

A DOLEFUL AND PERSISTENT VOICE

As a result of my research, I realized that though its brilliance has faded with time, Syriac culture is like the enduring voice of a centuries-old deliberation. It is a VOICE beseeching the wounded perception of modern times. A VOICE that refuses to become estranged to itself.

“Appreciation and helpfulness” are at the core of Syriac culture, which uplifts human dignity. Its primary purpose is to contribute to the fullness of life and social continuity, like in the relationship of the grapevine and the stick. Its primary goal is to lead the inner world to harmony and unity. The main priorities are achieving inner balance, acting with restraint, as well as being in harmony with the flow of life. Its motives are truth, justice, fairness, humility, conscience, reason, morality, restraint, righteousness, balance, harmony, decency, etiquette, politeness, kindness, genuineness, legitimacy, generosity, forgiveness, tolerance, trust, self-knowledge, individuality, freedom, inner peace, equality, diligence, prudence, loyalty, fortitude, compassion, sincerity, faithfulness, responsibility, altruism, solidarity, and helping one another.

Such ethical concepts that form the main constituent of this culture and complement one another are like limitless credit cards in the bank of human values. Syriac culture stipulates that these credit cards be used according to two benchmarks: The first one is reason, the second one is morality. The first one dictates what we should do; the second one dictates what we should not do. For a rational and moral life, it stipulates that the essence (the spirit) must flourish/develop. Because when the essence flourishes/develops, the burdens of life are more bearable. Life becomes easier. We experience the pleasure of complementary and formative/transformative love. This, in turn, gives more life energy and makes life better.

Syriac culture, which takes care that divine gifts are not left to the free reign of the ego, has no place for conceit, boasting, using humans for malicious intents, repression, exploitation, abuse, or subjection. It has no place for condescension, pontification, or appropriation. With a holistic approach, it embraces the development/growth of humans, while encouraging, empowering, and liberating individuality, love, respect, responsibility, faithfulness, consistency. Syriac culture serves and contributes to these aims in a positive sense. For this culture's main point of reference is primarily the word of the Lord and its moral tenets. Just as all varieties of food require salt for flavor, humility is indispensable for healthy individuals and a healthy society. Because humility is truth itself. It is the calm and creative state of the spirit. This state is imperative and vital in all attitudes, approaches, and behaviors. When we live with this awareness, our essence grows and we multiply. With this awareness, we should remember that any self-sacrifices we make will undoubtedly return to us. We must own our possessions without letting them own us. Those who are able to show this boldness and courage, and those who successfully carry this out in their lives achieve the highest rank possible. Accordingly, the more love and goodwill there is, the more life becomes meaningful, fulfilling, and meritable. Though it may be long and tiring, this state becomes more meaningful with the journey we take from our brains/minds to our hearts/spirits.

In a responsible and meritable life, there is no place for gratuitous living. There are situations that merit constant attention and awareness, like driving in traffic. Like the drivers, pedestrians must know where to walk and how to behave. If drivers and pedestrians are ignorant of traffic laws, radars and police must intervene, accidents or deaths are prone to happen. Therefore, ignorance of traffic laws is not an excuse. Just as ignorance of the law is unacceptable as an excuse before the judge, ignorance of traffic laws is also not an excuse. Hence, it can be argued that we must focus on the road itself and its laws, rather than

momentary goals. According to thinker Epictetus (55-135 a.d.), **“Happiness is on the road traversed, not at the destination.”**

Pedestrians’ carelessness or instability might not be as big a threat as that of drivers, but it still has certain fundamental risks of its own. However, the carelessness of high tonnage vehicle drivers (meaning those in high office) is always a greater and more destructive risk.

Culture, which develops humans’ spirit of self-control and protects them from destructive risks, plays the same role in social life as brake systems do in motor vehicles. At the same time, they have cautionary functions similar to radars or traffic police.

In psychosocial environments where drivers are held wholly accountable, warnings from radars and traffic police are as important as the vehicles’ brake systems. In other words, while developing the human spirit, the spirit of self-control faithfully makes cautionary suggestions in daily life, just like radars and police. With no leeway for inattentiveness (without idolizing one’s possessions), it shows how to keep balance with various didactic reasonings.

For some reason, in daily conversation, the liabilities of pedestrians are always overlooked. Everyone speaks of the necessity of being a good driver. However, no one gives opinions on how to be **“a good driver and good pedestrian”** or the qualities of good drivers and good pedestrians. And such opinions are always disorganized and deficient.

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