

The Spirit of Mardin

Mardin -a virtual grammar of historical layer- is the name of an ancient civilization which has served as an abode of the truth of life, and of the life of truth.

Civilization is a name for the encounter of a mind, purified from selfishness, with the love of truth, the love of peace, and the love of life; a name for enlightenment and by way of that enlightenment, the attainment of a new demension of inner development.

Even if there are diverse beliefs and diverse cultures, there is one civilization. It unites in universal values. It consists of the mutual cultural influences of East and West. It is the common herritage of humanity.

Civilization is the marathon of accepting existence, bringing greater vitality to life, fulfilling, developing, and serving. It is the love of attaining to the spirit of truth and the truth of life. It is a passion for greeting human beings, nature, and all existence with sincere salutation.

Civilization does not have destructive instincts, because it springs from the Spirit of the Creator. It continually generates, gives life, developes and causes growth.

The spirit of Mardin, including the region of Turabdin, is a fruitful womb with historical-cultural-spiritual depth.

The spirit of Mardin is a common inherritance, taking its place among the front runners of civilization.

The organik dimmensions of this spirit must encounter one another in a sincere awareness. Mardin needs further enlightenment according to the saying, **“Love and sincerity are the most difficult aspect of intellectual work.”** The conditions of the road, together with new methods and proceedures, will determine how that enlightment manifests itself.

The fundamental thing is to protect the life and dignity of human beings, and accordingly to find **“the new”** within existing meanings of the term **“growth.”** If Mardin can develop its own

new self by creating a new discourse, there may be a horizon, a point of departure from the hitches and impediments we face in some areas.

The spirit of Mardin is multi-dimensional, has many veins, and is very nuanced in the fine distinctions it bears.

From the depths of history until our own day, within the many-cultured catchment basin which has brought this spirit into being, there have been various beliefs, various ethnic constructions, diverse cultures and diverse spiritual traditions.

In the periods when the different dimensions of Mardin and its various social structures created synergy, the spirit of Mardin grew strong and added positive values to life.

When, however, the harmony and synergy between the main elements that generated this spirit were lost, Mardin experienced social fragmentation and dissolution.

So in order to civilize ourselves more deeply, and develop ourselves spiritually, we should dive into the historical wisdom of Mardin. Earnest desire to renew our human values compels us to lower our copper buckets into that depth, and, having drawn them up again to our garden, to pour out the old and new meanings with a sense of proportion around our thirsty plants and trees.

For the Syriac heritage, the spirit of Mardin means opening a closed treasure chest full of wealth and riches.

It means the spirit of Turabdin. In fact it means the fertile, clear, and deep spirit of Mesopotamia (Bethnahrin).

This spirit means artistic skill. It is human development. It is social pluralism. It is the comprehensive spirit of cultivated manners and morals. It is the spirit of loyalty -the kind of faithfulness that stands with people in their pain and trouble. It is to serve the values that must not change amid the changes of life.

For me the spirit of Mardin is the spirit that created the monasteries Mor Gabriel and Deyrulzafaran Monasteries, which do so much to help Mardin in its efforts to be known. It is

the spirit that identifies with Midyat. It is the spirit in whose historic self reside Hah (Antlı), the Monastery of the Madona, the Monastery of Saints Hobel and Abrohom in Midyat, the Saint Jacob Monastery of Salhe (Bariştepe), the Monastery of Saint Malke in Harabale (Üçköy), and the Monastery of Saint Jacob d’Karno in Badibbe (Dibek).

It is the smiles which the insights buried in Tur Izlo (Bagok) have given to the civilized world. It is the spirit of greeting, and understanding, the ancient School of Nisibis. It is the spirit of feeling for Bishop Hanna Dolabani.

Beyond these things, for me the spirit of Mardin is the spirit that is able to meet unjust treatment and troubles. It is the spirit that does not exalt tyranny. Because it is a spirit that competes within a framework of mutual help and collaboration.

It is a quiet spirit which does not serve supremacy, exploitation, or arrogance, but rather transcends personal absolutism. It is a spirit that sanctifies the impulses of servanthood. It is a spirit that does not feed upon human weakness and contradictions, whose world of meaning is wide, simple, and embracing.

For us the spirit of Mardin is a spirit that gives value to subalternity and social minorities.

It is the spirit of hosting foreigners and guests well. It is the spirit that gives food to the hungry, water to the thirsty, and help to the poor. It is the spirit that visits the sick and those in prison.

It is a spirit that gives power to those who prepare young people for the future, give meaning to life, and help one another.

In a word, for me, the spirit of Mardin means being a lover of life and peace -full of the feelings of kindness and conscience.

Mardin is like heart. When heart and intellect are united, the union breaths spirit into life. Because in the life of intellect/intelligence, the heart has the executive role.

It is for this reason that Saint Ephrem (303-373), a man of letters who was cultivated in the region of Mardin, said, **“Reign in your thoughts and send them to your heart.”**

The heart is the place of mercy and kindness. With the conscience which it has nurtured, it keeps the individual on the duty roster of **“loving God and man”**. It offers him the ladder of ascent.

To be able to rejoice in these thoughts for new hope, new expectations, and rational solutions, creates excitement. The biggest joy is to be able to rejoice in the peace and stability for which the nation and the region long. Most especially, to be able to rejoice in the new opportunities that may be born to Mardin, adds power to my joy of living.

My greatest desire and petition before God is that people and institutions look at their roles in life as if they were different organs of the same organism, that they serve, and that they solidify their own social maturity and the consciousness of being “us”.

Because when people create synergy, with their loves, knowledge, beliefs, hopes, and differences, life takes on meaning. Democratic maturity solidifies.

Of course we cannot forget that in this world there is no complete belonging nor ownership. The things we think are our own, in the blink of an eye, can depart from our life. Then we remain face to face with our losses and sorrows. So this is why I say that we people have come into the world to complete each other in love, respect, and to build up each other.

We need to take our steps carefully, fully aware of all of this. We need to put effort into fulfilling our responsibilities, without forgetting that life only continues on the principle of mutual devotion.

When we open up the doors of our hearts to mutual dialogues, we are saved from prejudice and negative self-conditioning, and troubles. We slip out of our monologues. And for the sake of serenity and peace, our spirit must be the manager of our body.

We need to develop our ability to make evaluations about inner development. Because people who find their inwardly growing self find their identity in being, whereas those who cannot discover their spiritual self, define their identity according to what they own.

Stability and tranquility is not found in the ambition to do whatever we want. It is found in freedom and originality. It is in the spirit of self-control. It is in behaving responsibly and productively.

With a prayer for removing all injustice, easing pains, binding up wounds on global and regional scales, with right currents of heart and thought, by changing our paradigm, I wish all the institutions and organizations that serve the future of Mardin health and success.

The spirit of Mardin is an inheritance to be retained and passed on.

In that case let this spirit blossom, with loves, expressions of respect, and fulfillment of responsibilities.

As it was said, **“So long as the trees are alive, they give fruit. As for people, so long as they bear fruit, they stay alive.”**

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