

Withdrawn People

Saint Mor Aphrem of Nusaybin (306-373), a prized influence in Syriac literature and considered a profound writer of the spirituality engendered by this literature, has conceived in his mind and written from the heart countless unfading orisons in verse. This immortal personage who brought metaphysical dimensions to the poetry and prose of Syriac literature says thus in one of his orisons:

"**أَطْرُقُ جَنَّاتِ الْجَنَّةِ أَهْلاً بِمَنْزِلِي! أَوْ جَهَنَّمَ أَهْلاً بِمَنْزِلِي. صَبِّحْ بِمَنْزِلِي حَتَّى تَمُوتَ بِمَنْزِلِي**"

"Lord, I'm not worthy of paradise. Neither do I want hell. Send me wherever you will!"

While trying to understand Saint Mor Aphrem's self-critical words, I realized how important it was for a far-sighted person to reflect inwards towards the self without withdrawing into one's shell. Those who can observe themselves earnestly without withdrawing into a shell inevitably come across a merciful awareness in their inner world. Merciful awareness is like a staircase descending into the spiritual strata and depths of that inner world. What it all comes down to is learning to put this staircase to good use.

For the spirit looks inward, at truth/simplicity/wholesome service.

The spirit is beauty. And all beauties are manifestations of the spirit. All benevolence is its solace. All virtues are its revival. All purity is its embodiment. All aesthetics are its rejuvenation. All productivity is the spirit in flight. All development/innovation is its overflow.

The ego looks outward, at the display.

When the spirit is muddied by the egoism of the ego, it loses all of its beauty and radiance. So long as this egoism that muddies the spirit is not cleared away, true life cannot come to pass. Love, which is high life energy, cannot grow. This is why the meanings of the spirit are the final and biggest assurance given to humanity. This meaning is the yeast. The yeast must obey its nature raise the dough. These meanings have to find a workspace inside people. They have to permeate the self. They need to

transform and build up. They must discipline the passions and ambitions. They must supplant negative feelings.

If life means empowering goodness and development in vital energy, there is a tremendous need for that staircase which will raise the meanings of the spirit in the ebb and flow of life as well as in its contradictions. Because that staircase symbolizes the positive stream of vital energy flowing in the natural cycle of life.

Whereas evil is the absence of this energy (love). It is the absence of goodness. Therefore, the internal walls and external barriers that people have to surmount go beyond blocking vital energy and congest goodness and development too.

To flow free as a river through communal life without retreating into a shell, to be in a state of positive flux is to fulfil the obligations of merciful awareness and to perform the law of love. And this means victory. **For heaven and humanity are not in cold and dark space. They are in the glow of humanity's thoughts. In the purity of intent. In the breadth of roads. In the pureness of actions.**

Do not forget that life bears no satisfaction, but rather TASTE.

The search for ways to enrich our lives with good things while savoring the taste in pursuit of inner peace and satisfaction is possible through ownership of the keys of the spirit. To enjoy that taste we must open the locked doors inside us, which is difficult without the keys of the spirit. Visibility is restricted.

Therefore, it is of great importance to develop the language of the heart (language of love, language of compassion) which is intrinsic to life. In places where the language of the heart is developed, people feel at home with one another and are honored.

In this context, it is vital to work and contribute positively in one's area of service while displaying humility and avoiding pretentiousness or shows of strength. Contributions to life's positive energy and social peace are the principal purpose of life. They open the gates to success, happiness, and heaven.

Similar to how the wolf you feed wins, everything great or small must be overcome, and the spirit must be cleansed of the muds of egoism in order for it to impact a person's life and bear fruit. As it is written, **"He who sows into his ego, reaps death out of it. He who sows into the Spirit, shall reap eternal life out of the Spirit."** (Galatians 6:8).

I believe it will be constructive to convey the pertinent thoughts of esteemed Şafak Nakajima, a writer who happens to be a doctor of medicine and scientist, specializing in his field. He says, **"While external objectives tear us and lead us away from ourselves, internal objectives bring us closer to ourselves, unite us, reconcile us to life. Pay attention to the people you feel comfortable around. You will see that they are unpretentious, modest, genuine people who don't go out of their way for someone's favor, are comfortable in their own skin, and have inner purpose and values."**

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