

Syriac Culture and Self-Knowledge

Syriac culture, which has unique folkloric qualities, values the power of people who use their talents and creativity to express and convey to others the colors and emotions of their inner world in the most aesthetic way possible. With its characteristic outreaching and sharing character it teaches to avoid everything that dampens the energy of life. Its main purpose is to reveal humanity's "**inner greatness**" in all areas of life based on spiritual reality. On the journey from knowing to doing, then from doing to being, people must turn inward, observe themselves, see their blind spots, illuminate their blind spots, ask the right questions in this regard, and while doing these, use the correct methods in the process of discovering their inner greatness.

Despite the growing knowledge and developments of today, virtue, morality, sincerity, honesty, wisdom, sense of justice, human rights, and labor are still only attained through the journey of "**self-knowledge**". Because self-knowledge is the stem cell of all knowledge. Its birthplace. For individual and societal development, we must know ourselves and be appreciative, not unfair.

Self-knowledge can have different meanings. There is a more general knowledge and a more personal one. If there is no personal knowledge, there most likely is no general knowledge either. A person must first have personal self-knowledge before having general knowledge of himself. Knowing oneself, being aware of one's behavior means advancing in a spirit of self-control that contains both enlightenment and awareness. For this reason, someone who knows and controls his own thoughts, actions, prejudices, attitudes, and identity has taken responsibility for everything he does. This marks a movement toward what's good, right, and beautiful on the road of balance which leads from conflict to consonance¹.

This fundamental, unchanging truth of intellectual history, this motto of self-knowledge is constantly used in various forms in many languages.

¹ Yüksel, Berk, İnanç Sistemleri ve Kendini Bilmek, 4. Baskı, Akılçelen Kitaplar, Ankara, 2020, p. 240-244.

However, the historical background of this idea, expressed with the saying “**O human, know thyself!**”, belongs to an old philosophy that developed in ancient Mesopotamia and Syriac culture, its heir.

O human, you must know thyself, ² □□□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□ □□□□□□□□ □□ The historical background of this idea belongs to an old philosophy that developed in ancient Mesopotamia and Syriac culture, its heir. This profound saying □□□□□□ □□ □□□□□□□□ belongs to a Mesopotamian philosopher known by the name Bar Havšo the Babylonian, who was nevertheless unrecognized. He was the first in history to use this saying. This philosopher, who lived in the 5th century B.C. (in the 430-450’s), wrote a great deal on the topic of philosophy and wisdom. At the same time, he was the source of knowledge of such Greek philosophers as Socrates, Aristotle, and Plato. He was their tutor. He was noted in the literature not with his familiar Syriac name but as ‘Biros’, a name used more by the Greeks³.

Saint Mor Aphrem (306-373), who says, “**If you focus on yourself, you will not need the law. If you understand the universe, you will not need order**” contributes to the world of meaning by carrying the dimensions of this call to self-knowledge to a higher level.

With this quality, Syriac culture can be defined as an ancient retention of civilization and intellectual history.

Yusuf Beğtaş

² Kierkegaard, who associates this fundamental approach with Socrates, writes, “**According to the perspective of Socrates, each individual forms his own center and the rest of the world revolves around him. Because the knowledge he has of himself is simultaneously the knowledge of God.**”

See: <https://1000kitap.com/meister-eckhart--205867/alintilar>.

³ This obscure and interesting insight, which is revolutionary in philosophical history, is a quote from Mor Theophilus George Saliba, who appeared on a Suboro TV program.

Source: <https://youtu.be/yPeYOmfw0w>