

A Pleasant Breeze of Hope amidst Suffocating Despair
(St. Narsai College: a Half Full Cup)

Was there ever one who loved knowledge: and he was not loved by all.

Was there ever one who toiled in its instructing: and the world ever grew tired of praising him:✽

- Isaac of Antioch

January 21st 6767

Preamble:

Everything is relative. Everything is multidimensional. There is not one single angle nor a specific view through which the human vision can perceive all the dimensions of a given phenomenon, at least not without any assistance and an attempt to view it from other peoples' angle.

Any dimension not perceivable to an eye from a particular angle, one that does not expose a blind corner: is called a blind spot. We all have our own blind spots and we must be conscious and aware of this shortcoming.

Thus, any decision taken by any individual without taking into calculation the various views and all the angles of a given phenomenon, can not be a sound decision.

Sometimes one views a phenomenon from all of its angles without considering other's point of view, this is very important and can be another shortcoming. Thus, if one sees all the dimensions of a phenomenon and from all of its angles but not from other's point of view, it would be possible for one's decision to be sound but it would remain incomplete.

For example, if there is a cup that is half full, you would see it half full no matter from which angle you view it. Yet, another individual viewing one and the same cup and from the very same angles could very well see it half empty. And this here is relativity: you are not wrong in seeing the cup half full nor is the other individual wrong in seeing it half empty.

What is of paramount importance for every individual is to ask one's self, 'which category do I fall in: into those that view the cup half full or into those that view it half empty'?

It is in the human nature, for the majority of people to view the cup half empty and ignore the half that is full, especially among us Assyrians. Since it is much easier to see faults, especially when this is done without offering any solutions to the problem at hand.

But seeing the cup half full requires a composed mind because this would oblige you to find solutions in order to fill the remaining emptiness, and this would demand competence.

I am sure (all of us and I more than anyone of you), have, sometime in life, experienced one or both of the shortcomings. This is natural but it is pivotal for one to be aware of such relative shortcomings and be self critical and to reconsider their original decision in order to avoid its repetition.

Half full or half empty:

Generally speaking, the current situation of the Assyrian nation, either in all four corners of our homeland or in the diaspora, is mournful, sad and saddening.

In our homeland: our Assyrian people escape one suffering only to enter into another torment, their national and religious rights have been snatched and their freedoms are being lost on daily bases; their numbers are on the decrease because on the one side they are concerned about their daily bread and on the other they have their eyes set on migrating to the west (the cup half empty).

Yet, alongside all this we must acknowledge the fact that we have members of parliament and people that remain in the homeland and strive to preserve what they can etc. (cup half full).

In the West: we are losing our identity in its melting pot: our language is endangered more than it is in the homeland, we are forgetting our culture, we are losing our faith; and scientifically speaking, the third or the fourth generation would forget the fact that it is Assyrian and what are the connotations of this self-identification (cup half empty)!

Yet, alongside this, we must acknowledge: we have clubs and associations, churches and monasteries, councillors and members of parliament in various city councils and na-

tional parliaments (cup half full).

It is perfectly alright for one to see the positives in this miserable situation of our people, although these positives are few and far between, but at the same time there is no fault in seeing the negatives in this wretched situation; and this is where one differentiates between a lay person and an intellectual.

Generally, a lay person ignores the positives and only focuses on the negatives; without finding any solutions (cup half empty).

The intellectual; however, evaluates the negatives and the positives equally without solely focusing on the negatives (cup half full). And if the intellectual addresses the positives in brief and lingers on in his evaluation of the negatives, it is only because the intellectual's objective is to find solutions to remedy the phenomenon.

The intellectual occasionally succeeds in his/her evaluation and at times he/she errs. This is natural because perfection is not a human attribute and non of us can lay claim to being perfect.

Focusing on the half full:

The esteemed reader may know: the writer of these lines has sometimes briefly addressed the positives and lingered on the negatives in some of his evaluations of certain events and phenomena. It is also possible that some of these readers would feel the writer's evaluations were correct and others among them might feel the opposite, that this writer had erred in some of his evaluations.

Both of these point of views are natural; however, if this writer was to be asked, this writer - through self reflection and self criticism - would say: he has possibly erred in many of his evaluations and succeeded in a few. The writer also believes it is his duty to evaluate and focus on the positive a little more. Thus, this is the aim and objective of this particular article: to evaluate a positive project that is unparalleled in our diaspora and our homeland too.

St. Narsai's College: A Pleasant Breeze of Hope amidst a Suffocating Despair!

In truth, every sincere Assyrian whose love of his nation is placed in his heart and his atrium pumps the love of his nation's and church's heritage into his arteries, should rejoice and jubilate by this great project: which is the result of the sharp intellect and clear vision; labour and toil of His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia, the metropolitan of Australia, New Zealand and Lebanon.

It is true: the Assyrians of Australia, Sydney especially, are zealous and generous but even a zealous and generous people would require guidance and leadership.

The zealousness and generosity of the Assyrians of Australia aside, without an unerring guidance and ingenious leadership: this great project, just like many others like it, would not have seen the light of day. Titanic too was the praise of its time and period, yet it sank due to the indiscretion of its captain.

Firstly, a great project such as St. Narsai's college would require a leader that sees the cup half full and soundly evaluates the half empty aspect of the cup; and in this evaluation of his strives to find the necessary solutions fill the vacuum left by this emptiness.

As we already mentioned, this is not something that can be easily done by just anyone nor is it something that can be achieved by any leader. And this is the reason as to why we should all, in unison, praise Mar Meelis Zaia for this success of his.

This success of His Beatitude was a dream envisioned by him and he transformed into reality for us all, turning it from a mere dream into a national achievement and a cause of national pride and honour.

We that live in the west and have families and children of our own, know the importance of such a project.

In the west, our children are ours for two days a week and they do not belong to us for the good part of the remaining five days.

For these five days, our kids belong to their schools where they do not receive instruction in our reach culture, heritage, ancient language and the true faith of the Assyrian nation, thus our kids are not disciplined in accordance with our Assyrian identity.

We as parents fear this terrifying fact for we know: in one way or another, and if things continue as they are, we will lose our kids in this melting pot that is the west. If we - as a nation - are fortunate and do not lose our children we will surely lose their children or their grandchildren. However, the St. Narsai college project is a pleasant breeze of hope amidst suffocating despair. This project of St. Narsai college defies the total loss that awaits us and prolongs the existence of our Assyrian nation and promises a bright future for our people. Through this college of St. Narsai, our children are ours for the entire seven days and not for just a mere two days a week.

It is great and ever so important that this project is being emulated in Melbourne Australia too, under the administration of His Grace Mar Benjamin Elya - the bishop of Victoria and New Zealand - and under the aegis of His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia. If only other archdioceses/dioceses of the Church of the East and all the archdioceses/dioceses of our other churches, along with their already great deeds, would follow the example of Mar Meelis' foresight and emulate this particular educational project of his that demands respect and merit praise and exultation and...!

Conclusion:

I have nothing left to write other than: as an Assyrian, I am filled with pride in having a prelate such as His Beatitude Mar Meelis Zaia who is soundly evaluating full half and the empty half alike; and is finding concrete solutions to fill the vacuum, not only in words but in action too and very successfully.

Thank you your Beatitude, kudos your Beatitude: we are all behind you in such deeds and projects of yours, whose tangible results are seen today and we will surely harvest their fruits in the very near future and only fathom their worth in the distant future.

I would like to conclude this article with a few lines from the poem of the great church doctor, the prophet of the Assyrians that is Mar Aprim - the harp of the spirit:

Lord grant knowledge: to whomever seeks knowledge.

And the instructor that excels in teaching it: make him great in thy kingdom✠

- St. Ephrem the Great

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