

Conference of the Birds (in prose and verse)



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١ - DEDICATION

*Attar, our learned scholar and guide,
Writers assemble where you lived and died.
Fired by a Dervish who railed at mortality
You dismissed the cares of life and its vanity;
Then marching in the tempting path of love,
You crossed seven cities and climbed above.
With your birds you soared higher and higher
And boldly flew into the mystics' empire
Where globes in globes in due order roll
And the Maker presides from pole to pole.
What you warble gushes from your heart's core
With a pen which none have employed before.
Much you have taught from virtues that you hold,
Now roaming in mountain, now in the fold.
Plain words which hang in every lip, O sage,
You mould in sweet verse and pour your knowledge.
From you, O bard, lovers learned how to burn*

*In a journey which there is no return;
In living pages your lovely numbers are read,
And we look where your hallowed remains are laid;
But no monument you need, O divine master,
Your fame flies from your tomb faster and faster!*

۲- Biography and Works

Farid ud-Din Attar Neishaburi, the celebrated Iranian poet and mystic, lived during the ۱۲th century A.D. He was born in ۱۱۵۸ or, according to Dolatshah Samarghandi and Ghazi Noorollah Shoushtari, in the year ۱۱۳۴. Hedayat says Attar was born in ۱۱۳۲ A.D. at Kadkan, one of the villages surrounding Neishabur. Dolatshah maintains that he was born in Shadyakh. Neishabur was ruined during the invasion of Tartar hordes in the year ۱۱۶۹ and Shadyakh was built east of Neishabur to replace the original town. After the invasion of the Mongols, this town was ruined and Neishabur was rebuilt in its original place .

We have very little information about the poet's childhood except the fact that his father owned an apothecary at Shadyakh. After his father's death, he resumed his profession and ran a well-organized shop. However, it must be noted that an apothecary is called "Attar" in Persian and Attar chose this as his pen name .

What we are certain is that at the beginning of his career, and for a considerable period of time when he was climbing the stages of mysticism, he maintained the profession of the apothecary. This necessitated some medical knowledge and he treated patients at his shop .

In his Khosrownameh we find the following verse:

*He said: "O symbol of knowledge and light,
So you treated patients day and night".*

And again in his Mosibatnameh he wrote:

*Mosibatnameh is the tale of sorrow and pain,
Elahinameh is mysteries revealed to men;
I began both books in the pharmacy to line,*

*I wonder how I began and finished my design;
Five hundred patients were in the shop daily or more,
In between I took their purse and prescribed the
cure."*

There are repeated references to Attar's profession as apothecary or seller of perfumes in his poems. According to Jami one day, a dervish stepped into his shop and repeated the word "Shai-Allah" several times, a salutation common among dervishes. Attar did not pay attention to the dervish. The dervish said, "Master, how would you like to die?" Attar replied, "The same way you would wish to die." The dervish said, "Can you die like me, sir?" "Yes!" Attar answered. Upon this answer from Attar, the dervish lay down on the ground, put his cap under his head, and died while the word "Allah" was on his lips .

After this miracle Attar was completely revolutionized. He shut up his shop and proceeded upon the path of mysticism.

Concerning poetry and his method of versification Attar thus speaks in his Mosibatnameh:

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*I am a fruitful poet but hate vain pretense,
I'm no poet of illusions; I'm man of sense;
The problem is in poetry, not these poems, man,
To me poetry has no limit and span.
Read not these poems if you cannot surmise,
Seek the meaning of the verse if you are wise;
Since poetry is based on method and weight
And needs order and rhyme to make it straight,
If a little variance you see in the sense,
Take it not wrongly, no, follow prudence.*

Because of his drugstore where about five hundred patients crowded daily and presented their pulse for his inspection Attar had sufficient money to be free of a patron. The fact that he was wholly independent of help is manifest in the following poem:

*I thank God I've matured in my faith and creed
And am free of all persons, nor need I to plead;
What I need I possess and more than that I own,
Then why must I extend my hand to this or that
person?*

Content with his moderate income, Attar always maintained his magnanimity of soul and lofty ambition and did not debase himself by flattering the authorities, as was the practice of others at the time :

*Therefore words are rated (and the rhyme,
Praise is forbidden, we must value our time;
I hate the flatterer; he is vain and foul,
The blackness of a flatterer deadens my soul.*

Following the example of students of the Way, Attar spent part of his life traveling to various countries including the present Turkmenistan and visited many eminent scholars. It is reported that at his old age when Jalaleddin Rumi and his father, Mohammad, were passing Neishabur, they visited Attar. There the sage presented a copy of his Asrarnameh to young Rumi. Impressed by his ready wit and precociousness he predicted that Rumi would become a great poet. At that time Rumi was about ten years old.

Attar was active and industrious both in his youth ,in his drugstore and during his declining years when he led a life of seclusion he composed many massnavis, a

divan of lyrics, elegies, and quatrains and compiled the much valued Tazkarat-ul-Olia (Memorials of the Saints). After that, he produced the Asrarnameh, Elahinameh, Mosibatnameh, Javaher-ul-Lezzat, Vasiatnameh, Manteq-u'tayr, Bulbulnameh, Heydarnameh, and other works still unexplored. Among them, Manteq-u'ttair or The Conference of the Birds is unrivaled in mastery and composition. In the following fragment in Khosrownameh the poet himself confesses that he is a prolific writer:

*"Those who criticize my verse and prose,
Say I am a great talker and am verbose;
But since many things I've in mind to explain,
Much I've to say; heed not such talk, nor complain".*

He urges his disciples to submit to God only :
If you wish to glance at a proper place, mate, beside
Him you must stoop your puzzled head;
*I neither want a new land to view
What I seek from You is You, is You!*

To demonstrate Attar's value as a Sufi teacher and poet it is sufficient to quote the following from Rumi :

*"Attar crossed seven towns of love in his sally,
But, alas, we still linger in the first alley " .*

Shabestari, the author of "Garden of Mysteries" says:

*"I'm not shy of my poetry or my writing
But in hundreds none like Attar can sing;
Though of such themes hundred secrets puzzle the
scribes
'It is but a small potion that Attar prescribes;
Not mere druggist - he heals the world part by part,
For what he sings is pleasant to the heart.*

Mantiq-ut-Tayr or the Conference of the Birds, composed in iambic hexameter, is one of the most important mystical books which the poet composed during the later part of his years when he had trodden the path of mystic development and had overcome the obstacles obtruding the way towards perfection and truth. He employs the most versatile descriptions and parables, seldom used in Persian poetry except by Saadi, to instruct the birds to seek the legendary Simorgh or the Master of Creation all the while

reminding them about the perils and merits of the expedition.

This book reflects the mysticism of Islam which maintains that the meaning of things does not lie on their surface. The pilgrim of the Way must search the meaning of things and this search is the real mission of a true mystical scholar. The instructions are offered in allegorical terms. In fact, allegory is a suitable form for description of mystical works. In allegory, the meaning is not represented on the surface and must be thoroughly and deeply explored. The surface is only a symbol of the meaning and may be a veil covering it. The king in this book often represented God and the dervish represents the poor and distressed .

In the Conference of the Birds, the author follows the tradition of Solomon who knew the language of the birds. He put tongues in the mouths of birds and enables them to chatter and fly toward lofty Mount Ghaf, a legendary topless mountain located in Caucasus, in search of the invincible Simorgh or Almighty God.

Acting as the guide and leader of the birds the hoopoe represents a mystic Sheikh who leads his students along the Way. The different birds in the beginning of the poem represent different human characters. The peacock represents ostentatious beauty and pomp, the hawk is a proud to hunt for arrogant lords, the nightingale loves the rose which lives for a few days only, the bashful duck vainly baths in the pond to purify his body, proud Homa believes he has the power to make kings, the owl searches treasure in the dark, the feeble sparrows is a coward ...

Like an experienced mystic guide who has traveled the tempting Way many times, the hoopoe skillfully steers the birds all the while pointing to the stages of evolution of the soul and the dangers awaiting a mortal who dares to embark on the dangerous journey in order to dissolve in the Absolute Being and find everlasting life. The greatest obstacle to human perfection is his carnal desires and attachment to the allurements of the temporal earth. The hoopoe gives appropriate answers the questions of the birds and tells them how to overcome the difficulties of the journey in the Path. He mentions many parables and

anecdotes and quotes from saints and mystic teachers to substantiate his remarks. Attar repeats two important subjects throughout the story. He maintains that self is a manifestation of pride and love of reputation, and adds that a pilgrim will make no progress in the Way as long he has not overcome his and love of reputation. He believes that only true and passionate love (for Almighty God) can help mortals to overcome and destroy their selves.

The various titles given to Attar's *Manteq-u-Tayr* show the difficulties of translating Persian literature dating back to a thousand years ago and make us appreciate the labor of foreign scholars who translate from a language alien to their mother tongue. Yet a word of warning: such works which are not easily understood by native Persians and are differently interpreted even by Persian scholars must be accompanied by the original text to benefit students of Persian literature. For if there is a mistake or if the translation does not reflect the charm of the original, the Persian text must be at hand to satisfy the reader and help future editors to make corrections.

The following is a translation from Dr. Sadeq Goharein's edition of the Conference of the Birds in which I have versified the speech of the birds and some of the stories and rendered most of the anecdotes into prose reflecting the poet's teachings and doctrines. Meanwhile, I have shortened the stories and anecdotes and omitted such stories that lead to the same result .

I hope that the accuracy of my translation as a native speaker of Persian language, and my extensive studies of the language and the doctrines of mysticism, will compensate for any defects in the English .

۳- THE STRUCTURE OF THE STORY

The hoopoe, representing himself as Solomon's page and courier, gathers the birds and bids them to seek the Simorgh, their heavenly king and warns of the dangers lurking in the expedition. Awed by Simorgh's greatness and superior rank, the birds try to forge an excuse to avoid the dreadful journey.

The nightingale says his love for the rose is enough and that he seeks no greater reward from the Simorgh, but the hoopoe warns him to give up love for temporary things. The parrot is eager to achieve everlasting life but is content to reach the gate of the Maker only. The duck cannot leave the pond and stop bathing in the pleasant water. The partridge is digging the mountain and seems happy to find shining jewels. Hoopoe tells the treasure hunter that pearls are only colorful stones and love of worldly treasure darkens the heart. Homa is proud to crown kings and is shy of Simorgh and the owl loves to dig treasures in the ruin. Hoopoe urges the sparrow to fly bravely to the Prince and shun death. He tells the birds that they represent the shadow of the Simorgh and they will be dissolved

in Him if they complete their adventurous journey. “You can see the divine image if you look in your heart,” he says. “One truly in love is not afraid to sacrifice his life to join his or her beloved. One must purify his soul and listen with the inner ear to hear divine secrets”.

As mentioned before, when the birds hear the dangers of the expedition some of them try to excuse themselves, but others ask guidance about the Way. Twenty-two birds speak to the hoopoe and seek guidance .

The first bird is eager to know why Solomon has chosen him as his favorite and has revealed so many secrets to him. Hoopoe says that with a single glance Solomon liked him and elected him as his page.

The second bird says he is feeble and afraid to die in the expedition. Hoopoe rebukes him for fearing death. “Better to perish in the journey than to die a coward in this degraded earth,” he warns. The third bird has committed many sins. Hoopoe urges him to beg divine grace and not give up hope of salvation. The fifth bird says the dog in his soul restrains him. How

can he defeat the dog and purify himself? Hoopoe says, “Unless you defeat the dog in your heart you will never succeed because that dog has destroyed thousands like you ”.

The eight birds say he has a very strongly-built palace and is happy in that fort, as nothing can harm him. Why risk a perilous journey? Hoopoe says, “You cannot escape death wherever you are. Death will find you even if you fly to the seventh heaven.” Another bird is very feeble but is determined to go. Hoopoe says one with lofty ambition will succeed even to bring down the sun from heaven. Another bird boasts he has achieved perfection. Why search a better faith in a painful journey? Hoopoe is angry with his boasting and egoism. “You must destroy your pride,” He cries. “If a false light glimmers in you take it as scorpion's string.” He urges the twentieth bird to take pain and ardor to the Prince as a gift.

In between these questions and answers, the author mentions brief stories and anecdotes to clarify his point. “As long as you do not destroy yourself and love of worldly objects you cannot be accepted in the heaven,” Hoopoe exhorts. “He who is entangled with

exterior attachments cannot walk in the spiritual path. The dog of desire and the devil who has ensnared the world keeps you from the Way. Satan has imprisoned you and stops you from joining the Master of Creation. The spirit is jailed in the flesh and is emancipated after death only. Helping beggars is better than a thousand prayers and ablutions. Death awaits everybody in the most strongly fortified palace even and fear of death will lead to damnation. Whoever is attached to temporary things shall have no lasting life. Justice means salvation. When you feel and understand real love the faults of those near you will appear as merits. When you see the ugliness of your own faults you will not find fault with others”.

The birds travel through the valleys of Quest, Love, Knowledge, Detachment, Unity, Wonder and Doom. In the Valley of the Quest they undergo a hundred difficulties and trials and after getting rid of worldly attachments one learns in the Valley of Love that love has nothing to do with reason. In the Valley of Knowledge, they learn that knowledge is temporary but understanding endures. Mending faults and overcoming weakness accelerates their goal. In the

Valley of Detachment, they neither desire to possess nor wish to discover. They must be self-sufficient to cross this difficult station. In the Valley of Unity, all creatures spring from a single neck and experience complete unity. In the Valley of Wonder, they lose themselves in the divine essence. Immersed in love, they achieve unity and forget themselves. It is impossible to describe the Valley of Doom. The present and future worlds dissolve in that vast ocean opening to the hereafter. Here on the verge of death, they understand that a single drop becomes part of a vast ocean .

Only thirty birds out of several thousand cross the seven valleys and arrive at the court of the Prince of the Universe with broken feathers and on the brink of death. To their amazement, what they see is an enormous phantom mirror. Made of a thousand molten planets, which reflects their own shapes and purified selves. This is consistent with the Sufi doctrine that in that elevated stage of purification of flesh and perfection of the soul the created and the Creator join and become one. At this stage, the light of divine wisdom and benevolence shines upon those

who have undergone the pains and sufferings needed to quit the mortal frame.

Attar's language is very simple and to the point, free of ambiguity, affectation. Borrowed wisdom, pompous expressions or unpopular metaphors. As in Saadi's poetry, his simple words are molded into clear and succinct verse.

ξ-INVOCATION

Praise to Almighty God who set his throne upon the waters and created all earthly creatures. He has given power to heaven to dominate and has made the earth obedient to heaven. He raised the firmament above the earth like a tent and created the stars and planets and the nine cupolas of heaven. First He decorated the heaven with stars to shed light at night and then He fastened the mountains firmly to the ground, capped with ice, and made the oceans liquid as a sign of bondage. He made the mountaintops sharp like the blade and the valleys like girdles helping mountains to lift their heads with pride. He placed the earth on the back of the bull, the bull on the fish, and the fish in the air .

Sometimes He causes the flowers to spring from fire and sometimes throws bridges over rivers. He paints the world with the color of the tulip out of vapor. He makes beds of water-lilies and drenches the earth with blood to cause them to yield rubies. The sun and the moonbow to Him and admire Him and their movement around an axis is a sign of their worship.

ϣ.

He lighted the day with sunshine and made the night black. He painted the parrot in gold, and crowned the hoopoe, appointing him the leader of the Path. He molded the universe out of a little vapor. In winter He scatters snow, in summer fruits and in autumn gold-yellow leaves. He adorns the jasmine with petals and puts a red bonnet on the head of the tulip. He created the wind, the earth, and fire. He took clay and mixed it with water to make a man and after forty days He breathed spirit into his nostrils and gave him the intelligence to discern, judge, and ponder .

There is only He and none else. People are aware of their ignorance. The soul is hidden in the body and God is hidden in the soul. Everyone sees himself in Him and He is manifest in everything. No one knows the extent of His attributes; being eternal and above all, He deceives even the wisest people .

He sent prophets and saints to describe His divine blessings and spread His words on earth .

Friends and enemies bow their heads before his Throne. Moreover, He is watching all of us. He made

all the planets and stars, His throne and the universe are only a talisman. Both the visible and the invisible worlds are a manifestation of God's immense power. After this do you think it is easy to acquire enough knowledge about spiritual things? What shall I say further since there is nothing more to say? One must live a hundred lives to know himself, but you must know God by his attributes and not by himself. For it is God, and not human wisdom, that opens the way, and God is beyond human knowledge.

*Praise be to Almighty God who created the world,
Bred life and made earth obedient in his hold.
He raised the firmament like a speckled tent,
Yet suspended it stand by His commandment.
In six days by him, seven globes were given,
And by two words He laid down nine vaults in heaven.
To the mountain, He gave a belt and a sharp edge
And made the ocean liquid as a sign of bondage ;
The sun and the moon worship the earth by rotation
And by that movement they express their admiration;
First He nailed the earth firm by the mountain
And washed the earth's face with the ocean,
Then He put the earth on the bull's back to bear;*

*The bull He put on the fish, the fish on the air.
In haughty Nimrod's nose, He put a puny fly
To make him suffer four centuries and to die.
Wisely He made the spider to spin a net
And saved the Prince of the World from death.
He made the ant's waist thin like a thread
And bade him sit with King Solomon and debate.
See what He did with Adam at the onset;
How many years Adam mourned in regret?
Think of Noah then who preached a hundred years,
And how his sermons fell on unbelieving ears.
Behold Solomon, the king who was rich and wise,
Satan robbed his realm, banned from Paradise.*

o- THE BEGINNING - THE BIRDS ASSEMBLE

The hoopoe, Solomon's messenger, and chosen bird, gathers the birds to speak about the invincible Simorgh who resides high in the heaven. By turns, He exhorts the wagtail, the parrot, the falcon, the quail, the nightingale, the peacock, the pheasant, the dove, the pigeon, the goldfinch and the hawk to seek the Simorgh (meaning God or the Absolute One) by overcoming their weakness and their worldly desires:

*Hail to you, O hoopoe, our nimble guide,
A messenger that at every bower fly and glide,
Bid by King Solomon to far Sheba you were gone
)Solomon to whom the language of birds was known;(*
*You preserved Solomon's secret in your head
And converted the Queen of Sheba to his faith.
Hold the Satan tightly in the jail, hold,
And be a confidante of Solomon in his fold, (1)
When temper is fettered in the jail you
Will sit on his magic carpet with his crew. (2)*

*Hail O wagtail, you who resemble Moses,
Arise, tune the lute, and sing melodious;*

*For mankind was made by music and motion
And music tuned the globes in the creation ;(3)
Like Moses you saw the fire but from distance,
When by sparrow guided to Mount Tour you did
advance (4)*

*And you, O painted parrot, who on Tuba perch with
fire (5)*

*You wear a saint's garb with the necklace of fire;
The arch of the fire is for the hellish race,
The badge you wear is for saints and the blameless.
He who likes Abraham escaped Nimrod's fire
Shall sit in the fire fearless and with desire; (6)
Kill Moses; kill him in the burning furnace;
Dive like Abraham in the fire and rise blameless.
When like him you forget Nimrod's deadly fear
The badge of the burning fire you shall wear. (7)*

*O painted partridge nimbly you prance,
And cheerful ascend the mount of cognizance;
Laugh in the dangerous path, stage by stage,
And cheerfully explore the mountain of knowledge.*

Hail to you swift falcon, who see well your path,

*Till when you must indulge in anger and wrath?
Tie the scroll of eternal love on your foot
And never unbound the letter, keep it for good!
Your mother-born wisdom to your heart you bend;
Then one you will see the start and the end. (8)*

*And you fair quail; from you, God asked his identity,
Men's answer of "yes" is your throne of eternity; (9)
When your soul hears God's question in grace,
Shut the mouth of yourself if it cries "yes"!*

*O sweet nightingale, in lovers' bower sings,
Like David sing the lover's pain and suffering,
Like David meaningful you sing and prate!
So hundreds shall follow your pleasing breath .
Hail golden peacock, the eight portals of heaven,
You burnt from the wound of the seven-headed
dragon;
The discourse of the charming snake tainted your
brainbanished from the Garden of Eden; (10)
He betrayed the tree to Adam forbidden
And darkened your heart from the bliss of heaven.
If you manage to escape this ugly viper's snare
With Adam, you will sit in the heavenly sphere.*

*Hail O peasant who you have a keen sight;
Fill your heart with the deep ocean of light;
O you who in the flesh of darkness are sunk, (11)
Jailed in the dungeon of trial and filth and junk!
Free yourself from your tepid well of darkness
And raise your head in the heaven of divine grace;
Like Joseph fly from jailing well which is base (12)
And rise high and manage Egypt's grain business.*

*And you, O fair dove, by good manners known,
Jailed unknown and risen by your virtue's crown,
You're sad for you are sunk in your putrid gore,
And jailed like good Zolnun many years before. (13)
Tear the head of the mischievous fish and soon
You'll touch the crescent of the shining moon;
If you escape the loathsome belly of the whale,
Like Jonah you'll sit with saints and avoid hell. (14)*

*Hail to you sweet-tongued pigeon, again hail!
Open your mouth and pearls will drop to the dale,
Since on your neck, you bear the ring of faith
It is baneful to prove untruthful to your faith;
If even a hair survives from your body*

*I shall call you faithless and nobody!
Should you exit from your dark bodily home?
You shall find the path of knowledge and wisdom;
And when wisdom enlightens your soul, heaving
Elias will bring you the water of living.*

*And you, O royal hawk who soar too high,
Risen too high and fallen from the sky,
Revolt not although you have fallen,
Leave your flesh tainted with blood by a balloon!
Since you eat the corpse and the carrion you sting
You are alien to the realm of meaning;
Dismiss both this world and the next - with that
Pull out your crown and look at the path.*

*Hail to you, fair goldfinch, in your pretty empire,
Burn in your pursuit and turn to a ball of fire;
Burn what you see in your path with your own heat,
Escape your flesh, expire, but proceed! Proceed!
And when you have burnt in your daring journey
God's bounties will fall on you plenty;
When enlightened by truth by fermentation
You will turn a slave to the Master of Creation,
And when to God you turn like perfect bird then*

You shall not survive, only God will remain.

٦- HE DISCOURSE OF THE BIRDS WITH HOOPOE

All the birds gathered in a huge assembly to discuss their fate and their need to have a king. They said that every country had a king to rule and administer justice, and debated how they could begin their quest for that king.

*All birds in the world in an assembly met
And let out all that was known or was secret.
All said, in such times that turmoil is shaking
No town is empty of a sovereign king.
Now that no ruler reigns our blessed land
It is unfit to loiter without a command;
Perhaps if we help each other by wisdom
We can find a prince to rule our kingdom.
Then all assembled in a gathering
And earnestly they sought a sceptered king.*

V-HOOPOE OPENS THE CONFERENCE

Hoopoe, who is wearing a natural crown on his head and has learnt his wisdom from Solomon, presides at the conference. He tells the birds that he is free of fraud and is a messenger of God. He says he used to preside at the levee in King Solomon's court and when absent Solomon badly missed him. He carried the King's letters as his trusted courier. For many years he traveled with Solomon by sea and land and he traversed the world after the flood. He exhorts the birds to give up their fear and love of self in order to find the Simorgh, who is the king of birds, the Lord of heaven and model of perfection. Simorgh does not show himself completely. Even in his own dwelling, the purest souls cannot describe him. All creatures wish to attain that perfection and beauty. "Many lands and seas are to be crossed to reach the Simorgh," Hoopoe informs the birds. "You should be lion-hearted to risk the expedition. I will be glad to find the path to the Simorgh, but first of all, you must wash your hands off your worldly attachments. Only those who sacrifice their lives will be accepted in Simorgh's lofty palace".

*The hoopoe long awaiting and in unrest
Entered the meeting nervous and distressed;
A cloak he was wearing pointing to the road
And a crown on his head that to truth did nod.
Sharp and intent he was and knew his mission,
Aware of bad and good he came to the session.
He said: "O birds I am free of cheat and fraud
I am both a courier and messenger of God; well
informed of all the saints, I am a page,
By nature quickened, I know the secret knowledge.
He who recites God's name, verbal and written,
No wonder if he knows what's known and hidden.
Sunk in my depression, secluded I live,
None deals with me or my counsel will receive,
And since I am free of people and need
Folk is also free of my belief and creed.
In Solomon's court, I presided at the levee,
I was his messenger though sometimes heavy.
Many were absent from his court, he didn't mind,
Neither had he cared what the delinquents designed,
But when a moment I delayed to attend the court
He sent embassies to find me and report;
For a hoopoe, this rank suffices all the while.
I carried his letters and was back as bidden,*

*I learned from him what was known and hidden.
He who is favored by a prophet I bet
Is worth to wear a diadem on his head.
For years I have scored land and ocean,
For years I've endured pain and commotion;
For years I've crossed deserts and wood
And have surveyed the world after Noah's flood.
With Solomon, I've traveled - the wise king-
With him I have searched the world wandering;
I have noted what wise Solomon has showed;
I cannot travel alone and dig the road.
But once you follow me in the blessed path
You will become His friend, be assured of that.
Leave your puny pride and your mortal bound,
Till when you must faithless linger around?
He who for love dies evades his frame
And leaves good and bad behind and the shame;
Burn flesh and soul, O friends, burn! O burn!
Dancing you fly and to His court, you turn.
A king we own indeed, pure and blameless,
Beyond Mount Ghaf dwells His Royal Highness (15)
His name is Simorgh; He is the birds' king,
He is near yet far we seek Him rambling.
On the peak of glory, He is sitting,*

*No tongue can sing His praise as is fitting;
A thousand veils hide the Prince and his face
Both of light and glory and of darkness.
Not in this world and the next one dares
To contest His power in celestial spheres.
A mortal can't enumerate his virtues and grace
For the brain cannot conceive His greatness;
There the body and brain stall in wonder,
With two eyes we cannot see and sink under!
No wise man has ever scanned His greatness,
Not he who sees can see His lovely face.
A thousand secrets lie hid in His court,
A thousand pains and strife I can report.
Many deserts and seas awaits to pass,
Deem not it is a short road that we must cross;
A lion-hearted man is needed to prance and leap!
For the path is too far, the see is deep;
We have reason to wonder as we fly mates,
We must weep and laugh in our vain debates.
If we trace His mansion we may live,
Without Him none can survive, I believe;
With dignity, if we trace His mansion we may live,
Without Him it is base to live I believe;
Manly, we must journey and bear to the end*

*Lives must perish till His court we can ascend.
Manly, you must wash your hand off this life
To prove that you can endure the strife.
Without the Beloved, your life is worth nothing
Manly, you must journey and by trotting!
If manly you perish and manly you die
Many you'll die for His sake when you climb the sky.*



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