

## **The Conference of the Birds and the Religiosity of the Empiricist**

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### **Introduction**

From the end of the eighteenth century, following Schleiermacher, religious and epistemological experiences gained increasing attention. In this article, after introducing religious experience and its characteristics from the Western philosophers' point of view, this type of experience is investigated from the perspective of Iranian mystics and philosophers. Travel has been one of the main topics in mysticism and many mystics have considered the journey of horizons as a prelude to the journey of the soul. Attar, as one of the mystics, and his work "The Conference of the Birds", are introduced in connection with this subject as a personal and spiritual travelogue, and by looking at Mulla Sadra's "Four Journeys", this notion and its dimensions are examined. "The Conference of the Birds" is seen as a travelogue that arrests an abandoned caravan to the confines of its presence; The "Four Journeys" is seen as a single journey. The article is based on the question: What was the basis of Attar's knowledge? The article concludes that Attar, in

addition to believing in an experience-oriented religion, tries to bring seekers to this experience step by step. Also, it quotes the characteristics of religious experience, obstacles and travel equipment that end in this experience in Attar's terms and the product of this religious experience is analyzed.

**Research method, background and purpose:**

The research method of this article is the library method and its contents have been provided by examining books and articles.

Regarding the background of the article, it should be said that although the phenomenon of religious experience has existed in all religions and sects from the beginning, its idea has been proposed since the late eighteenth century and many books and articles have been written about it. Mystical experience and revelations are under the religious experience and the life and works of great people such as Rumi, Attar, Sanai and Hafez have been studied from this perspective and several articles have been written about them.

Few articles have been written about Attar and religious experience in his works, which are: "Investigating Attar's mystical revelations in lyric poems based on the theories of William James" by Dr. Homayoun Jamshidian (2013); "Qalandarian Themes in Attar's Divan" by Mahin Panahi (2013); "A Comparative Study of Attar and Jung's Opinions on Religious Experience" by Marie Ikhlas (2006). Maria Ikhlas's study can be considered as the only text that has specifically studied and analyzed Attar's religious experience and has seen his Conference of the Birds from this perspective.

### **Discussion**

Schleiermacher was the first to propose the issue of religious experience. Emphasizing the "feeling of absolute reliance" as the essence of religion, he tried to bring religion back to the intellectuals. There is no complete consensus on "religious experience". The "contradiction" of the concepts of "experience" and "religion" and "the lack of access to a single concept of religion" have doubled the ambiguity of the meanings of religious experience. Religious experience is an unconventional experience that belongs to a supernatural being. The characteristics of this experience are "indescribable", "epistemic quality", "being ephemeral" and "passive state".

Attar's religious experience belongs to the logic of God, which according to him is far from the reach of reason and is beyond "simile" and "anthropology" and all manifestations of creation are manifestations of his essence and attributes and only through the heart and soul, one can know him and must experience him. Attar's Conference of the Birds expresses religious experience in a symbolic language. He likens himself to birds who have taken a moral path to achieve religious experience by having communications with one of the prophets and by breaking the cages and freeing themselves from lusts have achieved spiritual degrees.

By looking at Mulla Sadra's four journeys and examining the frequency of words related to travel, Attar's works can be considered as personal travelogues. In the general plan of Conference of the Birds, at least two of the four journeys discussed by Mulla Sadra can be found. The first journey is the movement of birds towards Simorgh and the second

journey is taking a step into the essence and becoming qualified and falling in love. Attar in Conference of the Birds intends to fulfill his spiritual duty, which is to give the indescribable experience of beloved and eternal lover to the seekers of love, and he carries out this mission in the guise of Hodhod.

In the beautiful story of Sheikh Sanan, one can also find the four journeys.

Some similarities can also be found between the states of the Conference of the Birds and the characteristics of mystical experiences. One of them is reaching a passive state in which the seeker feels that he has lost his will and has been conquered by a higher force. This feature can be seen in the state of independence. The indescribability of mystical experiences can be seen in the state of wonder, in which the seeker is amazed and considers himself indescribable.

### **Conclusion**

Considering the empirical nature of religion and the salvation of empirical religiosity has led to the survival of religion in recent centuries. The great mystics of Islam also realized that religion is effective in the destiny of man if the religious person has reached a destructive and constructive encounter with the transcendent and has felt that infinite existence immediately. Attar is also of this type who has reached this sweet and painful experience and knows that the experience he has been through is indescribable and one can only be placed in the position of gaining this experience and his conference of the birds is a travelogue to help travelers reach this state; A healing prescription for the pain of the whole sick human community; The pain

of love and longing. Salvation from hereditary religiosity and guidance to the threshold of oneness with the Creator. They state that God can be known with God or with a heart and soul and a true theologian is someone who loses himself as a shadow in the sun of God's radiant existence.

**Keywords:**

Religious Experience, Attar, The Conference of the Birds, Mystical Revelations, Islamic Mysticism

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