

# Rise of Patience in Attar's Manteg al-teyr, Mosibat Nameh, Asrar Nameh and Elahi Nameh

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**ABSTRACT:** Masnavi of Manteg al-teyr is a spiritual journey but symbolic that is realized by birds' journey to the shrine of Phoenix. Mosibat Nameh is also a spiritual travel but a different kind. In both journeys destination is the same that is the court of Allah. According to Attar the best provision for this journey is patience because in his views patience plays a pivotal role in this journey that boosts the human will. This takes man to perfection and court of Almighty. In this paper the author has tried to explain the literal meaning of the term, patience, and discover, select and analyze the related verses. On the subject of patience there has been little or no previous works.

**Keywords:** Patience, Attar, Manteg al-teyr, Mosibat Name, Mysticism.

## INTRODUCTION

Considering the fundamental role of patience in journey, mystics in their writings have argued about it and have highly emphasized in their teachings. An important part of Sufi literature, including: التَّعَرُّفُ لِمَذْهَبِ أَهْلِ التَّصَوُّفِ، قُوَّةُ الْقُلُوبِ , Translation of the epistle Ghashiriyeh , احياء علوم الدين , التَّصْفِيَّةُ فِي أَحْوَالِ الْمُتَّصِفِينَ etc., are dedicated to the subject of patience. The authors of these books citing the Qur'anic verses, prophetic traditions, many narratives and stories, have expressed the important role of patience in evolution of human spirituality. Due to the important role that patience has in progression to God, Sufis consider this one of the major positions in mysticism that is dedicated to the Holy Prophet. As defined in the Taarof "and patience is great position" and God told Prophet Mohammad (pbuh)

"اصْبِرْ وَمَا صَبْرَكَ إِلَّا بِالله"

(Mostamli Bokhari, 1986). Patience is the fifth-ranking of Sufism, and is considered a sign of faith and faithful endurance. "It has come in the Hadith that the Prophet (pbuh) was asked about the faith, he said: Patience and good temper. Also it has come that dervishes are patients and are Almighty's favorite. (Sajjadi, 1993)

Attar, in Mantegh al-teyr and Mosibat Nameh, considers patience one of the features of the mystics. He believes that the mystics must be able to handle the problems strong mindedly and have tolerance so that he could carry out the work till organizes his affairs. (Attar, 2004).

### Meaning of Patience

The word patience means sufferance, not complaining from scourge and the hardships. In Sufi's term according to Junayd Baghdadi patience is refraining superego from God without complaint. He expressed it as "the extreme trust is patience" (Shajii, 1994).

Ragheb Esfahani, about the meaning of the word patience, says: "Patience means to put to and when it is said: «صَبْرٌ فَادَانٌ» means imprisonment of animal without grass or without being able to eat grass. «صَبْرٌ فَادَانٌ» means to imprison one so that he could not get out. Patience is safeguarding the soul from what reason and canon requires or deterring the soul from what the reason and canon necessitate (Ragheb Esfahani, 1983).

### **Qur'anic Concept of Patience**

In Arabic language "patience" means "to refrain" and "abstain". When they say: «فَتَلَّ فَلَانَ صَبْرًا» this means that a certain person detained so long until he died. For example, verse 28 of the Sura 18 (Kahaf) "patience" has the same meaning: «وَاصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ مَعَ الَّذِينَ يَدْعُونَ رَبَّهُمْ بِالْعَدَاةِ وَالْعَشِيِّ يُرِيدُونَ وَجْهَهُ، وَلَا تَعْدُ عَيْنَاكَ عَنْهُمْ...» «إِصْبِرْ نَفْسَكَ» means self-abstain, and self-refrain from looking at what you mustn't have attachment to. The opposite of "patience", is "impatience" (abbreviation and تصرف by Lesani Fesharaki, pp. 22 and 23).

### **Lover's Patience in Mystical Literature**

In mystical literature, in connection with the beloved and or God, there are two kinds of patience which include lover's patience or مع الله and patience at the time of lover's manifestation or مع الله.

- 1- Lover's patience: In the mystics' vision, lover's patience or patience of not seeing the lover is one of the hardest and most severe forms of patience. In the book of «اللمع» of Abu Nasr Sarraj it has come that a man asked Shebli: Which patience is harder for the patients? Shebli replied patience for Allah. The man said no. Shebli said patience for God's manifestation, مع الله, the man said no, Shebli angrily said so what is patience? The man said God's patience, عن الله; Shebli screamed so much that it was near to separate soul from body. (Sarraj, 1914 AD, p 50)

2 - Patience at the time of lover's manifestation: According to Sufis' belief this kind of patience is also hard for lovers. Rashid al-Din al-Asrar Meibodi in interpretation of Kashf al-Asrar in mystical interpretation of verse 200 of Surah Al-Imran, where Allah says:

يا أَيُّهَا الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا اصْبِرُوا وَصَابِرُوا وَرَابِطُوا وَاتَّقُوا اللَّهَ لَعَلَّكُمْ تُفْلِحُونَ  
«وَقِيلَ اصْبِرُوا فِي اللَّهِ وَصَابِرُوا بِاللَّهِ وَرَابِطُوا بِاللَّهِ وَمَعَ اللَّهِ

Patience for Allah صبر في الله is the patience of worshipers served for the hope of reward. Patience for God is the patience of mystics as reverence for desire to join Allah. صبر مع الله is the of lover's observing lovers at the time of manifestation, anticipation, wonderment, and adornment, (Meibody, 1959, vol 2, p 400). Ein al-Ghozat says, "But patience is also divided:

الصبر مع الله is harder than all patience. (Ein al-ghozat, 1962, p 319)

### **Manifestation of Patience in Attar's Mantegh al-Teyr**

Attar begins Mantegh al-Teyr with praise and worship of the creator. He starts the Journey of birds and their passage through the seven valleys. In this journey which is in fact the seekers and mystics' journey, mystical stages should be traversed one by one. In view of Attar these stages are seven as follows: quest, love, wisdom, disdain, monotheism, wonderment, destitution and mortality.

For a description of this journey and its valleys Attar uses birds symbolically. These birds - which are mystics' and seekers' mystery, each are used as symbols- To travel and reach to Phoenix on Mount Qaf – which is the mystery of God – they must tolerate hardships and have patience. (Attar, 2004).

### **Quest and Patience**

Some of the birds gathered together, have a meeting. Each bird is eager to find their king. Such impatience is the first step and first spiritual valley in the quest for spiritual journey of Attar, until finally Hoopoe starts speaking. After his full introduction, Phoenix, king of birds, who lives in Mount Qaf is introduced to birds. He also pointed to the difficulty of the road, and says that this trip will require manly efforts and patience (Ibid, 733 b).

In the beginning Attar mentioned patience of the lover or, عن الله, which is common among Sufis and mystics. Patience for not seeing beloved is the most difficult type of patience among Sufis and mystics (Ibid. 737 and 738 b).

To heighten further the interest of birds to travel Attar flies Phoenix over their head. This is the same expression as one of the divine manifestation. Birds watching Phoenix lose heart, and they become impatience to visit him. (Baba Taher Oryan, 1987).

After casting lover's patience or عن الله Attar, takes one step further and brings up patience for God or مع الله. Attar flies Phoenix over the birds' head. In contrast to such manifestation all birds are puzzled and become concerned.

They become irritably impatience and this is patience of lover's manifestation or مع الله . According to Ein al-Ghozat Hamadani and Meybodi and other mystics this is the most difficult type of patience (Attar, 2004, 745, and 746 b).

All birds impatiently gather on tryst of love to begin their journey towards Phoenix. But when they become aware of the distance and the difficulty of the journey they start making excuses, some of which are mentioned in this article.

#### Nightingale's Tale

In this tale, nightingale restlessly enters in and talks about love and to be loved, but when it comes to the issue of journey he says:

I have the love of flowers, is enough whatever is my favorite, blanket flower, is enough.

Nightingale cannot endure Phoenix in love Love of a flower for a nightingale is enough.

(Ibid. 766 and 767)

In this poem Attar, beautifully performs masterstroke of the encountering of nightingale and Phoenix. Because nightingale is a very small bird as oppose to Phoenix, giant bird, in Iranian fairy tales. Therefore Nightingale cannot physically endure Phoenix. But this is just on the surface. Attar in such contrasting love stories wants to speak about superficial, temporal and true, lasting love. The lovers who are involved in fleeting love and are irritably impatient are guided to true love by Hoopoe.

#### Parrot's Tale

Parrot who is the example of canonists and hermits enters with hundreds and thousands claim and began to glorify himself and inconsiderately introduces himself as Elias of all birds. But when it comes to Phoenix says:

I cannot stand Phoenix A drop of water from the fountain of Elias enough.

(Ibid. 809b)

Attar masterfully wants to say that the parrot and parrot-like characters will not stand against Phoenix, why? Because the parrot has fallen in to love issue but love has not entered in the heart of the parrot. Anyone of any size or in any position or situation cannot bear love and stand against it till falls in love.

After making excuses by the birds, Attar cites some poems relating to the fact that whoever cannot bear the difficulties cannot enter to the realm of Phoenix.

If you cannot have a grain, how could you accompany the Phoenix?

If you become drunk with one drink, how could you take two drinks with the champion? (Attar, 2004)

Birds after hearing Hoopoe say: we are handful of weak and feeble, we cannot stand hardships what is the alternative? Hoopoe answers: O'uselesses, what is love? What is fear? You do not have the ability to see Phoenix you should not be eager to see him. Attar also refers here to the question of " صبر عن الله " and " صبر مع الله " .

No one could see that beauty because his beauty requires infinite patience (Ibid. 1097b)

Sheikh San'an's Tale Sheikh San'an tale is the climax of Attar's mystical masterstroke. The greatest reason for the survival of Mantegh al-Teyr is this story. Of course similar story existed amongst people before and after Attar. In even mystical texts before and after Attar such story has appeared with names and stories like Sheikh San'an, including the story of Abu Abdullah Andalsi, which is the closest tale to the story of Attar's Sheikh San'an. This narrative has come in the book of Al- Mostaraf Abshihi.

But how Attar could create such a masterpiece from repeated stories that could exacerbate every ones wonder? It must be asked the passion, mystical state, and pen of the phrenetic Sheikh. Attar with these simple words has created such a combination that has not lost its freshness and appeal over centuries. In this tale first a Sheikh who has prayed hundred fifty years in the sanctorum of the Kaaba, had four hundred perfect disciples falls in love with a Christian girl. So she cause calamities against sheikh till he becomes impatient of burning love and weeps to God (Attar, 2004).

The Sheikh's disciples attempt much to redeem sheikh from such love but it does not work. Sheikh for the hope of joining his love sits patiently on the alley of his lover and accepts his disciples' sarcasm. This is the highest degree of patience which is common among mystics.

For days and nights, in the alley, (The mystic) waited till he became ill (ibid. 1312b).

Finally, when the love of Sheik for the girl is undoubted, he announced his cabin as piggery (pigpen). Sheik wholeheartedly accepts it but his disciples dissipate around him and are asked to go back to Mecca. They returned to Mecca. There in Mecca has been another disciple who was not present in Sheikh's travel. When he hears the story of the disciples becomes angry. He reprehends them for leaving the Sheikh alone and decides to travel to the Sheikh. As he arrives in Rome he laments much that he falls asleep and dreams of the Holy Prophet (ibid, 1514 and 1515b).

Sheikh for his faith and patience comes out the ordeal proudly and overcomes all the difficulties.

Sheikh washed up and wore the robe (chimere) went to Hejaz with his disciples (ibid. 1546b).

Attar in his mystical story in a strange fashion places all his story characters on patience. What a substance to test patience more appropriate than love? Sheikh first falls him in love, the love in which both heart and faith are tumbled. The Sheikh in this test should apostate, drink wine, burn the Quran and do piggery. The Sheikh is patient for all, although comprehension of these by the public is difficult.

The challenge of love is not in the scope of our knowledge Resolution of this point cannot be done by wrong idea (Hafiz, 2001.).

However Sheikh's apostils must be patient with Sheikh's wrong doings and public blames. And again Hafiz says: Drink wine if the master says so,

that the mystic is not unaware of the tradition of the stages (Ibid, p.1)

Finally, from the birds who flew towards the Phoenix, thirty birds reach Phoenix. As it is unveiled, the thirty birds find themselves in the presence of Phoenix and secret is revealed:

Whatever is there in the world is not out of you  
seek it within what you are looking for, that is what you are.

(Najm al-Din Razi, 2001)

This long journey, in a new language, is a journey from self to self, *فى الواقع سيرٌ من الخلق إلى الحق*, And there is no more barrier between them (with abbreviation and *تصرف* Attar, 2001).

Attar, in fact, throughout Mantegh al-Teyr expresses the mystery of patience and resistance on subliming to God. He tells in this story: a large flock of birds (symbol of mystics and God seekers) took the step searching for Phoenix. Their number was large enough to block sunlight. But those who were impatient to the suffering and hardships of their self-esteem and did not have the patience and tolerance gradually were left behind. Only thirty wounded birds who were patient to suffering and hardships could liberate themselves of sensual egos and worldly attachments traversing seven valleys (seven mystical secrets) arrived to the doorstep of Phoenix.

### ***Patience Manifestation in Mosibat Nameh***

Attar also begins Mosibat Nameh with praise of the Lord like in Mantegh al-Teyr. He begins the main theme with this poem:

Be all ears O' unveiled (mystic) till I lay the foundation of this book with you  
(Attar, 2007)

Attar has composed Mosibat Nameh in forty letters containing aphoristic stories. These poems are a biography of a mystic who in the course of seeking God visits all creatures wanting to resolve his problems. But he returns frustrated. Finally he realizes that what he was looking for should have sought within himself. The spiritual journey of mystic, such as birds' journey in the Mantegh al-Teyr is nothing but patience. In the present paper some of the stories from forty-fold article are mentioned.

### ***Going Mystic before Gabriel***

In the first article mystic goes to visit Gabriel. After much explaining the issues he raises his problem.

My heart is in pain if there is a cure ameliorate it if there is one  
(ibid, 1111b).

But Gabriel refuses and says:

We're constantly in such pain of yours you go away; our pain is enough for us  
(ibid, 1113b).

As If Gabriel starts speaking and begins to express his sorrow and says: what is happening to me cannot be said to anyone, why? Because, tolerating these things are out of one's power. (ibid, 1118-1122b)

### ***Going Mystic before the Earth***

In this paper, mystic, goes after the earth describing the natural characteristics and what is narrated in the Qur'an and Prophet sayings indicating that treasures are buried within the earth. He asks the earth to guide him to a treasure. The earth replies that I am dispirited and heart sore, all corps are buried in me. I am among the corps unaware, why are you asking.

In this article points below are Attar's viewpoints:

- 1 – Expression of the benefits of tolerance and patience and the fact that patience is the foundation of the morality
- 2 – Kings' and power authorities' endurance is the best
- 3 – Tolerant must be humble even though he stands in perfect sublimity
- 4 - Interpretation of good tempering is tolerance and gloze

5 – Expression of the fact that entire earth is the particles of the dead (Forouzanfar, 1974, p. 468).

The mystic is also disappointed of the earth he returns to the master. The master invites the mystic to have patience. He says about the benefits of patience:

If you can tolerate like soil, in both worlds, you are pure like water

If you can tolerate a bit, you glow like the Sun

Whoever has tolerant disposition a little, his musk will savor the world

(Attar, 2009, 3541-3543b).

### ***Abdullah Ibn Tahir's Tale***

One day Abdullah Ibn Tahir returning from hunting stumbles an old woman on a bridge. Abdullah's horse stampedes, his hat falls off. He asks the woman what are you doing here? The woman replies: my guiltless son is in your jail, I want you to free him. Abdullah says that the boy must die in prison. She says if you are at work, God is not idle either, I leave things to God. Abdullah gets affected by these words, and he liberates her son. Attar in this story implies that one at high position must show patience for subordinates.

If tolerance is good action by one undoubtedly this is a better action by the kings (Ibid, 3567b)

### ***Asnaf and Silly man's Tale***

Once a fool said Asnaf Ibn Gheys if you say a word I will reply tenfold. Asnaf says I will not answer even once to your ten profanities.

Attar in this story points to the patience of grands against fools.

### ***Going Mystic before the Spirit***

Mystic meets the soul, admires the spirit with the scope of the nature and tolerance wants to learn the existence of mystic and sublimes to the great God. The Spirit advises him and says: you traveled the world till you arrived to the shores of the spirit. This long travel does not take you to the destination. Whatever you have lost is in within yourself. Hafiz in his sonnets says:

For years the heart have been seeking purity (sincerity) from us What it had, was asking from the stranger (Hafiz, 2001, p 193)

Spirit says in this journey you have not find out this point and you have not realized yourself. Now that you have reached the infinite sea, you have to integrate and ask no more questions. Because that is the sign of separation from the origin and continues that everyone's journey is as much as his knowledge. Nobody can ever reach to the bottom of the knowledge.

## **CONCLUSION**

In Attar's view being patient, on journey to God, has a fundamental role. The mystical poet in his two works of Mantegh al-Teyr and Mosibat Nameh, has been expressed patience in a broad sense. Since the spiritual journey of Attar begins with a group of birds and guidance of hoopoe towards Phoenix, it is quite evident that no provision other than patience could get the birds to the destination. In this journey it has been emphasized on tolerance of lovers to visit Allah صبر مع الله. Or in other journey of Attar, which is achieved by mystic, all obstacles are removed and problems solved only by the way of patience. In many places of this travel, it has been referred to the benefits of patience especially by the grands. So the foundation of Attar's Sufism is based upon patience.

In general it can be said that in Attar's insight patience is the key to the mystery of self-crossing the dark world of ego, the darkness of the world and reaching the fountain of light, survival and immortality.

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