

The Conference of the Birds Poem Analysis

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The Conference of the Birds is a beautiful Persian poem written by the famous Sufi poet Farid ud-Din Attar, also known as Attar of Nishapur. The poet has described a riveting story of a situation in which birds from across the globe gathered to select their supreme ruler. Apart from the apparent meaning of the poetry, there are deeper meanings in the passages. Although other poets convey deeper meanings, Sufi poets present many profound implications. The birds were suffering from multiple fears, which was one reason they wanted to select their king. Attar has magnificently communicated to the readers the message of love and peace; moreover, he has encouraged readers to seek the path of God even in the presence of hardships. (Attar, 2011)

Attar has told a parable, which refers to a brief fictitious story told to communicate a religious or moral principle, lesson, or simple truth. The parable is on pages 87 and 88 of the book. The leading allegorical players of the story are Sheikh Bayazid, the city's sleeping people, and God (Attar 87). Attar wants to portray Sheikh Bayazid as a creature searching for guidance to find the right path. On the contrary, God is the ultimate creator capable of many powers, including showing the people the path of nobleness. According to the story and its deeper meaning, Sheikh Bayazid was present in a city where everyone was sleeping at night. It means that not all people sought the right path as they were contented with their meaningless lives. Moreover, many were committing sins and engaging in unethical practices that were harmful to society. It is a common observation that not many people seek the truth. Sheikh Bayazid was representing this minority who wanted to know the right path. The sleeping majority of the city is an allegorical player representing the people who are satisfied with their shallow thoughts about life and its purpose. They are not committed to presenting something unique to God. According to the story, Sheikh Bayazid followed the light, which is a metaphor for the right path in the parable. Like other parts of the poem, in this parable, the poet promotes the concept of virtue and preaches that people should follow the path of Sheikh Bayazid and not the sleeping majority. He encourages the world to stand up for a good cause.

The referred parable of Sheikh Bayazid suggests that only a negligible minority takes the pain of finding the right path, whereas the majority prefer to live in their comfort zone, ignoring the higher goals of life. The controlling theme of the parable is the battle between good and evil. The poet conveys his message through the recurring mentioning of metaphors of light, moonlit, night, and sleep. According to the poem's details, Sheikh Bayazid saw a brilliant spark on a moonlit night (Attar 87). Through this line, the poet conveys that God helps people by showing some signs that good people follow, analyze their behaviour, and adopt good habits. However, the inner powers of evil try to resist. The poet mentions this through sleep, which attracts people. Only a few people resist their inner negativity by seeking the message of good, which is represented by the phrase "refulgent brilliance, clear as day" in the poem (Attar 87). Sheikh Bayazid represents a minority who wants to follow the good path and face hardships.

When Sheikh Bayazid saw the brilliant spark, it was like the day he moved in that direction while all the other people slept. The poet has sent a strong message to readers that many people do not chase the path of virtue. Sheikh Bayazid represented here the minority of people who resist their inclination towards evil. When Sheikh Bayazid moved towards the light, he had to pass through the desert, which is a metaphor for hardships (Attar 88). The poet wants to suggest that the path to seek the truth and move on to God's guidelines is not easy. It is perhaps the reason that many people were sleeping and not moving toward the light, as the path was full of adversities. The poet wants to convey that people decide to follow the right path; God helps them and makes their willpower strong enough to face the challenges. That is why Sheikh Bayazid did not care about the desert's hardships and continued to follow the brilliant light that lit the night like a bright day. Here, the poet's message is clear: if people follow the right path, God might help them and remove hardships represented by darkness and night. Sheikh Bayazid continued to move on as God had made his willpower strong enough to cross all the obstacles in the way. The poet wants to suggest that initially, people have to show courage themselves, and then God comes to their help. The poet showed a firm grip on the controlling theme, which is the battle between good and evil.

The soul's journey is being blocked from its path to God through the powers of inner and outer evils. The poet uses metaphors, including night, sleep, and deserts, to describe various kinds of hardships and powers that resist the soul's journey from its path to God. People don't want to move out of their comfort zones to extract more goodness from their lives and follow the path of God. The sound sleep of night represents this comfort zone and the human tendency to take the easy path, which might not necessarily be the path of God. This tendency might induce people to ignore the clear sign God shows them to follow the right path. As narrated in the poem, the city preferred to keep sleeping; however, one man decided to move on God's path. He was Sheikh Bayazid, who represents the minority here and is committed to overcoming all the obstacles to move on the path of God. Such people try to overcome both inner and outer obstacles to achieve their noble goals.

In reference to the hoopoe's advice, the parable is answering that people should continue to seek the path of God even in the presence of hardships. Sheikh Bayazid was alone, and he had to face hardships like darkness and desert, but even then, he did not stop the path to seek the truth. Many people do not take a challenge until they have some companions. However, the poet wants people to become committed. This commitment helps people move ahead on the soul's journey to follow God's path, as people are not afraid of resistance to moving on the right path. The message of a strong belief in God is evident in the poem. The stronger the belief in God, the stronger the truth seekers' power to adopt good virtues.

Sufi poet Farid ud-Din Attar has written a poem, *The Conference of the Birds*. He has explained the battle of good and evil through various short stories. He has conveyed deeper meanings through various stories. He has used metaphors, including night, day, and light, etc. Attar brilliantly tells the readers the message of love, virtue, and peace. Besides, he has encouraged readers to seek the path of God even in the presence of poverties. (Attar, 2011)

Work Cited

Aṭṭar, Farid. The Conference of the Birds. New York: Penguin Press, 2011. Print.