

# Origin and Analysis of One Story in “Masnavi”

Hamidov Khusrav Sadullojevich

Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies, Uzbekistan

**Abstract:** *This article deals with the genesis and content of the story “Merchant and Parrot” in the first book of the “Masnaviyima’naviy” (“Spiritual Masnavi”) by Jaloliddin Rumi (1207-1273). Although the origin of this story may be based on Indian folk literature, it appears in written sources such as “TafsiriAbulFuto’h” and “Asrornoma” of Attor before Rumi. But it is mentioned in the works of Khoqani “Tuhfatul-iroqayn”, Nizamiy’s “Khusrav and Shirin” and “Bulbulname” by Attor. The author of “Masnavi” has succeeded in describing his Sufism-Iphonic ideas in this story. The explanation of the bytes in the narrative and the supportive story provide a basis for the author’s creative intentions to convey his views on tariqat. This story in “Masnavi” and the story baliq “Three fish” in the fourth edition have common sense in terms of meaning. So, one can say that the interpretation of these stories complement one another.*

**Keywords:** story, merchant, parrot, die before death, cage

## 1. Introduction

One of the famous and extensive epic poems in the first book of Masnavi is the story of the “Merchant and Parrot”, and the author also reflects many literary meanings. The analysis and interpretation of the story creates the basis for the familiarization of Mavlaviy Rumi’s worldview and original educational ideas.

Jalaloddin Rumi interprets the stories in “Masnavi” in a new approach. Irrespective of their topic and content, he provides them with an educational-enlightenment meaning. The author pays attention to the educational aspects of the description of the character, deeds of every hero and enriches the story with some necessary episodes. In some cases, the storyline is so complicated with some exemplifying facts that it leaves the person unaware of the situation in the “crossroads”.

## 2. Materials and Methods

In this work meeting the demands of the theme, the comparative-historical classification methods are used. Scientific source materials form is object.

## 3. Results of the Research and their Discussion

Allegory is defined in the dictionary as examples of emulating, explanation of something, and depicting a story or event<sup>1</sup>.

In literary criticism, according to Sirius Shamiso, “Allegory ... is a reflection of a story that is apparent, but the author’s purpose is more general”<sup>2</sup>. It should be said that both illustrations mean, in essence, that “a small piece of work is a collection of symbolic narratives, exemplary stories, mysterious dialogues and symbolic influences and myths”<sup>3</sup>.

Various allegory stories in Classic Persian literature serve to increase the effect of the speech. Such stories are the most effective means to cover ethical, philosophical, religious, and social content in every respect. A. According to A. Afsahzod, the sermon or literary texts come into force with Persian-Tibetan literature “Kalila and Dimna” and “Marzbonnoma”<sup>4</sup>.

Sanoi and Attor have done considerable work to cover educational and intellectual content through Sufi poems. Attor’s story “MantiqUt-Tayr” consists of allegory for Simurg and seven birds. Therefore it is acknowledged as allegory work.

Jaloliddin Rumi, who accompanied his predecessors, also utilized allegory stories along with the Quranic, irfonic, historical and public narratives in the works of “MasnaviyiMa’naviy”, “Ulugdevon”, and “Fihi Mo Fihi”. Only in “MasnaviyiMa’naviy” the total volume of allegory stories reaches 53<sup>5</sup>.

The symbol of the parrot in “Masnavi” is portrayed in different ways. For example, in the story “Shopkeeper and Parrot”, it is expressed as an imitator, in “Merchant and Parrot” it is described as a perfect person who realizes himself. It is of particular importance that in this story Rumi focuses attention on the death of the parrot. Because the parrot that is ready for the death symbolizes intentions and desires of those people who have realized their selves. The death of the parrot is not new symbol in the literature; there were other poets who have written on this issue. For example, Khaqani pointed out to the death of the parrot in his book “Tuhfatul-iraqayn”:

*Like the parrot that freed itself after death,  
I have become a dead body to be free myself*<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> Muhammad Mu’in. Farhangeforsy. J.2. -T.: Enteshorota Amire Kabir. 1357.

<sup>2</sup> Sirius Shamiso. Bayon. -T.: Firdavs, 1372, p.205.

<sup>3</sup> A. Afsahzod. Fable /// Encyclopaedia of Literature and Arts Tajik. V.2. -D.: Soviet Encyclopedia of Science of 1989, p. 163.

<sup>4</sup> A. Afsahzod. Fable /// Encyclopaedia of Literature and Arts Tajik. V.2. -D.: Soviet Encyclopedia of Science of 1989, p. 163.

<sup>5</sup> Alirizo Nabilu. Mavlavi is the best friend of animals.

Pajuhishhoiadaby, No. 16, 1386. P.242.

<sup>6</sup> Badeuzzamon Furozonfar. Masnavi sources of stories and tamsil. Teheran: Amere Kabir, 1362. – P.18.

It should be mentioned that number of scientists including Abdulhusayn Zarrinkub, Karim Zamani, Hashmatullah Riyadh, Badeuzzaman Furuzonfar and others have expressed their opinions concerning the story of "Merchant and Parrot"<sup>7</sup>. But their analyses do not include the issues that we have intended to find. Rumi has a specific technique describing simple things, especially those that appear everyday in life, and giving them new content. To our mind, there is no such poet as the author of "Masnavi" in this point. Together with other animals, Rumi has also used the symbol of birds. Specifically, the author interprets the image of a parrot using different approaches.

Mavlavi uses "peculiar parrots" towards the people of Tariqah (a way in Sufism) and those who gather road taxes and, "simple parrots" are used mockingly towards the people of asceticism and religion and "blind parrots" symbolize embroidered and ignorant people in "Masnavi".<sup>8</sup>

Therefore, in each case, according to poem's storyline and interpretation one can find the symbol of a parrot coining new meaning. The people of the Tariqa took measures to die before death, i.e. saved themselves from greedy and abandoned themselves to reach the "vasl" (joining with beloved – here the "vasl" with the God).

This story ("Merchant and parrot") is similar to the stories "Tafsiri AbulFutuh" and Farididdin Attar's "Asrornoma"<sup>9</sup>. There are number of similarities between "Tafsiri AbulFutuh" and "Asrornoma". But the story "Masnavi" is written in a completely different way.

Sheikh Attor, when he met Jalaluddin's father, presented "Asrornoma" to the poet and told Bakhouddin Valad that the boy would become great person. That was just a tool. Jaloliddin Rumi has appealed to the works of Attor throughout his lifetime. Particularly, the composition of "Asrornoma" by Shaikh Attar has some influence on the formation of "Masnavi", and the similar version of the six stories in Rumi's book is found in "Masnavi":

- 1) The story of the "Ustozvagilayshogird" ("Master and grab student") (the first note);
- 2) The story of "Savdogarvato'ti" ("The merchant and the parrot") (the first note);
- 3) The story of "Podshohlochivakampiruyi" ("King's hawk and the House of an old woman") (the second note);

<sup>7</sup>See on this point: Furozonfar, Badeuzzamon. Sharhi «Masnaviyisharif». Volume 3.-Teheran: Zavvor, 1388; Zarrinkob, Abdulhusayn. Sirr-e nay. Volumes 1-2.-Tehron: Ilmiy, 1368; Zarrinkob, Abdulhusayn. The breeze is in the turtle. -Teheran.-Ilmiy.-1368. – 616 p.; Zamoni, Karim. General comments on "Masnaviyemanaviy". Volume 4.-Tehron: Etteloot, 1375; Hashmatulloh Riyoziy. Dates and messages in "Masnaviy". – Teheran: Haqiqat, 1383, 465 p.; Rumi, Jaloliddin. Comments to the story "Masnaviy". Naynoma. Wise words of "Masnaviy". – T.: Muharrir, 2011. – 404 p.; Rumi, Jaloliddin. Spiritual Masnavi: Kulliyot J.I. K.I. / Translation with comments; Translator: Asqar Mahkam; Editor in chief: T. Mahmudov. – T.: Sharq, 1999. – 368 p.

<sup>8</sup>Doktor Muhammad Jafar Yohaqqiy. The myths of Farhange. – Teheran: Surush, 1375. – P. 296.

<sup>9</sup>Badiuzzaman Furuzonfar. Sources of stories and tamsil "Masnaviy". Teheran: Amere Kabir, 1362. – P. 18-20.

- 4) The story of "Echki va uning mastligi" ("The goat and his drunkenness") (the third note);
- 5) The story of "Pashshaningshamoldanshikoyati" ("The claim of a fly against the wind") (the third note);
- 6) The story of "Ko'nchivaattorlarbozori" ("The leather master and perfumer") (fourth note);

If Attor had put the story ("The merchant and the parrot") to 26 bytes, Rumi could quote it in 368 bytes, including a number of other inscriptions and articles, and broadly describe his intention. By describing the events in such a way, the author succeeded to make the plot of the stories became easy to understand for the murids (followers) and enabled the readers to be aware of other educational issues. The story "Merchant and Parrot" was only put to 41 bytes, and Rumi mentioned about in 7 cases. In other words, in the main part of the story there are given the explanation of educational, ethical and philosophical thoughts, texts, verses and hadiths. The fact that the poet could attract the readers' attention on both educational and ethical issues and interpret the main essence of the story in a new way is a great and successful work.

The author points out about the story he wanted to narrate when necessary in few bytes. Here the author also wants to draw the attention of the reader to the story. For example, the following byte contains:

*If you read the story, the bird of your soul would want to fly from the cage.<sup>10</sup>*

In the story Rumi expresses his ideological views in the symbol of a parrot. He writes his thoughts on the slogan "die before death". According to the author it was the "need of the parrot" to die, otherwise it wouldn't have asked the merchants from India to tell his friends about its condition. Rumi points out that this "need" is a must for every person. The people of Tariqat (a stream in Sufism) cannot save their souls like a parrot unless they "die before death". For salvation it is important to face with the death. But it is voluntary death at the end of which a man abandons his pride and self-esteem and finds a way to the essence of the reality.

*The meaning of death is the need of the parrot, and you need to behave yourself as dead in the heat and the poverty.<sup>11</sup>*

Aziziddin Nasafi, a prominent scholar in the world of Oriental civilization, describes voluntary death in his book "Komillson" (A perfect person): ***"Be aware that the prophets and the saints have a different death apart from natural death. Because they die before their natural death with annihilated death ... and from the level of a person who is at the top of knowledge they reach the level that is close to the God"***<sup>12</sup>. That is to say, voluntary death is to

<sup>10</sup>Mavlon Jaloliddin Muhammadi Balxy. Spiritual Masnavi. Based on comparisons with Nicholson and other versions. – Teheran, 2003. – 1/1550.

<sup>11</sup>"Masnavi", 1/1919.

<sup>12</sup>Aziziddin Nasafiy. A perfect person. P.48. <http://www.sufi.ws>. Dr. Mohammad Jafar Yohaqqiy. The myths of Farhange. Teheran: Surush, 1375, P. 296; Sources of stories and tamsil "Masnaviy". Teheran: Amire Kabir, 1362, P.18-20;

reach this very level. Not everyone can reach this degree, because it is possible to reach this level only after saving oneself from greediness.

Nonphysical death is the same as that when a man frees himself from greediness in order to be with the God<sup>13</sup>.

... Voluntary death is to be entirely fanatical in connection with the existence of the world and its affairs. The person experiencing this situation does not even feel the presence of his own body. The natural death is no different from that...

Death is also of a few varieties: Mavtiahmar (red death). It is important to resist the wishes and desires of greediness. Mavtiabyaz (white death). This is a hunger strike of the abdomen. Mavtiahtar (green death). This is to wear plaid clothing made from cheap fabric. Because a new dress is a dream associated with the world. Mavtiavad (black death). This is to endure what people do to a person. It is also called "fanofillah", that is, to sacrifice one's all actions for the sake of the beloved (here the God)...<sup>14</sup>.

In his book "Nafahatul-uns", Abdurahmon Jami quotes Hatambinni Asam's words: "Whoever is in this tariqat should face these four deaths: white death and hunger, the black death and the patience of the people, red is death and it is a struggle against the greediness, and the green death and sewing dress with plaid".<sup>15</sup>

In the 4th chapter of the story "The Three Fish and the Hunter" Rumi gives the same episode when he described the second fish's state and gives a hadith in order to prove it: *Let me turn into a dead one and hand myself over to water. "To die before death" is getting rid of torture and move towards the God.*

*O young man, die before death is a martyr's death, so Mustafa (sallallahialayhivasallam) ordered us: You all are to die before death comes to you. Death with sedition.*<sup>16</sup>

Even though the story is about a parrot, in some places of the byte the author refers to it as nightingale. For example: *He raised his head and said: "O nightingale, give us a share of our own sole".*<sup>17</sup>

That is, when he says Mawlaviparrot, he seems to refer to birds in general. On the other hand, the author tries to attract attention to the conclusions drawn from the story, and does not pay much attention to such details of the plot. Because

both a nightingale and a parrot have wings and can also be regarded as the symbol of a spirit.

Allah the Almighty commands in the Koran: *"And whomsoever it is Allah's will to guide, He expandeth his bosom unto the Surrender" (Koran, 6/125)*<sup>18</sup>. *It is written in the book "Thya'id-ulum", that when the ayat (a part of the Koran) was revealed, the Companions asked the Prophet (peace be upon him) what was Sharhisadr (chest expand). He said, "When the light emits to the heart, the breast will expand". They said, "Oh, the Messenger of Allah, does it have a sign?" They were told: "Yes, it is to leave the house of pride, to return to the immortal home and to be ready for it before death comes"*<sup>19</sup>.

Rumi has also relied on this hadith. There is a great deal of meaning in the expression "prepare for it before death comes". That is, it is necessary to prepare for all the tragedies that might a person be faced in the future. Rumi's slogan is also to face the death with no fear. He was able to skillfully use "Merchant and parrot" in order to introduce this idea to the minds of the madrasah murids.

As it was mentioned earlier, the parrot is a symbol of soul here. It is well-known from the historical stories that a parrot is of the Indian origin. Accordingly, Ja'far al-Yaqisaid: "In philosophical stories, the parrot is a poor bird. Coming from the Indian property, the parrot always dwells in his desire to return to his homeland and lives with a desire to see its fellows"<sup>20</sup>.

They considered the contents of the book as a whole, and created an artistic image of a parrot in order to express a case when spirits return to their homeland.

According to Masudiyriyoviyat, the Arabs consider a spirit to types of birds... According to several hadiths, the ghosts of the believers are in the form of green birds in the paradise<sup>21</sup>. Along with the plot of the story, Jaloliddin Rumi also presents his interpretation to the audience. Sometimes, he goes to the description of the plot, and sometimes interprets it to reveal the world of meanings within it. This method seems useful in two ways. Firstly, the listener focuses not only on the plot, but also on the conclusions made. Secondly, Rumi summarizes the results of each episode after the end of corresponding episode of the story. This technique was the easiest way to introduce Sufistic ideas in the minds of the murids. This is because the author is able to

<sup>18</sup> M.M. Pickthall. The Meaning of Glorious Koran. – N. Y.: Mentor book, 1980. – P. 117.

<sup>19</sup> Shayx Odina Muhammad Xorazmiy. Miftoh ul-asror. Interpretation of "Spiritual Masnavi". Mahmud Hasaniy's translation from Persian. – Tashkent: Musiqqa, 2006. – B. 19.

<sup>20</sup> Doktor Muhammad Jafar Yohaqqiy. Myths of Farhange. – Teheran: Surush, 1375. – P. 299.

<sup>21</sup> Badiuzzamon Furuzonfar. Interpretation of holy "Masnaviy". Volume 3. – Teheran: Zavvor, 1388. – P. 593; Karaoke: Abulfaz Rashiduddin Maybadiy. He was the author of the book, Amr al-Amr, 1371, B. 133; "Masnavi", 4 / 2472-2474; "Masnavi", 1/1838; Shaykh Odina Mohammed Kharezmi. Mephta's mystery, "Morality Must See". Mahmud Hasaniy's translation from Persian. – Tashkent: Music, 2006, B. 19; Dr. Mohammad Ja'far Yahya, Ph.D., Ph.D., Teheran: Surush, 1375, B.

Mavloni Jaloliddin Muhammadi Balkhi Moody Mass. Based on text Nicholson and contrast with other versions. – Teheran: 2003, 1/1550; "Masnavi", 1/1919; Azizuddin Nasafhi A Perfect person. P. 48. <https://www.sufi.ws>.

<sup>13</sup> See on this point: Abulfazl Rashiduddin Maybadiy. Kashful-asror and iddatul-abror. – Teheran: Amire Kabir, 1371. – P. 133.

<sup>14</sup> Sheikh Najmiddin Kubra "Method of Ashara" (Translators): Ibrahim Haqqul, Aziza Bektosh. Comments author: Ibrahim Haqqul. Publishing House "Ukituvchi", 2005. – P. 6 and 7.

<sup>15</sup> Mevlana Abdurrahman Jami. Nothing is easy for me. Under the direction of Mahmud Abidil. – T. Itiloot, First Edition, 1370, – P. 56.

<sup>16</sup> "Masnavi", 4/2472-2474.

<sup>17</sup> "Masnavi", 1/1838.



synthesize conclusions based on other stories within the same story and eventually realizes the overall idea.

Having summarized the meaning of the narration Rumi begins to interpret the plot in order to draw attention to its subliminal meanings:

*The story parrot of the soul is in this way;  
is there a person who is merciful to birds?*<sup>22</sup>

Following the above-mentioned line, Mawlavi clarified these remarks about the perfect man and sought to establish his high status in a society.

The ability to describe Sufistic ideas in this story illustrates the author's immense and extensive talent in the example of the enlightenental poem. The story is not only about Mawlavi Rumi, but also the status of all Sufists in this religious dimension.

On the example of only one story there were discussed several subjects, and there was provided an opportunity to explore some educational, ethical, and social issues. Of course, matters related to other topics are discussed based on the ideas of Sufism. Rumi considers Sufism not as a religious-philosophical dimension, but as a process that covers the human feelings. According to Rumi, a representative of Sufism should be able to control his tongue, as well should know where and how express his/her opinion, and be emotionally and morally sensitive.

There are many examples of present-day Uzbek poetry that reproduce the stories and provide the reader with a new interpretation. Commitment of stories in a new style requires expertise and originality of the poet. In particular, the actuality of this story is proven by the fact that Shavkat Rahman, the great representative of modern Uzbek poetry, has given it in a new version. Only the main plot of "Merchant and Parrot" is given in the book "Abadiyatoralab" (Eternal Reckoning)<sup>23</sup>. The poet did not comment on the story like Jaloliddin Rumi, but leaves it for the reader. But there are some changes in the plot which show that the poet made it for some purpose. This poem by Shavkat Rahman, like his other poems, also includes social content. Indeed, such activities serve as a link between our classic literature and modern literature.

But in Masnavi, the death of a parrot carried several meanings: Firstly, a man cannot achieve anything without forsaking himself. Secondly, a person should not be a rock, s/he should be soil, because a humble person will be honored everywhere, as flowers grow out of the soil. Thirdly, the figurative meaning of "death" can inspire people to do things that they are not sure they can do.

According to Rumi, a person who is willing to die voluntarily can become a perfect person. If the merchant did not say the words that he had heard and the circumstances he had experienced, his parrot could not have freed itself and

get out of the cage. But there is another aspect of the story, which shows that the death of the parrot suggested the merchant how to live his life.

## References

- [1] Alirizo Nabilu. Mavlavi is the best friend of animals. Pajuhishhoiadaby, No. 16, 1386.
- [2] Badeuzzamon Furozonfar. Masnavi sources of stories and allegory. Teheran: Amere Kabir, 1362.
- [3] Badeuzzamon Furozonfar. Commentary of secure Masnavi. volume 3.-Teheran: Zavvor, 1388;
- [4] Zarrinkob, Abdulhusayn. Secrets of a flute. Volumes 1-2.-Tehron: Ilmiy, 1368;
- [5] Zarrinkob, Abdulhusayn. The sea in the jug.-Teheran.-Ilmiy.-1368.
- [6] Zamoniy, Karim. The perfect explanation of the Masnavi Ma'navi. Volume 4.-Tehron: Etteloot, 1375.
- [7] Hashmatulloh Riyoziy. Masnavi poems and message.-Teheran: Haqiqat, 1383.
- [8] Rumi, Jaloliddin. Comments for the stories in "Masnaviy". Naynoma. Wise words in "Masnaviy". - T.: Muharrir", 2011.
- [9] Rumi, Jaloliddin. Spiritual Masnavi: Kulliyot J.1. K.1. /The translation with the comments; The translator: Asqar Mahkam; Editor in chief: T. Mahmudov. - T.: Sharq, 1999.
- [10] Doktor Muhammad Jafar Yohaqqiy. Dictionary of Myths.-Teheran: Surush, 1375.
- [11] Badiuzzamon Furuzonfar. Sources of stories and allegory "Masnaviy". Teheran: Amere Kabir, 1362.
- [12] Mavlono Jaloliddin Muhammadi Balxy. Spiritual Masnavi. Based on comparisons with Nicholson and other versions - Teheran, 2003.
- [13] Aziziddin Nasafiy. A Perfect person. Teheran: Surush, 1375.
- [14] Abulfazl Rashiduddin Maybadiy. The opening of secrets and the group of piety people.-Teheran: Amire Kabir, 1371.
- [15] M.M. Pickthall. The Meaning of Glorious Koran. - N. Y.: Mentor book, 1980.
- [16] Shaykh Odina Mohammed Khorezmi. Mephta's mystery. Explanation of "Spiritual Masnavi". Mahmud Hasaniy's translation from Persian.-Tashkent: Music, 2006.
- [17] Shavkat Rahmon. Through the eternity. -Tashkent: Movarounnahr, 2012.

<sup>22</sup>"Masnavi", 1/1585.

<sup>23</sup>Shavkat Rahmon. Through the eternity. -Tashkent: Movarounnahr, 2012. - P. 311-313.