Analysis of sea in the (literary) works of Attar Neyshabouri

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Abstract

Phantom is one of inseparable parts of Persian poem that each poet increases its color and quality by utilizing of some elements. Symbol is one of the elements which is effective on different aspects of poem such as illusionary. Among different literal arrays, symbol in addition to the customary functions, undertakes different roles and poet transfers his/her message to the target group by utilizing of it. The amount and quality of using of symbol are different with regard to the poet time and poem purpose. By considering a principle in mysticism namely hiding the speeches and silence in the face of unaware persons, mystic poets in this way have used of symbol well and they have expressed their speeches for intended persons without strangers' awareness of it. Among different symbols which have been used in the works of poet mystics, sea has had more application and it has been used widely. Natural features of sea like wideness, depth, waves, blessings and difficulties existing in it are the fields and aspects that Attar uses of them for expressing the mystical points and hints. In this paper, we study and explain the sea position as a symbol in Attar’s works and we express its different functions.

Keywords: symbol, sea, Attar.
Symbol is a Persian term which is used instead of Greek symbol and Arabian mystery. Symbol is from Greek infinitive of Symbolian namely « joining to each other», and « casting to each other», and «symbol» means sign, manifestation and symptom of this infinitive. Mystery also in Arabian term means hinting with lip, mouth, eyebrow or hand (Pournamdarian, 1990: 411).

Sheikh Farideeddin Attar Neyshabouri is one of the prominent poets which have expressed the mystical concept in the frame of poem. Mystical poems of Attar are significant and valuable from different aspects. Attar continued the way of Sanaee and attempted a lot in its exaltation way. Symbol, fictions, anecdotes and allegory were used as the method of expressing the mystical thought since the first days of entering mysticism to the Persian poem. Attar as one of the pioneers of this method has used of it several times and he has composed one of the prominent mystical symbolic works in Persian poem namely Mantegholteir. It should be reminded that Attar hasn’t used of this method only in Mantegholteir, rather he has utilized of this method with different kinds in his other couplet-poems, lyric poems and short poems. It is correct that this method was not started by Attar and before him Sanaee used of symbolic fictions and mysteries in expressing his thoughts several times, but what is true is that Attar caused this method to reach to the superior circumstances and he has undeniable role in introduction, development and exaltation of this method.

Attar like other mystics, put his poem on the service of thoughts and emotions which originate from his unconscious. And he paves the way for wayfarers and those who want to reach to the truth and God. Since symbol and using of symbolic fictions have root in luminous verses of Quran, this issue that mystics such as Sanaee and following it Attar have taken this method from Quran isn’t far from expectation. Attar uses of Quran verses several times in expressing the difficulties of mysticism way and conducting toward God.

Attar believes that multiplicity existing in the world doesn’t negate its unity and all components of this world are an interconnected whole that in the unity, each moment is appeared with a color and manifestation and in these changes and color changings, the facts of this world are appeared. According to what was mentioned, it can be concluded that what exists in this world is a mystery and symbol of a better and superior thing than itself. Due to use of the same symbols, the poets sometimes drop in pub and sometimes they go to the mosque and they know that presence in both places is equal and in a same row. And for reaching to a truth or fact that mystics seek for it, they know that both of them are helpful with the same amount.

Symbol in mystical works is sometimes in the frame of a fiction and it is sometimes in the frame of an element of abundant elements which are on the human’s service in this world. In other words, sometimes the poet uses of symbol as an inseparable element of other poem’s parts as a symbol and he applies the words in another meaning except from its real and customary meaning. Therefore, the words like wine, lip, mole, stature except from their meaning help the poet as the symbols in expressing the mystical and non-mystical thoughts. Except from what was expressed, symbols are sometimes used in the poem structure and as a part which has an active presence from the first to the end of fiction. Presence of symbol in symbolic fictions is from the second kind.

As we know, Mantegholteir is a symbolic fiction in which the humans and wayfarers of the credo way are appeared in the frame of a bird, and they undertake a duty in this fiction to reach to their king by passing from some obstacles (Pournamdarian, 1997: 409). These kinds
of symbols are appeared more in the opportunity couplet-poem, although the samples of them can be sometimes seen in the short frames like lyric poems.

Although using of symbol in literal works is a kind of using of a word and element in its non-real meaning, but it should be considered that each word doesn’t have the use ability and competence as a symbol. In fact, somehow there should be a relationship between the fact and symbol so that an active competent and desired symbol to be created; of course beside the relationship between real and symbolic meaning, some other factors are also effective that due to the prolongation of the speech, we don’t consider them here.

According to what was expressed, it can be concluded that symbol is used in two forms and it is manifested in the works of poets and authors. It sometimes has general, wide and chronological concept and sometimes it has a limited and special concept. In wide concept, it is defined as an existing and abstract fact or a feeling and imagination for senses which are created by helping of an object’s picture (Sattari, 1998: 7). In mystical literature, the literature hasn’t been created suddenly and the poets in order to make the symbol and use of it in expressing their thoughts have used of ancient literal heritages and they have gotten help from the materials existing in the classical language and literature like cupbearer, wine and love... (Fotouhi, 2007: 15). But the fact is that using of symbol and symbolization in Persian poem and literature is twin with the presence of mysticism in Persian poem and literature, namely Sanaee by entering the Sofia terms to the Persian poem became the founder of symbol and symbolization in Persian literature.

There are abundant symbols in Mystical poems and perhaps it can be expressed in mystical poem more than any other kind of poem, symbol, fictions and mysterious elements are used. Among poet mystics, some like Attar more than the others have used of this possibility and he has created a valuable versified story like Mantegholteir by utilizing of symbol.

Sea as one of the natural elements which have been very effective in people's life in many different periods, has been used as the symbol several times by poet mystics. Sea has been sometimes used lonely and sometimes it has different function by considering other components and attachments like drop, wave, ship, fish. As we see abundant attachments which are somehow related to the sea or a part of it, have caused to create different functions for sea as a symbol in mystical literature. Sea beside each one of attachments and in the face of each one of them has different meaning and application and this issue has increased the value and position of the sea as a common symbol in symbolic poems especially in the works of Attar Neyshabouri. Understanding these symbols is sometimes possible by using of other works of Attar and he helps the reader to understand his purposes easier. In other words, Attar indicates his fixation to explain the mystics terms and his mysteries and «Attar explains his mysteries with metaphorical interpretations like the soul sun, general sea of intellect fowl, love Simurgh» (Fotouhi, 2007: 233).

Sea is present in the poems of Hafiz with different forms and it undertakes different duties. Using of sea as a symbol is also various in the works of Attar; in other words, sea is not from elements which are only used as a symbol with one meaning and application. Sea symbol is one of the symbols which undertake different roles and applications in mystical works such as Attar's works and it takes different meanings. In other words, it can be expressed that sea symbol in Attar's poems is not a one-aspect symbol with a limited meaning and application. Needless to say that lack of full dominance and familiarity of that days' people with sea and also its wide relationship with different elements and factors is as one of the most important causes that the ancient people have defined different roles for sea; in other words,
mysteriousness of sea is one of the main causes of different functions of sea in the works of mystic poets such as Attar Neyshabouri; Attar gets help from sea for expressing concepts like annihilation, monotheism, love that we study them in this part.

**Sea as the symbol of truth and fact**

Mystic poets, mystical works, wayfarers and those who enter and step in the mysticism path don’t have any purpose except reaching to the truth and fact or the same reaching to God. All mystical works, anecdotes, allegories and symbolic fictions step in the way for reaching to God and they attempt to facilitate the path of reaching to God for the persons who are in this path. In these works, dos and don’ts, principles, methods are expressed; Attar is also one of the same mystics that their attempt is to reach and be conducted toward God. Therefore, if we study the works of Attar, one principle will be common in all of them and it is in this form that the motif of all of them is to reach to God, express the creatures’ relationship with God and God’s relationship with creatures. Attar in expressing these thoughts has known sea as God’s symbol.

As it was expressed before, for using of an element as symbol, there is gentle relationship between its real and symbolic meaning. About sea, it should be mentioned that largeness, power, generosity haven’t been effectless in using of sea as God symbol. Difficulties of marine travels in those days and inability of people in dominance on sea and full recognition of it have been also the causes of making this symbol.

As the source of the rain drops is sea, Attar knows the nature of humans as drops that their source is from endless essence of God. According to it, sea is God’s symbol and drop is the symbol of humans that their nature has become existent from God’s nature. The significant point which is seen in this symbol is the sea largeness and power in the face of drop. By using of this symbol, Attar knows God’s difference and superiority over the humans as sea superiority and power in the face of drop. Therefore, he has expressed God dominance on humans and other creatures and feeling world by using of this symbol. The following verses are some cases that Attar has used of these symbols.

Every soul that came in the way, boasted the certainty very much but the soul’s portion is from that thought or supposition

Think with yourself so that by doing it in two existences

A dark water drop never exists in such sea (versified story of Attar, page 115)

A wave came up from this sea in a night

the firmament was transformed since that time

When the empyrean’s throne remained astonished in its place

when one way was passed from this world to hereafter

What a sea that from its awesomeness

the world’s color was changed every hour

When an image from this sea overshadowed

each particle was a gem isolated

Passion of this sea seized two worlds

thus the arrangement (order) of the world became valid (ibid, page 284)

O wow! What a sea which is hidden but not very evident
that from its humidity particle by particle brings waves till ever (ibid, page 173)

Finally, drop returns to the sea and whatever it has remained remote from the sea, it will return to its origin and this is an issue that poet mystics have emphasized on it several times; therefore humans also return to their real origin and position. By considering this principle which has been also mentioned in Quran, Attar expresses it and says:

I was a drop which has come from sea

this time I have come with sea depth (ibid, page 155)

The humans who are outlying from God and those that for some causes traverse a path and this issue causes their remoteness from God in Attar's poem has been known as some fishes which have remained remote from sea water and whatever this time period of remoteness is light, it is unbearable for them and they wish to return to the sea water. By considering this point, Attar says:

When fish falls from the sea on the soil it beats up to reach to the sea (ibid, page 337)

The presence of sea symbol in love relationship between God and human

Mystics know the relationship between human and God as a relationship between lover and beloved. A God that is all affection, kindness and grace is worthy of love. In mystics' poem, God's mercy, favor and munificence are as one of the main senses. He is a person who knows God's nature all grace and favor and he doesn't frown in the face of his servants' guilt and forgives their guilt; there is no disappointment in God's doorway and no one returns from this doorway with an empty hand; therefore God must be loved. In Attar's poem, this relationship is also the same relationship between lover and beloved and in expressing and describing this relationship, sea is present as an active symbol. When God is the symbol of sea, undoubtedly in the face of it, human has no position except drop. In Attar's poem, God is appeared in the symbol of sea and servants are appeared in the symbol of drop, and sometimes the relationship between them has been expressed as a lover who wants to reach to his beloved.

My body took heart from inside the well

I am planning to go to the desert, desert is good

If I was like a weak drop yesterday now I am a sea, sea is good (poetical works of Attar, page 165)

It is necessary to be said that Attar knows all existence as waves of endless divine sea that meantime they have isolated existence, somehow depend on the divine essence of God.

You are a hidden pearl in the love sea

We have fallen on the coast from the dread of wave (ibid, page 559)

About annihilation of part on whole, Attar believes that drop existence is disappeared by annihilation in the sea and it is unified with sea, therefore for expressing annihilation in God's way, he uses of drop symbol and its joining to the sea one more time, he expresses the unification with sea in this manner:

If a drop was drown in the sea of whole

Why do you pour soil on your crown because of sorrow?

Don't become without heads and feet like drop
that at first drop was in the sea (Elahinammeh, page 144)

Attar in another place uses of falling a person in salt-marsh and converting his body to the salt and another time, he mentions that drop drowning in the sea causes its unification with sea.

Something which falls in the salt-marsh, is lost in it

I don’t know this salty sea less than salt
(literary works of Attar, page 465)

Don't remain alive to yourself, O servant!

Because dew wasn’t alive to the sea

Perceive the existence of dew, O sea!

that there is no possessor for you except sea

In this sea, everything like clean dew is lost

that everything which was not lost wasn’t knower

(ibid, page 334)

All are connected into the unity sea inevitably

although they are a lot but they are one gem in attribute (ibid, page 315)

The mystics know some conditions are necessary for followers of mysticism way and wayfarers and reaching to the fact and annihilation in God. One of the principles that mystics should be adhere to it is silence. Silence means to hide the mysteries from strangers and remain remote from speeches which create obstacle on the way of mystic. Attar says about it:

The sea diver bewitches a lot

that he becomes manly (courageous) in silence

If he speaks in the sea depth

his bewitchery becomes myth

In this sea, the painful heart of Attar

I don’t know becomes man (courageous) or not (ibid, page 237)

Like diver don’t speak

If like sea you need companion (ibid, page 147)

In addition to what was mentioned, annihilation in God also has other conditions such as freedom from body. Attar for expressing this principle has used of another symbol. Attar has used of ship as the symbol of body and he believes that for reaching to the annihilation in God, body and material things should be left. Attar says if you leave the material things and body and cast yourself to the existence sea of God, you will achieve what you want, namely annihilation in God. Entering to the ship in the sea is a mystery for passing from existence and leaving a body which is an obstacle on the way of reaching to God. Attar says about it:

If you sit in the sea without ship

sea will say to you whatever you are (Elahinammeh, page 150)

Attar knows that the least demand of God (anger) which has been reminded as wave, is the factor of disappearing material body and material things and this world. With regard to this point, he has known the wave as the symbol of God’s anger and knows it as a factor of disappearing everything and all things except instantaneous tings which have been
annihilated in the existence sea of God. Attar in continuation in addition to emphasize on sea as the symbol of God expresses remoteness from God in this world will cause an endless sorrow in hereafter and if you are annihilated in this world in the existence sea of God and join to it, you will achieve kingdom in hereafter. With regard to what has been expressed in these verses by Attar, it can be concluded, in his opinion annihilating in God’s existence and connecting to the existence sea of God is the significant factor of prosperity in hereafter. If you are not annihilated in the divine existence sea, you should expect different days in other world. Attar expresses these points in the following verses beautifully:

If a wave comes up from that sea
    everything that we put them here will become inconsiderable
If here you are dismissal from sea
    we put sorrowful world there
And if today you have the same color with sea
    We will make you a king of tomorrow (literary works, page 492)

Attar knows the annihilation in divine existence sea by using of an allegory is like falling a stone piece and a clod piece in the sea and he says clod is disappeared and it is unified with sea and in other words, it is annihilated in divine essence sea but stone remains in the same form and it doesn’t leave its physical existence and it doesn’t reach to the annihilation in God.

Attar in the annihilation of human existence drop in the divine essence sea reminds this point that God doesn’t need this annihilation of humans, rather the humans by connecting their valueless and small existence to the divine existence sea valuate that low value existence, therefore, God is needless from this annihilation. Attar says about it:

You are just a drop, how much are you thinking with yourself?

If there was a drop, if it was lost, if it was found
Your existence and annihilation of you is just a water drop

Which came from the sea to the coast and it became with sea (ibid, page 280)

Attar for entering to the divine essence sea and annihilation in it knows some conditions necessary and one of them is that we can enter to this sea with congenital or the same material life. In other words, all material desires and wishes of this world should be exited from our existence so that we can achieve divine annihilation. Attar says by losing material life or the same life of this world, you will achieve a life that its value and position will be much more than the material life. This is in fact another birth which prepares wayfarer for entering to a larger world which is the same God existence sea. Attar says about it:

You can not enter to this sea with congenital life

A person can enter to this sea that has another life

You are desert man not sea man, you don’t recognize
    that what occurs in the sea with each one of these courageous men (sea men)
Sea that courageous man how moves in this sea
    that on the way, all life passes in one hour (ibid, page 250)

According to what was expressed, from Attar’s speech it can be concluded that he considers circumstances for the life that one of them is congenital life which is impure and you should turn away from it and another is the essence of existence which is clean and pure and this existence joins to its origin or the same divine existence sea when dies from apparent life of
this world (Mohammadi, 1990: 61). From what was said, it can be perceived that final purpose of Attar and other mystics is not to become free from the world and essence; rather the apogee of each mystic's purpose is to be unified with God and link his valueless, small and drop-like existence with God existence sea. Although wayfarer thinks about God constantly, but if he doesn't join to God and isn't unified with God, he will not reach to its final purpose. So attar says:

If drop and sea aren’t unified

When will blasphemy stone become belief garnet? (Literary works, page 338)

Attar in order to be annihilated in divine essence expresses some results and believes reaching to divine existence sea and unification of drop with sea is proper just for drop and gives worthy value and circumstances to its valueless and small existence. Attar in continuation mentions this point that reaching to the divine existence sea and annihilation in it isn’t an easy work and any person can not undertake it, rather a very different path should be traversed and some stages should be passed that passing from each one of them has its special conditions and difficulties. In the following verses, in addition to emphasize on this point, he expresses the values and benefits of annihilation:

When I dived in the annihilation sea

I found abundant pearls in annihilation

So that you don’t suppose that this deep sea

is not difficult and I found it easy

Hundred thousand blood drops dipped from the heart

so that I found a sign of a drop from it (ibid, page 427)

In addition to what was said, annihilation has abundant benefits in the divine existence sea that the most valuable of them are remoteness from oneself and desisting from pride and reaching to the freedom and cleaning the human's essence and soul from bad attributes which are as an obstacle on the way of reaching to God. Attar in the benefits of annihilation in God Existence Sea says:

Everyone that was annihilated in this sea, became free

Shame on me if I will be on feet

Here is selfless, the reward of both existences

If I reach to myself, I will reach to the fault

I am a dew, I have a particle annihilated

When am I reach to the eternity sea? (ibid, page 362)

God’s names and attributes

Mystics believe that full recognition of God isn’t possible for humans and humans’ recognition of God is as much as their perception amount; in fact because God existence is very larger than it that to be posed in human's mind, recognition of God for humans is possible to some extent that their perception has capacity, therefore for recognition of God, some attributes are accounted for him/her which describe only a bit of his divine essence. Attar also like other mystics has the same opinion about recognition of God and he believes no human can recognize and describe God fully unless he/she has been drowned in God’s existence and have reached to the annihilation in God and those who have reached to the
union with God don’t have the ability of expressing their perception of God, and when mystic reaches to such rank, he has reached to the astonishment and silence rank and due to it, it is said that everyone who knew God, his/her tongue becomes slow and he/she can not express what has perceived.« Attar in Tazkaratololya quotes from Janid's saying that has said: mystic is the person that God gives rank too him/ her to speak from God’s mystery and he is silent» (Zarrinkoub, 2000). Attar says about it:

From this sea that my soul (existence) is drowned in it

I went out but I am in the midst

I went to this sea very much and I said

My eyes were opened to the sea

When I found the sea mystery well

I don’t know anything from sea

Everyone who has seen the face of this sea
gives me good sign in each time

But a person that is drowned in the sea

I don’t know him to never give my sign

When my eyes are not, see the sea, what will be the purpose

if I remain drowned in this sea (literary works, page 470)

Since the ancient people's recognition of sea has been very limited, they knew the sea as an unlimited environment without boundary, therefore in addition to consider this attribute of sea, they knew sea as the symbol of God and more than any other attribute, they have concentrated on the attributes such as largeness and being unlimited. If we study Attar's works generally, we will see among God's attributes, largeness and being unlimited have been considered more than other attributes and they have been expressed.

In this endless sea

There is no hope of acquaintance

You are isolated from sea and Zooks!

That this sea isn’t isolated from you even one moment (ibid, page 198)

The largeness of sea also indicates the excessive power of it, therefore Attar sometimes reminds also this extraordinary power and he sometimes know that worthy attributes and forgiveness of God are as endless sea and somewhat he describes God’s forgiveness unlimitedly and excessively.

If a wave comes up from this sea

No face and portraitist will remain (ibid, page 583)

In another place, he says about God's forgiveness and generosities:

O God! Your mercy is the public sea

And from there a drop is the whole of us

If you clean (wash) the contamination

of guilty human with that sea at once

That sea doesn’t become dark in any time

but the world work becomes clear

What will be decreased from mercy sea
If you sect a drop on humans (Elahinameh, page 2)

I became informed of Virtue Sea

I came with empty hand and thirsty liver (Mosibatnameh, page 18)

Attar also mentions other attributes of God:
This deep sea is knowledge in knowledge

Where I such ignorant will reach? (Literary works, page 362)

All are divers in the unity sea inevitably
although they are a lot but they are one essence in attribute
(ibid, page 315)

**This world**
Attar knows this sea as a drop in the face of large essence and he knows sea as God's attribute, although this drop may have some adornments, but finally all these adornments will be disappeared. Attar has expressed this issue in the frame of beautiful anecdotes and allegories.

A man asked a question from a mad man with several questions that what these two worlds are

He answered that these both high and low worlds are a water drop and it neither exists nor doesn’t exist

It (world) became evident from the first water drop

It is water drop with several pictures

Each picture that was on water

Even if there was iron, it would be destroyed (Mantegholteir, page 49)

He says in another place:
Many persons in the bottom of this endless sea

Were drowned and there is no sign of anyone

In such sea which is grand sea

A world is particle and particle is world (Mantegholteir, page 12)

**Love**
Attar believes that love means remoteness from oneself and eternity to a sea of difficulties and problems. In fact, lover annihilates himself and lover is sacrificed for lover to reach to the love existence and it is eternal meanness.
Love is the beauty of souls of fiery sea

If you are lover, you will be burnt because this is the way

Wherever the brilliant candle is inflamed suddenly

Butterfly isn’t burnt that burning of it is certainty (literary works, page 229)

Mystics' recognition of the world and all elements existing in it is different with other perceptions of the world. Mystics see this world with different view and they consider a
commission for each one of God’s creatures. This mystical perception of this world is different with what is their fact. Therefore, love means annihilation of lover in God’s existence sea. A person could perceive the pearl of love sea that could perceive it in the blood during long years (literary works, page 383) Drink the wine of oppression if you are demander of this way Don’t escape from Noah’s curse if you are the sea lover (ibid, page 624) In the endless sea, your love was lost From whom should I find your moon sign? (ibid, page 219) Love is a sea, in its depth I am drowned to find out acquaintance Because no one found out on the sea water How can I find out without head and foot (ibid, page 452)

**Using of blessings existing in the sea**

A person who endures the difficulties of cruises, undoubtedly will utilize of abundant benefits. Persian poets and authors have known the benefit of cruise more than other journeys since many years ago, but beside it, they have known the dangers and difficulties of cruise more. There are abundant benefits in the sea such as gem and pearl and someone can achieve valuable gems of sea that enters to this sea. Poet mystics such as Attar also have used of this feature of sea well and they have reminded that mystic with eagerness of utilizing of these gems starts his cruise toward divine existence sea. He was restless constantly and day and night he didn’t sit one moment and he didn’t sleep one hour Many gems that from the depth of Essence Sea He brought out and attached them to the heart’s blood (literary works, page 132) In this sea, thousands drops are hidden But gem is inside the sea depth (Asrarnameh, page 58) In fact, what we remind it as gem and pearl of divine sea includes oracular mysteries and senses that God inserts them on the existence of person who has entered to this sea and has been annihilated in it. You can not find the pearl of Senses Sea and if you find, you will remain drowned in that place Someone who recognized the pearl of those mysteries Casted the same pearl to this sea In this sea, someone knows the gems of senses Ask him to say you to know (Asrarnameh, page 114)

**Conclusion**

Sea and the words related to it like ship, drop, wave and pearl are a set of words which have been used in the works of poet mystics a lot. Attar also has used of these words a lot. Attar’s uses of these words are often symbolic and by symbolic use of these words in expressing the
way of reaching to a fact that Attar and other mystics seek for it, each one of these words has undertaken a duty. Therefore, it can be said that Attar has utilized these words well for expressing mystical thoughts. Since the final purpose of Attar is to reach to God and be unified with him, he has used of sea more than other words as the symbol of this fact that seeks for it. In this thought, sea is the symbol of God and other creatures are those drops that try in the way of reaching to him. Sometimes there are some obstacles on the way of reaching to the sea that ship has been used as a symbol for expressing these obstacles and he has known the ship as the material things which are obstacles in this way.
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