



# Study of "Flower" and "Bird" and the Related Mystical Literature

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**Abstract:** In painting and scriptures, patterns and images transfer special meaning to the audience which are known as symbols. Understanding the concepts of such symbols forms a work. As it is known, there is a long-standing link between literature and art. Traditionally, poets or artists use symbols in literature and art to express their purposes. Since the images are the symbols of mystical concepts, it can be said that the painting is directly connected to mysticism. For example, in the paintings and scriptures of flower and bird, flower is the symbol of the beloved and bird is the symbol of lover. The romantic speeches between flower and bird are the symbol of God's praise. Flower and bird paintings are dedicated to Iranian art that refer to four thousand years ago, the companion of plant with bird is originated from the Phoenix myths and the tree of life. Interpretations of flowers and birds in nature are concerned by most poets. Flower and bird are used in the works of the poets, especially those who use the symbol for mystical concepts. The present research which is written in descriptive method aims to study "flower" and "bird" and the mystical literature related to these concepts. It is concluded that flowers and birds' paintings show life in nature and its beauty in one sense and on the other hand, they show their instability; therefore, the more beautiful paintings, the more pleasant concepts to the heart and eye. That's why flowers and birds' paintings have been presented in a decorative way for Iranians in handmade arts.

**Key words:** Islamic Mysticism, Persian Mysticism, Flower Painting, Bird Painting, Flower Symbol, Bird Symbol

## INTRODUCTION

Painting is a manifestation of the sacred art of Islam. Painter observes the world from the perspective of the Almighty, so that God governs the universe, not from the perspective which has become embedded in our limited look. Human beings look at the world objectively and it is not a reality-based one, while the painter shows the world's reality to unveil the truth. Muslim painters have beautifully decorated holy codices with abstract and geometric patterns and natural customs and have embellished historical and scientific books with descriptive pictures. Therefore, natural phenomena appear by crystalline effects in images which are the result of artist's observations of the supreme world and divine order of the universe and include a transcendental nature of the universe.

One of the main and innovative branches of Persian painting is flowers and birds (flowers and nightingales) painting which includes paintings of flowers and bushes alone (flowers and bushes painting) or paintings of flowers and seedeater birds as nightingale side by side (flowers and birds painting). Some believe that flowers and birds' painting is a kind of Iranian nature making (naturalism). Although method of flowers and birds' painting has emerged in the late of Safavi era, it reached its highest point in the Qajar period. However, this kind of painting has an appropriate and desired position among painters in the contemporary era. In flowers and birds' painting, all kinds of flowers such as lily, rose and damask rose enter the picture and various types of birds are peacefully placed beside the flowers. Flowers and birds have been usually

described in mystical literature of past periods which have been found in the mystical poetry of great poets like Rumi, Hafez, Baba Taher, etc. in the form of lyric and innovative poems. The image below is an example of flowers and birds painting:

**Image 1.**



### **Symbolic Naturalism in Persian Traditional Art**

Tendency to nature and its reflection in symbolic forms are always seen in Persian art. Symbols of nature which were being shaped by ancients' thought and beliefs and how they faced with natural forces, have appeared in various forms and formats. The image of these signs and symbolic elements is seen on containers and objects, military and every day ground cloth and tools as well as architectural ornaments from the past to the present.

Artist's feelings and emotions and human reaction against natural and ecological phenomena of environment can be seen in decorative designs on Kerman's textiles and tiles. The image of Kerman's native plants and birds has appeared in abstract forms, including the image of white and yellow petals, opium poppy, anemone and marshmallow in red, yellow and pink colors, wild rose in pink and eglantine; trees such as silk, citrus and cedar and birds such as grey francolin (partridge, etc.) (Pourahmad, 1991: 100).

On the other hand, since the late fifth-century, due to the Sufi influence on urban weavers and artisans who chose this course and Sufi's belief that each aspect of nature represents the perfection of divine love, these categories have compelled the artist to observe and respect the nature and use natural symbols to express the mystical concepts which exist in the environment (Khazaeli, 1976: 433).

The combination of Kerman's native naturalism with western landscape painting is seen in harmony and beautifully on tile works of Ibrahim Khan Complex. The highest point of attention to the nature through being influenced by European and innovative landscapes using traditional and indigenous elements and color and image in new combinations is considered as a new approach of decoration in the Qajar period which some excellent examples of this method are shown in Ibrahim Khan Complex. This way of painting unlike the previous symbolic approach is highly landscaping one and redefines familiar elements of the environment.

According to documents of the Iranian art history, the use of plant images and painting in Iran goes back to the first handmade works of people of this land. Since past millennia of history, ceramics' surfaces were appropriate context and place for painting images and plant presentations and these images have been used by potters as pure natural elements, including mountain, sea, sun, etc. according to Ghirshman, the effects of cultural unity of Persian decorated potteries which had lasted for a long time were interrupted at the beginning of the third millennium BC, under the pressure of external forces whose origins are unknown. Engraved decoration was forgotten in Shush certainly under the influence of Mesopotamian civilization, and at this point, the man has experienced one of his most amazing inventions, namely writing (Machiani, 2002: 18).

After the arrival of the Aryans to Iran, the first manifestations of painting art appear in the ninth-century of the first millennium BC. Paintings of this period are seen on ceramics derived from the cemetery. It can be

said that the position of bird is not well known in the art of this period and by Aryans. Flowers also enter into the context of these images, but there is no sign and color of realism (ibid, p: 18-19).

The image of combined legendary beasts and winged human appears gradually instead of bird images, which in later periods of Iranian art survives in a consistent manner with the figure of "Phoenix"; it is an immortal bird traversing Seven Valleys of Love.

Transformations occurred regarding symbolic looks at Phoenix with the passage of Iranian culture to the Islamic period provide the best ground for understanding continuities and discontinuities of Iranian art before and after Islamic periods.

The earliest manifestations of birds in painting book date back to a period that is called "School of Baghdad" in Islamic period's Iranian art historiography. In this period, with the development of book-making techniques, images are seen on books' covers and inside pages in addition to dishes, clothes, carpets and palaces' walls.

### **Origin of flowers and birds' works**

Flowers are symbolically manifestations of beauty in nature. What is attributed to delicacy and elegance by mystics and poets is characterized by flower (Eskandarpour Khorrami, 2004: 3). Poet and artist describe the world with similar language which has been generally inherited from their ancestors and this is a world beyond time and space in which creatures have been created based on a general and eternal pattern (Jalali Jafari, 2003: 24). To establish a link between tangible and intangible worlds, Persian mysticism creates the world of fantasy or eighth district which is a mediation world between the world of pure idea and the world of ordinary perception (Ishaqpour, 2000: 36). This mediation world is manifested in garden, flower and bird forms by the Iranian painter. These artists engage in garden and create works which involve human perception of nature (Mousavikhamaneh, 2004: 24). Certainly, Persian garden is one of the most beautiful manifestations of spirit and reason derived from Iranians' beliefs and has shown the finest singing of love and nature in life in the most powerful form (Samiazar, 2004: 10). Painting of Persian garden is one of the greatest Persian art throughout the ages. Since the beginning, Iranians considered garden as earthy manifestation of a spiritual truth and experience of garden was not limited to the sensible world (Nasr, 2004: 202). In Persian painting and in image, its magical mirror and supernatural colors become pure and the world is revealed in in the light and the heaven form (Ishaqpour, 2000: 38).

The theme of flowers and birds has been honorable by Iranians due to observing Iranians' thoughts; therefore, it entered into their artistic tradition in the most distinctive natural examples (Azhand, 2007: 32). Since the bird always praises God in Islamic culture and Iranians' belief, it has taken a particular position and has entered into poem and literature with interpretations such as the prayer bird, screech owl, night bird, etc. (Amine, Shabahang, Haq and Shabaviz birds in Persian language) (Sabaghpour & Shayestefar, 2010: 40). According to Suhrewardi, bird is resembled to a man's spirit and soul which has the dream of flight and escape from the cage in a mystic and pious man; so that this enthusiasm appears at Sama (Sufism) (ibid, 44).

Generally, flowers and birds' painting is a term used to describe a variety of old Persian painting which includes the theme of flower, leaf, bird such as nightingale and even butterfly. Painters were often inspired by the nature in representing the theme (Pakbaz, 2006: 588).

Flowers and bird's manifestations are seen in Iranian art in the oldest images and Persian potteries and birds are observed by black lines on red bowls (Hosseini et al., 2008: 282). The earliest manifestations of birds in painting book date back to a period that is called "School of Baghdad" in Islamic period's Iranian art historiography. In this period, with the development of book-making techniques, images are seen on books' covers and inside pages (ibid, 2008: 285). The first works resulted from the origin of flowers and birds appeared in Iranian painting art in the early years of the 11<sup>th</sup> century AH (17<sup>th</sup> AD) through several months' and single sheet paintings after the release of painters from employer's instructions. Previously, the theme of Persian paintings was more a story scene of an epic, historical and romantic book (Shahdadi, 2004: 16).

### **The meaning and etymology of the word flower**

Flowers are symbolically manifestations of beauty in nature; it is pleasing and pleasurable. What is attributed to delicacy and elegance by mystics and poets is characterized by flower. It recalls Garden of Eden and Eternal Paradise. Flower is a symbol of fragrance and the pleasant smell causes happiness and pleasure and eliminates coarse and bitter character. Rosewater and wine are considered at the same level. Rosewater

is the extract of flower which its magic smell invites the human spirit to a higher world which is far from the lower universe. The fragrance of flowers causes purity of heart and brings the man to a pleasant level and satisfaction. The great men were reaching from mortal life to eternal paradise and sustainable garden and spiritual heaven through the pleasant smell of flowers.

Flower is a symbol of beauty and beloved and the beloved always encounters the death in lover's attitude. The short life of flower tells the story of exploitation and rosewater is the result of this exploitation from the eternal beloved; painful destiny of rosewater and description of this heart-rending incident fire the soul of every spiritual one.

Where the flowers are grown in is called *Gulzar*, *Gulshan* (in Persian language) and *Garden* and *Gulshan-e Qods*, *Jinnah Garden* and *Gulshan-e Rezvan* are irony of the Eden and divine world.

Rose which is a kind of *theophraste* in terms of phytology has spiritual feature in Iran and it is adorned by the name of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) by faithful people of this land. About thirty thousand years BC, a rose has been described which has absolutely identical features with damask rose; it is in fiery red with very pleasant smell. When this flower is blooming, it is round; its circle shape is the most complete and distinctive form of perfection.

### **The meaning and etymology of the word bird**

Its combinations are bird of Bismillah, unity bird, everlasting and eternity bird, inspiration bird, analhaq bird, bird of abstraction garden, manifestation bird, sanctified bird, the bird of soul, the bird of wisdom, the bird of spirit, the bird of Solomon, love bird, the bird of Jesus, human bird, toubah bird and bird of heaven.

Nightingale and bird are in the position of lover and flower in the place of beloved; therefore, flower departure from nightingale is fatal and painful.

*I asked a nightingale what the cure of separation is*

*It fell to the ground and died*

Bird is combined with various words which have hidden and inner meaning.

Divine bird = laughing dove: an irony of the rational soul

The bird of garden = an irony of nightingale which is called *A'ndalib* by the Arabs

The bird of Bismillah = Bismillah which is written in bird form is in fact a bird's face.

Wise and clever bird = parrot and Phoenix

The bird of sidrah = Gabriel (Jibra'il)

Night bird (shabaviz) = a bird that keeps hanging on one foot and repeats the word of truth (*haq* in Persian) until a drop of blood is dripped from his throat.

The bird of sublime = a metaphor of human spirit

The bird of sky = an irony of angel

Talking bird = parrot

The bird of heaven = an irony of the popular one and the beloved

### **The status of allegorical bird in Iranian mystical literature**

In the story of the queen of Sheba and Solomon, the role of hoopoe as messenger of Prophet Solomon is a symbol of Solomon conference of the birds. The queen of Sheba pays no attention to the small size of the messenger and considers beautiful points written in Solomon's letter; therefore, she observes the humble bow of Solomon in hoopoe's tiny face and in this way he is chosen for perception of perfection.

Parrot in this story is an allegory of spiritual (clear) soul and of course it is an abstract category. "The storyteller knows parrot as the secret of rational soul and thereby he does not consider a communication based on perception and determination unlikely." (Zarrinkoob, 1988: 424). There are some traditions saying that spirits of believers appear in the form of green birds in heaven, as the souls of unbelievers are seen as fiery black birds (Abdolhakim, Kh. *Sufism of Rumi*, Translated by Mohammadi, A.). In Iranian mystical literature, human spirit and angels are related together:

*I was an angel. I resided in the heavens*

*Renovation of the world – the mission given to me*

*No soothsayer foretold of my exit or entry*

*O Lord, this journey, why did you for me decree?*

*The nymphs of paradise, the cool ponds and the tree*

*In the hope of union, swiftly left my memory*

*(Divan of Hafez, Edition and Introduction by Elahi Ghomshei, H., 1999: 314)*

Both come from the unseen world to the ground and then return to their first position. Human is always described as the bird of heaven and not earthy world; a bird which a cage has been made from its body. Soul returns to the invisible world during sleep and after death. A bird which returns to the eternally beloved one and since this coming back is auspicious, it cannot be said that the human presence is futile in this world. This is the marvelous fact which has been mentioned repeatedly in the Quran:

*Did you think that we had created you only for play, and that you would never be returned to Us?*

Therefore, the soul should have feathers and wings. If someone visits briefly the history of the visual arts, he will find out that ancients were considering soul with feathers and wings. Although parrot as a symbol of human rational soul has been repeated in other places in Masnavi, it seems that bird as an allegory of soul (life) has broader use, like the story of a bird and hunter wrapped in a plant.

Among stories drawn from the interpretations which of course have Quranic source, there are some which the role of birds is very significant in, such as the story of crow and Cain which train the experience of digging grave among humans and thereby it may want to show that no profession is supposed to happen without training.

*When was grave-digging, which was the meanest trade (of all)*

*(Acquired) from thought and cunning and meditation?*

*If knowledge of a trade were (derived) from this intellect,*

*Any trade would be acquired without a master*

As even digging grave which is the least important career is something that Cain learned from the crow; and of course, the crow was endowed with knowledge through the inspiration.

*It buried it, then it covered it with earth:*

*The crow was endowed with knowledge through the inspiration (given) of God*

Perhaps nothing so much as the story of flying creatures (Ababil) and their role in death of companions of the elephant do not make tangible and acceptable the apparent contradiction between means and ends in what is belonged to divine providence, because here the small bird like the mosquito which caused the death of Nimrod, destroys companions of the elephant who are against God:

*And send against them swarms of flying creatures (Ababil), which pelted them with stones of baked clay, and made them like green crops devoured (by cattle)*

Molavi mentions story of Ababil bird, Abraha and companions of the elephant all over Masnavi and raises significant points in mystical and divine discussions through these subtle and artistic reference. He shows that even if an oppressor is powerful as an elephant, he will be unable to resist against Ababil birds. Where God has mercy upon his creature, a small stone will be as effective as hundred catapults against an enemy that is powerful as an elephant. According to this story, in another part, he also points out this fact that when a small bird and a tiny stone can cause destruction of a great companion, it is clear that God's providence does not require tools and means. As in the story of Abraham who is thrown into the fire, God's will take back the causation of burning which he himself has given to fire. This fact that the first cause does not lead to the late effect is an eternal and permanent point.

*The Quran is for termination of cause*

*Honor of Dervish and death of Abu Lahab*

The story of birds of Khalil is another example which represents the power of God in new creation and removes any doubt in those who deny context of the Quran.

*What, were We wearied by the first creation? No, indeed; yet, there are in doubt about a new creation.*

Molana considers this story as a symbol of resurrection in the spiritual life. When the man perishes what the four birds of Khalil represent for, he will understand resurrection. Thus, he will be born again in spiritual life after dying in the sensual world. Names of these four birds have not been mentioned in the Quranic verse and only it has been referred to four birds.

*And (mention) when Abraham said, "My Lord, show me how You give life to the dead." (Allah) said, "Have you not believed?" He said, "Yes, but (I ask) only that my heart may be satisfied." (Allah) said, "Take four birds and commit them to yourself. Then (after slaughtering them) put on each hill a portion of them; then call them-they will come (flying) to you in haste. And know that Allah is Exalted in Might and Wise."*

Rumi considers the four birds as a symbol of sensual and malicious characteristics and calls them peacock, rooster, duck and crow. According to him, duck is symbol of greed, rooster is a symbol of lust, peacock

represents ambition and crow is a symbol of vain desires. To achieve the highest points of God's admittance, these sensual and malicious features should be removed.

In the story of the queen of Sheba and Solomon, the role of hoopoe as messenger of Prophet Solomon is a symbol of Solomon conference of the birds. The queen of Sheba pays no attention to the small size of the messenger and considers beautiful points written in Solomon's letter; therefore, she observes the humble bow of Solomon in hoopoe's tiny face and in this way he is chosen for perception of perfection.

The history of phoenix, this mythical bird dates back to pre-Islamic period in Iranian culture. According to Avesta and Pahlavi works, it can be understood that the Phoenix is a bird with broad wings which nests in a tree with healing feature called "*Vispubish*" or "*Harvisptokhm*" containing seeds of all plants. In Avesta, it has been pointed out that this tree is placed in the "*Vourukasha*" Sea. The word Phoenix appears in the form of "*Meregho Saeno*" in Avesta; its first part means "bird" and the second part has been read with a few changes "sin" in Pahlavi and "si" in Dari Persian which does not represent the number 30 (si) in Persian language; it means the same as "falcon". The meaning of this word "si" may be spiritual feature of that bird (*The Conference of the Birds*, Corrected by Shafiee Kadkani, 2004).

After Islam, the Phoenix exists not only in heroic epics but in mystical works. The Phoenix has two different divine (in the story of Zal) and evil (in the story of the Seven Adventures of Esfandiar) faces, because all supernatural creatures are two opposite twins according to dualistic cosmology. The evil Phoenix is more like a dragon bird; it lacks the sacred talents of divine Phoenix and is killed by Esfandiar in the fifth adventure. The divine Phoenix enters into the Shahnameh when "Zal" is born. "Sam", Zal's father commands that his child who has been born with white hair, be left in the desert to die. Due to the compassion given to the Phoenix by God, he brings Zal to his nest and cares him. Finally, when Sam comes around the Alborz mountain or Borazan (the place of Phoenix) to search for Zal because of his night dream, after a farewell to Zal, the Phoenix gives him one of his feathers to use it in hardness. The Phoenix helps Zal in two important situations; the first one is when Rustam is born (due to his big body, his birth is with difficulty and the Phoenix overcomes this problem by a timely solution) and the second one relates to the war of Rustam and Esfandiar (where Rustam is incapable of defeating Esfandiar, he overcomes Esfandiar by the way which the Phoenix learns him. The phoenix also treats the wounds of Rustam's body). Although the Phoenix appears as an earthy creature in Shahnameh, it has supernatural features. Its relationship with this world is only through Zal. The Phoenix is like one of the Amesha Sepenta, gods or angels that their frequent relationship with this world is not the reason of their attachment to this physical world. Phoenix is not shown spiritually and supernaturally in other Persian mythological texts such as "*Garshasname*" by Asadi Toosi. Generally, except the mythological part of Shahname, there is no real mythological text in Persian works after Islam. That's why the Phoenix has entered into the Persian mystical poetry and prose and it is absorbed in the elements of Islamic culture through its mysterious character and only by mythological potential and interpretable feature and capacity shown in Shahnameh.

This point that exactly when and by whom mystical color and concept has been given to Phoenix is still unclear.

In addition to Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*, there are other books in Persian literature in which features of Phoenix have been mentioned, including *Risalat al-Tayr* by Ibn Sina translated by Shahal al-Din Suhrewardi, *Risalat al-Tayr* by Ahmad Ghazali, *Rosat al-Fariqin* Abu al-Raja chichi, *Nezhat Nameh Alaei* (the first encyclopedia in Persian), *Bahr al-Favaed* (The Sea of Benefits), (an old text from the six century which was formed in the fourth and fifth centuries and compiled in the second half of sixth century in the Levant) and most important Attar's the Conference of the Birds (*Mantiq al-Tayr*). "The Conference of the Birds is in fact a kind of mystical epic, including the risks and destruction of the pilgrim soul which has been interpreted as tayr (bird) according to the usual traditions of the ancients. This hazards and destruction occur during the seven stages of the journey which is similar to the seven adventures of Rustam and Esfandiar. Hence, the Conference of Birds is an epic of spirit birds and epic of pious souls and those which seek for wisdom and cognition in which their problems and disasters during this spiritual journey are not less than problems of those seeking for wealth and power and name and fame." (Zarrinkoob, 1995: 211)

Attar's Conference of the Birds is the story of a group of birds travelling to Mount Qaf in order to reach the Phoenix shrine by the guidance of Hoopoe. Each bird is represented as a symbol of a certain group of people. Path's difficulties cause that birds refuse to continue the journey one by one. At the end, thirty birds reach the Mount Qaf; intuitively, they find out that they themselves are the Phoenix. However, most literary

scholars, such as Shafiee Kadkani believe that Phoenix is a mystery of God's essence and its mystery is a concept which has name but no sign.

*(Because) there (on her hair), hundreds of morning breeze (lovers' wind) are dancing, the companion and opponent of her hair should be in this way; he should not do any work in vain or say useless words*

*O God! Who can be informed of this subtle point that the beloved one who is among others did not show her face to anyone?*

*(Divan of Hafez, Edition and Introduction by Elahi Ghomshei, H. 1999: 489)*

Phoenix in Persian literature is sometimes a symbol of the sun which is the essence of God. Phoenix uniqueness and invisibility are features that make it a symbol of God. According to writers, poets and mystics, Phoenix is the symbol of "unseen world". A world where its manifestations can be perceived, but no one can understand its nature, like the Phoenix, although its name is mentioned everywhere, no one has seen and will not see it. So that some researchers consider Phoenix as a symbol of absolute beauty, wisdom and goodness when there is no need and poverty in his court: "A bird asks eagerly: Now that we enter into the realm of beloved and palace of king, what we give him and what we present him? Hoopoe answers that there is only one thing that the Phoenix does not have and it is poverty and need. You take the need because the rich one likes the need, as the richness, goodness and grace which are the Phoenix's features become apparent only in the mirror of poverty and need."

(Elahi Ghomshei, 1998: 298)

### **The symbolic role of bird in literature**

In ancient Iran, birds are symbol of cloud and rain (Parham, 1992: 154). The concept of soul and spirit is another symbolic concept which has been always important in explaining this painting. It means that the soul which finds naturally itself with wings flies toward the sky that is its homeland and this is a very old secret. For example, the soul can be likened to two winged horses and a charioteer. According to Plato, one of these two horses is original and noble and another is rebellious and unoriginal; then, driving a chariot by man will be difficult and painful. The soul is complete when its wings are healthy; it has a tendency upwards and governing the universe. When it appears incomplete, its wings wither away, come down and fall to the ground. Feather and wing are parts of the body which are closer to God than other members; since its natural tendency is upwards and toward the sky and there is God's housing. What is related to God is all beauty, wisdom and goodness and these are power and food of soul wings, but when wings feed on evil and ugliness, they wither away and become destroyed (Plato, 1983: 137-138). Thus, according to philosophers and thinkers, the soul is potentially demon or angel; if its angel character be strong, it will become like an angel representing the angel-like soul of human being. As it is mentioned in the Chant of the Wing of the Gabriel, it has two wings (Sattari, 2007: 122); the right one is pure light towards the truth and the left one is sign of darkness like a stain on moon; indeed, it is like peacock's foot and goes towards destruction (Suhrewardi, 2001: 220).

### **The symbolism of flowers and birds**

In flowers and birds' paintings, flower is the symbol of the beloved (especially rose flower), and bird is the symbol of love. Birds in flowers and birds' paintings are merely flying and more sitting on a branch, and even often with eyes closed; it means lover's peace of mind beside his beloved.

When these birds come together with flowers and leafy plants and twisted shrubs, they show a kind of naturalism which is called Iranian flowers and birds' painting in artistic tradition.

It is a collection of flowers in magical and amazing colors and effects are discretely placed on books and magazines or on miniature pages or with combinations of arabesque and floral (khataei) patterns and designs. It also includes birds which keep themselves to themselves sitting sadly or have raised their neck looking at an ignored corner in horizons. All of people have encountered manifestations of this mysterious art in various places and for a moment, although short, their spirits have been engaged in magical and mysterious lines, images and colors. They are seen on carpets, walls and porch of buildings built based on styles of Iranian architecture or on covers of Quran, Shahnameh and other priceless books produced by anonymous book binders and experienced masters.

Flowers and birds' images are always related to other parts in all of these manifestations or novels, like a part of a carpet in which designs and colors mingled with its warp and weft are symbols of generation of national and Iranian art.



Flowers and birds' designs along with other images around a piece of Quranic verse or few verses of poems composed by Iranian poets with sweet words with *Kufic*, *Thuluth*, *Naskh*, *Reqa*, *Nastaliq*, *Shekasteh Nastaliq* (broken Nastaliq) scripts or designs at the edges of Persian miniatures' leaves recall a memory in human soul as if it has been intertwined with his soul and spirit for a long time and now a prospect of pleasant garden is facing him.

**Image 2.**



### **Conclusion**

In flowers and birds' paintings, painter was searching for freshness and glaziness of creation in the beauty of flower, and the poet evokes the Garden of Eden in mind by utilizing the theme of flowers and birds. Painter was attuning the Garden of Eden with the eye and combining it with the mind and pointing out the essence of beauty depended on God. Flower was a natural representation of beauty, the beauty of the beloved; and nightingale was a representation of lover, a lovelorn one who was always annoyed by thorns of the flower.

*I was walking in lawn and garden all the time*

*I was thinking about the flower and nightingale*

The Iranian artist's mind, soul and tongue have been always engaged with flowers and birds' images. The artist enters the nature with the concept of the Garden of Eden in everyday life through representation of this theme in his artworks from potteries and metals to textiles and other handmade works. Since ancient years, birds' images as well as other animals' can be seen on ceramics engraved with black lines on red bowels; since ancient times, the relationship between bird and flight has been meaningful for Iranians. Bird gives the concept of flying toward another world and flower can be an irony of a fleeting life which was precious for human and now, it is too. Flowers and birds paintings show life in nature and its beauty in one sense and on the other hand, they show their instability; therefore, the more beautiful paintings, the more pleasant concepts to the heart and eye. That's why flowers and birds' paintings have been presented in a decorative way for Iranians in handmade arts.

In Islamic culture, birds are symbols of angels in particular and the purpose of the Conference of the Birds is angels' tongue referring to spiritual cognition and awareness. Birds traversing in Attar's and Avicenna's Conference of the Birds search for divine nature and meaning to find and recognize themselves in. Birds, such great concepts enter into Iranian illustrations and penetrate in people's heart and mind and become a part of their everyday life. The purpose of flower in perfect works of flowers and birds is rose or a hundred leaves flower which its visual and symbolic importance is the same as birds'. The whole bushes of such flowers are painted discretely in flowers and bushes' works; however, these bushes are more the place of bird in flowers and birds' works.

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