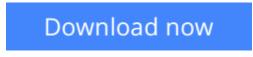


The Conference of Birds: the Sufi's journey to God

Farid ud-Din Attar



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Written in 1177, 'The Conference of Birds' is a Muslim mystical allegory dealing with the struggles and ordeals a soul must face to achieve enlightenment. One thousand birds assemble to hear the Hoopoe bird (a spiritual master) who describes how they must seek the Simurgh, their true King. Many give excuses: they are happy with love or treasure, or fame, or any number of other worldly delights, and do not see the need for an arduous adventure in search of a semi-mythical sovereign. But the journey begins, leading the avian pilgrims through seven valleys where the travelers confront their own individual limitations and fears. Only 30 birds complete the journey, and discover that they themselves are the Simurgh they have sought. As with all truly mystical literature, 'The Conference of Birds' teaches that the aim of the quest is the discovery of the Divine within.

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