



ETHICS AND MORAL VALUES IN KALILAH WA DIMNA OF ABDULLAH IBN AL-MUQAFFA: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY

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Abstract

The work at hand is based on the topic *Ethics and Moral Values in Kalilah wa Dimna of Abdullah Ibn al-Muqaffa: An Analytical Study*. It is an important and feasible research topic in present day research scenario. Abdullah Ibn al-Muqaffa is considered to be one of the greatest writers of Classical Arabic literature. He is known for his translated work Kalila wa Dimna which is the mirror of ethics and moral values.

We greatly encounter moral and ethical values, in our day-to-day life. Perhaps, these two defines a personality, attitude, and behavior of a person. The word Morals is derived from a Greek word “*Mos*” which means custom. On the other hand, if we talk about ethics, it is also derived from a Greek word “*Ethikos*” which means character. Put simply, morals are the customs established by group of individuals whereas ethics defines the character of an individual.

Definition of Morality: Morals are the social, cultural and religious beliefs or values of an individual or group which tells us what is right or wrong. They are the rules and standards made by the society or culture which is to be followed by us while deciding what is right.

Ibn al- Muqaffa was born in Gor, present firuzabad in Iraq around 724 AD in to a noble family. His father Dadvih was a state official in charge of taxes under the Umayyad rulers. Reportedly Dadvih was accused and convicted of embezzling some of money entrusted to him and punished him by the ruler by having his hand crushed. Due to this he has been known as al-Muqaffa (shriveled hand) and his son was known as ibn al-Muqaffa. After Al-Muqaffa’s conversion to Islam from Zoroastrianism by 743 AD he is renamed as Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa.

One of the classic works of the Eastern literature, *Kalila and Dimna* is a book full of stories and tales written with advice to assist rulers in state administration. The work, which is inspired by Indian-origin *Panchatantra* tales, was written by Bidpai, Brahman Priest from the Vishnu religious sect, in Kashmir around the 3rd century. The work also known as five books on the art of politics and administration consists of five books on politics and administration each of which is called *tantra*. The book was written in Sanskrit language, and it aims to teach wisdom to rulers by means of animal fables. The main characters in the book are two jackals named *Kalila and Dimna*. The book was named after these main characters. It was entitled as *Karīrak ud Damanak* in Sanskrit language, which descended the later Syriac version in *Kalilag Damag*, and has taken its present form as *Kalila and Dimna*. The work was penned by Indian philosopher Bidpāy, who is known as Bidpai or Pilpai in the West, and as Bidba or Bidbah in Arabic texts, for the reputed sultan Dābešlim, meaning ‘the great king’ in Indian language, who rule over many other countries besides India

Keyword: Kalila wa Dimna, Ibn Muqaffa, Important, Ethic, value, Morality, Social, Culture, Religious

1. INTRODUCTION:

The work at hand is based on the topic *Ethics and Moral Values in Kalilah wa Dimna of Abdullah Ibn al-Muqaffa: An Analytical Study*. It is an important and feasible research topic in present day research scenario. Abdullah Ibn al-Muqaffa is considered to be one of the greatest writers of Classical Arabic literature. He is known for his translated work Kalila wa Dimna which is the mirror of ethics and moral values.

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Definition of Ethics: Ethics is a branch of philosophy that deals with the principles of conduct of an individual or group. It works as a guiding principle as to decide what is good or bad. They are the standards which govern the life of a person. Ethics is also known as moral philosophy.

Kalilah wa Dimnah, is a book containing a collection of fables, translated into Arabic in the Abbasid period, i.e. in the second Hijri century by Abdullah Ibn al- Muqaffa using his own writing style from Panchatantra of Pt. Vishnu Sharma. The book contains a good number of stories having moral and ethical values. These stories have been included in various schools’ syllabi to inculcate ethics and morality in the students.

2. IMPORTANCE OF THE TOPIC:

The book *Kalila wa Dimna* is playing an important role in various school’s curricula in many countries including India. Nobody can deny the contribution of *Kalila wa Dimna* to the development of Arabic language and literature. Hence, a thorough and meticulous research on this book from the perspective of morality, ethics and values is needed of the hour.

Influences of al- Muqaffa’s translation also are apparent in such important western literary works. *Kalila wa Dimna* is a kind of mirror for princes. Questions of social life and princely wisdom are explained on the basis of stories taken from the animal kingdom. This book has been playing a pivotal role in teaching ethical values and morality. This book still considered a model of Arabic prose. It has been translated at least 200 times to 50 different languages.

3. OBJECTIVE OF THE TOPIC:

This research will show a tremendous development than any other literary genres in the field of ethics and moral values. No research work has been done without an objective because it is the core sight of any research problem. Like other researches this research has also some valuable objectives. The main objectives are:

1. To observe the growth and development of Classical Arabic prose
2. To evaluate the place and position of Abdullah ibn al-Musqaffa in the field of ethics and moral value
3. To analyze the ethics and moral values in *Kalila wa Dimna* of al-Muqaffa
4. To examine the impact of al-Muqaffa’s ethics and moral values on Arabian as well as Islamic society

4. VIEWS OF CRITICS ON KALILA WA DIMNA:

Review of relevant literature reveals several studies aimed at identifying the religious, moral and educational value of *Kalila and Dimna* which is considered as an Eastern classic. Of these, the study by Orak and Berköz emphasizes that *Kalila and Dimna* has a high educational value thanks to its characters including moral, the framed narrative technique, the humor element, building stories on wisdom, and the annotated and repeated expression technique. In Bakan’s study “Contributions of the Fables in *Kalila and Dimna* to Religious and Moral Education”, the 38 tales in the book one of the classic works of the Eastern culture and Indian Literature are examined in relation with religious and moral messages. It was concluded that the tales can contribute positively to the religious and moral development of children if presented with appropriate teaching methods in Religious Culture and Moral Knowledge courses. Mazid in his study underlines that the tales of *Kalila and Dimna* need to be re-read from a critical point of view for academic and educational purposes, and relevant literature should be revised again for this purpose. Moreover, such a critical re-evaluation of those fables according to contemporary reality will bring about a rapprochement between different cultures and languages. According to Mazid,



the tale of 'The Crow and Partridge' in *Kalila and Dimna* is entertaining and also implies wisdom and philosophy by discussing topics such as 'passive silence, blind obedience and support or acceptance, existence of the existing power structures.

5. SHORT BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ABDULLAH BIN AL MUQAFFA

Ibn al- Muqaffa was born in Gor, present firuzabad in Iraq around 724 AD in to a noble family. His father Dadvih was a state official in charge of taxes under the Umayyad rulers. Reportedly Dadvih was accused and convicted of embezzling some of money entrusted to him and punished him by the ruler by having his hand crushed. Due to this he has been known as al-Muqaffa (shriveled hand) and his son was known as ibn al-Muqaffa. After Al-Muqaffa's conversion to Islam from Zoroastrianism by 743 AD he is renamed as Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa. Al- Muqaffa became an Umayyad katib (clerk) and also served in the secretary posts under the Umayyad governors of Shahpur and Kirman. After the fall of Umayyad dynasty al-Muqaffa ties with Banu Ali. Officials appreciated the katibs refined manners and deep respect for Persian traditions along with sincere observed Arab ways. He escaped persecution at the hands of Abbasids after their overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty. Later al- Muqaffa returned to the Basra and appointed as a secretary under the Eisha bin Ali and Sulaiman bin Ali the uncle of the Abbasid caliph al- Mansur. After their brother Abdullah bin Ali made on abortive bid for the throne, they asked al- Muqaffa to write a letter to the caliph not to retaliate against his uncle and pardon him. The language of letter offended al- Mansur who wished to be rid of al- Muqaffa. He was executed around 756 to 759 AD by the governor of Basra. He died at Basra in 759 AD.

6. LITERARY CONTRIBUTION OF ABDULLAH IBN AL- MUQAFFA

Ibn al- Muqaffa writes several books on different subjects, which were equally valuable as he advised to conduct themselves with ethic and justice. His more significant contributions *Al-Adab al-Kabir*, *Al Adab al Sagir* and *Risala fi-al-Sahaba* were fulfilled with political advice to the caliph and his country.

Al- Adab al- kabir: Two perceptive works in Arabic are ascribed to Ibn al- Muqaffa, *al- Adab al- Kabir* and *al- Adab al- Sagir*, but only the first, now known as *Kitab al- Adab al- Kabir* can be accepted as his own writing.

Risala fi-al- sahaba: *Risala fi-al- Sahaba* is a short but remarkably percipient administrative text. In less than 5000 words, he discusses specific problems facing the new abbasid regime. The unnamed addressee is identifiable as al- Mansur, who may never have been it. There is no logical arrangement.

7. ETHICS AND MORAL VALUES IN KALILA WA DIMNA

Kalila wa Dimna was originally written in Sanskrit, as *Panchatantra* or *Five Discourses*. *Kalila wa Dimna* a book of practical wisdom. Burzue translated it from Sanskrit into Middle Persian. In the middle eight century royal advisor Ibn al- Muqaffa produced an Arabic version called *Kalila wa Dimna*.

One of the classic works of the Eastern literature, *Kalila and Dimna* is a book full of stories and tales written with advice to assist rulers in state administration. The work, which is inspired by Indian-origin *Panchatantra* tales, was written by Bidpai, Brahman Priest from the Vishnu religious sect, in Kashmir around the 3rd century. The work also known as five books on the art of politics and administration consists of five books on politics and administration each of which is called *tantra*. The book was written in Sanskrit language, and it aims to teach wisdom to rulers by means of animal fables. The main characters in the book are two jackals named *Kalila and Dimna*. The book was named after these main characters. It was entitled as *Karīrak ud Damanak* in Sanskrit language, which descended the later Syriac version in *Kalilag Dammag*, and has taken its present form as *Kalila and Dimna*. The work was penned by Indian philosopher Bidpāy, who is known as Bidpai or Pilpai in the West, and as Bidba or Bidbah in Arabic texts, for the reputed sultan Dābešlim, meaning 'the great king' in Indian language, who rule over many other countries besides India. The fables of *Kalila and Dimna*, which are descended from the original Sanskrit version, have gone beyond the borders of its birth place India, spread across large



countries and communities, and have been subjected to substantial changes in both content and volume by taking on some characteristics in various countries. *Kalila and Dimna* is one of the most widely read, translated and adapted books throughout the history. Indeed, considered as the first fable collection and one of the most important works of the Indian literature, *Kalila and Dimna* has influenced many famous writers, poets and thinkers like Aesop, La Fontaine, Brothers Grimm, and Rumi, and has also become the source of their fable by being translated into the languages of the world.

As a moral and ethical book, *Kalila and Dimna* discuss the way not only rulers but also viziers and other dignitaries must act. The book describes the qualifications of an ideal executive. In general terms, it is about the state, government, management of a state, namely politics. In addition to providing administrators with knowledge about managing the state, this book also contains information necessary for continuation of daily life in a peaceful manner. In this work, popularly known as Bidpai tales, the Indian philosopher Bidpai intended to convey his moral through wisdom inserted into the tales in which animals are the main characters. Owing to the animal heroes in the tales, the author could imply criticisms and suggestions to rulers, courtiers and the society which could not be brought openly. While seeking solutions to people's problems, this book suggests alternative solutions to issues such as corruption, bribery and destruction through animal heroes. In those fables, each animal symbolizes one sort of human. The ruler is symbolized by the lion, while Vizier Jackal *Kalila* is the symbol of honesty and Jackal *Dimna* is the symbol of lie. Apart from this, "the monkey is mettlesome, naughty, disobedient, but charming and intelligent. In addition, the 'donkey' symbolizes pure-mindedness, 'kingfisher' stands for cunning and treacherous people, the 'frog' illustrates quarrelsome and inconsiderate people, and 'crow' and 'mouse' represent shy people. The fables are also a reflection of real life since they reflect various personalities from human life.

In this study, it is aimed to investigate the Eastern classic *Kalila and Dimna* in the framework of the Western theories of values adopted today. Undoubtedly, the work, which has survived for the centuries, will provide a rich educational material in character and values education. Since the book provides wise knowledge for managers as well as the public, it is expected to reveal information covering not only the hosting Eastern geography but the whole world.

8. CONCLUSION

Kalila wa Dimna was originally written in Sanskrit, in Kashmir, in the fourth century AD. In Sanskrit it was called the *Panchatantra*, or *Five Discourses*. It was written for three young princes who had driven their tutors to despair and their father to distraction. Afraid to entrust his kingdom to sons unable to master the most elementary lessons, the king turned over the problem to his wazir, and wazir wrote the *Panchatantra* which concealed great practical wisdom in the easily digestible form of animal fables. Six months later the princes were on the road to wisdom and later ruled judiciously. The book *Kalila wa Dimna* has an important role in Arabic literature. It consists of several lessons having moral stories. The stories discussed in the book are so strong and fascinating that it converted delinquent sons of the king into a gentle and wise man and ultimately he become eligible to rule the kingdom easily. This let us realize easily how beautiful and educative the stories of the books are. The book has become a necessary and integral part of the curricula of the various schools and religious seminaries across the globe- especially in the Arab world.

Ibn al- Muqaffa chanced upon the Pehlavi version of it and read it. He liked it very much and translated it into Arabic in a style so lucid it is still considered a model of Arabic prose. Called *Kalila and Dimna*, after the two jackals that are the main characters, the book was written mainly for the instruction of civil servant. It can be said that it was entertaining that it proved popular with all classes, entered the folklore of the Muslim world and still playing a pivotal role in Arabic literature. The moral aspects of the book made it one of the best books in morality. Reading and acquisition of the moral values provided by the book can lead one to the path of being morally stronger.



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9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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