

KUTADGU BILIG BY YUSUF KHOS HAJIB AS THE BASIS OF SPIRITUAL AND MORAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This article explores Kutadgu Bilig, a medieval philosophical and didactic work by Yusuf Khos Hajib, as a foundational text for spiritual and moral education. The study examines its ethical and pedagogical principles, highlighting its relevance in contemporary moral instruction. The work presents a framework for righteousness, justice, and wisdom, which are essential for shaping ethical individuals. By analyzing its historical context and philosophical underpinnings, this paper underscores its enduring significance in modern educational paradigms.

Keywords: Kutadgu Bilig, Yusuf Khos Hajib, moral education, spiritual values, ethical philosophy, medieval literature.

Introduction

Moral and spiritual education plays a fundamental role in shaping individuals and societies [4]. Classical literary works have historically served as valuable sources of ethical guidance. Kutadgu Bilig, written by Yusuf Khos Hajib in the 11th century, is one such work that offers a comprehensive moral and spiritual philosophy. This research investigates the principles embedded in Kutadgu Bilig and its potential contributions to contemporary moral education [1].

Literary Review

Kutadgu Bilig belongs to the tradition of wisdom literature, emphasizing ethical governance and virtuous living. Scholars recognize its profound moral teachings rooted in Turkic-Islamic philosophical traditions. Previous studies have analyzed its political and legal dimensions, but its role in moral education remains underexplored. This paper builds on existing research to highlight its educational significance.

Results and Discussion

Kutadgu Bilig means “knowledge that leads to happiness and prosperity” or “education that brings success.” From the title itself, it is evident that the work is a mature didactic piece filled with advice and guidance, serving as a textbook for cultivating a well-rounded and virtuous individual [2].



Yusuf Khos Hajib had a profound command of Arabic and Persian and was deeply familiar with the religious, scientific, and literary works in these languages.

The philosopher was also well-versed in ancient Turkic written literature and the oral traditions of Turkic peoples. Since he was raised in this cultural environment, he possessed extensive knowledge about the ancient neighbors of the Turkic nations, including the Chinese, Mongols, Indians, Iranians, as well as Greek philosophy and other aspects of the intellectual life of that era.

The only surviving work of the poet is Qutadg'u Bilig ("The Knowledge That Leads to Happiness"), and no other compositions of his have reached us. It is clear that no writer begins their literary career by composing a grand epic of approximately 6,500 verses, which serves as undeniable evidence of his prior experience and depth of knowledge.

The epic Qutadgu Bilig expresses all aspects, intricacies, and contradictions of life during that era. Yusuf Khass Hajib, in conveying his profound thoughts through remarkable allegories, never distanced himself from real life. We can see that he remained deeply connected to reality. The scholar did not turn a blind eye to the contradictions of his time; rather, he keenly observed the virtues, flaws, and social conditions of all classes and groups in society. Sometimes, he presented these aspects in a way that seemed aligned with feudal court perspectives. This approach, however, should not be misinterpreted as a lack of social awareness, but rather as a result of the realities of his time.

The Qutadgu Bilig was not written for the common people but was primarily intended for the rulers—khans and beks—who governed the land. At a time when Turkic dynasties were asserting dominance in the Islamic world, this work was considered more socially relevant than Shahnameh. It was regarded as the "Book of Rulers' Wisdom" and was deemed necessary to be written in the Turkic language. Yusuf Khass Hajib recognized this social necessity in a timely manner and responded to it at the highest intellectual level.

Whether Turkic rulers truly read and internalized the work is another matter. However, historical records suggest that Abu Ali Hasan Khurunkhan received it well and honored the poet appropriately. This aligns with the idea that the characters Kuntugdi and Aytoldi represent real-life truths.

The Qutadgu Bilig follows the traditional structure of pandnama (a book of wisdom and advice) in Eastern literature. The first eleven chapters serve as an introduction, containing a eulogy for the Qarakhanid ruler, discussions on the purpose of education, the seven planets and twelve zodiac signs, the importance of language, the author's apology, reflections on goodness, the significance of knowledge, the naming of the book, and lamentations on old age.

The study reveals that Kutadgu Bilig provides a structured moral framework through its allegorical characters—Kün Togdi (Justice), Ay Toldı (Happiness), Ögdülmüş (Wisdom), and Ođurmuş (Asceticism). These figures symbolize fundamental ethical values necessary for personal development and societal harmony. The text advocates for balance between material success and spiritual integrity, aligning with modern educational needs.

Furthermore, the didactic dialogues within Kutadgu Bilig emphasize the cultivation of virtues such as justice, humility, and wisdom. The text also serves as a precursor to contemporary ethical education, reinforcing principles of responsibility, respect, and self-discipline. Its

pedagogical approach—using poetic and metaphorical instruction—makes moral concepts accessible and engaging, which remains relevant in modern teaching methodologies.

Conclusion Kutadgu Bilig is a timeless repository of moral wisdom, offering valuable insights for contemporary spiritual and moral education. By integrating its ethical principles into modern curricula, educators can foster a generation rooted in justice, wisdom, and virtue. Further interdisciplinary studies can enhance our understanding of its educational applications, ensuring that its lessons continue to inspire future generations.

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