



## Studying the effect of Aesop's legends and stories on Kalila-wa-Dimna written by Ibn-e-Moghaffa

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**ABSTRACT:** Greek Aesop's legends book is one sample of allegory legends in western literature that has been translated into all known languages in the world. In eastern literature, the book Kalila-wa-Dimna is the invaluable one translated by Ibn-e-Moghaffa into Arabic and some stories and legends were added to the original one to change it into a unique book for Arab world. Regarding the historical evidences about Greece and India and the dominance of Greeks before the composition of Bidpay stories in India, the present research is going to investigate on Aesop's stories and legends to study about the probable effect of it on Kalila-wa-Dimna. Findings in this research showed that at least 12 concepts of Aesop's legends have been represented in Kalila-wa-Dimna with trivial modifications.

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### INTRODUCTION

Studying legends and comparing and assessing the similar legends of different folks and direct and indirect exchanges of them in ancient era are a part of comparative literature field. Allegory legends are short narrations in which most of the characters are animals and natural agents that are symbols of human and events in them are guides for human being in a way and finally an advice is given directly. Folks express and prove their demands and intentions by using proverbs and legends descended from forefathers orally because they neither can present philosophical reasoning nor understand by hearing. As logicians say they are fans of allegory. That is they understand something by assimilating an event with another incident or make others understand it. This method not only is the useful tool for folks in their speeches, but also it is used by even scientists and scholars when they teach folks (Halabi, 1994: 12). Greek Aesop's legends book is one sample of allegory legends in western literature that has been translated into all known languages in the world. In eastern literature, the book Kalila-wa-Dimna has done the same. The main source for Kalila-wa-Dimna was Bidpay's stories that have been collected after Alexander's attack in 323 BC and inevitably it was a representation of viewpoints and the minds of Greeks and Romans in its primary form (Tahsili, 2011: 88). Then Ibn-e-Moghaffa translated into Arabic and added stories and legends to the original text and called it Kalila-wa-Dimna, and it has been presented to Arab world as a unique work. Additionally it should be noted that in Persian moral texts, solely morals in Pahlavi language have not been utilized and their religion was very close to Greek's culture. Greek's culture has long been present in central Asia. Results

of combined thoughts of Greeks' and Alexandria's and Romans' periods were among moral texts in Persian. The perception of the moral hidden in these texts is closer to the first Greek philosophers rather than to Aristotle. The triple areas of morals- thoughts, speeches, and behaviors- are the same morals in Avesta and democratic morals. After reading the advisory books of ancient Persia, we can read some works of Herodotus and Socrates (Foshekor, 1998: 7). Another perception about the similarities of stories and the same origins of Aesop and Kalila-wa-Dimna books is related to Aesop's life. It is a long time that a debate has started between eastern and western researchers that who Aesop was and where Logman was living? Some stated that they are both the same personality because all points referred to by Europeans from Aesop and all sayings about Logman by Islamic scholars more or less coincide (Halabi, 1994: 14). Also it is probable that the intellectual and moral commonalities in different human cultures have resulted in the similarities between stories and anecdotes in the two books. The main goal of the present research is to study the probability of the effect of Aesop's legends and stories on Kalila-wa-Dimna.

### Research questions:

The present study is going to investigate Kalila-wa-Dimna and Aesop's stories and legends to find answers for the following questions:

1) Did Aesop's legends affect Kalila-wa-Dimna which has been a combination of Iranian, Indian, and Greek culture?

2) If Kalila-wa-Dimna has been affected by Aesop's stories, has it changed the stories, characters, events, or the messages of stories?

3) Are there moral and intellectual commonalities in different human cultures?

**Research literature:**

Aesop was a Greek legend composer and fable writer (Dekhoda, 1998: 2) and some scholars have wondered whether there was someone like him or not (Masaheb, 1966: 116/1). It is said that: a series of Aesop's allegories were collected in 5th century BC and the date for the oldest version of it is about 300 BC. It is commonly known that Aesop did not write the stories himself but after him, lots of allegories even related to periods before him were recorded as Aesop's stories; such as the story of a hawk and nightingale or an eagle that was shot and then saw its feather in that arrow and some allegories and fables of that book which were written and modified long after Aesop's era. Additionally, Belanodes – the collector of those stories- added some and claimed to be from Aesop in the year about 1300 AD (Abedin, 1989: 187). Anyway, this work is one of the resources for moral learning among all western nations. Because this book was translated from Greek to Syriac and published in Sham (Damascus), it affected eastern countries a lot too (Hekmat, 1982).

In fact Aesop's life was hidden in fancy and legends. Some say that he was living in about 6th century BC (Abedin, 1989), or he was born in 630 BC and passed away in 560 or 500 BC (Dasanpir, 1943: 72), in other words. In some works, his birth was mentioned to be in 554 BC (200 years after Rome was built) (Tantavi, Bit: 15/125). It has been claimed that he was a slave for some time in Athens and Samus and then he was set free. Some narrations say that he was ugly, stammer, and humpback (Moein, 1963:5/129). But his extreme wisdom and intelligence caused him to be set free finally. Legends have stated Aesop's life to be as follows: after being set free he started to travel and went to Egypt and Babel and traveled to a part of east and finally went to Kerzos's palace. Although he was ugly, his talent led to the absorption of the honor and mercy of the king of Lidia. "Kerzos" gave a mission to him to carry some gifts to 'Delphi' temple. He did so, but since he was really astonished and he hated the feigning of priests in the temple, he sarcastically spoke about them and they revenged him; they put the special cup for gods in the temple in his luggage and then accused him to steal it and sentenced him to death and they throw him down from a rock and killed him (Will Durant, 1986: 2/124). There is another story about Aesop's death which can be summarized as follows: when Aesop was commissioned by Kerzos to take money and gifts to Delphi temple, he took it for himself and thus he was killed after being tortured by the people in Delphi (ibid, 164).

Kalila-wa-Dimna is one of the most renowned books in the world that has entered Iranian culture by Boirzoyeh-e-Tabib (doctor Borzoyeh) from Sanskrit. The original book was in Hindi and was called Panjatentra (5 principles or 5 chapters) which is more or less in accordance with the very first version of Kalila-wa-Dimna and 3 other sections which were derived from 'Mahabharata', national epic of India that is highly valued by Indians. Other sections have some Indian sources and some made by Iranians and maybe the composition of Borzoyeh the son of Azarmehr (the translator) and the original writer of the book in Pahlavi language with some modifications and adding by Ibn-e-Moghaffa and then other writers and translators (Bokhari, 1990).

The main source of Kalila-wa-Dimna is an older book called Panjatentra that has been called the main source of story and legend in the world by some researchers. About the origin of legends, there have been much debates posed. Some relate it to ancient Greece and some attribute it to Indians with stronger reasoning. Of course, both groups believe that these two sources have had a reciprocal effect on each other. But it seems that India has given more to them than it has received. Theodor Benfi the famous orientalist whose translation of Panjatentra led to comparative literature has proved that story and fable were completely belonging to Indians while legend was originated from Greece. Benfi proved that the Buddhists have had an effective interference in inventing this field of study in literature (Mahjoub, 1970).

Three centuries after the translation of Kalila-wa-Dimna into Pahlavi language, Abdollah Ibn-e-Moghaffa, the great translator and scientist, translated it into Arabic. The translation by Ibn-e-Moghaffa was not a pure translation and he followed Borzoyeh-e-Tabib to add stories, myths, thoughts, and imaginations of Iranian folks to present a unique work for the culture world of Arabs. This translation was almost the basic source of translations of Kalila-wa-Dimna into other folks' and nations' languages.

Kalila-wa-Dimna by Ibn-e-Moghaffa has 75 fables and in each section, some stories are told and some are called as the main fables in that section; such as the story of merchant and his sons in section entitled 'Lion and Cow' or the pigeon with a ruff in the section for the friendship between pigeon and mouse and sparrow and deer which are considered as long stories either. Some fables, are minor fables which are retold by the characters of the story such as the fable of an ape and the carpenter in section entitled 'Lion and Cow' and the fable of 'birds and owl in section entitled 'owl and raven' which was among the shorter main fables (Azizi, 1998).

## CONCLUSION

### 1. The end of inappropriate imitation

About end of inappropriate imitation, there are 7 stories in Aesop and 2 stories in Kalila-wa-Dimna as follows:

Aesop (A): a frog saw a cow in the meadow and envied its horn. He swelled itself until all wrinkles in the body disappeared. Each time he swelled, he asked the children whether he is fatter or the cow? His children responded: cow. The frog swelled itself madly until it exploded and died (P: 84).

Aesop (B): a kite had a clear voice at first. It envied the neigh of horses and imitated it. Not only it could not mimic horses' voice, he forgot his basic sounds (P: 126).

Aesop (C): in an assembly of animals, a donkey stood up and danced. All audience applauded him. A camel envied and tried to dance like the donkey but it showed up a funny representation which made the audience angry and they sent him away (P: 100).

Aesop (D): an eagle came down a high rock, and fetched a lamb. This aroused a sense of envy in a raven. It came over a ram to compete with the eagle. But its claws were stuck in the back of the ram. The shepherd saw it, ran and fetched it (P: 116).

Aesop (E): a donkey wore the skin of a lion and went out to make the killer animals afraid. It came across a fox and tried to frighten it. But the fox had heard his cry before and recognized it (P: 159).

Aesop (F): a man had a dog and a donkey. He played with the dog and gave a part of his dinner to it. The donkey envied. He went to the owner and moved up and down before him and his leg hit the owner. The owner became angry and ordered to hit the donkey with wood and tie it in the manger (P: 161).

Aesop (G): a monkey was sitting on a high tree. He saw the fishermen to put their nets in the river. He observed them carefully. When they left the net he came down the tree and tried to mimic them. But as he touched the net, he was trapped and was in danger of being drawn (P: 89).

Aesop (H): a rook tied the feathers of other birds to itself to be selected as the most beautiful bird. It was selected but since others were angry, they removed all its feathers and it became known how ugly he was (P: 119).

Kalila-wa-Dimna (A): a crow saw a partridge and liked the way it walked. He wanted to imitate partridge's walking but could not. He wanted to walk in his own method but it could not do it well, too. He was wondering. He could not find what he wanted and he could not preserve what he had, either (P: 357).

Kalila-wa-Dimna (B): a monkey saw a carpenter who was mounting a horse and going forwards as if he was sitting on a wood and is hitting with two nails on the wood and cuts it. After a while he puts a nail in it.

The carpenter left his work for a while. The monkey went to the wood and mounted it. His face was in nails' side and its tail stuck in wood. When he removed the nail from the crack, its nail stuck within the wood's fissure. The carpenter came and hit him so strongly that it was hurt more than his tail (P: 130).

### 2. Kindness results in kindness

Aesop (A): a mouse was trapped in the body of a sleeping lion. The lion wanted to fetch and eat it. The mouse asked the lion to release it and promised to compensate for his goodness. After a while, the hunters trapped the lion and tied it to a tree. As the mouse heard its cry he went there and chewed the rope to release the lion (P: 75).

Aesop (B): a thirsty ant crawled into a stream and left the coast in the flow of the water. A pigeon saw it in danger and throw a log into the water. The ant came out of the water by using that log and was saved. Some time later a hunter came and stood in a place to hunt the pigeon. An ant stung his feet and its pain forced him to put the arrows and bow on the earth. In this way, the pigeon frightened and flew away (P: 192).

Kalila-wa-Dimna: a mouse and a cat were living in a trunk of a tree. One day the cat was trapped by hunters. The mouse was happy but when he turned back, he saw a jackal and an owl preying and then he was forced to live in peace with the cat. He asked the cat to support him against jackal and owl. In return he promised to chew the trap and save the cat (P: 310).

### 3. Wrong appearance and weak conscience

Aesop: a lion was paying attention to a group of frogs and thought that they are big animals. After a short time he saw a frog coming out of the pond. The lion leaped and crushed it and cried: it is wonderful that a small animal like you creates such a wonderful noise (P: 81).

Kalila-wa-Dimna: a hungry fox was crossing a jungle where a drum was hanging a tree. The wind blew and the branches of the tree hit the drum and a high noise was made. The fox heard the noise and approached it. When he saw the big drum, he thought that this greatness is due to the excess of flesh and its fat. He searched the drum and finally tore it. When he understood the drum was empty inside, he said to himself: the most trivial things are those that have bigger bodies and higher noises than the others (P: 139).

### 4. A serious hostility is not removed easily.

Aesop: a snake curled a peasant child and killed him. The peasant became angry and stood in front of the snake's den to attack it as soon as it comes out. When the snake came out of the hole, the peasant threw the axe but it could not hit the snake and hit the

stone instead of the snake. After that he tried to reconcile with the snake. The snake rejected and said: I can not reconcile with you while I see this crack in the rock. And you can not reconcile with me until you look at your son's tomb (P: 93).

Kalila-wa-Dimna: a prince was interested in a talented bird and its chick. One day the boy killed the chick because he was angry. When the mother bird came and saw the chick it killed it moved forwards to the boy and took his eye out and flew away. The king wanted to deceive it with sympathy but the bird did not accept and said: there is not any goodness in our approaching because you will never forget what I have done for your son and I will never forget what your son has done for my chick (P: 316).

### **5. Greed and avidity, the calamity for wisdom and intellect**

Aesop: a lion became ill and went to reside in a cave. His friend, the fox, deceived an elk and brought it for the lion. The lion attacked the elk but he only could fetch its ears and it ran away. The fox tried to bring the elk back to the lion with his sweet talks. The lion tore the elk but there was not a heart in the body. The fox had stolen it and had eaten it. The fox told the lion: this elk did not have a heart because you can not find an animal that has a heart and comes to the place where a lion lives (P: 102).

Kalila-wa-Dimna: a lion became ill and asked a fox eating his leftovers to bring a donkey for him. The fox deceived a donkey and brought to the lion. The lion attacked but the donkey ran away. The fox brought the donkey to the lion again. The lion attacked the donkey again and tore it and said to the fox: it has been suggested for me to wash myself first to be cured and then eat its ears and heart. The lion went and the fox ate the heart and ears of the donkey. The lion asked for donkey's heart and ears. The fox answered: this donkey did not have a heart and ears. If he had, he would never come back to you after what happened the first time you met him (P: 261).

### **6. Opposing the nature makes corruption.**

Aesop: a turtle asked an eagle to teach him fly. The eagle noted that his nature does not let him to fly. But the turtle persisted and the eagle put it on to its wings and flew up in the sky and then released it to fly. The turtle fell onto a rock and was broken into pieces (P: 111).

Kalila-wa-Dimna: there were two ducks living in a pond and there was a turtle there too. Water became scarce and the ducks thought of migration. Turtle said: I also can not live without water. Can you take me with yourselves too? Ducks said: we will hold the two ends of a wood and you can hold it with your mouth and we will fly together. But if you hear the voices of people you should not make any noise.

When people saw the turtle in the sky they said: it is wonderful that two ducks are carrying a turtle with themselves. The turtle opened his mouth after hearing this and said: I wish your eyes would be blind. But when it opened the mouth, he fell and died (P: 168).

### **7. Prediction causes danger avoidance.**

Aesop: a swallow saw the gum of trees and understood there was a danger. It collected the birds and advised them to remove the gums if they can and if not it is better to shelter in the presence of humans and ask them to forget using plants' gum to fetch birds. Since other birds mocked the swallow to be a liar, it approached human beings. Humans rewarded the swallow for its wisdom and let it to live with them. Other birds were being hunted by human beings and the swallow was living without any fright and terror with human beings (P: 122).

Kalila-wa-Dimna: there were three fish living in a pond. One was smart and the other was smarter than it but the third was weak. Hunters were crossing there and decided to come back there again and hunt these three fish. The thoughtful fish doubted when it saw the hunter and went out of the pond to enter the river. The smart fish waited up to the time the hunters arrived and when they saw them it pretended to die and was floating the water. Hunters caught it and threw in water in a close area. But the weak fish doubted to the extent that the hunters hunted it (P: 153).

### **8. It is impossible to evade fate.**

Aesop (A): Halison is a bird that likes isolation and spends its life on the sea and makes nests on top of rocks to avoid humans follow it. But once it was out to gather something to eat. The sea became windy. A wave crossed the top of his nest and took all the chicks. After seeing this incident Halison said: I seek shelter in the sea for traps in the dry land, but now the sea committed treason on me (P: 132).

Aesop (B): a coward man had a son who was brave and fond of hunting. One night the man saw in his dreams that a lion kills his son. Because he was afraid he built a high palace and put the son in it. To entertain him, the walls were decorated with images from different animals. One day the boy cried on the lion to be the cause of his imprisonment. Then, he put his hand on the picture of the lion. A small nail went into his nail and it resulted in pains and amasses and fever and then the boy died (P: 260).

Kalila-wa-Dimna: a man was carrying a wood. A wolf followed him. When the man saw the wolf he was afraid a lot and ran away to the village next to the river. When he reached the river, the bridge was broken. He went into the water and he did not know how to swim. People saved him and he lied back to a

wall. But suddenly the wall collapsed and killed him (P: 128).

#### **9. Unreasonable work results in decay.**

Aesop (A): a thirsty pigeon saw a water jar in a drawing and thought that it was a real jar. It flew and touched it severely with its wings. Its wings were hurt and it fell on the earth and a passerby caught it (P: 134).

Aesop (B): a dog was crossing a river and had a piece of meat in its mouth. When it saw the picture of him in water, it thought that it is another dog with a bigger piece of meat. Thus, it threw the meat and jumped into the water to rub the meat piece of the other dog. But it could not because there was not any meat piece and lost its own meat, either (P: 170).

Kalila-wa-Dimna: in order to be safe from the lion, the animals of a territory took an animal to it every day as its meal. One day it was the rabbit's turn. Rabbit thought to deceive and take the lion to water well. The lion looked into the well and saw itself in the water. It thought as if it was a lion. It jumped into the well to fight with it and drowned (P: 150).

#### **10. The traitor can not find an opportunity.**

Aesop: a friend of a man put some money in his home and then the man wanted to steal that money. He thought that when his friend comes to get the money back, he will deny receiving it by swearing. He thought that the easiest way is to move to a small village out of the city. But when he reached the gates, he saw a limp man who was going out of the city. He asked him about whom he was and where was he going. The man answered: my name is Swear and I am going to punish reneging people. The man asked: "how much time will it take to come back?" Swear said: "40 years or 30 years". The reneging man did not hesitate and the next day swore that he has never received any money. But he found himself in front of the limp man immediately. While he was forcing him to throw himself down from top of a rock, the man was complaining that you told me you are going to return 30 years later! The limp man answered: "Yes, but if somebody stimulates me I will return the same day" (P: 214).

Kalila-wa-Dimna (A): a merchant had 100000 Kilogram iron. He decided to go on a trip and asked his friend to look after the iron. When the man returned, his friend had sold the iron and had spent the money. He told the merchant: "mice have eaten the iron". The merchant believed him and stayed a night with him. The next day he took his friend's young son and hid him in his house. The man asked the merchant about his son. The merchant said: "when I was approaching you I saw an eagle stealing a child and it took him away". The man cried and said: "have you ever heard such a thing?" The merchant

answered: "in a territory where the mice eat 100000 kilogram iron, it is not a wonder that eagles steal a child". The man regretted and said: "return my son and I will return your iron" (P: 178).

Kalila-wa-Dimna (B): a deceitful man and a stupid one were partners. They found a sack of money and wanted to divide it but the deceitful man had decided to take all the money. He said: "to continue our friendship it is better to take some each of us and hid the rest under the ground somewhere". But he took all the money. One day the stupid man came to him and asked to take the money. But since there was no money, the deceitful man started to complain and accused the stupid one to take the money. They went to the judge and he asked for an observer. The deceitful man told that their observer is a tree located in the place where they have hidden the money. The judge did not believe and ordered to take him to the tree until the next day. The deceitful man went to his father and convinced him to go into the crack of the tree. He accepted. When the judge saw this scene he was astonished more and turned around the tree but saw nothing. He ordered to make a fire around the tree. When the smoke went into the tree, the old man cried and went out of the tree and while he was nearly dead. The old man died and the son came back with his father's corpse. Meanwhile, the stupid man got the money and returned (P: 175).

#### **11. Support of people increases the wealth of charlatans.**

Aesop: a novice cobbler introduced himself to a proficient doctor in an unknown city. The king's servant became ill and the doctor was asked to cure him. The fake doctor made a drug and asked the servant to drink it but after a short period of time he confessed that he is not a doctor and his fame resulted from the foolishness of the folks. The king told his servants: "is not is a madness to ask someone to cure you while nobody has accepted him even for cobbling his shoes" (P: 229).

Kalila-wa-Dimna: a knowledgeable doctor died in a city. A man came and all thought that he was a doctor. The pregnant daughter of the king was ill and was in a great pain. They brought a blind man to subscribe a drug and sent someone to prepare this drug. The stupid doctor came to prepare the medicine. The fake doctor rapidly started to make the medicine. When the king saw his speed, he rewarded him a lot and they gave the drug to his daughter and soon after she died. The king ordered to give the same medicine to the doctor and he died (P: 197).

#### **12. Lucky you if you know your faults.**

Aesop: when Prometheus created humans, he hung two sacks from their throats, one in front full of others' faults and one in back including their own

faults. Because of this people see the faults of others but they never recognize their own faults (P: 237).

Kalila-wa-Dimna: the enemy attacked a man and he was captive with both his wives. One day all three were looking for firewood while they were naked. One of the wives found a cloth and wore. The other wife said: "look at this woman. She is walking naked". The man told her: "alas on you! Why don't you see you are naked and complain about her that has covered herself! (P: 199).

## CONCLUSION

Thinking deeply about the moral messages of Aesop's and Kalila-wa-Dimna's fables show that the moral and behavioral component of human being have not changed much during thousands of years and moral principles have been almost fixed. Still human beings consider pride and greed and envy and cheating and telling lies to be undesirable and invite for seeing the future and doing goodness and being faithful and being contented. Thus, Aesop's and Kalila-wa-Dimna's stories have not become old yet and have preserved their novelty and attractiveness. The message of Aesop is the same message given by the prophets in succeeding centuries to human beings and the content of stories in Kalila-wa-Dimna refer to wisdom, truthfulness, goodness, and desirable human characteristics. Regarding the findings of this research, at least 12 stories with trivial changes in story components (similarity and resemblance in 8 story environments, 8 characters, 11 events, 12 messages, and 12 allegories) from among Aesop's legends, that is somewhat one fifth of the stories have been transferred into Kalila-wa-Dimna. Also by comparing the stories and considering historical priorities, Aesop's legends have been effective in Kalila-wa-Dimna and the presence of Greeks in 300 years BC in India and the developed civilization of Greeks and the spread of their culture in that territory. Thus, it seems that Greek thoughtfulness and literature especially in composing stories and Greek stories have affected Kalila-wa-Dimna composition. Accordingly, the hypothesis in this research, the probability of Bidpay's stories being affected by Aesop's legends is approved due to the long presence of Greeks in India and the cultural dominance of this folk.

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