



## **SOCIAL AND ETHICAL IDEAS IN ABDULLAH IBN MUQAFFA'S "AL-ADAB AL-KABIR"**

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**Abstract.** This article explores the social, ethical, and political ideas presented in Abdullah ibn Muqaffa's "al-Adab al-kabir". It provides a comprehensive analysis of the author's perspectives on moral conduct, civic responsibility, justice, and governance, highlighting their significance within the broader framework of early Islamic thought. The study demonstrates how Ibn Muqaffa combines ethical principles with practical guidance for rulers and members of society, emphasizing the interconnection between personal virtue, social harmony, and political authority. By situating "al-Adab al-kabir" within the tradition of the Islamic siyasatnama literary genre, the article illustrates the continuity of moral-political discourse in classical Islamic literature and its relevance for understanding the ethical foundations of governance and social order. The research also sheds light on the ways in which Ibn Muqaffa's ideas reflect both universal ethical concerns and the specific historical and cultural context of the Abbasid period.

**Keywords:** Abdullah ibn Muqaffa, "al-Adab al-kabir", Islamic ethics, social philosophy, political ethics, governance, siyasatnama, moral philosophy, early Islamic thought.

### **INTRODUCTION.**

Today, the spiritual and moral processes taking place in society, and their connection with the development of civil society in Uzbekistan, are demonstrating their universal significance. Historical experience shows that no nation has been able to preserve its identity without spirituality. In particular, studying the fundamental relationship between spirituality and the idea of national independence, as well as enriching the development of individuals and society in a moral sense, represents a pressing scientific issue in the context of the democratic reforms and socio-political processes currently underway in our country.

From this perspective, since the early years of our independence, great attention has been paid to studying the scientific, philosophical, and rich historical heritage created by Eastern scholars and historians. The government has issued numerous resolutions and decrees to support this work, establishing several research centers aimed at studying these rare manuscripts and thoroughly examining the invaluable ideas and insights they contain. One of these scientific centers is the Center for Eastern Manuscripts under the Tashkent State Institute of Oriental Studies, where the preserved manuscripts are considered a priceless treasure of our nation.

### **MATERIAL AND METHODS.**

Among these valuable works is the "al-Adab al-kabir" by Abu Muhammad Abdullah ibn al-Muqaffa, a scholar, political thinker, and translator who lived and worked in the VIII century during the Arab Caliphate and holds a significant place in Islamic science and philosophy. The ideas presented in "al-Adab al-kabir" are, in essence, rich in valuable insights



and represent one of the rare works of enduring significance. Ibn Muqaffa's "al-Adab al-kabir" ("The Great Book of Morals") addresses ethical, spiritual, social, political, and state governance issues, providing valuable conclusions and recommendations based on a study of various aspects of life.

The work "al-Adab al-kabir" consists of two parts. The first part contains special advice and guidance for caliphs, state administrators, and close ministers and officials. The second part, titled "Friendship," addresses moral and ethical issues, the principles of friendship, and the interactions between rulers and the general population.

Ibn Muqaffa himself described his work as follows: *"In this book, I have attempted to open the doors of etiquette that people need. I have offered guidance on good morals and other complex matters in a manner suitable to human nature, and through its positive aspects, I have tried to inspire love for this book in order to cultivate self-discipline and personal development."*

"Al-Adab al-kabir" is primarily intended for rulers, their heirs, palace officials, and other members of the upper echelons of society, and is written in the form of advice and guidance. The main focus of the work is on ethical and moral issues, as well as the functioning of the state and its interactions with citizens. Ibn Muqaffa emphasizes in this book that a ruler should be energetic yet humble, and should not make hasty decisions concerning his subjects. Citizens, in turn, should be obedient to their ruler but must avoid flattery and sycophancy. The ruler must not harbor feelings of hatred toward anyone, speak falsely, act out of jealousy, or hold grudges against others [3].

## DISCUSSION AND RESULTS.

Through this work, Ibn Muqaffa analyzes various socio-economic problems in society and seeks solutions in his unique manner. The thinker calls upon state officials to achieve moral and ethical perfection and encourages the elimination of vices that hinder social development. Specifically, Ibn Muqaffa discusses the harmful faults and moral deficiencies of officials and high-ranking authorities, their social consequences, and ways to address them. For example:

The "disease of the judge" occurs when a judge becomes a slave to his desires, issues incorrect rulings, and creates conditions for anarchy. To prevent this, it is necessary to assemble legal scholars, establish a comprehensive system of laws, and organize their implementation accordingly.

The "disease of soldiers" is linked to greed and material desire, which leads to bribery. The remedy involves improving the soldiers' living conditions, exempting them from burdensome obligations, and providing timely fair wages.

The main faults of tax collectors include exploiting and oppressing the people. To remedy this, Ibn Muqaffa recommends promoting tax laws among the population, educating each member of society about this area, and thereby eliminating opportunities for corruption.

Through these prescriptions, Ibn Muqaffa seeks to cultivate a morally upright administration while mitigating the social ills that threaten the welfare and stability of the state.

According to Ibn Muqaffa, a ruler should never swear an oath to prove the correctness of his statements:

*"It is not appropriate for the king to become angry, for power cannot coexist with wrath. It is also not appropriate for him to lie, because no one can compel him to act against his will"*.



Anger is unbecoming for a ruler, as authority cannot coexist with rage. Similarly, deception is inappropriate, because no one can force the ruler to act contrary to his own intentions.

*“He should not be stingy, for he is among the least likely to fear poverty. He should not be given to swearing, for no one can doubt the truth of his words”.*

Benevolence and generosity must guide the ruler, as he is among the few individuals free from the threat of poverty. Swearing is unnecessary, since no one can question whether his words are true or false.

In “al-Adab al-kabir”, Ibn Muqaffa pays particular attention to the ruler’s advisors. Many young rulers, due to their impulsiveness and zeal, may pursue misguided policies. Learned and wise advisors serve as physicians for the ruler’s soul, helping him remain free from the “diseases” of pride, ambition for fame, cruelty, greed, and tyranny.

These advisors are responsible for cultivating in the ruler a spirit of nobility and generosity. Under their guidance, the ruler should act with care and compassion toward ordinary citizens and enact just laws. Only a knowledgeable and wise advisor can prevent the ruler from making harmful or unjust decisions.

The advisor’s guidance must be authoritative for the ruler, carrying mandatory weight that cannot be ignored. Mastery of the art of eloquence is particularly useful for advisors, as Ibn Muqaffa notes:

*“If you wish your words to be accepted, ensure that your opinion is correct and not mixed with any personal desire or bias. A correct opinion, free from flaws, will be accepted even by your enemy; but if it is tainted by personal passion, your own child or friend will reject it”.*

Thus, the effectiveness of the ruler’s governance depends not only on his personal virtues but also on the moral and intellectual guidance of capable advisors, who protect him from error and ensure justice for society.

Ibn Muqaffa envisions the ruler as a person endowed with moral virtues. From his perspective, political activity cannot be conceived apart from ethical considerations. Anyone aspiring to lead the people must first focus on self-cultivation, presenting themselves as a morally upright and trustworthy guide. The ruler’s behavior must be exemplary, and their path to authority should be chosen carefully. Orders and decrees should be thoughtfully considered, and actions should reflect integrity. Just as wise words please the ear, wise actions are pleasing to the heart. A person who cultivates themselves properly earns greater respect and authority within society.

“Al-Adab al-kabir” is rich with ideas aimed at personal perfection and moral elevation. Research indicates that the work also provides detailed information about the internal politics and culture of the Sasanian state. Numerous passages reveal the influence of Greek philosophy. For example, the discussion of various contrasting emotions, as well as the need to preserve one’s health and life, echoes Epicurean thought. Furthermore, Ibn Muqaffa’s emphasis on the learned person valuing intellectual and moral pleasure over sensual enjoyment reflects the influence of Aristotle and Plato.

Compared to his other works, “al-Adab al-kabir” is broader in scope and more substantial, occupying a unique place not only in the history of Arab-Muslim philosophical thought but also within the intellectual traditions of the broader Eastern world. Ibn Muqaffa composed this work after deeply studying Greek, Persian, Indian, and Arab cultures and philosophical views,



and was influenced by them. The work encourages the study and analysis of ancient intellectual models, using their lessons to advance societal development. It serves as a unique guide for rulers, offering valuable reflections on the art of governance. Ibn Muqaffa stresses that the study of political rule must be inseparable from moral principles.

As noted by the Arab researcher Yusuf Abu Khalaqa, “al-Adab al-kabir” demonstrates examples of ancient wisdom, as the author was deeply fascinated by Greek, Persian, and Indian scholarship and conducted serious studies of these cultures.

#### **CONCLUSION.**

In conclusion, Ibn Muqaffa’s “al-Adab al-kabir” emphasizes that political governance cannot be effectively carried out without ethical and moral principles. A person aspiring to rule must master political and military skills while also being morally and spiritually cultivated. The insights, recommendations, and guidance presented in the work play an essential role in educating individuals to become responsible members of society and in fostering their moral and spiritual development.

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