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The Evolution of the Word "Kherad" (Wisdom) From the Avesta to Kalila and Dimna

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Abstract

The concept of "wisdom" (*kherad*) has undergone significant transformations throughout Iranian civilization. Originally rooted in Zoroastrian thought as the divine plan of Ahura Mazda, *kherad* encompassed reason, rationality, and thought. However, after the advent of Islam, while the term retained its divine associations, its meanings began to shift.By analyzing key texts, including the *Avesta*, *Menog-i Khrad*, *Shahnameh*, the poetry of Rudaki and Shahid Balkhi, as well as *Qabusnameh* and *Kalila and Dimna*, this study traces the semantic evolution of *kherad*. The findings reveal a gradual departure from its sacred origins. By the 6th century AH (12th century CE), in works such as *Kalila and Dimna*, the term had acquired connotations of trickery and deception.During this period, "wisdom" and the "wise man" no longer strictly denoted sacred virtues. Instead, wisdom became a pragmatic tool for achieving personal goals, and the "wise" individual was redefined as one who pursued objectives by any means necessary. This semantic shift reflects broader changes in societal values and intellectual discourse. Given the centrality of *kherad* in Iranian culture, its transformation offers critical insights into the cultural.

Keywords: Evolution of wisdom; wise man; *Avesta*; *Shahnameh*; *Kalila and Dimna*; the sacred.

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