



## Review Article

# Reflection Of Good Governance in Kutadgu Bilig

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### ABSTRACT

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The Qarakhanid dynasty contributed two significant scientific works to humanity: Yusuf Khas Hajeb's "Kutadgu Bilig" and Mahmud Al-Kashghari's "Diwan Lughat al-Turk." Kutadgu Bilig is an illustrious tome replete with insights on state administration, politics, utopian ideals, philosophy, and science. Moreover, it functions as an educational narrative that retains significant value in contemporary times. This book, authored for the Kagans, imparts teachings that encompass the secrets of knowledge, philosophy, ethics, and societal regulations. Composed a millennium ago, these two volumes, regarded as invaluable artifacts, have endured through the ages. Kutadgu Bilig thoroughly examines the administrative conditions, organizational structure, social hierarchies, and customs of the Qarakhanid period. The book examines politics, state administration, administrative organization, and traditions of the Qarakhanid period through an engaging narrative, informed accounts, and delightful tales.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

During the late 4th and 5th centuries AH (10th and 11th centuries CE), three prominent empires governed our region: the Samanid Empire, the Ghaznawid Empire, and the Qara-Khanid Empire. Our professors and international experts have performed comprehensive studies on the Samanid and Ghaznawid empires. Nevertheless, minimal research has been conducted on the Qara-Khanid Empire, its domain, and its administration by our researchers, rendering this empire very obscure in our nation. This may be attributed to the dynasty's governance being limited to Eastern Turkestan, excluding present-day Afghanistan. The dynasty, historically referred to as the Qara-Khanids, Il-Khanids, Al-e Afrasyab, and Al-e Khaqan, possesses profound ties to our culture and literature. The monarchs and nobility of this dynasty not only fostered the advancement of the Turkish language and literature but also exhibited considerable interest in the evolution of the Persian Dari language and literature (Kitabi, 1992). The late Professor Dr. Ahmad Jawid noted that numerous Persian-speaking poets and writers, including Amir al-Sho'ara' Am'aq Bukhari, Rashidi Samarqandi, Lol'o'i, Najibi Farghani, Najd Sagharchi, Ali Banidhi, Ali Sepehri, Pesar-e Darghush, Jawhari, Pesar-e Tisha, and Ali Shatranji, were patrons in their courts. Mukhtar Ghaznawi, Suzani Samarqandi, and Razi al-Din Nishapuri were also beneficiaries of support and patronage from the Qara-Khanid emperors, ministers, and nobility (Jawid, 2011, p. 123)

Yusuf Hajeb lived in the second half of the 11th century CE, when the Qara-Khanid Empire had consolidated its power, borders expanded, and rulers conquered new territories. Their centers of power were in Kashgar and Ordukent. To the north

lay Balasaghun (Koz Ordu), and to the west lay Samarqand, which were major cities of enormous trade and political power (Hafizi, 1926, p. 124).

This newly established empire, which was one of the first local states after the Islamic era, required a strong system of governance. During this period, the compilation of "Kutadgu Bilig" took place, a code and dictionary that delineated principles of state administration, political policies, ethical principles, rules, and regulations (Khas Hajeb, 2015).

Numerous chapters of "Kutadgu Bilig" address the political and social challenges of the 11th century CE during the Qara-Khanid era. The author examines government, governance, sovereignty, the attributes of an optimal government, the responsibilities of courtiers, the many social classes and their societal functions, and the interactions between courtiers and diverse segments of the populace. A segment of "Kutadgu Bilig" discusses the king's appointment of province governors and the selection process, highlighting the persistent historical issue of despotic rulers and subjugated populations. (Rasekh, 2002). The imposition of exorbitant taxes on the impoverished, intended not for the treasury's benefit but for the personal enrichment of regional governors and monarchs, has consistently constituted a significant burden on the populace, leading to their tyranny. Numerous chapters of "Kutadgu Bilig" address the political and social concerns of the 11th century CE during the Qara-Khanid era. The author examines government, governance, sovereignty, the attributes of an optimal government, the responsibilities of courtiers, the many social classes and their societal functions, and the interactions between courtiers and diverse segments of the populace. A segment of "Kutadgu Bilig" discusses the king's

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## 2. Statement of the Problem

Literature, in all its forms, mirrors life and articulates the values, norms, and traits that underpin both individual and communal existence. Literary works occasionally relate to life from an ethnic or national viewpoint, at times from an emotional perspective, and at other instances, via rationality and ethics, they serve to educate and guide audiences. "Kutadgu Bilig" is a work that embodies existence through the lens of reason and ethics. In this significant work, Yusuf Hajeb skilfully represents the progressive social, political, ethical, educational, governance, and global perspectives of himself and his day. He also offers a distinctive collection of historical knowledge relevant to that period, encompassing ethnography and further views. Yusuf Khas Hajeb commenced this work at Balasaghun and completed it in Kashgar, dedicating it to the Qara-Khanid monarch, Bughra Khan Abu Ali Hasan Ibn-i Arslan Khan. His work garnered him recognition and distinction, leading Bughra Khan to confer upon him the title "Khas Hajeb" and to honor him.

## 3. Research Background

Researchers have conducted extensive research on "Kutadgu Bilig," also known as the "Turkish Shahnameh," in foreign languages, particularly in Turkish. However, despite its fame and its treatment of important political and social topics, this work remains largely unknown in our country.

## 4. Necessity and Importance of Research

As mentioned, Yusuf Khas Hajeb's book reflects fascinating topics about governance, the relationship between the people and the government, their rights and obligations, in a breadth and clarity rarely found in other books.

## 5. Yusuf Khas Hajeb's Teachings in Kutadgu Bilig

Among the educational texts written in our cultural sphere, there are many that contain the stories of kings, princes, and nobles, as well as political and social issues. However, some of these works stand out because their authors were themselves involved in these matters, like Abu al-Fadl Bayhaqi (the secretary during the reigns of Sultan Mahmud Ghaznawi and Sultan Masoud Ghaznawi), author of the "Tarikh-i Bayhaqi," and 'Unsur al-Ma'ali Kaykawus, one of the princes of the Ziyari dynasty, author of the "Qabusnameh." As the sultan's secretary or a ruler, themselves, the authors of these books gained firsthand knowledge of the intricate details and nuances of state affairs, incorporating numerous political and social points into their works. Such literary figures have also existed in the history of Turkish literature, one of whom is Yusuf Khas Hajeb Balasaghuni. From this esteemed man, we have received the valuable book "Kutadgu Bilig," which some have translated as "The Knowledge of Happiness." This invaluable work, according to Dr. Jawad Hayat, is the first Turkish poetic work after Islam, containing a total of 6645 verses. The work concludes with the inclusion of three Qasidas (124 verses) and 173 Do-bayti verses in the style of old Turkish poetry (Hay'at, 2001).

"Kutadgu Bilig," which some have also called the "Turkish Shahnameh," is one of the most important epic texts and a beautiful example of Middle Turkish literature. Recent semantic and etymological studies have proven the inaccuracy of

translating it as "The Knowledge of Happiness." In Old Turkish, "Qut" comes from the root "Qut-admaq," which means "to govern," and it is one of the oldest political and cultural terms in the Turkish language. PreIslamic texts also use this term. For example, the powerful Turkic ruler, Mete Khan, in his letter to the Khan of China, refers to himself as "Tangri Qouti Tanhu" (Khan whose authority is from God).

Moreover, "Kutadgu Bilig" devotes two-thirds of its topics to the discourse between rulers and their ministers on matters like ethics, government, and politics. Therefore, if we translate "Kutadgu Bilig" as "The Science of Happiness," there will be a contradiction between the content and the name of the work. It appears that "Qut" is the exact equivalent of "imperium" in Roman civil law, according to the book "Kutadgu Bilig" and older texts. Therefore, we should translate "Kutadgu Bilig" as "The Science of Acquiring Power" or "The Knowledge of State Governance".

The knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom of Yusuf Hajeb are obvious in this esteemed book. During his boyhood and youth, he acquired specialized instruction in his father's court, gaining proficiency in riding, archery, and swimming, as well as knowledge from the intellectuals and educators of his era. In addition to his proficient writing, he possesses remarkable knowledge on all subjects within the book, encompassing governance, warfare, equestrianism, military affairs, literature, medicine, astronomy, music, commerce, and more. The author's integrity, insight, and kindness are evident to the reader throughout the examination of the book. His work exemplifies the insights of an individual with profound experience in personal, political, and social realms, articulated with exceptional clarity and veracity. Moreover, his humility, prominently displayed throughout the book, exemplifies the noble character of our forebears and their profound commitment to knowledge, peace, friendship, tolerance, and harmonious interactions with neighbors. These attributes illustrate that Yusuf Khas Hajeb was a person of significance and erudition, a pragmatist and moderate, an aficionado of human behavior, possessing a profound understanding of individual and social psychology, a political tactician, and a visionary with extensive insight.

The author possesses extensive expertise in mathematics, which he imparts to his readers. He commences with addition and subtraction, proceeds to multiplication and division, and subsequently advances to square roots and exponents, encompassing algebra, equations, and various other mathematical subjects. He subsequently examines metals such as gold, copper, silver, and iron, the transmutation of elements, their combinations, colors, various animals including quadrupeds, reptiles, and beasts, as well as avian species and terrestrial fauna, encompassing those that inhabit land, subterranean environments, the air, and aquatic realms, thereby offering the reader captivating and intriguing insights.

Yusuf Khas Hajeb illustrates his profound knowledge of nature and the supernatural by articulating his concepts of health and disease across the human lifespan. He examines subjects like human temperaments, various natures, temperamental extremes, blood and veins, nerves, and other modern medical insights. He subsequently explores the spiritual realm, addressing reason and intellect, awareness and comprehension, emotions and sentiments, and initiates the instruction of philosophy through clear and elegant illustrations. He elucidates the methods to refine reason and intellect, so enhancing comprehension and perception from both scientific and philosophical viewpoints. He populates his work with the reflections of eminent philosophers from China to Egypt. By

referencing these prominent individuals, he familiarizes audiences with their concepts while occasionally critiquing their statements. He explores the realm of religion, attempting to link it with philosophy. He examines concepts from both Eastern and Western civilizations, including China, Iran, Rome, and Egypt.

### 6. Yusuf Hajeb's Thoughts on Governance

Yusuf Hajeb has an impressive knowledge of different countries, speaking of Balasaghun to Khorasan, Rome and Greece to Syria and Egypt. He discusses the culture and language of nations, poetry and stories, literary arts, the culture of the commoners and the elite, and thousands of other topics, presenting his work as a unique masterpiece to humanity. "Kutadgu Bilig" is also a treatise on politics. In this regard, Khas Hajeb has delved into the sayings and writings of thinkers from China to Egypt, and then turns to his own people, teaching beautiful lessons, especially to the "Elik" (the ruler of the Turks).

Governance is a subject that can be found in many books, especially after the Renaissance; however, centuries before these European thinkers, Khas Hajeb had already put forth these ideas and written down beautiful laws. His thoughts on this subject can be compared and analyzed not only with those of these great figures, but also with those of his contemporaries.

The majority of the book deals with state affairs and politics, discussing the principles of statesmanship. He talks about the laws needed for society, the social hierarchy, different professions, superiors and subordinates, ruler and ruled, the ranks within the government, different classes and strata of society, and the culture of these classes. He writes about the laws issued by the Kagans. He strives to write down laws that were written by the philosophers of China, Egypt, and Greece, and that are in line with religion. He tries to explain laws that do not conflict with philosophy and human reason, and are more compatible with human nature. He believes that "Bilig" or "Yasa" (law) is necessary for the implementation of justice. The "Elik" (ruler) is also a ruler who, with his righteous "Bilig" (knowledge), implements justice in his ideal utopia, where everyone stands in their true place based on their merit and wisdom, and relationships are governed by justice and a divinely ordained order. He discusses the relationship between justice and righteousness, challenging the ideas and thoughts of philosophers to eliminate any remaining weakness in justice. The relationship between the ruler and the people of the country, the ruler and the different strata of society, even the ruler and the hierarchy within the government, are topics that occupy the majority of the book. In his work, the situation of the time, the position of the ruler and statesmen in times of peace and war, famine and prosperity, etc., are discussed. Here, in addition to the performance of the Kagan, the behavior of ministers, advisors, and other statesmen are also scrutinized, and the characteristics of each are identified. The author speaks on these matters as a thoughtful philosopher and a capable thinker.

There is no doubt that the book "Kutadgu Bilig" reveals a valuable account of the culture and civilization of the ancient Turks, and it remains valuable and useful even after a thousand years. These ideas were still being discussed in Europe in subsequent centuries, finding many supporters, while these ideas were put forward centuries earlier by Yusuf Balasaghuni.

### 7. Structure and Subject of the Work

"Kutadgu Bilig" begins with a supplication to God, followed by praise for the Prophet Muhammad Peace be upon him and the first four Caliphs of Islam. After that, it describes spring and praises Bughra Khan Harun. Then, it talks about the seven stars, the twelve constellations, knowledge, reason, and language.

Then, it gets to the main topic, entering into a dialogue between four characters, each representing a reality or truth:

- 1) Gun Doghdi (Sunrise) symbolizes the right path and justice.
- 2) Ay Doldi (Full Moon) represents happiness, fortune, and success.
- 3) Ogdolmish (Reason and Logic).
- 4) Ozghormish (Destiny).

These names also happen to be the names of four ancient Turkic heroes. (Hay'at,2001)

A ruler named "Gun Doghdy" becomes renowned for establishing justice. "Ay Doldi," who is a wise and prudent person with knowledge, excellence, and understanding, hears of his fame and, after enduring many hardships and difficulties, comes to serve him. The ruler, or "Elik," thoroughly assesses him and chooses him as his minister, entrusting him with all matters of state. During his time as minister, Ay Doldi leads the people and the realm towards peace, comfort, prosperity, progress, and advancement.

Gun Doghdi is a just, wise, and knowledgeable king who discusses social issues and the governance of his country with his wise and intelligent minister, Ay Doldi. They talk about happiness, justice, and the benefits of speech. It becomes clear that the king represents justice and the minister represents happiness, but as always, happiness is short-lived, and the minister dies. However, the sultan appoints his protégé (Ozghormish) in his father's place and governs with him.

The young Ogdolmish enters the service of the ruler and, in a very short time, attracts the king's attention with his intelligence and wit. Soon, like his father, he becomes one of the ruler's closest companions and is entrusted with the administration of the kingdom. He, like his father, provides valuable services to the people and the government, and the king is happy with his presence and lives in peace of mind. Gradually, the affairs of state increase. He speaks with Ogdolmish about politics, knowledge, justice, chivalry, and human desires, and they reach the following conclusion: the king's entourage follows him, and if the king is not bad, he will not gather bad people around him. The king tells Ogdolmish, "You are the reason for the establishment of justice and happiness in the country. The world is impermanent; what will I do if I lose you as well?" Therefore, he speaks of hiring capable and competent people like him. He believes one of his relatives is suitable for this job and recommends his employment to the king. This person's name is Ozghormish, and despite his exceptional merit, greatness, and excellence, he has left the world and sought refuge in a mountain, contemplating and drawn to the afterlife; therefore, he is unwilling to stay with the sultan. The ruler orders his minister to summon him. Ogdolmish goes to him and tells him about everything that has happened between him and the ruler, sharing it with him. Ozghormish does not agree to his request, and Ogdolmish returns alone from the mountain. The king sends his minister to him twice more, saying, "This time, I will not summon Ogdolmish to service, I only want him to come to court and share his thoughts with me, and if he is not willing, I will go to him myself, listen to his words, and learn from him, receiving advice and counsel from him, and this will not harm Ozghormish in any way." This time, the wise Ozghormish agrees to go to the ruler's court and tells Ogdolmish, "Until now, the ruler has summoned me for his own benefit, now things are different. He will not come to me; I will go to him."

They come before the ruler and are warmly welcomed. During the meeting between the ruler and the wise Ozghormish, numerous topics are discussed, with many questions and

answers exchanged. Ozghormish also informs the sultan of his national, moral, and human duties towards his people and his country, so that he may make both this world and the next good. After the meeting, Ozghormish returns to the mountain. In his old age, Ogdolmish goes to his friend Ozghormish and seeks advice on whether to continue serving in the court or leave the world like him. Ozghormish considers continuing worldly affairs to be necessary for him, deeming worldly matters that benefit the people as acts of charity and reward. He advises him to continue his government service. After some time, Ozghormish falls seriously ill and calls for Ogdolmish. His friend is deeply saddened to see him. The wise Ozghormish advises the minister to return to his work, and after his departure, he passes away. In this way, Ogdolmish continues his activities, and the story ends with this event (Mallayev, 1999).

### 8. Power and Obligation: Ruler and Subject

In " Kutadgu Bilig " the culture and mindset of the intellectual class of the Qarakhanid society are clearly illuminated. In this work, Yusuf Khas Hajeb speaks extensively about the way of governance, the relationship between the king and his subjects, the rights of the subjects, and their responsibilities. In his opinion, the true heir to the government is the "Beg" (king), who is chosen for rule according to the will of God.

#### Bayat kimga birsa bu Beglik ishi

#### Birur og kongul kur ol ishgato shi

(Whoever becomes a Beg, this is his duty He becomes wise and takes care of that duty).

However, in his view, the "Beg" should not boast or shirk from serving the people. The king has greater duties and responsibilities compared to other officials, and he must fulfill these duties honorably. In his view, these duties include: governing the country with wisdom and proper judgment, working to make the country prosperous and flourishing, ensuring peace and well-being for the people, enacting laws and regulations that are beneficial and in favor of the people, implementing them properly, and supporting scholars, intellectuals, and others.

According to Khas Hajeb, the "Beg" must be wise, prudent, knowledgeable, and possess good character and manners. Only then can he fulfill these duties. In his opinion, wise and experienced people are suitable for rulership:

#### Bilig birla beykler budon bashladi

#### Okush birla il-gun ishin ishledi

Translation: "The Beks became the heads of the people with knowledge, and they worked for the people with reason."

Yusuf Khas Hajeb, in his work, extensively discusses the relationship between ruler and subject, addressing the ruler with these words:

*"Ra'yat haqqi bar sening de kur uch  
Bo haqqi otagil uzun qilma kuch..."*

(O ruler! People have three rights over you. Fulfill these rights and do not oppress yourself.)

The first right of the people over you is to raise the value and importance of money; that is, to increase the purity of gold and silver and maintain its price. The second right of the people over you is to establish real, reliable, and solid laws and regulations for them. This is what the people want and expect from you, and they welcome it. The third right of the people over you is to protect the roads from bandits and saboteurs and keep the people safe and comfortable.

Yusuf Khas Hajeb, in return for these three demands of the people from the ruler, states three rights of the ruler over the people:

"O leader of the people! After fulfilling the rights that the people have over you, you are also entitled to three rights over the people:

1. Every law that you enforce, all people must follow without question.
2. The taxes that the government imposes on them, they must pay into the state treasury without delay, on time, and generously.
3. All the people must be friends with your friends and enemies with your enemies.

**Ra'yat uza ol sening uch haqqing  
Tilago olardan, sen uch qolghaqing  
Biri yerlighingni agir tusalar  
Niku ir sata irkin ani qilsalar...**

(People have three rights over you  
They demand them, and you have three obligations  
If someone is burdened by your rule  
Let them be happy, and free them)

In the opinion of Yusuf Khas Hajeb, while the good character and manners of the ruler are undoubtedly valuable and useful, laws and rules are more useful and valuable:

**Adi edgu beglik taqi edgurak  
Turur, ol ani tuz yuretgu kirak  
(Becoming a Beg, becoming a leader, it is a duty  
To maintain it, to govern it justly)**

"Kutadgu Bilig" is one of the most exceptional works that provides a wealth of information about the social life of the Qarakhanid period (5th century AH). In this work, the author divides people into city and village dwellers, residents and nomads, different classes and strata, and speaks about farmers, ranchers, merchants, scholars, commanders and soldiers, and artists, describing their roles in life and society, and the connection between them. He discusses their duties, responsibilities, actions, behavior and conduct, the interactions of each of the officials and strata of society, and offers good advice regarding their relationships. For instance, concerning his connection with the farmers, he states:

**"Be close to the farmers and speak to them gently, be open-minded!"**

In the same way, he speaks about relationships with ranchers:

**Qatiligil, qirighil, batir hem icher  
Kunilik uzala tiriklik kicher  
Niku qonsa birgil, kirak bolsa al  
Kuni kurdum ushbu qut we bilmas al**

(Be with them, be close, feed and drink them, live with truth and honesty; give what they ask of you. If you need something, take it from them. Truly, these people never know deceit and trickery.)

### 9. Guidance and Governance: Ensuring People's Comfort

In the view of this thoughtful poet, the ruler cannot manage state affairs alone. In this endeavor, he must be assisted by the rulers and officials who are attached to the court, those who possess extensive expertise and experience in these matters, and those who are wise, prudent, and hold a high social position. He places great value on the loyalty, honesty, and competence of the government officials and employees, describing each member of

the court separately, from the minister to the cook, listing their duties and qualities, and offering advice to the ruler in these matters. For instance, in his view, if the minister, as the permanent advisor and assistant of the king, executes the affairs of the realm, and the commander-in-chief arranges military affairs, and the affairs of the country are in their hands, if both of them work together and execute matters together, no force can penetrate the work of the state. One of them with the pen, and the other with the sword, bring order to the country:

**Wazir ol, ikkinchi subshlar ilim**

**Birisi qilich tutti, biri qalam**

**Bu il baghi, urke bu ikki tuzar**

**Bu ikki biriksa, oni kim uzar**

(Khas Hajeb, 2015)

Translation: "First, the minister and then the commander of the army, one with the pen and the other with the sword, bring order to the state. If both of them are united, no force can break this order."

Yusuf Hajeb, besides the minister and the commander-in-chief, also discusses the virtues and good qualities of other government employees, the most important of which are: Ishik Aghasi (Chamberlain), Agichi (Treasurer), Ishbashchi (Head of Staff) and others. Even in his work, he speaks about the good qualities of an Ilchi (Ambassador) as follows:

**Qumugh til biler irse achsa tilak**

**Qumugh khat ni bilasa bitsa elik**

"Many things are done through the Elchi (Ambassador), important tasks are accomplished through them. The envoy must be a wise, perceptive, knowledgeable, eloquent, and prudent person. He should understand the content and aspects of speech well so that through him, ruined works can be rebuilt. The envoy should be a truthful, well-fed, and content person, that is, not greedy or covetous. He must be a reliable and honest person. Those who are weak-willed are unsuitable for ambassadorship, and such people should not be chosen for envoy (ambassadorship). The envoy must be able to read and memorize writings and understand the meaning and meaning of the books he reads. His awareness comes to him when he reads, writes, listens to speech, and makes himself wise through its benefit. He must be able to distinguish borders from each other, learn all languages, and have the courage to speak..." (Mallayev, 1999)

## 10. Conclusion:

In summary, Yusuf Khas Hajeb's work examines diverse social classes and strata, governance methodologies, and the dynamics between the subject and the ruler, while also addressing the consolidation of governmental authority, advocacy for independence, and the formation of communication and diplomatic relations with other nations.

This work is essential for its relationship with ethical and pedagogical concerns. Consequently, "Kutadgu Bilig" serves as both a literary and poetic masterpiece as well as a treatise on political, administrative, and social sciences. "Kutadgu Bilig" is a treatise about intellectual and artistic realms. Balasaghunli asserts throughout the text: Exercise wisdom, acquire knowledge, embody humanity, and enhance yourselves... The author's employment of diverse terminology in this work, such as wisdom, reason, path, light, chivalry, culture, spirit, and knowledge, is purposeful. He employs numerous words with precision and particular emphasis. He articulates elevated aspirations through this reiteration and emphasis. He implores his audience to contemplate and introspect on these domains. Through the incorporation of proverbs, brief narratives, terminology, and quotations from esteemed philosophers and literary giants across various cultures, he seeks to impart his sagacious insights to his audience and facilitate the pursuit of human happiness. He perceives humans not solely as beings for consumption and indulgence, but rather derives pleasure and delight from elevated emotions such as love, contemplation, and transcending the animalistic state to attain the heights of humanity. He derives satisfaction from assisting others, advancing human growth, cultivating virtuous thinking, administering justice among individuals, ruling the nation with equity and fairness, and promoting camaraderie and sincerity among nations. To impart these elevated concepts, he references the aphorisms of prominent individuals in literature, art, philosophy, and the adages of previous generations. His terminology encompasses numerous proverbs and idioms, and this compilation of verses is a lasting repository of Turkic literature for the global audience.

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