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# A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEADING THEMES IN UZBEK AND TURKISH FOLK PROVERBS

Shohista Soatboyevna Atajonova

Postgraduate Researcher, Urgench State University of Pedagogy

### Abstract

This article investigates the main themes of Uzbek and Turkish folk proverbs through a comparative analysis. Key themes such as family and kinship, social relations, friendship, labor and honesty, as well as fate and philosophical reflections are examined through examples from Uzbek and Turkish proverbs. While similarities rooted in shared Turkic origins are highlighted, distinctions arising from national and cultural characteristics are also discussed.

**Keywords:** Folklore, Uzbek proverbs, Turkish proverbs, social relations, moral values, comparative analysis.

### Introduction

Proverbs are among the oldest genres of folklore worldwide. They provide insights into the mentality of different peoples, as well as their worldview and ways of thinking. Linguistic dictionaries define a proverb as “a concise, figurative, and wise expression created by the people based on life experience, usually conveying moral advice” [1, p. 456]. As social life, lifestyles, and worldviews evolve, the semantic nuances of proverbs are also refined.

Uzbek and Turkish proverbs reflect centuries of social experience, ethical norms, worldview, and aesthetic sensibilities of Turkic peoples in a concise, memorable, and figurative form. As a distinct manifestation of folklore, proverbs reveal a society’s life strategies, hierarchy of values, models of labor and livelihood,

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family and kinship systems, concepts of authority and justice, as well as the metaphorical potential and rhetorical techniques of language.

The closeness of Uzbek and Turkish paremiology can be explained, on the one hand, by shared Turkic historical roots, ancient nomadic and semi-nomadic cultural layers, and Central Asia–Anatolia cultural exchange; on the other hand, each society’s unique socio-political development, economic structure, and regional ecological conditions have resulted in thematic shifts and semantic emphases in proverbs. Therefore, analyzing the leading themes in Uzbek and Turkish folk proverbs remains a relevant scholarly task.

To identify the main themes in these proverbs, attention must first be paid to their functional nature. Proverbs often convey evaluative judgments, moral conclusions, or social guidance concisely. Studies analyzing the social functions of folklore emphasize the educational role of proverbs. They mediate conflicts, quickly remind individuals of socially accepted norms, and guide listeners toward specific decisions [2, p. 336].

In Uzbek and Turkish societies, high value is placed on family relationships, labor, and skill; social forms such as neighborliness and hospitality are important; and concepts of fate, patience, and gratitude form the foundation of religious and ethical values. These aspects are also reflected in the leading themes of proverbs. One of the most prominent themes is social relationships, particularly family and kinship. Proverbs embody social values, transmitting them across generations, connecting the youth to the nation’s intellectual and linguistic heritage, history, and ancestors, while encouraging the enrichment of past experiences with new insights.

Social values in Uzbek and Turkish proverbs can be grouped around family, kinship, neighborliness, friendship, and ethical conduct. Folklorist M. Temirova notes, “Proverbs cover various aspects of social life. They reflect the history, beliefs, worldview, and modes of thinking of the general Turkic peoples” [3, p. 131].

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Many proverbs focus on family, marriage, and continuity of generations. In both Uzbek and Turkish traditions, the family—including parents and children—is considered sacred, and this value is transmitted across generations through proverbs. Family is portrayed as the foundation of society and a source of personal support. In both cultures, the family serves as both a physical and moral shelter. For example:

“Oila tinch – yurt tinch” (A peaceful family ensures a peaceful homeland) [4, p. 127]

“Onangni quyosh bilsang, otangni oy bil” (Consider your mother the sun, your father the moon) [4, p. 128]

Turkish equivalents: “Aile küçük bir devlettir” (The family is a small state) [5, p. 49], “Ağaç yaşken eğilir” (A tree is bent while it is young) [5, p. 49]

Proverbs emphasize the importance of kinship while also acknowledging occasional negative aspects of familial relations:

“Qarindoshing o‘lsa-o‘lsin, Qadrdoqing o‘lmasin” (Even if your kin dies, your beloved should not) [4, p. 136]

Turkish equivalent: “Akraba ile ye iç, alışveriş etme” (Eat and drink with relatives, but do not engage in trade) [5, p. 28]

Another central theme is ethical conduct, including friendship, honesty, diligence, and patience. Moral values have historically contributed to social stability and mutual respect. Proverbs serve as powerful tools for reinforcing ethical principles.

There are strong parallels between Uzbek and Turkish proverbs regarding moral values, reflecting shared historical and cultural roots:

“Do‘stsiz boshim, tuzsiz oshim” (A meal without friends is tasteless) [6, p. 86]

“Dost kara günde belli olur” (A friend is known in adversity) [5, p. 168]

Proverbs also highlight the importance of labor and diligence as essential for life success:

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Uzbek: “Mehnat qilsang yasharsan, katta-katta osharsan” (Work hard to live and prosper) [6, p. 216]

Turkish: “Bugün çalışan yarın kazanır” (He who works today will succeed tomorrow) [5, p. 122]

Additionally, honest labor is consistently valorized:

Uzbek: “Manglay tering bilan topilgan mol – taningga halol” (Wealth earned with one’s sweat is lawful) [4, p. 21]

Turkish: “Alın teriyle kazanılan helaldir” (What is earned with the sweat of the brow is halal) [5, p. 123]

Proverbs reflecting philosophical observations on life, death, time, and fate appear in both Uzbek and Turkish folklore. Fate often expresses a realistic balance: human effort is necessary, but outcomes are not entirely under individual control. Proverbs balance “action” with “patience” and “contentment,” demonstrating an integrated worldview:

Uzbek: “Men qilaman o‘ttiz, Tangrim qiladi to‘qqiz” (I plan thirty, God decides nine) [4, p. 206]

Turkish: “Kader olmayınca kadir bilinmez” (One’s worth is not known without fate) [5, p. 339]

These proverbs highlight the interplay between human agency and divine or circumstantial forces, emphasizing the role of wisdom, luck, and fate in life.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Uzbek and Turkish proverbs are grounded in shared Turkic cultural roots, reflecting centuries of lived experience, ethical norms, and worldviews in a concise and figurative form. Comparative analysis shows that themes such as family, kinship, friendship, labor, and honesty occupy central positions, playing key roles in maintaining social stability and ethical order. Philosophical reflections on fate and patience also contribute to the balance of human life. While similarities stem from common historical-cultural origins,

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differences arise from each society's unique social and cultural development. Proverbs thus serve not only as folklore artifacts but also as significant expressions of national thought and value systems.

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