

A LOOK AT THE EXPRESSION OF SOCIAL RELATIONS IN UZBEK AND  
TURKISH FOLK PROVERBS

**Eshchanova Gavhar Atajonovna**

Acting Professor at Urgench State Pedagogical Institute

**Atajonova Shohista Soatboyevna**

PhD Candidate at Urgench State Pedagogical Institute

eshchanovagavhar@gmail.com

nodirbekzaripboyev392@gmail.com

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the depiction of social relations in Uzbek and Turkish folk proverbs. It highlights how social values are promoted through proverbs.

**Keywords:** Folklore, proverb, social relations, family, society, labor, moral values.

Since ancient times, the Uzbek people have maintained economic and cultural ties with Turkish nations, alongside kindred peoples from Central Asia, the Volga region, Crimea, and the Caucasus. As a result, similarities have emerged in the cultures and literatures of these peoples. Such parallels can also be observed in the folklore of the Uzbek and Turkish peoples. As our President has emphasized: “The priceless cultural treasures created by humanity are, above all, embodied in the folklore art of each nation” [1, p. 134].

The oral folklore of every nation represents its historical memory, spiritual heritage, and reflection of its way of life. In particular, proverbs offer rich insights into a nation's worldview, values, and social life. The Uzbek and Turkish peoples are Turkish nations with deep historical roots and closely intertwined cultures. Their proverbs widely reflect concepts such as family, society, labor, ethics and morality, social equality, and unity.

Social life is defined by human relationships, labor, one's role in the family and society, and moral-ethical values. Through proverbs, the experiences, advice, and perspectives of a people in these areas are passed down from generation to generation. For example: “A single tree does not make a forest” [2, p. 98].

This article reflects the idea of human interdependence in society and emphasizes the concept of collectivism. For example: “A lone horse does not raise dust, and even if it does, it does not bring fame,” “You can't make porridge from a single grain of wheat” [2, p. 98]. These proverbs also promote the idea of unity and vividly express the advantages of being together with others. Turkish proverbs such as: “Bir elin varlığı birliğiyle olur” (A nation's strength lies in its unity) and “Bir elin sesi var; iki elin sesi

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var”(What can one hand do? Two hands make a sound) [3, p. 55] highlight the vital role of unity and solidarity in societal life.

These sayings stress that an individual cannot achieve much alone and often needs the support and cooperation of others.

In both uzbek and turkish proverbs, the significance of the family in social life is deeply expressed. The family is seen as the foundation of society. In the folk wisdom of both nations, the concepts of family, parents, and children are considered sacred. Through these proverbs, our ancestors have passed down these values to future generations. As a result, each new generation approaches family with a sense of responsibility.

In many uzbek proverbs, the family is portrayed as the basis of society and a pillar of human life, instilling a sense of respect and reverence for family. In both cultures, the family is seen not only as a physical shelter but also as a spiritual refuge:

“If the family is at peace, the country is at peace”[4, p. 127]

“If your mother is the sun, your father is the moon”

“A home with a mother has honor; a home with a father has wealth”[4, p. 128]

“The father is wisdom, the mother is understanding”[4, p. 128]

“A father's craft is a legacy to his son”[5, p. 49]

“The family is a small state”[5, p. 49]

“One who sees the table from his father, sets the table; one who sees the cushion from his mother, lays the cushion”[5, p. 49]

These proverbs clearly demonstrate the vital social role of the family.

In both cultures, there is also a strong emphasis on the importance and necessity of kinship ties:

“My relative is my black cauldron; my kin is my sack of flour”[4, p. 136]

“He who honors relatives will not be left empty; he who honors outsiders will not advance”[4, p. 136]

“One who throws a stone at a relative knows no shame”[5, p. 28]

“Even if your relative is an enemy, he’s still better than a stranger”[5, p. 28]

These proverbs reflect a strong sense of respect and emotional connection toward kinship.

However, in both uzbek and turkish cultures, there are also proverbs that express negative attitudes toward relatives, indicating the complexity of family and kinship relations:

“Let your relative die, but not your true friend”[4, p. 136]

“Don’t borrow from a relative, don’t marry your daughter to one”[4, p. 136]

“Better to have it in my lamp than with my relative”[4, p. 136]

“No scorpion can do to you what a relative can”[5, p. 28]

“Eat and drink with relatives, but don’t do business with them”[5, p. 28]

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Such examples are numerous and reflect the dual nature of kinship: both a source of support and potential conflict.

An inseparable part of social life is “labor”. In proverbs, the value of honest work, craftsmanship, and profession is especially recognized. Throughout their lives, people achieve true peace and happiness—namely, a prosperous and fulfilling life—through hard work, effort, and endurance. As the famous Russian writer Maxim Gorky once said about labor:

“I know what labor is. It is the source of all joy and all good things in the world.”[6, p. 49].

The long path humanity has traveled is rooted in the process of labor. All human wealth is created through work—and only through work. Therefore, labor is respected and glorified, and the younger generation is raised with the spirit of diligence and hard work.

As in the proverbs of all nations around the world, the theme of “labor and industriousness” holds a central place in both uzbek and turkish proverbs. In both cultures, work and acquiring a trade are not only seen as means of livelihood, but also as the foundation of “human development” and “social progress.” Proverbs express this idea in short, vivid forms. For example:

“What you earn through labor tastes sweeter than sugar and honey”

“A skilled person will never be humiliated”[4, p. 16]

“Skill is a flowing spring, knowledge is a burning lamp”

“Craft is an inexhaustible treasure”[2, p. 440]

“Labor leads to comfort”

“If you work, you will live; you will eat big meals”[2, p. 216]

These proverbs show that, over the long course of history, humanity has worked hard and created all wealth through labor. For this reason, labor is glorified and highly valued.

Just like in uzbek proverbs, turkish proverbs also place special emphasis on work and craftsmanship:

“He who works today, earns tomorrow”[5, p. 122]

“Working is half of worship”[5, p. 122]

“He who is ashamed to work will go hungry”[5, p. 122]

Through these proverbs, it is clear that both peoples view “diligence and hard work as a source of honor”.

In both uzbek and turkish proverbs, the concepts of “labor” and “honesty” are closely intertwined. Indeed, the idea that earnings from honest labor bring blessings is emphasized in many proverbs. For example:

“He who sweats, earns gold”[4, p. 18];

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“Wealth earned through the sweat of your brow is lawful for your body”[4, p. 21];

“What is earned with forehead sweat is lawful”[5, p. 123].

These proverbs reflect the wisdom and worldview of the people. In the oral traditions of both nations, the “blessing of labor”, its “honesty” and its role as a “human value” are held in high regard.

Throughout human history, “moral values” have always played a crucial role in ensuring social stability, mutual respect among people, and communal harmony. Especially in today’s era of globalization, the need for ethical norms and values is increasing. This is because the healthy development of social relationships depends directly on moral standards.

Uzbek and turkish proverbs give special importance to “moral values” in human life. Proverbs serve as powerful tools that reinforce “ethical principles”. Concepts such as “friendship”, “hospitality”, “patience” and “respect” frequently appear in these sayings. There are numerous similarities in how moral values are reflected in both uzbek and turkish proverbs, which can be traced back to the nations’ shared historical and cultural roots.

Examples include:

“My head without a friend is like soup without salt”[2, p. 86]

“Don’t accumulate money, accumulate friends”[2, p. 86]

“Before your money reaches a thousand, make sure your friends reach ten”[2, p. 86]

“A true friend is known in hard times”[5, p. 168]

“A friend supports a friend”[5, p. 168]

“A friend does not keep secrets from a friend”[5, p. 168]

“Hospitality” is considered one of the highest virtues of a person. Our people have long honored hospitality. Therefore, proverbs reflect the belief that the guest is a gift from God, that the best part of the house is reserved for them, and that their arrival brings blessings:

“The guest is dear, the host is sweet”[2, p. 212]

“The home of a guest shines brightly”[2, p. 212]

“When a guest enters through the door, his provision comes through the crack”[2, p. 212]

Turkish proverbs also emphasize that a guest brings sustenance and blessing, and that the host must serve the guest regardless of their faith:

“A guest comes with ten blessings; eats one and leaves nine behind”[5, p. 371]

“Show respect to your guest, even if they are a non-believer”[5, p. 371]

“The guest’s footsteps bring good fortune”[5, p. 371]

Proverbs that encourage “patience and contentment” are the products of the uzbek and turkish peoples’ centuries-long experience and outlook on life, labor, and humanity.

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Patience and contentment are mirrors of uzbek wisdom. They help individuals manage themselves and become more resilient and industrious in life:

“Patience yields golden results”[2, p. 303]

“If you’re patient, even an unripe fruit can become a sweet dessert; if you’re not, you’ll bite it bitter”[2, p. 304]

“Be patient and rise, be impatient and fall”[2, p. 304]

“Patience is the key to paradise”[5, p. 421]

“The patient dervish reaches his goal”

“Patience is bitter, but its fruit is sweet”[5, p. 422]

These proverbs teach that patience, when combined with effort, leads to great success.

“Moral values” highlight how essential humane relationships are within society. They help strengthen “trust” among individuals, “resolve conflicts” and promote “unity and solidarity”. These values serve as core principles in all areas of social life—from family dynamics to workplace relationships.

In uzbek and turkish proverbs, “moral values and social relations” are highly appreciated. These sayings reflect the “national mindset”, “spiritual worldview” and “practical life experience” of both peoples. Their impact lies in their vivid imagery, brevity, and profound wisdom.

Thus, the “social relations reflected in uzbek and turkish folk proverbs” stem from the “shared turkish roots” of both nations. Through these proverbs, people learn the “culture of interpersonal relations”, the “value of labor” and “family values”. These proverbs serve as a “rich source of national wisdom” and can be effectively used, especially in the “upbringing of younger generations”.

These proverbs represent the “priceless spiritual heritage” of both nations and continue to play an important role today in nurturing “morally upright and well-rounded individuals”. Studying, comparing, and passing them on to future generations is a “duty for every individual”.

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