

COMPARATIVE LEXICAL-SEMANTIC AND STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS OF UZBEK AND ENGLISH PROVERBS WITH RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL COMPONENTS

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Introduction

Proverbs are an integral component of the linguistic and cultural heritage of any nation. As condensed expressions of collective wisdom, they encapsulate moral codes, social norms, and philosophical reflections in forms that are memorable and easily transmitted. When examined through the lens of religion and spirituality, proverbs reveal an even deeper layer of meaning, offering insights into the metaphysical beliefs, ethical values, and behavioral prescriptions of a given culture. In the context of Uzbek and English traditions, proverbs related to religion not only preserve centuries-old faith-based knowledge but also demonstrate the interplay between sacred teachings and daily human experience. This study seeks to conduct a comparative lexical-semantic and structural analysis of Uzbek and English proverbs with explicit and implicit religious elements, focusing on categories such as sin, repentance, good deeds, charity, judgment day, prayer, fasting, halal/haram, faith, and religious figures. The research addresses both denotative and connotative meanings while situating the findings within broader cultural and linguistic frameworks.

Literature Review

Paremiology — the scientific study of proverbs — has long attracted the attention of linguists, folklorists, and cultural historians. Scholars such as A. Abdurahmonov, M. Hamroyev, and S. Esonova have emphasized the importance of proverb analysis for understanding national mentality. In global scholarship, researchers like W. Mieder, R. Honeck, and L. Norrick have developed theoretical frameworks for the structural and semantic classification of proverbs, while noting the influence of religious traditions on proverbial content. Religious linguistics, a subfield focusing on the interaction between sacred discourse and everyday language, further illuminates how faith-related terms and imagery become embedded in folk wisdom. Uzbek paremiology often draws upon Islamic moral teachings, with the Qur'an, Hadiths, and Sufi literature serving as foundational sources. English proverbs, shaped by Biblical language and Christian moral codes, similarly reveal the transmission of sacred values into common speech. This study positions itself at the intersection of paremiology, religious linguistics, and comparative cultural studies, integrating insights from Uzbek and English scholarship.

Methodology

The research applies a comparative-descriptive method, supported by componential semantic analysis and structural classification. The corpus consists of 300 proverbs — 150 in Uzbek and 150 in English — selected for their direct or metaphorical connection to religious concepts. Each proverb was analyzed for:

1. **Lexical-semantic features** — identification of religious terms, metaphors, and connotations.
2. **Syntactic structure** — classification into one-member and two-member sentences, simple, compound, and complex types, including elliptical, imperative, and verbless constructions.
3. **Cultural context** — tracing links between proverbial meaning and religious practice.
4. **Category grouping** — thematic organization into major religious-spiritual domains.

Proverbs were then compared across languages to identify both parallels and divergences.

Analysis and Discussion

1. Proverbs about Sin

In Uzbek, sin (*gunoh*) is often depicted as an invisible burden or poison to the soul: "*Gunohing ko'p bo'lsa, qadam bosma.*" The lexical choice evokes fear of divine retribution. In English, sin frequently carries Biblical imagery: "*The wages of sin is death.*" Both languages connect sin with moral decay, but Uzbek proverbs often stress community judgment, whereas English ones highlight divine justice.

2. Repentance

Repentance (*tavba*) is a key theme in both traditions. Uzbek examples, such as "*Tavba qilgan toshdan suv chiqaradi*", convey hope for transformation through divine mercy. English parallels, like "*It is never too late to mend*", emphasize human agency and moral correction, even if not overtly theological.

3. Good Deeds and Charity

Charity (*savob*, *xayr*) appears as a moral duty. Uzbek: "*Savob qilgan savob topar.*" English: "*Charity begins at home.*" The Uzbek usage often ties charity to afterlife reward, while English proverbs sometimes frame it as social responsibility.

4. Judgment Day

Uzbek proverbs on *Qiyomat kuni* often contain eschatological warnings: "*Qiyomat kuni hisob bor.*" English expressions, such as "*Every man shall bear his own burden*", reflect individual accountability before God.

5. Prayer

Prayer (*duo*) appears as a protective force in Uzbek: "*Onaning duosi tog'ni ag'darar.*" In English: "*Prayer is the key of the morning and the bolt of the evening.*"

Both languages link prayer to divine favor, but Uzbek idioms more often involve intercessory prayer.

6. Fasting

In Uzbek, *ro'za* is associated with purification: "*Ro'za tutgan rohat topar.*" English proverbs rarely address fasting directly, but Biblical allusions exist: "*Fasting without prayer is like a bow without an arrow.*"

7. Halal and Haram

Islamic law concepts (*halol*, *haram*) are deeply embedded in Uzbek proverbs: "*Halol topgan – halol topar.*" English proverbs, shaped by Christian ethics, rarely use equivalent legalistic terms but convey similar moral distinctions through concepts like “honest gain” versus “ill-gotten wealth.”

8. Faith

Faith (*imon*) is a moral compass in Uzbek: "*Imonli odam halol yashar.*" In English: "*Faith will move mountains.*" Both highlight faith as a force for moral and physical change.

9. Religious Figures

Uzbek proverbs often mention *mulla*, *imom*, or *shayx* to symbolize authority or hypocrisy: "*Mulla bo'lsa ham, mol bo'lsa ham.*" English uses “priest,” “preacher,” or “bishop” metaphorically: "*The preacher's son is often the worst.*" This shows a shared satirical tradition.

Structural Observations

Structurally, both Uzbek and English religious proverbs employ:

- **Imperative forms** to instruct: "*Do good and throw it into the sea*" (Uzbek), "*Do unto others as you would have them do unto you*" (English).
- **Elliptical constructions** for brevity: "*No sin, no shame*" (English).
- **Verbless sentences** to convey absolutes: "*Halol rizq – eng ulug' boylik*" (Uzbek).
- **Syndetic and asyndetic coordination** to combine moral ideas.

Uzbek proverbs often rely on parallelism and rhyme for oral transmission, while English ones tend toward balanced antithesis or metaphorical juxtaposition.

Conclusion

The comparative analysis reveals that while Uzbek and English religious proverbs share universal moral themes, their linguistic realization reflects distinct cultural and theological backgrounds. Uzbek proverbs, rooted in Islamic tradition, often frame morality in terms of divine command, communal accountability, and eschatological reward. English proverbs, influenced by Biblical and Christian moral thought, emphasize individual conscience, moral reciprocity, and scriptural authority. Structurally, both languages employ compact, rhythmical forms for memorability, yet Uzbek displays greater reliance on rhyme and alliteration. This study confirms that

religious proverbs function as a cultural bridge between sacred doctrine and everyday ethics, making them valuable not only for linguistic analysis but also for interfaith and intercultural understanding.

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