

Wise Saying – Aphorism and Proverb

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Abstract. *This article discusses the interrelation between folk proverbs and aphorisms, the influence of oral creativity on written literature, and the principles by which the wise sayings of representatives of written literature turn into folk proverbs. Folk proverbs, in fact, were once uttered by a certain individual, but over time they adapted to the people’s taste and way of life and became folklore samples. The author of the expressed idea is forgotten. Folklore usually develops by constantly drawing nourishment from written literature; in particular, the edifying thoughts of great thinkers, poets, and statesmen create a broad foundation for the expansion of folk proverbs. The article puts forward scholarly views precisely on this issue.*

Key words: *folklore, proverb, wisdom, aphorism, written literature, transformation, evolution, education, upbringing.*

INTRODUCTION

In our classical literature, nourished by divine and mystical sources, clear guidelines are given for disciplining and purifying the ego, cleansing the heart, perfecting the spirit, and, in general, achieving moral freedom. Such guidelines are often expressed concisely and completely within a single bayt (couplet). These bayts, which are the product of a unique melody and refined thought, pass from literary works into oral speech and, as a result of being transmitted from mouth to mouth, undergo changes. The order of words changes, or the same meaning takes on a different form, and the author is forgotten. Instead of the author, folk expressions such as “the ancients,” “the wise,” “narrators,” or “ancestors” are used, and thus aphorisms gradually turn into folk proverbs.

The Russian scholar N. T. Fedorenko, defining the aphorism, states: “Short, profound in content and semantically complete, possessing an expressive and memorable form, and having a clearly identifiable author, edifying thoughts are called ‘aphorisms’” [7.3.]. From this it can be seen that proverbs and aphorisms are very close to each other in terms of content and form, with the main difference being their authorship. Nevertheless, other important distinguishing features between aphorisms and proverbs can also be observed. These features are as follows:

1. An aphorism is a product of written literature, and its author is known.
2. Aphorisms are generally longer than proverbs, and the words used strictly conform to the norms of the literary language. Proverbs are concise in form, and the words they contain are simple and suited to the colloquial style.
3. Aphorisms often express attitudes toward social life and society, are imbued with specific political and social views, and represent complex and consistent lines of thought. In proverbs, however, a folk-wise attitude toward a particular issue of social life is expressed.

4. Aphorisms are close to proverbs in terms of having a clear didactic purpose and a complete conclusion, but internal rhyme and melody are not always present in aphorisms. For proverbs, rhythm, melody, and rhyme are considered extremely important.
5. Proverbs, depending on the speech situation, can express several meanings. It is precisely this feature that causes proverbs to spread widely and expand through oral transmission. Aphorisms do not possess this characteristic. They convey a specific meaning and provide an individual evaluation of a situation. Therefore, aphorisms do not spread as widely as proverbs and do not undergo change.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In folklore studies, the common features of proverbs and aphorisms have been examined. According to scholars, proverbs, too, were once uttered by a specific individual; however, having firmly taken root in the collective consciousness of the people, they were polished over a long period of time, transmitted from mouth to mouth, passed from one era to another, and eventually their authors were forgotten [9.9.].

Proceeding from this, the reasons why aphorisms turn into proverbs can be identified as follows:

First, the widespread reading of didactic works among the general public (it is historically well known that among our people the works of Navoi, Mashrab, Bedil, Fuzuli, and Sufi Olloyor were widely read, and that there existed special traditions of *navoiyxonlik* and *mashrabxonlik*).

Second, the separate compilation and publication of wise sayings contained in literary works.

Sometimes aphorisms are transferred directly into proverbs, while in other cases they pass into proverbs with changes in wording or form. At this point, it is also worth noting that proverbs themselves have influenced the aphoristic views of creators. As N. Mallayev emphasizes: “Writers creatively made use of folklore—its themes and ideas, plots and images, artistic mastery and linguistic style—achieved a popular character in their works, and, in turn, exerted an effective influence on oral folk creativity” [3.10.]. This can be observed through the examples of «*Qutadg‘u bilig*» work that are regarded as products of creativity of exceptionally high ideological and educational value.

ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH RESULTS

It is well known that Yusuf Khas Hajib, a major representative of the 11th century, and his work *Qutadg‘u bilig* gained fame throughout the entire Eastern world even in his own time. The content and ideas of the work, as well as its admonitory wisdom, could not but influence folk creativity. While endowing the work with a didactic and advisory spirit, Yusuf Khas Hajib not only made use of folk proverbs but also created aphoristic wisdom corresponding in meaning to those proverbs; later, these very aphorisms directly turned into folk proverbs. Professor B. To‘xliyev, who deeply studied the poetics of «*Qutadg‘u bilig*», writes in this regard: “There are such lines within the work that it is difficult to distinguish them from folk proverbs. Moreover, our research shows that they continue to enrich the oral creativity of Turkic peoples with ever new variants” [4.45.]. It can thus be said that Yusuf Khas Hajib, in «*Qutadg‘u bilig*», not only drew upon oral folk creativity but also created wisdom capable of influencing folk creativity itself.

“Yusuf Khas Hajib subtly sensed the power of the word and the inner possibilities of the mother tongue. He himself writes: ‘I knew Turkic words like wild mountain deer. Nevertheless, I carefully tamed them.’ Among these ‘tamed words’ there are many folk proverbs as well. In short, the work may be regarded as a distinctive encyclopedia of the artistic thinking of Turkic peoples” [5.7.]. As a sage of his time, Yusuf Khas Hajib created many edifying aphorisms concerning manners and ethics in his work. Some of his aphorisms have by now turned into folk proverbs. Even the very title of the book, «*Qutadg‘u bilig*», evokes proverbs such as “Knowledge is the sign of fortune” [6.1.67] and “Knowledge brings happiness” [6.1.80]. Likewise, in proverbs such as “Learning brings happiness, knowledge brings the throne” [6.1.195], one can clearly perceive the influence of the work being called “Knowledge that leads to felicity.”

Similarly, in the couplet from the epic: Know knowledge to be great, deem understanding exalted,

These two together perfect a person, one can discern the meaning of folk proverbs such as “Knowledge is vast, life is short—learn what is necessary” and “Knowledge is vast, life is short—learn what is necessary; if you attain it, you will see the throne” [6.1.195].

Restrain your words, lest your head be split,

Restrain your tongue, lest your teeth be broken [8.14].

Literary scholar H. Abdullayev, who specially studied the folk proverbs used in *Qutadg‘u bilig*, taking into account the exceptional vitality of the proverb genre, notes that Yusuf Khas Hajib included in his work proverbs of the Turkic peoples that date back to periods much earlier than the 11th century [1.14.]. Indeed, in this passage the poet makes use of an ancient proverb widespread among the people. He himself alludes to this by writing, “He who is restrained by his tongue—listen to what he says,” and draws an instructive conclusion in the form “Restrain your words, lest your head be split,” “Restrain your tongue, lest your teeth be broken.” As a result of the influence of this wisdom, our speech has been enriched with such proverbs as “The tongue is calamity, the tooth is a fortress,” “The tongue eats the head, the hand eats the pilaf,” and “Restrain your tongue—your teeth will not break” [6.73].

Yusuf Khas Hajib seeks to substantiate the wisdoms and admonitions he expresses by referring to folk proverbs and the sayings of the ancients, while at the same time creating new didactic maxims that correspond to them. Literary scholar Q. Karimov notes the following in this regard: “No matter what topic the author of the work addresses, in order to prove and support his views on the matter, he cites proverbs, sayings, and wisdoms that have risen to the level of moral exemplars among the people in that particular field. In presenting these wisdoms and proverbs, he adheres to the artistic device of *irsol ul-masal* (that is, the use of parables and aphorisms) and employs it masterfully” [2.136.].

Listen to what the knowledgeable person says,

His head has grown white from seeing much of the world.

If the ignorant is given a place on the *to‘r*, look—That *to‘r* has become a footstool; is this footstool now a *to‘r*? [8.18].

In this passage, the poet refers to the aphorisms of the wise. That is, he states: “An ignorant person is never truly worthy of a seat of honor; even the footstool on which a learned person sits is, in essence, higher than the place of honor,” and as proof of this idea he cites the proverb “An ignorant person is equal to livestock,” calling the proverb “the word of the forefathers.”

The words of the forefathers are an inheritance for us,

The benefit of the forefathers’ words is incomparable [8.19].

In this couplet, “forefathers” signifies the predecessors, the ancients, the best ones, the pioneers (those endowed with noble faith). At the same time, the author emphasizes that the words of the forefathers, which are immensely beneficial for human life, constitute a legacy for us. This emphasis also implies the responsibility of conveying the words of the forefathers to others intact and uncorrupted.

As a poet, Yusuf Khas Hajib possesses an exceptionally refined eloquence. When incorporating a folk proverb into the structure of a couplet, he does not limit himself merely to quoting the proverb itself. He also pays special attention to its interpretation, adding new lines harmonious with the proverb. For instance, the poet presents an ancient form of the folk saying “The adornment of speech is the proverb” and creates new rhyming lines in accord with it:

The adornment of a person is speech, and this speech is boundless,

O tongue, always praise the virtuous person!

A proverb has come in Turkic, similar to this;

Listen—this is what the wise have said:

The adornment of understanding is knowledge, the adornment of the tongue is speech,

The adornment of a person is the face, and the adornment of the face is the eye [8.19].

In this stanza, “The adornment of understanding is knowledge” and “The adornment of the tongue is speech” are folk proverbs, whereas “The adornment of a person is the face” and “The adornment of the face is the eye” are discoveries born from the proverbial tone employed by the poet. In general, the role of Yusuf Khas Hajib’s *Qutadg’u bilig* in the preservation of such Turkic proverbs up to the present day and in the emergence of new proverbs is considered invaluable.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the corpus of folk proverbs is constantly evolving, developing, and expanding. At times, ancient proverbs have fallen out of use over time or have undergone certain lexical changes. Even if a particular proverb disappears from active speech, new proverbs harmonious with its meaning are created. On this basis, different variants of proverbs emerge.

At the same time, representatives of written literature have made use of folk proverbs in their works to deepen the ideological and artistic intent, substantiate their ideas, and enhance the poetics of their compositions. In doing so, their works have provided a foundation for the preservation of ancient Turkic proverbs up to the present day. Simultaneously, the edifying conclusions contained within literary works have themselves turned into folk proverbs.

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