

THE CONCEPT OF DILIGENCE AS EXPRESSED IN UZBEK PHRASEOLOGICAL
UNITS

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Abstract. *This article examines how the concept of “diligence” is expressed in an imaginative, emotional, and ethical manner through the phraseological wealth of the Uzbek people, which has been formed over many centuries. Using examples from proverbs, sayings, and fixed expressions, the article reveals how labor is valued not merely as a means of earning a livelihood, but also as a virtue that enhances a person’s dignity and brings respect, prosperity, and well-being within society. Particular attention is paid to the sharp opposition between diligence and laziness in Uzbek oral folklore, as well as to the national attitude toward labor reflected through such figurative expressions as “shedding sweat” and “the sweat of one’s brow.”*

The article discusses the linguocultural essence of the concept of diligence on the basis of authentic linguistic units that have been preserved and continue to be used in everyday folk speech.

Keywords: *diligence, Uzbek phraseological units, proverbs, shedding sweat, the sweat of one’s brow, labor and prosperity, oral folklore, moral values.*

Introduction

Since ancient times, the Uzbek people have regarded labor not merely as a means of obtaining food and earning a livelihood, but also as one of the most important virtues that ennoble a person and determine his or her dignity and social worth. This attitude has become so deeply rooted in the Uzbek language, particularly in its phraseological units and proverbs, that when one reads or hears them, it almost feels as though our ancestors themselves are speaking.

The concept of diligence is expressed in the Uzbek language through lexical and phraseological units such as *mehnat* (“labor”), *ish* (“work”), *ter to ‘kish* (“to shed sweat”), *peshona teri* (“the sweat of one’s brow”), and *halol mehnat* (“honest labor”), all of which carry positive connotations and, in some contexts, acquire an almost sacred significance.

In Uzbek oral folklore, a person who works diligently is consistently portrayed as deserving respect, having a bright face and a prosperous household, whereas a person who avoids work is depicted as a negative character who causes difficulties not only for himself or herself but also for those around them. In this article, I intend to examine precisely this linguistic wealth — that is, authentic phraseological units that have survived in everyday folk speech — and to explore how the concept of diligence has become an integral part of the national character.

This issue is considered from the perspective of an experienced linguist and an observer of living language. The topic is significant not only from a linguistic point of view but also because it provides an opportunity to understand how a people perceive themselves and to recall and preserve their traditional values.

Main Part

In Uzbek phraseology, the concept of diligence is first and foremost expressed through the close relationship between labor itself and prosperity or well-being.

The proverb “*Mehnat, mehnatning tagi – rohat*” (“Labor, the end result of labor is comfort”) expresses this idea in the most concise and profound manner: labor itself may be difficult and demanding, but behind it and as its ultimate result there are inevitably comfort, tranquility, prosperity, and abundance. The same idea is repeated in other expressions such as “*Mehnat qancha og‘ir bo‘lsa, keti shuncha shirin bo‘ladi*” (“The harder the labor, the sweeter its outcome”) and “*Mehnat qilgan to‘yadi*” (“The one who works will have enough to eat”). Through these expressions, the people articulate not merely an elementary economic principle but a profound philosophy of life: nothing comes by itself, and one cannot earn one’s bread without working hard and shedding sweat.

The proverb “*Ishlab topganing – osh, ishlamay topganing – tosh*” (“What you earn through work is food; what you obtain without working is stone”) emphasizes particularly clearly that what is earned through honest labor is valuable and nourishing, whereas something obtained without labor is useless and even potentially harmful. Here, the contrast between *osh* (“food, a traditional cooked meal”) and *tosh* (“stone”) intensifies the value attributed to labor.

The semantic opposition between these two words creates a vivid figurative image: the fruits of labor are associated with nourishment and well-being, while the results of laborlessness are represented as something lifeless, hard, and useless.

Another important dimension of diligence is its ethical and social significance.

Expressions such as “*Halol ishla, halol tishla*” (“Work honestly and eat honestly”) and “*Halol mehnat yerda qolmas*” (“Honest labor will never go unrewarded”) evaluate labor not only as something useful and productive, but also as an activity that should be morally pure and conscientious. The phraseological expression “*Peshona teri bilan topmoq*” (“to earn through the sweat of one’s brow”) is particularly noteworthy. Here, physical exertion and the image of sweat flowing from the forehead emphasize the authenticity of labor and indicate that the resulting earnings have been obtained without deception, fraud, or trickery.

Similarly, expressions such as “*ter to‘kib ishlamog‘*” (“to work by shedding sweat”) and “*belini bukib ishlash*” (“to work bending one’s back”) do not conceal the hardship and physical effort associated with labor; on the contrary, they glorify the result achieved precisely through such hardship. The proverb “*Elning ko‘rki – er bilan, urning ko‘rki – ter bilan*” (“The beauty of the land lies in the farmer, and the farmer’s beauty lies in his sweat”) presents labor not only as a personal virtue but also as a collective and national form of wealth. According to this figurative understanding, the land becomes prosperous and beautiful through human labor, while the strength and dignity of society are closely associated with its hardworking people.

The social status of a hardworking person is also particularly recognized in phraseological and proverbial expressions. Proverbs such as “*Odamni ish tanitadi*” (“A person is known by his work”), “*Ishsevarni el sevar*” (“The people love the hardworking person”), and “*Yuk ko‘targanning yuzi yorug‘*” (“The one who carries the burden has an honored face”) indicate that through labor a person earns a good reputation among the people and gains social respect. The saying “*Bir yigitga yetmish ikki hunar oz*” (“Seventy-two skills are still not enough for one young man”) interprets diligence not merely as the ability to work in one particular field, but as a multifaceted quality associated with continuous self-development and the desire to acquire new skills.

In this context, the people encourage a young man — and, more generally, any individual — to continue learning and to master a variety of crafts and professions, because diligence is associated not only with physical strength but also with knowledge, skill, competence, and mastery. Thus, the concept of diligence in Uzbek phraseological and proverbial expressions encompasses both physical and intellectual labor. A person who is willing to learn, develop new skills, and continuously improve himself or herself is also regarded as hardworking and worthy of respect.

Laziness, on the other hand, is consistently condemned as the direct antonym of diligence.

Proverbs such as “*Ishlamagan – ichmagan*” (“The one who does not work does not eat”), “*Betashvish bosh qayda, mehnatsiz osh qayda*” (“Where is a carefree life without effort, where is food without labor?”), and “*Ishlagan yerni yashnatar, ishlamagan – qaqshatar*” (“The one who works makes the land flourish; the one who does not work leaves it barren”) explicitly demonstrate the negative consequences of laziness. The expression “*Bekor o‘tirguncha bekor ishla*” (“Rather than sit idle, do even an ordinary task”) regards even seemingly unproductive activity as preferable to idleness, because action and effort themselves are considered essential conditions of an active and meaningful life.

The proverb “*Tirishqoqning teshasi toshga mix qoqar*” (“The diligent person’s axe can drive a nail into stone”) figuratively expresses the power of persistence and diligence to overcome even seemingly impossible obstacles. The image of stone, which is hard and resistant, contrasted with the persistent efforts of a hardworking person, demonstrates the traditional Uzbek understanding that determination and perseverance can make even the impossible possible.

Therefore, the semantic field of diligence in Uzbek phraseology is closely connected with such concepts as persistence, determination, endurance, effort, and the ability to overcome difficulties.

Most of these expressions are rooted in the traditional practices of agriculture, animal husbandry, and craftsmanship, because the historical way of life of the Uzbek people was closely connected with precisely these spheres of activity. Proverbs such as “*Yer – xazina, mehnat – kaliti*” (“The land is a treasure, and labor is its key”) and “*Xazina g‘oyibdan emas, mehnatdan*” (“Treasure does not come from nowhere; it comes from labor”) emphasize the necessity of working the land in order to obtain prosperity and abundance from it. These expressions reflect an understanding formed through centuries of practical experience: the land itself may possess great potential, but that potential can only be realized through human effort.

For this reason, Uzbek phraseological and proverbial expressions frequently contain images associated with animals such as horses, donkeys, goats, and livestock, as well as natural elements such as land, water, and sweat. Such imagery is not accidental. It reflects the traditional economic and cultural environment in which labor, agriculture, animal husbandry, and craftsmanship played a central role in people’s lives. Consequently, the figurative images used in these expressions preserve traces of the historical lifestyle, worldview, and value system of the Uzbek people.

The concept of diligence expressed through these linguistic units therefore represents a complex combination of economic, ethical, social, cultural, and psychological meanings. Labor is understood as a source of livelihood, but at the same time it is presented as a means of achieving personal dignity, social recognition, moral purity, prosperity, and inner satisfaction.

Laziness, in contrast, is associated with poverty, disgrace, dependency, and social uselessness. This opposition between labor and laziness is one of the most stable value-based contrasts represented in Uzbek proverbial and phraseological heritage.

It is also important to note that the figurative expressions discussed above demonstrate how language preserves collective historical experience. The images of sweat, the forehead, the land, food, stone, tools, animals, and manual labor are not simply stylistic devices. They represent culturally meaningful symbols through which generations have transmitted their understanding of a worthy and respectable way of life. In this sense, Uzbek phraseological units function as a linguistic repository of the people's moral experience and traditional worldview.

Conclusion

In Uzbek phraseological units, the concept of diligence has deep national, ethical, and practical roots and represents not merely a linguistic phenomenon but also an expression of the people's worldview, system of values, and accumulated life experience. Through expressions such as "*Mehnatning tagi – rohat*" ("The end result of labor is comfort"), "*peshona teri bilan topmoq*" ("to earn through the sweat of one's brow"), and "*ter to'kib ishlamoq*" ("to work by shedding sweat"), the people perceive labor as a source of honor, prosperity, respect, and well-being, while laziness is condemned as a cause of hardship and poverty.

The analysis demonstrates that diligence in Uzbek linguistic and cultural consciousness is closely connected with honesty, persistence, responsibility, skill, social usefulness, and respect for labor. The opposition between diligence and laziness is particularly significant because it reflects not only an assessment of individual behavior but also a broader moral principle: a person earns dignity and respect through productive and honest effort.

This phraseological heritage has not lost its significance in the modern period. On the contrary, it continues to serve as an important means of instilling a spirit of diligence in the younger generation, preserving national character, and strengthening traditional moral values.

The vivid expressions preserved in our language connect us with the voice and life experience of our ancestors and remind us of the enduring value of honest labor.

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