

# Generosity As The Intrinsic Feature Of Uzbek Nation

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**Abstract:** Proverbs carry an indelible trace of the national character, wisdom, and spirit of a nation therefore, in every proverb we can see the image of folk who created these proverbs. In the article through proverbs, features of Uzbek national character which appeared on the basis of immortal and tenacious Uzbek values are defined and elucidated. According to the author, such traits as generosity, mercifulness, hospitality pertain to the nature of Uzbek ethnic group. Apart from this, the author discusses reasons for the formation such kind of formidable personality traits in Uzbeks.

**Keywords:** proverbs, national character, generosity, collectivism, mercifulness, graciousness, hospitality, love of children.

**Аннотация:** Одним из источников национального идентичности являются пословицы и поговорки. Пословицы несут в себе нестираемый печать национального характера, мудрости и духа нации, поэтому в каждой пословице можно увидеть образ народа, создавшего эти пословицы. В статье через пословицы определяются и раскрываются особенности узбекского национального характера, возникшие на основе бессмертных и живучих узбекских ценностей. По мнению автора, характеру узбекского этноса присущи такие черты, как щедрость, милосердие, гостеприимство. В статье ещё обсуждается причины возникновения вышеупомянутых черт характера у узбеков.

**Ключевые слова:** пословицы, национальный характер, щедрость, коллективизм, милосердие, гостеприимство.

## Introduction

There are different ethnical groups and nations in the world that have been living in diverse environmental conditions. Yet any of them are alike to each other because every nation has its traditions and customs which have been passed down from generation to generation for many centuries. It is noteworthy to mention that various factors had a profound impact on the formation of them. For instance, religion, belief, lifestyle, and natural conditions of the continent where people live. They, in turn, affected people's mentality, morality, outlook, and national character as well.

Every person, ethnical group, or nation has its character, more exactly, spiritual and moral world. Moral and spiritual world of a nation encompasses in itself such elements as national mentality, characteristic traits, behavior, traditions, values, and feelings that bind a nation together in a national unit. National character is the main component of the moral and spiritual world or precisely the nucleus of it. Up to now a lot of researches have been done on this topic and the authors of the researches tried to elucidate the term national character in their works. For instance, according to M. Kuranov national character is a set of qualities of many people that belong to one culture. [1, 14] Whereas, N. Jandaldin defines the national character as "a set of specific psychological traits that have become more or less characteristic of one or another socio-ethnic community in the specific economic, cultural, and natural conditions of its development" [2,122]. However, the definition given by V.G. Krisko is completer and more detailed: "national character is a set of stable psychological qualities that developed historically and they are moral manners and a conduct of behaviors that show nation's attitude towards social and living conditions, surroundings, labor, themselves and other ethnic groups, etc". [3, 55]

## Materials and methods

It should be pointed out that national character is a relative concept because a characterization of a nation cannot be manifested in each member of the nation. For instance, in many sources it is said that French are flippant, the English – self-centered, the Russian - patient, etc. but we have already met courteous and deep-thinking French, selfless and dedicated English, and extremely impatient Russians ..." [4, 137]. Above mentioned information claims that national character is controversial and contradictory. Therefore, a Russian linguist S. G. Ter-Minasova suggests a list of sources where national character of a nation can be manifested. They are following:

1. International jokes;

2. Classical literature;
3. Folklore; [5, 20-25]

### Results

Proverbs being a part of folklore are regarded as vehicles of a nation's morality therefore, they are considered as means of transmitting moral ideas of previous ancestors, traditional wisdom and knowledge. Formerly having arisen in individual consciousness, proverbs in the course of time became a part of public consciousness. Expressing folk consciousness, they have remained as mirror reflection of the folk and its experience, world outlook, cultural and spiritual values. Thus, it is justifiable to determine national character of a nation via them.

Currently, there are a lot of dictionaries of Uzbek proverbs. But we collected data for analysis from "Ozbek xalq maqollari" (Uzbek folk proverbs) compiled by T. Mirzayev, A. Musakulov and B. Sarimsoqov (2003) and "Ma'nolar maxzani" (The treasure of meanings) by Sh Shomqsdov and Sh Shorahmedov (2001). Due to the analysis of Uzbek proverbs, we identified the following characteristic features pertinent to Uzbek nation: Collectivism, generosity, hospitality, mercifulness and graciousness, discretion, and love for children.

### Discussion

**Generosity.** Today, generosity is being considered as the first mark of a good person. Generosity expresses itself in various forms; for example, *hospitality, kindness, giving material aid or offering help by giving time or skill* (that we call now charity). When we picture the national identity of Uzbeks, the first two notions that spring to our mind are hospitality and generosity. They are for Uzbekistan are the values inherited from ancestors. To put it another way, these inherent virtues are in their blood.

Ils Laude Cirtautas in his article entitled "A survival and revival of traditional Uzbek values and customs: A view from the outside" states that early ancestors of Uzbeks - Bilga Kagan and Kul Tegin were willing to give financial support, help and kindness to his nation. He came to this conclusion by analyzing funeral inscriptions chiseled onto large stones left by them. For example, Bilga Kagan states the following expressing his obligation towards his people: "*For the sake of the Turk people, I didn't sleep at night, I didn't rest by day.*" Other lines describe his generosity: "*Having been seated (i.e. elected) as Kaghan, I gathered all the poor and destitute people together. I made the poor people wealthy and the few people numerous*". Like in the Kul Tegin inscription, a favorite phrase in the epic songs, symbolizing generosity is: "*.... And he (the hero) gave clothes to those without clothes and horses to those without horses*". At the end of the article Ils Laude Cirtautas compares Turkic kagans with the king Beowulf who was the hero of the Old English epic song and comes to the conclusion that Beowulf gathered great treasure but "was unable to extend generosity and concern for his people's welfare". [8, 10]

This priceless tradition of generosity in Central Asia didn't cease to exist then, but it proceeded in the next centuries. For instance, Samanid rulers and affluent Samanids competed with each other to pay yearly kharaj (Tax on agrarian land owned by non-Muslim) of folk [9, p. 9]. Likewise, a great folk hero across Asia Tamerlane outscored others in the competition on generosity. His following statements prove the abovementioned thought: "*I donated a lot to help poor people and to build mosque, madrassah, hospice, caravanserai (caravan site) along the roadsides for travelers to rest and recover from the day's journey. I checked out every problematic issue thoroughly and I put all my effort into solving it impartially*". [10, 54] Regarding benevolence not only rulers but ordinary people also gained recognition and popularity among folk. For instance, according to sources a prominent savant, the founder of the Naqshbandiya Order Muhammad ibn Muhammad Bahouddin Naqshbandi al-Bukhari used to donate all his earnings to beggars and orphans. Another representative and successor of Naqshbandiya Order Khwaja Ahrar, who was one of the richest men in Central Asia in the 9th century used to spend most of his money on the needy. Most of his wealth was invested in *Waqf* (religious endowments) and was used for the poverty-stricken people. Furthermore, historians contend that when Umar Shaykh Mirzo demanded from residents of Tashkent to gather the amount of money equaled to 250000 dinars, Khwaja Ahrar paid all sum of money by himself. Apart from that, he gave away 70000 dinars to tax collectors. What is more, many madrassahs in Tashkent, Kabul, and Samarkand were built under his sponsorship. [9, 14]

The most admired and desired qualities that had earned unequivocal admiration of Central Asian thinkers, and writers were generosity and magnanimity. Therefore, generosity was praised a lot and shown as an example of virtuous conduct in the literature of ancient and medieval centuries in Central Asia. For instance, in the

works of Alisher Navoi, Yusuf Has Hajib, Makhmud Yugnakiy, Munis, Khorasmi. morality that saturated with ideology of benevolence, generosity, kindness, and magnanimity is acclaimed. Here it is noteworthy to say that most Uzbek proverbs devoted to generosity appeared based on these sources as well as hadiths and holy Koran.

According to our analysis of two sources 147 proverbs devoted to generosity and greediness are found. In all of them generosity, openhandedness, and benevolence are emphasized as exemplary conduct, whereas stinginess is reputed as a repugnant vice:

“Baxilning bog‘ida sunbul ko‘karmas”.

(Nothing grows on stingy man’s land);

“Baxildan tosh soraguncha,

Gadoydan osh so‘ra”.

(It is better to ask for bread from a mendicant than corn from a greedy man);

“Maqtasang saxiyni maqta,

Toptasang baxilni topta”.

(Generous man be praised

Greedy man be neglected);

“Tog‘ belgisi tosh bilan,

Boy belgisi osh bilan”.

(The symbol of the mountain is rock, and the sign of a wealthy man is generosity);

“Saxiy or bo‘lmas,

Baxil bexishtga kirmas”.

(Good things come to those who are generous);

**Hospitality:** One of the main inherent features of the Uzbeks is hospitality and cordiality. Uzbek people adore guests so much that even dropping corn from the beak of a turtledove, standing a tealeaf or stem upright in tea, and seeing a road in a dream are thought to be a portent of the arrival of guests. [11, 212] In Uzbek culture anyone who steps the threshold of Uzbek’s house is considered to be holy and they must let any guest in the house and in every way show respect and hospitality. The main reason for this is that there is a belief among Uzbeks that a guest brings a *barakah* and a host’s generosity is an opportunity to accrue *thawab*. [12, 88]. This belief also reflected in Uzbek proverbs:

“Mehmon –otangday ulug‘”

(A guest is as sacred as your father);

“Mehmon kelgan uydan baraka arimaydi”.

When a guest comes (to you)

Good luck comes (with him);

It means, he should be considered a blessing, not a burden

“Mehmon kelgan uyning chirog‘i ravshan yonadi”.

(If a guest pays a visit, the light of the house gets brighter).

Elder people always admonish younger ones to prepare more food because unexpected guest may come at any time. Apart from this, there is a view in Uzbek culture that 2 portions of food can satisfy three people or there are five people’s *rizq* in three portions of food. Because of this faith, many inhabitants of Uzbekistan sheltered evacuated children from different parts of the world during World war II. The whole world witnessed how Uzbek nation generously shared the last piece of bread and surrounded them with warmth.

If a guest comes during the mealtime Uzbeks use phrase “Mother in law’s pet” towards him and as a sign of welcome and to make him less discomfort use saying “A good guest comes at mealtime”. It shows how Uzbek people are tolerant and hospitable.

In Uzbekistan when a guest visits your house, first, a host spreads a *dasturkhon* (tablecloth). *Dasturkhon* in Uzbek signifies both the physical table covering as well as what’s placed atop it-namely, the foods. [13, 10]. Along with bread, sweets, and fruits the guest is treated with national meal pilaf. The following proverbs reveal an invaluable tradition of the guest receiving in Uzbek culture: “Mehmon kelsa pastga tush, palov bermoq axdga tush”; “Mehmon ko‘rki dasturhon”; “Mehmonga osh qoy, Ikki qo‘lini bosh qo‘y”; “Osh mehmon bilan aziz; Yuzta siz-bizdan bitta jiz-biz yaxshi”. All of these proverbs are about the importance of feeding a guest.

Hospitality in Uzbek families is appreciated higher than the wealth of a table and the prosperity of the family. Turning away a guest at the door is considered a sin or disgrace to the family, kin and makhalla. Conscientious and dignified Uzbek people wishing to perpetuate invaluable jewels of their culture fixed them into the following proverbs and sayings: “Borini bergan uyalmas”, “Qo‘noq ko‘nsa et pishar, et pishmasa bet pishar”, Qizil et ketar, qizargan bet qolar”. The meaning of the above-mentioned proverbs is that guests’ wellness and fullness are most crucial along with the notion that their mood must be maintained or uplifted at all costs. If not, it is a shame and it is worse than death.

Guest receiving differs in different parts of Uzbekistan. In Fergana Valley and Qashqadaryo region neighbors, and relatives of a host bring meals as soon as they know about the guest’s visit. Russell Zanca describing Uzbek hospitality mentions that food appears out of nowhere when an unannounced guest shows up, especially in various regions of Andijon and Namangon (FV), involving other diners whom the guest would never have expected. [13, 10] Serving a whole sheep or goat to honor or welcome guests is still very much part of Qashqadaryo region's culinary tradition. It is done by a host or host’s neighbor, or a relative. As a result of such kind of traditions the following proverb appeared: “Mehmon kirs a eshikdan, rizqi kelar teshikdan” (*Should a guest walk through the door, food will come through a hole in the floor*).

According to gems of wit that have been passed from our ancestors it is indecent to raise your voice, speak loud in an angry way, have a row with somebody, speak sarcastically with anybody, and bawl at your children in the presence of guests. Even it is immoral to say “scat” to your cat because it is thought that it can upset a guest.[14, 29] The following proverbs reveal such character of Uzbeks: “Mehmonning oldida mushugingni pisht dema” (Don’t say “scat” to your cat in the presence of your guest”, “Mehmonning itini tur dema” (Don’t say “scram” to guest’s dog), “Uyinga mehmon kelganda kapgiringni taqillatma” (Use kitchen utensil gently not to make sound).

There are several reasons for the formation such kind of conduct and behavior concerning hospitality in Uzbeks. Firstly, in the past Uzbekistan stood at the crossroads of the Great Silk Road. Its grand cities hosted thousands of road-weary tradesmen who sought refuge from the desert and the perils of the open road. These caravans would stay for days at a time. As a result, such decent morals as generosity, hospitality, and tolerance are molded in Uzbeks.

Secondly, many aspects of the code of conduct as well as customs and traditions still practiced today in Uzbekistan are rooted in Islamic culture. After converting to Islam radical changes occurred in the social life of people of Central Asia and of course, these changes were reflected in the literature. Thus, masterpieces of literature were created under the influence of Islamic culture as well as fiction of regional traditions.

Islamic hospitality means to give voluntarily and without compensation. Hospitality, an unconditional welcome of the guest, is made through acts, words, and objects. [15, 462] Welcoming guests starts with saying good and gentle words. Therefore, in Uzbek proverbs it said to treat your guest with kindness, though you don’t have anything to feed him (“Bug‘doy noning bolmasa, bug‘doy so‘zing bo‘lsin”, Issiq oshing bolmasa ham, iliq so‘zing bo‘lsin”).

According to Islamic tradition, hospitality implies three important components: the host, the guest, and Allah. God is hospitable, and people should show hospitality. All good deeds, including hospitality, will be rewarded by God in this life by giving barakah (blessing) to his wealth, health and increasing his rizq (sustenance). This idea is also expressed in following Uzbek proverb: “Mehmon kelgan uy barakali”.

If we take a glimpse at the literature of this nation in ancient and medieval centuries, we can surely notice that it was based on a canon of wisdom literature, generally called didactic literature. In this literature, generosity and hospitality are considered important features of cultivated man. Throughout centuries Uzbeks have been brought up and grown up by reading literature and oral folk tradition in which such invaluable moral features are exalted. Therefore, generosity and hospitality are fixed in Uzbeks’ personality.

### **Mercifulness and graciousness.**

Mercifulness and graciousness of Uzbek people can be manifested in the relationship between neighbors, siblings, relatives, parents and children.

In Uzbek families children from their early childhood are brought up in the spirit of love and respect to their family members. Parents urge their elder children to be kind, supportive, merciful, and caring towards little ones, whereas little children are encouraged to be obedient and respectful to elder ones. In Uzbek families parents make their little children call their elder siblings as “aka”(elder brother), “opa” (elder sister). The



following proverbs show tight –knit bond between siblings: “Jahl-og‘adan, uzr inidan” (Even if elder brother is angry with little one, he should forgive him), “Ota-hazina, aka-uka –tayanch” (A father is treasure, brothers are pillars to lean on), “Onangni kaftingda tutsang, singlingni boshingda tut” (If you hold your mother on the palm of your hand, your sister-on the top of your head).

Since the Uzbek community are built up on the principles of collectivism and collaboration, relationship between relatives is important. In many aspects of life, they rely on their relatives, and make important decisions in consultation with them. According to Uzbek proverbs familial bond is the strongest and the first who comes to help when you are in trouble is your relative: “Qorongida qichqirsang, qarindosh tovush berar”, “Qon qarindosh-jon qarindosh”.

Most Western travelers to the Turkic regions of Central Asia have been impressed by the dignified conduct of the local young in the presence of elders. This was especially observed among Uzbeks. [17, 2]. According to Uzbek traditions children are grown up with respect for their parents, grandparents, and all elders. Therefore, elders occupy a respected place among Uzbeks. Uzbeks are extremely fond of their elders. No negative attribute can be used to describe an elderly person. English expressions such as "silly old woman" are unheard of. In Uzbek folktales old women are not depicted as witches, living somewhere alone. A common attribute used towards elders is "nuroniy keksalar" (elders with faces shining with light). [16, 25-26].

Uzbeks also express high reverence for elders with numerous proverbial sayings: "Boshida qor-kongillari bahor" (On their head is snow (that's their grey hair) -In their hearts is spring), “Qari –uyning farishtasi, saranjomu saristasi” (Elders are angels of the house, and those who put everything in order) "Qari bilganni pari bilmas" (What elders know, fairies do not know), The latter proverb is originated from a legend that dates back many centuries. “According to this legend in ancient times, there was a custom to execute elders. One man loved his father very much so he hid him... Once a king sailed along the sea. Suddenly wind started to blow hard. They were hit by a terrible storm with strong winds and in a moment their ship was thrown to the bank. It was a land of fairies. As the king and his servants walked along the coast, they encountered a hill. From the top of the hill, they saw something glittering in the sea. It was an egg-size diamond. He ordered his servant to get it from the sea. Many of them dived but nobody got it. However, the wish to own the diamond did not get the king sleep. Then he announced to give half price of the diamond who get it, otherwise would be sentenced to death. Finally, the turn came to the man who hid his father. He could not help thinking about his death, that's why he came to his father and told him everything. At that time his father predicted that there was a tree near the sea and bird's nest on the branch of it. He said that the diamond in the sea was the reflection of the diamond in the nest. A gleam of hope awoke in the heart of the man. He followed what his father said, and found the diamond. Even the fairies of this land did not know anything about this diamond. The king asked the man how he knew about it. He had to tell the truth. Afterward, the king canceled his order about killing elders”. [11, 438]

To get old, means to get wise. In Uzbek proverbs elders are teachers to listen: "Qariyali uy- maktab" (The house which has elder is school (It means that elders teach you a lot)), “Otang o‘rgatsa dono bo‘lasan (You will become wise if you obey to your father). Moreover, many Uzbek proverbs admonish the younger generation to have a high regard for elders. If so, god will bestow blessings upon him: “Sen siylasang qarini, Tangrim siylar barini” (if you show honor to elders, god will bestow his blessings upon you), Qariyani hurmat qilgan baxtli bolur” (He who respects elder will be happy), “Qarining hurmati farz” (You must respect elders). In Uzbek society the tradition of mercifulness and graciousness can be seen in the relationship between neighbors. Since Uzbeks have been living for thousands of years collectively in the communities, neighbors play a special role in their lives. This long-standing and priceless tradition is built up on the principles of mutual help, cordiality, respect, and generosity. Uzbeks believe that “a good neighborhood prolongs a life” (another version of this proverb is “You never get old if you have a good neighbor”) because they always share happy moments of their life with them or it is the neighbor or relative who gives a helping hand in your time of need. The rituals of Uzbek people are not held with the participation of neighbors. In Uzbek makhallas no one can be indifferent if someone goes through a rough patch. This living tradition that has been passing for millennia is stamped on the following proverbs: “Yaxshi kunda yon qo‘shnim, yomon kunda bor qo‘shnim” (Neighbours are on your side in your good and bad times), “Qo‘shni keldi-ko‘mak keldi” (Neighbour helps in your time of need), “Qo‘shningda bori-senda bor” (Neighbour shares with what he has) “Uzoqdagi qarindoshdan yaqindahi qo‘shni yahshi” (A close neighbor is better than a faraway relative).

Uzbek proverbs admonish not to buy a house not knowing neighbors (“Hovli olma qo‘shni ol”) because if your neighbor is at peace with himself, you will also be at peace (“Qo‘shning tinch-sen tinch”).

The last thing that should be pointed out about traditions of good neighborliness in Uzbek culture is the obligations of neighbors. In addition to respecting and visiting neighbors, people are responsible for looking out for one another by collectively parenting children. Perhaps, it seems like meddling with others’ private lives for people from an individualistic society, but in Uzbek culture seven neighbors are considered parents for a child (“Bir bolaga yeti qoshni ota-ona”). These traditions and rituals have been formed throughout the years and turned into the lifestyle of Uzbek nation.

One of the features referring to Uzbeks is “andishalilik” the meaning of which is difficult to convey with a single word in English. The concept “andisha” in Uzbek language is concerned with the following concepts:

1. Discretion and prudence
2. Respect and reverence
3. Patience and tolerance
4. Sagacity

For instance, some people act based on good judgement and understanding, even though someone hurts their feelings. They prefer to be patient, tolerant and preserve prudent silence. Here “andisha” emerged as a result of patience and tolerance. Some people call such kinds of people a coward. In response to these people, Uzbek nations use the following proverb: “Andishani otini qo‘rqoq qo‘yma” (don’t call delicacy cowardice).

Besides, in Uzbek culture “andisha” is developed because of high respect for somebody. The tradition of showing respect to young ones and respect and reverence to elders refers to Eastern culture in particular Uzbeks where this tradition is considered a core value. One of the priceless values in the Uzbek community is treating parents with utmost respect. For many centuries Uzbeks have been obeying the proverb “Ota –aql, ona- idrok” (A father is mind, a mother- reason). This proverb urges children to follow this belief. According to this proverb, a father is endless wit for his children. As well as he should set an example for them. In its turn, a child should be truly son of his father. As a father, a child also has some obligations towards his father. Looking straight at his father’s eyes, interrupting his sentence, going in front of him, extending his hand to reach over food before his father and not being obedient to him are considered immorality in Uzbek culture. Even getting to the rooftop of the house where a father sits is regarded as disrespect towards a father (“Ota o‘tirgan uyning tomiga chiqma”- Don’t get to the rooftop of the house where your father sits). It is noteworthy to say that you cannot meet such kind of treatment toward fathers in Western countries because father and child relationship is based on the principles of democracy and individualism.

Thus, the abovementioned ideas prove that “andisha” can be developed as a result of high respect towards somebody. According to the paremiological fund of Uzbek language “andisha” can appear in the relationship between following people:

1. Parents and children: “Otangni ko‘rsang otdan tush” (Get off a horse when you see a father), “Ota o‘tirgan uyning tomiga chiqma” (Don’t get to the rooftop of the house where your father sits);
2. Teacher and student: “Ustozinga tik qarasang to‘zasan, hurmat qilsang asta asta o‘zasan” (If you disrespect your teacher you will lose your reputation, if you respect, you will outperform him);
3. Between parents of daughter-in-law and son in-law: “Qudangdan qarz so‘rama” (Do not ask for debt from the parents of the daughter-in-law or son-in-law)
4. Host and guest: “Mehmonning itini tur dema” ((Don’t say “scram” to guest’s dog);
5. Mother-in-law and Daughter-in-law: “Qizim senga aytaman, kelinim sen eshit” (I tell you daughter; daughter in-law should listen - This proverb urges daughter-in-law be sharp-witted because everything is not to be told straight to the face of daughter-in-law. She can grasp when it is said to others).

Culture, traditions and national values of different nations differ from each other greatly. It is due to a number of factors: beliefs, religion, history, language, geographical locations, climate and etc. In its turn all of them are responsible for molding people, determine their behavior, way of life, outlook, mentality and national character.

National character is a set of stereotyped qualities attributed to one nation. The significance of studying national character is essential, because it impacts how people interact with each other, behavioral actions, and

attitude towards different things. Thus, learning national character opens the door to the moral-spiritual world of a nation, so by going in depth of a nation's soul you can avoid cultural misunderstanding.

One of the source objective information on national character is proverbs. In the proverb the experience, habits and traditions of a certain nation are reflected, that is why the study of the proverbs aids to get deeper into the essence of such notions as "national character", "mentality", "language picture of the world". [19, 627] Analysis of Uzbek proverbs enabled us to determine such personal traits as collectivism, generosity, hospitality, mercifulness and graciousness, amicability, discretion, prudence and love of children pertain to Uzbek people. This mini research also proves that these features of Uzbeks exist in the paremiological fund of Uzbek language.

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