

## PROVERBS AND WISDOM: EXPLORING THE CONVERGENCE AND SEPARATION

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### ABSTRACT

This article explores the agreement and differences between proverbs and wisdom. It emphasizes their shared qualities of brevity and honesty, as well as their ability to convey extensive experiences. However, the main distinction lies in their association with specific incidents or stories. Proverbs are concise statements that originated from particular occasions and have come to represent various similar situations. Moreover, the significance of proverbs and wisdom lies in the purposes they serve, which would render them meaningless otherwise. When proverbs and wisdom are repeatedly used, they reveal the essence of humanity and the underlying tendencies within individuals. They also provide insights into people's perspectives on different life matters and their overall worldview. Proverbs serve as authentic reflections of individuals and the research aims to evoke emotions, fulfill aspirations, and shed light on contemplation, as well as the philosophy and wisdom intertwined within them. It is noted that proverbs must possess eloquence, be commonly known, or encompass great wisdom. Both proverbs and wisdom originate from knowledge, contain profound content, and are rooted in philosophy. A person's vision, derived from knowledge, results from a reflective, abstract, and stable outlook, nurtured by expertise and experience. It requires contemplation and a balance between various aspects, as it represents the individual's perspective and mindset. The article seeks to explore the similarities and differences between proverbs and wisdom, employing a descriptive analytical method to achieve its aims.

**Keywords:** Proverbs, Wisdom, Rhetoric, Heritage.

### INTRODUCTION

Through this article, we aim to discuss the significance of proverbs and sayings. We acknowledge that a proverb or saying,



when widely circulated, can be considered accurate based on its contextual relevance. Factors interact and shape the formulation of these proverbs or wisdom, creating an appropriate framework. Popular proverbs and sayings hold immense value as they represent a rich heritage of collective life experiences. They provide insights into societal norms, beliefs, and moral standards, as well as guide individuals on how to navigate various circumstances across successive centuries. These expressions have been passed down from generation to generation, taking on different forms that showcase intellectual and artistic creativity. They play a role in guiding and shaping society, offering advice and lesson that illuminate people's paths in life. In this article, we will explore select popular proverbs and sayings, delving into their origins, meanings, and multidimensional aspects. We also emphasize the importance of understanding the underlying reasons that motivate individuals in their actions and decisions. Conflicting reasons can lead to confusion and divide one's path, making it challenging to discern the primary goal they are pursuing from secondary objectives. It is vital for individuals to recognize and align themselves with the truth behind their motivations to effectively navigate their responsibilities. The research focuses on the significance of proverbs and sayings as a valuable heritage, representing a literary and cultural treasure that encapsulates extensive life experiences and societal values passed down through generations.

### **Motives for Selection:**

Proverbs and sayings hold significant importance and occupy a prominent position in every language. Particularly among earlier generations, they served as concise expressions of the accumulated wisdom and experiences of the past. Proverbs and sayings encompassed various aspects of intellectual, social, literary, cultural, historical, national, and moral dimensions, effectively capturing the essence of individuals' lives. They eloquently translated the realities, aspirations, and pains of people into beautifully crafted phrases.

### **Research Background**

The researcher did not find any previous studies with the same title, "Proverbs and Wisdom and the Convergence and Divergence between Them." Consequently, an independent study was conducted. However, studies analyzing the analogies between proverbs and wisdom have been scattered across various sections. Some examples include "Masterpieces in Wisdom and Proverbs" by Abd al-Rahman Afif, "Arabic Proverbs and the Pre-Islamic Era" by Muhammad Tawfiq Abu Ali, "Semantics of Proverbs and Proverbs in the Arab Heritage" by Nwejem Masouda, and "Proverbs and Proverbs and Their Manifestations in Arabic Novels" by Dr. Samah bin Kharouf. In contemporary



times, the exploration of proverbs and wisdom has received significant attention within world literature, as they are recognized as powerful elements influencing both literature and culture.

### **Presentation and Analysis of Proverb: What is Proverb?**

Proverbs have been a part of human discourse for generations, passed down from predecessors to successors. They are often uttered in response to specific incidents or special occasions, and subsequently repeated in similar contexts. These proverbs have been preserved through the ages, as people pay homage to their ancestors. In addition to their cultural significance, proverbs often encapsulate wisdom, thus explaining their interconnectedness.

In terms of language, the term "proverb" encompasses a range of concepts which blend concrete and abstract meanings. Language dictionaries include various definitions such as equivalence, similarity, resemblance, counterpart, adjectives, predicates, examples, arguments, parallels, lessons, verses, measures, templates, and more. These definitions highlight the multifaceted nature of proverbs and their ability to convey diverse concepts and ideas (Abu Ali & M. Tawfiq, 1988, p. 32).

The proverb is a term that was described by Ibrahim Al-Farabi. According to him, a proverb is something that both the public and private individuals agree upon in its wording and meaning. It is shared among themselves and interpreted in both good and bad times. Proverbs have the power to inspire admiration, fulfill deep desires, and provide relief in times of distress. They are regarded as one of the highest forms of wisdom because they are not associated with individuals who possess deficiencies or lack quality. Proverbs are valued for their ability to convey precious insights. (Al-Farabi, Abu Ibrahim Ishaq bin Ibrahim, 2003, p. 74).

According to Al-Suyuti, who quotes Al-Marzouqi, the author of the book "Sharh Al-Fusih," the proverb can be defined as a brief sentence or saying that originates from itself or is transmitted independently. Proverbs are characterized by their widespread acceptance and are known to be commonly circulated. They have the ability to encompass various intended meanings without any alterations to their wording or intended message. Proverbs can be interpreted in different ways, even if the reasons behind their meanings are not known. In addition, the use of ellipsis and present participles, which are usually prohibited in other forms of speech, is permissible in proverbs. (Al-Suyuti, Abd al-Rahman Jalal al-Din, 1/486).

The proverb is an integral part of the artistic and eloquent style of expression that effectively conveys meanings and holds influence over the listener. Through the use of proverbs, the desired message becomes more relatable and resonates with the listener on a

deeper level. Proverbs are able to establish a connection between the intended meaning and the tangible reality of the listener's life and surroundings. This is particularly true in the case of prophetic proverbs, which serve as beacons of wisdom. They illuminate the path for humanity, providing guidance and imparting important life lessons.

The proverb, as described by Awni in his work, is a representative metaphor that holds significant usage and encompasses the original meaning implied. It has the ability to address various grammatical forms, including the singular, dual, and plural, regardless of gender, without modifying the phrase used. Additionally, it requires the presence of the word "suspected" within the metaphor itself, which further contributes to its popularity and widespread usage. Over time, such proverbs have become exemplary in their usage and have gained widespread recognition. (Awni, Hamid, 2/132).

When it comes to proverbs in literature, they are defined as spoken statements that aim to draw a comparison between the situation of the individual to whom it refers and the situation for which it was originally said. Proverbs are commonly used to describe peculiar situations or stories and align closely with the definitions put forth by contemporary scholars (Al-Qattan, Manna, 2008, p. 181).

This notion is also evident in the proverbs found within the Sunnah, where they serve as representations of one thing in relation to another. They may convey wondrous stories or emphasize matters of significance or virtuous status, encouraging positive behavior, or warning against shameful and derisive actions. The earlier definition aligns closely with the perspective of a contemporary researcher, who describes proverbs as general sayings that can be likened to a situation that corresponds to the basis of the proverb's meaning. For instance, it is acceptable to say to someone who neglected an opportunity that was easily accessible to them and now seeks it after its expiration, "summer, I lost the milk" (Al-Zunaidi, Abd al-Rahman bin Zaid, 2008, p. 311).

### Examples of Proverbs

- Do good and cast it into the sea.
- Every sheep is hanged by its own foot. (This is the best way to handle this.)
- Each creature with a tail struts proudly. (Naz Arous Beh Jaiz Ast).
- Man is enslaved by acts of kindness. (Insan Panda Ihsan Ast).
- He sought shelter from the rain but found himself under a leaky gutter. (If you doubt it, we will dismiss it).

### What is Wisdom?

"It is a saying that encapsulates the wise man's opinion based on an experiment he conducted. Through this experiment, he was able to discern right from wrong and gained valuable life experience. People consider these expressions wise because they accurately reflect their experience and knowledge. In ancient times, wisdom held a similar significance as poetry. Wisdom is the result of experience, a philosophical approach to life, and a deep understanding of the situation and how to solve it. The wise person possesses keen insight when it comes to resolving issues, which is akin to a type of physiognomy.

Wisdom, in its literal sense, involves arriving at truth and reality through knowledge and reasoning. It is associated with wisdom as an article of governance, meaning the application of reason and prevention. One of its primary meanings is the ability to issue rulings that prevent injustice. Wisdom also prevents ignorance and lack of knowledge. The term 'knowledge' refers to the understanding, perception, and comprehension of the truth and essence of a thing. It allows one to discern what is strange or unique about them.

In terms of terminology, some believe wisdom to be the knowledge that shapes and strengthens human personality. The subject of wisdom is mentioned multiple times in the Holy Qur'an, with various interpretations provided by commentators. Some suggest that wisdom refers to prophet hood, while others argue that it pertains to legislation and the knowledge of what is permissible and forbidden. Some commentators claim it relates to the sciences of the Qur'an or the understanding of divine speech. Allama Tabatabai defines wisdom as a form of ruling and mastery of knowledge.

In the Qur'an, God is described as 'The Wise' in ninety-two instances and 'The All-Knowing' in one hundred and fifty-six instances. The descriptions of God as wise and knowledgeable highlight His ability to create with perfection and precision, without any flaws. It is creation based on unlimited knowledge, which is an attribute of the Divine Essence. Wisdom is also an attribute of God's actions, signifying mastery, truth, and freedom from falsehood.

In conclusion, wisdom entails the state and characteristic of perception and diagnosis, relying on the knowledge whose ultimate truth lies with God Almighty. Luqman, for example, received this wisdom from God Almighty."

#### **Examples of Good Governance:**

- A person's manners are more valuable than their wealth.
- When it comes to making judgments, space becomes limited for decision-making.
- The safety of people lies in communicating kindly.



- Too much criticism can lead to the separation of loved ones.
- After a long period of silence, he expressed disbelief.
- Complaints are often used by those who feel powerless.

The meeting of wisdom and proverbs holds common features, but one characteristic sets them apart. Let's begin by discussing their shared attributes before delving into their differences.

Abu Ubaid stated that proverbs represent the wisdom of the Arabs during pre-Islamic and Islamic times, with their words standing in contrast to their actual intentions. They convey their messages through logical non-literal metaphors, combining brevity of expression, precision of meaning, and effective similes. The Prophet (PBUH) himself utilized proverbs, and this practice continued with his successors (Al-Suyuti, d. T., 486).

### **The intersection of proverbs and wisdom:**

Therefore, it can be concluded that there are four common features between wisdom and proverbs:

1. Concise wording and intricate meaning.
2. Influenced by religious and cultural texts.
3. Demonstrating depth, accuracy, and sobriety in meaning.
4. Exhibiting ease, elegance, and fluency in pronunciation.

Additionally, wisdom and proverbs are rich in literary and rhetorical devices.

### **The Difference between Proverbs and Wisdom**

Despite the association of the word "proverb" with another word that conveys a similar concept, namely "wisdom," it is important to note that wisdom encompasses a broader range of elements including customs, traditions, management, common sayings, and even rare expressions. It serves as a means of expressing life experiences, albeit in an abstract form. (Zelheim, 1982, p.33).

The common proverb encapsulates sublime aspects that exemplify the most exquisite forms of eloquence. Abu Ishaq Al-Nizam further supports this notion by asserting that proverbs possess four distinctive traits not found in other forms of speech: brevity in pronunciation, precision in meaning, effective use of simile, and the quality of metonymy. In essence, proverbs represent the pinnacle of eloquence. (Ibn al-Qayyim, 1981, p.33).

Abu Ubaid's reference to a "metaphor without a statement" highlights the distinguishing features of ancient Arabic proverbs. These proverbs are characterized by their clear ideas and skillful depiction of content without excessive elaboration or repetition that could detract from their effectiveness. Instead, they rely on concise references, exhibiting

brevity in pronunciation, accuracy in meaning, and a savvy use of divisions. These foundational aspects were deemed essential by the people of that time and contributed to the pinnacle of eloquent expression.

It is important to note that while proverbs may contain elements of wisdom, they are not synonymous. Proverbs often surpass wisdom in the depth of their ideas, as they effectively convey intended meanings through the use of similes, imagery, and representations. Wisdom, on the other hand, encompasses contemplation, insight into life's affairs, and attempts to uncover its secrets. Individuals who express wisdom are often well-known in their communities, possessing eloquence, knowledge, and philosophical understanding.

Both proverbs and wisdom share common traits of brevity, condensation, and effective expression. However, wisdom may lean towards lengthier and more elaborate explanations, distinguishing it from concise proverbs. (Taha, Jumana, 2002, p.34).

Afif Abdel Rahman contends that linguists have not given adequate attention to proverbs. Rather than studying and analyzing proverbs, linguists have mostly focused on collecting them, writing them down, and providing explanations. According to Rahman, this lack of emphasis on studying proverbs is due to the challenge of defining them, as they encompass elements of wisdom and common sayings. Rahman classifies proverbs into three categories: ancient Arabic proverbs, generative proverbs, and contemporary popular colloquial proverbs (Abdul Rahman, Afif (1983), 3/pp. 13-17).

While it is difficult to precisely define a proverb and separate it from other related sayings and expressions, there are certain foundations that can help distinguish them. This becomes apparent from Ibn al-Sakit's previous definition of a proverb, as well as Al-Mubarrad's definition: "A different saying that resembles the case of the second" (Al-Maydani, Ahmed bin Muhammad (1955), 5).

Abu Ubaid al-Qasim bin Salam characterized proverbs as the wisdom of the Arabs from the pre-Islamic era to Islam. He described proverbs as embodying contradictory words that convey logical attempts and metaphorical ideas rather than explicit statements (Ibn Salam, Abu Ubaid al-Qasim (1970), Proverbs by Ibn Salam: p. 3).

What sets proverbs apart from wisdom is their timeless nature and their ability to manifest concepts in real-world situations. Wisdom, on the other hand, can fluctuate and take different forms depending on time, circumstances, and the perspective of the wise individual towards existence. Wisdom tends to be more direct, while proverbs rely on

representation and simile, employing indirect means of expression. As Afif Abdul Rahman suggests, proverbs and wisdom share common goals and outcomes but differ in their approach. Proverbs can be seen as one aspect or expression of wisdom (Abdul Rahman, Afif (1983), Old Arabic Proverbs: p. 3).

A proverb arises from a repeated occurrence, resulting in a saying that encapsulates the story in a concise manner, using easily understandable language that resonates with all who hear it. Proverbs are a remarkable cultural fabric, possessing a remarkable precision that endows a sense of constitution to the people.

Wisdom, in its current form, emerges from experience and knowledge, possessing deeper content and stemming from a philosophical and insightful understanding of the world. It is imparted by knowledgeable individuals, scholars, or theologians, rather than theologians themselves. The words and language of wisdom are derived from thorough study, knowledge, and research. Every philosophy can be subject to practical analysis, making physiognomy an essential part of any discourse (Ibn Salam, Abu Ubaid al-Qasim (1970), Proverbs by Ibn Salam: p. 3).

The research suggests that many individuals, including writers and thinkers, often conflate the concepts of proverbs and wisdom, failing to distinguish between them. However, a proverb is a well-crafted, widely known phrase that often contains elements of wisdom in its explanation and revelation. In this article, we will highlight some of the findings from our research.

## CONCLUSION

- Proverbs emerge from people's experiences and carry a similar meaning to wisdom, although wisdom is the result of one's correct opinion.

- Wisdom encompasses both words and actions, whereas proverbs are specific to linguistic expression.

- Proverbs are commonly used in situations that mirror the circumstance in which the proverb is shared, while wisdom can be applicable at all times.

- Wisdom is a result of knowledge and holds deeper content, stemming from an individual's philosophy and vision. It is an expression of insight and intelligence informed by extensive knowledge.

- Proverbs and wisdom share some similarities but differ in certain aspects. They agree in brevity and sincerity, often representing long-held experiences. However, they diverge in their connection to specific incidents or stories. Wisdom has no specific source and is usually shared by individuals who possess exceptional experience, draw from their own encounters,



and have a wide breadth of cultural understanding to enhance their insights.

- Proverbs often employ similes, whereas wisdom may or may not include them. If similes are present in wisdom, they tend to be combined with the proverb. Otherwise, they differentiate it from a proverb.

- Proverbs are intended to convey a protest, while wisdom aims to warn, inform, and advocate. It is not unreasonable to consider proverbs as a part of wisdom, as they permeate it and extend to other forms. This led Imam Abu Hilal Al-Askari, author of the book "A Collection of Proverbs," to deem every common wisdom as a proverb (Abdul Rahman, Afif (1983), Old Arabic Proverbs: p. 3).

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