

# Semantic Shifts In Phytonyms In Uzbek Folk Proverbs

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**Received:** 22 September 2025; **Accepted:** 13 October 2025; **Published:** 20 November 2025

**Abstract:** This article analyzes the semantic-transformative properties of phytonyms in Uzbek folk proverbs, focusing on the processes of semantic shift arising through metaphor, simile, metonymy, and synecdoche. Phytonyms in paremiological units not only express the biological characteristics of plants but also acquire symbolic meaning, representing human character, social status, aesthetic views, and the artistic expression of national worldview. Through proverbs involving phytonyms, the study reveals the metaphorical interpretation of female and male figures, models of analogy formed in folk thinking, and synecdochic structures based on the “whole–part” relationship. Additionally, certain paremiological examples demonstrate contextual meaning enhancement through metonymic abbreviation. The article scientifically analyzes the functional-semantic potential of phytonyms as a means of representing the cultural memory of the Uzbek people and highlights their linguistic and cultural significance.

**Keywords:** Phytonyms, Uzbek folk proverbs, semantic shift, metaphor, simile, synecdoche, metonymy, symbolic image, linguistic culture.

**Introduction:** Paremiological units are specific to the oral heritage of each nation, consisting of concise and expressive forms rich in metaphorical meanings and content. They encapsulate traditional concepts reflecting humanity's historical experiences and initial knowledge. Simile and metaphor, as foundational concepts in linguistic-cultural studies, play a critical role in human cognition, as comparison is one of the most common logical methods to identify similarities and differences between two or more objects or concepts, observable across almost all areas of human activity. Metaphor (Greek *metaphora* – “transfer”) generates derived meaning by transferring the name of one object to another based on similarity. Aristotle noted that simile and metaphor are nearly identical phenomena, with minimal differences between them. Both serve as mirrors reflecting moral beauty and the expressive potential of language. In metaphor, reality is expressed through language, manifesting human experience and aiding comprehension of one object through another within a conceptual system. Metaphor arises through comparison, wherein a concept is expressed via an unrelated second concept, giving it a new designation. In this comparison process, metaphors and other expressions—such as

metaphorical epithets and personifications—form semiotic structures. National cultural values are also reflected through metaphorical signs. Philosophically, metaphor has long been studied as a means of embellishing speech. The Uzbek people, over centuries, have used semantic shift in folk proverbs to express their ideas in vivid, precise, and concise ways. Analyzing the paremiological linguistic fund, the role of metaphor and simile is unparalleled.

In particular, metaphor in proverbs plays a key role in describing the character and appearance of both genders, revealing positive and negative traits. Metaphors come alive through perceived similarities in human consciousness. For example, in the proverb “A girl's scent is like a flower,” female beauty is metaphorically compared to a flower, emphasizing charm and grace. In proverbs with phytonym components, various forms of semantic shift, including simile and metaphor, are observed. Metaphors referring to female beauty often include terms such as “flower,” “Layli,” “fairy,” “beloved,” “hyacinth.” Examples include: “Flower as an excuse, sight as a delight,” “The red flower is not the bounty of the planter; a beloved is not the fulfillment of desire,” and “If you do not climb the mountain, where is the valley;

if you do not burn your soul, where is the beloved?" In other proverbs like "Find your true cypress while your beauty lasts" and "A nightingale without a flower is a nightingale without song," the lovers' external beauty is compared to flowers, cypresses, or nightingales. Metaphors depicting the appearance of both genders differ genetically: "flower" represents female delicacy, while boys are compared to "cypress," symbolizing bravery, determination, and perseverance in love. Phytonyms in Uzbek proverbs thus play a crucial role in expressing social, moral, and aesthetic values.

Phytonyms in proverbs are not limited to the biological traits of plants; they acquire new meanings in different contexts. This can be described as follows:

In metaphors, phytonyms are often used figuratively, comparing the natural properties of plants with the qualities of other entities. For instance, in the proverb "Mother is a tree, child is the fruit," the tree bears fruit and nurtures it until ripening, analogically representing mother and child, thus generating a metaphor. Professor B. Sarimsokov interprets metaphor as a literary term distinct from simile, emphasizing that simile involves two comparative components, while metaphor arises from the omission of words like "like," "as," "similar to," or "akin to."

Beyond metaphor, simile also serves to express subtle nuances in proverbs. As Sh. Usmanova notes, "Similes are the linguistic-cultural wealth of each nation, reflecting the national worldview and comparing objects, events, and actions according to the nation's conceptual framework." Similes employ markers such as -dek, -day, -simon, -vash, -namo, misoli, and o'xshash. Plant names reflecting folk cognition also appear in oral creativity, especially in proverbs, forming outstanding simile examples of national identity: "Grow like a poplar, gain wisdom like Nino," "The love of a faithless one withers like moldy dung," "Grow tall like a cypress, be wise like Tumor," "A child is like a flower," and "Speak well, and goodness is added daily; speak ill, and evil is added daily."

Proverbs reflecting all aspects of life, particularly those with phytonym components, also provide exemplary synecdochic structures. For example, "If you spin the wheel, you will gain money; your head will be a bouquet of flowers" highlights the virtue of diligence: one's entire body benefits from effort, and the flower represents life improvement. In these proverbs, a single term ("head") denotes the whole body, and "flower" represents overall well-being. Similarly, in proverbs, names of fruit trees (whole) and fruits (part) enable understanding the "whole through the part": "In the seed is the tree," "An apple will not fall far from the tree," "Under the apple is the apple, under the

apricot is the apricot," "Plant at sixty, eat at seventy," "No almond without apple, no low person without tag," "Better to die eating apricot than suffer from apple," "Seeing the field, do not forget the mountain."

Additionally, some proverbs with phytonyms exemplify metonymy. In these cases, omitted words are inferred from context: "The unthinking bird finds no perch," "Plant the vine before reaching maturity to enjoy its fruit," "One who loves flowers endures thorns," "A straight tree will bear flowers; a crooked tree, ashes," "Plant fallen in fire yields ashes; plant fallen on earth yields flowers," "One who loves flowers also loves thorns," "Good man, flower and shade; early harvester gains bounty, late harvester regrets," "Until the evil one loses, the good one rides the donkey," "Good man threads silk; evil man threads thorns," "One without melon does not know autumn; one without soap does not know summer."

Thus, phytonyms in Uzbek folk proverbs not only generate derived meanings through metaphor, simile, metonymy, and synecdoche but also convey stylistic devices such as symbolism, personification, and expressive characterization. Beyond biological and ecological traits, they carry rich meanings about human character, social life, labor, and traditions. In this way, phytonyms are an essential cultural instrument reflecting the lifestyle, worldview, and values of the Uzbek people.

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