

Advice Through the Ages

by Azerbaijan
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It's true what they say in Azerbaijan: everyday speech is chock full of proverbial expressions. We tested it out in our Baku office and were amazed that over a two to three week period, proverbs came tumbling out of our mouths all the time. We didn't plan it that way; it just happened.

Each staff member had the assignment of writing down the proverbs that she heard or which she offered herself, noting the specific contexts in which they were used. In the process, we learned so much about the nature of proverbs. We discovered that proverbs could be heard everywhere, spoken by everyone regardless of age, gender, locale, religion, status or education. And these short, pithy sayings were far more potent than longer explanations when it came to conveying meaning.

The staff chose the following nicknames for themselves to cloak their relationships for this article. In most cases, the name selected had been used by friends to address this person in an endearing manner.

Matryoshka refers to the little Russian dolls—brightly painted wooden figurines—that are carved out so that they nest one inside the other. Matryoshka dolls are associated with the image of a woman with red cheeks, a plump, healthy, cheerful countenance. She is usually thought of as a mother of a rather large peasant family.

Bajishka is a term comprised of the Azeri word for sister—"baji"—plus the endearing Russian ending "-iskha" meaning "little and dear". Bajishka means "dear little sister".

Banu is a Turkic female name from the past. The girl who chose this name considers it unique and aesthetically beautiful.

Chichak means flower and was chosen because her family sometimes calls by her that name.

Daffodil is a yellow flower, signifying the first days of spring.

Mana connotes "meaning" in Azeri. Her friends tease her with this nickname because she is always searching for a reason or logic behind every action.

DECLINING STRENGTH

Qılıncın kəsərdən düşüb?

Has your sword become blunt?

When the most recent issue of our magazine arrived in Baku, Matryoshka jokingly asked someone who often takes photographs: "Do you have any photos published in here?" The photographer didn't think so. "Why not?" she pressed him. "*Qılıncın kəsərdən düşüb?*" meaning, "Aren't you capable of taking good photos any more? Aren't you as sharp as you used to be?"

SIGNIFICANCE OF PROVERBS



If you want to understand a culture, study its proverbs. Look for patterns that keep repeating themselves such as: (1) the choice of metaphors used to describe everyday experiences and (2) the values that are embraced by that society. In Azerbaijan, many proverbs laud generosity, sense of sharing, hospitality and loyalty. It's hard to find a faster way to delve into the psyche of a nation than by exploring its proverbs.

—Betty Blair, Editor

ABUNDANCE

Açacağın sandığı, təkəyəm pambığı.

I'll unlock the trunk and toss out the cotton.

The magazine staff was discussing the idea of collecting proverbs and Banu observed, "*Açacağın sandığı, təkəyəm pambığı*", meaning that since there were so many Azeri expressions this would be an easy assignment. Typically, this expression is used in a different sense. When two people are arguing (whether in jest or seriously), one of them often threatens to blackmail the other by exposing secrets about the other person.

FRESH IDEAS

Xoruz banı eşitməyən

...Hasn't heard the first cock crow

Banu was impressed with how many Azeri expressions Matryoshka knew that she had never heard. She commented: "*Bunda xoruz banı eşitməyən sözlər var*", implying that most of the sayings that Matryoshka uses are so fresh that no one in the office has ever heard of them before.

CLUMSY EFFORT

Dəvə durdu, dam yıxdı / aşdı.

The camel stood up and the roof collapsed.

Chichak bumped into a fan that had been placed on the floor. Matryoshka told her: "*Dəvə durdu, dam yıxdı / aşdı*", implying that Chichak had been clumsy and not careful in watching where she was walking.

DEEP TROUBLE

Bir dəli quyuya daş atdı, 10 ağıllı yığışab o daşı çıxarda bilmədi.

Amad man threw a stone into the well and 10 wise men aren't able to take it out.

One of the buildings adjacent to ours was having electrical problems, but it had nothing to do with us. The utility workers came and excavated the underground wires. In the process, they cut through the electrical cable that affected our building. When our owner found out, he said: "One mad man threw a stone into the well and 10 wise men weren't able to take it out." The original problem had nothing to do with us; nevertheless, we were not left unscathed. We suffered the consequences anyway.

LESSON LEARNED

Başına gələn başmaqçı olar.

Literally: The one to whom something happens becomes a shoemaker. Meaning: This expression seems to have nothing to do with the craft of shoemaking itself; instead, it is a play on the words "**b a** (head) and "**b a ş m a** (shoemaker). It just means that the clever person learns from experience.

Banu was hiding her pen somewhere and Matryoshka wondered what she was doing. When asked, Banu replied: "*Başına gələn başmaqçı olar*", meaning that in the past, her pens had disappeared from her desk several times. She was just being careful so that she wouldn't lose them again.



TORIG QAZANPIR

GRATITUDE

Min bərakət

Athousand [times] abundance

This expression often refers to material substance, such as money or food. It is used when people want to express their gratitude to God for what they have, despite the fact that it is barely sufficient.

Chichak was on her way to work one morning. While riding the bus, she overheard two Russian-speaking women who were talking about buying apartments in Baku. The conversation was carried out entirely in Russian, except for the one Azeri expression, “**M i b ə r ə k**”, which in this context meant, “We’re grateful. Thank God that we succeeded in getting this apartment, even though it’s not as large as we would wish it to be.”

OUNCE OF PREVENTION

Qızını döyməyən, dizini döyar.

[The mother] who doesn’t beat her daughter will beat her knees.

Mana told her Mom about a neighbor girl who had eloped with her boyfriend because she had been afraid her parents wouldn’t let her marry him. Mana asked: “What will her parents do now?” Her mom replied: “The mother who doesn’t beat her daughter will beat her knees”, meaning “If you don’t raise your daughter properly, she won’t be well behaved and you’ll end up having deep regrets.” Note the rhyme between “**q ı z ı** (daughter) and “**d i z i** (knee). And the play on variations of the verb—”**d ö y**: (beat) and “**d ö y m ə**: (didn’t beat).

CONSEQUENCES

Bağa baxarsan, bağ olar; baxmazsan dağ olar.

Take care of your garden and it will become a garden. Don’t take care of it, and it will become a mountain.

Mana asked her mom why her flower had wilted. Her mom replied that she really had to get serious about taking care of it if she expected it to thrive. Note the rhyming pattern which is created by the words “**b a** (garden) and “**d a** (mountain).

BE INDEPENDENT

Özge annə minən tez düşər.

The person who mounts someone else’s horse is quick to fall off.

Mana’s sister was complaining to her father about a friend who had not shared her university notes with her. The sister was afraid she wouldn’t be able to pass the exam the next day. Her father replied: “Why didn’t you take your own notes?” “**Özge annə minən tez düşər**”.



ART BY TORIG QAZANPIR SEE AZERBAIJAN.ORG

PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Dəmir sürtüldükçə parıldar.

The more iron is polished, the more it shines.

Mana’s sister was complaining about how difficult it was to master some of the material of her university lessons. Her father replied that it was important to keep working at it.

SOLACE

Ella gələn dard-bala toy-bayramdır.

Shared sorrow or tragedy brings joy.

Literally: Sorrow shared by all is a bridal celebration.

Mana heard that many people at a local farmers’ market in California were concerned and complaining about the upcoming U.S. Presidential elections, fearing that there would be widespread fraud. Matryoshka replied that at least people had the comfort and solace of each other’s company.

TOO MUCH DEBT

İta də bir sümük borcluşam.

I even owe the dog a bone.

Matryoshka was in the habit of stopping by a local shop to buy yogurt. One day she was reminding herself of the fact that she needed to settle her account with them.

This example shows how proverbs are often highly exaggerated to make their point. Matryoshka only owed a few manats to them.

BE PREPARED

Ehtiyatlı igidin anası ağlamaz.

The cautious hero's mother never cries.

The weather had been pleasant when Matryoshka left the house to go to work early one morning, but by midday, it had started to rain. Fortunately, she had brought her raincoat; otherwise, she would have gotten wet and cold. Matryoshka was glad that she had come prepared.

CROWDS

İynə atsaydın, yərə düşməzdi.

[Even] if you threw a needle into the air, it wouldn't land on the floor.

Crowded situations are often described this way. The reception that was organized by UNOCAL and Azerbaijan International magazine at ISR Plaza in November to launch the Vagif Mustafazade Mugham Jazz set of 6 CDs was so crowded. If you had thrown a needle into the air, it would have landed on someone and not the floor as there were so many people who were attending the event.

MORE CROWDS

İt yiyəsini tanımır.

The dog can't recognize his master.

It was so crowded that a dog would get confused and not be able to find its master.

EASY COME, EASY GO.

Kələklə gələn, küləklə gedər.

Whatever comes by deceit goes with the wind.

Matryoshka's brother came home with a camera that someone had left behind on the bus. His mom criticized him for having taken it. She was convinced that in the end, it would not end well. A few days later, he lost the camera and his mom used a proverb to reinforce her initial reaction: "Kələklə gələn, küləklə gedər". Whatever is ill-gained won't end up benefiting you. Note the play on words, the alliteration (repetition of similar sounds) with "kələklə" (with deceit) and "küləklə" (with wind) and also "gəl": (coming) and "ged" (going).

SIGNIFICANCE OF PROVERBS



Even though North and South Azerbaijan have been separated for nearly 200 years, there don't seem to be major differences in the proverbs that we use. Many of these expressions are nearly identical in meaning and context despite the fact that we have lived under different cultural and political situations for so long. It shows that the roots for many of these proverbs are essentially the same, as are so many of our experiences.

—Aydan Najafova

BEYOND EXPECTATIONS!

Doşab almışq, bal çıxıb.

We bought doshab (thick syrup made from mulberry juice), it turned out to be honey.

This expression is often used by relatives to describe a new bride who has married into the family. "Doshab" [or "bahmaz"] is considered to be very delicious and nutritious. It is often used as a syrup to flavor sturgeon. Honey is even more expensive and more valued. When this expression is used, it means that the girl chosen to be the new wife turned out to be even better than everyone expected.

When Bajishka's cousin got married, her relatives went to see the new bride. As usual, they bombarded the husband with questions about his wife—whether he liked her cooking and how she did the housework. To convince them that everything was quite fine, he said "doşab almışq, bal çıxıb".

RESPONSIBILITY AT THE TOP

Balıq başdan iylanar.

The fish rots from the head.

This proverb appeared in an e-mail from an Azerbaijani complaining about his boss and the company he worked for. He felt that the company's policies were misguided, and management should be held accountable, not the employees.

IMPOSSIBILITY

Dəvə oynayanda qar yağar.

Were the camel to dance, it would snow.

One evening, Chichak decided that since the weather had been quite warm the previous few days, she would wear something lighter to work the next day. But that night, the weather suddenly changed and again she had to dress warmly. Her mother observed: "Dəvə oynayanda qar yağar", meaning the situation was impossible as camels live in desert climates where it never snows. Because her daughter wanted something, it wouldn't happen. The weather would not cooperate.

UNDYING SACRIFICE

Toyunda ağıstəzanla su daşıyacam.

I'll carry water in a colander [for you] at your wedding party.

Meaning: You've done me such a big favor that I will do my best to reciprocate. Every time Bajishka offers tea to one of her cousins, instead of acknowledging her gesture with a mere "thank you," he exaggerates his gratitude by replying that he'll carry water in a colander at her wedding party. Of course, it would be impossible to do that so the expression is empty, but these days it is widely used among youth.

WEALTH BEYOND WORDS

Pula pul demir.

He doesn't [even] call "money" money.

Azerbaijan International's editor was being interviewed on RFE/RL (Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty) about the Azerbaijani language classes that are being offered in the Autumn session at the University of California, Los



ART BY TORIG GAZANFAR

Angeles (UCLA). Afterwards, the RFE/RL journalist joked that California's governor Arnold Schwarzenegger would soon be wanting to learn Azeri, too. Reference was made to Schwarzenegger "who doesn't call 'money', money", meaning that he is so wealthy that he doesn't even have to think about money at all.

OBVIOUS ANSWER

İt hürəndə ağzına atacam.

I'll throw it at the dog when it barks.

One day Bajishka's mother bought a new dish and showed it to her, she asked: "Mom, what are you going to do with this dish?" Her mother ironically replied: "I'll throw it at the dog when it barks", meaning the answer is so obvious that the dish will be used for a significant purpose. Her mother did not buy it for no reason just to break it.

TOO PROUD

Özündən bir razıdır, elə bil alçaq dağları yaradı

He is so self-assured, as if he were the one who created the low mountains.

One of Mana's schoolmates became very arrogant after enrolling in a university abroad. And this, despite the fact that during his university years he had just been an ordinary student with mediocre grades. When he returned to Baku for winter break, he didn't even want to greet his old schoolmates. One of Mana's friends asked whether she had seen this student or not. Mana replied that she had and commented about his haughty attitude: "He behaved in such a way as if he were the one who had created the low mountains".

EXPLOITATION

Hamını boynuna mindirmisən.

You [let] everyone mount upon your shoulders.

Matryoshka's sister was blaming her that she was a person who couldn't say "no" to people. "You let everyone mount upon your shoulders," she complained.

BLOOD FROM A TURNIP

Çıxmayan yerdən qan çıxarırsan.

You try to bleed the place that has no blood.

Meaning: you pry so deeply that in the end everything turns against you. The father of one of Matryoshka's friends came home late, and his wife started prying him about where he had been. "At my friend's", he insisted. But the wife kept nagging. The husband lost his temper, the couple ended up quarreling and the husband left the house. If the wife had not so much, everything would have been much better.



ART BY TORIG GAZANFAR. SEE AZGALLERY.ORG

SIGNIFICANCE OF PROVERBS



They're like a natural extension of our vocabulary.

Proverbs are widely used in everyday speech. The word "proverb" (in Azeri) literally means "fathers' words" (*atalar sözlü*), implying the opinions of male elders—society's aghsaggals (ones with white sideburns). Men have always been perceived as the voice of authority in our society. But the truth is that proverbs are not only created and used by our forefathers, but by women as well.

Proverbs are used by everybody—both old and young alike. They aren't dying out. We're surrounded by proverbs. We're immersed in them and hear them all the time—at home, with friends, and at work. When we started noting these expressions in everyday speech, it made me realize how frequently we use them with everybody—they're so natural and so frequent.

—Ulviyya Mammadova

GARGANTUAN APPETITE

Dağdan yumşaq nə var, hamısını yeyirlər.

They eat anything softer than a stone.

Parents use this express to complain about their children who eat too much. However this same expression can also be used when mothers are pleased that their children are not picky eaters and are easily satisfied with the food that they offer.

PATIENCE

Dama-dama göl olar.

Drop by drop, the lake is filled.

Mana has a cousin who sets aside 1,000 manats (about 25 U.S. cents) everyday. When asked why she bothers to put aside such a small amount, she replied: "Dama dama göl olar", meaning that though this amount is small, it will add up in time.

GOSSIP

Padşahın da dalınca danışurlar.
People even gossip about the king.

Once Mana's mother complained to Mana's grandmother: "One of our relatives is gossiping about you. Grandmother replied: "People will even gossip about the king, so am I someone more respected than he is for them not to gossip about me?"

AVOIDING THE SUBJECT

Sözə söz qatmaq.
To mix a word with another word.
Meaning: to try to avoid the subject.

Once Daffodil and Bajishka were making plans to cook something. But suddenly Bajishka started talking about something quite different because she did not want to make any meal. Daffodil complained: "Gəl sən sözə söz qatın" meaning, don't run away from the subject. It's your turn to cook.

NO APPRECIATION

Əlimin duzu yoxdur.
My hand has no salt.
Meaning: People always thank others for the hard work that I've done.

Once someone ordered music scores at Azerbaijan International's store on the WEB [AZER.com]. The lyrics for the songs were in Cyrillic script but the customer could only read the Latin script. Daffodil obliged by rewriting all the Azeri lyrics in the Latin alphabet. The task was quite complex and time-consuming, but Daffodil wrote that someone else had found the scores for him. The customer wrote back a big note of thanks, not to Daffodil but to her office mate. Daffodil told Bajishka "My hand has no salt. I really did the hardest part of the job, but this guy thanked someone else!"

DOUBLE TROUBLE

Əri döymüşü it də qapdı bir tərəfdən.
As if it weren't enough to be beaten by the husband, the dog bit the wife, too.

Matryoshka was stuck driving home in bad traffic. She called her sister to let her know she would be late but the sister's three-year old son wouldn't pass

SIGNIFICANCE OF PROVERBS



Proverbs and expressions are simple folk sayings, which carry deep behavioral and cultural meaning. Many proverbs seem to be age specific. For example, young people use some expressions that older people would rarely use. Take the expression: "Töyündə aşsızanla su daşıyacam" (I will carry water in a sieve at your wedding). This means: "I'm deeply obliged to you and will do anything to pay you back".

This expression is widespread among youth; rarely would older people say it.

Proximity of relationship also determines choice of proverbs. There are some expressions that you share only with friends. For example, it is considered impolite to sit with your back turned to someone. When you find yourself in such a situation and can't move your chair to accommodate that person who you may have offended, you try to ease the situation by apologizing. The person often replies with the set phrase: "Gülün dalı, qabağı olmaz" (A flower doesn't have a back or front). Young people, who know each other well, often tease each other with a play on words from this expression. They might say: "Tikanın dalı, qabağı olmaz" (A thorn doesn't have a back or front).

—Narges Abadi

the receiver to his mother. Finally when Matryoshka arrived home, she was exhausted and angry and complained to her sister about the child. Her sister laughed: "Əri döymüşü it də qapdı bir tərəfdən". As if it weren't enough to get stuck in bad traffic, her nephew had played an annoying joke on her, too.

FORGOTTEN

Torpağın üzü soyuqdur.
The face of the ground is cold.

Matryoshka's mom had gone for a visit out in the countryside to see her parents. But she returned much earlier than she had planned because she felt so estranged from her own mother and father. "Torpağın üzü soyuqdur" means that a person is forgotten with time. This expression is often used about someone who has died. Matryoshka told Mana:

SIGNIFICANCE OF PROVERBS



The process of using proverbs in our everyday speech seemed so natural that sometimes I took these expressions for granted, forgetting that I should be documenting everything that I was hearing. I also noticed that we often borrow expressions from literary works, and over time, these lines gain such extensive usage that they almost turn into proverbs themselves. This is especially true of our great writers such as Jalil Mammadguluzade, Mirza Alakbar Sabir, Abdurrahim bey Hagverdiyev, and Uzeyir Hajibeyov.

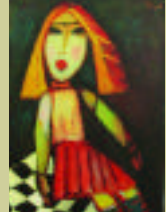
For example, there's a line from Hajibeyov's musical comedy, Mashadi Ibad. "Heç hananın yeridir", meaning, "It's not the right time/place to talk about

henna" (a traditional plant extract used to dye hair). In the theatrical work, Mashadi Ibad, the protagonist, goes to meet the young woman whom he hopes to marry. He doesn't know what to talk about.

So he just asks the first question that pops into his head. "Do you dye your hair with henna?" he asks. The maidservant of the bride-to-be replies rather curtly: "Why should she dye her hair? She isn't old yet."

Confused, Mashadi Ibad insists that he isn't old either (though he is considerably older than his intended bride), but that he dyes his beard out of habit. And then he mutters under his breath that "this is not the time to talk of henna", realizing that the conversation has gone badly and is absolutely off track. Today we use this expression whenever somebody says something that is totally irrelevant.

—Gulnar Aydamirova



TOPIQ GAZANMIR

“Torpağın üzü soyuqdur”. It’s as if they are dead for my mother, she has nearly forgotten them”.

COOL HEAD

Başını sarın saxla, ayağımı isti.

Keep your head cool and your feet warm.

Mana was describing a situation that had happened during the day. She said, “Mom, I got so nervous and upset that I almost blew up. But then I calmed down and was grateful that I had not offended anyone.”

Her mother replied, using a common expression: “Keep your head cool and your feet warm.” Always try to be patient even when you are extremely angry. This expression seems to have entered into folk literature originally as medical advice.

**Ayağımı isti saxla, başını sarın,
Yeməyini bol eylə, düşünmə dərin.**

Keep your feet warm and your head cool.
Eat plenty of food and don't think too deeply.

BE PREPARED

Yazda düşünən, qışda üşüməz.

The one who thinks in spring, doesn't feel the cold of winter.

Mana's sister didn't study very hard for one of her exams and got a lower score than she had hoped for. Her father urged her to learn from her mistake. He challenged her: “The one who thinks in spring, doesn't feel the cold of winter”.

CAUTIOUSNESS

**Hündür yerdə yatma yel aparar, alçaq yerdə
yatma səl aparar.**

Don't sleep in a high place, you'll be blown away by wind. Don't sleep in a low place, you'll be swept away by a flood.

When Mana does something that seems radical, her mom cautions her not to do anything extreme: “Don't sleep in a high place [on a mountain top], you'll be blown away by the wind. Don't sleep in a low place [a valley], you'll be swept away by a flood.”

DOUBLE JEOPARDY

İp də getdi, it də getdi.

Both the rope and the dog were lost.

People use this proverb when they spend time or money but don't succeed in reaching their goals. Chichak and her brother had mobile phones and were trying to download a certain melody. Despite all their efforts, they didn't succeed. Chichak complained: “I'm sorry I even tried because I lost both the rope and the dog. Meaning, she had lost her



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money and still didn't get the melody. Note the play on words that sound alike: “i p (rope) and “i (dog).

BUSYBODY

Ələyə gələnə ara verir.

She marries off anyone who gets in the sifter (sieve). Chichak was standing next to Matryoshka one day asking her something. During the process, Matryoshka asked her to return the dictionary back to another desk. Chichak jokingly told her that she regretted having stood next to her. Matryoshka replied with this proverb, admitting that she likes to order people around

whenever she gets the chance. Note word play on “əl ə” (sieve), “ər (marriage).

DON'T RUSH

Tələsən tandıra düşər.

The one in a hurry will fall into a tandir. Note: A tandir is a mud-brick oven often constructed below the surface of the ground. Afire is built inside this oven for baking bread.

The other day when it was time for Banu to rush off to university classes, she was sending her daily report via

email to Los Angeles when the Internet connection broke. Banu started complaining that something always happens whenever she's in a hurry. Chichak commented: "Haven't you heard the proverb: **"Tələsən təndirə düşər?"**

GIVE AN INCH...

Üz verirsən, astar istəyir.

You give the outer covering, but he asks for the lining [as well]. Similar concept in English: Give an inch and they'll take a mile.

Padded handmade quilts that are filled with wool are traditionally protected by an outer slipcover, made of cotton or satin. These outer covers can easily be washed and kept clean. Here the reference is to someone who is greedy. You offer the outer slipcover but he isn't satisfied and grateful, he wants the quilt as well.

Bajishka took Daffodil's mug and put yogurt into it without asking permission. When Daffodil realized the situation, she said: **"Sənə də üz verirsən, astar istəyirsən,"** meaning, "I'll be glad to let you use my things but, at least, ask me!"

NO BACKBONE

Nə ədir, nə balıq

Neither meat, nor fish.

A staff member was complaining about a visitor who had stopped by the office. "He's neither meat nor fish," she said, meaning that the person is wishy-washy, and you could never figure out what his position was or where he stood on issues. He always shifted with the wind and never had his own opinion about anything. This expression is used for people and things that cannot be categorically defined. It has a negative connotation.

EXCEPTIONALLY STINGY

Kəfən müftə olsa yıxılıb ölər.

If the shroud were free, [that stingy person] would pull up his legs and die.

Akafan is a white sheet that is wrapped around a dead person in preparation for burial. This proverb characterizes a very stingy person who is so greedy that he would even arrange his own death just to get a free burial cloth.

One of the staff members was complaining about an acquaintance that always tried to sponge off her. He never pays for anything and tries to get

things free or discounted.

CHEAPSKATE

Çürük fındığı da havayı verməz.

Not willing to give even a rotten hazelnut [for free].

A writer walked into the office, requesting that his new book be reviewed and sold on the Internet. The staff received instructions to offer to pay for the book. Matryoshka commented: "Don't worry. The author will accept the money. This one is never willing to give even a rotten hazelnut for free."

TOKEN GESTURE

Adımı ansınlar bir çürük qozla.

Let my name be remembered by a rotten walnut.

Meaning: Offer a token gift, even if it is nothing more than a rotten walnut.

Azerbaijanis are quick to offer gifts especially when they visit one another. Kids are delighted to receive some little token like a new kind of chocolate bars (Mars, Snickers, Milky Way, Bounty) or some chewing gum. For adults, it's typical to offer a box of chocolates, a cake or a bouquet of flowers. But the main thing is to bring something, "even if it's a rotten walnut".

SUNSHINE FRIENDS

Bağda ərik var idi, salamaleyk var idi,

Bağda ərik qurtardı, salamaleyk qurtardı.

When there were apricots in the garden, you said hello,

Now that the apricots are gone, there are no more hellos.

The word, **"S a l a m ə** (abbreviated form of "salam aleykum") is used as a greeting in Azerbaijan. Bajishka's mother had a friend who wanted to marry her son, but when the family rejected this proposal, the relations between the two friends became tense. Bajishka's mom explained that **"Bağda ərik var, idi, salamaleyk var idi, bağda ərik qurtardı, salamaleyk q u r t a r d ı** When the motivation was gone, the relationship disappeared.

TO OVERDO SOMETHING

Şorunu çıxartmaq

Literal translation: You pulled the salt out of it.

In South Azerbaijan [in Iran], this expression is used to mean "to overdo something". Daffodil went to a casual party and was surprised that for every course of the meal, the hostess kept giving her a clean plate: one for the salad, another for soup, the main dish, fruit, and for desert. She worried that there would be so much work for the hostess. Since the meal was just for close friends, she criticized her for overdoing it.

In North Azerbaijan [Republic], "whiteness" replaces the term for "salt".

Ağını çıxartmaq

Literal translation: You pulled the white out of it.

NEGLECT

Hamını bəzər, özü lüt gəzər!

Literally: It decorates everybody else, but is naked itself.

This expression originated as a child's riddle, the answer to which is "a needle". But the concept is so widespread that the riddle has entered into the repertoire of proverbial expressions.

SIGNIFICANCE OF PROVERBS

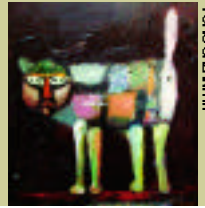


Proverbs provide us with one of the best vehicles to express our ideas. They carry the full meaning of what we want to say. This explains why they are in such widespread usage. They're short, they're succinct—right on target—and they're memorable.

It seems all Azerbaijanis sprinkle proverbs throughout their speech—no matter if they are educated, or not. Everybody knows these expressions.

They come with our lullabies—with "mothers' milk"—as we say.

—Aynura Huseinova



TOFIG QAZANFIR



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Although many proverbs must have been created centuries ago, they have not lost their potency. We still incorporate them in our everyday speech. Proverbs make us conscious of our past and, as a result, we respect the wisdom of our forefathers.

When I'm in a hurry, for example, I don't pay much attention if my parents warn me: "Don't be in such a rush. Think twice before you do something." But when they say, "The one who is in a hurry, will fall into the oven" (*Tələsan tandırda düşər*), meaning the person who rushes will end up in serious trouble, I pay attention: "I bite my finger" as we say. It makes me stop and think that the reality may be different than I imagined.

Proverbs have passed the test of time. The validity of their truth has been proven over and over; otherwise, people wouldn't continue to use them. Those who created these proverbs were geniuses; they understood human nature brilliantly.

—Aytan Aliyeva

Daffodil's responsibility at work entails filling orders for the Internet store. She always is so conscientious and prompt about shipping out the packages. Recently, she ordered a book for her own university studies on the Web, but instead of arriving quickly, she had to wait a long time for it to come. She told Bajishka: "H a m ı bazar, özü lüt gazar!" Note the rhyming pattern between "b a z , (decorate) and "g ə z : (naked). During the Soviet times, variations of this expression became widespread.

Müəllim uşağı savadsız olar; həkim uşağı xəstə.
The teacher's child is illiterate; the doctor's child is [always] sick.

Again the same idea is conveyed. A person works and sacrifices himself for others, but neglects himself and his own family.

COMPREHENSION, AT LAST

İki qranlığım düşdü.

Literal translation: My two grans fell into the proper place (slot).

Meaning: when somebody finally understands the situation.

This expression is used in South Azerbaijan. Agran is a Persian coin of small denomination equivalent to about one U.S. cent. The gran is used for making calls from public telephones. Often, the telephone equipment is faulty and causes trouble, making it hard to get the coin into the slot so that the call can go through. The expression grew out of frustration of people trying to get the telephone to work but, eventually, succeeding.

Bajishka told Daffodil a joke but Daffodil didn't catch the meaning. There was a long pause while Bajishka waited for Daffodil to respond. Nothing happened, so Bajishka told the joke a second time. Finally, Daffodil caught the meaning. She laughed, acknowledging that she had finally understood the joke and she admitted: "my two grans fell into the slot".

In North Azerbaijan, the same idea is conveyed by the use of animals.

Zürafa məsələsi.

Literally: The giraffe's case.

This expression is used even by people who don't know the origin for the reference to the giraffe. Was it originally part of a legend or story where the giraffe, because of its height, was the last one to comprehend the meaning?

Or was the expression coined because by nature the giraffe is slower than other animals? No matter. The expression, "giraffe's case", means: "Oh, you finally caught on. You might have been the last person, but eventually you understood." ■