

Analysis of Proverbs in *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*

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Abstract

The present paper analyzes proverbs in the four volumes of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* otherwise popularly known as *Arabian Nights*. The purpose is to point out the cultural nuances and implied meaning of the proverbs. The stories are set in the Arabian context hence, they use different contexts to perform their proverbial function. The contexts, the culture, and the elements related to natural, social, and traditional aspects are different. Therefore, it becomes difficult to understand these proverbs. I have attempted to understand and interpret the proverbs in the best possible way. The analysis hopefully provides a better understanding of the proverbs used in these folktales.

Keywords: Arabian Nights, Folktales, One Thousand and One Nights, Proverbs

The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night, popularly known as the *Arabian Nights*, is a collection of folktales written in the Arabic language. These folktales are famous all over the globe and have been translated into many languages. The first English-language edition of the book appeared during 1706– 1721.

Many writers, translators, and literati of the Asian subcontinent from West Asia, Central Asia, South Asia, and North Africa have compiled these folktales. Some of these folktales indicate their origin in the literature of old and medieval Arabia, Sanskrit, Persia, and parts of modern Iraq.

It is believed that most of these folktales were initially folk stories from the Abbasid and Mamluk eras.

All the editions of the *Arabian Nights* use the framing device which is a story within the story. The wife of King Shahryar, Scheherazade, narrated these tales with one tale each night of storytelling. According to Marzolph some of these tales originated in older Indian texts like *Panchatantra* (04 & 10). Some folktales continue from the original tale; some are intertwined with other tales, whereas some are self-sufficient. Some editions cover only a few stories related to a few hundred nights, whereas others contain one thousand and one or more. Much of the text of the stories is in prose, yet versification is occasionally evident in the use of songs and riddles to express profound sentiment. Most of the verses have single couplets or quatrains, even though some are comparatively lengthier.

Even though the stories *Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp* and *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves* are associated with the *Arabian Nights*, they were not included in the original Arabic collection initially. When a Syrian writer Hanna Diyab visited Paris, he told these stories to a French translator Antoine Galland. These folktales were included later in the collection. The folktales like *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad the Sailor* existed independently before they were included in the collection.

The background of the *Arabian Nights* stories begins with the story of a king named *Shahryār*, whom the narrator calls a “Sasanian king”. *Shahryār* comes to know the infidelity of his brother’s wife. He gets her killed as she becomes a dishonour to his family. This makes him believe that all women are of the same nature. As a vengeance, he begins to marry women in his kingdom and kill them the next morning. He does so to prevent the women from being dishonest to him and his family. His minister’s duty was to provide him new bride every day.

At last, the minister fails to find women for the king. *Scheherazade*, his daughter, offers herself to the king as the next bride and her father reluctantly agrees. *Scheherazade* starts telling a story to the king on the night of their marriage but does not end it. *Shahryār* becomes excited to

know about the end of the story. As a result, he delays her execution waiting for the end of the story. The following night, she ends the story and starts a new one. The king becomes eager to know the end of the second story as well and thus postpones her execution again. This continues for one thousand and one night. Thus, the collection is named *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night*.

The foundation of the folktales in the *Arabian Nights* is found in Sanskrit literature where devices like frame stories and animal fables are evident. The technique of frame storytelling used by the daughter of the king's minister has references to the art of Indian storytelling. As a result, she succeeds in removing an impending danger by telling stories. The stories in the *Arabian Nights* reflect Indian folklore through the use of certain animal stories similar to that of ancient Sanskrit fables. These folktales influence the *Panchatantra* and *Baital Pachisi*.

The influence of *Panchatantra* stories on these folktales is due to the Sanskrit adaptation of *Tantrapakhyana*. The versions of *Tantrapakhyana* are available in Tamil, Thai, and Indonesian Javanese languages but only a few excerpts of the original Sanskrit exist. The art of storytelling in the *Arabian Nights* follows the concubine storytelling style that maintains the interest and excitement of a king. The foundation of the collection of folktales in the *Arabian Nights* is *Panchatantra*.

According to Warder, in 570 CE, the *Panchatantra* and *Jatakas* stories were translated into Persian by Borzūya (61–62, 76–82). In 750 CE, Ibn al-Muqaffa translated them into Arabic. Later on, the Arabic version of the stories was translated into numerous other languages like Syriac, Greek, Hebrew, and Spanish.

The present paper analyzes the proverbs in the four volumes of *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* to understand the cultural shades and indirect meanings extended by the proverbs in the select folktales. The understanding of cultural, social, environmental, situational, and traditional elements to understand proverbs from an unfamiliar context. Hence, reading the folktales enables us to arrive at appropriate meanings of the proverbs in the above book.

Proverbs in *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night: Volume I*

“You who have helped the unworthy, know that the wicked man has in his wickedness punishment enough!” (Mathers 17).

The proverb is used in the folktale *The Tale of the Second Sheikh*. The folktale is about the second Sheikh and his two brothers. The Sheikh and his brothers inherited the wealth of three thousand dinars. The Sheikh opened a shop, and his two brothers did the same, but soon one of his brothers set out on a trade. It had been a year since he went on his trade and returned poor. The Sheikh told him that he had warned him not to go on the journey. The brother repented, and the Sheikh took him into his house. He gave him clothes and food, counted his income, and leaving the invested capital aside; gave his brother half of his profit. Thus, the Sheikh counted his profit, gave half of it to his brother, and lived together for many days.

After some days, both the brothers of Sheikh asked him to set out on a journey for trade, and he refused. After some days, they again asked him to go on a trade journey, and the Sheikh refused. They were so determined that Sheikh could not deny the third time, and they went on a trade journey. They counted the money they earned so far, and the Sheikh suggested that they should hide half of it in the earth and use the remaining half for trade. They agreed and went on a journey.

When they went to the first city, they earned a good profit and went to another town. They came across a poor-looking woman who asked the Sheikh for his help, and she promised to repay his service. The Sheikh agreed to help her. She asked him to marry her and take her to his country. The Sheikh carried her with him. Gradually, the Sheikh started loving her, and he became used to her company. His brothers became jealous of his wealth, and they plotted his murder. One day when the Sheikh and his wife were asleep, his brothers threw them into the water, and the Sheikh's wife, who was a demon, took him to the shore on her shoulder and went away for the whole night. She came back and told him that she was his wife, and now she was so enraged with his brothers that she was going to kill them. He told her not to kill them and described everything from the beginning. She said to him that now she would go to them and sink their ship. The Sheikh told her not to kill them and quoted the above proverb.

The proverb indicates that the Sheikh's brothers proved to be unworthy and wicked, and they have their punishment for their wickedness. It will be enough for them. Yet, his wife wanted to kill them. She took the Sheikh with her and left him on the terrace of his house. He dug out the money buried in the earth and opened his shop. One day when he came home, he saw two dogs tied in his place. The Sheikh's wife told him that they were his brothers. Thus, the proverb proved true that wicked persons get their punishment through their wickedness. The proverb is made of "the wicked man", "has in his wickedness", and "punishment enough". Thus, the proverb advises that one should consider that the result of wickedness is its punishment. One gets the punishment for his wickedness right here. Therefore, one should not be wicked to others; otherwise, the punishment for wickedness lies in the wickedness.

**“If you would know the taste of bitterness
Seek sorrow out and comfort her distress,
You need not feed a jackal cub to see
Just how ungrateful gratitude can be” (Mathers 23).**

The proverb finds its place in the folktale *The Tale of the Fisherman and the Jinni*. The folktale is about an old and poor fisherman who had three children. When he went fishing, he threw his net and waited to get to the bottom. Then, he pulled the net and found it heavy. He tried to get the net out of the water but could not pull it. So, he brought the ends of the net to the shore and tied them to a wooden pole. Then he dived into the sea and pulled the net to the beach, and he laughed at himself. It was a dead donkey trapped in the net. He freed his net and again spread it in the water and waited to get to the bottom. When it went to the bottom, he pulled it and found it heavier than before. He thought he had found a big fish, but he had found a big jar full of mud and dirt this time. He became nervous and pulled out his net, cleaned it, and spread it again. The third time he caught the broken pots and pieces of glass. Thus, he became sad and asked God if he could put the net only four times, and till now, he had put the net three times and has not caught any fish. Instead, he caught a sealed copper jar. He became happy to sell it in the market and get some money. It was a heavy jar, so he decided to open it.

When he opened it, a cloud of smoke came out, and later a giant demon appeared whose head reached above the clouds. The devil at first begged pardon of the prophet Sulaimān, but the

fisherman told him that prophet Sulaimān had died many years ago, and he asked him how he had gotten into the jar. The demon said to him that he had brought the news of his death. The fisherman was scared to listen to this, and he said to the monster that he had taken him out of the jar. The fisherman asked what the reason was behind his death. The demon asked him to listen to his story. He told him that he rebelled against Sulaimān, and Sulaimān imprisoned him in this jar. He had been in the jar for many years, waiting for someone to free him. He said to himself that whoever releases him in the first hundred years shall have eternal wealth, but no one released him. Then he told whoever frees him shall have all the treasures on the earth, but it did not happen. Then he said whoever frees him shall have three wishes thus four hundred years passed, but no one released him.

For the fourth time, he said that whoever frees him shall have his death as the gift and the fisherman released the demon. On hearing this, the fisherman implored the devil to spare his life, but the monster was determined to kill him. Thus, the fisherman prayed to the prince of Afarit to be unfair to award him death for his good deeds. The fisherman quotes the above proverb at this juncture. The proverb indicates that the fisherman was already facing harsh conditions. Despite the worst conditions, he was encouraged to get something better, but his efforts finally led him to death. He freed the demon, but he received his death in return for the demon's freedom. The demon did not express his gratitude but decided to kill the fisherman. The proverb is made of "to know the taste of bitterness", "seek sorrow out and comfort distress", "you need not feed a jackal cub", and "to see how ungrateful gratitude can be". Thus, the proverb suggests that even if you do good things to bad people, they always remain ungrateful. If we know how bad it could be, we should comfort ourselves and face the situation.

“Each man envies, the strong openly, the weak in secret” (Mathers 27).

The proverb is exemplified in *The Tale of The Wazir of King Yunan and Rayyan the Doctor*. The tale is the story of a king called Yunan, a very influential king, but his body was infected with leprosy, and no doctor could treat it. One day an old doctor named Rayyan came to the king's city. He was a very learned doctor knowing all the good and the harmful effects of the medicine. He had also learned other subjects apart from medicine like philosophy and all other sciences. He stayed in the city for a while and learned about the king's leprosy and the unsuccessful treatments

that the king had undergone. He thought over the king's illness and went to the king's palace with the best of his clothes the next day.

When he went to the king, he told him that he could cure the king without medicine. The king asked him how he was going to do that. He also promised him if he succeeds in curing the king, he and his upcoming generations will be rewarded. The doctor went to his home and prepared a mallet and a ball. The next day the doctor asked the king to take the mallet in his hand, hit the ball, and practice this until the king sweats. After being sweaty, the king should take a bath in the hammam. Thus, he would be cured. The king did exactly as the doctor said. The next day the doctor went to the king. The king honoured the doctor as the king was cured. The king offered him wealth as promised, and the doctor took his prizes. The king asked the doctor to sit beside him and receive his prize the next day.

Among the wazir's, one wazir who was envious of the doctor expressed his disgust for the doctor in his mind. In this context, the proverb indicates that the wazir secretly expressed his jealousy about the doctor. He further went on to tell the king that he is not a faithful servant, and he is also an aught and a bastard servant. The proverb is made of "each man envies", "the strong openly", and "the weak in secret". Thus, the proverb suggests that a jealous person envies the strong openly and the weak secretly. He further expressed his opinion to the king about giving money and prizes to the doctor. He used the following proverb out of jealousy towards Doctor Rayyan to make the king aware of the consequences.

"He who regards not the end and the consequence shall never thrive" (Mathers 27).

The wazir further expressed why he said so by quoting the above proverb to the king. The wazir was jealous of the doctor, and he thought that if the king spent all his wealth just over the doctor, he would not prosper. The wazir wanted to make the king aware that the doctor wanted to take over his kingdom. He was doing it out of jealousy, so he quoted the above proverb. The proverb indicates that the king was spending his wealth on the doctor, and the wazir considered it a waste if the king spent his wealth like this, soon he would be in bad condition. Therefore, he warned the king of the consequences of being a spendthrift.

The proverb is made of "he who regards not the end", "and the consequence", and "shall never thrive". Though the wazir used the proverb to warn the king as a result of his jealousy of the

doctor, it indirectly suggests that one must consider the consequences of being a spendthrift. A person who spends wealth carelessly never prospers. Therefore, one should think of the result before the expenditures of wealth.

“He who requites a fault with kindness at the same time pardons the evil” (Mathers 36).

The fisherman told the demon *The Tale of The Wazir of King Yunan and Rayyan the Doctor*. Then the fisherman continued telling the devil another tale. The above proverb is used in the folktale *The Tale of the Prince and the Ogress*. The demon promised to kill the fisherman, but the fisherman did not want to die. He thought that though he was a demon, God had given the fisherman some intellect so he could use it. Thus, the fisherman told the demon that he would be regarded with the highest name if he told him how he could fit into such a small jar. The fisherman told him to demonstrate it. When the demon heard the highest name, he agreed to show it to the fisherman.

As soon as the demon got into the jar, the fisherman closed the jar with the seal of Sulaimān. Thus, the demon was trapped. The fisherman threatened him to throw into the sea and ensure that no one got him out. The demon begged, but the fisherman did not listen to the devil. The demon implored the fisherman to release him if he had been bad to the fisherman, he asked him to be good to him. Thus, the demon quoted the above proverb. The proverb indicates that the fisherman should avenge the demon’s fault and kindly pardon him. However, the demon was not going to pardon the fisherman. The proverb is a contradictory statement to the act of the demon, and the demon expected the fisherman to follow the proverb. The proverb is made of “he who requites a fault”, “with kindness”, and “pardons the evil”. Thus, the proverb suggests that a person who revenges a fault with kindness pardons a bad person. The revenge taken with kindness is like forgiveness.

**“Blessed are they who control their anger and forgive the offender”
(Mathers 221).**

“The man who takes good council has provided himself with a shield” (Mathers 221).

The proverb is used in the folktale *The Tale of the Lame Young Man with the Barber of Baghdad*. The tale is told by the lame young man and reported by the tailor. The lame young man

told his story. He was the son of the leading merchant of Bagdad. His father led a very peaceful life and brought up his son similarly. The lame young man inherited the property when his father died. The only thing that the lame man feared was the woman.

When he was walking on the streets of Baghdad, he saw a group of women approaching him. He tried to avoid them and went to another road and sat on a bench. In front of the bench was a window opened by a young woman who came there to water the plants. She was so beautiful that he felt something for her. After looking at her, his fear of women went away, and he felt a desire for them. He sat there as if he was enchanted. After some time, a judge appeared before the house door and went in. He thought that he might be the father of the girl. Her thought did not leave his mind, and after some days, he fell ill.

An older woman came to him and asked him everything. He told her everything, and she told him to be brave. On his behalf, the older woman went to the girl, but the girl became angry with the older woman and told her not to come again with such a proposal; otherwise, she would punish her. He fell seriously ill and stopped eating. After a few days, the older woman came with a smile on her face and demanded a gift for good news. He asked her what the good news was. The older woman told him that she told the young woman that a man was about to die in her love, and she explained everything to her. Thus, the young lady became ready to meet the man after the Friday prayers. She told her that she would spend hours with him, but she had to leave before her father arrived.

The man prepared a plan for their meeting when the older woman asked him to go to the hammam and do a makeover. Thus, he decided to call the barber first and then went to the hammam. The barber came and started conversing with the man. He became irritated with the barber's conversation and told him to do his duty and stop the conversation. After some time, the barber started conversing again about his knowledge of the horoscope, and it irritated the lame young man more.

The barber further clarified that he is not merely a barber but a scholar in many sciences. He told the man that he should follow whatever he said, but he became angry with his talk. The barber again started telling the man about him and the story of the talkative six brothers. Thus, the lame young man reached his limit of patience and ordered his servant to send the barber out. Then again, the barber started telling him about the lame young man's father and his relationship. The

barber consulted him and how the barber received a hundred dinar as a reward from his father. The lame young man thus became angry with him and expressed his regret about his father having such a barber with him. The barber told him that he thought the lame young man had recovered from his illness, but it affected him badly. Therefore, he reminded him of the first proverb mentioned above.

In the story's context, the proverb indicates that the lame young man should control his anger and forgive the barber even though he talked much and did his work less. He advised him that the person who knows how to control anger and forgive the offender is blessed. The proverb is made of "blessed are they", "who control", and "their anger and forgive the offender". The proverb suggests that one should learn to control anger and forgive the offender. Anger affects the person's conscience, leading to the person's downfall. An angry person makes wrong decisions. Therefore, one needs to control anger and learn to forgive the offender as forgiveness is divine.

In the same story, the next proverb is used. The barber told him that he did not understand why he was so impatient. He added that the lame young man's father never made any decisions without seeking his advice. The barber told him that his father knew the importance of the second proverb mentioned above. The proverb indicates that the lame young man's father took advice from the barber, and he protected himself from the probable threat. Thus, the barber advised him to take his advice and stay protected. The proverb is made of "the man", "who takes good council", and "has provided himself with a shield". Thus, the proverb suggests that one should listen to the advice to be safe. Good advice always leads to success and safety.

"It is for a father to name his own son" (Mathers 392-393).

The proverb is used in the folktale *The Tale of King Umar Al-Numan*, a series of tales, and the proverb is exemplified on the fifty-sixth night. It is a tale of a slave woman Nuzhat and the Badawi owner. The Badawi was taking Nuzhat to the slave market in Damascus. When they arrived at Damascus, Nuzhat was pale due to over-crying. Badawi warned her if she cried anymore, he would sell her to an unworthy Jew. He took her quickly to the slave market and announced that he had brought a young, enslaved person to sell. He also said that whoever buys her would also get her brother who was ill as an enslaved person.

One of the merchants asked Badawi her age. He explained that she is a virgin, intelligent, beautiful, and well-mannered. The merchant asked the Badawi if he could see her as he wanted to make sure that whatever the Badawi had said was true, and if it were true, the merchant would offer whatever he gets by selling her. The merchant wanted to buy her for King Umar al-Numan. The Badawi agreed, and the merchant accompanied him to see Nuzhat.

The Badawi called her out, but she did not come out, so he asked the merchant to go in and see for himself. He was impressed by her intellect, and she wished that he must buy her as he seemed a very kind and venerable man. She also spoke with the best manners to make the merchant ready to buy her. He asked her how she was, and she answered that she was not in the best condition. He was impressed by her answer and thought she must be a lovely lady. The merchant asked the Badawi the price of the admirable lady. When he heard the word respectable for Nuzhat, he became angry and told him that she was obnoxious of all the enslaved people.

The merchant said he was ready to buy her with all her faults. The other man asked how much he could give him for her. At this juncture, the merchant used the above proverb. In the context of the story, the proverb indicates that Badawi must decide the price of his slave. He is her owner, and he has all the rights to determine her price. The proverb is made of “a father”, and “name his own son”. Thus, the proverb suggests that one must decide what to do with the possessions just like the father chooses his son’s name.

“He who leaves children behind him does not die” (Mathers 553).

The proverb finds its place in the folktale *The Adventures of Young Kana Ma Kana*. The story is about King Du al-Makan and his son Kana Ma Kana. The king was on a battlefield with the siege of Constantinople for four long years. The king and his army were suffering from their exile. The king asked his three chiefs what they should do as the war did not seem to end due to the siege and the Mother-of-Calamity who caused the death of his brother Sharkan. The three chiefs told the king that the Wazir Dandan was more experienced. Therefore, he would be the appropriate person to ask this question. The king instructed the Wazir Dandan to give his opinion. The Wazir advised the king to return to their nation as the war would go on forever. He also urged the king that they should come in the future to conquer this country. Thus, the king announced that they must return to their nation in three days.

The first thing King Du al-Makan did on returning to his country was to meet his son Kana Ma Kana and ask him to see his friend, the fireman of Hammam. The fireman had become fat. The fireman hesitated to sit beside the king, but the king insisted, and he sat beside the king. The fireman saved the king once, so he was indebted to him. The king asked him to wish for something in return for his favour for the king. The fireman demanded something that the king thought to be very much for the fireman. The king rejected the fireman's demand three times and asked for something of his worth. The fireman murmured that the king was not capable of offering it to him. The king shouted at him that nothing was impossible. Thus, the fireman asked the king to make him the Sultan of Damascus. The king agreed and made the fireman the Sultan of Damascus.

The king named the fireman Zibl Kan al-Mujahid and ordered Wazir Dandan to bring his niece from Damascus. The new Sultan sent the princess of Damascus with great care and an entourage of her attendants. King Du al-Makan's niece and his son Kana Ma Kana became attached. Thus, eight years had passed, and the king became tired day by day. His health became weak. One day the king called the wazir and told him that he wanted to see his son ascend. He wanted the wazir's opinion, but he said to the king that the prince Kana Ma Kana was too young to be a king, and it was not possible to make him the king, but the king told him that he would make his chamberlain his advisor till he becomes ready to be a king.

The king made his son the king and told him that the chamberlain would be his advisor, and after his death, the wazir would take his position as a father. He also told him to take vengeance for the death of his grandfather and uncle from the woman called Mother-of-Calamity. Prince Kana Ma Kana promised his father and the king fell and died. Thus, the storyteller continued telling the story of the adventures of King Kana Ma Kana, which proved the above proverb true. The proverb indicates that the person who has children does not die. King Du al-Makan died, but his son carried his name forward with his bravery. The proverb is made of "he who leaves children behind him", and "does not die". Thus, the proverb suggests that a person's children carry on his legacy and name even if he dies. Therefore, a person with children lives forever with his name.

The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night: Volume II

“Words of a night to bring the day!” (Mathers 382).

The proverb is used in the folktale *Abu Nuwas Improvises*. It is the story of Khalifah Harun al-Rashid, who was deprived of sleep and walked into the gallery. He saw the slave woman going to her pavilion. He followed her into her pavilion and started making love till her veil dropped. He was so desirous of her, but she stopped him by telling him that she was not well prepared that day. She told him that she would be ready as always, the next day for him, and then he could have her in his arms. The next day he sent his chief chamberlain to her to inform her that he was coming, but she told him that she was tired and thus could not meet him. The chamberlain reminded her of her promise to Khalifah Harun al-Rashid, but she quoted the above proverb.

When the chamberlain told her answer to Khalifah Harun al-Rashid, he did not understand it and called his poet Abu Nuwas to create a poem explaining the proverb’s meaning. The proverb indicates that she promised him something for tomorrow, but the words uttered at night do not make things happen. She meant that whatever she promised at night was gone with the night. The proverb is made of “words of a night”, and “to bring the day.” Thus, the proverb suggests that promises made at night do not necessarily become true. It is not obligatory to keep the promises made at night.

“The hearts of well-born men are tombs” (Mathers 414).

The proverb finds its place in the folktale *Girls or Boys?* The tale is an argument between a learned woman called Dahia and the storyteller’s friend al-Salihani who considered boys superior to girls. This aroused an argument because al-Salihani fell in love with Dahia’s brother. Dahia saw it and asked why he preferred men over women. Then he argued that God had made men more perfectly than women. Thus, they broke into an argument over the superiority of men and women, boys and girls. When she asked him to prove the superiority of men and boys over women and girls, he told her that he would use both logic and the holy scripture as his proof to justify his stand. He quoted the Quran and the book of Sunnah, where it was evident that men and boys are superior to women and girls. Dahia agreed with his explanation and asked him why he fell for the young boys then and why not for the bearded and old ones. To this question, he answered that the Prophet

and the poet Abu Nuwas had also praised the beauty of young boys. Thus, he quoted many people's praiseworthy words regarding the beauty of the boys.

After listening to whatever al-Salihani said, Dahia told him to be prepared for whatever he said as his arguments were misleading. She explained to him how beautiful a woman is. She also argued that men of significant positions have deserted everything they have for women. Al-Salihani quoted comparing men with women, proving that men are superior to women. She also quoted from the holy book why men looked for beauty in men when women were created. She further quoted poets like Abu Nuwas in praise of women. While counterarguing al-Salihani, Dahia became so excited that she realized that she might have crossed her limits in the presence of old sages and men to prove the superiority of women and girls over men and boys. Therefore, she expresses her apology if people present there found her criticism too harsh, and she relied on others to use their will to tell this to others. She quoted the above proverb. By using the proverb, she indicates that well-born men do not feel harsh about the argument she makes. The well-born men understand her argument. The proverb is made of "hearts of well-born men", and "tombs". Thus, the proverb suggests that well-born men show a willingness to accept the right thing. They do not take her argument to heart as whatever she said was right. Well-born men exhibit such maturity.

"For he who leaves no posterity, leaves no name" (Mathers 493).

The proverb is exemplified in the folktale *The Tale of the Shifts of Delilah-the-wily and her Daughter Zainab-the-Cheat, with Ahmad-the-Moth, Hasan-the-Pest, and Ali Quicksilver*. The tale is about two thieves and a trickster woman. The thieves were known for their art of thievery. They were so good at it that the king of Baghdad had appointed them as the chiefs of police with good salaries and guards. When the second daughter of the trickster woman Delilah-the-wily heard this, she went to her mother and asked her to find an evil device that would make them rich and make the king give them back the honour of her father. Delilah-the-wily promised her daughter that she would do her best to get back what they deserved. Hence, she told her daughter what she was going to do. She disguised herself in the dress of a Sufi beggar and went into the town. Hidden in the dress of a Sufi beggar, she went to the house of the king's guard Mustafa. He was very short-tempered. He promised his wife that he would not marry any other woman on their wedding night. He was aging and did not have any children. Thus, he was very angry with his wife as he could

not marry another woman. He quoted the above proverb to indicate that he must have his heir. The proverb suggests that Mustafa was very eager to have a child, but his wife did not give him a child nor did she allow him to marry another woman to have an heir to continue his family. He believed that he would not leave his name behind unless he had any successor.

The proverb is made of “for he who leaves no posterity”, and “leaves no name”. Thus, the proverb advises that one should have a successor to continue his family name. The story goes ahead, and the following proverb gets its place.

“Offer your daughter soon and your son late” (Mathers 497).

The proverb is used in the same folktale. Mustafa became angry with his wife for not allowing him to marry another woman to have his successor. Delilah-the-wily went to the wall of the house and saw Mustafa’s wife sitting at her window wearing all the jewels. She thought she must try her black magic on her and take away all her jewels. So, she went on to take the name of God loudly.

Mustafa’s wife heard her and asked the house guard to let the woman in to take her blessings. The guard went to her and asked her to come to the house. There, she exhibited with her tricks that she was no ordinary Sufi. Hence, the guard became fascinated with her elegance and let her go into the house. Mustafa’s wife fell to her feet when she entered the house and begged for her blessings. She told her everything. Delilah-the-wily asked her to come with her, and then she would be able to conceive a child. Thus, she agreed to come.

Delilah-the-wily now began thinking as to how she could steal her jewels. She made a plan and carried it out. She took her to a busy market and saw that a merchant had looked at her and felt attracted to her. She went to the merchant and told him that the girl was her daughter and was now marriageable. She said to him that she had brought her believing an old proverb which she quoted. She used the above proverb. The proverb indicates that the older woman was ready to marry the girl as she became marriageable. She believed that girls should be married soon and that boys should be married late.

The proverb is made of “offer your daughter”, “soon”, and “your son late”. Thus, the proverb advises that one should marry a daughter when she becomes marriageable and a son late. The following proverb is used in the same folktale highlighting a different aspect of the story.

**“Not every time you drop a cup
Will it be worth the taking up” (Mathers 509).**

The proverb finds its place in the same folktale. The story goes further, and Delilah-the-wily manages to get the merchant into her trap. They started walking behind each other. When they were going through the market, a dyer’s eyes caught sight of the girl and the merchant. Delilah-the-wily saw it and went to him to ask for a place to live. She told him that the girl and the boy were his children. After much discussion, the dyer gave them the upper floor of his house to live in. She called both the merchant and the wife of Mustafa and took all of their jewellery, and left the house.

While leaving the house, she made the dyer a fool and looted him. She saw a donkey boy whom she asked to load everything from the dyer’s shop on the donkey. She told him that the shop belonged to her son but he was mad, so she asked him to smash the shop into pieces; meanwhile, she took the things on his donkey. When she went further, she met her daughter. Her daughter asked if she had found something. She told her that she had fooled four persons: Mustafa’s wife, a merchant, a dyer, and a donkey boy.

When the dyer returned with food for the merchant and Mustafa’s wife, he saw the donkey boy thrashing his shop. He stopped him and asked him what he was doing. The donkey boy told him whatever Delilah-the-wily told him to do. The dyer said that his mother had died and that the woman who told him to break down the shop was not his mother. Thus, the donkey boy broke into tears because she took his donkey with her. He was mad after his donkey. Both the dyer and the donkey boy started fighting. After some time, people separated them. They came to know that they had been fooled. They went to the dyer’s house and found the merchant and Mustafa’s wife, who were also deceived. Of the four: the merchant, the dyer, and the donkey boy decided to take revenge on Delilah-the-wily.

Meanwhile, Delilah-the-wily changed her Sufi clothes and became a wealthy merchant’s servant. She went on to her next venture to rob other people. She robbed the son of a merchant’s head and a jeweller in the market. When she went to her daughter, the daughter asked her if this was the end of her robbery. She told her that she had more to do. When the head of the merchant came to know that his son was with the jeweller, he went there and asked how his son had been there. The jeweller told him everything, and at the same time, the three victims: the merchant, the

dye, and the donkey boy, appeared. They told the head of the merchant and the jeweller what they experienced, and the same woman had done this to them as well. The jeweller requested the three of them to allow him to join them in search of the older woman.

Thus, they began searching for the older woman: Delilah-the-wily. They decided to search for the woman separately. The donkey boy first found her. She told her to be quiet, and that she would give him her donkey back. She asked him to wait, and she went into a barber's shop and again fooled the barber and the donkey boy and went away. The barber also joined them, searching for the woman as she looted his shop.

They wandered many places and failed to find the woman, but the donkey boy saw her and grabbed her at one corner. They took her to the king's courtyard, but the king was sleeping. Hence, they handed over the woman to a eunuch. The woman somehow managed to reach the king's wife and told her that she had brought her five slaves standing in the courtyard. The king's wife saw them and gave her money. The older woman asked the king's wife to let her out of the secret door as she did not want to see the enslaved people again.

Thus, Delilah-the-wily escaped and went to her daughter. The daughter asked her what she did, and she explained how the donkey boy always recognized her. The daughter told her to be in the house and remember the above proverb.

The proverb indicates that the older woman need not take risks every time. She had been recognized by the donkey boy two times, and she managed to escape, but it was not possible that she would run away all the time. One day, she might get caught, so the daughter asked her to stay in the house. The proverb is made of "not every time", "you drop a cup", and "be worth taking up".

Thus, the proverb advises us not to take the situation for granted and that everything will happen as we think. Things might be in our favour a couple of times, but not always.

The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night: Volume III

“To-morrow’s bread will come to-morrow” (Mathers 35).

The proverb is used in the folktale *The Tale of Land Abdallah and Sea Abdallah*. It tells the story of a fisherman called Abdallah who had a wife and nine children. Every day he would go fishing and sell whatever he found. If he found a good number of fish, he would bring good food for his wife to cook and fruits for his children. His net was everything to him. Whatever he earned from fishing, he would spend it on his family as he believed in the above proverb. The story and the proverb indicate that Abdallah was worried only about today, and he never thought of the next day. Whatever he received on a given day was spent on the same day.

The proverb is made of “tomorrow’s bread”, and “will come tomorrow”. Thus, the proverb suggests that one should not worry about tomorrow as the things of tomorrow are bound to happen. It also advises not to worry about tomorrow and waste the beautiful present. The story thus goes further, and the following proverb is used to provide a different message.

“The weak are devoured by the strong” (Mathers 45).

The proverb is used in the same folktale of fisherman Abdallah. Abdallah’s wife gave birth to her tenth child, and there was no food in the house, so she asked him to go and get some food. Hence, he went fishing, but he could not feed his family after many efforts. He blamed his wife for not allowing him to do another business as he found the business of fishing non-profitable. For the third time, he tried his luck and threw the net into the water. He found a man with a fishtail. He was afraid, but the man told him to reward him if he freed him from the net. Abdallah asked him if he was a demon, but the man said he was not, and asked him to agree that Abdallah should provide him fruits, and he would provide Abdallah pearls and other precious things in return. Abdallah asked the merman his name, and he told him that his name was also Abdallah. Thus, they agreed with them in the presence of Fatihah, and the merman dived into the sea to bring his first gift for Land Abdallah. The merman did not return for long, so Land Abdallah thought he was tricked.

With so much wealth, Land Abdullah became very happy and got drunk. He went to the baker and asked him what he owed him. The baker asked him if he had money to pay for whatever he had and if not, he could take the bread and pay later. Abdullah told him that he had money and wanted to pay him. Taking bread and other food, he went to his house, told his wife everything, and asked her not to tell anyone. The next day he went to the sea as promised by the Sea Abdullah and called him. He gave him a basket of fruits that he took and returned with jewels. Thus, Land Abdullah became rich and Wazir of the king.

One day he sat beside Sea Abdullah on the seashore and began talking. He asked how life was beneath the water. The Sea Abdullah asked him to come with him, but he told him that he was used to living on the ground and might die underwater. Sea Abdullah said that he had something that could be applied to his body, and nothing would happen to Land Abdullah underwater. Thus, Land Abdullah became ready to go underwater. Sea Abdullah brought an ointment to apply to the body, and Land Abdullah asked him what that was. Sea Abdullah explained to him that it was the liver fat of the fish called Dandan, a large fish that could swallow an entire elephant. Land Abdullah asked him what the fish eat then. Sea Abdullah told him that the fish ate small fish and quoted the above proverb.

The proverb indicates that Dandan ate small fish because Dandan is a mighty and robust fish, and the small fish are weak. Thus, the strong overpower the weak. The proverb is made of “the weak”, “are devoured”, and “by the strong”.

Thus, the proverb suggests that the strong take the benefit of the weak. Therefore, the weak are overpowered by the strong as a natural law indicating that only those who survive are the strongest.

“Unlucky as an ape’s face” (Mathers 119).

The proverb finds its place in the folktale *The Tale of Khalifah the Fisherman*. The story is about a fisherman called Khalifah who was so poor that he could not get married even after the most impoverished neighbours had been married. One day he went fishing but could not catch a single fish even after many efforts. He cursed his fate and sat on the riverbank for some time. At last, he threw the net into the water and waited for some time. Later, he tried to pull the net, but he could not get it out. He had to try harder to get the net out, and when he succeeded, he saw a one-

eyed and lame ape in the net. He accepted it as his fate and pulled out the monkey from the net and tied it to a tree. He was about to beat the ape with the whip, but he spoke to him. The ape told him not to beat him and instead throw the net into the water, and God will bestow him with the food. Hence, he took his net and threw it into the water.

After some time, he pulled the net and found it heavier than before. When he pulled the net completely, he found another ape that was neither one-eyed nor lame but very beautiful, and it was decorated with jewels. The ape looked at Khalifah and laughed.

Seeing another ape in the net, the fisherman became frustrated and went to the first ape cursing him to be the reason for his hunger. He started beating the ape with his whip, but he told him to go to the second ape. When he went to the second ape, the ape asked him if he knew him. In anger, the fisherman said that he did not know him, but he would surely beat him if he did not answer him. The ape asked him to listen to him patiently. The ape told him that he belonged to a money changer Abu Saada who became prosperous due to the monkey. Abu Saada saw the monkey's face after waking up and before sleeping, making him rich. The fisherman did not believe him and asked him if the above proverb was right.

The proverb indicates that Khalifah believed the ape's face was the unluckiest. It was a social belief that whoever sees a monkey's face might face some difficult situation. The same thing he experienced when he caught a monkey and then another but no fish. The proverb is made of "unlucky", and "as an ape's face". Thus, the proverb suggests that seeing a monkey's face brings bad luck.

The story goes further, and the following proverb suggests another aspect reflected in the story.

"A camel-boy never achieves pilgrimage until he has buggered his camel" (Mathers 125).

The ape asked Khalifah to throw the net to find his food and more. The fisherman did the same and found two large fish. The ape told him to take them to the moneychanger Abu Saada and offer it to him for a few words. The ape told him what words he should ask the moneychanger. The ape asked him to get the promise words from Abu Saada, which would make the monkey his servant, and then the monkey would be able to provide the fisherman with wealth. The fisherman

did the same. He managed to exchange the promise from Abu Saada, and thus he lost his fortune, and the fisherman received the ownership of the beautiful ape. He went to the water the next day, threw his net, and caught many fish. He sold them in the market and earned a hundred dinar. As a result, he became anxious about his wealth. He thought if the chief of the police came to know about his wealth, he would beat him with his whip until he told him the source of the wealth, so the fisherman decided to get used to whipping. The next day, he stripped himself naked and struck the whip a hundred and eighty times. The neighbours heard a noise from his house and came to his house. They saw that he was thrashing himself with a whip. The neighbours asked him the reason, but he told them to go away.

When he finished with his whipping, he began thinking of his wealth. He was afraid to keep the money in his house as robbers might take them. He was unwilling to keep money with him as the robbers would kill him for money. He made a cloak bag, tied it to his neck, and went fishing. As soon as he threw his net into the water, the bag of gold coins in his neck jumped from his neck and fell into the water with the net. He immediately dived into the water and searched for the bag but could not find it. When he came out of the water, he found his clothes gone. Thus, he concluded that the thieves had stolen his clothes. As a result, he concluded that everything that happened to him proved the above proverb.

The proverb indicates that Khalifah took more care of his gold coins, and thus he lost them. He should not have taken care of his wealth so much. He was on the voyage to be rich, and the gold he achieved was a prime means to be rich, but he had been very anxious about it, so he did not have it with him.

The proverb is made of “camel-boy”, “never achieves”, “pilgrimage”, and “until buggered camel”. The proverb thus suggests that one should put every possession at risk to achieve the target. If we give undue consideration to something in our lives, we fail to achieve our biggest dreams. Similarly, the following proverb finds its place in the same folktale highlighting a different aspect.

“Dress an old stick in good clothes and it looks like the bride” (Mathers 149).

The proverb is exemplified in the same folktale. The story goes further, and the fisherman becomes rich. He bought a girl named Heart’s-Life who wrote a line on a piece of paper and asked

Khalifah to give it to the jeweller. When Khalifah went to the jeweller and gave him the piece of paper, the jeweller thought it must be a demand, so he asked his attendants to give him some money. Khalifah refused to take the money and asked the jeweller to read the note. When the jeweller read the message on a paper, he immediately called his attendants and asked them to go with Khalifah to the bank and give him a thousand dinar. When Khalifah returned with a thousand dinar, the jeweller was ready to ride a horse, and he requested him to ride on the other, but Khalifah told him that he had not ridden a horse before. Yet, he insisted, and Khalifah tried but fell off the horse. The jeweller asked his attendants to take him to a hammam to have a bath, and he went to Khalifah's house to bring the girl Heart's-Life. Meanwhile, the attendants cleaned Khalifah and clothed him in the best robes. The girl's Heart's-Life had already arrived, and everyone waited for her to speak.

When Khalifah arrived, everyone greeted him and sat near the girl. She told him to go back to his place. Khalifah went with many enslaved people to the palace dressed in the finest robe of thousand-dinar silk, enhancing his natural beauty. The above proverb indicates that his clothes made him look younger even though Khalifah was old. Khalifah became old, and with his old clothes, he looked different, but when the servants put on new clothes, he looked younger. The proverb is made of "dress an old stick", "in good clothes", and "it looks like the bride".

Thus, the proverb suggests that an old thing wrapped in a new cover looks different. When old things get new looks, they are rejuvenated.

“As fine as an Egyptian; for he can pass through the eye of a needle!” (Mathers 226).

The proverb finds its place in the folktale *The Two Jesters*. The tale is the story of two comedians. One lived in Damascus in Syria and the other in Cairo. The comedian who lived in Damascus always wanted to meet the comedian from Cairo. His audience told him that the jester in Cairo was more vindictive, intelligent, and amusing than him. They also said that he should go and experience what they said. He thought there was no harm in witnessing what the comedian in Cairo did.

So, he set out on a journey to Cairo and reached there safely. He went to the house of the jester in Cairo, and he was welcomed. The next day, the Damascene jester asked the Cairene jester that he had gone there to see his tricks and would like some guidance from him. The Cairene jester

told him that people have told him lies as he is just an ordinary jester like him. Yet, he said to him that being a host, it was his duty to show his guests the beautiful things in the city, so they went to the town. The Cairene man took the Damascene jester into a mosque to show him Cairo's spiritual and religious wonders. He also bought a bunch of flowers. They saw some men lined up to fulfill their needs.

The Cairene jester asked the Damascene jester if he wanted to play a trick on the people what he would do. The Damascene jester told him that he would go behind the people with a broom and prick them from behind. The Cairene jester said that it seemed very insignificant and vulgar to him. The Damascene jester went ahead and offered flowers to the people and asked them to allow him, and the people cursed him in confusion and asked him if he thought that they were in the dining room. With these words, the other people in the mosque laughed. Then the Damascene jester turned to his host, Cairene jester, and told him he had defeated him. At the same time, he said that the above proverb is true, and he experienced it himself.

The proverb indicates that Egyptians are very clever people. They can escape from any problematic situation. The Damascene jester wanted to see how intelligent the Cairene jester was, and he experienced it in the mosque. Thus, the proverb became true. The proverb is made of "as fine as an Egyptian", "for he can pass", and "through the eye of a needle". Thus, the proverb suggests that one should be as clever as an Egyptian because he becomes successful in any problematic situation.

"A man should scratch with his own nails and walk on his own feet" (Mathers 284).

The proverb is exemplified in the folktale *The Loves of Zain al-Mawasif*. The tale is about a young man named Anis who is very rich, compassionate, friendly, and humanitarian. One day he fell in love with a woman called Zain al-Mawasif whose husband had gone on a business journey. When her husband returned, they decided not to let him know about their relationship, but her husband somehow found out and decided to punish them. He took Zain al-Mawasif on a false business journey and lashed her with his whip for her adulterous behaviour. He also asked a smith to shoe her feet and her hands, but the smith found her beauty so attractive that he refused to do so and told the king of the land that a man had been ill-treating the woman. The king ordered his men to bring them. He asked the woman about everything, and she told him that she had been

tortured by the man and the smith was telling the truth. Her husband told the truth, but they did not listen to him and immediately imprisoned him. He died there.

Thus, Zain al-Mawasif escaped from her husband and took leave of the master of the land to meet her lover Anis. On her way to her lover's land, she stopped by a monastery, and the father of the church fell in love with her and wanted to express his love for her, so he sent his monks to her one by one, but no one was able to say anything to her. Thus, the father of the monastery remembered the above proverb. The proverb indicates that the monastery's father expressed his feelings through other representatives. Still, he forgot that if he has feelings of love for the lady, he must tell them to her on his own and not through any other person.

The proverb is made of "a man", "should scratch with his own nails", and "walk on his own feet". Thus, the proverb indicates that one should carry out his activities independently. If we want to do something and are capable of doing it, we must do it ourselves. We should not depend on others to do our work.

“Not every time you drop a cup will it be worth the taking up” (Mathers 327).

The proverb finds its place in the folktale *The Tale of Young Nur and the Warrior Girl*. It tells the story of a wealthy merchant who had a wonderful son called Nur. Nur's friends once called him to visit a garden with them. He took permission from his father and went to see the garden. The garden gate seemed the gate of paradise, and they entered through the gate. The keeper of the garden welcomed them and started touring them around the garden. Then they sat at one place where the garden owner provided them wine to drink, but Nur had not tasted wine before. He was forced by his friends to drink, and he drank wine. The other friends asked the host to make arrangements for singing, and the host brought in a woman to sing. After some pleasantries, she turned to Nur, who had been out for the first time and started entertaining him. He was attracted to her, but she escaped as others watched her. After some time, everyone deserted Nur and the girl alone in the hall. They made love to each other, and when it became dark, Nur left for home.

Nur's family was a strict follower of their faith, and it was a sin for them to drink wine. When Nur entered his house, his mother smelled wine on his breath. She covered him in bed. When his father arrived, he asked what had happened to Nur. His mother told him that he was suffering from a headache. Nur's father went near Nur and smelled the wine, and he scolded Nur

for breaking the family law. Nur raised his hand to his father in a drunken state, and his father swore that he would banish him after cutting his arm. His mother became afraid of this, and when Nur recovered to his senses, she told him to run away to Alexandria.

In Alexandria, he saw a beautiful girl taken to the market, and he followed her. She was put up for auction, and the auction started. The girl insulted whoever bid for her, and the seller found it difficult to sell her, so he returned her to her owner. She asked her owner to sell her to Nur, and thus he bought her. Her name was Miriam, and they stayed together. She was so impressed by his manliness that she asked him to change her religion. She was a Christian by birth but wanted to change her religion to Nur's religion. Nur completed her wish, and she was converted to Islam.

Back at her home, Miriam's father learned that pirates had taken his daughter. He ordered his men to bring her back, but they returned without her news. So, he ordered his chief of police to find and get her back. The man had been a successful spy, and he found the princess. He took her forcibly to her father, and Nur waited for her. Later he went in search of her but could not find her. At last, a man told him that a man on the ship had taken her. The other man said that he was going to the same country and would take him to that country. So, he went with the man and found that Miriam's father would purify her with the blood of a hundred Muslims. Nur was among the men, but an old churchwoman saved him. He was taken to the church by her and trained to perform the church duties. He met Miriam in the church, and they planned an escape. Miriam was caught again and taken to her father. No sooner did they escape than Nur went to bring clothes for her from the market. Her father was so angry with her that he ordered her execution, but his wazir asked him to offer her to him for marriage as it would be her punishment. The king agreed and married her off to him.

When Nur returned to shore, he found that her father's spy had taken Mariam. He was deeply grieved, but an older man consoled him and told him that he would find another pretty woman. He told the older man that he could not forget her. The older man asked him what he would do. He answered that he would return to her country and bring her back, but the older man told him not to do so. Therefore, he quoted the above proverb and advised him that once a thing goes, it is better to let it go.

The proverb indicates that Mariam had been taken away by her father twice. If he brings her back, he will take her again. Thus, this will go on forever. The older man advised him not to do such a thing because her father would take her again. The proverb is made of “not every time you drop a cup”, and “will it be worth the taking up”. If we lose something again, it is worthless to have it. Thus, the proverb suggests that the thing once gone is not worth searching for anymore.

“It is easy not to marry a daughter if you ask enough for her” (Mathers 349).

The proverb exemplifies the folktale *The Lovers’ Tomb*. The story is about Abdallah, who tells this story. Abdallah says that he went on a pilgrimage and visited the prophet’s tomb for the second time. When he sat near the grave, he heard a melodious song by which he was charmed. Then there was silence, he started looking for the singer. He saw a handsome-looking man coming towards him and fell to his feet. The man asked him who he was and what he wanted. Abdallah told him that he was so impressed by his song that he became his slave. The man said to him that his name was Utbah. When he made prayers to his God, many women came there, and among them, one beautiful woman came to him and asked him if he would marry someone who liked him. Before he could answer her, she disappeared into the crowd. He has been searching for her since then. Abdallah told him to have faith in God, and he expressed his desire to help him search for the woman.

They went to the mosque the next day and waited for the woman. Many women had come, but she did not come there, and Utbah became frustrated. Abdallah told him to wait for him, and he went into the crowd to ask for the woman. He came to know that she went away with her father to the Euphrates. He told him not to be frustrated. He gathered all the pilgrims and asked them what they thought about Utbah. All the people answered that he and his family were noble. Then, he requested everyone to help Utbah bring his happiness back to him by asking her father for his daughter’s hand for him. Hence, they went to the Euphrates.

When they reached the Euphrates, they were welcomed by the girl’s father. He offered them food, but Abdallah told him they would not accept it until he promised them one thing. The man asked what they wanted, and Abdallah requested his daughter’s hand for Utbah. When the man heard that Abdallah was asking for his daughter’s hand for Utbah, his expression changed, but he told Abdallah that he needed to consult his daughter. When he went to his daughter, he told

her that he had promised her to his nephew. His daughter asked him what he would say to them. If he rejected their proposal, it would be trouble for him and his people. Her father agreed with her and told her he would ask them for an excessive dowry as the above proverb is true. He used the above proverb as a guiding principle to solve the situation.

The proverb indicates that it would not be easy for Utbah to marry his daughter so quickly if he asked for an impossible amount of dowry. The girl's father was caught between two stools, and he had only one choice to make. The proverb guides him to get through the situation safely. The proverb is made of "it is easy", "not to marry a daughter", and "if you ask enough for her". Thus, the proverb suggests that it is better not to marry a girl whose father asked more for her. If one wants to avoid a situation without hurting anyone, one must always follow the safest way.

“The grave is a finer place than poverty” (Mathers 355).

The proverb finds its place in the folktale *The Strange Tale of the Mirror of Virgins*. The folktale is about the sultan of Barsah named Zain. He was a very handsome, generous, and brave person, yet he was a spendthrift. He spent all of his wealth giving gifts to women and greedy people. Thus, he spent all his ancestral wealth. One day his wazir came to him and told him that nothing was left in the treasure for tomorrow. He was afraid that he would be blamed for that, so he quickly retired from his position. The sultan became exceedingly anxious that nothing had been left behind for the days of necessity. He repented to this and said he must abandon his throne as it is better to be a beggar on the streets than to be a poor and disrespected king. He reminds himself of the above proverb.

The proverb indicates that the sultan believed that poverty was worse than the grave. He did not understand this at first and spent all his wealth. The proverb is made of "grave", "a finer place", and "than poverty". Thus, the proverb advises that one should not spend to the limits of being thrown into poverty. The person in poverty has to go through many troubles, which makes him think that it is better to get rid of poverty by dying or it is better to die instead of being in poverty.

“He does not die who leaves a son” (Mathers 379).

The folktale *The Tale of Ala al-Din and the Wonderful Lamp* exemplifies the above proverb. The folktale is about a tailor’s son named Ala al-Din in China. Ala al-Din was not clever from his early childhood; hence, his father taught him business. He could not afford the fees, so he took his son and taught him his own business. He tried very hard to teach him, but Ala al-Din did not concentrate on trade and spent his time playing with his friends. The tailor fell ill and died, but this did not move Ala al-Din. His mother sold the shop and started weaving clothes to earn a living. Ala al-Din was never serious about his life, and he did not have anyone to fear. He spent all his time playing and coming home only to eat.

One day Ala al-Din was playing with his friends, and a Sufi man saw him. He was a magician with potential and said he looked for this child Ala al-Din. The man asked another boy about him and his family. After getting the information about Ala al-Din’s family, the man called him and told him that he was his uncle. He asked him about his father, and Ala al-Din said his father had died. The man grieved a lot, and Ala al-Din consoled him. The man gave him ten dinars and told him to go home and tell his mother that his uncle would come tomorrow.

Ala al-Din’s mother did not understand who his uncle was. The next day the man came again and told him that he would come in the evening. Thus, Ala al-Din’s mother prepared food for her husband’s brother and told him to go and wait for his uncle at the place where he met him. At that moment, Ala al-Din’s uncle appeared and told him where he was and how he came back looking for them. He also said that Ala al-Din resembles his brother, which reminded him of the above proverb. The proverb indicates that Ala al-Din’s father died, but he left his son behind, and thus, he is still alive in the form of his son. He left his heir behind to continue his family lineage.

The proverb is made of “he does not die”, and “who leaves a son”. Thus, the proverb suggests that the person who leaves a son behind does not die but continues to live with his name attached to his son.

“The younger dog is fouler than his elder, for the race of dogs ever declines” (Mathers 438).

The proverb finds its place in the same folktale *The Tale of Ala al-Din and the Wonderful Lamp*. The story goes further with Ala al-Din’s uncle asking him to trade, but his mother expressed

her anger as he would never learn to trade. His uncle told him that he would help him become a merchant, and he agreed with it. To make Ala al-Din a merchant, his uncle promised to buy new merchant clothes the next day. They bought a new dress for Ala al-Din, and his uncle took him to acquaint him with the merchants and the way merchants do business. He started Ala al-Din's training as a merchant. His uncle took Ala al-Din to a mountain beyond the valley. He told Ala al-Din to rest for a while and then see a marvelous garden. He asked Ala al-Din to collect some wood. He collected the wood, and his uncle lit the fire and started uttering words in an unknown language.

Suddenly, the ground shook and there became a hole in the ground with a locked trapdoor. Ala al-Din saw this and started running away, but his uncle stopped him, he told him that no one in the world could open the trapdoor but him, and it was full of wealth. He told him they could divide the wealth among them if he opened it. The man was not Ala al-Din's uncle, but he was a magician who wanted to get to the magic lamp hidden in the mountain only Ala al-Din could enter. Ala al-Din did not know it, and when he came out with the lamp, the man demanded it fiercely, but Ala al-Din did not give it to him as he waited for him to be calm. The cave was closed as the man tried to enter after Ala al-Din to get the lamp. The man gave him a ring to protect him from the dangers in the cave. He accidentally rubbed the ring, and a demon appeared. He asked him to take him out of the cave, and thus, he escaped from the cave and ran to his home.

When he reached home, he relaxed and then told his mother what had happened. Then the next day, Ala al-Din was hungry, and there was no food, so he asked his mother to sell the lamp he had taken from the cave. She thought of cleaning it before she took it to sell, but Jinni appeared and asked what she wanted as she rubbed the lamp. Ala al-Din's mother fainted, but he asked him for food, and he had it. When Ala al-Din sprinkled some water on her face, she woke up. They ate the food with delight.

Ala al-Din told her what had happened, and she asked him to throw away the ring and the lamp, but he refused to throw away the ring as it saved his life, and he promised her that he would hide the lamp. When the Jinni provided them with food, all the food was served in the gold dishes that he sold, and he became a wealthy and wise person. He wished to marry the sultan's daughter, but he had promised her to his wazir's son. With the help of Jinni, he separated the sultan's daughter and the wazir's son, whom the princess disliked. Then he married Badr al-budur, the sultan's daughter. Meanwhile, he remained generous and helped the poor people of the city.

Later the man who left Ala al-Din in the cave with the lamp came to know about Ala al-Din and his prosperity and decided to take the lamp from him. He came to Ala al-Din's city and waited for the right moment to steal the lamp. One day, Ala al-Din went out of the city for hunting. He forgot to lock the cupboard where he kept the lamp. The man came to his palace to sell new copper lamps in return for the old, and he succeeded in getting Ala al-Din's old lamp for the new copper lamp.

The man rubbed the lamp and ordered the Jinni to take Ala al-Din's palace to his town. Thus, it was done, and the following day the king found out that his daughter had vanished along with the palace. The king ordered to bring Ala al-Din. He asked him about the palace, but Ala al-Din did not know what had happened. When he saw that his palace had vanished, he was deeply grieved and requested the king give him forty days to bring his wife back. He went to a river and thought of committing suicide, but he accidentally rubbed the ring on his finger, and the demon appeared. He asked the devil to take him to his wife. Thus, he reached his palace in the city of the man. He met his wife and asked what happened, and she explained everything to him. He asked her to do something exactly as he said so that they could escape from the man's captivity. She poisoned the man's glass of wine, and they took away the magic lamp from him and returned to their town.

The king found his daughter and Ala al-Din's palace and became happy. They explained everything, and he ordered to burn the man's body who took his daughter. Some days passed, and Ala al-Din did not have any children, so his wife became anxious about having a child. She came to know that an older woman had arrived in the town who could make her fertile to bear a child. The woman told her how she could bear a child. Ala al-Din's wife said to him that the older woman had asked her to bring an egg of a bird named Rukh and hide it in the palace then she would be able to bear a child. When Ala al-Din asked Jinni to do this, he became angry as he asked for something that was a crime, but Ala al-Din told him everything and Jinni understood everything. The Jinni told him that the older woman was no one else but the man's brother who took his wife and palace away. He came to his palace to take revenge. At this juncture, the Jinni used the above proverb.

The proverb indicates that the older man is cunning, but his younger brother happens to be more cunning than him, and this cunning nature among such people never changes. The older man

who took away Ala al-Din's wife and his palace already tried to kill Ala al-Din once when Ala al-Din took the lamp out of the cave. His younger brother came and tried to harm Ala al-Din's family. The nature of cunning people never changes, and Ala al-Din must guard his family against such people. The proverb is made of "the younger dog", "fouler than his elder", and "for the race of dogs ever declines".

Thus, the proverb advises that one should be aware that the world is full of cunning people. When we get rid of one shrewd person, another appears, and this goes on. Therefore, we must be aware of such people and save ourselves from trouble.

"A man who had been ill-served at any feast would say: 'I ate at the kadi's gold-fringed cloth'" (Mathers 529).

The proverb is used in the folktale *The Tale of the Father of Farts*. The folktale tells the story of a judge in a Syrian city called Tarabulus. There was a reign of King Harun al-Rashid who administrated his kingdom with stringent rule. The judge was so thrifty that he had only a woman servant in his harim who was dark-skinned. He was abundantly rich but lived life like a beggar eating stale bread and onion. He was so greedy that even his generosity was known to everyone to be fake. The judge would ask his servant loudly to lay the gold-fringed cloth for dining when he called the neighbours for dinner. Yet, no one ever received the meal that followed, and the exhibition of the cloth became merely a show of prosperity. Thus, the above proverb came into existence.

The proverb indicates that when a man experiences unfair treatment at a feast, he would always ironically say that he had eaten the food at the kadi's gold-fringed cloth. The judge would ask his servant to make excellent preparations for the meal but never invited anyone to eat out of his stinginess.

The proverb is made of "a man", "ill-served at any feast", "would say", "I ate", and "at the kadi's gold-fringed cloth". Thus, the proverb suggests that a stingy man never serves to the content of the guests' hearts but exhibits the house's extravagances. As a result, the guests remain ill-served and forced to tell others that they had eaten the food at the host's luxuries. Hence, we get the advice that we should not expect proper hospitality from a parsimonious person, or else we have to pretend that he served the guests in the best of manners.

“As large as the kadi’s belly!’ ‘As stupendous as the kadi’s belly!’” (Mathers 532).

The proverb finds its place in the same folktale. He was once asked to get married, and he asked the man who would find a bride for him. The other man told him that he had a marriageable daughter. The judge became ready to marry her. On the day of their wedding, the guests waited for the food to be served, but they returned with empty stomachs. The bride was hungry, and as soon as he ordered his servant to lay the gold-fringed clothes, he sat immediately, but she became nervous to see three pieces of bread and onions. The bride tolerated this for three days, but she called her father on the fourth day. The judge became angry with her, cursed, and divorced her.

After a few days, the judge found a new bride in the people of his kind and married her. The second bride also divorced him, but other people did not understand his nature and married their daughters to him. His marriages and quick divorces became so popular that people considered him unfit for marriage. The judge became uneasy as no woman married him again. One day, he saw a woman approaching him, and he asked her if she would like to marry him. She told him that she would tell him the next day. The next day she demanded fifty dinars as her dowry. He gave her the dowry and married her. The guests went away without having food. The bride was cunning, and the judge would not know what would happen to him. She ate whatever the judge gave her, and he thought that God had given him the perfect bride.

When the judge went out, his wife searched every corner of the house and found his treasure. She took some gold and ordered the servant to bring the most delicious food, and they ate it together. She asked her servant to be quiet and enjoy the food. When the judge returned, his wife served him the remains of the food. He ate it with delight and asked where they had brought the food from. The wife told him that a person of acquaintance had sent the food. The judge’s wife served him such food for an entire year, and he became so fat that the above proverb was formed referring to his physique.

The proverb indicates that a person becomes fat like the judge after overeating food. The proverb is made of “as large as the kadi’s belly!”, and “as stupendous as the kadi’s belly”. The proverb suggests nothing but the large size of the person in comparison with the other things.

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**“If the king’s vexed, run hard and do not halt; the best way to be hanged is by default”
(Mathers 43).**

The proverb is exemplified in the folktale *The Adventures of the Royal Bastard*. The story of the folktale is about three friends who were genealogists. They became pick pocketers out of amusement and gathered at a room hired for themselves. They maintained an everyday purse to collect all their money. Their tricks were very subtle rather than harsh. One day, they tried a different trick and thus talked about everything and gathered at the king’s wall. They started fighting among themselves.

The king found their quarrel very uneasy and summoned them in front of him. He asked why they were fighting. They told him they were fighting over their profession as to which profession was the noblest. They accepted that they had forgotten about the place where they stood fighting. The king asked them about their professions. The first man told him that he was a genealogist of precious stones. He can identify whether the stones are real or fake only by looking at them or touching them. Then the king turned to the second person and asked him his profession. The second man told him that he was a genealogist of horses. He can tell everything about any horse, from its breed to its diseases. Then the king turned to the third man and asked him his profession. The third man told him that he was a genealogist of man. He can tell whether the man belongs to noble parents or not.

The king was impressed to have experts in three fields, so he patronized them. They received royal treatment. One day a neighbouring king sent gifts to the king. There were many precious stones. The king summoned the first genealogist to test the stones. When the man tested the stone, he told the king that the stone was fake and there was a worm inside the stone. The king became angry as he knew that the man was a fraud, but the wazir asked the king to test the stone. If there is a worm, then the man should not be killed, and if there is no worm in it, he deserves a punishment. When they cut the stone, there was a worm in it. Thus, the first man’s life was saved from penalty.

After a few days, the king received a horse from another king. He summoned the second man to check the horse. The man told the king that the horse is of good breed and perfect for a

king's horse, but there is one imperfection. The king became angry with the last word. The king asked him to tell if there was a fault in the horse. The man said nothing further and told the king so. The king ordered him to tell the imperfection of the horse, but the man demanded security before stating the defect. The king promised him protection and demanded an explanation of the horse's fault. The man told the king that the horse's father was of the greatest race, but the mother was a sea buffalo cow. The king asked the executioner to kill him, but the wazir asked the king to check whatever the man said was true, so they checked with the keeper of the horse, and it turned out to be true whatever the man said.

The king wanted to check the knowledge of the third person; hence, he took him to one of his favourite mistresses and asked him to tell her origin. The man found a fault in her birth, and the king also became angry with him. The wazir intervened and asked the king to give him a chance to explain himself. The king summoned the father of his mistress and asked the truth of her birth, and it turned out to be true.

The king became happy with the knowledge of the three genealogists. He found the third very intelligent among the three, so he decided to ask him about his origin. He agreed to tell the king his origin, but he asked for security as he believed in the above proverb.

The proverb indicates that the king will be angry with whatever the man will say, and the king will hang him for the same. Therefore, it is better to run away and never stop when a king is angry. He preferred to die as destined than by hanging if he was to die. The proverb is made of "if the king's vexed", "run hard and do not halt", "the best way", "to be hanged", and "is by default". Thus, the proverb advises that one should not stop running if a master is angry or else he should suffer the wrath of the master. It is better to suffer for our faults but worse to suffer for others' faults.

“When the blade is red it is ripe for the hammer” (Mathers 58).

The proverb finds its place in the folktale *The First Madman's Tale*. The story of the tale is about a silk merchant. One day, when he was sitting in his shop, an older woman came to him and asked him if he had the best silk. He told her that he had, and she asked him to show her something. He showed her a piece of embroidered silk and priced it five hundred dinars. The lady

paid him the money and went away with her purchases. The lady came to his shop daily and took the same silk piece for the same price.

On the sixteenth day, she came but forgot her purse at home, so the merchant gave her the silk piece and told her that she would be welcomed again with or without money. The lady told him that she would not take the piece without paying for it. Both of them fought over the payment. The lady asked him to come with her and take his money. Thus, the merchant agreed and went with her. As they began walking to her house, she asked him to put a blindfold on his eyes. She told him that she did not want him to look at the women sitting in her neighbourhood and fall in love with them which would cause him trouble later. He allowed her to do so, and they went to her house. When he went into her house, she untied the bandage from his eyes, and he found her home very stately.

The lady left him in the chamber and went inside. The merchant looked at the silk pieces that the lady bought from him. Suddenly, two girls came with rose water, took the silk pieces, tore them into two, and started cleaning the floor. The merchant was astonished to see that they used the silk piece as a cleaning cloth. Later, another fifty girls came with gold brocade and decorated the place. The girls circled the place, and another ten girls brought a chair covered with cloth.

Suddenly the chair disappeared, and a queen appeared. She took the merchant to the hall and asked him to marry her. The merchant was mesmerized by the view and asked the queen if she had not tricked him. He also reminded her of the above proverb by which he meant that his heart had agreed to their union.

The proverb indicated that the merchant had already fallen in love with the decoration, and the queen asked him to marry her at that moment. Thus, the atmosphere already made the merchant inclined towards the lady that he accepted her proposal. The adornment of the place was made to attract the merchant, and finally, the queen asked him to marry her. The proverb is made of “when the blade is red”, and “it is ripe for the hammer”. The proverb suggests that when one wants to achieve something, the primary preparations should be done beforehand, and when the moment comes, one should go for it.

“Beat the bolt while it is soft” (Mathers 386).

The proverb is exemplified in the folktale *The Tale of the Eighth Captain*. The folktale is the story of a clarinet player whose wife gave birth to a son, but he was so poor that he could not feed his wife. Therefore, he went out to beg for copper pieces he would give to the midwife and the poultry merchant for a bird. As he was walking through the field, he saw a hen sitting. He caught the hen and her egg and went away, saying that he would cook and eat the hen, sell the egg, and give some money to the midwife.

As he went to sell the egg in the egg market, his friend asked him for it, and he sold it to him. The man asked him if he had more eggs, and the clarinet player told him to come tomorrow. Thus, he was able to feed his wife and pay the midwife. The clarinet player’s friend came every morning to buy an egg, and soon he became prosperous enough to open his new shop. When his son had grown enough to go to school, he built a school and gathered the children of the poor. He hired a master to teach the children the holy book. Then, he decided to go on a pilgrimage. He asked his wife to take care of the hen and went to Mecca.

The man’s friend who regularly took the eggs from him came to his wife and asked her for the hen in return for a trunk full of gold. At first, she denied it, but when she saw the gold, she gave the hen to him. The man asked her to kill the hen and cook it. After a while, the woman’s son came and asked about the cooked hen, and she told him that it had not been cooked for them. As she went away, the boy took the hen and ate it. The house’s servant saw it and told him to go away as the man would kill him to take the cooked hen out of his stomach.

The boy rode away to save himself. The man came to know about it, and he searched for the child. He saw the child in a field but could not catch him. The man drew out a knife, but the child threw him to the ground very hard, and the man died. The boy tried to return to his home, but he was lost. He wandered and came to a palace. At the gate of the palace, there were some heads hung. The boy asked about it and came to know that the king’s princess is a wrestler, and she vowed that whoever defeats her in wrestling shall get to marry her, and whoever loses shall be beheaded. The boy became ready to face the princess. Neither the princess nor the boy lost the fight, and the king ordered them to fight tomorrow.

The king ordered his men to examine the boy at night. The king’s men examined him and found the hen’s rump. They took the rump out and stitched his wound. When he woke up, he came

to know what had happened to him and ran away from the palace. He saw three people fighting over a magic carpet as he was wandering. He told them that he would mediate between them. Then he threw a stone and asked them to bring it. Meanwhile, he beat the magic carpet and ordered it to take him to the palace. Suddenly, he was in the courtyard where he fought the king's daughter. The king's daughter came to him on the carpet and ordered it to take them away. The girl was afraid and asked him to take her back to the palace. She told him if he took her to her palace, she would accept her defeat and marry him. He agreed and quoted the above proverb.

The proverb indicates that the boy wanted to ensure that whatever the princess says must happen. The proverb is made of "beat the bolt", and "while it is soft". Thus, the proverb advises that one should make a hurry while everything is in his favour. It is of no use to get something when time has passed.

“There is no track where no track has been left, for, were there track, it had been left!”

“One must lose oneself to find a lost thing” (Mathers 411).

The proverb is used in the folktale *The Tale of the Sea Rose of the Girl of China*. The tale is about a king called Zain al-Muluk, who was known worldwide for his bravery and generosity. He had two sons and soon was bestowed with a third, charming son that the most beautiful girls would feel embarrassed for their womanly nature. The king was so happy with the arrival of his son that he ordered the astrologers to map out his horoscope. The astrologers looked carefully and told the king that the boy's destiny was prosperous, but the king's eyesight would be destroyed if the king saw him in his boyhood. Therefore, a separate provision was made for the boy and his mother far away from the kingdom. Yet, when the king went hunting, the boy took his horse and went into the forest. No sooner did the king see him than he lost his eyesight. The king consulted many doctors, but there was no cure. There was only one remedy to bring back the king's eyesight. That was the sea rose of the girl of China.

A tree of the magic sea rose could cure blindness. The king announced that whoever brought the magic sea rose would get half of his kingdom. The king's three sons also set themselves on the expedition. The third son of the king travelled to the East and came to a very dense forest. He came across a Jinni in the forest. The Jinni was attracted to the prince. The prince offered him

food that was so delicious that the Jinni asked him a favour. Prince Nurgihan asked the Jinni to take him to the kingdom of King Firuz-Shah whose garden holds the sea rose of the girl of China.

As soon as the Jinni heard the name of the sea rose of the girl from China, he beat his head with his hand and fell unconscious. When the Jinni became conscious, he told the prince that it was impossible to pluck the sea rose of the girl of China as aerial Jinn guards it. The Jinni took the prince to the garden as he had an idea to distract the aerial Jinn. The Jinni went to distract the aerial Jinn and asked the prince to get the flowers soon. The flower was in the middle of a lake. Prince Nurgihan swam to the flower and plucked it by its roots. He wished to see the garden's pavilion, so he entered and found a beautiful girl lying on the couch. Her beauty spellbound him. While leaving her, he exchanged his ring with her and left.

The prince came to the gate where the Jinni was waiting for him. He asked the Jinni to take him to his palace, and after giving him a piece of bread, the Jinni took him to his palace. When the prince gave his father the sea rose, his eyesight returned. Prince Nurgihan shared the kingdom with his father. He planted the sea rose in a garden created by the Jinni. His other two sons thought that some magic had cured their father and not by the sea rose, but their father told them a story in which God made an impossible thing possible. Thus, he said to them that God could do anything, and with God's grace, his eyesight was cured. Back at the place where the sea rose had been planted, the sea rose girl of China woke up and went into the garden. She saw that her sea rose was missing. She was about to faint, but she saw that the ring she wore was strange. She understood that someone had seen her sleeping naked and became confused. She reminded her of the above proverbs.

The first proverb indicates that the sea rose was there in the lake, but now it has been lost. The proverb does not state the truth as evidence that someone took the sea rose. If there was the sea rose and it was lost, there would have been its evidence. The proverb is made of "there is no track", "where no track has been left", "were there track", and "it had been left". Thus, the proverb suggests that if a thing is lost, there remains no evidence of its existence. If it existed, there would have been evidence.

In the context of the story, the proverb does not prove to be correct. The second proverb indicates that the girl has to set herself out in search of the sea rose. She need not forget to go searching for the sea rose as she has a ring with her, and it would take her to the person who took

away the sea rose. Thus, the proverb proves wrong as one needs to forget himself in searching for the lost thing. The proverb is made of “one must lose oneself”, and “to find a lost thing”. Thus, the proverb advises that one must forget himself while searching for the lost thing. The following proverb is used in the same story when the girl searches for the sea rose.

“A heart will hear a heart” (Mathers 413).

The proverb finds its place in the same folktale. The girl decided to search for her sea rose on her own and punish the person who stole the flower that was near her heart. She took her slave girls with her and came to the kingdom of Prince Nurgihan. She saw that the people of the city were celebrating. She asked them why there was a celebration and learned that her sea rose was in the city. She became happy that she had found the flower. She went to the garden where the sea rose was planted and decided to wait for the person who stole it from her. Prince Nurgihan came into the garden, and when the girl saw his beauty, she forgot about her motive to go to the garden. She was seduced by the beauty of Prince Nurgihan and realized that he had taken her heart as well.

The girl went back to her maidens and wrote a letter to Prince Nurgihan. She sent the letter along with his ring to him. He recognized the ring and was eager to meet her. He read what her letter said to him. She expressed her feelings for him in the letter. She quoted the above proverb in the letter telling him that she was dying for him and unaware of her feelings. She expressed her resentment that the proverb was false as he had been unaware of her feelings.

The proverb indicates that the girl is in love with the prince, but it proves wrong as she is unaware of her love for him. The proverb is made of “a heart”, “will hear”, and “a heart”. Thus, the proverb suggests that people of the same thinking understand each other’s feelings without expressing them directly. There is an unseen connection between people with close relationships, and there is no need to express their feelings as they automatically sense them.

Conclusion

To sum up, it is observed that the proverbs in *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night* are difficult to understand independently as the cultural, social, environmental, situational, and traditional elements are related to the Arabian context. The reading of the folktales makes it easy to understand the proverbs and follow both the implied and literal meanings. In general, we

understand the meaning of a proverb based on the words provided that we know the cultural, social, environmental, situational, and traditional elements.

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