



**Araştırma Makalesi • Research Article**

**Reflecting the Concept of Family in Turkish and American Societies through Proverbs:  
The Masnavi and Poor Richard's Almanack**

***Türk ve Amerikan Toplumlarında Aile Kavramının Atasözleri ile Yansıtılması: Mesnevî ve  
Poor Richard's Almanack***

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**Abstract:** In this study the proverbs on the concept of family in the works of Mawlana and Benjamin Franklin, important personalities of their time, are analyzed. Mawlana's *The Masnavi* and Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanack* are the main texts used in this study. Proverbs, which are seen as inseparable parts of culture, are widely used in both works. With this article, it is planned to shed light on the concept of family with a comparative study through proverbs. While the proverbs about the concept of family are discussed, the words related to the family such as husband-wife, woman-man, mother-father, children, marriage, and love are examined in detail. The positive and negative aspects of the proverbs used when dealing with the characteristics, duties and responsibilities of the two historic figures are compared. Subsequently, while examining the relations of women, men, and family, light is shed on the important points in the views of both communities on these relations. This study, which deals with proverbs and cultural differences, is expected to contribute to studies on Turkish and American culture.

**Keywords:** Mawlana, Benjamin Franklin, Proverbs, Family

**Öz:** Çalışmamızda yaşadığı dönemlerin önemli şahsiyetleri olan Mevlâna ve Benjamin Franklin'in eserlerinde aile kavramı üzerine söylenmiş atasözleri ele alınmaktadır. Mevlâna'nın *Mesnevî* adlı eseri ile Franklin'in *Poor Richard's Almanack* adlı eseri bu çalışmada kullanılan temel eserlerdir. Kültürün ayrılmaz parçaları olarak görülen atasözleri her iki eserde de yoğun olarak kullanılmıştır. Bu makale ile aile kavramına atasözleri üzerinden karşılaştırmalı bir çalışma ile ışık tutulması planlanmaktadır. Aile kavramı ile ilgili atasözleri tartışılırken, daha çok karı-koca, kadın-erkek, anne-baba, çocuklar, evlilik ve sevgi gibi aileye ilişkin sözcükler detaylı olarak incelenmektedir. Bahsi geçen iki tarihi şahsiyetin özellikleri, görev ve sorumlulukları ele alınırken kullanılan atasözlerindeki olumlu ve olumsuz yönler karşılaştırılmaktadır. Akabinde kadın, erkek ve aile ilişkileri irdelenirken, her iki toplumun bu ilişkilere bakışlarındaki önemli noktalar gün yüzüne çıkartılmaktadır. Atasözleri

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ve kültür farklılığını konu alan bu çalışmanın Türk ve Amerikan kültürü ile ilgili çalışmalara katkı sağlaması beklenmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Mevlâna, Benjamin Franklin, Atasözleri, Aile

## Introduction

Proverbs are very valuable resources that provide us with information about many fields such as sociology, psychology, history, philosophy, folklore, and social sciences, as well as the values, behaviors and thought patterns of the societies. Proverbs offer great information about the society to which the individuals belong and about the social, cultural, and religious life of this society. Such aspects of societies like management, education, marriage, divorce, democracy, and peace are also represented through proverbs (Okray, 2015: 95). TDK (Turkish Language Association) defines proverb as “a word, a saying, a parable, an assertion, or an argument that was said on the basis of long trials and observations and has become popular and has an advisory quality” (<https://sozluk.gov.tr/>). For Aksoy, proverbs are “words that are valued, touching the soul and considered sacred, just like the words of God and the prophet” (2017: 15). According to Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English, a proverb is “a short well-known statement that gives advice or expresses something that is generally true” (LDOCE, 2009: 1398). The various definitions of proverb show that proverbs are patterns that play a pathfinder role in societies. Accordingly, they convey the knowledge of life by shaping it according to the conditions of the time and have a very important place in organizing human life (Erenoğlu, 2007: 1150). Its organizing role is not only related to our daily routines but also to social and moral behaviors of individuals. More specifically, how someone should behave towards their parents, how a person should behave towards their lover, their attitudes towards their children, the matters of money, love affairs, business, relationships, or friendships are all related aspects of this unity.

Each society has its own unique customs and traditions. Among them, there are significant elements such as lifestyles, etiquettes and values, which constitute cultures as a whole. In other words, culture has distinctive characteristics based on societal differences. Proverbs, as cultural components, “are created by all nations with their own experiences and wisdom expresses the integrity of language, world argument, and lifestyle, as well as guiding information about the cultural past of that nation” (Aksan, 2003: 38). Proverbs, hence, are outputs of shared cultural accumulations and perpetual documents that form the cultural structure of a nation. These invaluable documents enriched by proverbs play a vital role for community life. On the other hand, language is among the most outstanding constituents of a society as well as being the most significant part of cultures. Cultural transmission is inherently actualized by language and proverbs, in this regard, acts like the symbols of culture and history.

Proverbs are generally considered to reflect general truths to guide human-beings. Mawlana expresses such truths as, “everything in the realm attracts something...blasphemy, the unbeliever, righteousness, the person that takes you on the right path” (Mevlâna, 1991, Vol. IV: 133), while Franklin in *Poor Richard's Almanack* voices generalizations as, “the honest man takes pains, and then enjoys pleasures; the knave takes pleasure, and then suffers pains” (Franklin, 1914: 48). Both figures contribute to leading roles of proverbs as Manser remarks “[a] proverb is a saying, usually short that expresses a general truth about life. Proverbs give advice, make an observation, or present a teaching in a succinct and memorable way... We use proverbs or allude to them quite often in everyday speech” (2007: ix). Proverbs are commonly laconic phrases rather than long sentences or complicated explanations, which give direct and catchy messages. For Mieder (2005: 1), proverbs function “as one of the smallest ubiquitous folklore genres” although they are quite short, briefly summarize the event and give the message to the other correspondent, without leaving the need for a long explanation. Kerschen also touches on that aspect of proverbs by explaining them as, “Proverbs provide, then, an ease of communication. They are handed down as useful ‘saws’, tried and, people are told, true

expressions that can handle any situation. Such verbal tools have long been popular and continue to be so” (2012: 5).

Some people are beyond their time as important figures or characters. Since their position in their society is everlasting, space and time lose their significance for them. These figures, living in different periods on earth, can sometimes share the same information despite their differences and enlighten people with the sparkle of their thoughts. This work is the result of such an encounter. It focuses on the comparison of two masterpieces containing hundreds of proverbs about the period and society in which they lived. *The Masnavi* by Mawlana and *Poor Richard's Almanack* by Benjamin Franklin are crucial works that shed light on their people. Both authors primarily use proverbs to deploy their tenets.

The proverbs in *The Masnavi* are sometimes explained, sometimes supplemented with other examples, and sometimes detailed by quotations from religious sources such as the Quran and hadith. But on the other hand, Franklin sets a simpler style and glazes proverbs respectively. He does not go through too much explanation as “[t]he [basic] principle most often employed in Franklin's proverbs is balance: balance, through either parallelism or inversion, of word, phrase, or complete expression” (Meister, 1952: 158). While Franklin plays with words, adds new meanings, changes them, yet achieves harmony, Mawlana, on the other hand, concentrates on conveying the proverbial patterns through impressive stories.

In this research, a comparative study is conducted to examine how the concept of family is presented in the proverbs in *The Masnavi* and *Poor Richards Almanack*. The proverbs to be used in the study are related to familial affairs, which include the words like husband, wife, woman, man, mother, father, children, marriage, and love. While making the comparison, the connection of common proverbs in both societies will be examined. During this examination, the authors' negative thoughts and sayings on social issues are not included in the study because the focus will be on how positive values are reflected.

### **Mawlana and *The Masnavi***

In the thirteenth century, political and social turmoil along with spiritual one prevailed in Anatolia and the people deeply felt this political chaos. Misinterpretations of Islam among the people were common. Accordingly, the atmosphere of oppression and despair surrounded the Anatolian people. They were so poor, depressed, tired, and exhausted that they did not know how to cope with such toils. In the midst of such turmoil, they were in search of solution and Mawlana became their source of morale during those hard times. He was able to penetrate in the hearts of people of all races, religions, and understandings, and set the flag of love and friendship against the feelings of enmity that gushed from every side (Vakkasoğlu, 2005: 19).

Mawlana was born in 1207 in Balkh, which is located in what is today Afghanistan. Although his real name is Celaleddin Muhammed, he is called Mawlana, which means “our master”. He is also called Rumi because he spent most of his life in Anatolia<sup>1</sup>. Those who love him are called Mevlevi (Vakkasoğlu, 2005: 20). His father, Baha al-Din Walad, was also one of the leading professors and preachers of his time. He was a highly respected personality among the statesmen and the public. Due to his father's decision to emigrate from Balkh because of the clash of ideas among scholars, Mawlana visited many places, but he finally settled in Konya. Mawlana, who received his first religious education from his family, had the chance of studying with the leading figures of the period. In other words, Mawlana spiritually improved himself not only through his father's cultural and religious richness but also through the deep knowledge and profound experiences of the significant persons that he met.

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<sup>1</sup> Anatolia, also known as Asia Minor, is a large peninsula which was occupied by the Byzantine Empire. Then it was conquered by Muslims, but it was still known as the area of Rum. Therefore, the word Rumi literally meant Roman.

His most prominent work, *The Masnavi* is regarded as a pathfinder for virtuous and morally justified societies. Abdurrahman-ı Cami emphasizes Mawlana's importance as "his not being a prophet but having a book".<sup>2</sup> It was completed with the help of Husam al-Din Chalabi, who penned most part of it. Thus, Mawlana writes the first 18 couplets of *The Masnavi* and gives them to Husam al-Din Chalabi and says: "If you write from now on, I will speak if God permits" (Mevlâna, 2005: 15-18). After that day, they start writing *The Masnavi*. Mawlana speaks tirelessly day and night, on the road, in the garden, on the mountains, and Husam al-Din Chalabi persistently continues to write. This work, which is penned intermittently, results in 6 volumes. Mawlana has other valuable works; however, *The Masnavi* is the most appreciated and well known one. After Mawlana migrates from this world, the day of his death is called Seb-i Arus, which means the wedding day or the union of Rumi with God. Death, like all believers, is a rebirth for him and a meeting with the Everlasting Beloved. He is an enthusiastic man of God with his poetry, art, thoughts, and ideas. His greatest guide in the way of God is love (Mevlâna, 2005: 15-18).<sup>3</sup>

*The Masnavi*, one of the most important and most influential literary and mystical works of the Oriental literature, consists of 6 large volumes called notebooks. In the introduction of Volume I, the book makes its own description as follows: "This is the Book of the Mathnawî, which is the roots of the roots of the roots of the (Mohammedan) Religion in respect of (its) unveiling the mysteries of attainment (to the Truth) and of certainty; and which is the greatest science of God and the clearest (religious) way of God and the most manifest evidence of God" (Nicholson, 1925: 18). Since family has a vital role both in Islam and Turkish society, *The Masnavi* also deals with such issues related to family; the importance of virginity, downsides of infidelity, how to cope with lustful desires of human beings, and equality between spouses.

### **Benjamin Franklin and *Poor Richards' Almanack***

"Be neither silly, nor cunning, but wise."

Benjamin Franklin

As a leading writer, publisher and an inventor, Benjamin Franklin was among the key Founding Fathers of the U.S.A (Morris, 1973). Franklin was an ambidextrous man; he was an outstanding intellectual, an accomplished politician, a diligent printer, an accomplished physicist, and a perfect diplomat. Houston draws attention to his sophistication as "To Europeans he was a dazzling scientist and brilliant statesman, he 'snatched lightning from the sky and the scepter from tyrants.' To political opponents in Pennsylvania, he was a 'demagogue' with an 'almost insatiable ambition.' To fellow revolutionary John Adams, by contrast, he was a man who 'loves his ease' and 'hates to offend' " (2008: 1). Obviously, he had enough knowledge and experience as well as authority and tenacity to both affect and lead his community. His wise sayings noticeably display his way to success in distinctive fields: "Early to bed, early to rise makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise" (Franklin, 1890: 54). As mentioned in his *Autobiography*, he had a strict and proper daily routine which emphasized hard work, intensive reading, organization, harmony, satisfying the physical needs along with spiritual tranquility (Bradley, et al., 1974: 235). Therefore, what made Benjamin Franklin a versatile figure was that he changed his habits and developed new models of thought while working on his own. He, with his great effort, created thirteen virtues<sup>4</sup>, which are still as clear and logical as they were some two hundred years ago.

Franklin was born into a large family, in Boston, in 1706. The youngest son and fifteenth child of a Boston tallow chandler and soap boiler, Franklin received only two years of formal education before being apprenticed to his brother, a local printer (Houston, 2008: 1). Printing seemed to be in his

<sup>2</sup> <https://islamansiklopedisi.org.tr/mesnevi--mevlana>

<sup>3</sup> Translations were made by the authors.

<sup>4</sup> There are many similarities between Mawlana and Franklin, which are reflected in both their words and messages. For example, while Franklin wrote his thirteen virtues, Mawlana expressed his message with his seven virtues years ago. In other words, the similarities between these two authors do not exist only in *The Masnavi* and *Poor Richard's Almanack*, They have a lot in common in terms of dignity, fame and wisdom.

nature, as he loved reading and writing, so he was lucky enough to learn the job promptly, and became an expert printer. As Houston underlines, “Franklin’s homespun wit, practical intelligence, and commitment to thrift and industry have made him a cultural icon. To many men and women, he symbolizes the American Dream” (2008: 3).

Science was Franklin's great passion. Franklin believed that humans are naturally innocent, that all the mysteries that fascinate the religious mind can be explained to our benefit, and that properly undertaken education will change our lives and liberate us from the tyranny of the church and monarchy. Franklin suggests that one can change his/her past (Baym, et al., 1979: 212). According to Isaacson, with a sincere belief in leading a virtuous life, serving the country he loved, and hoping to achieve salvation through good works were the priorities of his morality. He associated private virtue with civic virtue, and he could muster about God’s will. In this way, earthly virtues were linked to heavenly ones as well. As he put it in the motto for the library he founded, “To pour forth benefits for the common good is divine” (Isaacson, 2003: 4).

*Poor Richard's Almanack* was firstly published in 1733. Franklin filled the interior of this work with aphorisms (Baym, et al., 1979: 212). Containing the wisdom of many ages and nations, these proverbs originated as a wise old man's speech to the people attending an auction. Bringing these somewhat disseminated advice to such a focus made them leave a bigger mark. In his other dignified work, *Autobiography*, Franklin is the protagonist of his plot and he explains why he started writing his *Almanack*: “In 1732 I first published my almanack, under the name of Richard Saunders; it was continued by me about twenty-five years and commonly called *Poor Richard's Almanack*. I endeavored to make it both entertaining and useful, and it accordingly came to be in such demand that I reaped considerable profit from it, vending annually near ten thousand” (Franklin, 1868: 235). He also considered “it as a proper vehicle for conveying instruction among the common people,” thus he “filled all the little spaces that occurred between the remarkable days in the calendar with proverbial sentences” (Franklin, 1868: 236).

*Almanack*, which is universally accepted, was copied in all newspapers in America of the time, re-printed on a large paper for stacking up in homes in England (Franklin, 1907: 93). Its significance lies not only in its enlightening aspect for the benefit of American society but also adorned and enchanting language: “Franklin was brilliant at adopting and adapting mottoes, phrases, and proverbs; *Poor Richard's Almanack* was, by his own admission, an exercise in creative recycling” (Houston, 2008: 85). When Franklin’s sophisticated character is considered, his unsatisfied sense of curiosity and his wish to improve his community are of his outstanding features which are also reflected in his proverbs analyzed in this study.

### **Proverbs related to family**

The importance of family for societies and for the construction and prolongation of societal values have been reflected through art and literature. The masterpieces of Franklin and Mawlana are representative examples of both linguistic and social legacy. Their efforts in their works arise primarily from their social sensitivity. As proverbs are distinctive linguistic elements in conserving cultural, historical, and social values, both authors choose the same way to consider their societies. Although they use proverbs related to other aspects of societies such as trade, shopping, business, or education, family issues are chosen to be discussed in this study since family is regarded as the backbone of all social groups. Through both works, we aim to present the importance attributed to the concept of family with proverbs preferred by the authors. We, hence, emphasize the perception and interpretation of “family” despite linguistic, cultural, social, historical, and even periodic differences.

Although Benjamin Franklin is a versatile person, his diplomat side stands out. Mawlana, on the other hand, takes his place in the scene of history as a religious figure. From this point of view, it can be said that the almanacks written by a diplomat have been read by a great many of people since his work is full of succinct words. These sayings are mostly short phrases with rhymes. Franklin tries to convey the moral messages he wants to give to the American people through almanacks. On the other

hand, Mawlana explains the ways to create a more virtuous society by bringing together the succinct words he uses to educate the society and supporting them with some short stories. The concept of family was as important in the 18th century as it was in the 13th century. Despite all the years that have passed, the proverbs they used have served to increase the value of the society even though they are different in tone and style.

Therefore, both Franklin and Mawlana deal with family and family relations, and they reflect their thoughts through their works. Franklin warns his society about marriage as: “Keep your eyes wide open before marriage, half shut afterwards” (1890, 84). This proverb shows the importance of forming a family and maintaining family relations by ignoring possible obstacles in family life. Similarly, Mevlana draws attention to the importance of family life in which he emphasizes “love” as a fundamental aspect of family in particular and society in general. His proverbs about love, the unique word that forms the life philosophy of human beings, are used not only to refer to the love between man and woman but also to the divine love. As Mawlana states: “Whoever does not have a tendency to love is like a bird without wings, woe to that person!” (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 3). “If Jack's in love, he's no judge of Jill's Beauty,” (1890: 185) says Franklin, which means “love is blind.”<sup>5</sup> The person who is in love cannot see the flaws of their lover. However, there is another point that should not be forgotten. The lover cannot hide their love; so, Franklin explains it this way: “Love, cough, and a smoke, can't well be hid” (1890: 73).

Unlike Franklin, Mawlana uses proverbs relevant to love commonly for divine love. Divine love, for him, has a certain definition: “Love is the astrolabe of God's secrets” (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 9). Or else “love for what is endowed with form is not necessarily for the outward form or the woman's face. Whether it is the love of this world or the love of yonder world, there is no form in the true loved one. If you are truly in love with the form, why do you leave your beloved when the spirit flees” (Mevlâna, 1991, Vol. II: 54). If the love in question is divine love, the image disappears in the eye of the beholder. Therefore, Mawlana continues as follows: “Oh man of common sense, why do you set your heart on adobe? Search for the source which shines perpetually” (Mevlâna, 1991, Vol. II: 54).

Although the description of love differs for both valuable writers, both are aware of the value of love and convey it to the readers. Mawlana has brought love to such a point that these sentences are the proof of what can be done with love: “The dead are resurrected because of love and the sultans become servants” (Mevlâna, 1991, Vol. II: 117). He enlarges upon this: “Of love feculent, turbid waters become pure, afflictions find healing from love” (Mevlâna, 1991, Vol. II: 117). According to Franklin, the way to love is again by love; thus, he says: “If you would be loved, love and be loveable.” (1890: 241), and “Love, and be loved” (1890: 251).<sup>6</sup> For Mawlana: “Love and mercy are human qualities; anger and lust ... are animal qualities” (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 195). Therefore, love becomes the primary condition that separates human beings from other living creatures.

Mawlana does not use the word “family” in proverbs in *The Masnavi*, but he lists succinct proverbs with and about men and women that form the core of the family. Mawlana describes women as one of the great indicators of the existence of the Creator. His saying attaches great value to women, as he utters: “Woman is the light of God, not only the beloved... [She is] as if a creator, not the created!” (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 195). The task undertaken by women, who Mawlana thinks were not created and thus are actually the Creators in one sense, was childbearing. It looks as if they have embraced some roles of the creator. Similarly, Franklin holds women in such high esteem that to him they are necessary for the essence of men. Explicitly speaking: “The proof of gold is fire, the proof of woman, gold; the proof of man, a woman.” (Franklin, 1890: 29).

House or home (“ev” in Turkish) also has vital importance for family life. Getting married opens the doors of a new and shared house. Franklin associates women with the house to draw

<sup>5</sup> For more information see: Speake, J. (2008). *The Oxford dictionary of proverbs*. Fifth Edition, Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

<sup>6</sup> With this Franklin is sharing the thought of Yunus Emre, a poet from the 13th century. It definitely takes an effort to learn how to love, yet we need to learn it because Yunus Emre says: "Let's love and be loved, no one is eternal in this world".

attention to the women's roles for family unity: "A house without woman and fire-light is like a body without soul or sprite." (Franklin, 1890: 26). While the physical presence of women is sufficient for family unity in Franklin, Mawlana draws attention to the spiritual equivalence between couples. According to Mawlana, it is essential to be equal in order to reveal love and share it in marriage, and to ensure unity and cohesion between spouses. In addition to Franklin, Mawlana points out the importance of equality between partners for a healthy family and a happy home: "In order for things to go right, spouses must have the same temperament. The married couple must match each other" (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 185). He also believes, "In matrimony the couples must be equal; otherwise, their relationships will fail, and their happiness will not last long" (Mevlâna, 1991, Vol. IV: 17). Although the equality mentioned by Mawlana seems to be in material terms, it mostly refers to spiritual equality. Mawlana also knows that men and women are not the same. To him, the mind represents the man, or the man represents the mind, and the desire or soul is feminine. Thus, he says: "Know that the man is mind (reason). The woman is the ego and nature. These two belong to the dark and are deniers; mind (reason) is the candle / light." (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 233).

Both Mawlana and Franklin express respect for parents. Mawlana describes respect for parents as a religious duty, and Franklin calls it honoring. Here lies the emphasis on placing the family on a more solid basis and conveying this respect and obedience to future generations. "Honour thy father and mother, i.e. Live so as to be an honor to them tho' they are dead" (Franklin, 1890: 93). *The Masnavi* says: "The child is his father's secret" (Mevlâna, 1991, Vol. VI: 129), and adds: "The mercy of the mother is from God, but serving her is both an obligation and a decent job" (Mevlâna, 1991, Vol. VI: 258). Mawlana and Franklin represent the praise and respect that should be offered to parents. Franklin bases his statement on the Bible, which says "... 'Honour your father' and your mother', and 'Whoever reviles father or mother must surely die' " (Matthew 15:4). Mawlana also bases his saying about serving parents on the Qur'anic expression, "Thy Lord hath decreed that ye worship none but Him, and that ye be kind to parents. Whether one or both of them attain old age in thy life, say not to them a word of contempt, nor repel them, but address them in terms of honor" (Al-Isra, 23).

While *The Masnavi* gives a more general message, that is, a warning to both men and women, to every society, *Almanack* conveys a slightly more personal or gender-specific message. Mawlana says: "If you have the ambition to eat and drink, quickly marry a woman" (Mevlâna, 1991, Vol. V: 115). Franklin gives the message to the family: "Marry your son when you will, but your daughter when you can" (1890: 43). Mawlana presents his proverbs in a general framework. The words he utters are not only to himself or to his family but to the universe and the message he wants to convey is to reach a more sublime and divine source. The object of desire is nothing but God. On the other hand, Franklin gives some more specific examples from his own life and family with such proverbs: "An undutiful Daughter, will prove an unmanageable Wife" (Franklin, 1890: 215), "A man without a wife, is but half a man" (Franklin, 1890: 241), "Where there's marriage without love, there will be love without marriage. (Franklin, 1890: 39), and "The way to be safe, is never to be secure. Dally not with other folks' women or money" (Franklin, 1890: 262). Some of these proverbs may indicate the problems of his own marriage.<sup>7</sup> Mawlana's message, however, is clear and direct. "Never leave anyone private with women. Because men and women are like cotton and fire" (Mevlâna, Vol: V, 2870). This situation causes lust to flare up, which is the beginning of a bad consequence. To Mawlana, "Lust has abused hundreds of thousands of good names" (V: 1370).

In the works of both writers, women as family members and women as a word are sometimes used in proverbs in a negative sense. In this way, the writers try to give their social and moral message. In this regard, Franklin depicts women by glorifying men "One good Husband is worth two good Wives; for the scarcer things are the more they're valued" (Franklin, 1890: 124). Furthermore, he states: "You cannot pluck roses without fear of thorns, nor enjoy a fair wife without danger of horns" (Franklin, 1890: 37). While Franklin is talking about the goodness of scarcity, he glorifies men and

<sup>7</sup> William Pencak tells us to inspect Franklin's marriage, see Pencak, 201.

emphasizes that it would be better if the number of men was fewer. He also says that what lies behind his use of the word *horn* is that labor is required for a relationship, just as labor is required for any job. Mawlana, on the other hand, explains this incomprehensible negativity as he does for every situation. For example, he says; “The nafs<sup>8</sup>, like a woman, is sometimes laid on the ground to find a solution for every task and shows humility; sometimes it wishes greatness and becomes exalted” (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 210). Mawlana explains why he uses the given proverb. To him, men and women are like mind and soul. They are absolutely necessary for the good person and for the bad person. These two are captives and prisoners in our homeland. These two are adventurous in combat day and night. Therefore, the woman constantly demands the needs of the house, and to her the honour of the house comes first. She also wants whatever the house needs, so she wishes bread, glory, and respect (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 210). Without the explanation of any proverb in *The Masnavi*, examining the sentence itself may lead to negative thoughts. However, the addition of his explanation actually shows that Mawlana makes the incomprehensible understandable. If the concise words that are said in the work remain without explanation, they are likely to be misunderstood. For example, if one hears the proverb, “Carelessness and imprudence is nothing but remorse” (Mevlâna, 1991, Vol. III: 119), it may be hard for anyone to understand what it is said, so to make it clearer, Mawlana adds an explanation, or tells a story right after the saying.

Mawlana exhibits such a situation in *The Masnavi* that in one story he vilifies the woman, in another story he glorifies her, and moreover, in the next story, he equates her position with that of man. He thinks “the soul has nothing to do with man, and woman. The soul has no fear of femininity” (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 157). “God created the woman so that man could find peace with her... Even if a person has great courage, he is the prisoner of his wife in the ruling. It seems that water is superior to fire, but when placed in a bowl the fire will boil it” (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 195). However, “you seem to conquer the woman like water, but you are defeated inwardly, [because] you want the woman” (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 195). Mawlana customarily uses the term “woman” in a metaphorical way, often in the negative sense as a metaphor for the hidden desire [nafs] of human beings, but sometimes in a positive sense, such as, “She [woman] is a ray of [the beauty of] God” (Mevlâna, 1990, Vol. I: 195). Franklin, on the other hand, made some repetitions during the nearly 25 years of almanack writing. He repeated the same proverb in another year, or he made a few additions or subtractions and used it again. Another way he followed is that he shared a proverb in one year and another proverb, which was an answer to the previous one, in another year. Below is an example of two proverb groups giving information about the cultural aspect of the period. While in 1733 he criticized the woman seriously, in 1734 he did the same for the man. Franklin, through Poor Richard, lists the signs of a useless female:

She that will eat her breakfast in her bed,  
And spend the morn in dressing of her head,  
And sit at dinner like a maiden bride,  
And talk of nothing all day but of pride;  
God in his mercy may do much to save her,  
But what a case is he in that shall have her (Franklin, 1890: 31-32).

In 1733, he gave the above message to the society through women. Otherwise, how would a man marry such a woman? In 1734, he gave a list of what men should and should not do. Otherwise, how would a woman marry such a man? In answer to the above verses of 1733, he used his Dutchess’ name, Mrs. Bridget Saunders and said:

He that for the sake of drink neglects his trade,

<sup>8</sup> The ego. For Mawlana the ego is feminine. Thus, most often he uses the term “woman” in the negative sense as a metaphor for the ego [nafs] of all human beings. The nafs is identified with the ego, and the ego is identifies with femininity; therefore, Mawlana uses the word woman to refer to the ego.



And spends each night in taverns till 't is late.  
And rises when the sun is four hours high,  
And ne'er regards his starving family,  
God in his mercy may do much to save him,  
But, woe to the poor wife, whose lot it is to have him (Franklin, 1890: 43).

As a proverbial stylist, Franklin often tries to give a mental picture of an ideal of social behaviors. He usually does this in one of the following ways: by refuting the opponent's argument, making up his own argument, explaining the reason in a cause-effect relationship, and reaching a moral conclusion (Meister, 1952: 161-162). Mawlana, meanwhile, follows a similar way with Franklin to give his social messages both based on religious and cultural background. He also narrates his advice to teach moral lessons and supports them with proverbs.

### Conclusion

Although there is a significant time difference, some five centuries, between these great figures, they depict universal virtues and morals through proverbs since human beings are always human by nature and their desires are almost the same. Undoubtedly, virtue is among the prior values in every society. Accordingly, it is evident that both authors deeply affected and guided their societies both during their lifetime and thereafter.

The prominent proverbs of the writers not only on societal issues in general but also on family life, in particular, are still compelling today as a pathfinder. The most important similarities between the authors considering proverbs are that they were of particular concern to different issues of social issues. Moral, religious, educational, and family concepts are significant matters that they treated in their proverbs. However, while Franklin leaves his proverbs without explanation, Mawlana clarifies his proverbs and even supports his narration with various stories. *The Masnavi* is mostly presented as a work full of stories; *Poor Richard's Almanack*, on the other hand, is written in a kind of diary style with only proverbs without any description.

Consequently, the efforts of Franklin and Mawlana throughout their lives have been appreciated by their people. Franklin is the best example of how people can be successful and virtuous in life. He both contributes to social and cultural richness of American society and, also, political scene of America. He was at the forefront as a more liberal figure whereas Mawlana was more religious. Considering the life and words of Mawlana, it can be said that he has been a significant model for his society, and his reputation has spread all over the world. The essence of his words and works are principally based on peace, love, unity, and solidarity. Paying attention to the proverbs about family of these important characters can be one of the ways to escape from a restless and unhappy life. In spite of their individual differences regarding their social roles in their societies, both authors focus on morality for better communities. They obviously reveal that only in this way one can become a successful person who can live in love, live in peace and achieve moral perfection. They devote themselves to improve inner worlds of individuals. For that purpose, they benefited from perpetual power and universal richness of proverbs.

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