

## PROVERBS- The Treasure Trove Of Wisdom

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### Abstract

Proverbs are the form of short and easily memorable phrases that absolutely delights the readers or the listeners. Needless to say, these proverbs are certainly the exchequer of the Indian nation. The essence of the witty statements can always be conveyed in a nutshell form. Most of the proverbs are anonymous and bardic in nature. The great ancestors have failed to script the most precious proverbs in their mother tongue. A proverb is used in a sentence to enrich the meaning and those can easily be conveyed to any age group as it withstands time. It does not belong to any period in particular. Though proverbs are ancient, it can be compared to the present scenario of life, as well. In spite of the fact that not all the cultures practice the use of the proverb, those who use find it as excellent tools for social influence. Proverbs reflect the language and culture of both upper-class people and the low-class society. Proverbs are the vehicle of thought to convey wisdom from one generation to another.

The paper aims to explore the proverbs in Dravidian languages like. Tamil, Malayalam, and Telugu. As proverbs are universal, each and every proverb can be compared and could be traced out with their socialistic and linguistic differences. The tracing of one's self and culture are possible through exploring proverbs. The language of the proverbs is used as a symbol which can be appealed to the intended audience.

**Keywords:** Gem of Wisdom, Repository of Information, Vehicle of Culture, Archives of Elders.

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Proverbs, the cultural tools of man are well known for its unique socialistic and linguistic properties. These ancient great sayings are from collective authorship. Being bardic in nature, those were told by our great ancestors to their family members and were transmitted orally from one generation to another. Our forefathers have failed to record such precious treasure in the script form. As a result of which, even the elderly people are uninformed about their cultural richness. These maxims can be divided under the section of the regional and linguistic pattern. The aphoristic statements are related to the cultural, climatic and traditional beliefs of the particular state. It is a must that each and every person should know about his/her traditional history. As for now, the majority of the people are not sure of their cultural heritage. The climate and the food habits of people exhibit the real nature of a particular land. However, proverbs play a vital role in revealing the real harmonious life of the ancestors. These are embedded in the life of the predecessors as they preached noble thoughts only through the words.

Some of the great sayings and the true statements have been documented through the communal talk of women. The tradition and culture of the nation can be traced in a capsule form of the proverbs. Philosophical preaching of the elders was done through proverbs. In spite of the warnings of Rabindranath Tagore, people did not realize the demonic effect of westernization. Hitherto, people have lost the essence of their language as some prefer to talk in a foreign language than in their mother tongue. Accordingly, there is a great possibility that we would lose the wise sayings in the future if ever we do not script these pearls of wisdom.

The word 'Proverb' is of Latin origin *Proverbium* which means "words put together" and that has been used right from the fourteenth century. Proverbs differ from place to place carrying culture and tradition according to the climate of the land. The self and the culture of a person can be traced with the help of proverbs. In terms of culture and tradition, the related ideas are cherished in the Proverbs of Dravidian languages like Tamil, Malayalam, and Telugu. Some of the proverbs are the same in all three languages and at times comparison of proverbs differ from place to place.

In Tamil, the proverb *aatral* talks about the strength of knowledge. In Malayalam, there is a similar proverb in which knowledge is considered more precious than wealth *Vidhya dhanam Sarva dhanal pradhanam*. The great ancestors have stressed the importance of world knowledge through maxims. According to some people, knowledge acquired through books is more valuable than any other knowledge. In the case of the predecessors, more importance was given for practical knowledge as it makes a person to be fit enough to face any hardship. The Tamil proverb *ettu surakka karikku uthavaathu* proverb reveals a great truth that a bottle guard as a picture in the book can never be used to make curry. In the same way, Malayalam maxim *ettile pasu pullu thinnilla* talks about the impossibility of the cow in the picture

everyone grass. Our elders have advised everyone to learn everything in and around the world. *kalavum kattru mara* is a famous maxim that preaches everyone that a person should possess complete knowledge from all the resources of the world. The same meaning was given in script form by Thiruvalluvar as *karka kasadara katravai katrapin, nirka atharkuth thaka*. He says that whatever is learned by a scholar has to be learned thoroughly and has to implement his knowledge in the day to day incidents.

A proverb expatriates the strength of a valiant person in such a way that even grass can be used as the great weapon by him. Tamil proverb *valavanukku pullum ayudhamin* Telugu reads *askashtapadi pani chesevaniki gaddi pullaina ayudham laga maruthundi*. According to the proverb, for a hard worker, even grass can be turned into a great tool to fight with his rivals.

The ancestors gave much importance for words and speech. They did not believe in delivering unkind words, but, practiced to use only polite words in their speech. As a result, they have coined many wise statements related to prominence of words like *aalum velum paluku urudhi, naalum irandum soluku urudhi*. In the above statement, they try to reveal the practice and culture of people in those times. Our predecessors used the twig of neem and Banyan to brush their teeth as they both are antibiotic and keep the teeth healthy forever. In the same way, a person's knowledge in *Thirukkural* (couplets) and *Naaladiyar* (quatrain) will be reflected in the words of a scholar as both the works comprised of worldly wisdom. Thiruvalluvar has written couplets regarding the usage of words in the following lines *theeyinal sutta pun ullarum aarathe, naavinal sutta vadu* and *iniya ulavaaga innatha kuural, kaniirupak kaikavaranth thattru*.

Through the above couplets, Thiruvalluvar tries to preach everyone that even the scar of a wound can be healed easily compared to the arrogant words spoken by a person. In fact, he also compares the ignorance of a person in using harsh words to polite words with a person who chose an unripened fruit to relish instead of picking the ripened fruit. The words uttered by the elders are more precious than any gem in the world. The maxim *pullu pona sollu pochu* talks about the youngsters' way of unheeding to the words of elders once they turn old. *moothor sollum muthu nellikaniyum munne kasakum pinne inikum* throws light on the comparison of nature of amla with the words of elders. At first, the taste of the ripened amla and the advice of the elders give the feeling of uneasiness. But in the end, a ripened amla and the words of the elders do only good for everyone. In Telugu, the wise statement *pedda vala Mata chadhiannam mootu* reveals the same truth that the elders are more precious than the well-ripened fruit. The same meaning can be seen in the statement of Malayalam *moothor chollum muthunellikkayum adhyam kaykum, pinne madhirikkum*. It conveys a great truth to everyone that the words of the elders have to be treated with respect.

The predecessors gave much prominence for the seasonal festivals which differ from one land to another. In Tamilnadu, seeds are sown in the month of July-August and are harvested in the month of January. To stress that ritual, our elders have coined *aadipattan thedi vithai*. In the month of January, many auspicious ceremonies take place and a great demand for the plantain leaves is very common. So they have coined *aadi vaazhai thedi nadu*, with the reason that if plantain is planted in July, it can be harvested in January for all functions. The month of December and January are known for cold weather *markaliyil Maram ellam nadungum, thai maasam thalai ellam nadungum*. The month of aadi is known for the strong fiercely wind *aadi kaatril ammiyum parakkum*. Even in the month of aadi, the farmers utilized the chance of strong wind to separate a paddy from the unwanted items *kaatrulla pothe thootrikol*. The month of January is known for harvest *thai piranthal vali pirakum* and as a result, almost all the farmers gain profit during this time. They celebrate this occasion of harvest as thanks giving ceremony in the name of *Pongal*. In Kerala, they celebrate *Onam* festival in order to thank and welcome their king Prajananth or Mahabali who comes once in a year. People wanted to welcome the king by arranging flowers as a *pookalam*, wearing a new dress and preparing delicious sweets. To make the king happy, people would sell their entire wealth to show their prosperity *kaanam vittum Onam unnanam*. They celebrate the function with absolute ease as a state festival without any religious animosity, but, in great harmony.

The great maxim enlightens people of the condition of farmer *asuzhluthavan kanaku paarthal uzhalaku kooda minjathu*. The farmer does the work of agriculture and when he tries to check his account of profit, even a small quantity may not remain in the hands of him. The former Prime Minister of India Lal Bahadur Shastri has made a proclamation in relation to the soldiers and the farmers of the nation as *Jai Jawaan, Jai Kissan*. A person should think before his action as a work done in haste will end up as waste. Tamil saying *aalam theriyamal kaalai vidathe* and Malayalam maxim *irukkunnathinu munpu kaal neetaruthu* reveal a great truth that before knowing something for sure, no one should take the further step. In Malayalam, they explain the same idea with a different comparison that a person should not try to stretch his legs before he is seated.

The level of the elders and the great people do not go down even though they are in a critical situation. Tamil maxim *aanai paduthalum kuthirai uyarathil irukkum* and *puli pasithalum pullai thinnathu* and similarly, in Malayalam, *aana melinjal thozhuthil kettumo?* queries everyone whether if anyone would tie the elephant in the cow shed if ever the elephant loses its weight. All these proverbs enunciate the great truth the whatever the position of the elders may be, they can never be defamed.

No one should value the petty things like the useless one as it will also be useful for everyone in some way or the other. In the case of *siru thurumbum pal kutha uthavum*, the statement

implies an idea that even the small trivial object will be useful for clearing the morsels in the tooth gap. In Malayalam, the statement denotes the same idea with the usage of different comparison *annankunjum thannalayathu*. In *Ramayanam*, in order to help Rama in building a bridge between Lanka and Bharatham, a squirrel contributed its help by carrying sand on his wet body. Health is wealth and many of the proverbs that have been coined are related to it. Health maxims in Tamil *noyatra valve kurai atra selvam, sutta ennaiai thodathe. varutha payirai vidathe, neer surukki, nei urukki, moor perukki unn* and *pathu milagu kaiyil irundhal pahaiavan veetulum unnam* convey noble thoughts about eating healthy foods to keep our body fit. In Malayalam, the proverbs talk about eating less quantity and to walk a small distance after dinner *athazham ahipazhatholam* and *Athazham undal arakatham nadakkanam*. The wise sayings are coined even for the way of eating food like *norungathinral nooru vayathu*. The same idea is repeated in Malayalam as *payyethinnal panayum thinnam* and *melathinnal mullum thinna* in which they explain that a palm tree and a thorn can also be digested if one eats slowly.

In this world, no one knows everything-- known is a drop, unknown is an ocean. The same idea differs in three languages with the use of different comparison. In Tamil *katrathu kaiyalavu, kallaathathu uzhlakalavu* compares known with the hand and unknown with the world. In Malayalam, *anandham ajnayatham* explains that unknown is in infinity. In Telugu, *thelisindi gorantha, theliyandi kondantha* exhibits the comparison of the nail with the known and a mountain/hill with the unknown.

A person has to be happy with whatever he possesses and has to be content with his position and should not run after the unimportant things. This message is conveyed through *marathil irukkum pazhakaai vidai kaiyil irukum kazhakaaiye mel* and *aale illa ooril izhupai poo cakkurai. guddi kanna mella melu* and *parigethi paalu tagadam kanna nilabadi neelu tagadam melu* Telugu maxim convey a moral that a person with squint eye is better than a blind person and drinking water is better than the spoiled milk. In Malayalam *mookilla, rajyathu murimookan rajavu* and *kurudan naattil konkannan rajavu* poses the same idea with a different comparison of noseless person and the blind person.

The foremost reason for selecting this topic is to unearth the lost precious witty statements which are in the dangerous situation of perishing. Hitherto, the maxims are not documented periodically. As a result, our country has come to a very dangerous situation of losing its authenticity. If the proverbs are not made into script form as soon as possible, then there is a chance of forgetting the total race. If only everyone could record the proverbs, we can save the race and the proverbs for the next few generations. The great stupor is that the country which is known for the culture and race is losing its richness day by day.

Proverbs can also be taught in schools as it is engrafted with ethical motive. In order to protect the wise sayings, these have to be preached in the classrooms. Only then it will spread from one person to another and gain prominence. Ancient stories were derived from the maxims in order to explain the statement. The creativity of the ancients grew through telling stories with noble ideas. The witty statements are not meant for speech but for oral preaching. The life of the predecessors can never be segregated from wise proverbs. The usage of maxims in their regular talk was inevitable. The noble statements are imperishable if ever immediate steps are taken to record the proverbs in their mother tongues. In the future, further research can be done on proverbs of other different languages. Even the folk songs, dirge songs, laments, nalangu pattu and regional celebration songs were transmitted orally and further study can be done on those songs. This paper is a journey through proverbs for the discovery of self and culture.

**Reference:**

- Self authored