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**Proverbs in Modern Tamil and Telugu Societies**

**A. Parimalagantham, Ph.D.**

# Proverbs in Modern Tamil and Telugu Societies

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## Introduction

Proverbs are usually short forms and contain social and individual wisdom of the society in which these are used and often followed. Proverbs have the unique distinction of being used both in written and spoken language. They may contain allusions, stories, advice, sarcasm, cynicism, history, and many other virtues, which authors have to struggle hard or sweat it out to achieve in their deliberate creations. The change of time may change some words and give some extended meaning to proverbs. But the proverbs are time-honored. Proverbs can be part of the didactic literature of any society or faith community.

## Aim of the Paper

The main aim of this paper is to show the place of proverb in this modern society. That means in this modern world how much importance the proverb has? How it is used? Is there any change in the form and content? Are there any new arrivals? There are many proverbs created on the basis of old ones. How are they used? This paper is going to check some of the above mentioned questions.

## Data

The data for this paper is collected from the weekly, monthly, daily Tamil and Telugu newspapers and magazines, novels, etc. The proverbs are extracted from the above mentioned sources with contexts.

## Method of Analysis

In sociolinguistics, to study the use of language in the society, society is divided into various domains like home, neighbors, friends, market, place of staying, etc. The variables are age, sex, caste, religion, occupation, social status, economic status, etc. Likewise to check the use of modern proverbs in the society, the society is divided as the mass media, the field of Computer, and politics as domains. The variables consider for this study is occupation. I collected the proverbs from the News Reporters who worked in the Newspapers, Cinema, also from story-writers and News Readers from Radio and T.V. and also from Computer Scientists. Then I analyzed the collected proverbs as how they are used by these people? Whether they used these as they are, or changed their form and meaning? Or changed only the form? Or changed only the meaning?

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## Results

The old proverb in Tamil ‘நாளொரு மேனி பொழுதொரு வண்ணமாக குழந்தை வளர்ந்தது’ which means “The child is growing healthy day by day” indicates various meanings in the modern society. The above mentioned people used the proverb with the extended meaning. The story-writers in Tamil use the proverb to indicate the story development in writing as ‘naaLoru kadhaiyum pozhutoru kavitaiyumaaka ciRRidazhukku ezhudi vandeem’ (நாளொரு கதையும் பொழுதொரு கவிதையுமாக சிற்றிதழுக்கு எழுதி வந்தேன்) means “the writer writes per day a story and a poetry.”

The Cinema Reporter is using the same proverb to indicate the development of the cinema actress Malavika’s cinema life as maLavika cinema vazhkai naaLooru vaayppum pozhutoru tirilumaakap pooyik koNTirukkiratu (மாளவிகா சினிமா வாழ்க்கை நாளொரு வாய்ப்பும் பொழுதொரு திரிலுமாகப் போய்க் கொண்டிருக்கிறது) means ‘the cinema life of Malvika is going with chance and thrill day by day’. One poet wants to indicate the development of love by using the same proverb as ‘naaLooru meeni pozhutoru vaNNam I love you. (நாளொரு மேனி பொழுதொரு வண்ணம் I love you) ‘I love you day by day so much’. “NaaLooru meeni pozhutoru vaNNam oruvar manatile oruvarati” (நாளொரு மேனி பொழுதொரு வண்ணம் ஒருவர் மனதிலே ஒருவரடி) “Our thinking about each other is growing in our heart day by day’

In the same way the old proverb (Here after OP) in Telugu “nii batuku muuDuvuvulu aaru kaayaluga vardhillaali” (నీ బతుకు మూడు పువ్వులు ఆరు కాయలుగా వర్ధిల్లాలి). The meaning for the proverb is that the newly married couple should lead their life happily with wealth and children. The Modern proverb (Here after MP) created on the basis of this shows various meanings like inauspicious, injustice, crucial situations. For example, a story writer in his story used this proverb as ‘nii jiivitam muuDuromansulu aaru sviiT nightulugaa vardhillaali’ (నీ జీవితం మూడు పువ్వులు ఆరు స్వీటు నైటులుగా వర్ధిల్లాలి). That means “you enjoy your life as you like”. Actually it is not a blessing in a good sense. The story writer is teasing sarcastically the younger generation’s free ways of life.

The same proverb is used as it is to indicate the growth of selling a “drugs and drinks” business in the Hyderabad city. ‘guDumba viyapaaram kramamgaa nagaramanta

muuD u puvvulu aaru kaayalugaa vardhillutundi'(నగరమంతా గుడుంబ వ్యాపారం మూడు పువ్వులు ఆరు కాయలుగా వర్ధిల్లుతోంది), “The business of gudumba increases gradually throughout the city”. ‘nalla bellam amakaalu muuD u puvvulu aaru kaayalugaa virajallutundi'(నల్ల బెల్లం అమ్మకం మూడు పువ్వులు ఆరు కాయలుగా విరజల్లుతుంది), “The business of selling nalla bellam (a kind of drug) has increased in the city”.

Another newspaper reporter has used this proverb to pinpoint the critical twisting of the murder case related to a popular cinema hero by changing the words in the following way. ‘muuD u malupulu aaru twistulugaa baalayya kaalpula kadha maarindi'(మూడు మలుపులు ఆరు ట్విస్టులుగా బాలయ్య కాల్పుల కథ మారింది), “Balayya’s murder case became very much critical”.

Another story writer to describe the development of phyakshanism in the Rayalaseema area used the proverb according to the situation. The proverb is ‘muuD u baambulu aaru katyalugaa pheyakhsanism veeLLunukundi’ (మూడు బాంబులు ఆరు హత్యలుగా ఫ్యాక్షనిసం వేళ్ళునుకుంది), “The pheyakhsanism developed in Rayalaseema very much”.

One of the newsreaders used the same proverb to indicate the injustice in politics as ‘aviniidi muuD u puvvulu aaru kayalugaa velicindi'(అవినీతి మూడు పువ్వులు ఆరు కాయలుగా వెలిసింది), “The injustice in politics increased a lot”.

The computer scientist used this proverb to indicate his degree of involvement with the computer in the following way. ‘naa jiivitam muuD u flappiilu aaru vairasululaa unTundi'(నా జీవితం మూడు పిలాపీలు ఆరు వైరసులులా ఉంటుంది), “My life is immersed deeply in the computer”.

The above uses of proverbs show that the variety of form and meaning of the old proverb is changed to suit varying demands. The proverb once used for blessing the couple is now used in various meanings. These meanings are used not only in a good sense but also in bad sense. This way of using the old proverb in new senses increases the value of proverb in the society and somehow helps retain the form.

In another story, one female character wants to show the mental condition of her after listening the varieties of cooking her husband needs as kaNNaik kaTTi camaikaTTil viTTatu poola (கண்ணைக் கட்டி சமையல் கட்டில் விட்டது போல) on the

basis of the OP kaNNaik kaTTi kaaTTil viTTatu poola (கண்ணைக் கட்டி காட்டில் விட்டது போல) which means “left in the jungle, blindfolded”.

Another proverb kuTTi poTTa puunai poola means the cat which gave birth to the puppies won't keep quiet. It will always change the place by carrying them with her mouth. These proverbs generally are used to indicate a person who is in restless mood. But a storywriter used this proverb to show restlessness of a dog named 'Tarky' with his master 'Vengi' as; Tarki kuTTi pooTTa puunaiyaaka naDamaaDik koNDiruntatu vengiyuDan' “Tarki roamed with her master Vengi restlessly”. (டர்க்கி குட்டிபோட்ட பூனையாக நடமாடிக் கொண்டிருந்தது வெங்கியுடன்).

The development in Science and Technology changed the society upside down. Electricity became part and parcel of the human life. Without electricity we cannot imagine the modern society. But the electricity cut or outage creates many problems like leaving the work in the middle or doing the same work again and again. This happens in the computer field more often. Now, because of the advanced invention in the computer field, there is a possibility of storing the information even when there is an outage of power. But in the beginning saving the typed matter was very difficult when power supply was stopped suddenly in the middle of the work. It gave much irritation to the computer scientists. Due to that discouragement they created many proverbs related to computer use on the basis of OPs. 'karanT unnappuDe kamputer cakka peTTukovaali' (కరంటు ఉన్నప్పుడే కంప్యూటర్ చక్క పెట్టుకోవాలి) “when there is a current one should save the data” on the basis of the old proverb 'diipam unnappuDe illu cakka peTTukoovaali' (దీపం ఉన్నప్పుడే ఇల్లు చక్క పెట్టుకోవాలి), means “when there is an opportunity it is better to learn whatever we have to learn”

Some other proverbs related to computer are the following:

Vairus disku miida paDDa disku vairus miida paDDa nasTam Diskuke (వైరస్ డిస్కు మీద పడ్డా డిస్కు వైరస్ మీద పడ్డా నష్టం డిస్కుకే) “if the disc falls on the virus or the virus falls on the disc the loss is only to disc” The OP is aaku mullu miida paDDa mullu aaku miida paDDaa nasTam aakuku'(ఆకు ముల్లు మీద పడ్డా ముల్లు ఆకు మీద పడ్డా నష్టం ఆకుకే), “if the leaf falls on the thorn or thorn falls on the leaf, the loss is only for leaf”

MP: disku Disku raasukunTe DaTa raalintaTa  
డిక్కు డిక్కు రాసుకుంటే డాట రాలిందట)

“If one disc is rubbed against another disc, the data will fall.”

OP: joogi joogi raaukunTee buuDita raalindaTa  
జోగి జోగి రాసుకుంటే బూడిత రాలిందట)

“If the saint and saint rubbed each other then the ashes will fall.”

MP: taa ceDDa vairus kamputarella ceerucu  
తా చెడ్డ వైరసు కంప్యూటర్లెల్లా చెరుచు

“The spoilt virus spoiled the whole computer.”

OP: taa ceDDa kooti vanamanta cerucu  
తా చెడ్డ కోతి వనమంతా చెరుచు

“The spoilt monkey spoiled the whole garden.”

In society, T.V. occupies a special place. Especially the new arrivals of cable connections have special status in the society. People spend much time for watching TV as these offer many programs. Due to this, housewives neglect their house work. To point out the negligence many proverbs are created in a sarcastic manner. The following are some of them:

MP: atta tiTTinantuku kaadu t.v. channel maarcinantuku eedicintaTa  
(అత్త తిట్టినందుకు కాదు టీ.వి ఛానల్ మార్చినందుకు ఏడిచిందట)

“She cried not because her mother-in-law scolded her but for changing the T.V. channel”

OP: MoguDu koTTinanduku kaadu tooTi kooDalu navvinanduku eeDicinanta  
మొగుడు కొట్టినందుకు కాదు తోటి కోడలు నవ్వినందుకు ఏడిచిందట

“She cried not because her husband beats her but because her sister-in-law laughs”

MP: paapa pakkinTivaaDitoo leeci pooyindandi ante paapular siiriyal  
cuuDanivee annaaDaTTa

పాప పక్కంటి వాడి తో లోచి పోయిందండి అంటే పాపులర్ సీరియల్ చూడనీవే  
అన్నాడట్ట.

“The wife told “our daughter eloped with the neighbor house boy” but the husband replied that please allow me to see the popular serial.”

OP: illu kaali pootunTe cuTTa velikincukoni  
ఇల్లు కాలి పోతుంటే చుట్ట వెలికించుకోని

“Let the house burn, but let me light the cigarette.”

MP: moguDiki T.V. piccekkutee peLLam pakkinTivaaDitoo leeci pooyindata  
మొగుడుకి టీ.వి. పిచ్చేక్కితే పెళ్ళాం పక్కింటి వాడితో లేచి పోయింతట

“Because the husband is mad after T.V. the wife eloped with her neighbor.”

OP: moguD mettani vaaDaitee uurandajiki odina aiyindi  
మొగుడు మెత్తని వాడైతే ఊరందరికి ఒదిన అయింది

“If the husband is not a skilful person then his wife will be sister-in-law to the village.”

MP: moguD castee eeDavanamma T.V. siiriyal cuusi eeDiccindaTa/  
మొగుడు చస్తే ఏడవనమ్మ టీ.వి. సీరియల్ చూసి ఏడిచిందట.

“The lady who did not cry on her husband’s death cried seeing the serial.”

The above examples of proverbs show how T.V. consumes the time of our lives and the consequences of such excessive interest in TV watching.

In the same way, cinema, the delusive world, also has much influence on the society. The following proverbs are the best examples for its influence on the society.

MP: Niiyavva niyamma ani tiditee cinimaa Dayalaakulaa ani aDigindaTa  
నీయమ్మ నీయవ్వు అని తిడితే సినిమా డయలాకులా అని అడిగిందట.

“If one scolds in a bad manner the person who listen to it asks, is it a cinema dialogue”

MP: Shaarukhaanni cusina kaLLatoo moguNNi cuustee mottabuddeestundaTa  
షారుఖాన్ని చూసిన కళ్ళతో మొగుడ్ని చూస్తే మొత్త బుద్దేస్తుందట.

“The wife who saw Sharukhan does not like to see her husband.”

OP: raajunu cusina kaLLatoo moguNNi cuustee motta buddeestundaTa  
రాజును చూసిన కళ్ళతో మొగుడ్ని చూస్తే మొత్త బుద్దేస్తుందట

“After seeing the king, the wife feels like beating her husband”

MP: meDiteeshan gurinci moguDaalosistee meDa vanci cinimakelaa  
tiisukkeLLaalani peLLam aalocincindaTa.

మెడిటేషన్ గురించి మొగుడాలో చిస్తే మెడ వంచి సినిమాకెలా తీసుకెళ్ళాలని పెళ్ళాం

అలోచించిందట.

“While the husband is thinking of meditation, the wife is thinking of cinema and how to take him to that”

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MP: Pellaam pootee eeDavani vaaDu abhimaa hiiroo cinimaa flap aiyinandukg eeDiccaaDaTa.

పెళ్ళాం పోతే ఏడవని వాడు అభిమాన హీరో సినిమా ఫ్లాప్ అయినందుకు ఏడ్చాడట.

“The husband who does not care about his wife’s death laments for his hero’s film flop.”

Last but not the least, the powerful and profitable field of politics also does not escape from the attack of proverb. To get power and profit, many are join politics. This is considered as the place for injustice. To point out this there are many proverbs. Following are some of these proverbs on politics.

MP: Rooju aDukunee vaaDiki paccaDannam aitee aideeLLakkosari aDukkune vaaDiki ashTaaivaryaalu

రోజు అడుకునే వాడికి పచ్చడన్నం అయిదేళ్ళకోక సారి అడుక్కునే వాడికే అష్ట ఐశ్వర్యాలు.

“The person who is begging daily will get only dal and rice but the politician who begs once in a five years will get wealth.”

OP: vanDukunna aameku oka kuuraitee aDuguku tinee vaariki aneeka kuuralu

వంటుకున్న ఆమెకు ఒక కూరైతే అడుగుకు తినే వారికి అనేక కూరలు

“The person who is cooking has one curry, but the person who is begging has many curries.”

MP: aadaayam leeni padavi unnaa leeka pooyinaa okaTee.

ఆదాయం లేని పదవి ఉన్నా లేక పోయినా ఒకటి.

“The unprofitable power has no value.”

OP: suupuleeni kaLLu unnaa okaTe pooyinaa okaTe

చూపు లేని కళ్ళు ఉన్నా ఒకటి పోయినా ఒకటి

“There is no difference if the eyes which do not have vision are there or not.”

MP: raajakiiya naayakulu mundu puTTi kumbhakooNaalu tarvaata puTTindaTa

రాజకీయ నాయకుడు ముందు పుట్టి కుంభకోణాలు తర్వాత పుట్టింతుట

“The politicians are born earlier than the notion of justice was born.”



OP: aaDavaaLLu mundu puTTi iirsya venka puTTindaTa

ఆడ వాళ్ళు ముందు పుట్టి ఈర్ష్య వెనక పుట్టిందట

“The ladies are born earlier than the notion of jealousy was born.”

## Conclusion

In this way, the proverbs, which are the part of folklore, gain glamour and act as super stars in the Tamil and Telugu society screens. That proverbs have taken re-birth in so many novel ways is, indeed, a tribute to the creative aspect of language use. Whatever modernity the society got due to various developments like modernization, industrialization and globalization, the importance of “good old” proverbs will only increase. They have their own importance yesterday, today, and tomorrow and this is naked truth.

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