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Proverbs in Tamil and Telugu

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Introduction

Proverb is short, crisp and pithy. It is frequently used in all cultures to express their wisdom, practical guidance, and as basic truth plainly told. It is condensed and is easily remembered. Proverbs do not exercise any legal authority but is often accepted as something that we all need to understand and follow. Authorship of proverbs is hard to trace and hard to prove. Its domain is human nature and all human activity in terms of our relation to people, objects, events, creation and natural and spiritual realms, etc.

Proverbs may be considered miniature poems in their structure and in their use of features such as alliteration, rhyme and assonance, rhythmic phrasing, balanced opposition and parallelism. These are comparable but not identical to aphorisms and metaphor, etc. There is a proverb in Kannada that equates the Proverbs with Vedas.

- i) Proverbs are small scriptures
- ii) Proverbs are the storehouse of experience
- iii) Proverbs are the storehouse of wisdom
- iv) Proverbs is an ornament of language
- v) Proverbs may serve as impersonal vehicles for personal communication

An Ugly Face of Proverbs

The above description of the form and function of proverbs does not really reveal some of the ugly facets of the use of proverbs in Indian languages. Some castes, women, professions, processes, etc. are shown in bad light. Use of such proverbs should be discontinued. Only for the sake of description I'm forced to use these ugly proverbs in one or two places in this paper.

Aim of the article

The present article deals with the linguistic features of Tamil and Telugu proverbs in comparative mood. There are so many linguistic features found in proverbs. Some of these are as follows:

1. Allusion,
2. Alliteration,
3. Parallelism,
4. Rhyme,

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5. Hyperbole,
6. Paradox,
7. Metaphor,
8. Simile,
9. Rhythmic phrasing,
10. Personification and
11. Balanced opposition and parallelism.

Tamil and Telugu belong to the same language family, that is, the Dravidian family. The proverbs found in these languages have both similarities and dissimilarities.

1. Allusion: Allusion means the "reference"

Example from Tamil for Allusion

puthusukku vaNNaan kaDusukku veLuttaan
“At first the Dhobi washes the clothes very neatly and sincerely.”

In the above example the proverb describes the nature of one particular caste “Dhobi” and it becomes the reference.

Example from Telugu for Allusion

Mundu occina cevvlukkanna venakka occina kommu meelu
“The late coming horns are better than the first coming ears”

In the above Telugu allusion example the parts of the body are compared and concluded which one is better and the comparison becomes the reference.

2. Alliteration: Alliteration means the first letter is same in all the occurrences.

Example from Tamil for alliteration

Cettaal teriyum ceTTi vaaZhvu
“One can come to know the character of Vaishyaa after his death”

In the above example the first letter 'ca' is repeatedly coming in the proverb and it explicit the character of one particular caste.

Example from Telugu for alliteration

atta sommu alludi daanam
“The mother - in law's property was given by the daughter - in law as alms

(dhaanam)."

In the above example, the first letter 'a' of the proverb is one and the same and it conveys the reality of the world.

3. **Parallelism:** Parallelism means some communicational information is conveyed by using the proverbs.

Example from Tamil for Parallelism

Aataayam illaamal ceTTi aattak kaTTi uuttu eRaikka maaTTaan
“The Cetty Caste people don’t do anything without any profit.”

Example from Telugu for Parallelism

Laabham leenidee ceTTi varadakku pooDu
“The Cetty caste people don’t go to any work/anything without profits”

Both in Tamil and Telugu the meanings conveyed by the proverbs are the same but the words used by them are different. In Tamil the word aaRu “River” is used and in Telugu the word Varada means “Flood” is used.

4. **Rhythm:** Rhythm means the words are occurring in rhythmic way.

Example from Tamil for Rhythm

Arasan evvazhi kuDikaL avvazhi
“The people follow the way of (the model set by) the king.”

Example from Telugu for Rhythm

Yadaa raajuu tadaa prajaa
“The people are following the king’s way.”

5. **Hyperbole:** Hyperbole means the exaggerated statement not meant to be taken literally.

Example from Tamil for hyperbole.

Kataikku kaal uNTaa? Unka appanukku vaal uNTa?
Does the story have the leg? And your father has tail?

Example from Telugu for hyperbole

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Katai kancikku manamu inTikku
The story will go to kanchi? And we will go to house?

The above examples of hyperbole give exaggerated meaning but they were not meant to be taken literally. In Tamil, the phrase kataikku kaal uNTa? Unkappanukku vaal uNTaa? is used but in Telugu katai kancikku and manam intikkuis are used.

6. **Paradox:** Paradox means seemingly absurd or contradictory statement or a person or thing having contradictory qualities.

Example from Tamil for paradox

Puyalukkup pin amaiti “There is a peace after a strong storm.”

Example from Telugu for paradox.

Dufaan occee mundu nisabdam “There is peace before a strong storm.”

In the above examples, the prepositions used in Tamil and Telugu are opposite to one another. That is, in Tamil the preposition ‘pin’ “after” is used and in Telugu the preposition ‘mundu’ “before” is used.

7. **Simile:** Simile means the comparison with the comparative marker ‘poola’ “Like” in Tamil and ‘aTTu’ “Like” in Telugu.

Example from Tamil for Simile.

Cuuriyanaip paarttu nay kuraittatu poola
“By seeing the sun the dog barks”

Example from Telugu for Simile.

kondamu cuusi kukka moriginaTTu
“By seeing the mountain the dog barks”

In the above examples, the Tamil language uses the habitual noun ‘Cuuriyan’ and the Telugu language uses the static noun ‘Mountain.’

8. **Metaphor:** Metaphor is an application of a name or descriptive term or phrase to an object or action to which it is not literally applicable.

Example from Tamil for Metaphor

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viiTTilee puli veLiyilee puunai
"In the house he is a tiger and in the outside he is a cat"

Example from Telugu for Metaphor.

inTiloo puli veediloo pilli
"In the house he is a tiger and in the outside he is a cat."

In the above example of Tamil, the whole space ("Broad space") is referred, but in the Telugu example, one particular space, that is, the street is referred.

9. Rhythmic phrasing: Rhythmic phrasing means one complete phrase is repeated in one particular proverb.

Example From Tamil

YaanaI varum pinnee maNi oosai varum munne
"The Elephant comes behind but the bell sound comes before."

Example From Telugu

chaduveevaaDik kannaa caakkari vaadi minna
"The dhobi is better than the educated person"

10. Personification: Personification means the non-human things are represented as human.

Example from Tamil for personification

aDi utavuvatu poola aNNan tambi utava maaTTaan
"Beating is more powerful than the brothers' help."

Example from Telugu for personification

Debbē veesina meelu aNNa tammuLu ceestaraa?
Are the brothers given the things which the beating gives?

The same concept is given by another proverb.

debbē Guru "The best teacher is the beating."

The above examples of proverbs for personification both in Tamil and Telugu convey the same meaning with almost same words and the beating is represented as human. In Tamil

the said message is a confirmed declaration but in Telugu the said matter is in the form of a rhetorical question.

11. Balanced opposition and parallelism: In this construction both opposition and parallelism are used simultaneously.

Example from Tamil

paTikkiRatu raamaayaNam iTikkiRatu raamar koil
“Reading Ramayana but destroying Ram’s temple”

Example from Telugu

Ceppeedhi sriranga niithulu dureedhi dommarak kuDiseelu
“Taking/following the morals of Sri Ranga but destroying the poor people’s huts.”

In the above Tamil example, the Ramayana and the Ram’s temple are correlated. But in the Telugu example the morals of Rama and the huts of the poor people are correlated.

Conclusion

1. Both Tamil and Telugu (members of the same family of languages) convey similar concepts but the words used are different.
2. In one language the top most objects are used and in another language the least objects are used. For example, Balanced opposition and parallelism.
3. In one language the conveyed message is affirmed but in another language it is in question format.
4. In one language the broad space is taken into consideration but in another language the narrow space is taken into consideration.
5. There are differences in the choice and use of nouns, verbs, etc. for similar sounding and meaning proverbs across languages.
6. Opposite prepositions are used to convey the same concept of proverbs.
7. Same concept is conveyed through the name of a particular caste in one language and in another language it is conveyed by using the real things of the world.

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A. Boologa Rambai, Ph.D.
Department of Tamil Language & Translation Studies
Dravidian University
Kuppam – 517 425
Andhra Pradesh, India
arpudharambai@gmail.com