

Sāmetalu

(Telugu Proverbs)



C P Brown Academy
The Alpha Foundation
Hyderabad, India

SĀMETALU

(With transliteration and English translation)

Translator

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Sāmetalū (Proverbs in Telugu)

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Preface

Proverbs are perhaps as old as human civilization. As man started living in groups, new relationships came into vogue – both with people and places and the nature around them. This ‘togetherness’ of living might have provided a rich platform for the wise to observe the evolving group behaviour keenly and hypothesize on how and how not to conduct oneself for a better living.

Every society and every language have proverbs. They are not the exalted words written by literary savants. They are mere utterances of the common man. They are the very ideas, views, and conceptions of evolving man. They are the manifestations arising from everyday life. They are, perhaps, a reflection of the “common consciousness” of mankind expressed in ordinary language. But their greatness lies in their pithiness. At the same time, they are statements of profound wisdom.

They constitute oral literature of every society. Yet, owing to their enlivening and refreshing nature, they survived for generations. Quite often, the underlying meaning of the proverbs in different languages appears similar. But their expression acquires a native tang, for they have evolved out of one’s own living experience amidst a particular society and its dynamics. They are mostly influenced by local experiences. They, thus, acquire an aura of ‘nativism’. And so, they sound dearer to its clan. They mean so much to the society from which they emerged. But it is this native thwack that at times makes it difficult for outsiders to appreciate them.

For instance, the underlying profundity of the saying—*Mrugaśira kārtelō musileddu kūdā rankēstundi*—can be well appreciated only by those who know what *Mrugaśira kārte* stands for, the energy status of a *musileddu* – old ox, and what its *ranke*—bellowing—denotes. As *Mrugaśira kārte* succeeds *Rōhiṇi Kārte* that is known for its scorching temperatures and baking heat wave, it brings in its wake cool pre-monsoon winds and showers. These cool showers obviously rejuvenate even the old bull that suffered the worst during the preceding *kārte*. And as the shower so softly touches the old ox, it also bellows in ecstasy. This whole truth has been decocted into that pithy statement. Thus, proverbs are to be understood, not in isolation, but only in conjunction with the prosaic activities of mankind against the backdrop of changing nature and its products.

The Brown Academy of Alpha Foundation has taken up the task of transliterating the proverbs into Roman script and present them in a book form with a commentary in English, for the benefit of those who cannot read Telugu script. We shall feel satisfied if it serves its intended purpose. Feedback is solicited.

GRK Murty

Transliteration Scheme of Telugu Alphabet

Vowels (అచ్చులు: Acculu)

అ	ఆ	ఇ	ఈ	ఉ	ఊ
a	ā	i	ī	u	ū
ఋ	ౠ	ఌ	ౡ	ఎ	ఏ
ṛu	ṛū	.lu	.lū	e	ē
ఐ	ఒ	ఓ	ఔ	అం	అః
ai	o	ō	au	aṁ	aḥ

Consonants (హల్లులు: Hallulu)

క	ఖ	గ	ఘ	ఙ
k	kh	g	gh	ṅ
చ	ఛ	జ	ఝ -	ఞ
c	ch	j	jh	ñ
ట	ఠ	డ	ఢ	ణ
ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ
త	థ	ద	ధ	న
t	th	d	dh	n
ప	ఫ	బ	భ	మ
p	ph	b	bh	m
య	ర	ల	ళ	వ
y	r	l	ḷ	v
శ	ష	స	హ	క్ష
ś	ṣ	s	h	ksh
				ౠ

Introduction

Adages, aphorisms, maxims and proverbs are short pithy catchy utterances. Alexander Pope's poetic witticisms, La Rochefoucauld's Maxims are different kinds of sayings. But they are all stylistically crisp and eminently thought provoking.

Proverbs are unique in that they open windows on the culture of a speech community. Regional variations apart, they are understood and appreciated in the larger language community. The sayings are witty, telling and appropriate to the context in conversation or an informal written discourse. These are products of observation and analysis with incisive insights into human nature. And then they are unique to the culture from which they come.

Defining a proverb is as difficult as defining poetry. It is simply not possible to include all the different qualities of these expressive devices in a short definition. We must finally say that a proverb is what a proverb does. When in an expansive mood we can say that proverbs are perceptions as varied as men (or, women for that matter) and nothing is unsuitable to form the basis of a proverb. These are products of a language region and everything that is seen or heard could provide an occasion for the making of a telling, apposite proverb. Broadly, we may describe proverb as the quintessence of the collective experience and inherited value system and social ethos. Telugu language region abounds in villages, hamlets and 'satellite villages' in the present day scenario. They represent a stance of the 'sayer' of the utterance. These utterances draw liberally from the environment—social, occupational, religious and ethical—and carry on the age-old wisdom to countless future generations. A quick example is this: *tāṭicēṭṭu nīḍa*, which is both an idiom and a proverb too. The shade of the tall palm tree is useful neither to itself nor to the wayfarer in the hot sun. This is sometimes useful while speaking of a singularly unhelpful person. The palm has given occasion to other utterances too. *Tāṭi cēṭṭu kindā pālutaḡinā.....* Even if one drinks milk under the palm tree one is thought to be drinking only palm ale, an intoxicant. And drinking intoxicants was not 'respectable' at all. And then there is this: *tāṭicēṭṭu ekkēvāḍiki entavaraku egadōyaḍam?* How far can one push a man trying to climb the palm tree?

There are people who have a way of exaggerating things, or making habitual overstatement (considered an Indian habit opposed to the British understatement).

One comes up with the utterance *gōlconḍa miriyālu tāṭi kāyalantēsi*. The person alluded to says that pepper seeds in Gōlconḍa (name of a place, near Hyderabad, the seat of Qutub Ṣāhi kings) are as big as palm nuts.

Many proverbs bring in animals to provide humor and sometimes a sly sting. *Andāniki nēnu; rāgāniki mā appa* This is supposed to be uttered by a camel: me for beauty and for voice and song my elder sister: the donkey. The camel is not the acme of beauty nor the donkey the doyen of music.

Unfortunately the use of proverbs in common conversation is a habit fast disappearing in the present day urban people. It is heartening that among the rural folk the habit prevails.

Certain very common names of vegetables are brought into proverbs. Here is an illustration: *kandaku lēni durada baccaliki*. Why should the leafy vegetable *baccali* (spinach) feel the itchiness that the Elephant's Foot (*kanda*) does not have. This is used when the targeted one keeps silent and someone else takes offence for something said or done. *Vistarāku* is a 'leaf' plate in which people have their meal. There are some proverbs making use of the word: *Vistarāku morri samsāram morri tīrca lēmu*. It is impossible to fill the gaps in the leaf plate and the household. While stitching the leaves together, gaps persist in the leaf plate. There is always shortage of something in the common man's household. There is another *vīramma peṭṭuki vistarāku ēla?* Why a leaf plate for what Vīramma (a woman not very generous) gives (in charity, perhaps). There are some proverbs where the word *kunḍa* (clay pot) is used. An ordinary clay-baked pot is used as a symbol of the human body. It is used occasionally in spiritual discourses.

Familiarity with the language to the extent of the three R's would not be enough to appreciate the use of a proverb or use it in an appropriate context. It needs a deep understanding of the culture. Some proverbs have similar ones in other languages. For example, the idiom/proverb *pogalōninci sega lōki* – from smoke into (the heat of) fire is similar to the expression in English - 'from the frying pan into the fire.'

Proverbs are products native to a given language. Some are spicy and enrich the persuasiveness or effectiveness of the speaker. Some have universal appeal as in: *aḍḍalālō biḍḍalu kāni geḍḍaloccāka biḍḍalā?* While in the lap they are kids, but when

they are growing beards, are they so? The implication is that they are not to be expected to be as obedient or loving as when they were kids. *Mappavaccu kāni tippalēmu* suggests that it is easy to familiarize one with something, or teach, or do something but it is not easy to turn one away from that. If you make a beggar accustomed to be given alms, it would be quite a job to turn him out without giving alms. If a child is given to pampering, it would be an uphill task to wean him out of that. There is another, which has a similar import: you can plant something, but plucking it away may not be that easy. *Vēstē vēpakomma, tīstē ammaṁvāru*. When it is planted it is a neem plant. But you cannot pluck it away at will; it turns into a goddess. The neem tree is believed to be goddess by the rural folk.

The following are some broad heads into which proverbs could possibly be grouped:

- i. those dealing with human nature
- ii. those with social aspect of living and life styles
- iii. those relating to matters ethical
- iv. those dealing with inter-family relations
- v. those revealing insights into public life

For Telugus themselves there is no guarantee that all the proverbs in the language are understood automatically. With changing times, changing lifestyles, community living and family setups, the younger generations and those mostly living in places far away from Andhra Pradesh and the diaspora may find themselves confused and clueless when confronted with them.

The proverb *bataka lēka baḍi pantulu* may seem odd. Literally, unable to live (making a living,) one becomes a schoolteacher. *Badi* usually is an elementary or primary school where in those days of distant past teaching did not require any prior training for a teacher and the compensation was too meager for the teacher to make a decent living. It is not really so now. This we can call a 'period piece' among proverbs, which demands setting up a category for itself.

Some proverbs gently pull the leg of people who have kinks in character. For a man who is showy and pretentious with no wherewithal this is used: *ambali tāgē*

vāḍiki mīsālettē vāḍokaḍu. For the one slurping gruel, another to lift his moustache (to facilitate the intake).

For the literary translator rendering these into an outside culture poses tricky and intriguing challenges, which call for his ingenuity to meet them successfully. Long explanatory notes would be needed. But for a reader they are a drag whether embedded in the text or included as glossary. (For example, the idiomatic expression *kukka muriki* in Telugu signifies plentiful availability or ubiquitous presence, equivalent to ‘dime a dozen’ in American English. The two words in the idiom mean literally *kukka* – dog and *muriki* - dirt). Interestingly, in English they say dirt-cheap. Perhaps in both languages dirt is something that is found everywhere.

In Telugu, proverbs are used extensively in conversation. Usually as one grows older, the tendency to bring in proverbs becomes more and more marked. They are used as brilliant stylistic flourishes to drive home a point or even to start a discourse. Thinking of apposite proverbs and the contexts in which to use them come with experience. To listen to good proverbs with very accurate and expert use, one must listen to actual conversations among the old people, people with a good deal of experience in life and knowledge of men and matters. They enrich the command over language. Here are a few Telugu proverbs in Roman script followed by meanings of a few difficult words, their English rendering and a brief comment.

It is hoped that the present offering will help the enthusiastic Telugu people as well as people of other linguistic communities in India and abroad to have a taste of the rich wisdom contained in these storehouses and profit from them in molding their own lives and progress towards happier and more meaningful existence.

I express my gratitude to the authorities of C P Brown Academy for sponsoring this effort and providing me an opportunity of pleasant association with the project.





1. Ākali ruci yerugadu, nidra sukham yerugadu.

Ākali=hunger; ruci= taste; nidra=sleep

Hunger does not know (need) taste and sleep knows (needs) no comfort.

Comment: When a person is very hungry anything tastes good; when very sleepy, one does not require the usual comfort one looks for.

2. Āru nelalu sāvāsam cēstē vāru vīru avutāru.

Literally, six months' company makes one the other.

Comment: Being together makes one absorb the ideas of the other to the extent that there appears total transformation in both. This is usually when the change is not for the better.

3. Antya niṣṭūram kanṭē ādi niṣṭūram mēlu.

Niṣṭūram= blame

Better to get the blame (for an action or for help asked) earlier (at the beginning) than later.

Comment: Before taking up any activity, it is better to get to know the objections or criticism of others, so that one need not regret one's effort at the end.

4. Annapu coravē gāni aksharapu corava lēdu.

Corava = aggressiveness

Aggressiveness only in eating, not in education.

Comment: A person may be more interested in food than in learning. One should strike a reasonable balance between acquisition of knowledge and physical needs.

5. Ālasyam amrutam viṣam.

Ālasyam = delay; *Amrutam* = nectar; *Viṣam* = poison

Delay turns nectar into poison.

Comment: Opportunity unavailed becomes harmful. One should not delay.

6. Ālu lēdu, cūlu lēdu, koḍuku pēru sōmalingam.

Ālu = wife; *Pēru* = name

No wife and no pregnancy, but the child's name is Sōmalingam.

Comment: Some people look for results even before the necessary tasks are performed. This indicates absurdity in wildly expecting something to happen.

7. Ārē dīpāniki velugu yekkuva.

Ārē dīpam = lamp about to go out; *Velugu* = brightness

The lamp about to go out gives sudden brilliance.

Comment: This suggests subtly the final glow or false promise before the approaching end. There is a saying *cāvu telivi*: that before death one gets brilliant idea(s)

8. Aggi mīda guggilam.

Guggilam = incense

Adding incense to the fire.

Comment : When a person is already angry the anger is aggravated by indiscreet words. On those occasions, it is wise to be silent; otherwise it would add insult to injury.



9. Āśa lāvu pīka sannam

Āśa= desire; Lāvu= great

Desire is great but the throat is thin (narrow).

Comment: Usually a greedy person wishes to acquire all, but has limited ability to absorb. One should realize what one deserves before desiring it. This proverb is akin to the English expression 'bite off more than you can chew'.

10. Aḍagandē ammainā peṭṭadu.

Aḍagandē= unasked

Without being asked even a mother will not give.

Comment: Without asking, help wouldn't be forthcoming, even from well-wishers.

11. Aḍigē vāḍiki ceppēvāḍu lōkuva.

Lōkuva=inferior (in) status

For the one who asks, the one who answers seems inferior in status.

Comment: It is easier to put questions than to answer them. It is therefore necessary to be considerate to others and raise only genuine doubts for proper clarification.

12. Aiśwaryam vastē ardha rātri goḍugu paṭṭamanēvāḍu.

Aiśwaryam=prosperity, wealth; *Ardharātri*=midnight, *Goḍugu paṭṭu*= hold the umbrella.

The neorich person demands an umbrella to be held for him even at night.

Comment: A person, who acquires riches suddenly, makes unreasonable demands, as his riches go to his head and make him arrogant. One should be poised and maintain emotional balance, when fortune smiles on him.

13. Anditē siga andaka pōtē kāḷḷu.

Siga= a lock of hair on top of the head.

To go for the head or fall at the feet of a person to get one's purpose served.

Comment: This is said of the opportunist who changes tactics, with the sole purpose of realising his wishes.

14. Angaṭḷō annī unnā, alluḍi nōṭḷō śani

Angaḍi= small shop; *Śani*= inauspicious (*graha*) planet; misfortune

Though there is everything in the shop, there is ill luck in the son-in-law's mouth.

15. Antā mana mancikē

Antā= everything

Everything is only for our good.

Comment: Normally used in comforting someone, the statement indicates that acceptance of what befalls one is a positive attitude. Worrying about what is unavoidable serves no purpose. One should realize what will be, will be.

16. Ārōgyamē mahābhāgyamu

Ārōgyamu=health; *Mahābhāgyamu*= great wealth

Health is real wealth.

Comment: In one's life, health is more essential than material wealth and so it should not be neglected.



17. Ādi lōnē hamsa pādu.

Hamsapādu = is a mark of insertion while making a correction in writing.

An insertion at the very beginning of writing.

Comment: Usually said when there is a hurdle, gap or break in the very beginning.

18. Appu cēsi pappu kūḍu.

Appu = debt; *Pappu kūḍu* = expensive food; in villages eating dal is considered the mark of wealth

Eating well (enjoying comforts) on borrowed money.

Comment: Borrowing used to be viewed as undesirable in the past. People, now under the influence of consumerism, want to live on their future income. It is still wisdom to be neither a borrower nor a lender, in the words of Shakespeare.

19. Appu tīrci angaṭanunḍu

Appu tīrci = clearing debt

Only after clearing dues, visit the shop.

Comment: This is a word of advice, which impresses on us the need for clearing old debts before trying to spend again.

20. Bratikuntē balusāku tinavaccu.

Balusāku=a wild, leafy vegetable

If alive, one can subsist even on leaves.

Comment: To achieve anything in life, to be alive is important. One should therefore make all efforts to survive and endeavor to reach the goals set for oneself.

21. Bhakti lēni pūja patri cēṭu.

Patri= leaves used for worshipping God, especially Ganēśa.

Worship without devotion is a waste of leaves,

Comment: For a true worship of gods, it is not the external paraphernalia that is as important as devotion.

22. Būḍidalō pōsina pannīru.

Būḍida= ash; *Pannīru*= scented water, like rose water.

Perfume thrown into ash.

Comment: A fruitless effort is one that does not achieve what one sets out for.

23. Bōḍi talaku mōkālīki muḍi

Bōḍitala= Hairless head; *Mōkālu*= knee.

Making a knot between the shaven head and the knee.

Comment: This refers to the way of trying to bring together two disparate things for a harmonious blend. When such an attempt is made, the listener understands the absurdity.

24. Cāpa kindā nīrulā

Cāpa= mat used for sitting on, in rural and semi-urban areas

Like water under a mat.

Comment: This refers to something done secretly. Though on the surface it appears fine, it can be quite dangerous in the consequence.

25. Caccinavāni kaḷḷu cāreḍesi.

Cāreḍu = large

The eyes of one dead, are large (attractive).

Comment: The good deeds of the dead are normally praised beyond what they deserve. It is possible that in such remembrances of things past there is likely to be considerable exaggeration – even, falsehood.

26. Cētulu kālināka ākulu paṭṭukunnaṭḷu.

Kālināka = after getting burnt; *Paṭṭukonu* = hold

Holding leaves after the fingers are burnt, by holding a hot cooking pot or object.

Comment: The proverb refers to action taken after something harmful has already happened. It is always desirable to take proper precautions to avoid any undesirable developments rather than regretting after the event. Prevention, they say, is better than cure.

27. Ceviṭi vāḍi cevilo śankham ūdinaṭḷu.

Ceviṭi vāḍu = deaf person; *Śankham* = conch

Like blowing a conch in the ears of the deaf.

Comment: It refers to making a complaint to someone, who does not even pay attention to the complaint – much less, act on it; it does not serve any purpose.

28. Ciniki ciniki gālivāna ayinaṭḷu.

Ciniki = drizzle (in drops)

Like drizzles becoming a cyclone.

Comment: Sometimes, a mere altercation, starting off in a small way, may lead to a fierce quarrel and continuing enmity.

29. Cerapakurā ceḍevu

Cerupu = spoil

Don't spoil any other person; you would end up in ruin yourself.

Comment: It is unwise to spoil the other person, mostly out of ill will, as it will usually result in one's own destruction.



30. Dongaku tēlu kuṭṭinaṭlu.

Tēlu = scorpion

Like a thief, stung by a scorpion.

Comment: This refers to some criminal who cannot even complain. If a person is doing something criminal, he cannot complain against a natural problem/discomfort he has to face. The moral is that it is better not to commit blunders one may find it difficult to get out of them.

31. Dēvuḍu varam iccinā pūjāri varam ivvaḍu.

Pūjāri = priest in a temple

Though god gives a boon, the priest doesn't.

Comment: In our dealings with subordinate officers in a setup, we come across hurdles in getting our rightful things done. Even if the higher-up agrees to our request, the junior officer will prove to be a stumbling block and deny justice to us.

32. Daridruḍi peḷḷiki vaḍagaḷḷa vāna.

Daridruḍu = pauper, unfortunate person; *Vaḍagaḷḷa vāna* = hailstorm

For the wedding of an impecunious (a poor) man, a hailstorm.

Comment: This refers to the bad luck of an unfortunate person. When one is in misery, additional troubles come upon one and make one's life more miserable.

33. Dīpamunnapuḍē illu cakka beṭṭukōvāli

Cakka beṭṭukonu= keep in order

When there is light, one should set things right in one's house.

Comment: While there is opportunity one must avail oneself of it and make proper arrangements for oneself and the family. It is similar to "make hay while the sun shines."

34. Deyyālu vēdālu vallincinaṭlu.

Deyyālu= evil spirits; *Vallincu*= recite, quote

Devils reciting (quoting) the Vēdās.

Comment: Similar to 'the devil citing the scripture', which suggests that an evildoer may try to justify his evil actions, by cleverly citing the sacred books. It is defending the indefensible.

35. Ḍabbuku lōkam dāsōham

Dāsōham= becoming a slave, literally 'I am a slave'.

The world is a slave to money.

Comment: In the commercial world of ours, all become slaves/worshippers of money. The proverb cautions against the excessive power of money over human psychology and tries to advise people to consider other values in life *as well*.

36. Dūrapu koṇḍalu nunupu.

Nunupu= smooth

Distant hills appear smooth.

Comment: People or things appear fascinating from a distance, as distance lends them charm. One should not be lured by false charms but should judge people after observing them closely.

37. Durāśa dukhamunaku cērcu

Durāśa= greed; *Cērcu*= make one reach (take).

Greed lands one in grief.

Comment: If one is excessively greedy, one is most likely to get into trouble. The golden rule is deserve and desire – and moderately.

38. Ē enḍaku ā godugu.

Enḍa = Sun's heat

An umbrella to suit the sun's heat.

Comment: This suggests that adjustment to the situation, and adaptability to the present requirements is essential for success in life. Rigidity is not recommended in all matters. But when practiced in the extreme, it would turn one into an opportunist, who gives up all ethics for immediate success.

39. Ekkadainā bāva kāni vanga tōṭa daggara mātram kādu

Bāva = brother-in-law ; *Vanga tōṭa* = brinjal garden

Maybe, brother-in-law anywhere, but not at the *brinjal* (egg plant) garden.

Comment: When it comes to money or material, relationship is of no consequence. Some are extremely business-like in their relationships.

40. Evaru tīsukunna gōtilō vārē paḍatāru.

Gōtilō = in the pit (ditch)

The one who digs a ditch to harm someone falls into it oneself.

Comment: If one plans to harm others, he will be harmed himself. It is therefore advisable to wish the welfare of all.

41. Gājula bēramu bhōjanāniki sari.

Gājulu = bangles: bangle-sellers are (or used to be) common in villages.

The sale proceeds of bangles are just enough to buy food.

Comment: For a petty businessman, the profit from his business would hardly meet his basic needs. This refers to an unprofitable enterprise.

42. Gōranta dīpam koṇḍanta velugu

Gōranta = of the size of a nail (small); *Koṇḍanta* = size of a hill (large)

The lamp (wick) is of the size of a nail; illumination the size of a hill.

Comment: Even a small lamp can give a wide glow. Physical size does not always lead to insignificant actions. It is the largeness of purpose that makes the act big.



43. Kūṭi kōsam kōṭi vidyalu.

Kūṭu= literally, food, livelihood; *Kōṭi*= crore (ten million)

Ten million skills are all for earning one's livelihood.

Comment: The purpose, by and large, of acquisition of diverse special skills is only to make a living.

44. Gōrucuṭṭu mīda rōkali pōṭu.

Gōrucuṭṭu= whitlow; *Rōkali*= pestle used for pounding, especially in villages nowadays.

The blow of a wooden pestle on a whitlow-infected nail.

Comment: Refers to a severe blow of misfortune on some one already suffering. When misfortunes come, they come in battalions. It is on those occasions, one should be bold and face the situation.

45. Guḍḍilō mella

Guḍḍi= blind; *Mella*= squint

Squint is better than blindness

Comment: A slightly better position. All pleasures and miseries are relative. When compared with a man with two of his legs amputated, the one with at least one leg is fortunate. It is the positive (optimistic) attitude that matters.

46. Eddu punḍu kākiki muddu /muddā?

Eddu= ox; *Punḍu*= ulcer

An ox's ulcer is dear to a crow.

Comment: When a person is suffering, the other person is pleased. It shows the extreme inhumanness of certain people. Even if one cannot help others in their difficulties, at least they should not derive pleasure out of them. (If in the interrogative *muddā*, it signifies that one doesn't care for another's pain. Even that attitude is undesirable.)

47. Guḍḍu vacci pillanu vekkirincinaṭḷu.

Vekkirincu= mock

Like an egg heckling the young bird.

Comment: A young, inexperienced man ridiculing an elder one. It is better to learn to respect the elderly and experienced people, and, if possible, learn from their expertise gained over many years.

48. Guḍini, guḍilō lingānni mingēvāḍu.

Lingam= idol of Śiva

A cheat, literally one who swallows the temple as well as the deity inside.

Comment: When greed grows excessively, a person wishes to acquire all – without caring for the means to attain his immoral goal.

49. Gurramu gruḍḍi dainā, dāṇālō takkuva lēdu.

Dāṇā= fodder for horses

Though blind, the horse does not eat less.

Comment: Refers to a person, who may not be earning anything, but his needs will be no less than any body else's. One should learn to live within one's means, even by limiting his basic needs.

50. Illu alakagānē paṇḍugā?

Aluku= to smear the floor with dung.

With a mere dung wash of the floor the festival is not complete.

Comment : On festival eve, the earthen floors are given a dung wash. But there must be several other tasks to be performed for the festival. The practice is still extant in villages. The use of dung is part of rural economy as well as a hygienic practice, fast fading out.



51. Minga metuku lēdu mīsālaki sampenga nūne

Metuku= tiny piece of food; *Mīsamu*= moustache; *Sampenga*= champak

Literally, no food to eat but for the moustache perfumed oil.

Comment: This is said when one does not live within one's means. Extravagance is to be avoided at any cost, as it would turn one into a pauper sooner than later.

52. Kaṭṭe vanka poyyi tīrustundi

Kaṭṭe= firewood; *Poyyi*= a country oven, usually made of bricks

The fire straightens the curvature in the faggot.

Comment: Force or strategy removes angularities. For each undesirable quality of an individual, there will be a cure to make it agreeable to the needs of society.

53. Kīlerigi vāta

Kīlu= joint in the human body (leg or hand) ; *Vāta*= branding with hot iron

One should know the joint and brand it.

Comment: In the past and also occasionally at present, there is a practice of scorching or branding literally as a therapy. One should identify the problem and take appropriate steps to solve it. In other words, you have to know the sensitive spot and work on it for your success.

54. Koṇṭē korivi ammitē aḍivi

Korivi = torch

To buy is like a torch: to sell a wilderness.

Comment: This has reference to the price one gets and one has to pay while buying and selling. Neither buying nor selling is profitable to the needy.

55. Inṭikannā guḍi bhadramu.

Bhadramu = safe

A temple is safer than the house.

Comment: Sometimes, one's place of work or stay elsewhere is better than living in one's own house, especially when domestic harmony is absent.

56. Jōgi jōgi rāsukunṭē rālēdi būḍidē.

Jōgi = an ascetic who has renounced all

If two ascetics jostle each other only ash falls. (for they are known to cover their bodies with vibhūti.)

Comment: When two poor, ineffectual people join hands, there could be no success in the enterprise. It is no use joining the company of incompetent persons.

57. Kāsina ceṭṭukē rāḷla debbalu.

Kāsina ceṭṭu = fruit-bearing tree

Only the tree that bears fruit is hit by stones.

Comment: Only those who help often have to bear the brunt of seekers. In many cases, after receiving help, the beneficiaries tend to criticize the benefactors.

58. Kāki pilla kākiki muddu.

Muddu = lovable, dear

For the crow its young one is the loveliest.

Comment: The suggestion is that for the parents the ugly child is not ugly but very lovable. It is the unbounded love of parents for their offspring that is highlighted here.

59. Kālam kalisi rāka pōtē, karrē pāmai kāṭu vēstundi.

Kalisirākapōtē= turn out unfavorable; *Kāṭuvēyu*= bite

If time is not favorable, even a stick becomes a snake and bites.

Comment: Adverse circumstances make matters worse when times are not favorable.

60. Kalasi vuntē kaladu sukham

Sukham= happiness

Living in unity gives happiness. Joint families are comfortable.

61. Kalimi lēmulu kāvaḍi kunḍalu

Kalimi= affluence; *Lēmi*= poverty; *Kāvaḍi kunḍalu*= pots slung on the bamboo pole (*kāvaḍi*), in villages for carrying water from the village pond/river

Affluence and poverty are like two pots slung on the bamboo pole to carry on the shoulder. One who carries the pole has to carry both the pots for balance.

Comment: In life, happiness and unhappiness, wealth and poverty are both inevitable. It is necessary for us to maintain the proper balance between them and we should not get either over-joyed or depressed, but ought to retain optimum poise.

62. Kalisi vaccē kālam vastē, naḍici vaccē koḍuku puḍatāḍu

Kalisivaccē kālam= time of good fortune

When times are favorable a walking (precocious) son will be born.

Comment: When circumstances are favorable, good things happen in quick succession. One should wait for the right time, when good fortune will smile on him, instead of losing hope in moments of misfortune.

63. Kance cēnu mēsindi.

Kance= fence usually for a farm (*cēnu*); *Mēsindi*= has eaten

The fence ate up the crop.

Comment: This proverb is used when the law-enforcing officer demands and gets bribe. It calls upon the custodians of law to abide by law themselves and give no scope for any lapses in the performance of their duties.



64. Munduku pōtē goyyi; venukaku pōtē nuyyi

Munduku= forward; *Goyyi*= pit ; *Venaka*: behind (backwards) ; *Nuyyi*=well

A ditch ahead and a well behind.

Comment: This refers to a situation where both going forward and coming backward are risky. In life, too, one arrives at a crossroads, where the choice of moving either way can lead only to unfortunate results. On those occasions, it is better to trust one's instinct and go ahead, hoping for the best.

65. Karavamanṭē kappaku kōpam, viḍavamanṭē pāmuku kōpam.

Karacu= bite (as by a snake); *kōpam*= anger (resentment)

If asked to bite, the frog would be angry; if asked to let go, the snake would be angry.

Comment: This refers to a situation when there are two disputing parties and advising either of them to compromise or withdraw from the dispute will be rejected by both. On those occasions, it is wise to keep quiet.

66. Kīḍenci mēlencamannāru

Kīḍu= harm; *Mēlu*= good; *Encu*=consider

Think of the harm first and then of good.

Comment: This is a suggestion: think of the harm first and then only of the good that may ensue. It is always safe to anticipate problems during the execution of a plan of action, instead of getting stumped later on.

67. Konḍallē vaccina āpada kūḍā mancuvalē kariginaṭlu.

Āpada=danger; Karugu= melt; Mancu= ice, fog, dew

Like danger approaching like a mountain, melting away like ice.

Comment: Even a formidable danger would be finally staved off, either through the good fortune of an individual or owing to the confidence and competence of the individual in facing the situation.

68. Konḍanu tavvi elukanu paṭṭinaṭlu.

Tavvu= dig; Eluka= rat; Paṭṭu= catch

It is like digging up a mountain to catch a mouse.

Comment: A fruitless endeavor considering what is obtained by the effort. Sometimes, one makes herculean efforts but achieves precious little.

69. Korivitō tala gōkkunnaṭlu.

Gōku=scratch

Scratching the head with the burning torch.

Comment: Doing something dangerous. One should avoid taking to dangerous paths to solve one's problems, as they may lead to more troubles.

70. Kotta oka vinta; pāta oka rōta

Vinta= (fascinating) wonder; Rōta= something detested (hated)

The new is a wonder, the old detestable.

Comment: Generally, people are attracted by the new (especially, fashions in dress and the like) and tend to dislike the old. It is similar to the saying in English: "familiarity breeds contempt."

71. Kukka kāṭuku ceppu debba

Kukka kāṭu= dog bite; Debba= beating (slap)

A slap with a chappal for dog bite.

Comment: Figuratively, it is an act of retaliation. Similar to "Tit for tat."

72. Lankhaṇam paramauśadham

Lankhaṇam= fasting (going without food); *Auśadham*= medicine

Fasting is the best medicine.

Comment: For centuries, fasting is recommended as cure for any ailment by doctors practicing Indian medicine, *Āyurvēda*.

73. Lōguṭṭu perumāḷḷaku eruka

Lōguṭṭu=hidden secret; *Perumāḷḷu*= god; *Eruka*= knowing

God knows the hidden secret.

Comment: When one does not know the inside (secret) story or the real truth behind something, one tends to shrug one's shoulders and say, 'God knows'.

74. Mancamunnanta varaku kāḷḷu cācuko

Mancamu=cot; *Cācu*= stretch

Stretch your legs as far as the cot permits.

Comment: A piece of advice to adjust with available things. Similar to “Cut one’s coat according to one’s cloth”; that is, live within your means.

75. Maṇiṣi pēda ayitē māṭaku pēdā?

Māṭa= speech

Does it mean that being poor, one should be poor in one’s speech as well?

Comment: One may give a noble speech, even if one is financially poor. The nobility of one does not depend on one’s wealth or the lack of it.

76. Mokkai vonganidi mānai vongunā?

Mokka= sapling; *Mānu*= grown up tree

If not bent as a plant, would it bend when it grows into a tree?

Comment: Children should be advised properly, when they are young, so that they do not stray into evil ways. This is an advice meant particularly for parents, who pamper children and allow them into undesirable ways.



77. Pulini cūsi nakka vāta beṭṭukunnaṭlu.

Vāta = a mark on the body made with a heated metal tool or branding iron

Like the fox branding itself, to match the tiger's stripes.

Comment: The reference is to ordinary person trying to pretend that he is a great man by imitating mere external features and mannerism of a great person. By such efforts one only makes a fool of oneself.

78. Morigē kukka karavadu.

Morigē = barking; *Karavadu* = does not bite

A dog that barks does not bite.

Comment: It is said that a shouting man does not harm really. It is not necessary to take the loud threats of one seriously, because one may not really be able to carry out one's threats.

79. Munjēti kankaṇamuku addamu enduku?

Munjēti = fore arm; *Kankaṇamu* = an ornament for the fore arm (wrist), usually bracelet.

Why a mirror to see the bracelet on the wrist?

Comment: It is used when a thing is self-evident. There is no need for elaborate explanation for obvious facts; it will be belaboring the point.

80. Navvu nālugu vidhāla cēṭu.

Cēṭu = harm

Laughter is harmful in four (many) ways.

Comment: This is used when one laughs unnecessarily or too much. For every action there is a proper place and proper time. When the action does not take these considerations into account, it will land people in trouble or awkward situation.

81. Nijam nippu lāṇṭidi

Nijam = truth; *Nippu* = fire

Truth is like fire.

Comment: Truth cannot be concealed or suppressed. If one tries to hide away truth, it is likely to harm one. It is therefore wise to reveal the truth by making a clean breast and gain peace of mind.

82. Niṇḍu kuṇḍa toṇakadu

Toṇaku = spill

A pot full wouldn't spill.

Comment: The virtuous one would remain silent and wouldn't make a show. It is only the empty vessels that make much noise.

83. Nippu lēnidē pogarādu

Poga = smoke

No smoke without fire.

Comment: Unless there is some basis, there can be no suspicion, or gossip. One should take care to see that there isn't even a slight lapse that gives rise to avoidable scandal .

84. Nippu muṭṭanidē cēyi kālādu

Kāluṭa = burn

Without touching, fire wouldn't scorch.

Comment: If one does not make a mistake, the question of punishment does not arise. It is therefore necessary to avoid wrong conduct, in the first place.

85. Oka voralo renḍu kattulu imaḍavu.

Vora= scabbard; Imuḍu= fit in

Two swords wouldn't fit together in a scabbard.

Comment: It is not possible to put together two (especially, different) persons on one platform.

86. Pōru naṣṭam pondu lābham

Pōru= quarrel; Pondu= friendliness

Quarrel leads to loss and friendship to gain.

Comment: There is much to gain by living/working together, rather than by quarreling over petty differences. This is a piece of sage advice to keep friendly relations all over.

87. Pānakamulō puḍaka

Pānakamu=a sweet drink made of jaggery and offered, especially on the festival of Śrī Rāma Navami, Puḍaka= small, thin stick

A little stick in a sweet drink.

Comment: An interfering hindrance or a nuisance can be irritating. One who pokes one's nose in a business not one's own is disliked by all. It is wise for one to keep off other people's affairs and mind one's own business.

88. Pāpamani pāta cīra istē gōḍa cāṭuku velli mūra vēsindaṭa.

Pāpamani=Pitying; Cāṭu=secret place; Mūravēyu= measure with arm (arm's length)

A (woman) secretly measures the length of a saree given out of pity.

Comment: It is like looking a gift horse in the mouth. Without being grateful, some people find fault even with generous people.

89. Paccakāmerlu vaccina vāḍiki lōkam antā paccaga kanapaḍinaṭlu

Paccakāmerlu= jaundice, caused by the malfunctioning of the liver; Lōkam= world

A man with liver disease has yellow eyes. For the sick eyes everything looks yellow.

Comment: When people have some problem with their health or in their conduct, they find the same problems in everybody around.



90. Pinḍi koddi roṭṭi

Pinḍi= dough; *Roṭṭi*=roti

Cake (roti) according to the dough.

Comment: The result that can be achieved depends on the resources available.

91. Pelliki veḷutū pillini cankana peṭṭuku vellinaṭṭu.

Cankana= in the arm pit (in the arms)

Taking a cat along while going to a wedding.

Comment: This refers to doing something inauspicious or undesirable. It is an unwanted burden and might lead to undesirable results.

92. Pēnuku pettanamistē tala antā korikindaṭa

Pēnu= louse; *Pettanamu*= power of authority; *Koruku*=bite

A louse, if entrusted with authority, only does what it knows to do: it bites the whole scalp

Comment: If an unworthy person is given authority, he will misuse it and destroy the whole organization. One should exercise great caution and proper judgment, while selecting the leaders.

93. Piccōḍi cētilō rāyilā.

Piccōḍu = mad person; *Rāyi* = stone

A stone in a mad man's hand.

Comment: When authority or power is entrusted to a person without mental balance, it will result only in unhappiness to all.

94. Piccuka mīda brahmāstramu.

Piccuka = swallow (sparrow); *Brahmāstra* = A powerful incantation believed to be inspired by Lord Brahma, the Creator.

Using *brahmāstra* on a swallow.

Comment: Using a very powerful weapon against a small person. Unnecessary use of strong force.

95. Pilliki celagāṭamu, elukaku prāṇa sankāṭamu.

Celagāṭamu = playfulness; *prāṇasankāṭamu* = mortal fear

For the cat, fanciful play and for the mouse, mortal fear.

Comment: This refers to a situation when a powerful person/power attacks a weak person/power for self-glorification. It may be merely a (power)game for the powerful, but it will be a question of life and death for the weak.

96. Piṭṭa koncemu kūta ghanamu

Piṭṭa = bird; *Kūta* = cry

Little bird- loud cry.

Comment: One may be small in physical size, but one may be loud in speech. It is used both as a criticism of talkative person and as an appreciation of one whose achievements are higher than what one's physical limitations would appear to permit.

97. Peruguṭa viruguṭa korakē

Perugu = grow (up); *Viruguṭa korakē* = for breaking only

To grow is only to break

Comment: All that goes up must come down. We should not be proud when we prosper, but must be aware of the possibility of downfall. We should be humble in the moments of our triumph.



98. Rāmēśwaram vellinā śanēśwaram vadalanatlu.

Rāmēśwaram= a holy place in south India; *Śanēśwara*=an inauspicious *graha* (planet), who brings misfortune to people

Comment: When one is dogged by misfortune, one will not escape misfortune, even if one goes to a holy place to ward off the evil influence.

99. Puṇyam koddī puruṣuḍu, dānam koddī biḍḍalu.

Puṇyam= virtuous action; *Puruṣuḍu*= man (here, husband); *Dānam*= charity

Husband according to past virtuous deeds and children according to one's charity.

Comment: The advice is that one should lead a virtuous life, so that in the next life, a lady will be blessed with a noble (good) husband. And if she performs acts of charity, she will be blessed additionally with well-behaved (good) children. It calls upon women to lead a life of virtue. By extension, what applies to women applies equally to men.

100. Purrelō puṭṭina buddhi puḍakalatōṇē pōtundi

Purre= literally, skull; brain; *Puḍakalatō*= with faggots (the funeral pyre)

The will, intention or desire born in the skull goes away only with faggots (the funeral pyre).

Comment: When an evil thought is born in the mind, or if one is born with evil nature, it will not leave one until death. In-born wickedness is incurable.

101. Roṭṭi virigi nētilō paḍḍaṭṭu

Virugu=break; Neyyi=ghee (clarified butter)

Cake (roti) breaking only to fall in clarified butter.

Comment: When good fortune smiles on one, even usually harmful acts turn out to be helpful.

102. Rautu koddi gurramu

Rautu= horse rider

Horse behaves (runs) to suit (the ability of) the rider.

Comment: The worker in any setup works as directed/controlled by the master. If the master/manager is incompetent/lenient, there will be no discipline and the entire setup will be disorganized.

103. Santōṣam sagam balam.

Santōṣam= happiness; Balam= strength

Being joyful is half one's strength.

Comment: This is to suggest that one should be joyful, especially in unfavourable circumstances. That is the way to draw strength from even adverse circumstances.

104. Śivuni ājña lēka cīmainā kuṭṭadu.

Ājña= order; Cīma= ant; Kuṭṭu= bite/sting

Everything happens according to the Lord's will: even an ant does not bite without His order.

Comment: This reiterates the potency of God and His will. But all the same, one should perform one's duty (*karma*) and leave the result to God.

105. Tā ceḍḍa kōti vanamella ceracindaṭa

Ceḍḍa= spoilt; Vanamella= entire forest (garden); Ceracu= spoil

A spoilt monkey spoiling the whole garden.

Comment: This refers to one already spoilt spoiling all the others around. Generally, when one is in bad shape – especially, morally – one would spread one's vice to others also. Such people should be avoided by all means.



106. Tantē gārela buṭṭalō paḍḍaṭṭu

Gāre= a dish made of black gram dāl; Buṭṭa= basket

A kick landed one in a basket of gārelu (cookies)

Comment: When some harm is intended to be inflicted on a person, sometimes the person gets benefited by that. Occasionally, evil intentions and actions of others may turn out to be beneficial.

107. Tāḍi tannu vāni tala tannu vāḍu unḍunu.

Tāḍi= palm tree; Tannu= kick

There will be one who can kick the head of the one who kicks the top of a palm tree.

Comment: There are always people who are of superior abilities. One should try for the best in life, but after achieving a good position in life, one should not feel that one is at the top of the world; there are still higher peaks to reach.

108. Tāṭaku cappuḷḷaku kundēḷḷu bedaravu.

Tāṭaku= palm leaves; Bedaru= get frightened

Hares wouldn't be frightened by the noise of palm leaves.

Comment: Strong men are not frightened by empty threats by the unworthy. We should develop necessary courage and should not be scared by the trivial.

109. Tānu paṭṭina kundēluku mūdē kālḷu.

Kundēlu= hare

For the hare he has caught there are only three legs. (Note the absurdity of the statement.)

Comment: Some people become dogmatic and argue that the most absurd is the most reasonable. We should be prepared to accept the weakness of our argument and be ready to learn from others.

110. Tīga lāgitē ḍonka antā kadilinaṭḷu.

Tīga=creeper; *Lāgu*= pull; *Donka*= bush

When we pull at a creeper, the whole bush is moved.

Comment: This is to suggest that if a small thing is disturbed, it leads to a lot of movement. It suggests that when a small clue is obtained in an investigation, it may lead to unexpected connections and result in the nabbing of the real culprit.

111. Tinṭe gārelu tināli, vinṭe bhāratam vināli.

Tinu= eat; *Vinu*=listen

If one wants to eat the tastiest, one has to eat *gāre*, and if one wants to listen to the best, one has to listen to *Mahābhārata*.

Comment: A saying, describing a typical Telugu taste, suggests the best dish to eat and the best book to read.

112. Vāpunu cūsi balamu anukunnadaṭa.

Vāpu=swelling; *Balamu*=strength

On seeing the swelling, she took it as a sign of growing strength

Comment: Swelling is not healthy growth. We should be wise in our judgment and should not rush to conclusions, by merely noting the external appearances.



113. Verri veyyi vidhālu

Verri= eccentric behavior; Veyyi= thousand

Madness takes a thousand forms.

Comment: Each person has his/her own types of odd behavior and thinks that that behavior quite normal. Honest criticism by well-meaning friends can help people in realizing the truth about themselves and take appropriate corrective measures.

114. Unna māṭantē ulukekkuva

Unna māṭa= truth; Uluku=(taking) offence

If truth is said, offence is taken.

Comment: People are not ready to accept unpleasant (uncomplimentary) truths about themselves. They instantly become angry. It is always a true friend that tells us our faults and helps us correct our conduct. It is the flatterer who hides the truth and cheats us.

115. Tātakū daggulu nēṛpuṭa

Tāta= grandfather; Daggi= cough; Nēṛpu= teach

Teaching the grandfather how to cough.

Comment: This suggests that an experienced person does not need advice on how to go about doing things. Coughing is natural for the old. They do not need to be taught. Attempting to teach them is absurd.



Proverbs are perhaps as old as human civilization. As man started living in groups, new relationships came into vogue – both with people and places and the nature around them. This 'togetherness' of living might have provided a rich platform for the wise to observe the evolving group behaviour keenly and hypothesize on how and how not to conduct oneself for a better living.

Every society and every language have proverbs. They are not the exalted words written by literary savants. They are mere utterances of the common man. They are the very ideas, views, and conceptions of evolving man. They are the manifestations arising from everyday life. They are, perhaps, a reflection of the "common consciousness" of mankind expressed in ordinary language. But their greatness lies in their pithiness. At the same time, they are statements of profound wisdom

They constitute oral literature of every society. Yet, owing to their enlivening and refreshing nature, they survived for generations. They are mostly influenced by local experiences. They, thus, acquire an aura of 'nativism'. And so, they sound dearer to its clan. They mean so much to the society from which they emerged. But it is this native thwack that at times makes it difficult for outsiders to appreciate them.

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