

P.R. Subramanian (Chief Editor). *Tarkālat Tamil Maraputtoṭar Akarāti (Tamiḷ-Ṭamiḷ-Āṅkilam) (Dictionary of Idioms and Phrases in Contemporary Tamil (Tamil-Tamil-English))*, 1997, xliii + 404 pp. ISBN 81-900694-0-3. Chennai: Mozhi. E-mail: mohzi@md3.vsnl.net.in. Price Rs. 200,00.

This is a publication on Tamil idioms and phrases compiled to assist Tamils to make spoken and written language interesting. Contained in this dictionary are both traditional and contemporary idioms and phrases. This dictionary is essential for all researchers, Tamil lovers, scholars in linguistics and students.

Main Components

Introduction

A good introduction forms part of this dictionary. This introduction

- explains the need for such a publication,
- gives the construction pattern of idioms and phrases and their limits,
- explains various types of idioms and phrases,
- explains the relationship between proverbs and idioms and phrases, and how some proverbs became idioms and phrases,
- gives the relationship between the *Dictionary of Idioms and Phrases in Contemporary Tamil* and the *Dictionary of Contemporary Tamil*, and
- gives a detailed explanation of some structural aspects of this dictionary.

List of Abbreviations

A short list of abbreviations to assist the user is included. This list is adequate for this dictionary.

Structure

The structure or arrangement of the dictionary with the key words, symbols and grammatical abbreviations applied in the dictionary is well set out to assist the user. Some aspects highlighted in the structure include:

- obvious words that may be omitted from the head idiom or phrase, given in brackets,
- the use of asterisks next to words that may be substituted, with the suitable word given in the right-hand column of the page,
- the numbering of idioms and phrases with similar meanings,

- other forms of the head phrase given in the right-hand column of the page,
- the general rule for classifying grammatical changes in head idioms and phrases,
- the change of the grammatical form of a single word,
- the use of arrows to show the grammatical form from which the spoken form of a used word is derived,
- other phrases that may be formed from the head phrase,
- the numbering of the various meanings,
- the explanation of head idioms and phrases in Tamil within their context and the advanced meanings of head idioms and phrases,
- the explanation of the head idioms and phrases in English, the English equivalent appearing in bold print, and
- the use of the symbol # to show the use of the singular instead of the plural form, absence or inclusion of particles and the change of the form of a verb.

Explanatory Notes

Useful explanatory notes are given to assist the user. The explanatory notes are mostly a detailed explanation of the structural aspects.

Assessment

The authors have made an important contribution in preparing this outstanding collection of idioms and phrases. This is the first dictionary of contemporary Tamil idioms and phrases. The authors have analysed the characteristics of traditional and customary idioms and phrases in detail and their variation in expression and meaning. The head phrases are printed in bold type. This is followed by a Tamil explanation of the head phrase. The equivalent in English is given next to it and if the equivalent English idiom or phrase is an accepted one in the English language then it is shown in bold print.

Explanations of head idioms and phrases in English and Tamil are lucid. Popular English idioms and phrases which were at one time part of the syllabus in schools make this publication very interesting, especially to bilingual speakers. They should derive pleasure in using these during conversations with other bilingual speakers. These are given in bold print.

This publication consists of 1 930 head idioms and phrases. These idioms and phrases have been used in suitable sentences to assist the user to understand them. The over 5 000 sentences used as examples have been carefully chosen. The various examples given are very suitable and excite the interest in the users. Further explanations of head phrases are given within brackets.

The absence of grammar with regard to traditional idioms and phrases will greatly interest common readers. It is important to note, however, that grammar is not totally ignored.

New idioms and phrases which are not traditional or customary are also included and well explained. Furthermore the choice of idioms and phrases seems to be from different regions or areas of South India. The authors have taken great pains in giving detailed explanations. In their explanations they have brought out the intricacies of idioms and phrases with meanings based on area or region.

The equivalent English idioms and phrases will also benefit non-Tamils. It is important to note that all idioms and phrases given in English are not word-for-word translations of the Tamil head phrases. Instead the authors have chosen to translate the phrase or idiom as a whole. A word-for-word translation could distort the meaning. The following are a few examples of popular English idioms and phrases included in this dictionary:

bite off more than one can chew, dog tired, once in a blue moon, old wives' tale, build castles in the air, God knows, have a foot in both camps, the grass is greener on the other side of the hill, give someone an inch and he will take a mile, go in one ear and out the other, kick up a dust, with open arms, twiddle one's thumb, bite the hand that feeds one, keep up with the Joneses, add fuel to the flames, like water off a duck's back, like cat and dog, I will eat my hat, by hook or by crook, kill two birds with one stone, put the squeeze on, a drop in the ocean.

The layout of this publication is very good. This is a result of the fact that it was prepared on computer. Furthermore, it is stated that the compilers spent six years in preparing this dictionary of idioms and phrases.

This publication will mainly benefit people who can read the Tamil script because the authors have chosen not to give transliterations. This dictionary will be appreciated in all countries where Tamil is taught in schools and universities. Traditional and customary idioms or phrases are from the different regions or areas within India. It is possible that Tamils who have settled in South Africa, Fiji, Réunion, Ceylon, Australia and other countries may have idioms or phrases unique to their countries. Perhaps these could also be included in the next edition.

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