Tamil proverbs

Ainthil Valayaathathu Aimbathil Valayaathu

• அந்தில் வையலாது ஐம்பதில் வையலாது
• What won't bend at five will not bend at fifty (literal)
• You can't teach an old dog new tricks.

Sudum varai neruppu, sutrum varai boomi, poradam varai manithan. Nee manithan.

• சுடம் வைர என்பு, சுற்றம் வைரப் புமி, போராடும் வையல் மலித்தல்
• Fire lasts only as long as it heats. The earth lasts only as long as it revolves. Man lasts only as long as he tries. You are man (literal)
• To be human is to strive.

Mayirai katti malayai izhu - vanthal malai ponal mayir

• மயிரைக் கட்டி மைலைய இஞ்சு. வந்தால் மைலை போலானால் போபு
• Pull a mountain by tying a hair to it. If you succeed you will get a mountain, if you lose you will lose a hair (literal).
• There is no harm in trying, especially if it is a low-hanging fruit.

Maamiyaar udaithaal mann kudam. Marumagal udaithaal pon kudam

• மாமியார் உைத்தால் மண் குடம். மாமகள் உைத்தால் பெபான் குடம்
• If the mother-in-law breaks it, it is a mud pot. If the daughter-in-law breaks it, it is a golden pot.

Kudigaran Pechchu Vidinja pochu

• குடிகாரன் பெச்சு விடிஞ்சா பெச்சு
• A drunkard’s words are gone by the next dawn.

Nirai Kudam Neer Thalumbaadhu kurai kudam Koothadhum

• நிரை குடம் நீர் தலுமாடும். குடம் நீர் கூத்தாம்
• Fully Filled pot does not spill (literal)
• Empty vessels make the most noise.
Thani Maram Thopu aagadhu

- A single tree doesn't make an orchard.

Mullai Mullal than edukka vendum

- A thorn can only be removed with another thorn (literal)
- Fight fire with fire.

Agathin Azhagu Mugathil Theriyum

- The beauty of the soul is in known in the face (literal)
- Meaning: Face is the index of the mind.

Aazham paakamal kaalai vidadhe

- Don’t step in the river without knowing its depth.
- Look before you leap.

Yaanaikkum Adi Sarukkum

- Even elephants do slip.
- Even the mighty do slip.

Erumbu ora kallum theiyum

- Even ants can wear out a rock (literal)
- Persistence never fails

Kaakaikum tan kunju pon kunju

- Even a crow thinks its child is golden.

Aatril pottaalum alandhu podu

- Even when throwing in the river, measure what you throw
InnA seitharai oRuththal avar naana nannayam seithu vidal

- இன்னா எசய்தாைர ஒத்தல் அவர் நாணநன்னயம் எசய்விடல் (திக்குறள்)
- Make a wrong doer feel shy, by doing him a favour. (Source: Thirukkural)

Nizhalin arumai veiyilil thaan theriyum

- நிழலின் அைமெவயிலில் தான் ஏதாம்
- Only when in the sun do you miss the shade.

Kadugu ciruththaalum kaaram kuraiyaathu

- கசி சிருத்தா´ம் காரம் குைறயா¢
- The mustard its small, but it is still too spicy (literal)
  - Don’t measure the worth of a person by their size/shape
  - Size does not matter.

Moorthy chinnathaanalum keerthi periyathu

- மோர்த்தி சின்னதா´னா´ம் கீர்த்தி பெற்றா¢
- The idol may be small, its fame is big.
  - Don’t judge the worth of a person by their size.
  - Size does not matter.

Puli Pasitthalum Pullai Thinnadhu

- புலிபசித்தா´ம் பொல்லை தின்னா¢
- Even hunger wont make tiger eat grass (literal)
- A person never loses his nature no matter how hard-pressed.

CiRu nunalum than vaayaal kedum

- சிற்றி நுணலும் தன் வாயால் ஏக மணம்
- The frog that talks is soon dead (literal)
- Know when to keep quiet.

Kattrathu Kai Man Alavu, Kallaathathu Ulagalavu

- கற்றைகமண் காய் மாலவா் காலா,
- Alternatively "Known is a drop, unknown is an Ocean". (Source: Avvaiyar)
Theeyinal sutta punn ullaarum aaraathe naavinaal sutta vadu

- The wounds of fire would vanish with time but the wounds caused by words never (Source: Thiruk-kural)

Paambin kaal paambariyum

- Only a snake will know the tracks left by another snake. (literal)
- The persons involved in similar activities know each other better than others do.

Tholvi unnai thòrkadikkum mun tholviyai nee thorkadithu vidu

- Defeat defeat before defeat defeats you. (Source: Swami Vivekananda)

Aalaakku arisi, moolaakkup paanai, mudhaliyar varugira veeraappap paarum

- Half an ounce of rice, a quarter ounce pot. But look at the false pride of the mudhaliyar.

arai koththarisi anna dhaanam. Vidiya vidiya maela thaalam.

- Half a pot of rice is given as charity. but the announcing drumming is done all night.

Minnuvathellam ponnu alla.

- All that glitters is not gold.

Verumkai enbathu moodathanam,un viralgal pathum mooladhanam.

- There is nothing called empty hands. You always have 10 fingers in it
- Your effort is what all you have got.
Veetai kattipaar,kalyanathai senjuppar

- வீட்டைடக் கட்டிப்பார், கல்யாணதாகத் பண்ணிப்பார்.
- Build a home, organize a wedding (literal)
- If you think daily life is painful, try building a home or organizing a wedding.

Muyarchi udayar igalchi adayar.

- முயர்ச்சி உடயார் இகழ்ச்சி அடயார்
- There is no downward journey for those who keep trying.

Paavam seiyadhu iru maname, naalai gopam seithe yeman kondodippovan.

- பெய்யாள் சலப்பாள் திணுக்கிச் அடயாள
- Desist from sinning, for, tomorrow an angry god of death may deprive you of applying the corrective by taking you into his fold.

Thannirai kooda salladail allalam, athu panikati agum varai poruthal

- தண்ணீரக் கூடசல்லைடயில் அள்ளலாம், அடு பனிக்கட்டி அடும் வைர ஆடுத்தாய
- Even water can be held in a sieve, if you wait till it turns to ice.

AAdath thireyathaval medaii konal enralaam

- ஆடத் தெத்தாய் சம தெத்தால் என்றாள்
- She who cannot dance says the stage is imperfect.(Literal)
- A bad workman blames his tools.

Adi mel adi vaithal ammium nagarum

- அடி மேல் அடி எவத்தால் அம்மி்­ம் நக¯ம்
- If you keep hitting it, even the ammi will move. (Ammi is a large grind stone usually not moved from its position) (Literal)
- Try and try till you succeed.

Arukamataathan keil 58 aruvaalam

- A person who does not know to cut has 58 sickles in his hand. (Sarcasm)
Theedhum nandrum pirar thara vaara

- தீடும் நந்தும் பிறர் தர வாரா
- Good or bad, it doesn't come from others. You are responsible for what you get/face.

Kaatrullapothe thootrikol

- காறள்ளேபாேதற்றிக்கள்
- Make hay while the sun shines.

Poruththaar Boomi Aazhvaar

- பெத்தார் பெத்தமிஆள்வார்
- The patient will rule the world.

Pudichhalum puliam Komba Pudichitaru

- He has taken a strong position (in the activity he is engaged in)

Saathi irundoliya verilai (Source: Avvaiyar)

- சாதி இரணெடாழியேவறிலைல்
- There are only two castes in this world: ones that give, and ones that don't.

Ettuchchuraikkai kootukku uthavathu

- ஏடுசுைரக்காய் கூட்ெகா்க்கு உதவா்
- A picture of a vegetable can't be used in a kottu('koottu' is a sort of stew made with vegetables and lentils).
- A recipe is not the dish.

Kattikkodotha chaappaadum cholikkodutha vaarthaiyum pala naaal thaangathu

- கட்டிகசாப்பாம் சால்லிக்கெசால்லிக்ெகா்வார்த்ைத­ம் பல நாள் 
- Packed food and words of wisdom from others don't last more than a few days.
- Self-reliance lasts longer than depending on others.
Koozhukkum aasai meesaikkum aasai

- கூ¸க்கும் ஆைசமீைசக்கும் ஆைச
- You can't drink thick porridge if you want to keep your mustache clean.

Kuppura vizhunthaalum meesaiyil man ottavillai

- குப்பு வின்நாம் மீைசயில் மண் ஒட்டவில்.
- I fell flat on my face, but there is no dust on my mustache (literal)
- Make sure your lies are believable.

Aakkapporthuavanukku aaraporukkavillai'

- ஆக்கப்பெபாத்தவக்கு ஆறப்பெபாக்கவில்ைல
- He could wait for the food to be cooked, but couldn't wait for it cool down (literal)
- You waited this much, wait just a bit more.

Paalukkum kaaval poonaikkum thozan

- பா´க்கும் காவல், பைனக்கும் இதாழன்
- Guardian of milk, as well as friend of the cat (literal)
- Beware of those that get a commission from both parties.

Naai vaalai nimirtha mudiyathu

- நாய் வாைலநிமிர்த்த
- A dog's tail can't be straightened (literal)
- It is difficult to change one's nature (similar to 'a leopard can't change its spots')

Naai vedam pottal kuraiththuthaana aagavendum

- நாய் வேவடம் பெபாட்டால் குைரத்தான் ஆகேவண்ஞங்சம்
- When (you) dress up as a dog, be prepared to bark (literal)
- If you take on a role, be prepared to do whatever the role demands (think before you decide).

Aarellaam paalai ponaalum naai nakkitththaana kudikkum

- ஆெறல்லாம் பபாலாய்ப்பன்னாம் நாய் நக்கித்தான் குடிக்கும்
- Even if a river flows with milk, a dog can take in only one lick at a time (literal)
- What one learns is limited by ones capacity to take in (understand).
Naai vitra kaasu kurakkaadhu

- நாய் விற்ற காசு குைரக்கா¢
- The money from selling a dog doesn't bark (literal)
- All money looks the same (no matter what was sold) (also known as the *Money-launderer's Manifesto!*)

Malayai kelli eliyai pidiththaanaam

- மலையாட்டுக் எல்லைப் பிடித்தானாம்
- (He) uprooted a mountain to catch a mouse (literal)
- (He) wastes a lot of effort to do simple jobs

Sundaikkaai kaal panam sumaikkooli mukkaal panam

- சுணைட்டக்காய் கால் பணம் சுைமக்கூலி க்கால் பணம்
- A quarter (money) for the berry, three quarters (money) to deliver it (literal)