# A SOCIO-PRAGMATIC INVESTIGATION INTO THE PROVERBS OF

THE AKURMI (KURAMA) PEOPLE OF CENTRAL NIGERIA

GADA, JEMIMAH DAN’AZUMI

Department of English and Drama

Faculty of Arts

Kaduna State University, P.M.B 2339, Kaduna, Nigeria jemimahgada@gmail.com, +2348065232007

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BUTARI, NAHUM UPAH

Department of English and Drama

Faculty of Arts

Kaduna State University nwunubete@yahoo.com, +2348027474733

# Abstract

Studies have underscored that fact that proverbs are a rich cultural heritage which can easily be washed away by modernization if they are not preserved and passed to the next generation within a speech community. The need to keep making researches on proverbs as a way of preserving our cultural heritage can never be over-flogged. In the Akurmi speech community, not much research has been carried out at all linguistic levels of their language (T’kurmi), it is therefore classified among the languages facing the danger of extinction. Hence the need to carry out a research like this because aside from the need to preserve its rich cultural heritage, it will be a way of documenting the language itself and adding up to the many researches done on proverbs by various researchers. This paper therefore, attempts a Socio-Pragmatic investigation of the Akurmi proverbs using Searle’s and Hymes’ framework of analysis. As an analytical study, it draws data from the rich pool of Akurmi proverbs within their various contexts of usages. The paper establishes that proverbs as a form of oral literature are the most consistent and most employed by the Akurmi people because they are used in everyday situation.

# Introduction

Language is an avenue through which cultures can be understood. Language and social reality are strictly tied together, hence language is said to be culturally transmitted (Heath, 2003). This implies that peoples’ cultural orientation, attitude, belief, disposition, world view and social value among others are reflected in their language (including proverbs). Proverbs are products of human experiences and mostly culture specific. They (proverbs) are concise in structure, often known by heart, loaded with philosophical meaning and passed from one generation to another. The role of proverbs in societies where discourse is laced with assorted forms of proverbs for different communicative functions cannot be over emphasized. Proverbs are a special way by which social behaviour is controlled in order to ensure mutual interaction among the interlocutors. Proverbs provide hard hitting messages in a profound way rather than in a nasty or demoralizing manner. They pass very weighty messages in a mild or gentle way. The persuasive and highly philosophical nature of proverbs makes them a special means of communication in any discourse.

Every speech community has its own proverbs that are used in their everyday life through speeches or conversions which serve as a hallmark of their linguistic culture and can naturally be acknowledged in their language. An understanding of their proverbs then provides a key to their thinking, reasoning and valuing patterns. It is an established fact that a lot of researches have been carried out in the past on proverbs. However, it needs to be pointed out that our cultures and traditions are diverse and should therefore not be taken for granted and generalized especially when it comes to meaning explication in proverbs. Also, some of the universal theories adopted by such researchers on proverbs are not likely to yield the same results in a different context.

To the best of the knowledge of the present researcher not much has been documented on T’kurmi language which makes it susceptible to the linguistic monster called- “languagedeath”. As things stand presently according to Wurm’s (2003) and UNESCO’s (2010) classification of language endangerment, T’kurmi can be classified as vulnerable or potentially endangered. This is because it is imperfectly learned/acquired by children in the areas where the language is spoken because of the over-riding influence of the dominant language – Hausa. Also, the phenomenon of what can be best described as ‘Diaspora’ children is not helping matters. These are children who are born in the urban areas and have little or no contact with the villages; they lack the basic knowledge of such forms of arts like proverbs as well as their dynamism. The study will therefore assist greatly in documenting Akurmi proverbs as well as analyzing them within their context of usage.

# Definitions of Proverbs

Several attempts have been made by different scholars towards providing an accurate definition of proverbs. While some of the outcomes of these attempts have provided one striking revelation or the other about the nature of proverbs, none has been accepted as the universal definition of the term proverb (Zakariyah 2013). One of the many attempts towards defining a proverb is the effort of Taylor (1931) cited in (Olowonihi, 2000:15), according to him;

The definition of a proverb is too formidable to repay the task, and any attempt to combine in a single definition all essential elements giving each the proper emphasis, is still even just a tip of the ice berg. But many people seem to identify a proverb from ordinary statements. Thus, it is a kind of incommunicable quality that informs one if sentence is proverbial and if another is not. Therefore no one definition can enable a person to conclude authoritatively that any given sentence is proverbial.

Finnegan (2012) submits that the exact definition of ‘proverb’ is not easy. There is, however, some general agreement as to what constitutes a proverb. It is a saying in more or less fixed form marked by ‘shortness, sense and salt’ and distinguished by the popular acceptance of the truth tersely expressed in it.

Abrams, (2012) defines proverbs as short pithy statements of widely accepted truths about everyday life. He explains further that many proverbs are allegorical in that the explicit statement is meant to have by analogy or by extended reference, a general application.

According to Bascom (1964) proverbs are the most important type of aphorism in Africa and they have deeper meaning than is stated literally; a meaning which can be understood only through the analysis of the social situations to which they are appropriate. In the same vein, English Proverbs (2010), proverbs are popularly defined as short expressions of popular wisdom.

A proverb, from the Latin proverbium, is a simple and concrete saying popularly known and repeated, which expresses a truth, based on common sense or the practical experience of humanity (Latin, 2011).

Also, Mieder (1985: 119) as cited in Dabaghi et al (2011) defines a proverb as ‘a short, generally known sentence of the folk which contains wisdom, truth, morals, and traditional views in a metaphorical, fixed and memorisable form and which is handed down from generation to generation’. He adds that there are proverbs which define proverbs and further adds that ‘proverbs are the children of experience, wisdom of the streets,’ and that proverbs are true words’. According to him, proverbs contain a lot of common sense, experience, wisdom and truth, reflecting ready-made traditional strategies in oral speech acts and writings from high literature to the mass media. In the same vein, Akporobaro (2005:72) defines a proverb as “a traditional saying that is concise, witty and figurative in form which usually expresses a truth derived from practical experience”.

It is therefore deducible from the assertions above that proverbs contain elements of truth, experience and wisdom. This is why proverbs are authoritative and attract attention. Proverbs are associated with wisdom because they show the ability of the human brain to relate ideas and events that are happening in real life.

Experience comes with age and that is why more often than not, adults would use proverbs that summarize a given event more than the youth because they might have gone through it or may have seen someone go through it. Hence, they use them with a lot of conviction.

# Characteristics of Proverbs

Several scholars in the field of Paremiology have advanced their views on characteristics of proverbs. According to Norrick as cited in Dabaghi (1985), proverbs have certain characteristics. He maintains that proverbs are self-contained in that none of their essential grammatical units may be replaced. This distinguishes proverbs from proverbial phrases which do not have grammatical units. In addition, he states that proverbs are in statement form. He further asserts that proverbs must be complete sentences. Finally, he states that proverbs are tradition as they are items of folklore.

The characteristics above distinguish proverbs from the ordinary statements we encounter every day in speech or in writing. Whereas words in sentences can be replaced with their synonyms, replacing words in a proverb will kill it. This is because proverbs have a fixed form. Trench (1853) as cited in Dabaghi (2012) posits that proverbs constitute three things: the first one is that of shortness such that it can be uttered in a breath, secondly, a proverb should have sense and the third is that it should have salt; so as not to be easily forgotten. Shortness in a proverb means that the words contained in it are carefully chosen to deliver the message effectively and also to enhance memorability.

Kipury (1983:148-157) notes that proverbs are usually stated in the form of a maxim, epigram or aphorism or that they can be in the form of a poetic statement. Kipury further notes that the basic difference between a proverb and other forms of oral literature is that while some of them, like riddles and songs are sung during functions, can be posed or listed in succession at a specific time in a specific context, proverbs cannot. She adds that it is a mark of admirable elegance in speech to be able to use the apt aphorism skillfully.

# Nature of Akurmi Proverbs

The Akurmi people popularly referred to as Kurama by their Hausa neighbours occupy a fairly sizeable territory spanning across four states namely: Bauchi, Plateau, Kano and Kaduna. They occupy about 80% of the landmass and 70% of the population in Lere Local Government Area of Kaduna State. The term Akurmiwas derived from the ‘forest people’ which is the generic and genetic name for Akurmi people who occupy the geo-political areas described earlier on. The Akurmi people speak ‘T’kurmi’’ a language which belongs to the Platoid language of the Niger-Congo language group. Linguistically, the Kurama people belong to the Eastern Kainji cluster, a sub-branch of the Benue Congo (Nengel, 1988). This area covers the present day Kwara, Niger, Kogi, FCT Abuja, Nassarawa, Benue, Taraba, Adamawa, Plateau, Bauchi, Gombe, and the Southern part of Kaduna State. This area is termed to be the melting pot of ethnic groups including the Kurama. Ojaode et al (2008) as cited in Nengel suggests that it was the place ‘where the tower of Babel was pulled down’’. T’kurmi has various dialects such as the Garu, Kudaru, Karku, and Waba dialects which are mostly regional dialects.Akurmi society constitutes what linguists call a speech community. The language of the Akurmiis calledT’kurmi and it has various dialects such as the Garu, Kudaru, Karku, and Waba which are mostly regional dialects (Amos2014:158). Akurmi are a people whose rich culture has been sustained for over a hundred years.

David and Jeremiah (2014:135) posit that Akurmi proverbs are like any other proverbs in any other language. They are short, concise, and meaningful and carry multiple meanings. Akurmi proverbs are said in a simple and understanding language. Although their meanings are not gotten as easily as one could think of but they are not different from other proverbs. Proverbs are meant to educate, inform, and forecast the future. Akurmi proverbs possess the same characteristics of any proverb in any community. Also, proverbs have been the medium of transmitting and transferring cultural norms among the Akurmi people. A proverb in the Akurmi language is an instrument of rebuke, correction and encouragement. In the Akurmi community just like most African societies, the survival of proverbs was in their usage because they were orally handed down to the next generation. This means that those who took interest in them became responsible for their existence. As a result, some proverbs may easily be forgotten and others widely used as dictated by context.

# Classification of Akurmi Proverbs

The Akurmi proverbs may be classified as follows:

Proverbs that promote unity. Examples of such proverbs include:

1. Sa uvuuusatarko ko uyaneb’nereubjiyare utu nugi. (Until a wall cracks or develops a fault then a lizard will enter)
2. Taat’ne a t’nat’pchizitaat’gure. (Mutual respect and unity leads to social and moral development which constitutes peaceful co-existence)

Context of usage: A situation where there has been some evidence of inter-sibling rivalry or conflict within members of the Akurmi speech community.

# Proverbs that promote mentoring. An example is:

i. Apuwasaanewu Mande udama ana vanabo utu dam (What mother goat

eats is what the young one will eat)

Context of usage: whenever a parent/older member of the Akurmi speech community falls short of being a good example to their child/younger ones.

# Proverbs that pertain to correction. An example is:

ii. Buru riyauuraraniyiawoukugofet’yang t’ b’zenk’zeng (Wisdom

acquisition is only for those who listen carefully)

Context of usage: when correcting wrong behaviour

# Proverbs that pertain to wisdom. Examples include

i. Ka b’tareb’nezwama, sa bi niyauchom (If you want to eat a hare, you must run fast) ii. Kan wuamauinritrike, ntaren-ntarenntunna (If a thing reaches the climax it is about to be over)

iii. Gwammanwammungabzarennebo, gwammanwammurawannebo (It is

better to die a hero than to die as a sluggard)

Context of usage: when someone is passing through trying times

# Proverbs of ridicule

i. Upimsuunugofouhiyauniciyenoba (A black stink ant that smells does

not perceive its smell.)

Context of usage: when someone displays any sign of pride and a judgmental attitude especially if that person has a well-known weakness.

# Proverbs that promote tolerance. Example include:

i. Ka n’vuwanobonimyisetabiwaab’tankenba (You cannot cut off your

finger even if it is rotten)

Context of usage: when a member of the speech community has committed a grievous offence

# Proverbs that pertain to secrecy. An example includes:

i. N’shen nun wata, a wata aka nen (Whatever is done indoors should remain indoors)

Context of usage: when someone is trying to expose something that is deemed a secret.

# Theoretical Considerations

This paper adopts a Socio-Pragmatic approach to the study of selected Akurmi proverbs. Searle’s phenomenon of illocutionary indirect speech acts is used because Akurmi proverbs just like other proverbs are not direct speeches but are more or less metaphorical- witty and figurative in form and that there is not always a one-on-one relationship between form and meaning (illocution). Akurmi proverbs go beyond their literal meanings and their metaphorical meanings are deeper reflections on life and speak to broader concerns indirectly. These metaphorical meanings have to be deciphered through intellectual wit. While the literal interpretations may assist in communication, it only serves as an impetus to decipher the deeper, embedded meanings (metaphorical) of proverbs to understand the importance of these knowledge systems. It is also important to understand the context in which the proverbs are spoken. Proverbs are appropriate in select contexts and situations.

In indirect speech acts, the speaker communicates more than he actually says by way of relying on the speaker’s and hearer’s mutually shared background information, both linguistic and non-linguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer. Searle posits that the most common indirect speech act form is the directives (Levinson, 1983: 264). He emphasizes that the hearer may not find it difficult to understand the illocutionary point of an indirect speech act because of the context of use, the shared background knowledge of the speaker and the hearer (linguistic and non-linguistic) and some inferences on the part of the hearer (interlocutor). Moreover, Searle points out two types of indirect acts. One: An indirect act which has both a primary, non-literal meaning that has to be inferred and a secondary, literal meaning that needs no inference. Two: An indirect act that has just one, non-literal, inferable meaning. The indirect act which has both a primary, non-literal meaning that has to be inferred is adopted in this study because Akurmi proverbs have both primary and non-literal meanings that need to be inferred for proper understanding and use in accordance with the view that proverbs have deeper meaning than is stated literally; a meaning which can be understood only through the analysis of the social situations to which they are appropriate.

It should be obvious that the notion of the "ethnography of speaking" is extremely relevant to the study of proverbs; thereforeHyme’s model is adopted in the study of Akurmi proverbs. One needs to ask not only for proverbs, and for what counts as a proverb, but also for information as to the other components of the situations in which proverbs are used. What are the rules governing who can use proverbs, or particular proverbs, and to whom, on what occasions and in what places, with what other persons present or absent. Do restrictions or prescriptions as to the use of proverbs or a proverb have to do with particular topics or with the specific relationship between speaker and addressee? What exactly are the contributing contextual factors which make the use of proverbs, or of a particular proverb, possible or not possible, appropriate or inappropriate?

Hymes (1972:22) states that: the starting point is the ethnographic analysis of the communicative habits of a community in their totality, determining what counts as communicative events. Hymes’ belief is that social matrix, context, setting and culture have strong influence on communicative events so, an adequate ethnography is here considered to include the culturally significant arrangement of productive statements about the relevant relationships obtaining among locally defined categories and context within a social matrix.

# Methodology

This paper adopts the qualitative design in the sense that the significance of the selected proverbs are accounted for, bearing in mind the socio-cultural background of a group of language users whose worldview is aptly projected through the way the proverbs are contextualized. The corpus comprises 10 written versions of proverbs randomly selected from the book entitled-The Akurmi People of Central Nigeria: Their Heritage and Hope. The proverbs were originally written in T’kurmi but translated in English for the purpose of this research. Thereafter, Searle’s phenomenon of indirect speech is used to analyze the proverbs.

# Analysis

1. Sa uvuuusatarko ko uyaneb’nereubjiyare utu nugi. (Until a wall cracks or develops a fault then a lizard will enter)
2. Taat’ne a t’nat’pchizitaat’gure. (Mutual respect and unity leads to social and moral development which constitutes peaceful co-existence)

With regard to the relationship between a child and his siblings, proverbs play an important role in showing how one child should behave towards another. Akurmi parents are very anxious to have unity among their children and they believe that a lack of such unity would have a serious disruptive effect upon the family's solidarity. They are, therefore, constantly on guard to ensure that siblings’ unity is encouraged. A situation where there has been some evidence of intersibling rivalry or conflict will elicit a proverbial comment such as proverb 1 above from a parent or older relative. Literally, the proverb entails or presupposes that where there are cracks; lizards will most certainly gain entrance. While the non-literal meaning refers to the issue of unity which is so much cherished among the Akurmi people, that is why even their motto captures that- “Sa no Dote waCiye, Taati ne Ubosa” (unity is the key to progress). Therefore, all manner of quarrelling and bickering is highly prohibited in order that the enemy does not take advantage of that to gain victory over them. This proverb is addressed to either individuals or the entire community in times of quarrels or misunderstanding that is likely to threaten the unity of families or even a whole community. The expectation is that having spoken this proverb, the addressees will realize the need to remain united, they will therefore put aside their differences and move ahead.

Likewise, in the second proverb the literal meaning entails that the right hand washes the left hand and vice-versa. The non-literal usage is an emphasis on the fact that no matter how important or self-sufficient a person thinks he/she is, they are not islands because they need the companionship and support of others. It is used in the Akurmi community especially by the leaders of the community to remind their members that no matter how well off they think they are, there are certain things that they might not be able to do all by themselves, hence there is need to treat one another with respect because you will need their help or support one day.

3.Apuwasaanewu Mande udama ana vanabo utu dam (What mother goat eats is what the young one will eat)

The Akurmi people believe that children adopt their parents’ behaviour or character. Parents are therefore expected to serve as good role models in order to avoid transferring negative attributes to their children/wards. It is more of ‘a like father/mother like son/daughter’ phenomenon. The person(s) to whom this proverb is addressed is expected to be careful the way he/she conduct their lives so that they do not pass on negative behaviours to their children.

Parents do have responsibility with respect to their own behavior in the child training context. They are expected to do more than simply bring up their children in accordance with cultural norms. As evidence for this, there is a proverb the Akurmi parent might cite whenever he felt the other parent fell short of being a good example for their child. The proverb would be used to inform the guilty spouse of his mistake. In the proverb: “What mother goat eats is what the young one will eats”, there is an explicit indication of the importance attached to parental example in the education of an Akurmi child. Suppose a father who quarrels with his siblings strikes them when he gets angry. The child sees this and later when he becomes angry with one of his brothers or sisters, he hits him. The father, observing the child's behaviour, is upset and he admonishes the boy not to do such things. When the father complains to the mother about the boy's actions, she might reply (not in front of the child) with the proverb to communicate the idea that if he is disturbed about what the child is doing, he should remember that he himself is the model for the child. It should be noted that this proverb is not limited in its use to indicating only the effects of bad parental example. It may also be used to show the effects of good parental example on the child. Essentially, the proverb is an expression of the strong Akurmi belief that the parental influence to which a child has been exposed has a great deal to do with the type of person he ultimately becomes.

1. Buru riyauuraraniyiawoukugofet’yang t’ b’zenk’zeng (Wisdom acquisition is only for those who listen carefully)

This is literally translated as whoever is attentive will be able to hear the movement of an ant; the deeper meaning is that those who listen attentively when an elder addresses them no matter how small his voice sounds will gain the wisdom which he is trying to pass to them. The Akurmi people use such proverb in different contexts: a father to his child (children) or a friend to a friend in a bid to correct bad behavior. It could also be an elder in the community correcting a wrong behavior of his board of elders or of the youths or any other person who misbehaves. Respect is esteemed highly within the Akurmi community; elders are revered so much so that they are viewed as store-houses of wisdom. Therefore, listening to them is an act of respect. The listener whom this proverb is addressed to is expected to imbibe the culture of listening to advice from those older than him/her as an act of respect and in order to correct misbehavior.

1. Ka b’tareb’nezwama, sa bi niyauchom(If you want to eat a hare, you must run fast)
2. Kan wuamauinritrike, ntaren-ntarenntunna(If a thing reaches the climax it is about to be over)
3. Gwammanwammungabzarennebo, gwammanwammurawannebo(It is better to die a hero than to die as a sluggard)

Proverb 5 literally presupposes that anyone who wants to eat an hare must be a fast runner. The proverb implies that enjoyment comes only after hard work or suffering. In the Akurmi community, hunting is a common phenomenon associated with gallantry. The hare being a swift runner, a hunter must be willing to run in order to catch it. This proverb is used to cheer someone who has been passing through trying times so that he persists and keeps pressing on to achieve his goal because nothing good comes easily. The interlocutors in this proverb may be both old and young.

In the same vein, proverb 6 literally means that there is nothing in this life that has no end. Any situation that a person finds himself/ herself is not permanent. Whenever a man feels or thinks that there is no way out of a seemingly intractable situation, the solution to the problem may be at hand. Therefore, one should not be discouraged and give up at that point but rather persevere on. Again, this proverb is used especially by elderly people to encourage a member of the Akurmi community who has been passing through trying times so that he will persist and keep pressing on to achieve his goal. Such a proverb is seen to give hope to a person who is possibly at the verge of giving up on either their child/husband/wife or a challenging task.

Proverb 7 is used to encourage someone in the battle field who may be at the point of surrendering because of the circumstance he finds himself. It gives strength, hope and encourages one to keep on pressing forward. This proverb is common especially in the gathering of youths, especially as they engage in community work known as Inyane or during war when they are encouraged to be heroic and gallant. The person addressed here is expected not to give up especially in very tough or trying times.

1. Upimsuunugofouhiyauniciyenoba (A black stink ant that smells does not perceive its smell.)

The proverb above literally refers to the stink ant that is smelly but does not perceive its foul smell. It is an indirect way of referring to people who are quick to point out other people’sweaknesses or wrongs forgetting that they are also guilty of the same offence. The Akurmi view the black stink ant as smelly and unclean. This proverb is meant to ridicule anyone who displays any sign of pride and a judgmental attitude especially if that person has a well-known weakness. It is therefore an admonition on people to always search their activities before condemning others, a kind of self-admonition. The context of use is therefore that of sharp rebuke and the meaning cannot be deduced literally.

1. Ka n’vuwanobonimyisetabiwaab’tankenba (You cannot cut off your finger even if it is rotten)

The role of the proverb as an agent of communication is even more apparent in an actual case in which the parents of a child disagree as to the kind of disciplinary action to be taken. While the husband adopts an extreme position such as disowning the child because he is fed up with the child’s bad behaviour, the wife can respond using the proverb- “You cannot cut off your finger even if it is rotten” as a way of disagreeing with the husband.

The literal meaning of the proverb is that one looks for a solution of treating a rotten finger instead of cutting it off. The implied meaning here is that no matter how bad someone is, he or she will never be abandoned by his or her close relatives. It is often used among the Akurmi people to evoke a sense of togetherness among close relatives or even the community. Here, the hearers are expected to show tolerance to an erring member of the family or community.

10.N’shen nun wata, a wata aka nen (Whatever is done indoors should remain indoors)

This proverb literally implies that there are certain things that should remain indoors and not exposed. It addresses indirectly those kinds of Akurmi people whether men or women who cannot keep secrets that have to do with family, friends or the community. It urges them to know that their bellies are not meant for food alone but also for keeping of secrets. A typical example is that of a man or woman trying to disclose certain issues that should remain within the confines of the home or between her and her husband. The more experienced men/women would caution him/her by using this proverb. It serves as a sharp rebuke and an encouragement to be selective in the kind of information they share with others and what they need to keep to themselves.

# Discussion

Much more might be learned about the import of each of these proverbs and the conditions governing their use through field study in an indigenous setting. Some provisional observations, however, can be made here. The Akurmi proverbs analyzed above are seen to exhibit the features of Searle’s illocutionary indirect speech act. This is so because all of the ten proverbs contain both the literal and non-literal aspects and that the non-literal meaning is decoded from the context of usage of such proverbs. A typical example is the context of use of proverb 9- “Ka n’vuwanobonimyisetabiwaab’tankenba” (You cannot cut off your finger even if it is rotten). Here, the context of use is an erring child and that is why the proverb is seen to function indirectly by referring to the child as ‘a rotten finger’ (metaphorical). Therefore, the context of usage of this proverb must be taking into consideration in interpreting the deep meaning (non-literal meaning) of the proverb. Likewise proverb 10- “N’shen nun wata, a wata aka nen” (Food that is cooked indoors should be eaten indoors) literally refers to “food cooked indoors” but because of the context of use, the deep meaning is decoded which is an address to those Akurmi people whether men or women who cannot keep secrets that have to do with family, friends or the community. It urges them to know that their bellies are not meant for food alone but also for keeping of secrets. A typical example is that of a man or woman trying to disclose certain issues that should remain within the confines of the home or between her and her husband. The more experienced men/women would caution him/her by using this proverb. It serves as a sharp rebuke and an encouragement to be selective in the kind of information they share with others and what they need to keep to themselves.

Apparently the most important Akurmi rules for the use of proverbs has to do with the identity of the participants in the speech situation. It is the identity of the addressor which seems crucial for the genre to be used at all, and the identity of the addressee, or audience, which seems crucial to the appropriate use of a particular proverb. Regarding the genre as a whole, the main consideration seems to be the age of the person speaking relative to the age of the addressee. The speaker is normally older for some proverbs, equal in age for others. Some proverbs might be appropriate to either case. Younger persons are not wholly excluded, but Akurmi etiquette dictates that a younger person's use of a proverb in the presence of an older person must be marked by a prefatory apology.

Of the present examples, it seems safe to say that an elder person would probably address numbers 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, and 10 to a younger person; e.g., a parent might say them to his child (but the elder need not be a parent). In contrast, number 3 would be more likely to be addressed by an elder to another elderly person, e.g., by a husband to his wife or by an adult to a friend or relative. Numbers 1and 2 could be used by either seniors to juniors or by age equals. The topics or situations which might appropriately elicit a proverb are primarily concerned with a younger person's behavioural responsibilities toward his elders and an elder's behavioural responsibilities toward younger individuals as well as the collective responsibilities of members of a community. All the proverbs refer to proper and accepted behaviour among members of the Akurmi people. What stands out clearly in the proverbs is the identity of the speakers and the addressees which is crucial with regard to whether a particular proverb is appropriate or not. For example, a child would most probably be a suitable addressee for numbers 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9, but a child would rarely, if ever, be the addressee of number 3. In fact, it is doubtful whether number 3 would be used to any addressee if the child in question were even present. The point is that the presence or absence of individuals other than the principal addressee may be an important factor governing the use of particular proverbs in speech. The use of proverbs is not restricted by need for knowledge of any special code other than the Akurmi language itself, so far as we know.

# Conclusion

Proverbs have been and remain a most powerful and effective instrument for the transmission of culture, social morality, manners and ideas of the Akurmi people from one generation to another. The paper establishes that proverbs as a form of oral literature are the most consistent and most employed by the Akurmi people because they are used in everyday situation. The reason behind the efficacy of the proverb is that it is an aphorism, a wise saying based upon people’s experience, and it is a reflection of the social values and sensibilities of the Akurmi people. Proverbs cannot be out-weight because of the fact they have been in existence and are still very vital in our day-to- day activities. They are employed in a variety of ways: to control activities without the use of force, as devices for shaming and getting out of difficult situations without losing face as well as a means of praise, encouragement etc. Some of these proverbs have been there before our great-great grandparents were born and are still transmitted from generation to generation to prevent them from going into extinction as they are already being faced with the threat of endangerment.

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