



A Critical assessment of Mongolian idioms and their cultural similarity in Tamilnadu social context

Munhtuul Norjvanchig¹ and Sundarsingh Joseph^{2,*}

¹Mongolian University of Science and Technology, Mongolia.

²Karunya University, Coimbatore, India.

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ABSTRACT

An analysis of Mongolian idioms reveals that there is lot of cultural significance which could be compared with cultural context of other society especially Tamil society. The paper highlights some of the idioms used in Mongolian cultural context and presents the meaning of each idiom. The study is made in general perspective and the meaning of each idiom is explained both in Mongolian and Tamil context. The culture of Mongolia has been heavily influenced by the Mongolian nomadic way of life. A few idioms used in the contexts of family life, discussion with older people and village people are analyzed and their contextual significance is highlighted. The present attempt is to bring out the contextual relevance of some of the Mongolia idioms and show how significantly they fit into Tamil culture and tradition.

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Introduction

Both Mongolian and Tamil are rich in tradition dating back to 3000 BC. It appears that religions and belief systems of these two societies appear similar in more than one way. India has rich cultural heritage and a wealth of long tradition. Indian has numerous languages, religious systems and traditional beliefs. Though the society is complicated with diversity in culture and tradition, the people of India have learnt to coexist. The different religious and traditional systems have helped the people to complement with each other in more than one way. Among the regional culture, the Tamil culture has its own significance and it is influenced by many other culture and regions. Mongolia has experienced influence from Tibet and Tibetan Buddhism, and from China. Since the 20th century, Russian and, via Russia, European cultures have had a strong effect on Mongolia. For 3000 years, the people of the steppes have adopted a pastoral way of life moving in the search pastures and campsites. They live by and for their livestock, in the forefront of which the horse undoubtedly was the first animal domesticated in these infinite meadows. Nomadic life thrives in summer and survives in winter. Considering climatic conditions, especially during winter, such lifestyle may seem to the outside world to be a very hard way of living. Traditionally, Mongolian nomads raise 5 species of livestock known as the five 5 muzzles: horses, cows, sheep, goats and camels. Khalkha Mongolian is the official language and is spoken by 90 percent of the people. Minor languages include Khazakh, Russian, and Chinese. Khalkha Mongolian is part of the diverse Uralic- Altaic language family, which spread with the ancient Mongol Empire and also contains Korean, Manchu, Turkish, Finnish, and Hungarian. Each of these languages features highly inflected grammar. Khalkha Mongolian may be written in traditional Uighur(vertical) or Cyrillic script.

The most important public festivals are the Naadam (English: game). The biggest one is held each year on July 11-13 in Ulaanbaatar. Naadam involves horse racing, wrestling, and archery competitions. For families, most important festival is Tsagaan Sar(English: white month), which is roughly

equivalent to the Chinese New Year and usually falls into January or February. Family members and friends visit each other, exchange presents- very popular presents for all opportunities are the khadag- and eat huge quantities of dumplings. New Year becomes a big event, and it is one of the biggest celebrations, comparable to Christmas in the West.

Idiom and its significance

An idiom is a combination of words that has a figurative meaning, due to its common usage. An idiom's figurative meaning is separate from the literal meaning or definition of the words from which it is made. Idioms are numerous and they occur frequently in all languages. Normally *idiom* is used for a specialized vocabulary or an expression that is not obvious. If you are studying a foreign language, idioms are the hardest phrases to translate. Most idioms do not seem to make any sense because their origins are so old. Some of them come from ancient literature or even classic films. People use idioms to make their speech more attractive and impressive. Idioms are a way to make language more vivid and descriptive. Language is always changing, people come up with new words and phrases every year. Idioms also allow speakers to say things indirectly, sometimes in a playful way so that the listener will not get offended. In that way, they can soften the blow. Another reason people often use idioms is that they can save time. Saying that something is a "hot potato" can be more interesting than saying no one wanted to touch it, although they have the same meaning. Presented below are some of the significant idioms used in Mongolian contexts. The researchers have tried to find out their relevance in the Tamil context.

Family/ life

1. аавын цээж гаргах –father's chest show (to act like adults)- If a young boy talks and behaves like old people, old family members or older people use this idiom.

Жишээ нь: "Хөөрхий дөө, ядарсан амьтан юм даа. Юун ч хар нялхаараа аавын цээж гаргаав дээ!" хэмээн бодсоор би араас нь алхан унаандаа суув.(Я. Ганбаатар, "Нутгаан гүйсэн адуу" өгүүллэг)

It is commonly used in Tamil culture highlighting how a young fellow behaves like a matured person. In Mongolia it is used for acting like brave and it is used in a positive way. The context and the suggested meaning are the same in both the culture.

2. араар нь тавих- behind put (cheat someone)- when husband or wife betrays each other, people use it.

Жишээ нь: Ямар хүний толгойд гэр бүлээ **араар нь тавих** бодол төрдөг байна аа. (До. Болдхуяг, “Хар” өгүүллэг)

In Tamilnadu also similar situations occur like any other society as it is a universal problem. It is also used when a brother or a sister cheat the elder or younger ones. It is often used when son betrays his father.

3. гай газар доороос- troubled ground underarm (happen an unexpected thing) – to suddenly become very angry or upset with the unexpected trouble and they nag and use it.

Жишээ нь: “Намайг тайван байлгаач. Ямар **гай газар доороос** гараад ирэв ” гэж үглэв. (“Зулын сарын бороо” өгүүллэг)

In Tamil culture mostly troubled ground under the feet is used. But the people become anxious and react or act desperately

4. гал голомт балрах- fire hearth fail(all family members are killed or die)- when parents don't have a son or they don't have any children or their only son dies, because of it parents tizzy(suffer) from it and use the idiom

In Tamil it is symbolic when someone says ‘light is put off’ that the flame of the family or fire of the family is gone. It is also possible to use the idiom in Tamil context.

Жишээ нь: Гагцхүү Гөлөгдэй баатрын өвгөд дээдсийн тахилга тасарч, **гал голомт балрахын** гашууныг бодож нэгэн болзол тавьж, гуйн хүссэн ёсоор Шунын амийг хэлтрүүлье. (Б. Ренчин, “Нууцыг задруулсан захиа”)

5. Гал манах- fire guard(inherit)- parents want to inherit the property such as house to their children or son, they use this idiom.

Үрээд үрээд дуусахгүй эд хөрөнгө надад байвч, цайгаа хувааж уух хань минь, **гал манаж** үлдэх үр минь надад алга байна. (Г. Мөнхцэцэг, “Тахир сар”)

Fire is used symbolically as something protective but in Tamil culture fire is used as harmful or something that destroys evil. In this context fire is used as a guard.

6. давсанд явах- to salt go(to sleep)- when the little children or older people sleep, parents caress them and say humorously this idiom

Жишээ нь: Өвөө чинь юу гэх бол доо. “Номгүй хүнд давс худалддаггүй, хомгүй тэмээнд ачаа ачдаггүй” гэх байх даа гэхэд бөөн инээдэм болоод өвөөгийнхөө хойноос **давсанд явцгаав**. (А. Далхжав, “Дулаан нугынхан” Утга зохиол урлаг)

It is a typical Mongolian idiom which has no Tamil parallel. But the context appears similar as it is done in any society

7. замаа алдах- way lose/miss/(astray, go wrong)- when parents are upset with the children who don't want to study, work and roam everywhere, they use it

Жишээ нь: Охин маань уг нь энэ жил сургууль төгсч байх ёстой хүүхэд. Сургуулиа хаяад замаа **алдаж байна**. (Б. Шүүдэрцэцэг, “Муу охин”)

This idiom is universal and in Tamil it is exactly the same like Mongolian idiom. The context is also exactly the same in both Tamil and Mongolian

8. хуруу хумсаа хуйхлах- finger nail burn(make a lot of effort or suffering for living)- wives usually complain about their below average life to their husband, they nag and use this idiom

Жишээ нь: Нүүр хуурайшаад байна, тос авч түрхэх юмсан, чиний цалин амьдралд хүрэхгүй байна. Би л хувьдаа ингэж **хуруу хумсаа хуйхлах** шахсан ядуу тарчиг амьдарч чадахгүй. Гэвч тэр надтай амьдарсаар арваад жил өнгөрсөн байлаа. (П. Батхуяг, “Загас мэт” өгүүллэг)(blood, sweat and tears)

This idiom is also exactly similar to Tamil idiom which conveys the same meaning and uses finger as a symbol.

9. Хэл амаа ололцох- tongue mouth find (make peace with husband or wife)- after argument and misunderstanding, family members make peace with each other and understand each other well, they use it

Жишээ нь: Сүүлийн үед уух шалтаг мундахгүй болсон нь эхнэртэйгээ **хэл амаа ололцох** гээч төвөгтэй асуудлыг үүсгээд байгаа. (Х. Болор- Эрдэнэ, “Тэргэл сартай шөнө”)

The Mongolian idiom conveys that ‘the tongue finds its own mouth’. The context is found in Tamil culture but the idiom is not used.

Older people

1. Амаа барих- mouth hold(regret)-older people usually warn the young people not regret after doing wrong things

Жишээ нь: Миний санаа амарч тайвшрахдаа ингэж бодлоггүй үг алдсан хойноо **амаа барив**.

(Г. Мөнхнасан , “навч ” өгүүллэг. Утга зохиол урлаг)

Though it is of common usage, it is used as an idiom in a special way in Mongolia. In Tamil culture it is more attached with exclamatory expressions with a typical gesture of closing the mouth with the palm of the hand

2. Алганы амт үзүүлэх-palm taste show(slap)- when older people are angry with younger people or naughty children who make mistakes and wrong things, older people want to punish them and use this idiom

Аавын минь **алганы амт үзүүлсэн** тэр мөч надад дахин олдохгүй агшин байж дээ гэж одоо боддог юм. (Жа. Пүрэв, “Аавын алганы амт”)

It is more symbolic in Tamil culture with showing slapping gesture. It is commonly used in almost places by everyone irrespective of age group. In Mongolia it is used only by the older people

3. задарсан хар тархи- disassembled black brain(very naughty child)- when older people are angry with naughty children who make mistakes, they nag and say this idiom

Жишээ нь: Хагархай Жамбал Хөлөрсөн зулайгаа илэх зуураа, “Зодоон хийх шалтаг л байхгүй юу, **задарсан хар тархи**” гэв. (С. Пүрэв, “Чөтгөрийн бага Гүнсэл” өгүүллэг. Өнөөдрийн монгол)

It is typical Mongolian way of describing the characteristic of a child who is very mischievous. For Mongolian black colour is something to do with strange and unusual things. Child is riddle and it is considered a mischief.

4. нас залуу, цус шингэн- age young, blood thin(very young)- older people encourage young people by words to make them brave

Нас залуу, цус шингэн, тархи нь сэргэлэн та нар шиг улс юу юм гэхээс мань мэт нь яах вэ дээ.(Ш. Баяржаргал, “Эрэл”)

In Tamil culture it is used in a negative connotation which compares a young fellow who acts like an adult with the imperfect ripening of a fruit. In Mongolian tradition it is used in a positive way.

5. насны нар хэвийх- age sun set(to grow old)- older people avoid from saying “I am getting older”, so they use this idiom

Жишээ нь: Цаг хугацаа гагч ийм нүд ирмэхийн төдийд урсан өнгөрдөгсөн үү, эс бөгөөс хүмүүний нас гэгч тийм агшин зуурын ахар түргэн үү, нэг л мэдэхэд **насны намар хэвийгээд**, үсэнд буурал суусан хойно төрсөн нутагтаа дахин хөл тавьж, анх амласан агаараар амьсгалах нь энэ ээ. (Я. Ганбаатар, “Алтайд өргөсөн дуулал”)

It is symbolic in Mongolian tradition that sun set is attached with growing old. The Mongolians, especially men, never accept that they are old and they are against confessing it. So they symbolically present it. In Tamil culture also sun set is attached to fading away of human life.

6. насан эцэслэх- age finish(die)- older people avoid from saying “die” directly, so they use this idiom

Жишээ нь: Шударга журам, үнэн ёс ялан мандаж, сайхан санаат өвгөн авга багшийн хэлдэг ёсоор дэлхий дахинд нэгэн гэр, хүн ард ах дүү болох цаг ирэхэд тэр цагийг ойртуулахын **төлөө насан эцэслэж**, түмэн гашуун эдэлсэн бүгдийн тахилгын сүм босгох цаг бий. (Б. Ринчин, “Гүнж”)

It is also one of the characteristics of Mongolians that they refuse to accept the reality, the reality of death or loss. In Tamil culture people use symbols to convey the loss or death.

7. нүгэл үйлдэх- sin do(to do bad things such as lie, kill the animals, steal)- especially older people do not want to use the words such as kill, steal, cheat, so they substitute and use this idiom

Жишээ нь: Тэрээр хэвтэрт байхдаа “Би **их нүгэл хийсэн** хүн дээ. Уг нь онилсоноо л авдаг байсан. Ноднин нэг тэхийн хөлийг шархдуулаад алдсан юм. Хожим нь хэд зүүдэлсэн. Ингэж үхэх тавилантай хүн” гэж ойлгуулаад нүд аньсан гэдэг юм. (Г. Мөнхнасан, “Мундуу дэвсэг хоёр” өгүүллэг. Утга зохиол урлаг)

Mongolians consider any bad activity as a sin and they are very sensitive to killing. In Tamil culture all anti-social activities are considered bad and they do not compare everything with sin, though the religions in India consider those activities as sin.

8. өрөмний өт шиг – clotted cream’s worm like(very naughty, unstable)- when older people are upset and tired of a naughty child, they use this idiom

Жишээ нь: Үгүй тээр! Чи ер нь яасан **өрөмний өт шиг** хаашаа хүүхэд вэ? хэмээн багш хэллээ. (Т. Бум- Эрдэнэ, “Нэгдүгээр анги” өгүүллэг)

This is typical of Mongolian culture.

9. шийх хатаах- shank(leg) dry - (do like parents)- if the children repeat doing things which his parents did it before, older people use it.

Жишээ нь: Монгол бөхийн удам тасардаггүйн бэлгээр Ваанчиг гуайн отгон хүү Туязаяа аанай л бөхийн **шийр хатааж**, аймгийн заан болоод хол ойрын наадмын түрүүг хамж эхэлсэн нь мөн өдрүүдэд Цээлд болсон овооны наадам, Хантайширын нурууны ноён оргил Өвгөн овооны наадамд түрүүлснээс нь харагдана. (Я. Ганбаатар, “Алтайд өргөсөн дуулал”)

This is also typical of Mongolian culture.

10. эрийн тэнгэр хаях-men’s sky throw away(men’s failure, misfortune)- when men can’t have any children during his life, people say it for him.

Жишээ нь: Хааяа нэг хүүхэд төрөхөөрөө заавал нэг согогтой, чихгүй юм уу хэлгүй, хөл гаргүй ч хүүхэд төрнө. Тэгээд, манайхныг **эрийн тэнгэр хаясан** газар гэх болсон юм даа гэж хөгшин хуучлах нь тэр. (Г. Жамьян, “Эрийн тэнгэр”)

In Mongolia sky is compared with freedom or rights of an individual. It is also symbolic of having descendants. So it is used to express when men are not able to have children.

Village/ tribal/countryside people

1. Баян ходоод- rich stomach (loser)- when a child who rode a horse becomes a loser in horse race, adults caress them and use this idiom to call them

хамгийн сүүлийн, уралдааны хамгийн сүүлд ирэхийг ийн хошигнон хэлнэ. Жишээ нь: “Адуучин Борын навсаан улаан **баян ходоод** болсон доо.” (Г. Дамба, “Наадмын сонин”);

This idiom reveals an irony attached to the way in which they gently chide a young child by comparing him with a rich stomach. Rich people may not be strong and this idea prevails in every society.

2. Гахай явган нохой нүцгэн- pig horseless, dog nude(to become poor)- 1. when people lose their last property such as horse or house, they use it. 2. People use this idiom for the very poor people

Жишээ нь: Хүний газар гүний нутагт **гахай явган** хаачих билээ хэмээн Долгор уйлахад нулимс хацрыг нь даган урсав. (Ч. Лодойдамба, “Тунгалаг тамир” роман)

When people loose even the minimum property they have, they are considered to be unworthy. Similar symbolic representation of poverty is used in other society also. But the idiom like ‘dog nude’ is unique of Mongolian culture

3. Дөрөө нийлүүлэх- stirrup(pedal) combine(go parallelly)- when two people go to far place together by horse, they use it

Жишээ нь: Түүнтэй холын замд **дөрөө нийлүүлэн** явах нь хэзээ хэзээгүй буцах болсон Уртнасанд олдошгүй завшаан байлаа. (Ж. Бямба, “Газар эх”)

It is only of common usage but Mongolians use it as an idiom

4. Дэр нийлүүлэх- pillow join (marry)- countryside people usually don’t say “marry” instead of it they use this idiom.

It is interesting to note in Mongolian culture that joining pillow is symbolic of marriage. It is symbolic in Tamil culture but it is communicated non-verbally only.

Жишээ нь: Арван найман насандаа нутгийн Долгор гэдэг бүсгүйтэй **дэр нийлүүлэн** гэр барьж амьдрал. (Ч. Лодойдамба, “Тунгалаг тамир” роман)

5. Мод толгой- wood head(pipe)- countryside people use this idiom

Жишээ нь: а. Тэргэнийхээ сүүдэрт тавтай завиан суугаад өврөөсөө **мод толгой** гаргаж, тамхиа татаж утааг нь алгуурхан үлээн гаргах зуур ногооны үзүүр имрэн оролдоно. (Ч. Лодойдамба, “Тунгалаг тамир” роман)

б. Жанжаа гуай гэрийнхээ барааг хараад санаа нь амрав уу гэлтэй **мод толгойгоо** гарган хувингаа сандайлж над руу хараад: - Би чамаас юм асуух уу? гэлээ.

It is common usage to tell about a wood. It has nothing to do with human expression or emotion

6. сүүлгүй чоно- tailless wolf(human)- countryside people usually use this idiom when hunters kill the animals.

Жишээ нь: “Өнөө хэдэн буга чинь цөөрсөөр гуравхан үлджээ. Хаврын тачирт турж үхээд байна уу, эсвэл сүүлтэй **сүүлгүй чононууд** хороогоод бйна уу” гэж Мандах ярьж байсан. (Н. Надмид, “Хөвчийн зочин” өгүүллэг)

Mongolians do not like killing animals and they consider the hunters as cowards. Similar context may be found in Tamil culture.

7. Тогооны хүн-pot’s person(wife)- countryside man calls his wife because she works as a housewife and she cooks, washes the dishes in kitchen

Жишээ нь: **Тогооны хүн** Долгор хэмээх нилээн биерхүү мань эрийг бодвол хаа хаагуураа хоёр дахин том шахам. (Т. Бум-Эрдэнэ, “Америкт зорчсон Жийжээ”, бичил тууж)

In Mongolian culture symbolism is given much importance. Imaginary characters and things are attached to human beings and their activities. Symbolic representation of things and people are common among societies. However in this context looking at woman as a ‘pot’s person’ is different. But in Tamil culture most of the women can be seen with pot on their hip. Hence the idiom is recognizable in the Tamil culture.

8. Хотоо харлуулах- place blacken(kill all cattle)- when someone regrets after killing all cattle because of draught and storm, herdsmen use this idiom

Жишээ нь: Хамаг хонио хядаж **хотоо харлуулах** гэж байгаа бол намайг хамт төхөөрчих. Би хэдэн хониндоо дөрвөн хүүхдээсээ илүү хайртай.(Сан. Пүрэв, “Од шүүрэх ухаан”)

Black colour is something very much attached to destruction, sadness, melancholy and gloomy atmosphere as far as any society is concerned. It is same with Mongolia and Tamil. But the uniqueness here is ‘blacken place’ which is symbolic of ‘killing all the cattle’.

9. Өрхний оосроо татуулах- chimney strap pull(to take a bride into one’s house)- when men want to marry someone, they use this idiom.

Жишээ нь: Ямар сайндаа Сарлаг Дамбын охин Сайхан төрсөн Думаагаар

Өөдрөг төрсөн аавын хүү **Өрхний оосроо татуулна...** гэж дуу гарахав.(Жа. Пүрэв, “Гурвалжин”)

Pull chimney strap is symbolic of bringing a happiness into the family by way of marriage. It also brings in light. Similar context is used in Tamil context saying that the ‘woman comes to lit the lamp of the family’.

10. Хулгар шар- crop-eared yellow-(marmot)- hunters usually abstain from saying some animals’ names directly, they give names which described using their appearance and features and use it.

Жишээ нь: Буун дуу тасхийлээ. **Хулгар шар** намсхийх эгшинтэй зэрэгцэн би гэдэг хүн гүйн очиж, түүнийг өшиглөж орхидог билээ.(П. Наранбаатар, “Халуун чулуу”)

This kind of saying is often used in Tamil culture and people give different names based on the appearance and characteristic of each animal.

Thus the similarity between Tamil culture and Mongolian culture has been assessed and it makes a revelation of interesting facts about human life and living. It is found that they both highlight the main aspects of life and project the positive side of human life. The Mongolian idioms are found to be easy to understand and read like the ones used in Tamil context.

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Munhtuul Norjvanchig is the lecturer of the Department of Foreign Language at the School of Mechanical Engineering. She has taught English for 7 years. She is studying a Ph. D research degree and she is in her third year at Mongolian University of Science and Technology. Her research interests focus on comparisons of Mongolian, Tamil and English idioms. She worked on her research work with her guide Sundarsingh Joseph, Head of the department of English at Karunya University when she was an intern in India during 2013. She graduated from Mongolian University of Science and Technology as an Engineer- Translator in 2002.

Sundarsingh Joseph is a Professor and Chair, Department of English, Karunya University, Coimbatore, India. He has more than 25 years of experience teaching English as a Second Language to Engineering, Arts and Science students. He specializes in English linguistics and has rich experience in English language studies. He has published about 30 research papers and presented papers in more than 40 conferences.