PREFACE

As a student and teacher of English I have to travel much, like Keats in the 'realms of gold'. Once, I came across this statement of Blaise Pascal, 'All the good maxims have been written. It only remains to put them into practice'. This brought into sharp focus the fact that I have been reading a number of proverbs without making full use of them. I then began to study them more closely and use them in my classes. The present study owes its origin to the proverbs I use in this way. During the course of my twenty-five years of college teaching I found the students much interested especially because they were able to search for parallel ideas in the proverbs of their mother tongue. When I had a sizable collection of such proverbs I thought of applying the principles of linguistics to the study. Linguistics is a comparatively new entrant to the halls of the Muses. So I found myself overwhelmed by the thought of applying its methods and technique to the study of proverbs. I began to search for previous work on these lines but could not find any. There were many collections of proverbs—some with explanations and comments, but none in which linguistic methods were applied. I felt like an explorer entering a new territory with no guide posts. I had to carve out my own path. I was encouraged to take up this
stupendous task inspired by the words of the T.V. serial Star Trek. To boldly go where no one has gone before.

I have taken a large sampling of proverbs and studied all the three linguistically important aspects - phonological, syntactic and semantic. In order to make the study broad-based, historical linguistics, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and philosophy of proverbs have also been included. The areas have often been found overlapping. Similarly, some proverbs have found their way in more than one chapter.

In accordance with modern trends I have tried to avoid too many footnotes and references, wherever annotation was needed I have tried to incorporate it in the text itself. The M.L.A. style sheet has been used for the pattern of references and bibliography.

I have relied upon the following collections for my selections:


I express deep gratitude to the above named editors and also to other scholars who have worked in the field of paroemiology.
I would like to express my hearty thanks to the many people who have been kind enough to offer assistance during the preparation of this study. Dr. J.J. Kao, Reader in English, Pt. Ravishankar Shukla University, Raipur acted throughout as a very competent supervisor who was always eager to offer advice and overcome any snags. The credit for acting as a guide from the beginning, to the completion of this study must surely go to him. Dr. P.C. Asmara, Principal, College of Science, Raipur, placed at my disposal the resources of the College Library. The Principal, Govt. Girl's College, Raipur did likewise. Prof. K.K. Nema, Head of Department of English, College of Science, Raipur and Prof. Raj Bharati, Head of Deptt. of English, Govt. Girls' College, Raipur offered timely comments and suggestions. Other colleagues in various colleges also gave great help. I am grateful to all of them. Last but not the least, I am thankful to my students who appreciated and accepted my rather unorthodox teaching of proverbs.