

Hmong Proverbs

1.

**Hlais nqaij ntshaw zoo riam,
Ua neej nyob ntshaw zoo pojniam.**

*slice meat need good knife;
live life need good wife*

To slice meat, you need a good knife;
To have a good life, you need a good wife.

2.

**Ib koog hav zoov muaj ib tug ntoo ntev,
Ib cuab kwvtij muaj ib tug ntse;
Ib koog hav zoov muaj ib tug ntoo loj,
Ib cuab kwvtij muaj ib tug coj.**

*one-patch-forest-have-one-tree-long,
one-group-clanmates-have-one-smart;
one-patch-forest-have-one-tree-big,
one-group-clanmates-have-one-lead*

Each jungle has one tree that's tallest;
Each group of clanmates has one who's smartest;
Each jungle has one tree that's biggest;
Each group of clanmates has one who's the leader.

3.

**Ib lub hav zoov yuav tsum muaj ib tug tsov,
Ib lub qhov txos yuav tsum muaj ib tug miv zov;
Lub tshuaj khib yuav tsum muaj tus qws txob,
Lub qhov txos yuav tsum muaj ib tug tswv nyob.**

*one-jungle-must-have-one-tiger,
one-clay stove-must-have-one-cat-guard;
one-mortar-must-have-pestle,
one-clay stove-must have-one-master-occupy*

The jungle has a tiger,
The stove has a cat to guard it;
The mortar has a pestle,
The stove has its stove spirit.

4.

**Ib roob ntoo los muaj ib tug sab;
Ib nkuaj qab los muaj ib tug qua.**

*one-mountain-trees, then-have-one-highest;
one-coop- chickens, then-have-one-rooster.*

Groups have leaders.

5.

**Khiav nab ntsib qav,
Khiav dab ntsib tog cav,
Khiav tog cav zom pas av.**

*run-snake-meet-frog;
run-ghost-meet-tree log;
run-tree log-stuck-mud*

Run from the snake, meet the frog;
Run from the ghost, meet the fallen log;
Run from the fallen log, get stuck in mud.

6.

**Koobmeej nrov cuag cav kaus ntxhw,
Txog hauv tsev tsis muaj chaw pw,
Koobmeej nrov cuag cav povhaum,
Txog hauv tsev tsis muaj chaw zaum.**

*reputation-loud-compare to-fang-elephant,
arrive-in-house-not-have-place-sleep;
reputation-loud-compare to-magic stone,
arrive-in-house-not-have-place-sit*

Your reputation may be like an elephant's tusk,
But you get home and there's no place to sleep.
Your reputation may be powerful as an amulet,
But you get home and there's no place to sit.

7.

**Niam tshuab ntuag,
txiv qaiv (khaiv) ntxaiv,
Niam mloog txiv qhuab,
txiv mloog niam hais.**

*wife-machine-weave (loom),
husband-hang thread on loom;
wife-listen-husband-preach,
husband-listen-wife-speak*

The wife is the loom,
the husband hangs the thread;
The wife listens to the husband's lessons,
the husband listens to the wife's opinions.

8.

**Nkauj nyob ces sov zos,
Nkauj ua nyab ces tsov los.**

*girls-live here-then-village-warm;
girls-all married & gone-then-tiger-come*

When there are a lot of young unmarried girls, the
village is safe (warm);
When the girls are all married and gone, the tiger
comes.

9.

**Noj txiv yuav saib noob,
Yuav tabzag saib caj Hmoob,
Noj nqaj yuav saib txha,
Yuav tabzag saib neejtsa.**

*eat-fruit-need-watch-seed,
marry-spouse-watch-lineage;
eat-meat-need-watch-bone,
marry-spouse-watch-inlaws*

Eat fruit, watch out for the seed;
Marry spouse, look at the lineage;
Eat meat, watch out for the bone;
Marry spouse, look at the relatives.

10.

**Saib ntxhw yuav saib kaug,
Saib ntxhais yuav saib nam.**

*see-elephant-will-see-tusk;
see-daughter-will-see-mother*

Children are examples of their parents.

11.

**Tsis noj mov yuav tshaib plab,
Tsis yuav kwv yuav tij ces yuav tu dab;
Tsis noj mov ces yuav tuag,
Tsis yuav kwv yuav tij ces yuav tu dab qhuas.**

*not-eat-rice-will-hungry-stomach,
not-take-old brother-take-young brother-then-will-
lack-(lineage) spirits;
not-eat-rice-will-dead,
not-take-old brother-take-young brother-then-will-
lack-ancestor spirits*

Eat, or you'll be hungry; Join a clan (marry), or you
won't have lineage spirits;

Eat, or you'll die; Join a clan (marry), or you won't
have ancestor spirits.

12.

**Cuaj lub cub tawg sov tsis cuag ib lub hnuv
Cuaj leej ntxhais zoo tsis cuag ib leeg tub.**

*nine-fireplaces-warm-not-equal-one-sun
nine-daughters-good-not-equal-one-son*

Nine fireplaces are not as warm as the sun
Nine daughters do not equal one son.

13.

Zom zeb mob tes

Tuav cos mob taw

Ris dej mob nraub qaum

Noj mov nkaus diav maum.

grind-stone-hurt-hand

pound-rice pounder-hurt foot

carry-water-hurt-back

eat-rice-get-big-spoon

Grinding corn hurts my hand!

Pounding rice hurts my foot!

Carrying water hurts my back!

But for eating rice, you get a big spoon.

14.

Txawj ntos tsis qeg txia

Txawj hais tsis qeg lus.

skilled-weave-not-waste-thread (woof, or cross-threads)

skilled-speak-not-waste-words

Able to weave, don't waste thread,

Able to speak, don't waste words.

15.

Plaub hau ntshov thiaj yuav zuag los ntsis

Plaub ntug ntshov thiaj yuav txwj laus los lis.

hair-tangled-then-will use-comb-to comb

dispute-complicated-then-will use-elder-solve

Tangled hair, use a comb to unsnarl it,

Complicated dispute, use an elder to solve it.

16.

Koj qaib pw kuv cooj

Kuv os pw koj nkuaj.

your-chicken-sleep-my-coop

my-duck-sleep-your-stable

Your chicken sleeps in my coop

My duck sleeps in your stable.

17.

Noj tsis noj kuj tuav diav

Luag tsis luag kuj ntxi hniav.

eat-not-eat-so then-hold-spoon

laugh-not-laugh-so then-smile

Whether you eat or not, at least hold a spoon,

Whether you laugh or not, at least smile.

18.

Tsuas muaj tus ntses lawv tus dej

Tsis muaj tus dej lawv tus ntses.

only-have-fish-follow-river

not-have-river-follow-fish

There are only fish that follow the river;

There are no rivers that follow the fish.

19.

Hla dej yuav hle khau

Tsiv teb tsaws chaw yuav hle hau.

cross-river-will-take off-shoe

flee-country-leave-place-will-take off-status

Cross the river, you'll take off your shoes

Flee from your country, you'll lose your status.

20.

**Noj qub zaub mob plaab;
Has qub lug mob sab.**

*Eat-old-food,-sick-stomach;
Speak-old-words,-sick-heart.*

Eat old food and get a stomach-ache;
Bring up old problems and get a heart-ache.

21.

**Ntau txhais tes ua hauj-lwm sib
Ntau lub tswv-yim ua tau txoj kev qhib.**

*many-hand-make-work-light
many-idea-make-way-open*

Many hands make work light;
Many ideas open the way.

22.

**Thaum luag tsaj, yus tsis nrog luag tsaj
Thaum luag saj, yus ua dev nuam yaj**

*when-they-(work) shake-you-not-with-them-shake
when-they-eat-you-do-dog-look for scraps*

When they work, you don't do your share;
When they eat, you're a dog looking for scraps.

23.

**Pos ntse tsis yuav hliav
Neeg ntse tsis yuav piav.**

*thorn-sharp-not-will-sharpen
person-sharp-not-will-explain*

No need to sharpen a thorn;
No need to explain to a smart person.

24.

**Nyuj laug nyuj kub kawb
Nraug laug nraug suab hawb.
Ntoo laus ntoo yoog kav,
Neeg laus lawm los tseem xav-xav.**

*cow-old-cow-horn-crooked?
man-old-man-voice-creaky?
tree-old-tree-many twigs
person-old-already-but-still-wish-wish (think-think?)*

Old bull, crooked horns
Old man, creaky voice
Old tree, many twigs
Old man, but still has many thoughts

25.

**Pluag pluag ua plhu luag
Muaj muaj ua plhu quaj.**

*poor-poor-make-cheek (face)-laugh
have-have-make-cheek (face)-cry*

The poor laugh;
The rich cry.

26.

**Muaj tsis txhob khav
Pluag tsis txhob quaj.**

*have-don't-boast
poor-don't-cry*

If you're rich, don't boast;
If you're poor, don't cry.