

THE SURROGATE MOTHER

(NOVEL)



PON KULENDIREN

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A Novel

By

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(Canada)

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Designed by



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AUTHOR'S COMMENTS

My long-time desire as a writer is to write a novel with a different, realistic, science-fiction plot. When I was planning to write this novel, I had the opportunity to meet a Canadian lady from the white community known to my daughter's family.

Sylvia came to my house with her husband and her daughter Sera for the Christmas party. Sera's appearance was like that of her father and eyes like her mother, Sylvia. Sera was an active pretty girl. The two-year-old girl answered my questions without hesitation. I thought that she must be having a high IQ level like her father.

"How old is your daughter Sera "? I asked Sylvia.

"She is two years old. She can't sit in one place. She is quick in identifying letters. She loves to draw pictures. She has a puppy, Charlie. She loves him, and she sleeps with her puppy," Sylvia said to me. I saw an attractive smile like Sylvia's husband Peter in that child. My daughter told me that Sylvia, the baby's mother, had three miscarriages. The Doctor said to her that the baby would not stay in her womb. As they were rich, Sylvia and her husband Peter wanted to have a baby inherit their assets and look after them at their old age. They consulted their family doctor, who referred them to the gynecologist. The consultant explained to them about having a baby through surrogacy. They learned for the first time about surrogacy as defined by the Doctor about in gestational surrogacy, the child is not biologically related to the surrogate mother. The latter is often referred to as a gestational carrier. Instead, the embryo is created Vitro fertilization (IVF), using the eggs and sperm of the intended parents or donors, and is then transferred to the surrogate. And through that, it is highly likely to have a child with their genes. Sara was born through Surrogacy. Sylvia did not carry her during the pregnancy period. I asked her who was the surrogate mother who carried Sara.

Sylvia, after hesitation, explained in detail her experience of surrogacy, and the surrogate mother was from India introduced to them by an Agency that deals with such cases. It was cheaper for them to find a Surrogate mother in India and the cost is less. That is how the experience narrated by Sylvia blossomed and grew in my imagination under the title "Seed in Tamil " and developed into this short novel. In English titled Saratha the Surrogate Mother, this s story is a mixture of science, family issues, Traditions, the Lifestyle of rich people in Colombo, and motherhood. The latest medical system will significantly help recover from infertility's social criticism, calling women who cannot conceive is a Baren. They are not permitted to take part in wedding ceremonies or bless the couple. The law allows surrogacy in Western countries Sri Lanka and India.

I am writing this story in a Sri Lankan environment. The names that come up in the story do not refer to anyone and are fiction.

CHAPTER 1

THANGARAJAH (RAJAH)

The temple bells of Naachimar Sakthi temple were ringing, followed by the Nadaswaram and Thavil music. Temple bell and Music serve as an alarm bell for any families living in that area. Thangarajah (alias Rajah) family is one of them. Thangarajah is from the goldsmith community. Many goldsmiths live in that Naachimar temple area.

During the reign of the Aryan king of Jaffna Kingdom, the Nallur Kandasamy temple employed garland makers, idol-decorators, musical instrument players, goldsmith sculptors, Washers, Temple Pandaris who prepare food, and carpenters. They were brought from South India to serve the temple. They lived in different areas around the Nallur temple.

The name of the town and the streets were based on the people's profession who lived in large numbers. Thus, caste system developed in Jaffna based on professions. Brahmins who did poojas in the temple are considered as the topmost caste, followed by Farmers who were called Vellalar. Examples of the streets named after caste are Thattar Theru (Gold Smith Street), Washman farm area, Sivaiair Theru (Palanquin carriers Street, Chetty Street Parangi Street, Thachan Thoppu (Carpenter's Grove,) Pandarak KULAM (Pond). Even though the street names have changed over time, the old generation calls the street by the old caste names.

Naachimar Temple area is located about three miles on Jaffna Kankesanthurai Road. Vishwakarma caste sculptors called Thattar, in Tamil, excelled in making idols and gold ornaments for God lived in that area. This temple is also commonly known as the Vannai Sri Kamatchi Ambal Temple. It is in the northern part of Jaffna's city in the north of Sri Lanka, at the junction of Kankesanthurai Road and Pon Ramanathan Road, leading to the University of Jaffna.

Many centuries ago, a statue was found in a pond by a farmer.

. The farmer installed the idol in a hut under a Marutha (Kabuk) tree and started worshipping. The idol in a cabin gradually has grown into a temple. The temple was destroyed during the Portuguese rule in Jaffna, but subsequently, it was rebuilt. The temple came to be known as the "Naachimar Temple" in the late nineteenth century. The Naachimar, according to a government memorandum on temples issued by the Governor of Jaffna in 1898. Temple was built in 1870 AD by the Visvakula sculptor Kandar. There are many legendary stories about the Naachimar temple narrated by the locals

In the early days, the pond's area was a very fertile vast area with mangroves and paddy fields. The Siva Brahmins, the Visva-Brahmakula caste people, lived in large numbers in this Naachimar Temple area.

Famous jeweler Thangarajah is a native of the Naachimar Temple area. He lived in a small ancestor's house at Ramanathan Road. The house and the land were donated to Thangarajah's ancestors by the Jaffna king who ruled Jaffna before the Portuguese period. Thangarajah learned the art of making gold jewelry from his father, Navaratnam. Navaratnam's father, Manikkaratnam, is a native of Prathameshwara in South India.

In many Hindu families in Jaffna, gold is melted to prepare the Mangal sutra before a family wedding.

The word mangal means auspicious, and sutra means thread - together, Mangala sutra is called Thalli. It represents a bright thread uniting the souls".

"The Thalli is a sacred one, unlike other ornaments. This ornament is called in different names and different states in India. The design of the Thalli is of various forms. According to the caste and religious differences of South India, they create different types of Thalli for marriage. As per science, Thalli regulates women's

blood flow and helps control women's blood pressure. They say that married women should wear the Thalli so that it will be in contact with the skin.

In northern India, Thalli looks like a necklace embroidered with black and gold beads. Women wear it to preserve the happiness and prosperity of their home as they proclaim happiness and prosperity. Black dots lead to the emotional bond between husband and wife. And this Mangal Sutra is influential in eradicating evil forces like Kandhirushti (bad eyes). Black beads help to remove all negative thoughts and make married life happier.

The groom ties the Thalli attached to a gold chain around Bride's neck on their wedding day. It signifies that their bonding by thread or the gold chain carrying the Thalli. Thalli is the symbol of a Hindu Tamil married woman. Hence before the wedding day, the Goldsmith is contracted to prepare Thalli from gold. He is invited to the bridegroom's house. The goldsmith is well-versed in the rituals involved in melting a sovereign of gold called Ponurukal in Tamil (Pon in Tamil means gold, Urukaal means melting to prepare Thalli (Mangala Sutra). The bridegroom's family meets all expenses involved in preparing the Thalli made from gold. It is usually about fifteen sovereign gold chains, including Thalli carrying God Ganesh's idol or a Hindu god's model. The thickness of the gold chain depends on how wealthy the bridegroom's family is.

The Thalli is taken on a tray with flowers, saffron, and turmeric around the visitors. The visitors who attend the wedding give their blessings. After they bless the Thalli, the bridegroom ties around the bride's neck the golden chain with the blessed Thalli.

The veil covering the face of the bride is removed once the bridegroom ties the Thalli. He also makes a Bindu from saffron with his index finger on the forehead of the bride. The red color Bindu is again a symbol of a Hindu married woman whose husband is living. If she becomes a widow Thalli, and Bindu disappears

from her. In the old Brahmin customs in Tamil Nadu, they even shave the hair on the woman's head. She keeps the shaved head covered with her saree. This system is no longer followed in many Brahmin families.

Thangarajah prepared Thalli for the brides of many families in Jaffna. At times he is invited to villages located at far distances to melt gold for the Thalli. People believed that the Thalli prepared by goldsmith Thangarajah has some good omen as the couple lives a long-married life with children.

* * * *

After melting the gold to make the Thalli at a bridegroom's house, Thangarajah returned home tired. His assistant brought the vegetables, rice, and other gifts from the bridegroom's parents as gifts for the service Thangarajah provided.

Luximi was interested to know about the significance of the event attended by Thangarajah.

She asked her husband, "Aiyah, you went all the way to Chunnkam to attend the rituals of melting gold for preparing Thalli. Do you know the significance of the event "?

"Why not? The bridegroom's father is the Chunnkam Town council Chairman. I knew him before as I have melted gold for his eldest son's wedding. This ritual is for his second son, who is getting married in Urelu."

"How long did the ritual take? You left home at eight in the morning and returning only at three in the afternoon".

"Well, the rituals took about four hours. The bridegroom parents insisted I should have lunch with them. I could not refuse. That is the reason for the delay. Your brother's son Manicam who came with me, was very helpful as he is aware of the ritual," replied Thangarajah.

"Appah, can you please explain to me the importance of the ceremony you went to. You maintained high austerity before attending this event ".

"Laximi, it is good that you asked this question. Many are not interested in knowing the significance of melting the gold, which they call Ponurukal in Tamil.

The ceremony for Ponurukal is one of the traditional Hindu wedding ceremonies of the Tamils. The gold coin used to make the Thirumangalyam (Thalli) is first kept in a tray and pooja done in the temple. A traditional goldsmith then melted it. It is customary to carry out the Ponurukal at the bridegroom's house.

On an auspicious day before the wedding day, the ritual is done. Apart from the Bride, relatives and friends will be present at the auspicious occasion.

The Goldsmith then melts the gold and puts it on a betel leaf, with lemon fruit, flowers, turmeric, saffron, and gives it to the bridegroom. The bridegroom should show it to the congregation who have come to watch the ritual.

Some people in Jaffna today can tell their future life with that shape of the melted gold. It is questionable whether this is due to their age, experience, or any power they have.

A Pandalkaal is to be placed in both houses on the day of Ponurukal. The Mul Murungai tree (Indian Corel Tree) will be used for this event. It is said that the branch of the tree should be straight. They believe that it is to get an entire upright life.

From this day until the wedding day, it is customary for the bride and groom not to see each other. On that auspicious day, both the houses will start making wedding gifts.

Thus, in the Tamils' Hindu marriages, Ponurukal is considered an auspicious event. This traditional custom is still practiced in some races in south India. It is practiced as a custom by tamis in Sri Lanka," Thangarajah explained to his wife.

"What is Panathal kaal Aiyah "

"Yes, it is an Indian Coral tree called Mul Murukai tree. It is an herbal plant that is helpful for the fertility of women. It is also connected with a Vedic story."

"What is the story "?

"During the Vedic period, Ahalikai is the wife of the sage Gautama Maharishi. Many Hindu scriptures say that she was seduced by Indra (the king of gods). When Gautama Maharishi came to know it, he cursed Indra for infidelity. The curse caused the female organ to appear like thorns all over the body of Indra. Hence it is proper to warn the bridegroom to behave well in married life and not love any woman other than his wife.

In Tamil Hindu marriages, the gold melting to prepare the Thalli ceremony is considered an essential auspicious event.

This traditional custom is still practiced in some races in the south during the reign of the Pandya kings".

"Kalyana murungai does it have any herbal value '? Luximi asked her husband.

" Kalyana Murungai or Indian Corel plant is used for Panthal kaal. Even today, in the villages, Kalyana murungai is called mull murungai. It looks like a sack that encloses with a drawstring. The tree has a thorn, and the leaf has a thorn-like shape under it, so it is called a thorn which has a fantastic ability to fix health problems for women.

. That is, the wedding drumstick tree will be placed in front of the house and beautified. There is a reason why the wedding drum should be placed in front of the house. There is an allegory that if this wedding drumstick is in front of the house, then the women living in that house will not get the ovarian disease."

"What is the significance of Panthal Kaal? "Luximi asked her husband

We perform various rituals at home, from the day of the engagement to the end. The most important of these rituals is the planting of mull Murungai. It is called Pandal Kaal planting. This planting ceremony will be held on Brahma Mukurtham or any other Mukurtham good time before the wedding.

The ceremony will be held separately at the bride and groom's house with a pandal on the northeast side. It is essential in the planting ceremony

A branch from the Kalyana drumstick tree is cut; the leaves are removed, and tie five mango leaves with a yellow ribbon at the end of the tree and tie with a copper thread over a yellow and white cloth.

The elder in the house should take all the relatives and put the tree where it should be planted, break the coconut, and show sambirani (Frankincense) smoke. Pour water and milk with the rice grain under it and put water, sandalwood, and saffron on the tree.

Both spouses should not participate in any mourning ceremonies until after the marriage ceremony is over.

An invitation will also be sent to the king when he marries early. The king can't go to all the weddings. So, he sends his commission. N that day, the decree was approved by the king. Therefore, the marriage is recognized. They do today with a wedding drumstick in the wedding pavilion and worship it

a house has a chance to have women, children. It is a myth that no gynecological disease will come for girls who may be like that, even if it is entirely true news. If you have ever seen this wedding drum leaf, then you can say that it is a beautiful tree created by God for women. If we look at something that can enhance femininity, we can say that it is the endocrine gland that runs through women's bodies. So, you can make this Kalyana drumstick leaf as dosa, or you can get the medicinal quality of eating Kalyana drumstick leaf soup. Chop the Kalyana drumstick leaf with pepper, cumin, garlic, apricot, ginger, black Ratnam, salt, and oil and serve hot. You can enjoy the best results." Thangarajah explained to his wife, Luximi

"Thank you, Aiyah, for all this information regarding wedding rituals."

"My Pleasure," replied Thangarajah.

* * *

Over time Thangarajah started a jewelry store in Kannathitti. That area has is popular Jewellery shops in Jaffna. He became successful in business among competitors as he was very prompt in delivering the offered jewelry. He never mixes with good quality gold. There were four goldsmiths; all his relations worked for his Naachiyar Gold House.

A Muslim gem merchant, Haniffa from Beruwala, contacted a Thangarajah and partnered him to start a Jewellery shop by the "Gem House" in the sea street Pettah area in Colombo. He began selling Gems with his Muslim friend Haniffa, a Gemology expert and has a Gem shop in Beruwala.

Through his lucrative business at Sea Street, Thangarajah became very rich. After marrying his uncle's daughter Luximi, he expanded his business. He started a jewelry store in Dubai with his Muslim partner, following which he became the shop owner in Singapore.

Thangarajah had two houses in Colombo, one at Barnes Place in Cinnamon Gardens Colombo 7 and the other at Ramakrishna Road in Wellawatta. He owned a 20-acre Coconut plantation in Palai. The house he bought in cinnamon gardens named Gokulam is an urban panchayat in Mathura district in the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh. It is located 15 km southeast of Mathura. It is here that the Nandagopan-Yasodara couple is told in Hindu mythology that they grew up blind. The temple of Lord Krishna is located on the banks of the river Jamuna. Thangarajah is a Vishnu worshipper. As such, he named the house Gokulam.

Thangarajah is a humble person, no matter how rich he is. God-fearing, honest man. He never fails to go to the temple with his wife every Friday. He ran an orphanage for children affected by the Eelam war in Mullaitivu.

Thangarajah was involved in many charities work. Although he never supports any political party, he donates a fixed amount to essential parts. Thangarajah refused the request from a leading Political party for Thangarajah to contest as councillor for ward 7 in the Colombo Municipal elections. He makes it a point to go daily for a walk at Galle face green with two of his friends Nalliah a retired customs officer, and Pereira, a retired Police inspector.

CHAPTER 2

VIJAYALAKSHMI

Vijayalakshmi (alias Lakshmi) is the wife of Thangarajah. She is a humble god-fearing woman. She is a firm believer in Astrology and traditions. Her parents are from the Naachimar Temple area. Vijayalakshmi 's father, Suppiah aachari (goldsmith), was a relation of Thangrajah's father.

Vijayalakshmi was known to Thangrajah's parents from her childhood. Thangrajah's mother, Muthuluximi, did not have any daughters. As such, she treated her daughter-in-law Vijayalakshmi as her daughter. Muthuluximi husband did not live long and died at the age of sixty. Muthuluximi gets a monthly rent from her house at Kokuvil. She gives it to her daughter-in-law to keep it for her funeral expenses. She never wanted to be dependent on others.

When the marriage was proposed to Lukshmi to Thangarajah, their parents agreed as both families belonged to the goldsmith caste. Moreover, the horoscopes of Thangarajah and Lukshmi matched. Suppiah aachari came to know about the business talents in Thangarajah and his charity work. He was happy to become the father-in-law of Thangarajah. Since Vijayalakshmi was their only daughter, the Suppiah aachari gave a large sum of money to Thangarajah as dowry and jewelry. He advised his son-in-law to start a Jewelry shop in Jaffna town to make & sell gold ornaments. He suggested a location for the business. The area was Kannathitti near Jaffna Town, where many jewelry shops were located.

The wedding of Lakshmi and Thangarajah took place at Naachimar Amman temple. Many of Thangrajah's clients attended the wedding.

Vijayalakshmi is a quiet, god-fearing lady. She loved her husband. She would never utter a word against Thangarajah. Vijayalakshmi also looked after her in-laws. She prepared different types of dishes liked by her husband. Vijayalakshmi never failed to visit the Naachimar Temple. She prayed that she should have a long-married life with many children.

Vijayalakshmi's close friend was next door, Paakiam. Paakiam's husband Rajaratnam was a clerk at the Jaffna Kachcheri. Paakiam had a son and two daughters. Son was a teacher at Jaffna Hindu College. The two daughters were studying at Hindu ladies' college in Jaffna. Vijayalakshmi shared her problem with Paakiam. For three years after marriage, Vijayalakshmi did not conceive. Her friend Paakiam advised her to consult a doctor and advised her friend to visit the Rameswaram temple in South India and do pujas. When she told her husband about what Paakiam had suggested, he agreed and took his wife to Rameshwaram and did a special pooja,

Luximi is a believer in Astrology. Her family astrologer was Sathasivam from Kokuvil. Sathasivam had many clients. They come from different places for their horoscopes to be read by him

Thangarajah and Vijayalakshmi made an appointment with Astrologer Sathasivam and visited the Astrologer with their horoscopes. After attending to a client, Astrologer called them to his room.

"Thangarajah Aiyah what is your problem. ?"Sasthri, we had got married three years ago. So far, we did not have a child. It does not matter whether it is a girl or a boy. We want only a child. Please have a look at our horoscopes and say whether we will have children ".

"I now see your problem. Let me see both your horoscopes".

Astrologer Sathasivam took the horoscopes from them and analyzed the reasons for the delay in getting a child. He did some calculations.

"Listen, Aiyah, both your horoscopes are matching well. Both of you have no malefic planets in the fifth house for children in the horoscopes. I see no reason as to why there is a delay in having a child. I would advise you both to fast for a week and do a Special pooja for Naachimar Amman. There is a Marutham tree (Kumbuk tree) in that temple. Go around the temple and the Tree three times and pour milk on the roots of the tree. Feed needy children. Naachimar Amman will bless you with a child. Both your horoscopes say that the number of children is limited. Be happy with one Child. Sathasivam advised them.

CHAPTER 3

PAVITHRA (ALIAS PAVI)

Vijayalakshmi conceived after four years of married life and visiting many temples. Her parents were happy. Vijayalakshmi's mother ensured that the daughter eats healthy food. She was not allowed to carry weights. Thangarajah took the wife to the doctor every month to ensure that Vijayalakshmi had no fetus issues.

A baby girl was born to the Thangarajah family. It was standard delivery. The village Astrologer Sathasivam looked at the newborn baby's horoscope. He said it was good to name starting with the letter 'Pa.' The girl was born in the 2nd quarter Pooradam star Thangarajah knew about Pavithra Mothiram, a kind of gold ring worn by Indians for its ritualistic value. This holy ring is worn during the prayer for the person's dead ancestors. This ring was traditionally made of Tharba grass. However, the modern Pavithra Mothiram is made of gold. Thangarajah and Vijayalakshmi decided to name the child Pavithra

Vijayalakshmi cast the horoscope of their baby Pavithra through their family astrologer Sathasivam. He told Lakshmi and Thangarajah,

"Your daughter's horoscope has a non-malefic Mars in the Lagna. When she grows, you must look for a bridegroom with the appropriate non malefic Mars in his horoscope. As per your daughter's horoscope, the fifth house has a malefic planet. As such, the chances of having a child are remote. In her previous birth, she would have aborted babies as a doctor or midwife. The chances of the fetus staying in her womb are very low. Visit the temples and do pujas in your daughter's name once a month. Some malefic effects of the planets can be removed," said Sasthri Sathasivam

"Sasthri, will my daughter study and get a degree "?

Vijayalakshmi, she may not become a graduate. There is a chance of a proposed marriage. Besides, she is more interested in growing flower plants, but it is doubtful whether the seeds planted by her will germinate," said Sathasivam Sasthri.

Thangarajah couple named their daughter Pavithra. She was five feet eight inches tall, with long hair& a slender body. She was proud she is from a wealthy family. Her Parents and relatives called her "Pavi. "

Her parents educated her at Ladies College on Flower Road Colombo 7. She drove to the college by car; the father had bought her a Volkswagen car for her eighteenth birthday. Her main interest was gardening, listening to Tamil film music, and watching only selected Tamil cinema films. Pavi did not want to continue to study after A level. She had never been to the orphanage run by her father in Vanni. She just got acquainted with the wealthy high school students. She was a member of the Otters swimming club and learned swimming to keep her body slim.

At the age of twelve, the Thangarajah couple held a puberty ceremony at their Gokulam bungalow in Barnes Place, Colombo 7, with friends and relatives.

She got everything she asked for because she was the only child in the family. Although she is interested in gardening, the plants she planted did not grow. Seeds do not sprout when planted by her. It worried her a lot. She complained to her parents. She said that her fingers are not green.

Her father bought her a Pomeranian puppy at a high price. The puppy died within three months. Thangarajah bought her a Persian cat. Unfortunately, it too failed.

Thangarajah hired Saraswathi's husband Sellasamy, who worked in a Maskeliya tea estate factory, to help Pavi in gardening. Sellasamy looked after the Tea estate Superintendent's bungalow's garden and his work in the Tea factory as a packer. The seeds and plants get planted fast.

One of the biggest dreams of women is to have children. Every woman born in this soil has a desire to carry a baby in the womb, deliver, breastfeed and look after the child

The basis for the fulfillment of this natural desire is the conception and birth of a child. For a woman to carry and nurture a life within herself, the fetus must first develop in the womb. But not all women born on earth receive that opportunity. Many women cannot conceive a child and some developed fetuses that do not stay in the womb. Menstruation is the essential thing for women to create. Any abnormality in the menstrual cycle can affect a woman's chances of conceiving. In women, conditions such as irregular menstrual cycles, or delayed menstrual cycles, can cause problems and complications during pregnancy. Women do not have the privilege of having a baby if they have any abnormalities in the uterus, such as pain, swelling, or rupture of the uterus walls. It can cause further problems. If there is persistent pain in the abdomen and issues with the uterus, its effect will be seen in the menstrual cycle. Factors such as these are factors that prevent women from conceiving. Pavi had these problems and had gone to the family doctor Mrs. Vaani several times with her mother.

When her family doctor Vaani examined her, she found small polyps in Pavi's uterus and suggested removing them. She referred them to gynecologist Dr. Ganeshan. When Dr. Ganeshan questioned Pavi about her menstrual cycle, she told him that there are weighty menstrual periods and Vaginal bleeding afterward

After further questioning Pavi, Dr. Ganeshan said to Pavi and her parents that from the symptoms indicated by Pavi, there is a possibility of growth of Uterine polyps attached to the inner wall of Pavi's uterus that extend into the uterine cavity. Overgrowth of cells in the uterus lining leads to uterine polyps, also known as endometrial polyps. These polyps are usually noncancerous, although some can be cancerous or eventually turn into cancer; hence better to remove them. It will not prevent from having a baby as eggs from the ovary will continue to be produced.

After tests, Dr. Ganeshan confirmed that there are only three small polyps in Pavi's womb, and it is advisable to remove them before it becomes cancerous. He got approval from Pavi and her parents and did surgery to remove the polyps.

When proposed to find a partner for Pavi, the parents did not mention to the broker the problems Pavi had and the surgery she underwent.

CHAPTER 4

SARASWATHY (ALIAS SARAS)

Saraswathy is from Broom field Tea Estate in Maskeliya. The estate was once owned by the British. Saras's parents came to work in the tea estate during British time as coolies from Tamil Nadu under the Kangani system. Kangani means he who oversees the workers. During British time Sinhalese workers refused to do hard work at a low rate per hour. Hence, they recruited people from Tamil Nadu called Kanagani to recruit people from Thirunelveli district living in poverty. Saraswathy's

parents came to Sri Lanka as coolies lived in line houses with limited facilities sharing toilets, Bathrooms, etc. The roofs of a row of houses were covered with sheets of tin. No proper sanitary facilities are provided to the estate workers' homes. Saraswathy could remember her mother Muthammah leaving for work at seven in the morning cold weather to pluck tea leaves by climbing the hill and facing leeches' attacks. She covers her head with a warm cloth. She carries a basket on her back to collect the plucked tea leaves. When it rains, the output is less as the supervisor who weighs the plucked leaves deducts a certain weight for the leaves' humidity. Also, at the weighing point, the supervisor calculates the daily wages as per the weight of leaves plucked by the tea plucker. The supervisor's decision of the compensation is final

Sellasamy, who worked for some years in the Broom field Tea estate, moved to Colombo to work at Thangrajah's house Gokulam.

Saraswathy stopped studying after 8th standard in school in Hatton, and she could speak Sinhalese fluently. Her mother forced Saras to start working in a tea estate as Tea leaf plucker to earn more money. It is at the same tea estate she met Sellasamy. In addition to working at the Tea factory, Sellasamy looked after the

garden at Estate Superintendent's bungalow. Sellasamy met Saraswathy at the Amman festival at Hatton. He liked her appearance and humble behavior.

Sellasamy said to Saraswathy, "Saras are you going to work in the estate like your mother who is plucking tea leaves. It is a difficult job for poor pay."

"Samy, what can I do when we do not have much money to run my parent's family? I have a sister as well. She is in the fifth grade. If I could find a job in Colombo as a servant in a Tamil house, I do not mind accepting it."

"Saras, I am getting a driver's job in a Tamil businessman's house in Colombo. I know the owner. He has a jewelry shop in Jaffna and another in Colombo and owns a Tea estate in Hatton. He knows our Periya Dorai (Estate superintendent.) I can arrange to get you a job in that Tamil house in Colombo. The lady of the house is pleasant. Her name is Vijayalakshmi. They have only one daughter. With your parent's approval, we both will get married and go and work in that bungalow," Sellasamy suggested to Saras.

"That looks like a good idea. If you want to get married to me, you should give up a smoking cigarette. If you agree then come and speak to my parents and convince them. I have no problem in marrying you and coming with you to Colombo," Saras replied.

That meeting ended in the marriage of Sellasamy and Saras. As promised, Sellasamy gave up smoking. They both got married at the Amman temple in Hatton. Periya Dorai Seneviratne was the attesting witness for the marriage. After the wedding, both moved to Colombo and started working in the Gokulam bungalow. Sellasamy was the driver and gardener in Gokulam, and Saraswathy was the housekeeper and cook.

When Sellasamy introduced Saraswathy to Thangarajah and Laximi before agreeing to offer her the job, they questioned her.

“Are you from Maskeliya “?

“Yes, Sir “

“In what Tea estate you worked”?

“Broom field estate.”

“Who was your Periya Dorai:”?

“My father told me that before 1950 there were Englishman as Periya Dorai. Later, many Periya Dorai were there. There were Two Tamils. Now we have Johnson Perera as Periya Dorai. He is a good man”.

“Seamy told us that you are his wife, and your name is Saraswathy. Do you have any brothers or sisters in your family”? Thangarajah asked her.

“Yes, Aiyah. I have only one sister Selammah younger to me.”

“Is she going to school”?

“No, Aiyah. She is working with my mother on the estate as tea leaf plucker.”

“What i`s your father is doing.”

“He is working as a packer in the factory. “

“So, you all live in a line House”?

“Yes, Aliyah.”

“What made you come to this job”?

“The revenue my parents get is not enough to run the family:”

“Do you have experience in cooking”? Laximi asked Saraswathy.

“Yeas Ammah. I can cook Tamil and Singhalese dishes.”

“So, you can speak Singhalese as well.”

“Yes Ammah.”

“What is the salary you get for a month as Tea plucker: “Thangarajah asked.

“With free accommodation I got about 5000 Rupees a month.”

“Ok, we will pay you 8000 Rupees per month with free accommodation and food. You will get new clothes for Thi Pongal and Tamil New Year. We will spend fifty percent of your parents' salary. The balance you can keep with you for your expenses Food and lodging are free. We will provide food and accommodation”, Thangarajah replied.

“I will be too happy to work in your house. You can call me Saras.”

Within a few months, Saraswathy won the confidence of Thangarajah and Vijayalakshmi. Pavithra, the being perfectionist, was too slow in accepting the kitchen's cleanliness maintained by Saraswathy. Pavithra started checking whether the cooking utensils were cleaned correctly. At times she started shouting at Sara's for not keeping the utensils clean & at the proper place.

She also complained that the curries prepared by Saras being too spicy

One day Pavithra complained to her mother, Vijayalakshmi

" Ammah, why does Saras cook vegetarian dishes on four days of the week? You know that I like nonvegetarian dishes.

"Pavi, you know that your father and I like vegetarian dishes. On Friday and Saturday, we both go to the temple. As such, on those days, I have instructed Saras to cook vegetarian food. If you want, please tell Saras the days you want a nonvegetarian dish. She will prepare it for you."

Pavithra was not happy that a room was given to Saras and Sellasamy in the bungalow. Since both are paid employees, as per Pavithra's opinion, Saras and Sellasamy should not be living in Bungalow. On her request, Thangarajah and Vijayalakshmi were forced to move Saras and Sellasamy to live in the one-bedroom guest house of the bungalow,

Saras and Sellasamy were aware of the temperament of Pavithra; since Pavi being the only daughter of the Thangarajah family, Saras and her husband, without any refusal, carried out the orders of Pavithra.

As time went on, Saraswathy and Sellasamy became family members of Gokulam. Salameh, the younger sister of Saras, worked in the tea estate after completing her 8th standard. She could not continue her studies as her parents did not have much income. Selammah lived in the Line house of her parents. Saraswathy used to send a part of her monthly salary to her parents. Saraswathy's mother had no control over her husband, who was a drunkard & spendthrift.

Pavithra sends Sellasamy to buy high-quality fertilizers and expensive plants, assorted roses, orchids, bougainvillea plants. Pavithra will also plant tuber flowering plants in her home garden with the help of Sellasamy. The seeds and plants she plants do not grow and flower. It was a mystery to her. She sought Sellasamy's help. Whatever the plants and seeds, Sellasamy Plants sprout and blossom very quickly. Vijayalakshmi could not understand the reason for the green fingers of Sellasamy. She remembered what her family Astrologer Sathasivam once told her when she gave the horoscope of Pavithra to be read. A baby will not stay in her daughter's womb, predicted the astrologer. Vijayalakshmi did not tell her daughter what the astrologer's prediction was. Vijayalakshmi gave an excuse saying that it needs a lot of patience to grow an orchid plant. It takes five to seven years for a plant to germinate and flower.

Since Pavithra was interested in growing Orchids, her father Thangarajah bought books about Orchids. Pavithra became a member of the Colombo Orchid Club run by women from high society. Sometimes Vijayalakshmi does not like the way Pavithra treats Saras. Vijayalakshmi advised Saras to carry out whatever Pavithra orders without arguing about cooking and housekeeping matters. Saras got used to Pavithra's temperament. Vijayalakshmi was like a mother to Saras. Once a year, Saras goes to Maskeliya for a few days and stays with her parents and younger sister.

She also sends money to her parents regularly. Saras's sister Selammah came to Colombo for a few days and stayed with her sister. Pavithra avoided talking to Selammah. Selammah also avoided talking as much as possible to Pavithra.

Vijayalakshmi liked the politeness of Selammah. She bought new clothes for Saraswathy, Sellasamy, and Selammah for the New year

Pavithra objected to Lakshmi buying dresses for Selammah and Saraswathy's family.

Vijayalakshmi said to the daughter, "Look, Pavi, we should be kind to the people who work for us. Our kindness to them will be one day repaid by them in some way".

"Ammah, how can poor Sellasamy family repay us. Is it possible," Pavi replied to her mother?

"Pavi, you should never underestimate people. Fate can change things ", replied Vijayalakshmi.

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CHAPTER 5

THE WEDDING

A proposal for twenty-one-year-old Pavithra was brought by the marriage broker Thambipillai. Thambipillai is a well-known marriage broker as well as Tobacco and Land broker in many villages. Many Tamil families in Colombo knew him as Broker Thambi. He always carries an old umbrella with a small leather bag containing horoscopes and photos. Thambi wears holy ash on his forehead with sandalwood Bindu. He wears a white shirt and Veshty and carries a pilot pen in his shirt pocket

To be a broker, one should have patience and know the art of conversation to make the client agree. Thambi has many years of experience. He also knew basic astrology to match horoscopes by looking at the Tamil almanac. He had the horoscopes and profiles of many girls and boys in Colombo. Since Thambi knew basic astrology, he first compares the horoscope of the boy and the girl. Next, he matches the caste of both parties. He follows the ABCDE rule, which covers Age, Beauty, Character, Dowry, and Education. Usually, in a year, he fixes about six or seven marriages. Also, he does land and Tobacco brokering in Jaffna Peninsula as side businesses. Thambi's wife died two years ago. When Broker Thambi's son married his lover from a different caste, Thambi had severed connection with him. Thambi knows the caste of all the families in villages as it is vital for his marriage brokering business

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It was a Saturday. Thangarajah was at home listening to the news on the radio. Thambi went to Thangarajah's Gokulam house with his bag full of horoscopes and photos. He knows that he can get a reasonable brokerage fee from Thangarajah if

he arranges a suitable bridegroom for Thangrajah's daughter Pavithra. Thambi charges brokerage fees from Bride and Bridegrooms parties based on their financial status.

Thambi rang the bell at the main entrance door of Gokulam.

There was no answer from the house.

Thambi rang the bell for the second time.

Vijayalakshmi went and opened the door. When she saw Broker Thambipillai, she was happy. "Come in, Thambi. We wanted to contact you regarding our daughter's marriage proposal. For a long time, we did not see you. Were you not well come and sit we will talk"?

Vijayalakshmi informed her husband of the arrival of Broker Thambipillai.

Thangarajah came out of his room and welcomed Thambi.

Vijayalakshmi ordered Saras to prepare Tea for Thambi.

"Aiyah, the reason why I did not come to see you all is that I was trying to find a good partner for your daughter Pavithra. Your future son-in-law should be a good boy of good status and at the same time of the same caste as your caste. It is difficult to find a partner for her as there are only a few educated boys from your caste in good jobs. The boy must also earn a good salary matching his financial status and respect society. At last, I was able to find a boy who meets all these requirements," Thambi said.

"Do you have a profile and the picture of the boy? Am I sure you would have done basic horoscope matching through your friend astrologer Arumugam '?

"Yes, Aiyah, I have done all that. Here is the photo of the boy". Thambi gave the boy's picture to Thangarajah. Vijayalakshmi was listening to the conversation between her husband and the broker. She was waiting to see the photo of the boy.

Saras brought tea and Vaddai in a tray to Thambi.

"Thambi, please enjoy the Vaddai and the tea. If you do not have diabetes, you can add the sugar that is in this small cup," Vijayalakshmi offered to Thambi.

Since Thambi was a frequent visitor to Gokulam, he had met Saras a few times. He inquired about her health and her husband. She politely replied to him and excused herself, and went to the kitchen

"Where is your daughter Pavithra Thangachi Ammah"?

"She is in her room talking to her friends. Let us discuss the proposal first:". Luximi replied.

"Thanks, Ammah, for the Vaddai and Tea. I do not take sugar," replied Thambi.

After looking at the photo of the boy given by Thambi, Thangarajah gave it to Vijayalakshmi.

She had a look at the photo for a few seconds. Her facial expression showed that she was satisfied with the boy's appearance. Thambi said the boy is the only son of his parents. Hence has no responsibility."

"Thambi, can we keep the photo. I want to show it to Pavithra," Vijayalakshmi asked. "Why not, Ammah? I am sure she will say okay."

"I forgot to ask you the boy's name and other family details," Thangarajah asked Thambi

"The boy's name is Maniratnam. His family and friends call him Ratnam. He is a qualified Chartered accountant and has done his MBA. He is working for an American company in Colombo as Chief Accountant. His father, Selvaratnam, is a retired Special class one Stationmaster who worked in the Railway department. He worked as Chief station master in Fort, Jaffna, and Kandy upcountry Railway stations."

"Thambi, I could remember Mr. Selvaratnam as he had come twice to my Jewelry shop at Sea Street to make jewelry for his sister's wedding. It was a long time ago. He is a friendly man. Thambi, give me a few days to discuss this proposal with my wife and daughter. Give me a call in two days. I will let you know our decision. If we want to go ahead with the proposal, you could arrange the boy's party to visit us and see my daughter. She may like to speak to the boy. Her decision is our decision."

"That is Okay, Aiyah. "

"Anyway, Thambi, whether the proposal will be successful or not, keep this cash with you for the initiative you took to find a partner for my daughter. "

Thangarajah gave one thousand rupees to Thambi.

Thambi thanked Thangarajah and Lakshmi and left Gokulam

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Two days later, Thambi received good news from Thangarajah, saying that his family agrees with the proposal. He also asked Thambi to arrange a good day for the boy and his parents to visit Gokulam. After putting to let him know the date and time.

* * * *

Selvaratnam, his wife and son, and Selvratnam's sister Sumathi and her husband Ponnudurai arrived at Gokulam to see Pavithra and decide about the marriage. Marriage broker Thambi also accompanied them. Thambi knew that he might get about twenty-five thousand rupees as commission from each party if the marriage goes through. He introduced Selvratnam's family to Thangrajah's family.

Ratnam came with his parents to see his proposed bride.

Pavithra was dressed in an expensive yellow color high-quality Kanchipuram saree with a black border. She was wearing a matching yellow blouse. The diamond nose stud and diamond ear stud were glittering like stars. Pavithra's left hand was decorated in g beautiful patterns engraved old bangles. A thick chain is glittering with a pendant added beauty to her. There was a cat's eye ring in her right hand. Jasmine garland in her hair filled the air with a pleasant smell. Pavithra's appearance showed that she is the daughter of a wealthy family. Her best friend, Menaka, who studied with her, dressed Pavithra and brought her from Pavithra's room accompanied by Vijayalakshmi and Saras. Saras was dressed in a green color Cotton saree with plastic bangles and thali on her neck. There was a significant difference between the appearance of Pavithra and Saras.

Pavithra, as she was studying at the Colombo Ladies College, is a forward-looking and outspoken, ambitious girl. She behaves in a manner to draw others' attention. She was in a relaxed mood when conversing with Ratnam and his parents.

Marriage broker Thambi suggested to Thangarajah and the bride groom's father that Ratnam and Pavithra should go to the garden and discuss in private. Thangarajah and Selvaratnam agreed to that suggestion.

Thangarajah said to the daughter, "Pavi, please take Ratnam and show him your flower garden."

On the suggestion made by the father, Pavi took Ratnam to show her garden in the backyard of Gokulam.

Ratnam looked around the garden and was delighted at the beauty of roses in full bloom in different colors. He was very much impressed by the rare variety of black Roses, Orchids, Bougainville's, Rhododendron, Jasmine, Dahlias. Daisy, Shoe flowers of different colors. He admired the squirrels and birds in the garden enjoying the grains kept in the bird feeder. There was a pond with goldfish. He watched the colorful fish swimming in the pond.

Pavi and Ratnam sat on a wooden bench and started their discussion.

"I am Pavithra. My friends and parents call me Pavi. How Do I call you? My father told me your name is Manikkaratnam. It looks a long name, " Pavithra asked Ratnam

"Pavi, True, my name is long. In my birth certificate, it is written as Selvaratnam Manikkaratnam. Many Sinhalese also have very long names, but my parents, relatives, and friends call me Ratnam. You too can call me Ratnam."

"That is short and nice. Ratnam, what is your opinion about my garden?"

"It looks beautiful with flowers, birds, squirrels, and a pond full of goldfish. You must be spending time maintaining the garden. I think that your hobby is gardening, am I right, Pavi? The flowers are beautiful. I am impressed with the black roses. It is the first time I see a black rose. There is a lotus flower in the pond. Does anyone help you to maintain this big garden "?

"Yes. Our driver Sellasamy helps me with gardening. Did you see an old tree in the right corner of the garden "?

"Yes, I do. That tree must be an old tree. "

"True. It has a story Ratnam ".

“What is the story. Tell me. I am interested to hear that story:

“Cinnamon Gardens is named from the former cinnamon plantation in this area. In the year 1789, there were 289 acres) of cinnamon trees in the gardens. Cinnamon Gardens is a multi-religious and multi-ethnic area. The major ethnic communities in Cinnamon Gardens are Sinhalese and Tamils. Ethnic minorities include Burghers and Sri Lankan Moors. Religions include Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam, Christianity, and various other religions and beliefs to a lesser extent. As time went on, the cinnamon plantation got destroyed as new buildings came up. During Portuguese and Dutch times, they used the bark of the tree for export. That tree is the only tree left in this area. My father bought this house because he liked this house, he believes that it will bring luck. After we moved to this Gokulam, he started business in Dubai and Singapore. When I was young, I used to swing in that tree. You can smell cinnamon if you pluck a leaf and squeeze it and smell. The tree must be more than 300 years old; my father takes care of it”. Pavithra explained

“This is the first time I have seen a cinnamon tree.
“In that left corner, I see a small plot of garden. Whose plot is that?

That's my mother's vegetable garden

There are green chilies, eggplant, cabbages. Snake gourd, Bitter gourd, beans, and tomatoes are in the vegetable plot. She is interested in vegetable gardening. She enjoys using fresh vegetables from that garden for cooking.

Ratnam said to Pavi," my mother told me that Snake gourd and Bitter gourd have many health benefits.

Snake gourd accelerates weight loss. It augments Heart function and detoxifies the Kidneys, enhances Digestive System, Strengthens Respiratory processes. Bitter gourd curry is ideal for people who have diabetes.

"My mother cooks it frequently at home as my father has type 2 ` diabetes".

"How about you"?

"Thank god I am not diabetic as I am cautious with my diet, and I do daily walking. I was an athlete during the school days. I played soccer and Tennis."

"Do you play Tennis? That is an expensive game usually played by rich people. Are you a member of any tennis club, Ratnam?"

"Yes, I am a member of Dehiwala /Mt. Lavinia Cosmopolitan Sports Club," replied Ratnam

"I am also a member of Orchids cub and Otter's swimming club. I go swimming to keep my body slim, "said Pavithra.

"We should keep our weight down. It is good for health", Ratnam replied Pavi.

"Ratnam, you look very slim and tall. What is your height

"I am almost six feet tall. My father, too, is tall. In his office, they called my father "Tall Selva" as there was one short person by the same name. That person is only five feet two inches tall. He, too, was a station master. They called him "Short Selva."

"Our Tamil people are good at calling people by Nicknames," Replied Pavi.

"Tell me, Pavi, about your driver who helps you in gardening."

"Whatever seeds our driver Sellasamy plants, it germinates quickly. He has green fingers, but it is not so for me. "Replied Pavithra with grief.

" Never worry about it. You must be happy that you have your driver help you. You can guide him where to pant. Where did you study"?

"I studied at Colombo Ladies college. After passing my Advanced level exam, I did a diploma in Home Science ".

"So, you must be a good cook:"

"I hardly cook at my house. When I like I do make a cake? I hate going to the kitchen. We have a servant woman from Maskeliya called Saraswathy. We call her Saras. She looks after the kitchen. She is a good cook. She also prepares Sinhalese dishes. "

"That is interesting. You can prepare a cake for my 25th Birthday," Ratnam said with a smile, indicating that he likes her.

"When is your Birthday Ratnam"

"April first next month. "

Pavithra laughed

"I know, Pavi, why you are laughing. Yes, I was born on April fools' day. I am not a fool. I am a Chartered Accountant and have done an MBA. Working for an American company in Colombo as chief accountant. Twelve people are working for me. I am also the Finance Director of that software company ".

"Do you know anything about April Fools Day, Ratnam "?

"I read that April Fools' Day is celebrated on April 1 each year. It has been celebrated for several centuries by different cultures, though its exact origins remain a mystery. April Fools' Day traditions include playing hoaxes or practical jokes on others, often yelling "April Fools!".

"Ratnam, you said that you are working for an American company. That means the company must have given you an official car with a driver".

"You guessed it correct, Pavi," replied Ratnam.

After more than one hour of conversation, Ratnam and Pavi returned to the main hall. The food was ready for all at the dining

Vijayalakshmi introduced Saras to the visitors. Vijayalakshmi mentioned that she is the wife of their driver Sellasamy. She is an excellent cook.

Saras was very shy to speak to the visitors. Ratnam's mother asked her which village she came from

Saras replied," I am from Maskeliya. My parents are working in the tea estate, I have a sister too. She is younger than me".

"I know Maskeliya as I worked as station master at Hatton and Badulla stations. I could see Adams peak from Hatton. I remember working during my service as a relief station master for six months at Demodara railway station. The station is 277 km away from Colombo. It is located 912 m above mean sea level and 8 km from Badulla, the Uva Province's capital city. All the trains that run on the Main Line, including the Podi Menike and Udarata Menike, express trains, stop at Demodara station.

The station is mainly known for its spiral rail line at its location, popularly known as the 'Demodara Loop.' The rail line passes around the loop and emerges from a tunnel, which runs directly beneath the Demodara railway station. The rail loop is approximately 900 meters long, and the tunnel is 320 m in length. It is considered the only one in the world with a railway station situated precisely over a tunnel at spiral loop" Selvaratnam recollected his experience working in upcountry as a Stationmaster.

"Yes, Aiyah Adams's peak is not too far from Maskeliya. I have climbed the hill twice with my parents. There is a village called Nallathani (Good Water) at the bottom of the peak. My father's relations are working in a Demodara Tea estate," Saras replied.

While visitors enjoyed the rice and curries, Vijayalakshmi mentioned the veggies are fresh from her vegetable garden.

The visitors left Gokulam at 3 pm

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Broker Thambi was happy that both parties agreed on the proposal. Ratnam's father did not insist on any dowry as he knew that his future daughter-in-law is the only daughter of a wealthy businessman Thangarajah.

As the only daughter, Thangarajah did not hesitate to give Ratnam considerable dowry money and a Car. Thangarajah also said that he would meet all the wedding expenses, including their honeymoon trip to Kashmir.

Pavithra's wedding was held at the Hilton Hotel Colombo. Pavithra and Ratnam went to Kashmir for a week for their honeymoon. Ratnam showered love on Pavithra. She also called him Ratnam. Pavithra ordered Saras to cook the food Ratnam wanted. Knowing that Saras could speak Sinhala, he would ask her to

prepare Ratnam Sinhala dishes such as Jackfruit curry, Seeni sambol, and dry fish curry.

"Saras, where did you learn to speak Sinhala?" asked Ratnam, as he had studied at Trinity College Kandy and could speak Sinhala to some extent.

"I was born in Hatton. I studied there, so I know Sinhala," said Saras

Ratnam and Pavithra went to Horton Plains and Haggala botanical gardens on Saras's recommendation and Adam's peak for a week.

CHAPTER 6

MISCARRIAGE

Within a year of getting married, Pavithra conceived. It was a great joy for Thangarajah and Vijayalakshmi. Saras and Sellasamy, too, were happy. Saras prepared the dishes Pavi liked. She took complete care of her.

When Pavi's and Ratnam's parents found they would have a grandson or granddaughter to play with, their happiness was overwhelming. Vijayalakshmi took her daughter to their family doctor Mahendran and checked whether Pavi is pregnant. After some pregnancy tests, Dr. Mahendran confirmed that Pavithra had conceived. Dr. Mahendran was aware of Pavithra's health condition. She had often complained that she had more pain in her stomach during menstruation and more blood flow. Dr. Mahendran warned Pavithra not to carry heavy weights and to be very careful during the menstruation period. No matter how much Vijayalakshmi said, Pavithra did garden work bending, lifting the heavy compost bags. Sellasamy, who had noticed it many times, did not say anything as he knew that Pavithra would not like to be ordered.

"Pavi, do not lift heavy things when you do gardening. Do not bend over and work. It is your first childbirth. Listen. Let Sellasamy do the backbreaking work," Vijayalakshmi advised the daughter.

One day while bending over and planting some plants, she developed sudden pain in the tummy and started bleeding. She was rushed to Dr. Mahendran's medical clinic. After an examination, Dr. Mahendran concluded that Pavithra had a miscarriage. He did Dilation and Curettage (D&C) and cleaned her uterus.

Dr. Mahendran warned Pavithra to avoid conceiving for a few months.

Pavithra became pregnant again for the second time in less than six months after being warned by the family doctor. The scan revealed that she was a normal baby boy, and the obstetrician asked her to come for an examination every two weeks.

In six months, as they feared, Pavithra's blood pressure increased, and for the second time, a miscarriage occurred. Pavithra was lucky to escape from death. It was a blessing for her from God.

"Do not try to conceive again. The baby will not stay in your womb". Her doctor warned that a fetus in her womb could be dangerous to Pavithra's life

It came as a shock to Thangarajah and Vijayalakshmi. Ratnam and Pavithra were speechless. It was a great disappointment to them who expected to have an heir to their assets. For Thangarajah's family and Ratnam, the life of Pavithra was more critical. They even thought of adopting a child, but Pavithra and Ratnam disagreed with Thangarajah and Vijayalakshmi. As per Lakshmi's suggestion, Ratnam and Pavithra slept in different rooms at night. Within two years of marriage, Pavithra and Ratnam lived like divorcees. Ratnam was grief-stricken. Pavithra was always in tears thinking of the disappointment in her married life. Pavithra refused to take pills to prevent conceiving. After seeing her daughter, Thangarajah and Vijayalakshmi started thinking about what to do regarding Pavi's health issue.

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CHAPTER 7

DR MALATHY

It is said that when issues come up in a family, they are generally interrelated. Miscarriages of Pavithra worries in Thangarajah 's and Ratnam's families for not having an heir in the family, Sellasamy getting admitted to hospital after a heart attack, etc. All these happened within a short period. Saras was worried when the doctors said Sellasamy, her husband has three blocks in the arteries, and a bypass surgery should not be delayed. Saras knew her financial position to find the money for her husband's by-pass surgery

There was no one to look after the garden as Sellasamy was sick.

Ratnam appointed a distant relative of his to look after the garden. Pavithra disagreed with that arrangement as the new gardener did not do things according to her instructions. Pavithra got into an argument with her husband. The inferiority complex that neither of them has the privilege of having a child coupled with various criticisms from relatives and neighbors lead to frequent quarrels between Ratnam and Pavithra. Ratnam and Pavithra decided to go on a pilgrimage to Kathirkamam and perform a religious rite, lighting a lamp keeping it on Pavithra's stomach. An age-old custom person suffers an incurable stomach problem.

In the forest there, they met a bearded spiritual man inside a large wooden hut. He blessed and told the couple, "Everything will go well by the grace of Kadirgamak Kandan."

On their return to Gokulam, Pavithra told her mother about the blessings from a spiritual person in Kathirkamam.

Vijayalakshmi said to her daughter, “Pavi, I too had a dream two days back that I was bottle-feeding a baby by keeping him in my lap. I wish that that dream comes true”:

When Pavithra and Ratnam returned to Colombo from Kathigamam, Dr. Malathy, Lakshmi’s cousin, had come to Colombo from England on leave. It was as if Kathigamam Murugan had sent someone to solve the problems of Ratnam and Pavithra

Dr. Malathy works as a doctor in the field of obstetrics in London. When Ratnam and Pavithra were away on a pilgrimage to Kathigamam, Malathy started the conversation with Vijayalakshmi

“Aunty, where is the newly married couple.”

“Both of them have gone to Kathirkamam on a Pilgrimage. They're due today at any time. Pavitra called me and said that they are at Galle.”

“Why are they going on pilgrimage at this young age.”

“You may not know the reason. Pavithra had suffered three miscarriages after marriage”:

"Aunty, as a doctor, I have a question to ask you. You and Uncle do not look happy. Any reason behind your worry?"

"Yes, Malathy, good that you asked me that question. It is all regarding my daughter Pavi's family. "Vijayalakshmi replied with tears in her eyes.

"What is the problem? Tell me the issue. If it is related to the health of anyone in your family, as a doctor, I may be able to find a solution."

"Yes, Malathy... `The Doctor advised that Pavithra will have problems conceiving after her miscarriages. Even if she conceives, it is dangerous to her life. It is because of this we are all worried that there'll be no heir to our family."

"Now I understand. In the modern advanced Medical Field, this problem can be solved. Moreover, your family is wealthy and can spend money if special treatment is given to solve this issue," replied Malathy.

"What are you telling me? Can you please explain to me?"

"Vijayalakshmi, Aunty, there is a way to get you and your husband a grandson or granddaughter through Surrogacy. Many women in India use this method to earn a lot of money by renting out their uterus. Some even sell one of their kidneys. Having a baby through this method has progressed so much that I have delivered healthy babies through their surrogate mothers for two of my clients in London.

The child's genetic parents have nothing to do with surrogacy and pregnancy".

"What are you saying, Malathy?" Lukshimi asked.

"Aunty, I would give you a simple example. Say someone has no place to park their car in their house, they can rent a parking lot and park the car. The only thing is that you must pay for rented parking," replied Dr. Malathy with a smile."

"Malathy, can you explain in detail what Surrogacy is. Can Pavithra carry the baby without risking her life" Lakshmi wanted to clear her doubt about the treatment?

"There are two kinds of Surrogacy. One is traditional surrogacy. A woman who gets artificially inseminated with the husband's sperm carries the baby and delivers it. A traditional surrogate is the baby's biological mother. That's because it was their egg that was fertilized by the father's sperm. The child will carry the genes of the father and mother. If the husband's sperm is not effective, then a Donor sperm can be used. In that case, the child will carry the mother's gene and the donor. Normally the name of the donor is not revealed. But in the case of Ratnam and Pavithra, the sperm and egg can be used produced by them. The only issue is that Pavithra can't carry the baby as her womb is weak and it is too risky."

"Malathy, I do not want Pavithra to carry the baby. "

"No problem, there is another method called Gestational surrogacy. The technique called "in vitro fertilization" (IVF) now makes it possible to gather eggs from the mother, fertilize them with sperm from the father. After fertilization, the embryo is inserted into a gestational surrogate's uterus, the rented womb of another woman. She must carry & deliver the baby. They don't have any genetic ties to the child because it wasn't their egg used. A gestational surrogate is called the "birth mother." The biological mother, though, is still the woman whose egg was fertilized.

"Can Malathy do this treatment in Sri Lanka? What does the law say?"

"Yes, aunty, this treatment can be done in a private hospital in Sri Lanka. I know a Sinhala lady, Doctor Hemalatha, who studied with me at Colombo medical college. She has a private clinic in Kynes Road. She has done few successful cases. I can discuss Pavithra's case with her. It costs money. The woman who agrees to carry the baby in her womb will ask for a large sum of money to become a surrogate mother".

"How much will she ask?"

"As far as I know, a surrogate mother in India charges three lakhs of Indian rupees, including the hospital cost. It may cost about five lakhs in Sri Lankan rupees. A woman from a low-income family who is badly in need of money to clear debts may come forward to become a surrogate mother," Malathy said.

"We will advertise in the papers. If we get an applicant, let Ratnam Pavithra and you interview and select a surrogate mother to meet the requirements. She and her husband should not have a claim over the child once delivered. I will ask my lawyer to deal with the matter in consultation with the Doctor. I know that there is no legal restriction in our country, "Thangarajah, who had also joined in the discussion, said

"How long will you all take to decide"?

"Well, Malathy, give us a week; I will talk to everyone and tell you the decision, "Thangarajah replied.

A week later, Thangarajah 's family gave the green light.

"Choosing a surrogate mother is your family's responsibility," said Dr. Malathy.

"My friend advised me to try for a surrogate mother in India. It is done as a business there because of poverty in rural areas. "

Thangarajah gave his option

"Uncle to find a surrogate mother in India will cause inconvenience. Your family must spend eighteen months there. Moreover, you may not know what type of woman will come forward to be a surrogate mother. I know families from western countries go to India to find a surrogate mother. But my advice is to find someone in Sri Lanka. I will take you all to Dr. Hemalatha.

She will be in a better position to advise you all," Dr. Malathy said to the family.

* * * *

CHAPTER 8

DR. HEMALATHA

Dr. Malathy took Ratnam and Pavi to Hemlalatha's clinic at Kynsey Road Colombo 7. That clinic was famous for surrogate treatment. All consultations, tests, treatments and care are done in that clinic

Hemalatha and Malathy studied together at the Colombo Medical College. Both are good friends. After talking to the other patients, Hemalatha came out of her room and saw Malathy

"Malu, when did you come to Sri Lanka from London?" Hemalatha asked Malathy.

Hemalatha calls Malathy Malu from the time they were friends at medical college. Hemlalatha's parents were both doctors. Hemlalatha's husband, Amarasekara, holds a senior director's position in Unilever Company in Colombo. Hemalatha is from Kandy. Malathy had visited Hemlalatha's parents' house in Colombo.

"Malu. I came to Sri Lanka on a month's vacation. I wanted to see my grandparents, who brought me up. They are rather old. My uncle called me and said that they are anxious to see me. I am staying with my Lukshimi aunty in Colombo 7

"So, what brought you here with your relations "?

"My aunt's daughter Pavithra has a problem in her married life. That is why I brought them to your clinic to discuss the matter ", Malathy replied Hemalatha.

Malathy introduced Thangarajah and Ratnam's family to Dr. Hemalatha.

"I am happy to meet you all. I will see the possibility of solving your problem ". Hemlalatha's reply gave confidence to both families.

"My aunt Lakshmi's daughter Pavithra conceived three times and had miscarriages. She is now twenty-five years old. The husband is thirty years old. Doctors have advised her that it is risky to conceive a baby because the fetus has been aborted three times. Ratnam and Pavithra are worried that they will not have children. Pavithra and Ratnam are not interested in adopting a child. There is no heir to inherit their property. Here are the medical reports from the doctors they consulted. The stories will reveal the complexity of the case," Malathy said to Dr. Hemalatha.

"Have they consulted any gynecologist?"

"Yes, they consulted Dr. Ganeshan. He carried out all tests, scans, and X-rays. His report is here. You can read and decide how to solve their problem." Malathy reported to Dr. Hemalatha.

"Is Pavithra, the only daughter of your uncle's family?"

"Yes, Hema, I should give a brief profile of Pavithra's father.

He is my uncle Thangarajah. He is a famous jeweler in Colombo. He owns two houses in Colombo and a tea estate in Bandarawella. He is also a partner of jewelry shops in Dubai and Singapore. Pavithra is their only daughter. I have told Pavithra could have a baby using a surrogate mother. They want to ask you some questions about surrogacy. You should answer Pavithra and Ratnam their queries and clear their doubts. After that, let them decide to go for it or not."

"Ratnam and Pavithra, what doubts do you both have about the surrogacy system?" Dr. Hemalatha asked.

"Doctor, can you please briefly tell us how to have a baby according to current medical methods? What is the role of both of us in this?" Pavithra asked Dr. Hemalatha.

"Surrogacy is the process of leaving your husband's sperm and the egg that comes out of your womb into a test tube and transferring it into the surrogate mother's womb a few days after the embryo develops. The baby comes out in the first 40 weeks. A variety of factors affect the length of the surrogacy process. Still, it usually takes four or six months or even a year to find a medically qualified surrogate mother and transfer the embryo created within the test tube into the surrogate mother's uterus. The born baby will have the genes of both of you

Implementing the decision to get to know a surrogate mother is not so easy. It takes several months to find a surrogate mother. It would be nice to have a good healthy woman and forty to forty-five years old, with no problems in her womb. It will be better that she has already given birth. But it is not a condition. The surrogate mother should not have a dangerous, irreversible disease like cancer. You can easily choose a surrogate mother in India. Sri Lanka also has that facility. We will do several tests to determine if the surrogate mother is eligible to carry the baby formed from your egg and your husband's sperm.

Some companies can help you choose a surrogate mother. They will take care of legal matters, and they will take a commission for it. It is the first step. It will be a crucial decision.

Once a surrogate mother is accepted, the medical process begins. Once the legal contracts are signed, the surrogate mother will start preparing for the medical procedure. We carefully examine any physical abnormalities and mental health issues to ensure a successful pregnancy. The physical and psychological preparation area is a big part of the surrogate mother's medical process. I am sure Pavithra, your father is financially OK to meet all expenses".

" Thank you, Doctor, for explaining the process," Thangarajah said.

In your case, the donor of the sperm is the husband of Pavithra. And the egg is from Pavithra. Only you must find a reliable, healthy surrogate mother to carry the baby in her womb. Please do not go for a surrogate mother in South India, although it is easy and quick to find one through India's Agency. I know two of my clients had issues after using a surrogate mother from Tamil Nadu. She narrated a story of a surrogate mother from a slum area in Chennai

” A Surrogate agency in Colombo told me this story of a Surrogate mother from slum area om Chennai, Tamil Nadu. The agency did not want to mention the surrogate mother's details and the people who hired the surrogate mother.

Her husband is a factory worker driver who earns about 8,000 Indian rupees a month. She works in a factory that makes clothes. She earns 6,000 rupees a month

For the last few years, her family was struggling to live as she had four children to look after; her husband borrowed 50,000 Indian rupees from people at high interest, mostly to pay the fee of our school-going children and their debts had to be repaid.

One day, she met a man who worked as an agent for a surrogacy clinic. He told me that I could earn 300,000 rupees being a surrogate mother.

I knew two other women in her neighborhood who had been surrogate mothers, so She agreed.

She thought she has four children, so she can help someone who cannot have any children. She was thinking how horrible it would be if my daughter couldn't bear children. She believed that everyone should have children, and hence she wanted to help.

She never met the natural parents and has no idea who they are. She was still under sedation when they removed the baby. She never set eyes on the baby.

She had no idea whether it's white or black, whether Indian or foreign; she did not even know whether it's a boy or a girl!

When She gained consciousness, her first words to her husband were, “Did you see the baby? Is it a boy or a girl?”’

He said to her that he hadn't seen it. She asked the doctor, who delivered the baby, but she didn't avoid answering her questions. The doctor said to her, “You are paid a considerable amount to carry the baby in your womb; you earned that large amount of money within a year. “

'If You are a surrogate mother, you shouldn't ask these questions,' the doctor said to her. She kept her mouth shut

I want to know about the baby. I want to know where he or she is and what it is studying.

For three months after giving birth, she spent sleepless nights, she would get headaches thinking about the baby, and She had to take medicines to calm down.

Every year day the baby was born, her family celebrates its birthday. I do all the rituals that I do for my other children.

She prays daily the baby's well-being and long life.

She always wondered if the baby is like any of her other children. She the baby and would give anything to see the baby once.

She knew it's not her baby after all, but she wouldn't have given the baby away if she saw the baby.

She wished the baby is happy and fine wherever the baby is.

She also said that the baby would be living in a wealthy family with all comforts, which her family could not have given “

“Very pathetic story off that poor surrogate mother. Dr. Malathy advised us not to go for a surrogate mother outside our country. We do not want to get into complications after the baby is born,” replied Ratnam.

* * * *

“I will be too glad to solve your problem; I have handled many surrogacy cases using different options.”

CHAPTER 9

THE SURROGATE MOTHERS

After two consultations with Dr. Hemalatha, the search for a surrogate mother to have a baby for the Ratnam family began. Thangarajah and Ratnam consulted an Agency that finds a surrogate mother. One Agency advised them to go to Tamil Nadu as there is a high probability of finding a surrogate mother. Thangarajah and Ratnam did not agree to that suggestion

"Appah, we have to be careful in selecting a surrogate mother. Later we should not allow her to blackmail us," Pavithra said to her father.

"Pavi, do not worry about it. Our Lawyer Sivarajah will look after the legal side of it. The issue is to find a surrogate mother who will be friendly with us; probably a known lady is much better. As doctor Hemalatha said the selected, a woman will have to be free of any disease, be healthy, and undergo tests. " Thangarajah replied.

One day Saras asked Lukshimi, "Amma, what did the doctor say about your daughter having the chance of conceiving"?

"Saras, it is risky for Pavi to conceive. There is a medical way in the latest medical development to solve our problem".

" How Amma"?

" You know that Doctors have advised that Pavithra can't carry a baby in her womb, and it is detrimental to her life. Hence the baby will have to be carried in another woman's womb. The baby will grow in that woman's womb".

" Amma, this is the first time I have heard about this method of giving birth to a baby."

"This is the latest development in the medical field. The problem is to find a suitable lady to carry the baby in her womb. Aiyah and Pavi's husband is searching through an Agency for a surrogate mother to have the baby in the womb “.

"Amma, if you wish, can I suggest a solution for your problem. You may discuss it with Aiyah and Pavithra's husband “.

"Saras, what is the solution you are proposing? Do you know anyone among your relations who is prepared to carry the baby in her womb? We are prepared to pay any amount of money for that help, "Lukshimi replied.

"Amma, first I should tell you about the health condition of my husband, Sellasamy. You know that a few weeks back, he had a heart attack and was admitted to hospital”?

“Yes, I do. My husband and I visited him when he was in the hospital. My husband gave him a month's leave to rest' How is he now. He had the attack because he was smoking before. After he married you, he stopped smoking “.

"Yes, Amma, he was a heavy smoker before he married me; I am thankful to Aiyah. The doctors advised that he must undergo open-heart surgery as three arteries to the heart are blocked 95%. He must be on the waiting list for many months for the operation in a government hospital. Delaying the operation is detrimental to his life."

“Saras, what are you trying to say? "Lukshimi again asked Saras

"Amma, I have a suggestion. You can discuss it with Aiyah and your daughter's family.

"What is the suggestion you want to make"?

"Amma, I want to get the heart operation done for my husband at a private hospital as soon as possible. It will cost me about 400,000 Indian Rupees. It is about three times the Sri Lanka rupee equivalent to an Indian Rupee. I can't afford it; I do not have that amount of money.

"So, what do you want me and Aiyah to do for it"?

"What I am suggesting is that I will carry the baby for your daughter's family in my womb. I am a very healthy woman of Thirty years of age “.

"Now I understand Saras what you are trying to say; It looks like a good proposal to be considered. Will your husband agree to it"?

I will convince him. Since it regards his life, he will agree".

"In return, you want us to meet all expenses for the by-pass surgery of your husband in Apollo hospital. Am I right:"?

" Yes, Amma, it is only a suggestion from me."

"I will have to discuss this proposal of you with my husband, Ratnam, and Pavithra. If they agree, we need not go through any agencies. We can go ahead with your suggestion. There is no problem in paying all expenses for Sellasamy's heart operation. My husband, Pavithra and Ratnam, like your husband. Where do you want the bypass surgery done “?

“The doctor advised us to get it done at Navaloka private hospital in Colombo. It will cost about three lakhs of rupees. " Thank you, Amma. It is my pleasure to help your family when you all are in a crisis. Your family and Ratnam Aiyah's family are very kind to my husband and me. Sorry that I am asking for money to pay the hospital expenses. I want to save my husband and at the same time help your daughter's family."

"Saras, you are a great lady. I treated you like my eldest daughter. You won the hearts of our family members. I will discuss this suggestion of you with all my family members. If they agree, we will inform you and your husband and sign an agreement to avoid any legal complications".

"Amma, I trust you and Aiyah. To accept me to carry your daughter Pavithra's and son-in-law Ratnam Aiyah's baby. I am prepared to do so as I consider both of you as my parents," Saras replied.

* * *

Lukshimi conveyed the suggestion given by Saras to Thangarajah, Ratnam, and Pavithra

"Good news! I found a surrogate mother within our house to carry Pavithra's baby," Lukshimi said to her family members at the Dining table.

"What are you saying, Lakshmi"? Thangarajah asked his wife.

"Yes. You all don't believe that Saras, on her own, has proposed to be a surrogate mother to carry Pavi's baby."

"Is it true, Amma"? Pavi could not believe what her mother said.

Vijayalakshmi explained the reason why Saras proposed to become a surrogate mother. After listening to Vijayalakshmi's explanation of why Saras wanted to be the surrogate mother, they all agreed. They all had a meeting with Saras and Sellasamy. Finally, Thangarajah and Ratnam's family decided that Saras will carry Pavithra's and Ratnam's baby. As suggested by Dr. Hemalatha, the baby will be fertilized using Ratnam's sperm and Pavithra's egg to have their DNA after birth.

CHAPTER 10

THE HEIR WAS BORN

Saraswathy gave birth to a chubby baby boy. At the time of delivery, the boy weighed nine pounds. It was a cesarian operation because the baby was large and twenty-four inches above the twenty-two inches regular length.

“Look, this baby is going to be a tall person like Ratnam. Moreover, look at the cheeks and eyes. It shows he has the gene of Ratnam and Pavithra,” Vijayalakshmi commented.

.Ratnam and Pavithra were pleased to hear that comment.

Two days after Saras delivered the baby, good news came to her from Navaloka hospital. That Sellasamy’s heart surgery was a success. Saras's sister Selammah was with Sellasamy called Saras and gave the information; Selammah congratulated her sister for delivering the baby boy. She said to Saras, “Acca, I am now qualified to be a city.”

Saras gave the news to Thangarajah and Lakshmi and thanked both for paying for her husband's heart surgery.

"Saras, our family's help to you is not greater than the help you have given to my family. You gave us an heir for our family. That too a chubby boy," Thangarajah thanked Saraswathy.

“I have checked from Tamil Almanac the star in which the baby was born. Vijayalakshmi told her husband. I have given the date, time, and place of birth of our grandson to Astrologer Sathasivam. He will cast the horoscope and call us. He now has an office in Wellawatte. “What is the Star in which the baby was born, Vijayalakshmi.”

“The star is Parani. He is going to rule as heir to the property of Thangarajah.

Ratnam and Pavi were there in the hospital a few hours after the baby were born. Pavi was very anxious to see how the baby looked. After seeing the baby, she told her mother, "Amma, the baby's eyes and cheeks are like my eyes and cheeks. The baby is long like my husband Ratnam, who is tall, and the baby has long fingers".

There was endless joy at seeing the baby among Thangarajah and Selavaratnam's family members. Pavi kissed the baby many times. It is her first experience in handling a newly born baby. From Saraswathy's look, it appeared that she did not like the way Pavi was holding the baby and kissing several times. Vijayalakshmi observed that Saras did not like the way Pavi was handling the baby. Vijayalakshmi turned towards her daughter and said, "Pavi be soft with the newly born baby, do not kiss the baby,

The germs in you will go to the baby, and he will fall sick. Wash your hands before you hold the baby each time," Vijayalakshmi advised her daughter.

"OK, Amma, I will do that. I have the right to kiss my baby," she replied to her mother.

"Thank you, Saras, for giving us a son. The seed that cannot be sown in my wife has been sown in your womb. Grown, and come out into this world. Now he is not only our son but also your child," said Ratnam.

Thangarajah and Lakshmi were delighted that an heir had been born into their family. They expressed their gratitude to Dr. Malathy and Dr. Hemalatha.

"Sir, the medical bill will come to you in two days. You can pay it in a week," Dr. Hemalatha said with a smile.

"My friend Latha is very focused on her business and will do what her customers want her to do for their satisfaction. My friend is a successful doctor," said Dr. Malathy.

"The baby and the mother Saras will be in my care for two weeks. The newborn baby needs to breastfeed for at least three months. As such, Saraswathy should take care of her health," said Dr. Hemalatha.

"Doctor, can I breastfeed my son?" asked Pavi.

" Pavi, if You would like to breastfeed your adopted baby or one born with a surrogate or gestational carrier? Wonderful! Not only is it possible, but chances are also you will produce a significant amount of milk. It is different, though than breastfeeding a baby with whom you have been pregnant for many months. I can talk with you about it privately," said Dr. Hemalatha.

"It's not a problem, doctor. Saras is like my eldest daughter. She and her husband live in our outhouse. Saras has been acquainted with us for many years, and I will take care of her health," said Vijayalakshmi.

" Doctor, we are ready with a cradle and supplies for the baby in our room. The baby will be taken care of by Pavithra and my mother-in-law. In a few days, we will consult with our family astrologer and name the baby," Ratnam said. "

"Don't be in a hurry to sleep with the baby; let the baby sleep with her for a month as she has to feed the baby when he cries of hunger, "Dr. Hemalatha replied Pavi. Dr. Malathy smiled at Dr. Hemlalatha's advice.

"My daughter Pavithra has no experience raising a child, so I will take care of the baby Doctor when we bring the baby to give vaccines for polio and other infectious diseases are?" Vijayalakshmi asked Dr. Hemalatha

"I will call you at the time the baby to be vaccinated," replied Dr. Hemalatha

Two weeks later, the Doctor allowed the baby and Saras to be taken home.

After Saras returned home with the baby, Vijayalakshmi told her husband Ratnam and Pavithra that she received a call from Astrologer Sathasivam.

“What did he say, Luximi: Thangarajah was curious to know about the prediction

“Sathasivam said that the boy will have a successful future and would be good at music. He also quoted the Tamil saying that “a boy born in Parani Star will rule the world. Moreover, the boy, once grown, will do more charity work like his father and great-grandfather. There is a possibility that he will marry outside his grandfather's caste”.

“The baby was ready for two ceremonies. One is the piercing of the two ears and shaving the hair on the baby's head. The other was the naming ceremony. Born in the original star, the Bharani family advised Thangrajah’s family to call the child with a name starting with the letter M

Pavithra immediately said, "Mother, I want to name my son Muthurajah."

She did not mention the name that she is proposing to Saras, who had given birth to her child. Vijayalakshmi and Thangarajah did not like what their daughter did.

Vijayalakshmi asked Saras, "Saras do you like the name Muthurajah"?

"Amma, I like whatever name you all give him. He is Pavi's baby. My husband and I will call him Muthu."

"He is going to be the pearl of our home," said Thangarajah

"May God bless the child and the mother who gave birth to the child.

"Vijayalakshmi blessed Muthu and Saras. Pavi did not like her mother blessing Saras and not mentioning her name in the blessing.

* * * *

That morning, Thangarajah, Selvaratnam, Ratnam, Pavi. Saras attended the special pooja before naming the newly born child. The Pooja was at Captain's Garden Hindu Temple in Colombo in the Maradana area called Sri Kailashanadar temple. It is the oldest Hindu temple in Colombo and one of the most popular ones as well.

The temple was built in Maradana, Colombo, by a group of Indian Chetty traders known as 'Thiruvilanga Nakarathar' who moved to Sri Lanka for business two hundred years ago. There are streets by the name Chetty street. Captain gardens are called Heetiyawatta in Sinhalese, which means Chetty gardens.

At the time, while the Dutch had taken over the coastal regions and were managing the incoming trade. It was in this environment that the Chetty traders from Tamil Nadu disembarked in Sri Lanka. They were Hindus and worshiped a small Sivalingam kept under a tree by the other Hindu Chetty traders who lived in the area. The Thiruvilanga Chetty felt there should be a Hindu Temple in Colombo built according to the Vedic Scriptures. So, he discussed with his fellow traders, and they all agreed to build a temple.

In 1783 the foundation was laid within the lands of a Chetty trader known as Sri Veerapathran. This same trader also accepted the responsibility of finding the finances for the construction and the building works. As these traders were the foremost and wealthiest people in Colombo, they had no issues; and soon, the temple was built. The ritualistic opening ceremonies properly took place, and the Hindus in Colombo started visiting the temple regularly.

At the time, the temple was called 'Captain Gardens Temple.' The name was given due to the Dutch officer responsible for overseeing the temple area's trade operations in Colombo port. He was called Captain, and the place he stayed was called 'Captain Gardens

* * * *

Thangarajah is a frequent visitor to this Shiva temple at Captain gardens at Maradana as it's located not too far from Sea Street, where he had his Jewellery shop. Thangarajah had donated ten lakhs of rupees to the temple for its renovation. The Chief priest is well known to him. He arranged a special pooja for the naming ceremony of the newly born grandson.

The baby was dressed in expensive clothes, a gold chain, with a pendant of God Ganesha.

The baby's maternal grandmother and the baby's paternal grandmother placed the baby in a well-decorated cradle. Announced the baby's name Muthurajah three times, rocked the cradle, and sang lullabies. After the naming ceremony, there was a get-together of relatives and friends at Gokulam. Some visitors gossiped about how the baby was born and appreciated the recent development in the medical sector. One Visitor mentioned that there are only three clinics that do this surgery in Colombo. They said the name of Dr. Hemlalatha's medical clinic.

One lady known to Vijayalakshmi mentioned that the Thangarajah family is lucky to get a surrogate mother quickly within the family. In turn, the heart surgery expenses of the husband of the surrogate mother were met by Thangarajah.

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CHAPTER 11

MOTHERHOOD

Within a year of his son Muthu's birth, Ratnam was promoted as vice president of the company.

Thangarajah had a plan to hand over his business to his son-in-law. Muthu, at times, was adamant that only Saras should bathe him and dress him up. Muthu wanted Saras to play with him in the garden. At times he insisted on sleeping with Saras in the outhouse. Pavithra was irritated at the behavior of her son Muthu. When Pavithra gets upset by the action of Muthu, she scolds him and makes him sit in the chair for half an hour. Muthu did not like this restriction. He would start resenting by crying aloud. Saras could not bear to see the punishment given by Pavi, but She could not say a word against Pavis's action. She knows Pavis's temperament. The only way to show her emotions is by crying alone in a locked room in the outhouse.

At school-going age, Muthu insisted that he should be dropped in the school by Saras. Pavi would get angry over Muthu, so adamant would shout, "Muthu, do not be obstinate. Behave yourself. The driver will take you to the school. Saras is a servant in our house, and she is not your mother. She has only to do the cooking. I am your mother. You just take orders from me.

The Pavi complained to Vijayalakshmi that she could not tolerate Muthu's affection and close relationship with Saras and Sellasamy.

"I don't like the way Saras treats my son Muthu like her own son. When Saras's sister Selammah came here, I saw her playing with him, saying that she is her Chithy. She is not Muthu's Chitty. My son Muthu was born from an egg in my womb and the sperm of my husband. He has the genes of both of us in his body. Mother, you tell this to Saras and stop her from getting closer to my son Muthu.

Don't just tell my son how he was born. Tell him that I carried him in my womb. If he comes to know that Saras gave birth to him, there may be problems. He will start hating me more," Pavithra told her mother confidentially.

"You do not know what breastfeeding is. I know how I felt when I breastfed you when you were a baby. Mother's love is to give without expecting anything in return from the baby when he grows. When your son grew up in Saras's womb, she would have felt the kick he gave her when he was hungry. Saras gave him the food he needed to grow. Not you. Saras carried your seed that could not grow in your womb. He grew in her womb, and she gave birth to a beautiful boy Muthu. Saras is not expecting anything from us other than your father's expenses for Sellasamy's heart operation; that was the agreement we made with her. We have settled all financial matters with her; she is more than happy. Only she wants to work for us with her husband. Muthu, once he grows up, and does not expect the slightest bit of money he earns. Saras is not going to request Muthu to light her funeral pyre when she dies. Her cousin's sister's son is there to do it. She even told me that she is not expecting anything from Muthu when he starts working. Just remember one thing that your father, I, and your husband Ratnam know how much you suffered when the doctor said a baby could not stay in your womb. You are lucky that Dr. Malathy, who came from London, told me how to solve your problem. A surrogate mother to carry your baby may have been arranged in India by paying more money through an agency. Your father, I, and Ratnam were against that option because we did not know the legal consequences and problems. May she continue to ask us for money at the risk of the baby growing in her womb? But that situation did not occur to you. We are lucky to find a surrogate mother within our house. We do not know how the Indian surrogate mother will behave as she is not known to our family. For many years, Saras, who has been with our family, agreed to be the surrogate mother for your baby. It was a good decision we all made. And the money we gave to Saras saved her husband Sellasamy's life. Sellasamy helps you in

gardening. Saras agreed to act as a surrogate mother, not for business purposes. She agreed to save her husband's life and at the same time solve your problem. Keep that fact in your mind. It is a medical-legal fact that Muthu is the son of you and your husband. A DNA test will prove that, so said Dr. Malathy. My husband and I know that the blood running in Muthu's body carries the genes of Ratnam and you." Said Vijayalakshmi in a slightly louder voice

Pavithra realized that what she had just said about the relationship between Muthu and Saras was wrong

She understood that Saras had a significant role to play in the birth and growth of her son Muthu

"Ammah, forgive me. I will no longer consider Saras as our servant; I will treat her as my sister. I will not raise a finger against her when Saras shows her affection towards Muthu. She has the right as she carried him for ten months and milked him for more than three months".

The sound of laughter was heard from Muthu playing with Saraswathy in the main hall.

* * * *

CHAPTER 12

MUTHURAJAH

Muthu had his primary school education at a private school in Colombo. Saras accompanied him to school as Muthu was persistent that Saras should drop him and take him home after school. One day Saras was sick, and she could not take Muthu to school. When Pavi obliged to take Muthu to school, he refused to go with her. Muthu's grandmother Lukshimi understood the situation and decided to take him to the school. Muthu liked his grandmother as she was very kind to him and got Saras to prepare dishes he likes

Muthu showed interest in sports from the age of twelve

After completing his primary school education, Ratnam admitted him for his higher education at St Thomas College Mount Lavinia. Since Muthu was a sportsman, he played cricket and basketball for St Thomas college. He was on the cricket team.

Royal College, Colombo is a government-funded public school that accommodates approximately 8,000 students. St. Thomas' College, Mt Lavinia is an Anglican private school with about 2,500 boys on the roll and a branch network of three colleges in Kollupitiya, Guruthalawa Bandarawella, with a total of over 5,500 students. Royal and St. Thomas' have been careful to preserve their proud history.

Known only as of the Royal-Thomian, the schools have played cricket matches since 1879 and are known as the Blues' Battle, representing the school's flag colors. The first match was played between Colombo Academy and St Thomas' College in 1879.

Both were founded in the 19th century, and between them, they have produced many Sri Lanka's most prominent scientists, writers, politicians, and noted figures in many fields.

Muthurajah is a well-recognized student at St. Thomas College as he was best at cricket and studies. Also, he was good at playing Mridangam. Muthu had scored eighty runs, taken four wickets, and caught three catches at the Blues Battle. His speed of running helped him in fielding.

He was an all-rounder, and the college appreciated him.

He was appointed captain of the college cricket team. When Saras heard the news, she was thrilled.

Many girls wanted to befriend him, but Muthu did not respond to their offers. Muthu was an excellent Mridangam player. After knowing his grandson's musical talent, Thangarajah arranged for A Top Miridangist Vaidyanathan to teach him Mridangam. Pavi was not happy that Muthu was wasting time playing mridangam without concentrating on his studies. She wanted him to become a doctor.

In a musical event, Muthu played mridangam for Carnatic singer Sivagami. He played mridangam for two of her Sivagami's recitals. The audience commented that both are a good combination for a musical event.

Sivagami's parents were Indians from Matale. Her great grandfather Ramasamy came as a Rubber estate worker during British time during the 19th century. With his excellent relationship with Periya Durai (Estate superintendent) Peterson, Ramasamy was allotted land and a Matale house. When Peterson left Sri Lanka after independence, he was kind enough to give Rubber estates ten acres to Ramasamy. With that as an investment, his grandson Sinnasamy, father of

Sivagami, started exporting Tea, Rubber, and spices. Sinamay's son Sivaraman looked after the business in Colombo. Sivagami is the only daughter of Sinmasamy. She studied at Methodist college Colpetty. She completed a degree in science at Colombo University. From a very young age, she was interested in Carnatic music. Her aunt Rajaambal was an excellent veena player. She encouraged her to learn music from a famous Carnatic guru Sembai Vaidyanatha Bagavathar in India

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Muthu accompanied Sivagami on Mridangam for many musical events. Their interest in music brought them together.

They started meeting in restaurants and discussing music and other related subjects

Muthu became interested in the plight of Tamil workers in the Tea and Rubber Plantations. During a conversation, Sivagami asked him, "Muthu, you once told me that your housekeeper Saraswathy and the driver and gardener Sellasamy are from upcountry. Do you know from which town in the upcountry they come?"

"Sivagami, my grandmother told us that our housekeeper and the driver are from Maskeliya; that town is not too far from Adam's peak. Maskeliya is a town named after Maskeliya Oya, a tributary of the Kelani river. The arm is 40 Km long. The city is known for its mountains, waterfalls, unique ethnic background, and estates. The actual town is built on a combination of three estates; because of Adam's peak, Maskeliya has been a popular Sri Lanka destination."

"My grandfather too came to Sri Lanka to work in a rubber estate in Matale. His roots are from south India. "

, Matale "Sivagami, you said that your ancestor came from South India to Matale; tell me about that town.",

"My father told me about Marble. Matale is the only district of Sri Lanka where an ancient book of written history is found. It is known as *Pannagam - "Five-Headed Serpent" in English*) of Goddess Muthumari in Sri Muthumariamman Temple, Matale.

The second comes to the Aluvihare Rock Temple, situated on the north side of the city's suburb, Aluvihare.

Christ Church, Matale was consecrated by Bishop James Chapman on 30 December 1860. The church site chosen was Fort McDowall, commanding a view of the entrance to Matale via Trincomalee.

Matale was the site of a significant battle in 1848 when the Matale Rebellion started. The British garrison in Matale was placed under siege by the rebels led by Weera Puran Appu and Gongalegoda Banda.

The city is also the birthplace of Monarawila Keppetipola, a rebel who led the Wellasa rebellion against the British troops. His ancestral home, Kappetipola walawuwa, still exists at Hulangamuwa”.

“Safari, it looks like your father is well aware of the history of the Matale town.”

“Muthu, my father, is friendly with the old Chief Priest of Bogahakotuwa Vihara in Mattale. He told him about the history of Matale.”

“Sivagami, I have read in papers about the pathetic working conditions of immigrant Tamil estate workers. They are the backbone of the economy of this island. During the past few years, many of them were involved in a trade union for tea and rubber estate. Few have graduated from the University. I know a student by the name of Kannusamy from Badulla. His father was a trade unionist. I call

him Kannan. He is a good writer in Tamil. His poems are excellent. He started working for Tamil newspaper as Assistant Editor “.

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CHAPTER 13

SIVAGAMI

Sivagami is a pretty girl. Her main interest is Carnatic music. She listens to old Carnatic singers like M S SubbuLukshmi, D K Pattamaal, Vasanth Kokilam, and some male singers.

She had a good collection of old records and played them on an HMV record player presented to her on her 18th Birthday by her father. Her brother Saravanan too, encouraged her love for music. He arranged Sivagami's Arangetram (First Musical Event) at Lionel Wendt theatre. He put the first musical event of Sivagami called Arangetram (First Musical Event) at Lionel Wendt theatre. The Lionel Wendt Arts Center was established in 1944. Lionel Wendt was from the Burgher family and a pianist, photographer, critic, and cinematographer. About three thousand people were in the audience. The Chief guest was the Minister of Culture, Mr. Basnayake. He was a Kandyan dancer in his youth

. Muthu also graduated from Peradeniya University in Business Administration. He studied further and completed his MBA. Muthu had friends from the Singhalese, Muslim, and Burgher Community.

Muthu brings good cricketers and businesses son he was invited to join The Tamil Union Cricket, and Athletic club can trace its roots back to the final years of the 19th century. Two pre-existing rival clubs amalgamated to form the Tamil Union Cricket and Athletic Club. The Club's embryonic years benefited from its stewardship by some of the country's most eminent Tamil Lawyers, Politicians, and Civil Servants. The first of these clubs was the Lanka Sports Club, which was established in 1895 had its base in Price Park. He made a friendship with top VIPs. At the Party's organized after a match, Muthu avoided taking liquor. He drank

orange juice to keep company with his friends. This habit he learned from his father and grandfather.

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CHAPTER 14

THE LOVE AFFAIR

Their interest in music brought Muthu and Sivagami closer.

Soon after, Muthu took up an Appointment as a Superintendent in an estate -He would travel to Colombo every weekend to meet Sivagami. Both would go out for musical events. After the event, they would have dinner together in a hotel. Their main topic was always Carnatic music and musical instruments

“Dear Muthu, can I ask you a question:

“Why not Sivagami”?

“I have never heard of anyone interested in music or could sing in your family. How did you become so involved in music?”

“That is a long story. One day I was going through our family album with my grandmother. There I saw the photo of an older man with a Mridangam. I had never seen him before in my family. I thought he must be a musician from South India. I asked my grandmother who is the person in the photo with Mridangam.”

“What was her reply?”

“She said that the person in the photo with the mridangam was her grandfather. He was the famous Mridangam player Kokuvil Krishnapillai. He was so popular; he had so many fans. He played mridangam for many Carnatic singers from South India.”

“Where is that Mridangam now”?

“I asked my grandmother whether I could see it. She took me to a locked storeroom and showed me a Mridangam covered with dust. When I touched it, I

felt like playing it? Some power forced me to play it. The beat came out beautifully. My grandmother was surprised to see me playing the Mridangam without getting any training. So, with my grandparents' permission, I continued to play the Mridangam used by my ancestor Kokuvil Krishnapillai.”

“That looks like a miracle. You are playing Mridangam well,” Sivagami said

“It is because my grandfather arranged a Mridangam teacher for me to learn the rules to be followed in playing Mridangam. That is how I learned Mridangam. When I am alone in the estate bungalow, I play Mridangam. Some of my Tamil and Sinhalese workers come to my place to watch me playing Mridangam. A Tamil tea plucking lady named Valliamma, many years older than me, sings devotional songs. I play Mridangam, for her songs, she has a good voice. “

“Interesting to hear that. Music helps in overcoming loneliness and builds friendship”.

“Once we are married, you will be living with me in that Big bungalow with a garden. There is an Amman Temple in Hatton. I go there to pray. We can give music recitals during temple festivals.

“Muthu, you have a vision. Like your Sarasu amma, my ancestors came from Tamil Nadu, my grandmother was a good Veena player, I learned music from her”.

It is our destiny we are both musicians, “Muthu said.

Muthu's and Sivagami's love ended up in marriage with the approval of their parents and grandparents.

Sivagami started living with Muthu in the estate bungalow. She taught music to estate children. During her free time, she formed a women's welfare club to fight against women's abuse by husbands.

In Colombo, she was the secretary of the Women club that was involved in village development projects. Since she could speak Sinhalese, she had many Sinhalese women as her friends. She also learned Sinhalese songs, and her Sinhalese friends once introduced her to Aamaradeeva in Sinhalese vocalist.

Aamaradeeva was a prominent Sri Lankan vocalist, violinist, and composer. Using traditional instruments like sitars, tablas, and harmoniums, Aamaradeeva incorporated Sinhala folk music with Indian ragas in his work. Many consider Pandit Amara deva's contribution to Sinhala music development as unmatched; hence, he is occasionally cited as the "Maestro of Sri Lankan Music.

Amar deva spotted Sivagami's talent in music. He introduced her to sing in Radio Ceylon. When Thangarajah's friends Sarvanamuthu produced a Tamil film, he requested Sivagami to sing two songs. She could not refuse the request.

CHAPTER 15

ESTATE SUPERINTENDENT MUTHU

Broomfield is a five-hundred-acre Tea estate that was developed in the 18th century by the British. The first Estate Superintendent was a Britisher by the name Morrison. The workers called him Periya Dorai. He was a strict administrator. He treated the workers as slaves. He did not care for the welfare of the workers. His main aim was to get maximum output from the estate. The Asst Superintendent called Sinna Dorai was a Britisher Livingston. Both were keener in getting good out from Tea estate workers.

Colonialism everyone's talking about seep into everything—even your cup of tea.

In the early 1800s, the British realized they needed a large workforce to grow tea in Sri Lanka. Hence, they began a recruitment drive that preyed upon low caste Indians from mainly Tamil speaking areas (Indian Tamils) with the promise of work, better living conditions, and a much better quality of life for them and their families.

The Indian Tamils targeted by the British were struggling with their life in India. Facing potential starvation from large-scale recurring famines, discrimination because of their low-caste status, and constant poverty, moving to Sri Lanka to work on the tea plantations seemed like a lifeline to a better and brighter future. Paying the exorbitant recruitment costs and putting this crippling debt to the back of their minds, they arrived on Sri Lankan shores brimming with excitement about their new life.

Excitement quickly turned to despair. The issues they on the tea plantations were many. Tea estates were closed communities, isolating workers and their families

from the outside world. Housing built for the workers and their families were row after row of barrack-type single rooms (line rooms). Entire families had only space no more significant than 12×12 feet to live. With virtually no sanitation, water, medical facilities, or schools and long hours of work, the harsh field officers made their work even more burdensome.

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When Muthu was appointed as Estate Superintendent in the same Tea estate where once Saraswathy worked as Tea plucker, he was pleased to know how destiny has given him a job in that estate Superintendent. He came to know from Saras how many difficulties they experience as tea plucker. When he took Superintendent's position, he was ashamed to see one of the one-room houses in a line of places where Saras grew. He was determined to do something to the line houses where the workers lived without proper toilet and bathroom facilities. There was also family violence as the husbands took liquor and abused their wives. Most of the women workers can speak only Tamil with an Indian accent and colloquial Sinhalese. The children have no proper education

The first job he did after taking Periya Dorai is to summon all workers and speak to them in Tamil. At the mering, he listened to the workers' grievances. He agreed to provide protective woolen clothing to work in cold weather. He also promised to supply boots to safeguard them from the bites of leeches. He also decided to recommend to the company which owns the state to offer a minimum wage per month. He told them it is a political issue where government and trade unions are involved. He promised to upgrade the medical clinic by increasing the number of nurses by three and provide more beds for patients. He said that a doctor would be arranged five times a week to attend to severe cases. Ambulance service will be set to take serious patients to Hatton hospital. Many workers wanted their line houses to be demolished and individual two-bedroom homes with Toilet and

Bathroom facilities to be provided. For their, request he told them that the Indian government had provided a grant to build 4,000 houses. Broomfield Estate is included in the list. He will ask the government to provide at least 500 homes for the workers in Broomfield Estate. He also promised to arrange a school bus to take the children to the school in Hatton

He said that scholarships would be provided to the first three students after the fifth standard to continue their studies up to the University.

CHAPTER 16

THE DUTY

After having a married life of thirty years, Saras was worried that she did not have a child through her husband, Sellasamy. That worry existed for a long time in her. She only shared her concerns with her husband. Sellasamy advised her to speak to Lukshmi and get an opinion. But she was hesitant that Sellasamy also mentioned to Thangarajah, with whom he had great respect as his driver, that Saras has some health issues. Thangarajah advised his wife to find out from Saras what the health issue is. Thangarajah informed his wife Luximi to speak to Saras and find out about the health issue.

One day Lukshmi spoke to Saras and asked her about her health problem. First, she hesitated to come out with the situation. Lukshmi insisted that Saras should come out with her health problem to find a way to resolve it. Luximi wanted Saras to trust her.

"Amma, twenty-five years after giving birth to Muthu, I could not have a baby for Sellasamy and me. We need a baby to do our final funeral rituals for Sellasamy and me when we die. That is our ambition, but I observed that suddenly my menstrual cycle became irregular.

During the menstrual time, I had excessive bleeding and pain in my abdomen. Initially, I thought that it is normal for women when they grow old. The bleeding and pain increased at every menstrual cycle. I did not know to whom I should complain. I only told my husband about it. He must have said to Aiyah and asked for help. That's why Aiyah must have spoken to you to find out the details from me as it is a women's health issue".

After hearing the details from Saras about her health problem, Lakshmi said to her

"Saras. I will get an appointment with Dr. Hemalatha. We'll both go to her and seek her advice".

" Amma, that will cost money. "

"Look, Saras, you are like my elder daughter. Do not worry about expenses. My husband will look after that,"

" Thank you, Amma. "Replied Saras.

Lakshmi took Saras to doctor Hemalatha for consultation. After questioning Saras about the symptoms, the doctor suspected polyps in Saras's womb and proposed to carry out Hysteroscopy and Endometrial biopsy. Saras agreed to undergo the tests

After looking at the test reports, Dr. Hemalatha confirmed four well-grown polyps in Saras's womb and should be removed immediately. She suggested Dr. Nanayakkara, an experienced surgeon for such operations, and sent the test reports to him. Saras was shocked to hear what the doctor said. She was in tears.

"Saras, this happens to many women. Do not worry about expenses. My husband will meet all expenses for the surgery. You and Sellasamy give consent for the surgery. We will do it in a private hospital." Lakshmi gave Saras the Confidence to undergo surgery.

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Surgeon Nanayakkara carried out the two-hour operation. After the procedure when the doctor came out from the operating theater

Thangarajah and Lakshmi asked the doctor, " How was the operation, Doctor"?

"Saras lost lots of blood, so we gave her blood transfusion. It took half an hour more than the usual time for such operations. Luckily, her blood group was readily

available in the blood bank. The operation was successful, but I have to remove her womb," the Surgeon said

"Why doctor"? Lakshmi asked hi

"The reason is that the polyps in her womb are significant, and it may lead to cancer. I consulted two other doctors, and I decided to remove the womb so that Saras will not have complications later ".

When Saras heard from the Surgeon that her womb was removed, she was in shock. She looked at Lakshmi with tears in her eyes.

"Amma, if the womb is removed, I can't have a baby. It only helped to give birth to Muthu. It was used to save my husband's life. Otherwise, I would have been a widow."

"Yes, Saras. Do not worry. Your life is important to our family and Sellasamy. Now, no one can say that you are barren. You gave birth to a baby boy twenty-five years ago. He is our Muthu. He loves you more than he loves Pavi. He is also your son," Lakshmi consoled her.

Thangarajah, Ratnam, and Pavi were listening to what Lakshmi was telling Saras to console her.

Pavi supported her mother and said to Saras. "Saras acca. Muthu is your son too. I know that you have great affection for him, and so he is. Sometimes I was jealous over it and was not happy that Muthu was too close to you. Now I realize that I have made a mistake. You are like my elder sister," Pavi said to Saras

Pavi looked at her husband for an answer. Ratnam, too, agreed with his wife.

When Thangarajah and Ratnam's family consoled Saras, Muthu and his wife Sivagami walked into the room.

Muthu was upset when he saw Saras in the hospital with wires and monitoring instruments connected to her body. Her heartbeat and blood pressure could be seen on the monitor.

"Amma, I am Muthu, your son. Can you identify Sivagami and me?" Muthu asked Saras, who was smiling when she saw Muthu

"Yes, Muthu. Did you and Sivagami come from Maskeliya?"

"Yes, Amma, When I heard the news from my father that you are to be operated on for the problem in your womb, Myself and Sivagami came from our Tea Estate bungalow to see you. I spoke to the Surgeon before seeing you. He told me everything about your operation. Do not worry. I am here to see you as your son. A few years back, when I asked my grandmother why I have more affection for you than my mother, Pavithra. She told me the whole story about how I was born through surrogacy, and you carried me in your womb. She also said that I was taken through artificial insemination using my father's sperm and mother's egg. That method was adopted because it was hazardous for my mother to carry a baby in her womb. Hence, I have their DNA. My grandmother told me that I look like my father Ratnam, and my eyes are like my mother, Pavitra. Even if I carry their DNA, it will prove that Ratnam and Pavithra are his parents. You fed me when I was in your womb and breastfed me for a few months after I was born. That builds an unknown affection in me towards you. Even if your gene and Sellasamy genes are not in me, my love will always be there. Sivagami and I love you, Amma. I promise that I will do my duty to you and your husband during your funeral rituals. I knew that you were born in a line house in Maskeliya Broomfield Estate. Now I am the Superintendent of the Estate; I live in a big bungalow when I look at the beautiful garden in that bungalow. It reminded me of your husband, who maintained it during a British Superintendent. He is also helping my mother Pavithra's garden in Gokul. I want to tell you that I have converted the line houses

to two-bedroom houses with toilets and bathing facilities. My grandfather and a few businessmen met all expenses for the charity work. I am thankful to them. The workers have named it as Rajah colony. I have increased the workers' daily wages; I have got government approval to start a school in the estate itself and a medical dispensary. I met your widowed mother and sister; They're proud of what you did to all of us. When I started loving Sivagami, you encouraged it as you, too, liked her. She always speaks highly of you; She even suggested bringing you to Maskeliya to live with us; I told her that she might not agree to leave Gokulam.

“Thank you, Muthu and Sivagami, for coming from Maskeliya and doing many things for the estate worker. May God bless both of you with a long life. After I get well, I will come with your parents and grandparents and stay in your Estate bungalow for a few weeks. I will also see my widowed mother and sister's family", Saras said with booming happiness on her face.

"Saras Amma, I have brought you tea packets from the tea estate where you worked. When you drink, you will recollect about the hard work you did in that estate". Muthu gave two packets of Tea from his estate factory to her.

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CHAPTER 17

KALAIMANI

Sivagami was conceived one year after marriage. Muthu was happy that he is going to be the father of a boy or girl. When the workers realized that Periya Dorai's wife had conceived, they arranged a special pooja at Murugan Temple at Maskeliya. Hills surround the Temple. Adam's peak and Laxapana could be seen from the Temple located on a hill. The Temple is situated three kilometers from the Superintendent's bungalow. The women who are members of the Ladies social club were present for the Special Pooja. Muthu never expected that his wife Sivagami was so popular. At the request of the ladies, Sivagami sang two Devotional songs supported by Muthu's Mridangam

Thangarajah and Ratnam's families were unhappy that Muthu kept his pregnant wife in a lonely Bungalow where proper hospital facilities were not available in case of an emergency. Pavithra advised Muthu to bring Sivagami to Gokulam so that both families could look after her. Also, her brother Sivaraman and wife could visit her frequently. Muthu was not happy to get separated from Sivagami. He assured Pavithra that Sivagami is busy with the women's welfare club, and as such, she will be reluctant to come to Colombo; he also told Pavithra, he takes her for a walk regularly. A cook is there to prepare the dishes she likes. The environment in Maskeliya is beautiful, and the air is not polluted as in Colombo.

Pavitra was not satisfied with the explanation given by Muthu. Sivagami, too, did not want to leave Muthu and come to Colombo.

Pavithra complained to Lakshmi and Ratnam.

" Pavi, I know that Muthu does not want to be away from his wife. I know how to solve this problem. I will ask Saras to speak to him and advise him to bring Sivagami and leave her in Gokulam. Muthu will not disregard when Saras requests him. He

listens to Saras more than you. We must be tactful with him. Saras should assure him that she will take care of her with his grandmother.'

Lakshmi advised Saras to speak to Muthu regarding Sivagami living in Gokulam until Sivagami delivers the baby. It is easy for her parents and brother Sivaraman also to visit her in Gokulam

Saras called Muthu and Sivagami and advised them there are good doctors in Colombo in private hospitals. He should bring Sivagami and leave her in Gokulam. She assured him, along with Pavithra, and Lakshmi that they would look after her so that the baby would be delivered without any complications.

Muthu and Sivagami could not refuse the request from Saras. That weekend, they both left for Colombo. Muthu took two weeks' leave to be with Sivagami in Gokulam. A large room was allocated for Muthu and Sivagami. Sivagami had two more months for delivery. Dr. Hemalatha took the responsibility to deliver the baby to her clinic. Sivagami should visit her clinic twice a week for a checkup. Muthu and Sivagami agreed. Lakshmi promised Dr. Hemalatha ensured that she would bring Sivagami to the clinic once in two weeks for a routine checkup.

After all the tests, Hemalatha informed Muthu and Lakshmi that the test results look fine, and her blood pressure and sugar levels are under control. Dr. Hemalatha did a scan and told everyone that it would be a Boy. She also said that the baby is enormous, and Sivagami may have to undergo a cesarian. Dr. Hemalatha promised that she would try to deliver the baby without any surgery as far as possible.

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Sivagami delivered a baby boy through standard delivery. Lakshmi immediately contacted Astrologer Sathasivam and gave him details to cast the horoscope for the grandson.

Two days later, Sathasivam informed Lakshmi that the baby's birth star was Moolam, and as such, he will do well in her life. And advised Muthu and Ratnam to name the baby, starting with the letter K.

Many names were discussed among Thangarajah and Ratnam's families. Sivagami said that it should meet the liking of Muthu and herself. Finally, Muthu proposed the name Kalaimani and explained

the meaning of the name Kalaimani

Muthu said, "Kalai in Tamil means Art. Sivagami and I are musicians --artists. Moreover, it refers to goddess Kalaivani, another name of Saraswathy, the goddess of knowledge. Thirdly, the name Mani section, which means beads, is associated with the jewelry business".

"That is an excellent name for the baby. We all will call him "Mani." Moreover, the name starts with the letter K as suggested by our Astrologer Sathasivam."

"Amma, just like going round the Mulberry bush, Muthu has included this surrogate mother Sarsu's name in his son's name," Pavithra commented.

"What is wrong with that Pavi.? Everyone knows that Muthu has a special affection for Saraswathy. She who delivered him," Thangarajah replied to Pavi's sarcastic comment.

Sarasu was listening to all the conversations among all families. She never spoke a word or suggested a name. She smiled and was proud about the affection Muthu has for her

" If Muthu is going to include all our names in his son's name, it will be a mile-long name like some Tamil, Singhalese, and Arabic names," Ratnam commented.

"I know a Singhalese estate Superintendent in a tea estate in Hatton with a 40 characters name "Dissanayake Mudiyansele Chaya Dissanayake." That new part Dissanayake Mudiyansele means that one of his forefathers was a Mudaliyar, a lesser noble. The name Dissanayake itself is a name probably gifted by a Nayaka king. It is two different words used together, Disa (direction/district/province) and Nayaka (chief/leader). Sometimes village names such as Ambapola, Batuwangala are included. The workers call him: Periya Dorai," Muthu commented.

"What Muthu says is true. In Tamil Nadu, the name carries the village name. My favorite Carnatic singer is Late M S. Her full name Went as Madurai Shanmukhavadiyu Subbulaximi" Sivagami showed her interest in Carnatic music.

All laughed and agreed on the name "Kalaimani" for the baby

He is to be called "Mani" by all the family members of Gokulam. Sellasamy did not take part in the discussion as he was sick and sleeping in the guest house.

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CHAPTER 18

THE FUNERAL

Immediately after naming Muthu's son Kalaimani, everyone started calling him Mani. Mani, like his father, got attached to Saraswathy.

At the age of two, he wanted to sleep with Saraswathy in the outhouse like his father. As there are no excellent private schools in Maskeliya, Hatton, or N'Eliya, Muthu and Sivagami decided to leave the son with grandparents Ratnam and Pavithra. Muthu wanted to be with Sivagami in the Estate Bungalow. But Sivagami was very unhappy that she was away from her son. She repeatedly advised Muthu to resign from the job of estate superintendent and get back to Colombo. Thangarajah was displeased that Muthu and Sivagami are living far away from their son Mani

One day Thangarajah called Muthu and said,

“Muthu, you and Sivagami must be feeling that your son Mani is away from you both. It is time for both of you would like to play with him and enjoy his talk. He is an interesting boy. He wants to watch cricket and soccer on the TV. I presume that when he grows up, he may be a sportsman like you. He is growing tall like you, Muthu. He sometimes asks for you both. One day he asked me, great-grandpa, why Appah and Amma are living away from me. Are they agree with me? Do they hate me? What wrong have I done to them? I love them both. Great grandpa, please ask them to come and play with me. Muthu, I could not give a reply to that innocent child. Muthu, I, and your grandmother, your parents have come to a plan “.

“What is the plan you all have made, grandpa “? Muthu wanted to know from his grandfather Thangarajah.

” Muthu, I am getting old. My mobility is restricted. I can’t fly to Dubai and Singapore. I want to sell the Dubai business to my partner Haniffa. He is willing to buy it.”

“That is an excellent decision, grandpa. How about Singapore business?”

“That business is doing well. My relation by the name Mahalingam who is a Singapore citizen is managing my business. Mahalingam is a heart patient. He had a heart attack once. He wants someone to take over the company in Singapore and run it. There are ten employees. Four of them are goldsmiths from Tamil Nadu; I named that shop after your grandmother's name as “Luximi Jewelry’s. “

“Who is going to run it, grandpa.”

“I have worked out a plan. Your father and I will look after the Jewelry shop business at Sea Street in Pettah. You must resign from the job from Tea estate and come here with Sivagami to Colombo. With your Tea estate experience, you can start a Tea export business with Sivagami’s brother Sivaraman. I will give you the money to start the business. Money is available from the sale of the Dubai business. Yourself Sivagami and your child move to Singapore and are over the Singapore business. Many Tamils are living in Singapore and Malaysia during the British period. Some of my ancestors migrated to Malaysia during British time. In Singapore, your son will have a good education

“Grandpa, you have been to Singapore several times on business. Please tell me about that country. I never want to that country,” Muthu said to his grandfather.

“OK. Here is what I know about Singapore. Singapore, officially the Republic of Singapore, is a sovereign island city-state in maritime Southeast Asia. It lies 137 kilometers or 85 miles north of the equator, off the Malay Peninsula's southern tip. The country has almost 5.7 million residents, 3.4 million) of whom are Singaporean citizens. There are four official languages of Singapore: English,

Malay, Chinese, and Tamil. Multiracialism is enshrined in the constitution and shapes national policies in education, housing, and politics.

Modern Singapore was founded in 1819 by Sir Stamford Raffles as a trading post of the British Empire. In 1867, the colonies in East Asia were reorganized, and Singapore came under Britain's direct control as part of the Straits Settlements. During the Second World War, Singapore was occupied by Japan in 1942 but returned to British rule as a separate crown colony following Japan's surrender in 1945. Singapore gained self-governance in 1959, and in 1963 became part of the new federation of Malaysia, alongside Malaya, North Borneo, and Sarawak. Ideological differences led to Singapore being expelled from the league two years later, becoming an independent country.

Singapore is a unitary parliamentary republic with a Westminster system of unicameral parliamentary government. While elections are generally considered free, the government exercises significant control over politics and society, and the People's Action Party has ruled continuously since independence. Singapore is also a member of the United Nations, World Trade Organization, East Asia Summit, Non-Aligned Movement, and the Commonwealth of Nations

That is the county for businesspeople with a vision. “

“Grandpa. Did you discuss your proposal with my grandmother and my parents?”

“Yes, they all agree. You discuss this with Sivagami. I am sure she will like it as both of you, and your son will be with both of you. You can give him the best advice to come up with in life. You can look after the Tea export business in Colombo with Sakagami’s

brother, and at the same time, you all can live in Singapore and manage Luximi Jewellerys. You can explore importing tea to Singapore and some countries such as Thailand and Indonesia.”

“It looks like a good proposal. It solves many issues:

“If you both agree, you resign from the Estate Superintendent Job. You have done much for the Tea estate worker; Sarah told me everything: She too wants you to return to Colombo.”

“Ok, grandpa, since you all agree, I will give a letter of resignation and return to Colombo,” Muthu replied.

“I am glad to hear that you have decided to resign and act as per the plan,
“Thangarajah replied to Muthu

* * * *

Muthu resigned from the estate Superintendent and returned with Sivagami to Colombo. Mani was happy that his parents are with him. More than ever, one in Gokulam Saraswathy was very happy to see Muthu and Sivagami back in Gokulam. Things went on smoothly. Muthu was busy establishing Tea export business with his brother-in-law Sivaraman. He made two trips to Singapore to study the Luximi Jewelry business and to arrange a three-bedroom apartment for their new residence.

On his return from Singapore, his grandfather had terrible news that Sellasamy was admitted to hospital. Luximi. Muthu and Sivagami went and saw him at the hospital.’

“Sellasamy Aiyah, how are you? What did doctors say?” Muthu inquired from Sellasamy?

“Muthu, I do not think I will live longer. My heart is badly affected, again. Doctors say I may have to undergo a significant surgery bay ass surgery; I am sure I can’t withstand that operation:

“Do not worry. Aiyah, our prayers will save you from the surgery. About expenses, we will look after all expenses.”

“Muthu, I want to request from you, “

“What is the request you want to ask from me, Aiyah’?

“I have no sons. You know that as per Hindu customs, the dead adult's body is carried to the cremation ground near a river or water by family and friends and placed on a pyre with feet facing south. The eldest son, or a male mourner, called the lead cremator or lead mourner, lit the fire to the corpse. If I die, will you have to light my funeral pyre?

“Why not Sellasamy Aiyah. Your wife Saraswathy Ammah, who has carried me in her womb and gave birth to me, breastfed me until I was six months of age. I am like the son for both of you; It is my duty to light the fire when you both die. It is not the time for it. Could you not talk about it now? Muthu

“Another request I am making. Once my wife Saraswathy becomes a widow, you and Sivagami should look after her will you do it.”?

” Sellasamy Aiyah, when I, Sivagami, and Mani move to Singapore, we will take Saras Ammah with us. She will join us if and only if anything worse happens to you. I have the confidence you will be successful in your second operation. Have faith in God”.

“Thank you, Muthu, for agreeing to my request. I love Saraswathy from the first her at the Temple festival in Hatton. She stopped me from drinking and smoking

and made me a good man. She has a deep affection for you and Sivagami and your son”.

“Sivagami and I are aware of that. Sivagami too is treating her as her mother” replied Muthu.

* * * *

Two days after giving the promise to Sellasamy Saraswathi’s husband Sellasamy passed away before the second heart operation. Saraswathy became a widow.

His funeral took place at Kanatte cemetery. The entire families from Gokulam and few Tea estate workers who worked with Sellasamy in Maskeliya Tea estate factory took part. It was a quite funeral organized by Reymond's funeral home in Borella. Thangarajah and Muthu paid the entire funeral expenses for the funeral of Sellasamy. As promised to Sellasamy, Muthu lit the Sellasamy’s funeral pyre.

Salameh, Saras's sister, came from Maskeliya with her mother and husband to attend the funeral. There was a crowd of about 200 people. Muthu Thangarajah and Ratnam families had a difficult time consoling Saraswathy. Saras became a widow at the age of fifty

“Saras Ammah, do not think that you are alone after your husband's death. So long as you live here in the guest house, you will be thinking about your husband. Sivagami and I have decided to take you with us to Singapore. You will look after Mani as your grandson. What do you say, Saras Ammah? Saraswathy couldn't speak. She held Muthu and Sivagami’s hands and cried. Her tears fell on their hands. Saras agreed to go to Singapore with the Malthus family. Thangarajah and Ratnam’s families endorsed Muthu’s decision. Before leaving Gokulam, Saras arranged for a friend of her, Valliamma, to take over her job in Gokulam.

After Saraswathy left for Singapore with Muthu's family,

Luximi. Thangarajah, Pavithra, and Ratnam felt the absence of Saraswathy in Gokulam. She came to Gokulam at the age of twenty-four and left Gokulam at the age of fifty-one. The assets she took with her were only a suitcase. It contained old clothes given by Thangarajah and Ratnam family for Pongal and New Year. When both families offered her money for expenses in Singapore, she thanked for their greatness.

“My son Muthu and his wife Sivagami are there to look after my needs. I will not live long. You do not know whether I will have the opportunity to see you all again.” Saras said with tears in her eyes.

Before leaving Gokulam, she went to the backyard garden, sat on the wooden bench, and took deep breath. Her memories went to the time she joined as a servant in Gokulam. She joined that family because of Sellasamy's recommendation. She has heard people talking about Colombo 7 families who are proud families. In some house there are more than one servant. She started working in that house with fear. She looked at the garden for ten minutes. Her husband Sellasamy helped build the garden for Pavithra. A Yellow rose plant planted by him a few years ago. Full of flowers. She thought this rose plant is full of flowers in her mind, but I could not have a child through Sellasamy. Saras knew that her husband took extra care of it. It was brought by Saras's sister Selammah from Maskeliya Broomfield Estate Periya Dorai's bungalow where Sellasamy was once a Gardner before coming to Gokulam. Several days Saras has watered that yellow rose plant.

Saraswathy took a Yellow Rose flower and a branch from that Rose plant to be taken with her in memory of her husband. She took it to be planted in a pot in the apartment where she is going to reside with Muthu's family. She never failed to manure and water the plant. The rose plant grew and bloomed with many yellow

flowers. Saraswathy was very happy and was thinking that she is living with her husband with many children.

Sivagami singing Subrbatham echoed in the apartment.
