



*Woven  
in  
Deception*

Nirmala Kasinathan



# *Woven in Deception*

By  
*Nirmala Kasinathan*

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# Dedications

*This book being my first, is specially dedicated to  
my family, friends and colleagues with love.  
Thank you for the inspiration, help and support.  
May it in turn inspire you.*



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# Acknowledgments

A special note of thanks to my editors and publishers.  
It's been good working with you.



# Prologue

Back in the early twentieth century, Kanmani had consulted an astrologer in her hometown of Kancheepuram regarding the well being of her family. Her son was planning to expand the family textile business into Malaya and was going to settle down there.

(The following conversation has been translated from Tamil into English for the benefit of the reader.)

“My son, Doraisamy has planned to expand the family textile business into Malaya and settle down there, Sittar Ayyah. He is adamant to do it whether or not we consent. Will he be all right, Sittar Ayyah? Will the business prosper as it has all this time?”

“Your family business has prospered and contributed so much to the upliftment of the Indian people as well as to the nation’s progress. It provides hundreds of jobs for the poor. Your husband has also been so kind and charitable by building schools and helping to educate so many poor people. Why is he so worried?”

“My son married Gowri, a woman from a different caste, because he made her pregnant out of wedlock. His father was resentful because this was his only son and the rightful heir to the family empire but was errant in his ways. He felt that Doraisamy disgraced the family and had no confidence in him. Please advise me, Sittar Ayyah,” Kanmani asks.

The astrologer closed his eyes and began chanting. Suddenly he opened his eyes and stared back at Gowri with a disconcerting look.

“I can see, Taiyeh. I see perfectly but what I see is very unsettling, Amma.”

“What is it that you see, Sittar Ayyah?”

“I see two main issues, Thaiyeh. There was a problem before he got married, wasn’t there?”

“Yes, Sittar Ayyah.” Gowri said as she looked down quietly and swallowed the lump that was forming in her throat.

“You don’t have to tell me what happened. I can see it perfectly. Doraisamy was to marry another woman, the only daughter of a rich landlord from a reputable Kauder family. Then your family decided to get him married to Gowri a daughter of a Sudra peasant. Am I right?”

“Yes, that’s right. Gowri’s parents along with other villagers armed with sticks and ‘*aravalais*’ (carving knives) came to Kamelanathan angrily demanding justice. We didn’t have a choice but to relent. It was against our will.” Kanmani mumbled softly.

“I can see the Vickneshwaran’s daughter, Malathi was her name I think, fell in love with Doraisamy and was heartbroken when he married Gowri instead. Her dreams of marrying the man she had an eye for were crushed. Her cries of outrage turned into nonsensical ramblings of lunacy. Locked herself up, forgetting to eat and bathe, mumbling and crying to herself; refusing to ever marry again.”

“Oh, we didn’t know about that. Mr. Vickneshwaran severed all ties with our family. What happened?”

“Her family was badly affected by Gowri’s change in behavior. In a moment of anguish and agony, just before Vickneshwaran died of a heart attack, he avenged his daughter’s deceit by casting a curse on three generations of Kamelanathan’s heirs, even though he had great respect for that family.

He was farsighted however, even in his moments of anguish. He realized then, as we do now, that the Kamelanathan family played a major role in helping the poverty-stricken people of our motherland, especially at a time when it was being ravaged by white-skinned giants. Had events ended on a different note, the two families would have joined their efforts to fight the white-skinned men shamelessly taking over their land. They would have done their part for the people by providing decent jobs as weavers, tailors, shop assistants, and farm hands. A role irrefutably necessary to avert the condescending glances of the white-skinned invaders who proclaim their right and privilege to stride so arrogantly on unwelcoming soil with boots so thick that their soles never got charred. In contrast to the poor peasants who tread wearily on their well-worn, unclad feet.

*“Although, the Kamelanathan family will prosper,” he thought, “three generations of the family shall each suffer severe misfortune. However they will survive, and live to perform further penance for Malathi’s deceit through service to mankind. Until the souls of both Malathi and her father attain “moksha.” Until then the Kamelanathan family shall be under the influence of the curse.*

*And only after the curse is revealed to the rightful heir, will their souls attain moksha.*

The curse would only affect Doraisamy and two consecutive heirs of the family. Malathi died unhappily, committing suicide after spending her short life in solitude. An uncalled for death all in vain not long after her father’s demise.”

“That’s terrible, Ayyah.”

Teardrops formed and trickled down her face.

. . . “What was the other problem, Sittar Ayyah?” she asked quietly, trying to hide her sobs.

“The Kamelanathan family, Kanmani Amma, has always been a very prosperous family. But they always had business rivals and poor people were always envious of them. Despite their kind nature, they have undoubtedly stepped on the feet of quite a few. There’s lots of envy, jealousy, and rivalry, Taiyyeh.”

“How can we remove the repercussions of the curse and set them free, Aiyah? How can we avert the envy of the people?”

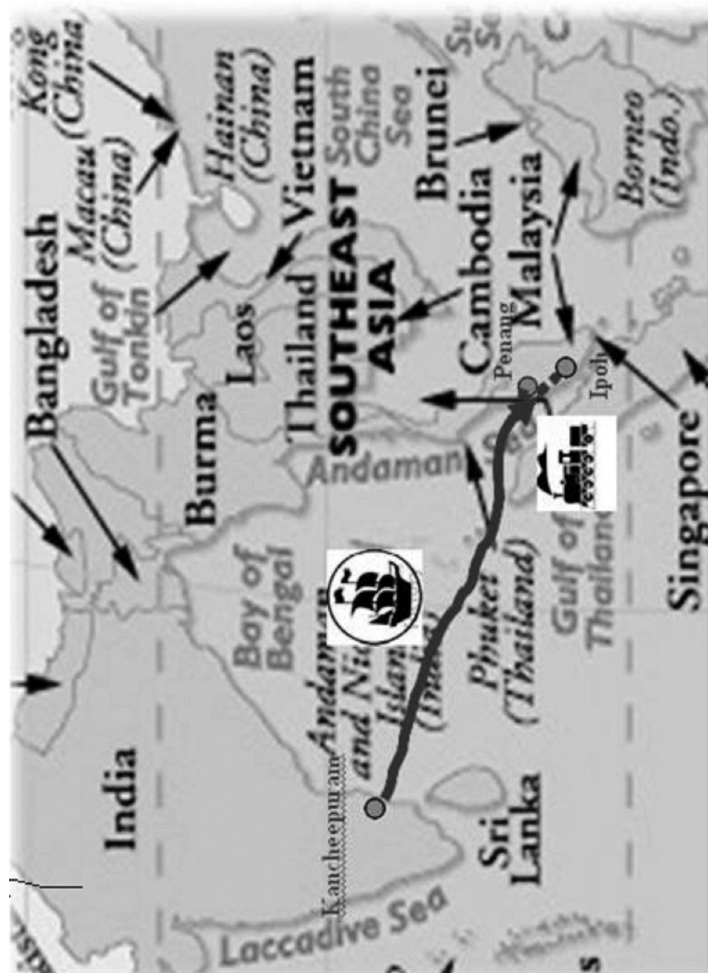
“Prayer and meditation will help, Taiyyeh. Of course, service to mankind will help to reduce the impact of the curse on your heirs. But the curse will only be lifted five years after the demise of Doraisamy. Until the influence of the planet Saturn leaves them, they will have problems. I will pray for them. One other thing, Taiyyeh, this revelation should remain hidden until Doraisamy and two more generations of heirs have come to pass. Should the vicious curse be revealed to them too soon, the afflictions will increase in magnitude and affect them in a ways that may cause them to loose the strength to persevere and prosper.

The curse is very powerful, and has its own way of revealing itself. We need not contemplate how or why . . . the answers will reveal themselves. Should the message not reveal itself after three

generations, three more consecutive generations will suffer the repercussions of the curse. This vicious cycle will continue until the souls of both Malathi and her father have attained *moksha*.”



**Part 1:**  
**The Doraisamys**  
**(1928—1972)**



Map outlining the journey undertaken by Doraisamy and family from Kanchipuram to Ipoh

## Doraisamy

It was on a hot summer night many moons ago, with the full moon shining brightly and the starry sky above looking down on them, when Doraisamy realized that Gowri wasn't the woman for him. He looked hard for the different constellations on the dotted sky as astronomy always fascinated him.

Gowri lay beside him in the haystack on top of the bullock cart and they listened to the sounds of dogs-howling, crickets-tittering, and frogs-croaking in the distance. He could hear her breathing faintly as she lay beside him. Just minutes before, he had lustfully ravished her fleshy body for the first time and was certain that it was the first time for her as well.

She was eager to please him and he happily seized the opportunity. She was a beautiful woman and he was attracted to her the moment he first set eyes on her. Beads of sweat formed on his face and body. A smile of smug satisfaction crept over his brown lips. He had finally given way to his manly needs.

He realized then; however, that the pleasure he got from devouring that virgin-woman wasn't going to be enough for a merchant of the higher, Vaisya caste, such as himself. Gowri was a peasant of the lower Sudra caste and he no longer deemed her fit to be his wife.

"When are we getting married?" she shyly inquired.

"Soon. I'll have to discuss the marriage with my family," he lied. "Keep things hush till then." Quietly he thought of fleeing as soon as he could. His parents would never approve of such a woman, especially one who so eagerly lost her virginity to him. They would question her morality and virtues; and besides, they would definitely want him to marry someone of equal social standing. He promised to see her again soon but left the village of Nagapattinam the next morning, never to return.



It was soon arranged that he be married to Malathi, the daughter of a fellow Vaisya landlord. He had seen her before at the temple and found her very attractive. She was the kind of girl, one would deem “well bred.” He eagerly awaited the grand wedding ceremony that his parents were painstakingly arranging for him. However, as fate would have it, the much awaited day never came.

What intervened was a cause of much shame to the Kamalanathan family. Although they questioned the virtues of Gowri, they never again spoke a word to Vickneshwaran Kauder, the Vellalar landlord who had promised his daughter to them. He severed all ties with them before the wedding, due to the racket that arose.

Gowri’s parents along with other villagers of Nagapattinam marched into their village one sunny morning in a fit of rage. They were shouting angrily and holding lighted torches, sticks, and ‘aravalais’ to get justice for Gowri who at that point was pregnant with a yet unborn child.

Doraisamy’s parents were more than a little taken aback, and fearing for the life of their only son as well as their own, unwittingly agreed to a simple wedding between Doraisamy and Gowri at the Kanchee Kamatchi Amman temple. Gowri denied being raped, confessed to being in love with Doraisamy, and of having a relationship with him. But was devastated and felt cheated when Doraisamy left the village without a word.

The parents were so shocked by the rage of the villagers and by their testimonies of witnessing Doraisamy and Gowri being together.

Despite agreeing to the wedding, they were certain that the ill-bred Sudhra girl would never win their hearts. Especially a girl who lost her virginity to their son so easily, well before their marriage. *Doraisamy is condemned to a life with the wrong woman*, they thought angrily. The first few months of the marriage were the hardest. Hardly a word was spoken between the couple. Their relationship was immediately strained. His parents kept a distance from them, although Doraisamy continued to manage his father’s outlets in Kancheepuram. The little bit of contact Gowri

had with her parents-in-law was marked by their sarcasm, fault-finding, accusations, and anger.

The ice between them was only broken six months after Doraisamy's child was born. They decided to name their son "Rajendran." Before long, Gowri proved herself to be a good homemaker and companion to Doraisamy and a dedicated mother to his child.

Soon after Rajendran was born, Doraisamy's father decided to pass on some of his business responsibilities to his son. Doraisamy was a keen learner but found his relationship with his father strained. His father hadn't left the business to him but instead appointed him managing director with a fixed monthly salary. Doraisamy proved to be an efficient businessman and his father grudgingly gave him a nod of approval when he mapped out his business expansion plans into Malaya.

It was when Rajendran turned two and Gowri's belly was protruding with the yet unborn Komala that Doraisamy moved to Malaya to expand his textile business, then called Little India Textiles.

\* \* \*

Doraisamy studied the map of Southeast Asia with much enthusiasm. The Peninsula of Malaya in the shape of a mango leaf protruded from the main Asian landmass separated by the narrow neck of Indochina, which was comprised by the Indo-Chinese kingdoms; Laos, Burma, Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand. On its left was the island of Sumatra which was separated from Malaya by the Straits of Malacca. Just below like a dew drop bursting out of the fresh mango leaf was the much talked about Singapore in the midst of the Malay Archipelago. Doraisamy thought excitedly while studying the map. The word "*Melayu*" itself was thought to have been derived from the Sanskrit word "*Melayuir*" which means land of mountains.

The Malay Archipelago including the Sri Vijaya empire (which existed between seventh to thirteenth centuries) was at one time

under the reign of the great Chola Tamil empire ( at around AD 1068). The fall of the Chola Empire was followed by the rise of the Pandya Kings in India. All this preceded the emergence of Malacca Sultanate in AD 1400. The Malay Sultanates were however at that time, in turmoil not unlike the Indian Maharaja-led kingdoms and Hindustani Sultanates, following the British invasion. Malaya at that time comprised of the Straits States, the Federated Malay States, and the Unfederated Malay States collectively known as “British Malaya” holding some similarity to “British India.”

The political situation at that time was a little unsettling, but that didn't deter Doraisamy from expanding his trade into Malaya. They were headed to Penang, also known as the Pearl of the Orient, from there they would then travel by train to Ipoh.

This long, ocean journey was Gowri and Rajendran's maiden voyage. They both suffered from bouts of sea sickness but the journey was otherwise pleasant.

Upon arriving at Penang, they were amazed and enchanted by the sights and sounds of a variety of traders and merchants busily emptying their cargo and selling their goods.

Gowri's young mind, not unlike Doraisamy's, quickly captured images of the Arab traders dressed in long ankle length robes known as 'Thobes' complete with fabric headdresses, plying their wares and spices. There were Chinese traders dressed in "Sam Foes," and Malay traders dressed in the traditional "*Baju Melayu*," and Indian traders dressed in their traditional "*Dhotis*." It was quite a sight to behold. Then, she became speechless while watching the British officers dressed in uniform alighting the first class decks of the ships, looking aloof and distant. Doraisamy glared at them, Gowri instinctively didn't like them.

They carried their goods and proceeded to the railway station on a trishaw to continue with their journey to Ipoh. Ipoh wasn't a port like Penang. At that time it was known for its tin mines. Doraisamy found the black "Samfoo" and cloak clad "*Dulang washers*" (tin-miners) on bicycles, a rather interesting sight on their arrival to Ipoh.

Rajendran tolerated the train ride better than he had sailing and was hungry. They proceeded to a stall nearby where a lady sold coconut cream rice served with anchovy *sambal* and eggs. The “Nasi Lemak” as it was called, looked appetizing to the little boy and would become one of Rajendran’s favorite foods in Malaya. However, being Ipohrean meant eating a variety of Chinese, Indian, and Malay foods which Rajendran also grew to love but all that would be years later ... The Doraisamy’s were initially skeptical of the local food and were not very adventurous.

Doraisamy had arranged through a fellow merchant for a house on the outskirts of the town and it was ready for them. A middle-aged man arrived in a, then rarely seen, Austin Martin and loaded their things into the boot of the car. Gowri and Rajendran were excited as this was their first car ride and the beginning of a lot of “firsts” in their new lives in Malaya.

Doraisamy was a keen businessman and his textile trade prospered well under his care. A few misunderstandings had risen between him and his father but were soon resolved.. He had to accept the fact that his father was a shrewd man but had denied him the family inheritance for many years paying him a monthly salary instead.

He made up his mind to enjoy his new life in Malaya with Gowri and the children, (there was to be a third child, Maheshwaran, after Rajendran and Komala), despite his occasional bitterness at being forced into this marriage and being denied the family inheritance. He became a stern disciplinarian, imposing standards on his children that he himself had not been subjected to as a child. They were to excel in their studies and lead virtuous lives. Rajendran being the naughtiest of their three children would grow up to be reprimanded brutally for being errant.

He saw to it that his sons, Rajendran and Maheshwaran, had a higher education. It didn’t occur to him that his daughter, Komala, would want to further her studies as well and thought it unnecessary.

He had grown used to Gowri over the years, appreciated and cared for her. She was, after all, the mother of his three children.

In all those years that he was married, he never looked at another woman in quite the same way...except for one.

He travelled frequently for business, and while he was a tyrant at home, he built a love nest in Penang with a woman named Grace. Later when she moved to Kuala Lumpur, he also visited her there.

He had given her the funds to start a grocery store after her husband's demise. She also had a daughter, Lydia, from her previous marriage. But Grace remained a secret no one knew about back home until the day he broke the news to Rajendran. Grace and Lydia were a source of much happiness and pleasure for Doraisamy outside his marriage to Gowri.

Little did he expect his memories of his years in Malaya, aside from building his business empire, family, and relationships, to be so brutally scarred by memories of torment by the Japanese and to personally bear witness to the rape of his mistress, Grace. Thankfully, their child, Lydia, then barely a toddler, was spared as she hid in the secret space in the back of the house. Hearing Grace's faint cries and her fervent attempts at bargaining with the Japanese soldiers haunted him for years.

It was one sunny Sunday afternoon, when Doraisamy had gone to visit Grace in her apartment in Kuala Lumpur. As they sat down to have tea, they heard some cars stopping outside their front door. Suddenly a group of Japanese soldiers alighted from the cars and came rushing in. Doraisamy and Grace quickly sent Lydia to the hiding spot near the kitchen and closed the hole in the wall behind her.

The soldiers had observed Grace being alone at home, were surprised to find a man in the house, and tied Doraisamy up. Then, they began badly hitting him while throwing rude questions at him about his whereabouts. The shocked Doraisamy lost consciousness. As he lay unconscious, the men took turns raping Grace. Doraisamy gradually regained consciousness and lay helplessly bound. When he shouted and screamed, the soldiers began hitting him again. He soon quietened and sobbed quietly to the threats of his head being chopped off to adorn the street lamps like that of so many other civilians.

“Mei Chee, the neighbor’s teenage daughter, I know where she hides.” Grace screamed. “Mei Leng too! Please leave me alone.” Doraisamy recalled her attempts to escape by betraying her Chinese neighbors. Then more outraged screams.

Lydia was under strict orders to remain hidden and not to come out until her parents came to get her, quietly sobbed on hearing the outraged screams of her mother. Finally she fell asleep oblivious to what was happening outside.

Doraisamy realized then how fragile his wealth and manly strength was against the weapons, brutality, and arrogance of the short, yellow-skinned Japanese soldiers. He spit out bloody sputum on the backs of the soldiers’ trucks as they hurriedly backed out of their drive. As soon as Grace set him free, she fell into his arms and cried like a baby.

They took their time cleaning up before going back to wake Lydia up. They had narrowly cheated death, and sobbed bitterly as the weight of the incident forever buried itself in the back of their minds. He wondered if his occasional outbursts of anger could possibly be attributed to their traumatizing experience.

It was many years later, when Grace had suffered a stroke and was bedridden that a carefully kept secret should reveal itself. He had gone to pay Grace a visit at their apartment in Ampang. Lydia was busy with some other work when Grace, unable to speak much, beckoned him to read a small diary that she had carefully kept. One entry in particular caught his eye.

*22nd March 1938*

*Dear Diary,*

*The midwife at the hospital just confirmed that I am now three months pregnant with my first child. Doraisamy may assume that this child is Arthur’s as I am still legally Arthur’s wife. I am quite certain; however, that I have not come in contact with Arthur in the last four to five months as Arthur had been called to Pangkor.*

*I am in a turmoil as to how to deal with the situation. On one hand, Arthur has been my husband for quite a few years and on the other hand, Doraisamy has gradually become the love I so badly need*

*all alone in this new land with no ties to my family and hardly any communication with my husband for months.*

*I am in a Love Triangle far more complicated than I could possibly have imagined. And now, there's Doraisamy's child whom I shall forever keep a secret so as not to turn my marriage sour and to keep the ties with Arthur's family. The only family I have left. I only pray that Arthur will forgive me for this deceit. I still love him, too after the long journey I have made to Malaya, causing all ties with my family to be severed.*

*I pray that the Lord should forgive me for this deceit.*

*Lots of love,*

*Grace*

\* \* \*

When on his death bed with his once well-built silhouette ravaged and shrunk with colon cancer, he once again thought about Malathi, the quiet, well-mannered daughter of the well-off landlord, Vickneshwaran Kaunder. He thought of the sharp features and pretty eyes of the girl who had been arranged to be his first wife. He recalled seeing her in the temple. He had no opportunity to return to his motherland in all those years that he painstakingly built his business empire, aside from brief strictly business trips. So he had no opportunity to inquire about Malathi.

He had carefully thought out his will and discussed it with his lawyers. His children from Gowri were to inherit his business empire; Lydia was to inherit the house in Kuala Lumpur; both his wife and his mistress were protected by a trust fund till the day they depart and live in their respective houses.

He wondered at this point if his life would have ended differently had he married Malathi instead.

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