

Grief

Translated from Tamil by

P. Karkuzhali and V. Dhivya

Everything came to an end. From now, there wouldn't be any connection between Jamal Moideen's family and Madurai. In the bus, Mehrunnisha was worrying about her daughter Subaitha's life while she and her daughter were returning home. What a lovely boy Sulaiman was! Not even a single trait of bad habit in him. People who had come for his funeral expressed their intense grief that this shouldn't have happened to him. There was none who left without lamenting over his death. Sulaiman could be seen within ten minutes at his home soon after his work in the mill. Chinnamuthalali had arrived in the car about time the coffin was lifted. It was a small house. Only one bench was put on the doorstep. All the workers from the mill stood in the lane. They were delaying the proceedings for their employer to come. As it was getting dark, the union leader who was as good as Sulaiman made all the arrangements to lift the coffin. As expected, chinnamuthalali had arrived on time. "Chinnamuthalali, Chinnamuthalali had come," That was the talk everywhere. He was there until the body was buried. Being a rich person, he stopped his car at the side of the house and walked with the people to the burial ground. How true it is to say that good people are everywhere.

It is Subaitha who was quite unfortunate. Dhawood Sacha in the city arranged for their marriage because Sulaiman had lost both his parents quite young and Subaida too had lost her father. Anyhow, God had decided that she would become a widow at the third year of their marriage. The bus had reached Meignanapuram. Within a few minutes it would reach Udangudi bus stand. Mehrunnisha was anxious about her daughters as she did not know what they are doing at home. Hajiyar household would take care of everything, still she couldn't keep calm. The compensation amount from the mill would come within a week. Rs. 8000 would be given. When it comes, the second daughter can be married off. Ayisha's son is running a coffee shop in Aathangarai Palli. This marriage would strengthen the relations. Here, in her parent's house, as she had tirelessly woven mats her hands grew as thin as bristles of broom. At least there in her in-laws house, let her live happily. Ayisha would take care of her as her own daughter. When the second daughter's life is settled, the lame one will be the only one left. A lame fellow can be

found for her. I am cursed, couldn't I have begotten a male child! If it was an affluent family, they would be looking for another groom soon after the death of the first one. When vapa Jamal Moideen died, he had left behind only a bundle of straw. Udangudi had arrived so soon. She left Subaitha to guard the luggage in the bus stand, went to the panchayat office and brought Muthaiya Konar's cart. As soon as they entered the house, all of them swarmed to set forth the mourning. Jamal Moideen might be poor. But the custom of the village to visit the bereaved family cannot be given up. Subaitha was weeping continuously. After all Sulaiman is not any stranger to her. She had lived with him for three years. All those who had come were lamenting over the demise of Sulaiman. It is not an everyday occurrence for some women especially someone like Korukku Muthalali's wife to shed tears. One thing was peculiar to Mehrunisha. Just like her, those who came there told her to get her second daughter married off with the money given by the mill. When they were saying so, Mehrunisha behaved as if she was unmindful of it, tightening her eyes and in a low voice, "yes, yes, I too have decided the same, but I don't know what Nagore's wish over this... I couldn't bear when I think of Subaida. I am choked off seeing her destiny to become a widow at this young age." Uttering those words she would begin to sob. "Then what, crazy woman! You are her mother. It's quite natural for you to grieve for your daughter," they would say. But all these things were said identically.

Source:

Vannanilavan. "Dhukkam." *Vannanilavan Kathaikal*. Kizhaku Pathipakkam, 2011.

Glossary

Chinnamuthalali: Son of the mill owner.

Meignanapuram: Meignanapuram or Meignanapuram is a small village in Thoothukudi district.

Udangudi: A Panchayat town in Thoothukudi District near Thiruchendur.

Aathangarai Palli: A small village in Tirunelveli district.

Nagore's: God of Nagore.