



LONELINESS

"Not association constant, not affection's token bind;

'Tis, the unison of feeling friends, unites of kindred mind" –Kural 785

It is a seven-story subsidized apartment building in Mississauga, located next to the main road. Many seniors live in that building. Luximi Ammal, a widowed Brahmin lady, is known to many people in that apartment building as she was living lonely there for many years after losing her husband in a car accident. Luximi could always be seen in white cotton Sari with hardly any jewelry. She wanted to live a simple life. The holy ash always appears on her forehead. She became well known in that building because she is a good cook in preparing Iddaly, Dasai, Uppuma, Vadai, etc. Being a Brahmin style of preparation adding ghee for many items, the crowd likes to buy from her, but she only accepts limited orders. Luximi is good in singing devotional songs. Every Friday, there is a get together of the apartment crowd to sing Bajan songs and Luximi leads them. She is a devotee of Sai Baba.

Long time, back she lived like a queen in a Sivan Temple at Jaffna. Being the eldest daughter of the chief priest Swaminatha Iyer of Thirunelveli Sivan temple, the whole family respected her. The two younger sisters of her had a great respect for her. She married her father's sister's son Subramania Iyer, an accountant in a company. Subramanian although an educated person, he was a very religious-minded man and frequently helps his father-in-law in doing pujas in the temple. Subramania Iyer won the confidence and respect of his father-in-law Swaminatha Iyer.

At the young age, Luximi and Sunbaramani played the game of husband and wife and started loving each other. Swaminatha Iyer's sister Maheswary wanted her son to marry Luximi and maintain the close relationship with Swaminthar Iyer's family

Luximi boasted about their ancestors who she said were from Rameshwaram temple in South India. Being a highly conservative minded lady, she moved with high caste limited crowd only and was proud that she is from the Brahmin caste. Everyday evening, she made it a point to visit the Ganesh temple in Tirunelveli with her husband. Luximi's the other two sisters married the relations, and the entire families lived in a large house provided to the chief priest. Swaminatha Iyer lost his wife due to a grave sickness and Luximi took over the responsibility to look after the family. The families of the other two sisters never crossed the line drawn by Luximi.

Swaminthar was respected by many people because he was good at predicting things to come. If anyone falls sick, they go to him and get his blessings, and he applied holy ash on their forehead, chanted mantras and blessed them. That cured them, and the people trust that he has some form of magical powers. He was also good at reading horoscopes. His old age won the respect of the priests from other temples. If they need any clarification to be made about temple rituals they approach Swaminathan Iyer for consultation.

Although the house where they lived was an old six bedrooms tiled house, the father, Luximi, her husband, and the families of two sisters lived as one family in that residence. Running the house was Luximi's responsibility. Luximi's the two sisters had three children, two boys, and a girl. It was very unfortunate Luximi and Subramanian Iyer did not have children although they married ten years ago. Luximi started loving her sister's children and looked after them as her children. Luximi's two sisters were married to government servants. They worked in Jaffna Kachcheri and Municipality and financially supported the entire families.

Luximi gets up early morning, has a bath and did Kolam in front of the house, milks the cow for the house before doing the puja. She also wakes the sisters from bed to do the usual duties. She handled the education of sister's children. She with the help of the sisters took orders from people to make some additional income for the family. Although Luximi looked after the cooking, her sisters gave her a supporting hand. The two sisters worked as teachers in a Tamil school.

Until the time Luximi went to bed, she spent her time looking after sister's children. Whenever she had the time, she goes to the Ganesh temple with her husband, Subramanian. That is only time she had privacy with her husband and discussed the family matters.

Luximi never expected that there will be a change in her life. The war forced her and her husband to migrate to Canada. Subramani's friend Sivarama Krishnan, who was also an accountant and CEO in an export company in Canada, helped

Subaramani to migrate to Canada. First he refused, but the war situation made him apply for migration with his wife. Luximi's sisters advised Luximi to migrate so that they too in the course of time get sponsored by Luximi and husband and migrate to Canada.

The new Canadian life of Luximi and Subramani was something different for the couple. Initially, they had problems in adapting to the Canadian life and moving with other community people.

After coming to Canada unexpectedly she lost her husband in an accident. It happened at a pedestrian crossing. The sudden death of her husband was a shock for her. She had no one to guide her and was left alone. Luximi was tired of working hard and living a lonely life. She never anticipated that she will lose her husband and without the help of her relations who live in Canada. Her plan to bring her sister's family to Canada did not go through after her husband's death. She started missing her sister's family and children, and there were no one to support her. Subramani's death brought loneliness in Luximi's life. She presented her case to the housing department and managed to get a subsidized single bedroom apartment to live a solitary life. Every day she sits on the side of the window of the apartment and watches the families who walk with their partners. That was her pastime. When she recollects the happy life, she lived with her husband and sister's family tears filled her eyes. She thought that it was very unfortunate she did not have a child. If she falls sick, there is no one to look after her. Her past time was to read religious books and Tamil papers.

One day an old divorced Canadian lady who lived alone on the fifth floor of the building, suddenly passed away. For three days, her milk bottles were not collected, and the building security got a smell from the floor. He detected that the old ladies' body was getting rot. The Police, on a complaint from the apartment, removed the body of the woman. Luximi feared that one day a similar situation of living a lonely life may happen to her as well. Luximi avoided speaking to her clients, collects the money, gives the food and closed the door of the apartment.

One day she happened to read an article in a local newspaper about meditation and how to overcome loneliness. She attended a meditation class conducted by Swami in the hall in the apartment building. Like her, there were few lonely ladies attended the lectures. On the advice of the Swami, she decided to go daily in the evening for a walk in the park, meet people, and enjoy the pleasure of

nature. She decided to search for a good friend to find company. Although she saw many Canadian ladies, she hesitated to speak to them and become friendly.

One day Swami saw Luximi with a worried look and was keen to know about her worry.

“Ammah, with whom did you come for the meeting”? (Tilak) he questioned her.“

“I came, alone swami. I read about your meditation class in the paper”.

“You have no thali or Kunkumum (Tilak). Are you a widow?

“Yes, Swami. I lost my husband after coming to Canada. I have no children. She explained her whole story of her family background to the swami; Swami felt sorry for her.”

“Your problem is mainly loneliness. You can overcome that situation if you have the will and determination. I would advise you to go for a walk daily and meet some good friends. Do not continue to think about the deceased husband and worry about yourself. Think about your future. There are many people like you living in this world. Everyone has a problem. Think about others. Try to help and interact with others. Move away from conservative thinking. Forget about caste and, religious beliefs. Do not consider that you belong to a supreme caste? In Canada is far away from your homeland. It is different from the way of life back at home. In Canada, we live with many ethnic people from different countries. Get rid of wrong beliefs. Read books and start writing. Go out and enjoy the beauty of nature. Nature is the God. Meditation will give you the creative power and calm in your mind. You have the talent to sing. Develop it”. Swami gave her many pieces of advice

Months rolled out. She started exposing herself to the environment. A beautiful stream in the park attracted her. By standing on the bridge, she enjoyed feeding the ducks that swam in the stream. She saw them swimming happily with other ducks. The Ducks were not lonely, then why I too overcome loneliness, she thought. She fed them with pieces of Vadai she brought daily from home. An old Canadian gentleman watched her feeding the ducks. He was taken up by the love she had for the birds.

“Madame, it looks as if you are trying to keep company with the ducks. It is a pleasure to watch the little ones following the mother” he started the conversation with Luximi.

“Yes, I love birds. See how happy they are. I have brought food from home for them. There are rabbits in that bush. I see them playing happily with their little ones”, Luximi expressed her love for birds and animals

“I am John Harrison. They call me John. I am eighty years old. I am a retired police officer. I faced many challenges in my life. I never miss to come to the park and enjoy nature. I lost my wife ten years ago when she suffered from breast cancer. I have no children. I am a lonely man. I have a three bedroom bungalow and get a pension to lead a happy life. I drive an old car to do shopping. I need a company in my house. I do my cooking. The only the problem is that there is no one at home to talk to and share my food. Why don't you visit me and keep company with me”.

Luximi never expected the invitation from John. “Let me think about your suggestion. I do not want people to talk bad about our friendship” Luximi replied John. Initially, she did not first agree to John's suggestion. As time went on, she decided that the only way to come over her loneliness is to forget about her caste, ethnicity, tradition and religion. She decided to accept John's offer; He appears to be an honest, friendly man she thought to herself.

Luximi gave a piece of Vadai she brought for John. He tasted it and enjoyed it. He gave a piece of apple he brought to Luximi from his garden. Their friendship started gradually expanding with the exchange of food items. She told him that she was an orthodox Hindu lady from Sri Lanka. After coming to Canada, she attended English classes and started talking in English. At John's request, she taught him few words in Tamil and narrated its heritage. She showed him as per the Tamil culture how to greet people by saying “Vanakkam” by holding both hands. “Tamil is an old language and more than 80 million Tamils living in the world. John was surprised to hear that. They started exchanging their culture.

“What is that mark on your forehead Luximi. What does it imply?” John was keen to find out the significance of it.

Luximi smiled and replied “John it is called holy ash in Tamil. I am a widow. As such the Tamil society will not permit me to have red “Tilak” on my forehead.”

“Why holy ash? We have Ash Wednesday in Catholic religion”

“You know that Hindus cremate the body after death. The final product of the body is ashes. Ash in the forehead reminds the person that one day his body will turn into ashes.” Luximi said.

“It is an interesting explanation. Symbolism carries a meaning. Every religion has its philosophy.” John replied.

John and Luximi exchanged Traditional and Cultural views of Hindus and Catholics.

As time went on John, and Luximi could be seen as friendly couple standing on the bridge, talking and feeding the ducks. They exchanged English books. John started to learn about meditation. Gradually the loneliness that existed in them disappeared. They did not care for the views of their community people. They are not a married couple, but a friendly couple of different ethnic communities is overcoming the challenges against loneliness. Luximi started living in a room in John’s house. They lived together as good friends. She gradually got adapted to the western culture. John too began to converse in Tamil. The issue of Loneliness brought two cultures and languages together.
