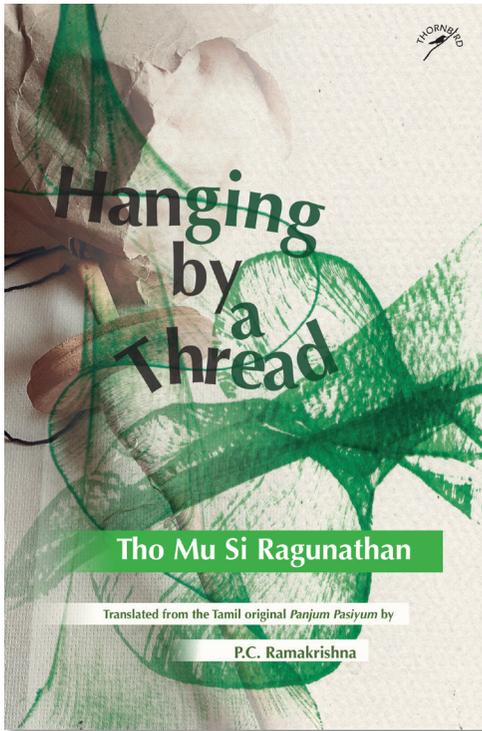


A powerful tale of realist fiction that portrays the tumultuous lives of weaver families in post-Independence rural Tamil Nadu.

The writing is direct and evocative, blending contrasting points of view to paint a stirring picture of injustice, exploitation and resistance.



Hanging by a Thread

Tho Mu Si Raghunathan

Translated from the Tamil original *Panjum Pasiyum* by P.C. Ramakrishna

How the Weavers of Tamil Nadu Rose up Against Injustice!

Tho Mu Si Raguathan's novel *Panjum Pasiyum* is set in the 1950s in Tamil Nadu. Its realistic depiction of the plight of handloom weavers makes it a significant work of its times. The weavers had to face competition with mill cloth, high prices of yarn due to import of expensive cotton from USA, accumulation of handloom stock caused by stagnation in exports, unscrupulous merchants and the apathy of the government.

The human aspects of the story are brought in by the families of Thathulinga Mudaliar, an exploitative businessman, and Kailasa Mudaliar, who is in debt to the former. The stories of their children Sankar, Kamala and Mani and how the weavers of Madurai and Ambasamudram organise and protest against the government to seek their rights, makes for stirring reading.

In *Hanging by a Thread* the travails of the weavers, the socio-political movements of the time and the human interest stories interweave in a fluent translation. The different strands of the plot culminate in a victorious procession of the weavers of Ambasamudram seeking their rights from the government.



Tho Mu Si Raguathan (1923–2001) was a Tamil writer, translator, journalist and literary critic. His first novella *Puyal* was published in 1945, and his literary criticism *Ilakkiya Vimarsanam* came out in 1948. *Panjum Pasiyum* (Cotton and Hunger) was published in 1951. In the mid-1960s he joined Soviet Land Publications, where he translated many Russian works into Tamil. He received the Soviet Land Nehru Award for *Thai* (1965) and for *Lenin Kavithaanjali* (1970). He was awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award (1983) for his literary criticism *Bharathi: Kalamum Karuthum*.



P.C. Ramakrishna is a veteran theatre actor and director with The Madras Players. He is the co-translator of *Katha Vilasam*, a collection of 50 articles by eminent Tamil writer S. Ramakrishnan. He has translated, dramatised, and staged Sivasankari's novel *Karunai Kolai*, as *Mercy*. He is a leading voice professional, lending his voice to documentaries,

films, children's audiobooks, etc., and is one of India's most-recorded English language voices. He has authored *Find Your Voice*, a definitive guide for actors and voice professionals.

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Tamil, one of the 22 Scheduled languages listed in the Eight Schedule of the Constitution, was the first to be classified as a classical language of India and is one of the oldest languages in the world, with a rich literary tradition.

Tho Mu Si Ragunathan (1923–2001) was an eminent Tamil litterateur. His writing reflected his socialist-realist political leanings. This is seen in *Panjum Pasiyum*, which describes the socio-economic conditions of handloom weavers in Tamil Nadu.

Based on a true incident, when a procession of weavers came to Madras and sought the intervention of the government, it is possibly the first realistic socialist novel in Tamil. Through its depiction of weavers organising for fair wages and prices for their products, it becomes a valuable record of its times.

It illuminates how vulnerable the position of handlooms workers was in society and how their lives were precariously hanging by a thread.