

The Queens of Parramatta

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Introduction

In the shadowed, indigo-hued interstices between myth and modernity, where the ancient, salt-heavy winds of Lanka whisper across the vast, churning expanse of the Pacific to the sunlit, eucalyptus-scented suburbs of Parramatta, there unfolds a tale that defies the neat boundaries of epic and ordinary life. This novella, woven with the blinding golden threads of imagination and the rough-hewn, calloused fibres of human endurance, recounts the improbable odyssey of nine women. Sumitri, Puju, Rashmi Bongi, Komal Gupta, Pallavi, Priya Sharma—known affectionately as Ms. Aussie—Priyanka, Khushboo, and Rohini. Their lives, once anchored

in the gentle, rhythmic hum of Sydney's western diaspora, were violently uprooted into the swirling, chaotic vortex of legend.

Here, in the rustling pages of this narrative, the air is thick with the scent of paradox. The timeless archetype of Ravana, the ten-headed sovereign of appetite and illusion, emerges from the mists of antiquity. He brings with him the overpowering aromas of ancient sandalwood, crushed lotus petals, and the metallic tang of spilled blood. This mythic titan collides violently with the contemporary realities of migrant resilience, financial pragmatism, and maternal ferocity—a world smelling of melting asphalt, fresh rain on dry earth, and the sharp, comforting spices of a suburban kitchen. What begins as a terrifying abduction in a flash of blinding, unearthly light blossoms, through the dark and agonizing alchemy of suffering, into a profound reclamation of agency.

The reader is invited to walk alongside these women through the merciless trials of Ashoka Vatika, where the sky is a bruised, eternal purple and the rains fall like cold, stinging needles against the skin. You will hear the squelch of mud beneath their feet and the relentless, maddening whine of mosquitoes in the oppressive humidity. You will bear witness to their strategic, whispered surrender in the dead of night, the summoning of forbidden arts that crackle with bioluminescent green energy, and the birth of hybrid heirs. These sons, entering the world with cries that blend the musical lilt of the subcontinent with the sharp, pragmatic vowels of Australia, become fluent in the persuasive, silver-tongued dialects of two wildly different worlds.

The ultimate seizure of power—a slow, creeping dawn painted in the vibrant hues of turmeric and saffron—forms not merely a retelling, but a luminous, echoing meditation on the human capacity to transform the dark, suffocating confines of captivity into the

sprawling, sun-drenched vistas of sovereignty. Like the great epics of old, whose chants still reverberate in the hollows of ancient stone temples, this narrative grapples with the eternal, burning questions of dharma and desire, chastity and survival, inheritance and empire.

Yet, it does so through a profoundly intimate lens. These are women whose brightly colored sarees—crimson, peacock blue, and emerald green—carry the faint, smoky scent of backyard barbecues, charred sausages, and sweet, caramelized onions. Their hearts beat to a complex, dual cadence: the sharp, metallic clanging of train announcements at Parramatta station harmonizing with the resonant, brassy tolling of temple bells during evening *aarti*. The light that guides them is not just the celestial glow of distant stars, but the harsh, flickering fluorescence of office buildings and supermarket aisles.

True greatness lies not in the pristine absence of darkness. Rather, it is found in the raw, trembling courage to navigate that pitch-black expanse. It is the audacity to plant tender, green seeds of renewal deep in the scorched, ash-choked earth of unimaginable tragedy. In the story that follows, the reader shall witness such courage rendered with unflinching honesty and a lyrical grace that sings like a perfectly tuned sitar. It is a soaring testament to the unbreakable, diamond-hard spirit that dwells within those who have crossed perilous, storm-tossed oceans, only to be carried further still by the inexorable, rushing currents of an uncaring fate.

May these nine queens, in their literary incarnation, step off the page in a riot of color and sound. May the rustle of their silk, the confident click of their heels, and the unyielding timbre of their united voices remind us of a fundamental truth: even the mightiest, most terrifying monsters, crowned in gold and breathing fire, must

eventually yield before the quiet, collective, and devastatingly beautiful power of determined womanhood.

Chapter 1: The Threaded Lives of Parramatta

In the sun-dappled, sprawling suburbs of Parramatta, the morning light struck the pavement in sheets of blinding white-gold. Here, the Parramatta sandstone, warm and rough beneath fingertips, whispered ancient, rust-colored secrets to the rigid, grey concrete veins of Sydney's sprawling west. The air hummed with the high-pitched, metallic trill of cicadas, a relentless summer soundtrack layered over the distant, rhythmic thumping of trains crossing the river. In this vibrant intersection of worlds, nine women moved through their days like luminous, brightly dyed threads in a vast, unravelling tapestry of diaspora longing.

They were a symphony of contrasting colors, scents, and sounds. Sumitri, cloaked in the quiet dignity of muted ochres and earth tones, possessed eyes that held the brooding, dark grey clouds of the monsoon rains of Bihar. When she walked, the silver anklets at her feet chimed with the delicate clarity of raindrops striking a tin roof, and she carried the ever-present scent of *petrichor*—the earthy perfume of dry soil drinking in the first rains. Puju was a riot of color, favoring bright, turmeric-yellow fabrics that billowed around her like captured sunshine. Her laughter rang through the humid air like heavy brass temple bells mysteriously misplaced in the sterile, air-conditioned aisles of a modern shopping mall.

Then there was Rashmi Bongi, fierce and unstoppable as the Ganges in a muddy, churning flood. She draped herself in crimson silks that seemed to catch fire in the afternoon light, her presence announced by the sharp, invigorating scent of roasted red chillies and toasted cumin. Komal Gupta possessed hands that smelled

perpetually of crushed mint, damp potting mix, and bruised eucalyptus leaves; her touch could coax brilliant pink roses and vibrant green coriander from the most reluctant, clay-heavy Australian soil. Pallavi moved with the elegant, fluid grace of a classical *raga*, her sapphire-blue attire rustling with the quiet, soothing sound of wind moving through tall river reeds.

Priya Sharma—known to all in the community as Ms. Aussie—was a study in bold contrasts. She wore sharp, tailored blazers over neon-bright scarves, her clicking heels tapping out a hurried, pragmatic rhythm on the pavement. Her voice was a fascinating auditory tapestry; her accent had long ago married the broad, nasal twang of the dusty outback to the bouncing, melodic lilt of the Punjab. She smelled of strong, perfectly poured flat whites, rich vanilla, and the crisp, starchy scent of freshly printed financial spreadsheets.

Priyanka harbored dreams that were sharper than the gleaming, silver-edged kitchen knives she wielded with terrifying precision. Her domain smelled of sharp, freshly grated ginger, pungent garlic, and the sweet, heavy aroma of simmering ghee.

Khushboo, true to her name, was a walking garden. She was fragrant with the intoxicating, heady memory of white jasmine garlands, her soft linen clothing catching the light like a solitary cloud in a brilliant blue sky. Finally, there was Rohini, wrapped in deep, midnight indigo. She was steadfast and silent as the northern star, smelling faintly of old paper, sandalwood incense, and quiet contemplation.

They were not merely neighbours, exchanging polite nods over low brick fences. They were a sisterhood, forged in the intense, white-hot crucible of migration. Their husbands orbited them like respectful, slightly bewildered planets, content to bask in the radiant, warming glow of their wives' multifaceted ambitions.