Love for Learning

A Woman's Perspective
on the
Struggle for Democracy in South Africa

By Saro Naicker

This book is dedicated to

The Struggle

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INTRODUCTION

The human life is a journey that can be compared with that of a river. It starts with a trickle at the top of a mountain, and ends as it flows into the ocean of eternity.

My life, enriched so greatly by marriage to a true hero, is a story that needs to be told so that succeeding generations could better understand the role women played in the struggle for social justice in a land where there was none.

I am but a simple woman thrust into the limelight through association of the mind and the boding of the heart. MP Naicker dared to dream, a dream that would see all of South Africa's people occupying their rightful place under the warm South African sun and sky.

The gentle face and dark eyes of the little Zulu boy is no less important than the blue-eyed blonde on the other side of the mountain. Both were created equally. I thank my late husband MP for opening my eyes and my mind and educating me politically.

The role of a politician's wife should never be underestimated. Only a stable domestic home life accompanied by protection of children from the harsh realities of a cruel world, can be a true inspiration for a freedom fighter.

My children Suganya and Pren and the rest of my family understood this and through the shifting sands of time in my life supported and encouraged me. My life as a little girl was stable, happy, carefree and content. But this slowly and surely evaporated into an uncertain, risky and often persecuted life style.

In spite of this, I never once wavered from my duty as a wife, daughter-in-law, mother and child of the South African soil. I have no regrets.

Sure, there were tough days where one never knew what lay in wait over the horizon. However, in the words of Mrs. Kasturi Gandhi when questioned about her role in her husband's life replied, "*My duty is to support my husband. I've always felt my duty was to!*"

My biography is not just a historical document. It is a message that clearly demonstrates how important the role of women is in political agendas. Whether it be Winnie Mandela, Albertina Sisulu, Adelaide Tambo or Grace Machel, the role of wife and mother is the cornerstone of any freedom struggle.

Giving up the blanket security that surrounded me in my parents' home and embracing the uncertainty of my married life to a politician was only made easy because MP was so dedicated to his cause.

My isolation during his prison days and in exile was a small sacrifice compared to the mental anguish that freedom fighters such as my husband suffered. A free and democratic South Africa, therefore, must be seen as a birthright.

June 16, 1976, The Soweto Uprisings, as it was a popularly referred to, was a watershed moment in the busy history of South Africa. The regime responded in the most brutal manner injuring and maiming young school children in an effort to stem the tide of the revolt. I can still picture the pain in MP's heart as he saw the fruits of our beloved nation mowed to the ground by an illegitimate and callous regime.

Finally, I dedicate large portions of the book to the Daughters of South Africa who suffered greatly while internal and international relentless efforts were made to free the nation.

The clouds have cleared and the tears have dried. Both of these have made way for a true South Africa belonging to all its precious children.

May you enjoy reading this book as much as I have been inspired by it.

Nkhosi sikelel' iAfrika! God bless Africa!

Saro Naicker
26 July 2004

CHAPTER 1: The Early Years
1928-1942

The gentle rain falls on the window panes leaving cascading patterns of rivulets. Seated at her kitchen table is Gonum Sarogonum Naicker (nee Naidoo). She is now the occupant of a two-bedroom maisonette reconstructed from a once lively, happy three-storeyed, semi-detached family home at 55 Agincourt Road, Hampstead, London. As she sips her cup of Rooibos tea her eyes turn to the windowpane and she watches the dancing raindrops. So many memories come flooding back, memories in this house and the other houses back in her beloved homeland.

Saro Naicker's paternal grandfather emigrated from Chennai (formerly Madras) the capital city of the province of Tamil Nadu with his family in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Years later after the contracts on the sugar estates were fulfilled, the family settled in Sea Cow Lake. Kannah Naidoo, Saro's father was born in 1885 and he had two older brothers. His older brothers assigned him the task of taking care of the farm and he subsequently left the farm and moved to the city in search of work.

Saro's maternal great grandmother lived in Magazine Barracks, Durban. She was affectionately known as Kadasi Otokar Ammah, the mother who lived in the corner house. She played the role of a social worker and when young girls were in trouble she served as the arbitrator in the family. When marriages were in trouble, she was the marriage counsellor. As a result of these social services she was well liked and respected in the Indian community. One of the young brides in this locality was Saro's mother-in-law's mother who later passed on this valuable information. Kadasi Otokar Ammah's daughter was Saro's grandmother. This great grandmother also had other children but Saro recalls two of her sons. Years later Saro attended the 25th wedding anniversary of one of these sons.

Saro's grandmother whom she affectionately called Party lived in Durban and raised her family of ten children. One of them was Angammah (Saro's mother) who was born in 1908. Her youngest daughter Seethamma was born in 1918. Angammah attended school with her siblings and was able to read and write. Her parents asked her to leave school at this point believing that she now had enough education to find a suitable husband.

Kannah Naidoo went to visit Angammah's home and saw the daughters. He was interested in marrying the younger daughter, Angammah but her parents refused since they wanted him to marry the older daughter. He married the older daughter and this union produced three daughters, Kanagambal (1920), Chinamma (1922) and Soobumah (1924). Kannah's wife died at the birth of her fourth child, a son, who also died.

Angammah meanwhile had married and settled in Pietermaritzburg and was pregnant when her husband passed away towards the end of 1923. Shortly after the funeral Angammah's family brought her back to Durban where her baby, a son, was subsequently born in March 1924. The youngster was given the name Sathiamurthie.

Kadasi Otokar Ammah realized that Angammah needed help in bringing up her young son. She also had compassion for her motherless granddaughters who were brought up by the widower Kannah. She brought Kannah and Angammah together.

In 1925 Kannah married Angammah. A few months later the family was settled in Fountain Lane, Durban with their three daughters and son. A son was born in 1926 but did not survive.

Saro Naicker was born on 25 September 1928. Around that time, for the first time in South Africa's history an Indian lady went to Edinburgh to study medicine. This became headline news in South Africa. The aspiring doctor's name was Gonum. Kannah, who was very impressed with this historic event, registered his daughter Saro as Gonum Sargonum, the second name being based on the astrologer's reading.

Early each weekday morning Kannah rode his heavily loaded bicycle through the streets of Durban, delivering the Natal Mercury to subscribers in the predominantly white areas.

There were no photographs at that time hanging anywhere on the walls of the house, except for one. Saro recalls a large photograph in her father's room of a dignified elderly gentleman wearing a red turban. She later learned that this was a picture of her grandfather. She did not ask why there was no photograph of her grandmother. In those days children were seen and not heard.

Kannah kept the photograph of his father in his bedroom and would pray after a bath by turning the camphor around the picture. He believed that parents are the first gods in one's life and as a result he did not worship in temples and did not pray to idols.

On 25 June 1930 Saro's sister Dhanum was born. A special relationship developed between the two sisters and lasted for the next sixty-nine years.

The following year the family moved from Fountain Lane to May Street largely populated by people from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Next door to the rented home was a mineral factory that produced cold drinks. At their retail outlet the refrigerators ran continuously to keep the products cold. They produced a continuous jarring noise that could be heard at the Naidoo home. Icy cold air also escaped into the home under the doorway of Angammah's bedroom.

In 1932 a baby brother was born, but eight months later he died of pneumonia possibly caused by the chill produced by the mineral factory next door. Saro can recall the picture of his little white coffin lying in the room.

Shortly after the baby boy's death, Angammah became ill and suffered pains due to rheumatism. The family believed the chill of the refrigerators caused this illness. Kannah believed in alternative medicines to remedy the pain. He would heat a brick in the coal-stove oven, cover it in a towel, and use this as a heating pad to bring relief from Mother's constant pain.

On regular basis, Kannah hired a taxi to take his ailing wife and Saro remembers accompanying them to the beach. Once there he used the spade that he brought

along, to dig a hole big enough to bury her feet up to her knees in the sand. Gradually she was able to stand upright unaided and thus restored strength to her limbs.

After the regular nursing care offered by Kannah and with treatment by doctors, Angammah recovered. Shortly afterwards Kannah sent his wife and two younger daughters on a holiday to Pietermaritzburg where they stayed with relatives in Berg Street for a month. In their absence Kannah decided that the family had to move to prevent a repetition of the illness that claimed a child's life and caused such pain to the mother.

The Naidoo family then moved into a semi-detached redbrick house located at 55 May Street soon after the family members returned from their vacation. The Naidoo family used two bedrooms. The parents' room had a double bed. Under the bed was stored a board with four wheels and the bedding was placed on this board. The younger children shared the room with their parents while the oldest brother and the older girls used the next room. The children slept on comfortable eiderdowns made by Angammah from worn out bedspreads, saris and blankets. These eiderdowns were used as a mattress and as blankets.

The front verandah afforded a good view of passersby. Dhanum and Saro enjoyed playing together in the afternoons on this side of May Street where everything was quieter than the lower end. Diwali was a special time for the family and they gathered on the verandah to light the clay lamps. Sparklers were distributed to the children, adding more light to the festivities.

Birthdays were celebrated in the Naidoo home. On these occasions it was customary for new clothes to be either purchased or made for the person celebrating. A high tea was part of the celebrations where cakes from the bakery were served.

Sharing the house was Angammah's eldest brother's family. Marma (Uncle) and Periatha (Aunty) and their four children occupied one bedroom and used the pantry as their kitchen.

Party, Saro's grandmother would also come to visit. She helped prepare meat for the evening meal in an unusual way. While sitting on the floor she deftly placed a meat-cutting knife between her toes. She then sliced the meat on the knife. This stands out in Saro's memory because she had never seen this process before and would never see this again.

Some months later Periatha and two of her children fell ill. The doctor concluded that the three of them had the highly contagious illness, diphtheria. He called for an ambulance to take the patients to a hospital. Saro's parents were concerned that their children may also be infected so they sent their children across the road to their neighbour's home. Everyone went across except for Saro who clung to her mother because she did not want to leave her. She must have also been unwell.

The nurse after examining Saro's throat concluded that Saro should also be sent to hospital with the other three. The ambulance then took all four patients to the Congela Hospital where Saro stayed for over a week with her aunt and cousins.

Kannah made daily trips to the hospital while his wife took care of the family at home. Saro missed her mother and looked forward to her father's visits. Kannah

bent over the cot to give his daughter a kiss and left sweets and some money with his daughter to pacify her.

A train line ran close by the hospital and the sounds of passing trains often filled the air. Saro would imitate these sounds bringing laughter into the hospital area that was shared by Periatha and her two children.

Hospital staff took good care of the patients. The air was filled with the smell of disinfectant. A caring nurse would bring meals to the bedside of each patient. Saro enjoyed her breakfast of oats porridge that she was diligently fed to her by the nurses.

The months following Saro's return to the house in May Street were filled with happy times with her sister Dhanum. Angammah was well known for her sewing abilities. She was able to sew intricate clothes from complex patterns. A neighbour asked that Saro be a bridesmaid at her relative's wedding. Angammah made a beautiful beige georgette dress for her daughter. The memory of this dress above all other dresses is clearly imprinted in Saro's mind. Saro looked angelic in this outstanding garment that she wore with great pride at the wedding that took place far away from Durban. When the wedding was over and the excitement had died down, Saro realized that there were no familiar faces around and she started to cry. The return trip seemed to go on forever and she fell asleep. When she awoke she was relieved to find herself safely back at home.

On 7 November 1933 Kannah's family increased when his son Krish was born. Six months later Saro took her sister Dhanum and her infant brother outside for a walk to pacify the crying brother. As they walked towards a friend's house they were attracted by the loud music that floated across the neighbourhood. The Naidoo children ventured closer and Saro was fascinated by the music and the dance. After spending a few moments there the children walked back to their home and found their parents in the kitchen and leisurely enjoying their evening meal. They then returned to the dance party without informing the parents.

Some time later the parents realised that the house was strangely quiet and the front door was left open. Kannah went in search of the children. He discovered that Saro had taken the children to the dance. Kannah was angry and Saro realised that she would have to face the consequences. That evening Saro was punished for this adventure. This was the first and the last time that Saro was ever punished by her father for disobedience.

All the members of this blended family got along well together, so well in fact that Saro did not realize that all the children were not from the same set of parents. A neighbour lady once asked Saro how many children her mother had and Saro counted all the children including those of her father's from his first marriage. This answer resulted in the neighbour muttering that this young girl doesn't really know. The bond between the children remained strong over many decades.

Even though Kannah did not worship in temples on a regular basis, that Good Friday he took the Saro and Dhanum to the Marieammen Temple at Isipingo to fulfil a vow he had made when his wife was ill. He believed that one should give to the poor and during these annual visits to the temple he carried a pocketful of tickies (light weight silver coins worth three pennies). That Good Friday in 1933 Dhanum and Saro helped

distribute the money to the stretching hands of the needy who lined the steps of the temple.

Kannah's attention was drawn to a puppet show while at this temple. He started to giggle and laugh and thus drew the attention of his daughters. The children were curious to find out what amused their father and were excited when they saw the puppeteer manipulate his puppets.

Years later after Saro was married she made annual trips to the Mariemmen Temple and on each one of these visits she would recall this incident so many Good Fridays ago.

Kannah's generosity extended to his close relatives as well and he helped in getting several family members married. He desired that all his charitable work remain a secret because he believed that one should not publicize charitable work. His philosophy was that one hand must not know what the other hand does.

The year 1935 brought about some major changes for the Naidoo family. Kannah was able to save enough money from his work at the Natal Mercury to purchase his own house. This house on 135 May Street was large enough to accommodate three sets of tenants and this revenue enabled the Naidoo family to pay their monthly mortgage.

To supplement the family income Kannah bought roll ends of newsprint from the Natal Mercury at the cost of half a penny a pound and then re-sold this for weddings at a penny a pound. This newsprint was stored in a tin shed alongside the large cooking pots that he had acquired some years earlier as part of his wages while working for a relative. These four pots were hired out at half a crown each to be used at weddings. This business from the sale of newsprint and the loan of pots generated regular income since weddings were held almost every weekend.

Angammah made sure that the family was well fed. She herself did not do the shopping and her husband took care of this. Kannah bought the groceries making sure that the vegetables, fruit, meat and fish were fresh. Each morning on his way back from work Kannah stopped at a bakery and purchased a loaf of fresh white bread and a loaf of brown bread.

Angammah's busiest days were Mondays and Thursdays when she had to wash the family's clothes. Water was boiled and bits of soap that had been melted separately were added to the water. Clothes were soaked in the hot soapy water for an hour and then hand-washed on a cement slab. The sheets and towels were given a thorough pounding. All the clothes were hung on a line in the backyard when there was enough sunshine to dry them.

Fridays and Saturdays were special days in the Naidoo home. Each family member took weekly baths. The water was boiled in recycled large four-gallon oil tins on an open fire in the backyard. The water was taken to the bathroom when it was each person's turn. Since there were so many people living in the home, this process went on for hours. All of this Angammah did without complaining.

Kannah was blessed with a wife who took good care of the household finances. Sewing continued to occupy Angammah's afternoons. Angammah was very creative in sewing projects. Used 100-pound flour bags were washed to remove the imprints

and then sewn into sheets and eiderdown covers. When there were half price sales of remnant material she would purchase these to sew dresses for her daughters. She sometimes also bought rolls of khaki material to be sewn into short pants for the growing boys. Rolls of calico were purchased for undergarments for the girls. The white calico material was also used to sew a valance for the double bed in the parents' room. Lengths of lace sewn onto the starched valance provided a decorative effect.

One of Saro's favourite possessions was the georgette dress that she had earlier worn as a bridesmaid. This year she used the same dress for a family wedding.

In January 1935 Saro was enrolled in Baby Class at the M.K. Gandhi Government-Aided School across the road from her home. After English lessons were over, the afternoon from three to five was spent learning Tamil.

A year later Saro started as a Class 1 student at the same school. While the white students had free education, non-white students had to pay school fees and buy their own books. The school curriculum was also different from the whites. Saro spoke English at school but when she was at home Tamil was her main language.

Saro's sister Saroj was born on 23 March 1936. Many years later these two sisters would both leave their native land to settle in England, five years apart.

That year Saro went to her first 25th wedding anniversary celebration. Her grandmother's brother lived in Greenwood Park with his wife of 25 years and the rest of his family. Saro has many happy memories of the hospitality in this home. Many people were invited to the silver wedding anniversary celebration. It was indeed a grand affair. A large marquee was erected on the grounds of the home; bright coloured lights were strung all around. The couple sat in a beautifully decorated silver canopy that was on one side of the marquee. Saro left for home the next day still in awe of the splendour of the event.

In January 1937 Saro was in Class 2. That year Dhanum, Saro's younger sister started in Baby Class at the same school that Saro attended.

One set of tenants at the 135 May Street home left and their rooms were used to house the growing Naidoo family. In the years to come as the other tenants also left, family members occupied the rooms.

Kannah bought pockets of oranges and dozens of mealies when they were in season and the children had a feast. Another popular item were broken Tennis biscuits that Kannah was able to purchase quite reasonably from the bakery. The biscuits came in a tin large enough for young Krishna to shove both hands into the container. He would then run off with both hands full of biscuits.

In July 1938 when Saro was in Standard 1 Linga was born. Saro enjoyed taking care of this younger brother while he was growing up. Putting him to sleep was a memorable experience. By Saro gently rubbing his eyes and singing to him, Linga fell asleep.

Saro played games like three tins, skipping and hopscotch but also learned soccer and cricket from her tomboy friend.

In addition to formal school Saro took part in many cultural events. Together with other girls of her age, she danced the Gummi dance at Indian weddings when requested.

On Saturdays Saro attended Tamil School where she learned to play the sitar while other students mastered the art of playing other instruments. On auspicious days students learnt about the philosophies of four Hindu saints. Prayers were held on such occasions that ended with sweet rice and cooked chickpeas being served.

Sunday mornings radios were turned on high volume in almost every house on May Street. Floating in the airwaves were the sounds of music coming from the Indian radio program broadcast by South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC). This program lasted only one hour and was the only radio program devoted to the culture of Indians in South Africa.

One particular broadcast stands out in Saro's memory. Logu, MP's cousin and the Padayachee twins, Radhamoney and Rookumoney sang the beautiful sacred song Parsakthi Jananee. Saro loved this song and she learned to sing it with her brother Sathiamurthi's help. He would play the violin while she sang. In the years to come Saro would sing Parsakthi Jananee on different occasions.

It was Angammah's practice to prepare lunch for the family in time for her husband at noon. While cooking she would make sure that the kitchen was always tidy. Dishes were cleaned immediately. In this way the place was spotless when Kannah and any relatives arrived for lunch. Angammah made sure that there was always enough food for unexpected visitors. 135 May Street was like a hotel. All those who came to visit never left without having a meal.

One day Angammah left the children for the day and went to visit with family. Soobumah was asked to take care of the kitchen chores and Saro helped take care of her younger siblings. That afternoon when the mother returned she found the kitchen in a mess and was very upset. Soobumah blamed her younger sister for this state of affairs because the little brothers who were Saro's responsibility kept getting in the way. Angammah accepted this interpretation in spite of Saro's protests. Saro's mother pinched her inner thighs as punishment. Saro was so upset that she refused to eat and waited for her father to come. That night she went to bed without eating.

The following January in 1939 Saro started Standard 2. Her brother Sathiamurthi was in Standard 6 that year and proved to be an accomplished student. He spoke fluent Tamil and displayed the musical talents he acquired from his father. Not only did he sing beautifully, he also played his father's violin with flair. He took a leading part in the Tamil drama produced that year.

Soobumah, Saro's half-sister entered Linga in a baby competition for one year-old babies and he won first place. A framed photograph of the winner was the prize and this hung proudly on the parents' bedroom wall of the Naidoo home.

In January 1940 Saro was in Standard 3. Saro continued to enjoy her school days both the times in class and on the playground. This was a busy year for the Standard 3 student.

For two weeks that year about eighteen girls accompanied by two Tamil School teachers and two female chaperones travelled to Johannesburg where they took part

in several Tamil cultural programs to raise money for their programs. The train took about twelve hours to make the trip from Durban to Johannesburg because it was not an express train and therefore stopped at every station on its way. Saro enjoyed her first train ride that was a long overnight journey.

During the two weeks in Johannesburg the girls stayed in various homes. For part of this time, Saro and the rest of the team stayed with two sisters who had married into the prosperous Vandeyar family. The sisters took a keen interest in Saro and enjoyed combing her thick black hair. Little did Saro realise that this stay would have a profound effect on her later life.

Each of the eighteen girls was promised a pair of bangles for their two-week contribution. Because the programme failed to make a profit no bangles were provided.

Saro took part in school cultural play Nalathungar, a story about a stepmother's cruelty. Saro's grandmother often requested that her granddaughter enact this play in their backyard with props and while this was in progress the older lady wept. This play must have conjured up memories of her childhood.

Each year the various cultural groups in the Durban area would organise events called Eisteddfods where groups from various communities would compete with each other. Saro took part in the Tamil Eisteddfod where her group of almost thirty young girls dressed in saris would dance, sing, play instruments and make speeches in the vernacular.

In addition to these national events, parents would be invited to the school hall where their children would show off their talents. These events took place during celebrations like Diwali (festival of lights), Pongal (change of seasons celebration), and the start of the Tamil New Year in mid-April. Saro and her fellow students would dance, sing, recite poems and entertain the audience with amusing Tamil sayings. One saying that caused the audience to laugh heartily went as follows: When a daughter-in-law breaks an object that is regarded as very valuable but when the mother-in-law breaks a similar object, it is regarded as almost worthless.

Angammah continued to sew clothes for her family and sometimes for others. She had sewn a beautiful green dress for Saro as part of her band uniform. The teacher was so impressed that they asked Angammah to sew similar outfits for the entire team.

On 5 May 1940 Saro's younger brother Serthu was born. For the next three years Saro was given the task of taking care of this younger brother. Eighteen years later Serthu would complete his matric examination and bring his unopened results to his sister Saro. She would read the results to him and he would not believe that he had passed.

Diwali, the festival of lights was celebrated in October. Angammah made sure that there were a variety of dishes and sweetmeats for the family. She also made parcels for relatives and neighbours. These parcels would be exchanged the next day.

Diwali also symbolized a new beginning. While the four-gallons tins of water were boiling on the outside fire, Kannah applied oils on each child: drops of castor oil on the eyes, drops of sweet oil in the ears and a blend of three oils on the hair. Each

child would then wait for Angammah to wash their hair and face thoroughly before taking their bath. Thereafter, each person put on a set of new clothes.

At the end of Standard 3 some of the students at M. K. Gandhi Government-Aided School decided to go to Dartnell Crescent Girls School, half an hour's walk from the house on 135 May Street. Those early months in 1941 in Standard 4 at Dartnell Crescent Girls School were enjoyable ones for Saro because all her friends were in her class and she found the teaching was more enjoyable. This change in environment that included new teaching methods brought a new perspective to Saro's learning. One of her favourite teachers Miss Peters was a great encouragement and Saro's schoolwork continued to improve.

Meanwhile the principal of M.K. Gandhi School spoke privately with Kannah and suggested that he bring his daughter back to his school. After several such conversations Kannah mentioned these conversation with Saro. This was a difficult choice for the thirteen-year-old girl but she did not want to disappoint her father. Saro returned to her former school and only stayed until the end of that school year, placing fourth in her class.

Christmas time was a special occasion in the Naidoo home. In November Kannah would buy a live turkey that he kept in his backyard and fed for a month. The day before Christmas the turkey was slaughtered and prepared for the Christmas meal to follow the next day.

In February 1941 Mrs. Panjalay Naicker who was a sister of the Vandeyar wives in Johannesburg, visited the Naidoo home with her husband and her brother Nadasen in search of a suitable bride for the young man. Saro meanwhile had gone to the store on a shopping errand, and when she returned she spotted a car parked in front of her home. She skipped into the house and saw the two men in the front room she stopped skipping. Mrs. Naicker was in the kitchen talking with Angammah, and when the visitor saw Saro, she asked, "Who is she?" Angammah replied that Saro was her daughter. This was Saro's first meeting with Mrs. Naicker.

In that year at the age of 13, Saro reached puberty and chose not to go to Dartnell Crescent School because of the distance she had to travel. She told her father that she would prefer not to return to school, and he accepted her choice without question. This marked the end of Saro's formal education. This unfortunate decision had a profound effect on Saro's life especially while she was married to MP Naicker whose formal education allowed him to be of great value in the struggles that lay ahead. It would be many decades before Saro's love for learning would flourish.

Kannah's friend operated a confectionary store about five minutes away from the 135 May Street house, located on Fynn Street. This friend persuaded Kannah to take over the store because he wanted to purchase a larger store. Sathiamurthi, Angammah's eldest child completed Standard 8 at the end of 1941. Kannah decided that the young man should work in the recently purchased store.

Kannah was still concerned about his stepson's education and encouraged him the following year to attend bookkeeping classes in the evening. These classes laid the foundation for Sathiamurthi's career. There was no conflict or disagreement between Sathiamurthi and his stepfather from the early years and even during the years in the business. Naidoosons continued to operate successfully under the leadership of Kannah.

The world was still at war in 1942. At intervals the siren would go off, lights had to be turned off, and candles provided some dim visibility. It was in this year that Saro found herself at home full time for the first time in seven years. Her week days were spent taking care of the bedrooms while her mother and step-sister attended to other household chores including attending to the needs of Saroj and Linga who were too young to go to school.

Some weekday afternoons Angammah took turns taking Saro or Soobumah to the cinema to see Tamil movies. These movies had sad themes that represented real life situations such as the cruelty and hardships of people's lives. Saro recalls her mother wiping her tears during some sad scenes.

An enjoyable part of each week included writing letters in English for a tenant who wanted letters written to her in-laws in Pietermaritzburg. The neighbour dictated the message and Saro was able to convey this in an interesting fashion.

There were also opportunities to attend weddings on some weekends. Nadasen Naicker, who had visited the Naidoo home the year before in search of a bride, had chosen a girl from another family. His wedding took place at the Umgeni Road Temple and the Naidoo family was invited. Saro went with her aunt to the wedding and was surprised to meet the Vandeyar family there. The sisters who had so kindly accommodated the Tamil School group in their home in Johannesburg some years earlier recognised Saro and were thrilled to see her again. Mrs. Panjalay Naicker, Nadasen's other sister was busy with the wedding ceremony.

Six months after this wedding, Mrs. Panjalay Naicker returned to the 135 May Street house, this time on another mission. Accompanying Mrs. Naicker were her husband and a lady friend from Short Street who was well known to Kannah. Panjalay's eldest son Sangaan (MP) had reached a marriageable age and was looking for a bride. Panjalay was determined to find a suitable bride for their attractive son. It was important that their eldest son set a good example for his younger brothers to follow.

Saro, who had no idea of the purpose of the visit warmly welcomed the guests and left the company with her parents. Snippets of their conversation reached the ears of other family members. Kannah could be heard explaining that the person was too young and had an older sister. Mrs. Naicker asked whether he would consider the proposal after the older daughter was married. After the guests departed Angammah told Saro with a broad smile that the Naickers wanted to have her as their daughter-in-law.

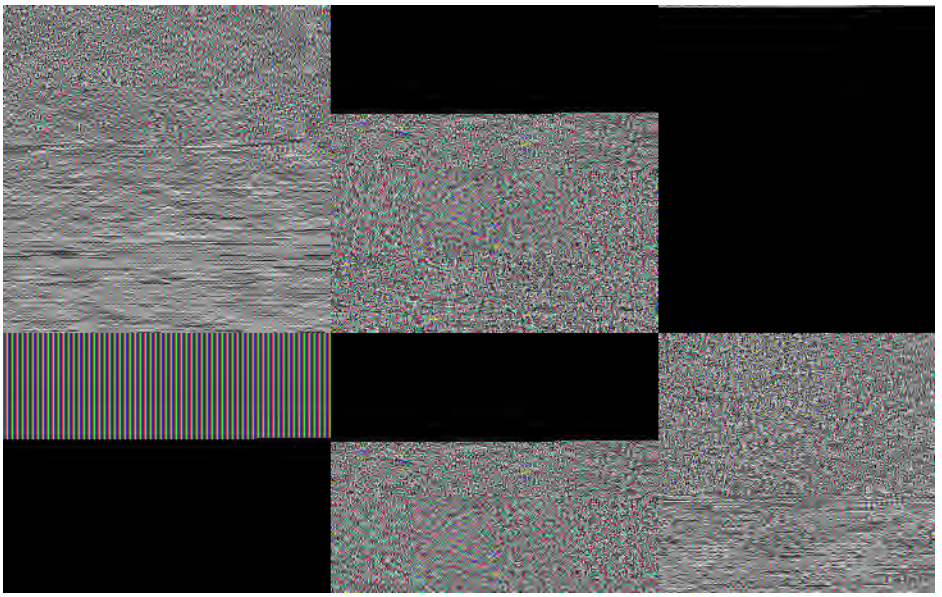
The year 1942 ended with Saro's mind filled with thoughts of a new life that was just around the corner. Childhood days in Fountain Lane and May Street held some precious memories. Her enjoyable school days had come to an end when she completed Standard 4. This year just completed was spent at home with its own set of adventures. Now she was wanted as a bride!



1936: Saro in the backyard of her Great Uncle's home in Greenwood Park, Durban



1948: 135 May Street
Saro lived in this house just before she married MP.



1940: M.K. Gandhi Government Aided School afternoon class
Saro is seated third from the left.

[Picture lost in conversion to PDF]

Chapter 2: Early Married Years
1943-1951

The year 1943 saw dramatic changes in the Naidoo home at 135 May Street, Durban. Kannah and his son Sathiamurthi ran Naidoosons. Angammah's family now included two married stepdaughters, a third stepdaughter Soobumah about to be married, her daughter Saro who was now in her second year at home since completing Grade Four, a daughter Dhanum and son Krishna at school, sons Linga and Serthu and infant daughter Devi.

Panjalay and Papiah Naicker visited the Naidoo home several times asking for Saro's hand in marriage to their son Sangaan (MP), but no final decision was made. Mrs. Naicker then started looking elsewhere for a wife for her son.

When Mrs. Naicker heard that Soobumah was to be married that February, she came back to the Naidoo home quite happy that the older sister was to be married. She reminded Kannah of the earlier conversation regarding the marriages of his two daughters.

Now that Soobumah was married, she felt it was time to make a decision on Saro. Earlier he had said, "We will see when the time comes". Little did he realise then that Soobumah's wedding would take place so soon!

Kannah's response was not positive and he continued to snub them. "Why don't you take no for an answer?" he asked. He reminded them that one daughter was just married and that he could not afford another wedding within the next three months as he was the sole breadwinner. The response from Mrs. Naicker was that she was willing to accept whatever they could afford as she did not expect anything elaborate.

It was an Indian custom for the parents to consult with an astrologer before making major decisions such as finding a suitable time to move into a new house, selecting the initials for the name of a newborn baby, or suitable partners, dates and times for weddings and if the proposed marriage was compatible.

As a result the Naidoos consulted an astrologer and his prediction was that Saro was going to have a very tough life, the birth charts of Sangaan and Saro were not compatible at all and she would even leave the country. He also predicted that at the age of 56 Sangaan's maranum (death) would occur. Both these predictions came true.

The astrologer further elaborated that should Kannah reject the proposal from the Naickers the next proposal would be worse. The astrologer's advice was that Kannah agree to the marriage proposal. Mr. Naidoo simply walked away, however Mrs. Naidoo was pleased because the Naickers appeared to be a good family.

After some days of reflection, Kannah agreed with his wife that Sangaan would make a good son-in-law. This opened the way for Sangaan to visit. His first visit did not convince him and he wanted to make a return visit. This time he too was convinced that his mother had made the right choice. Like her parents Saro believed that it would be wise to follow the astrologer's advice and agreed to the proposal.

The engagement took place at 135 May Street two weeks before the wedding. Present at the function were immediate family members from both sides. In all there were about a hundred people present. The engagement ceremony was over in an hour and tea was served. The menu included a variety of vegetable dishes: puri made out of sieved brown flour (since white flour was not available during the war years), potato curry, beans curry and gram dhal with eggplant. Vermicelli was served for dessert with tea. Entertainment was provided by the Tamil School Girls Band of which Saro was a member. Saro had played the sitar, a north-Indian musical instrument for this band.

Indian engagements are formal contracts between both parties. In keeping with her family custom, Saro wore a sari from that day onwards.

The day after the engagement Sangaan came to visit as arranged by his mother. Devi was eight months old. While he chatted with Saro, he played and carried the infant on his lap. Sangaan stayed only an hour because Saro had to prepare the afternoon tea for her father.

On Wednesday of that week Sangaan came again, but Saro had to prepare for her father's tea as her mother was busy delivering wedding invitations. In those days invitations were hand delivered rather than being posted. Sangaan was disappointed that Saro could not spend some time chatting with him and felt neglected. He did not call again until the wedding.

Two days before the wedding a cleansing process (Nalungu) took place at the Saro's home. A similar ceremony was conducted at Sangaan's home. Both households were busy with preparations for the wedding. Some relatives came early to help with the preparations.

In those days the traditional Tamil wedding ceremony took two hours. The Naidoo/Naicker wedding took place on 16 May at Surat Hall in Bond Street, Durban. As Sangaan was already a member of the Communist Party (which he had joined at the age of 18), he did not want a big wedding. In keeping with Sangaan's wishes only 500 people were invited to the wedding instead of the usual thousand.

After the wedding various ceremonies were held, and the couple went back to May Street, had supper at the Naidoo home, and Saro changed into her going-away sari. Saro felt sad leaving home for good for the first time and going into a new home and an environment unfamiliar to her.

That evening the married couple went to the Naicker home in 150 Gale Street. This was a wood and iron building in which lived the in-laws, Sangaan, his brothers Nad and Coetzee, and their cousin Jerry from Glencoe, Northern Natal, who lived with them while working in Durban.

That evening there were other guests in the house: Willy Vandeyar, Panjalay's two sisters, Panjalay's mother, Sangaan's only sister, Indrani, and her two children.

Similar to other Indian brides, Saro was quite tired the next day. The rituals on her wedding day started at six in the morning and went on until quite late that night. The bridal couple was elaborately dressed during the two-hour wedding ceremony.

Sangaan and Saro wore fresh garlands and in addition Saro had ornamental headgear decorated with flowers.

In the afternoon Sangaan took Saro by car to visit her family for a short while. After supper at the Naicker home the newly married couple went to the cinema with Sangaan's sister Indrani and her husband. There, Saro saw her first English movie. In previous years she had gone with her mother and sister to see Tamil movies.

Saro had to adjust to a change in her lifestyle. She came from relative wealth due to the family business and now had to face tough times because there were only three wage earners on limited wages in the Naicker home.

Sangaan's lifestyle was quite different from Saro's. As a young Indian man he led a full social life outside his home while Saro, being a young Indian girl, remained home most of the time.

Sangaan who loved dancing had to attend dance parties initially on his own because his father did not approve of his young bride attending such functions. In time Sangaan was able to convince his father that Saro should accompany him to these social events.

Two weeks after the wedding, Sangaan's cousin Monty Naicker had a party in his home for Saro and Sangaan. This was followed by a dance, and this was Saro's first dance where Sangaan gave her lessons and hints on the art of dancing.

Sangaan also enjoyed tennis and spent Sunday mornings on the tennis court. During the soccer season he attended matches at Curry's Fountain Sports Ground.

On a regular basis the young married couple went to the cinema to watch English movies. On occasion they would watch Tamil and Hindi movies.

According to Indian custom, Saro went home for Adimasum. This is a period during the year when it was inauspicious for a young bride to conceive, so her parents brought her back home if she is not already pregnant. One of the days during this period Sangaan came to visit. In the evening Sathiamurthi took out his violin and asked his sister Saro to sing Parsakthi Jananee, a song she had learned some years previously. Sangaan listened intently to the brother and sister.

Sangaan, an avid reader, encouraged his wife to read. One day he brought home two books. The first was on Angela Davis a political activist well known internationally for her efforts to combat racism in the United States of America. The second book was entitled *Mother* and was written by the renowned Russian author, Maxim Gorky. Both books were banned at that time in South Africa. Saro read these books eagerly. This journey into the world of literature was Saro's first exposure into a life that she was to face shortly.

The socialist system intrigued Sangaan and he read profusely on this topic. Even though he had not personally visited the socialist countries he understood their political system. During conversations with Saro, he would talk passionately about the common values shared by citizens in these countries.

Sangaan's parents, his father Papiah Mariemuthoo (PM) Naicker and his mother Panjalay had attended school and could read and write in English. Their home

environment encouraged reading and Sangaan the eldest child read from an early age. Sangaan's sister Indrani also demonstrated a love for reading.

After her marriage, Saro would find her mother-in-law reading magazines containing true stories of people's lives. Panjalay encouraged Saro to read those stories she found exceptional, an opportunity that Saro accepted.

The end of 1943 marked several special occasions. Saro's first birthday as a wife was celebrated towards the end of September that year. Mrs. Naicker cooked some special vegetable dishes for the celebration.

In keeping with tradition, Saro went home to be with her family for her first Diwali as a bride.

Christmas 1943 found the family at the Durban beach. Monty's family also joined in the picnic where a large pot of palaurice and meat cooked together) and patcha chutney (salsa) was served as the main course.

January 1 1944 was also spent at the Durban beach where several groups of people gathered to celebrate the New Year. The Naicker family packed their picnic baskets at the Gale Street home and headed to the beach. At this time of year the beaches were not over-crowded and the family enjoyed the uncrowded outdoors.

Mrs. Panjalay Naicker was also a good seamstress. She sewed blouses for Saro to wear at weddings and saris customized to fit Saro. The mother-in-law helped Saro to tie her sari and took her to every wedding. Mr. Naicker senior made sure Saro and his wife's thalie chains were cleaned and their shoes and handbags polished for the occasion. Fathers-in-law generally never did these kinds of tasks for their daughters-in-law. They treated Saro as if she were their very own daughter.

The thalie chain is a yellow string that the husband ties around his wife's neck when they are married. At the end of the chain is a gold pendant. After three months the bride may exchange this string for a gold chain, but the original pendant remains.

Wednesdays were Mr. Naicker's day off. These were the days when he would take his wife and daughter-in-law to the cinema to see Tamil movies.

Sangaan's political involvement that started at an early age now took on a deeper intensity. He believed that the Indian women should also be involved in the struggle for equality. Saro who believed in the cause being fought by her husband started to get involved at this stage. Together with other women she went to the homes of her well-known relatives and friends and spoke to the women to get their support.

Dr. Monty Naicker, MP (previously referred to as Sangaan) and other Indian political activists, formed the highly effective Anti-Segregation Council.

In spite of objections from his mother, in 1944 MP gave up his well-paid job as a bakery van driver and joined the Sugar Workers Union. In defiance of prevailing unjust laws, MP organised the Indian laundry worker's strike for better pay. He was arrested and locked up for the night. Panjalay was told about this but did not share this unfortunate news with Saro because she was expecting their first child. Instead she was informed her that MP was away on some work. Panjalay slept with her

daughter-in-law in her room that night. The next day MP explained to his wife what had actually happened.

A few months after this event, on November 15, 1944 Saro gave birth to an eight-pound baby boy. There was much celebration in the Naicker home. Unfortunately two months later the child died from pyloric stenosis, a relatively new illness in South Africa but prevalent in the United States and India.

In the years to follow MP took on a more active role in politics. MP was elected secretary of the Passive Resistance Movement dedicated to defying laws that were biased against people of colour.

In 1945 Angammah gave birth to her eleventh child, Saras. The days following the delivery found Saro back at her mother's house helping with household duties.

The following year the Naicker family built a house with a slate roof at 61 Everton Road, Mayville on large piece of land. This newly built house included three bedrooms, a sitting room and a dining room. In their large backyard the family planted several fruit trees, including bananas, mangoes, peaches, litchis, lemons, oranges and mulberries. The front yard had various varieties of flowers including bougainvillea, hibiscus, roses, and marigolds.

It was in this home that Saro and MP's daughter Suganya was born on April 15, 1946. Even though a baby arrived a month early she weighed five and a half pounds. Saro had to stay in the hospital for ten days before mother and child could go home. At home little Suganya found the cold uncomfortable. Her uncle Nad built her a special cradle where she could be kept warm and cozy. The infant was then able to enjoy her sleep.

As the daughter grew up, she called her mother Unnie (sister-in-law) because her brothers-in-law Nad and Coetzee and sister-in-law Indrani called Saro by this name. Many decades later Suganya asked her children to call their granny Saro "Amma" since she herself did not have this chance to call her mother by this name. In her early years Suganya spoke only Tamil because her Aya (grandmother), Thatha (grandfather) and her mother all spoke Tamil.

The affectionate term Unnie; meaning sister-in-law was used in the Naicker home. MP's brothers and his sister Indrani all called Saro Unnie even though some of them were older. This term of endearment reveals the respect that the siblings had for the lady who married their eldest brother. In Indian homes the eldest daughter-in-law occupies a place of importance as the head of the family next to her mother-in-law.

When Suganya was a year old, Panjalay arranged for her daughter-in-law to learn to know the proper way to knit so that she could make elegant knitwear. Saro recalls seeing a woman in the neighbourhood practice the art of knitting in a skilful manner. This lady then served as the tutor for Saro. This resulted in Saro knitting pullovers for the men folk and cardigans for the children sometimes in Fair Isle intricate patterns.

That year in 1947 when Saro demonstrated prowess at knitting, Panjalay allowed Saro to attend classes at a technical college to learn embroidery, smocking, and sewing. Mrs. Naicker understood that soon Saro might have to depend on these skills to help support the family as her son MP was getting deeply involved in politics.

In latter part of 1948 Saro was at her mother's home when her Party (grandmother) fell ill and passed away. The funeral took place from the 135 May Street house. Saro had much love and respect for this grand lady who helped so often with Angammah's numerous responsibilities. Party loved all her grandchildren, including Saro whose earlier renditions of Nalathungar had moved her to tears.

While Saro was mourning her grandmother's death, MP came to the house and informed Saro that he was charged and will be sentenced to six months with two months suspended for aiding and abetting resisters for participating in the Passive Resistance Campaign. Saro was devastated by the news that she would be separated from her husband for such a long time.

This arrest affected Suganya in profound ways as well. On her second birthday, Jugdees, a close family friend and his girlfriend bought Suganya a beautiful pink smock dress and took her to see her father in prison. This traumatic experience etched in her mind pictures of a big gate and with her Papa behind this gate. She pined for her father and soon developed a high temperature.

Upon his release from prison, MP was unemployed and had to find temporary jobs to supplement the Naicker family income. MP's brother Nad was to be married the following year. One of these temporary jobs was with a quarry where he drove a truck filled with red soil. He would come home each day full of dust and dirt from the day's labour.

The Durban riots in January 1949 were turbulent times for residents of that city. There were racial tensions and MP played a key role in working with groups trying to restore calm. The Naicker family in Everton Road packed hastily and left for Dr. Monty Naicker's house that was in a white neighbourhood free from rioting. After a week when the riots subsided the family members returned home.

During this week Dr. Naicker played a phonogram record of the national anthem of India, Jana Gana Mana. He wanted the family to learn this song. This Saro played several times because she wanted to learn this anthem. This was the anthem that was sung at various public gatherings of passive resisters held in Red Square in Pine Street.

On 29 January 1950 MP's brother Nad's wedding took place. The extended family increased and now included three families: MP's parents, MP's family, Nad, and his wife. Extended families were the norm in Indian culture. It was common practice for the salaries of all wage earners to be pooled and managed by the mother-in-law or her eldest daughter-in-law. This system worked well in most circumstances including the Naickers. The Naicker family also contributed to a family savings plan that enabled Nad to purchase a plot of land some years later.

That year Saro's youngest brother Sagaren was born. This was Angammah's last child. That same year Nad's wife Panjie gave birth to their first child Pragason on 6 November 1950.

Indian political activity since the 1949 riots began to increase. MP felt that it was time for his wife to be involved in the struggle as well. Hundreds of other women were involved, MP argued as he tried to convince his parents to allow Saro to work

by his side. By attending the important public meetings she could keep abreast of what was actually happening in the South African struggle.

MP and Saro attended all the important ANC meetings. At the end of each meeting the President of ANC, Dr. Albert Luthuli would beckon to MP and Saro asking them to join the group on stage in singing and dancing. The dance was similar toyi-toying which is a Zulu dance celebrating an event. The meetings ended in high spirits in spite of members of the Special Branch taking notes of the event.

However, the birth of their third child Prenaven on April 14, 1951 temporarily delayed Saro's active involvement in the struggle for democracy. The baby arrived ten days late. Four days before the baby arrived Saro was admitted to hospital because she was anemic. The doctors wanted to make sure that Saro was well enough to deliver the baby. Panjalay Naicker, Saro's mother-in-law was by her side and made sure her daughter-in-law was fed. The baby arrived safely the four days later.

Unfortunately, Pren contracted the same illness as the first child. He was admitted at McCord Mission Hospital, a Christian hospital where he was born. Daily prayers were said for the infant's recovery. When Prenaven was six weeks old, a major operation was undertaken by the top doctors in the facility and this proved to be successful. Other complications set in and the infant had to remain in hospital for another six weeks.

Dr. Pillay, one of the doctors who was in high school with MP gave them the information that this operation on the infant was one of the first of its kind in South Africa. The operating theatre was packed with senior medical staff. Little Prenaven spent three months in the hospital where he was named "The Miracle Baby". Each morning at prayer time baby Naicker was included in their prayers.

Saro sat by her son's bedside in fear recalling her first child's tragic death. She felt a pat on her shoulder and turned to see Dr. Hendriske. This medical professional told her that he too had undergone an operation when he was five months old and today he is operating on others. He comforted her with the possibility of her son being engaged in similar life-saving operations. This prediction came true years later when Prenevan while serving as a doctor in exile in Lusaka and Maputo devoted his life to the medical needs of the exiles.

Suganya who was now five years old was the only child in the house. She had a very happy childhood in spite of her father's detention that caused him to be in and out of prison. The whole family treated the young girl like a little princess. In these years of childhood Suganya had no playmates and thus spoke only Tamil and also imitated the older folks' mannerisms.

The family wanted the child to become familiar with English and the culture of the day. They introduced Suganya to Hazel, a Coloured child of the same age who lived across the road. The two girls got along very well, ate together and played together. Suganya and Hazel enjoyed playing in the doll house especially built for Suganya by her Uncle Nad. These play times helped Suganya improve her English and when she was ready for school, the young student was able to fit in quite well into the world of other six-year-olds.

The household chores in the Naicker home were now shared between the two daughters-in-law. The stage was now set for Saro's involvement in the political struggle.

Chapter 3: Political Involvement 1951-1959

In April 1951 after three months in the McCord Mission Hospital, the infant Pren left the hospital completely healed. His father MP worked for Natal Glassworks as a bookkeeper. In addition, MP was getting very involved in the Defiance Campaign that was planned for the following year.

MP was able to convince his mother that Saro should participate in the Defiance Campaign in early 1952. With her approval he approached Saro and she agreed to participate.

At the beginning of autumn Saro joined a group of 12 men and 2 women led by Ashwin Choudree that defied the apartheid law by going into a whites-only waiting room at the Durban Central Railway Station. The group sat down in this facility reserved for whites. White policemen arrived promptly and asked them to vacate the room since non-whites were not permitted in the waiting room. The entire group refused.

The policemen then forced the group into waiting police vans and all fourteen were taken into custody for the night. The women were separated from the men. This was traumatic for Saro who had to spend the night under terrible conditions. The night soil bucket (toilet) gave off a terrible stench.

Meanwhile Panjalay Naicker and her daughter-in-law, Nad's wife Panjie took care of Saro's children, Suganya and Prenaven.

The next morning the two Indian women protestors joined the twelve men in front of the magistrate and pleaded not guilty to the charge. The group was sentenced to thirty days hard labour.

The women were then taken to the women's section of the Durban Point prison. A humiliating experience was the initial physical examination that was intrusive and embarrassing. The female wardens made life very difficult for Saro and the other political prisoners so that they would be deterred from repeating the alleged offences. Subsequent convictions carried heavier penalties.

There were six women in each tiny cell and they literally breathed into each other's faces. Thick coir matting and two blankets were the sole bedding provided. One blanket was used as a sheet and the other as a cover. The floors were washed daily but the bedding was infested with lice that even found their way into the hems of the inmates' underskirts. Bites during the night prevented anyone from having a restful sleep. Saro hardly slept for those thirty days.

Each woman prisoner was given the following garments: a tunic and an underskirt, a khaki top and a pleated skirt made up of thick gabardine, and a red headscarf. The scarf was to cover the head completely so that no hair showed. Saro noticed prisoners working in the yard outside had uniforms that were free of creases. She learned later that in the evenings at bedtime, the uniforms were slightly sprinkled with water and placed on top of the coir matting. A blanket was carefully placed above the uniforms and the prisoner slept on top of this.

The prisoners awoke at five each morning and had to march in an orderly fashion into the huge yard. Breakfast consisted of mealie meal porridge sprinkled with a little brown sugar. Weevils could be seen in the meal. Lunch for the Indian women was just a thick slice of bread with a spread of ghee. African women were given samp with beans. Supper was a meagre meal served in a filthy aluminum dish not fit even for animals. These were left in the yard to be picked up. Saro would eat from the centre of the bowl avoiding the rusty contaminated outer edges.

During the first two weeks the women had to scrub the men's smelly uniforms that were used in the sewage department. An overpowering stench came out of these thick gabardine overalls. The African inmates asked the Indians "What did you do? Why are you here? and they were surprised to learn that Indian women would fight for the cause of all non-whites, including them. They had a deep respect for Saro and helped her in any way they could. They brought a wooden stool to help Saro stay above the dirty puddle of water. They also found her a hand brush to help in the washing so that her hands would not be soiled.

The white wardens stood by with whips asking the inmates to hurry up in Afrikaans. Long-term prisoners washed the wardens' laundry separately.

In the third week the tasks became more difficult. The women had to break up small stones into small chunks with hammers. When the prisoners refused to do this without protective eye wear, the authorities gave in and provided the needed protection.

This tough task started after breakfast and went on for four hours until the midday lunch break. The women continued with this backbreaking task after lunch for another four hours. Supper was served at five. This consisted of mealie rice with some vegetables. Stale boiled carrots were thrown into the mealie rice. Meat was provided twice a week.

During the fourth week the women washed six cubicles of toilets and their walls. All 100 prisoners used these facilities and they were in a terrible condition.

On Saturdays the routine was different. Ten to twelve women had to take a common bath in a large concrete tub of cold tap water. Lice and dirt could be seen swimming on top. The women had to use blue soap that was normally used to wash clothes. Saro was able to maneuver herself close to the tap so that she could use clean water to wash her hair and body. No towels were provided to dry off and they had to rely on the warmth of the sunshine. Saro used her previous set of clothes to dry herself off before putting on the fresh set.

Some of the long-term prisoners, who were sentenced for different crimes including murder, were given better jobs if they displayed acceptable behaviour. Among these tasks included being in charge of the kitchen and cooking for the female wardens. After lunch on Saturdays and Sundays friends from this group helped Saro and the other Indian resister move to an empty cell where they could be by themselves. On Sunday afternoons they brought tea and toast and took pity on the Indian women who were fighting for their cause.

On a regular basis Saro swapped the bread she was given for the African prisoners' stamp and beans since they preferred bread. This generosity further endeared Saro to her African fellow prisoners.

On Sundays an Indian priest came to the prison to preach to the Indian inmates and ask them to change their ways. The priest Naniah Raj recognized Saro because he was Kannah's neighbour in May Street. He asked why Saro was there and was shocked that Saro would be so foolish to go to prison for such a cause. He left a Tamil hymnbook with Saro. Saro read the Thevarum on Saturday afternoons and Sundays to escape the weekend of boredom.

The prisoners could not see what the outer world looked like because of the very high walls surrounding the prison. Saro could hear the sound of passing vehicles and she tried to imagine what this outside world must look like after so many days of separation from the real world. One can imagine the traumatic experience of those who had to serve solitary confinement for ninety days and longer. They were kept in total isolation.

White prisoners were treated better: there were only three to a cell, slept on single beds, were allowed to wear their own clothes and shoes, had proper toilet facilities, and had no hard labour.

In spite of these dismal conditions, Saro had no bitter feelings. She was pleased to serve such a worthy cause. At the end of Saro's prison experience, she was prepared to be imprisoned again to fight the unjust laws. Saro remembered the comments made by Zainab Asvat on her release from her four month prison term after the Passive Resistance Campaign: *"I have learnt that prison life is a necessary part of one's education on the battlefield of freedom … Our women are showing their preparedness to make the necessary sacrifices to uphold the honour of their nation and the self-respect of their community … The struggle is destined to change the course of our womanhood."*

In those thirty days Saro had no access to her husband or her children.

Thirty days expired on Diwali Day 1952. MP came in his white driver's coat as he was still at work. He greeted Saro and left a short time later. Her children were there to meet Saro. The resisters were treated as heroes and taken to the ANC office, where sandwiches and tea were served. A large gathering of well-wishers came over to greet the group and sang jubilant songs. Included in the group were ANC President Chief Albert Luthuli and ANC Youth League Secretary M.B. Yengwa.

Once back home, the first thing Saro did was to have an enjoyable bath. A sumptuous meal was provided, as it was a double celebration--Saro's release from prison and Diwali. Thanks to the extended family Saro was relieved that the children were well cared for. This social environment made it possible for Saro to fight for the broader cause of democracy. In that month MP reduced his political involvement so that he could spend more time with the children.

The following year, 1953, MP continued as an accountant at Natal Glassworks. He was also involved in his ongoing political activities.

Panjalay Naicker was proud of her two daughters-in-law, Saro and Panjie. She delighted in buying identical saris for both women. Panjalay encouraged Saro and

Panjie to join the Tamil Mathar Sangam, a group of thirty to forty Tamil-speaking women engaged in social and religious activities. While the grandmother took care of the children her daughters-in-law attended the monthly meetings.

The Sangam group presented several cultural programs. At one event Panjalay watched with pride as Panjie sang a solo and Saro took part in a short play.

The Nav Ratri Celebrations were held each October over nine days; "nav" meaning "nine" and "rathri" meaning "evenings". These were held in nine different homes. Saro and Panjie were involved in this each year.

One of the evenings was at the Naicker home in Everton Road. In preparation for this evening Saro would save two shillings and six pence each week. The savings were enough to entertain the fifty or so adults to supper after the prayer.

Nad put up a tent in the yard while MP came home early to help with the preparations. This prayer evening caused the entire Naicker family to work together, bringing much needed relief from the dark political clouds hovering over the country.

On 17 April 1954 the Federation of South African Women was formed to fight against the injustices of the apartheid regime, which now proposed that African women should also carry passes. Saro could not be involved in this movement. Panjie, Nad's wife, and Saro took turns with kitchen duties and other household tasks. Panjalay did not want Saro to be involved in politics because of the household responsibilities and the need for her to take care of the children. However, Saro attended some of the meetings that were deemed very important.

New Age, a weekly newspaper of the labour movement advertised for a reporter. MP had a love for journalism and took this opportunity to leave Natal Glassworks and join the newspaper as a Durban reporter. This marked the beginning of his remarkable career in journalism.

On 26 June 1955 the ANC conference in Kliptown adopted the Freedom Charter at the Congress of the People. MP was there at the meeting and at previous earlier meetings where the charter was debated, developed and finalised.

In the same year a women's circle of three Indians and two whites met in the Naicker outbuilding. At the second meeting Saro was asked to read a book and lead a discussion with the group. However, the busy housewife could not find the time to do this reading. Saro apologised to the group for not being able to complete the assigned task. The group disbanded soon afterwards.

On 9 August 1956, 20,000 women marched to Pretoria to present a petition to the Prime Minister asking that the government rescind the discriminatory pass laws. The current South African government recognises the importance of this struggle and has designated 9th of August as a national holiday called Women's Day.

Pren's first year at school held some precious memories for his mother Saro, and provided a distraction from her difficult life especially when MP was in detention.

Nad's son Pragason was five months older than his cousin Pren. As they were growing up Pren called his cousin "Unnah" (Big Brother) in spite of the small age difference. They grew up as brothers rather than as cousins. When Pren received his

first report card he was excited and shouted out to his mother: " Ummah I came out 31st and Unnah came out 30th." Pren believed the high numbers meant that they had done very well in school. Saro couldn't help laughing and had to share this with her husband during the Treason Trial.

Saro walked past Pren's school on her way to the nearby grocery shop. She spotted Pren all by himself. He sat on a short brick wall pretending to be driving a car. Saro was concerned that her son was not in class so she took him back to his classroom.

The ice cream vendor came by on hot afternoons ringing his bell and attracting the youngsters in the area. Pragason held on to the tires of the vendor's ice cream cart while his cousin Pren rushed into the house shouting, "Ummah, Ummah, quick, quick, money." The youngster's enthusiasm was rewarded when his mother handed him the money to buy two chocolate-covered ice-cream sandwiches.

Saro's siblings Krishna and Dhanum worked with their father in Naidoosons that was now a grocery shop. When Saro visited her parents' home she would stop at this shop first to visit with the family. It gave her much pleasure to join her father at the shop window. These visits helped to relieve the stresses of being a politician's wife.

Kannah was a kind-hearted man. On one of Saro's visits she noticed an African customer walk in with an alarm clock in his hand. The gentleman enquired from Kannah where he could get his clock repaired. The shopkeeper examined the clock and responded the repairs required were very minor and that he could get this done in the next two days. He was prepared to do this at no cost.

To his surprise Kannah heard the African man ask how he could trust his clock with a stranger. Kannah who was a trusting soul could not understand this behaviour of suspicion and mistrust. Kannah reached for a wristwatch and handed this to the man as a token of good faith. The customer left with a broad smile knowing that he now had something valuable.

The family does not know whether the expensive watch was ever returned, but the incident remained in Saro's memory. She realized then how kind-hearted and trusting her father was. These character traits were passed on to his children and Saro was grateful for this legacy.

On 1 November 1956, MP's brother Nad and his wife became the proud parents of a baby girl. Deena was born

On 5 December many dramatic events took place and these would have a profound effect on the Naicker family. Nad and his wife were in the main house with their baby of one month. Saro and MP occupying a room in the outbuilding.

In the early hours of the morning Panjalay answered the phone in the main building. Someone asked in Hindi, "*Have they come there? They are on their way."* Panjalay went to the outbuilding and told MP about the call. MP who seemed to know what this was all about, dressed quickly and then opened the door. When he saw a car filled with uniformed policemen turning around the corner, he quickly went behind the toilet outside to hide.

The policemen came out of the car. While some came to the front others went to the back. They had a search warrant for MP's arrest. Saro went into the main building

and stayed with the children. The police asked where MP was. They searched every room and they left having not found him.

Later Coetzee took MP's coat and went in search of his brother. He found him somewhere in the back and gave him the coat. MP then disappeared. The family heard over the radio that the leaders were arrested and read the papers of the high treason that these people were accused of.

The police kept coming over the next ten days, each time looking even under the beds for MP. They went from room to room arrogantly shining their torches into every part of the house. Those who were not arrested earlier were heavily involved in underground work. This group called for a huge mass meeting to make the public aware of the arrests.

MP sent a message to Saro saying she must attend the meeting. Saro went to the meeting. She felt comforted that hundreds were in the same predicament.

While MP and others were organizing the mass meeting MP had to be in hiding so that he would not be captured. On one of these days he got in touch with Saro's brother Krish, and gave him one hundred pounds to pass on to Saro to take care of household expenses. As soon as Saro received this money she gave this to her mother-in-law.

On 15 December, ten days after the mass arrests, MP came home with Roley Arenstein, a top Communist Party politician to tell the family that he was going to give himself up to the authorities to save his family from further harassment. He and his comrades had successfully conducted the task of organising the mass public meeting. MP put on a brave front and must have been deeply affected by it all.

MP's decision caused emotional turmoil in the Naicker home. As Saro packed MP's clothes she wept openly fearing what the future held for her husband, her two children and herself. The racist government was determined to impose the death penalty for anyone found guilty of high treason. The trial was to be held in Johannesburg, a day's journey away by car. Would she ever see her husband again? How would she raise the children without him? What about their dreams and aspirations for the future?

Panjalay loved her eldest son of hers and fought hard to control her emotions. Her two grandsons Prenaven and Pragason had heard about their father and uncle's decision. When MP came in to say that he had to leave to fight an unjust regime, each boy provided advice. The first youngster advised that he wear a bulletproof vest while the other who flung his pillow in frustration urged that MP fight the enemy.

Saro had to go to St. Theresa's Catholic School to fetch her daughter Suganya to say goodbye to her father. Suganya cried and was very sad when father and daughter finally parted. MP subsequently surrendered to the police. After MP gave himself up he became part of the Treason Trial group of 156 men and women.

Friends came to the Naickers to sympathize with them. Each time someone came to the door, MP's son Prenaven ran to the back door expecting to see his Papa there. His disappointment caused Saro much pain. When walking to the barbershop with his mother one day he saw a police van similar to the one that had taken his father away. This realisation caused the boy to pick up stones and hurl them at the vehicle.

As months passed by, Coetzee, MP's younger brother tried to relieve the stressful situation by taking his nephews fishing. Prenaven caught a small fish and was determined to keep this to show his father when he returned home. Saro had to store this in the ice compartment of their refrigerator.

MP came home during the recess of the trial between Christmas and New Year and also when the case was temporarily adjourned.

The Treason Trial resumed in January 1957 after the Christmas recess. An Indian postman would come each day with a letter from MP. As he handed her the letter he said that the letter arrived just in time for Saro to enjoy since the day's tasks were coming to an end.

MP wrote letters to Saro describing the events of each day. Some of these included humourous anecdotes that brought a smile to Saro's face. After reading these letters several times, Saro passed these along to family members. Years later Saro would regret that she did not preserve these letters as they would have been valuable historic documents.

Nad's young daughter Deena stayed with Saro in the main building with her two children with Panjie and Nad staying in the outbuilding while MP was away. They would only sleep there at night. Cooking and eating took place in the main building.

MP came home during the recesses for the next three years and while the trial was in progress MP and his cousin Dr. Monty Naicker stayed with his relatives the Vandeyars in Johannesburg. Saro was relieved that she had regular contact with MP because he was not in confinement. She missed his presence but felt somewhat at ease when she heard from him. In another trial that was to follow shortly the situation was to be quite different. Little did Saro know that even tougher times lay ahead!

While the trial was in progress, MP's brother Coetzee married Indi and they lived in 61 Everton Road. Nad and Panjie built a new house at 126 Clayton Road, Sydenham and they and Nad's parents moved soon after Coetzee's wedding.

The Treason Trial dragged on throughout 1958 and 1959 and ended with all the accused being released at different times because of insufficient evidence. There was much jubilation in the Naicker home when MP was released. The children were eager to tell their father all that had happened while he was away. Saro too had the opportunity to enjoy some quiet times with her husband. The other relatives all had so much to say and so much to ask.

Fortunately there were celebrations in this period that brought some relief. One of these took place in 1959 when Dr. Monty Naicker and his wife Marie celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary at their home in Innes Road, Durban.

Twenty years ago Saro had attended another 25th wedding anniversary celebration. This elaborate affair had taken place when she was eight years old. However, this time, the event was celebrated in a modest manner. The highlight for Saro and MP was the Indian dance Bharatha Natyam performed by their daughter Suganya. MP made sure their daughter was involved in cultural activities that included ballet and Bharatha Natyam.

MP and Saro watched with pride as their daughter completed the graceful movements of this ancient Indian classical dance. Suganya's performance was in honour of the anniversary couple.

MP and Saro knew the political storm was not over and more dark clouds could be seen just over the horizon. They knew the future still looked bleak for them as a family but they had an inner assurance their struggle was for a worthy cause and the oppressed in South Africa would one day be free!

Chapter 4: Political Exile
1960-1967

Some years later, Saro made the following comments at a panel discussion in London: "*Indian women participated in the Defiance Campaign of 1952 in organizing and participating in the Congress of the People. In 1955, 1956 and dressed in colourful saris they marched as a part of the 20,000 women demonstrating against the pass laws. The Treason Trial brought Indian men and women into confrontation with the regime and the 1960 State of Emergency took its toll on their activities*."

On 21 March 1960 the infamous Sharpville massacre took place and a State of Emergency was declared. During a dawn raid all the leading political activists including MP were arrested and kept in detention without a trial for six months. During these long months there was no communication between MP and his family. The family did not know where MP was being detained.

Saro remained at home with the children. MD Naidoo was also arrested during the State of Emergency. On his release MP was able to pass on to him three personal letters for his wife Saro. The letters came from the Durban Central Prison. MP expressed concern for the welfare of his family and he reassured Saro that all was well and she should not worry because he was not alone and was at least able to enjoy the companionship of other activists. In spite of the pain of separation, Saro was at last relieved to know that her husband was safe.

Early in 1961 Coetzee and Indi moved to their own house in Abelia Road, Asherville, Durban, and for the first time since their marriage MP and his family lived alone in their house. This lasted only for three months.

Umkhonto we Sizwe (MK), the military wing of the ANC was formed on 16 December 1961 in response to the Sharpville massacre. MP became a member of MK.

Saro started working as a seamstress in a dressmaking shop Sumay's in West Street, an exclusive shop for white women only. The work was hard but the pay was relatively good, five pounds per week for five days work. Four of these five pounds were paid to the Naicker family for board and lodge. The remaining money was used to pay for Saro and her children's clothes, toiletries, etc.

The workday started early for Saro. There was only one break of thirty minutes for lunch. As a result of these long hours and efficient work of Saro and two other Indian employees, the shop was quite productive and started making good profit for its owner. As a result their wages were increased slightly every six months.

Ninety-day arrests in solitary confinement without a trial were implemented in 1962. MP was arrested together with other ANC leaders and spent ninety days in solitary confinement. He was released and re-arrested shortly afterwards. Altogether he spent 183 days in solitary confinement. Later on the family came to know that he was in Mont Clare prison near Clairwood where MP's sister Indrani lived. Severe torture was often used to extract information.

Coetzee was also arrested under the ninety-day detention law. Saro had been through separation from her husband before and was now a comfort to Indi. Saro

took Indi to see Lieutenant Steenkamp to enquire why Coetzee was arrested. The answer was that he was also involved in sabotage.

After the first ninety-day period was over MP was re-arrested for a further ninety days. The family had no further news about his whereabouts, as there was no means of communication.

In 1963 the 183 days solitary confinement came to an end. After five months of freedom MP was the only Indian to be arrested together with 22 African men and 2 African women for continuing the aims of the banned African National Congress (ANC).

GR Naidoo, a journalist with the Drum Magazine lent his car filled with petrol to transport the family to Ladysmith to visit MP. Indrani's son Logan drove the car with his mother, grandmother, Aunt Saro and cousin Suganya as passengers. On arrival at the prison, the warden refused permission for the family to visit MP since it was a Saturday and not a visiting day. Suganya burst out crying and Saro asked for the warden to show some compassion as they had travelled a long distance. Eventually the family was able to visit MP for only five minutes.

MP's heart went out to his wife and children but he took consolation in the fact that his parents and other relatives would be there to help his family. Circumstances at the prison were difficult because of the brutality of the guards and warden.

There was insufficient evidence against the group. All of them were released in 1964 except for five men. These trials lasted eight months and were held in Ladysmith, Northern Natal.

On the advice of ANC leaders, MP was asked to go abroad to continue the struggle, as this would be more effective for the cause of freedom.

MP decided to leave South Africa and he begged his wife to join him but without an extra set of clothing and without telling a soul. After some reflection, Saro did not want to leave her children as they had already been through difficult times. She was also concerned for her aging parents and the prospect of never seeing them again. Saro asked that he leave without telling her exactly when. She assured him that she would join him later.

During the Easter weekend he slipped out of South Africa. He chose this weekend because the following Monday was a bank holiday and he did not have to report to the police station like he usually did on Mondays.

On that Good Friday morning Saro walked into her bedroom and noticed MP's tearful face. Later she realised why MP was so emotional. Saro was given to understand that MP was going to a card tournament and wished him well. Later after MP did not return she realised the reason for MP's emotional behaviour that Friday morning.

Panjalay was concerned that MP had not come home that night and she suggested that Saro contact the police, but Saro dissuaded her suggesting instead that they wait a little longer before taking any action.

MP meanwhile went to his uncle's home in Asherville and explained to him that he was leaving South Africa and that the gentleman should break the news to the family the next morning.

Anxious hours followed for the Naicker family not knowing the location of their loved one. On that Saturday at three in the afternoon MP called from Lobatsi, Botswana. Saro was happy to hear her husband's voice and relieved that he was safe away from police harassment, detention and continuous arrests.

The next day Saro took her children to her parents' home and told them the news of MP's departure. They were extremely shocked at the realisation that they may never see this son-in-law again.

Saro continued working in West Street and waited for the dust to settle down so that she could apply for a passport to join her husband.

MP kept in contact with Saro by mailing letters to her parents using a pseudonym. After eight months in Botswana, he spent further months in various parts of Africa.

Top ANC leaders eventually placed him in London. In May 1966 MP arrived in London to establish Sechaba, the monthly journal of the ANC. Sechaba came out in January 1967 and was produced monthly. The purpose of the journal was to inform the international community about the brutalities of the South African government towards political activists.

Saro decided to apply for a passport. The South African authorities refused her application, and Saro then applied for an exit permit. This permit was granted for Saro and Pren on 9 December 1966. A news item in the Post reported as follows: "*Mrs. Saro Naicker, wife of MP Naicker who skipped the country two years ago, and her teenage son Prenaven, left South Africa on an exit permit on Wednesday afternoon. Mother and son will join Naicker, who is now in London.*"

Suganya could not join her mother and brother because she had signed an employment contract as a radiographer at the King Edward Hospital and could not leave her position.

Saro and Pren were given three months to leave South Africa. In February 1967 Saro and Pren boarded the ship, *Penndennis Castle* bound for England. Amongst the many emotions going through Saro's heart was a consolation that she would be going to a country where her sister Saroj and her family lived since 1962.

Mother and son arrived in Southampton on Friday, 13 March 1967.

Saro wrote the following essay in 2002 in her creative writing class:

"*Going back 35 years ago I remember clearly my very sad day when I was forced to leave my beloved country, South Africa. But I was not as sad as the rest of my family and friends were. I was going to make a home for us in England away from the political harassment where we as a family will live together rest of our lives.*

It all boils down to my political circumstances. I had married a politician who was deeply committed to eradicating the racial tyranny perpetrated by the racist National Party (Afrikaners) against the Indians Africans, and the Coloureds.

My husband was forced to leave in 1965. I thought it wise not to immediately apply for a passport so I waited over a year. Then I applied for my son Pren aged 15, and myself. It took a long while to hear from the authorities. When the reply arrived the news was shocking. We were refused passports. Exit permits were issued to leave my country of birth within three months. This meant that I would not be allowed to return to South Africa.

Time was of the essence. It did not leave me much time to bid my farewell to such a large circle of friends; our huge closely knit families both my husband's side and mine.

In the midst of my preparation to leave the country, my youngest sister Saras' wedding was scheduled to take place in December 1966. My husband's niece Pangajum's wedding was arranged to take place a month before my departure. I enjoyed both these weddings immensely and was able to see and talk to their respective new families too. Memories of those joyous functions are still etched in my mind's eye.

I had to leave by ship so I could take all our household belongings with. My husband had arranged our fares. He would not have been able to pay for them. In 1966 the British authorities had granted him refugee status to live in London.

Canon John Collins, an Anglican clergyman, committed his organisation, Christian Action to raise funds for the defence of anti-apartheid activists accused of treason and other political offences in South Africa. This gave rise to the Defence and Aid Fund for Southern Africa. MP contacted Canon John Collins who authorized the fund to pay for the tickets for the journey by ship.

The day and date was set to sail. The journey started on 22 February 1967 from the Durban docks.

My father's shop Naidoosons was closed for half a day. All my sisters, brothers, cousins, nieces, nephews including my half sisters were at the Durban dock to bid us farewell. On MP's side, his aunts, uncles, their respective families were there, and so were Pren's classmates, both girls and boys. I gathered later that the girls were weeping. Pren was popular among his classmates especially the girls.

There were about three to four hundred people, mainly of Indian origin at the docks. I was told to start my farewells, hours before the departure because of the huge gathering there. Besides my parents I felt very sad to leave Suganya behind. She broke down and sobbed to leave us. Like MP I was also concerned about our daughter's future as she was now twenty-one years old.

When Pren and I boarded the ship, a white man came towards me and asked, "Can you explain to me the reason why so many of your people are here when only two of you were the travellers?" I did not know what to reply so I remained silent. I did not want to go into details about the fact that we may never see each other again since I was leaving on an exit permit.

As the ship slowly left the docks, the passengers threw out streamers from each side. The ship's horn sounded as the vessel started to move. This sound added to the poignancy of the moment. The departure caused a great deal of sadness and pain.

Little did I know then that the Pendennis Castle was taking me to a new life in a new country and that I would have opportunities to visit my beloved country again.

Even to this day I feel an inward sadness as I recollect that painful moment.

The journey ended in Southampton on 13th March on a Friday. As the saying goes it's unlucky for some. It certainly was unlucky for me. I lost my dear MP just 10 years later in a very, tragic circumstance at a very young age. He was only 56."

Chapter 5: Political Exile Continues 1968-1977

In 1967 MP was living temporarily with Brian and Sonya Bunting in London. During his stay MP had influenza and his hosts called in their general practitioner, Dr. Bill Smith to attend to him. During the examination the doctor enquired about his patient's circumstances. In the conversation MP indicated that his wife and son would be arriving shortly from South Africa. The doctor replied that they had some rooms available to accommodate the family and he would speak to his wife Ursi.

MP then moved into this self-contained unit that had a bedroom, bed/sitting room, kitchen, and bathroom. This house was located at 6 West Hill, High Gate, an exclusive part of London. The reasonable weekly rent was seven pounds and fifty pence, inclusive of electricity and heating.

The Naickers had a wonderful relationship with this British family that took them into their hearts and home. In the years to come this friendship was to develop further as the Naicker children and the Smith children played together and learned from each other. The two families maintained this relationship from that first meeting to the present day.

On 8 March 1967 Coetzee arrived in London from Botswana and joined his brother.

On 13 March, MP hired a van to pick up his family at Southampton Docks, about three hours away from London. His brother Coetzee accompanied him. The British authorities were notified of Saro and Pren's arrival and there were no difficulties in processing the immigration documents.

Saro had been told earlier to expect many cloudy days in England with hardly any sunshine, but to her surprise the day of her arrival was a beautiful, sunny day.

Saro found a changed MP due to the two years of separation and his adjustment to an ever-changing environment as he moved from country to country finally arriving in London. Adjusting to a life in a new country was a difficult process.

The family moved into the High Gate rented home. Coetzee lived with them at that time until he found employment some months later. The excitement of moving into a new home in a new country was accompanied by some sadness at the fact that their other child, Suganya was still in South Africa.

MP wanted Suganya to stay in South Africa, marry, and then come to London for a visit. His daughter disagreed and preferred to be with her family rather than with a husband. In her view it was time for the family to have a life together. Suganya was able to convince her father through regular correspondence to allow her to join them.

MP arranged for the International Defence and Aid Fund to provide transportation for some of his family members to immigrate to London.

Suganya, Nad's son Pragasen and Coetzee's wife Indi and their seven-year-old son Parthiben arrived in August of that year. All of them travelled on the Windsor Castle for 21 days from Durban to Southampton.

When Saro first caught sight of Suganya her happiness knew no measure. Her family was re-united! The long absence from Suganya was painful and now that she was in London with her family, life started to take on a semblance of normalcy.

Shopping, cooking and caring for the family became Saro's full-time job. MP's monthly allowance was seventy-five pounds. All the ANC staff got the same allowance. Out of this MP gave Saro eight pounds a week to take care of household expenses. This required Saro to be very prudent in the use of their money. She would save eight pence a day on bus fare by walking part of the way and taking the bus at the next stop. On her return from the grocery shop she came back with bags of food and household items to meet the family's needs.

While shopping one day she noticed an advertisement by an adult learning centre where classes were offered in English for foreign students. This attracted Saro's attention and she enrolled for these classes that were held for two hours on Friday afternoons in the autumn term. At these classes she became familiar with the culture of her new country. Saro was appreciative of this learning opportunity. This was a gateway to further education.

The Naicker family enjoyed the neighbourhood of their rented home. They started to look around for a suitable home to purchase. In January 1968 they bought the house at 55 Agincourt Road, Hampstead very close to Highgate. MP approached Canon John Collins to raise a loan to buy the house. Canon Collins authorised a loan from the International Defence and Aid Fund (IDAF). MP insisted that it be an interest-based loan. In this way the Naickers were able to buy this property in spite of MP's limited monthly allowance.

With the help of his nephews, Pren and Pragason Coetzee completed several carpentry projects: built-in cabinets in the bedrooms, built-in cupboards kitchen cupboards and many other areas that had to be modernised. The projects were completed during weekends when he came with his family.

In addition to her immediate family there were regular visits by South Africans who were partners in the struggle. MP was very popular with his comrades who visited from South Africa and elsewhere. They preferred to stay with the Naicker family. MP was a key contact in England.

Dr. Randeree who practised medicine and was exiled in Lusaka had two children studying in England. MP was the guardian of these children who would come for short vacations from their studies to stay with the Naicker family.

Albert Dhlomo, a former Robben Island political prisoner, studied farming at Sheffield University and stayed with the Naickers during the university breaks.

Three months after Suganya's arrival in London, her work permit was finalised and she started work as a radiographer at Hampstead General Hospital within walking distance to home. This provided additional income for the family.

In May 1968 the Naickers celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary at their new home in Agincourt Road. On the Sunday before the anniversary date close family members came for lunch on this joyous occasion.

On Thursday, 16 May, the couple went out for an evening together. MP stopped at a jeweller shop where he picked out an eternity ring that he slipped onto Saro's finger. The family met Saro and MP at a restaurant where they all enjoyed an evening celebratory meal.

A week after the anniversary celebration, MP and Saro left on a six-week's holiday to Europe sponsored by the German Democratic Republic to honour the work being done by political exiles from developing countries, who have fought for the liberation of their respective homelands. The first two weeks were spent in a medical facility in Berlin for thorough physical examination. After that the couple headed for a holiday resort on the shores of the Baltic Sea. They enjoyed the comforts of a holiday cottage well supplied with food and beverages, normally enjoyed by wealthy holidaymakers.

Day outings included trips to Potsdam and other places of interest. The saris that Saro wore on some occasions enchanted local residents and visitors who had never seen this eastern outfit before. Admirers asked to be photographed with Saro.

After their return from Europe, Saro started a small sewing venture in her home, sewing dresses and making alterations for customers. This generated some income that was to be used for Saro's parents' visit, planned for the following year.

While on holiday in Edinburgh in early 1969, Suganya met a young man Mahendra Chetty formerly from Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, and a friendship developed.

In June 1969 the long-awaited visitors from South Africa arrived. There was Saro's father Kannah Naidoo who was 84, her mother Angammah and Saro's sister Dhanum. They spent three months in England with their daughters Saroj in South London and Saro in Hampstead.

While the Naidoos were still holidaying with Saro, news arrived that MP's parents would be arriving on September 15 to settle in England. The grandparents also brought along their granddaughter Deena, Nad's daughter, who came to study in England.

Frantic preparations had to be made to accommodate the additional guests. Saro's parents then moved to their other daughter's home.

The last visit with Saro's parents was difficult. Saro realised that she might never see her father again and in November, two months later, Kannah Naidoo passed away.

After her parents left Saro discontinued her home dressmaking and enrolled in a dress making instructor's course. Six months later this educational endeavour had to be abandoned as the pressures of home and family mounted.

In December 1969, the last of the Naicker sons, Nad, immigrated to England with his wife, Panjie. Their children Pragason and Deena were already in the country. Nad's family stayed with Saro while her in-laws moved to their other son Coetzee's house.

In spring of 1970 Saro felt unwell and had to have a complete rest so she was sent to East Berlin. After a thorough medical examination that included several tests, Saro stayed in the nursing home to recuperate. While in Europe, Suganya informed her mother that her engagement to Mahendra might take place in July. Saro returned home from East Berlin in good time for the preparations to be made for the engagement ceremony.

Fortunately Saro managed to recover and return to London well in time for Suganya's engagement. While she was away Suganya wrote to her mother that Mahendra's parents would be coming to London in the summer and the engagement might take place when they arrive in London. Living in London was not a major problem. The Naicker family could manage with having closest relatives on both sides present.

Fortunately Nad and Panji bought an engagement sari for Suganya that came in very handy and Suganya was pleased to wear this. Saro's first task was to sew the engagement blouse. Other responsibilities included spring-cleaning the whole house and tidying the little flower garden.

As soon as Mahendra's parents arrived with their eldest daughter Sarla and her husband Dergi Chetty, the date for the engagement two weeks ahead was set. There was much excitement and happiness floating in the air and around them. No cards were printed or distributed and guests were invited by telephone. Aya, Suganya's paternal grandmother was an expert in engagements, weddings and other social preparations. Everything was organised in a methodical and orderly manner. All the necessary tasks went like clockwork.

In Indian custom when a daughter reaches a marriageable age parents worry about their future. Suganya's marriage was not arranged like her parent's. MP and Saro were very pleased with their daughter's choice and couldn't hope for a better family because they had known them quite well in South Africa.

MP's father took on the role of the father of the bride-to-be because he was the senior Naicker and MP wished to honour him in this way. MP was unfamiliar with these customs because he attended very few functions of this nature.

The engagement turned out to be a very simple and beautiful function. The families could not hope for a better one.

Initially MP did not want Suganya to come to London but he wanted her to marry in South Africa and only come to visit her parents in England. Suganya had objected to staying in South Africa and MP eventually agreed. As MP watched the engagement and thought about the forth-coming wedding he was proud of his daughter's decision. If the wedding had taken place in South Africa he would not have had the opportunity to be present at this important milestone in his life.

After the engagement Nad and his family purchased their own home and moved out of 55 Agincourt Road to 74 Durham Road in East Finchley.

While Mahendra's parents were still in London, Suganya's wedding date was finalised for the following year, 3 July 1971. Preparations for the wedding were more complex than those for the engagement because of the number of guests that had to be

invited. Both parties agreed to the wording on the wedding invitation cards. The venue was finalised and booked well in advance.

The Naicker home served as the preparation venue for the bride and the groom since Mahendra's rented home was very small. As the wedding day approached, the excitement mounted. Just a week before the wedding several South African visitors members of the Naicker family arrived in addition to guests from the Chetty family. MP and Saro's family included MP's sister Indrani, Saro's mother Angammah, and MP's aunt Janakie.

It was MP's task to write to all the senior family members about the engagement that took place and to send the wedding invitations. He also sent out invitations to local guests.

Since Suganya was so special to all her family members there was much excitement and joy. Saro and MP were delighted at the wedding of their daughter.

A week before the wedding, Nad and Coetzee pitched a tent in the backyard of 55 Agincourt Road so that visitors were not too crowded indoors.

The weather cooperated for the Nalungu on Thursday and the Second Nalungu on the following day. The first Nalungu comprised of an oil bath that included three kinds of paste (moong dahl, seaaker, and tumeric powder). The second Nalunugu was not as messy since sandalwood paste was used. This wood gave off a pleasing aroma. The third Nalungu took place on the wedding day.

On Friday Nad, Coetzee, Pragason and Pren went to the wedding hall close by and erected a beautiful canopy for the ceremony. This was decorated with fresh flowers. Two banana trees brought from Mahendra's relative's hothouse in Cheam. This was an unusual sight in London.

Suganya was a beautiful bride in her full bridal attire including the gorgeous rust-coloured sari provided by her in-laws-to-be. Mahendra looked handsome in his Indian outfit.

The ceremony was conducted between three and four in the afternoon. Tea was served with semolina pudding and bhajies, an Indian savoury.

As soon as the wedding was over Saro and Panjie rushed off to the house to prepare for the large wedding feast that evening. They prepared chicken briyani and mince kebabs with chutney and salad. A variety of Indian sweetmeats were served as desserts. The evening ended with a dance at Nad and Panjies house in East Finchley. This was a fitting end to a wonderful day of celebrations.

When the wedding excitement subsided, MP and Saro entertained MP's sister, Indrani. The Naicker families showed her the attractions of London, including a rowboat ride at Epping Forest. Nad was the life of the party with his jokes that entertained everyone.

While his Aunt Indrani was still holidaying in London, it was time to prepare for Pren's departure to Moscow to study medicine. In preparation for university entrance Pren completed O-level courses at William Ellis Boys' School in Parliament Hill,

walking distance from Agincourt Road. He completed these successfully and then went on to A-levels taking science subjects. He passed with flying colours.

Some years earlier while still in South Africa, he had planned to become a doctor and now this dream was being fulfilled. There were no grants available for Pren to study in England. MP asked if he would consider going to Moscow for his medical training and Pren unhesitatingly agreed.

MP in consultation with the ANC made an application to the university in Moscow on Pren's behalf. Pren had to take a crash course in Russian in the Soviet Union away from the university campus. Pren completed this course in spite of the challenges of learning a strange tongue and was able to speak and write in Russian.

The Moscow State Medical University catered largely for Russian students but accepted Pren's application for admission on the basis of his good performance in the language test. Other students from foreign countries studied at Lumbumba University in Moscow.

During long study breaks Pren travelled from Moscow via Brussels to London by several trains because this was a more affordable mode of travel.

While Pren was studying in Moscow, MP became a member of the Executive of the International Organisation of Journalists (IOJ), based in Prague. In 1971 Sechaba, the journal of the ANC edited by MP, was awarded the IOJ gold medal.

In September 1972 Saro became a full-time student for the first time since 1941 when she was in Standard 4. MP encouraged Saro to enroll in a clerk/typist program to enhance her skills and open employment opportunities. By the end of the program Saro's touch typing skills were exceptional. Subsequently Saro was later able to type articles for Sechaba.

After the course ended in June 1973, MP and Saro went on a month's vacation to Prague and then to Karlovary Vary in Czechoslovakia, This vacation was sponsored by IOJ. Karlovary Vary was a holiday resort with health spas. There were twelve hot and cold springs. These were tested for their health-giving potency. Saro and MP were advised to drink the spring water first thing in the morning. Each morning Saro made her way to fetch the spring water, but MP did not accompany her, as he preferred to sleep in a little longer. Saro brought him a supply of spring water.

They visited various tourist spots throughout the country. While on vacation in Prague MP came across an advertisement in the Morning Star for a clerical assistant to work in the Star Market where goods from Europe were sold.

On their return to London, Saro applied for the job and was accepted. She started her first full-time job in September 1973. This job was quite different from the one at Sumay's Dress Shop in Durban. The job was comparatively easier and straightforward.

The challenge was for Saro to be familiar with the many fancy goods available for sale. Goods came from various Socialist countries and Britain. Catalogues were distributed and telephone enquiries regarding the various items had to be handled. British Communist Party members and supporters of the paper were the main customers.

The manager of the market Lillian Warren bought the goods from representatives or at exhibitions. Lillian and Saro were the two fulltime employees while Peggy and Josie worked part-time. Peggy worked in the office. Josie packed the goods. She also took care of damaged items that had to be returned to the suppliers.

Catalogues were mailed out in October in time for the Christmas season the busiest time of year. Food hampers of selected canned fruit, chocolates and preserves were prepared. Orders came weeks before Christmas Day. These had to be filled and posted in time for customers to receive them by Christmas. While Lillian and Peggy took care of the customers in the shop, Saro and Josie took care of the catalogue orders.

Lillian was very pleased with Saro's work and once commented that Saro was the hardest working employee she had ever had. On the front cover of one of the catalogues was a picture of Saro and Josie.

The weekly wages were relatively good. When Saro first started work she took home twenty-five pounds per week, earning more than MP. It increased annually with inflation. All workers at the Morning Star were paid a standard rate similar to the ANC.

Saro worked for the Star Market from September 1973 to July 1978.

The Star Market was a part of the Morning Star business whose main purpose was publishing the daily radical left wing newspaper. The profits from the Star Market went towards the costs of operating the paper. This was a vital source of revenue and helped the paper to survive.

The Morning Star was sympathetic to the South Africa struggle against the apartheid regime. The newspaper occupied five floors and employed almost 500 people including many South Africans who were respected for their efficiency and diligence.

In November 1973, Saro's brother Sathiamurthi came to visit his sisters in London while on his way to India to conduct prayers for his recently deceased wife. He spent about two weeks there and during one of his conversations with Saro he told her about their mother's illness and how she had asked for Saro during her delirious condition. This news saddened Saro because she realised that as an exile she could not return to South Africa.

During Sathiamurthi's short stay in London, MP made a tape recording of his singing. He sang several classical Tamil songs and the tape sounded like a professional singer.

After his stay in London, Sathiamurthi flew on to India, but on the way he passed away from a heart attack in Switzerland. Sathiamurthi's two sisters Saro and Saroj went to Switzerland and to have their brother's remains cremated. A friend of the Naickers in London Dicky Reddy was able to contact his friend in Switzerland. This friend met Saro and Saroj took them to their hotel. The sisters wept when they saw the lonely coffin in the funeral parlour. Sathiamurthi had such a large family back home.

The two sisters held a short Indian funeral service. Camphor was lit and prayers were chanted. If this funeral were in South Africa there would be so many mourners and so many prayer services held to honour Sathiamurthi.

It was many months later when Saro was able to grieve with her mother over Sathiamurthi's death.

This was a sad time for Saro since she had lost her brother Sathiamurthi. Often, sad times are followed by happier ones. On 13 December 1973, Suganya's daughter Humsha was born. This was MP and Saro's first grandchild. Suganya came to Agincourt Road after she was discharged from the hospital. The baby sounds of Humsha were like music to the grandparents' ears. The last baby sounds were made by Humsha's uncle Pren twenty-two years ago in Everton Road, Durban, South Africa.

A familiar face was in the Naicker home soon after the baby was born. GR Naidoo the journalist from Durban, MP's closest friend and the man who so selflessly lent his car to the Naicker family so that they could visit MP in Ladysmith prison, was visiting in London with his family. GR took many spools of photographs of the happy baby. MP was thrilled that his best friend was there to celebrate this happy event with him.

On the thirtieth day after Humsha was born, an impressive naming ceremony was held in the Naicker home. Close immediate relatives were present. The Naicker family of four generations gathered in the home: Panjalay Naicker, her son MP, MP's daughter Suganya and her daughter little Humsha.

After the naming ceremony Suganya and her family moved into rented accommodations in Stoke Newington in the East End of London. Suganya's grandparents came to take care of the baby when she had to return to work.

Saro continued to pine for her mother. MP felt that the South African authorities should not be begged for permission to re-enter the country. As a mother Saro realised the longing that one has for one's child. She put herself in her mother's shoes. Against MP's wishes, she applied for a special permit to visit her ailing mother. A permit provided only after a lengthy investigation. The investigation included a thorough review of the medical report and a visit to Krish's house in Isipingo Rail, Durban, South Africa.

In April 1974, Saro took leave from work for a month, and with her savings from having worked since September of the previous year, Saro was able to travel to South Africa. Mother and daughter were reunited for the first time since they last met in London in 1969. During her visit, many people came to see Saro who together with her husband was well respected for her fight for justice.

The local paper carried a news item by Hoosen Kolia with the title "*Exile back to see sick mum"* One of the paragraphs read as follows: *"Mrs. Sarogonum Naicker, who left South Africa legally after her husband, Mr. MP Naicker crossed into Botswana, saw several members of her family for the first time in about nine years when they thronged Durban's Louis Botha Airport during the week to welcome her home. There were moving scenes as tearful relatives hugged and kissed her,"*

Soon after Saro's return to London, her mother Angammah had a stroke that deprived her of her speech. She had to be admitted to hospital. Suganya, Mahendra

and their eight-month-old daughter Humsha visited South Africa in June 1974. This was Suganya's first time back in South Africa since she left in August 1967. During these holidays Suganya often visited her grandmother in hospital. She was moved to tears to see her Party in that condition and her mind was filled with memories of a kind, wonderful caring grandmother.

That same year MP's parents went to South Africa for eight months, the first time they returned to their homeland. Their sons purchased the tickets for their parents. Papiah and Panjalay Naicker stayed with their daughter Indrani and visited their close relatives.

In June 1974 MP and Saro went to Moscow for a six-week holiday. Pren joined them for a short while. This was Saro's first visit to Moscow but MP had already been there several times on work. The Soviet Communist Party organized this holiday.

On the arrival of the Naickers at the party headquarters a red carpet was laid out to welcome them. MP was embarrassed because he did not enjoy the limelight. Saro had heard so much about the Soviet system at work and admired this from afar. Now at last she was able to observe this in person. Similar to their earlier holiday to the German Democratic Republic in 1968, they both had to undergo medical checks and various treatments before starting their holiday.

Two weeks later MP and Saro arrived at the Soviet Communist Party holiday resort in Sochi on the shores of the Black Sea. There they enjoyed the wonderful facilities that were once enjoyed only by the wealthy tzars and their families. From this holiday home they walked down straight to the beach area that had deck chairs and huge umbrellas. Speedboats were available for those who wished to participate in this activity. The beaches reminded the Naickers of Durban where the climate was similar. Other places of interest included museums and cathedrals.

At one of the functions MP was garlanded with green leaves. MP was quite amused when he had to play the part of Neptune, the Sea God. A huge Samovar (Russian kettle) was on the boil all the time so that the holidaymakers could help themselves to tea. There were plenty of cakes and biscuits to accompany the tea.

A Russian interpreter – Munira was her name - accompanied the visitors. This beautiful young lady could have passed as the Naicker's daughter. Saro was unwell and could not go to other eastern provinces. Munira cried when she was told that the Naickers would not be joining the group as she had taken a great liking to Saro and MP.

Munira asked Saro to teach her to greet someone in Tamil. She was a good learner. The General Secretary of the South African Communist Party, Moses Kotane was recovering from a stroke. The interpreter cupped her hands and said, "Vanakum" not realizing that Moses was an African and did not speak the Indian language, Tamil. Saro found this very amusing and had a difficult time not bursting out in laughter. She later explained to the Russian girl the ethnic backgrounds of the Naickers and Kotane.

Angammah passed away on 7 September 1974 three months after her stroke. Mrs. Panjalay Naicker later told Saro, her daughter-in-law about the flowers she had bought for the funeral. Panjalay placed a large bouquet of white lilies at the head of the coffin with these words, "*This is from your eldest daughter Sarogonum."* Those

who heard this were deeply touched. The Naidoo sisters missed Saro who was so many miles away on a different continent.

In 1974 Mahendra was offered a better job in Edinburgh and the Chetty family left England for Scotland. Saro and MP were saddened at the thought they would not see Humsha growing up. Because of the distance the visits would be few and far between. Whenever Humsha visited Agincourt Road she played with her many toys. After Humsha left all the toys were carefully stored in a blue plastic container. MP asked Saro not to send this box away to Suganya's home as this was of sentimental value to him.

Throughout 1975 Saro enjoyed her job at the Morning Star Market. MP had to attend many international conferences during this period while still serving as the editor of Sechaba. He reported on these conferences in Sechaba. Sometimes he was given short notice to attend a conference.

Papiah Naicker and his wife Panjalay returned to London from South Africa in February 1975 after an eight-month holiday. A few months later Papiah was diagnosed with cancer, and he passed away peaceful on 29 July 1975. He did not suffer greatly since his form of cancer was the mildest form. Because the cancer was well advanced when it was detected, Papiah had no treatment for the illness.

Suganya came from Edinburgh when she heard of her grandfather's terminal illness. She stayed at Agincourt Road with her daughter Humsha. Pren was back home from the university for the summer break. MP was also home since there were no conferences at that time.

The MP Naicker family sat at Mr. Naicker's bedside. Suganya felt her grandfather's pulse and noticed that he had gently slipped away. MP whispered, "Rest well, Pa!" The cremation took place at Golder's Green Crematorium. Panjalay later told the family that she would like to have a similar peaceful death with all her loved ones beside her.

Saro did most of the cooking at home except for the rare occasion when MP and Saro were alone. MP would experiment with some exotic dishes. On 16 May 1976 on their thirty-third wedding anniversary, MP asked her to meet him in the West End after work. MP bought Saro a swimming costume. The couple was supposed to eat out but MP asked that they return home for the evening meal. Saro was concerned that she had not prepared any supper.

On the couple's return to 55 Agincourt Road, MP asked his wife to sit down. He then brought in the mince briyani he had prepared for supper. Saro was surprised that he could cook so well. Little did they realise that this would be their last anniversary together.

Saro took her two week's summer holiday at the right time to be with Suganya for the birth of her second grandchild. The timing was perfect. Navin was born the very next day, on 7 June 1976. There was much jubilation in the Naicker/Chetty families. MP came the following weekend when the naming ceremony took place on a Saturday fifteen days after the birth. That evening Suganya and Mahendra invited their close families and friends in Edinburgh for a snack to celebrate the occasion. There were about forty people in all.

At such social gatherings the conversation usually ended with a discussion on South African politics. Someone asked MP what was the magic of his long involvement in the struggle that began when he was only eighteen years old. Suganya and Saro could not believe what they heard. MP's reply was "It's because of Saro I managed to be in politics for so long. She gave me a stable home to come back to." His family was surprised because MP did not praise his family in public.

Suganya decided to play a part in the freedom struggle after the Soweto Uprising in South Africa. She joined the Scottish Anti-Apartheid Movement in Edinburgh. Ruth Mompathi, chief representative of the ANC in London, was very pleased with Suganya's involvement in the organization in Scotland. She was a spokesperson for the ANC. Suganya and Mehandra hosted visitors from the ANC in their home.

In October 1976 in Prague, Czechoslovakia MP was presented with the Julius Fucik Gold Medal in honour of his services to journalism. The Julius Fucik award was named after a brave journalist who was captured, tortured and killed by the Nazis during the occupation of Czechoslovakia in World War II. MP did not tell his family about having received this award.

After his return from Prague to London, MP looked very unwell. After a medical examination that indicated cardiac problems, his doctor advised that MP be admitted to hospital. A complete bed rest was needed. He was diagnosed as having angina. This condition did not allow him to travel by air, but MP put his work before his health.

On the Saturday when MP was admitted to hospital, Saro manned an Indian sweetmeat and savouries stall at the annual ANC bazaar to raise funds for the freedom struggle. The goodies were quickly sold out. Saro then heard about MP's physical condition. She rushed off to the hospital in a highly tearful state. MP reassured her that all would be well. He discharged himself within a week saying that the nurses were overworked. Doctors, however, wanted him to have a complete break from work and stress.

Saro decided that he should go to Edinburgh to be with his daughter Suganya, far away from the continuous telephone calls from his ANC office. Amazingly he listened to Saro. Little Humsha was three and a half years old and was his regular walking companion during his stay with Suganya.

After a month MP returned to London. Saro and MP made their next visit to Edinburgh the following March when Mahendra's niece Kaliyani married Peter Lyle. Their son Pren also attended the wedding. MP was asked to speak at the reception and in moving terms spoke about the coming together of the bride and groom whose parents had played a remarkable role in the development of their lives. The Naickers had an enjoyable time at this family get-together.

At the end of the two weeks of celebration the Naicker family had a marvelous sendoff at the Edinburgh Waverly train station. Kaliyani and Peter made sure that champagne was available at the station for a toast. This was the last time that MP would see his beloved daughter Suganya and his grandchildren Humsha and Navin.

MP would take the Sechaba manuscripts for publication to East Berlin on a monthly basis. He spoke with the typesetters and the printers about the layout for the journal.

Prior to leaving for East Berlin on his April 1977 trip, MP had admitted to Saro that he should have listened to her by taking a complete rest. He apologised for not taking better care of his health. Saro had advised MP to take a complete month off from work and get treatment in East Berlin where he could have expert medical care. This would have then improved his health so he could return to London as a new man.

On Friday morning, 29 April 1977, MP called Saro three times at the Morning Star Market. His last call asked her to take care of herself. Saro responded by saying that he was the person that should take care of himself and should return home safely. Without uttering another word, MP quietly put the receiver down. That was the last time Saro heard the voice that she first heard thirty-four years ago when she and MP first met.

MP passed away on 29 April 1977, at the age of 56, twelve years after being exiled from South Africa. While on a flight from Amsterdam to East Berlin taking the Sechaba manuscript to be printed in the German Democratic Republic, he suffered a massive heart attack soon after the flight took off. MP had always wished for a sudden death without being a burden to his family.

Eric Singh who worked for Sechaba in East Berlin came to the airport to meet MP. At the airport he was shocked to learn that his comrade had passed away. When the news reached Saro she was devastated and deeply traumatised by her husband's unexpected death. This dreadful news was too shocking and unbelievable.



1943: MP and Saro three months after their wedding



1944: Saro and MP in front of their 150 Gale Street House



1944: Public meeting to protest the Land Pegging Act
Saro is in the sari at the left.



1950 Durban Beach
Naicker family



1952 Released from Prison
Saro carrying Pren and being welcomed by ANC President Chief Albert Luthuli



1959: Monty and Marie Naicker's 25th Wedding Anniversary
Suganya dances the Bharatha Natyam

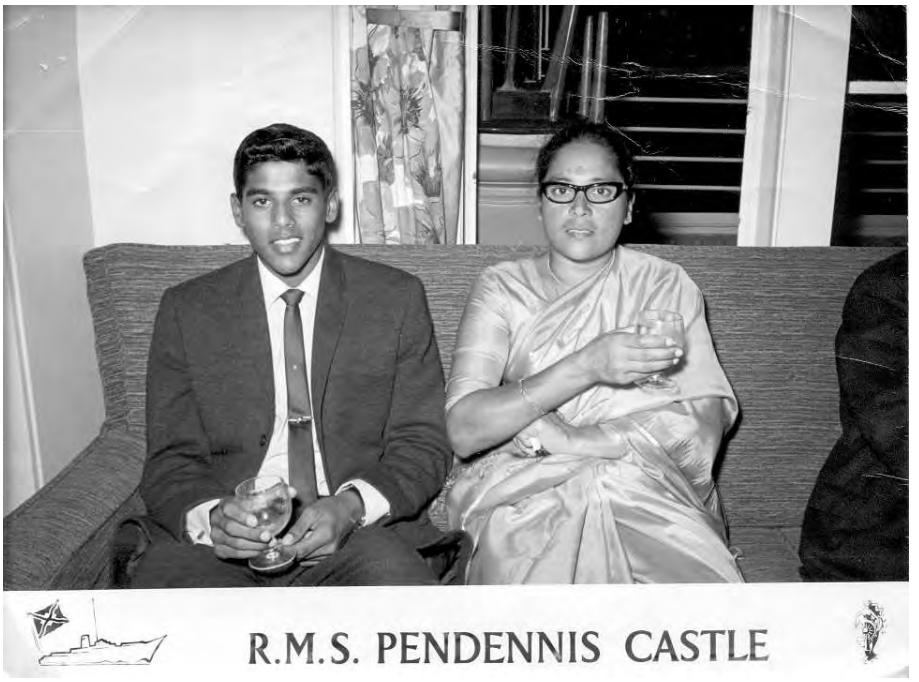


1962 Durban Airport

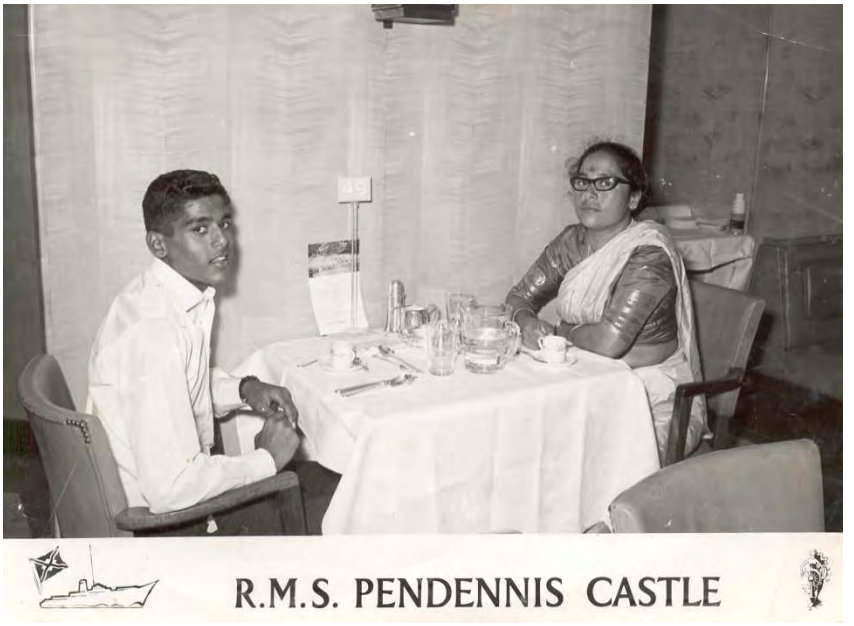
Saro in glasses and next to her are Sathiamurthi, Kannah, Dhanum and Angammah



1967: Pren and Suganya prior to Pren's leaving to England



1967: Aboard the Pendennis Castle bound for Southampton
Pren with his mother Saro



1967: Aboard the Pendennis Castle bound for Southampton
Pren with his mother Saro at dinner



1968: On the shores of the Baltic Sea in East Germany
MP and Saro vacationing with friends



1968: On the shores of the Baltic Sea in East Germany
MP and Saro on vacation



1969 Papiah and Panjalay Naicker



1970 London Heathrow
Moulivi Catchilia an former ANC exile with the Naicker family



1970 At English class in London



1972: Party time in England
MP with Panjie, Suganya and Nad



!970: Suganya's Engagement
Saro and MP with their daughter



1973: Sathiamurthi with Angammah on the left and Seethamma on the right



1976: MP with his grandchildren Humsha and Navin



1976 Saro at the Morning Star Market

1977 CATALOGUE

star market





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Chapter 6: The Struggle Continues 1978-1990

On Sunday May 8, 1977 MP was cremated at Golder's Green Crematorium. His coffin arrived on Thursday. Ruth Mompati, the chief ANC representative in East Berlin, Eric Singh and two other Sechaba staff had been sent to MP's funeral. They brought the coffin with them.

MP's funeral was a very big one with over 500 mourners. He was given a hero's sendoff. All the ANC Comrades and colleagues wore ANC black green and gold arm bands: black stood for the people, green was for the land, gold was for the precious metal mined in South Africa. As the hearse entered, people on either side waved little ANC flags. The mourner's car followed the hearse. The General-Secretary of the ANC, Comrade Alfred Nzo sat in the front seat. On the back seat were Saro, her children Suganya and Pren and MP's sister Indrani. Other close family members followed in subsequent cars.

There were three speakers at the funeral ceremony. The ANC President Comrade OR Tambo who came especially to be at the funeral was the first speaker. Yusuf Dadoo, chairman of the South African Communist Party (SACP) was the second speaker. The third speaker was Brian Bunting, on behalf of the SACP. Three poems were read and ANC songs were sung.

Since MP's death in 1977 Saro's world collapsed. All the special days like birthdays, Diwali did not seem special any more. They were just ordinary days to Saro. Saro was now alone after living in London for many years after caring for a large extended family including her two children. However, life had to go on. Saro continued full-time work, volunteered for the ANC thus keeping fully occupied.

Dr. Hans Treffkorn, Director of the International Institute of Journalism had met MP in London the week before he passed away. He had great admiration for MP's commitment to the South African struggle. Dr. Treffkorn was so moved by MP's death that he sent a message to Saro that the Institute wanted to sponsor a holiday in Sofia, Bulgaria for Saro to recuperate after the tragedy. Saro was in no position to accept this offer so soon after her husband's tragic death but she indicated that she might take up the offer later on.

MD Naidoo a comrade and an advocate who represented the Ladysmith trialists in 1964 came to the Morning Star where Saro was working. ES Reddy (former Assistant General-Secretary of the United Nations and Director of its Centre against Apartheid) sent a message to him to inform Saro that he would arrange a sponsorship if she wishes to advance her education for a better standard of living. Saro replied that she would consider this, but it was too soon to make any dramatic changes.

When Saro felt she was ready for the holiday earlier offered by Dr. Treffkorn, she requested that Pren also be issued with a ticket. She needed this break away from her home and away from the memories of living in that sad atmosphere. Unfortunately, Pren could not arrive from Moscow on time. While packing and checking her passport she realised that it had expired. MP normally took care of such matters for his family and his extended family. He had done all the paperwork for his brothers' immigration requirements.

After having packed, Saro went to the Immigration Passport Office with her bags. The officers were not able to process the passport application the same day. On her return home, Saro called the ANC office in London to inform Dr. Treffkorn of the problem with the passport.

A few days later the passport was renewed but Pren had still not arrived in London. Saro had to go by herself to Sofia, Bulgaria. She missed her husband a great deal having to go on her own. MP was not there to take care of the various travel arrangements. The vacation was not fun any more.

Officials from the Institute met Saro at the airport and took her took her to the journalists' holiday home, the Golden Sands Resort at Varna, Bulgaria. She spent some time watching the waves on the Black Sea from the beach. Dark clouds and the fierce waves did not lighten Saro's emotional load. This reminded her of the turbulence in her life. There were also periods of calm on the Sea very much like her own life. Turbulence and calm intermingled!

The sea at its best is worth watching as it is soothing and comforting. Its continuous flow can be watched hours on end. Saro appreciated this opportunity to be alone with her thoughts and to reflect on her past, present and future life.

After a few days in Bulgaria, Pren turned up suddenly, adding to the joy that Saro was experiencing. It was good to have her son to talk to after so many days of being alone.

The two weeks came to an end. The return trip with Pren by her side was easier. She returned to her work at the Star Market. She worked here until the end of August 1978 when Saro decided to take the opportunity to study offered earlier by ES Reddy. This was a chance for Saro to improve her studies. The grant was finalised and during the first week in September 1978 Saro started as a full-time mature student at Westminster College taking four O-level courses plus basic mathematics.

Saro turned fifty on 25 September 1978. On that day Nad and Panjie invited Saro to have supper with them. Saro only realized she had turned fifty that day after her guests brought out a birthday cake for her to cut. She refused to cut the cake because of her husband's recent death. They understood and did not force her.

Saro continued her volunteer work with the African National Congress (ANC). She worked with the Hampstead area ANC unit that met monthly to discuss the political situation in South Africa. The group was kept informed of the struggle for freedom through lectures, seminars, and briefings from Lusaka and by weekly news briefings. The group then discussed the important issues arising from these.

Each committee member contributed to a Fighting Fund that was set up to help in the struggle.

Panjalay Naicker continued to live with her children in England, taking turns staying with different family members. An Indian lady friend arranged for Panjalay to receive a British pension. Panjalay used part of the pension to contribute to some of her living expenses. She also asked Saro to open a bank account for her. Into this savings account Saro was asked to deposit the rest of her pension. Later there was sufficient money in this account to pay for Panjalay's funeral expenses.

At the end of June 1979 Saro completed all four O-level courses successfully. From September 1979 to June 1980 Saro worked on the A level courses together with courses in typing and shorthand. This was a heavy course load. Suganya and Mahendra eased the situation for Saro by caring for Panjalay so that Saro could concentrate on her studies.

During this time Pren qualified as a doctor in the Soviet Union and returned to London in 1979. Dr. Dadoo exiled in London since the early sixties visited Saro and Pren and requested Pren to go to Lusaka where doctors were needed to work for the ANC. Pren moved to Lusaka that year in early autumn to provide medical care to political refugees from South Africa, including young men and women who were preparing for combat as freedom fighters. MP would have wanted his son Pren to serve in this capacity because doctors were much needed by the movement to care for thousands of exiled refugees in Lusaka and Maputo.

Pren had grown up in the shadow of a father who deeply respected democracy and had paid a tremendous price during his fight against apartheid. His mother's life was not only affected by her husband's involvement but she also participated in the struggle. This legacy from his parents continued to shape the life of this young man.

Saro's brother, Krishna applied to the South African government to grant his sister a visitors' visa on compassionate grounds because of the recent loss of her husband and the need for her to visit other members of the family. This visa was granted and in the summer of 1980 Saro went to South Africa for a two-month holiday.

Since MP's death close family members were anxious to see Saro. She drew a great deal of comfort from the relatives who surrounded her with love and care. Krishna and his wife Vishvani took Saro and her sister Devi to the Kruger National Park and from there to Johannesburg and to the Sun City Resort. They had also planned to visit Swaziland but were unable to because Saro did not have a visa for this country.

Their travel necessitated a stay over on the way. The apartheid system made no provisions for non-white travellers. They were eventually able to go through a back door into a large room where the entire travel group spent the night. South Africans of colour were treated poorly. It would be many years later before the ANC would succeed in its struggle and people of all races would be equal in a free South Africa.

On her return to England in August 1980, Saro started employment at the Morning Star as Secretary to the Chief Executive and the Production Manager.

In 1982 Pren decided to marry Tanya a fellow student he had met in the Soviet Union. The general secretary of the ANC wrote to the authorities in the Soviet Union for permission for the marriage to take place. This wedding took place at very short notice and Saro was disappointed that she could not attend the wedding that took place in Tanya's home village that was twelve hours by train from Moscow.

Meanwhile Panjalay who was living with her granddaughter Suganya had a mild stroke and needed regular care. She asked that Saro not be informed of the latest turn of events because she feared that her daughter-in-law might cancel her visit to Moscow.

Pren came to London immediately after the wedding and arranged for his mother and him to visit Tanya and her mother in Moscow. This visit took place shortly after

the wedding. Saro spent a week with Tanya and Pren and returned to London. A month later Pren left Moscow to Lusaka, leaving his bride in the Soviet Union while her papers were being processed by the authorities.

The weekend after returning to work from Moscow, Saro took an early afternoon train to visit her mother-in-law in Edinburgh. Panjalay awaited this visit by her daughter-in-law and was excited when she visited with some special eats prepared for her. Panjalay had told Suganya that her mother would come with some murkoo and here she was with the prediction coming true.

Suganya continued to attend meetings held by the Scottish Anti-Apartheid Movement. Wally Seroti a South Africa poet and a supporter of the ANC was asked to unveil a sculpture *Mother and Child* in Edinburgh. He was unable to attend and Suganya was asked to do this as she was well known in the ANC circle. The media covered this event and the news was warmly greeted in South Africa. It was encouraging to see a native of the land continuing the struggle abroad.

In February 1983 Panjalay came to London to stay with Saro. Saro continued in full-time employment with the Morning Star.

Suganya visited with her grandmother in London before going to Venice for a holiday with her family. While the Chetty family was still on vacation, Panjalay became ill and had to be hospitalised. During the stay in hospital Saro visited regularly and the nurses enquired what the relationship was. Before Saro could reply, Panjalay spoke up and uttered these words, "My Daughter! My Daughter!" These words spoke volumes to Saro.

Panjalay Naicker stayed at the Royal Free Hospital until she passed away on Friday, 17 June 1983. The funeral took place at 55 Agincourt Road. This was a simple funeral unlike the one that was held for her husband a few years ago. If the funeral were in South Africa there would have been many relatives to mourn her loss. Saro's relationship with her mother-in-law which started in 1942 now came to an end. Saro called Pren to let him know the sad news.

In 1983 Saro was transferred to the position of Editor's Secretary with the Morning Star. The editor Tony Chater needed someone he could trust to work in this key position. This new position was more demanding but very enjoyable. Her work consisted of opening the Editor's mail, sorting out mail of the editorial staff, typing the editor's daily editorial and typing letters for the Deputy Editor. Furthermore, memoranda had to be typed and distributed to various departments.

Saro's years at the Morning Star were very memorable ones. Her positive experiences coupled with the appreciation for her work made this job enjoyable.

On 20 July 1983 Tanya gave birth to a premature set of twin boys that weighed only a kilogram each. Unfortunately, the boy who looked like his father passed away a month later. The surviving twin, Daniel was a comfort to his mother. Unfortunately Pren was unable to be present at the births that took place in the Soviet Union. Saro could not visit the family and did not see her grandson until four years later in 1987 when she was in Moscow attending the Sixth Moscow Book Fair on behalf of Sechaba Publications.

Saro was thankful that the disease Pyloric Stenosis that claimed her first child's life and had hospitalised her son Pren, did not affect Daniel.

Saro continued her monthly involvement in the Hampstead unit of the ANC. In 1983 Saro was elected treasurer and maintained financial records of the unit including monies received from the annual memberships and donations to the fighting fund. The Hampstead unit held the record for having collected the highest amount towards the fighting fund. A further role was typing hand-written minutes taken by the Unit's secretary who was unable to do the typing. She hand-delivered these minutes to the ANC office in London. She continued serving in both capacities for over five years. She participated in all the annual ANC bazaars and she also prepared the food at the Hampstead unit's fundraising socials.

In December 1983 Saro left for Mumbai, India for a six-week vacation. A family reunion was held at a Mumbai hotel where Saro met with 27 of her very close relatives including her sister Dhanum and MP's sister, Indrani. Saro had not seen some of the youngsters before. The family members were eager to greet their relative who had been in London since 1967. Saro chuckled when she noticed that a queue was forming in front of her.

The Morning Star had a news item *Defiance … and garlands* in its August 10, 1984 edition. Mikki Doyle reported the following conversation with Saro: "*Recently I have experienced a joyful interlude—a visit to India, a land of my ancestors which I shared with 27 relatives who travelled to India from South Africa.*

"I am now a grandmother, but I felt youthful excitement on arrival in Bombay and was glad to have a little time alone in that great colourful city. While in India, I always felt safe on the streets, whereas in Britain where I have known harassment and insult. Fear is an undercurrent of life.

"I took a train northwards to spend a little time in Gujerat State where a South African friend has settled. There I glimpsed village life and was impressed by the self-confidence of the women in the marketplace who were selling fresh fruits and vegetables and the cakes they made at the roadside. Some were fashioning beautiful garlands of fresh flowers. Touched by the wistful faces of the children who sold these garlands near the temples, I would always buy from them.

"On the many Hindu festival days even the cattle are garlanded and cows ambled through the marketplace with one horn painted red and the other painted green.

"Back in Bombay, I met my 27 relatives who flew in from South Africa. Among them were my sister, many cousins and children whom I had never met before. You can imagine the greeting, the laughter, the endless chat. …"

In mid January 1984 Saro returned from one of her best holidays to her position at the Morning Star.

Saro's role in the Hampstead unit of the ANC extended to participation in peaceful pickets outside the South African embassy at noon during her lunch break. The British public thus became aware of the political strife in South Africa. Through the news media this news spread to all parts of the world. The Anti-apartheid Movement organised pickets outside the South African embassy. Thousands of the British public

joined in these protest marches that normally started in Hyde Park and moved past Whitehall, and ended at Trafalgar Square in front of the South African embassy.

In September 1984, the thirst for further learning drove Saro to take a course in Urban Community Studies where she learned about the role of the community in uplifting its members. Saro was now involved in research, writing reports and discussing these in front of her peers. The Morning Star helped Saro by giving her time off to attend these weekly classes. The course was successfully completed a year later.

In January 1985 Saro continued working as the Secretary of the Editor of the Morning Star. Saro then moved to work in the library of this daily newspaper. Shortly afterwards Saro changed careers.

Sechaba, the ANC journal that was published for many years under the editorship of MP, had a vacancy. Saro decided this was a good time to move from the Morning Star to Sechaba. Saro was thrilled that she now worked for a journal that her husband MP had devoted so many years of his life to in the struggle for freedom. This job proved to be a highlight in Saro's career.

Sechaba was printed, published and distributed from East Berlin. Saro had different roles at Sechaba. The first was to help Jean Middleton, the Sub-Editor with typesetting articles, proofreading and even writing articles when time permitted. The second task involved circulation and the third was distribution of the journal.

Saro recommended that distribution take place from the London office so that the circulation process could be improved. Eventually this recommendation was accepted and Saro was responsible as equivalent to the Circulation Manager for the process that saw the journal being distributed to various parts of the world, including major libraries, bookstores and individual subscribers. Updating the addresses of recipients, many of who where on file during MP's years as editor, was a major task. Colleagues and volunteers helped update the addresses. The circulation rose dramatically resulting in a big increase in the revenues. These additional finances helped increase the impact of the journal and the movement as a whole.

Francis Meli took over the position of the editor of Sechaba after MP passed away. Francis was very pleased with Saro's efforts and consulted her on whether the ANC could make use of much-needed money. Saro was honoured that she was consulted but replied that this was the ANC's money to be used where the organisation found it was needed.

On April 7, 1986, Marianna, Pren and Tanya's second child was born. After Marianna's arrival Tanya wrote to Saro and to Pren. Pren's letter had to be re-directed via the ANC offices. Tanya was living with her mother in a remote village that was difficult to get to and Saro was unable to visit her new grandchild. However, the following year while at the Moscow Book Fair, Saro extended her stay for a week and she met Tanya and her four-year old son Daniel. She could not bring Marianna because of the long distance for such a young child. Tanya did bring many photographs of the baby. Saro had brought many gifts for her son's family in the Soviet Union.

That year Saro continued to enjoy her job at Sechaba. Her involvement with the Hampstead unit of the ANC continued to help the cause of the struggle.

Entertainment evenings continued to be held on a regular basis, and tickets sold to raise money. Saro prepared meals at some of these events and substantial revenues were raised by these projects.

As she did for several Octobers already, Saro was involved in the annual bazaar day where further funds were raised. Saro took charge of the bazaar table responsible for selling Indian savories. She was able to obtain several donations of items after months of careful planning and communication with potential donors.

In 1987 Saro was privileged to represent Sechaba Publication of the ANC at the 6th International Book Fair in Moscow. This was held from 8 to 14 September 1987. Copies of the ANC publication, Sechaba were made available for sale to those who attended. Sonya Bunting was also there representing Inkululeko, the South African Communist Party publication. Sechaba and Inkululeko Publications shared a stall with books being sold by the International Defence and Aid Fund represented by Ramini Dinath.

There was tremendous interest in the literature of these three organisations and sympathy for their cause. Saro, Sonya and Ramini were kept busy answering questions about their books, organisations and the situation in South Africa. Members of the public requested posters and badges especially those that related to Nelson and Winnie Mandela. The Mandelas were popular in the Soviet Union.

Saro wrote an article in Sechaba which included the following sentence: "*During the week-long exhibitions the continuous flow of the crowd and the long queues waiting from the morning onwards to visit the bookstalls were evidence of the thirst for education and knowledge and the hunger to read within Soviet society.*"

In 1988 Saro continued working for ANC journal Sechaba. On 25 September 1988 Saro turned sixty. She felt that this special birthday ought to be celebrated. This would be an opportunity to get family, friends and comrades together to thank them all for their support during her sad years. She was concerned that Pren might not be able to attend but she was thrilled when both her children arrived to celebrate the event with their mother.

About one hundred guests attended including Comrade Mendi Msimang, the chief representative of the ANC in the London office. The party started at seven in the evening and ended at eleven with dinner and a dance. Suganya made the birthday cake and Saro made mutton briyani, vegetable briyani and salad and salsa. Trifle and chocolate cake were served for desserts. Saro's niece Deena, Panjie and Saroj helped with the preparations. Food plays an important part in Indian celebrations.

Life from this moment on became less painful for Saro.

A seminar on women in journalism was organised in Berlin for six weeks in 1989. Participants came from various parts of the developing world. Saro was selected from the staff working with the ANC journal Sechaba. One of the tasks at the seminar was an essay that had to be written by participants on the principles of reporting.

An impressive diploma ceremony was held at the conclusion of the seminar. Top dignitaries attended this function.

During this period the collapse of the Berlin wall occurred on 9 November 1989. Saro was privileged to witness this historic event. The photo journalists who were at the seminar took this opportunity to cover this event for their respective papers.

Saro was interviewed for her perspective on the result of these changes in Berlin. Saro's response was that the capitalism of the west would lead to further poverty in the lives of the former East Berlin residents. Later a video of this interview was played to the course. The lecturers congratulated Saro on this viewpoint that later proved to be accurate.

In early February 1990 the ANC was unbanned and on 11 February 1990 Nelson Mandela was released.

In December that year Sechaba ceased publication. Saro continued the task of clearing and packing the files until March the following year. The files and related material were shipped to South Africa in containers. All the leaders including many exiled students and others left for South Africa. Only a small number of ex-patriots remained in England.

This group went on to play an important role in supporting the developing democracy in South Africa.

Chapter 7: Free at Last
1991 – 1999

The African National Congress (ANC) asked Pren to travel with Nelson Mandela and the delegation serving as their medical doctor for a six-week world tour. The delegation toured various countries to gain support for a democratic South Africa.

After this important mission, Pren was able to enjoy the time with his close family members and friends. He made a point of visiting everyone he knew. After some months he returned to Lusaka to continue with his duties with the ANC. Small batches of exiles were allowed back into the country.

In March 1991 Pren returned permanently to South Africa.

Saro went in April 1991 to South Africa to meet with Pren and numerous family members while she spent three months in her homeland. This was the first visit to South Africa since 1980 when Saro was able to visit on compassionate grounds after the recent death of her husband. A family reunion took place at the Blue Lagoon on the Durban Beach bringing together members of the Naidoo and Naicker families.

In autumn 1991 Saro returned to London and in September started an Access Course towards university entrance at City Lit, an adult learning centre in Holborn, where Saro had already attended before where she took special interest classes. At the end of the first year she felt that she was not ready to start her university degree. Therefore, the following September Saro started another program called Open Study and which she completed successfully in June of the following year. A major component of this study was a project consisting of 6,000 words on the three major speeches of Nelson Mandela. Saro was now eligible to enter university.

In the summer of 1992 Saro and Saroj left London together and travelled to Singapore to meet their sister Devi and her husband Shun. They then travelled together for two weeks.

After the ANC was unbanned and Mandela's release from prison, the ruling South African government and the African National Congress held many discussions dealing with the implementation of democracy into South Africa. One of these decisions affected the Naicker family. From 1994 to 1999 Pren participated in the integration process of seven armed formations in to the South African National Defence Force.

In the summer of 1993 Saro considered a university degree. After looking at various university prospectuses she chose the Guildhall University in the East End of London. She chose this university because it had a learning centre where students could get help with essay writing.

Saro kept her study a secret from everyone except her two children. She was not confident that she would pass and did not want to be embarrassed.

In September 1993 at the age of 65, Saro enrolled in a Bachelor of Arts degree at Guildhall University as a full-time student in the humanities faculty. Saro qualified for a British government grant provided to mature students to cover the costs of tuition and textbooks.

The first year in university proved to be a challenge because Saro had to juggle studies with her other household and social responsibilities. Saro felt handicapped without having had years at high school to prepare for university like the younger students had. On the whole campus it felt like there were just a handful of mature students in Saro's age group. In spite of these circumstances Saro was determined to succeed.

Meanwhile in South Africa the political landscape was changing dramatically.

In the local weekly newspaper, *Ham and High*, March 18, 1994 issue one of the headlines read "Saro's dream vote". The article included this first paragraph: *"Saro Naicker has been fighting for the vote since she was a girl. She is now a grandmother, and next month, after living in exile in Hampstead for almost thirty years, she will finally get the chance to vote in the country of her birth, South Africa."*

The article goes on to quote her saying *"It's a very exciting time. There is going to be real, genuine change."*

On April 27, 1994 South Africa held its first free elections. Like other countries, South Africans in Britain had the opportunity to vote. It was a bright sunny day and many people arrived ready to cast their votes. There were people of all races, immaculately dressed, waiting to exercise their democratic right for the first time in the history of South Africa. A long queue formed around Trafalgar Square. Because of Saro's involvement with the ANC struggle, she and several members of the ANC were able to go directly into South Africa House to cast their votes.

Election results revealed that the ANC won the election by a huge margin. This party formed the first fully democratic government in South Africa. This was an emotional time for everyone who was engaged in the struggle for freedom. Saro experienced joy and sorrow, sadness that some of the key figures in the struggle could not be present to celebrate the fruits of their labour.

Saro choked with emotion that her husband could not be there to celebrate this victory since he was so involved for such a long time in the struggle for freedom. They had gone through so much together and it was a pity that today she had to celebrate alone.

The celebrations in South Africa House were a historic occasion where people of all races mingled freely sharing in the triumph and jubilation. Dancing, singing and laughter filled the halls.

In previous years this was the very building where people like Saro picketed. They had no desire then to go in to the building. And, this day, they were jubilant inside the once hated building that now belongs to all the people of South Africa, not just the exclusive white population.

Nelson Mandela's inauguration as the first black President of the new South Africa took place on May 12. Saro would have loved to be there to celebrate with her former comrades in the struggle but university engagements kept her in London. Watching the event on television brought back fresh memories of the decades of hardship that finally resulted in this victory.

In June 1994 the results from the university arrived. Saro was relieved that she had passed her courses reasonably well. That summer Saro started preparing for her second year at university, and in September Saro started her second year of the Bachelor of Arts program at the Guildhall University.
In September 1995 Saro started her final year as a full-time student at Guildhall University. This was her final year of study. Even at this late stage only her children were aware that she was studying at university.

In June 1996 Saro completed her Bachelor of Arts degree at the age of 68 years. Saro's daughter Suganya was so excited that she contacted many people in South Africa and London with the good news that spread like wildfire. Congratulatory cards and telephone calls arrived at 55 Agincourt in a steady stream. The three years of hard work bore fruit.

On 10 July 1996 Nelson Mandela who was now the President of the Republic of South Africa, was given the Honourary Freedom of the City of London in recognition of his years of struggle for democracy in South Africa.

Saro was privileged to be invited to attend the following functions.

On the morning of Wednesday, 10 July, a tree planting ceremony took place at St. James Park at 7:30. The morning was perfect for the ceremony with the weather being clear. After planting a tree Mandela made his way towards the numerous guests. Saro was privileged to greet Mandela and chat with him briefly. She recalled seeing Mandela for the first time in the 1950s when MP took Saro and Suganya to see Mandela who was in hiding in GR Naidoo's house. At that time she had never heard of Mandela.

The award was presented to Nelson Mandela in the evening during a banquet at Guildhall. Saro could not witness the event face to face because she was in an adjourning banquet room together with other invitees. Saro shared a table with Denis Goldberg, one of the Rivonia Trialists and Leon Levi, one of the Treason Trialists and his wife Lorna. This group could hear the proceedings over the speakers.

On Thursday evening a two nations concert was held in the Prince Albert Hall. British and South African artists shared the stage. Mandela was overcome with lively South African singing that caused him to stand up and dance to the music. Spontaneously, most of the guests followed suit. The President's humility and jubilation made a deep impression on everyone, especially Saro.

After the concert Queen Elizabeth and President Mandela left the hall together under tight security. His entourage of six limousines was about to leave when freedom fighter Mac Maharaj's wife Zarina spotted Saro. Mac was the Minister of Transport in the Mandela government. He asked the driver to stop the car; he stepped out and spoke with Saro. Bystanders were surprised that one lady could cause an entire entourage to come to a stop.

It was encouraging that people who were formally involved in the struggle and now had senior positions in government did not forget the role played by people like Saro and MP.

On Friday afternoon ANC members met with Nelson Mandela at Kensington at the High Commissioner Mendi Msimang's residence. Mandela listened intently while each person introduced himself or herself. He then shook hands with evryone. This was the last function and a remarkable way to end a week of high excitement.

A few months later, in November at an impressive graduation ceremony in London Saro was awarded a BA degree in Sociology, English and Politics.

After Saro's graduation ceremony Saro and her children and grandchildren together with other members of the Naicker family went to a restaurant to celebrate the occasion. Pren was able to come from South Africa to honour his mother's achievement. There were about twenty people in all.

A few days later the family met at 55 Agincourt House to discuss what to do with the house. Some were in favour of selling the house, but Humsha and Navin supported their grandmother in her desire to live in the same house. Because the house was quite large it was decided to split this into two homes with Saro occupying the ground floor.

Ten days later in December Saro's granddaughter Humsha graduated with a degree in dentistry in Glasgow. It was a capping ceremony quite different from Saro's graduation ceremony. Saro was proud of her granddaughter Humsha's achievement. Only seven family members were able to obtain tickets.

In 1997 Saro started cleaning up the five-bedroom family house. The first step was to reduce the volume of contents in the house. A large part of the family possessions included a large collection of MP's books and papers. These were valuable artifacts of the era of the ANC struggle for freedom.

She approached Comrade Denis Goldberg about dispatching these collections to South Africa. Denis undertook to send the packed 39 cardboard boxes consisting of single monthly copies of Sechaba, the quarterly journals of the South African Communist Party from the very first issue, and other political journals. Saro donated all of these materials to Fort Hare University whose students included Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela. MP would have been pleased with this decision.

Renovations started in June 1998. That year Saro reached the age of 70. In an essay in her writing class Saro commented on this in the following as follows:

"*I was greatly disappointed about my 70th Birthday celebration, as I reached another milestone in my life I wanted to celebrate it. My sixtieth bash turned out to be a very successful one and everyone enjoyed themselves thoroughly. Our seven-bedroomed house was being converted into two flats. Having lost MP and both his parents and my two children married and living their own lives, I decided that a one-bedroom flat will do for me.*

As usual the contractor who promised me that my flat will be ready in three months. It was not to be. Builders are notorious and it took them six months and it was still not complete.

However, I was greatly disappointed on my birthday. I honestly believed that I would move into my new flat and that would have compensated me. Alas this did not happen. On my birthday I got up at the usual time, bathed and washed my hair, got

dressed. I had to wear a sari as I planned to go to a Hindu Temple. For auspices days and ones important days we were brought up to go to the temple. As a mark of respect it is compulsory to wear our traditional clothes when attending religious places.

I had to get off at Highgate underground station on the northern line. A Norwegian women in her late fifties or early sixties also got off and was walking in the same direction as I was. The temple was situated in Archway a good 15 minutes walk from the station. Fortunately it was a downhill walk and this woman seemed to be very happy and humming merrily as she walked with me. We kept chatting as we walked. I then asked her "What is your reason for being so very happy with yourself. I hardly come across people in such delightful, and pleasant mood. She then replied, I have been chosen for a radio script for a religious play which will be broadcast in couple of months. Therefore naturally I am very delighted at such an opportunity as this to come my way at my age". Do you live around here? No I don't I am on my way to the Temple. Do you often go to the Temple. No, said I. This is my special day. I have turned 70 today. What is your name? On telling her, she started singing. Happy birthday to you, happy birthday to Saro happy birthday to you.

I really felt emotionally good within myself that an unknown, foreign woman to wish me on this important day in my life. That made my day. Furthermore, when I got back to my rented accommodation a beautiful bouquet of flowers from my adorable grandchildren from Newcastle Upon Tyne and a present from Suganya, my daughter from Scotland was waiting for me. Lots and lots of phone calls from relatives from abroad and local friends on that day contributed to a satisfactory day after all."

While the renovations were taking place, Saro lived in her neighbour's house next door.

Finally on 7 December 1998, Saro moved into her renovated home. Pren came from South Africa to help his mother get settled in her home. On April 23 1999 the new owner of the first floor maisonette moved in.

Dhanum Saro's younger sister was unmarried and had no family. Saro invited her to come to London for a holiday. On 3 July 1999 Dhanum came to stay with her sister Saro for three months. Saro's other two sisters Saroj and Devi were in Canada on a holiday. The fifth sister Saras was in South Africa.

There was now an opportunity for all the sisters to get together. The five sisters came together in England for the first time since Saro left South Africa. The five sisters Saro, Dhanum, Saroj, Devi and Saras went on a two-day cruise to Hamburg, Germany.

On 11 September, Saras, Dhanum and Saro left for South Africa. On 22 October Saro went to the University of Fort Hare that was the recipient of 39 boxes of MP's collection. Saro was given VIP treatment as she toured the facility. Saro was an honoured guest at a special graduation ceremony sharing the place of privilege with university dignitaries.

On 7 November 1999 Dhanum passed away peacefully in her sleep from a heart attack in Durban. It was Diwali and Saro went to her room early to get her ready for the celebrations that day. Dhanum was meticulous with her hair and clothes. Saro wanted to make sure that her sister was well prepared for the day.

Dhanum remained single all her life. She loved people and cared for them greatly and as a result she was deeply loved in return. Dhanum had joined the Insipingo Beach Senior Citizens Group that met weekly giving Dhanum an opportunity to mingle with other members. Trips were organised to places of interest in South Africa and Mauritius. The group rates were reasonable and in this way Dhanum had an opportunity to tour many places including casinos and holiday resorts.

Dhanum also joined the Tamil women's group that sang at religious functions bringing comfort to many people. The group also undertook wedding ceremonies that proved to be inexpensive for people who cannot afford elaborate weddings. After the wedding this group was totally in charge of catering. At these special functions group members wore white saris and green blouses.

At Dhanum's funeral at the Temple Hall two speakers had many good things to say about this loving lady. Her brother Krish's older daughters Lingesh and Thevaloshni took care of the flower arrangements and the lamps that were lit. As the coffin was taken for cremation the bells in the temple rang loudly.

Saro's heart ached as she recalled the days she and her sister had shared together in South Africa and in England.

Saro used the remaining days in South Africa to participate in several social events where people expected Saro to attend. One of these was the 60th birthday of a dedicated activist Sunny Singh who credited MP for recruiting him to the ANC. Saro's contribution to the struggle was acknowledged by one of the important guests, the former chief ANC representative in London, Reg September. Other senior people involved in the struggle were present at this function including Dr. Masalamoney Pather and his wife Mavis.

At the end of 1999 Saro returned to England where she had to make arrangements for a major contribution to the collection of resources that recorded the struggle against apartheid.

Chapter 8: The Final Years
2000 - 2003

In December 1999 Member of Parliament Billy Nair and Saro visited the librarian at the University of Durban Westville to discuss the possibility of the university housing seventeen bound volumes of the weekly radical newspapers produced for the Labour Movement by Communist Party members. Mark Moonsamy, the university librarian was very interested in the collection since he had never heard about these papers. He felt these would be valuable for research purposes. Saro returned to London on 30 December that year.

From January 2000 until January 2003 Saro communicated with the University of Durban-Westville about the MP Naicker Collection. Billy Nair and Pren met with representatives of the University of Durban Westville to discuss the handing over of the collection.

Saro wanted to write a profile of MP Naicker for inclusion in a brochure celebrating the handing over of the collection. She asked Billy Nair who would be the right person to do this and she was surprised by his response "*Who better than you who lived with this man through the struggle?"* Billy Nair's comments prompted Saro to research and write her husband MP's profile.

After Easter 2000 Saro became a member of U3A, the University of the Third Age whose main purpose was to encourage lifelong learning for those no longer in full time gainful employment. The campus was located in Camden Town a ten-minute bus journey away from 55 Agincourt Road. The first course was entitled "*Write Your Story"* and each of the ten students was asked to do this in no more than five pages. Each story was read in class and suggestions made for improvement.

Now the stage was set for Saro's major writing project that was to undergo further metamorphosis in the ensuing months. A University group organized a trip to Paris in the summer of 2000. Saro went along with forty other students. In Paris Saro spend some time with some of these students discussing their life's experiences. On returning to London, one of these friends suggested that Saro attend the Writer's Holiday in Wales where she could learn more about writing her biography.

In September 2000 a young man named Martin Rice proposed to Saro's granddaughter Humsha. The wedding date was set for 1 September 2001. Saro and Suganya travelled to India to purchase the wedding garments. Saro worked on sari blouses for the bride and her three bridesmaids for the upcoming wedding of her granddaughter. Several trips took place to Edinburgh to make arrangements for the wedding.

In July 2001 the Chetty family and the Rice family got together in Edinburgh at Suganya and Mahendra's home. Saro came a week earlier to help with the preparations. Nad followed a few days later. This was an opportunity to get to know each other and to make some tentative arrangements for the wedding ceremony.

On 1 September 2001, Saro's granddaughter Humsha married Martin Rice in Edinburgh. The evening before the wedding a Nalungu rehearsal took place at Suganya's home.

The mother of the bride Suganya had planned everything well in advance so there was little tension that day and everything ran smoothly. Family members helped with different aspects of the event.

Martin's parents were devout Catholics and the Chettys were Hindus. A Catholic wedding took place in a church in the morning. Humsha and Martin's family participated in this ceremony by reading appropriate Scripture verses and poems.

A Hindu ceremony took place in the afternoon. Saro was ecstatic and felt blessed to witness her grandchild being married. The appropriate Hindu ceremonies were completed under the watchful eye of the beaming grandmother. The Hindu priest explained the significance of each part of the ceremony. Nad's wife Panjie and Mahendra's nephew's wife Marie sang the mangalum.

The wedding reception took place in the evening in another part of the same hotel. After the speeches, the bridal couple led the dancing that lasted until quite late that evening.

Pren continued his work in the field of medicine with the ANC government. In January 2000 he was appointed Director Medicine in the Office of the Surgeon General. In February 2003 Pren was appointed General Officer Commanding, Mobile Military Health Formation with the responsibility of ensuring medical and related services to the South African Contingent Forces engaged in Peace Support Operations in Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Mahatma Gandhi founded *The Indian Opinion* in 1903. The paper was published in English, Gujerati, Tamil and Hindi. This paper was thus able to reach several segments of the Indian population. It served as a form of communication to inform its readers about the injustices being perpetrated against the Indian population by the South African Government.

In that same year Dr. John Dube founded the *Ilanga Lasa Natal.* This paper was published in Zulu and like *The Indian Opinion* it served to inform the African population about the unjust practices of the government against the Africans in their own country.

Both these papers were published in Durban, South Africa. In honour of the 100th anniversary of both papers, a group of community workers, academics and media practitioners met in Durban to organize a conference that addressed the universal themes of empowerment, human rights, mobilization, peace and development in the context of critiquing a century of the alternative media.

At this conference in June 2003, ten journalists were honoured for their contributions to alternate journalism. Saro was privileged to receive a posthumous award on behalf of her husband MP Naicker.

As soon as Saro entered the Kendra Hall she saw a several displays and exhibitions of stories first printed in early editions of *Ilanga Lase Natal* and *The Indian Opinion*. Included in the displays were pictures of people working at the printing presses.

Saro reflected on this function when she wrote the following essay in May 2004 for her creative writing class.

"A Time I will never forget

I was invited as the wife of the late MP Naicker to a 3-Day Conference to celebrate a centenary of the birth of Ilanga Lase Natal started by Rev. John Dube in April 1903. The Indian Opinion started on 4th of June 1903 by the great Mahatma Gandhi. Men and women of courage who have left an imprint in the annals of alternate journalism were honoured. My beloved MP was one of the 10 nominees to receive this great accolade for his outstanding contributions through his work with Sechaba, the official organ of the African National Congress (ANC) and the weekly progressive newspapers in South Africa.

Satyagraha, a monthly South African paper in its May 2003 edition commented, "The alternate Press has been powerful in shaping the freedom struggle in South Africa. Weekly Newspapers such as the Guardian, People's World, Clarion, Advance, New Age, Spark, Flash, Sechaba, Ukusa, Grassroots and Ilanga Lase Natal have been journals which mobilised the South African."

The Indian Opinion was published in four languages namely English, Gujerati, Tamil and Hindi. These papers helped to inform the community on matters of interest and also served as an educational and mobilising tool. These papers were printed and produced on the grounds of the 90 acres of the Phoenix Settlement

The awards were given on the first night of the opening ceremony of the three-day Conference. It was held at a very grand newly-built Kendra Hall. This function took place in a smaller hall which can hold about 150 people. The stage was decorated mostly with green ferns and the colours of the flag of India green white and saffron was draped near the green ferns.

The significance of the colours and the chakra in the National Flag of India was amply described by Dr. S. Radhakrishnan in the Constituent Assembly which unanimously adopted the National Flag. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan explained, "Bhagwa or the saffron colour denotes renunciation of disinterestedness. Our leaders must be indifferent to material gains and dedicate themselves to their work. The white in the centre is light, the path of truth to guide our conduct. The green shows our relation to soil, our relation to the plant life here on which all other life depends. The Ashoka Wheel in the center of the white is the wheel of the law of dharma. Truth or satya, dharma or virtue ought to be the controlling principles of those who work under this flag. Again, the wheel denotes motion. There is death in stagnation. There is life in movement. India should no more resist change; it must move and go forward. The wheel represents the dynamism of a peaceful change."

On one side of the wall a flag of India was hoisted and on the other end of the stage a South African flag was draped. In the centre of the stage a wooden cotton weaver stood. Above it hung a photograph of Mahatma Gandhi seen weaving the cloth.

A panel of six dignitaries was seated at the front. Among them was Dr Pallo Jordan who gave a keynote address on the media. Prof. Uma Dhupelia- Mesthrie spoke on the History of Indian Opinion.

I was too nervous to take in very much. I was too overwhelmed and excited at being the recipient of such an outstanding accolade. When MP's citation was read I literally was trembling and tried my very best to steady myself to collect the award and at the same time felt deeply honoured and proud to receive this great prize. There were about 100 or so people. Only the recipient and few of their families were present. I believe there were some international guests too. Indian women who were there wore colourful saris. After the keynote address we were served with delicious vegetarian supper.

People... these papers did not only provide information, but called the people to action. They helped to organise, educate and mobilise the masses of our people. Their stones are linked to the stones of the freedom struggle.

MP was truly a devoted journalist who took tremendous pride and dedication in the work he loved best and did it well. I would say he truly deserved such a honourable award. He also received two other awards one in 1971 and another also Prestigious Award named after a Progressive journalist who was prosecuted and executed in Prague, in Czech during the WW2. It was a Gold Pin. I still have these Gold Medal and the Pin which will the housed in ANC Museum in Johannesburg, South Africa probably next year.

On Friday evening, in the biggest hall in the same venue our State President Mr. Tbabo Mbeki received the inaugural Mahatma Gandhi Award for Peace and Reconciliation. The President was also recognised for his tireless peace efforts in the Democratic Republic of Congo and for his opposition on the war in Iraq.
It was the final part of the celebration.

On 7 June 2003 at a formal ceremony at the University of Durban Westville, Saro handed over 17 bound volumes of Sechaba. She made the following comments on this occasion:

"The Honourable Deputy President of South Africa, comrade Jacob Zuma
The Chancellor of the University of Durban-Westville and Constitutional Judge Yacoob
The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Durban-Westville, Dr Saths Cooper
The Programme Director, Professor Dasarath Chetty
Distinguished Guests
Our dear Friends, Families and Comrades

Ladies and Gentlemen

Today is a highly emotional day for me and my dear children but a very happy day as well.

As the wife of the late Mariemuthoo Pragalathan Naicker, popularly known by his initials as MP, I wish to sincerely thank the University of Durban-Westville for accepting this rich and invaluable collection of 17 bound volumes of the weekly newspapers printed in the 40's, 50's and early 60's.

The Guardian was launched in 1937 as a journal of the Labour Movement. This weekly newspaper took a political slant and was progressive from the outset. The character of the paper changed gradually, as it aligned itself with organisations such

as the ANC and the Communist Party as their mouthpiece fighting against racism, colonialism and imperialism, and for the liberation of the peoples of South Africa.

In 1950, the Communist Party was banned and subsequently in 1952, under the Suppression of Communism Act, The Guardian was also banned for the first time. This paper was not the official organ of the Communist Party but it supported its policies. The paper was banned because it had on its staff people who were members of the Communist Party.

The Guardian was replaced by The Clarion, which was not different to the Guardian in its role of publicising the plight of millions of oppressed people of South Africa. The weekly paper was not banned but for a variety of technical reasons, it had to change its name to The Peoples World and later to The Advance. In 1954 The Advance was banned and was replaced by The New Age.

In early 1955, MP became the Natal editor for the New Age which continued for 8 years. In November 1962 New Age was banned. Almost all of its editorial staff were forbidden to write or enter any offices or printing presses. A week later The New Age was replaced by Spark – a weekly newsletter printed in the format of an A4 page size. The Spark started out as a 4-page paper. In just three weeks it began to churn out 16 pages of progressive news. Although it was never banned, on 21 March 1963 Spark ceased publication because of the intense political activity at the time. Spark was an underground newsletter and it just could not be produced on a skeleton staff working under very difficult political circumstances. Alas, no staff replacements could be found - so ended these weekly newspapers.

I understand there are only two sets of these bound volumes. Brian Bunting who was the editor of these newspapers for some years donated his collection to the Mayibuye Archive Centre in Cape Town.

January 1967 witnessed the birth of Sechaba and MP was its first editor. He was one of the Indian activists to receive a high post in the African National Congress as the Director of Information and Publicity. He single-handedly brought out this monthly journal named Sechaba - meaning the Nation - for 10 years assisted by volunteer typists. Sechaba served as the mouthpiece of the ANC operating outside the country. Its function and task was to expose to the world the horrors of the racial tyranny suffered by Africans, Indians and Coloureds. It also served as an active participant in the struggle for human dignity, freedom and for the ideals of a free press in South Africa.

MP was an internationalist. He ensured that Sechaba carried articles on the oppressed peoples all over the world. It is not surprising that the journal was awarded the IOJ prize for journalism in 1971. Five years later MP himself was awarded the Julius Fucik Medal in Gold for his contribution to journalism. Julius Fucik was a progressive journalist in Prague, Czechoslovakia. During the Second World War he was arrested, persecuted and executed in prison and this award was named after him.

In 1985 I worked for Sechaba in the ANC Department of Information and Publicity, in London. By then I had in my possession 9 bound volumes of Sechaba. Comrade Selby Msimang, the third editor of Sechaba, advised me to retain and keep a complete set for safekeeping until it was safe to be dispatched to South Africa.

In February 1990, the ANC was unbanned and Nelson Mandela and our other leaders were released. At the end of 1990 Sechaba ceased publication. Our offices were closed and almost all of our leaders left to return to SA. The entire collection of books, files and the remaining copies of the bound volumes of Sechaba were also sent home.

Going through his study after his death, I often wished and hoped that this kind of recognition would take place. After all these years my wish has been realised and I am immensely happy and so are my children too.

When I met Comrade Billy Nair in 1999, I spoke to him about these bound volumes I still had with me. He, in fact, initiated this function which is now taking place. Thank you, Comrade Billy.

I suppose this function was meant to take place. Durban was MP's birthplace and it rightly belongs here.

MP was involved in politics even before he married me. I was 16 years old when we got married (not because I was a naughty girl) but because it was arranged by his very headstrong mother. I believe she decided that her son, then aged 22 and endowed with the enthusiasm of youth, should get married and settle down and lead a responsible life.

As the years passed it became clear to me from the very beginning that MP was married to the Communist Party and the Congress Movement and that they were the most important aspects of his life.

I was pregnant with our first child in 1944 when he was picked up by the police for mobilising and addressing the Indian laundry workers to demand better pay and working conditions. He was locked up for the night. That was the beginning of his active political career.

MP was working as a bakery van driver with his father in the same bakery. They used to start work at 5am and finish at 2pm. His afternoons were taken up for political work. A year later he gave up this job for far less pay to organise the rural Indian communities working for a pittance and in appalling conditions on the sugar cane fields together with the late George Ponen and H A Naidoo. Subsequently, MP was elected Secretary of the Natal Sugar Workers Union.

MP was a key figure in the Anti-Segregation Council of the NIC and helped to transform the Congress into a mass organisation.

In 1946, during the 3rd Passive Resistance Campaign MP distinguished himself as an able and first class organiser for this campaign. He was charged for aiding and abetting resisters. MP was sentenced to six months detention for this. He was subsequently appointed Secretary of the NIC.

On a personal note, considering our marriage was an arranged one, it was successful in spite of it being frequently disrupted. He loved me. Yes, I was his wife and the mother of his two children whom he adored and who in turn in their own separate ways, have done the both of us proud, very proud indeed.

During the 40's, 50's and mid 60's when we were living in SA and then in exile throughout the 70's, I often used to wonder if MP at all appreciated what I had to sacrifice. We were living in a loving, very closely-knit extended family situation. I always felt that I have 2 sets of parents. Whenever MP was in prison or on trial I was totally and economically dependent on the family until I got a job in the beginning of 1962.

I then became the breadwinner and worked until I too was forced into exile with Pren who was 16 years then. I had to leave my daughter Suganya, my aging parents, all my loving younger brothers and sisters and make a home for us, in exile in a lonely and foreign land. Suganya joined us six months later. Two years later MP's aging parents, his brother Nad and his family joined us too.

In SA, MP's closest friends referred to me as the "gaol bird's wife" and in exile I became known as the "grass widow" as he was always away covering international conferences. MP was, however, able to address this by saying that I was his ROCK, that solid dependable being who was out there for him and his family whether he was in jail or in the lonelier years of his life when he had to face the harsh realities of exile and international political life. Indeed, in exile, I became a much closer confidante to MP than I had ever been in the earlier years of his political life.

MP would have wanted me to donate this outstanding collection to UDW because of the University's standing in the community of his birthplace. Many activists were scholars here and some have gone on to serve the nation in Government.

MP would have wanted for the youth of South Africa – the future leaders of our country – to use the advantage of our rich history of struggle to build a fair and proper society for all who live here. What better way than to make available a rare and unique collection on our history for students to study, research and develop the political and social sciences.

Oliver Tambo, the Acting President of the ANC in 1977, had a very high regard for MP and at his funeral said:

"MP has passed away at what is probably the beginning of the most challenging time in the history of our struggle. We salute him for his contribution, one that he began as a young man. And, it is without question the solid foundation he so ably helped to establish, which makes it possible for our movement to meet the demands we face in our revolutionary struggle. The cream of our youth is flooding to the African National Congress today and living up to the finest traditions of struggle. This is the best tribute which can be made to MP and comrades like him."

It is therefore fitting that this University's Archive Centre benefits from this collection which it is hoped that posterity will make use of in this glorious SA to which MP so ably dedicated and devoted his short life.

MP's worldview is immortalised by his words from which we take inspiration - "Don't Mourn, Mobilise".

I thank you."

After the excitement of the awards ceremony and the University of Durban Westville function Saro returned to London exhilarated and full of energy. She recalled an email from her writer friend that she received in 2000 after her trip to Paris. Now was the time to go to Wales for the writer's holiday.

At the end of July 2003 she attended a writers' holiday at Caerlon in Wales. Saro chose a class for people interested in writing their stories. Each student indicated why he or she would consider writing his or her biography. Class members were intrigued by the life that Saro had led and encouraged her to record her memoirs.

Saro returned to Hampstead encouraged and enthusiastic to start her autobiography.

In September Suganya organized a surprise 75th birthday celebration for her mother at 55 Agincourt Road. Here are Saro's comments:

"*My daughter, Suganya rang from Edinburgh to ask me what plans I had to celebrate my 75th birthday. I said, "I have none. Prior to my birthday, I had invited a number of my very close friends in batches of two separate groups, as my flat is too small to get them all together. For this was a kind of celebration but I did not tell them so. Anyway these dinners were prior to the date itself.*

Suganya asked me to come over to Edinburgh during that period. I was unable to do so. In that case Mahendra (her husband) and I want to come over to London to spend it with you. They came a day before. Unknown to me, she baked a birthday cake and iced it, bought 2 bottles of champagne, snacks and so on and had arranged before hand with my next-door neighbour who knew all about the party. So the cakes and stuff were left in her fridge before coming over to me that evening. I only came to know about these arrangements the next day.

The next morning, I was called into their room where three presents beautifully wrapped was handed to me -one from herself, another from Mahendra and Navin, my grandson. I also received lots of telephone calls and cards from my families from South Africa. Humsha, my granddaughter and her husband, Martin sent me a card saying see you soon. I normally receive flowers from them on my birthdays. I never for a moment thought I'll be seeing them and Navin that evening coming over especially to spend my birthday with me. I only knew that a table for three had been booked at a restaurant for 8pm.

From 5.30pm Suganya is pestering me to get ready. I'm getting annoyed with her for rushing me. She then says "We want to go for a drive and then to the Restaurant. As I was getting dressed and was almost ready the doorbell rang. Suganya refused to answer it saying she is not familiar with the intercom. I'm getting annoyed with her and put on my gown and went to answer the doorbell.

"Hello, who is it" My niece, Sam disguised her voice -This is Interflora, we have flowers for Mrs. Naicker. "Come in" To my surprise, my sister, Saroj, my two nieces Sam and Anu and my brother-in-law Giddy full of smiles walked in with more flowers and presents.

Fifteen minutes later doorbell rings again. I was still near the door this time it was Martin and Humsha all the way from Newcastle Upon Tyne especially came over to spend the day with me. What a wonderful surprise it was. Navin of course joined us also to my surprise after work from Newcastle made it straight to the Restaurant. It

was all too overwhelming and exciting for me. I never expected such a wonderful surprise. I cannot believe I have reached 3/4s of a century. The thought makes me feel ancient. What amused me most were the 6 or so colourful balloons tied on to my front gate, apparently to indicate that some celebration was going on inside.

Suganya in-fact thought of everything to make my birthday what it turned out to be."

September 25, 1928 is such a long time ago, 75 years of a life well lived. What the future holds is in the hands of Saro's gods who have guided her through every adventure along her life's journey.

Mrs. Gonum Sarogonum Naicker walked to the kitchen sink, rinsed her teacup and walked to her bedroom very grateful for a wonderful life. She turned her bedside light off and whispered, "Thank you Sangaan for everything!"



1980: Edinburgh: Four generations
From left to right: Humsha, Navin, Suganya (Mother), Saro (Grandmother) and Panjalay (Great grandmother)



1981 Pren at the World Health Conference



1983/84: Kashmir, India
Naicker and Naidoo family on vacation in India



1987: Moscow Book Fair
Sonya Bunting, Ramini Dinath, Saro



1988: Saro's 60th Birthday
Receiving a gift from ANC Chief Representative Mendi Msimang



1988: Saro's 60th Birthday
Celebrating with Family



1983: Taj Mahal, India
Family members with Saro



1989: East Berlin

Relaxing after the International Institute of Journalists' course



1989: Brandenberg Gate in East Berlin



1989: East Berlin
Saro at the one of the lecturer's homes: International Institute of Journalists



1995: Durban, South Africa
Saro with her grandchildren Daniel and Marieanne



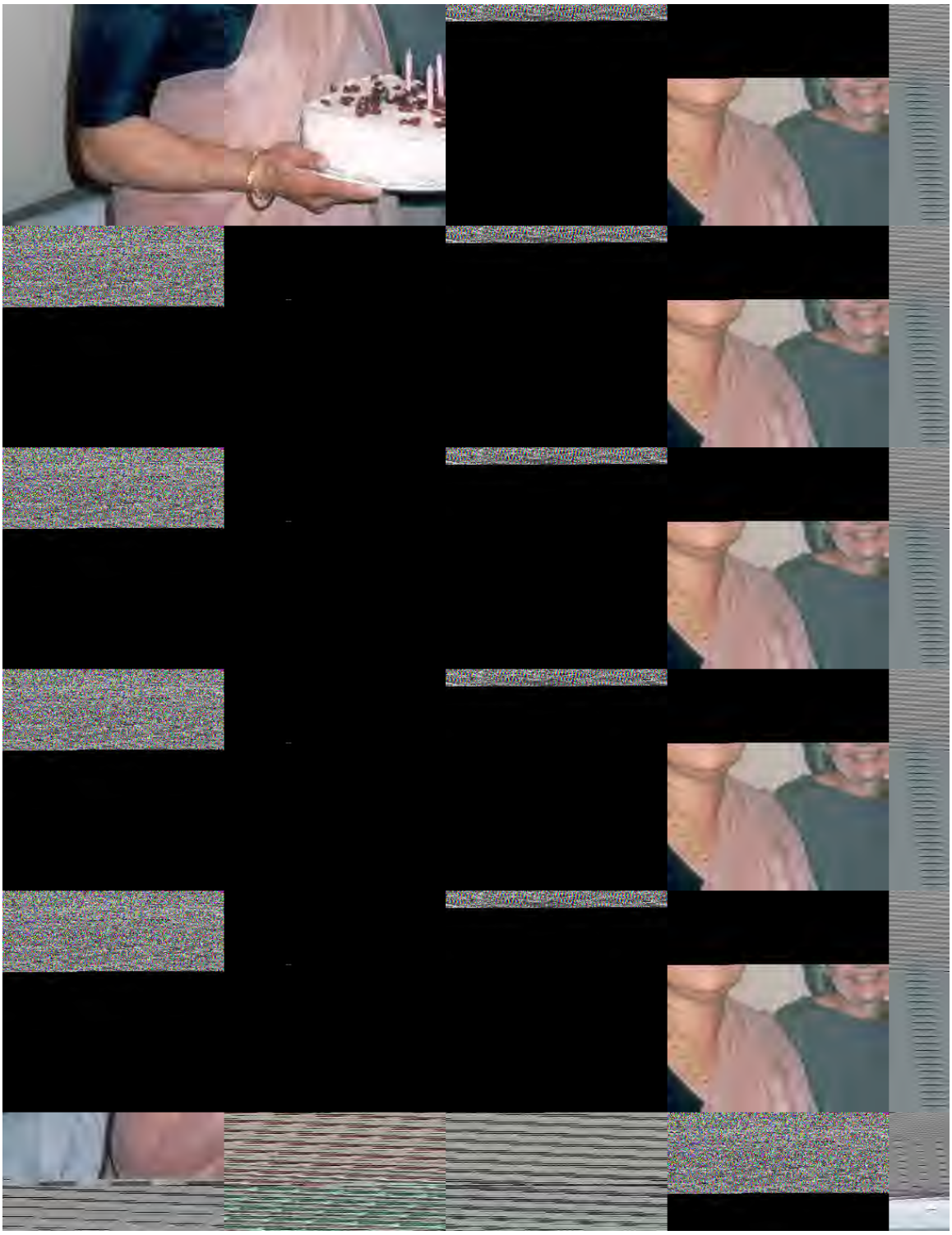
1991: Singapore
Saro with her sisters Devi and Saroj



1996: Prince Albert Theatre, London
Saro with friends at the Two Nations Concert during Mandela's state visit



2003: Saro at her 75th birthday party



1996: Saro graduates with a Bachelor of Arts degree

[Picture lost in conversion to PDF]



1997: Navin Chetty, Saro’s grandson at his graduation



2000: Saro' son Pren in his Brigadier General uniform



2001: Saro’s grandson Daniel Naicker



2001: Marieanna Naicker, Saro’s granddaughter



2001: Humsha's wedding to Martin Rice



2001: Saro with her granddaughter Humsha and her husband Martin



2003: Saro with MP's Gandhi Award. Nad and Panjie share the happy moment



2003: Saro with her siblings



2003: University of Durban Westville
Handing over the MP Naicker Collection



2003: University of Durban Westville
Handing over the MP Naicker Collection



2003: University of Durban Westville
Handing over the MP Naicker Collection.



2003: University of Durban Westville
Handing over the MP Naicker Collectio



2003: University of Durban Westville
Handing over the MP Naicker Collection



2003: Saro with President Mbeki

EPILOGUE

Love for Learning is not the end of the story. It is only the beginning of the next chapter of my life.

Past experiences have guaranteed uncertainty. I had no idea of how my life would unfold while skipping rope at the MK Gandhi Government Aided School on May Street Durban. Today, as I write the final pages of my memoirs, the only unchanging fact is that change is inevitable.

Suganya, my eldest child now lives in Edinburgh with her husband Mahendra. Their daughter Humsha is married to Martin Rice and they too have chosen Scotland's capital city as their current home. Navin Chetty, Suganya and Mahendra's son lives at home with his parents but greener pastures may soon beckon.

Prenaven, my son is a Brigadier-General with the South African National Defence Force. His children Daniel and Marieanna after spending their earlier years in Russia now live with their mother Tanya in South Africa.

MP's brother Nad and his family are now back in South Africa. MP's other brother Coetzee lives in London with his family. Indrani, MP's sister has always lived in South Africa.

My siblings are all in South Africa except for my sister Saroj and her family who came to London five years before me and continue to reside in this city I have called home for over four decades.

The inborn love for learning will continue to shape and re-shape my life. My residence may change but this journey of learning will continue!

AUTHOR



Saro Naicker, wife, mother and political activist left her beloved South Africa in 1967 to settle in England as a political refugee from the apartheid regime.

Saro left school at an early age but retained her thirst for knowledge. Through the turbulent years of political life, Saro always took advantage of any opportunity to learn. She persevered in this quest that culminated in graduating with a Bachelor of Arts degree from the Guildhall University.

MP (Sangaan) Naicker played a key role in the struggle against apartheid. He continued as a leader within the ranks of the group of freedom fighters after his marriage to Saro in 1943. Saro supported her husband in all the struggles that were to follow.

Saro faced one of her biggest challenges in 1977 when MP passed away suddenly while flying to have the ANC international mouthpiece *Sechaba* published in the Soviet Union. Comrade Oliver Tambo, the then President of the ANC presented a tribute to MP at his funeral, *"MP has passed away at what is probably the beginning of the most challenging time in the history of our struggle. We salute him for his contribution, one that he began as a young man. And it is without question that it is the solid foundation he so ably helped to establish which makes it possible for our movement to meet the demands we face in our revolutionary struggle".*

The support of her children, Suganya Chetty and Prenaven Naicker, enabled Saro to cope with life after the loss of her husband of 34 years. Saro's immediate family now includes Suganya and Mahendra Chetty and their children Humsha and Navin, Pren and Tanya and their children Daniel and Marieanna.

This book chronicles the labours of a fruitful and rewarding life, a life that exemplifies a *Love for Learning*. Saro looks forward with eager anticipation to fresh challenges that lie over the horizon.

Saro's desire is that this book will be a source of inspiration to her family and friends.