

# Hello, My Name is Thangamani

Franz Rheinhardt Wise

"HELLO, MY NAME IS THANGAMANI"

FADE IN:

INT. THANGAMANI'S APARTMENT – LIVING ROOM (2012) – MORNING

\*COLOR UNTIL OTHERWISE NOTED\*

The glow of a television illuminates a sleeping THANGAMANI, a Tamil man in his early 30's. On the television is a classic, black and white Tamil film.

Thangamani stirs, removes the sheet covering his head, and wipes the sleep from his eyes. After adjusting his eyes to the dancing images flashing on the screen, Thangamani reaches for the remote control and surfs through a couple of channels before turning off the television. Thangamani climbs out of bed and exits frame.

INT. THANGAMANI'S APARTMENT – GOD ROOM – MORNING

On a shelf in the God Room is an assortment of knick-knacks, memorabilia, and images of Sai Baba, Siva, Vishnu, and Vinayakar. Thangamani, standing in front of the shelf, lights an incense stick and places it in an incense holder. Thangamani picks up a vessel containing red, white, and gold powder and applies the red and white powder to his forehead. Thangamani prays. After praying, Thangamani pretties himself in front of a mirror and steps out of the room.

INT. THANGAMANI'S APARTMENT – LIVING ROOM – MORNING

Thangamani enters the living room and carefully walks around two young men who are sleeping on the floor; both men are wrapped in sheets, heads covered. Thangamani exits the apartment.

EXT. STREET – CHENNAI, INDIA – DAY

Thangamani opens the front door to his apartment and surveys the street.

Thangamani exits the apartment, locks the door, and walks in the direction of an intersection -- a tea stand is in the distance.

Thangamani orders and drinks a tea with sugar and milk; he eyes several parked autorickshaws.

Thangamani approaches an autorickshaw driver and after the two men haggle over the price of the fair, the driver agrees to take Thangamani to his destination. Thangamani climbs into the vehicle; the vehicle drives off. The autorickshaw drives on a busy street, turns onto a side street, and enters a quiet neighborhood. Thangamani gets out of the vehicle, pays the driver, and walks to the gate of a house. Thangamani opens the gate, climbs the stairs, and rings the doorbell to an apartment.

TITLE: "ACT ONE: VINAYAKAR VINAYAKAM"

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE (1980) – SUNRISE

\*BLACK AND WHITE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED\*

VIJAY, a man in his mid 20's, steps out of the house; he adjusts his lungi. Vijay, frustrated, sits down and surveys the village. The sun illuminates the scene. SITA, a beautiful woman also in her mid 20's and the wife of Vijay, appears in the doorway leading to the kitchen; she is holding a platter of food (idli, vadai, rice, and masala). She approaches Vijay and presents the platter to him. Vijay declines, she insists.

\*DIALOGUE IS IN TAMIL UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED\*

SITA  
 Vijay, you must eat.  
 You need your strength; you have to  
 work today.

Vijay accepts the platter. Sita returns to the kitchen.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE – KITCHEN – MORNING

Sita is cleaning the kitchen. Vijay enters the kitchen and hands Sita the platter.

VIJAY  
 I should be home by sunset.

SITA  
 Be careful.

Vijay leaves the kitchen; Sita watches him leave.

SITA'S POV – VIJAY

Vijay climbs into his autorickshaw, pulls the lever to start the engine, and drives off.

BACK TO SCENE

Sita finishes cleaning the kitchen and enters the living quarters.

INT. LIVING QUARTERS – MORNING

Sita approaches a shrine to Siva and begins to pray.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE – SUNRISE

Vijay steps out of the house; he adjusts his lungi. Vijay, frustrated, sits down and surveys the village. The sun illuminates the scene.

Sita appears in the doorway and looks at her husband. She is holding a platter of food. She approaches Vijay and presents the platter to him. Vijay declines, she insists.

SITA

Vijay, you must eat. You know how you get when you don't eat.

Sita pushes the platter in front of Vijay's face. Vijay reacts by knocking the platter out of Sita's hands. Sita, upset, runs into the house. Vijay looks at the platter and the spilled food. Vijay scoops the food onto the platter, stands up, and enters the house.

INT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE – LIVING QUARTERS – MORNING

Sita, sitting on the floor, is upset. Vijay approaches Sita and sits down next to her.

VIJAY

Sita...  
I'm sorry.

SITA

Why do you treat me this way? I try to please you.

(MORE)

SITA (CONT'D)

(beat)

It's not my fault that we haven't had a child.

VIJAY

I know.

(beat)

Again, I'm sorry.

(beat)

I think we are cursed.

Vijay and Sita look at each other. Vijay gets up and exits the room; Sita watches him leave.

OFF CAMERA: SOUND of Vijay leaving the house, climbing into his autorickshaw, starting the engine, and driving off.

EXT. VILLAGE ROAD — DAY

Several autorickshaws are parked along the road. The drivers, except for Vijay, are clustered around one vehicle. Vijay is alone, working on his autorickshaw. A CHRISTIAN DRIVER, wearing a silver necklace with a silver crucifix, approaches Vijay.

CHRISTIAN DRIVER

Vijay, you are always working on your vehicle.

VIJAY

I'm perfecting what I have.

(beat)

It's the only way for me to know that what I have today will function for me tomorrow.

(beat)

Besides, I'm working towards having my own fleet.

CHRISTIAN DRIVER

To pass down to your son?

Vijay returns to working on his vehicle.

CHRISTIAN DRIVER

Vijay...

Vijay stops and looks at the Christian Driver.

VIJAY

I don't have a son.

CHRISTIAN DRIVER

You are married, aren't you?

VIJAY

Yes...

CHRISTIAN DRIVER

And?

VIJAY

I must have done something terrible in  
a past life.

CHRISTIAN DRIVER

Pray to Jesus Christ -- he has answered  
my prayers: I have two strong sons and  
a beautiful daughter.

Vijay returns to working on his autorickshaw; the Christian  
Driver walks away and stops.

CHRISTIAN DRIVER

Visit the church and pray to Jesus  
Christ. He will answer your prayers.

The Christian Driver walks away and joins the other  
drivers; Vijay looks at the Christian Driver.

EXT./INT. CHURCH - DAY

Vijay approaches the entrance to the church, pauses for a  
moment, and then enters the great hall.  
Vijay walks to the pulpit, kneels down, and prays.  
After praying, Vijay gets up, and walks out of the church.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE - DAY

Vijay drives up to the house, stops, gets out of the  
autorickshaw, and walks to the front door. Sita is waiting  
to greet him. Vijay and Sita enter the house together.

## SERIES OF SHOTS

- A) Palm trees moving in the wind.
- B) Lizards basking in the sun.
- C) Crows exploring the tropical landscape.

## EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — DAY (LATER)

Vijay appears in the doorway and surveys the village; he is content and relaxed.

## EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — DAY

Vijay drives up to the house, exits his autorickshaw, and walks to the door. Sita appears in the doorway to greet him. Sita is smiling and Vijay, on seeing her smile, bounds over to her and puts his hand on her belly.

VIJAY

Yeah...

Sita's smile turns to a frown; she looks away.

VIJAY

No?

SITA

No.

VIJAY

Then why were you smiling?

SITA

I was happy to see you.

(beat)

I had a dream that you were in an accident.

And when you arrived home safely, I realized that it was just a dream.

Vijay turns away and sits down; Sita looks at him before entering the house.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — SUNRISE

Vijay steps out of the house; he adjusts his lungi. Vijay, frustrated, sits down and surveys the village. The sun illuminates the scene.

Sita appears in the doorway and looks at her husband. She is holding a platter of food. She approaches Vijay and sits down next to him. Vijay and Sita eat breakfast together; no words are exchanged.

Suddenly, Vijay's eyes brighten and he looks at Sita.

VIJAY

Why didn't I think of it before?

SITA

What? What is it?

VIJAY

Ah, just the other day I saw a performance troupe rehearsing the story of how Vinayakar beat his brother in the race around the world.

(beat)

I picked up a foreigner who needed a ride to the College of Dramatic Arts and when we got there...

EXT. STAGE — DAY

Students are performing a stage play of how Vinayakar beat his brother in the race around the world.

MEDIUM SHOT — VIJAY

Vijay, sitting in his autorickshaw, is enthralled. The spell is broken when the foreigner tries to pay for the ride. Vijay accepts the money and drives off.

BACK TO SCENE

VIJAY

Sita, it was beautiful -- you would have enjoyed it.

(beat)

Vinayakar!

(MORE)

VIJAY (CONT'D)

(beat)

We should pray to Vinayakar.

(beat)

And I will build a small temple, here,  
in our yard, next to our house.

SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY

- A) Vijay builds the miniature temple.
- B) Vijay places Vinayakar inside the temple.
- C) Vijay, exhausted, goes to sleep.

EXT. TEMPLE - MORNING

Vijay is asleep at the base of the temple.  
Sita, holding a platter of food, approaches Vijay and sits  
down next to him.

EXT. TEMPLE - MORNING (LATER)

Vijay wakes up and notices that Sita is praying to  
Vinayakar. Vijay joins her in prayer and then takes her  
hand -- they get up together and enter the house.

BLACK SCREEN

The SOUND of a crying baby FADES IN.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE - DAY

The scene is peaceful except for the SOUND of a crying  
baby. Suddenly, PRIYA, a woman in her early 20's and the  
sister of Vijay, runs to the front door and enters the  
house. After a moment, Priya and SANTHI, Priya's mother,  
exit the house.

SANTHI

Priya, go find your brother and tell  
him the news.

(beat)

And hurry up.

Priya runs off and Santhi returns to the house.

EXT. VILLAGE ROAD — DAY

Vijay is working on his autorickshaw; the other drivers are lounging about. Priya, excited and out of breath, runs up to Vijay. Vijay is startled.

PRIYA

Sita has given birth.

Vijay looks at her and before he can utter a word, Priya, in anticipation of his question, gives the answer.

PRIYA

A boy -- A golden boy.

Vijay and Priya jump into the autorickshaw and drive off.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — DAY

Vijay and Priya pull up in front of the house, quickly exit the vehicle, and run to the door. Santhi and a DOCTOR are there to greet them.

VIJAY

Is everything all right?

DOCTOR

Sita is resting; childbirth was difficult.

(beat)

You should keep an eye on her.

(hesitantly)

She may not pull through.

VIJAY

What?

(beat)

And my son?

DOCTOR

He's fine... though he is a bit small.

Vijay runs into the house.

INT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — LIVING QUARTERS — DAY

Sita is drowsy; she is cradling her son.  
 Vijay enters the room and looks at his wife and newborn child; he's excited but he doesn't want to disturb them. Sita opens her eyes and looks at Vijay; Vijay smiles and joins his new family.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — MORNING

Vijay steps out of the house, adjust his lungi, and sits down; he is proud.  
 Santhi, holding a tray, appears in the doorway and looks at Vijay. Vijay smiles and accepts the tray.

VIJAY

Thank you.  
 (beat)  
 My son is beautiful.

SANTHI

(smiling)  
 He takes after our side of the family.

VIJAY

(smiling)  
 Yes, yes he does.

Santhi smiles but in her eyes is a look of concern. Vijay recognizes this look.

VIJAY

Mother, what's wrong?

SANTHI

Sita has no milk.

Vijay is crestfallen.

VIJAY

What can we do?

SANTHI

I know a wet nurse but...

VIJAY

But what?

SANTHI

She's from the Muslim quarter.

VIJAY

So? Do we have a choice?

(beat)

My son is a Hindu by birth; milk from a Muslim woman can't change that.

(beat)

Can it?

SANTHI

No. I'll search her out today.

VIJAY

Thank you, mother.

(beat)

Do you need a ride?

SANTHI

No... You should go to work.

I'll take care of it.

All is going to be okay.

Santhi smiles and walks towards the road. Vijay looks at the platter and puts it down. Vijay gets up, walks to his autorickshaw, starts the vehicle, and drives off. Santhi walks down the road.

EXT. VILLAGE ROAD — DAY

Several autorickshaws are parked along the road. The drivers, except for Vijay, are working on their vehicles. Vijay sits in his vehicle; he is contemplative. The Christian Driver looks over at Vijay and smiles. Vijay ignores him. The Christian Driver walks over to Vijay.

CHRISTIAN DRIVER

You're not jolly. Why?

You have a son -- your prayers have been answered.

VIJAY

Yes... But my wife is not well and she has no milk.

CHRISTIAN DRIVER

Do you need a wet nurse?

VIJAY

Yes... My mother says that she knows  
of a Muslim woman who can feed my son.

CHRISTIAN DRIVER

All is going to be okay. God is  
looking after your son. Have no fear.

VIJAY

Thank you.

The Christian Driver smiles and returns to his vehicle.

INT. MUSLIM WOMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Santhi and the MUSLIM WOMAN are sitting on a rug on the  
floor -- they are drinking tea.

MUSLIM WOMAN

I charge 100 Rupees a week.

SANTHI

How about 80? -- my son has not been  
working very much.

MUSLIM WOMAN

90.

SANTHI

Okay. When can you come to the house?

MUSLIM WOMAN

I can't -- you will have to bring him  
here. As you can see, I have my  
hands full.

The Muslim Woman points in the direction of the next room;  
the SOUND of crying babies is audible.

SANTHI

Okay. I will bring him over today and  
I will pay you 45 Rupees when I return  
and 45 Rupees at the end of the week.

The Muslim Woman smiles; Santhi finishes her cup of tea and  
gets up to leave.

SANTHI

Thank you.

## MUSLIM WOMAN

Goodbye.

Santhi leaves. The Muslim Woman takes another sip of tea.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE - DAY

Santhi enters the house.

INT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE - DAY

Santhi enters the room where Sita is sleeping. The baby is in bed with her. Santhi approaches Sita and places her hand on Sita's head.

SANTHI

Sita?

Sita does not respond. Santhi carefully picks up the baby, cradles him in her arms, and carries him out of the room.

EXT. CITY ROAD - DAY

Vijay is taking a WESTERN CUSTOMER to a five star hotel. The Western Customer steps out of the autorickshaw and pays Vijay.

WESTERN CUSTOMER

Thank you.

VIJAY

(in Tamlish)

You are welcome, sir.

Vijay drives off.

EXT. MUSLIM WOMAN'S HOUSE - DAY

Santhi, carrying the baby, approaches and enters the house.

INT. MUSLIM WOMAN'S HOUSE — DAY

Santhi and the Muslim Woman greet each other and the Muslim Woman extends her arms to accept the baby. Santhi passes the baby over to the Muslim Woman. The Muslim Woman, cradling the baby with one arm, extends her other arm, hand wide open.

MUSLIM WOMAN

Forty-five Rupees.

Santhi roots around her bag and pulls out 45 Rupees -- two 20 Rs notes, one 5 Rs note -- and hands the money over to the Muslim Woman. The Muslim Woman looks at the money and returns to Santhi the 5 Rs note.

MUSLIM WOMAN

Do you have another five Rupees note?  
This one is dirty.

SANTHI

No.

MUSLIM WOMAN

I will hold onto this one but bring a new one when you return to pick-up the child.

SANTHI

What time should I return?

MUSLIM WOMAN

After sunset.

SANTHI

Thank you.

Santhi leaves. The Muslim Woman looks down at the baby boy and smiles.

MUSLIM WOMAN

Such a beautiful child...

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — DAY

Vijay drives up to the house; Santhi is in the kitchen, washing dishes. Vijay comes up to her.

VIJAY

Hello, Mother.  
 (beat)  
 How's my son?

SANTHI

He's with the wet nurse; I have to pick  
 him up at dusk.

VIJAY

And Sita?

SANTHI

She's sleeping -- she's been sleeping  
 all day.  
 (beat)  
 I'm concerned.

VIJAY

I'll look in on her.

Vijay walks towards Sita's room.

INT. SITA'S ROOM - DAY

Vijay is kneeling over Sita.

VIJAY

Sita? It's Vijay.

Sita opens her eyes -- she looks up at Vijay. Sita starts  
 reaching around her; suddenly, she is horror-stricken.

SITA

Where's my child?

VIJAY

He's with a wet nurse.

Sita is disheartened.

VIJAY

Sita, please don't look that way. You  
 gave us a beautiful son. I am proud.  
 We will overcome this.

SITA

I hope that I am around to see it.

VIJAY

What are you talking about?

SITA

I think that I am going to die soon.

Vijay collapses into his arms.

VIJAY

Sita?

Santhi appears and pauses in the doorway to the room.

SANTHI

Vijay?

Vijay turns around and looks at his mother.

SANTHI

(continuing)

I must be going -- it's time to pick up  
the child.

VIJAY

Thank you, Mother.

Santhi goes to leave the room and then stops.

SANTHI

Vijay, do you have a five Rupees note?

Vijay reaches into his pocket and pulls out a five Rs note  
and hands it to his mother.

Santhi leaves the room; Vijay returns his attention  
to Sita.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — DUSK

Vijay is sitting outside. He has a mile long stare; he is  
worried about Sita and his son.

Santhi, carrying the child, arrives at the house. Vijay's  
mood changes when he sees his son and his mother. Vijay  
gets up to greet them.

VIJAY

Hello, mother.

(beat)

How is he?

SANTHI

He's upset. When I picked him up, he was crying.

VIJAY

Crying?

SANTHI,

He probably needs a bath.

Vijay follows Santhi into the house.

INT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — BEDROOM — DUSK

Sita is asleep. Santhi and Vijay enter the dark room. Santhi puts down the child next to Sita; Santhi leaves the room; Vijay sits down next to Sita. Santhi returns to the room; she is carrying a bowl of water and a small towel. Santhi undresses the baby and then stops. Santhi looks over at Vijay. Vijay notices the expression on his mother's face.

VIJAY

Mother? What is it?

Vijay cranes his neck and looks at his son's tiny, naked body.

VIJAY

Circumcised?

(beat)

Why would she do that?

SANTHI

I'm so sorry.

(beat)

It's my fault. I should not have left him alone with her.

Vijay, angry, gets up and storms out of the room.

SANTHI

Vijay... Don't...

Santhi, upset, watches Vijay leave the house. Santhi returns to washing the child.

SANTHI  
 (to the child)  
 You're father has a temper. I only hope that he doesn't do something that he can't undo.

After a moment, Vijay re-enters the room and leans up against the doorjamb. Santhi looks at him.

SANTHI  
 I'm glad you came to your senses. There's nothing we can do.

VIJAY  
 I know, but...

SANTHI  
 No "buts" -- your son will live because of that woman. You do know that, don't you?

Vijay nods in agreement.

SANTHI  
 Besides, there's already too much trouble between the Muslims and the Hindus.

Vijay, in silence, watches his mother dress his son.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE -- MORNING

Vijay finishes his breakfast and walks to his autorickshaw. Vijay starts his autorickshaw and drives down the road and turns onto the main thoroughfare.

EXT. MAIN THOROUGHFARE -- MORNING

Vijay passes a WHITE AMBASSADOR traveling in the opposite direction.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — MORNING

The white Ambassador drives up to the house and the Doctor and a government official, MR. KUMAR, get out of the car and walk to the house. The Doctor announces their arrival.

DOCTOR

Hello?

Santhi, cradling the newborn child, appears in the doorway; she looks at the Doctor and then to Mr. Kumar.

SANTHI

Hello, doctor.

DOCTOR

This is Mr. Kumar. He is here to register the newborn child.

SANTHI

Please come in.

DOCTOR

Mr. Kumar, I'll wait outside.

Mr. Kumar follows Santhi into the house.

EXT. VILLAGE ROAD — MORNING

The DRIVER of the white Ambassador is wiping down the car; the Doctor is watching him.

EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — MORNING (LATER)

Mr. Kumar, holding the birth certificate, exits the house and joins the Doctor. The Doctor looks at the piece of paper.

DOCTOR

Thangamani?

MR. KUMAR

Yeah, Thangamani.

The Doctor and Mr. Kumar get into the car; the car drives off and down the road.

## EXT. MAIN THOROUGHFARE — MORNING

The white Ambassador turns on to the main thoroughfare and passes an autorickshaw -- the driver of the autorickshaw is Vijay. Vijay, recognizing the Doctor in the car, hurries to his house.

## EXT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — MORNING

Vijay pulls up in front of the house, quickly exits the vehicle, and runs to the front door. Santhi is sitting outside; she is enjoying the morning sun.

VIJAY

I just saw the doctor drive by -- Is everything okay?

SANTHI

Yes, the doctor and a government official were here to register the child.

VIJAY

Whew! Seeing the doctor had me worried.

Vijay and Santhi enter the house.

## INT. VIJAY AND SITA'S HOUSE — LIVING QUARTERS — DAY

Vijay enters the room, Santhi steps back. Vijay kneels down to look at his son.

VIJAY

How is he?

SITA

Thangamani is fine.

VIJAY

Thangamani?

(beat)

Vinayakam! His name is Vinayakam.

SITA

I'm sorry. I registered him as Thangamani.

VIJAY

Thangamani?  
 But I thought...  
 I built a temple to Vinayakar and we  
 prayed to him; it only makes sense that  
 we would name our son after the God who  
 delivered us from hardship.

SITA

I know.  
 (beat)  
 But just look at him -- he's golden,  
 like a golden bell.

Vijay, miffed, walks out of the room; Santhi and Sita watch  
 him leave.

OFF CAMERA: Vijay starts the vehicle and drives off.

EXT. VILLAGE ROAD — DAY

Vijay is working on his autorickshaw; he is alone. Priya,  
 upset and out of breath, runs up to Vijay. Vijay is startled.

VIJAY

Priya? What's wrong?

PRIYA

It's...

VIJAY

Priya?

PRIYA

It's...

VIJAY

No! Not my son?

PRIYA

No. It's Sita.

(beat)

She's dead.

Vijay, distraught, gets into the autorickshaw and starts  
 the engine.

VIJAY

Priya, get in!

Vijay and Priya drive off.

The SOUND of a RINGING doorbell FADES IN.

INT. MODERN HOUSE (2012) – MORNING

\*COLOR\*

The SOUND of the RINGING doorbell continues.  
An older CAUCASIAN MAN, dressed in western clothing,  
approaches the door and opens it.

CAUCASIAN MAN'S POV – THE OUTSIDE

The door opens onto the world; no one is visible until the  
Caucasian Man looks down and sees a Tamil Man in his early  
30's. The Tamil Man, wearing a baseball cap with a large  
bill and smiling, looks up at the Caucasian Man.

THANGAMANI

(in Tamlish)

Hello.

(beat)

My name is Thangamani.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE