

The King had always been fond of hunting. It was a passion with him. He had reached the banks of the Ganga and it was there he saw her. She was like a vision, there she stood, her skin glowing like gold. Her eyes were large and lustrous and her hair which she combed with her fingers was long, looking like the proverbial Rahu trying to envelop the moon. He stood rooted to the spot drinking her with his eyes, it seemed to him that a nymph from the high heavens had descended on the earth to feast his eyes and only his eyes. He approached her, she turned on hearing the noise and looked at him. A blush suffused her face which became downcast, a smile hovered on her lips. Her toes were tracing patterns on the ground below and her fingers, which were like ivory sticks, twined and untwined the strands of her dark hair. A moment later she lifted her eyes and looked at him. He knew then that she cared for him.

He went near her, he took her reluctant hand in his and said "you are so beautiful, i want you to be mine, i am Santanu, the King of Hastinapura, i love you, i cannot live without you" She smiled and said "The moment i looked at you i knew that i had to be yours. I will be your queen, but there is a condition. You must not cross me in anything at any time, the moment you displease me i will go away from you never to return". "So be it" said the lovelorn king and led her to his city.

She was, to him, the ideal wife, a companion in every sense of the word. She pleased him immensely with her charm, her beauty, her sweet words and her many good qualities. He lost count of time when he was with her. She was called Ganga.



Days passed by, months too. Ganga bore the king a son and his joy was immense. At last, a son and heir had been born to adorn the time honoured throne of the great Pauravas. He hastened to the queens chambers, he was told that she was not there. He heard that she had hurried to the banks of the river Ganges with the new born child clasped in her arms. He could not understand. He hurried to the river bank and there his horrified eyes saw a scene which he

could never blot out from the tablets of his memory. Ganga, his dear beloved Ganga, had just flung the new born into the river. There was a look on her face which teased him for days together. She looked as though a great load was off her mind. He wanted to ask her, but he could not. He remembered the promise he had given her that he would never, never cross her and displease her.

It happened again a year later and again and again. Seven of the king's sons were thrown into the river by Ganga. The king was silent. Love they say is blind, but no, it's an extra eye which sees only the good in the beloved, blind to all the other faults. Ganga meant his very life to the king, but then the desire for an heir was just as powerful. He knew no peace, a year passed thus. The eighth child was born, Ganga rushed to the river with the child clasped in her arms. The king was speechless with grief and anger, he rushed behind her, he held her back, he spoke harshly to her for the first time. He said "what inhuman act is this? I cannot bear it any longer, I cannot see all my sons destroyed like this. Why do you do it? How can a mother, or anyone for that matter, break the stem of a flower ere yet it blooms? Please give me this one son. I cannot keep silent any longer.

There was a strange smile on the lips of Ganga, it was sad and it was happy too. She spoke very gently to the king. She said "My lord the time has come when I must leave you, you have broken your promise, I must hurry away from here. This child of ours will live, I will take him with me and give him back to you when the time comes. I will call him Devavrata, his other name will be Gangeya. The king was numb with woe, he could not follow all she was saying. He knew only this, the woman who meant everything to him, was about to leave him forever. And all because he had asked her not to kill his eighth son. He looked at her with mute appeal in his eyes, words came to his lips "Why do you do this to me? Can you not see that my life is bound up in you and that I cannot live without you? You cannot abandon me and go away. Ganga, you loved me once, in the name of that love I implore you, do not leave me and go away.

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