

Daughter of Shiva

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Late 1800s. Margaret was the daughter of the British governor of India, the Jewel of the Crown of the British Empire at its peak. She grew up spoiled and used to a life of luxury based on the exploitation of the native people of that glorious land.

A powerful religious leader, one of the few remaining independent authorities remained in the hands of the Indians, began working at a powerful potion that would show her and her father the true power of India.

He began working on this project as soon as Margaret's father, the Governor, decided to destroy an ancient Hinduist temple in order to build a new railway, ignoring the protests of the native people of India.

He decided to target his daughter to gain control over him instead of directly eliminating him as in that case he would simply be replaced by another one sent by the United Kingdom.

He summoned all his powers to produce a potion able to mold everybody who ingested it into any appearance he desired.

DAUGHTER OF SHIVA



Margaret was notoriously addicted to sweets of any kind so one day the religious leader lead a delegation at the palace of the Governor to advocate for his people's rights. As a present, he brought among other goods a good amount of fine pastry and biscuits baked with the potion, which he was sure would end up on Margaret's table.

Indeed, after having been refused to be seen by the Governor, busy elsewhere, the biscuits were eventually served during an official ceremony to mark the anniversary of the coronation of queen Victoria and caught the girl's attention. She grabbed a whole bunch of them and began enjoying their flavour. She felt weird and decided to retreat into her private rooms. Maybe she had eaten too many of them, she thought.

That night, she slept deeply while her appearance changed quite dramatically. Her complexion darkened significantly and her face became unrecognisable. In the early morning, one of the Indian servants working in the Palace took her, dressed her up in a traditional Indian attire and sneaked her out of the residence, while she was still sleeping. She had been altered beyond recognition so nobody recognised her as Margaret and assumed she was just an Indian servant girl who was feeling sick.

DAUGHTER OF SHIVA



Margaret was carried in a Hinduist temple and finally woke up feeling groggy. She quickly realised something had gone wrong. Her nostrils had been pierced by a ring, following the fashion used among Indian women, and her elegant dress had been replaced by a Saree.

“Good grief, what have those barbarians done to me?” - she cried -
“What do you want from me?”

The high priest smiled and replied “Such arrogance, you are not the daughter of the British Governor anymore. You are just a daughter of Shiva, and as such you need to learn modesty and good behaviours if you want to get married one day!”

“Stop with this nonsense please, of course I am and will always be by father’s daughter. Now you mention it, he’ll most certainly find me any time soon, so you had better free me if you don’t want to face his ire! I would escape myself but I can’t be seen wearing such garments, even my hands are decorated with rings... Why is my hand so brown?” - she noticed, alarmed.

“You are finally starting to realise more than your attire has changed. This happens to those who disrespect the temples of Shiva. Present her an ample mirror, so this young lady will be able to see her new beauty!”

DAUGHTER OF SHIVA



Margaret was too shocked to speak for a while. Not only her pale skin was much darker now, like a native Indian girl, but her red hair had turned dark brown and even facial features had shifted to match her new Indian heritage.

"I'm... I'm one of your people now."

"Precisely, you are a Hindi girl now and you will have to follow our traditions and customs. You will write a letter to your father the Governor where you will explain him that our power is real and that he should listen to us from now on."

"But... My father will never believe this, he would think the letter is a forgery! Maybe I ought to return to the Palace in my new form, although I'm dreading to be seen like this by everybody..." - replied Margaret and began weeping at the mere thought of that.

"Wise words, young lady, I will consult the high Council and we will deliberate on our next move before the sunset. In the meanwhile, our women will instruct you on your new lifestyle. Please, escort her in her new room. It's not as magnificent as what you are used to but it's a honest accomodation."

What happens next?

A. She is sent back to her father's palace but nobody believes it is indeed her

B. She writes a letter to her father but he doesn't believe her

C. The governor finds where she is hidden, kills the priests and takes her as a servant as he does not recognise her

DAUGHTER OF SHIVA



When they tried to make contact with the Governor, he sent in a small division of British troops which found where his daughter was held prisoner, slaughtered the high priest and with him everybody who was aware of what had happened to Margaret.

Not seeing any Caucasian girl around, they searched elsewhere for Margaret and when she tried to convince them of what had happened, they thought the poor Indian girl must have been drugged by the priests.

She begged them to bring her back to the city where the governor's residence was and they complied, feeling bad for the girl who had clearly gone crazy.

She tried to get in touch with her true father but he was too heartbroken for the loss of his daughter and the people around him didn't want to let this crazy Indian girl to give him false hope with her strange ideas.

She was hosted for a few days in the governor's place as they felt pity for the lonely crazy girl but seeing how she was constantly trying to speak in the Governor's rooms they eventually kicked her out of the palace.

DAUGHTER OF SHIVA



Living on the streets was a brutal experience for the poor girl. She had to sell her precious garments and jewels in order to have enough rupees survive but after a few days she got robbed and was left with little choice.

Growing up in a very wealthy family she never had to worry about her income but now she was faced with the harsh reality. Her looks attracted many glances from the men around her, especially now that she was showing some skin.

She stopped for a moment to reflect on her chances. She could either prostitute herself, there were plenty of girls doing that on the streets, and she had the body for it, or she could return to the governor's palace and beg them to keep them as a servant. She would just ask for food and a place to stay and she would never try to contact the governor again. Being so close yet so far from her former life was going to be hurtful but it was still the better option, so she approached the palace and humbly asked to be readmitted as a servant.

DAUGHTER OF SHIVA



Margaret was now obliged to dress modestly and to cover most of her head with a headscarf not to distract the men working in the governor's palace.

She eventually picked up some Hindi from the other maids and slowly integrated in the local society. Of course, not having a family behind her and having such a humble mansion as being a servant meant that her social status was very low in the Indian society but she could still hope to marry into a somewhat wealthier family thanks to her good looks.

Being used to the perspective of marrying into the British nobility, the idea of marrying the son of a local carpenter was not very palatable at first but she realised it was probably the best to hope for. At least, as a married woman she wouldn't have to work the whole day as she was doing now!

Margaret took the Indian name Manya and accepted her new role as a traditional Indian wife and mother.