



Gandhini

Eka Live

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A life of service.

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Gandhini

Her wait is over.

Gandhini packs the carry bag for her son, Karthy. He is going on a long tour of five cities, having recently finished three performances in three Sabhas - it was a glorious madras music season, at least for him. It has been hectic for Gandhini, so far. But she is almost done. This is the final leg of this year for Karthy. There is one more thing to be done and then she is free. Gandhini is getting ready to get some life back.

She rests. Time passes slowly now.

Karthy is going to become a great singer: that is Gandhini's dream and she knows it. She will do whatever it takes to get him there. Not because of what she wants, but because that is what Karthy wants.

She found his talents early, when he was five. He was a silent boy and never spoke much. But one day, he started singing along with the radio station, in the "hall", the living room, while she was cooking. This would have been a normal day, had it not been for their neighbour, who came in unannounced, listened, cried in happiness and left him a gift of Amul chocolates - a treasure for a five year old!

Since then, Gandhini has been trying to get Karthy as much music time as she can. It is a constant struggle, since she lives in a colony that can give Cupertino a run for their money. Students carry twice their body weight in books

from the age of 3, and it never lightens. As a local Gym trainer said, *“too bad they don’t compete in deadlifts and squats amma, they’ll easily win in the under-age category”*.

In all schools in the colony/neighbourhood, the sticks are literal, and the carrots are imaginary. Gandhini tries hard to get Karthy to escape his destined reality. She is not popular with the teachers, or the other parents. She always “cooks up trouble, thinking of leisure time for children”. But that’s what she can do. That’s what she wants, and that’s enough for her. Her role in life was never pre-ordained, but it is what it is now.

Gandhini thinks she is past trying for what she needs. She had dreams. Aspirations. Hopes. Fantasies. It all began when she was 5. She fell over from the parapet wall of her rooftop, trying to catch a butterfly - and landed 10 feet down into the grassy backyard. Miraculously she escaped. Even more miraculously, she dodged the verbal arrows of her parents. She knew very well what a panic stricken parent in unconditional love of their child would unleash. On that day, however, her mother simply smiled and her father said “It is ok Gaani, you grow only by making mistakes, ok? Now go and play, go go”. Yes, she thought. She can make mistakes, honest ones. And she had to try better than anyone else. Life long.

Since that day, she tried hard for everything, no matter how risky. It was reinforced at school when her teacher introduced her to Bharathiyar the great Tamizh poet. Reading his works, Gandhini was afire, ready to change the world.

Her hero was Kannagi, not one of the gods, but a historical figure from South India. She would fight for her right whenever it was due.

Gandhini was going to become a poet activist, just like her idol, Bharathiyar.

Gandhini was also the topper in her school and college. In extra curriculums, she won every poem recitation contest there was. That's how she found Virat, and their life became her best poem. For a while, it was all exactly the way she wanted it. Then came the typical Indian trap-pings. Infinite wisdom crept into their lives, purely through benevolent intentions from harmless family members (you wouldn't know from their actions, you had to imagine that it was in their hearts so). Her vision blurred. Bharathiyar was demoted from activist into a merely superlative poet. Mother Teresa was for feel good documentaries, not for a lifestyle to pursue. Loans, both taken and given, took from them more than it gave them. They moved around, in pursuit of dreams that remained so.

Slowly, she gave away what she wanted. Not because that's what she wants, but because that's what Virat wanted. She would do whatever it took to get him there. That became Gandhini's dream even before she knew it: Virat is going to be a great Businessman.

Time passes slowly now. But Gandhini never rests.

She is always hoping to get some life back. There is one more thing to be done and she will be free. There is the

matter of the final leg in Virat's ascent in his company. He had just finished a wonderful 2 years finishing up a rehaul of his organization, and is going on a long business tour. Gandhini packs the suitcases for her husband, Virat.

Her wait is never over.