

The Holy River Ganges

Many years ago lived a wise and benevolent king called Sagura who had 60,000 brave and honest sons. One day, the sons were out looking for their father's horse when they were all, except for one son, burned by the glare of an angry fortune teller who they had disturbed. They were instantly turned to ashes. This was a terrible way for them to die, and their souls would never find freedom.

In time King Sagura gave up his throne and his grandson became king. He had heard the terrible story of the 60,000 sons whose souls were trapped, and he was filled with sorrow. What could he do? The young king prayed to the powerful God, Lord Vishnu, for help.

Lord Vishnu took pity on the young king and ordered the River Goddess Ganga to go to earth. If the River from heaven, the Goddess Ganga, would go to earth, the souls of the 60,000 sons would be washed clean and pure and become free. But Ganga did not want to move. Lord Vishnu tried to persuade her; again and again he coaxed and encouraged her until she became very angry. She became so angry that eventually she plunged with thundering, churning waters towards the earth in a huge rage. If she crashed onto the earth with such ferocity the earth would be shattered and all would be lost.

Another God was looking on. The great God Shiva could see the earth in peril and moved swiftly. He caught the holy river Ganga in his long, black hair as she plunged towards the earth, and she became lost and tied up in the tangles and knots. When Ganga was finally released she was a calm river that flowed gently to the earth. The river flowed across India and found its way to the souls of the 60,000 sons. Their ashes were washed clean by the holy river and their souls were released to find eternal bliss. This holy river was the River Ganges.