

Immortal Love Legend:

*The Story Of Savitri And Satyavan*

Adapted From About.com: Hinduism And Wikipedia

This is a story from the epic Mahabharat. The moral of the story is that one can beat all odds in life through true love and devotion. The story illustrates the interplay of karmas and pseudo-karmas. The thoughts, gestures and actions of one individual serve as pseudo-karmas (instrumental cause, NIMITTA KAARAN) in modifying the fruition of karmas of another individual. - DCJ

Savitri was the beautiful daughter of a wise and powerful King Ashwapati. The fame of Savitri's beauty spread far and wide, but she refused to marry, saying that she would go out in the world and find a husband for herself. So the King chose the best warriors to protect her, and the princess wandered throughout the country searching for a prince of her choice.

One day she reached a dense forest, where dwelt King Dyumatsen who had lost his kingdom and fallen into bad days. Old and blind he lived in a small hut with his wife and son. The son, who was a handsome young prince, was the sole comfort of his parents. He chopped wood and sold it in the countryside, and bought food for his parents. The family lived in happiness and peace. Savitri was strongly drawn towards them. She knew her search had come to an end. Savitri fell in love with the young prince, who was called Satyavan (meaning the emblem of truth). Satyavan was known for his legendary truthfulness.

Hearing that Savitri had chosen a penniless prince, her father, King Ashvapati, was heavily downcast. But Savitri was bent on marrying Satyavan. The King consented, but a saint forewarned him that the young prince was doomed to die in one year. The King told her daughter about the premonition and asked her to choose someone else. But Savitri stood firm in her determination to marry Satyavan. The King finally agreed with a heavy heart.

The wedding of Savitri and Satyavan took place with a lot of fanfare. After the ceremony, the couple went back to the forest hut. For a whole year they lived happily. Three days before the foreseen death of Satyavan, Savitri took a vow of fasting and vigil. Her father-in-law told her she had taken on too harsh of a regime, but Savitri replied that she had taken an oath to perform those austerities, at which Dyumatsen offered his support. She stood firm in her

resolve and adhered to a higher spiritual commitment. Dyumatsen appreciated her determination.

On the last day of the year, Savitri rose early and when Satyavan picked up his axe to go into the forest to chop wood, she requested him to take her along. The two went to the jungle.

Under a tall tree, Satyavan made a seat of soft green leaves and plucked flowers for Savitri to weave into a garland while he chopped wood. Towards noon Satyavan felt a little tired, and after a while he came and lay down resting his head in Savitri's lap. Suddenly the whole forest grew dark, and then Savitri saw a tall figure standing before her. It was Yama, the God of Death. "I have come to take your husband," said Yama. He looked down at Satyavan as his soul left his body.

When Yama was about to leave, Savitri ran after him, and pleaded with Yama to either take her along with him to the land of the dead or give back the life of Satyavan. Yama replied, "Your time has not yet come, child. Go back to your home." But Savitri insisted on accompanying her husband. Yama was impressed and agreed to grant her any boon, except Satyavan's life. Savitri asked, "Let me have a wonderful son." "So be it", replied Yama. Then Savitri said, "But how can I have a son without my husband, Satyavan? Therefore I beg of you to give back his life." Yama had to give in! Satyavan's body came back to life. He slowly woke up from the stupor and the two gladly walked back to their hut.

So strong was the single-minded love and determination of Savitri that she chose a noble young man for her husband, knowing that he had only a year to live. She married him with all confidence. Even the God of Death had to relent, and bowed to her love and devotion.

***Yama can be taken to be symbolic of a serious life-threatening disease and the wish for the birth of a son signifies optimism. Savitri's entreaty represents the medical treatment coupled with her genuine devotion, conscientious care and dedicated service that resulted in the full recovery of Satyavan. The gestures and actions of Savitri served as pseudo-karmas in modifying the fruition of Satyavan's karmas.***