

A faithful wife

A Hindu story

Key ideas: faithfulness, loyalty, kindness, wisdom

One day when Savitri was walking in the jungle she met a boy called Satiwan who lived there and who looked after his blind mother and father with great kindness. Over time she got to know Satiwan, and she told her father she wished to marry him.

Savitri's father consulted with the family and asked the astrologers if this would be a suitable match for his daughter and, if so, when would be the best day for the wedding. The astrologers warned the families that Satiwan was going to die within a year, but Savitri was determined to marry him.

The wedding took place, but Satiwan had to promise to take Savitri wherever he went. At the end of the year the husband was bitten by a snake. Savitri sat down beside him and took his head in her lap as he died. Yama, God of death, sent his messengers to take away Satiwan's life. They were unable to do so while Savitri was touching him so they asked her to lay him on the ground.

Sadly, Savitri did so, but then she followed the messengers and refused to go back. Over mountains and rivers, over seas and through fire and tempest Savitri followed the messengers. As she still would not return to her home the God, Yama, came to persuade her, but she still refused to part with her husband.

The Lord Yama said, 'I will grant you three wishes if you return tonight'. Savitri then said, 'My mother and father in law are blind. Please give them back their sight. They were once a king and queen, please let them have their kingdom back. And let me be the mother of seven children'. 'Your wishes are granted. Now you can return' said Lord Yama.

But Savitri still followed him to ensure that the wishes could be fulfilled. Lord Yama realized he had to return Satiwan's life to his faithful wife. 'You win, I lose,' he said. Savitri returned to the body of her husband and he awoke believing that he had just had a long sleep.

All Savitri's wishes were granted.