**#8 Savithri- the strength that dwells in women**

Adapted from www.freeindia.com

Introduction

She chose a noble young man for her husband. She knew he had only a year to live, but yet she married him. Even the God of Death bowed to her love and devotion, and restored her husband to life. Author- C. Bharathi

The Blessings Of Goddess Savithri

Narrator: Can the dead come back to life? Very strange, if they do isn’t it? There is a history in Vedic India of a wife who brought her dead husband back to life by her spiritual power. She was a princess and was undaunted by troubles. She lived happily with his poor husband in a forest. She face Yama, the God of Death, and won back her husband’s life. She was Savithri.

 This happened long, long ago. Ashwapathi was the king of Madradesha. He was just and noble. His wife was Malavi. They had only one sorrow; otherwise, they were perfectly happy - they had no children. They performed religious rites to get children and they worshipped Goddess Savithri. A year passed, two years passed. The Goddess did not answer their prayers. Yet the couple did not give up their attempt, they continued their religious rites until Eighteen years had passed!.

Then, Goddess Savithri was pleased with them when the couple praised the Goddess in many ways.

Ashwapahi: Mother, I have everything. I am happy with my wife. My subjects love me and my courtiers serve me with love. But, I have no children; after me there is no one to protect this country. Mother, I want children to continue my dynasty!

Goddess Savithri: O king, nothing can happen which is not willed by Lord Brahma. You will have a radiant daughter, that is Brahma’s will.

Narrator: The Goddess blessed the king and disappeared. Some time passed and Ashwapathi’s wife gave birth to a daughter. She was Goddess Savithri’s gift and so she was named after the Goddess Herself.

‘Choose A Husband Worthy Of You’

When Savithri grew up, she was a maiden of charming modesty and matchless virtue. She was as lovely and bright as a goddess. When she was of the age to be married, many youths sought her hand – strong men and brave men and good and modest men. But every prince who saw her at once felt humble; he felt he was not worthy of her and withdrew.

Ashwapathi was full of admiration for Savithri’s words and conduct. She was the center of his life. He had offered ‘tapas’ (deep meditation and prayer) for eighteen years for this daughter and her radiant liveliness filled his heart with joy. But he grew more and more troubled as days passed and no prince, however, handsome and brave, came forward to marry her.

Ashwapathi: Savithri, my child, it is time for you to marry. Go where you will and choose a husband worthy of you!

Narrator: He made all arrangements for her journey.

# ‘Fate Is Against Him’

Narrator: On the day she returned to the palace, Narada Muni was there, visiting with her father. Narada Muni was a great sage. He could understand the past and foretell the future. He knew everything because he wandered in all the three worlds – earth, heaven and the lower world.

Ashwapathi welcomed Narada Muni with great respect. He washed Narada Muni’s feet with devotion and worshipped him. Just then Savithri entered. She bowed down to sage Narada Muni and to Ashwapathi. Narada Muni blessed her and then he turned to Ashwapathi and said:

Narada Muni: Maharaja, where had your daughter gone? You are fortunate to have such a daughter -have you thought of her marriage?

Ashwapathi: I sent her to choose a husband. (to Savithri) My child, tell me, who has won your heart?

Savithri – Holy Sir, Father, I visited all countries but nowhere did I find a man who won my heart. At last, we came to a forest; there I saw a young man called Sathyavantha. His father is Dyumathsena; he was the King of Salvadesha. Now he has become blind and has lost his kingdom, too.. I have lost my heart to this Sathyavantha.

Narrator: Narada Muni was a great sage and a seer. Ashwapathi looked at Narada Muni and waited for his reply. He wanted to know the opinion of Narada Muni about his daughter’s choice. Sage Narada Muni sat for a while, with his eyes closed. Then he said:

Narada Muni: O King, your daughter’s choice is excellent. This young man always speaks the truth and therefore he is called Sathyavantha. He has loved horses from his childhood, so he has another name also – Chithrashwa. He is radiant like the sun, intelligent, most handsome and more patient than the Earth. He is also generous and valiant, friendly and free from envy.

Ashwapathi – Holy Sir, I am very glad to hear your words. You are a wise man but you have told me only of what is commendable in Sathyavantha. Sir, I beg of you to tell me if there is anything against this match.

Narrator: Narada Muni grew grave. Looking at his grave face, Ashwapathi was disturbed.

Ashwapathi: Great sage, forgive me if I have spoken amiss. I beg of you, sir, to tell me of any drawback you see!

Narada Muni: Ashwapathi, Sathyavantha has no shortcomings; he is a mine of rare virtues! But, fate is against him - he is destined to have a short life. In fact, his life will come to an end exactly after a year from this day. Not knowing this, Savithri has given away her heart to Sathyavantha.

Narrator: Ashwapathi was very much disturbed by the words of Narada Muni. He did not know what to do. He was unhappy, not knowing how to deny his daughter’s wishes.

# ‘I Will Marry No One But He’

Ashwapthi: My child, Savithri, your choice is excellent. The man you have chosen,

Sathyavantha, is a wise man and an intelligent one, too. But, my child, he has a short

span of life. Knowing this, how can I give you in marriage to him? Choose some

other man and I shall gladly give you in marriage to him.

Narrator: Savithri looked at Narada Muni once again and then at her father. Narada Muni was looking at Savithri, waiting for an answer. Her father’s face was disturbed by sad thoughts.

Savithri: Savitri: Death can only come once. A daughter can only be given away once. And a person can only say once, "I give this away." Similarly, whether Satyavan's life is short or long, virtuous or evil, I’ll only choose my husband once and I have done so!

No, my father, my love once given can never be given to another. I chose Prince Satyavan to be my husband. I love him and him only will I wed.

Ashwapathi: Savithri, you are still very young; do not be hasty! Think for a while - what terrible sorrow awaits you after a year!

Savithri: Father, do not think that I am disobedient. Long-lived or short-lived, Sathyavantha alone is my husband. I will not change my mind.

Ashwapathi: (to Narada Muni frantically) Holy Sir, I beg you to advise my daughter!! Please turn her mind away from Sathyavantha!!

Narada Muni: Ashwapathi, your daughter has made up her mind. Besides, no one has so many virtues as Sathyavantha has! In every way, he is worthy of our daughter. Let this marriage be celebrated! All will end well.

(touched by her courage) O King, the maid will never wed any one but Satyavan.

Let her, therefore, have him for her husband.

King Asvapati: (bowing before Narada Muni) Venerable Sir, as you will, so shall it be!

Narrator: Ashwapathi did not want to go against the wishes of his daughter. And the blessings of Narada Muni gave him some courage.

# Husband And Wife

On an auspicious day, Ashwapathi traveled to the hermitage of Gautama Muni with

some of his courtiers. He met Dyumathsena and inquired about his welfare. He called

his daughter and said to Dyumathsena:

Ashwapathi: Maharaj, here is my daughter, Savithri. I beg you to kindly accept her as

your daughter-in-law!

Dyumathsena: Maharaja, we have lost out kingdom and are in the forest! How can this tender Savithri face the troubles of life in the forest? Can she live in a forest? Can she live on the simple foodstuffs available in the forest?

Ashwapthi: Sir, please grant my prayer and make my daughter your daughter in-law. I am sure that, under your protection and love, she will forget all inconveniences. And, I am sure that my daughter will prove worthy of your affection.

Dyumathsena: Even before you came, I wished for this very match! But, we had lost our kingdom and we are in a forest - how could I speak about this marriage with you?

In the old days, when I was king of the Salyas, I would gladly have accepted your offer. But today, when I am but a forest hermit, how can I?

Ashwapathi: No, I have set my heart on the marriage; therefore do not thwart me.

Dyumatsena: If that be so, let the wedding be this very day!

Narrator: King Ashwapathi agreed. The two kings called together the Brahmans who had followed King Ashwapathi and those who lived in the hermitage, and that very day, they announced that Satyavantha, the prince of the Salyas, would marry Savithri, the beautiful princess of the Madvas.

An iron ring was bound on Savithri’s left wrist and her veil was tied to Satyavantha’s cloak, as custom dictated. A sacred fire was lit and hand in hand they walked around the fire seven times while the brahmanas chanted the ancient marriage prayer. Then, she went to live in the forest as the devoted wife of Satyavantha and the dutiful daughter of his parents.

So, the marriage of Sathyavantha and Savithri was celebrated. Savithri rejoiced that she could marry the man who had won her heart and Sathyavantha was supremely happy that he had such a lovely and good and noble wife.

Ashwapthi had spent eighteen long years in prayers, to be blessed with Savithri for his daughter. It was not easy for him to bear separation from her. He returned to his kingdom with a heavy heart.

# Sorrow Amidst Happiness

Ever smiling and cheerful, the beloved wife of Sathyavantha won the hearts of all at

the Hermitage. Savithri removed all her sparkling jewels and wore a dress made of

the bark of trees. She served her father-in-law and mother-in- law quite gladly but she

could not forget the words of Narada Muni, even for a moment. All the time, they

were like live coal in her heart. She could not forget, even in her dream, that

Sathyavantha had a short span of life. Her mind was always chained to Narada

 Muni’s words. One day passed, two days, three days – in this way, she kept count

of the passing days.

Ten months passed! As the days flew. She grew more and more terrified. Though her heart was heavy with sorrow, she did not miss any part of her work and she showed no outward trace of her distress.

# Only Four Days Remain

Time’s wheel kept rolling. One month, two months – So even the eleventh month passed. Only a month remained! It was now a matter of days!

Those days, too, glided by. When only four days of life were left to Sathyvantha,

Savithri spent three days in religious rites of the most rigorous kind. She fasted for

three days. She was determined not to drink even a drop of water.

She worshipped Goddess Savithri, day and night. She begged the Goddess who had

blessed her father, to protect her husband. The residents of the hermitage were

concerned for her health but she would not listen to anybody.

Dyumathsena: My daughter Savithri, Why have you undertaken such rigorous rites? Is it not difficult for you to fast for three days?

Savithri: Father, please bless me that my religious rites may conclude without any obstacle! I beg of you, please do not ask me to give them up!

# The Nerve-Shattering Day

The last three days, too, passed. To Savithri, those three days were like three moments. As the day which she feared most dawned, her agony knew no bounds. Here was the day the very thought of which made her soul shiver! She could not be in one place, but kept moving restlessly. There was a mine of anguish in her heart.

# Morning came! Words cannot describe her agony but Savithri did not forget her daily duties. She assisted the elders in the worship of the family deities. She served her father-in-law and mother-in-law. She gave them food. She bowed down to the elders and touched their feet. They blessed Savithri saying:

# An elder: May you live long with your husband!

# Savithri: (aside) I feel that the words of the great sages would never be falsified, for they are men of truth. I hope and pray that their blessings would come true.

Sathyavantha’s death is so close! There are but a few moments left to count!

# I Will Also Come With You

As usual Sathyavantha started for the forest to hew trees and collect firewood. But on that day, Savithri could not bear separation from him.

Savithri: What can I do? I do not want to ask him to stay with me and thus come in the way of his work. Suppose he asked, ‘Why?’ What reply could I give? What could I say to him, ‘Your death is approaching!’ ? But, how could I send him to the forest alone on this day? My heart trembles at the mere thought of what would happen! In order for my prayers and sacrifices to be effective, I must be very near to him! I will go to him and beg him to take me with him today!

Narrator: Savithri went up to Sathyavantha and said:

Savithri: My lord, I wish to come to the forest with you. I want to see the beauty of the forest and I wish to help you in your work. Today, I will also come with you. Please do not say ‘no’ to my one and only sincere desire!

Sathyavantha: (surprised) My dear, I shall be delighted if you come with me. But, after three days of strict religious rites, you are tired and weak! You have not yet eaten anything! It is not easy to walk in the forest; you will surely be tired. Why only today? You can come with me after your rites are over.

Savithri: It will be no trouble at all! I want to see the flowers blossoming in a forest! I want to hear the song of birds! I will come today.

Sathyavantha: Savithri, I do not wish to hurt you. If it gives you delight, I will not come in your way. I will also be happy if you are with me. Go to your parents-in-law and get their permission, as well.

Savithri: Yes, I’ll be right back. (She exits quickly and soon returns. They both exit.)

Narrator: Savithri went with her husband to the forest with her elders’ permission. She spoke cheerfully but her heart ached within her.

Sathyavantha was delighted because Savithri was with him. He walked with greater liveliness than ever before and pointed out the beauty of the forest. Though Savithri’s mind was like a volcano within, she added her words to her husband’s and made him happy.

Together they collected flowers for the temple worship. Then, they gathered fruits. Midday, Sathyavantha made Savithri sit under a tree and started hewing the trees for firewood. Savitri gazed on him with wide-eyes, without bringing her eyelids together even once.

Savithri: (to herself) Oh! The terrible moment which Narada Muni had foretold is approaching!

Narrator: All day, Savithri felt her heart shiver. She was in unbearable anguish.

‘I Am Yama’

Sathyavanatha: Savithri!!

Narrator: All of a sudden, Sathyavantha called out. He perspired. His head ached as if it would be shattered into a thousand pieces. Savithri sprang to her feet and raced to him.

Sathyavantha: Savithri, I have a dreadful headache, which I cannot bear. My body is perspiring and I feel as if my head is about to burst!!

Savithri: My lord, you are too tired. You have been cutting the wood for too long. Your headache will be gone if you rest for a while. Lie down with your head in my lap and sleep for some time.

Narrator: Savithri took her husband’s head in her lap and he slept. The next moment, there appeared a dark, mighty figure near the feet of Sathyavantha. He was Yamaraja, the God of Death. (Yamaraja enters dramatically wearing black robes and carrying a noose.)

Savithri laid her husband’s head on the ground and stood up. She bowed down to that frightening figure with great reverence and she asked:

Savithri: Lord who are you? Why have you come here?

Narrator: Yamaraja, the God of Death, was surprised to be addressed in this way because normally he is not visible to the eyes of ordinary persons. But Savithri was deeply devoted to her husband and she had performed many rigorous religious rites, therefore it was possible for her to see Yama.

Yama: My daughter, I will tell you the truth! Today your husband’s life has come to an end. I am Yama; I have come here to take away his life. I am visible to your eyes and I have answered your question because of your spiritual power.

Narrator: Yamaraja tied up the life of Sathyavantha in his leash. At once, Sathyavantha’s life left his body. Yama placed the tiny soul of Sathyavantha within his robe and then Yama went southward. He had traveled but a short distance when he chanced to look back.

# ‘I Won’t Give Up Dharma’

# Savithri was following him! Yama was astonished. He and his followers had taken away millions of lives with them but no one had followed the dead! He admired the courage of this woman who had followed him but without showing admiration, Yama stopped.

Yama: Savithri, you have followed your husband as far as possible. You were like his shadow when he was alive, now turn back. Your ties with him have snapped. Go and do the last rites to his body.

Savithri: In the Vedas it is said that if one walks seven steps with a person he becomes a friend. I have come with you all this distance; therefore, now you are my friend. So, I have something to say to you and it is this:

For knowledge and for dharma, people perform tapas (penance) in a forest. Good men say that dharma (Sacred duty) is greater than anything else. Is it not my dharma to be with my husband? Yes, I cannot give up my dharma.

# ‘Ask For A Boon’

Yama: I am impressed with your understanding of Vedic truths and I am pleased with your words, Savithri. But, would it be right to give back the life of one who was already dead?

Savithri, your words have pleased me immensely. Ask for any boon except your husband’s life and I will grant it.

Savithri: Dharmaraja, You have indeed blessed me. I will not ask for anything for myself. By your grace, may my father-in-law regain his eyes! May he also regain his former strength!

Yama: I am very much pleased, Savithri, to see that you have such great affection for your husband’s parents. Your wishes will be fulfilled. Now go back. You are tired.

Savithri: Lord, how can I feel tired when I am near my husband? I shall be there where he is. A single meeting with good persons makes him a life-long friend. Good men’s company is every fruitful. Therefore, one should always seek the company of good persons.

Narrator: Her wisdom filled Yama with admiration. What then? He could not give back the life of Sathyavantha!

Yama: My daughter, your words give me great joy. I am immensely pleased. Ask for some other boon; but only, do not ask for your husband’s life.

Savithri: My lord, if you are pleased with me, my prayer is that my father-in-law may get back his kingdom and that once again he may rule justly and well.

Yama: So be it. Now go back and do your duty.

Savithri: Yamaraja, you bind everyone with a single uniform law. You do your duty, never going against that law. It is because of this that you are called Dharmaraja (the Lord of Righteousness). I pray you, listen to me. In the Vedas it is said that one should not deceive any one in thought, word or deed. Instead, one should help others. This is Dharama, which sustains the world. The good are kind even to their enemies. This is my faith.

Yama: My daughter, your words are like nectar. My joy knows no bounds! Again, ask for any boon except Sathyavantha’s life.

Savithri: My lord, grant that my father may have valiant sons so that his dynasty may continue. Let my father’s home be brightened.

Yama: As you wish. Your father will have good sons. You have followed me very far; now go back.

Savithri: It is not at all far for me when I am near my husband. My mind hovers even farther then this. I pray you, listen to just another word. Your are very strong. You are serene and you do what is right, and so you are Dhramaraja, the Lord of Supreme Righteousness. All people seek the love of the good. They yearn for their friendship. Such friendship brings trust. Thus, I have great faith in you, for you are good. I know you will do me no harm.

# Even Yama Was Defeated

Yama: My child, I have not heard such words from anyone except you. Again, ask for a boon except your husband’s life and I will give it to you.

Savithri: My Lord, you have shown me much kindness; I am fortunate. I pray that I may have children who are strong and who will bring fame to our dynasty.

Yama: So be it! You are too tired. Return my child!

Savithri: My lord, pray listen to my words. The good always walk the path of righteousness. They will not give up the truth whatever be the difficulties. They never do what is unrighteous. They help others expecting nothing in return. The Earth is sustained by the good they do and by their tapas. If those who are righteous are pleased, nothing evil can happen.

Yama: My child, your words are noble. They have profound meaning! As I listen to you, my regard for you deepens. Again, ask for a great boon.

Savithri: My lord, I beg of you, may your boons be fulfilled in a virtuous way, in a righteous manner. So I am praying that my husband may come back to life. I am dead without him. I do not want heaven or wealth without my husband. You have already granted me many children but how can I have children without the aid of my husband? You know, of course, that the Vedas declare that a woman may only marry once! May your words come true! This is the boon I beg for.

Narrator: Yamaraja was defeated by Savithri’s arguments. (Applause and cheers)

Yama: My daughter, I will give back your husband’s life. He will be healthy and strong. He will live for four hundred years, and will walk the path of virtue. You and your husband will live happily with your children. Your children will come to be known as Savithris, after you.

Your father also will have sons, and they will be known as Malavas, after your mother-in-law. By your devotion, by your religious rites, you have brought your dead husband back to life. No one can equal you. Now return my child.

Narrator: Savithri’s mind blossomed like a flower. She bowed to Yama and said:

Savithri: My lord, your mercy is boundless, your have indeed blessed me! (She exits and Yama returns to his kingdom.)

# ‘How I Have slept!’

Narrator: Savithri came to the place where Sathyavantha lay on the ground. She took his head in her lap as before and blessed Life returned to Sathyavantha. Joy flooded Savithri’s heart as life returned to her dead husband and he sat up. He was her life and she lived for him. Sathyavantha sat up full of wonder.

Sathyavanatha: How is this? When I fell asleep there was daylight. Now it has become dark? Have I slept so long! How could I do it? I have forgotten my world! How long have I have been asleep!?

(to Savithri) My dear, I have slept along time. I slept, as I had never done before. Where is that dark figure whom I saw in my sleep? Have you seen him?

Savithri: Dearest, it is true that you have slept a long time. That dark figure you saw was none but Yamaraja whom in time all living creatures must obey. But, he has gone, now. Do not worry. Now you have rested. If you can walk, let us go back to our hermitage.

Sathyavantha: I … I felt that dark figure carry me away with him. Was it so? Or was it only a dream? Tell me, Savithri what you do know of this?

Savithri: My dear, it is so dark that our eyes cannot make out anything! I will tell you everything tomorrow. We came to the forest to collect fuel but we have not returned home though night has fallen. By this time, your father and mother will be worried about us for this is the time when rakshasas (evil men) walk in the forest!

You can hear the rustle of dry leaves as wild animals move about. The darkness fills me with fear. Come, let us go home!!

Sathyavantha: It is so dark that I cannot see the way! How can we find the way back home? How can we reach our hermitage?

# Back To The Hermitage

Narrator: Now, a fire had broken out in the forest. Savithri was able to light some firewood and they sat down upon the forest floor. Sathyavantha was thinking of his parents. He was disturbed and said:

Sathyavanatha: Savithri, I have never before stayed away from home at odd hours. Even when I out of the hermitage in the day my parents used to be worried. They used to come search of me. One day, with tears in their eyes, they said, ‘Child, we cannot live a moment without you. You are the staff of your blind parents.’

I do not know what has happened to them today! If anything happens to them I cannot live. All this anxiety is because of my wretched sleep!

Narrator: Savithri consoled her husband with soft words. She remembered the gods. In her heart, she bowed to them and prayed:

Savithri: O Lord. if I have always beloved in Dharama (virtue), if I have never uttered a lie, may my husband’s parents be safe from harm! May this be a night of good fortune! May the parents of Sathyavantha live by the power of my truthful life!’

Sathyavantha: Let us join my father and mother before anything untoward happens. If you love me, come now let us reach our hermitage by the nearest way.

Savithri rose at once eagerly. She took her husband’s hand and helped him to stand up. She hooked the basked of fruits to the branch of a tree. She thought that the axe might be of use and put it on her shoulder. They left the forest for the hermitage.

Sathyavanta: Savithri, it is not difficult to walk here. It is a familiar path. Savithri, look here, we came by this way. It is here we collected the fruits, here we culled the flowers. Look, our path lies through this grove! There is the fork, and the northern path leads to our hermitage!

Narator: So saying, and at the same time thinking of his parents, Sathyavantha walked fast. And Savithri kept pace with him.

# An Auspicious Night

Narrator: In the meanwhile, in the hermitage, Dyumathsena was anxious and alarmed

The Sathyavantha had not yet returned. But all of a sudden his sight was restored; he

could see clearly. And so, brightness had come back to his life, too, which had grown

dark. His joy knew no bounds. But, even at that glad moment, he was worried

because his son, Sathyavantha, had not yet returned.

Husband and wife were filled with fears for their beloved daughter-in-law, Savithri;

they asked about him again and again, in fear and misery:

Sathyavanath’s mother: Why has Sathyavantha not yet come back? Where could he

be?

Narrator: They went to every hermitage near by. The slightest sound made them look up eagerly, hoping that their son and his wives were back. They searched every pool and stream. Their feet grew bloodstained as they stepped on stones and thorns.

The elders in the hermitage tried to comfort them with words of hope and good cheer. And even as their hearts were flooded with fear, Savithri; smiling and radiant, entered with her husband. Every one there was filled excited delight when the young couple came. ‘Why so late?’ – that was the question on every one’s lips.

Sathyavantha: I was splitting the wood in the forest when, all of a sudden, I had a severe splitting headache! So, I had to lay down. When I woke up, it was midnight. Although it was dark, we came here; we knew you would all be worried and unhappy.

Narrator: There was an elderly sage by name Gauthama Muni in the assembly. He said:

Gauthama Muni: Sathyavantha, your father has got back his eyes. There must be some other reason for your delay. Savithri may know the reason. My child, Savithri, Your face is radiant! Tell us what happened, if it is what you may tell others.

Savithri: Holy Sir, what you are saying is true. There is nothing secret in this; I will tell you what happened.

Sage Narada Muni told me a year back that my husband’s life would come to an end one year from that day. My father advised me to marry someone else but by then I had lost my heart to Sathyavantha. So, I married him without the slightest hesitation. That is why yesterday I went to the forest with Sathyavantha. Around midday, Sathyavantha lay down because of an unbearable headache. Then Yama himself came, snatched away the life of Sathyavantha and left the place. Determined not to lose my husband, I followed Yama. I praised him with words of truth and Yama graciously granted me five boons.

Two boons were that my father-in-law would regain his eyes and his kingdom. The other two boons were that my father would have sons and I, too, would have sons. The fifth boon was that both Sathyavantha and I would live to be four hundred.

I have been performing religious rites for three days. I performed these rites that my husband might overcome death. All my sorrows have vanished and happiness has dawned. The danger was averted with the blessings of Goddess Savithri and of all of you, my elders.

Narrator: When they learnt from Savithri all that had happened, her parents-in-law were filed with amazement. Their joy knew no bounds. With a heart overflowing with joy and admiration they blessed Savithri. They were astounded and full of praise for Savithri. They honored her as the savior of her father-in-law’s family, a great and pure woman, a wife of perfect devotion.

What might have been a sorrowful night turned into an auspicious and joyful night. Slowly the night passed and the sun rose. All of them were churning the memories of the gladness of the night.

And then they saw a big crowd at a distance. Leading the crowd was a man on horseback. They well all filled with curiosity.

As he approached, the rider descended form the horse and bowed down to Dyumathsena with great respect. He had been Dyumathsena’s minister.

The minister: My lord, I have brought joyful news to you. I defeated your enemy in a war and with him have perished also his sons, his kinsmen and his followers. Therefore, O King, come back to the land of the Salyas, for we have thrown off the yoke of the foreigner. Your subjects all say, “Let Dyumathsena be our king; even if he has lost his eyes, the eyes of his mind are open.’ I beg of you, Sir, to fulfill our wishes!!

Dyumathsena: My subject’s wish is my wish. Service to my people is my joy, too. By God’s grace and by the spiritual power of my daughter-in-law, Savithri, I have got back my eyesight! Let us make preparations to return to our capital. No, let us start at once!!

Narrator: They all traveled to the capital city with all royal Honors. Dyumathsena became the maharaja (the king), and Sathyavantha became the Yuvaraja (the crown prince). Savithri saved herself from dire distress and saved her husband, from catastrophe, and also her parents and her husband’s parents.

And what do we learn from this tale?

Single-minded devotion, deep love of her husband, rock-like determination and a will of steel – all these were blended in the character of Savithri.

The story of Savithri is the story of the love triumphing over death and the story of the strength that dwells in woman though she is usually considered weak. And especially, the story of Savithri is a story that enshrines India’s respect for womanhood.