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The Tale of 3 Couples Who Verily Influenced Hindu Culture

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Indian mythology abounds with several thousands of interesting tales and parables of kings, legendary warriors and extraordinary human beings whose mission was to make their own life an example for others to follow; thereby showing the way ahead to ordinary mortals like us. The main protagonists in these tales went far beyond the limits of human endurance, reaching out to touch others' lives in a way none can imagine, thus changing the entire world for the better.

In this month's post, we bring you the stories of three such couples, who find prominent mention in several Hindu scriptures. They are Damayanti and Nala; Devyani and Kacha; and Savitri and Satyavan. Each of these couples was different from the other and came to this Earth with a unique purpose.

Interestingly, the common thread that runs through all these stories is that the nayikas (heroines) in all of them are the central characters. They are great legends, who serve as catalysts, driving the very direction of each of these tales. Apart from the message each story brings, these strong, determined women are an inspiration in themselves. They are the torchbearers for every subsequent generation of women, teaching them by example, how they can retain their softness and femininity, while also being spirited, fearless and all-conquering.

Let us now examine the lives and times of these three couples and find out what it was that was so special about them.

Damayanti and Nala

Nala, the son of Veerasena, was the ruler of the Nishadha Kingdom. He was legendary for his skill with horses and also for his culinary expertise. His only great weakness was gambling - that got his whole life going on a downward spiral.

The story of Damayanti can be found in the Vana Parva book of the great Hindu epic, the Mahabharata. She was the princess of the Kingdom of Vidarbha. She, along with her husband, are central characters in numerous Hindu texts. They also feature in one of the five mahakavyas, written by Sriharsha.

Life and Marriage

According to Nishadha Charita, a 12th century text, written by Sriharsha, Nala once heard about the beautiful Damayanti from his swan. So influenced by the swan's description was he, that he instantly desired to marry her and make her his own. He asked the swan to go to her and talk about him too. On hearing what the beautiful bird had to say, she too fell in love with Nala and wished to meet him.



Hamsa Damayanti - Poster

Some time passed by and it was soon time for Damayanti to get married. She chose Nala as her husband during her swayamvara function; an event the bride chooses her husband from the participants assembled at her function. In fact, several Devas (Gods) were desirous of marrying her, but she ignored them all and, instead, chose Nala as her life partner.

The Devas who had assembled there, blessed the couple and returned to heaven, all praise for Nala and his extraordinary qualities. They were genuinely pleased for the young couple. However, Kali Purush, the reigning deity of Kali Yuga (the present epoch that we live in), was most unhappy to see them being joyful and so much in love. He felt angry and insulted that Damayanti had ignored all the Devas and had chosen a mere mortal as her life partner.

In wrath, he vowed to make their lives miserable. In order to achieve his goal, Kali Purush planned to divert Nala from the path of Dharma (righteousness) and thus, to separate his beloved wife from him.

Kali Purush Strives to Separate Nala and Damayanti

Kali Purush tried very hard to find a single fault in Nala. But such was the purity of the latter, that the former kept failing in all his attempts to seduce him to follow the path of Adharma. Finally, the evil Kali Purush found a way. He influenced Nala to play a game of dice with his own brother, Kuvara. Kuvara was jealous about his brother's success and prosperity.

He also knew that gambling was Nala's weakness and so, he invited him to a game of dice. Nala continued to gamble and play, till he lost his entire wealth and had to even surrender his kingdom to him.

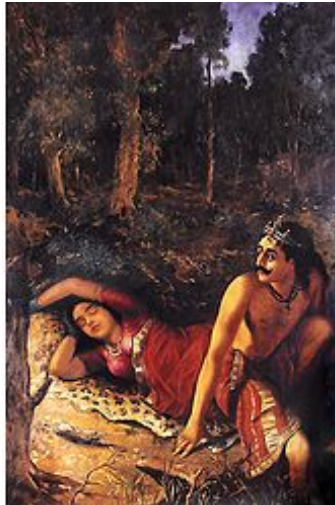
Aggrieved by the sudden and extremely unfortunate turn of events, Damayanti prepared to leave the kingdom along with her husband. On seizing the throne, Kuvara threatened all the citizens with dire consequences if they chose to support Nala and Damayanti in any way.

Nala Abandons Damayanti

The couple left for the forest. After walking many long hours, Damayanti was exhausted and decided to sleep a little. The minute she lay down, she fell into a deep sleep.

Nala, who was still under the influence of Kali Purush, deserted her and ran away from there. As he proceeded deeper into the forest, he saw a Karkotaka Naga (Snake Person) being trapped in a fire and rescued him. The Karkotaka Naga used his poison to change Nala into an ugly dwarf, named Bahuka. He then asked him to serve King Rituparna of Ayodhya. He told him that

Rituparna was an expert in dice and counting, and that he would help Nala win back all that he had lost to Kuvara.



Nala leaves Damayanti - Poster

Before Nala left, the Naga gifted him with a magic garment that, when worn, would restore him to his original form. Taking the advice of the Naga, Nala went to King Rituparna and served him both as a charioteer and cook.

In the meantime, Damayanti, who realized that her husband was not to be found, sobbed uncontrollably. After sitting there for some time, she decided to go in search of him. During her travels, she had to face the terrible snake, Nishada. She also met several ascetics, who comforted her. Proceeding onward, she met merchant travelers and joined in their group, for her own safety.

One night, a herd of elephants destroyed all the traders' belongings. Furious and believing that Damayanti had brought them bad luck, they drove her away. Walking on all alone, she reached Viprapur, where she served the Queen of that kingdom, as her maid.

One day, a minister from Vidarbha visited the palace. He immediately recognized her and took her back to her father's palace. Once she got back home, she announced a hefty reward for anyone who could give her information about the whereabouts of her husband. Some days later, one of her sleuths told her about a charioteer named Bahuka, who lived in a faraway kingdom.

Nala and Damayanti Reunite

Suspecting that Bahuka was none other than her husband, Nala, Damayanti sent a message to Rituparna that she was going to remarry. In fact, Rituparna had heard much about Damayanti and had wanted to marry her.

On hearing this news, Rituparna decided to visit Vidarbha and meet her. Bahuka took Rituparna and drove the chariot as fast as he could. They traveled from Ayodhya to Vidarbha.

During this journey, Kali Purush got out of Nala's body and, for fear of being cursed, asked him for forgiveness. Kali Purush also offered Nala a boon as he left him. Nala sought the boon that whosoever should read his story would not be unduly affected by the ill-effects of Kali Purush. Nala forgave him and, in the span of a few hours, reached Vidarbha.

With the help of her servant, Damayanti came to know that her suspicion was true and that Bahuka was indeed Nala. She called him to her apartment. Though he was still the ugly dwarf, she instantly recognized him. He then took his original form.

Nala Gets Back His Kingdom

Nala knew that Rituparna was an expert at dice and numbers. He traded his skill as a charioteer to gain complete knowledge about dice. He then set out to reclaim his kingdom from his brother. He challenged Kuvara for a match, either at dice or at a single combat. At stake, he put all his wealth that he had earned. Making a calculated move, he also put his wife and her kingdom at stake.

Greedy of getting a beautiful wife and kingdom for free, the arrogant Kuvara, who was sure of his own success, accepted a rematch in dice. To his dismay, he lost everything he had to Nala and became his slave. But then, Nala forgave him as well, as this was his own brother; his own flesh and blood.

Four years went by, when Nala went through many difficulties, but never once strayed from Dharma. He had successfully defeated Kali Purush and Kuvara and had regained his lost kingdom. He was also reunited with his beautiful, virtuous wife. He was a content man.

In due course of time, the couple had two children; a boy named Indrasen and a girl also named Indrasenaa. The daughter later went on to marry Mudgala, the King of Panchala.

The Reason Nala and Damayanti Suffered

Nala and Damayanti were separated for twelve long years. When she had been roaming the forest after being abandoned, a mendicant she met, told her that she would be reunited with her husband after twelve years. Both of them underwent much suffering in those years.

After Nala was reinstated as King, a monk visited the palace and told him the reason why he had undergone such trials and tribulation. He stated that even in their previous births, Nala and Damayanti were King and Queen of a particular kingdom. They had thrown an innocent monk in prison. Their exile in this birth, he said, was the karma of the heinous acts performed in their previous birth.

In due course of time, Nala and Damayanti made their son, Pushkara, the King. They then renounced the world and went in search of spiritual enlightenment.

Damayanti - Female Power

In this story, Damayanti shines as a brilliant example of womanhood. Her purity, courage and steadiness of purpose helped her save her husband from the malefic influence of Kali Purush himself. She managed a feat that few other women could have hoped to achieve. The soft, feminine, enchanting woman changed overnight to a formidably mighty tigress, who would go to any lengths to protect herself and her loved ones.

Nala Paakam

As mentioned earlier, Nala turned out to be an expert cook during his tenure as Rituparna's chef. Interestingly, so good was he, that there is a term, associating him with any chef par excellence. The term, "Nala Paakam" traditionally describes the food prepared by one known for his excellent culinary skills.

Devyani and Kacha

According to Hindu mythology, Devyani or Devayani was a daughter of Shukracharya, the Guru of the Asuras, and his wife, Jayanti; who is the daughter of Lord Indra. She was married to Yayati and gave birth to two sons, Yadu and Turvasu. Before her marriage, she was once deeply in love with Rishi Brihaspati's son, Kacha. But Kacha refused to marry her.



Asura Mask - Papier Mache Wall Hanging

Kacha was the son of sage Brihaspati. His tale is mentioned in the Mahabharata, the Matsya Purana and the Agni Purana. He is best known for learning the Mrita Sanjeevani Mantra (a hymn to bring the dead back to life and to completely heal them) from Shukracharya, the Guru of the Asuras. Though he brought his own teacher back from the dead, he failed to do so with many of the dead Devas, because of being afflicted by Devyani's curse.

Legend

As per legend, the Devas and Asuras were still fighting for supremacy over the three worlds, namely, Akasha (Heaven), Prithvi (Earth) and Patala (Netherworld). Each side appointed their own Guru, who would guide and advise them during the war.

While the Devas appointed Angirasa Brihaspati, the Asuras appointed Bhargava Shukracharya for the same. Both these Gurus were stalwarts in their fields and also enjoyed a healthy rivalry with each other. Though they respected each other, neither would give in to the other.

The war between the Devas and the Asuras had started right in earnest. So the Gurus were conducting yagnas and prayers to make their respective sides more powerful.

Shukracharya breathed life into the demons who died on the battlefield, making them more powerful than before. He had the knowledge of Sanjeevani, the art of bringing the dead back to life and healing them completely. This Sanjeevani Vidya gave more vigour to the Asuras, thus enabling them to have the clear edge in the war.

On the other hand, the Devas were facing great losses, as Brihaspati did not possess the Sanjeevani Vidya. The gods deliberated upon this drawback and finally decided that someone from their side would have to go to the Asura camp and learn the Sanjeevani Vidya from their Guru.

Kacha Becomes Shukracharya's Disciple

After much thought, they decided that Kacha, the son of Brihaspati, should go to the land of the demons and learn the Vidya from their Guru. Accordingly, Kacha left for Shukracharya's ashrama (hermitage).

Respectfully, he introduced himself as the son of Brihaspati and humbly requested that he be accepted as the Acharya's pupil. He also promised to live the life of a brahmachari (celibate) and serve the Acharya for a thousand years.

Pleased with his humility, Shukracharya accepted him as his disciple. Kacha started his tutelage and served his Guru with all sincerity and devotion. He also took care of his Guru's daughter, Devyani. As time passed, Kacha became his favourite pupil.

500 years passed by and then, the demons came to know about the actual purpose of Kacha's visit. They became insecure in the knowledge that he would learn the Sanjeevani Vidya from Shukracharya. Fearing that the gods would then become more powerful than them, they plotted to kill Kacha.

One day, when Kacha had taken the cows to graze on the hills, the demons killed him. They then cut him up into small pieces and fed him to the wolves in the forest. In the evening, the cows returned without Kacha.

By now, Devyani was deeply in love with Kacha. Worried and anxious, she went to her father and told him that Kacha was missing. She told her father that she feared he had been killed and asked that he bring him back somehow. She also confessed her love for him.

The Acharya, who was very fond of Kacha, used his siddhis (mystical powers) to find out what happened to him. He then brought him back to life with the Sanjeevani Vidya. All the pieces of Kacha tore open the stomachs of the wolves that had eaten him. They joined together to form one whole and Kacha sprang back to life! He returned to the Ashrama and profusely thanked his Guru.

Kacha Learns the Sanjeevani Vidya

A few days later, the Asuras killed him yet again. Again, on Devyani's request, Shukracharya breathed life into him. Not ready to give up, the Asuras killed him a third time, and this time, burnt Kacha's body. They then took his ashes and mixed it up with wine, requesting the Acharya to take a taste of the delicious drink.

Unaware of their malicious intentions, Shukracharya drank the wine. When Kacha did not return to the Ashrama, Devyani yet again requested her father to bring him back to life. The Guru started chanting the mantra to breathe life into him again.

Kacha, who was inside his Guru, revealed his dilemma to him, in the form of a quiet voice within the Guru's mind. He said that he could not come out of his Guru's stomach, as it would result in the latter's death. The Guru thought about it and told his disciple that he would teach him the Sanjeevani Vidya, using which he could come out of his stomach and then, would be able to bring his Guru back to life as well.

Shukracharya was disappointed with himself, that he had given in to the vice of drinking wine, which had made him irrational. He promised himself that he would never again touch even a drop of alcohol to his lips. He also laid out a rule that Brahmins who drank would cause irreparable damage to their own divinity and spiritual strength and would eventually rot in hell. They would not only earn bad karma in their present lifetime, but would ruin their subsequent births as well, by consuming alcohol.

The Acharya had a soft corner for this young disciple of his, who had never broken the Brahmin code of conduct at any point of time. The Guru knew that the boy had survived so long inside his stomach, only because he was so pure and untainted.

He taught Kacha the mantra and asked him to tear open his stomach and come out. Kacha then used his knowledge of the Sanjeevani Vidya and came out, instantly killing his Guru. Then, he used the same mantra to bring him back to life.

Kacha stayed with his preceptor till the completion of one thousand years. It was then time for him to leave and go back to his original life.

Devyani Curses Kacha

Just as Kacha was preparing to depart from the Ashrama, Devyani approached him and told him about her love for him. She also requested him to marry her and take her back with him to his home. The youth was now in a dilemma.

While he could not refuse his Guru's daughter's wish, she had now become his sister. By coming out from his Guru, the latter had become a father to him, thus making this beautiful girl his sahodari (sister). Even otherwise, it was only right to treat the Guru's daughter as his own sibling. He tried to explain this to Devyani, saying that he would never be able to see her as anything other than his own little sister.

Devyani was hurt and angry at what she considered was an insult. She therefore cursed him that all the knowledge that he had acquired from her father would prove to be useless to him, just at the time when he needed it the most. Kacha accepted the curse, as he understood he had hurt her, though unintentionally. He decided that he would teach others what he had learnt, so that they could in turn use it for the benefit of others.

As a parting shot, he told her that, since she had not taken into consideration the rules that bound him, she too had been cruel and inconsiderate. He said that, for this reason, no Brahmin would ever marry her. He then took his Guru's blessings and went back to his father, where he gave away his knowledge for the benefit of others. He never ever met Devyani after that.

The curse, however, took effect and Kacha could not use the Sanjeevani Vidya to bring back dead Devas to life. That power was permanently lost to him.

Devyani Fights with Sharmishtha

Sharmishtha was the daughter of Vrishaparva, the Danava King, for whom Shukracharya worked as an advisor. One day, Sharmishtha and Devyani went with the former's retinue to bathe in a pool in the forest. After coming out, Sharmishtha confused Devyani's saree with hers and draped it around her.

When Devyani finished her bath and saw Sharmishtha wearing her saree, she scolded the latter for her mistake. She also belittled her, saying that it was only because of her father, Shukracharya, that Vrishaparva's kingdom was happy, blessed and abundant. This jibe irritated Sharmishtha, who with the help of her servants, threw the naked Devyani into a well and left for the palace, with her retinue tagging behind her.

Much later, Yayati, son of Nahusha, came to the well to drink some water. Seeing Devyani trapped there, he helped her out of the well.

After returning to her father, Devyani narrated the entire story to him and demanded that Sharmishtha, along with the other Asura girls, should serve as her maids. Though Vrishaparva could not quite stomach this, he meekly agreed, as he did not want to offend Shukracharya.

Devyani Marries Yayati

Some days later, Devyani went to a picnic in the forest with Sharmishtha and her other servants. As luck would have it, Yayati came there again for hunting and they met again. This time, Devyani took him home to her father and told him that they would like to marry.

Shukracharya immediately gave them his consent, telling Yayati that he should take good care of Sharmishtha too, as she was a princess. However, he also warned the prince that he should not have any conjugal relationship with Sharmishtha. Yayati agreed and married Devyani.

In due course of time, Yayati and Devyani had two sons, namely, Yadu and Thurvasu. Unknown

to her, though, he did have connubial relations with Sharmishtha as well and had three sons by her, namely, Dhruhyu, Anu and Puru.

When Devyani came to know about this, she was very hurt and left him to return to her father's place. The angry Acharya cursed Yayati with premature old age. When the prince apologized and pleaded that his curse be mitigated, the Acharya agreed, on the condition that Yayati could swap his old age with the youth of any of his sons. The latter then swapped his youth with his fifth son, Puru.

Devyani - the Catalyst

Though Devyani and Kacha were never involved romantically, she ended up being the catalyst among the two, as her curse changed the whole picture for the Devas. Had Kacha not been cursed, he could have brought many more Devas back to life with his Sanjeevani Vidya. Though Kacha did work for the good of others, he could never really do that himself, as he was permanently impacted by Devyani's curse.

Savitri and Satyavan

The oldest and probably the most authentic version of the legendary tale of Savitri and Satyavan is found in the Vana Parva of the Mahabharata. It features as one in the series of tales narrated by Rishi Markandeya.

As the story goes, Yudhishtira, the oldest Pandava Prince, once visited Rishi Markandeya and asked him if there had ever been a woman whose devotion to her husband could equal Draupadi's (the wife of the five Pandavas). The sage replied to the Prince by relating the story of Savitri and Satyavan.

Legend

The King of the Madra Kingdom, Ashwapati, was childless for several years. He and his wife Malavika were pious, God-fearing people. Disappointed at having no heir, the King lived an ascetic's life for many years. He was extremely devoted to the Sun God, Savitr. He would pray to his ishta-devata (favourite deity) every day, offering obeisance, begging the Lord to grant him the boon of a child.



Sun God - Brass Wall Hanging

Finally, pleased with his devotion, Lord Savitr appeared before him and granted the boon that the King would soon have a beautiful daughter. The couple was overjoyed at the prospect of welcoming a member into the family. When the baby girl was born, they named her Savitri, in

honour of Lord Savitr, who had blessed them with their little angel.

Having been born by the grace of Savitr, Savitri was well-behaved, soft-natured, devoted and pious. Beautiful as she was, she intimidated all the men in the vicinity. So, when she reached the marriageable age, the men did not dare to come anywhere near her and ask for her hand in marriage.

Savitri Marries Satyavan

Fed up of the situation, Savitri's father asked her to choose her own groom. For this purpose, she set out on a pilgrimage of sorts. During this journey, she found Satyavan, the son of a blind King named Dyumatsena, belonging to the Shalwa Kingdom. Having lost everything, his sight included, Dyumatsena was living in exile in the forest, along with his wife and son.

Returning to her palace, Savitri found her father speaking with Sage Narada, who announced that she had made a bad choice, though the groom was perfect in every sense of the term. Narada explained, saying that it was Satyavan's destiny to die exactly in one year from that day. Alarmed, the King asked Savitri to change her mind and select a different groom. But she was adamant and refused to budge from her decision.

Soon after, Savitri and Satyavan got married and she went to live with him in the forest. She gave up all her grand silk clothing and jewellery and instead, wore the apparel of a hermit. She lived a simple life, exhibiting complete respect and obedience to her parents-in-law and husband.

One year flew by and soon, there were only three days left, before the prophesied death of Satyavan. Savitri decided to undertake severe fasting and penance, in order to appease the Gods and save her husband from sure death.

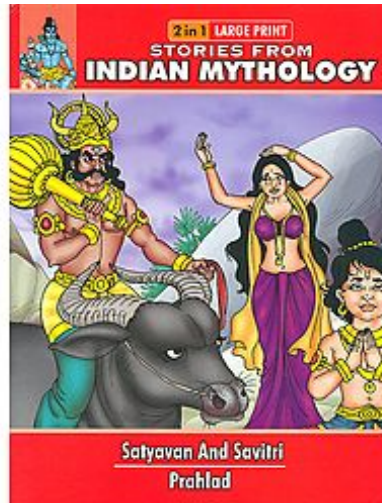
Her father-in-law told her that she was being too harsh on herself. But she did not swerve from her decision. Finally, Dyumatsena gave in to her wishes and offered her his full support.

Savitri Brings Satyavan Back to Life

On the morning of Satyavan's foretold death, Savitri requested her father-in-law to permit her to accompany her husband into the forest. She was never the type to ask anything of anyone and so, Dyumatsena immediately granted her wish.

As Satyavan was splitting wood in the forest, he suddenly felt overwhelmingly weak and lay his head on Savitri's lap. He then saw the messengers of Yama (the God of Death) coming to claim his soul. He knew his time was almost up. The messengers saw Savitri and, awestruck with her divine aura, they quietly left without taking her husband's soul.

Infuriated that his messengers could not bring Satyavan's soul with them, Yama decided to go there himself. As he proceeded to carry his soul away, Savitri kept following him and refused to turn back.



*Satyavan and Savitri and Prahlad
(Stories from Indian Mythology)
Comic Book*

She then sweet-talked Yama into giving up his hold over Satyavan's soul. She praised Yama as the greatest one; the Just One who always adhered to Dharma. She hailed him as the Dharmaraja, the King of Dharma; the one who rules above all else.

Pleased with her general persona and her wisdom, Yama told her to ask for any boon, except that of the life of Satyavan. Savitri first asked that her father-in-law's eyesight and lost kingdom be restored to him. She then asked for a hundred children for her father and another hundred children for herself and Satyavan.

While Yama granted her the first three boons, he was in a dilemma about her last one. Granting that boon would mean having to bring Satyavan back to life. Impressed with Savitri's purity and complete devotion to her husband, he told her to ask for one more boon. This time, he omitted the condition, "except for the life of Satyavan".

Savitri immediately asked that Satyavan's soul be restored inside his body and that he come back alive. Smiling, Yama granted that boon too, bringing Satyavan back from the dead and blessing the couple to have a long, happily married life, lasting four hundred years.

Savitri and Satyavan Live Happily Ever After

After Yama left, Satyavan awoke, as though from a long, deep slumber. Surprised that he was still alive, he queried his wife about what had happened when he was asleep. Savitri merely smiled and told him that it was time for them to return home.

When they reached their cottage, Dyumatsena had already regained his eyesight. Savitri, who had kept silent till then, narrated all that happened when they were in the forest. Hearing this, her husband, father-in-law and all the ascetics present there were astounded at her feat.

As they started praising her, Dyumatsena's former ministers arrived there, with the news of the death of his usurper. Filled with joy and gratitude, Dyumatsena proceeded to regain control of his kingdom. He reigned long as King, keeping his subjects happy and contented.

Savitri Vrata

Even today, married Hindu women from most parts of India conduct the Savitri Vrata once a year, as follows:



Vat Savitri Vrata Katha with Aarti - Book

- Married women from Bihar, Jharkhand and Odisha observe Savitri Vrata (or Savitri Brata) on the Amavasya (new moon) day of the Jyestha month, every year. They perform this Vrata for the well-being and longevity of their husbands. In Odisha, a treatise called "Savitri Brata Katha" is read out by women performing this pooja.
- In Western India, this holy day is observed on the Purnima (full moon) day of the month, as Vat Purnima.
- As per Tamil beliefs, Savitri got back her husband on the first day of the Tamil month of Panguni. This day is celebrated as Karadayan Nonbu, all over Tamil Nadu and among Tamil women all over the world. Not only married women, but even young girls wear yellow robes and pray to Goddess Savitri for the long life of their husbands (future husbands in the case of young, unmarried girls). Girls start this practice from a very young age, so that they can find a good husband when the time comes.

In Popular Culture

The tale of Savitri and Satyavan has been told and retold through many mediums, including books, poems, songs, plays and films. Savitri is regarded as the greatest embodiment of purity, devotion and chastity.

- In 1950 and 1951, Sri Aurobindo published his epic poem, titled, "Savitri: A Legend and a Symbol".
- In the year 1916 in England, Gustav Holst composed a one-act chamber opera, named Savitri. It was based on this very tale.
- One can find numerous versions of the Savitri-Satyavan story, enacted through the medium of films. These include both Indian and foreign films.
- One of the earliest versions was the silent film, "Satyavan Savitri" (1914), directed by Dadasaheb Phalke.
- Incidentally, Savitri (1933) was the first film produced by the East India Film Company. It was directed by C.Pullaiah and received an Honorary Certificate at the Venice Film Festival.
- The Tamil films, Doctor Savithri (1955) and Roja (1992) are modern adaptations of the self-same story.

Savitri - the Embodiment of Purity and Strength

Savitri is undoubtedly the very embodiment of purity, chastity and character. So spiritually strong was she, that she managed to bring back her husband from the clutches of Yama; from the valley of death! Her story is most inspiring and serves as a brilliant beacon of light for all of womanhood. This is the reason why, she is accepted as a Goddess; as Savitri Devi, among many ethnicities in India.

Conclusion

The above-mentioned couples, namely, Nala-Damayanti; Devyani-Kacha and Satyavan-Savitri have played a vital role in shaping the culture, the thought and the psyche of Hindu culture. While Damayanti and Savitri are the epitome of a woman's strength, courage and conviction; Devyani shows the world the true power of a spurned woman's wrath.

They may look like mere stories, on the face of it. However, there is much that can be learnt from them. Though they were set in an ancient era, several centuries ago, they will continue to be relevant in the present times and for all time to come.

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