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GNANAVALLI

A TAMIL DRAMA

WITH AN ENGLISH
TRANSLATION

BY

H. H. THE RAJAH OF
ETTAYAPURAM

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எட்டயபுரம் ஸம்ஸ்தானம் ஆதினகர்த்தரவர்களாகிய
 மஹாராஜ ராஜபூஜித மஹாராஜராஜஸ்ரீ ராஜ ஜகத்வீர ராம
 வேங்கடேஸ்வர எட்டப்ப மஹாராஜா
 அய்யன் அவர்கள்.

GNANAVALLI

CREEPER OF WISDOM

AN ORIGINAL TAMIL DRAMA

1021

BY

H. H. THE MAHA RAJAH

OF

ETTAYAPURAM

With an English Translation

BY

S. A. T.

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PREFACE



HIS new Drama from the pen of His Highness the Raja of Etaiyapuram has for its key-note the dictum, 'None but the brave deserves the fair.' It is a true dramatic picture of one of the stories in the Indian folklore. The gist of the play is but this :—

An ancient King of Hastinapur uneasy at heart for want of a son to inherit his throne goes to a jungle to do penance. Mighty Siva appears before him and endows him with a daughter. When this princess came of age she goes one day, as usual, to her park along with her attendant-maids to cull flowers and make a bouquet thereof. Unfortunately a giant surprises her and carries her off to a mountain cave. The father of the maid is pained to the quick at the unexpected disaster and at the advice of his vizier sends heralds all over the different states of India to proclaim by beat of drum his sad plight and announce that any hero who rescues his daughter from the monster by his might of arms would be worthy of his daughter's hand and would also be

crowned as the Lord of Hastinapur. Several heroes try, but only one succeeds. The prince of Kuntala after roaming over hills and dales finds the retreat of the giant and by means of a stratagem encompasses the destruction of the Rakshasa and rescues the maiden from thralldom.

Evil besets this hero. For, his companion (the son of the minister) falls in love with the maiden and by a trick pushes the prince down into a deep well. After committing this foul deed secretly, the villain tries to persuade the princess to consent to wed him. The chaste maid repulses his suit with the greatest disdain reviling him as a traitor. The rogue seeing that persuasive measures were of no avail was about to use force to violate her virginhood. Providentially a tiger appears at the nick of time and carries away the hard-hearted villain in its jaws. Though relieved from the clutches of this rogue the maiden cherished no desire to prolong her life as she fancied that her deliverer and true lover was no more. She therefore resolved upon sacrificing her body to the flames and was preparing a pyre. While she was about to plunge herself into the conflagration her rescuer appears all of a sudden and catches her in his arms and relieves his sweet-heart from unnecessary death. The hero, without any more

delay, leads the princess to her father whose exultation on seeing his daughter safe again is really high. The prince is at once wedded to the Creeper of Wisdom (the name of the princess) and is also installed as the King of Hastinapur. The old king then takes leave of all his relatives and repairs to jungle to spend his time in contemplating upon Siva to gain his salvation.

Leaving aside many a beauty in this play let me dwell upon one important trait.

The saintly chastity of the Creeper of Wisdom, the heroine of the play, is depicted with a masterly hand by the author. Chastity, as Milton says, is the hidden strength of a woman of virtue. In speaking of its glory, the divine bard of England writes,—

So dear to heaven is saintly chastity
That, when a soul is found sincerely so
A thousand liveried angels lackey her,
Driving far off each thing of sin and guilt,
And in clear dream and solemn vision,
Tell her of things that no gross ear can hear.

Clad in the hidden strength of her divine chastity, Gnanavalli repulses the suit of the young minister with the utmost disdain caring little that she is within his power. Thinking that might is right

the rogue is about to use physical force to do violence to her virginity, when divine intervention sets in at the nick of the moment and the villain is blown away from her presence quite mysteriously by the unexpected arrival of a tiger which carries away the wretch in its jaws. This, in fact, is a very glorious passage in this drama.

To popularise this play in English a free English version of it is herewith appended.

S. A. TIRUMALAI KOLUNDU,

ETAIYAPURAM, }
3rd February 1915. }

*English Teacher,
Etaiyapuram Service.*

THE CREEPER OF WISDOM

GNANAVALLI

DRAMATIC PERSONÆ

MEN.

- Kirtisena**—The King of Hastinapur, father of the heroine.
- Parvataketu**—The minister of the King of Hastinapur.
- Chapala**—The King of Magada.
- Santasila**—The minister of the King of Magada.
- Sarabha**—The King of the Land of Kuntala.
- Atirupa**—The Prince of the Land of Kuntala ; the hero of the play.
- Garvasila**—The companion of Atirupa ; the son of a minister.
- Vikata**—The jester at the Court of Hastinapur.
- Kutarka**—A Rakshasa who carries away the heroine.
- Ramakkon** } Shepherds living in a village near the town
- Timmakkon** } of Hastinapur.

LADIES.

- Gnanavalli**—The Princess of Hastinapur, the heroine of the play.
- Swayamprabha**—The young daughter of the minister of Hastinapur ; attendant maid of Gnanavalli.
- Kamalini** } Other maids attending upon the Princess
- Minalochani** } Gnanavalli.

A shepherdess.

Heralds (Drummers).

The scene of the play lies for the greater part in Hastinapur and the mountain region adjoining it ; some scenes are found in Magada and Kuntala.

THE CREEPER OF WISDOM

GNANAVALLI

ACT I

SCENE 1

Place : Durbar of Hastinapuram.

Time : Morning.

[*Enter Kirtisena, Parvataketu and Servants*]

Kirtisena—Vizier, we have, hitherto, bestowed ever so many gifts and performed a lot of charities ; still, we remain unblessed without any issues to succeed after us. Is there any other method of overcoming this difficulty? If you know of any other means of gaining our object, do reveal it, so that I may act up to it and become blessed.

Parvataketu—Oh lord, our lot, indeed, is quite miserable, as your majesty thinks. [Contemplates for a while.] Away to remedy our distress flashes now upon my mind. If your majesty condes-

cends to abide by it, I am quite convinced that your majesty's wish would be really gratified.

Kirtisena—Is there really any such remedy? Vizier, suggest it to me without delay, let me see.

Parvataketu—Oh lord, have we not heard that in ancient times many a king went to jungles and sat in contemplation upon Siva, and were then blessed with children by the grace of the Almighty. I do really believe that if your majesty also were to adopt their plan, our anxiety would come to an end.

Kirtisena—Vizier, I really rejoice at your plan. Without any more delay I start this very instant to the jungle to do penance contemplating upon the mighty Siva. I will return with His grace and beget a child to rule after me. Take into your hands the responsibility of the Government of my state till I return from penance. Farewell.

Parvataketu—I await your pleasure.

[Salutes the king.]

Kirtisena—Well.

[The king hands over his seal and sceptre and departs.]

SCENE 2

Place : Jungle for penance.

Time : Evening.

[Kirtisena is seen sitting in the midst of fires contemplating on the Almighty ; then he begins to sing.]

Kirtisena—

Ponnâr mēniyanê pulittôlai araikkisaittu
Minnâr senjadaimêl milir konrai anindavanê
Mannê mamaniyê malapâdiyul mânikkamê
Annê ninnai yallâl yini yârai ninaikkênê.

Oh god of gods, I have been doing for a long time very horrible penance ; still, Thou dost not condescend to present Thy Divine form to my eyes. If Thou dost make any more delay to grace Thy humble slave with Thy presence, I shall positively stab me with this dagger and give up my ghost.

[So saying the king draws his dagger from its scabbard and is about to commit suicide when God Siva appears in Divine Form.]

Siva—Enough, enough ; stop your attempt. I am overwhelmed with delight at your extreme devotion. I have made myself visible to your

eyes and am quite ready to confer any boon.
What do you really want ?

Kirtisena—Oh Lord of the Immortals ; I bow my head before Thee. [Sings hallelujahs and says.] Oh great Lord, Thou hast endowed me with countless blessings. My only want is that I should be endowed with a son. It is to remedy this want that I betook myself to this jungle to do penance. Take pity on me and favour me with posterity. Further, my vizier also suffers from a similar calamity. His distress also should come to an end.

Siva—Oh flower among devotees ! it is decreed that you cannot get a male issue in this birth. I shall, however, bless you with a daughter. You will feel yourself extremely happy in every way after begetting the child. I do bless your vizier also with a daughter likewise.

Kirtisena—Oh Immortal Lord, I feel, indeed, very happy ; I salute Thy grace.

Siva—Farewell.

[Siva vanishes after giving His boon
and the King leaves the jungle
and wends his way homeward.]

SCENE 3

[Gnanavalli about to enter the park sings a song on the natural beauty of the garden calling her maids to accompany her; her servant-maids, Swayamprabha, Kamalini, and Minalochani, along with the buffoon, follow the princess and all of them enter the park with much cheer ; then.]

Gnanavalli—My dear sister, oh my maids, words fail me if I wish to describe to you the beauty of this park. What a variety of trees have we here such as the palm, the mango, the jack, the pomegranate, and the orange ; look at the shrubs of flowers such as the rose, the jasmine, the champaka ; direct your ears to the humming of the bees ; behold how the peacocks dance in delight spreading their thousand-eyed fantastic fans ; note the melodious tunes of the cuckoo. What great happiness do these really give to our hearts ! But still, oh ! a certain heaviness hangs on the mind in the midst of so much joy. The sweet odour from the flowers and the happy union of these couples of birds inflame my mind with something I cannot well explain. Oh, even the cool Zephyr blows upon me hot as fire.

Swayamprabha—Yes, my dear sister, I too suffer quite likewise. I believe our blooming age is the cause of this internal fire. Oh, if we have

been already married there would be very little room for this gloom. Sister, we shall leave the subject aside for a while. I wish to ask of you something; you should not hide anything at heart but should answer me, candidly. If you allow me, I shall speak out my intention.

Gnanavalli—Oh my dear, what do you really wish to ask me? Tell me.

Swayamprabha—My dear sister, will you tell me which prince your heart is set upon? Speak out your heart, let me see.

Gnana—Oh, my dear, I know not of any prince. How then shall I be able to answer your question?

Swayam—If so, I shall begin to enumerate the names of the various princes and shall also explain to you their character and accomplishments. Then I believe you will be able to tell me on whom your love falls.

Gnana—All right; begin your description, let me see.

Swayam—There is the king of Magadha, Chapala by name who—

Gnana—Enough, enough, stop. See the very name, Chapala.

Buffoon—Maiden, what a name have you suggested to the princess ! If the very name signifies 'changeable', how capricious would the very person be !

Swayam—Hold your tongue, you fool. Are you trying to mock at us ?

Buffoon—If you all feel angry at me, I shall keep myself quite aloof [aside]. The princess and her dear maid are discussing over their love and wish to be happy. What have I to do here ? I am unmarried. I shall get out and reveal my own love to my dear Kamalini.

Swayam—Sister, the prince of Kuntala whose name is Atirupa is unparalleled for beauty and character.

Gnanavalli—Yes, yes, what you say is quite right. But how can we—?

Swayamprabha—Oh ! Oh !! Is it really so !!! Yes, I have understood your real heart. Oh, my dear sister, I am going to beg of you a request. If you do really love me and promise to gratify my earnest desire, I shall venture to reveal it.

Gnana—By all means, there shall be no impediment to carry out your eager wish. Proceed, at once, to reveal your heart.

Swayam—Dear sister, how very amiable to each other have we been from our infancy ! My wish is that such love should continue between us till the end of our lives. This is my anxiety.

Gnana—I am really very glad. Is it for this that you made such a preamble and forced a promise from me. My wish was also to the same end. I do agree to your proposal. We shall both wed one and the same husband and lead a very happy and agreeable life. You need not be at all uneasy.

Swayamprabha—Thank you very much. I feel myself quite happy in your grace.

Gnanavalli—We shall stop this talk for a while and shall think of such pastimes as would enable us to spend our hours in mirth. What is the best game to be played presently ?

Swayam—Oh my dear, the recreation that seems to me the most pleasant for the moment is that we should all separate ourselves to cull the best flowers possible and knit them into a garland each. This done, we shall again join together and compare our respective merits in garland-making. Kamalini, what is your wish ?

Kamalini—My mind also likes the same plan. Oh Minalochani, what is your opinion? Let us see.

Minalochani—When you all agree in any affair I shall most willingly join with you. What more have I to say?

Gnana—Yes, I see. You all like the same idea. I also like the same. Let us all, then, proceed each in a different direction to cull blossoms. Oh my young Swayamprabha, you may proceed by this track and gather flowers and knit them into a fine garland. Oh Kamalini, you may walk by this foot-path to make a wreath likewise. Dear Minalochani, you do see my intention, I beleive. You may walk by the yonder path and proceed on your errand. I shall, meanwhile, go somewhere here to pluck flowers and be engaged in knitting a fine bouquet. Oh buffoon, dont you go away; do stop here while I leave you for a while to gather flowers. Be on the alert.

Buffoon—Yes, madam, I shall abide by your order. Will you allow me, however, to cull flowers like others. I shall tie some garland; it will not be so beautiful as those of the maids. I shall place it round the neck of my dear

Kamalini and see the fun. Ah, ah, ah. [Laughs.] I am going to pluck flowers from the sky and tie them into a garland. I start at once on my job ; give me leave, madam.

Gnanavalli—What a fine fellow are you? How are you going to mount up the sky and get the flowers and make a garland thereof?

Buffoon—See, madam, whether I do succeed or not in what I promise to do. You are soon going to see my prowess. I am just going out on my business. Eh, eh, eh! [Laughs.]

[There is much laughter at the lips of all on hearing the funny words of the Jester. Each maiden wends her way out precisely as the Princess ordered them. Gnanavalli, having stopped the jester at the spot was engaged in culling flowers. The jester makes vain jumps as though he would reach the sky to gather flowers. A giant, just then, pounces upon the buffoon all of a sudden and frightens him.]

Buffoon—Oh what a fun is this ! When I was making a high jump to snatch a flower from the sky, a stupendously big form falls upon me. Who are you, you fool ?

Kutarka—Who are you, mortal? What is your name? How did you happen to come in my way, you fool? I shall swallow you instantly at this spot.

Buffoon—Hollo, what a tremendously gigantic figure so very jet-black to look at! It is indeed very terrible to the eyes—[at the monster]. Are you the fellow to gobble me up! Get away, you rogue, otherwise I will kill you instantly and eat you like a pancake, so easily. What business have you, here, you simpleton! Don't you know that this is the spot where our princess used to tie nosegays of flowers, quite alone? Which fool allowed you entrance to this spot? Get away at once. Otherwise you will receive blows from my shoes. [The buffoon passes his hand over the soles of his feet and says.] What! I don't seem to have worn my shoes. I see no weapon to attack this rogue.

Kutarka—Oh, I see! Is this the secret? His words betray to me that the beautiful princess is in this park. Let me go in and see her.
[Tries to enter within.]

Buffoon—Rogue, don't go in; I shall not allow you. Get out, you rascal.

[Prevents entrance.]

Kutarka—Are you the fellow to stop me by your word? You cannot cross my will and pleasure.

[Kicks the buffoon and the latter falls down fainting. The monster enters the park and beholds Gnanavalli and she also catches sight of him.]

Gnanavalli—Oh, who is this strange being? While I am engaged in making a nosegay, a strange and terrible form appears before me all of a sudden. How huge is this! It begets great terror. Who allowed him to enter our park? Who is there? Oh buffoon, where are you gone? Oh sister, Swayamprabha! Oh Kamalini! Oh Minalochani! Nobody seems to respond to my call. Oh friends, will you not all come atonce to help me. Alas, I am quite alone and forlorn, I see nobody coming to rescue me. Oh what shall I do at this crisis!

Kutarka—This maiden seems to be of incomparable beauty. She ought to be caught this instant and carried away to my cave. There surely I can marry her without any ado. I should not waste even a minute.

[So saying he approaches the young princess who is really frightened at his approach.]

Gnanavalli—Oh God of the Universe ! Have you destined this lot to me ? You are my sole refuge as I have no one else to help me at this crisis. Oh Almighty.

[She falls down in a fit. The monster bears her in his shoulders and carries her to his cave ; just then, Swayamprabha comes to the spot with her garland.]

Swayamprabha—[Soliloquises] I have tied my garland and come to the spot. I believe my garland will beat out those of others in excellence ; therefore it is I that shall win the wager. [Sees the buffoon in swoon.] What is this ? Vikata the fool seems to be asleep. No, he is in a swoon ? The fellow in jumping up into the sky to gather flowers as he wished has fallen down in a fit.

[She goes quite near him and gives him medical treatment and he begins to wake.]

Buffoon—Good heavens, has the monster gone away really ? Enough, have I suffered, at his hands. Woe unto the day I came to cull flowers in this park. What terrible blows have I received from the wretch ? [throws his limbs at length.] How do my limbs ache ?

Swayamprabha—Whom do you speak of, jester ? Did any stranger come here ? Who has beaten you so terribly ? Is there really any being who would venture his presence into this park ? It is indeed, wonderful to hear that some stranger has really dared into our retreat. Jester, please reveal the affair without delay.

Buffoon—Madam, the person you speak of is no human being. He is a giant ; his body was very huge. He said ‘ Who is here ’ and asked me whether he could enter the park. I told him that he should not go in. He grew angry and kicked me down and I fell in a swoon. Did you all escape from his blows ? Then you are all fortunate, indeed.

Swayamprabha—Is it so ; did, indeed, a Rakshasa come. I did not see him at all. He may be lurking somewhere in the garden. [She goes to and fro trying to catch sight of him.] Jester, look sharp ; go and search for the princess and the other maidens and find them out. We should no more tarry here.

[The buffoon who is in a fright goes in search of them but with great alarm and returns.]

Buffoon—Madam, I could not discover our princess; nor is the monster to be found anywhere. As for the other maidens, lo, they are all coming there.

Swayamprabha—Kamalini! Minalochani! it seems that a monster made his appearance here and kicked down our buffoon; the princess is not to be found. I learnt this from the buffoon whom I had to revive from a swoon. How did you all escape from the fury of the devilish giant?

Kamalini—Madam, we don't know of anything you speak of. It is now that I learn from you that a giant has trespassed into our park. Did you search for our beloved princess all through this garden. Let us all go a-seeking after our mistress.

[All of them search for a long time but in vain and become disconsolate].

Swayamprabha—I see now the truth; a disaster has befallen us. Considering the sudden disappearance of our princess and the account given by our jester about the giant, the only conclusion that we can draw is that the monster should have taken away our princess to his own abode. We should no more delay here any longer.

We shall make haste to tell the news to our sovereign ; let us all run to him quickly.

[The maidens and the buffoon with their tresses dishevelled and with gloomy faces make their way towards the palace.]

SCENE 4

Place : Durbar.

Time : Afternoon.

[*The scene discloses Kirtisena in conversation with Parvatāketu.*]

Kirtisena—Vizier, though we are without sons, yet we are blessed in a way, as we are both endowed with daughters through the grace of Siva, Whom I had to please by my penance in a jungle. Our daughters are reaching the bloom of their maidenhood. They are both in the House of Virginity. I am at a loss to see that they still remain as virgins without being wedded. I wish to bring about their marriage as quickly as possible. The difficulty lies in choosing fit husbands to them. Will you fetch and show me the portraits of princes who would be worthy of their hands?

Parvataketu—I shall execute your commands. I shall soon find a way to get the portraits.

[Swayamprabha and the other maids along with the jester approach the King's presence with eyes bedimmed with tears.]

Swayamprabha—Oh Lord of lords, this morning the princess, myself and other maids along with our jester betook ourselves to the park to while away the time pleasantly. There we separated ourselves from one another to cull flowers. While we were thus playing, a giant abruptly entered the park and after dashing down the jester on the ground in a swoon, seized our Gnanavalli and fled away. Our sorrow and distress are beyond the power of words. How can we brook to live upon the face of the earth bearing her privation?

Kirtisena—What ! What !! What !!! Is my darling really taken away by a monster ? Alas ! Alas !! What shall I do ! Oh, oh, You powers of Heaven !!

[Falls down fainting when the minister supports him.]

Parvataketu—Our king has fainted. The privation of his daughter may, even, bring about his

death. Thus we should try our best to discover and rescue back his daughter in order to save his life. We should adopt the right means of speedy discovery. There is no use of our wailing over the affair. The first business, however, is to bring our lord to consciousness.

[By fitting medical treatment, the King awakes from the swoon.]

Kirtisena—Ah Gnanavalli ! Where have you really gone ! What mental torture would you have endured and how much would your tender body have quivered when the wretch took you by force. How my mind throbs, like a worm in the midst of fire ! Alas, what shall I, hereafter, do ! Oh my darling ! Is it to undergo this calamity that I be took myself to the jungle to beget you by penance. Though I was denied the happiness of being blessed with a son, I considered myself very happy in having begotten you, my dear daughter. Oh, you have forsaken me and left me in the lurch; you are entangled in the hands of the rascalish giant. Oh, my dear girl ! How can my mind brook to live without you ? When am I going to see you again ? How can I endure your privation ! Oh, my rare gem ! I don't know what hardships you

endure at the hands of the rogue ! Who knows how much you lament ? Who knows what your anguish is ?

Parvataketu—My lord, your majesty should not lose heart. I shall try to get back our princess as early as possible. I shall leave no stone unturned in the affair. Your majesty need not be uneasy. Call up a little courage into the heart,

Kirtisena—What steps are you going to take to discover and rescue my dear daughter quickly ?

Pravataketu—My lord, the way to get back our princess seems to me this: we should proclaim throughout all the fifty-six states by beat of drum, that your majesty's daughter is kidnapped by a giant, that any prince who would kill the giant and rescue our princess would be wedded to her and that the rescuer would also be installed as the king of Hastinapur. Such a proclamation will certainly bear fruit ; some hero or other out of double ambition for the hand of your daughter and dominion over our land would venture to face the giant and rescue our princess from his clutches after putting him to death. This seems to be a good plan for carrying out our wish. I shall, however, abide by your majesty's opinion.

Kirtisena—Vizier, your plan is indeed a befitting one. Proceed at once to put it in execution.

Parvataketu—Duffador, you know very well what I was talking to his majesty. You should soon call up our heralds and intimate to them that it is our majesty's order that they should proclaim by beat of drum throughout all the fiftysix kingdoms the royal wish to which you have been privy. Let them go about their business without any delay.

Daffador—My Lord, I shall carry out at once your orders.

[Exit Duffador to tell his message to the drummers (heralds); they proceed on their errand without any delay.]

SCENE 5

Place : Cave in a mountain.

Time : Evening.

[Enter Kutarka and Gnanavalli.]

Kutarka—Oh my dear, what pains have I taken before I was able to bring you to this abode ! I am known, by the name of Kutarka. I am, you ought to know, quite unconquerable in battle,

[striking his shoulders by way of exaltation.] I am of tremendous strength. I can fetch you instantly anything you may desire of. Further I am endowed with a mystic power of transforming myself into any beautiful shape required. You should not, therefore, feel afraid or uneasy at my present ugly form. You may very well marry me and be indeed very happy. Oh my dear, suppose you ask me out of fun to transport wholesale the city of Kubera, the god of wealth, to this spot, I can, no doubt, transplant the city without delay. Even if you desire the all-giving tree, Kalpaka, from the land of the immortals, even that is no impossible task to me, for I can uproot it and bring it here instantly. All kind of fanciful dress and ornaments are to be found here in abundance. There is no sort of want ; you can, therefore, make yourself completely happy here. Be cheerful and drive away sorrow.

Gnanavalli—[aside] Alas ! I am now entangled in the hands of this monster. What can I do ? How can I escape from this wretch ? It would be impossible to reason with him to give up his love for me. Pierced by the arrows of cupid, the rogue requests me to give my consent for the marriage.

Will it be fair at all ! Is it at all fit in any way to wed this ugly-looking monster ! Better die than marry him. How can a human being as I am be united to a man-eating monster ? Such a union is quite absurd [contemplates for a while]. The way to get over the present difficulty is this; by some trick I should hold in check his passion from me till I find some means of deliverance. [Addressing the giant.] My lord, what refuge have I save you ? As I am suddenly severed from my parents my mind is subject to an alarm. In time it will subside and bring peace of mind. After my present indisposition leaves me I will be ready to act up to your wish. Where can I go away escaping your vigilance ? A flood cannot carry away the water secure in a well. Exercise some patience, my lord.

Kutarka — [Aside.] This maid is like a bird caught in a cage. Escape is quite impossible. She is now in a terrible fright. At present I should not therefore make my proposals of love to her. We shall leave her undisturbed for a few days. [Addressing her] Oh dear maiden, you need not be at all afraid. Give up all cares. You may, while away your time pleasantly in this grotto.

Further in the vicinity there are so many pleasant toys, tuning birds, flower, gardens, streamlets, cataracts and crystal houses. Your time will easily flit away if you roam by the side of these pleasant scenes. I am going away presently to fetch you food and drink and condiments.

[Leaves her.]

Gnanavalli—By God, I am relieved at least for a time from the dire rascal-still, I should be on the look-out for finding some means or other of escaping from the fellow. Let me wait. Let me make a walk round the whole garden.

[End of Act I].

ACT II

SCENE 1

Place : Durbar of Magada.

Time : Morning.

[Enter Santasila, Chapala, and a Servant ; a herald proclaims in the public street beating a drum.]

Herald—This beat of drum is to announce to the public ear the following : ‘ the endearing daughter of Kirtisena, the king of Hastinapur, while playing with her attendant-maids in a garden was suddenly kidnapped by a giant. If any hero could face the monster in an encounter and rescue the princess, such a hero shall not only get the hand of the princess but shall also be installed as the king of Hastinapur. This is the royal order of our sovereign lord’.

Chapala—Minister, I hear a herald proclaiming something important by beat of drum at our gate. See what it is.

Santasila—My lord, I shall satisfy your majesty’s curiosity presently. *[Addressing the peon.]* Peon, go and fetch the drumming herald without delay.

Peon—Very readily, my lord. [Goes out and returns with the herald.] Here he is come.

Santasila—Are you the herald? What is your errand? Explain your message at length.

Herald—My lords, I bow to you all. I am a native of Hastinapur. While our princess Gnanavalli was engaged in plucking flowers in a garden a giant surprised her and walked away with her. If anybody is daring enough to rescue her from the monster and bring her back safe to our king, our sovereign would not only confer his daughter upon him for wife but would also instal him as the King of Hastinapur and himself would retire. This is the royal wish.

Chapala—Minister, I believe you understand the affair. I am this instant proceeding according to the wish of the Princess's father to encounter and kill the giant and rescue the maiden from his clutches. This done, I shall wed her and become the lord of Hastinapur as well. After accomplishing these my aims I shall come back. Meanwhile you should very vigilantly guard my empire in my stead.

Santasila—My lord, it is no easy job to kill the monster. Rakshasas are notorious for their

mysterious powers. With great skill should your majesty face him in the fight. Further, giants of his stamp are exceedingly stronger than mortal men. Thus the only way to vanquish a giant is by means of some trick and not so much by sheer prowess.

Chapala—Minister, you seem to know very little of my valour; what will his physical strength do before my superior prowess? By one blow of my fist, I can lay him dead in the encounter. See how I return victoriously and with all fame after vanquishing the Rakshasa. I take leave of you. Farewell.

Santasila—My lord, let my advice be always at your majesty's heart. Your majesty may do according to your royal will and pleasure. [Aside] The king out of ungovernable amour for the maid starts precipitately turning quite a deaf ear to my advice. Who knows his fate? Who is there on earth to turn away the course of destiny! What is ordained would certainly come to pass. Oh God, it is your burden to keep my king from danger.

SCENE 2

Place : A mountain region.

Time : Evening.

[Chapala enters while Kutarka is asleep.]

Chapala—Oh, I have been searching for the maid Gnanavalli in so many places and yet I could find no trace of her. What shall I do? Perhaps she may be found in the yonder cave. Let me somehow go and search within it.

[Approaches the cave].

Kutarka—*[Suddenly getting up]* What is this? To-day I catch smell of some human being. This, indeed, is very strange. No mortal ever ventured to come to this retreat. *[Tries to trace out the man by scent.]* Oh, there comes a man; let me go near and demand who he is. *[Comes out]* Fellow, who are you? Is there any mortal man who would dare to approach my abode? How did you embolden yourself to come to this spot? What is your name, you fool? You are like a poor animal caught within the meshes of a net. If you care for your life, bolt away at once. If you tarry any longer I will seize and gobble you.

Chapala—Oh, wretch of a monster, you seem to prattle without sense. Are you not the rogue that kidnapped away the princess? If you care to exist on earth any longer, bring the maid and leave her before me without any delay. Else, you fall a victim to this arrow ready drawn to shoot you down.

Kutarka—What a vain-glorious ignoramus are you? Can a rat put to fight a cat? Eh! eh! eh! you are indeed a bold fellow in as much you dare to stand before me fearlessly. You have, however, very few minutes to live. It is because, your end is near, that you dared to insult me. Oh mortal fool, with this one blow of my fist I shall strike you dead.

[The giant snatches the bow and arrow from Chapala and breaks them to pieces and deals a deadly blow to Chapala which deprives him of his life.]

SCENE 3

Place : Durbar of Kum-tala.

Time : Evening.

[Sarabha (the king), Atirupa (the prince), Souryaketu (the minister), Garvasila (the minister's son) and others are at the Durbar. A foreign herald is proclaiming something at the gate of the Royal palace.]

Sarabha—Minister, I hear a beat of drum at our gate. Try to see what it is.

Souryaketu—My lord, I shall satisfy your majesty's curiosity at once. [To the Duffador]. Go and fetch the drummer quickly.

Duffador—Instantly, my lord, [goes out and returns with the foreign herald] Here is the proclaimer, my lord.

Herald—Maharaj, I bow before your majesty.

Souryaketu—Who are you, man? Which country do you come from? What is your errand? Disclose every thing clearly.

Herald—My lords, my native land is Hastinapur. The darling daughter of our king repaired one day to her garden to cull flowers and while away the time pleasantly. While she was thus cheerfully engaged, a monster pounced upon her all of a sudden and carried her off by the sky. If any true hero would discover this giant and vanquish

him and rescue our lovely princess, to him will our king give the hand of his daughter and also instal him as the sovereign of our land. This is the royal mandate. I have been ordered to proclaim his majesty's order by beat of drum throughout all capital cities.

Atirupa—Father, perhaps you may know that for a long time I have set my heart upon winning the hand of this fair princess. I have already been captivated on hearing her beauty and personal accomplishments. Now it is very painful for my ear to hear that my object of love is in such a peril. I am, therefore, resolved to start instantly with my companion Garvasila in search of her. I shall destroy the rogue and after rescuing her I shall reach Hastinapur and wed her and become the lord of that land as well. I shall return home as a victor. I request your majesty to confer your blessings and grace upon me and give me leave to proceed upon the enterprise.

Sarabha—I bless you, my darling. You should exercise great care in your encounter with the giant. By some stratagem or other you shall be able to overthrow your mighty antagonist and God will be in your favour.

Garvasila—Father, I wish to accompany the prince as a helpmate in his adventure. I seek your kind permission.

Souryaketu—I bless you, my son. Your duty is to render timely and fitting advice to the prince to ensure success. You shall be his body-guard wherever he goes ?.

Garvasila— I will act according to your will and pleasure.

Souryaketu—Go forth and return victoriously.

[Both the youths take leave and depart.]

SCENE 4

Place : Mountain region.

Time : Morning.



[Enter Atirupa and Garvasila.]

Atirupa—Comrade, after searching over so many places for the princess, we have now come to this spot. This, indeed, is the mountain region which is the abode of the monster. With great vigilance we should enter into it. You may tarry here quietly for some time, while I roam about the cave and reconnoitre.

Garvasila—My lord, you should be on the alert while you wander ; try to return with success.

[Atirupa parts from his friend.]

Atirupa—What a charming scene this jungle and the grotto present to the eyes ! What indescribable beauty ? Birds of this park are perched with their dear mates and caress each other ; the frolicksome monkeys jump from branch to branch in great glee ; the antelopes frisk and gambol in companies ; flowers blossom and emit their sweet odours all round. All these tend to raise up my spirit to a pitch of enthusiasm. [thinks for a while]. How is it that my right shoulder and right eye throb like this. This is a good omen to indicate that success is quite near at hand ; well, let me roam over this jungle.

[Proceeds further and catches sight of the maiden Gnanavalli who stands with much distress under the shade of a tree.]

What a paragon of beauty. Is this brunette the heavenly nymph Rambha ? Is she a living statue of gold ? Or else is she the very Psyche the bride of Cupid ? Her beauty beggars all description. The face of this charming maid seems to be the very full moon ? Her eyes are more

enticing than ambrosia ! Her lips are more tender than the rose. Her teeth are more charming than a row of pearls. It is quite an impossible task to find fit resemblance in nature to her organs. Who could this maid of unparalleled beauty be ? I cannot make out who she is. If at all I marry anybody I cannot choose any other maiden as my bride. Is it possible that she is already married ?—Oh, poor mind, do not be uneasy ; exercise a little patience. She may fortunately be the very maiden I come in search of. Who knows what my fortune is ! Let me go near her and enquire who she is.

[So saying he gently approaches her without her knowledge.]

Gnanavalli—How can I find some means of escape from the dire monster ? When shall I be fortunate enough to see the faces of my parents ? How deeply would they be lamenting on my account !

[She casts her glance all round and discovers Atirupa approaching her.]

Oh what a wonder ! Some stranger seems to approach this desolate place. [Sees him more attentively and becomes enticed.] Who is this rare being whose beauty surpasses that of the

son of Kubera. Is he the very son of Indra? Is he the God Cupid himself who is the enticer of all womankind? Whose son could this prince be? This person whose character also seems supreme is really a fitting husband to me. Who on earth is so much blessed as I am! The charm of his face and his strong mountain-like shoulders and the grandeur of his form bewitch my eyes. Could he be a *Gandharva*. [Meditates for a while] What is the use of extolling upon his beauty. He may perhaps be the very monster who can assume any fair form at his will and pleasure. The giant once informed me that he could metamorphose himself into any shape. I am in a dilemma———. No, no. This fair man cannot be the wretched giant. As my mind naturally begins to love him, he cannot be the monster. My mind feels quite at ease. How well do my left shoulder and left eye throb! This good omen and my natural inclination for him make me quite certain that he cannot be the monster that kidnapped me. He may perhaps be my deliverer from the wretch. Let him come near.

[She casts her eyes on the ground and stands as though unaware of his approach.]

Atirupa—Oh fair maid, who are you? What is your name? What is the cause of your living alone in this jungle far away from the haunts of men? Are you already married or are you a maiden still? Try to give me your personal history.

Gnanavalli—Good sir, who are you? Which is your abode? What is your name? How did you dare to approach this dire spot which is the abode of the cruel Rakshasa? Will you please explain the cause of your adventure? If you can satisfy my curiosity I shall also reveal my history.

Atirupa—Fair princess; I am the prince of Kuntala and my name is Atirupa. While I was sitting one day with my father at the Durbar, a beat of drum was heard. The herald was sent for and from him I learnt that the maiden Gnanavalli the princess of Hastinapur was kidnapped by a giant while she was engaged in gathering flowers along with her maids in her park. The herald informed us that any hero who boldly faces the giant and rescues her from his grip will not only be worthy of her hand but will also be installed as the Lord of Hastinapur. As my heart was long ago set upon the princess as the only fit lady whom I resolved to wed, the news pained me to the quick. With scarcely any

delay I started from my capital along with my companion in quest of the lady. After wandering over hills and dales in search of her, we at last, happened to catch sight of this grotto. I left my comrade under the shade of the yonder tree and came to this spot to examine whether the princess may be found here. Fortunately I discovered you here. I shall feel highly obliged if you would relate to me your circumstances.

Gnanavalli—[Aside] From what he says he appears to be the prince of Kuntala. But still some suspicion haunts me. Perhaps the wretched giant seeing that I am averse to wed him may be hoaxing me in this disguise. How can I trust in him and reveal my situation,

[Meditates for a while and begins to address him as though he is the very giant.]

Sir, you seem to beguile me by saying that you are the prince of Kuntala. Do you think that I am unaware of your true self. I know that you are endowd with the capacity of assuming at will any shape you desire. What is the fun of taking this beautiful form? I never asked you to assume this shape. Why do you want to probe my mind with this form? I am quite a helpless

maiden. It is unfit that you should try me thus. I shall feel more at ease if you resume your own true shape and appear before me for conversation.

Atirupa—[Aside] Though I really revealed my true history, the maid still suspects me to be a Rakshasa ! How can I disabuse her of her delusion ? [Addressing her] Oh maiden, I am no giant ; I swear before heaven that I am Atirupa the prince of Kuntala and no man-eating monster.

The Divine Asareer—Oh, Gnanavalli, don't suspect him to be a monster. Believe that he is the son of the king of Kuntala.

Gnanavalli—Oh, Heavens, I am indeed very happy. I should think that God himself has sent me this gentleman for deliverance. I can, therefore, very well disclose to him my history. Prince, I am, indeed, the very daughter of the king of Hastinapur whom you came in search of to rescue. My name is Gnanavalli. The giant whose abode is this grotto forcibly kidnapped me while I was playing in my garden. My humble wish is that you should destroy this giant and deliver me to my anxious father. Such a grace I expect at your hands.

Atirupa—Oh, gem among damsels, I am ready to act according to your pleasure. But Rakshasas can be destroyed only by stratagem and not by prowess. How can human strength stand before that of a Rakshasa? I have very often heard from the lips of the wise that the vital spirit of a Rakshasa would reside outside his body in some different object. Thus I should somehow understand where his vital spirit is located. You may very well do as I advise you. When the wretch comes to you this day, pretend to some extent that you do really begin to love him. Then he will think himself very happy and would divulge his secret. You may cleverly question him as to the locality of his vitality. He will certainly reveal it to you and then it will be quite an easy job to bring about his annihilation. You should look sharp to get out the secret from him and I shall instantly relieve you from the wicked monster. This is your duty. Don't forget.

Gnanavalli—My lord, I shall try accordingly. I will certainly draw out the secret from him. The time of his appearance is very nigh. You should try to conceal yourself somewhere here. As soon as he leaves me after an interview

I shall make a signal and you should be ready to come to me.

Atirupa—Very well ; I shall leave you at present. Remember what I have said.

[Atirupa leaves her and hides himself ;
Kutarka comes there in a few
minutes after.]

Kutarka—Oh, my dear, I have brought you, now, good meals, cakes, and fruits highly relishing to your taste. You may dine upon these and be quite happy and at ease with me.

Gnanavalli—[with a smile.] Sir, what refuge have I excepting yourself? I have resolved to act according to your will and pleasure. [Thinks for a while.] But, I have to make a request to you. You go out so often leaving me alone in this cave. Supposing by ill-luck if somebody or other encounters you outside in a duel and kills you, would I not be left forlorn ?

Kutarka—My dear, it is quite an impossible task to bring about my destruction. Do you know why ? It is impossible for any body to know where my vital spirit is. It is secretly hidden in a certain place.

Gnanavalli—Sir, you say, you are invincible. But mighty men have mighty foes. Thus nobody

can think that he is quite safe from all danger. You told me that the locality of your vital spirit is quite an unknown secret. If I but know that from you, how gladly would I drive away my weary hours of solitude by looking at it often and often while you are away. I shall also be, then, your devoted servant.

Kutarka—I feel quite happy, my dear. Is it on account of this that you have been hitherto indifferent to me without advancing my happiness? Oh, my dear, I shall whisper the secret of my life-spirit into your ear according to your wish. Come near and know it from my lips.

[He whispers the secret into her ear.]

Gnanavalli—Sir, I have grasped the secret.

Kutarka.—My dear, let the secret be safe in your heart. You should not reveal it. I think you will feel more at ease in my company hereafter. You may taste the food and the drink I have brought you. I feel a little drowsy and I go for a while into the cave to sleep.

[Kutarka goes into the cave and falls asleep. Gnanavalli seeing that he is fast asleep in the cave comes out after a few minutes and makes a signal and Atirupa appears.]

Atirupa—My dear, have you been able to know the secret of his life?

Gnanavalli—[with cheer]Yes, I have forced out the secret from him. Hear me. There is a tank at some distance north of this spot. In the centre of the lake you will find a red lotus and within its petals the vitality of the giant is in the shape of a beetle. If any body would bring the flower along with the beetle hidden within it and squeeze the insect to death at the threshold of this grotto the Rakshasa would give up his ghost. The monster revealed this to be the secret of his existence. Thus you should proceed at once to fetch the beetle meditating on God Siva. If you but catch hold of the red lotus, you can easily bring about the death of the monster and deliver me from thralldom. You cannot waste even a single moment. You are the only shelter to my life.

Atirupa—Oh my dear, you need not feel uneasy I go this instant and shall return with the beetle and encompass the destruction of the giant. God shall help us. I shall fetch the beetle in no time.

[Proceeds towards the tank.]

Gnanavalli—As both our minds are at one I feel quite certain that my champion will return with

success. I shall soon be able to see the face of my parents. Oh God of gods, let no danger accure to my deliverer, from the crocodiles in the tank.

[She fixes her gaze upon the direction of the tank meditating on God for the safety of her lover].

SCENE 5.

Place: Bank of a tank

Time: Midnoon

[Enter Atirupa]

Atirupa—The yonder tank seems to be the one described by Gnanavalli [goes near] Yes, yes, this is indeed the very pool revealed by the giant to Gnanavalli. There I see the lotus. Let me get in and see.

[While he is about to enter, crocodiles come in a body and Atirupa is frightened, he gets upon the bank again.]

Alas, the ferocious crocodiles were about to kill me. Fortunately I escaped. How can I get hold of the lotus-flower ? In the first place it is quite impossible to get down at all into the tank. How then can I reach the lotus ! God alone should help me in this crisis.

[Mediates and sings hallelujahs on Siva ;
God Siva appears in his Divine form.]

God Siva—Atirupa, I am, indeed, much pleased at your real devotion to me. I am ready to confer the boon you desire.

Atirupa—Oh Lord, I bow myself humbly. The only thing I desire at present is that I should get possession of the red lotus-flower in the midst of this dreadful pool.

God Siva—Lad, come near and receive the spell I whisper into your ear.

[Whispers a mantra into his ear.]

If you recite this mantra sitting on the bank of the pool with good faith, the flower will come of its own accord into your very hands. You may get the flower without any difficulty and victory will attend you. You will be crowned with all blessings.

Atirupa—God of Gods, blessed indeed I am. I bow humbly again for the grace shown to me.

[God vanishes ; Atirupa repeats the mantra, the flower comes near him while he is reciting the spell, he takes hold of the flower.]

Through God Siva's grace I have got possession of the coveted lotus-flower. The beetle which is the abode of the vitality of the giant is no doubt within the petals. If I allow the flower to

blossom, the insect will fly away and frustrate my success. Therefore I shall take the flower, as it is, without opening its petals to Gnanavalli who is in the grotto. I shall, then, show this to her and crush the flower along with the beetle within it at the threshold of the cave. The monster cannot escape death.

[Atirupa proceeds in the direction of the mountaincave.]

SCENE 6.

Place: The grotto in the mountain.

Time: Afternoon.

[*Enter Gnanavalli*]

Gnanavalli—What? the prince who went towards the pool to fetch the beetle has not yet returned. What shall I do? It is high time. The Rakshasa may wake from sleep. Has he unfortunately fallen a victim to the crocodiles? No, it can't be. Oh, throbbing mind, exercise some more patience. My hero will anyhow come with the beetle in hand through the grace of the Almighty. I seem to hear the footsteps of some one at a distance. Let us see who comes. [Sees Atirupa at a distance.] Lo, there he comes. His face when seen attentively indicates that he is really returning with

success. It is on account of his love for me that the prince has taken so much pains to fetch the flower. It is he that can really be styled a *purusha*, a real hero in fact. If at all I wed anybody he alone shall be my bridegroom.

[She is anxious to welcome him and he comes near her.]

Atirupa—Oh, gem among women, I have brought you the flower with the beetle within it.

Gnanavalli—[In a low voice] My Lord, I rejoice at your success. We should soon expedite our business. We should not tarry any more. The giant is fortunately in sound sleep. Before he wakes up you should crush the beetle to death.

Atirupa—See, it is done at the very threshold.

[He crushes the flower and kills the beetle.]

Kutarka—[From within] Oh, traitress! is it to deprive me of my life that you got out from me the secret of my vital abode. Oh, cruel wretch, my life-spirit is flying away from my body.

[The giant rolls on his bed and falls down before Gnanavalli with the last spark of life in his quite a lifeless body.]

Gnanavalli—My lord, will you please help me a little with your dagger. I shall stab him and

drive out the last spark of life from this rogue giving a full vent to my rage. [She gets the dagger.] Is this the mouth that dared to court my love? Are these the hands that ventured to kidnap me from my garden?

[So saying she hits at his mouth with the dagger and cuts away his hands; the giant dies.]

Good heavens, the wretch is completely gone. What a colossal figure! His form is formidable to look at even after death! What a horrible gigantic corpse!! Thank God, that He had saved us from the wretch. My lord, for my sake you took so much pains and risked your life. You have indeed annihilated the giant and saved me from peril. I shall ever be under a great debt of gratitude to you. I thank you a thousand times. Let us no more delay here but shall proceed to our city.

Atirupa—All right, I feel quite happy. Tarry here for a while. I shall return within a few minutes fetching my comrade whom I left under the yonder tree. [He goes and comes back with his friend.] Let us now proceed on our journey without any more delay.

Gnanavalli—My lord, is this the gentelman who is your companion?

Atirupa—Yes ; he is the son of our prime minister.

Gnanavalli—Oh dear lord, tarry yet for a while ; I shall just enter the cave and bring with me some provisions to serve in our way.

[She enters the cave ; Garvasila while looking at her is smitten with her beauty and falls in love with her.]

Garvasila—[Aside] Ah ! ah !! what a non-pareil among ladies ; my eyes are dazzled with her beauty. All the charm of the celestial nymphs such as Rambha, Tilottama, Urvasi and others seems to be centred in this living statue of gold. My mental balance is quite disturbed. What shall I do ? It is impossible for my life-spirit to remain any longer in the body unless I can embrace her sweet bosom. How can I help myself in the affair against this prince ? His muscular strength is indeed enormous ! Still, what if ? In the way I shall destroy him by some trick or other.

[Gnanavalli returns.]

Gnanavalli—My lord, I have brought the necessary victuals for our journey. Let us all start with cheer without any more delay.

[All the three start towards Hastinapur.]

ACT III

SCENE 1

Place: The Cottage of a Shepherd.

Time: Morning.

[*Enter Ramakkon, Thimmakkon and a Shepherdess.*]

Ramakkon—Wench, have you the porridge ready? If you have something of it, bring it in a bowl.

Shepherdess—What worry is this? It is scarcely day-break and you have already imbibed a bowl of porridge. How sharp does your stomach pinch you that you should demand so soon again a fresh bowl? What if you throw mud into the dirty pit of your stomach? If you have milked the cows I can give you some porridge. What, now?

[*Strikes him with a winnow.*]

Thimmakkon—Sister, why do you belabour our cousin so roughly with your winnow? He wanted the porridge merely to carry with him while he goes away to tend the cattle.

Shepherdess—Why the devil did you not say so already? Then I would have already brought

you the porridge. Here is the bowl and take it. Go both of you driving the cattle and after grazing them well return home in the evening.

[The Shepherds march out to tend cattle.]

SCENE 2.

Place : The Shadow of a tree in a jungle.

Time : Afternoon.

[Enter *Gnanavalli*, *Atirupa*, and *Garvasila*.]

Gnanavalli—Oh, my lord, we have come over a long distance. Our legs begin to ache out of fatigue and hunger is very oppressive. We shall sit for a while under the shade of this tree and regale ourselves with these refreshments and start again after a short repose.

Atirupa—Oh, the very apple of my eye, we shall do according to your pleasure.

[They sit under the shade of the tree and dine.]

Gnanavalli—Dear lord, I feel quite thirsty, can you go and fetch me some water to drink.

Atirupa—Princess, remain at this spot safely for a while ; my friend and myself go out in quest of water and shall return without delay. Be vigilant while alone.

[Atirupa and Garvasila leave her.]

SCENE 3

Place . Neighbourhood of a well.

Time : Evening.

[Enter *Atirupa and Garvasila.*]

Garvasila—[aside] My whole attention is now rivetted upon the damsel Gnanavalli. My life cannot last unless I have the fortune to embrace her. But as long as the prince is alive my intention can never be carried out. The only way, therefore, left to me is that I should dupe him somehow and take possession of the maid. But such a treachery would subject me to the ignominy of a traitor ! If I make scruples to avoid the ill reputation, it would be impossible to enjoy the maiden and I shall have to die of love. This is my dilemma! [Thinks for a while.]

There is one point to be considered. Which is more precious, whether one's own life or that of his friend? I think the higher virtue lies in preserving one's own life in preference to that of any other. Thus for the safety of my own life I can encompass the destruction of my friend, Atirupa———. But how can I bring about his death ? It is no easy business to destroy a hero such as he is. A timely thought seems to flash through my brain. We are now marching

towards a well. I shall play a trick and do away with the fellow.

[They both reach the well.]

Comrade, here there is a well. [Peeps into it.]
But the water seems to be at a very great depth.
How can we get in to fetch the water?

[The prince peeps into the well.]

Atirupa—Yes, the water, as you say is indeed at a great depth. How can we procure it?

[Is plunged in thought while peeping into the well.]

Garvasila--[Putting his hand over the shoulder of the prince says within himself.]

This indeed is the fit opportunity. I shall dash down the fellow headlong into the well.

[Pushes down the prince into the well.]

I have accomplished what I intended to bring about. I have thrown my rival into the well. The damsel is now surely mine. She is within my clutches. Still, there is another difficulty. What explanation can I give her of the fate of the prince? How can I appease her grief and win her into my favour?——. Yes, I shall play another trick. I will tell her that while I got down into the well to fetch water leaving the prince on the bank of the well, a tiger unexpectedly

pounced upon him and carried him away. I shall, also, feign that I am deep sunk in grief. Then she will believe me ; afterwards I shall try to win her by some persuasive words.

[After planning thus in mind he hastens to her with weeping eyes.]

SCENE 4.

Place: The Shade of a tree.

Time: Evening.

[*Gnanavalli under a tree.*]

Gnanavalli—My dear lover who went in quest of water for me has not yet returned. He promised to come back quickly and his delay plunges my heart in grief. The equilibrium of my mind is really disturbed. Oh, how is it that my right shoulder and right eye throb ? The wise would call these bad omens predicting some calamity near at hand. I don't know what disaster may ensue to me. Is it possible that some mishap has occurred to my dear lord? No ; no ; no such disaster would befall my lord. Oh, God, it is Your duty to guard my husband from all dangers and bring him safe to me.

[Sees Garvasila at a distance.]

Oh, some body seems to come at a distance; it is the young minister. Alas, he seems to come alone with sad face and weeping eyes. Alas, alas, I don't see my deliverer in his company. Has really some danger befallen my lord? Alas! alas!! alas!!! I am completely in the lurch and bereft of my very reason. What shall I do? Let me yet wait and see. The young minister will explain everything.

[Garvasila pretending to weep much comes quite close].

Garvasila—Ah, what shall I do hereafter? Oh, heavens, have you destined me to this lot? How can I appease my indescribable grief? What message shall I bear to your royal father? Alas! alas!! my friend.

Gnanavalli—Sir, where is your comrade? You would not brook his separation even for a minute? How do you happen to come alone? What has become of him? Please reveal the matter at once.

Garvasila—Maiden, what reply could I give you? Am I to tell you of the fate of my friend? How can I break the news to you? My tongue is spell-bound and I am at a loss to say anything.

Gnanavalli—Your words portend great evil ! Tell me anyhow what has befallen. What has become of the saviour of my life ? Where is my hero of heroes ?

Garvasila—Madam, I had to leave the prince near the bank of the well when I got down into it for getting the water. Then, alas ! I heard a sudden cry while I was within the well. How can I describe it ? My tongue shudders to reveal it !

Gnanavalli—What ! What !! What !!! Did really any disaster befall my saviour !

Garvasila—On hearing the sudden cry I came up abruptly and saw a tiger carrying away my friend in its jaws.

Gnanavalli—Was my lover carried away by a tiger ? Alas ! Alas ! What shall I do ? How did you then keep quiet ?

Garvasila—I really ran after the beast very rapidly. Still no good came of it for the beast ran with a higher speed and I was unable to overtake it. I don't know how terribly he should have suffered - then ! What pangs should he have endured ! My heart palpitates with grief when I think of the unexpected calamity ! Oh dear friend, when shall I see you again.

[Falls down as though in a fainting fit.]

Gnanvalli—Oh my love, you have fallen a victim to a tiger and have left me in the lurch ! What refuge have I hereafter ? Oh, God of the Universe !

[Falls down in a swoon ; Garvasila gets up and examines the beauty of Gnanavalli leisurely]

Garvasila—Probably my words might have proved a dagger to her heart and brought about her death. Let me test her pulse.

[tests the pulse.]

Oh, how soft are her tender hands ! They are more endearing to the touch than flowers !

[puts his fingers near her nostrils]

Breath has not escaped. Glad that she is really alive. Oh, how can I describe the charm of her nose ! Can I compare it to the champaka or the flower of the Sesame ! What a rare beauty ! What indescribable effulgence ! Even when she is in a swoon and sunk in grief her beauty beggars all description. If she be in her good humour who would be capable of describing her charm ! Even Adisesha with a thousand double tongues would be at a loss to do justice to her beauty by his eloquence ; how then

can I really measure her beauty with the power of my single tongue? The more I see her the greater becomes my difficulty to bear the darts of Cupid's flower-arrows! By what means can I console her and persuade her to love me. If I use force she may become desperate and give up her ghost. What course is left me then? I shall, yet, try my best to gain her love with the help of the sweet language in my power. That seems to me the only path left open to me. If even that fails to win her consent———. Who would come to aid her in this desolate jungle? I am her sole refuge. If my persuasive words really fail to win her love, there is force at my command. And that shall be the way to gratify my lust. Come what may! That is the way.

[Seeing that Gnanavalli is about to wake from the swoon the rogue falls down and pretends that he is still in a swoon.]

Gnanavalli—Oh, heavens! Have you destined me to this lot? My love was directed towards this prince from my early girlhood and ever since he slew the giant and rescued me, my love grew greater than ever. All my love has been blasted by fate. What shall be my lot here—

after ? How can I bear the pangs of my misery. As I have lost my sweet-heart what is the use of any more life in this wretched tabernacle of flesh ! I shall enter the funeral pyre without delay and reach the region where my lover now resides.

[Sees more closely Garvasila who is pretending to be in a swoon yet.]

This young minister has lost consciousness and is in a swoon on account of his friend's privation. I should therefore, wake him from his fit and ask him to prepare my funeral pyre.

[Garvasila awakes]

Garvasila—Oh, dear lord, how can I bear life in this body after your privation. I think of committing my body to the flames.

Gnanavalli—Oh friend of my saviour there is no use of our vain sorrow hereafter. The virtue of a woman of chastity lies in giving up her ghost as soon as she hears her husband's death. It is a grievous mistake that I have endured to live so long even after hearing the death of my lover. Please go about and gather cakes of cow-dung and some pieces of firewood and prepare my funeral conflagration.

Garvasila—[aside] There is no use of further delay in our matter. She has made up her mind to immolate her body to the flames. I should somehow or other prevent her from entering the funeral pyre and win her love by persuasion. [addressing Gnanavalli] Maiden, hear what appears proper to me. Why should you give up your beautiful body to the flames. You are in the very sweet bloom of life. Did the prince really wed you? You are no widow to enter fire for the sake of chastity. You are yet a virgin. You can very well wed me instead of Atirupa, my friend. You may lead a very happy life in my company. I shall take you safe to your father and afterwards I shall marry you with his consent.

Gnanavalli—Oh, cruel wretch. What words did you dare to use before me? Your words are more irritating to my ears than a red-hot poker. Rascal, don't stand before me in my presence. Is it for this vile purpose that you made such a high pretence of sorrow for your friend? Ah, vile traitor of friendship. It would be a great sin to see your accursed countenance.

[turns her face away]

Get thee gone at once.

Garvasila—Oh my dear, it is not proper that you should be so moody ; come near, I shall kiss you and embrace you into my bosom. It is very difficult to endure the arrows of Cupid which pierce deep into my heart. •

Gnanavalli—Fool, fool, how impudent are you ? Don't try to become the vilest sinner on earth. Stand aloof and dare not touch me.

Garvasila—It is not fit that you should be so much provoked. Your tricks to evade me will be of no avail, hereafter.

Gnanavalli—Are you a cousin of mine, you fool that you dare to prattle like a mad libertine.

Garvasila—My dear, you were so much vainly desirous of wedding the prince. What is the use of that love ?

Gnanavalli—You vile traitor that has murdered a friend. Sins besets you ; dont dare to stand before me.

Garvasila—Dear, dear, how can you escape me ? I am, indeed, your worthy husband.

Gnanavalli—Stout-hearted rogue, you yet dare to embrace me. I will beat you with my shoes, vile wretch ! be aloof.

Garvasila—Your lover is carried away by a tiger. What is the use of doting on him any longer ? I am now the right husband to you.

Gnanavalli—Rascal, you think to violate me fancying might is right. Keep back, you vile dog.

Garvasila—Foolish maiden, is there anybody here excepting me to help you at this hour. We shall embrace each other and live in union.

Gnanavalli—Stoutest idiot, don't think that I am unaided. The deities of the jungle are guarding me. Don't dare to use force. [Addressing the powers.] Oh, God of gods, it is Your bounden duty to guard my chastity from being impaired by the wretch. To those forlorn who else could render help? Oh God of the Universe I commit myself to Your shelter.

[Garvasila tries to force her to commit rape, then by divine intervention a tiger appears all of a sudden quite unexpectedly and pounces upon Garvasila and carries him away in its jaws.]

God has been really gracious to me and preserved my chastity from being molested. Why should I tarry any more? Let me myself set about to gather faggots for my self-immolation.

[She gathers pieces of firewood and piles them into a funeral pyre.]

SCENE 5

Place : Neighbourhood of a well.

Time : Evening.

[*Enter Ramakkon and Thimmakkon.*]

Ramakkon—Cousin ; I feel quite hungry. Let us drink our porridge a little and after refreshing ourselves with chewing some beetel and nuts, let us go home driving the cattle before us.

Thimmakkon—Yes, yes, I too feel hungry likewise. Let us both go near that yonder well and drink our porridge.

[*Both go near the well and drink their liquid food.*]

Atirupa—[*From within the well.*]

I catch fortunately the voice of some human beings —Who are you, sirs ? Sirs, sirs, kindly get me out of the well.

Ramakkon—What is this, cousin ? The voice of a man seems to proceed from within the well.

Thimmakkon—Cousin, let us both go and see what the matter is and learn who he is.

[*They go and see Atirupa who is within the well.*]

Ramakkon } Who are you, man, that has fallen
Thimmakkon } into the well ?

Atirupa—Sirs, I am a wayfarer ; I came to quench my thirst and by accident I slipped into this. Please try to get me out as early as you can. My breath is, as it were, at the point of quitting the body.

Ramakkon—Here, we throw you a thick rope ; tie it strongly round your waist and catch hold of the rope and we shall raise you up from the well to the ground.

[The shepherds take him out of the well.]

Atirupa—Your charitable deeds will bear good fruit. You have indeed saved my life. God will help you much. By this act of kindness you are going to become prosperous. Who are you, men ?

Thimmakkon—Gentleman, we belong to the shepherd tribe. The hut that is seen yonder is our cottage. We came to this jungle to graze our cattle. We are, now, returning home to our cottage.

Atirupa—Sirs, will you tell me whether there is any big town in the vicinity ?

Ramakkon—Yes, gentleman, at some distance from our hut there is the town Hastinapur. It is the capital city where our great king resides.

Atirupa—If so, I shall feel much obliged if you conduct me into the town ; I shall reward you both very handsomely.

Thimmakkon—Good luck to us ; come, gentleman, I shall lead you to the city. [to Ramakkon.] Cousin you may lead our cattle to the cottage and afterwards try to join us both by the yonder road. Then we all the three can enter the town in a company. Cousin, you should be very quick to return.

[Atirupa and Thimmakkon walk in the direction of the tree where Gnana-valli is preparing for self-immolation.]

Atirupa—[within himself.] When I consider the trick played on me by the rascal to encompass my ruin, he should have really meditated upon gaining the hand of my dear Gnana-valli. What height of treason ! You virtueless wretch, what a fool I was to have believed you as a fit help-mate in my adventures? Oh, what could have been the fate of my dear wife at this time?—my mind is not at all at ease. I should reach her as soon as possible. When I see the traitor I shall hack him to pieces with this dagger. [Turning towards Thimmakkon.] Man, let us make haste through this path.

Thimmakkon—Oh, by all means ; this path also leads to the city. [While walking by the path Atiruppa sees a maid about to enter the funeral pyre.]

Atirupa—Who could the maid be? She is about to plunge into the fire [They both hasten towards her.] Oh, it is my own Gnanavalli. I should make post-haste and prevent her from death.

[runs towards her.]

SCENE 6.

Place: Under a tree.

Time: Evening.

[*Gnanavalli when about to enter the pyre.*]

Gnanavalli—Oh, my husband! dearer than my life! I shall presently reach the very region to which you have gone away leaving me desolate. Oh God! help me.

[Gnanavalli rushes towards the fire and is about to pounce herself into the pyre when Atirupa prevents her from death and embraces her in his bosom.]

Atirupa—O, my dear, what were you about to do? Why did you venture to enter the pyre?

[Gnanavalli is astonished to see that her very lover has rescued her from the flames and sinks herself in an ocean of bliss along with her rescuer.]

Gnanavalli—Oh, my dear, thank God that I see you alive again. Let us sing fervently hallelujahs to God Siva the very Ocean of Grace for having brought about our union again, saving us from all perils.

[The pair sing hallelujahs on God Siva.]

Atirupa—My dear, why were you about to destroy yourself by plunging into the fire? Where is that rogue of a fellow, Garvasila?

Gnanavalli—My dear, should I contaminate my tongue by any mention of that unpardonable wretch? That villain pretended to be really sorry for your death and gave me to understand that you were abruptly carried off by a tiger. He then courted my love. When I refused he was about to force to violate my chastity. By divine intervention a tiger really appeared and carried him away in its jaws. Thinking that you are dead I thought of giving up my body to the flames

as all dames of chastity do and you rescued me in time. But tell me what really happened to you.

Atirupa—That arch-villain dashed me down into a well by surprise. I came with all haste to make him a victim to this dagger. But before I could punish him, God Himself has finished my business. Well, we cannot delay any longer; let us proceed at once to Hastinapur.

Gnanavalli—My dear, I am ready. Let us go.

Thimmakkon—[sees Gnanavalli very attentively and prostrates before them.]

My lord, I bow to you ; madam, I bow to you. Are you not the daughter of our king ? I have seen you as a child in the palace. I shall take you to the king and bring about his happiness. My cousin also, will soon join us for company ; let us soon proceed.

[On the way Ramakkon joins them and all the four proceed towards Hastinapur.]

SCENE 7.

Place: Durbar of Hastinapur.

Time: Night.

[*Kirtisena, Parvataketu, Buffoon and others are at Durbar.*]

Kirtisena—Though by beat of drum, I proclaimed my intention to all countries, no news has

reached me yet of my daughter, Gnanavalli. What has become of her, I don't know! I am still in the lurch. My mind is, constantly being pained.

Parvataketu—My lord, your majesty need not be uneasy. Some hero or other would be venture-some enough to attack the giant and rescue Gnanavalli from him after bringing about his destruction. Your Majesty may feel quite certain of what I predict.

Buffoon—My Lord, what suspicion is there in what the prime-minister says. To the hero who ventures, there is the chance of winning the hand of our princess as well as of becoming the Lord of our land. Would not this double ambition poke the spirit of real warriors and make them adventurous? I inquired of the herald already who made the public proclamation. He gave me to understand that Chapala, the prince of Magada has already proceeded on the adventure. Further, Atirupa, the prince of Kuntala along with his comrade Garvasila set out already in quest of our princess. One of them at least would be successful. He will kill the giant and bring our princess safe to us. There is no impediment to what I say.

Peon—My Lord, very happy news to your Majesty's ears.

Parvataketu—Peon, what good news ?

Peon—The prince of Kuntala, Atirupa by name, is coming here presently conducting our royal princess Gnanavalli with him.

Kirtisena—Is it really so? Indeed, I am very happy. Vizier, proceed at once to conduct them with due honour.

Parvataketu—Instantly, my lord.

[Goes and returns conducting the pair very honorably.]

Here they have come.

Kirtisena—[Leaps down from the throne and hugs his daughter close to his bosom].

I have, indeed, been fortunate enough to see you again alive. Thank God.

Gnanavalli—Pappa, I bow before you.

Kirtisena—Prosperity attend you, my daughter. Have you not been a rare bequeathal from God Siva to me ?

Atirupa—My Lord, I bow before you.

Kirtisena—Blessed are you, Athirupa ; seat yourself in this chair of state. [to Gnanavalli] Ah, apple of my eye. What terrible hardships should you

have endured at the hands of the monster ! How cruelly would the wicked giant have tortured you ! Give me an elaborate account of everything that should have transpired.

Swayamprabha—[runs and embraces Gnanavalli]

Sister how very fortunate I am to see you again in safety after so long a separation.

Gnanavalli—Dear sister, my deliverance from the wretch is due to this champion.

[Swayamprabha looks him at the face
and bends down her head out of
shyness.]

Father, one day while I was wandering in my park along with my maids a giant surprised me all of a sudden and carried me away into his grotto. He pressed me much to give him my love. I then replied to him 'Ah, I am sad at heart on account of my sudden separation from my parents and as the fright has not yet subsided my mind is in a great confusion. By and by it will attain its equilibrium. Then shall I see my way to love you?'. By means of this reply I pacified him but was ever on the look-out to effect my escape. My sorrow was, indeed, great. Some days ago this warrior among men fortunately appeared before

me near the cave and after some conversation between us he requested me to learn the secret abode of the vitality of the giant from him. By some trick I drew forth the secret from the monster and revealed it to the gentleman. He then made haste and fetched a certain beetle which was the abode of the vitality of the giant and squeezed it to death at the very threshold of the monster and thereby encompassed his ruin. I was thus rescued from the demon. Hear, father, to what more perils I was subject. My lover, his friend Garvasila, and myself then set out towards our capital. On the way, I felt extremely thirsty ; my saviour and his friend left me under a tree and went in quest of water near a well. Then his wicked friend pushed him into the well and came with weeping eyes and made me understand that the prince was carried away by a tiger. Then when I wanted to enter the funeral pyre he pressed me much against my will to wed him ; and the rogue even went to the length of trying to violate my virginhood, when by divine intervention a real tiger appeared miraculously and carried the wretch away. Still, fancying my deliverer to be dead I was on the point of sacrificing myself to

the flames. Then unexpectedly my hero came to me running and prevented me from self-immolation. These two shepherds Thimmakkôn and Ramakkôn are the benefactors of my lover ; for it is they that got him out of the well. This is my history. My lover really rescued me twice from death. I beseech you to get me married to my champion, this very prince, who twice saved my life. There is yet another request to make. I made a promise to Swayamprabha that both of us would wed one and the same husband and live in mutual bliss. Your majesty may get the consent of the vizier to bestow his daughter in marriage to the prince.

Kirtisena—Vizier, do you find any objection to my daughter's proposal ?

Parvataketu—Our princess's will is my wish.

[addressing his daughter].

Swayamprabha, you heard what our princess has expressed. I believe you are willing to abide by her will.

Swayamprabha—Father, my intention is to act in accordance with my sister's wish.

Gnanavalli—Dear lord, when marrying me it is your duty to wed her also.

Atirupa—My dear, I am quite ready to act up to anything you like.

Kirtisena—Vizier, prepare every thing necessary to conduct the nuptials.

Parvataketu—All things are naturally ready.

Kirtisena—Very glad ; at this very auspicious hour let us consummate the marriage of our daughters, Gnanavalli and Swayamprabha, with Atirupa.

[The wedding goes on auspiciously.]

Buffoon—My lord, just as your Majesty conferred upon the prince of Kuntala the hands of Gnanavalli and Swayamprabha, in the same manner please confer upon me my dear Kamalini as my wife. I have ready with me a flower-garland which I specially prepared for her so many days ago. I await your Majesty's pleasure.

Kirtisena—Jester, I allow you what you desire. You can marry Kamalini.

Buffoon—I am indeed fortunate, my lord ; many many thanks to your majesty.

[He puts on a withered garland over the neck of Kamalini and rejoices.]

Atirupa—My lord, I request your pleasure to reward properly these two shepherds Thimmakkôn and Rammakkôn who raised me up safe from the well,

Kirtisena—Vizier, reward these two men handsomely as my son-in-law wishes and send them home.

Parvataketu—Readily, my lord [addressing the peon.] Duffador, take these two men to our Treasury and inform the treasurer to allow them to carry each as heavy a load of wealth as he can bear. Let these men be rewarded and sent home quickly. Expedite.

Peon—Very readily my lord. [Exit]

Kirtisena—Vizier, as infirmity has crept upon me, it is now high time that I should seek for the salvation of my soul. I am, therefore, resolved upon going to the jungle for doing penance. In accordance with my promise I have to crown my son-in-law, the prince of Kuntala as the sovereign of our land. Vizier, you have been a very faithful minister to me ; you should act in the same manner under the new king in governing the kingdom without swerving from the path of righteousness.

Parvataketu—My Lord, I shall conduct myself according to your royal pleasure.

[The Coronation takes place.]

Peace, peace, peace.

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