

# CHITRA

## PREFACE

THIS LYRICAL DRAMA was written about twenty-five years ago. It is based on the following story from the Mahabharata.

In the course of his wanderings, in fulfilment of a vow of penance, Arjuna came to Manipur. There he saw Chitrangada, the beautiful daughter of Chitravahana, the king of the country. Smitten with her charms, he asked the king for the hand of his daughter in marriage. Chitravahana asked him who he was, and learning that he was Arjuna the Pandava, told him that Prabhanjana, one of his ancestors in the kingly line of Manipur, had long been childless. In order to obtain an heir, he performed severe penances. Pleased with these austerities, the god Shiva gave him this boon, that he and his successors should each have one child. It so happened that the promised child had invariably been a son. He, Chitravahana, was the first to have only a daughter Chitrangada to perpetuate the race. He had, therefore, always treated her as a son and had made her his heir. Continuing, the king said:

'The one son that will be born to her must be the perpetuator of my race. That son will be the price that I shall demand for this marriage. You can take her, if you like, on this condition.'

Arjuna promised and took Chitrangada to wife, and lived in her father's capital for three years. When a son was born to them, he embraced her with affection, and taking leave of her and her father, set out again on his travels.

## CHARACTERS

### GODS

Madana (Eros)

Vasanta (Lycoris)

### MORTALS

Chitra, daughter of the King of Manipur

Arjuna, a prince of the house of the Kurus. He is of the Kshatriya or 'warrior caste', and during the action is living as a Hermit retired in the forest.

Villagers from an outlying district in Manipur.

## SCENE I

CHITRA. Art thou the god with the five darts, the Lord of Love?

MADANA. I am he who was the first born in the heart of the. Creator. I bind the bond of pain and bliss the lives of men and women!

CHITRA. I know, I know what that pain is and those bonds.—And who art thou, my lord?

VASANTA. I am his friend—Vasanta—the King of the Seasons. Death and decrepitude would wear- the world to the bone but that I follow them and constantly attack them, I am Eternal Youth.

CHITRA. I bow to thee, Lord Vasanta.

MADANA. But what stern vow is thine, fair stranger? Why dost thou wither thy fresh youth with penance and mortification? Such a sacrifice is not fit for the worship of love. Who art thou and what is thy prayer?

CHITRA. I am Chitra, the daughter of the kingly house of Manipur. With god-like grace Lord Shiva promised to my royal grandsire an unbroken line of male descent. Nevertheless, the divine word proved powerless to change the spark of life; in my mother's womb—so invincible was my nature, woman though I be.

MADANA. I know, that is why thy father brings thee up as his son. He has taught thee the use of the bow and all the duties of a king.

CHITRA. Yes, that is why I am dressed in man's attire and have left the seclusion

































