

Storyline Highlights

- The wedding of Kovalan and Kannaki.
- A stage is built for Mathavi's dance debut.
- Mathavi performs her dance.
- The King presents Mathavi with the highest title and an invaluable golden chain.
- Kooni walks the streets to sell the chain and find a suitor for Mathavi.
- Kovalan acquires the chain and abandons his wife, Kannaki, to be with Mathavi.
- The Indhira Vizha festival begins. Women dance Kummi, and Mathavi gives a grand public performance.
- Kovalan grows jealous and quarrels with Mathavi but later reconciles and is drawn back to her.
- Kovalan and Mathavi join the celebrations on the beach. Kovalan sings exotic songs with subtle meanings about relationships.
- Mathavi suspects Kovalan's intentions and responds with suggestive songs of her own.
- Angered, Kovalan leaves Mathavi.
- Mathavi sends a letter to Kovalan through her friend, but he refuses to accept it.

Interval

- Kovalan returns to Kannaki, now penniless.
- Kannaki offers her jeweled anklets to help them restart their life.
- Kovalan and Kannaki set off for Madurai before dawn.
- On their journey, they meet Kavunthi, a Jain monk, who joins them.
- They encounter Mankaddu Maraiyavan, who provides guidance on the route to Madurai.
- They reach a Kali temple where a tribal community is performing rituals. The men prepare for a cattle raid.
- Traveling at night to avoid the heat, they continue their journey.
- In the morning, Kovalan meets Kausikan, who delivers a letter from Mathavi. After reading it, Kovalan realises Mathavi's innocence.
- They reach the outskirts of Madurai and hear temple bells, drums, and the trumpeting of elephants.
- At a monastery, Kovalan confesses his past misdeeds to Kavunthi.
- Madal Maraiyon, an old acquaintance of Kovalan, visits the monastery and recounts Kovalan's virtuous past, including his bravery and generosity.
- Mathari (not to be confused with 'Mathavi'), a woman from the serene village of Ayar Padi, visits Kavunthi.

- Kavunthi requests Mathari to escort Kannaki to Ayar Padi for protection.
- The women of Ayar Padi warmly welcome Kannaki. Mathari's daughter becomes Kannaki's maid.
- Kannaki prepares a meal for Kovalan.
- Kovalan confesses to Kannaki that he has been cruel to her.
- Taking Kannaki's anklet, Kovalan leaves for the city.

Climactic Events

- Kovalan meets a goldsmith who had stolen the Queen's anklet. Recognising the similarity between the anklets, the goldsmith devises a plan to frame Kovalan.
- At the King's court, beautiful dancers perform.
- The goldsmith meets the King and accuses Kovalan of stealing the Queen's anklet.
- The King orders the guards to kill Kovalan if the Queen's anklet is found in his possession.
- Though the guards doubt Kovalan's guilt, one of them kills him in haste.

The Aftermath

- Back in Ayar Padi, ominous signs occur. Mathari organizes a Kuravai dance in praise of Lord Krishna.
- Reluctantly, the people inform Kannaki of Kovalan's execution. Enraged, she resolves to prove his innocence.
- With the help of the city's women, Kannaki finds Kovalan's body.
- Kannaki storms into the King's court, declaring that her anklet contains rubies. The King says, the Queen's contains pearls.
- She smashes the anklet, revealing rubies, proving Kovalan's innocence.
- The King dies of remorse, and the Queen follows him in death.
- Kannaki curses the city, condemning it to flames, sparing only the virtuous.