# Soma Leela

The following document is specifically curated to demonstrate character design and dialogue writing for an RPG styled game narrative. Following the narrative system from the Quest Outline, I have picked a specific series of choices the player can make to present a linear narrative.
The objective is to present a collection of conversations inside an ancient Indian tavern that give us a window into the socio-political atmosphere of this part of the world. From trade tensions and war rumours to outright mystical legends that impact the daily lives of the common people, the intention is to teleport the reader/player into this fictional world with a progressive build-up of the cohesive narrative.

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## Gameplay Script

ANGADH knocks on the main gate of the tavern. There is no response.
He starts banging on the door with his clenched fist. A wooden frame at the eye level slides open from the inside, revealing an angry pair of eyes. It is GORO the gatekeeper.

**GORO**
Go away. The tavern is full tonight.

**ANGADH**
I have important business with the owner here.

Goro glances up and down at Angadh's frame and attire.

**GORO**
Another mercenary? Who are you fighting for, the Pani or the Chandalas?

**ANGADH**
Depends on who's asking.

**GORO**
Hmph! Think you're smart? Get off this property or else you won't see the light of day tomorrow.

**ANGADH**
If your owner discovers that you turned me away, you will meet the same fate.

**GORO**
You got a password?

// Player choice, don't bribe the gatekeeper.

Angadh remains silent.

**GORO**
Thought so.

Goro shuts the peephole.
Angadh steps back to inspect the building to see if there can be another way in. Walking around the main walls, he finds a stable on the side. A young boy, HARI (9) is cleaning the floor. Hari notices the towering warrior approach him. He tightens his grip on the mop as if getting ready to protect himself.

**ANGADH**
Easy boy. I won't hurt you.

**HARI**
Wh- What do you want?

Angadh scans the boy's body. Scars of abuse line his face and limbs. His eyes scream fear while his body continues to tremble. Angadh decides to take a cautious approach.

**ANGADH**
Who did that to you?

Angadh points at the clots of blood on the boy's shoulder. Hari takes a step back, heart racing, breath picking up pace, prepared to make a run for it. Angadh stares at the window of the tavern, dimly lit by oil lanterns, sounds of clattering utensils and laughter flow out into the quaint evening air.

**ANGADH**
How about this? You give me a name, and I'll make sure they never touch you again.

Hari hesitates for a moment, looking up at the tavern. Then he musters up the courage to speak.

**HARI**
It was G- Goro, the gatekeeper. Please don't tell anyone I told you this.

**ANGADH**
I promise, I won't tell anyone.

Angadh smiles. Gently approaching the kid, he ruffles his hair. Hari calms down and loosens his grip on the mop.

**ANGADH**
But I need another way in. Goro didn't let me through the front gate.

**HARI**
Why?

**ANGADH**
I think they fear people like us. They are scared that we will fight back, take away their gold and power.

**HARI**
Who are you?

**ANGADH**
Just another boy, who used to work for an abusive master stable in Malwa. But now, I'm searching for allies who will help me defend my tribe against demonic invaders.

**HARI**
Demons? Will they come to Ujjayini too?

**ANGADH**
Not if we stop them up north.

Hari's expression changes. He seems to be recollecting a long lost memory.

**HARI**
A demon took me from my village and brought me here. But Madam Leela saved me. She is a nice lady. Maybe she can help you.

Angadh is surprised to hear the mention of demons this far south. They seem to have started moving much sooner than he expected.

**ANGADH**
How do I find Madam Leela?

**HARI**
There is a secret backdoor to the tavern. Right this way.

Hari leads Angadh over to the back of the building. He removes some stacks of hay to reveal a trap door. Beneath it, a fleet of stairs descend into an underground passageway.

**HARI**

Please don’t tell anyone that I showed you this secret passage.

**ANGADH**

Thank you kid. I promise I won’t tell anyone. And Goro will never hurt you again.

Hari smiles for a moment. Then proceeds to survey the vicinity making sure nobody was watching. Angadh walks down the steps into the dimly lit passageway.

**ANGADH**

And remember kid, this world keeps beating you down, until you learn to stand up for yourself and fight back.

Hari closes the trap door and the passageway goes pitch dark. Angadh uses his palms to feel his way along the sidewall. After about 15 steps, he comes across a door that’s locked from the inside. Angadh searches the rest of the space for anything else that could help him get in, when suddenly he bumps into a lantern, sending it crashing on the floor. Suddenly he hears footsteps approaching the door from the other side. Angadh stands against the wall to the left of the door. Within moments, the door opens and a stocky middle-aged man, DOGA walks in holding a lantern of his own.

**DOGA**

Who’s there?

Doga walks ahead to inspect the fallen lantern. Angadh calmly slips behind him and sneaks past the doorway into the building.

**DOGA**

Those cursed mice are back at it again. How many times will Doga chase them away?

Angadh finds himself in a long corridor stuffed with boxes, barrels and crates. To his left, he spots a fleet of stairs going up. He climbs up and enters the kitchen area filled with a bunch of workers going about their regular routines. Loud conversations, clattering of utensils, the sounds of chopping boards and metal vessels being moved around. Not one person looks up to see him coming.

**COOK 1**

Did we run out of lotus stems again? Paru, I told you to stock up yesterday!

**COOK 2**

I did go to the market, but they were out of stock.

**CLEANER 1**

Same story with ginger and cumin.

**COOK 1**
Huh? How is that possible?

**CLEANER 1**
The shopkeeper said he was forced to sell most of his goods to the Pani soldiers.

**COOK 2**
I think they're stocking up for another military campaign down south

Angadh calmly keeps walking across the cluttered room hoping to not raise any suspicion, until one of the workers, an old lady, walks right into him in a hurry. At first she is startled to find him back here, but then she makes a stern face and scolds Angadh.

**COOK 1**
Get out of the kitchen. We don't have maidens for you here.

**ANGADH**
My apologies!

Angadh promptly walks out and finds his way into the dining area. He spots an empty chair on an otherwise filled table and quietly takes his place at it. He then proceeds to eavesdrop on the ongoing conversations, assessing each person and wondering whom he should talk to for intel on Loheshwar.

A drunk soldier, BHALLA, seems to be the loudest on the table, despite nobody giving him any attention in particular. A waitress, VIDUSHI, serves him some food and he grabs her by the waist.

**BHALLA**
Come one, sit with me for a drink

**VIDUSHI**
As much as I'd love that, there are other customers waiting for me.

**BHALLA**
Who? Who dares to set their eyes on you… you precious little lily flower. Your hair… so…

Bhalla squints his eyes and feels his insides squealing. About to puke, he looks around in desperation. Vidushi promptly shoves a bucket close to his face and Bhalla lets his guts out into it.

**VIDUSHI**
That's enough drinks for you oh Bhalla the brave. Save some for the rest of them.

// Player choice, speak to Vidushi

Angadh notices all this and decides to talk to Vidushi. He raises his hand quietly signalling her to come over. Vidushi takes notes and comes by.

**VIDUSHI**

Don't let the drunk bastard fool you, it's not the drinks. We have some of the best liquors in Ujjayini. And the best radish soup, you must try it!

**ANGADH**

The soup, please. And your company.

Vidushi lets out a mischievous smile.

**VIDUSHI**

That'll be 50 panas. 30 more, if you want some privacy.

**ANGADH**

Here is fine. I just need someone to talk to.

**VIDUSHI**

Well, well… aren't you a man of mysteries. Or are you not a man at all.

**ANGADH**

Don't lump me with the rest of them. A real man would never seek pleasures in a place like this.

**VIDUSHI**

A real man would also be bad for business, no?

Angadh drops a pouch of coins into Vidushi's hands. Vidushi tucks the pouch deep into her garments and proceeds to get him a bowl of soup. Then she sits down next to him.

**VIDUSHI**

So, what's a wretched place like this, doing in a real man like you?

**ANGADH**

And I thought Bhalla the brave was the drunk one.

Vidushi chuckles. Behind her, Bhalla's face still hasn't exited the puke bucket.

**VIDUSHI**

I have no clue why they call him that. My bet, he made it up.

**ANGADH**

Do the Ujjayini armymen come by here often?

**VIDUSHI**
They do. More so before they have to set out for a military campaign.

**ANGADH**
They've been doing an awful lot of campaigns these days, haven't they?

**VIDUSHI**
Tell me about it. I mean, it's great for business, but I have a bad feeling that all the fighting will follow them back to our kingdom.

**ANGADH**
Unless they know for sure that they cannot be defeated

**VIDUSHI**
Nobody is invincible darling. Not even the gods.

**ANGADH**
Aye! Not even the gods.

**VIDUSHI**
You surely know something. What makes you think they can't be defeated?

**ANGADH**
My bet is on their shields and weapons. The word on the street is that they have a new supplier of arms. And superior technology always wins.

Vidushi's face turns serious. Clearly something about the conversation got her to raise her guard.

**VIDUSHI**
And how do you know that?

**ANGADH**
All I can say is that I'm looking for the supplier myself.

**VIDUSHI**
And what will you do if you find him?

**ANGADH**
I wish I could tell you, but it could be bad for your business.

Vidushi stands up, eyeing Angadh with suspicion. Angadh puts down the now empty soup bowl. After a brief moment of measuring one another, Vidushi leans in to whisper in Angadh's ear.

**VIDUSHI**
Identify yourself, stranger. Tell me your intentions and maybe I will help you.

// Player choice, reveal identity to Vidushi

**ANGADH**
My name is Angahd. I belong to the Abhira tribe in Malwa. I've travelled here to find Loheshwar.

**VIDUSHI**
Why?

**ANGADH**
I intend on convincing him to stop supplying the Ujjayini army with his arms and instead, assist my tribe against the northern demons.

Vidushi bursts out laughing, catching the attention of quite a few onlookers around them. Panic fills Angadh's face, but he chooses to stay put and wait to see how things unfold. Vidushi walks over to a nearby counter and grabs a couple of cups, fills them up with drinks and walks back to Angadh.

**VIDUSHI**
I must say, I am amused by your bravado, but more so by your utter stupidity.

**ANGADH**
Why do you laugh?

**VIDUSHI**
You really think Loheshwar will listen to you? You just don't know the demon of the south.

**ANGADH**
Allegiances can be bought.

**VIDUSHI**
Even if you paid him more than the king of Ujjayini himself, you will never win Loheshwar's favor. So I say, forget this dream of yours and share a drink with me.

**ANGADH**
I don't drink. It dulls the senses and makes it hard to be ready for combat.

**VIDUSHI**
Wow, you really are a special one. Haven't seen one like you in all my years here.

**ANGADH**

I just need to know where Loheshwar is.

**VIDUSHI**

You may be a real man. But you're awfully stupid. Nobody knows where Loheshwar really is.

Angadh looks down deep in contemplation as to what he must do next. Vidushi takes a sip of her drink and taps on Angadh's shoulder.

**VIDUSHI**

Nobody, except Madam Leela.

**ANGADH**

Where can I find her?

**VIDUSHI**

Follow me.

Vidushi gets up and starts walking back towards the kitchen area. Angadh quietly follows her. The two walk straight through the kitchen and down the stairs that Angadh had previously taken to get in. Upon reaching the corridor below, Vidushi leads Angadh past the secret passageway door over to the other side. Three doors reveal themselves after a sharp turn.

Vidushi knocks on the third door in a coded pattern. Two knocks and one pat. After a brief moment, the door swings open, revealing a room that looks nothing like the tavern above. Adorned with clean fabrics and carpets, the walls display paintings from ancient mythology while ornate candles and lamps cast a warm radiance across the whole room. At the far end, a lady sits at her desk facing the other way. The guard who opened the door insists that Angadh leave his weapons outside. He then proceeds to frisk Angadh to make sure he isn't hiding anything. Then he stands back ready to pounce should things go south. Vidushi goes over to Madam Leela and whispers something in her ears. Madam Leela turns around and takes a good look at Angadh. She then gestures for Angadh to sit down and for Vidushi to leave. Vidushi leans in to whisper in Angadh's ears.

**VIDUSHI**

See me later, okay?

She then leaves the room.

**MADAM LEELA**

You seem like a real warrior. Tell me, how many wars have you fought?

**ANGADH**

None.

**MADAM LEELA**

That's odd, considering the number of times Malwa was under attack from up North.

**ANGADH**

We are. But I do not represent the Malwa court, nor their army.

**MADAM LEELA**

Then why go after Loheshwar's arms?

**ANGADH**

I lead the Abhira tribal warriors. We need the arms to protect our lands and forests. We do not wish to get caught in between the wars of kings.

**MADAM LEELA**

Get out. I don't deal with tribals.

The guard by the door approaches Angadh to escort him out.

**ANGADH**

What if I gave you what you desire the most?

**MADAM LEELA**

You can't. So don't waste my time.

The guard begins to manhandle Angadh, dragging him away from his chair.

**ANGADH**

Either I give you what you want. Or die trying.

Madam Leela gestures for the guard to stop. He lets go of Angadh but stands right next to him awaiting another order.

**MADAM LEELA**

What I want is Loheshwar's head. Bring it to me, and I will send you the arms you need.

**ANGADH**

But how will killing the man give you control of his blackmarket?

Madam Leela gets up from her chair and walks up to Angadh. Standing face to face, she measures him for a moment and then proceeds to speak.

**MADAM**

Oh, it will. For I am his only daughter.