

DIVYAKAAL



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The kingdom of vardhana

The kingdom of Vardhana stood like an ancient hymn carved into the earth itself. The rivers that embraced its land had flowed since time unknown, whispering stories of forgotten gods and warriors whose names had long faded into dust. The mountains that watched over it, clad in mist and legend, bore silent witness to the march of countless kings.

The people of Vardhana spoke of their ruler with both reverence and fear. Maharaja Narasimha Varman was not a king who simply sat upon his throne; he was a storm that shaped the land, a force whose mere presence turned the tide of war. For years, he had defended his kingdom's borders with unshaken resolve, leading his armies like an avatar of the gods, his voice carrying the weight of dharma and destiny.

And among them, Maharaja Narasimha Varman reigned not just as a ruler, but as the keeper of an age.

His name was etched in the songs of bards, carried in the war cries of soldiers, and spoken in reverence by those who tilled the fields under the protection of his banner. He was a man who held war like fire in his hands, yet walked the path of kings with the wisdom of ages. There was steel in his voice, yet restraint in his eyes. He had seen the cost of ambition, the weight of the throne, and the toll of time upon a warrior's soul. But even the fiercest storms must one day settle. In recent times, the king's gaze lingered longer upon the horizon. His council saw it, his warriors

whispered of it a shift in the great lion's heart. Narasimha Varman, who had carved his name into the stones of history, now stood at the edge of time, contemplating what lay beyond the battlefield.

And in his shadow, his son prepared to take his place.




The Prince and The hermit

Vikram Varman, son of Narasimha Varman had never feared battle. Born into the arms of conquest, his first lessons were taught not in the sheltered halls of poetry and courtly etiquette, but in the open air of the training fields, where the scent of sweat and steel filled the air. His childhood was marked by the sound of clashing swords, the rhythmic gallop of warhorses, and the solemn chants of the Brahmins, who reminded him that even a prince must answer to time. The boy became a warrior, and the warrior grew into a prince. His days were spent under the watchful eyes of the kingdom's finest generals. His mornings began with archery, his afternoons with the art of swordplay, and his evenings with the study of history and the laws of the land. But despite his skill, despite the fire that burned in his heart, he remained untested.

But war was not what weighed on his mind.

It was rule. It was the way his father, once the storm of the battlefield, now sat longer in silence, as if listening to something unseen. It was the way the councilors spoke of treaties more than conquest, of alliances rather than legacies. Vikram had always been told that the day would come when he would inherit the throne, that he would one day carry the burden of an entire kingdom. But no battle had ever prepared him for that. And perhaps, his father knew this. One morning, as the golden sun bathed Vaishaspur in light, a decree was issued. The Maharaja would ride out with his son and a select few warriors to visit Raja Veersena of Malava, a ruler bound to their house by peace and old ties. It was a journey of diplomacy, a reaffirmation of friendship. But Vikram knew better. The journey began at dawn.



The roads stretched endlessly before them, winding through fields painted in the golden hues of morning, past villages that still stirred from sleep. Maharaja Narasimha Varman rode ahead, his form as steady as the mountains that had stood beside their kingdom for generations. Vikram Varman followed, his mind not on the road, but on the man he rode beside.

He had spent his life preparing to follow in his father's footsteps. Yet, for the first time, he wondered if he truly understood the path ahead.

The days passed in quiet rhythm—the steady march of hooves, the rustle of wind through the trees, the distant cries of hawks that circled above.

Until one evening, as the sun dipped beyond the hills, a lone figure appeared by the roadside.

At first glance, he was unremarkable—just another wandering hermit, draped in time-worn robes, his hair long and wild like the roots of an ancient tree. Yet something about him was different. His presence did not speak of hunger or weariness, nor did he hold the air of one lost on the road.

Instead, he stood as though he had been waiting for them all along.

And when their eyes met, Vikram felt an unease he could not name.

The old man bowed with grace, the dust of the road settling around his feet. He did not bear the weakness of a beggar, nor the frailty of one lost in age. Instead, he carried himself with the quiet dignity of a man who had walked the path of wisdom far longer than others.


Maharaja Narasimha Varman observed him carefully. There was something familiar in his presence. Not in his face, nor his voice, but in the way he stood—as if he did not belong to the world of men, but had simply stepped into it for a purpose unknown.

“Where do you travel, Maharaj?” the old man inquired, his voice as steady as a river's flow.

His words held no fear, no hesitation—only the weight of someone who had seen kingdoms rise and fall like the passing of seasons.

“To Malava,” the Maharaja replied. “To the court of Raja Veersena.”

A flicker of something passed through the old man's eyes. Not surprise, nor concern, but something else—as if he had already known.



“Ah,” he said, nodding slowly. “The road ahead is long, and the burdens of a king are heavier than the sword he carries. But the true battle is never fought with steel.”

Vikram Varman watched the exchange, his instincts keen. There was something about this man’s presence that made the air feel heavier.

The warriors of the convoy, battle-worn and wary of strangers, had gathered close, listening. It was not often that a hermit or traveler spoke so boldly before a king.

And yet, the old man did not seem concerned with caution.

“A kingdom may stand on the strength of its armies,” he continued, “but it is truly built upon the will of the gods. A ruler may think he holds power, but if he walks against dharm, his days are already numbered.”

Silence followed.

Even the Maharaja, a man who had stood before sages and rulers alike, studied him with renewed interest.

“And what would you call dharm, O learned one?”

A slow smile played upon the old man’s lips. “The path that does not bend to cruelty. The law that does not bow before greed. The truth that stands, even when thrones crumble.”

His words were a flame in the evening light, drawing the attention of all who heard them.

It was not just the words he spoke, but the way he spoke them.

Vikram, despite himself, felt drawn in. There was an elegance in his speech, an art in the way he wove meaning into every syllable.

The Maharaja glanced toward his general and councilors. They too, seemed taken by the old man’s presence.

Perhaps that was the moment he decided to let him travel with them.

The road stretched endlessly beneath their feet, the sun now a molten disc descending toward the distant hills. The sky had turned the color of saffron, and the winds carried the scent of earth warmed by the day’s heat.

Durgacharan walked alongside their horses, his bare feet undisturbed by dust or pebbles. His robes, though tattered, carried an air of quiet dignity. There was something ancient in the way he moved—as if time itself had slowed in his presence.

For the past few hours, he had spoken little, merely observing the warriors and their king. But as twilight deepened, he finally broke his silence.

"Maharaj," he began, his voice calm, carrying wisdom like the rivers that had carved the land, "It is said that in every yuga, dharm stands tested. Kings rise, but not all rule in the name of righteousness. Some seek conquest, not justice. Some build their thrones upon the bones of the innocent. What, then, should a true ruler do?"

His words stirred something in the men. The Maharaja's gaze narrowed. Vikram Varman, though silent, listened intently.

Durgacharan continued, his voice laced with a rhythm only the truly learned possessed.

"Krishna himself has spoken of such rulers in the Gita, in the sixteenth adhyay (chapter)."

He turned slightly, addressing not just the king, but all who traveled with them.

"Dambho darpo'bhimaanashcha krodhah paarushyameva cha
Agnyaanam chaabhijaatasya paarthasampadam aasureem'
(Bhagavad Gita 16.4)"

"Pride, arrogance, excessive anger, harshness, ignorance—these, O Partha (Arjun), belong to those born with demonic nature."

A hush fell over the group.

The warriors, hardened by war, were not men of poetry. But the way Durgacharan spoke—the weight in his tone, the deliberation in each word—made even them pause.

"And tell me, Maharaj," he said, turning his sharp yet calm gaze toward Narasimha Varman, "What does the Lord say of a righteous ruler?"

The Maharaja, ever a scholar of scriptures himself, responded after a thoughtful pause.

"Dharmo rakshati rakshitah."

"He who protects dharm, is in turn protected by it." Durgacharan smiled. "Ah, truly spoken, Maharaj. And yet, do all kings live by this truth?" A faint frown crossed Narasimha Varman's face. Vikram leaned forward slightly, now fully drawn into the conversation.

Durgacharan exhaled softly, looking toward the distant sky.

"There exists a kingdom, beyond the rivers, beyond the golden hills. A land where the trees whisper in the voices of gods, where even the winds carry the scent of divine blessings. A kingdom that could have been a beacon of dharm." His tone had shifted. It was no longer just philosophical musings—it was storytelling.

Even the horses seemed to slow, as if drawn into his words.

"Suryagarh," he continued, "is Samrat Rajendra's."

The name fell into the air like an unsheathed blade.

Narasimha Varman's expression remained unreadable, but there was a shift in the way he held his reins.

Durgacharan's voice did not change—he spoke as if he were merely reciting the verses of fate, untouched by personal grievance.

"The rivers there run deep, their waters like liquid gold at dawn. The fields stretch as far as the eye can see, feeding thousands with the blessings of the land. Temples rise like ancient guardians, their bells singing hymns into the sky." He sighed. "But tell me, Maharaj—what is the worth of a kingdom when its ruler is unworthy?" No one spoke. "What happens when a land, blessed by the gods, falls under the hand of a king who does not heed dharm?"

The silence grew heavier.

Durgacharan's gaze met the Maharaja's directly. It was the first true challenge in his words.

"Rajendra sits upon a throne built not on dharm, but on deception. He sways the people with gifts, but they know not the cost. He builds temples, but lets sin fester in his halls. He speaks of

honor, but his hands have long been stained with the blood of those who dared to speak against him."

Vikram felt his own breath slow. Durgacharan was not telling them to act. Not yet. But he was planting a seed.

A seed that would soon grow roots.

"I ask not for war," the old man finally said, stepping aside as if yielding the path to fate itself.

"But tell me, Maharaj—if a king does not uphold dharm, is he still a king?"

The question lingered, hanging in the air like the last note of a sacred hymn.

For the first time in their journey, the Maharaja did not answer immediately. The night had drawn its veil across the land. The moon, half-hidden behind drifting clouds, cast a pale glow upon the road ahead. Their caravan had halted beside a quiet river, where the water murmured softly against the rocks, whispering secrets only time itself could understand.

A fire crackled at the center of their resting place. Its embers glowed like molten stars, illuminating the faces of warriors who sat around it—some speaking in hushed voices, others sharpening their blades in practiced silence.

Vikram Varman sat beside his father, his mind still lingering on Durgacharan's words.

The old man sat across from them, his presence oddly calm, as if the cold night air did not touch

him. His eyes flickered with the fire's light, but his expression remained unreadable.

And then, he spoke again.

"It is not the sword that makes a king great," he said softly, his gaze drifting toward Maharaja Narasimha Varman. "Nor the size of his armies. It is the weight of his choices, Maharaj. A king

must decide—again and again—whether to walk the path of dharm, no matter the cost."

The Maharaja, who had remained silent for long, finally spoke.

"And what if the cost is war, Durgacharan?"

A faint smile touched the old man's lips.

"Then it is not war, Maharaj," he replied, "but balance."

His voice was steady, patient, as though he were merely reminding them of a truth they had always known.

"Bhagavad Gita, Adhyay 2, Shloka 31," he murmured.

'Swadharme nidhanam shreyah, paradharmo bhayavahah.'

"It is better to die fulfilling one's own duty than to follow another's path, which brings only fear."

The firelight danced in his eyes.

"Rajendra does not rule as per dharm. He rules as per his will."

The words hung heavy in the air.

Vikram watched his father. The Maharaja's expression was unreadable, but something had shifted.

He was listening.

Durgacharan's grip over the night—over the minds of those who sat around him—was growing stronger. Not by force, not by command, but by patience. By wisdom. By truth.

Vikram frowned, his thoughts a storm within him.


And then—he saw it.

A glimmer of polished metal caught his eye.

Vikram's gaze lowered, drawn almost instinctively toward the staff that lay beside Durgacharan.

It was unlike any staff he had seen before.

It was tall, seemingly carved from a single piece of black stone, its surface polished yet eerily uneven, as if it were formed not by hands, but by something greater—something unnatural.



Along its shaft, ancient inscriptions twisted like veins, letters of an unknown script that seemed almost alive under the flickering firelight.

But it was the head of the staff that truly unsettled him.

At its top, a metallic ring encircled a dark, hollow void, as though it once held something—but whatever it was, was now missing. Small iron bells dangled around the ring, their chimes eerily silent despite the night wind.

Vikram felt something shift in the pit of his stomach.

The night had grown deeper. The fire, once fierce, had settled into glowing embers, casting long shadows across the gathered warriors. The air was thick—not with silence, but with thought. The words spoken between Maharaja Narasimha Varman and Durgacharan had woven themselves into the very fabric of the night.

It was no longer a mere conversation.

It was a debate of dharm.

A battle of thought, where words clashed sharper than swords, where truths were tested like steel upon an anvil.

The Maharaja, regal and wise, sat tall—his presence still commanding. He was no blind king to be led like a child. He, too, had walked the path of knowledge, of war, of rule.

And so, when Durgacharan spoke, the Maharaja answered not as a mere listener, but as an equal.

"Dharm is not so easily defined, O learned one," the Maharaja said, his voice steady. "You speak of Rajendra's wrongs, but what of his people? Do they not live? Do they not thrive under his rule?"

Durgacharan's eyes flickered with approval—like a teacher pleased by a student's progress.

"Maharaj, a river may seem calm on the surface, yet its depths may be poisoned. Tell me—if a man in power has turned away from dharm, does it matter if his people survive, if they do not live in truth?"

The Maharaja frowned but did not interrupt.

Durgacharan continued.

"Bhagavad Gita, Adhyay 3, Shloka 21."

'Yad yad ācharati shreshṭhas tat tad evetaro janah, sa yat pramāṇam kurute lokas tad anuvartate.'

"What a great man does, the world follows. Whatever standard he sets, others follow."

He leaned forward slightly. "Tell me, Maharaj—if the king himself follows the path of ego and greed, what will become of the kingdom?"

A hush fell over the warriors.

Maharaja Narasimha Varman took a deep breath, his fingers tightening slightly over the hilt of his sword.

He could see the truth in the words. And yet, war was not so simple.

"And what if war is the greater sin, Durgacharan?"

A smile ghosted the old man's lips.

"Then tell me, Maharaj—was Lord Ram a sinner when he waged war against Ravan?"

The air grew heavier.

Durgacharan's voice was soft, but unshakable.

"Was Krishna wrong when he stood beside Arjun on the battlefield of Kurukshetra?"

"No," the Maharaja admitted. "But they did not seek war. They fought when there was no choice left."


Durgacharan's eyes gleamed.

"Then let us do the same."

The moment had come.

"Send a messenger, O Maharaj."

"Let dharm be tested one last time."



The warriors stirred, exchanging glances. The idea had taken root. The attack on Suryagarh was now a certainty—but it would begin with words, not swords.

But who would go?

Who would be the Rajdoot?

The murmurs began, names spoken, then dismissed. A soldier? A minister?

Then, as if answering a call only he could hear, Durgacharan stood.

"I will go."

All eyes turned to him.

The Maharaja, surprised, narrowed his gaze. "You, Durgacharan?"

The old man nodded, his expression unreadable. "I will be the peace envoy. I will go as Krishna went before the Kauravas—one last attempt to awaken dharm within Samrat Rajendra."

A hush settled.

And then, slowly, the Maharaja nodded.

"So be it."

And just like that, fate moved forward once more.

Durgacharan had won.

But beneath his bowed head, behind his wise, aged eyes—something else stirred.

Something that none of them had seen yet.

Something that would change everything.

The SeeDS of War

The day passed, but it did not truly pass.

Time moved, yet it did not move at all.

The sun had risen, walked its long path across the sky, and now dipped toward the western horizon. The winds that once carried laughter and marching songs now swayed uneasily, whispering through the trees. The campfires crackled, sending embers into the fading light.

But no one spoke of the silence.

No one dared to.

For the words of Durgacharan still lingered—woven into the air itself, refusing to leave.

Maharaja Narasimha Varman sat before the largest fire, his silhouette dark against the golden glow. He had spoken little since the old man had left for Suryagarh, offering only brief commands, small nods.

His mind was not here.

It was where Durgacharan was.

Where fate was being decided.

"Father."

The voice broke through the stillness, measured yet uncertain.

Prince Vikram Varman stepped forward, his gaze steady, yet searching. He had seen his father in many forms—as a warrior, a ruler, a man of wisdom—but tonight, there was something else in him.

Something he had never seen before.

Doubt.

Not of himself, but of the world.

"Do you believe his words?" Vikram asked, careful, measured.



The Maharaja exhaled, looking into the fire. "Durgacharan speaks not as a man, my son, but as one who has seen time itself move."

Vikram hesitated. "And yet, we met him only yesterday."

The Maharaja turned to him then, his expression unreadable. "A man's worth is not measured by the time we have known him, but by the truth he carries."

Vikram frowned slightly. "And you believe his truth?"

A flicker of a smile. "I do not believe, my son. I listen. I question." He paused. "As should you."

Silence stretched between them.

And then—

"His staff."

The words came before Vikram could stop them. He had not meant to say it. Not now. Not like this. But something in him pushed the thought forward, refusing to stay buried.

The Maharaja's brow furrowed slightly. "What of it?"

Vikram's grip tightened around the hilt of his sword. "It is no ordinary staff. I do not know why, but when I looked at it, I felt..." He hesitated.

The words felt foolish now. As if spoken by a child, not a warrior.

The Maharaja, however, simply watched him.

And then, to Vikram's quiet frustration—he simply shook his head.


"We do not question a river by the stones it carries, my son. We see only where it flows."

A dismissal. A closing of the thought.

Vikram bowed his head, but inside, something in him remained awake, unsettled.

Night fell.

The moon hung low, veiled by clouds, its light weak and pale. The fires still burned, but they no longer seemed warm.



And then—

A shadow in the distance.

A lone figure walking toward the camp.

Steady. Unwavering.

The soldiers saw him first, straightening as they recognized the silhouette. Whispers spread like wind through dry leaves. He has returned.

Maharaja Narasimha Varman rose to his feet.

Vikram stepped forward, his breath slowing.

And then, out of the darkness, he emerged.

Durgacharan.

His robes still dusted with the road, his expression unreadable—except for one thing.

The fire in his eyes.

A fire that had not been there before.

A fire that told them—

Everything had changed.

He stood before them.

Draped in the dust of distant lands, his eyes burned with a fire that could not be put out.

And the first words from his lips were not heavy, not sorrowful, not uncertain.

They were expected.

They were final.

"He refused."

The silence that followed was vast.

Only the crackling of the fires, the restless shifting of men, the whispering of the wind in the distant trees.

Maharaja Narasimha Varman did not flinch.

Prince Vikram Varman did not look away.

"He refused," Durgacharan repeated, his voice quieter this time, but not weaker. "And he did not stop there."

A pause.

A perfect, calculated pause.

Then the blade of his words struck.

"Samrat Rajendra laughed."

Vikram saw it before he heard it—the way his father's hand tightened around the hilt of his sword.

"He laughed at my words. He laughed at your name."****"And then," Durgacharan exhaled sharply, "he spat on the ground and called you a king of cowards."

The fire roared.

Or maybe it was the blood in their veins.

"He said your sword has rusted in peace. That your son is untested. That your people have grown weak."

The silence that followed was no longer empty.

It was breathing. It was alive.

And it was waiting.

Maharaja Narasimha Varman rose to his feet.

Vikram had seen his father angry before. But this was not anger. This was something deeper. Something that did not burn, but smoldered.

Slow. Controlled.

Certain.

"We march," the Maharaja said, his voice like iron. "We march for Suryagarh."

And Durgacharan smiled.

"Not yet," Durgacharan said, his tone patient, as if speaking to children. "Not tonight. Not tomorrow. War is not a beast that can be unleashed without thought. It is a tide that must rise at the right moment."

Vikram frowned. "Then when?"

Durgacharan did not answer immediately.

Instead, he lifted his gaze to the night sky.

And the stars seemed to answer.

"Look up," he murmured. "Do you see?"

The men around the fire shifted uneasily. Some stole glances at the heavens, uncertain.

The Maharaja watched him, saying nothing.

And then, Durgacharan spoke.

"The planets move as warriors do. Each has a role, a duty, a place in battle. If we strike when the heavens are against us, we invite ruin. But if we move with the rhythm of fate..."


He turned, the flames casting shadows across his face.

"We become invincible."

Vikram inhaled slowly. "What do you see?"

Durgacharan lifted a hand, pointing toward the brightest body in the sky.

"That is Angaraka—Mars—the warrior's planet. He walks strong now, but he is not yet at his fiercest." His hand shifted. "And there—Shani—the judge. He watches, unmoved, waiting. If we move too soon, he will weigh us and find us lacking."



He turned back to the Maharaja. "Six days from now." A murmur ran through the gathered warriors. Durgacharan nodded. "Six days from now, when the moon wanes, when Angaraka stands at his peak, and when Shani's eye is averted—then we will strike." Vikram did not speak.

But for the first time, as he watched Durgacharan, he felt something crawl beneath his skin.

A thought. A question.

Who is he?

Not a man.

Not just a man.

Something more. Something that knew the language of the universe itself. The decision was made. The battle would begin on the chosen day. Now, there was only one last thing to do.


"He must know," Durgacharan said, turning to the Maharaja. "Rajendra must not be left in ignorance. A war without warning is the act of cowards."

The Maharaja nodded. "We will send a messenger at dawn."

Durgacharan shook his head. "No need."

He lifted his arm—and a shadow leapt from his wrist.

The men startled. Some reached for their weapons before they realized—it was a bird.



A great eagle, black as the night, its wings cutting through the darkness like a blade. It circled overhead once, its cry piercing the silence, before landing upon Durgacharan's shoulder.

He ran his fingers over its feathers with something almost like affection.

"He will carry our words."

The Maharaja's brows lifted. "A trained messenger?"

Durgacharan smiled. "An old friend."

From within his robes, he drew out a small parchment. He unfurled it, the firelight flickering across the ink as he scrawled the final message.

Then, with a practiced motion, he tied it to the eagle's leg.

"Go."

The bird took flight.

And as it disappeared into the night, the air itself seemed to change.

The waiting was over.

The war had begun.



The BaTTle for Suryagarh

The sky was dark before dawn.

But the battlefield was awake.

The drums of war thundered like the heartbeat of the earth itself. Flags rose high, the golden banners of Vardhan rippling in the wind, the lion insignia shining in the dim light.

Across the battlefield, standing firm upon the great walls of Suryagarh, flew the banners of Samrat Rajendra—deep crimson, bearing the blazing sun of his lineage.

Two great kings.

Two mighty armies.

And between them—destiny itself.

Prince Vikram Varman sat upon his horse, his armor glistening in the first light, his fingers gripping the hilt of his sword. His heart did not waver.

Today, he would not be a prince.

Today, he would be a warrior.

And yet, something gnawed at the edge of his thoughts.

He scanned the ranks, the war elephants, the chariots, the archers standing like an unbreakable wall.

But something—someone—was missing.


Durgacharan.

Vikram frowned. He had seen him that morning, standing beside the Maharaja, speaking in hushed tones. But now—now, at the moment of battle, he was gone.

His absence felt unnatural.

But before Vikram could think on it further, the conch was blown.

And the war began.



A great roar erupted across the battlefield. Arrows darkened the sky, the clash of steel rang like thunder, and the earth trembled beneath the weight of charging war elephants.

Vikram moved like a tempest.

His sword cut through the enemy lines, a blur of steel and blood. His horse galloped through the

chaos, weaving between warriors, his spear striking with deadly precision.

He was not just fighting.

He was proving himself. The warriors of Suryagarh were fearless. They fought like the sun itself burned within them. For

every man who fell, another took his place.

But the Vardhan army was relentless.


And Vikram Varman stood at its center, a beacon of fire in the storm of war. And then—he saw him. Samrat Rajendra. Not from a throne. Not from whispers and stories. But here. On the battlefield. He was not what Vikram had expected. A cruel tyrant should have wrinkles of greed on his face. His eyes should be hungry for power.

His movements should be cowardly and desperate.

But this man— This man carried himself like a king. Like a lion. His sword moved like the wind, cutting down warriors with ease. His armor was drenched in


blood, but his stance was unshaken.

And in his eyes, Vikram saw something strange.



Something he had only seen in one other man. His father. Vikram's breath caught for just a moment. How could this man be the same villain Durgacharan had described? He had no time for doubt. Not here. Not now. With a sharp exhale, he tightened his grip on his sword. Overthinking is death. This is war. The battle lasted not just for hours—but for days. For two full days, the warriors clashed, the rivers ran red, the ground soaked in blood and sweat. The sun rose and fell, and yet neither side yielded. Maharaja Narasimha Varman led like a storm—his chariot cutting through the enemy like a golden thunderbolt.

Samrat Rajendra fought like a mountain—unyielding, immovable, the very heart of his kingdom. And Vikram Varman—Vikram Varman became something new. No longer just a prince. No longer just an heir. But a legend in the making. His sword arm never tired. His spirit never faltered. His name was shouted across the battlefield like the call of destiny itself.



Even Rajendra himself took notice.

For a brief moment, across the chaos, their eyes met.

And Vikram saw something in that gaze.

Not just the stare of an enemy.

But the gaze of a king who had just recognized his equal.

But then—

Then came the final blow.

Then came the moment that would end it all.

By the third day, the tide had turned.

The walls of Suryagarh—the mighty, indomitable walls—collapsed under the force of the siege.

The gates broke.

And Vardhan entered.

What followed was not a battle.

It was a reckoning.

Vikram fought his way through the streets of Suryagarh, the cries of the fallen echoing around him. He saw temples set ablaze, statues of gods crumbling in the chaos.

And at the heart of it all, stood Rajendra.

His sword broken.


His armor shattered.

Yet still, he stood.

Still, he would not kneel.

Vikram stopped.

The moment stretched.



This was the man they had called a tyrant.

This was the man they had called cruel.

And yet—he stood with more honor than many kings Vikram had seen.

In that moment, Vikram knew.

Something was wrong.

Something had been wrong from the start.

But the war was over.

Suryagarh had fallen.

And somewhere in the shadows, Durgacharan smiled.

The fall of Suryagarh

The battle had ended.

The sun had fallen beyond the blood-soaked horizon, its crimson light casting long shadows over the land that was once Suryagarh.

The air was thick with the scent of iron and dust, but no more swords clashed.

The war was over.

The kingdom had fallen.

And now, the moment of judgment had come.

In the great hall of Suryagarh, beneath towering marble pillars and golden chandeliers, Maharaja Narasimha Varman sat upon his throne.

Before him, Samrat Rajendra knelt—his once-glorious armor now cracked, his wrists bound in iron.

His head was bowed.

Not out of fear.

But out of defeat.

The warriors of Vardhan stood tall, their spears lining the great hall like an unbreakable wall.

Behind him, the defeated stood—his queens, his ministers, the royal women of Suryagarh—their faces were veiled, their eyes burning with silent emotions. They had lost everything.


They were not harmed.

For this was not a war for conquest.

This was a war for Dharma.

Or so they had been told.

Prince Vikram Varman stood at his father's side, his eyes scanning the grand hall of Suryagarh.



And for the first time, he truly saw it.

The hall was unlike anything he had ever seen.

Every pillar was carved with delicate figures, the ceiling painted with scenes from the Ramayana, the floors inlaid with lapis and gold.

Suryagarh was not just a fortress.

It was a masterpiece.

And for the first time, doubt stirred within him.

Could a man who created something so beautiful truly be cruel?

Could an adharmi king build a kingdom that felt like a living hymn to Dharma itself?

Something was not right.

But this was not his moment to question.

This was his father's moment.

His duty had been fulfilled.

He had fought. He had won.

Now, whatever happened next was for the Maharaja to decide.

He exhaled and turned to step away, eager to explore the hidden beauty of the castle.

But then—

A single moment.


A fraction of a second.

And yet, it stopped him in his tracks.

As he walked past the seated women of Rajendra's family, something pulled at him.

A force he could not explain.

A pair of eyes.



Sharp as a blade.

Burning with fury.

He turned.

And there she was.

A young woman, sitting among the royal captives.

Her stare was like fire—a rage so deep it could set the whole kingdom ablaze.

For an instant, Vikram felt as if she had seized him by the collar, her gaze demanding, screaming—

"Why did you do this?"

But behind that hellfire, beneath the layers of anger and grief, there was something else.

Something that should not have been there.

Something like heaven.

A warmth hidden in the depths of her eyes, so subtle it was almost a whisper.

Something that, for a single breath, touched Vikram's heart.

A shiver ran through him.

But then—he blinked.

And the moment was gone.

Shaking off the feeling, he turned away and walked deeper into the castle.

Unaware that this one moment would haunt him for a long time.

And then—he arrived.

The air shifted.

The hall, once filled with murmurs and hushed whispers, fell silent.

From the shadows of the great doorway, a lone figure emerged.



Durgacharan.

His robe flowed like the night sky, and in his hand, he held his mysterious staff, its dark wood gleaming under the golden lights.

He did not walk in.

He commanded the space.

Like a judge stepping into his court.

Like fate itself had arrived to pass its final sentence.

Maharaja Narasimha Varman's eyes lit up with reverence.

But on the other side—

Samrat Rajendra's face twisted in shock.

His family stiffened.

As if they had seen a ghost.

As if Durgacharan should not be here.

As if they had never expected him to stand before them like this.

Rajendra's jaw clenched, his muscles tensing beneath his restraints.

He opened his mouth to speak.

But before a single word could escape—

BOOM.


Durgacharan's voice cracked through the hall like a thunderclap.

"SILENCE!"

The very walls seemed to shudder at his command.

Rajendra flinched.

Durgacharan stepped forward, his staff tapping against the marble floor with each measured step.



His voice was not just a voice.

It was a decree.

A law.

"The kingdom of Samrat Rajendra is no more," he declared. "Dharma shall be restored. The age of injustice has ended."

Maharaja Narasimha Varman nodded.

But Rajendra—

Rajendra's hands clenched into fists.

The muscles in his jaw flexed, his nostrils flared.

It was not just anger that burned in his eyes.

It was understanding.

As if, in this very moment, he had finally seen the truth behind everything.

But he did not speak.

Because Durgacharan was not done.

Durgacharan let the silence stretch.

Then, in a voice rich with meaning, he turned to the Maharaja.


"Rajan," he said, his words slow, deliberate. "On the occasion of your great victory, will you grant this poor Brahmin a small offering?"

The Maharaja's face softened.

"Speak, Durgacharan," he said warmly. "I have no desire to rule this land. Take what you wish, for you have guided us to Dharma. You may ask for anything."

Durgacharan's lips curled into a slow smile.

But his eyes burned like fire.



A hunger deep, ancient, all-consuming flickered in their depths.

And then he said it.

"I ask for only one thing from the royal treasury."

A single request.

But the moment those words left his lips, two people reacted.

Rajendra.

And that young woman.

As if a fire had exploded in their souls.

Their bodies tensed.

Their eyes went wide.

Their lips parted, a silent scream in their throats.

"No..."

The word never left their mouths.

But it was there.

Deep inside them, they had understood something that no one else had.

Something terrible.

Something final.

But Maharaja Narasimha Varman did not see it.

He did not hesitate.

"It is yours," the Maharaja said.

And with those words—fate was sealed.

The relicS of DeSTiny

The grand halls of Suryagarh stood in eerie silence, their golden domes bathed in the dying glow of twilight.

Prince Vikram Varman, victorious yet restless, wandered through the ancient corridors, his fingers trailing over ornate stone carvings that told stories of gods and kings long forgotten. The deeper he went, the stronger his curiosity grew.

Through the maze of passageways, he came upon a chamber unlike any other.

A temple, lost in time.

The entrance was framed by two massive statues of guardian deities, their once-sharp features worn away by the ages. Vines crept through the cracked stones, whispering secrets of forgotten prayers.

Inside, the air was thick with the scent of burnt oil and centuries-old incense, and the walls, once adorned with celestial murals, were now fading and fractured. The sound of his footsteps vanished in the dense stillness of the place, as if time itself hesitated to move forward.

At its heart stood an old Shivling, covered in a layer of dust and dried flowers, as if untouched for centuries.

But beyond the Shivling, something called to him.

A weapon, embedded deep within an ancient stone altar.

The light in the room flickered strangely around it, bending unnaturally, as if the very air refused to touch it.

Vikram's breath hitched.

It was as if the blade was waiting.

And then—

A voice—not from the temple. Not from outside. But from the depths of his own soul.



Not words.

Not a command.

But a feeling—

“It belongs to you.”

The whisper of fate curled through his mind. His fingers moved on their own, wrapping around the hilt.

The moment he touched it—

The world changed.

A great force erupted from the weapon!

The walls of the temple cracked.

The air hummed with power.

A tremor rolled through the castle.

Dust and debris rained down, and the stone beneath Vikram's feet split like dry earth.

He pulled.

The weapon resisted.

He pulled harder.

And then—

It came free.


The very moment the dagger left its resting place, a pulse of sheer energy exploded outward.

The entire castle trembled.

A massive stone broke free from above, plummeting toward Vikram.

His instincts screamed, but before he could react—

The dagger glowed, and his hand brushed against an unknown marking on its hilt.



Time warped.

The rock froze in midair.

Then, impossibly—

It began to rise again.

The cracks in the floor sealed themselves, the dust in the air reversed its course, and the tremors rolled back into silence.

The temple stood as it was before—as if nothing had ever happened.

Vikram staggered back, his heart pounding.

This was not just a weapon.

It was a force beyond understanding.

And it was now his.

Back in the royal court, as the earthquake settled, Durgacharan stood tall before Maharaja Narasimha Varman.

With a calm yet piercing gaze, he made his request.

"Rajan, on this day of your great victory, may I ask for a small offering?"

The Maharaja, still filled with the euphoria of conquest, chuckled.

"Durgacharan, you may ask for anything. Gold? Jewels? Land? The kingdom itself?"

But Durgacharan only smiled.


"No, Maharaj. I ask for only one thing."

The court leaned in, waiting.

And then—

"The Damaru of Kaalkuth."

Silence.



The Maharaja frowned.

And then, he laughed.

"A damaru? Out of everything in Suryagarh, you ask for a damaru?"

"Yes."

The Maharaja shook his head, amused.

"Very well. If that is your desire, so be it."

With a wave of his hand, his guards disappeared into the royal treasury.

Moments later, they returned—carrying an enormous, eight-foot-tall damaru.

Its frame was made of dark, glistening metal.

The drumheads were not made of leather, but of a strange, translucent material that shifted like liquid shadow.

And inside—

Inside was not empty space.

But a swirling, eerie substance—ash-like, yet alive.

As the soldiers placed it before Durgacharan, a deep tremor shook the court.

The very ground beneath their feet quivered.

The air thickened, like a storm was about to break.

And in that moment—


Samrat Rajendra's eyes flared open in horror.

"NO!" he roared, his voice shaking the hall.

His chains rattled as he surged forward, only to be held back by guards.

"Do not do this!" he bellowed. "Do not awaken that force!"

Durgacharan, unshaken, merely smiled.



And in the next moment— Prince Vikram stepped into the hall. Vikram entered with unanswered questions burning in his mind. But then—his steps halted. His eyes locked onto Durgacharan. And for the first time— He saw him. But Durgacharan's eyes widened. Not at Vikram. But at something in his hand. The dagger. For the first time—Durgacharan's face changed. Shock. Samrat Rajendra and the girl followed his gaze. And their expressions filled with something else. Not just shock. Horror. "How? Why him?" Durgacharan's eyes gleamed like twin embers as he turned toward Prince Vikram. His voice, smooth yet piercing, carried through the grand hall. "Where have you been, my prince? Why were you absent from your father's side, especially on this most glorious occasion of his victory? And more importantly, what have you found? What treasure lies in your grasp?" Vikram tightened his hold on the weapon in his hand, his brows furrowing. "You... you know about it?"

Durgacharan let out a soft chuckle, his expression unreadable. "Not only do I know, but I have waited for this day for many years. That, my dear prince, is the Kālāstra—The Weapon of Time, the divine gift of Mahākāl himself. Many veer warriors have come and gone, kings and princes alike have stood where you stand now, yet not one could even stir its slumber. But you... you have awakened it. You have been chosen."

A hushed murmur spread through the court, eyes darting between the young prince and the weapon he held. Maharaj Narasimha Varman, intrigued yet skeptical, leaned forward. "Is this the truth, Durgacharan?"

Durgacharan's voice grew heavier with conviction. "Yes, Rajan. Your son has received the blessing of Mahadev Mahākāl himself. This is no ordinary weapon—it is time made tangible, destruction and destiny intertwined. The universe itself bends before it."

A moment of silence, thick with unspoken wonder and fear.

Then Durgacharan's tone shifted, his voice coaxing, almost reverent. "Come, Prince Vikram," he beckoned, stepping towards the towering Damru of Kaalkuth. "You hold in your hand a divine key. And before you stands the Damru of Kaalkuth, a relic containing the very essence of Lord Shiva's holy ashes. With its power, diseases shall be cleansed, weaknesses eradicated, even death itself turned away. Our armies shall be invincible, our people immortal. As Mahadev once consumed the Kaalkuth Vish to protect the world and bestowed Amrit upon the Devas, so too will this Damru grant us eternal strength. All we need... is to awaken it."

His words wove a spell, an intoxicating dream of power and divine favor. The courtiers nodded, murmuring in awe. But amidst the sea of hypnotized faces, Samrat Rajendra stiffened. His voice, urgent and raw, sliced through the enchantment. "No!" His eyes burned with unspoken knowledge. "Do not do this! Do not awaken that force!"

Vikram, gripping Kālāstra tightly, hesitated, his instincts battling against the weight of his father's command. Something in Rajendra's warning unsettled him. Yet before he could voice his doubts, his father, Maharaj Narasimha Varman, spoke again—but something was different.

"Do it, my son. Unlock the Damru of Kaalkuth."

His voice was steady, but hollow—almost as if it was not his own.

Vikram's heart pounded as he glanced between his father and Durgacharan, whose gaze burned with triumphant expectation. The moment had arrived. The destiny of Suryagarh and Vardhan teetered on the edge of his decision.

As Maharaj Narasimha Varman's words echoed through the grand hall, a strange silence followed. The torches flickered, casting long shadows on the stone walls. Vikram stood frozen,

his grip tightening around the Kālāstra. His heart pounded—not with fear, but with an unexplainable hesitation.

"Why do you hesitate, Prince?" Durgacharan's voice, though calm, carried an undercurrent of command. His eyes, deep like the abyss, locked onto Vikram's. "This is the moment. The destiny of dharm rests upon your hands."

But Vikram's instincts screamed otherwise. His gaze drifted to Samrat Rajendra, who struggled

against the chains binding his wrists. His eyes—defiant yet desperate—bore into Vikram's very

soul. Beside him, the young woman from before, her face pale yet fierce, clutched the edge of her garment as if holding back a storm within.

"Don't do it, Prince Vikram," Rajendra's voice finally broke the silence. "You don't know what you're unleashing."

Durgacharan turned sharply, his expression hardening like a sculptor's chisel against stone.

"The words of the defeated hold no weight here," he declared. "Rajan has spoken. His command is your dharm."

Maharaj Narasimha Varman, however, seemed... different. His usual firm and righteous tone now held an unfamiliar distance. His eyes, once sharp with wisdom, carried a strange fog, as if

bound by an unseen force.

"Vikram," he said, slower this time. "Do as he says."

Something was wrong.

Vikram inhaled deeply. His fingers brushed over the strange markings on the Kālāstra's hilt.

As he raised the Kālāstra, its edge gleamed in the dim light. But just as the tip touched the Damru, the ground trembled. A gust of wind tore through the hall, putting out several torches. The shadows twisted, as if writhing in pain.

Rajendra's voice boomed. "STOP!"

At that moment, Vikram saw something—flickering, just for an instant. A vision. The battlefield of Suryagarh, drenched in a crimson haze. A city engulfed in darkness. And at the center of it all—Durgacharan, standing atop a pile of bodies, holding the Damru high, his laughter echoing through the void.

Vikram staggered back, his breath short.

Durgacharan's voice, once soothing, now carried an eerie sharpness. "You hesitate, my prince."

Vikram's grip on the Kālāstra wavered. The weight of a choice—one that could change the course of history—pressed upon him.

Vikram Varman stood at the center of a storm—one that raged not in the skies, not on the battlefield, but within the deepest chambers of his own soul. His fingers trembled over the hilt of Kālāstra, the weight of destiny pressing upon him like a mountain. The world around him blurred—his father, Durgacharan, the defeated Samrat Rajendra, the strange girl with fire in her eyes. Their voices mixed into a chaotic whirlwind in his mind.

Who was right?

On one hand, Durgacharan—the great Brahmin, the guide of dharm, the man his father trusted above all else. His words were law, his wisdom unquestionable. And Maharaj Narasimha Varman, the victorious king, had spoken. His father—the man he had sworn to follow, to fight for, to make proud—had commanded him.

But on the other hand, his own instincts screamed otherwise. And so did the defeated king. A man bound in chains had no power, no right to speak, yet his voice rang with desperation—not for himself, but for something greater. And that girl... her burning eyes, filled with fury, with anguish. Why did he feel as though her silent gaze was questioning his very existence?

He clenched his jaw.

This was not a battle of swords. This was not a war fought with steel or strategy.

This was a war against himself.

His breath came heavy. His heart pounded against his ribs like a war drum. Doubt and duty collided, ripping him apart. He could feel himself standing at the very edge of a chasm, between light and darkness, between honor and obedience, between destiny and free will.

Then came the voice—the voice that had swayed empires, the voice that had made kings bow.

Durgacharan.

His tone was gentle, yet carried the weight of the cosmos.

"Why do you falter, Prince Vikram?"

Vikram looked up. The Brahmin's eyes glowed, piercing into his soul like a blade.

"This is not the time for weakness. This is not the time for doubt."

Vikram's grip on the Kālāstra tightened.

Durgacharan took a step closer, his voice becoming a whisper that felt louder than thunder.

"Your father has given his command. Do you not trust his wisdom?"

Vikram's eyes flickered toward Maharaj Narasimha Varman, who stood still, his expression unreadable.

"I... trust my father," Vikram said, but his voice wavered.

"Then trust his decision!" Durgacharan pressed. "Your father, your King, has chosen dharm. Do you think you know better than him?"

Vikram opened his mouth but no words came.

"This is the will of Mahadev himself!" Durgacharan's voice was rising now, filling the entire hall. "The gods have chosen you, Vikram! YOU!"

Vikram's breath hitched.

"Mahadev has blessed your hands with Kālāstra! This is no coincidence! This is fate! This is your destiny!"

The words struck him like lightning.

Destiny.

"Strike the Damru, Prince Vikram. Unleash its power. Fulfill your purpose."

Vikram swallowed hard. The walls of his mind were crumbling. His doubts, his hesitation, his questions—all dissolving under the weight of Durgacharan's words.

Was this what fate had planned for him?

Durgacharan lifted his staff and pointed at the center of the Damru.

"Raise your dagger, Prince."

Vikram obeyed.

Rajendra's voice cut through the air. "No! Don't do this, Prince! You don't understand!"

But Vikram barely heard him now.

Durgacharan's voice echoed again. "Strike that point. Now!"

Vikram's hands were no longer his own. His mind was no longer his own.

He lifted Kālāstra high, his muscles tensed. The moment stretched—seconds felt like centuries.

Then, with a fierce battle cry, he struck.

"HAR HAR MAHADEV!"

Kālāstra connected with the Damru.

A blinding explosion of light burst forth.

A mighty wind howled through the grand hall, knocking soldiers off their feet. The very foundations of Suryagarh trembled. The Damru pulsed with a golden glow, as if the divine forces of creation and destruction had awakened within it.

From the other side of the hall, a desperate, anguished scream tore through the chaos.

"NOOOOO!"

It was her. The strange girl.

Vikram barely turned before his gaze caught something strange. A glow.

A faint, eerie light seeped through the fabric of the girl's dress.

Something hidden.

Something powerful.

And then...

Everything exploded into blinding light.

The moment Kālāstra struck the Damru, the entire world seemed to pause—like the stillness before a storm.

And then, the earth shook.

It wasn't just a tremor—it was as if Mahadev himself had begun his celestial Tandav, shaking the foundations of existence. The ground beneath them groaned, cracks slithering like serpents across the stone floor. A deep, resonating hum filled the air, as if the Damru had awakened after an eternity of silence.


A gust of wind roared through the chamber, wild and untamed. The torches flickered madly before extinguishing altogether, plunging the hall into an eerie darkness. The very air became alive, swirling like a cyclone, thickening into something unnatural.

Then came the laughter.

A laugh that should have belonged to no mortal being.

Durgacharan.

He was laughing—but it was no longer the laugh of a wise Brahmin. It was the laugh of a demon, a force that had waited for centuries to be unleashed. His body trembled with exhilaration, his voice echoing like a drum of doom.



Outside, the skies darkened unnaturally. The golden rays of the sun faded as if the very heavens had turned their face away in fear.

And then, it began.

Something ancient, something cursed, began seeping from the Damru—a swirling, glowing dust that seemed neither solid nor gas. It spilled into the air, mixing with the wind, creating a mist of ashes that consumed the room.

Vikram stepped back, his hand tightening around Kālāstra. Something was terribly wrong.

Then—a scream.

A soldier's voice, panicked and full of horror.

“AAAHHHH!”

The mist had become too thick to see through. Shadows twisted and swayed within it. A second scream. Then a third.

The sound of bodies thrashing.

The sound of... growling?

Then silence.

Only one thing remained.

Durgacharan's laughter.

It echoed through the mist like the howling of a beast, sending shivers down Vikram's spine.

Then—another sound. Something... unnatural.


A deep, guttural growl.

Another.

Something moved in the mist.

Then a voice shouted in unbearable pain.

"NOOOO!"



Vikram turned. It was Samrat Rajendra.

Another voice shrieked in despair.

"FATHER!"

Vikram's eyes widened.

That girl...

The defeated king's daughter?

But his thoughts shattered as his father's voice rang out through the mist.

"Vikram... HELP ME!"

The prince turned, his eyes frantically scanning the shifting mist. And then—his blood ran cold.

He saw his father.

Or what remained of him.

Maharaj Narasimha Varman stood there, his hands trembling. But his skin—his skin was no longer his own.

A gray, ashen layer spread over his flesh, crawling like a living disease. His veins darkened, his eyes dimming. His body convulsed, his form twisting unnaturally. His bones cracked, his face morphed, his humanity faded.

And then—the transformation completed.

The Maharaj no longer stood as a man.


He was something else.

His mouth parted, but no words came—only a deep, monstrous growl.

A lifeless, soulless creature.

A Bhasmabhut.

Vikram stumbled back, horror coursing through his veins. His father—his king—his very blood had turned into... this.



Then the mist began to clear.

And what Vikram saw shattered his soul.

His once glorious palace—the jewel of his kingdom—had turned into a graveyard.

No.

Worse.

A hellscape.

Every soldier, every noble, every man in the hall— they were all gone.

No.

They were not gone.

They had changed.

Dozens of ashen figures now stood in the great hall, their lifeless eyes glowing faintly. Their bodies were twisted, deformed, cursed.

The entire court—his people—had become the Bhasmabhut.

Durgacharan’s laughter finally stopped.

Vikram turned.

And what he saw was no longer a man.

Durgacharan’s eyes burned with an inhuman glow. His very presence felt suffocating, like standing in the shadow of an ancient evil.

And when he spoke, his voice was no longer his own.

“I have destroyed all weakness.”

Vikram’s breath hitched.

“All diseases, all suffering—gone. They are now blessed. They cannot die. They will never know pain again.”



Durgacharan spread his arms.

“And in return... I only took their souls. Just a small price... for eternity.”

Vikram clenched his fists.

“You... MONSTER!”

Durgacharan’s eyes twitched with amusement.

“Monster? No, Prince. I have done what even the gods feared to do. I have created an immortal army—my Bhasmabhut Sena.”

His eyes gleamed.

“And you, Prince Vikram, will be my greatest Senapati.”

Vikram’s body tensed.

Durgacharan then turned to the girl.

“And you, Princess Suparna... you are not ordinary. Your blood carries a secret. And you... will be my queen.”

Vikram took a slow step forward. His heart burned with rage.

“You think I will stand with you? After what you have done? After what you have turned my father into?!”

Durgacharan smiled.

“You think you have a choice? This world will belong to me. Either you rule beside me, or you become my servant like the rest. But you will not defy me.”


Vikram’s grip tightened on Kālāstra.

“I would rather die than serve you.”

A shadow flickered in Durgacharan’s eyes.

Then he laughed.

And laughed.



And then—his laughter stopped.

His smile faded.

His face twisted into a snarl.

“Then die.”

With a sudden roar, he slammed his staff into the ground.

“My Bhasmabhut! Attack!”

The creatures lunged.

Vikram barely had time to react as three of them leaped toward him. Their claws slashed the air, their growls shaking the ground.

With a roar, Vikram swung Kālāstra. The weapon gleamed, slicing through the creatures with divine power.

The Bhasmabhut shrieked as the Kālāstra’s blade burned through their cursed flesh, reducing them to dust.

Another one lunged—this time, toward Suparna.

But she was not a helpless princess.

With a swift motion, she dodged, flipping backward and striking the creature’s neck with a hidden dagger.

Vikram was momentarily stunned.

She knew how to fight?!


But there was no time to think.

Because Durgacharan himself was moving now.

He raised his staff—a bolt of blinding energy shot toward Vikram.

Instinct took over.

Vikram raised Kālāstra to block the attack.



The two weapons clashed.

And then—

A blinding explosion of divine energy erupted.

The force tore through the palace, cracking walls, shaking the heavens. Vikram and Suparna were thrown into the air, blasted away from the battlefield.

The last thing Vikram saw—before the world turned dark—was the twisted, grinning face of Durgacharan.

And then—nothing.

Darkness.

Vikram's eyes fluttered open.

His entire body ached. A dull, throbbing pain pulsed through his limbs, but he could still feel the weight of Kālāstra in his hand—its divine warmth grounding him, keeping him tethered to consciousness.

The world around him was a blur. He groaned, shifting slightly, feeling the cold ground beneath him. Where... was he?


Slowly, his vision cleared.

The place was desolate, empty. A vast land stretched before him, covered in mist and ancient ruins, as if time itself had abandoned this place. The sky above was tinged with the colors of a fading storm—deep purple clouds rolling across the heavens, still recovering from the explosion of divine energy that had sent them here. The air was thick with silence, broken only by the occasional whisper of the wind.

But then... there was something else.

In the distance, faint shadows lurked beyond the ruins—Durgacharan's Bhasmabhut. They were looking for him.

Vikram's breath quickened. He had no idea how far he had been thrown from the battle, but there was no time to think.



Then, a thought struck him like a lightning bolt.

The princess.

His heart pounded. Where was she?

Frantically, he pushed himself up, his muscles protesting in pain. He scanned the area, his breath shallow, his wounds forgotten. And then—he saw her.

Lying motionless a short distance away.

His breath hitched. Was she...?

He ran.

The moment he reached her, he dropped to his knees. His eyes searched for any sign of breath, any movement. And then—he saw it.

The slow, steady rise and fall of her chest.

She was alive.

A strange relief flooded through him, an unfamiliar warmth spreading in his chest. And for the first time, he really... looked at her.

Even covered in dust and battle scars, she was breathtaking.

Her long, dark hair was sprawled around her like a midnight river, strands brushing against her delicate face. Her skin, even marred with the dirt of war, seemed to glow softly under the dimming sun. Her lashes—long and dark—rested gently against her cheeks, her lips slightly parted as she lay unconscious.

A strange feeling stirred inside him. Something foreign. Something he couldn't name.

She was... beautiful.

Not just in the way that poets described beauty, but in a way that made the world around her feel different.

Something deep within him—something untouched, something innocent—moved.

Vikram swallowed, feeling an unfamiliar warmth creep up his neck.

This wasn't the time.

He reached out hesitantly, brushing a strand of hair away from her face. His fingers trembled slightly.

"Rajkumari..." His voice was soft, uncertain.

He placed a hand on her shoulder, shaking her gently. "Wake up."

Her brows furrowed slightly. And then—her eyes snapped open.

Before he could react, she pushed herself up, fire burning in her gaze.

And the first thing she did was slap his hand away.

"You!"

Vikram blinked.

Before he could even process what was happening, she was on her feet, eyes blazing with fury.

"Do you even understand what you have done?!" Her voice trembled—not with fear, but with rage.

Vikram opened his mouth, but she cut him off.

"I lost EVERYTHING because of you! My father, my people, my home—everything!" Her voice cracked, but her eyes remained fierce. "And for what? For your blind loyalty to that demon?!"

Vikram flinched as if struck. Guilt crashed into him.

"Rajkumari, I—"

"You destroyed my world!" Her voice broke, and for a fleeting moment, something else flashed in her eyes. Pain.

Vikram looked away, ashamed.

"I was blind," he admitted, his voice quiet but firm. "I trusted the wrong man. I let him deceive me. And because of that... I failed you."



Silence.

Suparna clenched her fists. Her body trembled—not just with rage, but with the weight of all she had lost.

Then, suddenly—a sound.

A growl.

Her anger was forgotten in an instant.

Vikram's grip on Kālāstra tightened. He turned sharply—the Bhasmabhut had found them.

A shadow moved in the mist, and then—they attacked.

The first creature lunged toward Suparna. But before Vikram could react—she moved.

With a speed and grace that stunned him, she dodged the attack, twisting mid-air before pulling out a concealed dagger.

With a swift motion, she drove the blade into the creature's skull.

Vikram froze.

She wasn't a fragile princess.

She was a warrior.

Another creature lunged, and she didn't hesitate.

With deadly precision, she pulled a bow from her back and notched an arrow in a single, fluid motion.


TWANG.

The arrow struck the Bhasmabhut straight through the forehead, turning it into dust.

Vikram had never seen anyone move like that.

He had been prepared to protect her. But now—she was fighting beside him.

And she was good.



Vikram smirked.

"Not bad, Rajkumari."

Suparna glanced at him, breathless but defiant. "You're not the only warrior here, Rajkumar."

But their moment of triumph was short-lived.

A whistling sound tore through the air.

An arrow.

And it was aimed at her.

Vikram's body moved before his mind could think.

He lunged—

And then—

PAIN.

The arrow struck his shoulder.

The force knocked him back. His vision blurred for a moment, his grip on Kālāstra faltering.

Suparna's eyes widened. She froze.

He had taken the arrow for her.

Vikram gritted his teeth, suppressing a groan. With his uninjured arm, he lifted Kālāstra, summoning its divine energy.

A blinding light burst forth.

The Bhasmabhut shrieked.

And then—they fled.

Silence returned.

Suparna turned to Vikram, staring at him with an unreadable expression.

"Why would you do that?!" she demanded.



Vikram let out a weak chuckle, wincing.

"Because I wasn't going to let you die."

Suparna's breath hitched. Something inside her shifted.

For the first time, she didn't see the prince who had betrayed her kingdom.

She saw the man who had saved her life.

Her gaze softened. But only for a moment.

Then, with a huff, she crossed her arms.

"You didn't need to, idiot."

But even as she spoke, she stepped forward and gently began tying a cloth around his wound.

Vikram watched her, a small, amused smile on his lips.

She was angry.

But she was also worried.

As the sun set behind them, painting the sky in hues of crimson and gold, something unspoken passed between them.

Something fragile.

Something new.

And for the first time since this nightmare began, Vikram thought—maybe he hadn't lost everything after all.

The wind howled through the ruins, carrying with it the whispers of a land long forgotten. The sky had surrendered to the night, a blanket of deep indigo stretching endlessly above them. The golden hue of the setting sun had vanished, swallowed by the darkness that now crept over the landscape like a silent predator.

Prince Vikram stood tall, his gaze shifting between the gathering shadows and the girl before him. Rajkumari Suparna.

She stood with arms crossed, her silhouette sharp against the dim light of dusk. Her fiery eyes held the same defiance as before, but beneath that hardened exterior, Vikram could sense something else—an unspoken truce, a fragile thread of trust.

“We need to find shelter for the night,” Vikram advised, his voice firm yet calm.

Suparna scoffed, shifting her weight. “You can go your way. I’ll go mine.”

Vikram exhaled sharply, shaking his head. “That would be foolish. If we scatter, they will find us. Alone, we don’t stand a chance.”

Her jaw tightened, her pride resisting the truth in his words.

A tense silence stretched between them before she finally rolled her eyes and muttered, “Fine. But don’t expect I got your back.”

Vikram smirked. The irony wasn’t lost on him—he had fought against her army, defeated them in battle, and not long ago, he had taken an arrow meant for her. And yet, here she was, telling him not to expect her protection.


His voice held a teasing edge as he responded, “Don’t worry, Rajkumari. I’ll try to survive without it.”

She shot him a sharp glare, but for a fleeting moment, Vikram swore he saw the ghost of a smile tug at the corner of her lips.

Together, they moved through the ruins, carefully avoiding the lurking shadows of the Bhasmabhut that still roamed in the distance. After what felt like hours of silent searching, they finally stumbled upon an abandoned temple, half-buried beneath the weight of time.

The entrance was crumbling, vines curling around the sacred carvings that had long lost their vibrancy. Inside, the air was thick with the scent of damp stone and forgotten prayers. The remnants of an old Shivlinga stood in the center, cracked but untouched by the decay around it.

“This will do,” Vikram murmured, inspecting the temple’s walls. It wasn’t much, but it would keep them hidden for the night.



Suparna sat against one of the pillars, adjusting her bow beside her. Vikram settled across from her, resting his Kālāstra beside him. The divine weapon pulsed faintly, as if whispering secrets only he could hear.

A heavy silence stretched between them.

But Vikram had too many questions swirling in his mind to remain quiet.

After a moment, he finally asked, “Who are you, Rajkumari?”

She exhaled sharply, as if expecting the question. “I am Suparna Rajendranandan, daughter of Samrat Rajendra, heir to a throne that no longer exists.” Her voice was steady, but there was an undeniable grief hidden beneath her words. “I was raised in the traditions of my ancestors. I was taught the Vedas, the scriptures, the histories of our people. But I was also trained in battle—warfare, strategy, weapons.”

Vikram listened intently, surprised. A princess well-versed in both knowledge and combat—it explained her skill with the bow, her fearlessness in battle.

She continued, “My father always said that knowledge of the scriptures and the strength of arms must exist together. That a ruler must know both the wisdom of the past and the art of war.”

Her voice grew softer, tinged with emotion. “But none of that mattered, did it? It wasn’t enough to protect my kingdom. It wasn’t enough to protect my father.”

Vikram lowered his gaze. He had no words to offer, no apologies that would be enough.

Instead, he shifted the subject. “And Kālāstra?” He glanced at the weapon beside him. “What is this... really?”

Suparna straightened slightly, her eyes flickering toward the divine weapon. “You hold something beyond mortal comprehension, Rajkumar.” Her voice took on an almost reverent tone. “Kālāstra is not just a weapon. It is a fragment of Mahadev’s power himself.”

Vikram’s breath hitched. He stared at the weapon, as if seeing it for the first time.

She continued, her voice weaving a tale older than time itself.

“When time began, the Trimurti—Brahma, Vishnu, and Mahadev—set the cosmic balance in motion. But among them, Mahadev held the power of both destruction and rebirth. His divine energy could erase existence, or create new life.

To maintain balance, Mahadev’s power was contained within three sacred relics, crafted by Lord Vishwakarma himself.

The first was Kālāstra—the weapon of time, carrying the force of Mahadev’s tandav. It can shatter fate itself.

The second was the Staff of Bhairava—the weapon that Durgacharan now wields. It holds the essence of death, capable of bending souls and raising the fallen.

And the third—” she hesitated, “was Kanchan Mudrika, the golden ring infused with the divine protection of Maa Parvati herself. A relic that can shield its bearer from any force in existence.”

Vikram’s fingers unconsciously brushed against his chest, where the glow from Suparna’s pendant had shone earlier. “The ring... could it be—?”

Suparna nodded slowly. “I wear it. The last relic.”

The weight of her words settled between them like a heavy storm.

Vikram exhaled, running a hand through his hair. “And what of the Damru of Kaalkuth? The thing Durgacharan so desperately wanted?”

Suparna’s expression darkened. “It is not just a damru. It is a cursed relic, containing the ashes of a forgotten era. The Bhasma of beings long lost, mixed with the poison of Kaalkuth itself.”

Vikram stiffened.

Suparna’s gaze was distant as she continued, “Durgacharan came to our kingdom years ago. He claimed to be a man of dharma, wielding the sacred staff of Bhairava. He spoke of destiny, of divine will. He earned my father’s trust. But the truth was, he only wanted one thing—the Damru of Kaalkuth.”

Her voice dropped to a whisper. “My father refused. And for years, Durgacharan played his game. He advised my father, fought wars for him, whispered truths and lies alike.”

Vikram's mind reeled.

He clenched his fists. "That manipulative demon."

Suparna's eyes locked onto his, unreadable. "And yet, you trusted him."

Silence.

The truth of her words stung, but Vikram didn't look away.

Finally, he whispered, "Is there a way to fix this?"

Suparna inhaled sharply, watching him.

For the first time since their journey began, she saw something in his eyes—not just guilt, not just regret... but determination.

And for the first time, she didn't answer him with anger.

Instead, she looked toward the horizon.

"...Maybe."

The night deepened, the stars flickering above them like distant, forgotten memories. And between them—amid the ruins of their shattered worlds—a new path had begun to form.

The temple's silence was vast, filled only with the distant howls of the wind and the whispers of leaves rustling beyond the ruins. The glow of dying embers flickered between them, casting golden reflections in Rajkumari Suparna's stormy eyes.

She gazed at the man before her—the warrior who had once been her enemy, who had fought against her people, and yet now... he was the only one left fighting for them.

Vikram sat opposite her, his grip tightening around Kālāstra, his jaw clenched in unshaken resolve.

"If the same place where the Damru of Kaalkuth was struck is hit again, and the power of Kālāstra is used at that exact moment... time would rewind." Suparna's voice was calm, but the weight of her words was immense. "Everything that has happened—the destruction, the curse, my father, **your father—it would all be undone."

Vikram's eyes widened slightly, a new fire igniting within them.

"But that's nearly impossible now," she continued. "Durgacharan knows this. That's why he will make it impossible for us to reach the damru again. And with his army of Bhasmabhut guarding the palace, we may never—"

Vikram suddenly stood up. His shadow stretched long against the temple wall, his figure sharp with determination.

"I promise you, Rajkumari." His voice rang through the temple like an oath bound by fate. "I will fix whatever I have done. If there is even the smallest chance, I will fight for it. I will restore everything." His fists clenched. "Not just for Samrat Rajendra, but for my father, for Maharaj Narashimha Varman, for the entire Vardhan army—for all of them."

Suparna inhaled sharply. For a long moment, she simply stared at him.

This man, this warrior, who had once fought against her kingdom, now burned with the same fire to save it.

And for the first time since this nightmare began, she felt something within her melt.

A strange warmth spread through her chest, quiet yet powerful.

She dropped her gaze, hesitating for only a moment before she spoke, "Suparna."

Vikram blinked, confused. "What?"

She lifted her eyes to his. The firelight flickered against her face, softening the edges of her fierce expression.


"My father gave me a name," she said gently. "You can call me Suparna, Rajkumar."

Vikram's breath hitched. For the first time since they met, he saw something else in her face—something softer, something unguarded. And for the first time, he saw her smile.

It was barely there, just a ghost of a curve at the edge of her lips, but it was real.

And he felt something he had never felt before.

A warmth, deeper than battle, stronger than victory. Something unfamiliar, yet intoxicating.



He swallowed, his lips parting slightly before he whispered, “Not Rajkumar.” He took a step closer. “Vikram.”

Suparna looked at him for a long moment. Then, she nodded—just once, but it was enough.

The silence between them changed. It was no longer tense, no longer filled with past wounds or unsaid accusations.

It was something else now.

Something fragile. Something real. The two sat there, speaking through the night, their voices soft under the vast sky. They spoke of their pasts, of their fathers, of Durgacharan’s deception. They spoke of battles fought, of memories lost, of things they could never get back. Somewhere in their conversation, Vikram caught himself watching her—not the warrior, not the enemy princess—but the woman. The way her eyes flickered in the dim light, the way her voice softened when she spoke of her mother, the way she unconsciously traced patterns in the dust with her fingertips.


And in the depth of her voice, he heard the weight of everything she had lost.

She was like a blade—sharp, unyielding—but beneath it, she was something else.

And somehow, he wanted to know more.

As the sky lightened with the first hues of dawn, Suparna suddenly stopped mid-sentence, her eyes widening slightly.

“There is... another way,” she murmured. Vikram leaned forward. “What?” She inhaled sharply. “Before the war, my father had a secret chamber built—a passageway that leads directly into the heart of the palace. It was meant for emergencies, to move the royal family out unseen. But now... we could use it to get in.” Vikram’s pulse quickened.



There was hope.

The first golden light of dawn broke through the temple's ruined walls, casting a soft glow upon them.

They looked at each other—two warriors, once enemies, now bound by the same purpose.

And for the first time since this began, they saw something else in each other.

Not just duty.

Not just war.

But something far more dangerous. Something neither of them were ready to name.

The night air was thick with silence, an unnatural stillness that sent chills down Vikram's spine. The once-grand Suryagarh was now a graveyard of walking shadows, where not a single soul remained untouched by Durgacharan's dark curse.

Vikram and Suparna moved cautiously through the narrow streets, keeping to the shadows, their breathing shallow. The air smelled of dust and something far worse—the scent of death trapped in eternity.

The streets that once echoed with the laughter of children, with the songs of traders, with the hymns of temple bells, were now drowned in silence.


Vikram's heart clenched as his eyes fell upon a small handprint, smeared in dust upon a wooden door. The door itself hung open, its edges blackened. And then, beyond it, he saw them—the smallest Bhasmabhut.

Children.

Gods... his mind screamed. His stomach churned at the sight of their twisted, grotesque forms—tiny bodies covered in ashen cracks, glowing faintly in the moonlight. Their eyes, empty pits of white fire, wandered aimlessly through the ruins.

Suparna stiffened beside him. Her fingers curled tightly into her palm.

“They didn't even spare the children...” she whispered, her voice trembling with quiet rage.



A wave of sickness rolled through Vikram. He turned away, unable to bear it. This was not war. This was not conquest. This was a nightmare beyond even the cruelty of the battlefield.

Durgacharan had not killed the people of Suryagarh. He had condemned them to a fate worse than death.

And he called it a gift.

Vikram felt Suparna's hand on his wrist. Her touch was urgent—they had to move.

They moved like shadows through the ruins of Suryagarh, their breaths shallow, their steps calculated. The once-magnificent kingdom, known for its golden spires and bustling streets, had

been reduced to a lifeless graveyard of wandering corpses. Every alley was filled with the grotesque forms of the Bhasmabhut, their hollow eyes glowing faintly in the dim light. The air was thick with the stench of burnt flesh, and an eerie silence filled the spaces between distant growls.

Children—once laughing, running through the palace courtyards—now stood motionless, their

tiny hands curled like claws, their faces frozen in expressions of eternal hunger. Mothers, who once hummed lullabies, now roamed aimlessly, their lips whispering silent, forgotten prayers. Suryagarh, a city of legends, had become a cursed wasteland.

Suparna's fingers clenched into fists. Her entire world had been stolen, turned into a nightmare

before her eyes. Yet, she couldn't allow herself to break—not now. She could feel Vikram beside

her, his presence like an anchor in this storm of despair.

A sudden noise—a distant clash of metal—made them press their backs against a ruined pillar.

The Bhasmabhut were searching, their jagged, broken movements like puppets controlled by an

unseen force. One turned its head sharply, sensing something. Suparna instinctively leaned closer

to Vikram, their breaths mingling in the tense air.



For a moment, everything else faded.

She could feel the warmth of his skin, the steady rise and fall of his breath. He was not just a

Vikram swallowed hard, his own heart hammering against his ribs. She was so close, yet she felt like an untouchable force—fierce, unyielding, yet painfully vulnerable. He had fought countless battles, faced death itself, but nothing had ever made his pulse quicken like the presence of this warrior princess.

“Rajkumari...” he whispered, barely audible.

She looked up at him, her dark eyes filled with emotions he couldn’t decipher. “We have to move,” she murmured, but for a second, neither of them did.

Then, like a passing wind, the moment was gone.

They made their way toward the hidden chamber, moving as one. When they reached the ancient stone archway, the sight before them stole their breath.

The entrance was carved with inscriptions of celestial beings, locked away from the world for centuries. It was no ordinary door—it was alive, pulsating with an energy older than time itself. In the center of the gate was a circular engraving, glowing faintly, as if waiting... waiting for the right word.

Suparna stepped forward. She had heard the tales as a child, whispered in the halls of her palace. This was no mere chamber—it was a sacred place, sealed by the lost word of the royal bloodline, a word spoken only in the direst of moments. A word that embodied the very essence of Shiva and Shakti, creation and destruction, power and devotion.

She exhaled, closing her eyes, and then—softly, yet with the weight of generations behind it—she spoke:

“Anoushkram.”

The moment the word left her lips, the air trembled.

The engravings on the door ignited, ancient symbols flaring to life with golden light. A deep, resonant hum filled the chamber, as if the very stones were chanting the name of the divine. Dust lifted from the ground, swirling in a celestial dance around them. The world seemed to hold its breath.

Vikram watched her, completely mesmerized—not just by the sight before him, but by her.

She stood like a goddess herself, bathed in the golden glow of the chamber's light. Her lips had barely moved, yet she had awakened something beyond mortal comprehension. For the first time since this journey began, he realized something unsettling...

She was the most beautiful thing he had ever seen.

And in that moment, she turned to look at him. The heavy doors began to part with a deep, echoing groan, revealing the darkness beyond. They had made it. But neither of them moved. They stood in the glow of the chamber, caught in something far stronger than destiny.

Suparna felt her chest tighten, but she refused to look away. There was something different in Vikram's eyes now—something raw, something unspoken.

And for the first time since this nightmare began, she felt safe.

Without another word, they stepped into the chamber together, leaving the cursed ruins behind. The heavy stone doors groaned as they shut behind them, sealing them inside the forgotten heart

of the palace. A silence settled in—a silence unlike the one outside. It wasn't eerie or unsettling;

it was peaceful, untouched, a remnant of Suryagarh before the nightmare began.

The chamber stretched before them like a sanctuary frozen in time. Golden lanterns hung from

intricately carved pillars, their flames flickering despite the lack of wind. The walls were adorned

with celestial engravings, each telling stories of gods and warriors, of battles fought and love that


endured through time. The marble floor was untouched by dust, polished like a mirror that reflected the glow of the lanterns.

Prince Vikram exhaled in quiet amazement, his eyes wandering across the breathtaking beauty of

the place. Unlike the rest of the palace, which had turned into a ruin, this chamber had remained

untouched—as if it refused to bow to the cruelty of time. Surely, Durgacharan had no knowledge

of this place, or else it too would have been swallowed by his darkness.



The soft golden glow of the lanterns danced upon her face, casting a divine radiance around her. She walked ahead of him, her long, dark tresses flowing like the ink of the night, her every step graceful yet strong. Her eyes held a depth that no engraving on these walls could ever capture—a storm, a fire, and yet... a softness. A softness that was revealing itself, little by little, like a guarded secret.

Vikram tried to look away, but his lips curled into a small, almost shy smile.

He was a warrior, a prince who had fought countless battles. He had seen beauty in the form of cities, palaces, and even the celestial relics of gods. But this—this was different.

And as much as he admired this sacred chamber, it was not more beautiful than her.

Suparna caught him stealing glances at her. A warmth rose in her cheeks, but she said nothing. Instead, she pretended not to notice, though a faint smile threatened to reveal itself.

But what Vikram didn't see was that she too had been stealing glances at him.

There was something about his childlike curiosity, his awe, his ability to appreciate even the smallest of wonders despite the horrors they had faced. He was different. Not the ruthless warrior she had once thought him to be.

Perhaps... he never was.

For the first time, Suparna felt something unfamiliar yet strangely comforting settling in her chest.

But then—she stopped.

Her smile faded. Her fingers curled into a hesitant fist.

A thought crossed her mind. A thought she hadn't allowed herself to dwell on before. Something she truly cared about.

Vikram, lost in the beauty of the chamber, didn't realize she had halted until he sensed the stillness behind him. He turned, his eyes instantly searching hers.

A hint of concern flickered in his gaze. "What happened, Rajkumari?"

Then he paused, correcting himself with a small, almost hesitant smile.

"Oh... sorry. Not Rajkumari. Suparna."

At the sound of her name from his lips, something shifted in her eyes.

And then—she smiled.

Not the teasing, guarded smiles she had given him before. This one was different. A fleeting, genuine smile—a moment where she let her walls lower, just for a heartbeat.

Vikram didn't know what had crossed her mind in that instant, but he knew she had chosen to hide it behind that smile.

And somehow... he felt it was something important.

She didn't answer his question. She didn't need to. Instead, she simply looked at him, her expression unreadable yet softer than before, before turning away and continuing forward.

Vikram remained still for a moment, his chest tightening—not with worry, but with a strange curiosity.

What was that?

What was she thinking?

And why did he suddenly want to know everything about her?

As they continued walking, Suparna found herself stealing glances at him once more. But this time, they weren't stolen in hesitation. They were stolen because she wanted to remember this moment.

She had made a decision.

The confusion she felt moments ago had settled into something certain. Something unshaken.

And at last, she spoke, her voice carrying a new kind of warmth, a quiet gentleness that hadn't been there before.

"We should rest," she said, looking at him—really looking at him.

Vikram raised a brow, slightly surprised by the sudden shift in her tone.

"We have been walking for a long time," she continued. "You must be tired, especially after everything you've faced today."

Her words were careful, but there was something deeper beneath them. A quiet acknowledgment. A silent care.

She had watched him fight relentlessly, watched him protect her without hesitation, watched him shoulder a burden that should have never been his.

And now... for the first time, she was offering something in return.

Vikram tilted his head, sensing something different about her—but he didn't question it.

Instead, he simply nodded, a small, knowing smile tugging at his lips.

And as they sat down together in the heart of the chamber, beneath the golden glow of forgotten lanterns, they were no longer just two warriors on a mission.

They were something more.

And though neither of them said it aloud, they both felt it.

They sat together beneath the warm golden glow of the lanterns, the silence between them no longer unfamiliar, no longer cold. It was... comforting. A rare moment of peace amidst the storm.

For the first time, Suparna was not guarded. Her shoulders were not tensed, her voice did not carry the weight of anger or duty. She was softer now—softer with him.

Vikram, watching her with quiet curiosity, hesitated before speaking.

"Rajkumari—" He caught himself again, his lips curving into the faintest smile. "Suparna."

She turned to him, and in the dim light, her eyes held something different. Something unspoken.

"Hmm?" she responded, her voice lighter, almost teasing.

Vikram smirked but then grew serious. "You spoke of three relics before. The third one—the Kanchan Mudrika. Will you show it to me?"

For a moment, Suparna said nothing.

Then, slowly, she extended her hand.

A golden glow shimmered against her fingers as she pulled something from the folds of her garment. And then, she revealed it.

The Kanchan Mudrika.

Vikram felt his breath hitch.

It was no ordinary ring—it was a divine masterpiece, a relic woven from celestial gold itself. The band, smooth as flowing water, shimmered like the first rays of dawn. But at its center, a tiny, ever-spinning orb of white light pulsed, as if alive. The ring bore no engravings, no markings—and yet, its power was undeniable. It radiated an energy that was both overwhelming and gentle. A balance of two forces.

The power of Parvati.

The power of protection, of devotion, of creation itself.

Suparna turned it in her fingers, the golden light reflecting in her deep, stormy eyes.

"This ring," she began, her voice carrying a depth Vikram had not heard before, "was forged by Lord Vishwakarma himself. A relic blessed by Mahadev and Maa Parvati—the embodiment of love, of power, of unwavering devotion."

Her gaze softened as she continued. "It is said that when the cosmos was young, chaos and balance danced in eternal conflict. And so, to preserve harmony, the divine mother herself infused her strength into this relic. It holds her will, her protection. No force—no blade, no curse, no god—can harm the one it shields."


Vikram, entranced by her words, watched her.

Not just the relic—but her.

The way she spoke. The way she held it. The way she believed in it.

He realized then that she wasn't just speaking of a legend.

She had lived its truth.



She had held this relic close—not just as a weapon, but as a part of her, as something deeply intertwined with who she was.

"And yet," he murmured, tilting his head, "you have fought all this time without its protection?"

Suparna looked down at the ring in her hand. "Some battles are not meant to be fought with protection, Rajkumar. Some battles... must be faced head-on."

Vikram stared at her, feeling an unfamiliar pull in his chest.

She was unlike anyone he had ever known.

A warrior. A princess. A woman of both fire and grace.

And perhaps, the only person who truly understood what it meant to fight for something greater than oneself.

For the first time, they spoke—not as enemies, not as warriors, but as two souls who understood each other.

They spoke of their families.

Suparna spoke of her father, the great Samrat Rajendra—the man she admired, the man she fought for. Vikram spoke of Maharaj Narasimha Varman, his father, the man he had betrayed without knowing.

They spoke of the past. Of mistakes. Of regrets.

And then... they spoke of the future.

A future uncertain. A future stolen from them by fate.

But still, they spoke of it.

And for a fleeting moment, they were not a prince and a princess burdened by war.

They were just Vikram and Suparna.

Two people sitting beneath the golden light, in a sanctuary untouched by time.

Vikram's eyes grew heavier. His body, despite his warrior's endurance, ached from the battles he had fought. His wounds, his exhaustion—they finally caught up to him.

His head tilted back against the cool marble wall, his breaths slowing.

Suparna watched him.

His face, once hardened with pride and duty, was now peaceful. For the first time since she had met him, he looked... vulnerable.

She hesitated.

Then, with a softness even she didn't recognize in herself, she whispered, "Sleep, Vikram. You need it."

And for the first time, he didn't resist.

For the first time, he let his guard down.

For the first time, he slept in her presence.

When Vikram awoke, the warmth was gone.

His eyes snapped open, and instantly, he knew something was wrong.

The chamber was still bathed in golden light, but it felt... empty.

Too empty.

He sat up, his breath quickening. His eyes darted around.

She was gone.

His heart pounded. He stood up, scanning every corner of the chamber.

"Suparna?" he called, his voice urgent, almost desperate.

Silence.

His pulse quickened further. His gaze darted to where the relics had been placed.

The Kālāstra was missing.

His chest tightened.

No.

His hands clenched into fists. No. No, no—

Then, his eyes fell upon something—a small piece of parchment left where she had been sitting.

A letter.

And beside it, the Kanchan Mudrika.

His fingers trembled as he reached for them.

The golden ring—the relic she had never parted with—now lay in his palm.

A lump formed in his throat.

Slowly, he unfolded the parchment, his heart hammering as he read the words written in her delicate yet strong hand.

"Vikram,

By the time you read this, I will be gone. I have taken the Kālāstra, and I must do what I must.

Do not follow me. Do not search for me. You have fought enough, and this is not your burden to bear anymore.

I leave you this relic as a promise.

A promise that if fate allows... we will meet again.

Until then—farewell, Rajkumar.

—Suparna"

The parchment crumpled slightly in his grasp as he exhaled sharply, his jaw tightening.


"Damn it, Suparna."

His grip on the ring tightened.

He felt the weight of the relic in his palm, the silent echo of her presence still lingering.

And then—the fire returned to his eyes.

She thought he wouldn't follow?



She thought this was her battle alone?

She was wrong.

Vikram was not done.

And if she thought she could carry this burden alone—

She was about to be proven very, very wrong.

Vikram was running.

Not walking. Not searching. Running.

His breath was uneven, his mind a storm of anger, confusion, and something else—something raw.

"Why, Suparna? Why did you do this?"

His own voice echoed off the ancient chamber walls, lost in the silence that surrounded him. His fists were clenched, his chest rising and falling with frustration.

How could he have let this happen?

How could he have allowed himself to sleep, to drop his guard?

For the first time, in all his battles, in all his wars, he had trusted.

And she had left.

"Didn't you realize, Suparna?" his voice broke slightly, his footsteps faltering for a brief moment.

"This fight is not just yours!"

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And then—he felt it.

A shift.

A flicker.

The glow of the Kanchan Mudrika against his skin.

At first, he ignored it, lost in his emotions. But as he moved, it happened again.

A faint pulse of light.

He stopped.

He looked down at his hand, at the ring Suparna had left for him.

And then, for the first time since waking up, he calmed his breath.

He focused.

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Realization struck him like lightning.

"The relics... they're connected."



His mind raced. The three relics—Kālāstra, the Staff of Bhairava, and the Kanchan Mudrika.

Not just weapons. Not just divine blessings.

They were tied to something greater.

To something beyond power. Beyond war.

To Mahadev and Maa Parvati.

The embodiment of destruction and creation. Of devotion. Of love.

He closed his eyes and took a deep breath, willing himself to feel it—to truly sense it.

And then—he saw her.

Suparna.

She stood in his vision, holding the Kālāstra. The divine weapon glowed in her grasp, pulsing in harmony with the Mudrika in his own hand.

She was out there.

He could find her.

A rush of determination surged through him, clearing the storm in his mind. This was no longer just a fight.

This was fate.

The relic was showing him the path, guiding him toward her.


Toward Kālāstra.

Toward the battle that had yet to begin.

Without hesitation, Vikram moved. He let the relic guide him, his every step fueled by an unshakable fire. He was coming for her.

And he would not fail again.

At last—he found it.



A hidden passage at the end of the chamber, opening into the heart of Suryagarh's palace.

Vikram emerged from the shadows, his senses sharp, his pulse quickening. He was inside the palace now.

And then—

A sound.

Loud. Thunderous. A clash of weapons. A battle.

His heart pounded.


And then he saw them.

The Bhasmabhut.

Their ash-covered forms moved with eerie precision, standing like statues at the entrance ahead.

They were guarding something.

Or someone. Vikram's jaw tightened, his fists clenching. She was close. He had no doubt now. The battle for Kālāstra was about to begin. Pain. That was the first thing Vikram felt as consciousness pulled him back into the world. His body ached, his muscles felt like they had been ripped apart and put back together. He groaned, forcing his eyes open—and found himself lying on an open field. The sky above was a deep, endless stretch of black, stars blinking faintly beyond the chaos of smoke and fire that still clouded the air. The scent of ash and blood lingered, but there was silence. No roaring commands of Durgacharan, no clashing of steel, no screams. How was he still alive?



His mind struggled to piece together the last thing he remembered. The rooftop. The battle. Suparna's outstretched hand. The pain of the Kālāstra's blade biting into his palm. And then... nothing.

His eyes fell on his hands.

The Kālāstra still rested in his grip, its divine steel glowing faintly. His Kanchan Mudrika, the sacred ring, pulsed with an ethereal light.

They saved me.

Just like before—**when the Kālāstra stopped that boulder from crushing him—the relics had protected him.

But there was no time to dwell on it. A sharp ache pulsed in his skull, but he clenched his jaw and pushed through it.

He had to move.

Suparna.

She was gone. Taken.

And now, he had no clue where to find her.

He clenched his fists, his mind racing.

Durgacharan would not kill her. No, not yet.

The monster wanted her as his queen.


Vikram's hands shook with fury. The very thought of it sent rage burning through his veins. But he forced himself to stay calm.

Durgacharan was not an idiot. He knew Vikram had both relics now. He also knew they had managed to get inside the palace without his knowledge.

This time, he would be prepared.

This time, he would expect him.

This time... he might even use Suparna against him.



Vikram's breath grew heavy. He closed his eyes, willing his racing heart to still. Think.

What would Durgacharan do?

He would use her as bait. He would make Vikram come to him.

And Vikram would.

Because nothing in this world would stop him.

His fate had been decided.

He was going to save her.

He was going to end this.

The towering palace loomed ahead, its once-proud walls now shrouded in eerie, lifeless silence.

The air was thick with the unnatural stillness of the Bhasmabhut.

Vikram moved carefully. This was no longer a reckless charge.

This time, he would have to fight with strategy.

Some fights had to be won with steel.

Some had to be won with shadows.

The first Bhasmabhut stood motionless at the palace entrance, guarding the gates with hollow, empty eyes.

Vikram gripped the Kālāstra and closed his eyes.


The weapon pulsed.

A strange energy coursed through him—an unfamiliar but powerful sensation, as if the blade itself was whispering secrets into his mind.

He opened his eyes.

And then—he moved.

Fast.



His body blurred through the air, his movements like liquid shadow. The first Bhasmabhut barely even registered his presence before the Kālāstra pierced through its chest.

It let out a hollow shriek, ash bursting into the air.

Vikram pulled his blade free, not stopping.

Another one turned—too slow. Vikram twisted around it, slashing its throat in one swift motion.

A third lunged—he ducked, slamming the Kālāstra into its skull.

Three down. No alarms.

But more were inside.

Vikram exhaled, gripping the Kālāstra tightly.

Time to move.

He slipped through the shadows, pressing himself against the cold stone walls. His steps were silent. He had trained for this all his life—stealth, precision, speed.

He darted behind a crumbling pillar as two Bhasmabhut marched past. They moved mechanically, without will, but their senses were sharp.

One wrong move and they would know.

Vikram held his breath. He waited.

The creatures passed.

He slipped forward.


Up ahead—the next passage was blocked. Two guards. Too close together to take out one without alerting the other.

He had to think.

Then—an idea.

Vikram tightened his grip on the Kālāstra.

He focused.



He let the power of the relic flow through him.

And then—time slowed.

The world around him shifted. The air itself felt thicker, heavier. The torches flickered in slow motion. The Bhasmabhut's movements became sluggish.

Vikram moved.

He dashed forward, his body a blur. His blade sliced through the first guard's throat before it could even react. The second turned—too slow. Vikram was already behind him, his blade striking true.

Time snapped back to normal.

Both bodies hit the ground at once.

Vikram exhaled.

The Kālāstra shimmered faintly.

The relics were more than just weapons. They were power. They were destiny.

And he was starting to understand them.

More Bhasmabhut ahead.

Vikram moved through the corridors, alternating between striking from the shadows and fighting in flashes of divine speed.

One by one, they fell.

Sometimes, he fought with steel.


Sometimes, he used the power of time itself.

But step by step—he made his way deeper into the palace.

Step by step—he got closer to Suparna.

And soon, he would face Durgacharan.

And this time—he would not fail.



Vikram was running.

Not walking. Not searching. Running.

His breath was uneven, his mind a storm of anger, confusion, and something else—something raw.

"Why, Suparna? Why did you do this?"

His own voice echoed off the ancient chamber walls, lost in the silence that surrounded him. His fists were clenched, his chest rising and falling with frustration.

How could he have let this happen?

How could he have allowed himself to sleep, to drop his guard?

For the first time, in all his battles, in all his wars, he had trusted.

And she had left.

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The curSe of The BhaSmaBhuT

The mighty halls of Suryagarh whispered with the echoes of the past—once glorious, now haunted by the cursed souls of bhasmabhuts. Prince Vikram moved like a shadow, swift yet calculated, his every step resonating with purpose. His heart pounded in his chest, not from fear, but from the burning need to find Suparna.

His grip tightened around the Kālāstra, the relic glowing faintly in his grasp as if it sensed his turmoil. The corridors ahead were lined with monstrous figures, their ashen bodies twitching with unnatural energy. Some staggered aimlessly, waiting for commands, while others turned their hollow, lifeless eyes toward him.

A deep breath. A warrior's mind.

With a single step, he lunged forward, striking down the first bhasmabhut with his blade. It crumbled into ashes before it could even scream. Another charged, but this time Vikram raised his hand, the Kālāstra pulsing with divine energy. The air twisted as time itself obeyed his will—he saw their movements slow, their cursed limbs struggling against an unseen force. He slipped between them, his blade flashing in deadly arcs, cutting through their cursed existence like a storm.

At times, when the horde was overwhelming, he didn't fight. He was a warrior, but also a tactician. The shadows became his ally as he slipped past the slow-witted creatures, hiding in the ruins of fallen pillars, using the palace's vastness to his advantage.

Days passed like fleeting moments. His body screamed in exhaustion, but his resolve never wavered. He had to find her.

And then, finally—he did.

A vast silence hung in the air as Vikram stepped into the chamber, his heartbeat drowning out everything else. It was a place frozen in time—its walls adorned with murals of forgotten gods, now cracked and fading. In the center, on a raised pedestal, rested the Damru of KaalKuth—the cursed relic that had started it all. But Vikram's eyes did not waver toward it.

His gaze locked onto her.

Suparna.

The moment he saw her, his breath caught in his throat.

She was sitting on the cold floor beside the relic, her once-radiant presence dimmed to a ghost of itself. The fire in her eyes—the fire that had drawn him toward her since the beginning—was barely flickering now. Her silken hair, once cascading like a waterfall of midnight, was disheveled, strands clinging to her pale face. The lips that once carried words sharper than swords were now trembling, cracked from exhaustion.

And yet, even in this fragile state, she was the most breathtaking thing he had ever laid eyes on.

She lifted her head, sensing his presence.

The moment their eyes met, an entire world passed between them—a world of memories, unspoken words, and an aching yearning neither had dared to voice before.

A shiver ran through her, her body tensing.

“No...” Her voice was barely above a whisper, raw and weak. “Don’t come. Go back.”

But Vikram didn’t stop.

He couldn’t.

In three desperate strides, he was before her, dropping to his knees. His hands trembled as he reached out, cupping her face as though afraid she would disappear. She flinched slightly at his touch, not out of fear, but because it had been so long since she had felt warmth.


“What have they done to you?” His voice cracked, barely containing the storm of emotions rising within him.

Tears welled in her eyes, but she shook her head. “Why... Why did you come?”

A bitter chuckle escaped his lips, his forehead resting against hers as he closed his eyes for a moment, breathing her in, grounding himself in the fact that she was real.

“How could I not?” he whispered. “Did you really think I would let you fight this alone?”

Her lips parted as if to argue, but nothing came out.



She had wanted him to stay away—to be safe. But a part of her, the part that had been yearning for him in the darkness, had prayed he would come. And now that he was here, now that he was touching her, looking at her as if she was his entire world, the walls she had built around her heart began to crack.

A choked sob left her lips, and she finally allowed herself to break.

“I was so afraid...” she admitted, her voice trembling. “Afraid that you wouldn’t come... That I would never see you again.”

Vikram swallowed hard, his thumb brushing away a tear that slipped down her cheek. “You should’ve known better.” He smiled, though his eyes burned with unshed tears. “I would walk through fire for you, Suparna.”

Her breath hitched.

There it was—the truth she had tried to deny for so long, now spoken aloud, raw and undeniable.

“Why?” she whispered. “Why would you do this for me?”

His fingers tightened gently against her skin, his eyes holding hers with an intensity that left her breathless.

“Because I love you.”

A sharp inhale.

The words struck her like lightning, setting every fiber of her being ablaze. Her lips trembled, and for a moment, she could do nothing but stare at him, her heart pounding so violently she thought it might burst.

He loves me.

Not as a prince loves a princess.

Not as a warrior respects his ally.

But as a man loves a woman.

Completely. Irrevocably.

A fresh wave of tears welled in her eyes, but this time, they weren't just from pain or exhaustion. They were from something far greater.

A tear slid down her cheek as she reached up with trembling fingers and touched his face—her touch so light, so hesitant, as though she still couldn't believe he was real.

“Say it again.” Her voice was barely a breath.

His lips curled into the softest of smiles, and he leaned in, his lips almost brushing against her forehead.

“I love you.”

A sob broke from her throat as she threw her arms around him, her body shaking as she buried herself against his chest. He caught her instantly, holding her so tightly it was as if he could shield her from the entire world. His hands wove into her hair, his heartbeat thundering in her ears.

“I love you too, Vikram,” she whispered into his skin, her voice muffled but filled with the weight of every suppressed feeling she had ever held for him.

And in that moment, as they held each other amidst the chaos, the battle, and the war that loomed over them—nothing else mattered.

Nothing but them.

From behind the Damru, a shadow moved. A slow, calculated clap echoed in the chamber.

Vikram's blood turned to ice.

Durgacharan.

The cursed Brahmin stepped into the dim light, his dark eyes filled with amusement. His wicked grin sent chills through Vikram's spine.

“How touching,” Durgacharan mused, his voice like poison dripping from a blade. “The mighty prince, defying fate for the sake of a woman. Tell me, Rajkumar—do you truly believe love can save you from me?”

Vikram stood, shielding Suparna behind him, his grip tightening on Kālāstra.

“You talk too much,” he spat.

Durgacharan chuckled darkly. “And you are too reckless. Do you really think I didn’t expect you? That I would leave my most valuable prize unguarded?”

Vikram’s eyes narrowed.

Trap.

Of course, this was a trap.

But he didn’t care. He had come too far to turn back.

Without another word, he turned to Suparna, his fingers slipping into his pocket. Kanchan Mudrika.

He took her hand and pressed the golden ring into her palm.

She gasped, looking up at him in shock.

“Wear it,” he ordered softly.

Suparna hesitated for only a moment before slipping the divine relic onto her finger.

The effect was immediate.

A golden light burst forth, surrounding her like a protective shield. Her pale skin regained its warmth, her wounds vanishing before their eyes. Her strength returned, her eyes burning once more with the fire he had known so well.

Durgacharan’s smirk faltered for the first time.

Vikram allowed himself a small smile.

“This time,” he whispered to her, “we fight together.”

And with that, the battle truly began.

A deafening silence filled the chamber as Durgacharan’s lips curled into a twisted grin. He tapped his staff on the ground, and the air trembled with a dark, ancient energy.

“You may be ready to fight me, but I am a generous host,” he declared mockingly, his voice echoing through the chamber. “So let me introduce you to some familiar faces. Let’s see if you can raise your swords against your own blood.”

With a violent tremor, the floor cracked open, and from the swirling depths of shadow and fire, two towering figures emerged. Their armor gleamed like cursed steel, their eyes empty—void of life, void of mercy.

Maharaj Narasimha Varman.

Samrat Rajendra.

Vikram and Suparna stood frozen, disbelief flashing in their eyes.

“No... this isn’t possible.” Vikram’s voice trembled for the first time.

Suparna’s breath hitched as she gripped her sword tighter. “How dare you...” she hissed at Durgacharan. “How dare you defile their souls like this!”

Durgacharan simply smirked. “Your words bore me, Rajkumari. If you wish to free them, then fight them.”

The kings moved.

Fast.


Too fast.

With a mighty roar, Narasimha Varman lunged at Vikram, his massive sword carving through the air. Vikram barely managed to block the strike, his arms trembling under the sheer force. At the same time, Samrat Rajendra came down upon Suparna with a merciless blow, forcing her to roll aside just in time.

The battle had begun.

Steel clashed against steel.

The chamber quaked with the fury of kings locked in battle. Vikram’s every move was met with Narasimha’s overwhelming strength. Suparna’s agility was barely enough to evade Rajendra’s relentless assault.



They weren't just fighting warriors.

They were fighting legends.

But as Vikram parried another crushing blow, a thought clawed at his mind.

These were their fathers.

They weren't enemies.

They were victims.

“Father! It's me, Vikram!” he shouted between strikes, his voice raw with desperation.

“Father! You are not this... you are not his puppet!” Suparna cried out.

For a fleeting second, the kings hesitated. The emptiness in their eyes flickered, as if something deep inside them was struggling to break free.

But then—

Durgacharan's staff pulsed.

The cursed magic surged through their bodies, and with a monstrous roar, they attacked again—harder, faster, deadlier.

Vikram and Suparna barely held their ground. Their blades rang like thunder, their breath labored, their bodies screaming in pain.

And then—

Their backs met.

Panting, bleeding, exhausted, they shared a look.

A realization.

This battle could not be won with words.

A heavy silence passed between them.

Then, as one—

They attacked.

Blow after blow, sword against sword, until finally, with a devastating final strike, they brought their fathers down.

The chamber fell into silence. The cursed light faded from the fallen kings' eyes. Their bodies stilled.

They were free.

But the price of victory was agony.

Vikram clenched his fists. His father's body lay before him, lifeless once more. A war had been fought. A war had been lost.

And Durgacharan?

He simply laughed.

"A marvelous show," Durgacharan sneered, stepping forward. "But all for nothing."

With a wave of his staff, the chamber erupted in chaos. Bhasmabhuts flooded the battlefield.

Vikram and Suparna stood side by side, backs against each other, gripping their weapons.

There was no turning back now.

"We end this. Here and now." Vikram growled.

Suparna smirked through her exhaustion. "Finally, something we agree on."

And then—

They charged.

Lightning and fire clashed. Steel and sorcery collided.

Vikram and Suparna moved like Shiva and Shakti in the divine dance of destruction.

The Kālāstra burned with celestial power as Vikram swung it, slicing through the undead with ease. Suparna's Kanchan Mudrika radiated golden light, shielding her from dark attacks as she struck with divine speed.



The battlefield was a storm.

But Durgacharan?

He was Bhairava incarnate.

Every move they made, he countered. Every strike they landed, he shrugged off.

“You are wasting time!” Suparna shouted between breaths.

Vikram’s eyes darted toward the Damru of KaalKuth.

That was the key.

“I’ll get to the Damru! Cover me!”

Suparna didn’t hesitate.

As Vikram sprinted toward the cursed relic, she turned—blocking Durgacharan’s path with all her might.

He growled. “You think you can stop me?”

She smirked, blood dripping from her lips. “I know I can.”

Durgacharan’s wicked laughter echoed through the battlefield, merging with the crackling flames and the wails of the dying bhasmabhuts. His eyes gleamed with cruelty as he raised his staff, its tip burning with dark energy.

Suparna stood before him, blood dripping from her wounds, sweat tracing lines down her dust-covered face. Her breath came in ragged gasps, but her grip on her sword remained firm.


She was the last wall between him and Vikram.

“Step aside, Rajkumari,” Durgacharan sneered, twirling his staff. “You are already half-dead. Another strike, and you will crumble.”

She smirked, wiping the blood from her lips. “Then what are you waiting for?”

With a snarl, he struck.

The air cracked as his staff slammed into her side.



A violent shockwave burst from the impact, sending her flying. She crashed into the stone wall, a sickening crack filling the chamber as blood splattered onto the cold ground.

Vikram, still running toward the Damru of KaalKuth, turned at the sound of her agony.

His soul shattered.

“SUPARNA!”

She coughed, red spilling from her lips. But she pushed herself up, her limbs trembling, her body screaming in pain.

Durgacharan’s eyes narrowed in annoyance.

She should be dead.

And yet, she stood.

Barely breathing.

Barely alive.

But still standing.

Her body swayed, but her gaze found Vikram’s.

Through the unbearable pain, she smiled.

“Do your job, Rajkumar... You promised me.”

Her words shattered him.

Vikram’s hands clenched around the Kālāstra, his vision blurring with rage, grief, and the unbearable weight of love.

Durgacharan snarled and struck again.

The world slowed.

Suparna gasped.

The second blow pierced her chest.



Her body arched, her lips parting in a silent cry.

Then—

She collapsed.

Vikram screamed.

The kind of scream that ripped through reality, tore through the heavens.

Durgacharan laughed, stepping over Suparna's bloodied, motionless body. Victory glowed in his wicked eyes.

“Now, Rajkumar—”

He never finished.

Because Vikram moved.

Not with desperation.

Not with fear.

With absolute fury.

With the rage of the Vardhan bloodline.

With the wrath of Shiva himself.

BOOM!

A shockwave erupted from his feet as he launched himself toward the Damru of KaalKuth.

Durgacharan's smirk vanished.


“NOOOOOO!” he howled, lunging to stop him.

But Suparna...

Even in the last flicker of her life, she moved.

Her trembling fingers found his ankle.

Durgacharan stumbled.



And in that moment, Vikram struck.

He drove the Kālāstra deep into the Damru.

The world exploded.

A wave of blinding golden light burst from the Damru, spiraling outward in an unstoppable surge of celestial energy.

The Bhasmabhuts shrieked, their bodies turning to dust as the divine power erased the curse that had bound them.

Durgacharan screamed in fury, his skin peeling away, revealing the twisted, demonic form beneath. The darkness that had made him invincible was collapsing, burning under the overwhelming radiance of the Damru's purification.

Lightning split the skies.

Flames erupted from the earth.

The very air cracked with divine wrath.

And in the middle of it all—

Vikram turned.

His body frozen in time.

Suparna lay on the ground, still, unmoving.

Her once-vibrant skin was pale, her golden eyes dimming, her lips barely parting to whisper something.

His heart broke.

He stumbled toward her, dropping to his knees, his shaking hands cradling her bloodied face.

Her voice was barely a breath.

“Love you, Vikram...”

His tears fell like shattered stars.

“Suparna... No... No... Stay with me... Please... I—” But her eyes closed. And her body fell limp. The Kālāstra and Damru surged with divine power, the energy growing brighter, brighter, until— Everything vanished. A blinding eruption of golden light consumed the battlefield. The curse was undone. But at what cost? The light consumed everything. Blinding. Endless. Vikram’s eyes burned, his tears lost in the overwhelming radiance. His heartbeat thundered in his ears, but no sound reached him—not the wind, not the battlefield, not even his own breaths. Was this death? Or something beyond it?

His body felt weightless, like he was drifting in an ocean of light, untethered from time, space, and existence itself.


Then, for the briefest moment—a fraction of a second that felt like eternity—he saw something.

A silhouette within the golden glow. A man, seated in complete stillness, as if the universe itself bowed before his presence. His body radiated an otherworldly power, vast as the cosmos, yet serene as the quiet after a storm. A serpent coiled around his neck, its hood raised in silent vigilance. Beside him stood a trident, its three sharp points piercing through reality itself.

And next to him—a woman.

A presence both fierce and tender, her posture poised in divine elegance. Her aura was like the dawn—gentle yet unstoppable, fiery yet nurturing. The folds of her garments seemed to merge

with the light itself, and in her eyes lay an ocean of boundless love and infinite power.



Their faces—

No.

Vikram could not see them clearly.

The light was too blinding, their forms shifting like ripples in an endless stream of time.

He tried to reach out—his fingers trembling, desperate to grasp the truth before him—

But the light dimmed.

And everything vanished.

Blankness. Silence. Emptiness.

A sharp gasp tore from his throat.

Vikram's eyes flew open.

Darkness. Cool air. The scent of sandalwood and jasmine.

He was in his room.

His bed.

The royal chambers of Vardhan's palace.

His fingers clenched the silk sheets beneath him, his breath uneven, his heart hammering in his chest. His body felt intact, unharmed, yet his head throbbed as if he had lived a hundred lifetimes in a single moment.

His mind reeled.

Was it a dream?

Suryagarh. Durgacharan. The battle. The pain. The sacrifice.

Suparna.

His hands trembled.

It couldn't be just a dream. It couldn't.



His palm brushed against something hard. Cold.

His breath caught.

Slowly, he turned his head—

The Kālāstra.

Lying beside him.

Real. Tangible. Covered in the faint glow of divinity.

He grasped it with shaking fingers, feeling its sacred weight. This was no illusion. No fevered nightmare. It happened.

But—how?

How was he here?

He pushed himself out of bed, his pulse racing, and rushed towards the Raj Darbar.

The grand hall was lit with golden lanterns, the scent of incense curling through the air. And standing in the center, draped in the robes of a ruler, with an aura of power and pride—
His father.

Maharaj Narasimha Varman.

Alive. Whole. Regal in his divine grace.

Vikram staggered back, unable to believe his eyes.

His father saw him and frowned slightly. “What happened, Kumar? Why are you wandering the halls at this hour?”

His voice—strong, commanding, full of life. Not the cursed shadow of himself from Suryagarh.

Vikram swallowed, his throat tight with emotion.

“Tomorrow morning,” Maharaj continued, rubbing his temple. “We leave for Malava. Get some rest; it will be a long journey.”

Vikram’s breath hitched.



Tomorrow?

No.

It wasn't just tomorrow.

It was the tomorrow before everything began.

Before Suryagarh.

Before Durgacharan.

Before fate had been rewritten.

He had traveled back more than he had expected.

But if his father was here—alive, untainted by darkness—then...

His heartbeat quickened.

Suparna.

Could it be?

Was she also—?

No. He had to see her.

Now.

Nothing else mattered.


His fingers tightened around the Kālāstra. He turned to leave.

His father's voice stopped him. "Go to bed, Kumar. You need rest."

Vikram forced a smile, bowing respectfully. "Yes, Maharaj."

But he had no intention of sleeping.

He hurried back to his chambers, but instead of returning to bed, he walked silently towards the back courtyard.



The night air was cool, laced with the scent of blooming night jasmines. The stables stood in shadows, but his horse—his loyal beast—stood ready, as if it too knew this was a journey that could not wait.

With one swift motion, Vikram mounted the horse.

He held the Kālāstra close, whispering a silent prayer to the divine force that had brought him here.

Then—

He kicked the reins.

The horse galloped forward, tearing through the night like a shadow across the moonlit plains.

The power of the Kālāstra surged through him, and within moments, his speed was beyond mortal limits. The very air around him blurred as he raced towards destiny.

Towards Suryagarh. Towards her. His Suparna.

The final BaTTle

The night stretched before him, vast and endless, but his heart knew only one path—

The path that led back to love.

To the one who had waited for him beyond time itself.

With the power of Kālāstra, Vikram reached Suryagarh in the blink of an eye.

The palace stood tall, **untouched, unscarred by war—**just as it had before. But this time, he knew its every secret. He had walked its hidden paths, fought within its cursed halls, and uncovered the darkness that lurked beneath its grandeur.

But tonight—none of it had happened.

At least, not in this time.

He stepped forward. With a mere thought, Kālāstra's energy pulsed through his veins. In an instant, he was inside—moving past royal guards who never even noticed his presence.

He climbed the stairs, his heart hammering wildly—a thousand wild horses galloping inside his chest.

Then, he stopped.

He knew this room.

Her room.

Vikram swallowed hard. A storm of emotions raged within him. Every breath was a battle between overwhelming anticipation and unbearable longing. His spine tingled as if lightning coursed through it.

Would she be there? Would she be... alive?

He stepped forward.

The door creaked slightly as he pushed it open.

And then—



Moonlight.

A silver glow bathed the room, and beneath that celestial shimmer, she lay—Suparna.

Her face, serene in sleep, glowed more radiant than the very moonlight that kissed her skin. To him, she was more beautiful than the heavens themselves.

Vikram exhaled shakily. His knees almost gave out.

Bholenath had not only heard his prayers—he had answered them.

And he had appeared, along with his better half, Goddess Parvati. In that divine light before the Kālāstra's final strike—they had shown their grace.

This was their answer.

This was his blessing.

Vikram's eyes burned as silent tears fell down his face. He didn't try to stop them. He didn't want to.

He had lost her once. Felt the agony of her sacrifice.

Now, she was here. Untouched by fate's cruelty.

A tremor ran through him. His fingers ached to touch her. But he didn't. Not yet.

He took a step forward.

And in an instant—

A flash of movement.


Faster than most would ever see, Suparna's eyes snapped open. Her warrior instincts, honed through years of discipline, reacted instantly.

In one swift motion, a dagger gleamed in her hand, poised against his throat.

"Who are you?" she demanded, her voice sharp, commanding. "What are you doing here?"

Vikram's heart skipped a beat.

Then—he understood.



The Kālāstra's final strike had reversed everything. The world had been rewritten. And only he carried the memories of what had happened. A slow, knowing smile spread across his lips. "Rajkumari," he said softly, "I am not your enemy. I came to warn you." Her dagger did not lower. Her fierce gaze locked onto his. "Warn me? About what? And why now?"

Vikram opened his mouth to reply—

But something moved. A shadow near the door. His instincts flared. Before the intruder could react, Vikram lunged. In one swift move, he seized the eavesdropper by the throat and threw him to the ground before

Suparna.

A familiar, venomous voice hissed in outrage.

"What is this, Princess?"

Vikram's blood ran cold.

It was Durgacharan. The man straightened, his eyes narrowing with feigned innocence.

"Who is this stranger? What

is he doing in your room at midnight?" His voice turned sharp, filled with fake hurt. "I never

expected this from you, Rajkumari. The Samrat will be devastated to hear of this... betrayal."

Suparna's eyes blazed with fury.

"Don't speak nonsense, Durgacharan! Don't you dare question my honor!"

Vikram's jaw clenched. This wretched man was playing the same game.

But this time—he would not win.



Vikram smirked. “I was expecting you, Durgacharan.”

The man’s expression faltered for the first time.

Vikram’s voice dropped lower, deadly. “Tell me, does the Samrat know your real intentions?”

Durgacharan’s throat dried.

Vikram stepped closer, his eyes dark and knowing. “You will never get the Damaru of Kālkūṭ.”

Suparna’s breath hitched.

Durgacharan’s face paled. His hands shook slightly. He staggered back.

How? How did this unknown young man know his secret?

Panic flickered in his eyes. In an instant, he lunged—his fingers aimed for Vikram’s throat.

But Vikram was faster.

He sidestepped effortlessly, caught Durgacharan’s wrist, and with a powerful grip—lifted him into the air.

“Not this time, beast.”

With one devastating throw, he hurled Durgacharan out of the window.

As the traitor plummeted, Vikram raised the Kālāstra. A pulse of raw energy surged from its core.

The blast struck Durgacharan midair.

A final, strangled scream—

And he was no more.

The ocean of Time

The beast was gone.

Silence hung in the air.

Suparna slowly lowered her dagger.

For the first time, her eyes were curious, searching. “Who are you?” she asked, her voice softer now. “And why did you kill my father’s most trusted general?” She frowned. “Though... I never liked him.”

Vikram chuckled, shaking his head. “That’s why I’m here, Rajkumari.”

And so—he told her everything.

The battles. The curses. Their destiny.

The truth of Durgacharan.

The wrath of Kālkūṭ.

And the blessing of Mahadev.

Suparna listened, her expression shifting—fear, awe, disbelief, wonder.

It was too much to comprehend.

But the Kālāstra was real.

She had heard of it. A weapon of legend. A gift from Devādidev himself. A weapon that chose only the pure of heart.


And she had seen this young man wield it.

A man whose presence stirred something deep within her.

As dawn broke, Vikram stood to leave.

The sky burned with hues of gold and crimson. His time here was done.

But Suparna wasn’t ready to let him disappear just yet.



Before he could leave, she called out. “Tell me one thing.”

He turned.

“What is your name?”

Vikram smiled.

“You can call me... Anoushkram.”

Her eyes widened.

That name—

The hidden word of Suryagarh.

Before she could speak, he was gone.

A ghost in the wind.

A whisper in time.

Some say time flows like a river—swift, certain, and inescapable.

But I have seen its face. And I know the truth.

Time is an ocean. And the tides... can change.

~ The End ~