

Dashanan: Ādi

by

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CHAPTER 01

“Jai Sri Ram! Jai Sri Ram! Jai Sri Ram!”

The chant rose like a tide from the sanctum of the ancient temple, washing over the sounds of the streets beyond. Honking rickshaws, clanging carts, and shouting vendors dulled beneath the thundering devotion that poured from within. The final hymns of the evening echoed through the stone corridors, blending with the scents of marigolds, sandalwood, and incense that filled the thick, warm air.

Inside, oil lamps flickered against carved granite pillars, casting dancing shadows across walls blackened by centuries of faith and prayer. The rhythmic cadence of Vedic hymns layered beneath the priest’s voice, which rose and fell like waves over the gathered faithful. Seated cross-legged on straw mats, devotees faced the sanctum, where an ornately adorned idol of Lord Ram stood radiant in the golden glow of oil lamps. Many were elderly, wrapped in cotton shawls. Some clutched palm-sized books, their lips moving in murmured synchrony, fingers tracing the script as they followed the story.

In their midst sat a young boy, no more than ten, still and wide-eyed. His gaze remained fixed on the priest, but his attention drifted from time to time to the man beside him—his grandfather—who sat with eyes closed, perfectly still, as though listening not with ears, but with his very soul.

As the priest’s tale neared its end, his voice carried the weight of divine finality.

“And that is how Lord Ram eradicated evil in Treta Yuga—through Dashanavadh! Even after many millennia, we still bow before Ram as the perfect man and eternal God.”

The boy blinked. His brows furrowed, lips parting slightly—not in awe, but in the silent birth of a question too large to shape into words. Slowly, he leaned towards his grandfather and tugged at his sleeve.

“Thatha... what happened?”

His grandfather remained unmoved. With a soft shake of the head and a raised palm, he gestured for silence. The boy nodded, but his eyes continued to search the face of his elder, the question still restless inside him.

As the final hymn swelled, they joined the crowd in chanting, the boy’s voice hesitant but sincere. The aarti flame circled the idol, temple bells rang out in a chorus of metal and prayer, and the great doors creaked open to release the devotees into the dusk.

Prasad in hand, the boy and his grandfather stepped out into the thickening night, their silhouettes swallowed by the crowd as it streamed back into the living chaos of the city.

As they walked together through the lamp-lit streets, the warmth of temple bells and fading chants still lingered in the air. But the boy’s mind was already elsewhere, whirring with questions too big for his small frame to hold.

He looked up at his grandfather, eyes gleaming with innocent urgency.

“Thatha, what happened to Dashanan after his death? Everyone knows Lord Ram was born again as Lord Krishna... was Dashanan born again too?”

The question hung in the night like an arrow loosed from a silent bow.

His grandfather—silver-haired, wrapped in a crisp white kurta and a traditional dhoti—stopped mid-step. There was a brief, almost reflexive chuckle, low and uneasy, as he looked down at the dust-covered path beneath their feet.

“Ahh... that’s a good question,” he said, laughing again, this time nervously. His eyes searched the road, as if hoping some grain of forgotten truth might rise to meet him. He could feel the boy’s excitement—pure, reverent, hungry.

After a pause that stretched just long enough, he placed a hand gently on the boy’s shoulder. His voice, when it returned, was steadier—marked by something deeper. A memory, perhaps. Or a story buried too long in silence.

“Listen, kannu...” he began softly. “Everyone knows how Dashanan died. But very few ask what happened after.”

The boy’s eyes widened. His steps slowed.

“The death of Dashanan was not just fate—it was prophecy. It was written into the very threads of time. The Devas, the Rishis, the Naras, the Vanaras—all beings waited for it, holding their breath.”

Now his voice shifted, taking on a slow, reverent rhythm—part sermon, part sacred storytelling.

“On the tenth day of the Yuddha, Dashanan finally fell to Lord Ram’s arrow. The skies themselves responded—celestial flowers rained down from above. Rishis chanted praises. The Vanara Sena cried out in joy: ‘Jai Sri Ram!’ And perhaps... that was the last thing Dashanan saw—his enemies rejoicing, dharma triumphing, and his great empire slipping into silence.”

The boy said nothing. His lips parted slightly, caught between awe and a deeper yearning.

“Lord Ram, in his boundless righteousness, ensured Dashanan’s last rites were performed with full honour. His body was returned to his followers. His brother, Vibhishan, was crowned king of Lanka. And Lord Ram returned to Ayodhya, victorious, Ma Sita beside him. That is the story the world knows.”

He paused again, eyes narrowing, voice softening to a whisper.

“But...” he said, leaning in with a glint of mystery, “...there is more to Dashanan than the Sita-haran, or his battle with Lord Ram. A truth hidden in the folds of time. A truth that was buried... not burned.”



Dashanan, master of the Artha Shastra, Ayurveda, Jyotishya, Sahitya, Vedas, and Yantra Nirmaana, understood one truth above all: knowledge unpassed is knowledge lost. He had studied at the feet of celestial beings, learned from Rishis whose wisdom echoed across yugas, and uncovered truths inscribed in the very pulse of the universe. But even he knew that war was inevitable—and with it, the risk that everything he had discovered could vanish in a breath of ash and blood.

Anticipating a day such as this, Dashanan had formed a secret order to preserve his knowledge. He did not choose princes or bloodline heirs, but minds that burned with brilliance and hearts tempered by unwavering conviction. He took ten disciples under his wing and passed on all his knowledge, everything he learned. Among his disciples, four stood unmatched: Kanaka, Veerabaahu, Pashupati, and Dharmapaala.

Pashupati, the healer, had nearly mastered the unmasterable—the art of rebirth through flesh. His Ayurvedic experiments bordered on the miraculous: severed limbs regrown, ruptured organs revived, the breath of life coaxed from the brink of death.

Veerabaahu, master of Yantra Nirmaana, was the forge behind Dashanan's vision. He birthed machines that pulsed with cosmic energies—devices that stitched wounds without contact, machines that shot energy pulses through the air, summoned fire without a spark.

Kanaka, the alchemist, could breathe soul into metal. Through secret alloys and ancient transmutations, he forged blades that sang, chariots that levitated, and armour that regenerated faster than living flesh. His hands shaped the very skeleton of Lanka's military might.

Dharmapaala, the sage, was scripture made flesh. His command over Jyotishya allowed him to see through the veils of time. He read omens in the wind's curl, in birdsong, in the shimmer of firelight. It was Dharmapaala who cried out before Hanuman's fire burned Lanka, who saved hundreds by urging them to flee to the water canals.

But even prophecy could not halt the inevitable.

On the tenth day of the Yuddha, Dashanan fell, struck down by Lord Ram's arrow. The skies rejoiced. Rishis sang. The Vanara Sena roared, "Jai Sri Ram!" And perhaps, in that final breath, that was all Dashanan heard—not silence, but the sound of his end written in joy. The war was over, and Dashanan died.

But for one of his disciples, a greater battle had only just begun.

Pashupati could not accept it. Not this. Not like this. His master—the fiercest mind, the brightest flame, the scholar of ages—could not simply vanish into dust. Not while his knowledge still pulsed through scrolls and yantras left behind.

He summoned the others.
He proposed the unthinkable.

He would find the wound. Rebuild the torn tissues. Restore the organs. And with the device he and Dashanan had designed together—the Vaayu Yantra, a machine that could circulate life essence—he would bring him back.

After nights of grief and debate, Veerabaahu and Kanaka joined him.

Together, they placed Dashanan's body on a chariot forged from rare metals. Its frame gleamed under the sun, etched with protective yantras of silver and copper. Four white horses, draped in garlands and bound with prayer thread, were yoked to the cart.

As twilight bled red across the city, the disciples pulled their master's body through the grieving streets, towards the heart of Lanka.

There, before a stunned crowd, Pashupati stood—his robes torn, his eyes ablaze not with madness, but with conviction.

And he declared:

“Our master shall not be burned.
He shall not be buried.
We will not mourn him as dead—because he is not done.
He shall rise again... not as memory, but as Dashanan himself.”

The crowd froze.
Then, it ignited.

Grief turned to rage. The people, who had gathered to bid farewell with fire and prayer, cried sacrilege. Denying final rites was blasphemy. It was unnatural. It was unforgivable.

Stones flew. Pots shattered. Curses filled the air.

Blood streamed from Pashupati's brow. Kanaka shielded him; Veerabaahu seized the reins. The golden chariot turned, wheels thundering over temple stone, the mob at its heels.

And then—silence.

A new voice cut through the storm.

“Enough.”

Vibhishan, cloaked in white and gold, stepped forward as dharma incarnate. His guards fanned behind him, unmoving, like statues of justice. He raised a single hand.

The crowd stopped.

Their fury, their grief, their cries—held still by one man's stillness. Only the wind dared whisper.

And then, Vibhishan spoke.

“I understand your anger,” Vibhishan said, his voice calm but unyielding. “He was my brother. I worshipped him no less than you worshipped him as your king. But under no circumstance will I allow his disciples to take his mortal remains.”

He stood beneath the darkening sky, his silhouette edged by torchlight. Grief shimmered in his eyes—but so did something colder. Resolve.

“An ordinary warrior did not defeat Dashanan. Lord Narayana himself slew him. He lived a life of sin—and of greatness. And now... he deserves rest, not return. All I want—for him, for this land—is peace. The kind that only his final rites can bring. The kind that only moksha offers.”



The sun had already slipped beneath the horizon. In the purple hush of twilight, the stars blinked to life above the city, bearing silent witness to the pronouncement that followed.

“At the break of dawn,” Vibhishan declared, “his last rites will be performed.”

Then, turning to the disciples, his voice turned iron.

“If any of you disobey your king’s command, you will be captured. You will be beheaded.”

Stillness fell over the gathering, sharp as a blade drawn in a temple.

Pashupati turned slightly, locking eyes with Veerabaahu and Kanaka. In unspoken accord, all three lowered their gazes, nodding in false submission. The crowd exhaled, their faith in order restored.

But in the hearts of the disciples, no vow of obedience had been sworn. Only a deeper promise remained—one not to their king, but to their Guru.

The people of Lanka broke into chants, hailing their new monarch with cries of “Jai Vibhishan!” even as they mourned the fallen Dashanan. The golden chariot was seized by royal guards and drawn towards the palace, its wheels grinding across stone as it carried the body of the Rakshasa-king away. A stream of citizens followed, praising the dead and honouring the living, offering flowers, chants, and tears in equal measure.

Gradually, the tumult faded, leaving the three disciples behind in the hush of approaching night.

Lanka's lamps began to flicker to life. Workers moved through the avenues, placing oil wicks into carved lanterns. Courtyards gleamed in pools of gold. Some towers still glittered with the grandeur of Dashanan's age; others bore dark scars—the charred remnants of Hanuman's fire, when his flaming tail had scorched pride into ruin.



Far from the palace, in a secluded ashram nestled at the southern base of Trikuta Parvata, Pashupati summoned his brothers-in-dharma. The chamber was aglow with oil lamps. Scrolls of palm leaf lined the walls, alongside hanging herbs and stone tablets etched with ancient formulas.

Upon a table, he unfurled a rough map of the palace grounds and the hills beyond.

“We will burn Shayana Sundari,” he said. “A rare mix of sleep-herbs. Its fumes will send even the sharpest guards into a dreamless stupor.”

He looked to his companions.

“Once the palace slumbers, we enter the crypts and retrieve our Guru's body. We take him to a cave north of Trikuta—abandoned, forgotten, hidden by an ancient forest. There, the restoration begins.”

Veerabaahu stepped back, his face stricken. “You said we would revive our Guru, not steal him away like grave robbers. If this is your path, I can't follow it.”

Pashupati placed a steady hand on his friend's shoulder—gentle, but firm.

“I understand. But we are not robbing the dead—we are protecting the living by preserving his knowledge. And if we wait until dawn, there will be nothing left but ash.”

He paused, voice softening.

“Trust me, Veerabaahu. I do not want to possess him. I want to preserve him. I want to bring him back—not as a tale, but as Dashanan himself.”

The fire in the chamber crackled softly. Kanaka and Veerabaahu exchanged looks. Doubt clouded their eyes—but beneath it, something else lingered: faith.

Pashupati was no ordinary healer. He had learned from Dashanan himself. If there was even the slimmest thread of possibility, he was the one who could pull it.

There was no third choice.

The fire of antyeshti... or the spark of resurrection...

And so they agreed.

The funeral pyre would not take their Guru.

Not yet.

Pashupati moved with deliberate reverence. Every vial, scroll, and herb he packed was handled with care—like an offering, not a tool. He gathered tinctures distilled from ancient roots, oils steeped in moon petals, powders of rare minerals, and surgical instruments forged in Veerabaahu’s workshop. These were not mere medicines. They were relics of ancient science and sacred lore, entrusted now to a singular, desperate mission.

He turned to his companions.

“Prepare two wagons,” he said. “One for the equipment... the other for our Guru.”

Veerabaahu and Kanaka nodded silently and vanished into the night's silence. The first wagon, weighed with crates of sealed jars, scrolls, heating stones, and obsidian blades, was stationed outside the barracks, its contents hidden beneath coarse canvas. Lanka's once-mighty army was now broken—many warriors dead, others wounded beyond return. The barracks were quiet, but not from sleep. It was the silence of absence.

Within those hollow walls, the disciples changed into the armour of the royal guard: deep-blue breastplates edged with gold, crested helmets, and crimson sashes. Only the royal guard and Vibhishan himself were permitted entry to the Ananta Garbha—the inner sanctum where Dashanan's body lay in state.

Before departing, each of them took a glass ampoule from Pashupati. The liquid shimmered under the moonlight like molten pearl.

“Drink this,” he said. “It will shield us from the Shayana Sundari's spell.”

The mixture burned their throats, but it chilled their blood and cleared their minds. Their limbs felt sharper. Their will, firmer.

The walk from the barracks to the palace was short—but each step thudded like a war drum. The wind carried with it the scent of sandalwood and distant ash. Shadows stretched along ruined courtyards as if even the city held its breath.

They entered through a side corridor, skirting the sea-facing windows, and climbed to the palace's highest floor. There, Pashupati unpacked sachets of Shayana Sundari—a potent blend of dreamroot, datura, and powdered lotus mist. He burned them in bronze censers, placing them

beside windows that opened to the inland breeze, where the air was steady and fresh.

And then they waited.

Five breaths. Ten. Twenty.

Then it began.

Thud. Clank. Clatter.

Weapons fell from limp hands. Armour clattered as bodies collapsed. One by one, the palace guards surrendered to slumber.

Shayana Sundari did its job as always.

Now, the real task began.



Descending quickly, they reached the Ananta Garbha. The chamber's entrance loomed like the maw of a sleeping god—an enormous doorway plated in hammered gold, carved with cosmic mandalas and encrusted with Navaratna gems, each stone aligned to tantric precision.

The door was nearly immovable. All three had to press together, muscles straining, as groaning metal echoed down the marble halls.

Inside, the guards lay in perfect rows—fallen like temple statues shattered by time. The silence within was sacred.

And in the centre, bathed in the glow of oil torches, lay the one they had come for.

Dashanan.

Pashupati broke. He rushed forward, falling to his knees. Tears streaked down his face as he clutched his Guru's feet, trembling. He bowed low, his forehead pressed against the warrior's flesh.

"Bless us," he whispered. "Be with us... guide our hands."

Kanaka and Veerabaahu moved to his side, each placing a hand on his shoulders.

"Pashupati," one said softly, "I understand your heart. But now is not the time for emotion. We must hold fast to the mission."

Pashupati rose slowly, his expression hardening, and turned to examine the bier that held Dashanan. It was a traditional, cooling board—crafted of polished teak, bound with bamboo cord, and supported by four long carrying shafts. The base rested upon a platform of inlaid diamonds, glowing faintly in reverence and wealth.

Dashanan was majestic even in death. His body was wrapped in silken funeral robes, his chest adorned with garlands of fresh flowers. The scent of sandalwood still lingered around him, untouched by decay.

But then the moment of reckoning came.

Dashanan, towering at over fifteen feet, broad and battle-scarred, was a titan in every sense. His bier was too heavy for three men to lift. It had been built for at least four carriers—six, ideally.

They exchanged a glance.

The perfect plan had one fatal flaw.

They tried lifting the board—but it didn't budge. The weight of Dashanan's colossal form was simply too immense.

Pashupati rushed to a window. A thin band of orange crept across the eastern sky. Dawn was near. Time, like sand from a shattered hourglass, was bleeding out.

“We don’t have long,” he said, turning back to the others, voice taut with urgency.

Panic flashed across Veerabaahu’s face. “If we’re caught now—if we fail here—Vibhishan won’t hesitate. We’ll be executed. And Dashanan... truly lost.”

From the pouch tied at his waist, Pashupati pulled a red-glass ampoule, its contents glowing like molten fire. The liquid pulsed in rhythm with his breath.

“This is Prabhanjan,” he said. “A formula I developed. It’ll give me strength beyond mortal limits—but only for a few minutes. After that, I’ll collapse.”

Kanaka’s eyes widened. “This is madness.”

But before either of them could protest, Pashupati bit into the ampoule—glass and all—and swallowed it.

His body shuddered violently. Breath came in rapid gasps. His chest rose and fell like a war drum. His heartbeat grew thunderous—echoing unnaturally, like gongs in a sanctum.

Veins bulged across his arms. Muscles swelled like storm clouds.

He stepped to the bier, grasped the front shafts of the board, and heaved.

The polished wood groaned beneath Dashanan’s immense weight, rising an inch—then sagging again.

Still—not enough.

Then Kanaka and Veerabaahu rushed forward. Without a word, they grabbed the rear shafts and lifted him.

With a shared roar, the three disciples raised their master—not in resurrection, but in rebellion.

Together, they bore him across the chamber, down long halls heavy with incense and silence. Their sandals slapped against the marble floors, each step echoing like ghosts fleeing fate.

They burst into the night.

The wagon waited near the barracks, its horses stamping anxiously. With care, they laid Dashanan onto the platform, securing the silk over his form. Kanaka and Veerabaahu took the reins, snapping them hard.

The wagon lurched forward.

Inside, Pashupati collapsed beside his master, drenched in sweat, limbs trembling from exertion. He looked up at the others, a faint, satisfied smile flickering across his lips.

“Brothers,” he whispered.

Then he fell unconscious.

The wagons tore through the forest roads, swallowed by jungle and night.



At dawn, the drums began.

Booming alarms thundered from Lanka's palace towers. Guards scrambled, bells rang. The city had awoken to the unthinkable: Dashanan's body was gone.

In the wagon, bathed in golden morning light, Pashupati stirred. He opened his eyes slowly, sat upright, and looked towards the shadow of the cave ahead—hidden beyond Trikuta Parvata.

He turned back once more. The city of Lanka, distant now, shimmered on the horizon. It looked like a memory.

He sighed. "He knows. Vibhishan knows."

His voice was barely a breath.

"The body is gone. We're the suspects. We have no time left."

He turned again to his Guru.

Dashanan's face, still and mighty, stared towards the cave. The beard thick. The scars deep. It was the face of a king carved by war, by devotion, by time itself.

And then, once more, Pashupati fainted.

The wagons reached the mouth of the cave.

Veerabaahu and Kanaka leapt down without hesitation. They unloaded crates, arranged herbs, unrolled scrolls, connected valves, and lit the burners—transforming the cave into a makeshift medical chamber. Every motion was precise, executed from memory, following Pashupati's instructions to the letter.

Then they approached the wagon, where Pashupati still lay motionless.

They looked at each other.

“He called us brothers,” one said.

The other nodded. “We are brothers.”

Together, they placed their hands on Pashupati’s shoulder.
And waited.

Pashupati stirred.

Golden light filtered through the cave mouth, casting a warm glow over the stone. The soft rustle of leaves and distant bird calls greeted his return to consciousness. His body still ached from the strain of Prabhanjan, but within him, a flicker of hope endured.

He looked around.

The equipment had been unpacked and arranged with precision. Pipes, scrolls, tinctures—all set in place exactly as he would have done himself. Kanaka and Veerabaahu lay nearby, asleep on the cold floor, their forms curled beside flickering lanterns and open crates.

Pashupati smiled—humbled by their faith.

He reached out and gently woke them.

They stirred, eyes heavy with exhaustion.

“You did well,” he whispered. “Thank you... for believing in me.”

They offered quiet nods. Without a word, they rose and unlatched the wooden canopy that shaded the wagon, exposing the body of their fallen master to the light.

Pashupati stepped forward, heart tight in his chest, and gazed upon Dashanan.

He was ready to face the wound—the mythic gash carved by Lord Ram’s divine arrow. A deathblow that had felled a titan.

But as his eyes traced Dashanan’s massive torso... there was nothing. No wound. Not even a scar.

His brows drew together. He leaned in closer, hands trembling, scanning every inch—from abdomen to chest, legs to throat. Nothing.

Veerabaahu watched him closely. “Is something wrong?”

Pashupati didn’t answer. His eyes widened in silent panic as he re-examined the body—again and again—desperate for some sign, any mark, of the fatal blow. But there was none.

“This... this cannot be,” he whispered.

Kanaka stepped closer, peering down at the body of the warrior they had once called indestructible. Even without formal training, they could see it. This wasn’t normal. This wasn’t natural.

“An arrow must leave a mark,” Kanaka said. “And there’s none.”

Pashupati pressed trembling fingers to Dashanan’s wrist. Then his neck. Then his heart.

No pulse.

No warmth.

Only silence.

Something was deeply, horribly wrong. And for the first time since their escape, Pashupati felt fear—not of Vibhishan, nor of the law, but of his own brothers. He had promised them a miracle. Revival. A second life. But now, standing before the untouched body, he realised he may have promised the impossible.



His mouth went dry. Sweat clung to his brow. His hands shook.

One of the brothers asked, gently, hopefully: “Can you revive him? There’s no damage—that’s a good sign, isn’t it?”

Pashupati said nothing. His lips parted. No words came.

Two paths opened before him:

He could speak the truth—that he didn’t know what had happened, that there was no explanation, no plan.

Or he could lie.

And if he lied... he would need to kill them.

His thoughts spiralled. “Would they forgive me? Would they turn me over to Vibhishan? Would they kill me themselves?”

Every path ended in blood.

And so, he reached into his waist pouch.

His fingers touched the cool glass of a teardrop-shaped ampoule—Neela Sarpa, a neurotoxin refined from the fangs of shadow serpents. Silence in seconds. Death in minutes.

He formed the lie in his mind.

He would say he needed a final ingredient—one that had been left behind in his lab outside the city. He’d send one of them. While the other stayed behind, he’d use the poison. One lie. Two deaths.

But before he could speak, the two stepped forward. Suspicion darkened their faces.

“Pashupati,” Veerabaahu said, voice firm. “Tell us. Can you revive Dashanan?”

He turned towards them. Sweat glistened on his skin. His breath hitched. The lie perched at the tip of his tongue—

—and then, it struck him.

A memory.

Dashanan was no ordinary mortal.

The sages had whispered it. The scrolls had hinted at it.

The king possessed the power to restore his own body—not with herbs or science, but by sheer will.

Pashupati gasped.

Could it be?

Had Dashanan healed himself in the instant of death?

Is that why there was no wound?

His knees buckled—not in fear, but in awe.

And in that moment of stunned realisation, a shadow swept over them.

An eagle—massive, golden-feathered, and silent—descended from the sky, its wings slicing the air with divine grace. It landed gently upon Dashanan’s chest.

The three men froze.

Tied to the eagle’s leg was a silken scroll, sealed in crimson wax.

A sign.

A warning.

Or perhaps... a divine command.

Pashupati stepped forward.

With hands of reverent caution, he reached for the eagle. The creature remained still, golden feathers glowing in the filtered cave light. Tied to its leg was a silken scroll—worn by wind, yet still firm and crisp.

He untied it gently and unfolded the message.

Kanaka and Veerabaahu approached, their eyes narrowing in disbelief.

“How is this possible?” Kanaka whispered. “We never told anyone where we were going...”

Pashupati offered no reply. He inhaled deeply and began to read aloud.

“I know that you are planning to revive Dashanan.

I want the same. But it is not that simple.

You can only bring someone back to life if they have suffered mortal wounds.

Dashanan was not slain by an ordinary man—he was killed by Lord Ram, the perfect man, born to uphold dharma.

His death was not just an event; it was a turning point etched into the very fabric of time.

It has happened before. It will happen again.

And so, his body now lies outside the natural order. It can no longer sustain life. It has lost the ability to respond to his Jeeva Tatva.

Your medicines will not work. Your methods will fail.

But all is not lost.

There is still a path.

Extract his Jeeva Tatva from this vessel,
and find—or forge—a mortal form that is capable of
receiving it.
When Jeeva Tatva finds a worthy host, Dashanan will
live again.
Not as he was, but as he must become.”



The torchlight flickered over the parchment as silence settled in. The message rang like prophecy.

Pashupati’s voice remained steady, but tension buzzed between the brothers. Their minds whirled with implications.

“I came to the same conclusion,” Pashupati said quickly, seizing the moment. “After examining the body, I knew revival in this form was impossible. His Jeeva Tatva must be rejoined with a vessel it can inhabit. That is our path. And we’ll need technology capable of guiding that transition.”

Before another word could be spoken, the eagle spread its wings and leapt—alighting softly on Pashupati’s shoulder.

Beneath one wing was a second scroll—tighter, harder to spot.

He retrieved it.
Another message.

“Vibhishan’s army is looking for you.
Save your lives.
Dashanan must live again.”

Pashupati’s jaw tightened.
“They’re coming. We have no time.”

Who had sent the messages remained unknown—but their urgency rang with unmistakable truth.

The brothers said nothing.
They simply nodded.

Pashupati sprang into action. His healer's mind reawakened, sharp and commanding.

“Kanaka—attach a fine steel needle to the end of the collection tube. Veerabaahu—connect the other end to the regulator on the Pranic Extractor. Now.”

They moved swiftly, without hesitation.

Pashupati crushed herbs and rare minerals, blending them with oils to create a blue, shimmering elixir. He turned to them.

“This will preserve his body for decades—centuries, if needed. Apply it thoroughly on every inch.”

The two men worked in silence, coating Dashanan's immense form with the mixture until his skin glistened like wet stone beneath the moonlight.

Then came the most delicate step.

Pashupati knelt beside Dashanan and gently slid the needle into the spinal cord—the deepest anchor of the Jeeva Tatva.

The extractor came alive with a low hum. The crystal container began to glow faintly—then darkened—as a viscous, black-gold substance spiralled into its heart.

Dashanan's Jeeva Tatva.

Pashupati did not blink. His hands moved with sacred precision, eyes gleaming with awe.

Following the scroll's instructions, he added powdered minerals, concentrated elixirs, and purified oils to the container. Once it was sealed and Dashanan's body fully preserved, they stood in solemn silence.

It was time to hide them.

They journeyed deeper into the cavern, carrying the crystal first. Through winding corridors and narrow stone paths, they discovered a crevasse—tight, perfect, as if nature itself had been waiting for this offering.

They placed the crystal inside and rolled a boulder over the gap, sealing it from view.

Then they returned, steering the wagon through the cave's deeper veins. Through winding passageways and stifling darkness, they advanced more than one-tenth of a yojana.

At last, they reached a chamber—circular, domed, silent.

There, at the heart of stone and shadow, they unhitched the horses, closed the wagon, and left Dashanan's body behind. Draped in silk, preserved in stillness.

A tomb.

Or perhaps... a cradle.

They walked away from Dashanan's resting place in silence.

No words. No glances. Only footsteps echoing through the cave's winding stone halls, slow and solemn, like the toll of unseen mourning bells.

When they returned to the main chamber—where scrolls lay curled, and instruments waited in quiet anticipation—it was Pashupati who finally broke the silence.

“Who do you think sent the message?” he asked.

One of the brothers replied without hesitation.

“There's only one person who ever wanted Dashanan to live more than we did.”

They all fell still.

The name was not spoken, but it didn't need to be. They had always known. They had never forgotten.

Before doubt could take root, Pashupati stepped forward and spoke again—his voice stripped of pride, softened by remorse.

“We have two problems. First, neither our Guru nor I ever discovered how to reunite Jeeva Tatva with a mortal body. And second—perhaps the greater challenge—is finding a body capable of containing Dashanan's Jeeva Tatva. I'm sorry. For what I've done. For leading you into danger. For giving you false hope.”

His words were low and sincere. There was no performance this time, only truth.

For a moment, the brothers said nothing. Then, as if moved by a single, silent impulse, they stepped forward and placed their hands on his back—firm and forgiving.

Veerabaahu met his eyes.

“Then tell us, Pashupati... what must we do to bring him back? You are the greatest healer in Lanka. However difficult it may be—trust us—we’ll do it.”

Pashupati looked away.

The truth was: he didn’t know. The instructions in the scroll—the fusion of technology it hinted at—were far beyond his understanding. Beyond Lanka.

And yet... he wouldn’t give up.

Not now.

Pashupati had travelled far in pursuit of knowledge. In his travels, he had witnessed many revival techniques—some ancient, some scientific, and some that could only be described as miracles.

He was familiar with every method known in Lanka, and none could bring their master back. What was lacking was not knowledge, but the will to defy finality.

But now, he had an idea.

A possibility. A hope.

He placed a hand on each of their shoulders.

“There are other kingdoms beyond our shores,” he said. “Some lost to time. Some ruled by wisdom instead of war. Somewhere—perhaps in Bharatakhanda, perhaps across the oceans—someone has discovered how to reunite Jeeva Tatva with a living form.”

His voice strengthened as he spoke. Conviction followed like a rising tide.

“Let us search for them. Let us journey across the world. And if we do not find the answer in this lifetime, then let our descendants carry the torch. Let this be our legacy—generation after generation, devoted to one purpose: to bring our Guru back.”



“Let us swear it now.” And they did.

Three brothers.

Bound not by blood, but by vow.

They swore beneath the silence of gods, the sound of the ocean, and forgotten stars that they would never rest until Dashanan lived again.

They packed their scrolls, their instruments, and the few remaining potions into the wagon and emerged from the cave. The forest light was soft, dappled with the sounds of birdsong.

They travelled to the northern shore of Lanka, where the port cities still clung to life—surviving through trade, barter, and prayer.

There, they sold everything. Every tincture, every blade, every scroll not vital to their quest. In return, they secured two ships and a loyal crew.

Pashupati, still burdened by guilt like a wound that would not close, made his decision.

“You two,” he said to his brothers, “will sail to the faraway kingdoms—those beyond the oceans. Search their temples, their labs, their ruins. Learn everything you can.”

“And you?” Veerabaahu asked.

“I will walk north,” Pashupati said. “Across the Vanara bridge. Across Bharatakhanda. I will climb the Himalayas and seek the Rishis, the yogis, the ancient sages. If knowledge of the soul’s return exists anywhere, it lives in the mountains.”

They stood together at the water’s edge.

The ships were ready. The sky, painted in bruised hues of sunset.

“Every five years,” Pashupati said, “we meet in Ayodhya. Share what we’ve learned. Build what we can. And never abandon our oath.”

They embraced—long and wordless.

Then came the parting.

Pashupati stood on the shore, watching as his brothers boarded the ships. He had never left Lanka before. The island was his whole world. His whole past.

The sails caught the wind. The ships glided towards the horizon—first ships, then specks, then grains of white against the setting sun. And then—nothing.

He turned north.

And began to walk.

Towards the bridge.

Towards Bharatakhanda.

Towards the mountains.

Towards the impossible.

Towards the vow that would outlive the **Anveshi**.