

The River of Time

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Introduction

Across the flow of ages, the river of time winds through worlds seen and unseen, carrying stories of sages, kings, and seekers alike. Its current glimmers with dawn's promise and dusk's reflection, urging every soul to embrace dharma's guiding light.

This novella unfolds in thirty-six chapters, each a portrait of a rishi whose wisdom shaped destiny's course. From Vashishtha beneath the ancient banyan to Patanjali's dawn-lit yoga, every episode reveals a facet of cosmic unity.

As you navigate the kalchakra(Wheel of time), observe how triumph and trial, devotion and duty, weave together in an unbroken tapestry. Let each chapter's lamp illuminate your own passage through time's ceaseless stream.

May these voices of the Rishis stir your heart to see beyond life's surface currents, and discover the stillness that lies beneath.

Chapter 1: Vashishtha

Vashishtha sat beneath the ancient banyan, its roots sprawling like the gnarled veins of the earth itself, a living testament to ages past. The air, thick and cool before the dawn, carried the scent of damp soil and the sweet, heady perfume of night-blooming jasmine clinging to the ashram walls. His heart, a steady drum in the vast silence, was attuned to a rhythm beyond the rustling of the banyan's heart-shaped leaves. It was the rhythm of the cosmos, a silent hum of existence, a sound he had learned to hear in the

space between his own breaths. As his mind stilled, the world outside faded, and the river of time unfurled before his inner eye—a vast, ceaseless flow born in the shadowed, unknowable peaks of eternity, its waters glinting with the captured light of countless souls.

The river shimmered, catching the day's first blush. A tender, saffron light bled across the horizon, painting the eastern sky in hues of rose and liquid gold. The water's surface, a flawless mirror, reflected these fleeting moments of beauty, shattering and reforming them with every gentle ripple. Vashishtha, guru to the illustrious Ikshvaku lineage, gazed upon it, his eyes, ancient as the stars, tracing the currents that carried the destinies of kings and sages alike. He saw the shimmering, golden thread of his own life woven into this grand tapestry, a thread of unwavering duty. He had stood as a pillar of dharma, a beacon of unwavering light, when the great King Dasharatha, his heart heavy with a terrible choice, had faltered. His counsel, a steady hand upon the tiller of a drifting boat, had guided the kingdom through the ensuing storm. Later, with the same patient care a gardener tends his most precious saplings, he had nurtured Rama and his brothers. In the fertile ground of their young minds, he had planted the seeds of righteousness, seeds that would one day bloom into magnificent, resilient trees amidst the harsh wilderness of exile and the bloody fields of war. To Vashishtha, the river was no mere passage of days and years; it was a teacher, its ceaseless motion a silent sermon, revealing profound truths to those with the wisdom to listen. He could hear its song, a low, resonant hum that spoke of creation and destruction, of joy and sorrow, of the eternal dance of life and death.

"Time," he murmured, his voice a low vibration that blended seamlessly with the water's gentle song, "is the great sculptor of

souls." The sound was like the drone of a tanpura, a single, unwavering note that held the universe in its embrace. "It carves paths of joy and sorrow, etching deep lines of laughter and grief upon the heart. Yet, beneath its turbulent waves, in the silent depths where the light of the sun cannot reach, lies an unchanging stillness." He recalled Rama's banishment, a single ripple of anguish that had emanated from the palace in Ayodhya, spreading outwards, growing into a torrent of purpose that would cleanse the world. What had seemed a cruel, arbitrary twist of fate, a senseless act of injustice, had, in the river's grand design, guided the prince toward Ravana's end and the restoration of cosmic order. A faint smile touched Vashishtha's lips, a flicker of light in the depths of his serene eyes. He knew that his role was not to halt the river, to build dams against its inexorable flow, but to illuminate its course, to be a lighthouse on a treacherous shore, guiding those who navigated its depths.

In his mind's eye, he saw himself as a ferryman of sorts, a timeless figure standing on the banks of eternity. He did not steer the boats of others, for each soul must navigate its own journey. Instead, he offered a lamp, its flame kindled with the oil of wisdom, to light their way through the darkness. The river, he knew, flowed from Brahman's boundless serenity, a source beyond all comprehension, a silent, formless void from which all existence sprang. And it spilled, ultimately, into a vast, luminous ocean where all divisions, all names and forms, melted away, returning to the oneness from which they came. Rama's journey—his steadfast devotion to duty, his quiet, unshakeable strength, his unwavering compassion—was but one vessel upon this eternal tide. Yet, its wake, a shimmering trail of a golden light, touched shores far beyond the gilded palaces of Ayodhya, inspiring generations yet unborn.

Vashishtha's thoughts drifted, like a lotus petal on the water, to Kamadhenu, the celestial cow of abundance, a gift of divine grace that had once graced his ashram. The memory brought with it the scent of fresh milk and sacred smoke, the sound of her gentle lowing a balm to the soul. Like the river, she symbolized the sustenance that lies beneath life's flux, a reminder that even in the midst of turmoil, in the heart of the fiercest storm, there was a wellspring of resilience, a boundless source of strength. He had taught Rama to draw from this inner depth, to face the rapids of life with a heart anchored in truth, a mind as unshakeable as the mighty Himalayas.

The sun climbed higher, a blazing orb of gold in the cerulean sky, casting a million glittering threads across the water. The air grew warmer, alive with the buzz of bees and the distant, melodic chime of temple bells from the ashram. Vashishtha closed his eyes, his breath, slow and even, merging with the river's ancient rhythm. He became the flow itself—past, present, and future entwined in a single, luminous moment of being. The river stretched onward, its waters whispering secrets of other rishis, other lessons, other ages yet to come. And Vashishtha knew, with a certainty that resonated in the very core of his being, that this was but the beginning of his journey through time's sacred stream. In that profound stillness, he felt a connection to the eternal, a unity with the ceaseless current that carried all existence forward. He was no longer merely the sage beneath the banyan, a solitary figure watching the world go by. He was a part of the river's endless song, his wisdom a ripple destined to touch the shores of eternity.