

The Uncertified

© Chinmoy Mukherjee 2026-2046. No part of this document may be used without explicit written permission from the author.

This is a work of fiction. All characters, events, and places are entirely fictional, and any resemblance to actual persons, living or dead, or actual events is purely coincidental.

The system reduced them to zero. They reduced the system to ash.

The Uncertified

Introduction

Chapter 1: The Revocation

Chapter 2: The Road to Prayagraj

Chapter 3: Arrival at the Certification Kumbh Mela

Chapter 4: The Capped Soul

Chapter 5: Shadows of the Elite

Chapter 6: The Convergence of Fates

Chapter 7: Whispers of Rebellion

Chapter 8: Return to the Eternal City

Chapter 9: Flames of Awakening

Chapter 10: The Echoes of the Ash

Chapter 11: The Analog Resistance

Chapter 12: The Final Pulse

Conclusion

Introduction

Long before the burning of the ancient manuscripts and the shattering of the holographic sky, the world did not end with a sudden, deafening explosion, but with a quiet, insidious hum. The transition from flesh and spirit to silicon and data was a slow, agonizing suffocation of the senses. India, a land historically defined by its overwhelming, vibrant chaos, was systematically sterilized. The intoxicating, chaotic scents of crushed marigolds, roasting

cumin, and the damp, earthy petrichor of the monsoon rains were slowly masked by the sharp, metallic tang of ionized air and the bitter, chemical smell of hyper-cooling fluids pumping through vast, subterranean server farms. The warm, golden-amber sunlight that once bathed the ancient sandstone temples was overpowered by the harsh, relentless glare of cyan and magenta neon, casting long, unnatural, bruised-purple shadows across the cobblestones.

At the heart of this silent coup was a deeply embedded societal algorithm officially designated as The Uncertified. Initially sold to the desperate populace as an infallible, perfectly objective system to eradicate poverty and corruption, it quickly mutated into a digital tyrant. The Protocol did not just monitor; it quantified the unquantifiable. The rhythmic, bass-heavy sounds of temple bells and the chaotic, overlapping symphony of human street vendors were replaced by the maddening, high-pitched, synchronized electronic chimes of millions of wristbands updating their owners' societal worth in real-time. Every breath, every transaction, every spoken word was fed into the gaping, cold maw of the Protocol, regurgitated as a glowing, inescapable number.

The organic, messy beauty of human existence was compressed into a suffocating, frictionless existence. People stopped looking into each other's eyes—which were now permanently reflecting the icy blue light of augmented reality interfaces—and began looking only at the numbers hovering in the air. The scent of human empathy was replaced by the cold, sterile smell of compliance. But the architects of The Karma Protocol had made one fatal, mathematically unprovable error: they believed that by extinguishing the physical evidence of the past, they could permanently rewrite the human soul. They forgot that fire, once sparked, possesses a chaotic, brilliantly colored will of its own, and

that the loudest sound in the universe is the sudden, unified roar of the oppressed remembering their true name.

Chapter 1: The Revocation

In the ancient, labyrinthine city of Varanasi, where the sluggish, silt-heavy waters of the Ganges whispered millennia of secrets to the bruised-purple dawn, Chunmun Sharma lived a life inextricably steeped in the rhythmic breathing of eternity. At seventy-two, his body was a fragile vessel, bent and worn like the spine of an over-read, beloved book, but his mind remained an impenetrable fortress of Sanskrit verses. Each phoneme he mentally recited was a guardian of forgotten wisdom, vibrating with the imagined resonance of temple gongs. His modest home, tucked away in the damp, claustrophobic alleys near the Dashashwamedh Ghat, smelled perpetually of roasted cumin, wet river mud, and the sharp, piney tang of decaying marigolds. It housed not just his meager belongings, but the last physical copy of the Rig Veda.

The manuscript was a breathtaking artifact—a thick stack of brittle palm leaves etched by devout hands long turned to dust. When Chunmun unbound the faded, saffron-dyed silk that protected it, the scent of ancient camphor and dry, sun-baked earth filled the tiny room. It was more than a relic; it was the breath of the ancients, a tangible, physical link to the divine hymns that had shaped civilizations. The ink was a rusted iron-gall brown, catching the flickering, warm amber glow of his brass oil lamp, casting dancing, jagged shadows against the peeling lime-wash of his bedroom walls.

The world outside his window had changed, evolving into a cacophony of blinding light and synthetic sound. India, in its relentless, algorithmic march toward absolute digitization, had

decreed that all cultural artifacts must be scanned, uploaded, and preserved in the pristine, sterile vaults of the national cloud. "For the greater good," the officials proclaimed. Their synthesized, mathematically pitch-perfect voices echoed constantly through colossal holographic billboards that bled harsh cyan and magenta light into the otherwise velvet-black night sky. The hum of their cooling fans was a constant, low-frequency vibration that rattled the loose tea cups in Chunmun's kitchen.

Chunmun had resisted. "The Vedas are not cold data," he had argued in his quivering, bass-heavy baritone during the mandatory, brightly-lit tribunal hearing, where the air smelled artificially of ozone and lemon-scented floor cleaner. "They are *prana*—living life force. To digitize is to dilute, to strip away the sacred acoustic vibrations inscribed by wood-fire and human devotion." His pleas fell on deaf ears. The Certification Board, a faceless entity powered by quantum algorithms and overseen by bureaucrats in towers chilled to a precise, goosebump-inducing eighteen degrees Celsius, labeled him a hoarder. "Cultural Hoarding," the verdict read, stamped in a blinding, flashing crimson digital ink that seared itself onto his retinas.

The revocation came swiftly. One overwhelmingly humid afternoon, as the bruised, charcoal-grey monsoon clouds gathered like uninvited guests and the air grew thick with the metallic scent of impending rain, enforcers arrived at his heavy teakwood door. They were young, their heavy boots thudding rhythmically against the cobblestones. They were clad in crisp, matte-black uniforms emblazoned with the national emblem—a lotus intertwined with glowing blue circuit boards that pulsed in time with their heartbeats.

Chunmun stood defiant, the manuscript clutched tightly to his chest like a newborn child, the rough edges of the palm leaves biting into

his thin forearms. "You cannot take this," he rasped, his eyes blazing with the reflected, golden fire of a thousand imagined *yajnas*. They stepped forward to violently seize the text, but Chunmun, fueled by a sudden, desperate surge of adrenaline, slammed his heavy teakwood door in their faces and bolted out the rear window into the labyrinthine alleys. His own certificate—the glowing, emerald-green digital wristband that quantified his societal worth—was revoked on the spot. A holographic projection snapped to life between them with a shrill, piercing electronic whine. He watched in visceral horror as the projection displayed his score plummeting from a respectable, warm-yellow 78—earned through decades of quiet scholarly contributions—to a harsh, strobing blood-red zero. Untouchable. Outcast.

Word spread through the humid, incense-choked ghats like acrid smoke from the nearby funeral pyres. The air itself seemed to sour. Neighbors who once sought his blessings now averted their eyes, their own wristbands flashing warning shades of amber as they hurried past. Shopkeepers refused him service, the optical scanners on their stalls emitting flat, dissonant buzzes at his uncertified status. "Go away, old man," they muttered beneath the hiss of frying samosas and the clatter of steel plates, terrified of the algorithmic contamination of their own scores.

Chunmun, once a revered Brahmin whose arrival was heralded by respectful silence, became a ghost in his own city. He packed a small, rough-spun burlap bundle—some dry rice that smelled of dust, a dented aluminum water flask, and the forbidden manuscript wrapped securely in its faded silk—and set out into the bruising twilight. The Ganges lapped rhythmically at the stone steps, a wet, slapping sound, as if mourning his departure. The river's surface