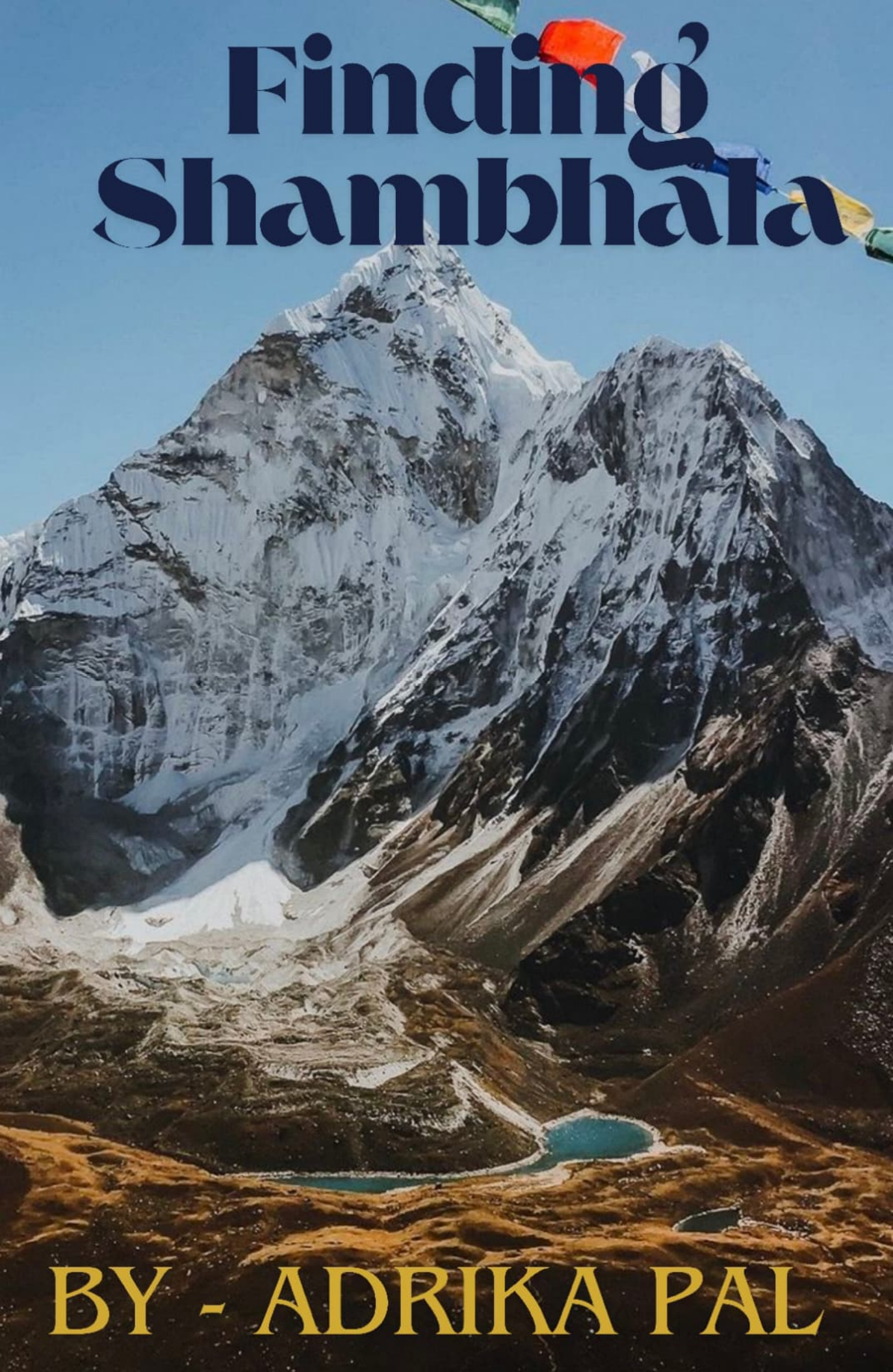




Finding Shambhala

BY - ADRIKA PAL

CHAPTER FIVE: THE FIRST WHISPER

That night, Aarya sat alone in her room, the manuscript open before her, glowing gently under the soft light of an oil lamp. The verses pulsed faintly, as if they were breathing—alive, aware of her presence. The world outside was asleep, but inside her, something had awakened.

The first line on the page echoed over and over in her mind:

“The path is not made by steps, but by shedding what is not you.”

She didn’t fully understand it—yet it stirred something within her. Like a door inside her soul had opened just a crack, letting in light she had never seen before.

She ran her fingers along the glowing text, the ink warm to the touch. She wanted to ask the manuscript for answers, for clarity—but she already knew this wasn’t a book of shortcuts. It was a teacher, and she had to become the kind of student who could truly listen.



The next morning, after breakfast, she found her grandfather sitting on the terrace with a cup of chai, watching the sunrise spill over the ghats.

“Dadu,” she said, quietly approaching, “did you ever... see anything strange while trying to decode the verses?”

He didn’t look at her, just sipped his chai. “Strange? Always. But not outside me—within.”

He finally turned to her. “Aarya, the manuscript won’t lead you with directions. It will lead you through transformation. It will test what you believe, what you fear, and what you hold on to. Only when you let go... will you understand.”

Aarya sat beside him, the silence between them like a sacred chant.

Later that day, she returned to her room, closed the door, and focused on the next page.

Another verse had appeared—this time darker, deeper:

“He who clings to the world walks blind in the sacred land.”

Suddenly, the room felt colder. Her vision blurred, and for a brief second, she wasn't in her room anymore.

She stood at the edge of a vast, snow-covered valley. Wind howled around her. A figure stood far in the distance, cloaked, faceless, holding something glowing in its hand.

Aarya blinked—and the vision vanished. She was back.

Breathing heavily, she realized what the manuscript had done.

It had begun to show her fragments of the journey ahead. Not in ink, but in visions.

This was not a book of maps. This was a mirror of the soul.

And her soul was beginning to remember a path she had never walked—but was born to follow.



CHAPTER SIX: THE INNER AWAKENING

The morning sun filtered through the ancient wooden windows, casting golden light across the pages of the manuscript. Aarya sat still, her fingers brushing its edge, but her mind was elsewhere—back in that cold, blinding valley. The cloaked figure. The glow. The wind that felt like it had whispered her name.

She needed answers.

She found her grandfather in the courtyard, feeding the birds like every morning. Without hesitation, she sat beside him and whispered, “Dadu... I saw something. Last night. A vision. I was in the snow, somewhere far. Someone was standing in the distance. They were holding something... I think it was meant for me.”

He didn't seem surprised. He simply nodded and looked at her with a calm that came from years of walking beside the unknown.

“The manuscript doesn't just speak in ink,” he said softly. “It speaks in symbols. In dreams. In what you feel, not just what you see. That

vision wasn't just a dream, Aarya. It was your first calling."

She looked at him, her voice trembling. "But how do I understand it? How do I prepare for what's ahead?"

Her grandfather's eyes softened. He reached into a small drawer in the wooden temple box and pulled out three books—one worn with time, one wrapped in silk, and the third sealed in a crimson thread.

"The Bhagavad Gita," he said, placing the first in her hand. "To teach you about inner war and how to silence your mind."

"The Kalki Puran," he continued, handing her the second. "To understand the prophecy, the purpose of Kalki's birth, and what must end before the beginning can arrive."

"And the third," he said, placing the final book in her lap, "is a journal. Your journal. Because the greatest scripture you'll ever carry is the one that grows within you."

Aarya held the books as if they were sacred tools.

“You must begin to meditate,” her grandfather added. “Not just to calm yourself—but to awaken. You’ll find that the land you seek outside must first be found within. Only then... will Shambhala open its doors.”

That night, for the first time, Aarya sat before the sacred fire, eyes closed, breath steady. The verses of the Gita echoed in her mind, soft but piercing.

“You have the right to act, but not to the fruits of action. Act for duty, not for reward.”

As the flames danced, her thoughts began to still. The outer world dimmed. And in that space between silence and breath, a voice called her name—not out loud, but from within.

She opened her eyes.

The manuscript’s pages had shifted again. A new line shimmered:

“Before the path clears before you, it must first clear within you.”

And so it began.



Over the days that followed, Aarya changed. Not in ways the world could measure—but in ways that only the soul could sense. She grew calmer. Sharper. Stronger. Not just in body, but in spirit.

The fear that once shadowed her steps slowly turned into clarity. She began decoding the verses not through logic—but through intuition. Her grandfather noticed it too, smiling quietly as he watched her grow into herself.

And one night, after her longest meditation yet, she returned to her room and fell into a deep sleep.

This time, the valley was clearer. The cloaked figure turned—and she saw eyes like galaxies. The figure held out the glowing object.

A single word rang through her dream, echoing like thunder through stillness:

“Begin.”