THE COMPLETE RAMAYANA

BOOK 6

RAMA VS RAVANA

PARO ANAND

juggernaut

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To Chiki Sarkar,
who knew I could do this, though I didn't.

And to Keshav,
whose love gave me the confidence
to take the leap.

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PREPARING FOR BATTLE

Rama stood up, one arm raised. His voice rang out, 'There is no time to waste; the great battle is nigh.'

Loud cheers greeted his words.

Looking up at the sky, Rama declared, 'The sun is at its zenith. This time of day is called Vijaya, meaning "victory". Victory will soon be ours!'

'Victory will soon be ours!'

'Victory will soon be ours!'

The cheering vanara and bear armies were eager to begin their sacred mission.



But Rama wondered: How would they ever cross the vast ocean? It had been one thing for Hanumana with his powers, but defeating Ravana would take a large army. Still, like a true leader, he kept his worries to himself and set about organizing the assault into enemy territory.

It was decided that Neela, the vanara general, would lead the way, cutting a path through the forests, so that the army could move unseen until they reached the seashore. Rama warned that a cautious and wily Ravana may well have poisoned the water and fruits along the way. Various generals and senior warriors – Gaja, Gavya and Rishabha – were appointed to lead different battalions.

It was decided that Rama, Lakshmana and Angada would be carried by Hanumana, who would return to his gigantic state. Young Angada – the crown prince, son of the late king Vali and nephew of Sugriva – was renowned for his wisdom and foresight.

