THE COMPLETE RAMAYANA

BOOK 7

LUV-KUSH'S RAMAYANA

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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A NOTE FOR THE READER

There is some controversy over the authorship of the seventh book of the Ramayana. Was it written by Valmiki – the sage who composed the six books – as a book of backstories and answers? Some say it differs in language and structure; others say it was written much later, even in parts, and then put together as a seventh book an epilogue to the main text.

But many think it was written by Valmiki as a conclusion to provide context for the epic. In this part, we see the birth of Rama's sons, Luv and Kush; this is where Sita finds a conclusion to her story and where we understand more about Ravana.

Maybe we will never know for sure who wrote it, but it is a fascinating book that brings the Ramayan to a satisfying conclusion.

1

ALL IS RIGHT WITH THE WORLD

It was the era of Rama Rajya. Rama had finally ascended the throne of Ayodhya, and everything was as it should be. Evil was vanquished and good was restored. Rama was satisfied with the Agnipariksha, or trial by fire, that Sita had undergone. She had emerged unscathed, carried by Agni, and stood once again by her husband's side. Ascetics and holy men from the three worlds came to pay homage to the new king. Although Lakshmana was the second brother, he refused the privilege of being made

the crown prince. This noble act was because Bharata, the third brother, had ruled faithfully during the banishment, never ascending the throne himself but placing Rama's padukas on the throne and always holding him in high honour. No amount of persuasion by his mother, Kaikeyi, had convinced him that he was the rightful heir. He was anointed yuvaraja and swore to serve his king.

Rama welcomed the gathering and then wished to know more about the worthy but evil opponent that he had just vanquished. He knew that Ravana was the king of rakshasas, but he wanted to know how he had built the beautiful city of Lanka and how he and his brothers had attained the powerful boons that had challenged him so.

Enthralled, Rama and his subjects sat down to listen to the story of how it all came to pass.