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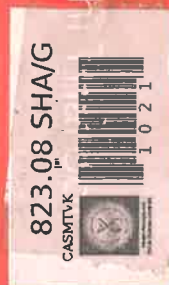
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for
my sons
Ishaan and Kanishk
and
for our own
Tilottama

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INTRODUCTION TO THE SILVER JUBILEE EDITION

Consider the evidence. A television series retelling the *Mahabharata* becomes the most successful Indian TV programme ever, drawing an audience of over 200 million and paralysing life during the hours of its weekly telecast. The Western world's leading avant-garde theatre director makes a nine-hour play of the epic, which a multinational cast performs to enthusiastic acclaim across the globe, from Avignon to Ayers Rock. The bestselling book in the history of Indian publishing in English is not some steamy potboiler, but the venerable C. Rajagopalachari ('Rajaji')'s episodic translation of the *Mahabharata*. (If the sales of other translations were added, the *Mahabharata* would probably eclipse the next few Indian bestsellers put together.)

My own homage to the epic, *The Great Indian Novel* remains in print twenty-five years on, has undergone forty-three reprints in India, and multiple editions abroad, a fate I could scarcely have imagined when I first sat down at my computer on a cold winter's evening in Geneva and began