



# Stories Of Indian Gods And Heroes

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The first Hindu Scriptures take the form of hymns, of which a large number were, sooner or later, collected together known as Vedas. The most famous of all is the Rig-Veda, a collection of over a thousand hymns. These are addressed to gods who bear a strong resemblance to the gods of the Norsemen the distant cousins, so to speak, of old Aryans. While the stories are not drawn wholly from the Vedas, some of the characters mentioned in this book appear more or less frequently in the hymns. Vashistha and Vishwamitra are supposed to have written some of them; traces of the Urvasi myth appear; and many of the gods are mentioned, though the position they occupied in Vedic days changed, in many cases, as time went on. Passing over a large mass of important literature attached to the Vedas though some of it contains a great deal of matter similar to that from which our tales are drawn we should notice next the great holy books of India, the Ramayana, the Mahabharata, the Puranas and the Upanishads. Ramayana means Story of Rama, a great hero, who is represented as the seventh of the incarnations of God Vishnu. Lord Vishnu, according to Hindu legend, had appeared several times on earth generally in forms not human: for example, a fish, a tortoise, a boar, etc. Lord Vishnu, under one name or another, is the most popular of all the Hindu gods. Under the name of Ram, he still receives the worship of millions; and Krishna, the incarnation following Ram, is even more worshiped. The story of each of these great heroes is shortly told in this book; and several of the minor tales are taken, either wholly or in part, from one holy book or the other.

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