

HOLY BOOKS



Hinduism - Holy Books

Hinduism does not have a single holy book, but several holy scriptures (holy books or texts.)

Neither is there any one person who wrote the main ideas down.

Together they support and guide Hindus in their daily life, family and in society.

They have also contributed to the way in which Hindus worship.

Hinduism - Holy Books

There are two main categories of Holy Books:

Shruti

(That which is heard.)

composed of 4 **Vedas** (Veda means knowledge), which contain the **Upanishads**.

Smirti

(That which is remembered.)

consists of **Dharma Shastras**, **Puranas** and the folk/historical legends known as the **Mahabharata** and **Ramayana**.

Hinduism - Holy Books

The god Brahma, is believed to have created the 4 Vedas.
The Vedas are holy books that were passed on orally for centuries.

The four Vedas are:

Rig Veda

Focuses on deities.

Yajur Veda

Instructions for rituals.

Sama Veda

Melodies and songs to be
sung during rituals.

Atharva Veda

Hymns and incantations to
be said during rituals.

Hinduism - Holy Books

Each of these texts is divided into four sections:

Samhitas

Oldest part of the text – contains mantras and hymns.

Brahmanas

These include myths, legends and explain some of the rituals. These are written as prose (written in spoken language, unlike poetry).

Aranyakas

Describe how to perform rituals and ceremonies.

Upanishads

This part explains spiritual ideas like Brahman (ultimate soul), ātman (individual soul) and reincarnation.

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Smirti

Dharmashastras

These texts are about the duties, rights, laws, behaviour and how to live life in the right way for Hindus.



Puranas

These texts contain myths and legends relating to the major Hindu deities.



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Smirti

Mahabharata

This is the longest known poem ever written. It is an epic story about the Kurekshetra War for the throne of the Hastinpura Kingdom. One part of this, called the Baghavat Gita, contains **Krishna's teachings to one of the** princes, which explains the different ideas in Hinduism contained in the Vedas. The Baghavat Gita is seen as a concise guide to Hindu philosophy and a practical guide to life.

Ramayana

This is the story of Rama and Sita (which is celebrated during Diwali). It was also written as a poem. Rama is seen as an example of dharma - **the 'right way to live one's life'**.



Themes in Stories



A common theme in Hindu stories is good overcoming evil.

Hindus believe that there is good and bad in everything and when evil becomes too powerful good has to overcome it.

Which Hindu stories do you know where these messages are contained?

What other stories (religious or non-religious) contain similar themes?

Why is it important to explore these ideas?

