



# Stories about Rishis

# Stories from the Puranas Retold

Written : Nalini Sahay  
Edited : Deepak Sahay  
Cover  
Design : Nalini Sahay  
Artists : Shijo Jacob  
Folk and Tribal Artists  
Layout : Govind Yasa  
Ashok Yadav

**deepam**  
**India**.com

© Copyright. 1999 - 2000 DeepamIndia.com  
All rights reserved.

Fax : +91-11-6828383  
Email : [info@deepamindia.com](mailto:info@deepamindia.com)



# Contents

**INTRODUCTION**  
**RISHIS, SAGES, AND POETS**  
**BRIGHU**  
**PULASTAYA**  
**DAKSHA**  
**VASHISTHA**  
**VISHWAMITRA**  
**VYASA**  
**VALMIKI**  
**NARADA**



## Introduction

Our gods and goddesses have strong and vibrant personalities as described in the hymns of the Vedas and the stories in the Puranas. Most Hindus have heard these stories in childhood and have an easy familiarity with the ways of life and living that the gods display in their various Avatars. There is always a take-away message in the stories - sometimes it is ambiguous and leads to more questions; sometimes the message simply defines good and evil, right and wrong - but always, there is the possibility of relating to ones own personality and ones own situation. No doubt, this is why the stories have endured. I for one carry a sense of comfort that there is a special god/goddess to recall in a certain situation. The stories actually hold our faith, allowing us to accept all the gods as one and the one god as many.



There is also the matter of images. In a way the images of India - the great idols in worship, the wayside shrines, the calendar art images, the great and the small sculpture - are abstraction of the stories and the personal message of the stories.

In this book, written entirely for the web, the stories have been cast in a simplified mould. The intent is to familiarize the new visitor and to aid recall for the old friend.

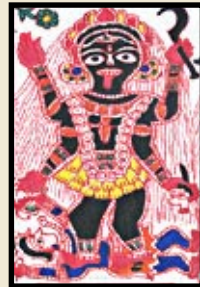
All the images were commissioned by me with Tribal and Folk Artists. We had only to tell them the story and they drew the pictures. They knew the stories! Language was no barrier. Some readers may be familiar with the styles of Indian Folk and Tribal Art and will instantly recognize the Madhubani, the Warli, the Oriya and Bengal folk art. For others, given below is a chart :

An attempt is made in the stories to show the harmony between the gods and goddess; time coalesces and the gods are present at each others life events, a general value system emerges; the invocation is of god love rather than god fear.

We hope the reader enjoys this presentation of ancient text and is encouraged to delve deeper into our well of faith.



Andhra leather puppet and folk art



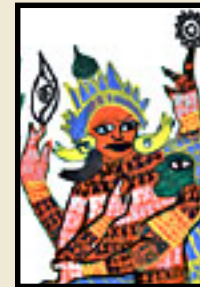
Madhubani style



Bengal folk art



Warli style



Madhya Pradesh  
tribal art



# RISHIS, SAGES, and POETS

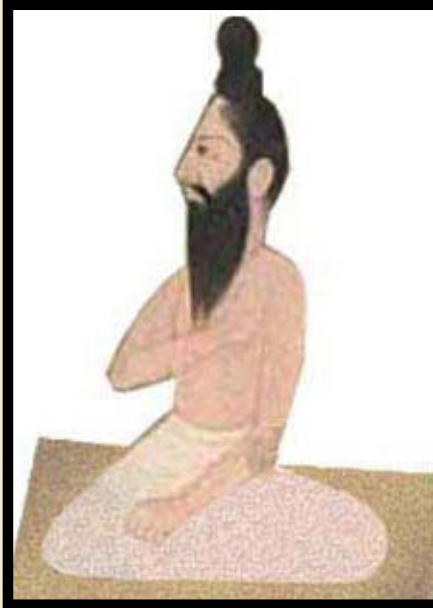


The Rishis are important players in the Hindu scriptures. They are described as poets to whom the four Vedas were revealed. They were learned men who performed austerities, knew the ritual practices, and through penance and prayer answered the questions of gods and men.

The names and tales of Brigu, Pulastaya, Daksha, Vashishta, Vishwamitra, Vyasa, Valmiki, Narada, remain even today in everyday memory. Though not deities, some of them are regarded as the mind-born sons of Brahma, who, at the dawn of creation brought forth both the population and the social order.



# BRIGHU



**Brighu** was one of Brahma's mind-born sons and a prajapati, one of the first fathers. He was the officiating priest at Daksha's great sacrifice to which Shiva and Sati were not invited. He sided with Daksha in humiliating Shiva and as a consequence, one of Shiva's ganas chopped off his flowing beard.



## ...Brighu



Bhrigu had an eye for beautiful women. He spotted a maid who was betrothed to a demon. He was moved by her beauty and married her. The demon was distraught and approached Agni for help. Agni helped him find the maid and had her carried home. Brighu was furious and cursed Agni saying that each time that he, Agni, lost control and got angry he would devour everything, Agni remonstrated. He had only spoken the truth and done his duty. The curse for not doing one's duty was already severe - seven preceding and seven succeeding generations would have been cast

into the nether world. He added that he too had the powers to curse but he respected the sage as the mouthpiece of the gods. Also, at the sacrifices, it is the sage who has to pour the ghee over Agni. How then could he curse him? Brighu heeded the reason in this and tempered the curse saying that Agni would also purify all that passed through him





## ...Brighu



Brighu also did a good and kind act. Divodasa, the king of Kasi was defeated in a battle. His whole family was slaughtered by one Vitahavya. The unhappy king went to the sage Bharadvajya who conducted a sacrifice for him. The result was that an heir, Pratardana was born to him. Pratardana vowed to take revenge on Vitahavya. Vitahavya fled to the hermitage of Brighu for protection. Pratardana approached Brighu and asked him to give up his enemy. Brighu replied that there are no warriors in a hermitage. Pratardana touched his feet for this learning and went on to become a good and kind king of Kasi and to become a chanter of the Vedas.



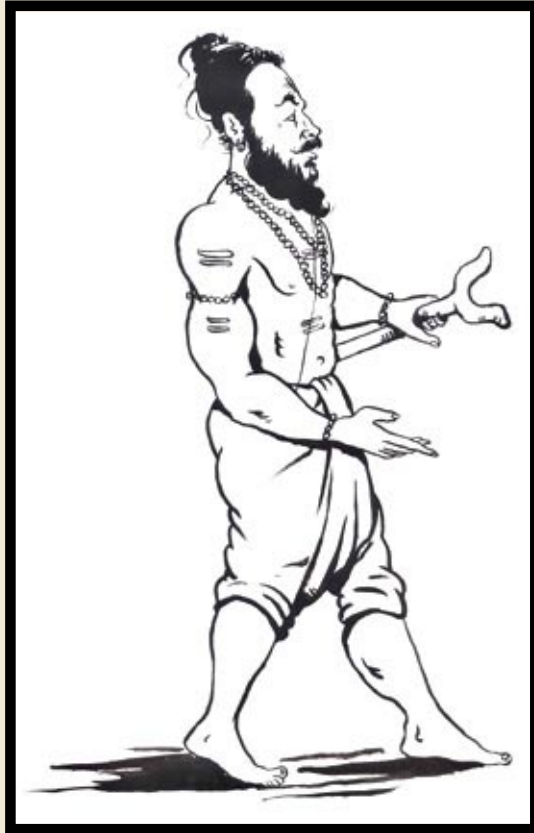
## ...Brighu



Brighu was also very caring about his fellow sages. Once an evil king Nahusha obtained superhuman powers such that at his one glance people were reduced to becoming his slaves. Nahusha went to the sage Agastya and soon had him bound hand and foot. He then tied Agastya to his chariot and kicked him to make him move. Agastya called for help and Brighu heard. He hid in Agastya's hair to avoid Nahusha's burning and evil gaze. Unseen by Nahusha, he pronounced a great curse and Nahusha fell from the heavens, an ugly brown snake on earth, to be hated by men for all time.



# Pulastaya



**Puyalasta** was the rishi through whom the gods communicated the Puranas to mankind. But first he had to find one who was worthy. This was Parasara, son of Shakti, son of Vashishta the sage. One day King Kalmashapada encountered Shakti on a winding path in the forest and ordered him out of the way. When the sage refused, telling the king to be more polite, he was delivered a merciless whipping. Shakti cursed the king saying he would turn cannibal and a mindless rakshasa..So terrible was the power of the curse that no sooner was it said than King Kalmashapada turned and killed and ate up Shakti ! And in complete madness, he followed up the feast by eating all of Shakti's one hundred brothers.



## ...Pulastaya

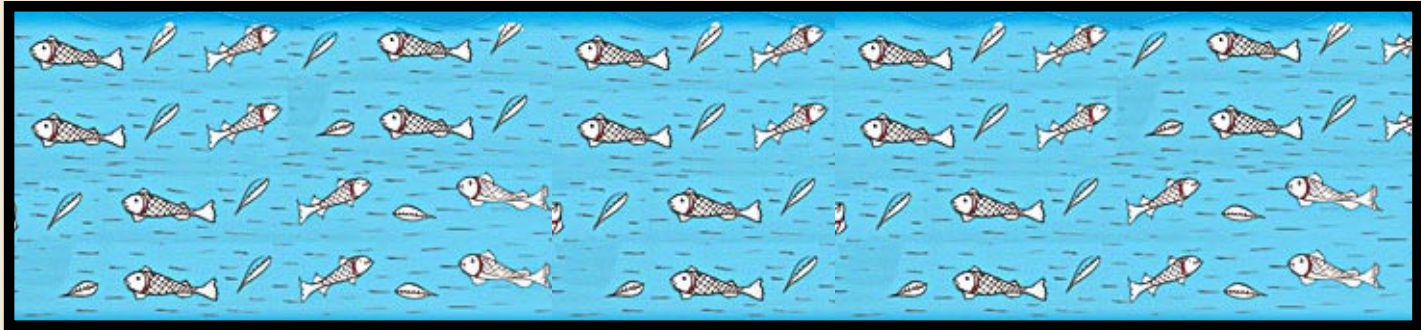


Parasara was born after this terrible event in his family and was brought up by Vashishta, his grandfather. He was taught the skills of war, the secrets of the body and the practice of the rituals.. Thus he became a ferocious warrior and

wrecked havoc and carnage on the rakshasas of the world. Eventually, his grandfather stopped him, saying that for all his savagery, his family would not return as this was destiny, both of his fathers and of the rakshasas. So it was that Parasara went to the ashram of sage Pulastaya and was taught the Puranas. He married Prithi and had two sons, Agasthya and Visarava, and in this way the Puranas came to mankind.



# Daksha



There are many stories about Daksha's origin. He too was a mind born son of Brahma. It is he who sprang from Brahma's right thumb and was married to the woman who sprang from Brahma's left thumb. The other origin is that he was born from the ten Prachetas. The Prachetas were the sons of a famous warrior named Prachinverhis. He was so named because he had planted on the earth sacred grass facing the sun. He performed fervent prayers, after which he married Savarana, the daughter of the ocean who bore him ten beautiful sons. They were great warriors and knew all there was to know about warfare. They in turn practiced austerities and remained on the ocean bed for ten thousand years. They observed this penance because Brahma had said to their father that this was the way to be able to increase the human race.



## ...Daksha



While the Prachetas were lost in their meditation, there was an upset of the ecological balance. The foliage on earth became dense, sunlight could not reach the people. There was darkness and the wind choked in the impenetrable forests. The Prachetas on opening their eyes saw this. They opened their mouths, and fire emerged from there and the fire burnt the trees. But now the earth would become bare and brown if the fire was not stopped. They were placated by Soma, king of the vegetation, who offered them the beautiful maiden Marisha. Marisha, in another life, had been promised by Vishnu that she would have ten brave and fearless husbands. And so from this union of Marisha and the ten Prachetas a son named Daksha was born, with a boon from Brahma that he would be a prajapati and would populate the earth with a thousand sons.



## ...Daksha



The next part of Daksha's story is that his thousand sons were tricked by Narada not to have children ! He had another thousand sons and again Narada coerced them not to procreate. Daksha was enraged. By a great sacrifice and terrible austerities he cursed Narada, who was then unable to stop his sons from having children from the sixty daughters that Daksha produced from his mind. This brought peace and tranquillity on earth and Daksha was given the title of the chief of the Prajapatis.



## ...Daksha



Daksha's daughter Sati married Shiva. This Daksha never accepted for Shiva did not much conform to the rituals and regulations which Daksha insisted on as Chief of the Prajapatis. He never accepted his son-in-law and chose every opportunity to humiliate Shiva. At one great sacrifice, he omitted to invite Shiva but unfortunately Sati was so aggrieved that she came uninvited. Thoughtlessly Daksha heaped abuse on her and Shiva. Hurting her so much that she leaped into the sacrificial fire.

Shiva's grief and anger was unimaginable; he brought catastrophe down upon all who had gathered in Daksha's yard. The mountains shook, the earth trembled and the sea sent up gigantic waves. Indra tripped and fell. Yama broke his staff. Saraswati and the Matris had their noses cut off. The moon got badly bruised. Brigu lost his beard. The Brahmans ran helter-skelter.

Daksha had to accept the supremacy of Shiva; of his way of life; of his teaching. But in the fracas Daksha was decapitated and even though he was forgiven, he had to forever live with a ram's head.





# VASHISTHA



According to a hymn in the Rigveda Agastaya and Vashistha were born from the seed of Varuna and Mitra, primordial mind born children of Brahma, jointly called Aditya. At a sacrificial feast they met Urvashi, the first dawn. Their seed fell in many places, on the water, on the ground and in a jar. Vashistha was born from the ground and Agastaya was born in the jar.



## ...VASHISTHA



There are several tales attributed to Vashistha. One day Vashishta returned from a three day fast in the forest and found a fierce dog guarding Varuna's home. He was hungry and could not wait to get in, but he did not want to argue with the dog. So he sang a hymn which lulled the dog to deep slumber. This hymn is in the Rig Veda and even today is invoked by burglars.

Vashistha was a family priest for many kings. King Saudasa was one amongst them. One day the king went out hunting and killed a tiger. But suddenly the tiger disappeared and left the king baffled. It was

actually a rakshasa in disguise. A few days later the king asked Vashistha to conduct a prayer and sacrifice. While Vashistha was out busy preparing all the proper items for the ceremony, the rakshasa came in disguised as a cook. Then the cunning rakshasa took out human flesh which he carried with him, and placed it in the pots to cook.



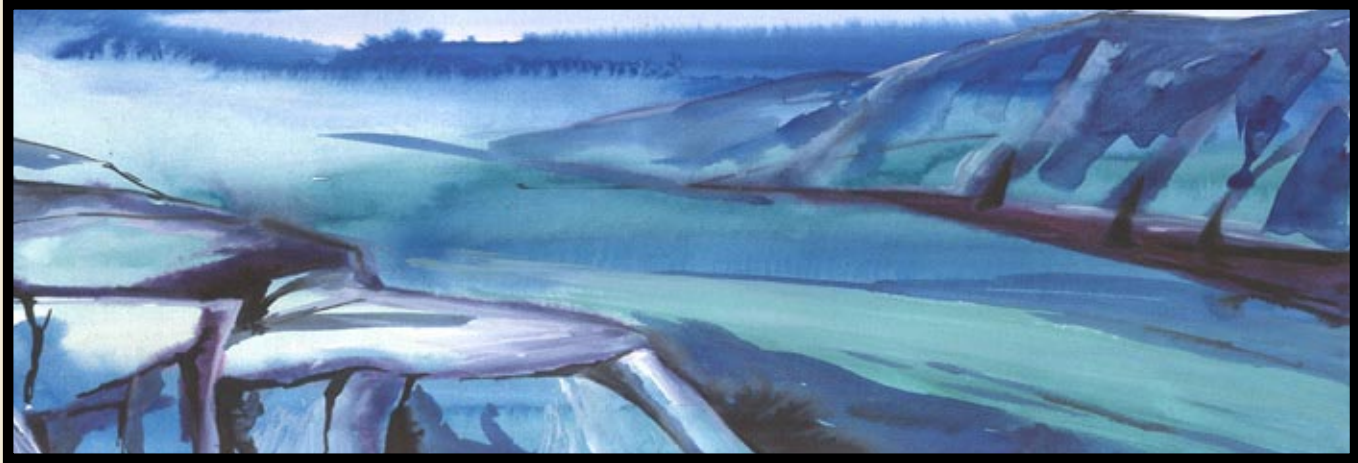
## ...VASHISTHA



Vashistha returned to the site and the king politely offered him the victuals. Vashistha by the power of his meditation recognised it as human flesh. He was enraged and cursed the king saying that he would be in a similar situation one day and would actually eat human flesh. The poor king was aghast. Vashistha realised what had happened, but now it was too late; he could only temper the curse by saying that it would be only for twelve years. But it was enough: it was this very king who ate the sage Shakti and his brothers, all sons of Vashistha. The story does not end here.



## ...VASHISTHA



Another version is that Viswamitra who was Vashistha's rival cast a spell on the king. Vashistha was heart broken. He tried to end his life in many ways but he could not succeed. Miraculously he stayed alive - when an avalanche from Mount Meru fell on him, the rocks turned to cotton. He went through a forest in flames, but not a hair was synged. He tried other methods, everything failed. He returned to his hermitage a broken man where he encountered the king turned rakshasa, who attempted to gobble him up. Vashistha then relieved him of the curse. Now the king was free at last but no one could forget that all this happened to good men at the mischief of a rakshasa. Perhaps it was the doing of Vishwamitra.



# VISHWAMITRA



Vishwamitra was one of the seven rishis. He was born a Kshatriya who was accepted as a Brahmin because of his intense meditations. He occupied a very important position in the RigVeda and he is associated with the famous Gayatri Mantra.



## ...VISHWAMITRA



The disputes between Vishwamitra and Vashishta are told in the Puranas. Once Vishwamitra went to the ashram of Vashishta. He was treated royally and every desire of his was met. Still, he coveted Vashishta's cow Kamadhenu which granted all material desires. He tempted her with much treasure, but she refused to accompany him. He tried to take her by force with his soldiers but Kamadhenu conjured up more soldiers. Vashishta entered the fray with his hundred sons. A battle ensued which Vishwamitra roundly lost. He determined to become Vashishta's equal through prayers and penance.



## ...VISHWAMITRA



While he was engaged in these penances, he became connected to a certain prince who had been banished for twelve years by his father because he had tried to ravish a woman of good virtue. While in exile, the prince lived with and took care of Vishwamitra. Once during a terrible storm, the prince was undergoing a silent fast, and the sage himself was praying. Kamadhenu the cow came by. Such was their craving that they overcame the magical cow and killed her. Vashitha was disgusted and gave the prince the name Trisankhu which means guilty of three sins ; the sin for which he was in exile;the sin of breaking one's avowed penance and the sin of killing a cow.



## ...VISHWAMITRA



Vishwamitra agreed to give him a boon and he asked to be admitted into the heavens. Vishwamitra granted his request as he himself had become a rishi through his severe austerities but Vashistha would not agree. While the two went through long arguments, poor Trishanku was left nowhere, neither a prince, nor a sage, nor allowed to enter the heavens. Eventually Brahma reconciled the two rishis explaining how each had arrived at their views through ardent penance, and both could live in the Cosmic order. Vishwamitra was Rama's guru when he went to the Swayamvar which Raja Janak arranged for his daughter Sita. In one of their battles they

cursed each other to become birds and plucked out each others eyes and feathers. Then Brahma intervened and forced them to accept each other as equals.





# Vyasa

## Writer of the Mahabharata

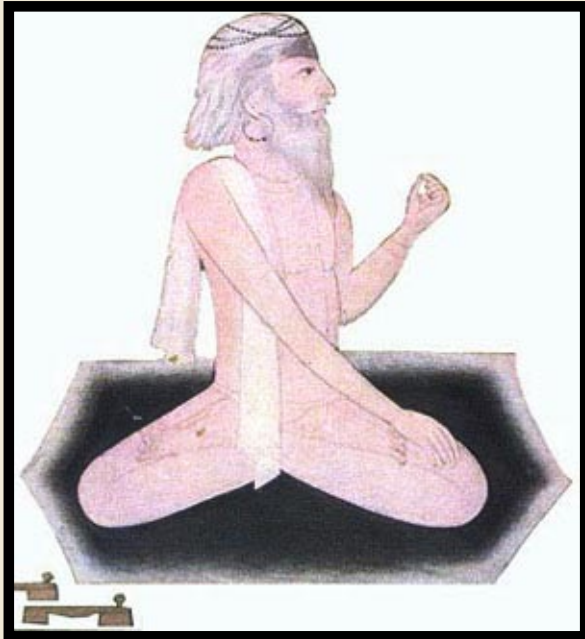
Vyasa is a title given to many Rishis. The name means arranger. The Vyasa referred to most often is the writer of the Mahabharata.

He is also the father of Dhritarashtra and Pandu whose progeny fought the Mahabharata.

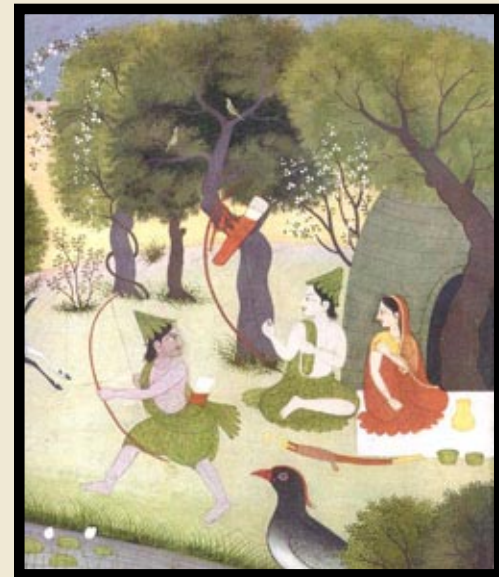


# Valmiki

Writer of the Ramayana.



Valmiki is the author of the Ramayana. Sita and her twin sons, Luv and Kush stayed at his ashram in Chitrakut. He was their teacher.



# Narada

The Trouble Maker.

Narada was regarded as the messenger of the gods. By some sources he is considered Brahma's son and a Prajapati, one of the first fathers. He was a meddler in people's affairs and to this day someone who is a busybody is called Narada Muni. He was responsible for placing a curse on Daksha's sons so that they could have no children. He informed Kansa of Krishna's approaching birth and that led to the mass slaying of male infants. Thereafter he became a devotee, friend and companion of Krishna. He was the creator of the Veena, which is a musical stringed instrument, delightful to the eye and the ear. He was very vain about his ability to create music. One day Krishna placed his Veena in the paws of a bear. The bear started playing it and it produced even sweeter strains than Narada. Narada was duly silenced by this celestial show.



## ABOUT THE PUBLISHER

DeepamIndia.com is dedicated exclusively to the creation of eBooks. Maybe the first in the world ! We specialize in eBooks related to the artistic, cultural, folk and religious heritage of the Indian subcontinent. Our philosophy is to create eBooks that are short,snappy, easy to read. And we want readers to judge them by the standards of convenience, aesthetics and enjoyment; not only content.

The global village is not only for commerce, but also to share the rich legacy of our cultures.Our authors have varied experience -- in textiles, crafts,performing arts,the spiritual realm etc. and we provide an exciting working environment of mutual earning and learning. We hope you will enjoy this experience of India. And we look keenly to hear from you, the customer and you, the contributor.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Nalini Sahay

Nalini Sahay lives in Delhi.She chose to write these stories as an experiment for ebook publishing. As her Introduction to the series states “ it was surprising how the folk artists and the tribal artists were completely at ease with the stories and could illustrate them “. She believes the stories are relevant and plans to continue extracting them from the Puranas.



## Other Books

Stories about Devi

Stories about Ganesh

Stories about Parvati

Stories about Parvati

Stories about Shiva

Stories about the divine couple

Stories about Vishnu

**deepam**  
**India.com**

© Copyright. 1999 - 2000 DeepamIndia.com  
All rights reserved.

Fax : +91-11-6828383

Email : [info@deepamindia.com](mailto:info@deepamindia.com)

