

Four ways in

Where to start, depending on why you picked the book up — with Mackenzie's own chapter numbers, so it works with any edition of the 1913 text.

If you want the best single thing here

Yama, the First Man, for the story of Savitri — a princess who follows her husband's soul to the god of death and argues him out of it. It is the most famous episode in the book and it needs no apparatus at all.

If you came for the gods

Indra, King of the Gods, then **The Great Vedic Deities**, in that order. The first gives you the central myth — the drought demon killed, the waters released — and the second gives you everyone else, at the density of about one god a page. Keep the who's-who open.

If you want the ideas rather than the stories

Mysteries of Creation, for the Hymn of Creation and the doctrine of the world soul. Then read the introduction's note on the word 'Aryan', and the Register of Comparisons — the two things in this volume most likely to mislead a reader who takes 1913 at its word.

If you like monsters

Demons and Giants and Fairies, which is a bestiary with a serious fact at the centre of it: the Indian demons and the Persian gods have the same name, because one branch of a single religion made devils of the other's gods.

The five chapters, and how long each is

I • Indra, King of the Gods

4,673 words · 24 of Mackenzie's own notes

II • The Great Vedic Deities

5,116 words · 28 of Mackenzie's own notes

III • Yama, the First Man, and King of the Dead

6,565 words · 19 of Mackenzie's own notes

IV • Demons and Giants and Fairies

4,267 words · 15 of Mackenzie's own notes

VI • Mysteries of Creation, the World's Ages, and Soul Wandering

6,338 words · 19 of Mackenzie's own notes