



A Flowering Tree and Other Oral Tales from India

A. K. Ramanujan

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This book of oral tales from the south Indian region of Kannada represents the culmination of a lifetime of research by A. K. Ramanujan, one of the most revered scholars and writers of his time. The result of over three decades' labor, this long-awaited collection makes available for the first time a wealth of folktales from a region that has not yet been adequately represented in world literature. Ramanujan's skill as a translator, his graceful writing style, and his profound love and understanding of the subject enrich the tales that he collected, translated, and interpreted.

With a written literature recorded from about 800 A.D., Kannada is rich in mythology, devotional and secular poetry, and more recently novels and plays. Ramanujan, born in Mysore in 1929, had an intimate knowledge of the language. In the 1950s, when working as a college lecturer, he began collecting these tales from everyone he could—servants, aunts, schoolteachers, children, carpenters, tailors. In 1970 he began translating and interpreting the tales, a project that absorbed him for the next three decades. When Ramanujan died in 1993, the translations were complete and he had written notes for about half of the tales.

With its unsentimental sympathies, its laughter, and its delightfully vivid sense of detail, the collection stands as a significant and moving monument to Ramanujan's memory as a scholar and writer.

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