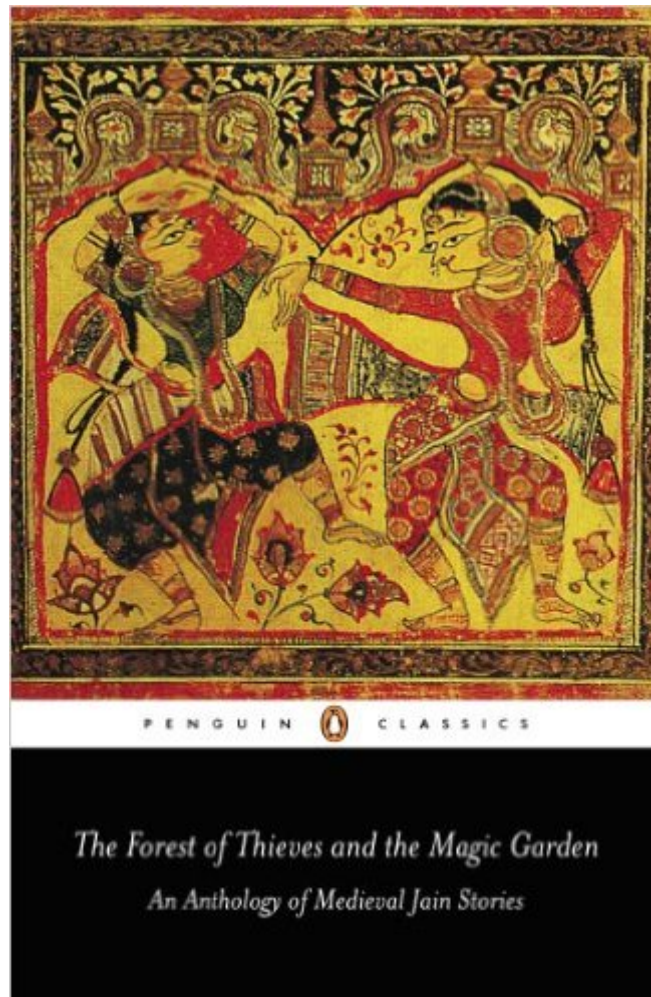


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The Forest Of Thieves And The Magic Garden: An Anthology Of Medieval Jain Stories (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

Lively tales of asceticism, wickedness, and virtue from one of India's great religious traditions. Beautifully translated from the Sanskrit, the stories in this volume reflect the vital tradition of Jain storytelling between the seventh and fifteenth centuries. Some of their characters find bliss by renouncing the world, others by living within it in peace and moderation. There are stories depicting the painful consequences of a loved one's becoming a monk and the triumph of Jain women who win their husbands over to their religion. The climactic story follows an unsuspecting traveler's journey through a forest of destructive passions. Ranging from simple folk tales to sophisticated narratives of rebirth, *The Forest of Thieves and the Magic Garden* opens a window onto a rich religious tradition. For more than seventy years, Penguin has been the leading publisher of classic literature in the English-speaking world. With more than 1,700 titles, Penguin Classics represents a global bookshelf of the best works throughout history and across genres and disciplines. Readers trust the series to provide authoritative texts enhanced by introductions and notes by distinguished scholars and contemporary authors, as well as up-to-date translations by award-winning translators.

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Customer Reviews

Our modern notion of "superhero" very likely originates from a very primal impulse. Stories of humans becoming superhuman, or of powerful spiritual beings with semi-human characteristics,

may in part help us deal with the limitations and finitude of our very fragile humanity. People often wish to be more than "mere people" and fantastic tales of any kind can fuel these fantastic desires. The question as to whether traditional tales associated with religion once played a similar role that contemporary "Superhero" stories (i.e., Batman, Superman) play may raise fire and brimstone ire in some and fervent curiosity in others. Parallels definitely exist between them, though how tenuous remains another question. In any case, anyone looking for great tales of magic, wonder and superhuman feats will find a host of them in "The Forest of Thieves and the Magic Garden." These 31 tales dating from roughly 900 - 1400 seem to provide multiple functions. In the manner of many tales (and arguably modern comic books, novels and television shows) these stories attempt to entertain while moralizing about the proper religious life. Not that they're overly pedantic, though a few do straddle this fence, but the purpose of these tales seems primarily to draw people in with a fabulous and hypnotic story while promoting the Jain way of life. Early marketing? Maybe. Most religions, and possibly all of them, utilize such techniques to increase the numbers of converts. Nothing new. What will appear new, particularly to those unfamiliar with Jainism or the vast diversity of Eastern spiritualism, is the medieval Jain ethos. One must keep the dates of these texts in mind while reading. Religions and cultures evolve, for better or worse, through time.

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