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RAMAYANA - LEGEND OF PRINCE RAMA, co-produced and directed by Yugo Sako and Ram Mohan. 120 min. Broadcasters may wish to note that worldwide, distribution negotiations are under way. To inquire about distribution or release dates, contact: Nippon Ramayana Films Co. Ltd., #410 Santoku Bldg., 7-1-9 Minamiaoyama, Minato-ku, Tokyo 107, Japan. Tel: 81-3-3409-0665 or Fax: 81-3-3406-0067.

On the eve of a recent business trip to Hawaii, HINDUISM TODAY called me to request I review a rare pre-release copy of the US \$6 million animated Ramayana. It was sitting in customs at the Honolulu airport, en route from Tokyo to HINDUISM TODAY'S Kauai office. To make a long story short, 3 days later I was sitting in a Maui hotel room with my wife and children watching (reviewing) one of producer Yugo Sako's personal copies of Ramayana. What a great experience! The film is fabulous.

While a two-hour film obviously cannot take on all the epic's giant plot details, this film adaptation is remarkably faithful to Valmiki's original. Breathtaking scenery magically transports you back thousands of years to pastoral Vedic times, more than making up for all the abridgement. The background drawings are hauntingly beautiful, and the pastel tones, lighting and composition of each animated cell makes this production a work of art.

The film opens with bas-relief sculpture and narration of Rama's family background. This leads into a picturesque scene of Sage Vishvamitra and other rishis conducting a yagna fire ceremony in a forest. At that point, the animation takes over. We were immediately riveted to the screen by the realistic artwork, beautiful landscapes and exciting characters - ranging from Sita and Rama glorifying courage, goodness and dharma to Ravana and his giant asuric monsters reveling in adharmic blindness. Because the noble, underlying themes of this epic

so affirm family values and virtues - such as keeping one's word and selflessly performing dharma - this film should, (when finally on video) be in every Hindu home. It will bring Hindu values to our children, who now perhaps only have Ninja Turtles, or worse, as video role models. By the way, my son and daughter got up early the next day and watched it two more times!

MAHASHIVARATRI, produced by Sri Ganpati Sachchidananda Ashrama. 60 min. US \$20. Order from: Planet Lakshmi (408) 429-9138 in the USA, or 0821-22662 in India.

This well-made film documents 24 hours of Maha Sivaratri celebrations on March 2, 1992, at Sri Ganapati Sachchidananda's Avadhoota Datta Peetha in Mysore, India. Highlights include singing bhajans and chanting the panchakshara mantra Aum Namasivaya as well as Swami giving spontaneous predictions in Kannada language, performing Mangalarati and agni homa while standing inside the fire pit.

RAGA, RAVI SHANKAR, narrated by Ravi Shankar. Filmed by Howard Worth. 95 min. US \$29.95 Order from: Mystic Fire Video, PO Box 1092, Cooper Station, New York, New York 10276. 1-800-292-9001. Internationally known and acclaimed sitarist/composer Ravi Shankar narrates an autobiographical journey back to his musical, cultural and spiritual roots. Raga is an homage to guru, to discipline, to tradition, to sound and the divine source of sound, Nada Brahma.

About his guru, Shankar says, "I stayed with Baba more than seven years. He demanded absolute surrender, years of fanatic dedication and discipline." About practice, he shares, "There is tremendous interest in sitar but there is danger of its going wrong. They learn scales and in a few weeks they want to play a raga completely. They'll have to demand more of themselves." As a retrospective, he shares vintage footage of 1960's concerts in the West and his efforts to teach Indian music. The West still associates Ravi Shankar with the Beatles and a fascinating musician. But there is so much more. More person, more music, more raga. I particularly recommend this for young Indian Hindus raised in the West.

THE FAITHKEEPER, with Bill Moyers interviewing Oren Lyons. US \$29.95 Order from: Mystics Fire Video, inc, PO Box 1092, Cooper Station, New York, New York 10276. 1-800-292-9001.

An hour-long, powerful interview - originally produced for US public television - with chief Oren Lyons of the Turtle Clan of the Onondaga Nation. Chief Lyon is one of the most dynamic spokespersons for Native American Indians. He is called "The Faithkeeper" because it is his mission to keep alive his tribe's spiritual heritage. The interview covers a wide range of topics, and by the end of the hour, I gained a real feeling of religious kinship and deep respect for Chief Lyons. As he talks, you hear the Sanatana Dharma so clearly echoed. It's quite inspiring. One strong point he makes is that an elder of any American Indian nation always considers how any decision he makes will effect seven generations ahead. A first-class production. Very uplifting.

MADE IN HEAVEN - Lorimar Pictures. Available at your local video outlet.

This big Hollywood-budget production is the fascinating story of a man who dies young. He arrives on the astral plane (where souls reside between births, called antaraloka in Sanskrit) and is greeted by his deceased aunt who show him around and explains how the inner planes work in a way that any mystical Hindu might. Then he meets a girl who is about to take her first life on earth. They fall in love, of course, and he then decides to follow her and re-experience another birth himself - but with no guarantee of finding her or even remembering that that was his goal. Things then get very sticky as desire, love and karma intertwine. I won't tell you any more, but it's tension-filled all the way. Rent it, have fun and learn a little more about karma and reincarnation, gratis Hollywood. Rated PG-13.

LEMPAD OF BALI, co-directed by Lorne Blair. 55 min. US \$29.95. Order from: Mystic Fire Video, Inc, PO Box 1092, Cooper Station, New York, NewYork 10276. 1-800-292-9001.

This is a vivid documentary of the life of Lempad, a legendary Balinese sculptor/architect/painter, who died recently at age 116. He is interviewed only a few months before his death a day he actually chose Much of the film digresses from his own life as an artist into a visual lesson in the Hindu knowledge of the soul body's relation to the astral body and the physical body, through detailed description and footage of Lempad' spectacular funeral rites. This is definitely one on the best video handling of some of the most esoteric Hindu subjects Stunning footage shows sculptors that Lempad himself trained carving their mentor's or nate bier only to later watch it turn to ash in ceremonial cremation flames with their teacher. One feels transported to a magical kingdom watching this video. The

people are so religious, festive, happy and artistic. An beautiful film which should be in every Hindu home.

MATA AMRITANANDAMAYI - A PORTRAIT OF COMPASSION AND 6TH WORLD TOUR OF META AMRITANANDAMAYI, both videos produced by Mata Amritanandamayi Center, 85 min.

Both of these well-crafted videos are designed to introduce the truly unusual soul Mata Amritanandamayi to those who don't know of her. I especially liked Portrait of Compassion because it really conveyed the power of this great soul considered a saint by many. It is filmed at her thriving ashram in Kerala and also at her picturesque ashram in the rolling hills east of San Francisco. I recommend every one see this just to admire how one soul is putting Hinduism in action. The 6th World Tour follows her on her 1992 tour around the world. Its unedited moment-by-moment footage is more intended for her closer devotees than the Hindu public.

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