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Easan Katir and Thamby Kumaran

By Easan Katir and Thamby Kumaran

Spirit and Nature, Narrated by Bill Moyers. 88 min. \$29.95 plus tax and shipping.
Order from: Mystic Fire Video, PO Box 1092, Cooper Station, N.Y., N.Y., 10276, USA.
Tel: 1-(800) 727-8433

For four days in late summer, 1990, a group of world religious leaders met at Middlebury College, Vermont, to talk about world ecology. The Dalai Lama was there along with Native American Indian, Christian, Jewish and Muslim religious figures.

This video of that gathering was, for me, totally engaging. Listen to the kinds of things they said: "It is Western modern science that has monopolized our view of nature--separating nature from the divine," Seyyed Hossein Nasr shared. Sallie Krawcheck, a Christian theologian offered: "We ended up with a transcendent sky god, and this has been a tremendous loss... If you are in a world that one imagines to be the body of God, one would treat that world very, very differently." Tibet's holiest Buddhist monk and Nobel Prize Winner for Peace held everyone's attention as he spoke in his simple perhaps disarming way: "Taking care of the planet is nothing special, nothing sacred, nothing holy. It's something like taking care of one's own house. We have no other planet, no other house, except this."

Aura of Divinity, 60 min. us\$34.95, and the Early Years, 110 min. us\$39.95. Both produced by Richard Bock.

Order both from: Pacific Spirit, 1334 Pacific Ave., Forest Grove, Oregon 97116.

Tel: 1-800-634-9057

Aura of Divinity, by Hollywood filmmaker Bock, offers a concise portrayal of the legendary Sathya Sai Baba. He shares events surrounding the great soul's birth; his entry into public spiritual life at age 13 with the declaration that he is the incarnation of Sai Baba of Shirdi; the growth of his ashram; assuming the mantle of avatar; fulfilling the prophecy of the Mahabharata; explaining the prophecy of his next incarnation; and giving darshan to thousands daily.

The Early Years is actually four-films-in-one, created individually by Richard Bock between 1960-1970. The four titles are: The Early Years 1964-1968, Advent of the Avatar, The Endless Stream Darshan and Darshan-Vision of Reality. Many events are recorded, including vibhuti darshan, vibhuti abishek, birthday celebrations, dedication of schools and remarkable footage of Sivaratri Siva lingam materialization.

Planet in Crisis: Reawakening the Human Spirit, by Swami Chinmayananda. 70 min. us\$27.

Order from Source Productions, 14755 Ventura Blvd., Suite 829, Sherman Oaks, CA 91403. Tel: (818) 990-6724

Recorded live in December, 1992, at the United Nations. Swami Chinmayananda tackles the subject of world ecology in his no-holds-barred, biting, wise, witty, extemporaneous style. The video begins ominously, laying out a frightening list of world problems: hunger, poverty, environmental destruction, religious hatreds, war, along with so-called "solutions" that in fact haven't changed anything. Swami

explains, "People complain there is something wrong with the world, but there is nothing wrong with the world. The sun, the moon, the stars, the plants, the animals, the birds--they have no problems. The problem is only with man because he is not able to live up to the laws of nature." Great video.

Sita's wedding, in Hindi with English subtitles by ITV. 99 min. US\$24.95 plus \$2.50 shipping

Order from: ITV, 3755 Watseka Ave. #200, Los Angeles, CA 90232. Tel (310) 559-7100 Fax: (301) 559-7101.

A thoroughly entertaining very Indian production depicting the life story of Rama, particularly the event of his marriage to Sita. With a deluge of songs, extravagant sets and costumes, this is a fun movie for the entire family. My kids loved it.

Ramayan--the famous 52-hour series on 26 videos, w/ English subtitles--by Ramanand Sagar. US\$279 plus shipping. Order from: Maharani Video,

7333 Harwin, Suite 125, Houston, Texas 77036 (713) 782-6533

By Bo and Sita Lozoff

We recently viewed Ramanand Sagar's 78-episode Ramayan, available on twenty-six videotapes (in Hindi alone, or with English subtitles). Originally broadcast one episode per week throughout India, the Hindi version mesmerized hundreds of millions of viewers with the ageless story of Ram, Sita, Lakshman and the immortal, all-powerful monkey/servant Hanuman.

Although production values might be likened to 1940's American films, and special effects woefully amateur compared to films like Jurassic Park, Sagar's Ramayan

conveys such pure devotion and integrity that we often sat with tears running down our faces while watching our favorite story brought to life by a cast of fine actors (obviously devotees themselves.) The story is all about dharma--living virtuously, keeping one's word, defending the poor and meek, being humble and the necessity of sadhana and puja.

Special treats are: introductory segments with sadhus singing bhajan at holy shrines; luminaries such as Swami Chinmayananda and Morari Bapu discoursing on the Ramayan; and a wonderful Siva puja at Benares. This video series is fantastic. (By the way, the Mahabharata epic video series will soon be released with English subtitles.)

Vocal Recordings

By Bhavani Param

AJOY CHAKRABARTY, by Ajoy Chakrabarty. Produced by India Archive Music. CD US\$15.99 Tape US\$7 plus \$2.50 shipping.

Order from: India

Archive Music, LTD. 2170 Broadway, N.Y.

N.Y. 10024.

This recording is a must for all those who enjoy the hauntingly expressive North Indian style. Ajoy's voice is so agile, full, fleeting, dancing. Yet even during his most spectacular tonal escapades, you feel him relaxed, poised, merging with the inner sounds of the sounds. Sound mystical? It is. He is.

AAPKO MERA PRANAM, by Anuraag & chorus, Chetana and Sangeeta. Lyricists: Ram Siddhartha-Tulsidas, and Damodar Das Bawri. Produced by Sur Sandesh. \$5.00 (Cassette) Order by phoning: (212) 759-4568.

A wonderful recording of Hindi devotional music on Lord Hanuman and his beloved Ram, by singers whose names may not resound for you but whose pure voices will.

NAMASTOTRAM, Songs on Ganesh and Rama (Vol 1) by Ashwini Bhide and Veena Sahasrabuddhe and Songs on Ganesh (Vol 2) by both artists. Produced by MUSIC Today as part of the Bhaktimala series. CD us\$14.95. Tape \$3.50. Plus \$3 shipping.

Available at most Indian music shops or: Shrimatis, 2011 University Ave., Berkeley, CA 94704.

An exquisite recording of Sanskrit devotional singing. The voices of these two rare souls glide with a grace only lifetimes of singing could instill. The prominence of the tamboura and tabla enhance even more the meditative quality of their serene renditions.

Saawan Ayo, by Rita Sahai.

CD \$12.99, tape \$7. Shipping \$3. Order from: OSMJ Music, P.O. Box 9598, Berkeley, CA 94709.

This young Hindustani classical vocalist has just released her new CD, Saawan Ayo. "Coming of the Rains" is a thunderburst of devotional songs inspired by the emotionally-charged monsoons. Sahai's tender and crystal clear voice cuts through

romantically melancholy rags like lightning through dark clouds. Painstakingly recorded, this collection further secures her gentle, "laid back" style at a time many singers are leaning forward, i.e. "showy." Accompanied by Pranesh Khan on tabla and pakhawaj; Kanwaljit Kalsi on violin and harmonium and Jai Uttal on keyboards.