A Saint's Life
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BOOKS

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The ultimate Ramakrishna

There are a lot of books on Sri Ramakrishna and his disciples, but nothing as comprehensive as Sri Ramakrishna, His Divine Play, (Vedanta Society of St. Louis, US$39.95) by Swami Saradananda. This is a hefty book, weighing in at nearly four pounds and running, as precisely intended, an auspicious 1,008 pages. When we first heard of it, we presumed it was a new version of the famed Gospel of Sri Ramakrishna as recorded by "M, " a daily account of Sri Ramakrishna's conversations with devotees. Swami Saradananda's book does draw upon the Gospel, but is a complete biography, starting with an account of Sri Ramakrishna's ancestral village. It was written in Bengali, titled Sri Sri Ramakrishna Lilaprasanga, completed in 1920. Though an English version was produced in 1950, it has long been out of print. The present very readable translation is by Swami Chetananda, a monk of the Ramakrishna order since 1960 and minister of the Vedanta Society of St. Louis. The book is highly recommended for anyone with an interest in this great modern Hindu saint. It is lengthy, and some parts are extremely detailed, but it is filled with fascinating accounts of Sri Ramakrishna's extraordinary experiences.

Sri Ramakrishna, His Divine Play by Swami Saradananda, Vedanta Society of St. Louis, 205 S. Skinker Blvd., St. Louis, MO 63105 USA. catalog@vedantastl.org

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America's Temples

Hindu Temples of North America is a sizeable coffee-table book loaded with excellent photos and comprehensive narrative detailing a cross section of American and Canadian temples. The work (320 pages, Titan Graphics and Publications,

US$75.00) was produced by South Africa-born Mahalingum Kolapen and his son Sanjay (who took most of the photographs) in collaboration with the Hindu University of America and the Council of Hindu Temples of North America. Twenty-seven temples are featured in the Hindu section, plus one temple each dedicated to Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. There are hundreds of Hindu temples in North America, but these 27 include the largest, all built from the ground up rather than adapted from a previous use. They include the Hindu Temple of Greater Chicago, the Sri Meenakshi Temple Society of Texas, the Flushing (New York) Ganesha temple and the Richmond Hill temple in Ontario, one of Canada's largest. The account of each temple includes abundant photos and a few pages of text detailing the temple's origins, organization, Deities and festival programs. It is a useful commentary on the impact of Hinduism Today's founder, the late Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, that he is mentioned with regard to several temples, especially in his customary gift of a statue of Lord Ganesha to "start the worship," as he would advise the trustees. Lord Ganesha was gifted by him to the temples in Texas, Chicago, Livermore and Nashville, to name a few. The book is well produced, a worthy addition to any Hindu home.

Hindu Temples of North America, by Mahalingum Kolapen, Titan Graphics and Publications, 3733 North Goldenrod Road, Winter Park, FL 32792 USA. mkolapen@aol.com

Children's Books

Finders Keepers? is a picture storybook for children up to sixth grade by Robert Arnett, the acclaimed author and photographer of India Unveiled. The hardcover book (36 pages, Atman Press, $16.95) is beautifully illustrated by Smita Turakhia. It is the story of a foreign traveler who goes to India and, in the course of his travels, loses his wallet. The wallet is returned to him by a small Hindu boy who can't understand why the foreigner wants to reward him for doing the right thing. Arnett, who portrayed the best of India with such class in India Unveiled has called this book volume one of "India Unveiled Children's Series, " so we may look forward to more delightful tales artfully told and illustrated by him and his collaborators.

M. G. Prasad of New Jersey has produced several useful books for children, including Daily Prayers (32 pages, Taranga Inc. no price), Multi-Faceted Vedic Hinduism (46

pages, ARSI, $2.00) and Garland, an Anthology on Vedic Hinduism (220 pages, ARSI, $10.00). Daily Prayers is a compilation of common Sanskrit chants for memorization. Vedic Hinduism, aimed at 10- to 14-year-olds, fairly covers all aspects of the religion. Garland, for teens and adults, explores a wide range of subjects, ranging from the Hindu view of birthdays to the meaning of Siva's dance to the theology of sound--made all the more interesting as Prasad is an engineering professor specializing in sound and vibration.

finders keepers? by Robert Arnett, Atman Press, PMB 345, 2525 Auburn Ave., Columbus, GA 31906 USA.web: http://www.atmanpress.com e-mail: robertarnett@mindsring.com

Daily Prayers, Multi-faceted Vedic Hinduism and Garland, an Anthology on Vedic Hinduism by M. G. Prasad, No. 1 Osborne Terrace, Maplewood, NJ USA. email: mprasad@stevens.edu