Video Reviews
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Sage of Arunachala, Sri Ramana Maharshi, 1879-1950. Narrated by John Flynn. Written directed and filmed by James Hartel. Music, G.S. Sachdev, and Ram Narayan. Thevaram songs by Dr. Salem S. Jayalakshmi. Color, 73 minutes, 1992, $29. Available from: Arunachala Ashram, 72-63 Yellowstone Blvd., Forest Hills, Queens, New York, 11375 USA.

This video is great. Through an engaging chronology of photographs, rare film footage, interviews, narration and music, we have the darshan of one of India's greatest modern-day saints, Ramana Maharshi. This video was a two-year project of film restoration, research and travel. We visit where he is born, where he attended school and the house in which his life was transformed by a mystical experience. Then we travel beside him as he leaves home and makes his way to the holy Arunachala Hill, Tiruvannamalai, South India. We stand where he stood in exultation before his "Father, Arunachala." I particularly enjoyed the rural landscape panoramas and scenes of South Indian village life and temple culture, the spiritual "greenhouse" where he grew up. The whole family will be uplifted spending an hour seeing through the eyes of this God-realized soul how there is an indestructible reality, an incomparable beauty, a life of perfect peace and joy within the hearts of all beings.

INDIA And The INFINITE. Written and narrated by Dr. Huston Smith. Produced by Hartley Film Foundation. 30 minutes. $49.95 (plus tax & shipping if applicable) Available from: Hartley Film Foundation, Inc., Cat Rock Road, Cos Cob, Connecticut, USA 06807 Tel: (203) 869-1818.

Imagine trying to describe India to a neighbor, your child's class at school or a new associate down at the office, in just 30 minutes! Where would you start? Well, here's a way to avoid the frustration of describing the indescribable. Let this video

do it. It's well-rounded, intelligent, cinematographically superb, with images of every place you would want to show someone in India. That alone is a serious accomplishment. Dr. Huston Smith, MIT professor of philosophy and religion, explains India's paradoxes and extremes with a depth and sensitivity often lacking in Western scholars. This film brings forward an India that swarms with life and vitality-a land of compelling philosophical truths, extraordinary architectural monuments, a dynamic village life and culture, the ancient alongside the modern, ritual rich with symbolism and the country's many faiths-Hinduism, Islam, Parsiism, Jainism, Buddhism, Sikhism and Christianity. Purchase this video now, and the next time you get asked "Could you tell me a little more about your country?," invite your friend over, put this video in your VCR, and enjoy.

DEEPA & RUPA, A Fairy tale from India. Produced, directed, animated and music by Manick Sorcar. Stars Piya Sorcar and Deepa Reddy. Animated, color, 33 minutes, $18 (includes postage and handling.) Available from: Manick Sorcar Productions, 14890 W. 58th. Place, Golden, Colorado 80403 USA

You will love this video. Award-winning animator and son of India's famous magician P.C. Sorcar Sr., Manick Sorcar Jr. has cut a cinematographic gemstone out of a classic fairy tale. Deepa is uncaring and greedy; Rupa is kind and caring. After the mischievous Wind takes her cotton, each sister makes a long journey all the way to the Old Woman in the Moon to retrieve it. On the way they encounter a hungry cow, a thirsty horse, and a tired, old banyan tree needing their help. Indian video animation of this calibre is rare. A bit of innovative magic which makes the video even more fun is the tricky blending of real-life acting (Manick's daughter Piya and Deepa Reddy) with animated characters. All four of his animation films have been feted at numerous film festivals and won 11 international awards. Deep and Rupa beat out Walt Disney at this year's Chicago International Film and TV Festival. You should acquire this enchanting, superb video for your children and friends of all ages. (And yes, this is the same Manick Sorcar who does our page one cartoons. But we deny any corporate bias!)

A COMMON DESTINY. Directed and produced by Gayil Nalls and John Steele. Color, 60 minutes, $24.95 (plus shipping and applicable tax). Available from: Mystic Fire Direct, PO Box 2249, Livonia, Michigan 48151. 1-800-292-9001

Two films are included here, companion to each other, bringing forth the message of the Native American Indians that modern civilization is out of harmony

with cosmic order, spiritually bankrupt and destroying the very planet that nurtures us. Part one is called Walking in Both Worlds. Jewell Praying Wolf James of the Lummi tribe, sitting on the stump of a recently felled old growth cedar tree, tells of the Native Indians' spiritual view of life and living in a white man's nation. "Growing up Indian in America is having one foot in both worlds," he says. "If you are part of the Indian world you are automatically part of the spiritual world with all things being interconnected. When we look at the 'other world,' everything breaks down. The clear-cutting of forests with trees over a thousand years old pains him: "We don't realize that a whole forest has died to make toilet paper. That kind of says it all." Hindus will feel kindred spirits talking here. I found their soulful voices very inspiring and very Hindu-like.

Part TWO is The Hopi Prophecy featuring a rare gathering of Native American leaders-and several non-Indians-seeking to resolve the problems that face indigenous communities in the West. The gathering includes Hopi elder Thomas Banyacya, Kenneth Cooper (Cha-Das-Ska-Dum) of the Lummi tribe, K'in Bor, a Lacandone Mayan, Mexico. Sitting in a sacred Circle, Thomas Banyacya interprets the apocalyptic message of an unusual petroglyph in Arizona on Second Mesa of the Hopi tribe and explains the cause of today's ecological plight: You, the white people have a sugary snack food called "Cracker Jacks." On the box it says, "The more you eat, the more you want." Seems like they [the white man] are like that. This is a professional, simple production, a rare and valuable document for all who want to hear the ancestral voice of the people who have lived in harmony with America soil for 10,000 years and more.