Book Reviews
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THE TEMPLE IN THE HOUSE, Finding the Sacred in Everyday Architecture, by Anthony Lawlor, AIA, pb., 240 pages, us$17.95. Tarcher/Putnam Publications, 5858 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 200, Los Angeles, California 90036, USA.

Seeing sacredness in the environment and creating that sacredness with architecture is the subject of this book. By examining architectural styles from around the world, with many references to Indian architecture and Hindu temples, Lawlor shows us how common building elements can become symbols of the sacred. Purposely used in this way, symbols become more than what they appear to be.

The gate, for example, allows us to move from one experience to another. The lock, the key and the threshold become obvious symbols of inner events. The character of a path can be formal and orderly or delicate and mysterious, labyrinthian or like a freeway. Bridges convey a leap of consciousness over a void-a leap of faith. The tower, or steeple, and sanctuaries of religious buildings are as polarities, the outer being very different than the inner. The tower is a symbol of the rising aspiration of the spirit. It is the axial pillar and referral point. It is the skydoor, a connection of heaven and earth. The sanctury is where we go inward for transformation, the portal to the divine wherein all experience is reconciled.

Lawlor continues to explore and explain the eight fundamental forms or elements in every building: the floor, stability; the wall, consciousness of duality, outside and inside, mine and yours; the pillar, symbol of hope; the roof unifies and

is a canopy for dreams; space, defined by architecture; windows, elements of inner connection; doorways are prime symbols of the movement of consciousness; ornament, where one thing meets another and rooms, where all the other forms come together.

Inspiring writing that articulates how buildings can reveal the sacredness residing in the simplest of elements-reflecting and harmonizing the animating force resident everywhere. Each page includes several pertinent quotes, many drawn from Hindu scriptures and sages. Lawlor quotes from Sri Ramakrishna, "I used to worship the Mother at Dakshinisvar. But it was revealed to me that all things are sacred. Then I began to shower everything with flowers."-dr

THE INTEGRAL YOGA, Sri Aurobindo's Teaching and Method of Practice, by Sri Aurobindo, pb., 401 pages, us$14.95. Lotus Light Publications, Box 325, Twin Lakes, Wisconsin 53181, USA.

These are selected letters of Sri Aurobindo compiled by the Sri Aurobindo Ashram Archives and Research Library. Divided into three sections, the first part deals mainly with the philosophical and psychological foundations of the teaching. The second part deals with the method of practice and the last part with elements of both. From the publisher's notes, "Sri Aurobindo wrote most of the letters during the 1930s to men and women living in his ashram in Pondicherry. At this time he was concentrated on his own spiritual practice and saw and spoke with practically no one. But he kept in touch with the seekers who gathered around him by means of correspondence." An excellent compilation, affording intimate glimpses into one of the great Hindu minds of the century, and a unique opportunity to sit and listen in as the teacher responds to his disciple's deepest questions. The extensive glossary of names and terms is most useful.-dr

UNDOING, Returning to Simplicity, by Rudite Emir, pb., 157 pages, us$12.00. Amber Publishing, 809B Cuesta Drive, Suite 163, Mountain View, California 94040, USA.

Here is a manual of techniques for the realization of Vedanta, especially adapted for those living the frenetic, extroverted lifestyle of the West. Many of us have at one time or another experienced a moment of perfect silence and clarity, a

stand-still, yet fleeting moment, in which the mind ceases its chatter and we gaze directly at Reality. Ms. Emir, a long-time disciple of Sri Swami Chinmayananda, describes such moments in her own life, and through guided visualizations and mental exercises, offers the reader ways to cultivate those brief flashes, and develop them into an on-going consciousness. Many of the procedures are similar to Sri Ramana Maharishi's famous "Who am I?" technique. Here also are techniques for calming the restless mind and disciplining the sluggish mind. The Prescriptions for Inner Health section includes a list of "symptoms" such as "You find your life dull and uninteresting; A health crisis is threatening your life; Though eager to change, you feel trapped in your old habits," each with an appropriate "prescription." The author describes results one can expect if the techniques are employed: "One day you find yourself exhibiting uncharacteristic poise in the middle of an argument. Another time, you see yourself feeling content despite failure. Yet again, you watch yourself being loving toward a belligerent neighbor. At times like these, you find that you are centered in the silence at the core of your nature, not rushing off with your fickle mind." I must restrain myself. It's hard to resist quoting every trenchant line. The author writes in a crisp, literate style, imbued with humor and a gift for metaphor and analogy. The material is at once philosophically profound and eminently practical. It's a gem.-gr

THE PEOPLE WHO HUGGED THE TREES, Adapted by Deborah Lee Rose with pictures by Borgotta Saflund, hb., 32 pages, us$12.95. Roberts Rinehart International, c/o Mizen Books, Schull, West Cork, Republic of Ireland.

Some years back, Hinduism Today featured articles on the Chipko (Hug the Tree) Movement in India, whose members support nonviolent resistance to the cutting of trees. Their efforts were preceeded nearly three centuries ago by several hundred Rajasthani villagers who not only risked their lives to save their forest, but ultimately sacrificed them. In this beautiful retelling of the folk tale, there is a happier ending. The illustrations are exceptional, and truly convey life in a Rajasthan village. The story is an excellent one to nurture environmental concern in children and also to engender an understanding of the power of the individual to influence events.-gr

SAVITRI, By Aaron Shephard, illustrated by Vera Rosenberry, hb., 38 pages, us$15.95. Albert Whitman and Company, 6340 Oakton Street, Morton Grove, Illinois 60053-2723, USA.

Savitri is a retelling of the famous story in the Mahabharata in which a wife through her personal character and devotion is able to overcome even the inexorable Yama, Lord of Death. This is a particularly pertinent tale because it portrays a woman of great intelligence and courage, as well as virtue. For today's young women she is a fuller, more multi-dimensional type of role model. Also potent is the reminder that Savitri is powerful by virtue of her Virtue. Although neither the author nor the illustrator are Indian, the story and pictures show great sensitivity to Hindu lore and culture. The God Yama is sympathetically portrayed, not as a terrifying spectre, but as a shining, princely figure, with a gentle voice. We so liked the detailed watercolors, we commissioned the artist to do a special poster for us.-gr

AYURVEDIC COOKING FOR SELF HEALING, by Usha Lad and Dr. Vasant Lad, pb, 246 pages, us$15.95. The Ayurvedic Press, Box 23445, Albuquerque, New Mexico, 87192-1445, USA.

Those of us familiar with the work of Dr. Lad (founder and president of the Ayurvedic Institute) appreciate his very profound, even mystical, approach to this science. Here is a real healer. This is the most sophisticated and comprehensive offering that we have seen of this genre. There is the prerequisite discussion of the doshas, in depth, followed by Factors That Affect our Health, Taste and Digestion, Food Combining. Setting Up an Ayurvedic Kitchen, Menu Planning and more. Valuable appendices include charts for determining doshas and food classifications. The recipes are very traditional, well suited to the cook familiar with Indian cuisine but also adapted to those living in the West. For depth and breadth, this book would be hard to surpass. Anyone seriously pursuing the ayurvedic understanding and way of life, and anyone who has others in their care, should have it.-gr

MYSTICISM OF THE RAMAYANA, An abridged version of this great epic with its subtle mystic implications, by Swami Jyotirmayananda, pb., 312 pages, us$11.95. Yoga Research Foundation, 6111 S.W. 74th. Ave., South Miami, Florida 33143, USA.

Similar to Swami's Mysticism of the Mahabharata (reviewed in Hinduism Today, April 1994,) the stories of the Ramayana are examined and explained in their multi-layered profundity. Swami beautifully unravels and retells each story on the higher levels of mystical meaning that lie beyond the familiar narrative drama of one of India's great epics. Swami also evaluates the two versions of the Ramayana,

that of Valmiki and that of Tulasidas. Destined to be one of the great commentaries on the Ramayana, it is also smooth yet rich and inspiring reading.-dr

HAPPY VEGGIES, by Mayumi Oda, hb, 32 pages, us$12.50, Parallax Press, Box 7355, Berkeley, California 94707, USA.

In this wide-eyed and warm-hearted appreciation of nature, Mayumi Oda introduces us to the exuberant denizens of her vegetable garden. "Cabbages wake up early. They open their leaves and begin to sing." Here is a garden where vegetables thump, dangle, dream, sing, pop, feast, and of course, grow their way through the four seasons, in the company of the buzzing, crawling, fluttering, burrowing varieties of garden inhabitants. The gentle message is enlivened by the author's acclaimed art work, highly spontaneous and vibrant, giving us images that really do seem about to jump out of the book. A soothing, uplifting experience for younger children, as well as those of us older ones who are often too rushed and too preoccupied to stop and listen to the vegetables.-gr

THE BLUE JACKAL, Written and illustrated by Rashmi Sharma, hb, 25 pages, us$14.95. Vidya Books, P.O. Box 7788, Berkeley, California 94707-0788, USA.

Most of us are familiar with the Panchatantra, in which the elements of good character are imparted to children through the vehicle of animal allegories; animals having all the faults, virtues and foibles of humans, often learning life's lessons through their mistakes. Most versions of the Panchatantra are presented in the original classical format of a main story that spins into smaller supporting vignettes, one flowing into the next. Ms. Sharma offers us a rendering of one story at a time. This is a convenient arrangement for teaching and enjoying the Panchatantra without having to use the whole continuum. The Blue Jackal is the amusing story of a jackal turned king of the animals, highlighting the weaknesses of superstition and pretense.-gr

A BRAHMIN'S CASTLES IN THE AIR, written and illustrated by Rashmi Sharma, hb, 16 pages, us$14.95. Vidya Books, P.O. Box 7788, Berkeley, California 94707-0788, USA.

A Brahmin's Castles is the story of a poor young brahmin lad who spends all his time dreaming of the future rather than working to create it, and his sudden gentle jolt back to reality. This and the above are the first two volumes in a series. They are fun reading, with lively and whimsical illustrations-valuable in their capacity to instruct and entertain.-gr

THE HEALING CUISINE, by Harish Johari, pb, 264 pages, us$16.95. Healing Arts Press, One Park Street, Rochester, Vermont 05767, USA.

"Cooking is an art when the cook is inspired and completely absorbed in inventing a new dish, a new taste. When the cook, like a medicine man, uses herbs and spices to enhance the nutritional value, cooking is a science. But when the art and science of cooking combine in a cook, cooking becomes alchemy and food becomes Tantra." There are lots of books on Indian cooking and there are numerous books on Ayurveda. Here is a felicitous combination of both. The author discusses the basics of Ayurveda: doshas, six tastes, etc., as well as material more usually treated in western nutrition-proteins, carbohydrates, fiber, fats, vitamins and minerals. Guidelines for Preparing and Eating Foods includes dos and don'ts for healthy eating and cures for indigestion. The recipes are straightforward and easy to follow, and include a section for children and the elderly. An occasional story, proverb, or quote from the Vedas adds color, and there is an interesting discussion of milk, sometimes a dietary controversy. This is a fine introduction both to the science of Ayurveda and to its cuisine.-gr

YOUR MONEY OR YOUR LIFE, Transforming your Relationship with Money and Achieving Financial Independence, by Joe Dominguez and Vicki Robin, hb., 350 pages, us$20.00. Viking, 375 Hudson St., New York, New York 10014, USA.

Though not a "Hindu book," this title is valuable and applicable to Hindus striving for the legitimate and traditional goal of artha, or wealth. The authors outline a nine-step program for transforming how we earn, spend and think about money. It shows readers a painless way to get out of debt, develop savings, reorder their material priorities, and achieve financial intelligence, integrity and independence. Basic to the program are the disciplines of keeping track of every cent that comes into or goes out of your life, developing a monthly budget of where it is all going, and minimizing spending. An important step to financial independence is identifying that "cross-over point," where monthly investment income exceeds monthly expenses. An enlightened approach to withdrawing from

the "rat-race" and creating an outer security which allows for spiritual inquiry.-dr