

[Video Reviews](#)

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Video Reviews

This month, we are featuring four non-English, movies/videos in response to our growing readership whose first language is other than English. This month's selections are on the fun side with reincarnational themes. As always, a reminder to all readers to inform us of movies or videos that you really like and think would uplift, inform, educate, entertain or inspire other readers.

Reviews by Vidya Chandrasekhar (VC)

Purandharadasa (1982) Produced by Gnanananda Seva Samajam Bala Mandali under the auspices of H. H. Sadguru Haridasgiri (Guruji). Stars kids of the GSS Bala Mandali. K. Kalpa plays Purandharadasa. Hindi. Approx. 2 hrs. Video available through GSS. For now, order by calling 011-91-44-827-9889 (Madras, India).

Vishnu's nephew, the sage Narada, promises that if he were on earth, he would never forget his Lord. So he is sent there as a test, taking birth as 16th-century Carnatic singer/saint Purandharadasa. He starts out in life as a stingy money-lender but changes into a great bhakta after miraculous events occur. The boy Purandharadasa's devotion is so emotionally charged, it was getting even the "cool" guys I know teary-eyed watching it.

Beautifully shown is how Purandharadasa's spiritual breakthrough comes from the grace of Ganesha who appears to him in a dream and teaches him the musical scale Sa Ri Ga Ma Pa Dha Ni which he thereafter uses to write songs in praise of God and introduces the Carnatic music format to the world. But when his fame rises and his ego swells, Goddess Saraswati comes to rekindle his devotion with a test. Dasa's soulful song to Saraswati, begging forgiveness (shot inside a temple) gives

one goosebumps. Complete with dancing-through-the-clouds scenes and other Indian-movies-only cinematographic musts. The entire cast is under 14-so pure, animated and professional. I loved it. So uplifting. My family could watch it dozens of times. -VC

Lok Parlok (1979) Stars Jeetendra and Jaya Prada. Hindi. Approx. 3 hours. Available at Indian stores.

So you die and go to the Devaloka. Divine beings determine it's not karmically the right time and send you back. Right? Well that's just what happened to a surprised Jeetendra in this hilarious, heavenly comedy that will foil even the best of plot-hackers. Jeetendra's counterpart, a lovely apsara, is played by Jaya Prada, who gets caught in a total life/death quandary of who's-alive, who's-supposed-to-be, who's-dead-but-really isn't and could-never-be. Complete with devas who come to earth, India, and get mistaken for Hindi actors tussle with huge gold maces and chase scenes with gandharvas in silk dhotis and gold crowns. One note: this is Bollywood and their scriptwriters are no theologians, so ingest the philosophy with a grain of salt. -VC

Chandramukhi (1993) Produced by Sawan Kumar. Hindi. Stars Sreedevi and Salman Khan. Approx. 3 hours. Available at local Indian shops.

Written by top actor Salman Khan, this is a funny imitation/combination of Big, Superwoman and The Little Mermaid. Sreedevi plays the nameless daughter of an Amazonian planet Queen leader. Sree daydreams of visiting Earth, and finally is forced to travel there in search of a stolen magic feather that could cause the destruction of her planet. She meets up with a little boy who is battling with an abusive uncle trying to take his fortune. Sree grants the boy's wish of being big so he can defend himself. Predictably, Sri then falls in love with her new hero/creation.

Mostly just healthy, fun family entertainment, scriptwriters did squeeze in the quintessential Bhagavad Geeta teaching about love vs. duty as Sree has to decide between the love of her life and her duty toward protecting her planet. Also, her conscience is pricked that she is dangerously toying with the boy's natural karmic pattern. Enjoy. -VC

Jagadeka Veerudu Atiloka Sundari (1990) Stars Sreedevi and Chiranjeevi.
Telugu. Approx 3 hours. Available at local Indian shops.

This time Sreedevi is an apsara (Hindu dancing demi-goddess from Indradeva's court) who visits Earth to prance in the snow. She loses her power ring which forces her to stay and look for it. She meets kind-hearted Chiranjeevi, a human god who protects homeless orphans. He finds the ring and uses the ring to ward off black magicians. Still, she wants her ring back and in her efforts to get it, she falls in love. So does she fly back off to her heavenly home or settle down to being Mrs. Chiranjeevi? Lightweight be assured, but it does put forward the reality of inner worlds and the idea that virtue is a power. -VC

The Barbarian West. Narrated by host/writer Michael Wood. Produced by Maryland Public Television and Central Independent Television, UK. 57 min. US \$29.95 Order from: Ambrose Video Publishing Inc. 1290 Ave. of Americas, Suite 2245, N.Y., N.Y. 10104.

Taking the Eastern perspective of life, Wood leads us through Western history from its Greco/Roman beginnings to Sir Francis Bacon's and momentous treatise declaring science's supremacy over God. Wood says this is where the West really got off-track, into matter, away from spirit. Final frames of this uncomplimentary portrait of Western societies-and their claims of superiority over Eastern cultures-are cuts from NASA spaceships to a worship scene in Meenaskhi temple, South India, where Wood suggests real civilization has been flourishing for millennia. I saw this movie with a group of Indians. Many welled up with tears of pride at seeing India so forcefully appreciated for its spirituality and culture. A must for building Hindu/Indian pride and dismantling West-is-best mentality in youth and adults.

India Empire of the Spirit. Narrated by host/writer Michael Wood. Produced by Maryland Public Television and Central Independent Television, UK. 57 min. US \$29.95 Order from: Ambrose Video Publishing Inc. 1290 Ave. of Americas, Suite 2245, N.Y. N.Y. 10104.

Finally, a big-bucks production on Hinduism that is sophisticated, intelligent, takes the Hindu side and wryly calls the West "barbarians" and the British "invaders"

who left few cultures of the world intact."

This and Barbarian West are part of a superb six-part series on world civilizations called Legacy. Opening scenes of a Kumbha Mela show 15 million Hindus wading into the Ganges. Wood narrates: "History is full of empires of the sword, but India alone created an empire of the spirit." Great for youth to see to nurture Hindu self-respect.