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A White Granite Temple, Carved in Bangalore, But Destined for Hawaii

After years of coordination among people in many countries, the first five white granite foundation stones brought from India were laid three feet underground at San Marga Iraivan Temple site during Pancha Shila Nyasa ceremonies held on April 4th and 5th in Hawaii, USA. The temple is part of the 51-acre Hindu monastic center founded by Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami on the banks of the sacred Wailua River, five miles from the extinct volcano, Mt. Waialeale, on the paradise island of Kauai, the world's most remote land mass. Here is the head monastery of the Kailasa Parampara and the administrative headquarters for Saiva Siddhanta Church (founded in 1949) and Himalayan Academy Publications, publishers of Hinduism Today.

The two-day-long pujas, conducted by two eminent Hindu priests from India-Sivacharya Sambamurthi and Sivacharya Bhairava-inaugurated the foundation work for the 35-foot high, 108-foot-long Siva temple that is being carved entirely of white granite in Bangalore, India. Also present was Sri Vaidyanathan Ganapati Sthapati, who has been guiding the carving of this ornate temple, since 1981. Local guests were specially invited to the usually cloistered monastery. They included the Honorable Maryanne Kusaka, Mayor of Kauai and Hawaiian priestess Leimomi Mo'okini Lum, priest Kahuna Kahu Abraham Aua'ia Makiola who invoked the blessings of the Hawaiian Gods.

Subramuniyaswami spoke to over one hundred devotees from Malaysia, Mauritius (near Africa), Scotland, England, Canada, Singapore, Australia, Sri Lanka and USA, "Each great world religion has places of pilgrimage that hold within them mystery and blessings. San Marga Iraivan Temple is such a sanctuary in the center of Kauai's Hindu monastery. It is not a public temple. It is a destination of pilgrimage for the astutely devout. Being a moksha temple, it is approached only by those seeking the highest of the high on pilgrimage-freedom from rebirth. We and many Hindu religious leaders, sadhus, swamis, mahatmas, as well as heads of

government and members of parliament all look at this beautiful temple as one of the outstanding creations of India, India's gift to the West." He asked devotees to think of Sri Tiruchy Mahaswamigal, Sri Balagangadharanatha Swami, Siva Puriswami and all the mahatmas of India who were helping the project.

Funded by well-wishers the world over, the temple is being wrought in stone by India's architects and craftsmen working under the aegis of India's holy men and priests. Iraivan is the first totally hand-carved stone Hindu temple ever to be erected outside of Asia. Enshrined in the inner sanctum will be the world's largest single-pointed, six-sided quartz crystal-a swayambhu, 700-pound, 39-inch-tall, sphatika Sivalinga.

Mayor Kusaka spoke: "I am very humbled to be included in this ceremony. My impression today is one of peace and humility. I witnessed great devotion, discipline and respect here. I am extremely impressed by the children, who are so peaceful and quiet. They live in a realm of love. I shall carry the memory of this day in my heart and draw strength from it." Former Kauai mayor Joanne Yukimura noted, "I feel Kauai is so blessed and privileged to be the site of this temple. It fits with the idea that Kauai is to be a model for the world-One God, One World."

Perhaps never in history have Hindu and Hawaiian priests and priestesses joined together in blessing the land. Two kahunas offered their potent ancient chants and poured holy waters (representing life) and salt (which preserves life) into the foundation chamber.

Once placed, the stones were covered with thousands of precious gems, gold and silver offerings sent by devotees from all over the world, stones and earth from sacred sites in India, Europe, Australia, mainland USA, Russia, and holy sites in Central and South America. Sacred Indian waters and vibhuti bathed the stones along with offerings from sadhus at the Kumbha Mela held in January, including the Sankaracharyas of Sringeri and Kanchi, Swami Chidananda Saraswati and others. The crypt was then sealed in concrete, a seed to enliven and empower the structure.

Participants' sentiments were summed up by the renowned, 71-year-old Dr. Sambamurthi Sivachariya, president of the South India Priests Association, India,

chief priest for the pujas, "I am too old to go on pilgrimage to Mount Kailas, a life-long dream of mine. But now that I have come to this sacred island, I feel my dream has been fulfilled. I have come to the home of God. In my life I have traveled all over the world and performed over 2,000 ceremonies for new Hindu temples. But I have never experienced the love, the depth of auspiciousness and sanctity that I have experienced while performing these ceremonies here on Kauai."