

[125,000 South Africans Jam Traffic at Temple Opening](#)

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This fall there was something else for Hindus to talk about in South Africa besides the country's spasms of apartheid violence. From beauty parlors to skyscraper offices the buzz of the town was the Oct. 18-20 grand opening of ISKCON's Sri Radha Radhanath Temple of Understanding in Chatsworth, outside Durban.

When the inauguration weekend arrived, bumper to bumper traffic shut down the main approach highway as an estimated 125,000 Hindus (with curious Christians and Muslims joining the crunch) headed for the temple's 3 shimmering spiers. The crowd was so huge that many had to go home without setting foot inside the finely crafted interior meant as a simulacrum of Lord Krishna's heaven.

The white Afrikaner media called the opening one of the greatest religious events of S. Africa's Hindu history. The function was presided over by H.H. Srila Bhagavan Goswami Maharaja Gurudeva, one of Hare Krishna's 16 sannyas gurus of this Vaishnav Hindu sect. His ISKCON territory includes S.A. Guest speakers included Zulu Chief Buthelezi and A. Rajbansi, Chairman of the Minister's Council in the South African House of Delegates.

Mr. Rajbansi stated that the majestic beauty and genuine peace of the Temple would enable his House of Delegates committee to identify more land for temple construction in high-density Hindu areas. Chief Buthelezi called the temple a triumph over adversity, saying, "the temple's magnificence and spirituality could not be here if racial hatred had already dehumanised us."

There were very real adversities, at times seeming to grind down the \$1-million temple's progress. Visa entanglements for the Hare Krishna workforce, fund-raising ups and downs and technological problems all had to be faced and resolved. Begun in 1981 with earthwork construction and ending with the laser beam enlargement

of giant Krishna murals arrayed across the main sanctum's octagon ceiling, every nuance of the design suggests some Vaishnav spiritual truth.

In contrast with ISKCON's New Vrindaban, W. Virginia, USA, classic South India design of its planned Temple of Understanding, the South Africa temple is contemporary, a neo-Bengal design. It is startlingly bright in the rising, noonday and setting sun as 35,000 specially fabricated stainless steel tiles reflect light off the main roof.

The impressive turnout at the temple opening has energized the imagination of hundreds of thousands of Hindus and sparked observations that, despite seige-like Christian efforts to convert Hindus, Hinduism as a whole in South Africa is standing tall and strong.

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