

[Pennsylvania Artist/Priest Takes Sacred Skills to India](#)

Category : [May 1990](#)

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Western-born Craftsman Commissioned to Restore Vishnu Temple Murals in South India

He's one of a rare breed - maybe one of a kind. The art world knows him as David Michael Donnangelo. Hindus in the United States and India know him as Subramaniya Dayananda. To them he is not only an artist, but also a Hindu priest. At age 33, this uniquely talented man, born in Pennsylvania with a name bearing an uncanny resemblance to that of the renowned Italian Renaissance painter, Michelangelo, has developed his creative abilities and diverse interests under the benign influences of Hindu deities.

Swami Parvati of the Sri Rajarajeshwari Peetham in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania, speaks of Dayananda with great respect. She says that he has long been affiliated with the Stroudsburg Temple and the Holy Shankaracharya Order both as a one-time reclusive monk and a long-time pujari who officially converted into Hinduism and was ordained into temple service through the sacred thread ceremony.

"Dayananda has helped in the pujas and priestly services in many different ways for many years," Swami Parvati explains. "He was a full time monk when he was very young. He started coming here when he was about 14. He has also done some very nice artwork for us. He has also done some very nice artwork for us. He just completed two pictures of Hindu deities which he gave to us as gifts. One is of lord Ganesha, and it's just beautiful."

While Dayananda was living as a monk at Sri Rajarajeshwari Peetham in the Pocono Mountains he cultivated a mystical approach to life which deeply affected his art. After three years in this monastery, he returned to society and is now a

successful professional artist fast accruing a distinguished reputation of his own. He owns and runs Gallery Enterprises, a popular art shop in his home town of Bethlehem. He maintains a studio in the tranquil Pennsylvania Poconos where he produces most of his work.

Like his famous rendering of Mother Theresa (a copy of which hangs in the Vatican in Rome), Dayananda's portrait of Mahatma Gandhi, which includes a garland of 108 beads and a chakra symbolizing cosmic creation and absorption, has been widely acclaimed in both the US and India. It illustrates the influence of a diverse variety of artists in his career ranging from the Renaissance painters of Europe and the Agamic staphis of India to famous surrealists like Salvador Dali. US owners of Dayananda's works include celebrities Joan Rivers and Jerry Lewis.

The Mahabalipuram Project

Pennsylvania is not the only place Dayananda is working as an artist. He's also currently involved in a project in Mahabalipuram, India, at the Shri Arulmigu Stalasayana Perumal Temple, which is currently being restored. In this temple, which houses as its main deity a 15-foot sleeping Lord Vishnu made of solid granite, Dayananda has been contracted to produce ten six-by-ten-foot murals on the outside walls of the sanctum sanatorium to depict the ten incarnations of Lord Vishnu. Additionally, he will paint 24" by 20" oil and acrylic studies of each mural to be displayed later in New Delhi and on tour in the US. Bombay Broadcasting just completed a short documentary on this project called Archana.

Hospital Project?

Inspired by an urge to serve, Dayananda has explored using art in a number of unusual ways. As a result of his investigation into "Isomorphism," (the positive relationship between aesthetics and health), he is working on a project which he refers to as "Hospital Healing Art." In this unique artwork, which he less academically refers to as "pretty pastel imagery," he utilizes calming, therapeutic colors and designs to harmonize the nervous system of hospital patients and "evoke an intense feeling of well being and positive energy." This, in turn, stimulates the type of healthy mental attitude that is such an integral part of the natural healing process of mind and body. Dayananda's contributions in this rare

style have proven that art can have therapeutic as well as aesthetic value.

Address: Subramaniya Dayananda, R.D. 3 Box 3430, Stroudsburg, PA, 18360, USA.

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