IYI LOTUS Welcomes The Dancing Siva Nataraja
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Karan Singh Finds a Home for His Ishta Devata At Swami Satchidananda's Virginia Ashram

Lord Siva Nataraja is dancing in Buckingham, Virginia. For five years Dr. Karan Singh, former Ambassador to the US from India, roved the US in search of a home for his seven-foot, bronze, Natraja murthi, exquisitely crafted in Mahabalipuram, South India. There were many opportunities, but none seemed quite right until a hill towering over Swami Satchidananda's Yogaville LOTUS temple beckoned. Patience paid off. Today, construction of a shrine for the deity is under way high atop this hill, now affectionately named the "Kailas of the West." Lord Nataraja is the Ishta Devata (chosen murthi for personal worship) of both Dr. Singh and Swami Satchidananda.

It has always been a part of Swami Satchidananda's ecumenical dream that LOTUS (Light of Truth Universal Shrine), which honors all faiths, would have individual shrines nearby. This Siva shrine will be the first of these. The land was cleared in the spring of 1990, and at high noon on March 10, the full moon day, there was a ceremonial placement of a gem box in the foundation. Swamiji, Dr. Singh and representatives from Integral Yoga Institutes all over the world came forward to place crystals in the box. It was a festive event with hundreds of balloons rising high in the sky while fire crackers banged and crackled.

When HINDUISM TODAY called Yogaville to get the scoop on this ground-breaking event, the Nataraja murthi had just arrived. As the phone rang, its raised hand of blessing was just emerging through the straw of the packing crate being dismantled by eager devotees hungering for a first look.

It's no wonder that Dr. Singh was attracted to LOTUS land. This serene, rural

property in Buckingham, Virginia, covering nearly 750 acres of woodland in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, is its own natural temple. Add to this the peaceful, useful and yogic lifestyle established by world-renowned yoga teacher and ecumenical leader Swami Satchidananda and you have with all the necessary ingredients for true spiritual alchemy.

Karan Singh has been one of India's national leaders for the last three decades. He is an authority on Hindu culture and spirituality and is committed to "international understanding" and global concerns. He is now Chairman of the International Committee of the Temple of Understanding and Founder-President of the Virat Hindu Samaj, a pan-Indian movement, promoting solidarity among the many other organizations working in Hindu reform and social services.

The Future

It's too early to tell exactly how the Nataraja Deity will be worshipped when it is fully installed in its completed shrine. Swami Satchidananda has not as yet established a formal routine of ritual, but it is clear that "daily worship and attendance of the Deity will be in order." Right now, the murthi is being temporarily housed in Sivananda Centenary Hall (the main Yogaville sat sang hall).

The Nataraja Shrine is scheduled to be completed in approximately seven months. Meanwhile, Swamiji and Yogaville ashram residents expect murthis of Lords Ganesha, Shiva, Krishna, and Durga (all marble murthis made in Jaipur) to arrive within the next few months.

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