America's First Hindu Church Turns to Micro-Computer Technology
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Saivite Monastics Take a "Byte" Out of High-Tech "Apples" to Nourish World Outreach Mission and Devour Office Chores

Navigated largely by micro-computers, the unmanned U.S. spacecrafts, Voyagers I and II, encountered Jupiter and Saturn head on and are now sailing out of the outermost extremities of our solar system and beyond. The U.S. Colombia space-shuttle has ventured into low-gravity Earth orbit for an unprecedented second time using an intricate array of micro-computers. In today's specialized laboratories, the microcomputer is the scientist's second brain. Small businesses to mega-corporations depend on computer power for their most efficient production. Universities, high schools and elementary schools have incorporated micro-computers into their learning environments. Even a quarter of a million private homes in the U.S. daily use their own micro-computer for everything from enjoying video games to forecasting their annual household budgets. The micro-chip, micro-computer technology has become a much-used tool of life. By the end of the 1980's they will be as common as telephones. Widespread as the micro-computer's employment is, it would be expected that this useful technology could be applied directly to religious mission purposes within Saivism. In essence, Kauai Aadheenam has done just that.

You may be wondering what we mean by "Kauai Aadheenam takes a 'byte' out of high-tech 'Apples.'" It's simply a pun. A "byte" is an increment of computer-readable information. It is what the computer processes electronically. "Apple" is the trade name of a company that manufactures a very popular and powerful micro-computer utilizing the latest computer technology. Kauai Aadheenam's "Apples" are two micro-computer systems purchased this last October to facilitate its work in global Saivism and to assist in planning Saiva Siddhanta Church's future programs and facilities. A full year's research was conducted before opting for these particular systems, which were purchased at Computer Land of Honolulu. After their installation, Gurudeva, Sivaya Subramuniyaswami, Aadheenakartar of Kauai Aadheenam commented, "We are judiciously using technology to help bring Saivism into the technological age. The knowledge of these intricate tools has come from the inner worlds of the Gods, and

as Saivites, we are inspired to use this knowledge and these tools to further our religion, just as they have furthered the understanding of science. As a global religion, Saivism will be greatly aided by global communication through modern technology."

Of the two almost-identical micro-computer systems, one was installed in Gurudev's office. Accessing the computer's versatile programs and permanently stored memory, Gurudeva's staff uses the computer system to assist him in guiding Saiva Siddhanta Church's short and long-range activities. Already, just within its infancy, the micro-computer has been employed to develop a multitude of data files and time-management schedules. For example, one data disk catalogs the church's on-going publication programs and projects. Research and translation requirements, and a project outline are all electronically stored on the specially-treated magnetic disks. Several more data disks list the Aadheenam's Saivite and Oriental artifacts, Kadavul Hindu Temple's annual archana schedule and the Temple's Saiva festival schedule. The final organizational plan for the 1982 India Odyssey pilgrimage was mapped out on the micro-computer and stored for future reference. Future uses include cataloging and cross referencing Kauai Aadheenam's 4,000-volume theological seminary library and educational applications.

Wizardry is an appropriate synonym for micro-computer technology. Depress a few keys on the micro-computer's keyboard - the selected information is displayed within seconds, glowing luminescently in green lettering on a video monitor. A few more commands and the information is printed noiselessly at 40 characters a second on a small printer attached to the computer. The entire system fits on a small desk a little bigger than a typewriter stand. Its compactness is part of the reason for referring to the computer as micro.

Looking towards the future, the Aadheenam has purchased computer programs oriented towards education. Known as CAI or "computer-assisted instruction" programs, these will enable Gurudeva to instigate the development of custom full-color graphic and audio display programs for use in Saivite schools. Computer-animated sequences could visually depict how the great Gods and devas manifest in the temples during puja or demonstrate for a youngster the meaning of God Siva as being both transcendent and immanent. Saiva scripture, culture, biographies of its sages and saints, the history of its most-revered temples and other religious and educational subjects could be factually and entertainingly presented through the computer medium. In view of the micro-computer's popularity with school-age children, the learning potential is tremendous.

The other Apple micro-computer system is located in Kauai Aadheenam's Church offices, the administrative headquarters of Saiva Siddhanta Church. This computer forms the database for the Church's international Saiva publications distribution and correspondence ministry. It is shared by the three main offices of the Church's headquarters: the Church Office, the Public Relations and Development Office and the World Outreach Mission Office. Like Siddhanta Press, these offices are entirely staffed by monastics of the Church who are residents of Kauai Aadheenam. Most of the publications created by Gurudeva and the Saiva Swami Sangam and printed by Siddhanta Press are distributed by these offices. In order to consistently accomplish this, an unwieldy amount of detailed information needs to be kept track of and maintained - not the least of which is thousands of addresses from over 20 countries. The entire The New Saivite World recipient list is maintained and stored electronically through this computer system. Previous to the computer's installation, this information was all processed by hand - a very time consuming and somewhat inaccurate process. The overall scope of the Church's work was limited by what the office's staff could manually handle. With the micro-computer, thousands of details are handled in split-seconds, giving almost immediate display of the desired information. Attached to this computer is a letter-quality printer (generates high-quality print) that produces copy at 55 characters per second. Mailing labels, bulletins, research papers, lessons, even articles for The New Saivite World can be processed and printed out at very high speed.

The sciences, business and educational fields have dramatically advanced in both knowledge and productivity through micro-computer technology. Applying this same tool to religious purposes, Kauai Aadheenam has increased its service for Saivism by many, many times. Without too much stretch of the imagination, it is possible to envision today's technology being extensively used by Saivite organizations and individuals worldwide to further their religion as it progresses into mankind's future.

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