Carving a Stone Chain
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WONDERMENTS

Carving a Stone Chain

How craftsmen painstakingly sculpt a black-granite masterpiece in 35 days with a hammer and chisel

Master silpis, or stone carvers, show off their artistry by creating three-foot chains out of one piece of black granite. The process takes around 35 man-days, working 10 hours each day and requires years of training. It's a work so demanding that few such chains have been made in the past hundred years. But in Bangalore, India, a team has been trained to revive the art. Twelve chains will hang from the ceiling of San Marga Iraivan Temple (www.saivasiddhanta.com/hawaii/iraivan/) under construction at the Hawaii ashram of Hinduism Today's founder, Satguru Sivaya Subramuniyaswami.

Stage 1, Quarrying: After three man-days of quarrying, the granite arrives at the worksite.

Stage 2, Roughing: The rough stone is made square and smooth so the master architect can draw the outlines of the chain. Five man-days.

Stage 3, Chain Outline: The chain begins to take shape, yet is still one solid stone. Ten man-days.

Stage 4-5, Separation: The chain is carefully broken, with the master architect's supervision, into free rings. Eleven man-days.

Stage 6, Polishing: With five different types of carborundum stones, the carvers spend six man-days polishing and evening out the rings.

Stage 7, Final Product: The finished chain is then inserted and locked into the fancy ceiling stones and adjusted for proper fitting.

(see print version for incredible photos)