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CONTRIBUTORS

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Envisioning the temple

Some contributions to the Iraivan temple project are gifts of abundant, natural talent. Artists Sri Indra Sharma, D.J. Khamis and David Donnangelo felt spiritually driven to depict [see pages 175 and back cover] the unusually sacred temple and lush surrounding grounds.

Rajasthan-born Sharma, 74, is one of India's preeminent religious artists. He's painted Gods, Goddesses, saints and epic heroes in oil and watercolor for 50 years [see ht, Dec. '97]. His son-in-law happens to live on Kauai, and that's how Sharma discovered Subramuniaswami (Gurudeva)--who is the newest focus of his brush. Sharma's latest rendering is an impressive eight-by-five-foot canvas. "I felt Gurudeva to be a saint when we first met," Sharma told Hinduism Today. "I saw a powerful light in his face, and felt I must do some good work for him." Sharma lives in Mumbai and paints 14 hours a day--treating it like a puja. He loves Kauai, feeling it's like heaven on Earth. "The ceremonies and chanting I experience here give a feeling I can't even feel in India," he says.

David Donnangelo, 41, is affiliated with the Rajarajeshwari

Peetham in Pennsylvania, which brought him partially into Hinduism, giving him the name Subramaniya Dayananda. Inspired by his first visit to the Iraivan site ten years ago, he finally was "pushed by Goddess Devi" to put his impressions on canvas this year. Hinduism Today was surprised to get his e-mail invitation to review the unfinished canvas on his website, as the staff didn't even know he was working on the project. The artistic excitement for Dayananda lies in the relationship between Mount Waialeale (symbolic of the mythological Mount Meru), the temple structure and the crystal icon. "Something very spiritually significant will happen on Kauai in the next 50 years," he feels.

Rendering Iraivan temple on canvas is extremely beneficial, because it gives devotees a solid mental image. This, in turn, firmly establishes the temple project on the astral plane, creating a huge thought form that facilitates physical manifestation.

We are grateful for the benefic spirit of these competent artists, who are normally paid well for their work. Giving to Iraivan in kind is common, and encouraged by the temple committee, which welcomes and values all creative contributions.

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ISLAND STYLE

His Brush With Spirit

Kauaian artist listens for God's inner orders

"Before stroking the canvas," D.J.Khamis explained, "I asked God to paint and I would hold the brush." With exemplary devotion, he has spent months over the last few years painting the planned Iraivan temple in a variety of panoramas. He is the most prolific art contributor to the project, in spite of personal obstacles. "I had a quandary with my Christian background," confesses Khamis, 55, on his internal hesitation when asked by Gurudeva to paint the temple. "I took this into meditation, and the rationale I finally took to the canvas was that the purpose of the temple is to glorify God."

Bringing Iraivan Temple and its grounds into reality starts with a mental plan, which Khamis has creatively rendered with his brush. A special result of asking God to paint is that Khamis found "spirits" in his work. "It seems the more sacred the piece, the more there are spirits of light and clouds, mountains, flora, fauna and waterfalls." Khamis equates the sacred setting with the Great Pyramids in its importance. "That translates onto the canvas. The challenge of the temple paintings has elevated my consciousness as an artist."

Khamis turned to painting in the '70s and now runs a gallery on Kauai. He depicts Hawaii's cultural and natural landscape to convey that "the loving Hawaiian civilization must return to world cultures." He's spent years capturing Kauai's nooks and crannies. Being a Kauaian, his adept eye can see and his hand can portray Kauai's nature to the world. Khamis' paintings sell for a lot--in fact he's offering the original canvas of the art on our fold-out this month for ^{US}\$275,000, pledging to donate all proceeds to the temple building fund. That may sound like a lot for one painting, but it's just a prelude to Khamis' goal of fetching \$1 billion for his painting of Goddess Pele, to feed the

world's hungry children.

Khamis was born Catholic, raised with "Father, the Son and Holy Spirit." Now, he admits, knowing Gurudeva, "I'm understanding spirit for the first time. The West is told not to delve into it. I was afraid at first, but was told from within to see spirit everywhere. I hope Westerners can learn to see it in the sky, clouds, trees and water."

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