

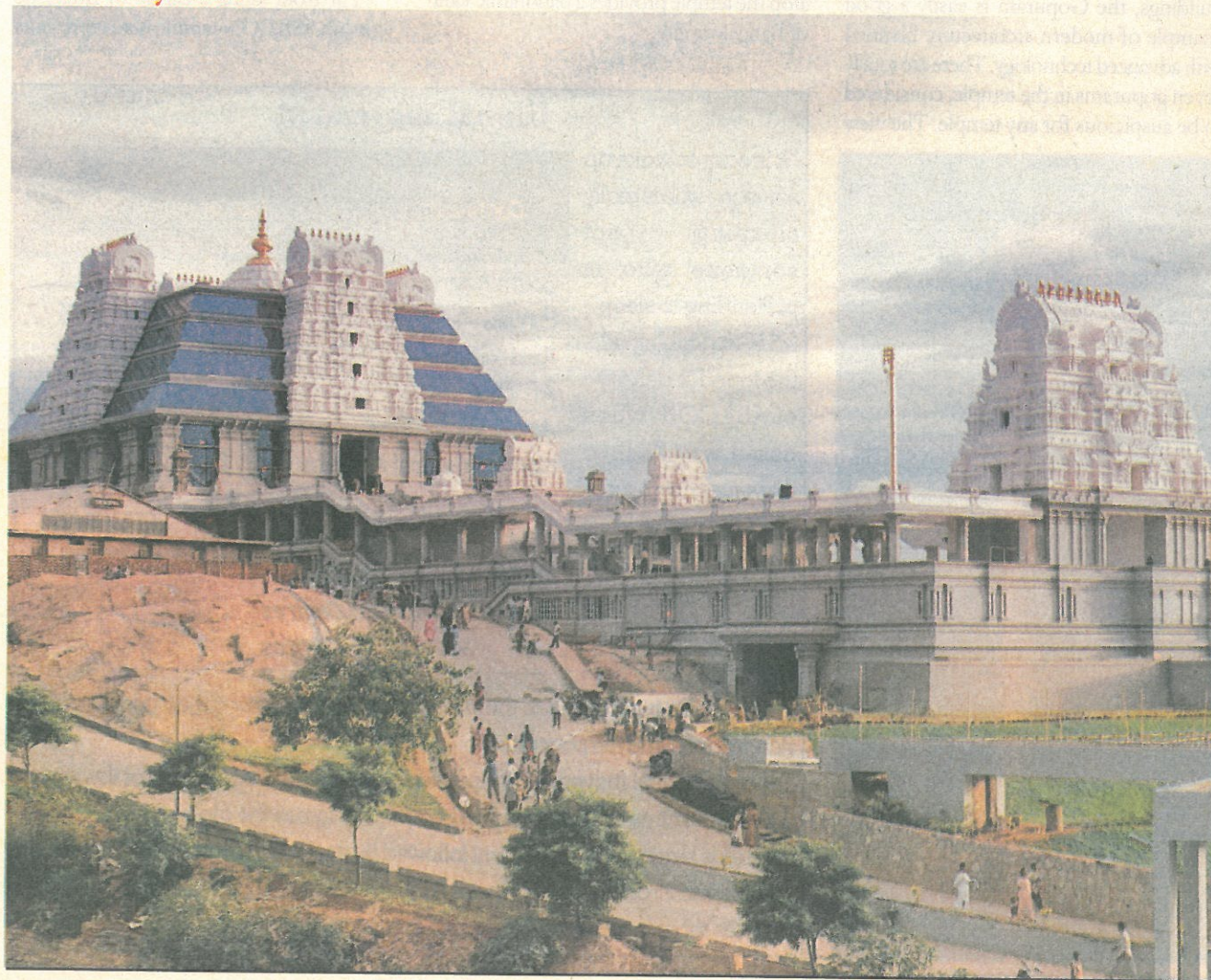
Hi-tech temple

The Hare Krishna temple in Bangalore is a perfect blend of modern technology and spiritual science.

ISKCON - International Society for Krsna Consciousness

■ **G.P. Vinayababu**

Photo Courtesy : Bhakti Vedanta Book Trust



Temple architecture has undergone a sea change in recent times. Gone are the days when artisans used stones or ordinary flooring material for the temple interiors. Temples are now being constructed using marbles, granites, etc. The Birla Mandir at New Delhi and Hyderabad, ISKCON temple in Mumbai are a few such shrines which have extensively used marbles. The Hare Krishna temple in Bangalore is also one such place of worship built at a height on a vast expanse of land and providing hi-tech facilities to its devotees.

One aspect of the temple which readily attracts a visitor at the first instance is the imposing structure of the main temple Gopuram. Designed in the form of a pyramid with the shiny glass exterior commonly seen in the modern high rise buildings, the Gopuram is easily a good example of modern architecture blended with advanced technology. There are totally seven gopurams in the temple, considered to be auspicious for any temple. The view

THE TEMPLE

Total area of temple complex	- 6.5 acres
Total area of constructed temple	- 3,00,000 sq. foot
Total cost of temple construction so far	- Rs 30 crore
Cost of construction of the remaining part	- Rs 4 crore
Period of construction	- 9 years
Cost of setting up multivision theatre	- Rs 2 crore
No. of visitors on week days	- 5-6 thousand
No. of visitors on Saturdays	- 10-12 thousand
No. of visitors on Sundays	- Upwards of 20 thousands
No. of visitors on Vijayadashami day	- 40 thousand
Unique features	
World's tallest Dvajasthamba	- 51 ft.
World's biggest Kalasa	- 36 ft. ht. x 10.8 ft. base (in complete gold)

atop the temple provides a panoramic view of Bangalore city.

Far from being a centre of ritualistic worship, ISKCON temple here represents

Global movement

"It is easy to wake up someone who is really sleeping, not someone who is pretending to sleep", said Srila Prabhupada, the founder acharya of ISKCON when asked why Krishna movement was more popular in the West than in the East. The ISKCON which was set up in the United States in 1966 by Srila

Continent	No. of Countries	No. of Centres
South America	12	55
Europe	32	35
Australasia	04	30
Africa	10	27
Asia & Middle East	22	130
North & Central America	11	77
	91	454
USA -	45 Centres	
India -	60 Centres	
Russia -	35 Centres	
UK -	16 Centres	

Prabhupada, has grown into the largest spiritual movement in the world attracting rich, famous and the poor alike.

Today, ISKCON movement is spread across all the 6 continents of the world with 454 centres established in 91 countries across the globe. India, with 60 centres is leading the movement followed by the United States with 45 centres, Russia with 35 centres and UK with 16 centres. All around the world the Krishna temples represent the best of Indian Culture and tradition.



World's tallest Dvajasthamba

Multi-vision cinema

Breathtaking panoramic visuals, Digital surround sound effects, specialised theatrical lighting, smoke and fog effects, animated figures sailing in air, artistic collage of slide and video images - all precision controlled by a computer, designed to create an unforgettable 40-minute experience of multivision cinema. The 400-seater multivision theatre is one of the main attractions at the temple. This is the first of its kind in the country.



A true audio-visual extravaganza for the first time in India

- ▶ The features of the multi-vision cinema
- ▶ Two large screen (12' x 9') video projection show
- ▶ Twelve-projector multi-image show (30' x 10')



- ▶ Full screen size: 54' x 10'. The centre multi-image screen is flanked by the video screens
- ▶ Computer controlled animatronic puppets (9' high figures)
- ▶ Melodious blend of Indian and western music composed by ISKCON devotees and professional musicians from Italy, Australia and USA
- ▶ ISKCON's invaluable collection of Krishna art from artists around the world.
- ▶ Specialised computer controlled lighting, smoke and fog effects
- ▶ Dolby Digital Surround sound theatre
- ▶ Media integration by the Swedish computer systems
- ▶ Produced by the ISKCON devotees with the collaboration of the media experts from USA.

Krsna - the all attractive

'Krsna is the greatest scientist'. A scientist is one who knows everything. No scientist can claim to be perfect in the world. But Krsna who is the creator of every living entity is a perfect scientist. His creations are so perfect that it makes him the only true scientist in the world. He is also the most attractive. The meaning of Krsna in Sanskrit is 'one who attracts'. He is attractive because he is replete with all the six opulences - that of strength, fame, wealth, knowledge, beauty and renunciation. With these six opulences he attracts everyone towards him.

Srila Prabhupada, Founder Acarya, ISKCON

a school of rationale thought based on the scientific principles of Vedic philosophy.

The temple is complete in all respects as a centre of spiritual education. It has a 1,000 seater lecture hall where regular spiritual lectures for the benefit of the general public are conducted. It houses a vedic library and a preaching lobby where interested visitors learn more about Krsna consciousness.

What fascinates every visitor at the temple is the dedication of the devotees and the meticulous working of the temple activities. The devotees are ever smiling and are ready to offer their help, anytime. Varadakrishna Das, PRO, ISKCON,

Modern kitchen

One important aspect of ISKCON temples worldwide is the pure vegetarian food served to the innumerable visitors as 'Prasadam' everyday. Many ISKCON restaurants are also set up in the western countries to treat the visitors with sumptuous vegetarian delicacies. It is no wonder that the Hare Krishna temple at Bangalore has the most modern kitchen to cater to the needs of cooking vegetarian 'Prasadam'. The 'Prasadam' normally is a combination of nutritious dal, rice and vegetables which is first offered to the Lord and then honoured by the devotees and the visitors. The kitchen here is capable of handling 1 lakh servings everyday. The modern facilities in the kitchen include steam cooking equipment, double jacketed steam cooking vessels, digital weighing scales, sophisticated fume control systems and modern water purification systems. This kitchen is put into ultimate use on Sundays and other festival days when hundreds of kilos of food have to be cooked to serve the visitors anywhere between 25 to 50 thousand visitors.

Bangalore provided the first impression of the enthusiasm of Krsna devotees at the temple.

Mr. Madhupandita Dasa, president of ISKCON centre at Bangalore says, "There is also the facility to organise regular short-term seminars for small groups on various subjects that are relevant to the well-being of man. A few of the rooms of the 75-room guest house will be used to accommodate people who want to take part in such short-term seminars on spiritually related subjects. We also have plans for short term spiritual retreats for various groups like company executives, senior citizens, politicians and school children (during vacations). A separate ashrama to accommodate 150 resident brahmacharis is also built".

One may find it difficult to comprehend as to why a temple which is supposed to represent a religious belief and spiritual understanding needs a materialistic grandeur.

But when one understands the rationale behind the ISKCON movement worldwide and the founding principles of its establishment, there would be little room for confusion. As Mr. Madhupandita Dasa says, "Srla Prabhupada's greatest contribution to the world was to serve Vedic knowledge to the taste of modern man. This was the note at which we started out". The whole concept of ISKCON movement is based on scientific principles and not

religious dogmatism. Hare Krishna movement has never preached casteism, regionalism or religious fanaticism.

It has always propagated the message of universal brotherhood and real purpose of human life. Keeping in line with this ideology, the Hare Krishna temples worldwide (about 400 of them) are constructed using the latest technology and modern architectural elements. The temple

at Bangalore is no exception to this. "The temple had to be something that would attract and at the same time be relevant to the modern context.

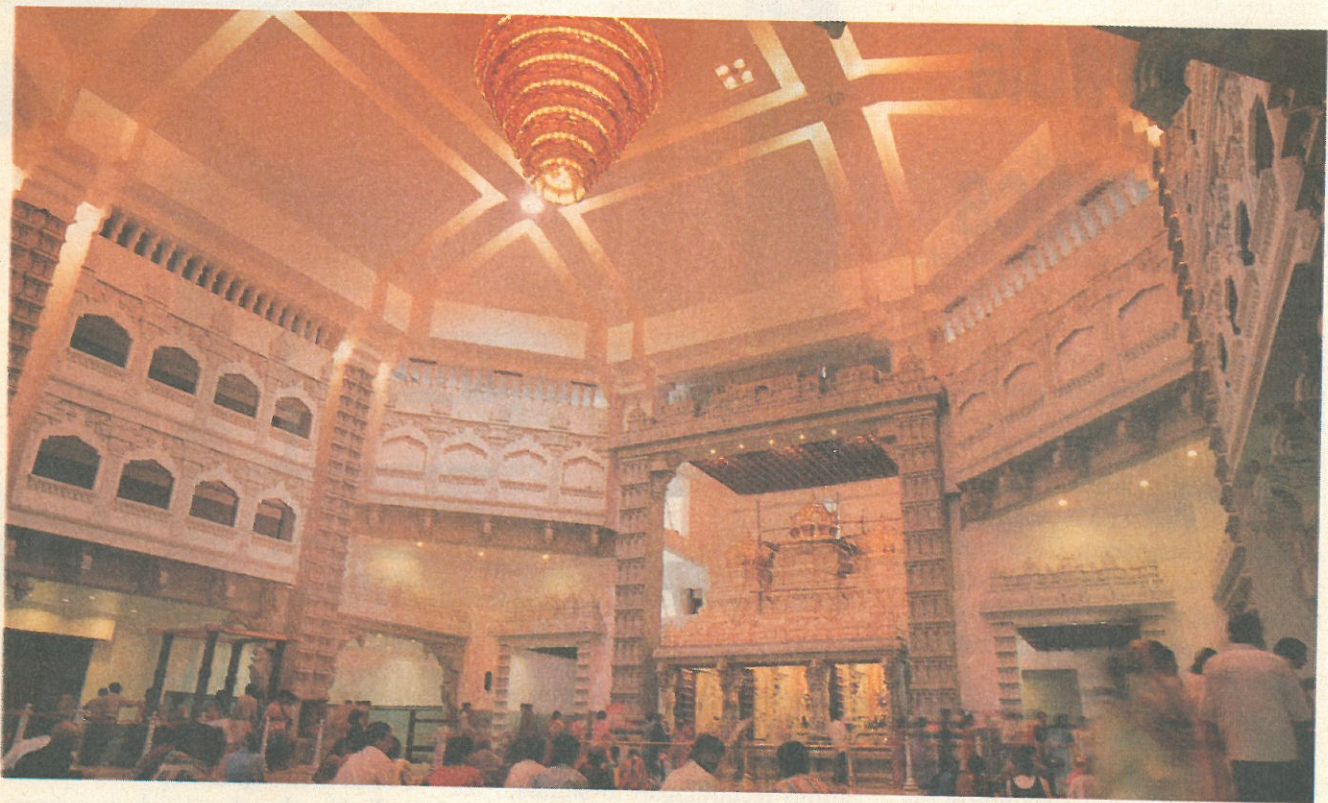
For the first two years after we got the land, we could not find a professional architect who understood what we really needed. That forced us to venture into it ourselves", says Mr. Madhupandita Dasa who is also the main architect and project director of the temple project.

Mr. Madhupandita Dasa, an M.Tech in structural engineering from IIT Mumbai, used his civil engineering knowledge to design and execute this architectural wonder. "I didn't imagine that my engineering education could be such an asset to me in my service to the Lord", he says. This is one other great aspect of ISKCON movement around the world. The devotees here are not people who have renounced their material lives at the fag end of their careers.

The Krsna devotees mostly are highly qualified people who have discovered the highest form of happiness in spiritual pursuits at the peak of their professional career. This aspect is there for everybody to see at the ISKCON centre in Bangalore.

Humble servants of the Lord

'I am a humble servant of the Lord' said Varadakrishna Das when inquired about his qualification. This is the kind of humility you find among all the devotees of ISKCON. Varadakrishna Das who is an engineer and a Master of Business Administration, is incharge of the public relations in the temple. The same submissiveness was seen in S. Gauranga Das who was happy to talk about the highly qualified team of full time devotees in the temple. Half of the 60 full time devotees at Bangalore are highly qualified professionals. Heading the list is Madhupandit Das who is a B.Tech from IIT, Mumbai and M.Tech (Structures) also from IIT, Mumbai. He is the President of the centre. Chanchalapathy Das, ME (Integrated) from IISc, Bangalore is the Vice-President. Stoka Krishna Das who is incharge of the computer department in the temple was a computer consultant in US. Anuttama Tatwa Das is M.Tech from IIT, Kanpur, who takes care of multivision cinema. Amit Asana Das is incharge of book division who is a B.Tech from REC, Kurukshetra. Chitranga Chaitanya Das is again a B.Tech holder from REC who is now incharge of the deities of the temple. The list goes on..... All in the service of Lord Krsna.



The main temple hall

Out of the 60 full time devotees in the centre, more than half of them are engineering professionals. The only objective of these people in joining the ISKCON movement is to pursue the realisation of the absolute truth and spread the message of Krsna around the world.

The next question which arises at this point of time is the wisdom of many scientists and technologists in embracing the Krsna consciousness movement. Scientists around the world have argued that spirituality can never be a science.

Simply because the concept of spirit soul and reincarnation cannot be subjected to experimental analysis which is one of the essential requirements for anything to be described as a science. Says Chanchalpathi Das, the vice-president of ISKCON, Bangalore, who is also a Master of Technology (M.Tech) from Indian Institute of Science, "The spiritual consciousness can be observed, experienced and verified just as any other science. Just as a lay man cannot understand complex mathematical problems, everybody cannot experience spiritual bliss without a thorough

understanding of the basics. It requires a different perception".

Several aspects of the temple are masterpieces in their own way. Glaringly apparent aspects which are unique include the glass Gopuram for the main temple, the kalasa atop the temple and the 'Dhwajasthamba'. The 23 ft. x 18 ft. kalasa is the biggest in the world. So also is the 56 feet tall 'Dhwajasthamba'.

The ISKCON devotees have never distanced themselves from the utilisation of the fruits of modern technology. In keeping pace with it, the complete gamut of activities of the temple are simplified by the adoption of technology wherever necessary. The administration and smooth functioning of the day-to-day activities of the temple are handled by computers which run on a LAN network.

The communication among the devotees within the temple complex which is built on a huge seven acre plot is ensured by a sophisticated pager network. The network is complete with fax, voicemail and answer back facilities.

The technology has also helped in

cooking hundreds of kilos of food which are given away as 'Prasadam' to the visitors everyday. High tech boilers and sophisticated steam cooking facilities are a part of the huge kitchen at the temple.

The multivision theatre at the temple complex is probably the first of its kind in the country.

It uses the multimedia and animatronics techniques to beam a 40 minute capsule on Krsna consciousness. Though the show is developed using traditional multimedia packages, what attracts the visitors is the huge screen on which the show is projected.

With the help of audio and video projectors and dolby stereo surround sound technology, the show provides a scintillating experience. The three part screen of 54x10 dimension makes a viewer immerse himself in the show. The digital surround sound also ensures that the 40 minute show provides a wholesome experience and the first glimpse of the spiritual world.

Await an exclusive interview with Chanchalpathi Das, Vice-President, ISKCON, Bangalore, in the next issue.