

FAQs / Philosophy

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ORGANIZATION:

Popularly known as the Hare Krishna Movement, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a worldwide confederation of more than 400 temples, 100 vegetarian restaurants, and a wide variety of community projects

HISTORY:

ISKCON belongs to the Gaudiya-Vaishnava sampradaya, or denomination, a monotheistic tradition within the broad Hindu culture. It is scripturally based on the 5,000-year-old Sanskrit text Bhagavad-gita, or "Song of God." ISKCON traces its lineage directly to the speaker of that sacred book, Lord Krishna, who is revered as the Supreme Personality of Godhead, and to Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a 16th century incarnation of God who emphasized the chanting of Hare Krishna as the most effective means of achieving self-realization and love of God in this age.

The Seven Purposes of ISKCON

To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all people in the techniques of spiritual life in order to check the imbalance of values in life and to achieve real unity and peace in the world. To propagate a consciousness of Krishna (God), as it is revealed in the great scriptures of India, Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam. To bring the members of the Society together with each other and nearer to Krishna, the prime entity, thus developing the idea within the members, and humanity at large, that each soul is part and parcel of the quality of Godhead (Krishna). To teach and encourage the sankirtana movement, congregational chanting of the holy name of God, as revealed in the teachings of Lord Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. To erect for the members and for society at large a holy place of transcendental pastimes dedicated to the personality of Krishna. To bring the members closer together for the purpose of teaching a simpler, more natural way of life. With a view towards achieving the aforementioned purposes, to publish and distribute periodicals, magazines, books and other writings.

FOUNDER:

In 1965, at the age of 70, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanata Swami Srila Prabhupada journeyed alone from India to America, to bring the teachings of Krishna west. On July 11, 1966, Srila Prabhupada officially registered the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) in New York City, and thus began the Hare Krishna movement in America. Srila Prabhupada passed away in 1977.

MISSION:

This nonsectarian, monotheistic movement's mission is to advance the well-being of society by promoting the science of Krishna consciousness. To that end, Srila Prabhupada enunciated ISKCON's mission statement in seven purposes.

SACRED TEXTS:

ISKCON bases its philosophy on the ancient Vedic literatures. These include the Bhagavad-gita, the 30-volume Srimad Bhagavatam, and the 17-volume Caitanya-caritamrita. Study of these scripture take place at ISKCON temples daily, and special narrations or sermons are often part of weekly community gatherings and festivals.

PHILOSOPHY:

Krishna devotees teach that people are not their material bodies, but are eternal spirit souls, and that all beings are

interrelated through God, the common father. In the Vaishnava tradition, God is known by many names, but primarily by the name "Krishna" which means "the All-Attractive Supreme Person." ISKCON members believe that the same God is spoken of in all major scriptures of the world.

ISKCON teaches that the goal of life is to develop love of God. Love of God is realized through the practice of bhakti-yoga, or devotional service. This ancient yoga system teaches the art of spiritualizing all human activities. To achieve Krishna consciousness effectively, members chant and meditate upon the holy names of Lord Krishna:

Hare Krishna, Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna, Hare Hare;

Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Rama Rama, Hare Hare.

PRACTICES AND PRINCIPLES:

In addition to daily chanting and meditation, ISKCON members practice their faith by attending regular worship services, studying scriptures, sharing sanctified vegetarian meals, and fostering fellowship among other Krishna devotees.

Members also practice four "principles of religion": compassion, truthfulness, cleanliness and austerity. To uphold these principles, and to focus the mind and senses on their spiritual pursuits, practitioners follow for basic rules of conduct. They are strict vegetarians, not eating any meat, fish or eggs. They also abstain from gambling and illicit sex, and do not smoke, drink, or take drugs.

MEMBERSHIP:

ISKCON has over one million members worldwide. While some members live in temples and ashrams (monasteries) as monks and nuns, most Hare Krishna devotees live, work, and go to school in the general community, practicing Krishna consciousness in their homes and attending the temple on a regular basis. Participation is open to anyone, regardless of race, religion, gender, ethnicity, or any other factor.

LEADERSHIP:

Prior to his passing away in 1977, Srila Prabhupada established a Governing Body Commission (GBC) to oversee the international society's activities. This ecclesiastic board consists of senior Krishna devotees who work together as a body to guide the organization. Each ISKCON temple is individually incorporated and manages its affairs through local leadership.

Numbers at a Glance:

4 principles of religion: compassion, truthfulness, cleanliness and austerity

4 regulative principles: no meat eating, gambling, illicit sex, and intoxication

over 40 farm communities

over 100 vegetarian restaurants

over 400 temples worldwide

over one million followers all over the world

over 100,000 followers in North America