

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY *for* KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

Founder-Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT PROMOTES VEGETARIANISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness is doing a superb job in letting people know that vegetarian food is healthful, delicious, and pleasing to the eye... they cannot be praised enough for their success in promoting the cause of vegetarianism worldwide.

- Scott Smith, Associate Editor, *Vegetarian Times*

Members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) believe that the Earth's resources, nature, and our own bodies are all sacred gifts from God and should be treated responsibly. The Vaishnava philosophy that the Hare Krishna movement is rooted in teaches that all living beings are interrelated through Krishna, the common father. Krishna devotees respect the animals' right to live, and practice a diet that seeks to minimize violence and exploitation. Thus they see vegetarianism – with its countless documented ecological, social, and health benefits – as most conducive to a compassionate, environmentally friendly, and wholesome way of life.

Sometimes referred to as “the kitchen religion,” the Hare Krishna movement actively promotes the benefits of vegetarianism. ISKCON temples offer visitors delicious sanctified vegetarian food, and host weekly Sunday open house programs that culminate in a free multi-course feast. The Krishna movement has established more than 100 vegetarian restaurants around the world, and has distributed more than 300 million nutritious vegetarian meals to the disadvantaged through its affiliate, Food for Life. Krishna devotees regularly teach vegetarian cooking classes at their temples and local universities, and several ISKCON members are authors of acclaimed cookbooks. Australian-born chef Kurma Dasa's popular “Cooking with Kurma” series has aired on public television stations around the world, and ISKCON member Yamuna Devi was awarded the 1992 James Beard Award for Best International Cookbook for her vegetarian text *Yamuna's Table*.

MORE...

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While some Krishna devotees are vegan, most ISKCON members are *lacto* vegetarians, avoiding meat, fish, and eggs, but eating dairy products. All Hare Krishna devotees oppose exploitative treatment of animals, especially the cow. Traditional Indian culture favored organic farming and gave distinctive recognition to the cow, who provides nourishing milk, and the bull, who plows fields, calling for these gentle creatures to be protected. This custom continues today in North America at several ISKCON rural communities, which have made cow protection a primary focus. These communities educate the public, run cruelty-free dairies, and allow well-wishers to help save cows from slaughter through an innovative “Adopt a Cow” sponsorship program.

ISKCON’s founder, Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada included in the movement’s mission statement an aim to “bring the members closer together for the purpose of teaching a simpler, more natural way of life.” To that end, internationally some ISKCON members are developing agrarian communities. These communities aim at self-sufficiency, exploring self-contained techniques such as natural pest and weed controls, the production of alternate fuel, waste management, and crop rotation. In keeping with the Krishna conscious ideal of “simple living and high thinking,” these ISKCON members make it their goal to produce only what they need and to avoid selfish excesses, thus providing a model for a conscientious spiritually-centered society.

Further Reading:

- ❖ *Holy Cow: The Hare Krishna Contribution to Vegetarianism and Animal Rights* (Steven Rosen; Lantern Books, 2004)
- ❖ *The Higher Taste* (Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1991)
- ❖ *Divine Nature: A Spiritual Perspective on the Environmental Crisis* (Michael Cremo and Mukunda Goswami; Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, 1995)
- ❖ *Vedic Ecology* (Ranchor Prime; Mandala Publishing, 2002)

Internet Resources:

- ❖ International Society for Cow Protection (an ISKCON affiliate): www.iscowp.org.
- ❖ Cooking with Kurma Das: www.kurma.net.

This material is available online at <http://www.iskcon.com/media>

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