



THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY *for* KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

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

Roots

THE HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT IN NORTH AMERICA IS ROOTED IN THE ANCIENT VAISHNAVA TRADITION OF INDIA

Popularly known as the Hare Krishna movement, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) belongs to the Gaudiya-Vaishnava *sampradaya*, a monotheistic tradition within Vedic, or Hindu, culture. It is based on the *Bhagavad-gita*, the spiritual teachings spoken by Lord Krishna. According to tradition, this sacred text is over 5,000 years old and documents the conversation between Lord Krishna and his close friend and disciple Arjuna.

ISKCON traces its spiritual lineage directly to the speaker of the sacred book, Lord Krishna, who is revered as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. The text teaches that the goal of life is to develop love of God, or Krishna. Love of God is realized through the practice of *bhakti-yoga*, the science of devotional service.

In the latter part of the 15th century, a saint named Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu revitalized the *bhakti-yoga* tradition by introducing an expansive spiritual movement that swept India. Central to this renaissance was Chaitanya's emphasis on the chanting of Krishna's name. Underlying this simple practice was a profound, rational, and intellectually comprehensive theology. Hare Krishna devotees worship Lord Chaitanya as an incarnation of Krishna for this age, and ISKCON is a vibrant continuation of the movement Chaitanya began.

The Krishna movement waned somewhat in the years that followed Chaitanya (1486-1534). In the late 19th century, Bhaktivinoda Thakura, a scholar, magistrate, and religious leader in Chaitanya's tradition, led a second renaissance of devotion to Krishna. His son, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, continued his work, and established

The Bhagavad-Gita:

"The Gita can be seen as the main literary support for the great religious civilization of India, the oldest surviving culture in the world. The present translation and commentary is another manifestation of the permanent living importance of the Gita. Swami Bhaktivedanta brings to the West a salutary reminder that our highly activist and one-sided culture is faced with a crisis that may end in self-destruction because it lacks the inner depth of an authentic metaphysical consciousness. Without such depth, our moral and political protestations are just so much verbiage."

Thomas Merton

Late Catholic Theologian, Monk, Author



Chaitanya Mahaprabhu

Chaitanya exhibited symptoms of love of God to the highest degree, and emphasized chanting the holy names of Krishna as the best means to attain love of God.



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prominent temples and institutions across India. Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati was the spiritual mentor, or guru, for A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, and it was he who requested that Prabhupada take the teachings of Krishna outside of India.

Srila Prabhupada arrived in New York in 1965 at the age of seventy. The next eleven years would see him establish an international institution, guide thousands of men and women of diverse backgrounds and nationalities in their spiritual lives, and help to make “Hare Krishna” a household phrase all over the world. ISKCON has since grown into a worldwide confederation of millions, from a variety of backgrounds. Today there are more than 600 Hare Krishna temples across six continents.

Srila Prabhupada:

“He was a genuine holy person with enormous integrity and compassion, and he had a powerful impact on those who met him. He never claimed authority and respect for himself; what he said and did was always in the name of Krishna.”

Dr. Thomas J. Hopkins,
Professor Emeritus, Franklin and Marshall College

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