



## THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY *for* KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

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

# Fact Sheet

### ORGANIZATION:

Popularly known as the Hare Krishna Movement, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a worldwide confederation of 600 temples and rural eco-communities, 110 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. The tradition is also rooted in the teachings of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, a 16th century saint who is revered by ISKCON devotees as an incarnation of God. Chaitanya emphasized the chanting of the Hare Krishna mantra as the most effective means of achieving self-realization and love of God in this age.

### FOUNDER:

In 1965, at the age of 70, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta 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 worldwide Hare Krishna movement. Srila Prabhupada passed away in 1977.

### NUMBERS AT A GLANCE

- **1965** - the year that 70-year old A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada left India and arrived in America
- **1966** - The year that the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was founded in New York City
- **4 Principles of Religion** - compassion, truthfulness, cleanliness and austerity (self-discipline)
- **4 Regulative Principles** - no meat eating, gambling, illicit sex, or intoxication
- **600** temples
- **65** rural eco-communities
- **110** vegetarian restaurants
- **9 million** worshippers attend ISKCON services (yearly)
- **516 million** ISKCON books and magazines distributed
- **3 billion** sanctified vegetarian meals served
- **1.2 million** school children fed each day through the affiliated Annamrita Mid-Day Meals program
- **212,992** patients treated at Mumbai's Bhaktivedanta Hospital in 2014, largest of nine ISKCON affiliated hospitals, clinics, and hospices in India
- **54** affiliated primary and secondary schools and colleges
- **95,000** initiates have accepted clerical vows
- **3600** weekly home-study groups
- **210,000** Kilometers have been walked during Padayatra, or Walking Festivals in 110 countries
- **1000** Hari Nama parties, or chanting groups sing the maha mantra in streets and parks each week



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## MISSION:

This nonsectarian, monotheistic movement's mission is to advance the well being of society by promoting the spiritual science of Krishna consciousness. To that end, Srila Prabhupada enunciated ISKCON's mission statement in seven purposes. (see box on page three)

## 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 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 source of all existence. 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 this, 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.***

## THE SEVEN PURPOSES OF ISKCON

- (1) 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.
- (2) To propagate a consciousness of Krishna (God), as it is revealed in the great scriptures of India, Bhagavad-gita and Srimad-Bhagavatam.
- (3) 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).
- (4) 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.
- (5) To erect for the members and for society at large a holy place of transcendental pastimes dedicated to the personality of Krishna.
- (6) To bring the members closer together for the purpose of teaching a simpler, more natural way of life.
- (7) With a view towards achieving the aforementioned purposes, to publish and distribute periodicals, magazines, books and other writings.



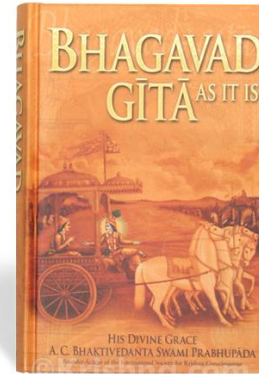
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### PRACTICES AND PRINCIPLES:

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 (or self-discipline). To uphold these principles, and to focus the mind and senses on spiritual pursuits, practitioners follow four basic rules of conduct. They are strict vegetarians, not eating any meat, fish or eggs. They also abstain from intoxication, gambling, and illicit sex.



### BHAGAVAD-GITA

The Bhagavad-gita has been revered by many great thinkers and philosophers:

*"In the morning I bathe my intellect in the stupendous and cosmogonical philosophy of the Bhagavad-gita, in comparison with which our modern world and its literature seem puny and trivial."*

- Henry David Thoreau

### MEMBERSHIP:

ISKCON does not have a formal membership census. However, an estimated 9 million people worship at ISKCON temples each year, and 95,000 have accepted formal initiation rites, or clerical vows to uphold the four regulative principles. While some “Krishna devotees” live in temples and ashrams (monasteries) as monks and nuns, the vast majority of 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 35 senior Krishna devotees, both men and women, who work together as a body to guide the organization. Each ISKCON temple is individually incorporated and manages its affairs through local leadership.



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### **SOCIAL CONTRIBUTIONS:**

ISKCON promotes social progress through teaching spiritual solutions to the myriad of problems we face today including war, poverty, environmental degradation, racial and sectarian strife, etc. ISKCON also operates the world's largest vegetarian food relief program through its affiliated Food for Life and Annamrita projects (<http://annamrita.org>). ISKCON affiliates also operate several hospitals, medical and eye clinics in India that serve several hundred thousand patients each year (<http://www.bhaktivedantahospital.com>).

In addition to ISKCON's spiritually focused educational programs, the society also promotes healthy vegetarian lifestyles and other educational programs.

*This material is available online at <http://communications.iskcon.org>*

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# 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 15<sup>th</sup> 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 19<sup>th</sup> 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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# Founder

### HIS DIVINE GRACE A.C. BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI PRABHUPADA

When His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada entered the port of New York City on September 17, 1965, few Americans took notice — but he was not merely another immigrant. He was on a mission to introduce an ancient religion, which originated in India, into mainstream America. Before Srila Prabhupada passed away on November 14, 1977, at the age of 81, his mission proved successful. He formed the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) and saw it grow into a global confederation of more than 100 temples, ashrams and cultural centers.



### EARLY LIFE IN INDIA

Srila Prabhupada was born Abhay Charan De on September 1, 1896, to a pious Hindu family in Calcutta. Growing up in British-controlled India, Abhay became involved with Mahatma Gandhi's civil disobedience movement to secure independence for his nation. It was, however, a 1922 meeting with a prominent scholar and religious leader, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Sarasvati, which proved most influential on Abhay's future calling. Srila Bhaktisiddhanta was a leader in the Gaudiya Vaishnava denomination, a monotheistic tradition within the broad Hindu culture, and asked Abhay to bring the teachings of Lord Krishna to the English-speaking world. Abhay became a disciple of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta in 1933, and resolved to carry out his mentor's request. Abhay, later known by the honorific A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, spent the next 32 years preparing for his journey west.

"His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada is doing valuable work, and his books are significant contributions to the salvation of mankind."

**Sri Lal Bahadur Shastri**  
Former Prime Minister of India

### A BOLD SOJOURN TO THE WEST

In 1965, at the age of sixty-nine, Srila Prabhupada traveled to New York City aboard a cargo ship. The journey was treacherous, and the elderly spiritual teacher suffered two heart attacks aboard ship. Arriving in the United States with just seven dollars in



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Indian rupees and his translations of sacred Sanskrit texts, Srila Prabhupada began to share the timeless wisdom of Krishna consciousness. His message of peace and goodwill resonated with many young people, some of whom came forward to become serious students of the Krishna tradition. With the help of these students, Srila Prabhupada rented a small storefront on New York's Lower East Side to use as a temple. On July 11, 1966, he officially registered his organization in the state of New York, formally founding the International Society for Krishna Consciousness.

In the eleven years that followed, Srila Prabhupada circled the globe 14 times on lecture tours, bringing the teachings of Lord Krishna to thousands of people on six continents. Men and women from all backgrounds and walks of life came forward to accept his message, and with their help, Srila Prabhupada established ISKCON centers and projects throughout the world. Under his inspiration, Krishna devotees established temples, rural communities, educational institutions, and started what would become the world's largest vegetarian food relief program. With the desire to nourish the roots of Krishna consciousness in its home, Srila Prabhupada returned to India several times, where he sparked a revival in the Vaishnava tradition. In India, he opened dozens of temples, including large centers in the holy towns of Vrindavana and Mayapur.

### CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE WORLD

Srila Prabhupada's most significant contributions, perhaps, are his books. He authored over 70 volumes on the Krishna tradition, which are highly respected by scholars for their authority, depth, fidelity to the tradition, and clarity. Several of his works are used as textbooks in numerous college courses. His writings have been translated into 76 languages. His most prominent works include: *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, the 30-volume *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, and the 17-volume *Sri Caitanya-caritamrita*.

"At what almost anyone would consider a very advanced age, when most people would be resting on their laurels, he harkened to the mandate of his own spiritual teacher and set out on the difficult and demanding voyage to America. Srila Prabhupada is one in a thousand, perhaps one in a million."

Harvey Cox  
Professor of Divinity - Harvard University

"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."

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# Eco-Farms

## **ECO-FARMS:**

The founder of ISKCON, Srila Prabhupada, included in his seven purposes for the society to teach “a simpler and more natural way of life.” In the past 50 years, ISKCON has grown to include many farming communities and eco-villages around the world. All are dedicated to promoting what Prabhupada called “simple living and higher thinking.”

Today, as the world grapples with global warming, unprecedented pollution of our land, air and water, and serious questions how modern modes of consumption can continue, these Hare Krishna communities offer alternative models of development. All Krishna eco-communities welcome visitors, and many have guest facilities and/or vegetarian restaurants for those seeking a spiritual retreat, or to experience a few hours or days of simple, environmentally centered living.

## **A LEADING EUROPEAN ECO-COMMUNITY:**

One of Europe’s best-known eco-communities is Krishna Valley, a 270-hectare property, which is a two hour drive from Budapest, Hungary. This farming community is celebrated as a highly sustainable example of a dedicated eco-village. Established in 1993, Krishna Valley draws 30,000 visitors annually.

Krishna Valley has developed multiple aspects of the sustainable paradigm, including a recognized cow protection center, organic agriculture, and efficient water and waste management. The community is also self-reliant in grains, vegetables, and fruits. It has also become an educational center where university and other students visit to see sustainable economics in practice.



Gita Nagari – United States of America



Krishna Valley - Hungary



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### AMERICA'S FIRST CRUELTY FREE DAIRY:

Gita Nagari, a 350-acre eco-farm in Port Royal, Pennsylvania, USA, is the country's first certified slaughter-free dairy. In 2014, Gita Nagari's Creamery was Grade B (raw milk) certified by the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture. As such, they are legally allowed to sell raw milk for public consumption. Also called the Gita Nagari Yoga Farm, the community hosts many yoga retreats and other seminars.



Govardhan Eco Village – India

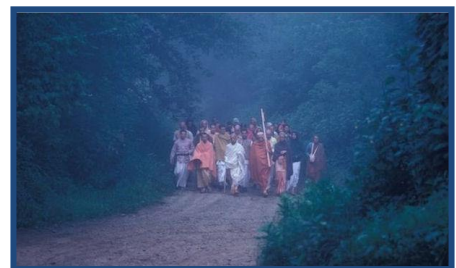
### ECO-VILLAGE IN INDIA WINS GLOBAL AWARD:

Govardhan Eco Village is one of ISKCON's eco-farms in India ([ecovillage.org.in](http://ecovillage.org.in)). Located in central Maharashtra, the one-hundred acre property lies at the foothills of the Sahyadri Mountains, approximately seventy miles from Mumbai.

Govardhan Eco Village (GEV) focuses on a broad range of eco-projects including organic farming, alternative energy, green building construction, cow protection, and waste treatment. GEV recently drew international attention when it was honored with the Green Apple Environment Award, which is presented to the greenest companies, councils and communities in the world and was selected from among 500 nominations for Environmental Best Practice. GEV was presented with a trophy at a ceremony in the House of Parliament, London in November 2015. The Govardhan Eco Village has also helped two hundred local farmers to improve their standard of living by teaching them how to be autonomous through the practices of organic farming.

### RURAL COMMUNITY IN WEST VIRGINIA:

New Vrindavan, outside of Moundsville, West Virginia is a 1200-acre community. It was the first rural community established by Srila Prabhupada. Today New Vrindavana has a large cow-protection program, and has become a pilgrimage site for many thousands of Krishna devotees and American Hindus of many persuasions, who visit its green hills and famed Palace of Gold, a memorial built to our founder.



New Vrindavan – United States

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# The Arts

## ISKCON – EXPRESSING DEVOTION THROUGH THE ARTS

With roots in the traditions of ancient India, the Hare Krishna movement finds expression in vibrant colors, striking melodies, mouth-watering culinary creations, and joyous festivals – all with glorification of Krishna, or God, in the center. Here are a few of the ways in members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) convey their devotion through the arts:



## MUSIC & DANCE

Tradition holds that in Lord Krishna's abode "every word is a song and every step is a dance." Music plays a key role in the lives of Krishna devotees. When Srila Prabhupada first brought the Krishna tradition West in 1965, he introduced the art of kirtan, devotional chanting accompanied by traditional Indian instruments. ISKCON devotees have shared this dynamic musical expression with the world, and many have gone on to become accomplished singers and musicians. Hare Krishna temples also regularly host stage performances and teach classes, highlighting classical Indian dance forms, such as Bharata Natyam, Kathak, and Odissi. These intricate and graceful performances are part of a rich tradition of depicting the divine activities of God or His devotees through dance.

## FINE ART

Artists within the Hare Krishna movement have created hundreds of original paintings depicting Lord Krishna and His spiritual abode. With their characteristic blend of Eastern and Western styles, these works of art illustrate multiple volumes of books, decorate ISKCON temples, and help to visually present the Krishna tradition. Within recent years, the Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) was established with locations at ISKCON temples near Florence, Italy, and Brussels, Belgium. MOSA



Museum of Sacred Art (MOSA) - Belgium



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presents visitors with an experience of traditional and living arts of India revolving around the theme of devotion, and includes many works by ISKCON artists.

(<http://mosabelgium.com>). Several ISKCON temples in India, including New Delhi house expansive exhibits of sculpture and paintings that depict devotional themes and the stories of India's great epics.

### ARCHITECTURE

Many ISKCON temples throughout the world are splendid examples of traditional and neo-Vedic architecture. In Spanish Fork, Utah, the ISKCON temple is modeled after a 15th Century North Indian palace, and boasts elaborately designed arches, columns, verandahs, and waterfalls. In West Virginia, Krishna devotees built a gold-domed temple that was penned "America's Taj Mahal" by the New York Times. ISKCON has also erected dozens of temples in India which employ classic architectural styles, in major cities such as New Delhi and Mumbai, as well as in sacred pilgrimage towns such as Vrindavana and Mayapur.

ISKCON's greatest temple project is the Temple of Vedic Planetarium (TOVP) at Mayapura, West Bengal. The expansive structure is currently under construction and will house 10,000 worshippers in its main hall. The highest of three main domes rises 370 feet. In addition to a temple, the structure will house exhibits on Vedic cosmology. Even before completion, the temple community attracts nearly a million pilgrims and visitors a year (<http://tovp.org>).

### WORSHIP SERVICES

Members and guests are drawn by the authenticity and vibrancy of ISKCON worship services. Krishna theology teaches that all the senses should be engaged in the glorification of God. Thus, upon entering an ISKCON worship service, a visitor's eyes feast on an elaborately decorated altar; his/her ears are entreated by melodious chanting; his/her nose embraces fragrant flowers and incense; and his/her mouth savors sanctified delicious vegetarian food.



Temple of the Vedic Planetarium (TOVP)  
Mayapura, West Bengal  
(Projected Opening 2022)



#### Worship Services

A pujari (priest) sounds a conch shell, signifying the beginning of a traditional worship service (arati).



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### HOLIDAYS AND FESTIVALS

Commemorating sacred days of the Vaishnava calendar, the Hare Krishna movement hosts colorful and exciting festivals that draw thousands of guests and worshippers. Holidays such as Janamastami (Krishna's birth anniversary) and Diwali (the New Year) are observed with great revelry and joy. Perhaps the most famous public festival, called Ratha-Yatra, or "Festival of the Chariots," is celebrated annually in major cities of the world, including marches down New York's Fifth Avenue, the Venice Beach boardwalk in Los Angeles, Independence Avenue in Washington, D.C., and alongside London's famed Trafalgar Square. Patterned after a millennia-old festival held in the Indian city of Jagannath Puri, the fete includes the pulling of ornately decorated 40-foot high chariots.



Ratha-Yatra Festival – New York City

### FOOD

Sometimes referred to as "the kitchen religion," ISKCON temples offer visitors delicious sanctified vegetarian food, and host weekly Sunday open house programs that culminate in a free multi-course feast. The internationally inspired menu can range from Punjabi curried vegetables to eggplant parmesan. To better acquaint people with the benefits of a vegetarian diet, the Krishna movement has also established 100 vegetarian restaurants around the world.

#### Promoting a Plant-Based Diet:

"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

### LITERATURE

With an aim to shed light on the profound philosophy underlying these cultural expressions, the Bhaktivedanta Book Trust (BBT), ISKCON's affiliated publishing house, has printed and distributed more than 500 million books and magazines. These publications often contain translations from Sanskrit or Bengali, reproductions of rare commentaries, and attractive original illustrations and photographs. Said to be the world's largest publisher of classic Vaishnava texts, the BBT is renowned as an excellent resource for the study of Indian culture and philosophy.

#### The Bhagavad-Gita:

"Whether the reader be an adept of Indian spirituality or not, a reading of Bhagavad-gita As It Is will be extremely profitable, for it will allow him to understand the Gita as still today the majority of Hindus do. For many, this will be the first contact with the true India, the ancient India, the eternal India."

Dr. Francois Chenique  
Doctor of Religious Sciences  
Institute of Political Studies, Paris

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# Vegetarianism

## HARE KRISHNA MOVEMENT PROMOTES VEGETARIANISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL AWARENESS

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 the belief that all living beings are interrelated through Sri Krishna, the all-attractive Supreme Person and original source of all life. Krishna devotees respect 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. Worldwide, since its founding in 1966, ISKCON has distributed more than 3 billion delicious sanctified vegetarian meals. The Krishna movement has established more than 110 vegetarian restaurants around the world and ISKCON temples host weekly Sunday open house programs that culminate in a free multi-course feast. In addition, Hare Krishna Food Relief programs provide free food to the disadvantaged through local community programs, schools, and at times of disaster. In India, 1.2 million school children are fed daily by ISKCON's Annamrita Mid-Day Meals project, which operates in partnership with the Indian government. (<http://annamrita.org>)

Krishna devotees also regularly teach vegetarian cooking classes at their temples and local universities, and several ISKCON members are authors of acclaimed cookbooks.

“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*

“We are deeply appreciative of the contribution made by this (Annamrita) great movement...every day in India it provides food to over one million children healthy food and the message... of love, compassion, which is inherent in Indian civilization”

Shri Pranab Mukherjee, President of India



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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 broke cultural ground when she won the 1988 International Association of Culinary Professionals (IACP) Cookbook of the Year Award for her 800 page, "Lord Krishna's Cuisine: The Art of Indian Vegetarian Cooking." The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust's "Higher Taste" vegetarian cookbook has sold millions of copies.

"It is my view that the vegetarian manner of living, by its purely physical effect on the human temperament, would most beneficially influence the lot of mankind."

Albert Einstein

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 at many ISKCON eco-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 programs. In keeping with the Krishna conscious ideal of "simple living and high thinking," these communities make it their goal to avoid violence against animals and other selfish excesses, thus providing a model for a conscientious spiritually-centered society.

*This material is available online at <http://communications.iskcon.org>*

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## THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY *for* KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

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

# Food Relief

### HARE KRISHNA FOOD RELIEF PROGRAMS HELP TO FIGHT WORLD HUNGER

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is doing its part to combat world hunger. In the last four decades, ISKCON's Food Relief programs, including "Hare Krishna Food for Life" and "Annamrita" have served more than 2 billion hot, nutritious, vegetarian meals to the disadvantaged throughout America, Asia, Africa, Australia and Europe.

In 1974, seeing street children rummaging through garbage for something to eat, ISKCON founder A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada was moved to tears and instructed his followers that no one within a ten-mile radius of any Krishna temple should go hungry. Today, the program includes free food restaurants, mobile kitchens, and emergency relief services, and distributes more than a million free vegetarian meals per day to needy people in more than 60 countries.

In India, ISKCON's affiliated Annamrita program distributes free hot lunches to school children in partnership with the Indian government's Mid-Day Meal program.

Annamrita works from twenty kitchens in eight different Indian states to feed 1.2 million children daily at hundreds of schools. These programs aim to liberate underprivileged children from the vicious cycle of poverty. They not only address hunger, they also encourage school attendance and better performance in class by providing students with fresh, nutritious lunches. (<http://annamrita.org>)

Elsewhere in the world, Hare Krishna Food for Life has responded to major disasters by providing nutritious vegetarian meals to victims of tornados, earthquakes, hurricanes, tsunamis, floods, and war.

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#### Appreciation for Annamrita Mid-Day Meals:

"We are deeply appreciative of the contribution made by this great movement. Just imagine... Annamrita every day in India it provides food to over one million children healthy food and the message... of love, compassion, which is inherent in Indian civilization"

**Shri Pranab Mukherjee**  
President of India

"We are extremely grateful to Annamrita Food Relief Foundation for their timely action. These children are happy to receive the khichdi. We whole heartedly appreciate the high quality, nutritious food that is delivered efficiently, on time and at the location instructed by us. We are looking forward to a very long association with Annamrita Food Relief Foundation in the future too"

**Prof S. Parasuraman,**  
Director – Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)

#### Disaster Relief in Action

- **Typhoon Haiyan – Philippines (2013):** Almost 13 million people in the Philippines were affected, including five million children, and 1.9 million people were displaced. Over 5 months Hare Krishna Food Relief volunteers in Manila provided tens of thousands of freshly cooked vegetarian meals.
- **Japan Tsunami Relief (2011):** Food for Life in Japan provided thousands of pounds of fresh fruits and vegetables, as well as cooked vegetarian dinners to survivors living in shelters in the Miyagi-ken district for months following the devastating tsunami.
- **Earthquake in Pakistan (2006):** Food for Life volunteers from neighboring India, working closely with local military and police set up base at an ISKCON temple within the earthquake-affected region, and provided drinking water, rice, bread, and blankets to victims.
- **Hurricane Katrina in Gulf Coast, U.S. (2005):** Local Food for Life team members ventured into the hardest hit areas of the Gulf Coast, to distribute hot meals to affected residents, and continued to serve 800 meals a day for months following the disaster
- **Tsunami in Southeast Asia (2004):** Food for Life provided relief support and hot meals to victims beginning the day of the disaster. In Sri Lanka alone more 10,000 meals were provided daily, along with medical care, clothing, and shelter for orphans.





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# Holidays

## **MAJOR HOLIDAYS & CELEBRATIONS**

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness follows an annual calendar that is filled with holy days and celebrations. Observance may include worship or meditation, voluntary fasting, and festivities. Festivals often include special discourses, dramatic performances, and grand vegetarian feasts for members and guests. Krishna temples, following tradition, determine the dates of their holidays by using the lunar calendar. Therefore, dates will vary from year to year when compared to the Western, or solar calendar. All events are open to the public.

### **KRISHNA JANMASTAMI** *(celebrated late August or early September)*

Janmastami, the birthday, or “Appearance Day” of Lord Krishna, is the most holy day for ISKCON devotees. In India, Janmastami is a major national holiday as well, celebrated by Hindus of all denominations. ISKCON temples celebrate the day with special worship and programs including traditional dances, congregational singing, theater, and feasting. Devotees fast until midnight and then enjoy a multi-course vegetarian feast to commemorate the Lord's appearance on earth.

### **BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SRILA PRABHUPADA** *(day after Janmastami)*

The birthday of Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada is a day where devotees observe services to express their gratitude and appreciation of Srila Prabhupada, who crossed the ocean at the age of 69 to spread knowledge of Krishna throughout the world. Krishna devotees gather to remember Srila Prabhupada and serve an elaborate mid-day feast in his honor.



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### **RADHASTAMI**

*(observed in September)*

The appearance day of Radha, who is the feminine aspect of the Godhead and Krishna's eternal loving consort, is also celebrated with special songs, worship and feasting.

### **RATHA-YATRA**

*(celebrated mid-summer)*

This joyous event is modeled after the ancient "Festival of Chariots" celebrated annually in the Indian city of Jagannatha Puri. That celebration has been held for thousands of years, and is the largest annual religious festival in the world, attracting millions of pilgrims yearly. Since 1967, local ISKCON chapters have been holding this event in dozens of cities worldwide every year, including New York, London, Paris, Durban, Toronto, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Sydney. In Los Angeles, more than 50,000 people take part in the colorful walk, pulling three giant 40-foot tall chariots, and enjoying the exhibitions and stage performances that often accompany the parade.

### **GAURA PURNIMA**

*(observed in March)*

The appearance day of Sri Chaitanya Mahaprabhu, the 16<sup>th</sup> century saint who pioneered the chanting of Hare Krishna as the primary method of attaining love of God, is a major holiday for ISKCON. ISKCON members worship Chaitanya as the incarnation of Krishna for this age. Special worship services and chanting go on throughout the day culminating in an elaborate feast in the evening.

### **HOLI**

*(observed in spring)*

Holi is the "Festival of Colors" and is a celebration of spring and the triumph of new life over death. Many ISKCON temples celebrate Holi with large public events filled with music, free food, and revelers of all ages throwing powdered dyes over each other in a spirit of unity and shared humanity amidst our diversity.



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### **DIWALI**

*(observed in early November)*

Diwali (also known as Dipavali) is the dual celebration of the New Year and the triumph of Lord Rama, an incarnation of Krishna, over the demon king Ravana. Sometimes known as the “Festival of Lights,” it is a celebration of good over evil, and is sacred to Hindus of all denominations and traditions. ISKCON temples host large crowds of worshipers who come to celebrate this auspicious day with chanting, the lighting of ceremonial lamps, fellowship, and feasting.

### **GOVARDHANA PUJA**

*(observed in early November)*

This unique celebration commemorates the legendary act of Lord Krishna lifting a sacred mountain named Govardhana to shelter His devotees from the wrath of a celestial rainstorm. Devotees recount the miraculous pastime, believed to have occurred more than 5,000 years ago in India, and depict it through song, classical dance, and dramatic performance. In many ISKCON temples, devotees also build a large mountain of halava (cake) as a symbol of Krishna’s protection. Some ISKCON temples celebrate this in conjunction with Diwali.

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# Academic Resources

There are many scholars with expertise in the Hare Krishna movement, or the Gaudiya Vaishnava religious tradition, who are qualified academic sources for the media. They include:

**DR. GRAHAM M. SCHWEIG**

Christopher Newport University  
Newport News, Virginia  
gschweig@cnu.edu  
(757) 594-7959

- Professor of Hinduism and Asian Studies faculty at CNU
- Author of *Bhagavad Gita: The Beloved Lord's Secret Song* (Harper Collins)
- Regularly invited lecturer-speaker at the Smithsonian Institution

**DR. RAVI GUPTA**

Utah State University  
Logan, Utah  
ravi.gupta@usu.edu  
(435) 797-1196

- Director of Religious Studies program at USU, Professor of Hinduism
- Co-author of *"The Bhagavata Purana: Selected Readings"* (Columbia University Press)
- Expertise on the Caitanya Vaishnava tradition and bhakti-yoga.

**DR. FRANCIS X. CLOONEY, S.J.**

Director of the Center for  
Study of the World's Religions  
Harvard University  
Cambridge University  
fclooney@hds.harvard.edu  
(617) 495-4495

- Professor of Hinduism and Comparative Religions with expertise in Vaishnava traditions and comparative religions.

**DR. E. BURKE ROCHFORD, JR.**

Middlebury College  
Middlebury Vermont  
rochford@middlebury.edu  
(802) 443-5303

- Professor of Professor of Sociology, Anthropology and Religion at Middlebury College
- Author of books on the Hare Krishna movement, including *"Hare Krishna in America"* (Rutgers) and *"Hare Krishna Transformed"* (NYU).



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### DR. ABHISHEK GHOSH

Grand Valley State University  
Grand Rapids, Michigan  
ghoshab@gvsu.edu  
(616) 331-3408

- Assistant Professor, Religious Studies and Liberal Studies
- Expertise on Hinduism and bhakti movements in India, including Kedarnath Datta, or Bhaktivinode Thakur, pioneer in the global spreading of Krishna teachings.

### DR. THOMAS J. HOPKINS

Emeritus Professor of Religion  
Franklin and Marshall College  
thomas.hopkins@fandm.edu

- Author of "Hindu Religious Tradition"
- Comprehensive survey of Hindu development from the Indus civilization to the modern era (Wadsworth Publishing)
- Specialist in the Bhakti traditions

### DR. REMBERT LUTJEHARMS

Oxford Center for Hindu Studies  
rembert@ochs.org.uk

### DR. KIYOKAZU OKITA

Assistant Professor  
Hakubi Center for Adv. Research  
Kyoto University  
kiyokazu.okita@gmail.com

### DR. SERGEY IVANENKO

Doctor of Philosophical Sciences  
and Expert in Religious Studies  
Moscow, Russia

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