

= It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) =

" It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " is a song by English musician George Harrison , released as the final track of his 1974 album Dark Horse . Harrison was inspired to write the song while in the Hindu holy city of Vrindavan , in northern India , with his friend Ravi Shankar . The composition originated on a day that Harrison describes in his autobiography as " my most fantastic experience " , during which his party and their ascetic guide toured the city 's temples . The song 's choruses were adapted from the Sanskrit chant they sang before visiting Seva Kunj , a park dedicated to Krishna 's childhood . The same pilgrimage to India led to Harrison staging Shankar 's Music Festival from India in September 1974 and undertaking a joint North American tour with Shankar at the end of that year .

Despite the devotional nature of the song , Harrison wrote it part @-@ way through a period of divergence from the spiritual goals he had espoused in his previous works , particularly Living in the Material World (1973) . " It Is ' He ' " serves as a rare example of an overtly religious song on Dark Horse . Recorded between August and October 1974 , the track features an unusual mix of musical styles and instrumentation ? including gospel @-@ style keyboards , folk @-@ rock acoustic guitar , Indian string and percussion instruments , and Moog synthesizer . Besides Harrison , the musicians on the recording include Billy Preston , Tom Scott and Emil Richards , all of whom played in his 1974 tour band and contributed to Shankar 's concurrent release , Shankar Family & Friends .

" It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " continued Harrison 's fusion of the Hindu bhajan tradition with Western pop and rock . The song failed to gain the favourable reception afforded his earlier productions in that style , however , such as " My Sweet Lord " , " Hare Krishna Mantra " and " Give Me Love " . With his spiritual pronouncements during the tour proving similarly unwelcome to many music critics , Harrison subsequently withdrew from making such public statements of Hindu religiosity until producing Shankar 's Chants of India album in 1996 . " It Is ' He ' " was the last overtly devotional song released under Harrison 's name until the posthumously issued " Brainwashed " in 2002 .

= = Background and inspiration = =

In a 1994 interview held at Ravi Shankar 's home in California , George Harrison referred to the reluctance he used to feel before visiting Shankar in India or meeting with A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada , founder of the Hare Krishna movement , or more formally the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) . This was due to the " craziness " taking place in his life , Harrison continued , which sat at odds with the spiritual goals represented by these friends . In January and February 1974 , he visited India part @-@ way through a period that he describes in his autobiography , I , Me , Mine (1980) , as " the naughty years " , coinciding with the end of his marriage to Pattie Boyd . The visit led to Harrison writing two songs that would appear on his Dark Horse album later that year : " It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " and " Simply Shady " . While the latter track reflected the singer 's recent indulgences with drugs and alcohol , " It Is ' He ' " documented what author Simon Leng terms " a spiritual epiphany for Harrison " in the Hindu holy city of Vrindavan .

Harrison went to India in 1974 to attend a ceremony in honour of Shankar 's new home , in Benares , on the banks of the River Ganges . At this time , the two musicians came up with the idea for Ravi Shankar 's Music Festival from India ? a revue of Indian folk music presented by an orchestra of eighteen pioneers of the genre ? and a subsequent joint tour of North America . From Benares , Harrison and Shankar then travelled across the state of Uttar Pradesh to Vrindavan , where the Hindu deity Krishna is said to have spent his childhood , thousands of years before . Discussing " It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " in I , Me , Mine , Harrison recalls that they arrived there at dusk , and adds : " the whole town is Krishna conscious ? everyone , everywhere was chanting ' Hare Krishna ' and various permutations on that . "

= = = Touring Vrindavan 's temples = = =

Shankar had arranged for an English @-@ speaking ascetic named Sripad Maharaj to serve as their guide on a tour of the local temples . Despite the bedraggled appearance of Maharaj , Harrison noticed that throughout the tour , swamis and other passers @-@ by would greet the guide by kissing his feet ? a sign of the utmost reverence .

The party slept for a few hours in rooms provided by one of the temples , during which Harrison heard " huge heavenly choirs " in his dreams and experienced " the deepest sleep I had ever had in my life " . After they had attended morning puja at this temple , at 4 am , Maharaj began singing a bhajan , a Hindu musical prayer . In the tradition of communal chanting , or kirtana , Harrison and the others there sang in response , repeating Maharaj 's lines , for a period lasting up to five hours .

Late that morning , Harrison and Shankar accompanied Maharaj to Seva Kunj , a park that commemorates Krishna 's love for all @-@ night dancing with his gopis (cow @-@ herd girls) . Harrison later marvelled of Seva Kunj : " All the trees , which are so ancient , bow down and the branches touch the ground . Just to walk in that place is incredible . " In I , Me , Mine , he describes the Vrindavan tour as " my most fantastic experience " and says that , at Maharaj 's suggestion , he turned the bhajan into a song , titled " It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " .

= = = Other activities in Vrindavan = = =

Harrison and Shankar spent a few days in the city , at the Sri Chaitanya Prema Samasthana ashram , on the banks of the Yamuna River ; there , they meditated , wrote music and discussed " the art of devotion " . Harrison also met with Prabhupada at this time and reunited with ISKCON disciples Gurudas and Yamuna . The latter couple were among the founding devotees of the London Radha Krishna Temple , whose recordings of chants , including a hit version of the Hare Krishna mantra , Harrison had produced for Apple Records in 1969 ? 70 . Theologian Dale Allison writes that " It Is ' He ' " resulted from Harrison having " rediscovered his enthusiasm for chanting " while in India .

= = Composition = =

Leng describes the mood of the song as " upbeat pseudo @-@ calypso " . He views it as a further example of the musical approach that Harrison employed in songs such as " My Sweet Lord " and " Give Me Love (Give Me Peace on Earth) " , whereby the Hindu bhajan tradition is fused with Western gospel music . The inclusion of Sanskrit verse in " It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " recalls both " My Sweet Lord " , which incorporates part of the Hare Krishna mantra as well as other Hindu prayers , and " Gopala Krishna " , an unreleased track that Harrison also recorded for his All Things Must Pass triple album in 1970 .

Over a three @-@ chord pattern in the key of G major , Harrison adapted the words sung at the Vrindavan kirtana , in a repetitive form typical of a mantra :

Jai Krishna , jai Krishna Krishna
Jai Krishna , jai Sri Krishna
Jai radhé , jai radhé radhé
Jai radhé , jai sri radhé .

Aside from offering praise to Krishna , these lines address Radha , his consort and lover , whom ISKCON devotees recognise as the female form of God . The words serve as the song 's chorus and translate to mean , " All glories and praise to Lord Krishna ; all glories and praise to Goddess Radha . "

Similar to Harrison 's 1973 song " Living in the Material World " ? where he contrasts the Western or " material " parts of the composition with its meditative , " spiritual sky " sections ? " It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " employs a change in tempo and rhythm , to differentiate between the Sanskrit choruses and the English @-@ language verses . Lyrically , the latter sections outline the " It Is ' He ' " element of the song title . In the first of the three verses , Harrison sings of his deity as " He whose eyes have seen / What our lives have been / And who we really are " ; in the final verse , the

description is : " He who is complete / Three worlds at His feet / Cause of every star ...

= = Recording = =

Throughout 1974 , progress on Dark Horse was compromised by Harrison 's commitment to setting up a new record label , also called Dark Horse , and his dedication to projects by the label 's first signings , Shankar and the English duo Splinter . With expectations high for his North American tour , the first by a former member of the Beatles , Harrison later referred to the pressure he had imposed on himself that year as " ridiculous " . As a further distraction , his return to less ascetic ways post @-@ Vrindavan was marked by what he termed " a bit of a bender to make up for all the years I 'd been married " , as Boyd left him in July .

Harrison taped an early version of " It Is ' He ' " at his Friar Park studio , FPSHOT , in Oxfordshire , with Bobby Purvis and Bill Elliott of Splinter on backing vocals . On the officially released recording , he was backed by members of his 1974 tour band , including Tom Scott (flute) , Billy Preston (piano , organ) , Willie Weeks (bass) and Andy Newmark (drums) . These four American musicians attended the main sessions for Dark Horse , which took place at FPSHOT over August ? September , in between rehearsals there for the Music Festival of India 's tour of Europe and the recording of a studio album by Shankar 's ensemble , which Harrison also produced . Harrison 's own contributions to the track included 12 @-@ string acoustic guitar and Moog synthesizer .

In October , with his album still unfinished , Harrison flew to Los Angeles , California , where he rehearsed with his musicians and Shankar 's orchestra for the upcoming tour , while carrying out further recording at A & M Studios . As additional members of the tour band , Jim Horn and Chuck Findley played flutes on " It Is ' He ' " and Emil Richards overdubbed percussion .

The completed recording features a mix of musical styles , with the R & B @-@ funk rhythm section of Weeks and Newmark , gospel keyboards from Preston , and Richards ' wobbleboard recalling pre @-@ rock ' n ' roll skiffle . Aside from the Western instrumentation he supplied on " It Is ' He ' " , Harrison provided Indian music textures through his use of the gut @-@ stringed gubgubbi ? described by Leng as a " banjo @-@ meets @-@ vocal sound " ? as well as small hand @-@ cymbals (or kartal) , commonly played by Hare Krishna devotees during kirtana . In addition , according to Leng , the flute parts serve as a musical reference to Krishna , who is often shown playing a flute in scenes depicting his Lila (pastimes) in Vrindavan .

Already suffering from laryngitis , Harrison overtaxed his voice during the weeks of combined recording and rehearsals in Los Angeles , and his hoarse singing would doom his subsequent concerts in the eyes of many observers . Alone among the tracks on Dark Horse , however , " It Is ' He ' " contains a lead vocal that is relatively clean and free of the effects of laryngitis .

= = Release = =

Dark Horse was issued on 9 December 1974 , towards the end of Harrison and Shankar 's North American tour , with a UK release following on 20 December . The concerts had attracted scorn from many music critics , partly because of Harrison 's decision to feature Indian music so heavily in the program and his frequent statements regarding his Hindu faith . " It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " appeared as the final track on Dark Horse , sequenced after " Far East Man " , a song that Harrison biographers interpret variously as a tribute to Shankar and India , and a reaffirmation of the humanitarian goals represented by Harrison and Shankar 's Bangladesh aid project .

In contrast with Living in the Material World in 1973 , " It Is ' He ' " was the sole example of a devotional song on the album . Leng considers that Dark Horse coincided with " a crisis of faith " on Harrison 's part and that , amid confessionals dealing with the singer 's troubled personal life and rock @-@ star excess , the track was " almost a reminder to himself of golden days in India , when he felt comforted by belief " .

While he identifies a level of religiosity in other songs on Dark Horse , Allison pairs the album with Material World as works that " literally wear their Hinduism on their record sleeves " . The front cover of Dark Horse includes a Himalayan landscape , above which floats the Nath Tradition yogi Shiv

@-@ Goraksha Babaji , while the phrase " All glories to Sri Krsna " appears on the back cover . Among his handwritten notes on the LP 's inner sleeve , Harrison included Sripad Maharaj 's name in a list headed " Thanks to " . The song was published by Oops Publishing (or Ganga in the United States) , the new company that Harrison founded in March 1974 .

= = Critical reception = =

Like the North American tour , Dark Horse was much maligned on release . According to Simon Leng , Harrison 's rejection of rock ' n ' roll tradition and the Beatles ' legacy during the tour was the cause for the album 's unfavourable critical reception ; in the case of " It Is ' He ' " , Leng continues , this manifested as " outright hostility " from some reviewers , who saw it as " one Krishna paen too many " . Bob Woffinden of the NME wrote : " You keep looking for saving graces [on the album] , for words of enthusiasm to pass on ... Tracks like ' It Is HE (Jai Sri Krishna) ' are more typical . There , the endless repetition of ' Jai Sri Krishana , Jai Sri Radhe ' over an enfeebled tune is hardly compelling listening . " Writing for Rolling Stone , Jim Miller opined : " [Harrison 's] religiosity , once a spacey bauble in the Beatles ' panoply , has come to resemble the obsessiveness of a zealot . " In a more favourable review , Brian Harrigan of Melody Maker called the song " a bit of a groover " and credited Harrison with the creation of " a new category in music ? Country and Eastern " .

The song has invited varied opinions among Harrison and Beatles biographers . In their book *Eight Arms to Hold You* , Chip Madinger and Mark Easter dismiss the track as " an inauspicious ending to a half @-@ baked LP " . Ian Inglis describes the deceleration into half @-@ time during the verses as " awkward " and notes the failure of " It Is ' He ' " next to Harrison 's earlier successes with " My Sweet Lord " and " Hare Krishna Mantra " . Inglis concludes : " The gently floating Indian [choruses] are somewhat undermined by the ponderous nature of the rock @-@ oriented interludes , and the evangelical nature of the English words ? ' he who is complete ' ? finally discourage any attempt at participation . " Author Elliot Huntley describes the song as " Krishna @-@ consciousness psychobabble " , with a refrain that is " repeated ad nauseam " . Writing in *The Rough Guide to the Beatles* , Chris Ingham views the track as " George at his happy @-@ clappy nadir " and pairs it with " Ding Dong , Ding Dong " , which Harrison released as a hoped @-@ for Christmas ? New Year hit in the UK , as " two of the worst songs he ever allowed out " .

While also commenting on the underachieving " Ding Dong " single , Alan Clayson writes : " Despite its non @-@ Christian slant , George might have fared better with the wonderful ' It Is " He " (Jai Sri Krishna) ' ... [The] repeated chorus was so uplifting that it scarcely mattered that it was sung (without laryngitis) entirely in Hindi ? no more , anyway , than McCartney breaking into French on ' Michelle ' off *Rubber Soul* . " Robert Rodriguez rates " It Is ' He ' " among Harrison 's most overlooked tracks from the 1970s and describes it as " a joyful delight " and " unrelentingly calming yet catchy " . Leng notes the song as a continuation of Harrison 's successful bhajan ? gospel " formula " , now rendered as " Krishna skiffle " and set in a " Kashmiri party atmosphere " . Leng views " It Is ' He ' " as " charming " and credits Harrison with anticipating the late 1980s world music genre , through his ethnomusicologist 's adoption of the Bengali gubgubbi , or khomok .

In a review of the 2014 reissue of *Dark Horse* , for *Paste* magazine , Robert Ham cited the song as a highlight of the album , writing : " The giddy ' Is It " He " (Jai Sri Krishna) ' ... is a joyous affirmation of [Harrison 's] spiritual beliefs that mashes up many of his musical interests , with Indian instruments finding consort with rambling English folk and R & B horn stabs . " Blogcritics ' Chaz Lipp identified " a lot of rewarding listening [on *Dark Horse*] for those willing to listen with an open mind " , among which , he continues : " ' Far East Man ' is a smooth soul collaboration with Ron Wood that , once heard , lodges itself in the brain . Even catchier is the closing track , ' It Is " He " (Jai Sri Krishna) . ' "

= = Aftermath and legacy = =

First published in August 1980 , I , Me , Mine contains two pages of description from Harrison on Vrindavan and the story behind " It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " . This coverage contrasts with little

discussion of his years as a member of the Beatles , and typically brief commentary on each of his songs . In the book , Harrison dedicates " It Is ' He ' " to Sripad Maharaj , whom he describes as " a wonderful , humble , Holy man " .

After 1974 , Harrison no longer wrote songs as obviously Krishna @-@ devotional as " It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " , although he returned to recording bhajans intermittently , with songs such as " Dear One " in 1976 and " Life Itself , released in 1981 . In his book The Dawn of Indian Music in the West , Peter Lavezzoli writes that following Dark Horse and the " ill @-@ fated 1974 tour " , Harrison " continued to infuse his work with an implicit spirituality that rarely manifested on the surface " . Speaking to ISKCON devotee Mukunda Goswami in 1982 , Harrison said :

Back in the sixties , whatever we were all getting into , we tended to broadcast it as loud as we could . I had had certain realizations and went through a period where I was so thrilled about my discoveries and realizations that I wanted to shout and tell it to everybody . But there 's a time to shout it out and a time not to shout it out .

Having distanced himself from the Hare Krishna movement after Prabhupada 's death in 1977 and through the 1980s , Harrison returned to Vrindavan with Mukunda and other devotees in 1996 , while in India working on Shankar 's album Chants of India . Leng views the latter project as Harrison returning to the musical statements of his Radha Krishna Temple recordings and " It Is ' He ' (Jai Sri Krishna) " . During the Friar Park sessions for Chants of India , Harrison taped the Indian music portions of his song " Brainwashed " , which ends with the Sanskrit prayer " Namah Parvati " . Dale Allison comments that it was not until the release of this chanted mantra , issued posthumously in 2002 , that Harrison again made such an " explicit statement " of Hindu religiosity as he had on " It Is ' He ' " .

= = Personnel = =

According to Bruce Spizer :

George Harrison ? vocals , acoustic guitars , gubgubbi , Moog synthesizer , percussion , backing vocals

Billy Preston ? piano , organ

Tom Scott ? flute

Jim Horn ? flute

Chuck Findley ? flute

Willie Weeks ? bass

Andy Newmark ? drums

Emil Richards ? wobbleboard