

## THE IDEA: Reasons for the development and growth of ISKCON

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was established in 1966, in New York City, by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (Srila Prabhupada). It is best known as the 'Hare Krishna Movement' (or, International Society for Krishna Consciousness – ISKCON). This movement has expanded widely since its founding.

One of the reasons for the popularity and development of the Hare Krishna movement is its emphasis on bhakti, a popular and simple form of Hindu devotion which appeals to the emotions and senses and is based upon the love of Krishna, one of the most popular avatars.

ISKCON promotes the message of the Bhagavad Gita, which is a spiritual message. It appeals to those who are seeking a spiritual message different from that of the prevailing Western culture. Yet it is also rooted in ancient influences within Hinduism.

In addition, the writings of Prabhupada have been a major factor in the establishment of the Hare Krishna movement worldwide. In addition, the use of English, such as in the distribution of the magazine 'Back to Godhead' clearly promoted its message to a widespread audience beyond the USA. Indeed, interest shown by groups such as The Beatles and the financial and proactive support of George Harrison in particular brought ISKCON to the media's attention. The movement provided an alternative lifestyle and its emphasis on a close community of devotees helped to make it attractive in a period that stressed love and peace. Prabhupada himself expressed the 'living' nature of Hinduism. There was also the fact that it rejected the restrictions of caste and was open to all kinds of people, once again stressing equality for all.

Additional appealing factors include the movement's emphasis on social action, such as its charitable works for the homeless and needy.

### QUOTES

- The mission of this non-sectarian movement is to promote the well-being of society by teaching the science of Krishna (God) consciousness according to these ancient Vedic texts that date back over 5000 years. (New Vrindaban mission statement).

- While the number of formally initiated members is only a few thousand, several hundred thousand regularly worship at the Hare Krishna temples, including many expatriate Indians. (Encyclopedia Britannica)
- Krishna consciousness is not an artificial imposition on the mind; this consciousness is the original energy of the living entity. (A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada).
- This great influx of Hindu teachers and ideas to the West during the 1960s and 1970s has contributed to Global Hinduism. (Gavin Flood)

## REFERENCES, FURTHER EXPLANATION AND EXAMPLES

- It is clear that this message of simple devotion, peace and equality is clearly accessible to the wider public and breaks through the limitations and restrictions of complicated religious dogma and ritual.
- Indeed, Prabhupada's writings present the timeless wisdom of Vedic scriptures in modern English with startling clarity and a convincing, simple eloquence that proves the relevance of the science of self-realization to the modern world.
- However, Prabhupada was also keen to root his message in traditional Hinduism. ISKCON promotes the message of the Bhagavad Gita, which is a spiritual message. It appeals to those who are seeking a spiritual message different from that of the prevailing Western culture.
- All these factors together have created a Global Hinduism and firmly establishing Hinduism as a world faith.

## Answer:

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was established in 1966, in New York City, by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada (Srila Prabhupada). It is best known as the 'Hare Krishna Movement' (or, International Society for Krishna Consciousness – ISKCON). This movement has expanded widely since its founding. According to the Encyclopedia Britannica, 'While the number of formally initiated members is only a few thousand, several hundred thousand regularly worship at the Hare Krishna temples, including many expatriate Indians.'

One of the reasons for the popularity and development of the Hare Krishna movement is its emphasis

on bhakti, a popular and simple form of Hindu devotion which appeals to the emotions and senses and is based upon the love of Krishna, one of the most popular avatars. It is clear that this message of simple devotion, peace and equality is clearly accessible to the wider public and breaks through the limitations and restrictions of complicated religious dogma and ritual. ISKCON promotes the message of the Bhagavad Gita, which is a spiritual message. It appeals to those who are seeking a spiritual message different from that of the prevailing Western culture. There is a strong message of devotion, love and a practical way for faith in the writing of Prabhupada. Yet it is also rooted in ancient influences within Hinduism. As the Vrindaban mission statement declares: 'The mission of this non-sectarian movement is to promote the well-being of society by teaching the science of Krishna (God) consciousness according to these ancient Vedic texts that date back over 5000 years'.

In addition, the writings of Prabhupada have been a major factor in the establishment of the Hare Krishna movement worldwide. Indeed, Prabhupada's writings present the timeless wisdom of Vedic scriptures in modern English with startling clarity and a convincing, simple eloquence that proves the relevance of the science of self-realization to the modern world. In addition, the use of English, such as in the distribution of the magazine 'Back to Godhead' clearly promoted its message to a widespread audience beyond the USA. Indeed, interest shown by groups such as The Beatles and the financial and proactive support of George Harrison in particular brought ISKCON to the media's attention. The movement provided an alternative lifestyle and its emphasis on a close community of devotees helped to make it attractive in a period that stressed love and peace. Prabhupada himself expressed the 'living' nature of Hinduism: 'Krishna consciousness is not an artificial imposition on the mind; this consciousness is the original energy of the living entity.' There was also the fact that it rejected the restrictions of caste and was open to all kinds of people, once again stressing equality for all.

Additional appealing factors include the movement's emphasis on social action, such as its charitable works for the homeless and needy. All these factors together have created a Global Hinduism and firmly establishing Hinduism as a world faith. As Gavin Flood states: 'This great influx of Hindu teachers and ideas to the West during the 1960s and 1970s has contributed to Global Hinduism.'

## THE IDEA: Prabhupada's life and influence

Prabhupada arrived in America in 1965 and established the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) at the age of sixty-nine. When Prabhupada arrived in the US it was during a 'decade of discontent'; there was widespread dissatisfaction with America's war with Vietnam. [\*]

Prabhupada quickly established Krishna-centred, self-sufficient farm communities that followed the principles of 'simple living' and 'high thinking'. [\*]

One vital aspect of influence was Prabhupada's uncompromising and open preaching of his ancient message to the modern world; for Prabhupada, his message was to the entire community irrespective of caste. [\*]

Prabhupada captivated the public eye by making the Hare Krishna Movement a very visual presence on the public streets of the USA. [\*]

Possibly, of all Prabhupada's major achievements and influences, many consider his writings to be of greatest importance. The writings presented timeless wisdom of ancient Hindu scriptures translated to a modern English audience with clarity, conviction and a simple eloquence. [\*]

Prabhupada established more than 108 temples and instructed his disciples that no one should go hungry within a 10-mile radius of an ISKCON temple. Since this time he has travelled the world many times and has established many Hare Krishna temples and centres, gathering a worldwide following. [\*]

### QUOTES

- Every living creature is the son of the supreme Lord, and He does not tolerate even ants being killed. (A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada)
- A grain of devotion is more valuable than tons of faithlessness. (A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada).
- While the number of formally initiated members is only a few thousand, several hundred thousand regularly worship at the Hare Krishna temples, including many expatriate Indians. (Encyclopedia Britannica)

- When you're open to something it's like being a beacon, and you attract it. From the first time I heard the chanting Hare Krishna, it was like a door opened somewhere in my subconscious, maybe from some previous life. (George Harrison)

## REFERENCES, FURTHER EXPLANATION AND EXAMPLES

- The American youth created their counter-culture popularly known as hippie culture based upon the principles of peace and love. Prabhupada presented an alternative authority that supported their principles.
- In 1972, he established what he called a 'gurukul' (teacher-focused school) in Dallas, Texas. This was to be a spiritual and educational institution set up according to the traditional Vedic model.
- Therefore, in doing this he attracted and influenced many young Americans who eventually offered their faith and loving devotion as his disciples.
- There was chanting in the public parks, distribution of the 'Back to Godhead' magazine, celebrating and sharing love feasts, offering teaching through both private and public lectures based upon the teachings in the Bhagavad Gita, initially from a rented store-front but soon expanded out to the wider public.
- Prabhupada's writings established the relevance of the 'science' of self-realisation for the modern world and as such they have changed the lives of millions.