



This is a revision focused activity, putting together the earlier skills learnt. It is about creating an end product, applying the skills required by A02. A bulleted summary is given though it is not necessary to develop all the bullet points. The order of the bullet points may also need changing. A variety of quotations are provided, but again not all are required. You will need to do your own intermediate summaries and produce a completed essay within the 25 minute time available. Then compare with others in the class and discuss any significant differences and ways it could have been improved.

ESSAY TITLE:

Is ISKCON a legitimate form of Hinduism? (A01 - Theme 3)

- It can be argued that ISKCON has had a profound effect on Hinduism by introducing it to Western society and as such is regarded by many as a legitimate form of Hinduism.
- It is legitimate because it has also influenced Hindu practices, for example, its re-emphasis on the importance of bhakti. It met the needs and spiritual aspirations of Western people and gave Hinduism new emphasis.
- Devotees are encouraged to read Hindu sacred texts - such as the Bhagavad Gita and listen to the teachings of a guru which is vital in Hinduism.
- It is highly representative of Vaishnava bhakti – in its practices such as care of murtis and seeking darshan.
- Those who practise Gaudiya Vaishnavism, see ISKCON as a legitimate and important development in their religion's history.
- It is recognised as part of the Hindu tradition by many diaspora Hindus.
- ISKCON accepts fundamental Hindu beliefs such as karma and reincarnation.
- Others would argue that whilst being a legitimate form of Hinduism, its impact has been minimal. It is a minor movement, a cult, which has had little effect on Hinduism in India or on mainstream Hinduism.
- Some would argue that since ISKCON entails committed, devoted, passionate beliefs in a complex supernatural reality, no challenge to ISKCON's identity as a religion can be seriously entertained. However, they would argue that it is a religion in itself and not a branch of Hinduism.
- Some Hindus would argue that it is not a Hindu movement at all. Some would argue that it is a



secular political organisation and not ingrained in Hindu belief and philosophy.

- Others would counter argue by noting that ISKCON's origins can be traced to the sixteenth century and therefore it is a well-established and legitimate form of Hinduism.



QUOTATIONS

ISKCON is a tradition that commands a respected place in the religious life of humankind. (Diana Eck)

It arose out of next to nothing in less than twenty years and has become known all over the West. This, I feel, is a sign of the times and an important fact in the history of the Western world. (A. L. Basham)

I must honestly confess, however, that despite my growing appreciation of Hindu culture, I wince whenever I hear someone refer to Lord Krishna as “a Hindu god,” to the Krishna consciousness movement as “a sect of Hinduism,” or to the Bhagavad-gita, which ISKCON has published in more than thirty languages, as “the Hindu bible.” By convention, or common understanding, it may be OK to call us Hindu, but a closer look shows that the designation is not wholly appropriate. (Mathuresa Dasa)

However, the truth is that Srila Prabhupada himself had a layered view on the subject, responding to the “Hindu” moniker in the same way that he did everything else—nuanced according to time, place, and circumstance. (Anuttama Dasa)

“I began my presentation with two quotes,” he says. “One was ‘There is a misconception that the Krishna consciousness movement represents the Hindu religion.’ The other was, ‘We are spreading Hindu culture throughout the whole world.’ (Gauri Dasa)

This great influx of Hindu teachers and ideas to the West during the 1960s and 1970s has contributed to Global Hinduism. (Gavin Flood)

The relativity of truth that Hinduism accepts is well shown by the blind men and the elephant. Each man touched one part of the elephant, and declared the elephant to be what he experienced. Every account was accurate as far as it went, but none of the men had any idea of what an elephant really was. (David Smith)

It is fashionable for good political reasons to deny the unity of Hinduism, but its multiple forms are more mutually accessible than are the disparate sects of other religions. (David Smith)