



# ISKCON Communications

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness  
Founder-*Acharya* His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

## Media Release

### **Hare Krishna Movement Celebrates 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary in 2016 The Joy of Devotion Inspires a Half-Century of Growth**

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*Washington, D.C.*—1966 was a significant year. Chairman Mao Tse-Tung’s “Little Red Book” was published for the first time. Despite mass protests, the United States began bombing Hanoi, North Vietnam’s capital. Actor Ronald Reagan was elected governor of California. The Beatles performed their very last concert in San Francisco’s Candlestick Park.

And on New York City’s lower east side, surrounded by a handful of young followers in a small storefront temple on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada incorporated a fledgling religious society. He named it the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, or ISKCON. On that hot summer day, the 13<sup>th</sup> of July, the Hare Krishna movement was born.

Few noticed the event. Fewer still would have expected this 70-year old swami and his band of reformed hippies to be more than a blip in the avant-garde history of New York. But fifty years later the society Prabhupada created is arguably the largest and most influential of global Vedic (Hindu) organizations, and the 600-plus Hare Krishna temples around the world attract an estimated nine million worshippers per year.

“Besides scholars, few people know the depth of the Krishna movement’s historic Vaishnava tradition, nor ISKCON’s impact as a leading proponent of devotional bhakti yoga around the world,” said Dr. Ravi Gupta, head of Utah State University’s Religious Study Department.

Srila Prabhupada passed away in November 1977. But, the movement he began has proven to be a resilient one. Today ISKCON claims 600 temples, 65 eco-farms and 110 vegetarian restaurants. Its affiliated Bhaktivedanta Book Trust is the world's largest publisher of Vaishnava literature and has distributed 516 million books and magazines.

In addition, ISKCON's affiliated Annamrita Food Relief program feeds 1.2 million school children *every day* in India. ISKCON is the official faith partner with the British government for the Krishna Advanti schools, which oversees multiple parochial schools. ISKCON's world headquarters in Mayapura, West Bengal India, draws one million pilgrims each year and a Temple of Vedic Planetarium is under construction that will hold 10,000 people in its main worship hall.

As early as 1975, scholars took note of ISKCON's growth. Dr. A. L Basham, author of the famed book, "The Glory That Was India," wrote that "The Hare Krishna movement... is historically very significant, for now, for the first time since the days of the Roman Empire, an Asian religion is being openly practiced by people of western origin in the streets of western cities."

"ISKCON teaches that every living being is an eternal soul, and that happiness comes from awakening our relationship with God, or Lord Krishna," said Anuttama Dasa, ISKCON spokesperson. "People are realizing that a consumer driven life is a dead end, and thus so many today are seriously looking for spiritual alternatives."

ISKCON will observe a year of celebrations marking the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Events will include major Rathayatra ("Giant Chariot") parades down New York's 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Washington's Independence Avenue, Toronto's Yonge Street, and London's Trafalgar Square; as well as celebratory festivals and events to coincide with the July 13 Anniversary date.

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