

## **The vision of the Hare Krishna Movement**

The seven purposes stated within ISKCON's articles of incorporation reveal Srila Prabhupada's vision for the Society:

1. To systematically propagate spiritual knowledge to society at large and to educate all peoples 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, as it is revealed in the 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 to develop 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 sankirtan movement, congregational chanting of the holy name of God as revealed in the teachings of Lord Chaitanya Mahaprabhu.
5. To erect for the members and 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 and more natural way of life.
7. With a view towards achieving the aforementioned purposes, to publish and distribute periodicals, magazines, books and other writings.

## **When did the Hare Krishna Movement start?**

The Hare Krishna lifestyle is one that has been followed since time immemorial – right from the beginning of material creation according to ancient Vedic texts. The Hare Krishna philosophy and lifestyle thus originates in the ancient Vedic civilisation, the teachings and writings of which have been passed down through the generations. Such a civilisation is based on a life of compassion, tolerance, cleanliness and discipline, all for one main purpose: to use the human form of life for the sake of cultivating knowledge of God, Lord Krishna. The cultivation of knowledge and service to Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, constitute the goal of this valuable human form of life. It is Lord Krishna's promise in Bhagavad-gita that when we achieve unalloyed pure service to Him we are then liberated from this world of repeated birth and death and, at the end of our lives, reach the spiritual realm.

What's wrong with the world in which we live and what is the solution?

The material world is characterised by the three-fold miseries of life – miseries caused by body and mind, miseries caused by other living entities and miseries caused by nature and its forces. At any moment in time we are troubled by at least one or a combination of these miseries. Lord Krishna advises in Bhagavad-gita that we should learn to tolerate these miseries as we cultivate our real spiritual identity.

As long as we are in the material world, we cannot be permanently happy by various material adjustments as the very nature of material enjoyment is temporary. Hence, the wise teachers of the past have advised that all activities in this material world be spiritualised by following a pure life dedicated to self-realisation. Thus we can gradually become free from the bonds of material life.

From the point of creation, the material world goes through four different stages of time. We are now in the final stage of the cycle, which is called 'Kali Yuga'. This Kali Yuga age is characterised by greed, quarrel, hypocrisy and cheating. According to the Vedic scriptures, as time progresses in this age, there will be further degradation with increased discrepancies in human behaviour, resulting in social disruption at all levels. The majority of the population will not believe in spirituality and God. For the minority who do seek a life of spirituality, the search for true religion may seem a distant reality.

The great benediction offered by Lord Krishna in this troubled age of Kali Yuga is that simply by chanting the holy names of God.

## **The Activities of the Hare Krishnas**

The Hare Krishna Movement is meant to fill the spiritual gap in the world today. Its aim is to build a society based on the teachings of Lord Krishna, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. In our Society, we believe God is a person and He has a name, has His own family and friends, performs transcendently wonderful activities and is cherished as the life and soul of His devotees. This Supreme Person is unimaginably beautiful, wealthy, strong, famous, intelligent and at the same time detached from everything. Although He has unlimited names, His original name is Krishna, meaning 'all-attractive'.

Spiritual life starts when one begins to build a relationship with Lord Krishna through His name, His pastimes and His devotees. At the Hare Krishna centres around the world, we chant His name, educate ourselves on His pastimes and associate with His devotees. The Supreme Personality of Godhead is fully spiritual, and a fragment of this spirituality – the 'soul' – exists within all of us. We are thus all individual souls existing in a relationship with the Supreme Soul, Lord Krishna. The happiness that eludes us in this material world can be found when we revive our lost relationship with Lord Krishna.

By chanting the names of Lord Krishna, listening to His pastimes and associating with His devotees, a person can return the soul to its original position of eternality, bliss and complete knowledge in relationship with Krishna – this is the true purpose of all yoga systems. As Lord Krishna is fully spiritual without a tinge of material contamination, His name, activities and paraphernalia are all spiritual. Hence, in the system of bhakti yoga, or devotion to Krishna, you can easily attain the highest perfection of life. Our daily activities include:

(1) Deity Worship – worshipping the Lord in an authorised form made of stone, earth, wood or painting.

(2) Vegetarianism – the art of cooking sumptuous vegetarian preparations filled with the mercy of Lord Krishna and devoid of any karmic reactions.

(3) Spiritual Education – study of Bhagavad-gita (spoken by Lord Krishna 5,000 years ago), Srimad Bhagavatam (about the life of Lord Krishna, also written 5,000 years ago) and Chaitanya-caritamrita (pastimes of the Lord when he appeared some 500 years ago).

(4) Community Distribution of Krishna's name – popularly known within as 'Harinam', a system of singing and dancing the names of Krishna on the streets for all to hear and relish. Passive hearing of Krishna's name immediately starts the spiritual progress of the listener too!

(5) And finally the most important exercise of all, the main purpose of every devotee and the very order of Krishna Himself – the chanting of His names in the form of the Maha Mantra – the greatest method of deliverance:

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna

Krishna Krishna Hare Hare

Hare Rama Hare Rama

Rama Rama Hare Hare

We welcome you, and we hope you have found a place where your spiritual life can start. We look forward to seeing you at our temples, farms or restaurants soon.

Hare Krishna.