

# Chicago's International Society for Krishna Consciousness, and Hinduism in Rogers Park

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## Introduction

For this project, my assignment was to research a particular temple belonging to an Asian religion. I chose to visit the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, or ISKCON, to gain deeper insight into Hinduism in Chicago, as well as to learn more about Hinduism on a local level.

## What is ISKCON?

ISKCON is a Hindu organization, particularly called the Hare Krishnas. The temple I visited, located in Roger's Park, opened up in 1979 as the first Hindu temple in all of Chicago. The movement itself started in 1965 by the founder, His Divine Grace A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada.

Stage with statues of several deities. >



## San Kirtan Movement

One of the most important aspects of the Hare Krishnas is that of its musical rituals. As explained by a devotee in the temple, the movement started in India, where people who felt excluded by the strict caste system came together to worship with music, using it as a way to unite everybody, despite one's role in the caste system. Today, devotees continue the tradition of musical meditation by playing music during meetings, festivals, as well as on Chicago's streets.



Statue of the founder, His Divine Grace A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada>

Information taken from the ISKCON website, <https://www.iskconchicago.com/>  
Photos taken by Michael Baker

## Core Ideals

The Hare Krishnas, as I have learned from both their website and members at the temple, are all about "inclusiveness and joy in the discovery of the innate spiritual nature of us all." They believe that there is a distinct difference in the body and the soul, where the body is simply a vessel for our conscious spiritual existence. They believe that the human search for love on a physical level is wrought with pain and disappointment, and instead, should be sought on a spiritual level instead. Hare Kirshnas worship Lord Krishna, and read scripture from the Bhagavad Gita.

## Rituals

The Hare Krishnas have several rituals, including

- Japa, or mantra meditation
- Kirtan, or meditation involving spiritual music
- Prasada, or holy offerings in the form of consuming food

And various other events such as feasts, festivals, and dances.

## Conclusion

In general, ISKCON is an incredible organization dedicated to spreading joy and awareness of one's position within both the physical realm and on a spiritual level. It is a universal path meant for all types of people regardless of background or beliefs, and is meant to be embraced by all who choose to do so.