



THEO299: Engaged Learning Project Chicago's ISKCON Temple

Richa Patel, Yarina Liston (Professor)
Loyola University Chicago



Preparing people to lead extraordinary lives

ABSTRACT

I visited the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) temple for my engaged learning project. ISKCON is a Vaishnavite Hindu temple that focuses on Lord Krishna. The movement was introduced to the Western world by A.C Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada in 1965 and, from there, has rapidly spread over the last few decades, with millions of followers currently. As stated on their website, the Bhagavad Gita is their core philosophical text, focusing on the spiritual nourishment of the soul to obtain inner happiness and contentment (ISKCON Chicago). I was excited to explore this community because it is close to the Loyola Lakeshore Campus. Growing up in rural Nebraska, I didn't have temples I could visit, much less a community like this to be a part of. I hoped that in visiting and interviewing devotees, I could better understand their mission and the community they have built here in Chicago and how that has modified their practices from our in-class learning. I also hoped to take that knowledge and reflect on what this means in terms of Loyola's mission of global awareness. **Exploring other cultures and thought systems allows us to be more accepting and conscious of our choices, providing an excellent example of how we are all interrelated and interdependent.**

TESTIMONIES



"Practicing Hinduism here has been different because of feeling cultural and minority differences while in predominantly white circumstances. It is not as easy to be open with others about spirituality and what it means to me while growing up.

– Sanya 2023 (Temple Devotee, Student)



"I believe that this is the eternal belief of mankind, and it makes the most sense. I feel as though innately this is the one and true religion."

– Adam 2023 (Temple Leader & Full-Time Devotee)

BASIC BELIEFS

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness

- The Absolute Truth is contained in all the great Scriptures of the world; the Bible, Koran, Torah, etc. However, the oldest known Revealed Scriptures in existence are the Vedic literature, most notably the BHAGAVAD GITA, which is the literal record of God's actual Words
- God, or KRISHNA, is eternal, all-knowing, omnipresent, all-powerful, and all-attractive, the seed-giving Father of man and all living entities. He is the sustaining energy of all life, nature, and the cosmic situation.
- Man is actually NOT his[/her] body, but is eternal spirit soul, part and parcel of God, and therefore eternal.
- That all men [and women] are brothers [and sisters] can be practiced only when we realize God as our common ultimate Father.
- All our actions should be performed as a sacrifice to the Supreme Lord." all that you do; all that you eat, all that you offer and give away, as well as all austerities that you may perform, should be done as an offering unto Me." (Bhagavad-gita, IX, 27)
- The food that sustains us should always be offered to the Lord before eating. In this way, it becomes the Offering, and such eating purifies us.
- We can, by sincere cultivation of bona fide spiritual science, attain to a state of pure, unending, blissful consciousness, free from anxiety in this very lifetime.
- The recommended means of attaining the mature stage of Love of God in the present age of "Kali," or quarrel, is to chant the Holy Name of the Lord. The easiest method for most people is to chant the Hare Krishna mantra: Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare.

Our basic Mission is to propagate the Sankirtana Movement (chanting of the Holy Names of God) all around the world as was recommended by the Incarnation of the Lord, Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu. People in this age are reluctant very much to understand God's consciousness on account of their unfortunate condition of life. They are working hard day and night simply for a sense of gratification. But this transcendental vibration of Sankirtana will knock at the door of their hearts for spiritual awakening. Therefore, they should be given the chance for this opportunity.

- A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada