



# ISKCON 50th ANNIVERSARY

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## International Briefing Pack



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

# INTRODUCTION

Srila Prabhupada laughed playfully when he first coined the acronym

– "We shall call our society '**ISKCON**.' "

## Purpose of this Brief

Throughout 2016, ISKCON will **celebrate 50 years** since its incorporation on the 13th of July, 1966. A significant achievement and historic milestone in Srila Prabhupada's legacy. This is also a time when ISKCON will be in the public eye internationally. Thus, we are presented with an unique opportunity to spread our values through the global celebrations named '**ISKCON50**'.

This document will highlight – **The Opportunity, Our Goals, Our Values and Features** of ISKCON50, in order to stimulate your regional and local planning for ISKCON50. As a result, it will enable you to –

- **Select initiatives that are appropriate to your locality**
- **Connect to ISKCON50 through consistent theming, values and goals**
- **Understand key messages that can be communicated to stakeholder groups.**

## Mission Statements

- I. To inspire public appreciation for values and contributions of Krishna Consciousness
- II. To unite our society to celebrate the successes of our Founder-Acharya and the ISKCON family
- III. To offer Srila Prabhupada a garland of achievements individually, collectively, locally and globally.

Key Public Message

# THE JOY OF DEVOTION

# The Opportunity

A moment to unite and inspire devotees in celebration

To highlight ISKCON's values globally

Increased attention: media, government, interfaith communities, beneficiaries, and other stakeholders

A once in a lifetime service to Srila Prabhupada

Enhance and improve ISKCON's reputation

## Our Goals

### ● A better public understanding of the Joy of Devotion

A life of devotion, focused upon the Divine, leads to the ultimate harmony of being. 'Devotion to God, Compassion to All' is ISKCON's world contribution, it is the purpose, the solution; it is the lifeblood and mission of ISKCON. Too often this life of devotion is portrayed vaguely as another trend such as yoga, meditation and eastern promise. ISKCON50 will put our uncompromised product front and centre with contemporary relevance

### ● An enhanced and informed image of our society

ISKCON's global achievements and acceptance are seldom understood and rarely accessible to the world in one collective resource. Often people around the world see us as a local minority group and not a world class global community. ISKCON50 will rebrand our image to **close the gap between reality and perception.**

### ● A shared pride in ISKCON

One of the greatest forces in nurturing Krishna Consciousness and spreading it to others is our own sense of well-being and pride in ISKCON. **What members tell friends and families will determine ISKCON's credibility.** ISKCON50 will provide the opportunity to plan, listen, reach out, review, and reconcile matters which may undermine the many millions of wonderful stories members have to tell.

## Our Values

### Empowerment

We will make room; see the potential, ideas and skill in others. We will responsibly delegate and watch success without limits.

### Cooperation

'Your love will be shown by how you cooperate...' - We will join forces locally and globally to achieve great things to glorify Srila Prabhupada.

### Appreciation of our society

ISKCON50 is a celebration. We will take this time to recognize, appreciate and share the achievements of our Founder and his followers.

# ISKCON50 FIVE FEATURES

Understanding the features will help group your ISKCON50 initiatives

1. Celebrate Events

2. Educate the World

3. Accelerate Our Mission

4. Appreciate ISKCON

5. Motivate Achievements

## Five Features' Goals

- Use the uniqueness of the 50th anniversary to attract more attendance from the public, get VIPs to come to the event, and get more media coverage
- Get support from ISKCON donors and volunteers for a larger more developed event than other years
- Build SKCON's reputation and awareness by incorporating specially designed 50th anniversary features into the event through unified "branding" elements like design, media, exhibits, handouts, advertising, and publications
- Utilize the initiatives as a medium to disseminate educational material that will enhance the understanding of ISKCON
- Increase prasadam and book distributions along with more harinam sankirtan on a global scale in order to mark the occasion with exceptional level of activities
- Celebrate our collective achievements and garner unity in the pursuance of greater goals like raising funds for the ToVP or other large initiatives.

## Five Features' Guidelines

- Know your target audience. Is it the general public, ISKCON members, donors and supporters, faith communities, Government, media, VIPS, academics, a specific demographic (e.g. Millennials, Indian community, locals) or a combination of these?
- Plan the follow-up as you plan the event. This includes how you will capture contact information from the people attending as well as what specific follow-up events or other strategies you will employ
- Connect with ISKCON Communications, elect a communications officer, and prepare for increased media exposure
- Ensure educational material, books and publication items are ordered timely
- Prepare to accommodate the branding principles and materials that will be provided by the international team in the coming months

# 1. Celebrate Events

*Events are an effective way of capturing attention and can be held throughout the year or as a stand-alone celebration of ISKCON50. The following are initiatives within this feature -*

## **50thize All Your Events**

All ISKCON centres are encouraged to highlight ISKCON50 throughout their scheduled annual events by utilizing materials that will be provided to you in coming months by the international team, including -

- Logos, banners and posters
- Exhibition material, theming, and media messages
- Publication material – ISKCON50 magazine, films, and exhibit.

If your centre is unable to organise special events for ISKCON50, you can 50thize your regular events with support from the international team. Go to 'Next Steps' or email through to [info@iskcon50.org](mailto:info@iskcon50.org)

## **2015 Launch Events**

Your centre can launch its celebrations by commemorating the day that Srila Prabhupada left for America on the Jaladutta, which falls on the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 2015. Potential activities include:

- Prabhupada Position Seminars
- Prabhupada Lilamrita book reading
- Recitation of Markine Bhagavata Dharma
- Srila Prabhupada memories by disciples, videos are available on the internet.

**\*Contact us for more guidelines and templates**

## **Signature VIP Events**

These are major events which may be delivered in partnership with the international team. A Signature VIP event is defined by formal proceedings at a prestigious venue with high-profile or influential attendees through invite-only. Attendees might include local councillors, Indian business leaders, cultural ambassadors, favourable celebrities, and heads of relevant organisations.

# 1. Celebrate Events

## Conferences

Conferences are specific events catered toward a unique audience or based on certain topical discussions that are informed through the perspective of Krishna conscious philosophy and culture.

- Academic panel discussions- potentially encouraged in partnership with local educational institutions. The international team are able to provide advise in approaching academics.
- Themed conferences on topics such as ecology, sustainability, conscious eating, yoga, etc.

**\*Contact us for more guidelines and templates**

## Opening, Launch, and Closing Events

An opening event for ISKCON50 early in the year will alert media, congregational members, and the broader devotee community of your plans in celebration of the event and increase interest and support of the program. Similarly, 2016 is an opportune moment to launch your local projects and other initiatives in the general spirit of celebration and observance of a major milestone. Finally, a closing event can also capture the success of the year and maintain momentum for the ongoing activities in the your centre.

## Padayatra Walks

A padayatra is a great initiative to spread Krishna consciousness by directly contacting local communities through which you pass. An international padayatra initiative exists through which your endeavours may be connected. For a modernised concept, centres may consider hosting 'Fun Runs', sponsored mountain treks or walks, or half-marathons as a form of non-competitive celebration.

## Other Events

Other events may be hosted to display the rich cultural dimension within Krishna Consciousness. ISKCON centres can harness local talents and also make specific efforts to engage external artists who may have relevant expertise. Cultural events may be centred around dance, drama, music, or visual art.

## 2. Educate the World

*Increased public and media attention can be harnessed toward better informed perceptions of ISKCON if we are able to present our philosophy, culture and values effectively*

### **Media Exposure**

Where possible, it is important for your centre to appoint a local media coordinator who can act as a communications liaison. They will receive specific instructions in the form of media messages, statements, and press releases but also broader guidelines from the ISKCON Communications Ministry in order to effectively engage the media. The different media forms to consider are – television news channels, radio shows, newspapers, trends on social media, and other modes through the internet

### **Endorsements**

If your centre has developed positive relationships with any notable or recognized personalities, 2016 is the year to seek public endorsement in order to generate more credibility and increase positive impressions toward Krishna consciousness and your local centre. This may include celebrities, political leaders, academics, and other opinion leaders. Centres may also seek official government recognition in the form of proclamations, installed memorials, postage stamps, or even just an acknowledgement letter that can be published in a festival souvenir, which is a potential form of fund-raising.

### **Productions**

The international team will be distributing an ISKCON50 magazine, films, and materials for an ISKCON World exhibit (details further) that can be integrated throughout your regular events. Your centre may also produce local material like videos, audio recordings, short publications, etc. The *Acharya* Film is also being released in 2015 and can draw a lot of attention to Srila Prabhupada's life and achievements

### **ISKCON50 Merchandise**

Congregation members and devotees will want to retain artefacts from the anniversary celebrations and centres are encouraged to produce memorabilia for the celebrations in the form of stickers, shirts, hamper packs, calendars, etc. This is also an effective way to fundraise for your initiatives especially if centres were to adopt donations for significant items like the Prabhupada Centennial Kalash (water-pot).

# 3. Accelerate Our Mission

*Experience from the Prabhupada Centennial celebration shows that such anniversaries increase the momentum of usual activities naturally and can be enhanced through planning*

## Books and Prasadam Distribution

An ISKCON50 book-marathon can be organised during the incorporation with special efforts to subscribe public libraries, interested community groups, and educational institutions. There will be a special edition of Back To Godhead for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and a target has been set to achieve 12 million books in 2016. Similarly, prasadam distribution and Food For Life activities can be increased through restaurants and centres as this will also gain attention and is a recognized form of goodwill back to communities.

## Harinam Sankirtan – Holy Name Week

It is also important to increase the chanting of the holy names through harinam sankirtan and initiatives like the **World Holy Name Week**. In 2016, the World Holy Name Week will specially commemorate and bring attention to the first public harinam led by Srila Prabhupada 50 years ago (NYC). You may also directly engage the public through meditation sessions and japa-thons.

## Public Participation Programs

Special programs may be organised to engage audiences such as the following –

- Bhagavad Gita essay competition and school contests
- Social agenda campaigns: Gita principled leadership, save Yamuna, spiritual economics and environmentalism, cow protection, Varnashram and sustainable community building.

**\*Contact us for more guidelines and templates**

## Follow-up Systems

It is important to harness ISKCON50 for your on-going programs by collecting information from new participants and directing them toward the next program that is suitable for their interest. This may include automated internet newsletter systems and knowledge capture databases.

# 4. Appreciate ISKCON

*As outreach programs are extended through ISKCON50 it is equally important to focus inward and cultivate our devotees' sense of well-being and pride within their communities*

## **Devotee Care**

Devotee care can be enhanced during ISKCON50 by replicating initiatives that are taking place within our international units focused on community, such as – Mayapur Congregational Development Ministry, Grihasta Vision Team, ISKCON Youth Ministry, etc. The youth should especially be given concern as they are our living legacy and will benefit greatly from formal mentorship programs.

A popularly practiced initiative is to host an Appreciation Event which is solely for the purpose of recognizing members of your community with awards. This may be a dinner and kirtan activity where devotees are also given the opportunity to thank each other for their association.

## **Regional Gatherings**

Regional gatherings like Kulimelas, Sadhu Sanga Retreats, and Kirtan-melas are specially enlivening for our devotee communities and in keeping with the ISKCON50 celebrations there should be a concentrated effort in bringing together devotees who may have served in the past together through different generations. Reliving memories from the early days and appreciating the ongoing efforts will build a sense of connection and pride in the history of our young movements locally and internationally.

## **Srila Prabhupada Seminars**

All ISKCON members are primarily inspired and empowered by Founder Acharya. Understanding His official position through the Prabhupada Position seminar or simply recollecting how He may have affected individuals within our community through personal interactions, teachings, or the international community is an important mediation that will engender unity within Prabhupada's family. Devotees may be asked to speak or write about their realisations to be shared with others in this regard.

# 5. Motivate Achievements

*An increase in activity and empowerment throughout 2016 can also be leveraged to motivate greater achievements for your local centre or global programs.*

## **Temple of the Vedic Planetarium**

The Temple of the Vedic Planetarium is one of the most significant civil projects within our international community at present and the ToVP team is touring the world throughout 2015 and 2016. Your centre may encourage its community to join together in making a collective donation towards this project and have it forever marked in the history of this structure.

## **Establish a Commemorative Structure**

It is common practice to establish a monument for significant milestones and your centre may choose to establish a structure, plant a tree/grove, or even just hang a plaque to commemorate the event.

This is particularly relevant to centres or cities where Srila Prabhupada may have personally visited. An ideal example is the Hare Krishna Tree in Tompkins Square Park.

## **Your Next Steps**

Having understood the wealth of opportunity and initiatives to commemorate ISKCON50 in your centre, it is time to put forward a plan with the support of your management and congregation. You may start by:

1. Establishing an ISKCON50 organisational committee or project leader
2. Defining your plans by selecting the initiatives within the capacity of your centre
3. Communicate these plans to your regional or national coordinators. You can also always contact us directly if you are unaware of a regional coordinator
4. Keep informed of international and regional progress through our website, newsletter, and social media platforms.

# ISKCON50 Publications

The following publications are being produced by the international team and can be integrated within all your initiatives and regular events for 2016

## 1. ISKCON50 Magazine

This is a special commemorative magazine being produced especially for ISKCON50. It will highlight ISKCON's major achievements over 50 years and also highlight stories and experiences from local centres around the world. Articles included in the magazine are - 'The History of ISKCON', 'The Many Faces of ISKCON', 'Yoga and Kirtan', 'Science, Art and the Krishnas', 'A World of Festivals'.

## 2. ISKCON50 Films

The 'Joy of Devotion' documentary project is a visually compelling and educational film that conveys Srila Prabhupada's key messages, the movement he built and how ISKCON continues to transform the lives of both its members and the people of the world. It will directly cover about 20 interviewees in 14 cities in 9 countries in 6 continents. This film will be perfect to showcase ISKCON throughout your 2016 initiatives. Another ISKCON movie is also planned and information will become available as it progresses.

## 3. ISKCON50 World Exhibit

This exhibit will encapsulate all the different aspects of our Krishna conscious culture with the idea of making it easily accessible to new audiences. It will be made available to print out at your convenience and displayed at all your ISKCON50 initiatives and regular events.

### 50thizing Events

- **Prior to events** – include the logo within all your invitations and posters, mention ISKCON50 in all interactions with stakeholders such as media, government, donors, and congregation
- **During events** – include key ISKCON50 messages in speeches, display the World Exhibit and commemorative merchandise, screen the films, and position logos in artwork. Also consider special features focussed around 50<sup>th</sup> themes like plays about Srila Prabhupada or anniversary mementos.

# Summary and Global Support

This briefing document should have introduced the potential of your ISKCON50 celebrations and prompted some thought and planning of initiatives that are suitable to your locale.

Introduce **The Opportunity, Our Goals, and Our Values** to your congregation or management committee in order to inspire them toward action.

Apply the **ISKCON50 Five Features** as a framework to categorise your initiative ideas and draw upon those supplied within this document. If there are any particular initiatives mentioned that you would like to explore further then feel free to reach out to the international team or your regional coordinator for support. Don't forget to leverage regular events by **50thizing** them with ISKCON50 publications.

Follow the **Next Steps** to develop a clear plan forward on how to begin your ISKCON50 celebrations.

*The ISKCON50 team strives to enable your centre by providing the following support :*

## **1. ISKCON50 Connectivity**

- Regular progress updates regarding international and highlight local initiatives.
- A hub of connectivity between local centres in order to leverage our global scale.

## **2. ISKCON50 Initiative Guidelines**

- The international team can provide advice on event checklists, budget templates, and organisational guidelines to assist local coordinators. Contact for more information.

## **3. ISKCON50 Marketing & Media**

- Composite advertising material for local customization, such as logos and posters.
- Standardised media releases, media messages, and engagement strategies.
- International website and social media exposure for local initiatives.

## **4. ISKCON50 Merchandise**

- Products are being developed to commemorate the anniversary and will be available for purchase. These items will be limited edition memorabilia and globally distributed.

# International Committee | Contact Us



Anuttama dasa | Gauri dasa | Pancharatna dasa | Romapada dasa

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