



All Purpose Declaration

We wish to explain the major tenants and practices of the Gaudiya Vaisnava religious sect otherwise known as Hare Krsna religion of which _____, detained at _____, is a practicing member.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a bona fide religious tradition, fully recognized by all leading theistic scholars and even the Supreme Court of the United States. The Hare Krsna religion is a monotheistic religion whose philosophy and precepts are encompassed within Vedic culture tradition, most recently coming from India.

The basis of the Hare Krsna religion is that there is one God and that His primary name is Krsna, although He is also simultaneously referred to by many names such as Allah, Jehovah, Rama, Krsna Caitanya, etc. The first and most important principle of practitioners, also known as devotees, is the chanting of the Hare Krsna maha-mantra.

*Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare
Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare*

Maha means great, and mantra means that which may deliver. Thus, the Hare Krsna mantra is the great mantra for spiritual deliverance.

Devotees are encouraged to chant this mantra on sacred beads as often as possible. Initiated devotees are required to chant a minimum of 1,728 mantras a day, usually taking two hours to complete.

Religious Requirements

1. *Prasadam Diet*

The necessary diet for devotees is vegetarian in substance, precluding the use of all meat, fish, poultry, eggs and their byproducts, or derivatives such as Jell-O. Products containing animal based rennet or gelatin (as found in Mayonnaise, etc.) are not acceptable. Likewise, onions, garlic, vinegar, and caffeine as found in coffee, tea and sodas are prohibited. However, the prasadam diet of the Hare Krsna religion is not merely a vegetarian diet.

All foods must be prepared by an authorized member of the Hare Krsna religion in a mood of love and devotion on equipment dedicated solely for such vegetarian fare. In principle, it is nearly identical to the Orthodox Kosher Jewish.

The preferred items for this diet may consist of all milk and dairy products, including cheese, cottage cheese, yogurt, sour cream, butter, etc. All grains are acceptable, as are pasta, rice, beans, vegetables, fruits, nuts (peanut butter, etc.), legumes, sprouts, leafy vegetables, roots (carrots, beets, potatoes, etc.). All these acceptable items must be free of any prohibited substances mentioned above.

2. Religious Paraphernalia

At the minimum Hare Krsna religious practitioners are required to keep and possess the following:

- A. Prayer beads, also known as japa-mala beads, made from one of the sacred trees of India, either Tulasi or Neem wood. This strand consists of 108 beads and one top bead called the “head bead”. Such japa beads should come from a bona fide Hare Krsna source.
- B. Bead Bag with attached counter beads - a small cloth pouch with strap, most usually made from silk or cotton, and used to keep said prayer beads clean and sanctified. Attached to this bag is a small string of beads for counting the number of rounds chanted. These beads are a set of 16-20 beads.
- C. Neck beads, also known as Kunti-mala beads, also made from the sacred Tulasi tree. These beads are to be worn around the neck by Hare Krsna religious practitioners at all times.
- D. Sacred thread or brahmana string - it is a special series of two strands of three white, lightweight strings for formally initiated Hare Krsna followers to pray on, who have been given the status of brahmana or priest. Such brahmana threads or strings must always be worn and replaced periodically due to wear, breakage, etc. They are included in the minimum requirements for initiated brahmanas.
- E. Altar, consisting of either Deity figurines or appropriate representative pictures of Krsna and various Vaisnava saints. At a minimum three pictures are required, one of the Panca-tattva Godhead, one of the spiritual master and one of Radha Krsna together.
- F. Religious books are likewise required for Hare Krsna practitioners. The main scriptural treatises of the Hare Krsna religion are: Bhagavad-gita As It Is, Srimad Bhagavatam, Caitanya-caritamrta, Caitanya-bhagavata, Nectar of Devotion, and Nectar of Instruction. Much of the Hare Krsna religious spiritual enrichment is associated with personal reading and study of these scriptures.
- G. Incense and prayer oil are used for offerings to God in daily ceremonies.

3. Religious observances

Religious holy days and other special days are based on the lunar calendar cycle; therefore, they will not necessarily fall on the same days every month or year.

- A. Ekadasi days are usually twice monthly observances wherein Hare Krsna practitioners are prohibited by the tenets of their religion to eat foods containing or made from any and all grains and beans. Roots such as potatoes and beets, milk products, tapioca, etc. are all acceptable food items for these days.
- B. Religious holy days such as Lord Nityananda’s appearance, Gaura-purnima, Sri Rama Navami (appearance of Lord Ramachandra), Nrsimha Caturdas (appearance of Lord Nrsimha), Pandava Nirjala Ekadasi, Sri Krsna Janmastami, Srila Prabhupada’s appearance day, Radhastami, and the disappearance of Srila Prabhupada are all important Hare Krsna holy days. On such days Hare Krsna followers fast throughout the day and take a feast meal in the evening. The specific rules governing such special holy days is to be found in the scriptures and will be made available upon request.