



International Society for Krishna Consciousness

Founder Acharya: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

info@iskconza.com

www.iskconza.com

ISKCON South Africa Stands Against Racism and Discrimination

Dear devotees of ISKCON South Africa,
Please accept our humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.

South Africa has a painful history. So many people have suffered transgressions, so many have endured racial policies based on discrimination and deliberate marginalization. This history and its ongoing ramifications should never be trivialized, and any callousness should be met with a concerted effort to deepen our collective understanding of past and present pain.

Human dignity is the bedrock of our country's constitution, which enshrines equality, human rights, freedom, non-racism, and non-sexism. Those very same principles are also expressed in the constitution of ISKCON's South African National Council (SANC), and each and every SANC member is committed to fully realizing those principles.

The *Bhagavad-gita* teaches that as eternal, infinitesimal spiritual beings, we are all equal as brothers and sisters, with Krishna as our common father. All of us must strive to fully assimilate this core teaching, and we must all recognize that example is more important than precept. Let us be cautious not to mistake our *own* perceived reality as *everyone's* reality, and let us always observe true Vaishnava decorum and compassion, no matter what.

Tenderness of the heart for Krishna is known as *bhakti*. Developing *bhakti* for Krishna goes hand in hand with loving, serving, and appreciating all His devotees — one cannot develop *bhakti* otherwise. If we do not take the time to understand the painful experiences of our brothers and sisters, we cannot suitably appreciate them, let alone support and serve them. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura writes that compassion is a natural human sentiment, which finds its highest expression in the works of the Lord's devotees.

When Krishna consciousness is practiced in an authentic way, a spiritual society replete with saintly virtues will naturally manifest. But for this to happen, each and every one of us must strive to be exemplars of Vaishnava culture, values, and behaviour — at all times, in all circumstances, without exception. Quality of character and purity of heart are the true measures of anyone's spiritual progress. Thus, our Vaishnava *sadacara* (proper behaviour) cannot be separated from Sri Krishna's philosophical teachings in *Bhagavad-gita*.

ISKCON's leaders in South Africa recognise that they must do better in this regard. Despite our efforts, we have not adequately ensured that ISKCON's principles and purposes are manifest in the experience of many sincere people who have accepted the shelter of Srila Prabhupada's movement. For this we sincerely apologise. We particularly apologise for biases experienced by black African devotees, especially if such biases have gone on uncorrected. As leaders, it is our responsibility to ensure that everyone feels valued, cared for, and included. Therefore, we reconfirm our commitment to develop Srila Prabhupada's movement according to the standards he desired to truly make it a house in which the whole world can live.

Over the coming months, all ISKCON's leaders in South Africa will undertake formal training on diversity, inclusion, and unconscious bias to better identify personal and institutional shortcomings and take appropriate corrective action. We are committed to furthering the spiritual advancement of *all* our members (including first and second initiation, as per established guidelines based exclusively on spiritual standing and practice).

Open-hearted dialogue on these matters is vital. ISKCON South Africa will, therefore, launch a series of online conversations centred around ISKCON South Africa's values (see illustration below) to discuss diverse perspectives in the realisation of these values for everyone's benefit.

We also recognise the pressing need for an independent body to adjudicate on matters pertaining to bias and discrimination. And looking further ahead, we are eager for the establishment of a Leadership Centre, which will provide a facility for the secular and spiritual training of future African leaders.

South Africa's diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious background offers all of us a unique opportunity to reveal the genuine efficacy and universal relevance of Krishna consciousness. United with a common desire for spiritual growth and purpose, and dedicating all our activities to Sri Krishna, let us attract countless people to joyously experience spiritual life.

ISKCON South Africa's leaders are ready to be courageous and to listen. With your support, we can realize Srila Prabhupada's vision for ISKCON together. Thus, we pray that we may serve all devotees better, with greater empathy and connection. And, in the end, may we all please Srila Prabhupada and obtain the grace of Lord Sri Krishna.

Bhakti Caitanya Swami
Co-GBC ISKCON South Africa

Govardhana Dasa
Co-GBC ISKCON South Africa

OUR VALUES

THE INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY FOR
KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS (ISKCON)

Founder-Acharya His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada



THROUGH THE SINCERE AND AUTHENTIC PRACTICE OF
KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS WE CAN CREATE A SOCIETY
THAT EXEMPLIFIES SAINTLY VIRTUES

The quality of character and purity of heart measure spiritual development. Practitioners of Krishna Consciousness greatly emphasize practicing truthfulness, forgiveness, equality, compassion, tolerance, humility, purity, and developing faith in God's Divine Service.



UNITED IN PURPOSE AS CHILDREN OF GOD

**CULTURALLY MANY,
SPIRITUALLY ONE**

COMPASSION FOR EACH OTHER AND ALL
LIFE, INCLUDING PROTECTING ANIMALS
AND THE ENVIRONMENT, FULFILLS THE
HEART

GENUINE CARE

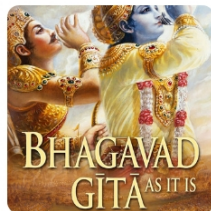


PERFECTING OUR THOUGHTS, WORDS AND
DEEDS

**TRANSFORMING THE
HEART THROUGH
BHAKTI YOGA**

A THRIVING COMMUNITY REALISED
THROUGH SPIRITUAL COHESION

**SHARED SPIRITUAL
GROWTH**



KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS IS THE
NATURAL, ORIGINAL, AND BLISSFUL
DISPOSITION OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL

**PURSUIT OF HIGHER
CONSCIOUSNESS**

WE TAKE GREAT SATISFACTION IN
BROADCASTING THE GLORIES OF GOD
AND THE BENEFITS OF A SPIRITUAL WAY
OF LIFE

**SHARING THE JOY OF
DEVOTION**

