BALANCING CHARISMA AND ROUTINISATION
EXPLAINING THE GROWTH AND
EXPANSION OF ISKCON

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During the past century Hinduism has produced many religious movements with adherents around the globe. Many of these movements have been founded by charismatic gurus who have specifically targeted their message to a non-Indian audience. The earliest one to establish itself outside of India was the Ramakrishna Mission launched by Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902) at the end of the nineteenth century. Most of the globally oriented Indian religious movements were founded half a century later, in the latter half of the twentieth century. One of the most successful is the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), founded by A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda (1896–1977) in New York in 1966.[1]

Success is of course a relative term, but one rough way to measure it is to count the number of centres and their geographical diversity. As of autumn 2009—a little over four decades since the founding of ISKCON—the worldwide address directory of ISKCON (www.directory.krishna.com) lists 416 temples, 51 farms, and 100 restaurants, located in 97 countries. It is noteworthy that about five out of six temples are outside India.

These figures can be compared with some other well-known religious movements stemming from India. The Ramakrishna Mission has established just over 180 centres during its more than 110 years of existence (the Vedanta Societies and the Ramakrishna Math and Mission were founded in the 1890s). According to the movement's website (www.ramakrishna.org),

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[1] The devotees commonly refer to him as 'Śrīla Prabhupāda' or simply 'Prabhupāda'. For the sake of brevity, I also will use the latter name henceforth.

the Ramakrishna Mission operates in 19 different countries around the world and about one fifth of the centres exist outside India.

Most Hindu movements seem to fall somewhere between ISKCON and the Ramakrishna Mission in terms of such numbers. For instance, Swami Muktananda's (1908–1982) Siddha Yoga movement, founded in 1975, has 139 centres in 30 countries (www.siddhayoga.org). However, there are a couple of movements that seem to exceed ISKCON in terms of geographical reach. Ananda Marga, founded in 1955 by Shrii Shrii Anandamurti (1921–1990) is said to operate in 175 countries. The organisation created by Sathya Sai Baba (b. 1926) claims over 1,200 centres in 114 countries (www.sathyasai.org).

As mentioned, such figures give us only a rough measure, and these comparisons should properly be made with a view of the respective movements' aims, institutions, and practices. The raw figures are not necessarily comparable in all respects. Nevertheless, it does indicate that out of dozens of comparable movements, ISKCON is among the most successful in terms of geographical spread in the world today.

One also needs to appreciate how much was achieved in the brief span of 12 years that Prabhupāda was touring the world. Prior to coming to the West, Prabhupāda had no disciples; within a few years of arriving in New York, he had hundreds. In 1967, only two years after arriving in New York, Prabhupāda sent disciples to open a temple in San Francisco, and other branches were soon opened elsewhere in North America. By 1968, the first missionaries were already in Europe. By the end of the decade there were 34 ISKCON centres around the world and a major preaching mission was underway in India. By the time of Prabhupāda's demise in November 1977, there were more than one hundred temples and more than 4,000 initiated disciples worldwide (Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami, 1983, p. ix).

So the question naturally arises: How did this happen? What explains the rapid growth and expansion of ISKCON? A lot can be learned about religion and spirituality if we can give a detailed and accurate answer to this question.

What is perhaps most significant in this story is that many of the usual elements of legend associated with illustrious religious founders are absent. In the available accounts, Prabhupāda's birth is not surrounded by miraculous occurrences. His own conversion seems to have been of a completely intellectual kind. The biographies that devotees have written about his life do not contain accounts of dramatic visionary experiences or supernatural abilities of healing and miracle-making, which naturally attract people. Did

the secret lie in the ideological message? Were Prabhupāda's social teachings and moral visions attractive to the members of the counterculture? Or was it rather his extraordinary personality that was so appealing? All of these and many other types of explanation have been offered.

The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement has attracted a great deal of sociological and anthropological research that has touched upon these issues already. In fact, there is an established scholarly tradition of interpretation of what is generally called 'new religious movements' (NRMs) and their appeal in the West, and studies of ISKCON have figured prominently in many accounts (see e.g. Bellah, 1976; Daner, 1976; Johnson, 1976; Judah, 1974; Yinger, 1982).

Here I will take one more look at Prabhupāda's career and teachings in order to find some explanations for the success of ISKCON. My analysis proceeds on the purely academic ground of the modern scientific study of religion. From the devotional angle, one can of course say that the success of Prabhupāda stems entirely from his being a pure devotee. It is also often said that Prabhupāda was specially empowered by Kṛṣṇa. My analysis is not meant to refute these kinds of theological understandings, but to complement them by adding a more human dimension to the picture. It needs to be remembered that while Prabhupāda may have been an exceptional devotee of God, his audiences were nevertheless quite human. Human nature, in turn, has its influence in any attempt to mobilise people for the divine cause.

This article examines ISKCON in terms of the type of religiosity it exemplifies in terms and categories developed in the science of religion. I will begin by introducing some of these analytic frameworks before taking a more detailed look at Prabhupāda and ISKCON. I will conclude by trying to answer the question of ISKCON's success.

THE TWO MODES OF RELIGIOSITY

A number of theories have recently been advanced which propose universally recurring types of religious systems. The claim is that, all else being equal, religions, by virtue of their inner logic alone, show characteristic patterns of development depending on a set of key features. For instance, the American sociologist Rodney Stark (1996) has argued that in order to provide adequate explanations of religious developments in history, we also need to take into account what social science has found about religious dynamics in general.

Here I shall only concern myself with the theoretical models advanced in the so-called 'cognitive science of religion' which is a school of thought that

VARIABLES	DOCTRINAL MODE	IMAGISTIC MODE
Psychological features		
Ritual frequency	High	Low
Level of emotion	Low	High
Principal memory system	Semantic memory	Episodic memory
Source of meaning	Learned from authority	Subjectively produced
Origin of religious insight	Rhetoric, logical integration, narrative	Intuitive apprehension of symbolic imagery
Socio-political features		
Social cohesion	Diffuse	Intense
Leadership	Dynamic	Passive/absent
Social inclusivity	Open/inclusive	Restricted/exclusive
Spread	Rapid, efficient	Slow, inefficient
Scale	Large-scale	Small-scale
Degree of uniformity	High	Low
Structure	Centralised	Non-centralised

Table 1: The two modes of religiosity

has been developed mainly since the early 1990s. One of the most prominent cognitive theories of religious systems is the theory of the 'two modes of religiosity', developed by Harvey Whitehouse (e.g. 1995, 2000, 2002, 2004a). There is an ongoing and lively discussion of the merits of Whitehouse's theory, and it is hardly a final word in the matter (see Pyysiäinen, 2001; Pyysiäinen and Anttonen, 2002; Whitehouse and McCauley, 2005). It nevertheless provides us with some fresh insight into how religions are transmitted both vertically (from one generation to the next) and horizontally (within a population).

Cognitive approaches to religious systems are distinguished from the sociological ones by the fact that in them religious systems are approached by focusing upon rituals rather than ideologies. The cognitive approach recognises that many of the religious rewards that inspire and motivate people to practice religion reside precisely in ritual (see Atran, 2002). No doubt religious explanations of reality are often of primary importance to people. Belonging to social networks formed by likeminded people is naturally rewarding in itself. However, a powerful case can also be made that it

is primarily the collective rituals that provide the foundations for all these rewards (see Rappaport, 1999; Sosis and Alcorta, 2003; Atran, 2002). According to this view, the ultimate sources of the rewards that motivate long-term practice and commitment most probably lie in rituals and practices rather than doctrines. Participants of religion often focus on the teachings and ideals presented in their religion. However, for a social scientist, religion is primarily something that people do—because those religions that only exist in people's thoughts tend to be short-lived. In order to spread and perpetuate a religious teaching in a larger population, one needs to do something together with other people.

The theory proposed by Harvey Whitehouse claims to identify and explain the patterns in which religious traditions may be transmitted and maintained. It starts from the generally held observation that human religiosity can be met in two distinct 'modes', which consist of clusters of features. Ever since Max Weber introduced his concept of charismatic authority, numerous sociologists, anthropologists, and scholars of religion have noted the tendency of religious organisations to exhibit two distinct and opposite forms. Weber (1964) expressed the contrast in terms of charisma and its routinisation. He claimed that there is a tendency for charisma to be transformed into a more permanent, routinised structure through the adoption of more stable forms of economic and social organisation (1964, pp. 363–86).

Whitehouse's theory of the two modes of religiosity is a further attempt to conceptualise this same dynamic pattern that seems to recur in many religious traditions. The explanatory strategy of the modes of religiosity theory starts from two key assumptions: people must, first of all, be motivated to pass on certain beliefs and rituals, and, secondly, they must be able to remember them. Taking into account the nature of human memory systems, it follows that the remembering can be achieved in basically two ways: either through frequent repetition, or through intense, though rare experience. The memorability of intense experience is predicated—to put it briefly—on surprise combined with heightened emotions. Lasting memories can be produced in a context that includes an element of surprise accompanied with strong and deeply felt emotions. This is naturally difficult to achieve on a continuous basis. The production of heightened emotion requires resources and energy, which are not limitless. Frequent repetition of highly exciting events also tends to produce a certain numbing effect, which requires ever more resources to produce the intended effect.

From these common-sense assumptions Whitehouse takes a step further

to argue that the frequency of ritual performance would turn out to be a key variable in the formation of distinguishable religious ritual traditions characterised by a whole set of other variables. In other words, the assumption is that distinct religious traditions are built up around particular types of ritual activity, which can be differentiated along the continuum of frequency. The mode of religiosity that depends on frequently performed rituals is termed 'doctrinal' (cf. Weber's routinised religion) and the mode that depends on more infrequently performed rituals is termed 'imagistic' (cf. Weber's charismatic religion) (see Table 1).

The frequently performed rituals of doctrinal mode religions are typically performed in a calm and sober atmosphere, whereas the infrequent rituals of the imagistic mode very likely involve higher levels of emotional intensity. Frequent repetition fosters the learning of verbal, propositional information coded in so-called semantic memory. Intense experience, on the other hand, fosters the formation of so-called episodic memories that involve particular events that one has experienced or witnessed. Similarly, the attributed sources of knowledge and the sense of revelation are likely to be construed differently in the frequent and the infrequent types of rituals. The doctrinal mode enhances the tendency to accept knowledge from outside authority. The imagistic mode, in turn, grounds religious conviction in one's own experience and personally relevant meanings.

These features in turn form the basis of a cluster of opposing socio-political features. The fundamental idea of the theory is that the frequency and the emotional nature of the rituals performed cause the entire religious tradition to gravitate into one or other of the religious modes with a number of opposing features. The nature of the rituals works thus like a centre of gravity, or an attractor, that forces the entire tradition to coalesce into a predictable social and religious form.

A religious group that organises frequent but low emotion rituals that provide a context for preaching and teaching, is therefore very likely to develop into a large scale but socially diffuse and centralised organisation. By bringing people together on a routine basis, the doctrinal mode has the effect of extending the boundaries of the community to larger social units with a much more diffuse social cohesion and inclusive sense of membership. Such religions also tend to spread far more easily and rapidly in a population. It is no coincidence that all the major world religions exhibit the features of the doctrinal mode to a very marked degree.

On the other hand, if a religious group is more intent on producing

highly emotional and personally consequential rituals through performing them less often but more dramatically and solely for specially selected individuals, it is also more likely to exhibit the symptoms of the imagistic mode: small scale elite groups that are highly cohesive. The Freemasons and the many esoteric, initiatory societies exemplify this mode of religiosity. Because the imagistic mode is precipitated by shared and vividly recalled intense experiences, it easily binds people together with ties of loyalty and comradeship. But it also means that such loyalty is not easily extended towards larger social units. Thus imagistic religions tend to be small in scale, and highly exclusive in terms of membership.

CHARISMA

The religious leadership figures associated with each mode also differ considerably from each other. The characteristic of dynamic leadership belongs to the doctrinal mode. Rhetorical ability and an ability to master an abstract set of doctrines are enhanced in the doctrinal mode and this provides a setting for talented prophets and missionaries to emerge. The leaders in the imagistic mode are very different. The absence of a clearly articulated doctrine positively impedes the emergence of strong leadership. If and when leaders emerge in imagistic movements, they tend to be passive focuses of symbolic reverence rather than real political leaders (Whitehouse, 1995, p. 216). One might also say that leaders in imagistic movements are likely to be conceived as ritual figures, ceremonial masters, or conduits of sacred power.

Thus the theory predicts the emergence of two very different types of religious authority. To use the Weberian terminology, we may say that the 'magicians' and the 'mystagogues' are religious figures which belong to the imagistic mode. A magician is a person who has cultivated a distinctive subjective condition of ecstasy that is essential for the mediation of charisma. The mystagogue, in turn, is a religious specialist who performs sacraments, understood as actions that mediate the boons of salvation (Weber, 1965, pp. 3–55).

The 'prophet' and the 'priest', on the other hand, are religious specialists more characteristic of the doctrinal mode. Like magicians, prophets are individual bearers of charisma. But in contrast to magicians, prophets claim authority by virtue of their revelatory knowledge (Weber, 1965, pp. 46–48). Priests are also custodians of revelatory knowledge, but they claim authority by virtue of their service to the tradition, not on personal gifts.

More recently, the Danish scholar of religion Jesper Sørensen (2005) has also argued that the more magical elements in connection with leadership are at a disadvantage in doctrinal mode religions. Sørensen points out that ritual action can be interpreted by the actors by two contrasting hermeneutics. The first style of interpretation, which Sørensen terms 'magical interpretation', focuses on ritual efficacy or instrumentality. Magical interpretation is always involved when ritual activities are seen as actually *doing* something to the world. The second style of interpretation, 'symbolic interpretation', involves the relating of ritual actions to religious conceptual and dogmatic structures in order to construct ritual meaning. Symbolic interpretation is involved when ritual actions are understood as symbols and signs pointing to the central dogmatic content of the tradition (Sørensen, 2005, pp. 177–9).

Looking at various movements within Hinduism, we can construct two key predictions regarding gurus and religious authority that follow from the modes theory. The first is that in movements operating predominantly in the doctrinal mode (routinised, high-frequency rituals), one is likely to find gurus who are dynamic preachers and missionaries focusing on the conceptual content of the revelation they are trying to transmit (i.e., prophets and priests). The second is that in the movements operating predominantly in the imagistic mode (intense, low-frequency rituals) one is more likely to find individuals whose focus is on the magical and supernatural effects of practices (i.e., magicians and mystagogues). The former are likely to be effective leaders with vast powers over their subjects through hierarchical organi-sational structures. The latter, in contrast, may be highly symbolic and revered figureheads who are yet lacking effective organisational structures to monitor and coach their subjects. Such figureheads may sometimes even be mythical, fictional, or shrouded in secrecy, such as in many esoteric and occult movements in history.

ISKCON IN THE LIGHT OF THE MODES THEORY

We are now in a position to examine ISKCON in terms of Whitehouse's theory of two modes of religiosity. There is a daily program of worshipful activities in ISKCON temples, which signals that we are dealing with a doctrinal mode. Many observations confirm the predictions of the modes theory: the scriptures of the tradition are lectured upon daily, which means that the revelation is codified in verbal propositional form. The devotees are also

proud of being able to present their teachings in philosophically articulated sets of doctrines. Preaching has generally been the most highly valued activity in the movement. We have already seen that the movement can also spread very rapidly and that it formed an international community of devotees very early on. The structures of authority that were set up were centralised and hierarchical. The whole system was set up for the explicit purpose of monitoring doctrinal deviance and ensuring the uniformity of belief and practice (see Ketola, 2004; 2008, pp. 45–85).

There is also no question about the dynamism of Prabhupāda's leadership. Charismatic tendencies proper had a rather limited role in Prabhupāda's organisational activities which also indicate the basic features of the doctrinal mode of religiosity. A number of observations concerning Prabhupāda's style of leadership give a clear indication of the mode of leadership in question.

First, Prabhupāda did not profess a novel, personally inspired religious revelation. He was operating within the clear bounds of an existing religious tradition—even if this tradition was not initially known to his first disciples. In a speech delivered in 1973 Prabhupāda compared the role of the guru to a postman (Prabhupāda, 1978). When a postman delivers an amount of money to a recipient, it is not the postman's money that is being given. Similarly the guru acts as a mediator whose role is to pass on the truth transmitted in tradition and having its ultimate origin in divine revelation. There are two authorities that a genuine guru is always held accountable by: the scriptures and the previous teachers in the tradition. Prabhupāda emphasised that it is these three sources (guru, scripture, previous teachers) that should be consulted when determining the truth of religious teachings. Prabhupāda was therefore not a fully-fledged charismatic leader in the Weberian sense—breaking with tradition and claiming total autonomy. But he was clearly a dynamic and practical leader and therefore fits easily into the schema set out in Whitehouse's theory.

Second, Prabhupāda did not buttress his religious teachings with overt magical claims. As he once explained: 'The process [of spiritual advancement] should not, however, be misunderstood to be something like magical feats whereby the spiritual master acts like a magician and injects spiritual knowledge into the disciple, as if surcharging him with electrical current. The bona fide spiritual master reasonably explains everything to the disciple on the authorities of Vedic wisdom.' (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 2.1.10, purport) Prabhupāda did not produce 'signs and wonders' to validate his teachings

other than his preaching success—i.e. the numbers of converts. As Prabhu-pāda's voluminous writings clearly show, he rested his claims on argumenta-tive force backed up by scriptural evidence. Prabhupāda's style of rhetoric was therefore more along the lines of a priest or even a professional theologian than a charismatic leader in the Weberian scheme. All this fits neatly with the scheme set out by the modes theory. Seen in terms of the doctrinal mode, these are exactly the features which are predicted to emerge.

Third, Prabhupāda was a very skilful organiser. Throughout the 1970s Prabhupāda toured the world initiating disciples and encouraging them to set up temples everywhere he went. About one hundred were opened by the time of his death. Throughout the whole period he continued writing and publishing religious literature and guided his disciples through voluminous correspondence. He set clear and unambiguous guidelines for the everyday management of the temples. To divest himself of some of the responsibility and to ensure that the movement would stay unified after his departure, Prabhupāda established an administrative organ called the Governing Body Commission (GBC) in 1970. The GBC consisted originally of twelve devotees Prabhupāda appointed. Although Prabhupāda subsequently continued to appoint the GBC members, he originally envisioned the process to be through elections. Prabhupāda wanted the annual GBC meetings to follow a proper parliamentary procedure of bringing proposals to the floor, debating them, and voting on their acceptance or rejection. The institutional structures he created for ISKCON's leadership were thus very rational and transparent. It is important to realise that the day-to-day management at any level of the ISKCON structure did not rely on displays of omens and oracles even in Prabhupāda's time, but on pre-established, planned procedures. This again is a characteristic of dynamic leadership in the doctrinal mode. (See Ketola, 2008, pp. 74–85)

From this evidence it would seem that ISKCON is a clear case of religiosity in the doctrinal mode and its gurus are closer to priests and prophets than magicians and mystagogues.

There is, however, an interesting exception to the norm. It has often been observed that devotees are able to reach extraordinary levels of bliss through the *saṅkīrtana* practices. As described in a number of accounts (e.g. Tamal Kṛṣṇa Goswami, 1984), during 1975–76 the devotees in the United States exerted themselves to the utmost limits in distributing devotional literature and reached what appeared to be exceptional levels of ecstasy in doing so. Such episodes have occurred in other places and may continue to

do so if the conditions are favourable. The process can be described in terms of a self-reinforcing cycle of ever increasing demand of mental and material resources which eventually has to crash. (see also Ketola, 2008, pp. 68–73)

It is important to keep in mind that *saṅkīrtana* is essentially and originally a ritual practice for distributing blessings through the holy name. In early ISKCON, *saṅkīrtana* was institutionalised as a practice by which a group of devotees go out into public places to chant, preach, and distribute devotional literature in exchange for small donations. It thus became a means by which the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees could simultaneously attract new members and collect money. However, this simple practice soon started to spiral into more and more intense forms, and by the mid-1970s it had provoked a great deal of criticism from the general public (see Shinn, 1987; Yanoff, 1981). This development is crucial in understanding the history of the movement.

According to Whitehouse, such cycles of intense religiosity are a characteristic of the imagistic mode. However, as I have argued previously (Ketola, 2004), in ISKCON's case we may more profitably speak of a doctrinal religion which has managed to avert tedium, which often comes with highly repetitive activities. According to Whitehouse (2004b) there are several mechanisms that doctrinal religions may use to avoid the low morale created by too frequent participation. ISKCON, for instance, has been able to maintain conditions for high emotional intensity and to enlist more personally memorable experiences for the enhancement of the religious transmission through the *saṅkīrtana* practices. Prabhupāda emphasised that to make spiritual progress, one must maintain a balance between deity worship (i.e. offering articles of worship for a deity housed in a temple) and preaching by chanting the holy name and distributing religious literature (see e.g. Vedavyāsa Dāsa, 1996, p. 89). The rationale for Prabhupāda was, however, that regular temple worship develops the devotional mood that is necessary for successful *saṅkīrtana*.

GURUS IN ISKCON

In his teachings on the guru-disciple relationship Prabhupāda presents a clear and explicit set of criteria for being a guru. The qualifications of the guru can be set out point by point and the duties of the disciple prescribed in a set of doctrines (Prabhupāda, 1990). The most important ones state that the guru must follow strictly the principle of succession and of scripture,

and that he or she should have spiritual knowledge and be learned in Vedic literature. Again we see that 'priestly' standards rather than magical capabilities are being emphasised, which is in line with the doctrinal mode of religiosity.

There was also a clear demarcation between the guru and God. Prabhupāda never identified himself with God and made it very clear that he did not possess the 'opulences' associated with God, such as limitless knowledge, limitless power, or limitless wealth (Prabhupāda, 1977a). The only commodity he claimed to be able to provide for his disciples was pure and authentic knowledge of God, transmitted through authorised guru-disciple succession. But this was sufficient to achieve salvation.

All this is clear evidence of a criteria-based understanding of the guru's position towards the disciple. And yet we should note that a door was left wide open for more intuitive thinking in that the disciple should represent the guru as being 'as good as God' (Prabhupāda, 1977b). As a matter of practical etiquette, the disciple should act 'as if' the guru were God. This means, for one thing, that one should worship one's guru on an equal level with God. The disciples were also supposed to obey his every word and gesture, and accept his teachings as if they were the word of God. (See Ketola, 2008, pp. 45–64.)

In light of this it is of great significance ISKCON members are under the jurisdiction of the GBC—including the gurus. Again we can see how this situation creates a certain tension: on the one hand, the disciple is supposed to treat his or her guru as equivalent to God in terms of reverence and obedience; on the other hand, the disciple must also accept the idea that an administrative committee monitors the behaviour and teachings of his or her guru and may even impose disciplinary measures on the guru.

Taking these tensions into account, the passage from Prabhupāda's personal charismatic leadership to a routinised GBC leadership was not destined to be altogether smooth. From this perspective, it was to be expected that the ISKCON 'crisis of succession' would also not be entirely smooth (Ketola, 2008; cf. Ravīndra Svarūpa Dāsa, 1994a–b; Bryant and Ekstrand, 2004).

The conclusion is that while ISKCON bears the characteristics of a typical doctrinal religion, it is also unusual in its capacity to enlist the participants' emotions for the purpose of religious transmission. The rituals of the movement contain both daily routines through regulated temple worship and more exceptional, intense, and memorable events occasioned through public chanting and book distribution. Prabhupāda taught an especially

clear example of criteria-based understanding of the guru-disciple relation-ship, and yet his disciples mostly represented him in far more intuitive and symbolically loaded ways (Ketola, 2008). He also developed organisational arrangements for the explicit purpose of keeping the movement unified, and yet it fostered autocratic and somewhat idiosyncratic leaders immediately after his demise.

EXPLAINING ISKCON'S SUCCESS

Most of the earlier studies of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement have started with the assumption that it can most profitably be analysed in terms of the Western cultural situation of the sixties and early seventies. The American theologian Harvey Cox (1977), for instance, has claimed that the various 'neo-Oriental' movements have altered the Oriental original so profoundly that there is nothing to be gained by viewing them in terms of their classical ancestry. To quote Cox: 'By now most of them are Western movements and are best understood as such'. (1977, p. 18)

This line of thought has also been influential within the sociological and anthropological studies of new religious movements. Many of the theories tend to be crisis or modernisation theories that focus on some acute and distinctively modern dislocation which is said to be producing some mode of alienation, anomie, or deprivation to which the Westerners are responding by searching for new structures of meaning and community (Robbins, 1988, p. 60; cf. Dawson, 2006, pp. 38–62). The classical interpretation of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement by J. Stillson Judah (1974) and many others falls squarely within this paradigm.

The implication, which this train of thought easily carries with it, is that other cultures are found attractive because the Western cultural images of purer and more humane forms of life are projected onto them. Primitivism and Orientalism are simply the products of Western, post-Enlightenment cultures (see, e.g., Diem and Lewis, 1992). According to this point of view, the Hare Kṛṣṇa worldview offered a viable channel of protest for the alienated Western youth. While hippie culture never developed more organised forms of lifestyle and sustained forms of protest, ISKCON, by contrast, offered just these (Judah, 1974). However, what is left inexplicable with this type of argument is that by choosing ISKCON as their channel of protest, the protesters had to turn their ideological positions upside down, from an ultra-liberal view to an authoritarian and conservative one.

It is also evident that each decade since the sixties has brought new forms of Eastern religious movements to the West, even though the cultural unrest has long since waned (see Ketola, 2000). The Hare Kṛṣṇa movement has also proven to be highly resilient, although the increase in membership has not been quite so spectacular as in the early years (see Rochford, 1995; 1999; 2007).

Thus it seems that the issue of cultural protest may have been given an exaggerated role in the explanations of the rise of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement and the new religious movements generally. This is not to deny entirely the role played by the counterculture. The countercultural milieu clearly had its role to play in the early stages of ISKCON. However, there are other processes that may be even more important. Here I only want to suggest that one should also look at the characteristics and dynamics of ISKCON as a religious system.

Seen through the modes of religiosity theory, we can now see that ISKCON represents an unusual balance between inherently opposing dynamics that recur in religious traditions. What I want to suggest is that it is precisely this precarious balance that may be the key to ISKCON's success as a religious movement. Many scholars of religion have suggested that religious phenomena should be understood in terms of balancing of various inherently opposing tendencies. Todd Tremlin (2002; 2006), for instance, has argued that there is a tension between personal religious motivation and organisational demands. Private religious belief and practice are motivated largely by personal relevance and acquiring religious ideas is largely an intuitive process. On the other hand, organising, communicating, and overseeing religion necessitates institutionalised techniques for transmission that takes theological forms (2006, p. 194). Ilkka Pyysiäinen (2005) puts this into a simple formula: the more intuitive forms of religion provide individual motivation while doctrinal features provide means for preserving the tradition and making it culturally stable and durable.

Precisely this kind of tension between opposing dynamics is evident in the material analysed here. While typifying most features of the doctrinal mode, ISKCON has an uncharacteristic ability to transport devotees to exceptional levels of ecstasy. More generally, ISKCON's beliefs and practices create a striking combination of routinisation on the one hand, and deep emotional relevance and intuitive appeal on the other. The same phenomenon can also be seen in other materials not analysed here. The conception of God within the literature of the tradition is extremely rich, personal, and even

intimate, while at the same time it has been articulated into an intellectually sophisticated theological system. It is therefore quite plausible that this ability to combine emotion-laden and intuitive images to conceptual sophistication and a strictly routinised way of life is one of the keys to the success of ISKCON.

CONCLUSION

In simple terms, I propose here that the key to the success of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement is that it is a religious movement: it is the religious ideas and practices that made the movement successful and not its social and moral ideology. If Prabhupāda had come to New York only to speak and write about his socio-political vision of how to organise society in Vedic terms and how to conduct our moral lives according to Hindu norms of conduct, it is extremely unlikely that anyone would have paid attention.

It may be recalled that the spread of the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement started its exponential growth immediately after the first public chanting in the Tompkins Square Park in New York. The Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra sung by a group of devotees attracted attention even when people had no knowledge of what the movement stood for in ideological terms. Singing, dancing, and feasting are enjoyable, as Prabhupāda very well knew. No doubt the hippies were attracted to Prabhupāda because he was also opposed to the Establishment. However, they were also connected through a shared fondness for artistic and musical expression, which Prabhupāda quickly recognised and utilised to higher ends. He even appeared at rock concerts and other hippie gatherings, leading tumultuous *kīrtanas*.

Some of this may have been conscious and deliberate. However, there were also processes which were not deliberate, and yet followed the same paradigm: exposure of the audiences to actions and images which evoked powerful religious intuitions. It is these intuitions that are ultimately responsible for the rise and spread of the movement, which succeeded in spite of what it preached concerning lifestyle and morals. At the same time, there was a deliberate emphasis on stable institutional structures which could maintain, cultivate, and disseminate the religious culture conducive to the arising of such intuitions among ever expanding circles of people.

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