

## MEDIA RELEASE

### HARE KRISHNAS INVESTIGATE PAST ABUSE AT BOARDING SCHOOLS

Date: October 18, 1998  
Contact: Anuttama Dasa  
Phone: (301) 299-9707

The academic journal of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), in its most recent volume examines allegations of child abuse in the Hare Krishna boarding schools in the United States and India during the 1970's and 1980's.

Two scholars, one a Krishna devotee, Bharata Shrestha Das, and the other, Burke Rochford, a sociology professor in Vermont, each contributed an article to the ISKCON Communications Journal. These individuals presented their research analyzing alleged abuse in ISKCON parochial school during the society's earliest years. The abuses they outlined were physical, emotional and sexual.

The New York Times called the report "an unusually candid expose." The Times noted ISKCON's openness, in contrast with other religious organizations including the Roman Catholic Church, which has been criticized for its handling of child abuse.

"This type of problem thrives on secrecy," said Anuttama Dasa, ISKCON National Director of Communications. "We chose to print the articles and bring the allegations out into the open as part of a multi-pronged response to address past problems as well as to help prevent future abuse of our children."

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In 1990, the ISKCON Governing Body Commission established policies to protect children from child abuse, as well as guidelines on how to respond to allegations of abuse. In 1996, when a panel of ten young adults testified about their experiences before North American Krishna leaders, the depth of the problem became known.

ISKCON responded by establishing a Child Protection Office staffed with professional social workers. This office has three functions: 1) To investigate and respond to allegations of child abuse, especially in cases where local legal systems are ineffective; 2) To provide support for victims of child abuse through financial aid and counseling; and 3) To work with ISKCON management and educational bodies to help provide screening and other programs to protect children.

Also, a support organization called Children of Krishna was established to provide financial assistance for Krishna youth for their educational needs and counseling.

All but four of Krishna schools are now day schools (not boarding schools), where students live with their parents, and parents have more daily input into their child's education.

ISKCON, also known as the Hare Krishna movement, was brought to the west from India in 1965 by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, an elderly Vaishnava monk and scholar. From there it spread across the world and today includes over 325 temples world-wide, including 45 in the United States.

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## MEDIA RELEASE

### HARE KRISHNAS RESPOND TO LAW SUIT

DATE: June 12, 2000  
CONTACT: Anuttama Dasa  
PHONE: (301) 299-9707

Washington, D.C.—A lawsuit alleging that child abuse occurred in the 1970's and 1980's at several parochial schools and temples affiliated with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), known as the Hare Krishna movement, was filed on June 12, 2000, in the Federal District Court in Dallas, Texas. The suit seeks \$400 million dollars in damages.

"It is terrible that child abuse has infected public and private schools, neighborhoods, churches, and families," said Anuttama Dasa, Director of ISKCON Communications. "Sadly, many children of the Hare Krishna society have also been victimized. If the events alleged in this suit did occur, we regret that they did, and we will make every effort to help address the needs of the young people named in the suit," said Dasa."

"At the same time, numerous allegations made in the suit by the lawyer, Windle Turley of Dallas, are gross exaggerations and outright falsehoods," Dasa said.

The Vaishnava religious tradition to which Hare Krishna devotees adhere is a monotheistic branch of the Hindu faith. Vaishnava scriptures state that the protection and care of children is an essential religious practice. According to Dasa, child abuse in any form is "horrible violation" of Krishna principles.

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Krishnas have made considerable efforts in recent years to prevent abuse and, when necessary, to provide counseling and financial assistance for past victims. In 1990, policies were established requiring abuse-prevention education for Krishna children and the immediate reporting of all suspected abuse to government and legal authorities.

In 1996, the organization "Children of Krishna" was formed to help Krishna youth with education, vocational training and grants for college. In 1998, the ISKCON Office of Child Protection was established with a professional staff to:

- 1) investigate and adjudicate allegations of past abuse, especially where local legal systems are ineffective or lacking.
- 2) provide financial support and counseling for abuse victims, and
- 3) work with ISKCON temples, managers and educators to enhance screening and child protection programs

In addition, the traditional Indian-style boarding schools, or *gurukulas*, that the Krishnas established in North America in the 1970's were closed, or transformed into day schools. The only exception is a small boarding school for high school age girls in northern Florida. Day schools, Krishna leaders say, provide greater scope for parental involvement and watchfulness over the children.

Krishna temples are independently incorporated. Most have relatively small congregations and limited resources. The \$400 million suit is "far, far beyond" the total financial assets of Krishna temples named in the suit, according to Dasa.       # # #

## MEDIA RELEASE

### \$400 MILLION SUIT AGAINST HARE KRISHNA DISMISSED

#### For Immediate Release

Date: October 2, 2001

Contact: Anuttama Dasa, ISKCON Communications (301) 299-9707

Contact: David Liberman, Attorney (310) 277-9288

**Dallas, Texas**—The Honorable Sam A. Lindsay, Judge of the United States District Court in Dallas, in a decision filed September 28, has permanently dismissed a lawsuit seeking \$400 million dollars in damages from several dozen temples, entities and individuals affiliated with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), better known as the Hare Krishna movement, a monotheistic Vaishnava denomination within the Hindu tradition.

The suit was originally filed on June 12, 2000. It alleged that various forms of child abuse occurred in the 1970's and 1980's at several parochial schools and temples affiliated with ISKCON. The case attempted to use the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations Act (RICO) to corral allegations of abuse at several schools into one Federal case.

“This was clearly a victory for religious freedom,” said David Liberman, one of the attorneys for ISKCON defendants. “The plaintiff’s attorney disingenuously sought to apply the RICO act in a attempt to go after the assets of innocent people and temple congregations. This effort would have opened the door for churches and religious institutions across the country to be attacked in a way never intended by the Congressional authors of the RICO law.”

Significantly, many respected faiths and religious organizations including the National Council of Churches, the United States Catholic Conference, the Baptist Joint Committee on

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Public Affairs, and the American Jewish Congress filed an Amicus Curiae brief, or Friends of the Court document, in support of the Krishna position on the RICO claim.

Krishna leaders assert that the suit sought to close temples and seize their assets, instead of pursuing and punishing those deviant individuals who may have been abusive of children.

“We are greatly pleased and relieved by Judge Lindsay’s decision on this case,” said Anuttama Dasa, ISKCON Director of Communications. “The decision will protect innocent families whose temples were threatened with closure by this overreaching suit. At the same time, we remain committed to assure the safety of our children and will continue to reach out proactively to help any young person who may have suffered in the past,” Dasa said.

ISKCON policies mandate immediate reporting of any allegations of abuse to government authorities. An independent organization, Children of Krishna, was formed in 1996 to provide grants for education and counseling for Krishna youth. In 1998, a professionally staffed Child Protection Office (CPO) was established to investigate all allegations of abuse, to provide assistance for youth, and to assure that Krishna communities comply with requirements for child safety and abuse prevention.

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KRISHNA TEMPLES SEEK CHAPTER 11 BANKRUPTCY PROTECTION  
REORGANIZATION FACILITATES FUND FOR ABUSED CHILDREN

Date: February 6, 2002  
Contact: Anuttama Dasa, ISKCON Communications Director, (301) 299-9707  
David Liberman, Attorney, (310) 277-9288  
Sandy Frey, Attorney, (310) 277-7400

*Washington, D.C.*—At least a dozen temples, related entities and individuals affiliated with the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), better known as the Hare Krishna Movement, will file Chapter 11 bankruptcy protection later this month.

The Chapter 11 bankruptcy focuses on reorganization rather than liquidation of religious assets. It is being filed to deal with claimants including a \$400 million dollar lawsuit against Krishna temples. That suit, first filed in Federal Court in June 2000, alleges children were abused at the religious society's boarding schools in the 1970's and 1980's. The Krishnas prevailed when the suit was dismissed in September 2001, but a similar \$400 million suit was later filed in Texas State Court.

The lawsuit, ISKCON leaders say, seeks far more money than the financial value of all the Krishna temples in North America. In essence, the suit threatens to shut down the entire religion.

“Rather than wasting millions of dollars to fight this suit, Chapter 11 reorganization will help ISKCON communities to establish a substantial, yet reasonable, fund to help any young person who may have been abused,” said Anuttama Dasa, ISKCON Director of Communications. “We want first and foremost to heal our communities and our young people,” Dasa said.

Through the reorganization, Krishnas hope to assure that all victims of the past abuse—including youth who may have chosen not to join the suit—are compensated according to the severity of their grievance.

“Chapter 11 protection will also assure that innocent families and congregations do not have their places of worship sold out from under them,” said Dasa. “We believe that innocent people should not be punished for the deeds of individual deviants who acted in total violation of our religious principles and teachings.”

The New York Times reported in 1999 that the Krishnas were “unusually candid” in their efforts to address past abuse. In 1990, ISKCON established policies mandating abuse prevention training and the reporting of any allegations of abuse to government authorities. In 1996, an independent Children of

Krishna organization was formed to provide grants for Krishna youth who may have been abused, and to assure the ongoing protection of Krishna children.

“Chapter 11 is a further effort to address past problems by creating an orderly and efficient procedure for dealing with and maximizing return to claimants,” said Sandy Frey, Bankruptcy Counsel.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is part of the ancient Vaishnava tradition, a monotheistic faith within Hindu culture. ISKCON was founded by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, who first brought the Krishna tradition from India to the West in 1965.

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Media Release

## Hare Krishna Temples File Chapter 11 Reorganization Plan

For Immediate Release

Date: February 27, 2004  
Contact: David Liberman  
Phone: 310 418-6464 or 310 277-9288

*Los Angeles*---Eleven temples and organizations adhering to the teachings and beliefs of the Krishna Consciousness religion, ISKCON or the Hare Krishna movement, filed a Chapter 11 Reorganization Plan today in the U.S. Bankruptcy Court which will oversee the distribution of financial compensation to over 500 tort claimants.

The Chapter 11 cases, originally filed in 2002, were in response to a lawsuit alleging child abuse in Hare Krishna boarding schools located principally in the U.S. and India during the 1970's and 1980's.

The Krishna reorganization plan provides for up to \$15 million to be provided to ISKCON creditors, the majority of whom are former ISKCON students.

The Reorganization Plan is unique in two ways: First, it provides compensation for over 400 youth who never joined the suit against ISKCON temples, and second, a significant portion of the Plan will be funded by voluntary contributions and settlement funds from individuals, independent temples and other organizations—and not just by the Debtor organizations who filed for bankruptcy protection.

“This Plan is unusual and far-reaching,” said David Liberman, ISKCON attorney. “We are providing assistance for any Krishna youth who may have been abused and who filed a claim with us—whether or not they sued—and we are increasing the available funds with voluntary contributions from independent temples around the world that want to help our youth.”

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## Krishna Temples File Chapter 11, page 2

Krishna temples in Los Angeles, San Diego and West Virginia are among the organizations that filed for Chapter 11 protection. The filing resulted from a lawsuit, originally Federal Court, on behalf of ninety former ISKCON students. That case was dismissed from Federal Court in September, 2001, but a similar case was filed in Texas State Court soon afterwards.

The reorganization plan includes \$2 million in startup capital for a nonprofit “Social Development Program,” a youth support organization which will offer free membership to all present and former ISKCON students. That organization will deliver support and assistance, including educational opportunities, social development assistance, career development opportunities, and financial grants to Krishna youth.

“Abuse of even a single child is a tragedy,” said Anuttama Dasa, ISKCON spokesperson. “ISKCON is a relatively small community of temples, but we are trying to do all we can to help our children. Our goal is to assist every young person who may have been abused,” he said.

The Reorganization Plan provides a detailed legal and financial roadmap as to the classification of various claims, the size of the fund, third party contributions, and other matters. The Claimants must yet approve the Plan, and an independent judicial determination assessing the legality, adequacy and fairness of the Plan will be made by the Bankruptcy Court within the next few months.

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), a Vaishnava, or monotheistic tradition within Hindu culture, was brought to the west in 1965 by His Divine Grace A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, a respected scholar and religious leader. ISKCON teaches bhakti-yoga, or devotion to God, through simple living, vegetarianism and the chanting of God’s names.

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Media Release

## Courts Confirm Hare Krishna Chapter 11 Reorganization Religious Society Apologizes to Victims of Child Abuse

For Immediate Release

Date: May 23, 2005

Contacts: Anuttama Dasa, ISKCON Communications (301) 299-9707  
Sandford L. Frey, Bankruptcy Counsel (310) 277-7400  
David Liberman, General Counsel (310) 277-9288/418-6464

Background: [www.iskcon.com/press/index.htm](http://www.iskcon.com/press/index.htm)

*Los Angeles, CA*— The United States Bankruptcy Court of the Central District of California today confirmed a Chapter 11 Reorganization Plan submitted by six Hare Krishna temples and affiliates. The Plan provides 9.5 million dollars in compensation to claimants—primarily former students who were subjected to various forms of abuse or mistreatment while in the society’s religious schools—while also protecting Krishna temples and religious communities from potential closure. Today’s California Plan confirmation follows closely on the heels of a parallel ISKCON Reorganization Plan which was approved last week by the U.S. Bankruptcy Court in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Those temples and affiliates of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), a monotheistic Vedic, or Hindu tradition, originally filed for Chapter 11 protection in February, 2002. That was two years after a \$400 million lawsuit was filed in Texas on behalf of 92 former students, who alleged emotional, physical, and sexual abuse during the 1970s and 1980s in Krishna boarding schools.

“As leaders, it was our responsibility to assure our children’s safety,” said Anuttama Dasa, ISKCON Governing Body Commissioner and Director of Communications. “We failed them, and for that we are very sorry. It is heartbreaking that many of our children were abused. On behalf of our entire society, I apologize to these young people. I pray that someday they will be able to forgive us. And, I pray that today’s agreement will help them heal and move forward in their lives,” Dasa said.

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The parallel ISKCON Chapter 11 cases were adjudicated in two jurisdictions simultaneously. In the first of the two Plan confirmation hearings, on May 16, 2005, in the U. S. Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of West Virginia, the Honorable L. Edward Friend II stated in court that he “wholeheartedly” endorsed the Plan: “I find it to be in the best interest of the creditors [former students] and I find the parties have actually worked together to come to a conclusion that really works and really makes sense.”

By seeking Chapter 11 protection, ISKCON was able to open the settlement to hundreds of additional former students who were either unaware of, or chose not to participate in, the original lawsuit. By way of Court approved advertisements in international media, as well as a proactive email campaign, ISKCON identified an additional 450 claimants who will now receive a share of the court approved \$9.5 million compensation plan. Above and beyond that amount, the compensation fund stands to increase by several million dollars if ISKCON is successful in ongoing litigation with its insurance carriers.

“There were always two priorities for us in this case,” said David Liberman, attorney for the Krishnas. “We wanted to provide as much money as possible for the young people that were abused, and simultaneously to protect innocent families and Krishna followers from having their temples closed had a jury awarded the original amount sought in the Texas case,” Liberman said.

“If this had gone to trial, it would have exhausted ISKCON’s assets through legal costs and left nothing for the tort claimants, the young people who deserve it,” said Sanford L. Frey, lead bankruptcy counsel for ISKCON. “In addition, the Chapter 11 allowed ISKCON to seek additional money from other independent contributors who voluntarily donated to the fund, making this an international settlement which increased the total dollar amount of the compensation fund far beyond the modest assets of the original temples that were sued,” Frey said.

Distribution of the funds will begin later this year and must be completed by 2011. The amount each individual receives will be based upon the nature of the abuse, its severity, and the time factor. The amount of compensation received by most will range from \$2,500 to \$50,000, which does not include the amount of insurance funds that may yet be recovered.

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## Backgrounder, Hare Krishna Chapter 11 Confirmed

### **Final Remarks by the Honorable L. Edward Friend II, US Bankruptcy Judge Northern District of West Virginia (from the court transcript)**

May 16, 2005 1:30 PM

Chapter 11 Re: Jaga, Inc., et al. Debtors

BK Nos: 02-51295 to 02-51298, 20-51699 AND 04-02306 (Jointly Administered)

Judge:

Right. And knowing litigation costs the way I know litigation costs, it appeared to me and it still appears to me that these parties are entitled to money and would be far off richer with this settlement and this plan of reorganization, than they would if they each brought their lawsuit or joined together in a lawsuit and proceeded for judgments. The Matrix was a little hard to understand but it makes sense to me and we do have a procedure that if somebody does not agree with the analysis on their Matrix, they can challenge it so that also is for purposes of voting, I think that was fair and under the circumstances, about as good as you can do with that type of case. I think, I truly believe that the parties who are affected by this, the creditors, are going to be substantially better off than they would without the plan of reorganization and I'm in favor of it, and I think you all have done an excellent job of putting together what I would call is a settlement of a hotly disputed – many, many cases – extending over geographical distances all over the world, and to put this into a general procedural aspect where each person will be able to receive some result is just – it's a great idea. I wish you all could figure out some way to do the asbestos cases and come up with a solution because we haven't been able to figure out what to do with asbestos. So I'm really, I'm impressed. I am impressed. It's a really good job. It's a great thing in the bankruptcy that we can do this. The only thing bad against it, I guess is that there will be some Plaintiffs' lawyers who won't be getting big fees if they would happen to win the cases. So you might not be real popular with the Plaintiffs' bar with this type of settlement, but I think it is much better for the creditors or the people that are deserving the money rather than these numerous lawsuits that we have to go through. So I am going to wholeheartedly endorse the Plan. I find it to be in the best interest of the creditors and I find that the parties have actually worked together to come to a conclusion that really and truly makes sense in this day and age which sometimes they are far and few between. So it is confirmed. Congratulations.