



Hare Krishna Chariot Featured in Independence Day Parade *Cultural Festival and Free Vegetarian Picnic All Day on National Mall*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Anuttama Dasa - (301) 299-9707; ic@pamho.net

WHAT: **Hare Krishna Rathayatra Chariot** joins National Independence Day Parade
Krishna Festival Of India Cultural Event all day on July 4th

WHERE: **Parade** –Constitution Avenue, from 7th Street to 17th Street
Festival – National Mall, Near the National Museum of the American Indian

WHEN: **Saturday**, July 4, 2009
Parade – Noon; **Festival** – 12 pm to 9 pm

Washington, D.C. – On Saturday, July 4th members of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) will hand-pull a 40-foot high, brightly decorated and festooned chariot, accompanied by dancing, the chanting of Sanskrit mantras, and the beating of drums in the National Independence Day Parade to honor America’s birthday and the religious diversity of our country. The procession, called *Rathayatra*, or “Festival of the Giant Chariots,” is a thoroughly American version of a religious and cultural tradition from India that goes back at least two millilena.

The celebration continues on the National Mall in front of the U.S. Capitol at 4th Street and Jefferson, with the *Hare Krishna Festival of India*, a traveling exhibition of spirituality and culture. The Festival features live stage entertainment all day; booths on reincarnation, mantra meditation, and vegetarianism; yoga classes; mehndi (hand painting); an Indian restaurant; live drama; classical Bharata-Natyam dance; a “Try on a Sari” tent; metaphysical books; and live kirtan music. A **free vegetarian picnic** will be served to eight thousand people. The public is welcome and admission is free. **MORE...**

BACKGROUNDER, Hare Krishna Festival and Parade

Popularly known as the Hare Krishna movement, ISKCON was founded in New York City by A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Srila Prabhupada in July 1966. ISKCON belongs to the Vaishnava *sampradaya*, or denomination, a monotheistic tradition within the broader Hindu culture. Once identified primarily by their shaved heads, robes, and street corner chanting, the movement today has matured into a community of over one million practitioners in North America. While some live as monks in *ashrams* (monasteries), most Krishna devotees today live and work in the secular community, practicing Krishna consciousness in their homes and attending their local temple on a regular basis.

Public chanting and distributing literature remain vibrant parts of the movement's mission. Unknown to most, the majority of ISKCON's congregations today are composed of Indian-American families; ISKCON affiliate Food for Life has quietly grown to become the world's largest vegetarian food relief organization; ISKCON runs a large hospital in Mumbai, India; ISKCON members spearheaded the establishment of the Oxford Center for Hindu Studies in England; and the movement is active in interfaith work internationally.

The Washington D.C. celebration is patterned after the ancient Rathayatra festival, in Puri, Orissa, India, one of the largest annual religious festivals on the world. Similar festivals are held across the United States and Canada throughout the summer.

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For more information phone 301 299-9707

www.iskcondc.org