

Anglicized Krishna in India: A Study on God-Posters in ISKCON

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ABSTRACT

The International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a testimony to the emergence of new religious-cultural imagination for a virtuous landscape in Odisha. Calendar art and God-poster in ISKCON represents an alternative identity to its believers. The burgeoning circulation of this new genre of calendar art stands in stark contrast with the existing calendar art and the God poster of religious theme in the Odia's society. The art is introducing novelty to the popular imagination and the life-world of the onlookers and the believers. The ISKCON's God poster enables the cultivation of 'habituation' among the followers of the utopian imagination. This article discusses the subtle blend of the new emerging genre of calendar art/God-poster in the religious visual piety with the existing religious-cultural imagination in Odisha. The article also presents the in-depth study of the devotees and their engagement with this new genre of calendar art and God-poster. Through the study, the article illustrates how the new calendar art is carving a niche for itself in creating the desired religious imagination. The discussion contributes to the sociology of religion and visual studies.

Keywords: *visual culture, calendar art, God-poster, ISKCON, religious imagination*

1. Introduction

To see and to be seen by the image of the deity is an important religious activity in Hinduism. These images vary from idols to

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pocket-sized pictures to wallpapers on desktops of personal computers. The motifs of the pictures are creative reflections of the artists who draw inspiration from the myriad sacred literature in Hinduism. The deities depicted in the pictures bear bodily features similar to those of Indians. However, there is a visible difference in the depiction of the deities brought by the religious movement in India. This new depiction stands in contrast to the already existing depiction of the same. Some have observed such bodily differences in the depiction of the Hindu deities (Lutgendrof 1999). With the conspicuous presence of new religious movements in India, such as the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), there is a noticeable introduction of a new type of image of the central deity, Krishna, in the pictures. Therefore, this article firstly examines the difference of the bodily aspects of the two varieties of images in relation to ISKCON. Secondly, it discusses the process through which the older versions of the pictures are being replaced by the newer ones. Lastly, the article evaluates the implications of this change.

The article draws on studies of God-posters in India and borrows theoretical concepts from the Sociology of Religion to explain the process through which the newer depictions become an integral part of the onlookers. In addition, the theoretical framework justifies the implications of these changes.

2. The God Posters in Hinduism

2.1. The Role of God-Posters in the Past and Present

According to Smith (1995), God-posters are a popular genre of devotional pictures also known as calendar art. This category of art is cheap and easily available in India. People buy God-posters and use them as calendars or frame the pictures and offer worship in their personal altars. The God-posters scaffold the act of *darshan*, which is to see and be seen by the image of the deity (Eck 1991). *Darshan* is a crucial activity that emphasizes the role of God-posters in India, as it is an inter-ocular experience. *Darshan* has been the subject of academic attention, with scholars such as Eck (2007), Babb (1981), Fuller (2004), Pinney (1997), Vidal (2015), and Srinivas (2008) examining the concept and practice.

Morgan (1998) argues that in contemporary democratic societies, there is a significant value in scholarly engagement with visual culture. The scholars contend that in India, the visual culture has been transformed due to imperial interaction, followed by a boom in mechanical production of images, which serves as a common backdrop for various discussions. Ramaswamy's (2003) study focuses on the role of visual culture in modernity in India. It was during this period that India experienced the mass production and mechanical reproduction of new visuals, contributing to the construction of a new nation and a new public sphere. Popular images, which were cheaply produced and loaded with meanings and idioms, were embraced by both the rich and the poor. Although these prints lacked originality and authenticity, they appealed to the masses by visualizing a new society and a new India. These images were produced as lithographs, chromolithographs, and posters.

Jain's (2007) monograph on God-posters examines interrelated issues such as the efficiency of representation, the authority of visual evidence, the notion of fine art, art as an arbiter of social distinction, and commodity. The market was an essential component of this new visual culture in India. Jain's scholarly exegesis reveals the site called the market or bazaar, which consumes and produces mass-produced popular images. Jain (2011a) contrasts the western notion of market with the native meaning of bazaar, which is embedded in the Hindu joint family, informality, and moral economy. Political meanings, cultural idioms, and religious fervor were the three prevalent themes of these images.

One sub-genre of calendar art that is widely popular in India is God-posters. Smith's (1995) extensive study on God-posters identified three categories in India, each with distinct themes. The "Supernatural" category features popular gods and goddesses like Ganesha, Krishna, Shiva, and Durga. The second category includes posters of saints, and the third group is posters of sacred sites. This article focuses on the central role of this category of art in ISKCON, which not only captures the attention of its devotees but also introduces novelty to the popular imagination of onlookers and believers.

Compared to the existing calendar art and God posters in India, ISKCON's God-posters represent an alternative identity for its believers. The growing circulation of this new genre of calendar art stands in stark contrast to the existing art in India. Devotees, believers, and admirers

of ISKCON interface and internalize this new genre of art through the devotional act of *darshan*. In ISKCON, devotees view the deity's image during the auspicious hours of the day when they offer *puja*.² God-posters are useful during these times as they enable devotees to retain a pictorial image of the deity for *darshan*.³

2.2. The God-Posters and the Corporeality

Scholars have extensively studied bodies and corporeality in the context of popular visuals, and there has been a noticeable shift in the topics discussed within this area. Lutgendrof's (2003) essay offers three perspectives on the subject, and this article aligns itself with one of those perspectives. Lutgendorf (2003) observes that there has been a transformation in the representation of the popular Hindu deity, Hanuman, from a hairy to a hairless, humanized muscular form. According to him, this transformation is a response to late-colonial and post-colonial anxieties over humanity in the Ramayana's good subaltern. Ramaswamy (2003) supports this observation.

Pinney (2011) notes a visible shift in aesthetics in popular visual cultures, which can be read as resistance to colonial perspectives in colonial India. The concept of "corpotherics," which engages the viewer with the image due to the liveliness of the subject, was in contrast to the colonial art masters' "absorptive" aesthetics. The latter introduced the notion of "absorptive" aesthetics, which was based on an absent viewer and no eye-contact. Calendar art and popular God-posters in the post-Independence era were a revival of "corpotherical" aesthetics. In this context, Pinney (1995) discusses popular calendar art with corpotherics as anti-colonial in nature.

² *Puja* is an important act of devotional ritual among the theistic Hindus. It is conducted by burning scented smoke and incense sticks in front of the deity's image (for a detailed discussion on *Puja* see Christopher Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 56-82. <http://library.lol/main/C744D1447D56C970DFE20A5ADEFB0678>

³ *Darshan* is exchange of vision (for a detailed discussion on *darshan* see Diana Eck, *Darshan: Seeing the Divine Image in India* (Chambersburg: Anima, 1981), 6 and Christopher Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 59-60. <http://library.lol/main/C744D1447D56C970DFE20A5ADEFB0678>

During the post-independence era, popular visual practices reflected the birth of nascent forms of nationalities that carried “dangerous corporality” (Pinney 1995, xxii).

3. The Socio-Religious Context: The ISKCON, the God-Posters and the Corporeality

Thus far the article has discussed the God-posters and the aspects of the God-posters in India. In this section, the article introduces the ISKCON and the ISKCON in Odisha then locates the God-posters in ISKCON; and illustrates the differences of which the ISKCON is making in order to assert its presence.

3.1. The ISKCON

The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) is a renowned devotional movement that is easily recognizable by its Vaishnavas worldwide. Founded by Srila Prabhupada in the 1960s, ISKCON is a Vaishnava *sampradaya*⁴ that encourages individuals to eliminate the ills of modern life through love and devotion to Krishna. Prabhupada was a charismatic Vaishnava leader-guru who inspired Americans to adopt a lifestyle based on love and devotion to Krishna. He went to the United States to spread the message of Gaudiya Vaishnavism, where he started the Hare Krishna movement in the 1960s. The devotees of ISKCON are renowned for their vibrant and dynamic ways of conducting congregational gatherings and singing *sankirtan*.⁵

ISKCON has numerous legendary national and international followers, and it has over five hundred centers across the globe. The organization’s headquarters are located in Mayapur, West Bengal, India, and feature developed and complex buildings and guest houses for devotees and visitors. The Governing Body Commission (GBC) is responsible for a variety of activities ranging from global interventions in food relief,

⁴ *Sampradaya* means sect. For a detailed discussion see Lawrence A Babb, “Sects and Indian Religion,” *Handbook of Indian Sociology*, ed. Veena Das (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2004), 223-241.

⁵ *Sankirtan* is congregational singing and chanting in unison.

education, environmental conservation, and various congregational social services. ISKCON has several local centers in India and different countries worldwide.

In academic literature, there is a debate regarding the taxonomic categorization of ISKCON. According to Robbins (1988), ISKCON has been studied as a sect or cult in western society, as well as in the context of new religious movements in America into adaptive movements and marginal movements. ISKCON, also known as “Hare Krishna,” attracted social dropouts from American society, primarily American youth. Other themes that have shaped the trajectory of the studies on ISKCON are the issue of power within the movement, which manifested in a renegade community, economic reforms, financial independence, and the place of family and sexuality in ISKCON.

In the Indian context, Brooks (1979) studied ISKCON, explaining the interaction between non-Indian ISKCON devotees and Indian Hindu pilgrims. He relied on symbolic interactionism to explain the interaction between both groups. Leman and Roos (2007) discussed ISKCON in Belgium in the context of “the process” through which individuals become devotees. The studies have discussed the non-Indian origins of ISKCON and the organization’s Indian roots at the same time.

By juxtaposing the studies by Babb (2003), Rao (2005) with Okita (2012) the debate emerges. The first two scholars include the ISKCON in the folds of Vaishnavism whereas Okita (2012) discusses the conflict between the Madhvas and the ISKCON followers. According to Okita (2012), the Madhvas of the Udipi declare that the contemporary ISKCON followers are not authentic and hence should not be identified with the Madhvas. This debate not only highlights the intra-*sampradaya* conflict but also raises questions regarding the location of ISKCON in Vaishnavism vis-à-vis Hinduism.

3.2. ISKCON in Odisha

Following the pan-Indian phenomenon, Odisha also underwent the effects of neo-liberalism in the 1990s and witnessed the state’s shift from syncretic tradition to communalism, as noted by Kanungo (2014).

However, Odisha is not limited to the dynamics of communalism and has also experienced a ‘soft revolution’ with the emergence of the middle class, as Rustau (2003) has pointed out. Based on first-hand experience, the article states that Odisha is also witnessing a recent upsurge of the ‘New Spirituality’ breed of people-centric spiritual movements, such as the Ramdev Baba yoga groups and Art of Living groups, as noted by Gooptu (2016, 934-974). Besides ISKCON, Odisha hosts other religious movements such as the Brahma Kumari, Gayatri Mata movement, and Osho movement.

One of the most intriguing features of ISKCON is that, on the one hand, its global presence makes it prominent, and on the other hand, its presence in Odisha makes it contentious in the land of indigenous Vaishnava deity Lord Jagannath. This relation sets it apart from other Indic origin religious movements that have made their presence in Odisha. In the popular imagination and worldview of Odias, Odisha is associated with the deity Lord Jagannath. The collective memory of the Odia rhetoric of valor is identified with Jagannath, which withstood several invasions in the past. The intertwining of Jagannath in the life-world of the Odia milieu has been studied by international scholars such as Eschmann, Kulke, and Tripathi (1978), Kulke and Schnepal (2001), Apffel-Marglin (1985, 2008a), and Kanungo (2003).

Jagannath is a male deity who belongs to the pantheon of Vaishnavism. He is considered as the *avatar* or the reincarnation of the Lord Vishnu. He is worshipped with his consorts-siblings, Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Subhadra, who are also considered as the avatars of Lord Balabhadra and Goddess Durga, respectively. In the Vaishnava religious landscape, Jagannath's Puri Temple is considered the most sacred pilgrim center, as one of the *Chardhams*.⁶

3.3. ISKCON in Bhubaneswar

By drawing on hagiographies and devotional accounts, the article traces the origins of ISKCON in Bhubaneswar, focusing on the founder and his Odia disciple who took the leadership role. The article also explores the complex relationship between ISKCON and the Odia community. Because Srila Prabhupada, the founder-guru of

⁶ Four important pilgrim centres in the Hindu sacred geography.

ISKCON, included foreigners as devotees, they were denied entry into the Jagannatha Temple in Puri because foreigners are considered as *mleccha*⁷ (Das 2012, 59). However, the first ISKCON temple in Odisha was built in Bhubaneswar and was named the Krishna Balaram Temple.

Following the legal contestation by the self-proclaimed savior of Jagannath culture in Odisha, the Jagannatha Sena it is observed that the presence of ISKCON is problematic in Odisha, in particular and in India, in general. The convener contests the authenticity of ISKCON as a religion. According to the Jagannatha Sena, ISKCON does not follow the traditional Hindu calendar⁸ which makes the ISKCON-centric celebration inauthentic.

Besides the above-discussed anecdote, the ISKCON's soteriology considers Lord Jagannatha as one form (*swaropa*) of Lord Krishna. Instead of a debate about the descendance of Krishna from Jagannatha or otherwise, the article borrows the term 'tradition' from Srinivas (2008, 45) to include the number of "complementarity, parallelism, reinvention, and reincarnation, rather than purely a lineage of leaders and successors" (Srinivas 2008, 45). Therefore, in the 'tradition' of ISKCON, Jagannatha is worshipped along with the Krishna, Balaram, Nitai Gour and Chaitanya and the *panch* (five) Goswami.

The ethnographic material discussed in this article is based in Bhubaneswar, also known as the "City of Temples" and the capital of the state, Odisha. With a population of 840,834, the city has gained attention from national and international information technology companies over the past decade, resulting in an influx of migrants from all over the country. Bhubaneswar is also home to many renowned educational and healthcare institutions. The migrants who have come to Bhubaneswar are generally well-educated professionals, including those who have migrated from within the state in search of better job opportunities and educational facilities. The Odisha government is developing innovative urban plans to make Bhubaneswar a smart city with improved rapid

⁷ Barbarians and the meat-eaters.

⁸ See Christopher Fuller, *The Camphor Flame: Popular Hinduism and Society in India* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2004), 291-Appendix. <http://library.lol/main/C744D1447D56C970DFE20A5ADEFB0678>

transport systems. Popular news articles have portrayed Bhubaneswar as a city of rapid development and modernization.

The majority of ISKCON devotees in Bhubaneswar are Hindu, Odia-speaking, educated urbanites employed in white-collar and blue-collar jobs. They include retired bank officers, schoolteachers, college lecturers, and managers in private and small software companies in the state. These devotees live in nuclear families in Bhubaneswar, and their children often pursue education outside of Odisha and even secure jobs outside of the state or abroad. Some of the grown-up children of the devotees are settled abroad. A significant number of devotees belong to the IT sector in the state, but there are also followers from petty jobs and small-time businesses rooted in extended families consisting of elderly parents and children who have finished their college education. They maintain frequent reference and connections to their community in their village.

The Krishna Balam Temple, which belongs to the ISKCON temple, is located in the Nayapalli area of Bhubaneswar. According to hagiography and the devotees, this location carries immense importance because Prabhupada claimed that one day it would become the “heart of the city,” and the Krishna Balam Temple would be one of the best ISKCON centers in the world (Das, 55). This article focuses on the Krishna Balam Temple in Bhubaneswar as a case study because it contains the temple complex that has been replicated in other parts of Odisha. The temple premises consist of the main temple complex, the saint’s hermitage, and the dining hall. The sacralization of the spot in Bhubaneswar where the temple is located was gradual and was led by the Odia Vaishnava leader Swami Gour Govind, who was a direct disciple of Srila Prabhupada. The temple utilizes *Back to Godhead*, published by the BBT, and *Bhagvat Darsha*, published by Gopal Jiu, which are monthly magazines of the movement.

Based on the commitment to remain celibate and renunciate, there are three groups of devotees in ISKCON Bhubaneswar. The first group is the *Sannyasis*, who lead a single, celibate, austere, and peripatetic life. They wear ochre-colored clothes and initiate novice devotees into the order. The *dikhya* gurus belong to this group of devotees. The second

group of devotees is the *Brahmacharis*, who are identified by their white clothing that depicts their celibate state for a temporary period and full-time involvement in temple activities. They work closely with the *Sannyasi* group and learn self-discipline techniques while executing temple administration and other day-to-day activities. This group consists of both men and women and members have the option to marry later in life and become *Grihastha* devotees. The last and third groups of devotees are the householders or the *Grihasthas*. This group consists of married people who have households and are involved in both worldly and temple activities. The entrants or enthusiasts work closely with all three groups mentioned above.

In ISKCON Bhubaneswar, a wide range of activities is led by two groups of trainers: the *sikhya* gurus and the *dikhya* gurus. The *sikhya* gurus are mentors who instruct ISKCON enthusiasts in the techniques and attitudes necessary for transformation into devotees. New entrants remain in regular contact with these mentors for an extended period. The *sikhya* gurus train enthusiasts in the correct attitudes and practices for transforming themselves, including the desired posture as a devotee, the necessary transformation of food habits, appropriate attitudes towards sexuality and money, and techniques for dealing with non-believers. Enthusiasts adapt to the new modalities of personhood with the guidance of *sikhya* gurus. *Dikhya* gurus occupy the highest position in the gurudom hierarchy of ISKCON and initiate trained enthusiasts into ISKCON.

3.4. The Change in God-Poster

In the same vein with Lutgendrof, the article highlights the changes found in the physical appearances in the visual depiction of the Krishna in the conventional images available in India and the imagery of Krishna as depicted by the ISKCON. There is an embedded narrative of change in image culture which is introduced by the ISKCON. The conventional Odia commercial markets offer images of Krishna with a white cow in his famous pose, playing the flute against a dense forest backdrop with a full moon in the sky. This Krishna has Dravidian features, a brownish complexion, a chubby boyish face, and round, fleshy limbs. He wears short kaccha and shiny ornaments and has short,

curly hair, giving the image a feel of an earthier Krishna.

In contrast, ISKCON's God-poster depicts Krishna with Caucasian features, a chiseled cheekbone, and a bluish complexion. He has a masculine face and paler limbs, and the jewelry with which he is adorned is less flashy. In some versions, even Radha with Krishna looks Caucasian. Following the studies on corporeality and God-posters, the changes are not just simple shifts but are protest to the foreign rule or at times can be expressive of imposition of foreign ideas. Therefore, the corporeality of God-posters can be read as a contested site. This article looks at the God-posters as a site which expresses novel identity. It carves a niche for itself in the host society which is far from the place of origin.

4. The Theoretical Context

So far, the article has discussed the ethnographic details and the changes in the God-posters. In this section, the article will discuss the implication and the theoretical framework which explains the observation. The article uses theoretical context because there is an emphasis on the cultivation of devotion grounded in the visual aspect of devotion, which involves the practice of decorating, adoring, and worshipping the image of the deity. The article seeks to employ a context that can explain the emphasis on individual practices without ignoring their implications in the larger context. This study adopts a basic approach from the discipline of Sociology, which reveals how the visual aspect of religiosity is cultivated by the God-poster, and how the God-posters offer novelty to the worldview of the devotees and assert its presence.

In her study on the Islamist women in Cairo, Mahmood (2009) applies the concept of habituation to explain the cultivation of piety among the women participants. The present study is informed by the notion of habituation which emphasizes the process aspects of the habit formation. Followed by the above notion, the present study also finds that the shift from the old God-posters to the newer ones is a conscious effort. This concept emphasizes two implications. Firstly, devotees who

observe or receive the darshan (blessing) of the deity through images of the God-posters become accustomed to a new version. Secondly, ISKCON establishes its presence in the host society through an innovative approach.

4.1. Religion and Self

The question of how religion shapes the self in the contemporary age holds different meanings and engages in different ways with different individuals located in the same time and space. The resurgence of religion is no longer an intriguing question to sociologists, who examine how religion transforms in response to new social conditions, such as changes in modern, post-modern, and globalization. Since individuals in society are shaped and influenced by these factors, sociologists study religion as an important dependent variable. They study the process and ideologies that influence the shaping of individuals and their subjective modern selves. There is an upsurge in the study of selfhood in the modern context, with Warriar (2005) exploring the three processes of personal freedom, self-authorship, and internalization of faith that shape religious subjectivity in modern India. Srinivas (2009) studies the process through which the religious imagination of religious subjects in the Sai Baba movement takes place, while Gooptu (2016) discusses religious subjecthood and subjectivity in the context of modern and democratic coordinates in contemporary modern India. The new religious movement, taking place through charismatic guru-centric organizations, has also gained scholarly attention from Pandya (2012) and Warriar (2012). New religious movements have always reflected collective aspiration and consciousness. However, the role of God-posters in the formation of religious subjects and subjecthood has not been studied in the Indian context.

4.2. The Cultivation of the Devotion

Based on field observation and interviews, it was revealed that there are stages through which the enthusiasts gradually become a devotee. There are gastronomic aspects, the corporeal aspects, the kinesthetic and the visual aspects of the cultivation of devotion. The *dikhya* gurus train the novice or the enthusiasts to consciously transform

the above-mentioned domains under their guidance. The paper will discuss the domain briefly:

4.2.1. The gastronomic aspect: the first and foremost aspect of a devotee's life is to shift from non-vegetarian eating habit to vegetarian eating habits. The Krishna devotee has to follow a diet which is free from any form of violence and cruelty. The *dikhya* gurus train the novice the do's and the dont's of the ISKCON regulated food-habits. The devotees vow to consume food which is offered to the deity.

4.2.2. The corporeal aspects: the corporeal aspects of a devotee's life include the way he conducts his everyday actions and behavior, both physical and mental. The *dikhya* gurus instruct the men and the women devotees to dress up in traditional attire when they visit the temple or when they are engaged in temple services. They are taught to hold their body in a particular way in order to express humility. At the mental level, they are asked to make a conscious effort to shift from cheap commercial entertainment to spend time in chanting the *mahamantra*⁹ or to spend time reading Vaishnava literature.

4.2.3. The kinesthetic aspects: in this aspect the devotees go on 'spiritual tours' to places which have Vaishnava significance. Such tours are organized by the ISKCON temple. Visiting the temples at the earliest hours of the day and at the evening hours holds importance in a devotee's everyday life. To be in the physical presence of the deity's image is also important.

4.2.4. The visual aspects: this is one of the most important aspects in which the enthusiast and the novice consciously make an effort to participate in the *darshan* in the earliest hour of the day. The *darshan time* in the temple is filled up with devotees. Congregational singing and dancing take place in front of the images. Besides the above, the devotees learn to offer food and to have consecrated food. It is required to emphasize at this point many devotees use the God-posters when they are in their workplace to offer food to the deity and then consume.

It is with the shift in the above-mentioned aspects in their

⁹ *Mahamantra* is the sacred formula which the devotees chant.

everyday living, the novice and the enthusiasts reach a stage where the *dikhya* gurus select the devotees and allow them to get initiated in ISKCON.

4.3. The God-Posters and the Devotees

Based on interviews with the novices and the senior devotees, it was assured that most of them have replaced their own old, framed God-posters with the newer ones. The novice devotees buy the ISKCON's framed God-posters and offer worship in their home altars.

Many devotees responded that in course of time they included the pictures of various Gurus within the ISKCON order in their home altars. These pictures were sold only in the ISKCON temples. Most of the devotees and enthusiasts agreed that their sense of sacred cosmology of deities and gurus have expanded because they interfaced with new sacred personalities. Being a conventional Odia, their sacred cosmology was limited only to the references to the deities' triad of Jagannath, Balabhadra, and Subhadra. With their association with the ISKCON, their knowledge about different avatars and gurus has deepened.

Many devotees have expressed their appreciation for the sacred books in ISKCON, which feature illustrations of various scenes from the Vaishnava texts. These images help to bring the stories to life and give readers a vivid and tangible depiction of the narrative. Many have even remarked that the quality of the books in ISKCON is comparable to that of books sold in conventional markets in Odisha.

Talking to devotees who work at offices, they confirmed that along with the conventional calendar posters, they hang the ISKCON brand of calendars also. These offered a site for the ISKCON to introduce to the devotees and the onlookers the newer versions of Krishna and Radha. The devotees even bought seasonal greeting cards from ISKCON which bore the images of the Krishna and Radha in their Caucasian version.

During discussions with ISKCON devotees, both in groups and individually, some have shared that they grew up in environments where images of Krishna were already present. However, they believe that the

newer versions of these images hold significance because they represent a newer self of the devotees – one that is grounded in the regular practice of integrating ISKCON's rules and regulations into their everyday life. As they shift their habits in terms of eating, conduct, and perception of their surroundings, there is a shift in their life-world as well.

4.4. The ISKCON God-Posters and Identity

The ISKCON in Bhubaneswar conducts various programs which aim at the individual level and collective level. The ISKCON conducts the *nagar-sankritan*, in which a group of devotees tour the city and visit various towns in the Odisha in order to spread the name of ISKCON. On such tours, the group uses their newer versions of God-posters which often attract attention of the onlookers. They even use the collage of the various versions of God-posters to locate themselves in the presence of the visual culture associated with Jagannatha. The ISKCON version looks different amidst the other prints and versions of God-posters. This has given a different identity to the ISKCON's *nagarsankritans*.

The prints and publication department in ISKCON Bhubaneswar have two sections: one which identifies with the global readers and is known as Bhaktivendanta Book Trust. This is the magazine which reaches out to devotees everywhere in the world. The other publication is known as the Gopal Jiu Publication which caters to the local and regional devotees and readers. BBT uses the Anglicized version of the Krishna motifs in the glossy magazines. The look gives an ethereal impression to the scared cosmology of Krishna.

5. Conclusion

The study juxtaposes the two versions of God-posters available in Odisha: one is commercially available, while the other is the ISKCON version of Krishna God-posters. The difference between them is striking and immediately apparent. The ISKCON version, which has its roots in Indic tradition but is now a global phenomenon imported from the West, portrays a religious imagination with Indic origins. However, this phenomenon is also transforming the Indic sense of aesthetics.

Qualitatively, the ISKCON version of Krishna God-posters showcases a different range of followership that is heterogeneous in nature. This category of devotees includes Hindus of both Indian and non-Indian origin, as well as foreigners who were not previously Hindu but have converted to Vaishnavism. During interviews, it was observed that ISKCON attracts devotees from various economic backgrounds. Some engineers have quit their jobs to become lifetime servitors in ISKCON, while retired salaried men and women are drawn to the organization for its blend of traditionalism and modernity. Additionally, many respondents noted that unlike traditional temples, the ISKCON temple premises maintain a high level of cleanliness.

In addition to the reasons cited above, the new category of devotees finds ISKCON's tour packages attractive, which are not commonly offered in traditional religious temples. With these factors in mind, the article argues that ISKCON is rapidly gaining popularity, as evidenced by the growing number of ISKCON temples in cities across India. This leads to the next part of the conclusion, which focuses on the integration of ISKCON into the Indian religious landscape.

Despite its non-Indic origins and growth in the West, ISKCON is gaining recognition in India and hints at a potential integration into the country's religious landscape. While Indian sectarian traditions have flourished in the West and gained prominence both in India and abroad, ISKCON originated in the West and then travelled to India. This puts its presence at odds with the traditional forms of religion in India. However, despite its complex relationship with native religious sects in India, ISKCON is being embraced by enthusiasts.

Therefore, the above observations suggest two questions: Will there be an expansion in the religious imagination of the Vaishnava sect in India, allowing non-Hindus to gradually be included in its fold? Is the replacement of the chubby Krishna with the Anglicized Krishna simply an artist's creativity or a subtler way of contesting the Indian version of God-posters? In India, God-posters previously served as a way for natives to contest colonial power. Now, in modern times, it is being used by non-natives to make their presence felt in India.

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