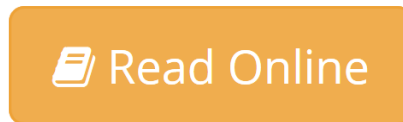


## Betrayal of the Spirit: My Life behind the Headlines of the Hare Krishna Movement

By *Nori J. Muster*



### **Betrayal of the Spirit: My Life behind the Headlines of the Hare Krishna Movement** By Nori J. Muster

Combining behind-the-scenes coverage of an often besieged religious group with a personal account of one woman's struggle to find meaning in it, *Betrayal of the Spirit* takes readers to the center of life in the Hare Krishna movement.

Nori J. Muster joined the International Society of Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON)--the Hare Krishnas--in 1978, shortly after the death of the movement's spiritual master, and worked for ten years as a public relations secretary and editor of the organization's newspaper, the *ISKCON World Review*. In this candid and critical account, Muster follows the inner workings of the movement and the Hare Krishnas' progressive decline.

Combining personal reminiscences, published articles, and internal documents, *Betrayal of the Spirit* details the scandals that beset the Krishnas--drug dealing, weapons stockpiling, deceptive fundraising, child abuse, and murder within ISKCON--as well as the dynamics of schisms that forced some 95 percent of the group's original members to leave. In the midst of this institutional disarray, Muster continued her personal search for truth and religious meaning as an ISKCON member until, disillusioned at last with the movement's internal divisions, she quit her job and left the organization.

In a new preface to the paperback edition, Muster discusses the personal circumstances that led her to ISKCON and kept her there as the movement's image worsened. She also talks about "the darkest secret"--child abuse in the ISKCON parochial schools--that was covered up by the public relations office where she worked.

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**Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Perhaps the most colorful and aggressive of the Asian spiritual communities to take root on American shores was that of the Hare Krishnas, more formally known as the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON). Who has not witnessed their American converts' dancing in the streets in their orange robes, confidently baring their shaven heads, or endured their fundraising efforts in airports? Against those finger cymbal-clanging memories of the 1970s, Muster's narrative of her insider's experience of ISKCON is nothing less than mesmerizing. That the American adventure into the worship of the noble Krishna would come to grief after the death of their ISKCON's charismatic Guru Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Praphupada in a scandal of murder, greed and corruption was perhaps not surprising to those who saw more than the Hare Krishna's superficial celebration of Krishna's love. For Muster, who worked for 10 years as a public relations secretary and editor of the organization's newspaper, the ISKCON World Review, the humiliation of ISKCON meant the loss of an admirable spiritual vision. Her narrative of that scandal confronts the ways in which traditional patriarchy and philosophical rigidity regularly defeated spiritual vitality. Muster's book is an important testimony that might be instructive to those involved in the leadership of any religious movement.

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### Review

"Muster's narrative of her insider's experience of ISKCON is nothing less than mesmerizing."--*Publisher's Weekly*

"Scholars of religion will find much of value in Muster's thoughtful and well written account. Anti-cultists will find ammunition for their crusade as well."--Catherine Wessinger, *Nova Religion*

### About the Author

Nori J. Muster, a freelance writer and website designer, lives in Arizona. Larry D. Shinn, president of Berea College, is the author of *The Dark Lord: Cult Images and the Hare Krishnas in America*.

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