



39th annual

# festival of india

july 16-17, 2011

FESTIVAL OF INDIA NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

July 8, 2011

## The 39th Annual Festival of India – July 16-17, 2011

*Embark on a Spiritual Journey to the East in the Heart of Downtown Toronto*

TORONTO (July 8, 2011) — For centuries, spiritual seekers and explorers have journeyed to the Indian subcontinent searching for answers to life's most profound questions. Interestingly enough, South Asian culture has now become known worldwide for its Bollywood dance routines and henna tattoos, amongst other things. As beautiful as these things are, the true and lasting Eastern treasures run much deeper and are far more spiritually compelling. On the third weekend of July, in the wake of the GTA's IIFA fever, the **39th Annual Festival of India**—a free, two-day event—intends to bring South Asia's most enduring spiritual culture to the heart of downtown Toronto in a contemporary, exhilarating, and family-friendly fashion.

Proving that spirituality need not be drab, festivities will begin on **Saturday, July 16th at 11:00 a.m.**, when thousands will take to Yonge Street alongside three magnificent 40-foot tall floats. The procession will be accompanied by a fervid menagerie of drumming, singing, and dancing all the way **from Bloor to Queens Quay**. This vibrant parade, traditionally known as a *Ratha-Yatra*, is actually a way of commemorating an age-old tradition of celebratory processions still held throughout the Indian subcontinent and beyond.

Celebrations will then **shift over to Centre Island** for the remainder of the weekend where festival-goers will find a massive, tented-outdoor pavilion that pulses with soul-enlivening music, shows, events, and activities. Specific Centre Island highlights include a **free vegetarian feast**, an acclaimed arts & culture showcase, a South Asian Bazaar, enlightening seminars, a fun-filled kids area, cooking demonstrations, and more.

On **Sunday, July 17th**, bespeaking a rising awareness that yoga isn't just about those form-fitting pants, the Festival of India will present the **Fourth Annual Yoga Meltdown**. Celebrated as a "festival within a festival", Yoga Meltdown is **Toronto's only free, outdoor spiritual yoga exhibition**. This unique event provides all yoga enthusiasts, from the simply curious to hardcore yogis, with a chance to explore yoga in a distinctively holistic way. With free outdoor yoga classes led by professionals from across the GTA, vegan cooking demonstrations, mantra meditation seminars and more, this mini-festival promises the public a rare opportunity to unwind and revitalize themselves amidst the splendor of **Centre Island**, one of Toronto's most naturalized and picturesque locales.

"What distinguishes our festival from the city's other South Asian events", comments Krishna Sharma, Chairperson of the Festival of India, "is our focus on presenting an aspect of spiritual India that has endured and flourished over centuries and across boundaries. Our festival is geared towards all Torontonians and promotes conscious living and spiritual understanding".

The festival is officially presented by Toronto's famous **Hare Krishna Centre**, also known as ISKCON Toronto, and offers a surreal and remarkably convenient opportunity to relish the tradition and spirituality of India right here amidst our city's looming skyscrapers and scenic isles. An open invitation goes out to one and all to come discover the hidden treasures of the East on both Yonge Street and at Centre Island this year at the 39th Annual Festival of India.



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### ***About the Festival of India***

*In the late 1960s, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the founder of the worldwide Hare Krishna Society, also known as ISKCON, inaugurated international versions of the Ratha-Yatra festival, which has been celebrated for centuries in India. With roots steeped in age-old spiritual traditions, Ratha-Yatra festivals are now celebrated in every major city around the world, including London, Paris, and New York.*

*The last 38 years have seen Toronto's version of the festival, known as the "Festival of India", mature into a much-anticipated annual event that brings a unique and vibrant culture to a larger mainstream audience.*

*Toronto's festival has developed into the largest of its kind in North America and presents a rare opportunity for Torontonians to experience, enjoy, and learn more about the profound spiritual culture of the east in a contemporary, family-oriented fashion.*

### ***About ISKCON Toronto***

*For over 40 years, ISKCON Toronto has been the hub of a rich, vibrant and enthusiastic community. Helping to celebrate and share the teachings of ancient spiritual India, ISKCON Toronto also regularly conducts programs for youth empowerment, community care, and a Food for Life program involving regular outreach to the underprivileged via the distribution of hot vegetarian meals. Internationally speaking, ISKCON is a worldwide confederation of more than 400 centres, including 60 farm communities, 50 schools and 90 restaurants.*

To arrange interviews, or for more information, please contact:

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