

# The Discipline of Devotion: Investigating the Spiritual and Motivational Factors Behind Time and Task Management in ISKCON

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**Abstract**—In a world where time management often relies on external enforcement, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) presents a unique spiritual model of discipline sustained through devotion. This study explores the motivational and organizational factors that enable full-time ISKCON devotees - including brahmacharis, and temple leaders - to consistently perform temple duties with punctuality, sincerity, and commitment. Conducted at ISKCON NVCC and ISKCON Camp temples in Pune, the research gathered primary data from 100 full-time devotees using a structured Google Form, circulated via email, and WhatsApp. The analysis revealed that service to Krishna, respect for senior devotees, and inner satisfaction are the strongest drivers of disciplined behavior. Core spiritual practices such as chanting, scriptural study, and attending morning aartis were identified as key routines anchoring time management. Temple teachings, servant leadership, and regular mentorship also emerged as critical supports. The study further highlights that ISKCON's value-based culture—centered on purpose, regulation, and self-discipline—has strong relevance for the corporate sector. Principles like servant leadership, devotion-inspired work culture, and structured routines can significantly enhance organizational effectiveness and employee engagement. The paper concludes by offering actionable suggestions to both ISKCON leadership and corporate managers, emphasizing that time management anchored in spiritual purpose can foster sustainable discipline, meaningful engagement, and operational excellence.

**Index Terms**—ISKCON, Time Management, Spiritual Discipline, Devotee Motivation, Temple Leadership, Servant Leadership, Purpose-Driven Service, Self-Regulation, Structured Routine, Workplace Spirituality, Organizational Culture, Volunteer Commitment.

## I. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced and distraction-filled world, managing time and tasks with discipline has become a universal challenge across personal, professional, and institutional domains. While corporate models often depend on external accountability systems and performance-based incentives to ensure punctuality and efficiency, spiritual institutions like the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) operate on a vastly different premise. ISKCON temples, managed largely by full-time volunteers and resident devotees, are globally known for their well-structured, timely, and seamless functioning of rituals, services, and large-scale events. This remarkable consistency achieved without monetary incentives raises important questions about the underlying motivational and organizational framework that drives such discipline. The daily life of ISKCON devotees is governed not just by a fixed schedule but by deep spiritual conviction and a commitment to service, or *seva*. Their actions are guided by scriptural teachings, regular spiritual practices such as chanting and meditation, and the example of servant leadership modeled by senior devotees. This integration of spiritual purpose and organizational clarity enables a culture of punctuality, personal accountability, and mutual support. The present study investigates these spiritual and motivational drivers by focusing on full-time ISKCON devotees at two major temples in Pune: ISKCON NVCC and ISKCON Camp. By examining how internal motivation, spiritual routine, leadership influence, and institutional values shape the time and

task management practices of these devotees, the study also explores the potential transferability of these principles to secular settings. It aims to offer insights not only for religious organizations but also for corporate leaders and educators seeking sustainable, purpose-driven models of discipline and engagement.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

ISKCON temples manage all their activities on time with strong discipline. This happens because devotees follow a spiritual routine with full dedication. Many books, articles, and reports show that their time and task management comes from their devotion, values, and regular training. This review includes key ideas, case studies, and examples from books, journals, blogs, and reports. It explains how devotion-based discipline supports ISKCON's organized functioning—and how these practices can also be helpful in corporate settings.

### a. Spiritual and Psychological Foundations:

- [1] The core discipline observed in ISKCON temples is rooted in spiritual teachings and personal sadhana. Srila Prabhupada, ISKCON's founder, emphasized early rising, mantra chanting, attendance at aartis, and service duties—all of which require a high degree of time consciousness.

### b. Discipline Through Devotion & Time Management:

- [2] Time management is a conscious practice in Krishna consciousness. ISKCON blogs and educational materials often use metaphors like “rocks, pebbles, sand” to emphasize task prioritization - placing sadhana before other activities. Devotees also align with sattvic rhythms as prescribed in the Bhagavad Gita for a calm, regulated lifestyle.

### c. Organizational Structure & Practice:

- [3] The daily routines in ISKCON temples—fixed aarti times, systematic prasadam distribution, and assigned seva duties—reflect a fusion of spiritual commitment and organized management. Devotees follow a pre-planned schedule that ensures activities start and end on time, following clear protocols.
- [4] A research paper by Nidhi Srinivas provides deeper insight into how ISKCON blends modern corporate strategies—like presentations, team

exercises, and structured timetables—within their spiritual framework. This "managerial spirituality" supports both internal growth and public outreach.

### d. Leadership & Servant Leadership Training:

- [5] ISKCON offers structured training in time and task management, modeled on Srila Prabhupada's 16 principles of servant leadership. These include communication, delegation, personal discipline, and spiritual accountability.

### e. Feedback and Ethical Culture:

- [6] ISKCON recognizes the need for structured feedback and ethical leadership. The ISKCON Communications Journal documents the importance of dialogue without fear, and creating open channels of guidance and correction within the spiritual community.

### f. Volunteer Motivation & Meaningful Service:

- [7] Volunteers in spiritually driven communities are often motivated by a combination of personal purpose, community belonging, and values-based service. In this context, discipline emerges not from external control, but from deep internal alignment with service goals. Spiritual service, when meaningfully structured, results in high commitment to time and task.

- [8] Clary et al. explain that the most consistent motivation in volunteer service is the 'Values' function, which includes altruism, compassion, and desire to help others. This framework helps explain how spiritual volunteers maintain commitment and punctuality over long periods.

### g. Spiritual Leadership and Task Efficiency:

- [9] Fry's spiritual leadership theory shows that leaders who inspire followers through vision, altruism, and spiritual values generate higher levels of commitment and task discipline. These values are key in religious movements such as ISKCON.

- [10] Spiritual leadership principles have been proven effective in secular environments too. Applying ISKCON's spiritual time-management models to corporates may boost employee engagement and ethical behavior.

### h. Organizational Productivity in Religious Orders:

- [11] Religious institutions that align personal values and institutional goals (such as Spanish monastic orders) demonstrate high organizational

productivity. This explains the efficient task management seen in ISKCON.

### III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a descriptive and exploratory research design to examine the spiritual and motivational factors influencing time and task management among full-time ISKCON devotees. The methodology integrates both quantitative and qualitative approaches to gain a deeper understanding of how spiritual conviction, institutional discipline, leadership culture, and daily routines collectively contribute to consistent, purposeful action. The research was conducted at two major ISKCON centers in Pune - ISKCON NVCC and ISKCON Camp, focusing exclusively on full-time resident devotees who are actively engaged in temple services and management.

- a. Research Questions: The primary research questions of this research study were:
  - i. What motivates ISKCON devotees to perform their duties on time every day?
  - ii. How do teachings of ISKCON or spiritual practices influence their discipline and time management?
  - iii. How are temple duties and services assigned and managed so that everything happens on time?
  - iv. What role do senior devotees or leaders play in guiding others to stay disciplined and committed?
- b. Primary Data Collection: Primary data were collected from 100 full-time ISKCON devotees, including brahmacharis, and temple leaders, who live within the temple premises and are engaged in daily services such as aartis, prasadam distribution, cleaning, book distribution, and festival organization. The data collection period spanned from 5<sup>th</sup> July to 15<sup>th</sup> July 2025. A structured Google Form was designed and circulated through multiple channels including email, and WhatsApp. The form consisted of Likert-scale questions, multiple-choice items, checkboxes, and open-ended questions aimed at capturing diverse aspects of spiritual discipline, motivation, leadership impact, and potential

corporate application of ISKCON values. A pilot test with 8 devotees helped refine the content and structure of the questionnaire. Participation was entirely voluntary and anonymous, and digital informed consent was obtained at the start of the form to maintain ethical research standards.

- c. Secondary Data Collection: In addition to primary data from temple participants, this study used secondary data from credible sources such as books, journal articles, research papers, and reports. These provided insights into how spiritual values, leadership, and routine practices contribute to ISKCON's time and task management.
- d. Data Analysis: The responses collected through the Google Form were analyzed using simple descriptive statistical tools. Quantitative data from Likert-scale questions was used to identify patterns in motivation, discipline, and time management among the devotees. Percentage values were calculated to show common responses and trends. In addition, qualitative data from open-ended questions was thematically analyzed to find repeated ideas such as the role of spiritual practice, leadership, personal responsibility, and internal motivation. These insights helped understand how and why ISKCON devotees manage time so efficiently in all their tasks.

### IV. FINDINGS, INSIGHTS AND SUGGESTIONS: DATA-DRIVEN ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

- A. Findings and Insights:
  - a. Motivational Drivers Behind Devotee Discipline: To understand what fuels the remarkable time management and commitment of ISKCON devotees, respondents were asked to identify motivational factors influencing their punctuality and task completion. The question allowed multiple selections and also captured open-ended responses. The distribution of 100 responses is summarised in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Motivational Factors Behind Timely Task Completion (*n* – 100)

Motivational Factor	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Service to Krishna	93	93%
Respect for senior devotees	83	83%
Inner satisfaction	73	73%
Personal discipline	57	57%
Group encouragement / peer pressure	13	13%
Natural attraction for Krishna	13	13%
Gratitude to Spiritual Master and devotees (e.g., Srila Prabhupada)	10	10%
Philosophical conviction (e.g., "not entitled to fruits of action")	7	7%
Special time to glorify the Lord with many devotees	3	3%

Table 1 presents the responses to the question “*What motivates you to complete your temple duties on time?*” as answered by 100 full-time ISKCON devotees. The top three motivational drivers—Service to Krishna (93%), Respect for senior devotees (83%), and Inner satisfaction (73%)—highlight the central role of spiritual intent, reverence-based culture, and personal fulfillment in maintaining punctuality and discipline within temple life. *Key findings* indicate that intrinsic devotion is the strongest force behind consistent time-bound behavior, with service viewed not as obligation but as sacred duty. Respect for senior devotees further reinforces behavioral alignment through role modeling and cultural expectation, while emotional satisfaction offers an internal reward system that sustains long-term discipline. *Key Insights* drawn from the data reveal that ISKCON’s operational excellence is not enforced through institutional control but emerges from personal alignment with spiritual purpose. The influence of gratitude, philosophical grounding, and group reinforcement—though secondary—adds emotional, intellectual, and social dimensions to the practice of timely task completion,

creating a multi-layered motivational structure rooted in devotion.

b. **Spiritual Practices That Anchor Time Management:** To understand the spiritual foundations that support the time management and disciplined lifestyle of ISKCON devotees, respondents were asked to identify the specific practices that help them stay focused and organized in their daily routines. The question allowed multiple selections to capture a holistic view of their *sādhana* (spiritual practice). The distribution of 100 responses is summarised in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Spiritual Practices That Anchor Time Management (*n* – 100)

Spiritual Practice	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Chanting / Japa	93	93 %
Studying scriptures	83	83 %
Attending aartis and morning programs	77	77 %
Meditation / reflection	53	53 %
Good association of like-minded devotees	7	7 %
The mode of goodness	7	7 %
Book distributions	3	3 %
Outreach programs	3	3 %

Table 2 presents the responses to the question “*Which spiritual practices help you manage your time and stay disciplined?*” as reported by 100 full-time ISKCON devotees. The most frequently mentioned practice was Chanting / Japa (93%), followed closely by Studying scriptures (83%) and Attending aartis and morning programs (77%), indicating that time-bound devotion is reinforced through a combination of meditative repetition, intellectual engagement, and collective rituals. *Key findings* from the table indicate that personal chanting serves as the most powerful anchor in structuring a devotee’s day. Scriptural study plays a strong secondary role by enhancing understanding and reinforcing spiritual purpose. Collective rituals like morning programs also significantly contribute to maintaining punctuality and regularity in the devotee’s schedule. *Key Insights* drawn from the data suggest that discipline among ISKCON devotees is rooted more in internal motivation than external enforcement. The relatively high response for Meditation / reflection (53%) also indicates that introspective and

contemplative practices complement routine-based activities, creating a holistic discipline framework. The combination of individual spiritual effort and community rhythm underpins the highly organized and timely nature of temple life.

c. **Doctrinal Influence on Devotee Time Management:** To explore how ISKCON’s spiritual teachings shape daily discipline and time consciousness among devotees, respondents were asked to indicate how temple teachings influence their ability to manage time effectively. The question allowed multiple responses, enabling a comprehensive understanding of how philosophical and institutional guidance is perceived in daily practice. The distribution of 100 responses is summarised in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Doctrinal Influence on Devotee Time Management (*n* = 100)

Influence of Temple Teachings	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
They instill purpose and direction	83	83 %
They encourage self-discipline	80	80 %
They emphasize regulation and routine	73	73 %
Increase in mode of goodness	3	3 %
Schedule of routine things	3	3 %
Time-management seminars	3	3 %
They have no impact	3	3 %

Table 3 presents the responses to the question “*How do temple teachings influence your time management?*” The majority of devotees stated that temple teachings instill purpose and direction (83%), encourage self-discipline (80%), and emphasize regulation and routine (73%). These three responses emerged as the dominant themes, revealing how spiritual instruction translates into daily behavioral structure. The *key findings* show that ISKCON’s teachings primarily guide devotees through clarity of purpose, which is reinforced by internal self-regulation and consistent routines. The strong alignment between purpose, discipline, and structure indicates a well-integrated lifestyle grounded in values. The *key insights* suggest that time management

among devotees is not a result of external enforcement but a product of spiritual conviction and personal transformation. The near-equal distribution of the top three responses highlights how ISKCON’s doctrinal system creates a balance of meaning, habit, and inner willpower—making it not only spiritually uplifting but also functionally efficient.

d. **Role Allocation and Service Alignment in ISKCON Temples:** To understand how responsibilities are distributed among ISKCON devotees, participants were asked to share how their temple duties typically come to them—whether through assignment, personal choice, or some combination of both. Multiple selections were allowed to reflect the flexible and dynamic nature of service distribution. The responses help reveal the balance between leadership-driven allocation and interest-based participation within temple functioning. The distribution of 100 responses is summarised in Table 4 below.

Table 4: Role Allocation and Service Alignment in ISKCON Temples (*n*=100)

Mode of Duty Assignment	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Assigned by leadership	83	83%
Based on strengths/interests	70	70%
Chosen voluntarily	63	63%
Rotated regularly	13	13%
Combination of personal choice and senior guidance	3	3%
Initially assigned & evolves with consciousness	3	3%

Table 4 presents the responses to the question “*How are temple duties generally assigned to you?*” The most frequently selected mode was Assigned by leadership (83%), followed by Based on strengths/interests (70%) and Chosen voluntarily (63%). This indicates that while temple services are largely directed by senior devotees, personal inclination and skills are also significantly considered—demonstrating a collaborative approach to task allocation. *Key findings* show that top-down delegation from leadership remains central, but there is a strong integration of individual preference and aptitude in the process. The voluntary nature of many

assignments further highlights the trust-based and internally motivated culture of ISKCON service. *Key Insights* suggest that ISKCON’s duty allocation blends spiritual hierarchy with self-awareness, allowing devotees to grow in responsibility while aligning with their evolving strengths. Additionally, the relatively lower rate of duty rotation (13%) implies that consistency and depth in service may be preferred over frequent switching, possibly to promote mastery and spiritual steadiness in assigned roles.

e. **Role of Leadership and Mentorship in Sustaining Devotional Discipline:** Leadership and mentorship are foundational aspects of spiritual organizations like ISKCON, where senior devotees often serve as role models and guides. Understanding how frequently devotees receive personal guidance reveals the strength of the support system that upholds daily discipline. The distribution of 100 responses is summarised in Table 5 below.

Table 5: Role of Leadership and Mentorship in Sustaining Devotional Discipline (n-100)

Response Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes, regularly	87	87%
Sometimes	13	13%
Rarely	0	0%

Table 5 states the responses to the question “Do you receive guidance from senior devotees/leaders to stay disciplined?” An overwhelming 87% of the respondents affirmed that they receive such guidance regularly, while the remaining 13% reported receiving it sometimes. Notably, no participant responded with “no,” reflecting the high level of engagement and presence of spiritual mentorship within ISKCON temples. The *key findings* indicate that consistent, structured guidance from senior devotees plays a major role in reinforcing discipline among temple residents. The absence of negative responses further confirms the institutionalised culture of regular support and accountability. These results offer valuable *key insights* into the strength of ISKCON’s leadership model—where mentorship is not just available but actively practiced. The regular presence of senior guidance helps create a stable spiritual ecosystem that promotes not only rule-following but also meaningful internalization of discipline.

f. **Role of Senior Devotees in Sustaining Disciplinary Culture:** To understand how senior devotees help cultivate and maintain discipline within ISKCON temples, participants were asked to share the ways in which they receive guidance and support from these spiritual mentors. Multiple selections were allowed to capture the range of influences—ranging from personal modeling and encouragement to formal instruction and scriptural mentoring. The responses help reveal how leadership within ISKCON combines inspiration, structure, and practical training to reinforce a disciplined lifestyle. The distribution of 100 responses is summarised in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Ways in Which Senior Devotees Support Discipline (n-100)

Form of Support by Senior Devotees	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Through personal example	93	93%
Conducting training or satsangs	90	90%
Offering encouragement	87	87%
Regular instructions / reminders	63	63%
By giving feedback	57	57%
Encouragement to read scriptures with points of improvement, citing scriptural and real-life examples	10	10%

Table 6 presents the responses to the question “In what ways do senior devotees support your discipline?” The top three forms of influence were leading by personal example (93%), conducting training or satsangs (90%), and offering encouragement (87%). These responses highlight that senior devotees primarily lead through their actions, supplemented by structured spiritual education and ongoing motivation. The *key findings* reveal that devotees look up to senior members not only for their words but more importantly for how they live their lives, suggesting that role modeling is the most powerful form of leadership. Training sessions and satsangs also emerge as effective platforms for cultivating discipline, while encouragement bridges the emotional and

motivational gap. The *key insights* suggest that in ISKCON’s framework, discipline is not enforced top-down but cultivated through mentorship, example, and shared wisdom. The layered support system—consisting of inspiration, instruction, and feedback—ensures that the values of punctuality, responsibility, and service remain embedded in daily practice. Senior devotees thus serve as both spiritual role models and functional timekeepers within the temple ecosystem.

g. ISKCON Values That Can Benefit the Corporate World: To explore the applicability of ISKCON’s value system in professional environments, respondents were asked to identify which ISKCON values they believe could benefit workplaces such as offices or corporate settings. This question aimed to highlight spiritual principles with practical potential to enhance organizational culture, productivity, and interpersonal harmony. The distribution of 100 responses is summarised in Table 7 below.

Table 7: ISKCON Values That Can Benefit the Corporate World (n=100)

ISKCON Value	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)
Servant leadership	84	84%
Devotion-inspired work culture	78	78%
Purpose-driven service	74	74%
Self-regulation	71	71%
Structured routines	50	50%
"I am here to serve... relationship strengthens service"	3	3%

Table 7 states the responses to the question “Which ISKCON values can benefit workplaces (offices or corporate life)?” The top three values identified were Servant leadership (84%), Devotion-inspired work culture (78%), and Purpose-driven service (74%). These values reflect a holistic blend of spiritual intention, ethical conduct, and emotional connection—elements often missing in modern workplaces. The *key findings* suggest that servant leadership is the most widely accepted principle for professional adaptation, with nearly all respondents viewing it as essential for fostering respectful and empathetic leadership. Devotion-inspired work culture

ranked second, indicating that emotionally meaningful and service-oriented environments can enhance motivation and team cohesion. Purpose-driven service emerged as another significant value, emphasizing the importance of connecting daily tasks with a higher sense of contribution. The *key insights* reveal that ISKCON’s core ethos, though rooted in religious practice, holds profound relevance for secular spaces. The emphasis on serving over managing, working with devotion, and internal regulation provides a framework for creating ethical, efficient, and value-driven organizations. The data affirms that spiritual models, when adapted with integrity, can serve as a blueprint for transforming professional behavior and institutional culture.

B. Suggestions: The study clearly demonstrates that ISKCON’s success in time and task management stems from a deeply rooted spiritual culture, sustained by purpose-driven service, self-discipline, servant leadership, and structured daily routines. These principles are not only applicable within temple life but also offer meaningful insights for organizations and institutions seeking to cultivate a more harmonious, efficient, and purpose-aligned work culture. Based on the findings and insights drawn from this research, the following suggestions are offered separately for ISKCON temple management and the corporate sector.

- Suggestions for ISKCON:
- ✓ Formalize Peer Mentorship Programs: New devotees can benefit from being paired with experienced seniors for at least the first 90 days. This strengthens the continuity of discipline through personalized guidance and role modeling.
- ✓ Incorporate Reflective Sadhana Diaries: Encourage devotees to maintain daily spiritual time logs or diaries to help them evaluate how well their actions aligned with their service purpose and temple standards.
- ✓ Digital Scheduling and Seva Boards: Introduce simple digital tools (e.g., e-ink displays or app-based dashboards) showing daily seva schedules and updates in common areas, improving clarity and accountability while maintaining a spiritual ambience.
- Suggestions for the Corporate World
- ✓ Adopt Servant Leadership Models: Encourage leadership based on humility, service to team

members, and moral authority. Training programs can be designed around case studies from ISKCON's mentorship and leadership style.

- ✓ Foster Purpose-Driven Work Culture: Clearly communicate organizational missions beyond profit to connect employees' roles with a higher cause, increasing motivation and responsibility.
- ✓ Introduce Structured, Value-Based Routines: Implement simple rituals such as morning check-ins, gratitude sharing, or mindfulness moments to provide rhythm and meaning to the workday.
- ✓ Encourage Self-Regulation Through Autonomy: Allow employees to take ownership of tasks with minimal micromanagement, while providing support systems and reflective tools to build intrinsic discipline.
- ✓ Recognize Meaningful Contribution, Not Just Output: Celebrate employees who go beyond KPIs to uplift culture, support colleagues, or embody company values – similar to how ISKCON values internal attitude and intent over visible results.

#### V. CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study reveals that the discipline exhibited by full-time ISKCON devotees is not the result of external enforcement or rigid management systems but rather emerges from an internalized spiritual culture grounded in devotion, purpose, and service. The integration of personal *sādhana* (spiritual practice), doctrinal teachings, structured routines, and servant leadership creates a self-sustaining model of time and task management that is both effective and meaningful. Key motivational drivers—such as service to Krishna, respect for senior devotees, and inner satisfaction—combine with spiritual practices like chanting and scriptural study to establish a lifestyle where punctuality and commitment become natural expressions of faith. The role of senior devotees, leadership modeling, and value-based role allocation further reinforces a culture of consistency and personal responsibility. Importantly, the findings show that these principles are not limited to religious settings but hold significant relevance for modern organizations. ISKCON's emphasis on servant leadership, self-regulation, and purpose-driven work offers practical insights for building ethical, efficient, and people-centered workplaces. Ultimately, the

discipline of devotion as practiced within ISKCON represents a holistic approach to time management—where the alignment of values, routine, and leadership fosters both spiritual growth and organizational excellence. This study underscores that when time is managed with purpose, and service is performed with devotion, both individual fulfillment and collective success naturally follow.

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