

## **Eckankar**

**Founder:** Paul Twitchell in 1965. Died in 1971.

**Headquarters:** Chanhassen, Minnesota

**Membership:** Estimate at 50,000

**Origins:** Paul Twitchell who was involved in the occult, formed the first Eckankar group in 1965. Its origins go back to Hinduistic philosophy. The present leader is Sri Harold Kemp known as Mahanta.

**Practices:** Spiritual exercises are meditation activities built upon the foundation of the "Holy Spirit" which is the Light and Sound of God who is known as SUGMAD. These exercises are intended to bring the person's mental, emotional, and spiritual state into a proper awareness of the self's past lives. The purpose of this is to facilitate the contact and aid of present ECK masters who are on different spiritual planes in the next world. By following their teachings, the subject can remove bad Karma and help in his spiritual progression through various reincarnations. Usually, these exercises consist of solitude and quiet meditation on a repeated word or phrase. After these exercises the meditator(s) says, "I now put my inner experiences into your hands, Mahanta. Take me wherever is best for my own unfoldment at this particular time." Mahanta is the highest state of God consciousness on earth. This is supposed to be the "inner, or spiritual form of the living ECK Master." The Mahanta is given great respect, but is not worshiped. Group chanting sessions sometimes involve repeating the name of God "Hu" (pronounced as hue) which is considered a love song to God. Interpretations of dreams is a very important part of Eckankar practice. Astral Projection is encouraged. This is a practice where a person seeks to leave his body and have his soul travel to different places and meet different spiritual beings. Eckankar claims that a soul can achieve omniscience through astral projection.

**Teachings:** ECK is the Divine Spirit, or "Current" of life that flows through all living things. Eckankar is a system of belief that seeks to unify the person's soul with Light and Sound which are twin aspects of the Holy Spirit, or the Divine Spirit. The human soul is eternal and is on a spiritual journey of reincarnation to discover and improve the true self thereby realizing his own true inner divinity. This process can include incarnations as animal forms. Through ECK teachings, people can learn from their past lives and understand their Karma. Journeys in soul and in dreams are aided by The Spiritual Eye, a part of one's inner self that helps him see God and your his divine self.

ECK masters are agents of God, vehicles of the Divine Spirit that guide people through spiritual learning, past life regressions, dreams, soul travel, and meditations. Past ECK masters include Socrates, Plato, Jesus, Moses, Martin Luther, Michael Angelo, Mozart, Einstein, etc. who all allegedly made astral journeys for their discoveries. There are different levels of heaven: "Astral, Causal, Mental, Etheric, and Soul" and eleven levels of the astral plane. Christ is a state of consciousness. Dying is called 'translating.'

**Publications:** *The Key to Secret Worlds, Stranger by the River*, both by Paul Twitchell. *The Wind of Change, Soul Travelers of the Far Country*, both by Sri Harold Klemp. The *Shariyat-Ki-Sugmad* are divine Scriptures.

**Comments:** This New Age philosophy is nothing more than Hinduism in another package. It focus on God, the self, and love to a great extent, but its real purpose is the exaltation of the self. Be careful of the deception. It appears calm and loving on the outside, but it houses occultic doctrines and practices.

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