



# IPM News



Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

**March 2012** ISKCON Prison Ministry Newsletter

**Changing Lives from the Inside Out!**

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## **“I can see the purifying effect of the maha-mantra”**

Sharing Krsna consciousness with the inmates is always enlivening, but, as in like any other preaching, it is even more ecstatic when the recipient is particularly receptive and appreciative. Bhakta Richard is such an ideal candidate and he is reaping the benefit of his sincere practice of bhakti-yoga. Please take the time to enter his world and you will see how Prabhupada and Krsna are reciprocating with his desire to please and serve Them.

1-18-11

Dear Bhakti-lata, Hare Krsna!

Please accept my humble obeisances.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

Hope all is going well for you. I'm still here in segregation but I'm safe and that's what's important. [My present] cellie is a very negative person but at least he's not a bully. Practicing KC has gotten me to a point that I don't even hate those bullies back, ya know? A mosquito got in my cell the other day and I wouldn't kill it (my cellie did though). I don't even want to hurt my enemies so I know Krsna has effected profound changes to my spirit. As you can probably tell, I've been regularly chanting again. It makes such a difference to my well-being that I have to wonder why I've neglected it. I say the Panca-tattva mantra as you instructed and I find that enhances the rounds.

A few weeks ago, I was having a dream that a KC devotee was at my cell door. I knew they were from India because I could see their brown skin. I could see their saffron cloth and I could see a garland around their neck. I got off my bunk, ready to embrace them. The door opened by itself and there in front of me was Prabhupada! I immediately dropped to my knees and placed my head to his lotus feet. He raised me up, embraced me and that was the end of my dream. I feel like Prabhupada came to me in my dream to reassure me and strengthen me. It was the most wonderful dream and now, every time I gaze at Prabhupada's photo on my altar, I feel even more closely connected to him. Like my atma resonates with my Paramatma like a tuning fork you know? Jaya! And now I have the 3 greatest literary treasures with me permanently- my CC and SB in story forms and my Bhagavad-gita.

I read and study each of them every day. They fortify me against this newest negative energy I have to share a cell with. But I'm learning! Prajalpa is kept to a bare minimum, I give him prasadam and he sees my KC pictures all over the cell. And even though I chant quietly, I know he hears me so I can only hope it will gradually help him. The most annoying thing is he's always using Lord Jesus Christ's and God's names in vain and it hurts my spirit each time he does and yet he claims he's a Catholic and believes in Them. Yeah, OK.

I'm rediscovering the wonders of the SB all over again! One of my most favorite quotes so far (I'm on Canto 6, at King Citraketu) is when Narada told Dhruva when he was a boy, "If you feel dishonored, you should not be disturbed. You should understand that the material dualities are simply a feature of the illusory energy of the Lord. Whatever may befall us is the result of our past actions, and thus should be accepted as the mercy of the Lord." Do you have any idea how much comfort that sastras gives me? I wish everyone could understand that, mataji.

I think one of the most amazing things KC has done for me so far is how it's teaching me humility. When I look back at the person I used to be, I feel shame. So I can see the power of the maha-mantra to purify. Those syllables are so infused with such transcendental power that it has the ability to cure all spiritual maladies! Of course I know I don't have to tell you this mataji- you've been trying to tell me this for the last 3 years or so. It's just that I'm beginning to experience another wave of realizations on a deeper stratum than before. Like how you tell me about the BG never getting old- and how certain purports I've read and reread jump out at me as if Lord Krsna was speaking them into my ear: "Param brahma param dhama pavitram paramam bhavan"- Jaya! "I now fully understand that you are the Supreme Personality of Godhead, the Absolute Truth, and that You are the refuge of everything." It was- I think- the 9<sup>th</sup> or 10<sup>th</sup> time I've read chapter 11, text 54 and that just floored me, made my eyes well up with tears- like I found the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow- more than that- like I discovered the most sacred, precious secret in the universe. Needless to say I've memorized this- and Sanskrit seems to be getting easier for me to pronounce and understand. It's beginning to really sink in that in order to be a true Vaisnava, one must learn to be absolutely humble- and it was that lack of humility that ultimately led to me getting beat up. So it's by the MERCY of Lord Krsna that I'm in the hole for now and it was the MERCY of Lord Nrsimha that I wasn't hurt bad and it's the MERCY of Lord Caitanya that my chanting is bringing me these realizations.

Ya know mataji- my new cellie is a really miserable guy- and it's as if he doesn't even realize it- every other word that comes out of his mouth is a complaint or something negative and it does absolutely no good to try and help him because he's the type that knows everything and I can't teach him anything. He's cynical, vulgar, angry, self-righteous, prideful, and in denial. And you know I used to be just like that- it's weird. At least he's not violent- physically. I'll give him that- but he's got plenty of violent thoughts. A lot of guys are like that. At least I can say that knowing Lord Krsna has given me an inner peace I didn't have before and studying sastras teaches me the way to live this life so I can be happy- I get that. I still have such a long way to go but I feel like I'm moving again in the right direction and that's extremely good. Being in the hole for now is good for me and it's the Lord's mercy. I'm learning more and more and moving toward the mode of goodness more than when I was out on the yard. One thing this latest experience has been teaching me- is to KEEP MY MOUTH SHUT. I'm really, really working on this mataji. Sometimes thoughts go through my head that are in the deepest mode of ignorance and material attachment and I just pray to Krsna, "Lord get these thoughts outta my head!" And then, if all fails, I silently repeat with my breath, "Om namo Vishnave namah; om namo naranaya; om namo bhagavate vasudevaya" and eventually the power of those mantras help me to gain control of my mind and quiet or redirect my thoughts. I'm beginning to learn the amazing power of Vedic mantras- the transcendental energy of those syllables are magical, alchemical. It's like they have transformative powers. No wonder in the earlier, purer yugas, the simple utterance of these mantras had the ability to transform matter. I'm beginning to understand this more and more- so that as I reread the SB, the pieces of the puzzle fit together- jaya! Just like the

celestial airships! Is it possible, mataji, that all these UFOs- or at least some of them- are actually demigods coming to check up on us in their celestial airships? How about that Brahmastra weapon? That sure sounded like a nuclear bomb.

What I'm discovering about the SB is that it's giving me an expanded understanding of reality. Then, as I read about Lord Caitanya in the CC, I notice how divine nature manifests. Lord Caitanaya like Lord Jesus healed lepers, became the servant of His own devotees, brought the dead back to life, and performed miracle after miracle. I like how He pushed Lord Jagannatha's Ratha-yatra cart with His head and how each group of devotees thought He was dancing, doing kirtan with them exclusively.

Being in the hole again has really helped me to "re-immense" myself back into full-time KC: chanting, taking care of my altar, offering water & fruit, praying, and reading (hearing) about Krsna, meditating on Lord Vishnu, memorizing sastras- It's blissful, mataji- and I offer obeisances to you for the care and support you've fostered me with. I pray Lord Caitanya richly blesses you with Krsna prema and that all is transcendental bliss for you and your family. May Krsna give blessings which are pavitram uttamam!

I look forward to the nectar of your next letter soon.

your servant, Bhakta Rich

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