

IPM NEWS

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



ISKCON Prison Ministry / DBA of Vaisnava Outreach, Inc.

March/April 2014 Changing Lives from the Inside Out!

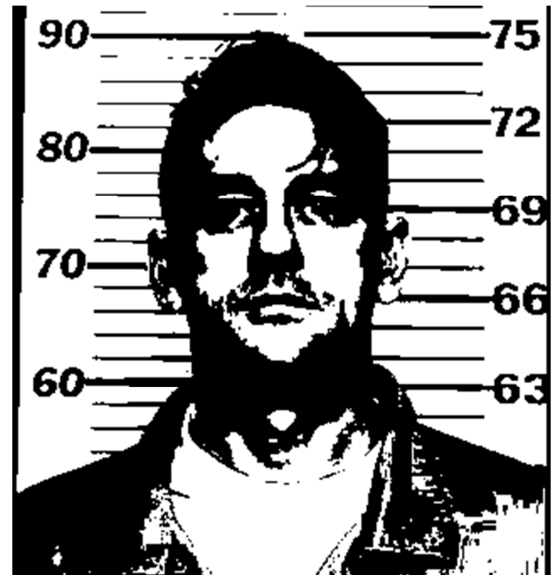
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KRSNA IS HOME BASE

by Douglas G.

I am fairly certain that I am a devotee of the absolute lowest grade, if, in fact, I am devoted at all. Many times, my approach to chanting, reading, and meditating, appears to be the effort of one who goes to the Lord for his own selfish reasons. I associate with the pastimes because it “gets me out of here” etc. I really don't know what to think about myself at this point. Why, really, am I clinging to the Lord? Doubtless, to relieve the afflictions of my infected, guilty, lost soul. Is there another motive? One that is directed from some pure motive? I don't know. Is this new perch that I have found even stable? If anything buoys me up it is the affection and encouragement I receive from the devotees and also the fact that I was already attracted to Krsna (in varying degrees) when I was “free”.

Whatever the true reality is, only Krsna knows how far it is possible for me to go devotionally, with whatever time is left in this lifetime.



Bhakta Douglas G.

For some reason, it is important to me to know that there are other souls out there wrangling with the same demons of regret, reward, self-doubt, and over-thinking in regards to their efforts to find true love for the Supreme and to worship in a way which is natural, free, and without offense.

A place like this [prison] is bizarre to say the least. The pain and ignorance and potential for violence literally seethe all around. The big questions that you ask yourself in here are highly unlikely meditational dalliances; this is a gang/ animal pack /hateful/cannibalistic environment and the moods swing more quickly in here than anywhere I've ever known. I tell myself that Krsna, as Paramatma, is within us all and I see Him in all these men, which only makes their facial tattoos, devil's horn tattoos, and the various odes to murder, death, and mayhem which they have printed on their bodies, that much more surreal. The demon Pralambasura, from the color plate inside Krsna book? I know that guy! Many times over! And it actually brings home the reality of the spiritual war that is going on in this material world every day.

And this is why I thank you so much for your service mataji. That thread of knowing that there are others out there who are engaging, daily, hourly, and minute-to-minute in the battle for the soul (armed with the Maha-mantra), is tremendously uplifting and reassuring. Just knowing that somewhere outside these walls, Krsna is being served, remembered, and meditated upon is the thing which I am utterly anxious

to rejoin. How I could ever have let go... could have gone on to sin so much even when I knew in my heart that Krsna was home base...

I don't even know why Krsna doesn't just smite me down for daring to attempt to chant His Holy Name! Anyway... I have been meditating upon the facts of Prabhupada's life which I found in the "About the author" tribute in the back of the *Teachings of Queen Kunti* book. I have been trying to serve Prabhupada as a faithful and loving son and he is a father I am proud to serve. I have used the images which you have sent me, no matter where I have been placed, and have developed an affection for certain of them which is almost unreasonable. I enjoy matching up favorite images with captions and then meditating upon them.

When I reflect upon Prabhupada's conviction, dedication, determination, perseverance, bravery, single-mindedness, and unflinching eye turned only towards loving Krsna... well, it blows my mind. I will never know why I fell so far mataji. So much effort is spent looking backwards. But if there is to be a continuance of joy, of peace, then surely it is the fact that Prabhupada loves us all; that I will be given that chance. Nowhere on this earth is there a science for returning to our true position that is more sublime, effective, and true than the one you serve. Thank you, a million times. Fool number one,

**Douglas G.
Sterling, Colorado**



The following is a letter from Bhakta Richard, who I have been in contact with since 2008. With patience and compassion, he has helped Bhakta Lewis receive Lord Caitanya's mercy.

“By now I'm sure you received a letter from Lewis. I consider him such an amazing accomplishment on the part of the holy name. He is a developmentally disabled man of 46 years old. He has hand and foot deformities and no teeth. No one had wanted to be in a cell with him, so about a year ago I volunteered. He had been going to a Judeo-Christian service for a while but instead of gently encouraging him (the man's mentality is that of a young teenager) they told him what a terrible sinner he is.

He never liked the sound of me chanting japa in the cell, so I would always go outside. But the weather here in Virginia has been so terrible this winter that I just had to chant in the cell. I explained that he could put on his headphones if it annoyed him that much. But slowly, gradually, he started listening! He would lie on his bunk and listen to my japa while I chanted my rounds. He told me how hearing the chanting relaxed him and made him feel good. I brought a little altar of Jagannatha, Subhadra, and Baladeva in our cell, in a little temple with tiny doors on it. He started offering his fruit to Them. Then I showed him how to do dandavats and soon, every morning, when we woke the Lord up and opened the doors of His altar, we would loudly say “Jaya, Jaya

Jagannatha!” 3 times, yell “Haribol!” and then offer dandavats. He began to really love this daily routine. Then, finally, he came to the service and hasn't looked back. He truly feels Lord Krsna's love profoundly. He is slowly giving up meat eating and helps set up our beautiful altar every week. It is such a joy watching him sing kirtan. We now have about 10 regular attendees and we continue to grow. Goddess Laksmi continues to bless our group and it's amazing how much [paraphernalia] we have. And this is because you gave me the encouragement to start a Hare Krsna group. Now so many here at Petersburg, who would have never known what the holy name sounds like or who our glorious Srila Prabhupada is, have this opportunity. Lord Caitanya has simply showered His mercy upon us. This is the progress we have made here at Petersburg. Lord Krsna has changed me in so many profound ways. I'm just not the same person I was before Lord Krsna pulled me by my sikha out of the ocean of material misery. There are now many Petersburg bhaktas who find ecstasy in the holy name and daily enjoy the mercy Srila Prabhupada has bestowed upon us. Thank you for all your service!

Your servant, Bhakta Richard C.



And now, Bhakta Lewis' letter:

“My name is Bhakta Lewis and I am Bhakta Richard's cellmate. I want to tell you how I came to Krsna consciousness. At first I didn't like it. I would tell Bhakta Richard to go outside. Until one day I told Bhakta Richard to stay in the cell and I listened to what he was doing and how I began to feel about what I was hearing. Now I go with him on Saturdays. I'm very happy and enjoy singing and learning to become Krsna conscious. Bhakta Richard read me about Lord Jagannatha and every morning we open Lord Jagannatha temple and we say “Jaya jaya Jagannatha!” Bhakta Richard is now reading me Bhagavad-gita. I really enjoy that Bhakta Richard reads because I'm able to take it all in. Would you please send me Bhagavad-gita because I would have my own? Bhakta Richard and I can read together. Thank you for reading my letter and I hope to hear from you soon.

Your servant, Bhakta Lewis I.

Quick News about a Prison Program



by Sarnga Thakur dasa, on 2-14-14

Kesava, Madan Mohan, and I made the visit to UCI this past Saturday. Stephen, Gary, Charles, Walter, and Anthony were present. We focused on BG 4.6-7 and purports, in between 2 lively kirtans, complete with mrdanga and harmonium.

They heard a lot about Krishna's incarnations, the "whys" and the "whens". They asked good questions, and Stephen often refers to the Bible. Walter apparently chants or sings a lot during the day, possibly starting to influence others positively. He is looking forward to getting his beads. We asked if they could invite others to come; and, on our way out through the yard, we extended an invitation to other inmates.

The inmates had their first successful meeting by themselves the previous Saturday, completely approved by the chaplain.



Inmate Letter Excerpts

This is Eric J. and I was at Lovelock Correctional Center. I have been meaning to contact you for a while, after being released in August, to thank you for everything you did for me during the time I became involved with IPM and to let you know that Krsna consciousness is very much a part of my life on the outside as well. Pradyumna said that maybe what you do may sometimes seem like a thankless task. I understand where that would be the case in a lot of inmate interactions, but I wanted to make a point of expressing my gratitude to you personally for all you have done in the past for me. IPM is one of my only fond memories of prison and I still correspond with Pradyumna to this day, although my life has been a little busy since release."

Eric J.
Lovelock, Nevada

"Hare Krishna! I am currently incarcerated in PA. I was brought up a Christian. Back in October, I wrote the American Gita Society to obtain a free Gita. I *never* heard one word from them. It's now April. All I hear [from the other inmates] is, "See! It didn't help you any-are you ready to give up that devil worship you took to and receive Jesus back again? He misses you!"

I've waited my whole life to obtain the knowledge of Krishna I now possess. And I truly want to go somewhere with this knowledge. But without proper guidance, I'm like the Jews still waiting for my messiah!

I'm not doing life in prison-my release date will come. I feel like it already has, with getting to know Lord Krishna's existence!!!! So I'm on the right path at least! I'd really like to learn more of the ways and words of Lord Krishna! And any and all help in this endeavor is most graciously appreciated."

Bhakta Philip B.
Albion, Pennsylvania

"I've been saving money. On March 26th, in the chapel, the chaplain will allow me to make canteen purchases of milk and pastires (fruit) and fruit cereal and cheese crackers to bring as prasadam to share with the guys who come to the Krsna program. So I've been saving money to spend for that.

When I got to Graceville prison in '07, there was nothing there for Krsna, but with mother Shyama Priya, Daru Brahma dasa and other IPM volunteers, we established a very nice program there. When I came to Tomoka prison 4 years ago, there was nothing for Krsna here. Now there is so much, increasing attraction for Krsna.

It is good to do everything for Krsna, as Krsna says in Bhagavad-gita 9.27. Thanks again. Take care. Your servant,"

Bhakta Gerald N.
Daytona Beach, Florida

"My release is coming shortly, April 10th. This will probably be my last letter you receive from me...at least while I'm in prison, as I do plan on staying in contact with ISKCON when I out.

I want to thank you for all that you have done for me in the short time that I've been in contact with you. The scriptures of Krsna, the teachings of Srila Prabhupada and all the literature I have received have shown me that, left to my own devices, I am a rascal; that without trusting in Krsna, praising His name and serving Him and allowing Him to have His will with me, that I am doomed to continue living an unfulfilling and wasteful life."

Vaughn S.
Windham, Maine

"I am thankful for just having the ability to think, breathe, and give thanks. In prison I hear so much negative talk it is amazing. One day I decided to conduct an experiment. I wanted to see how many times I heard the word "hate". Early I went to breakfast and at the table, "I hate this food"; an officer walked by, "I hate that C.O." All day-hate, hate, hate. I think that is very destructive thinking. So I strive to look for things I love. Things that make me smile. Things to be thankful for having.

I pray that everyone at ISKCON Alachua and around the world is well and in constant remembrance of Lord Krsna. Thank you again for your advice, guidance and your service."

Bhakta Robert C.
Elmira, New York

"The other book, the Perfection of Yoga, is new to me and really moved me cause I didn't know all that, even as I've done yoga hatha off and on since a teen. I thought meditation was the highest level among the 7 or 8 yoga aspects, but Prabhupada set that aright, that bhakti and mantra yoga are the ultimate. Awesome! See, I'm still learning. I got the books yesterday evening, and as I fussed over them I began to chant without thinking to, and I read and chanted to late night, and of course the tears came too, never fails, just rolling and rolling, til I fell asleep. Then this morning I read more in bed, and cried and chanted more. Wow - you know how to touch my spirit. I've been reading and highlighting the yoga book. I'm real impressed with it."

Eva Contreras
San Diego, California



THANK YOU to ALL our SUPPORTERS!

Your generosity is what keeps this program going! Please forgive me if I forgot anyone and let me know so I can add your name next time!

Our donors since last newsletter:

Eddie Garcia
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Dulal Chandra das
Deepak Mody
Angela Hil
Srutadeva das
Pranada

Our montly donors:

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Shashi Raina dasa
Stava Mala dasa



Yudhisthira dasa
Deepali Mittal
Aritra Nath
Richard Boyden
Richard House



Your Opportunity for more Service!

Many devotees feel inspired by this prison program and want to know how to participate. Here are a few ways:

- correspond with one or more inmates:
To be successful in this endeavor, you need to be motivated, to feel truly inspired by this service, and, also, to like/love writing. Of course, you also need to practice Krsna consciousness yourself, so your words have potency.
- donate new DVDs and music CDs (bhajans, kirtans).
- You have BTGs lying around the house? Send them to IPM; the inmates love them!
- give a one-time or a monthly donation (we provide tax-deductible receipts).

3 Donation Options

- 1) Send check or postal money order to:
ISKCON Prison Ministry
PO Box 2676
Alachua, FL 32616-2676
- 2) Donate through PayPal at: www.iskconprisonministry.org
- 3) For automatic, monthly donations, you can do so on our website (with the PayPal button), or through your bank “Automatic Bill Pay” option, which is free and easy.

We can send you a **tax deductible receipt** at the moment of the donation or at the end of the year, as you wish.

Questions? Inquiries? Please contact Mukunda Dasa or Bhakti-lata Dasi at:

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