

IPM NEWS

The newsletter of the ISKCON Prison Ministry, a
DBA of Vaisnava Outreach, Inc.



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

May/June 2013

Changing Lives from the Inside Out!

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A SURPRISE BIRTHDAY GIFT ...A JEWEL FOR JEWELL

by Pavana-Gaura Gopal Dasa

My name is Pavana Gaura Gopal das. A few months ago I started writing to inmates. I feel this service is much needed and appreciated by Guru and Gauranga, as it reaches into the dregs of society, who are often ostracized and abandoned by family and friends. IPM devotees are here to let them know that Krishna has not forgotten them....just as Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda did not forget Jagai and Madhai.

Having been incarcerated myself in the past, I know how much a kind word is appreciated, especially concerning the Love of God for others--*even* oneself!

Of course I am not new to this writing experience as I used to write to inmates in the very early part of this century under the auspices of Candrasekhar das, when we both stayed at the temple in Denver, Colorado. It is a very rewarding and fulfilling service to help one who is in a lonely and isolated place and many of the inmates' letters bring joy to my heart.

Recently I received one such letter from Michael J. Jewell. He had specifically asked for two books *Perfection of Yoga* and *The Art of Eternal Love*,

and after receiving these books Michael wrote me back a letter which began, "*Thank you so much for the two books I received yesterday-on MY BIRTHDAY! I appreciate these gifts.*"



Pavana Gaura-Gopal Dasa

Of course I did not know when his birthday was coming up, nor is it possible to anticipate exactly when an inmate will be given their mail, but somehow he received the books on his birthday and he was overjoyed to receive them on that special day, referring to the transcendental books as a GIFT!! (Yes a gift from Srila Prabhupada and the Guru Parampara!) All glories to Srila Prabhupada who is preaching everywhere, in every town and village!!

I was very much happy to get that letter and note the emotion and sincere gratefulness therein.

All in all, I consider myself a simple, low-grade devotee (trying to be a devotee) who wishes to help out in whatever small way I can to bring people in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead and His associates, the only true comfort and panacea for the entire world. I am thankful to be given such nice service!!! Hari, Haribol!

Your servant, Pavana Gaura Gopal das

CHAPLAIN'S WORDS

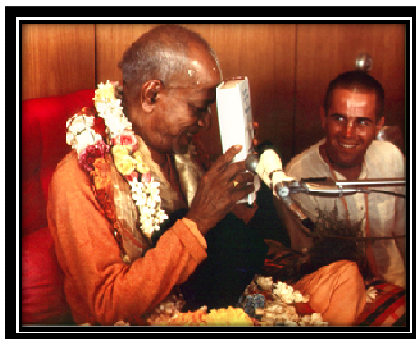
4-23-2013

Good Morning sister!

The Bhagavad-Gitas have arrived and I am extremely happy, as are our detainees who requested them. I was given permission to start a religious library at the detention facility. This is wonderful because it makes your material available to ALL, no matter what faith or religion they are, although normally a detainee can only request books that are of their stated faith upon entry into the facility. So, once again, my deepest gratitude for helping me serve these detainees! Blessings, Marissa."

Marissa Ann Herrera

Church World Service, El Centro, California



INMATE RELEASED

by Srutadeva dasa, April 2013:



"About a month ago, Bhakta William M. was able to have his case overturned by the West Virginia Supreme Court.

On March 28th, he received word that he was granted immediate discharge. He had been incarcerated for 12 or 13 years. He has said that in the four times filing the same appeal, the only thing different is that this time he was chanting and following Krsna consciousness. He said that he knows Krsna is the only reason he is released and he plans to continue practicing Krsna consciousness. He lives about an hour or two from the New Vrindavana temple and promised me that he would visit and send me pictures. I will miss his association, but now he is in a better situation to further his Krsna consciousness."

Does the Devotees' Personal Touch Make a Difference?

by Bhakti-lata Dasi

Very often, the only link an inmate has with the outside world is his correspondence with the IPM devotees. Some are fortunate enough to have supportive family or friends, but most are not. I am realizing more and more how important the relationship the inmates develop with their devotee pen pal(s) is for them.

A few weeks ago I received a letter from inmate Bhakta Terry H. from Bessemer, Alabama. He is new to Krsna consciousness. Terry is in solitary confinement, which means that he stays in a small, one-man cell 23 hours a day, without any contact with anyone, and is taken out for only 1 hour every day, for a shower and a walk outside. Moreover, untypically, he is not allowed any books at all. Terry first wrote to ask if someone could print the entire Bhagavad-gita, as he is allowed to receive printed material. I am sending him a few chapters at a time and he is diligently and systematically reading them. Here is part of Terry's letter:

"I was very happy to receive a letter from you. I thought no one would care to answer me back. I thank you so very much for printing and sending me the Bhagavad-gita. Please never think or feel as though you are doing this for nothing, because Lord Krishna knows you are not. Words cannot even express my gratitude for how you answered one of my prayers.

I have to let you know that your kindness touched my heart and really made me more strongly interested in the Krishna consciousness movement. I want this to be my life and religion until I leave this body. I'm not all that advanced in the Bhagavad-gita or anything else containing Krishna consciousness the way I used to think I was.

I need to learn the Bhagavad-gita because it is the words of my God Krishna. I realize that my consciousness is contaminated and for this purpose the Bhagavad-gita was spoken for all beings like me who want to know their real constitutional position in life."

"After reading and meditating on "Setting the Scene" and also Chapter One, what I got was true knowledge that shed some light into this deep, dark ignorance I've been raised up and living in. I am suffering and full of anxieties because of my being conditioned.

For so long I've been struggling to trust and believe in a God that understands and exists. My family raised me up in Christianity but I cannot believe that our material forms will resurrect from the graves on the Last Day. But I have no problem believing in my soul taking on other forms. And a planet where Krishna lives I can believe. My understanding is not that advanced but I am a fast learner.

I am in a contaminated state. So I'm going to have to take the Battlefield of Kuruksetra to be the Battle between my contaminated soul and pure consciousness. Listening to Krishna's teaching will give me the correct weapons and armor to fight this spiritual warfare within. I have a long way to go with this battle. I am now ready to study chapter 2.

I am not allowed japa beads but I still chant. I use all the spaces between the lines on my fingers and thumbs. I plan to increase my chanting. For now I have been doing 8 rounds a day. "

In the following letter Terry writes,



(To express his gratitude, Bhakta Terry takes the time to draw beautifully on the envelopes he sends me)

“Thank you so very much for sending me chapter 2. I received it on Friday and so I read the whole thing the whole week-end and meditated on it as well.

Lord Krishna has shown me in chapter 2 that the symptom of the soul’s presence is consciousness. I understand now also that I cannot be desireless or senseless but I do have to change the quality of my desires.

I love the pictures of Krsna you send me. I hang them on the walls in my cell. I’m able to wake up and see my Lord the first thing in the morning and all through the day. This is good for my consciousness. Krsna consciousness ☺

I am now ready to read chapter 3. Thank you.”

Update About Chaplain Steven Cottingham’s Family



Chaplain Steven with wife Janelle and daughter

You may remember from the March IPM NEWS that Chaplain Steven Cottingham from El Paso, Texas, had become a devotee but passed away suddenly in a car crash last February. He left a wife and baby. His wife, Janelle, was also starting to practice Krsna consciousness. She is in the process of moving one hour away from Alachua, Florida and looking forward to meeting the devotees. She also wants to make arrangements so that her husband’s ashes can be taken to the Ganges. Janelle has been in contact with Mukhya dasi, the Alachua temple president, who is planning to visit Janelle once she moves to Florida.

I want to thank Mr. Mukerjee, from India, who has sent a \$113 donation to help Janelle out. She is very grateful for the help. If you also wish to help her, contact us at:

iskconprisonministry@gmail.com



Inmate Letter Excerpts

4-1-2013

"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

3-5-13

"I've been saving money. On March 26th, in the chapel, the chaplain will allow me to make canteen purchases of milk and pastries (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 yrs ago, there was nothing for Krsna here. Now there is so much, especially 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

3-4-13

"Thank you for sending Lord Krsna and Srila Prabhupada into prison in the form of BTG. I read them and share them with others. I feel a real presence when BTG arrives."

John. R., Huntsville, TX

3-15-13

"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 am 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 look forward to shaping my life in a way where I become real dear to Krsna by spreading Krsna consciousness and hearing about Krsna and chanting!

Bhakta Sean S., Lucasville, OH

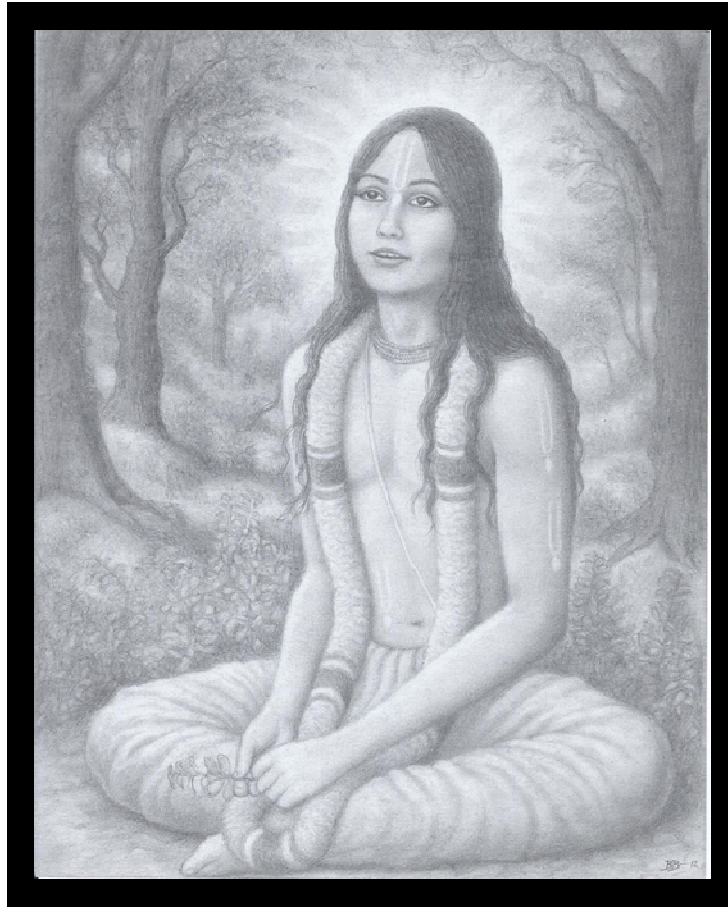
3-9-13

"Thank you for the calendar and the pictures. I have Prabhupada up on the wall, next to my family."

Bhakta Gordon S., Salem, OR



NEW INMATE ART



Drawing by Bhakta Brian B.

Please take the time to go see the inmate *artwork* on our website: www.iskconprisonministry.org



THANK YOU!

We want to sincerely thank and acknowledge all of you who made a donation during April and May 2013:

Aritra Nath
Danette Adams
Ramai & Radha Gaasbeek
Dwarkadisa dasa
Bhartrhari dasa & Sarasvati dasi
Champak Patel
Inmate Jason Keiser
Monthly Donors:
Jitarati dasa
Rene Waisvisz

Dina Sharana dasa
Yudhisthira dasa
Ravi Chandu Jadhaw
Ravi Jadhaw
Stava Mala dasa
Bhavananda dasa
Mickey Singer
Shashi Raina dasa
Maya Sudana dasa
Amala Gaura dasa

We can't do it without your help!~

This prison ministry is a tight cooperation between volunteers and donors to share Prabhupada's matchless gift with the inmates. This amazing teamwork makes it possible for hundreds of inmates to receive Lord Caitanya's mercy!



Present Needs:

- ✚ Bead bags, counter beads, and neck beads
- ✚ We also need the following **book titles**:
 - Chant and Be Happy
 - Nectar of Instruction
 - Science of Self-Realization (softbound)
 - Coming Back
 - Life Comes from Life
- ✚ Lastly, we have a **\$161.00** expense coming up for office supplies (envelopes, paper, toner)

Here are a few other ways you can serve the prison ministry:

- become a transcendental pen-pal for one or more inmates.
 - (We always need more devotees to correspond with inmates. To be successful in this endeavor, you need to be motivated, to feel truly inspired by this service, and you need to like/love writing. Of course, you also need to practice Krsna consciousness yourself, so your words have potency.)
- give a one-time or monthly donation (we provide tax-deductible receipts).
- donate Prabhupada's books and a few other select titles by other devotees (please inquire from us).
- donate new DVDs and **music CDs** (bhajans, kirtans only) from devotees (at the moment we have all the Prabhupada CDs we need, thanks to a very generous donation from the Bhaktivedanta Archives).

3 Donation Options:

- 1) Send check or postal money order to:
 - ISKCON Prison Ministry
 - PO Box 2676
 - Alachua, FL 32616-2676
- 2) Donate with PayPal through our website: www.iskconprisonministry.org
- 3) For automatic, monthly donations, you can use your bank's "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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