

Dedicated to His *Divine* Grace
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
Founder Acarya of ISKCON

IPM NEWS

ISKCON Prison Ministry / DBA of Vaisnava Outreach, INC.

"In this age, Kali-yuga, to kill the demons means to stop their demonic activities by the weapon of kirtan, Hari-sankirtan, which is spread by Lord Caitanya's associates."

Srila Prabhupada in London, March 10, 1975

Nov/Dec 2018

APPRECIATING KRSNA AND HIS DEVOTEES

By Inmate Bhakta Seged

To write about the devotee who corresponds with me is an honor and a humbling effort as I do not believe myself worthy to write and discuss Reverend Rambhoru. She is gracious, patient and has a heart of pure gold. Our very first connection by mail was of a familial tone and nature. Her letter was written to me as though I was a longtime devotee. This began a teacher/friend relationship over three years ago. Not so long, but spiritually and soulfully enriching.



At the time I was just finishing a Bhakti correspondence course and I was sad that it had ended. My response to Reverend Ram's letter was respectful, humble and the beginning of a new teaching/learning experience of understanding the modes of material nature and how our attachments bind us to them. Most important for me was learning that the teachings of scripture are both a guide and a mirror for me.

In my first letter to Rambhoru I pictured myself in terms of the introduction of the Bhagavad Gita, e.g., "I was born in the darkest of ignorance and my spiritual master opened my eyes with the torchlight of knowledge." My letter began this way because I saw Rambhoru as a spiritual teacher and friend. At this time, I was also studying Buddhism so I asked Rambhoru if it was okay if I continued to learn from her at the same time. She said it was acceptable. In my mind at the time, the two doctrines were like brothers (twins). But, Ram set me straight. The similarities in doctrine are slight and the closest similarities are that they both emerged from India.

The most important question I asked Rambhoru was this, "*Please make clear what the Absolute Truth is.*" Ram gave me an actual lecture to read,

not just a text book, and also shared her realizations about trial, error, successes and failures of herself and others. The Bhagavad-Gita helped me understand that the Absolute Truth has several features. 'The Absolute Truth is expressed as Brahman, Paramatma and Bhagavan. These are divine aspects that are similar to the sun. The sun planet, the sun surface and the sunshine. One who studies the sunshine is a preliminary student. Someone studying the sun surface is advanced further. And finally, one who can enter the sun planet is the highest. This is all expressed in terms of learning and knowledge. I, myself am still at the preliminary stage. A fault, a flaw of my own.

I am learning that the 'seers of the truth have concluded that of the non-existent there is no endurance, and of the existent, there is no cessation. The seers have concluded by studying the nature of both.'

My hope is to eventually become a wise person, as the Gita describes, who engage himself fully in devotional service by taking refuge in the Lord. In this way, I hope to free myself from the cycle of birth and death by renouncing the fruits of my actions. In this way, I can attain a state beyond all miseries.

Bhakta Seged
San Quentin, California



Seged's guide, Rambhoru Devi Dasi



Inmate Letter Excerpts

Not only is Eloy still working in the general library and covertly distributing books about Kṛṣṇa, but the new inmate working in the library is also Kṛṣṇa conscious! So, the “Kazi” and his allies here are losing the battle and Kṛṣṇa is winning! We’re having so much fun. More than I ever anticipated.

[NOTE: *In this institution the chaplain and the librarian seem to be in cahoots to prevent inmates from having access to Prabhupada’s books. Gerald calls the chaplain, “the Kazi”]*

**Gerald N.
Monticello, Florida**

It’s so nice that you have taken your service so seriously. For so many years you have given us mercy repeatedly by sending us these glorious books. You have no idea how they shine light and direction on our darkened consciousness.

You know, Lord Kṛṣṇa has a sneaky way of connecting His devotees in jail and prison so they communicate with others who are evolved enough to understand this great science. Already I have somewhat convinced two others in this new institution to look into this subject matter. Hopefully they will follow through. I guess I do my best research on Srila Prabhupada’s books while I’m incarcerated.

I’m institutionalized, this I know. I think differently, but I’ve always had and will always have a great respect for Srila Prabhupada and Lord Caitanya’s sankirtan movement and for all great Vaisnavas as yourself.

**Oscar T.
Orlando, Florida**

The DVDs you sent to the chapel library are incredible. Everyone who sees them feels amazing after and thank me for sharing them. In the

past week I handed out ten BTGss and one Bhagavad-Gita to people who really want to read them.

**Janardana Dasa
Coleman, Florida**



This morning's program with His Holiness Candramauli Swami was a resounding success!! What an amazing individual. We had about thirty inmates in attendance. It was held in a larger separate room so we didn't have to deal with the noise from the other services. We decorated it the night before and garlanded Maharaja with a beautiful origami garland that he liked quite well. He spoke on Bhagavad-Gita, chapter 10, verse 8 and explained it so beautifully and eloquently that both devotees and non-devotees benefitted from his transcendental explanation. He led a rousing kirtan and did a Q&A session.

After the main program, he sat with the bhaktas. He told us that out of ALL the prisons he's been to, Petersburg has the best program. We were honored. I showed him all my Vaisnava tattoos and he said he wished he could get pictures. We did have pictures taken, six of them, so we'll make sure Bhakti-lata and Sarva prabhu get copies of them. The new chaplain, Chaplain Mohammed, was an absolute gentleman and accommodated us quite well. It was an incredibly transcendental morning

and we're so fortunate and honored to have Maharaja in attendance today! Hari bol!!!!
Dasdasanudas,
Krishna Kirtan das
Petersburg, Virginia

Just this past week we received the devotional items you sent to the chapel library. May I now convey my deepest thanks and appreciation? Indeed, on a personal level, it is very humbling and inspiring at the same time. Truly, you are touching so many individuals by your transcendental devotion to Sri Guru and Gauranga.

About gifts given in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, I am humbly asking you to please accept this pottery

plaque. [see picture below] Yes, I know it's not fancy but I did make it with my own hands, hoping that when receiving it you will smile and know that I do very much appreciate your presence in this life.

I am in a very hostile cell situation, as has often been the norm in this hellish confined environment—I will spare you the horrible details. Just please know I am doing my best to reciprocate with you, as you are with me and convey my gratitude for your wonderfully refreshing showering of mercy.

Jason M.
Fairfax, South Carolina



Bhakta Jason's Pottery Gift

IPM's PRABHUPADA MARATHON SUCCESS!

In the last issue of IPM NEWS, we announced that the prison ministry was making a special effort to distribute SB sets in the prison chapel libraries.

We had already distributed eleven sets and were asking your help in order to purchase twelve more.

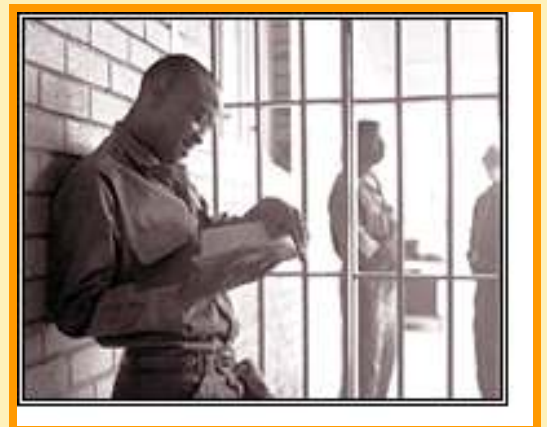
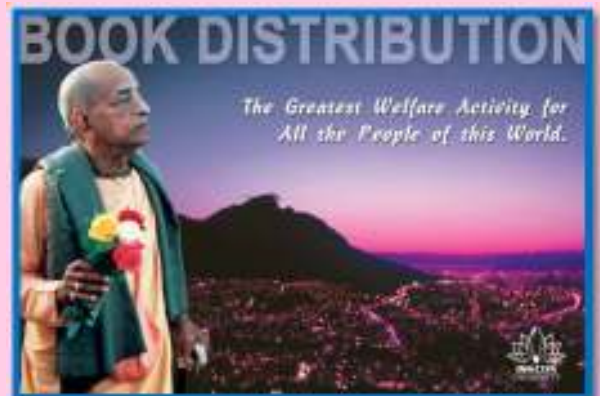
By the mercy and generosity of many devotees, these twelve sets have now been procured and seven of those have already been placed!

So in all, eighteen SB sets have been placed in chapel libraries in the past couple months!

We are now working on placing the remaining five sets.

I want to thank you all for your support in making this project a success! Hundreds of inmates will now have access to the Srimad-Bhagavatam, for years to come!

We pray Srila Prabhupada is pleased with our effort!



THANK YOU to ALL our SUPPORTERS!

Your generosity is what keeps this program going! 😊 If I forgot anyone, please forgive me and let me know so I can include your name in the next IPM NEWS.

Our donors since last newsletter:

ISKCON Columbus

Hridayananda Swami

Raviganesh Rajamanickam

Shefali (helped extra for SB sets)

Torchlight Publishing

Vikram Kumar

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Venkat Krishnan Dasa and Kalpana Dasi

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Rene Waisvisz

Richard House

Sahadev dasa

Satyanarayana dasa Shashi

Shefali Majmudar

Vikram Kumar

Vishal Thakur dasa

Yudhisthira dasa

1 anonymous (you know who
you are: thank you!)

3 Donation Options

- 1) Send a check or postal money order to:

ISKCON Prison Ministry

PO Box 2676

Alachua, FL 32616

- 2) Donate through PayPal at: www.paypal.me/IPM

- 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.

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