



# IPM NEWS



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

**August 2010**

**Changing Lives from the Inside Out!**

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## **IMPORTANT ANNOUNCEMENT**

At the suggestion of one of our supporter, and in our constant effort to improve our effectiveness, we will change the way we connect with you every month. Starting next month, we will send you our regular email (with "IPM NEWS" in the subject line) with a simple link to our IPM website where you will be able to read our feature article of the month. From there, you can browse our website for recent inmate quotes, book distribution scores, inmate art, letters from chaplains, as well as service opportunities for you. We think that this will keep you even better informed of more of our activities while saving us the time to prepare a separate newsletter, precious time we intent to use responding to the constant flow of inmate letters. Thank you. Your servant, Bhakti-lata Dasi

## **MY PATHWAY TO KRISHNA**

**by Bhavananda Dasa**

It seems that my coming to Krishna has taken me my whole life. As I look back on all my wasted years I can see many opportunities that Krishna gave me to put my life together, that I let pass by.

My early years were spent as a military dependent living around the world. The choice in worshipping God was broken down into Jewish, Catholic or Protestant. By the time I was out of elementary school my parents has stopped taking me to the Protestant services. By high school I felt that void and started going back on my own. I was active in the church but there was something lacking. I was confused in the teachings and just couldn't believe all I was being taught. I also couldn't find a role model in the church to help direct my life.



Bhavananda Dasa

My life started spiraling downward. Living in Germany I had easy access to alcohol. Drinking became my main focus. I returned to the states to start college but didn't last a semester in college before dropping out and joining the army. When I returned from Vietnam I decided to try college again. By this time I was drinking heavily and instead of making it to classes I spent my time in a local bar.

I had lost my faith in everything. Well, not quite everything, I still believed in God. I had no idea of how to worship God or anything about Him, but even as messed up as everything in the world seemed, I still believed there had to be a God. I had left Christianity behind and was becoming attracted to Zen Buddhism.

My first contact with Krishna devotees wasn't a physical contact but a very memorable one. I living in College Park, Maryland around 1972 and was in a bar trying to drink myself in to oblivion. The TV was tuned into a program where the host would invite guests to his show and then proceed to make fools out of them. These strange looking people wearing sheets walked in as the next guests on the program. I didn't follow a lot of what they were saying, some religious stuff, but what got my attention was that no matter how hard the program host tried he could not defeat the Krishna devotees. I said to myself, that these people may look strange but they are really fixed up in their beliefs and undefeatable.

I returned to Arkansas in 1973. A friend from back East moved there too and we moved into the woods of the Ozarks in northern Arkansas. It was really primitive; a hand built shack with no plumbing or electricity and a small 2 man tent. He had brought a copy of the Bhagavad-Gita with him. When he finished reading it he came to me and said he was only willing to talk to me about our survival or about Krishna. He believed that this philosophy was the truth and he was going to become a devotee. I'd go crazy without anyone to talk to, so I borrowed his Gita and started reading. I was just getting to the 18<sup>th</sup> chapter when he really started asking for the book back so he could study it more. I had been blown away by all that I had read and wanted to finish the last chapter, but could see how sincere he was in wanting to become a better devotee so I returned the Gita. Shortly after that he decided to go to a temple, so we loaded up the car and headed to Dallas.

This was my first actual contact with devotees. It was the summer of 1973 and the Dallas temple was very busy. My friend got shaved up and fit right in. I on the other hand wasn't sure what I was doing. Being there was totally blissful and I do not remember being as happy anywhere else. But it just didn't seem to be the place for me. After 4 days I returned to Arkansas. I was just too attached to the material world and all my pleasures. I had a job waiting, my parents were expecting me to come back and I just couldn't give up my propensity for intoxication and women, but I did become a vegetarian.

From then on my spiritual life was a series of ups and downs. I returned to college to get a degree in forestry in the hope of getting a better paying job so I could afford to buy some land and live a simple life in the country. I went to work for the U.S. Forest Service. I believed I had found the truth about God in the Bhagavad-Gita but wasn't able to actually follow the teachings. Never the less, my perspective on reality had changed.

I didn't really see another devotee until the latter 1980's when I started occasionally going back to the Dallas temple. Things seemed to have changed at the Temple. There weren't near as many devotees around and I was totally shocked to learn that Srila Prabhupada had left his body. I started sending money to the temple, trying to chant and read some of the many books I had purchased. One devotee I met traveled around teaching cooking classes and he used to stop at my house to rest from his travels. He taught me to cook and encouraged me by his association. I became a Life Member, but as time passed I stopped going back to the temple in Dallas. I met some devotees who lived in Missouri that had left ISKCON and I visited them off and on. I learned of a break in ISKCON and became totally confused as to what had happened.

As I moved from place to place I always kept Srila Prabhupada's books with me. I had finally read all of the Gita but had never attempted the Srimad-Bhagavatam or Sri Caitanya-Caritamrta. I knew these books contained all the knowledge I needed and they were my prized possessions. One day I would read them, when I could get my life together. I did tell everyone that in case of fire the only important thing to save was Prabhupada's books.

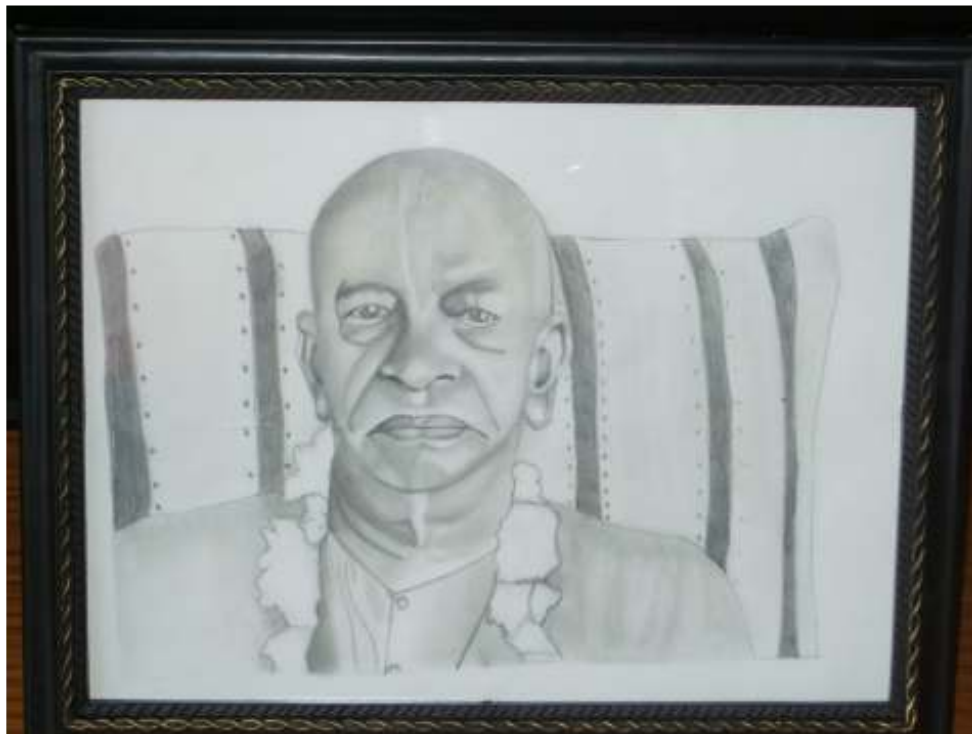
Years passed and I continued my old ways. I had become successful in the material world but had not made any new progress spiritually. My senses and mind pulled me around and I just didn't have the will power to say "no" to intoxication or women. Finally the Lord came to my rescue. I broke the law and went to prison. I had hit rock bottom.

When I first arrived in prison I had the good fortune to meet another devotee inmate, who gave me the address for the ISKCON Prison Ministry. I started writing Mother Shyama Priya for her association and that started a wonderful friendship both on a spiritual and personal level. The 2 years 7 months I was in prison was the Lord's blessing to me. He took away all my attachments and provided me the time to chant and read Srila Prabhupada's books. Of course trying to be a devotee in the Arkansas prison system was a real challenge. The prison units I ended up in didn't seem to have any experience with vegetarians. But I kept up my vegetarian diet and got stricter on myself as time went on. Shyama Priya was of great help to me, sending japa beads and books to read. I got out of prison in February 2008. That August I made a trip to Alachua to finally meet Shyama Priya in person, and be able to go to the Temple. Then the following February I received my initiation, on my

60<sup>th</sup> birthday, from H.H. Hridayananda Dasa Goswami.

Of course being out of prison has been difficult too. All the old attachments are now available once again. I have not met any devotees in Arkansas, but I have taken the shelter of the holy name and my spiritual master. I'm retired with free time so I've started producing the monthly IPM **Freedom Newsletter** as a service to others in prison. I bought a small house on a couple of acres in the country where I live alone living a simple life, chanting my rounds and reading Srila Prabhupada's books.

I have been fortunate to be able to make a couple trips to the Dallas temple and get the association of the devotees there. I plan to continue those visits on a regular basis. These trips have resulted in a blessing for people in Arkansas; several of the devotees I met in Dallas plan to come to visit me in Arkansas with the thought of starting some sort of a preaching program here. This is something greatly needed in Arkansas and I look forward to being part of it. It is all Krishna's blessings and I am thankful to have this opportunity to serve our Lord and my spiritual master.



Drawing by inmate Bhakta Brian

## What Inmates Have to Say

“I am a 51 years old aspiring devotee. I have made a mess of my life because of my drug and alcohol abuse. I am trying to salvage a few years by being of service to God and man.

I am a sincere student of Swami Prabhupada. I have searched diligently over the years and I am convinced Swami Prabhupada provided the highest teachings available in this age. I would be very grateful for the opportunity to study his books at this time. Please know that any books about Krishna consciousness will be appreciated so very much. For now I will use my time wisely chanting and studying. I have plenty of time here to do both. I do not want to waste a moment.”

**Bhakta Robert**  
Sneads, Florida

“There are no words to express what joy is within my heart. Material worlds are nothing on this transcendental road...where “Back to Godhead is the theme song and Krsna prema is the goal.”

**Anonymous**

“Today I feel unusually enthusiastic. I was doing a “japa walk” I my cell just now (space back and forth a 12 ft or so path) and after about 1 ½ hours doing this, I experienced an odd but humorous vision. I am still chucking as I write this, with a big smile on my face. See, I was at first feeling kinda “down in the dumps”, worrying about mundane issues going on in my life right now. So I thought to focus my attention only on Krsna by repeating His name in the mahamantra. He showed me mercy and lifted my spirits! I envisioned a photo of Jaganivasa Dasa sent me long ago of him doing sankirtan with a drum on his shoulders. I saw it like he was there in front of me and next I saw myself raise both arms and hands to the sky and I started to smile and twirl around and around in circles! Like if I was actually part of the sankirtan party.

Just seeing this vision in my mind’s eye made me so joy filled that I completely forgot about my prior worries! Krsna knows just what I needed.

(for Gaura Purnima) I will fast for at least one meal (because of my diabetes) and I plan to do japa walk in my cell for 2 hours after breakfast and at the noon and dinner time in the prison. That will be 6

hours total in observance of the appearance day of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu. I will also read Science of Self-Realization until bedtime around 12 midnight.



(...) When I read the articles in BTG it is like I am being transported right into the activity being described in the article. I can envision the scenery and feel the presence of other devotees, even though I have never met face to face with any of them. It still can feel a special connection to them through the articles they write.

The scriptures lessons are helpful to learn more about Krsna, and how to offer my bhakti to Him. Also the art work gives a wonderful way to visually keep Krsna in my mind’s eye! Makes me long to be in Krsna’s presence physically.

(...) I found another family (the devotees) to cherish and which gives me so much happiness and gives me hope and dreams of future association.”

**Bhakta Kevin**  
Plymouth, Wisconsin

“I’m chanting more but I am chanting in my mind most of the time. I have been chanting in my mind for at least 2 years. (...) At any rate, I am moving along to the point where I actually chanted in one of my dreams, to avoid a fearful situation. (...) I am blessed to be able to say that I am learning to see that God *is* love.”

**Anonymous**

## July 2010 Book Distribution Report

Maha-Big: 18  
Big Hard: 13  
Medium: 11  
Small: 226  
Magazines: 150

BTGs: 217  
Freedom Newsletters: 148  
Books written by devotees other than Prabhupada: 20  
Other Material (beads, CDs, etc.):  
2 DVDs  
Narration of Krsna Book, SB, CC  
4 lecture tapes folders  
13 music tapes  
5 lecture CDs  
Calendar 2010  
3 japa malas  
3 bead bags  
2 neckbeads  
3 posters  
1 calendar



This is the activity report of, Bhakta Kevin, Bhakti-lata Dasi, Candra Dasa, and Jatayu Dasa.

### WANT TO HELP?



Inspired to support this successful prison preaching program? You can:

- become a transcendental pen-pal for one or more inmates
- give a one-time or monthly donation (we provide tax-deductible receipts); **see page 4 for details.**
- donate books, CDs, DVDs, pictures, japa and neck beads, and bead bags.

At this moment, **we have an URGENT need** to replace the **INK CARTRIDGE** for the IPM Dell laser printer, model W5300. This cartridge costs \$280.00 on the Dell website and will last 3 years. This printer is **ESSENTIAL** to IPM and is used every day. We print letters to inmates and chaplains; 70 copies or more of the inmate monthly newsletter; labels; pamphlets, etc. If you can help, please contact Mukunda Dasa or Bhakti-lata Dasi at:

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## Thank You to Our Donors!

Radha-Jivan Dasa: \$153.17 for shipping  
Amal Bhakta Dasa: \$100  
Ankur Sethi: \$101  
Mickey Singer: \$150

Ekanatha Dasa: \$108  
Yudhisthira Dasa: \$20  
Bhavananda Dasa: \$150  
Inmate Larry Prickett: \$5

We also want to thank Jiva Goswami Dasa, for his invaluable technical support, and inmate Dan Green for a book of stamps.

**NOTE:** If I have overlooked anyone, please forgive me. I would appreciate that you bring this to my attention so I can acknowledge you in the next newsletter. It is important to us to recognize our donors, as they make this preaching program a reality. Because I do handle a lot of aspects for IPM, things will sometimes slip by. Thank you, your servant, Bhakti-lata Dasi



Want to donate to this prison preaching program? There are different options to do this:



- ❖ Send a check to:  
ISKCON Prison Ministry  
PO Box 2676  
Alachua, FL 32616-2676
- ❖ Donate through PayPal at: [www.iskconprisonministry.com](http://www.iskconprisonministry.com)
- ❖ For automatic, monthly donations, you can do so on our website above, or through your bank "Automatic Bill Pay" option, which is easy and free.

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? Contact Mukunda Dasa or Bhakti-lata Dasi at [ISKconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:ISKconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com) or 352-575-0458



*Changing bodies by Inmate Burl Dees*