

IPM NEWS



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

JUNE 2010

Changing Lives from the Inside Out!

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Visiting Prisons

The article on page 2 describes a successful prison program that was held in a prison facility in Slovenia, in May 2010.

Visiting prisons is a very rewarding experience. Hundreds of inmates are eager to receive something more than what has been offered to them up to now. Many are sincerely searching for the truth. They have nowhere to go; they *cannot* go anywhere. By the will of providence, they are stuck in one place, for a very long time, some even for life. Mother Shyama Priya used to say that inmates are a “captive audience”!

Inmates have hit bottom; when you tell them that this material world is a place of misery, they readily agree. They don't argue, because they know only too well that this is true. In other words, they are ripe for spiritual knowledge. More than that; they are *starved* for spiritual knowledge. For their life to make sense, they need to be able to understand why they are suffering the way they are; why, after giving in to all kinds of sense enjoyment, they are still unsatisfied. There is a great need for messengers to bring them the matchless gift of Krsna consciousness; the gift

that has been offered to us and which has completely changed our life.



I am looking for devotees here, in Alachua, Florida, to form a team of volunteers to visit and hold programs in local jails/prisons on a regular basis. If you feel attracted to volunteer in such a fertile preaching ground, if you want to pass the blessing you have received on to the inmates, please contact me through one of the contact method listed above. I am looking forward to hear from you. Thanks in advance!

Your servant, Bhakti-lata Dasi

PRISON PROGRAM IN SLOVENIA



by Vikalotkarsini Dasi

I was in Mayapur on Gaura Purnima. My spiritual master, H.H. Candramauli Swami was also there, and he had just recently published his new book *Holy Jail*. When I received a copy of this book, I immediately started to read it, although I already had with me a half of suitcase of other books. With every page I've read, I became more and more convinced that we should bring Krishna Consciousness to prisons in Slovenia. I stepped into action immediately after arriving home. Actually I didn't know how to tackle the whole thing but Lord Krishna guided me and gave me the right idea at the right moment. I checked when Candramauli Swami was to arrive in Slovenia, and then I asked him for his blessings for arranging a visit to some prison.

In the name of the Rasa society, of which I am a member, I sent an offering to all Slovenia prisons stating that we can perform a public show (artistic performance), the kind we already perform in different institutions (like in schools, homes for elderly people, etc.). I stated that the show will be an artistic performance accompanied with a lecture by H.H. Candramauli Swami.

Of all the prisons I send an offering to, only one prison answered. It was the biggest prison in Slovenia, Communication started with the head of the Education and Reformation Department and I began to assemble a team and a program for the performance. Krishna unexpectedly stepped in a few times and turned my plans upside-down and thus He had driven me almost on the verge of despair.

On May 5th 2010, I drove to the prison with tears in my eyes; I just gave up control and said, "Krishna-You are the Boss!"

The prison personnel greeted us with exceptional warmth and kindness and by doing so they diminished the anxiety we were feeling that was caused by threading on unknown territory. After all the formalities connected with security were complete, we took our places on the stage we had set up in the big dining-hall where 30 prisoners and roughly 10 security men, governesses and other prison personnel had gathered. We started the program with a bhajan in glorification of Lord Nrsimhadeva praying to Him for protection. The leader of our group, Tapta Kancanadi Prabhu was the host for the event. He began by explaining the instruments, used for performance of bhajans.

Then began the lecture, by H.H. Candramauli Swami. He - with his charismatic presentation - had captured the wrapped attention of all the members of the audience. In his lecture he talked about who we really are, what is our relationship with God and how to act in accordance with that relation, He also talked about what freedom really is and also shared some of his experiences he had when visiting different jails in other countries of the world (USA ,India.). After the lecture there was time for questions and answers and then one of the prisoners asked a somewhat provocative question, but Maharaja handled it well, with intelligence, respect and in a calm

manner, so everybody was satisfied with the answer. The musicians then sung Yasomati-Nandana and the Hare Krsna Mahamantra. Before the beginning of Mahamantra, Tapta Kancanadi Prabhu invited everybody to dance and sing along. To our great amazement, all the personnel and the prisoners stood up and danced ecstatically with their hands raised!

"I never thought that I would experience such happiness inside prison!" said an elderly prisoner.

"I have never been so happy in my life!" said one of the members of the prison staff.

And the head of the reformatory compartment said in amazement: "Even the greatest music stars could not get them[the inmates] so animated and fired up, as you did!"

During the December Srila Prabhupada book Marathon there is a special program, called "Shastra Dana". That program consists of an action named "A Matchless Gift". Devotees that cannot participate actively in the distribution of Srila Prabhupada books can finance books that are later on distributed by Tapta Kancanadi Prabhu and the members of his team to the homes of elderly persons, to different hospitals and similar institutions. It so happened that there were some of Srila Prabhupada's books left from December, so we distributed the books (SP Lilamritas and Bhagavad - Gitas) to the inmates and staff.

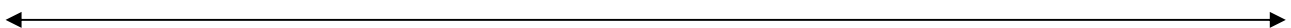
Many of the inmates gave their book to Candramauli Swami to get it signed. As Maharaja was signing their books, a pleasant communication was going on between Maharaja and the inmates. It was obvious, that the inmates accepted Maharaja as someone they can confide in. Others also joined in and spoke with the inmates. Slovenia is a country with only two million people as it turned out, that there were four inmates, that the different members of our team knew from before: one of the inmates used to supply vegetables to for our temple and he would often give some extra contribution for devotees. Another one had visited our temple and was crying loudly "Haribol, Haribol!!" during the kirtan. Another is regularly practicing yoga postures and breathing exercises. During our conversations with them we learned, that many of them like to read, practically everybody accepted a book! The inmates have their own choir and theatrical group and different kinds of creative "shops" in which they can express their artistic talents. The activities are led and organized by four ladies, each of them gladly accepted our books, which included two copies of "Holy Jail" and they gladly said that they will use them in their work with the inmates!



By the mercy of Guru, Srila Prabhupada and Sri Pancatattva everything went smoothly and the program was a big success. And although at the beginning we had no idea what to expect. We left there satisfied, waking up more souls to Krishna Consciousness. And in order to keep them awake, Tapta Kancanadi Prabhu already arranged a series of ten lectures entitled "The Wisdom of the East" to be held in the institution in near future. This is a series of ten introductory lectures aimed at acquainting the beginners with the basic concepts and ideas of Krsna consciousness philosophy such as karma and reincarnation. At the conclusion of the before mentioned course is some basics about bhakti-yoga.

As no program is complete without some prasadam distribution, we happily distributed a large number of bananas and oranges to the inmates many of them taking handfuls of Krsna's mercy.

At the end we bid each other farewell and everyone agreed that we must come and visit again.



Welcoming our new IPM Volunteers!



This month, Pavani Dasi is joining our IPM pen-pal team. We are in need of more devotees to correspond with inmates. If you are interested, or have questions about this service, please contact Mukunda Dasa or Bhakti-lata Dasi at: iskconprisonministry@gmail.com or 386-418-3828

Thank You to Our Donors!

Bhavananda: \$150
Mickey Singer: \$150
Shashi Raina: \$50
Vaikuntheshwar Balaji Dasa: \$130
Vivasvan Dasa: \$20
Radha-Jivan Dasa: \$36.22 (for shipping boxes)

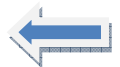
We also want to thank:

Pancaratra Dasa, for his continued help with the website.
Mother Indrani, for donating some audio tapes, CDs and calendars.
Mahamaya Dasi, for typing quotes from inmates.
exoticindia.com, for donating 5 CDs/DVDs
Harinam Press, Jitarati Dasa, and Veda Guhya Dasa for donating books.
Mother Danette and Inmate Mark Davis for donating 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
- ❖ 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 or 386-418-3828

What Inmates Have to Say

"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 a dream I had to avoid a fearful situation. (...) I am blessed to be able to say that I am learning to see *God is love.*"

Anonymous

"I've been reading the Mahabharata, which has been increasing my character and virtues."

Carlos Parham

Helena, Georgia

"I've always been aware of the religion, but didn't know much about it. I wrote to a book store asking if they had a resource list for prisoners because I wanted to study metaphysics, universal law, spiritual, etc... And they sent me your address so I wrote to you asking for info and if you had a *Bhagavad-gita* I could read...Thank you for sending it to me. I've just started reading it. But I'm just now really learning about Krishna Consciousness from materials you've sent to me and the one issue of the BTG magazine you sent. It's a great magazine by the way.

It seems to be very spiritual and metaphysical as opposed to a lot of religions which seem very shallow or mainly caught up in dogma and ideology and ritual instead of actually teaching universal law and how to apply it to our lives. I've blamed addiction to just about everything in my life. I've quit everything now. Two weeks ago I quit coffee because I was also addicted to caffeine. I hope Krishna Consciousness can help me live a better, healthier lifestyle and give me strength, knowledge and peace of mind. I would enjoy writing to a devotee, someone I can learn from. Thank you for your time and help. I do appreciate it. Hare Krishna!"

Todd Hines

Amarillo, TX

"I chant because I have to...to escape myself, my personal demons."

Anonymous



"Today I received the package you sent that contained books, CDs, BTG and neck beads. Thanks. I am always feeling increasing bliss for I constantly chant the holy name.

If I could get my fellow inmates to taste the sweetness of Krsna consciousness, then they will immediately give up their usual engagements. They become so excited over football games. I hear them and think, "If I can get them to become this excited or attracted to know Krsna, then they will have real happiness." These are my thoughts.

Lately I've learned that material nature is eternal, as the living entity, but it is the separated energy of the supreme Lord. The living entity, however, is not separated.

These things I have learned from closely studying the Bhagavad-Gita. I am now practicing a meditation on the Gita; I study one chapter at a time, for a week or two, or three.

I spoke to an officer one night and asked him to chant the holy name and he did. He told me that when he was in college he had heard the same mantra. We talked for a little while.

Everything is fine. There's just this rascal who insults me. Actually he does this behind a lock door (out of fear), but I wouldn't have done him any harm for such small talk. All day he does this, which actually helps me detach from any concept of the false ego.

I'm now getting ready to begin my morning studying and chanting, therefore I end this letter here."

Bhakta Kevin Brown

Jackson, GA

May 2010 Book Distribution Report

Maha-Big: 20
Big Soft: 8
Medium: 13
Small: 33
Magazines: 1

BTGs: 178
Freedom Newsletters: 66

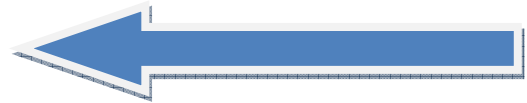
BOOKS written by devotees other than Prabhupada: 24

Other Material (beads, CDs, etc.):
10 music & lecture CDs
10 music tapes
1 japa beads, 1 bead bag



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

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 the moment, we are in great need of neck beads, japa beads, counting beads, and bead bags.
Any donation will be greatly appreciated.

Contact Mukunda Dasa or Bhakti-lata Dasi at:

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