



IPM News



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

JUNE 2011 ISKCON Prison Ministry Newsletter

Changing Lives From the Inside Out!

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And Devotional Service Begins...

by Bhakti-lata dasi

Almost every week I receive letters from inmates who just came in contact with Krsna for the first time, through Prabhupada's books. Some of these letters are brief, others more extensive, but all reflect a genuine desire to know the truth; all are from inmates who are reaching out, excited, curious, hopeful. Eric's letter (below) is a good example:

"To whom it may concern,

A friend let me borrow a CD and book of Swami Prabhupada, and reading it, I became very interested and wanted to learn more. Shortly thereafter I saw the address for ISKCON in a resource guide I had and wrote them. Also I read a BTG magazine not too long ago and I wrote the people there too. I was curious as to if it would be possible to have books and/or magazines sent to me for further study.

Words can't express my appreciation; what I have heard/read so far really speaks to me. Krsna consciousness feels like a deep truth I have always known about in some part of my mind, but have never fully realized or seen clearly. It's hard to put into words my feelings about it, or to properly describe how it appeals to me. By learning more about Krsna consciousness I expect to discover more of the truth about myself and about reality itself. Thank you in advance for whatever you are able to send, if anything.

With respects,

Eric Wells

Spruce Pine, NC

This short letter is a testimonial to the great power Prabhupada invested in his books and it is an honor and an indescribable pleasure to be able to not only respond to this letter, but to also be able to send Eric the books and magazines he desires.

This opportunity wouldn't be there without the continued support of all of you who so generously contribute to IPM. I want to thank every single devotee for their encouragements and prayers and for their donations of laksmi, books, and other Krsna conscious material. You all provide the facilities that allow IPM volunteers to engage in this service. I am very grateful.

“Right away [after being put in solitary], as stressful as I saw this situation to be, I knew all I needed was my meditation and yoga books. I knew that this was to be an opportunity to gain some introspection on myself. I am still going through periods of depression. I want to do service. In here I have no contact with anyone but the officers who bring me my mail and food.

Of course, as Srila Prabhupada says in his purport of Queen Kunti in the Gita “The duty of the sane person, therefore, is to be undisturbed by worldly calamities, which are sure to happen in all circumstances.” I am often amazed at the depth, yet simplicity, of his explanations on simple truths of the material world, the mind and the spirit soul.”

One thing that has been clear to me in this situation is the transient nature of this body. It has definitely become clear I am not this body; that it is like luggage I am carrying around, a space suit for the soul. The aches and pains that trouble me have shown me how fragile and temporary it is and thus I recognize not to put my faith and hope in “another” who is as temporary.”

Bhakta Robert Cepeda
Malone, NY

“Dear Bhakti-lata, Hare Krsna!

I've shared my KC knowledge with other inmates here in a community group meeting in our program. There have been 3, 4 other inmates already that have read the books and magazines I was fortunate to have with me. I even introduced kirtana to the inmates on my pod and one day I came out to the dayroom for “independent study” and some inmates at a table in the back yelled out to me, “Hey, do the Swami two-step!” and they all raised their arms, palms up, and swayed back and forth in their chairs, chanting “Hare Krsna-Hare Krsna.” Two of my cell mates often spontaneously dance around the cell doing the same thing! What a trip!

Maybe in some small way my being here had value unseen by me at first. I'm like ol “Johnny Appleseed” sowing seeds of Krsna consciousness along the way in his travels. That's all fine and dandy but I still want to serve Krsna from the other side of the wall, so to speak.

Reading “Prabhupada Nectar” gave me some really good insights about myself and what I need to do to be successful and return back home to Godhead. I have been maintaining my 16 rounds of chanting daily and reading and meditating on Prabhupada and Krsna.

Again, thank you for standing by me and inspiring me to continue my service to Krsna and IPM, my true and real family. The only place I actually feel I have found of contentment in a life filled with so much turmoil.”

Bhakta Kevin
Milwaukee, WI

“This morning I was given the beautiful Nrsimha pendant and necklace you kindly sent. Thank you so much. I have it on and will keep it on. Mother Syamapriya was so fond of Lord Nrsimha, and since she told me about that and we shared some experiences, I, too, have become very fond of Him and totally trusting. Two times I've been threatened with violence by demoniac inmates. Both times I

invoked the holy name of Lord Nrsimha and the same thing happened on both occasions. My would-be attackers became totally befuddled and forgot their own intentions. It was pretty cool seeing something like that and knowing the protection that Lord Nrsimha offers to devotees.

Did I tell you about the “Tomaka Idol” contest? It'll be on the yard. Contestants can use a microphone. There'll be many spectators. So I signed up! I will sing the Hare Krsna maha-mantra. I will get to do it at practice Monday and the event next Wednesday. Haribol! A really big show for Krsna! Even if we lack talent we should do our best at everything and give our all for Krsna.

Often I reflect on instances of life prior to my Krsna consciousness and I realize such existence was actually ludicrous, totally senseless! Now, everything makes perfect sense. No, I do not 'know it all', I only know the reality of Krsna.”

Gerald Niles

Daytona Beach, FL

(Gerald later sent me a certificate he received for having participated in the event!)

“Yes, indeed! I am truly enthusiastic because the more I read, the more I chant the maha-mantra, the more I see that this is where I should have been all along! Yes, BTG is the inspiration with its colorful illustrations and insightful articles. I share it at my “KC Table” here in my living section.

I pray to Krsna constantly for an increase in my fund of knowledge so that I may be worthy to fall at His lotus feet...I have the greatest desire in myself to become an initiate and live the renounced order of life. Any information you have concerning that issue is a blessing.

Yes, KC Has already begun to help me. I still have a journey because there are aspects of KC that I have yet to experience, but so far. I feel the greatness. My life is truly transforming.

Yes, my family is upset with me, but it is a conscious choice of mine. I have been searching for Krsna, I have come home.”

Albert Gertman

Beeville, Texas

“Hare Krsna! Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

I can remember when I first began my association with devotees by letter, that I wrote the above lines because that's the way the Hare Krsna's do it. As time went by I often wondered if others wrote this as a simple greeting out of routine. As years have passed I've found that rather than these lines becoming routine, the depth of meaning in them becomes clearer and clearer. I have made it a conscious practice that each time I write them or read them I instill in them or absorb from them this depth of meaning.”

Gary Winters

Raiford, FL

“Hare Krsna! I received the japa mala and the three books that you sent to me. Thank you so much! Please know that these are, to me, a very precious gift, helping me on my journey towards the lotus feet of Lord Krsna. The books, I will let you know my reaction to them as I read. I will begin studying immediately. I have already learned something from the mala. It seems I've been concentrating more on the number of japa repetitions done, instead of remaining centered on God. I noticed this immediately when I was able to simply chant, allowing the beads to mark the rounds. I do appreciate this.”

Joseph Powell

Galesburg, IL

“I want to thank you so much for mercifully ministering to me on a personal level in the form of sending transcendental items for my sadhana. I have received the two BTG magazines that you sent;

one just recently and the other some months ago. Greatly appreciated! For when my mind is disturbed, which is quite often these days, and I cannot concentrate well enough to read a book I can always turn to BTG so as to simply look at the spiritually potent pictures, and at times, read a short article or a few captions and 'Vedic Thoughts.' Again, mata, I am certainly grateful for these wonderful gifts given in Krsna consciousness. Uplifted, as well!

Jason Matthews
Columbia, SC

“I crave the association of Krsna devotees and Prabhupada is always stressing that association. When I get out, I want to at least live close to a temple for daily devotional service.

I do have positive advancement to report. On Tuesday, September 14th, 2011 I chanted a full 16 rounds for the first time. I was never able to do this with the other job that I had. I'm not doing this on a daily basis yet but on that day I just kept going.

I've let my new roommate read Bhagavad-Gita and he seems to have some interest. If you have a copy you can send me I will give it to him and we will see how it goes. Also, if you have a copy of “Chant, and Be Happy”, I'll give it to him since he is a fan of George Harrison.

Please pray that Krsna will bestow His mercy upon me.”

Bhakta Gary Griffin
Portland, OR

“Since time is a luxury that I have plenty of, I have spent on average 6 1/2 to 8 hrs a day studying, absorbing, and digesting the principles and teachings of the Bhakti-Rasamrta Sindhu (Nectar of Devotion) and the 'Teachings of Lord Caitanya'.

The reading and study of these two specific pieces of devotional literature has truly awakened my slumbering Krsna consciousness and has anointed my understanding with the salve of enlightenment to the love of Godhead, which is the ultimate goal of human existence. In performing my path of devotional service to Lord Krsna, I have found myself very drawn, as a moth to a flame, to the whole prayer and worship aspect of devotional service. More specifically, I am very drawn to the service of Deity worship (aratika) and offering of prayers, however all the literatures I read, study, research, only touches on the entire aratika process, there are no details on the subject. I would really like to learn more of this art of Deity worship by studying more elaborate and detailed literatures on the process.

Due to my current unfortunate position, I have to rely upon the mercy of Lord Krsna, through His devotees to assist in my spiritual advancement and further cultivation of transcendental knowledge.

I thank you so very much for your time, attention, and efforts invested on my behalf. I am very eager to hear from you soon. Hare Krsna!”

Richard Allen Hogan
Mount Olive, West Virginia

To read more excerpts of inmate letters and to see some of their artwork, please visit our website at www.iskconprisonministry.org

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To help with this prison program, please contact Mukunda Dasa or Bhakti-lata Dasi at:

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