



IPM NEWS



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

May 2010

Changing Lives from the Inside Out!

www.iskconprisonministry.com

PO Box 2676, Alachua, FL 32616-2676

iskconprisonministry@gmail.com

386-418-3828

The following article is written by one of our very active IPM volunteer.

My Present Service

By Bhakta Kevin Cummings

Once, when I was a child perhaps about 6-7yrs old, while our family was on vacation in some forgotten place, I saw some strange looking men approach my father with a small book. A seed was planted in me at that moment that lay dormant in my heart for many years. I remember that my father gave some money to these men and sadly, once they were out of sight, tossed the book in a trash bin. The curious child I was, I fished the book back out and hid it in the family car when my parents were occupied with other things. I will always remember this because of two things. The first was that I really liked the pictures that I saw in that little book, even though I had no understanding of the importance of what I was looking at back then. The second was a statement that my mother made to me in the car on the way back home when she realized that I had the very book my father had tossed away so carelessly. I remember her asking why I had the book, a bit annoyed at me. My response was that I liked the pictures and wanted to look at them. Her

reply back to me was something like you better throw that book out when you get home. When I asked why I couldn't keep it my mother told me, "Because you will go to hell."



Bhakta Kevin at his IPM home office

Somehow, those words stuck in my memory all these years. I don't know what happened to that book, but I gazed at it over and over the whole way back home. It is only many years later that I realized how important this incident was in my life; I was almost 35 years old in fact.

At that time I found myself in a jail cell up in the Northwood's of Wisconsin looking at serving a five year prison term; sadly, not my first and not my last either. But one thing unexpected happened to me at that jail. I happened to check out the jail library one day and found a copy of Srimad-Bhagavatam, first canto, part one. For some reason the book caught my attention and I took it back to my cell with me. Over and over I tried to read the hard-to-pronounce words and understand what they meant, but it just would not sink into my dull mind at the time. I saw the pictures in the book and remembered the incident from my childhood many years before. This made me curious to find out what this book was all about and who the people were that were associated with it. I saw the address for ISKCON inside the book and wrote it on a scrap of paper that I smuggled into the prison I ended up going to. I looked at it from time to time without taking any action for awhile; it was at the back of my mind again. Then I was transferred to the prison that I would be doing all my time at and became very bored with life in general. I didn't get much mail, so one day I decided to write a letter to the ISKCON address I had kept the whole time. It was a simple request for information and maybe a free book to read. At that moment, something happened in my life that would have a great impact on my thinking and my future. I got an answer from a Candrasekhara Dasa of IPM and started to feel him out to see what he might be about. If I ever did anything smart in my life; that was it!

Though I got involved fairly deeply with Candrasekhara prabhu and his ministry, I wasn't done with the dealings of Maya yet. I was eventually released and stayed in touch for awhile, then, as fate would have it (or so I thought), I was lost in the materialistic way of thinking I was so familiar with my whole life. Long story short, I ended up in prison again feeling very embarrassed to even think of writing my old friend Chandra at IPM. I sucked it up and took my medicine, so to speak, and eventually got the nerve to write to Chandra again. I got an ear full from him but I had to expect that and be humble about it and be honest with myself. He saw potential in me that I myself refused to see until he helped me to realize it within myself. I became more involved with IPM and took a stand for Krishna in the Wisconsin prison system, where inmates had either never heard of Krishna, or made fun of the Hare Krishnas with the old "airport" jokes. I stood my ground however and was able to get books in the chapel libraries and even get inmates interested. I decided then that I wanted to dedicate my life to serving Krishna and IPM.

Now that I am out once more (this time for keeps), I take joy in assisting as an IPM volunteer in any way I can. I realize firsthand the importance and magnitude of Srila Prabhupada's books being within the prison walls. Actually, everyone is a prisoner to the material world of illusion, but the prisoners inside the prison houses are in many ways even more in need of a light at the end of the tunnel. Krishna is that light and IPM is the means to let that light shine as brightly as it can.

Looking back on myself, it is very plain to see, at least to me, the very powerful life-changing effect IPM can and does have in the lives of so many lost souls behind prison walls. I feel for the inmates because I was where they are and I finally found peace. Now it is my turn to give peace back.

Hare Krishna!

Welcoming our new IPM Volunteers!

We want to thank our four new volunteers who have started writing inmates:
Rangavali Dasi, Mrgendra Dasa, Nandini Radha Dasi, and Shaktipati Dasa

If you are interested to join our pen-pal team, please contact us to discuss it. Every week we receive letters from new inmates in search of enlightenment and we need help to guide them all. If you like to write (handwritten or typed letters by snail mail), and if you like to share Krsna consciousness, this service is for you! Consider writing one inmate and see for yourself how satisfying this service really is!

Thanks to Our Donors!

This IPM service wouldn't be a reality without the continued support of our donors. This month, we want to warmly thank the following supporters:

Bhavananda dasa: \$150

Mickey Singer: \$150

Ankur Seti: \$50

Shanti and Ramakant Kharel: \$251.00

Mrgendra: \$150

Katrin Banks: \$50

Dina Sharana: \$21

Balabhadra Dasa: \$30

Manjari Smullen: \$30

Madhu Kiran Ramireddy: \$108

Leah Khan: \$50

Dravida Dasa: \$50

Inmate Reggie Pratt: \$5

Inmate Carlos Johnson: \$4

Vrndavan Lila Dasi: \$130

Ravi Jadhaw : \$65

Champak Patel : \$108

Radha-Jivan: \$153.86 (for shipping boxes)

Radha-Jivan for donating two boxes of books

Nikunja Vasini, Bhakta John, and Rai Krsna for giving some books and calendars

Mother Danette for an almost complete SB set

Nityananda dasa, for two boxes of Mahabharata

Inmate Dan Green for a book of stamps

Dwarkadisa Dasa for some audio material and a booklet

Jivana Krsna Dasi for scanning some inmate art; this will allow us to post them on our website so that all of you can admire it!

NOTE: If we have overlooked anyone, please forgive us. We would appreciate that you bring this to our attention so we can acknowledge you in the next newsletter.

Want to donate to this prison preaching program? You can do so through PayPal at: www.iskconprisonministry.com or by sending a check to:

ISKCON Prison Ministry

PO Box 2676

Alachua, FL 32616-2676

Questions?

Contact Mukunda Dasa or Bhakti-lata Dasi at ISKconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com or 386-418-3828

You can request a tax deductible receipt.



Artwork by inmate Burl Dees

What inmates have to say

“I first was attracted to Krsna because He was blue and blue was the color of my gang. My realization, however, came from chanting and reading His Divine Grace, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada’s books. It was then that I understood that being a gang member was simply a concept of the false ego, not myself, the spirit soul, a part and parcel of the supreme Lord, Vasudeva.

All the small books you sent I gave to inmates, except two, which I am now waiting to send upstairs to an inmate who has been asking for them. It is sometimes difficult to move things here at this prison, so I have to wait for the proper time to do so, but he will get them.

My little brother really cares about me, so he said he will accept my gift of Krsna consciousness; that he will listen to whatever I tell him. I was surprised to know that he wanted to be like me so badly. Now I can let him be like I am; actually, before he was attracted to be in a gang but now he’s being attracted in another way, for my heart has changed, so has his; now he wants to avoid such a life. This is good. It simply is the mercy of Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu, for I am only an instrument. My brother likes the books and he feels encouraged to change his life to set an example for his son.”

Anonymous
Jackson, Georgia

“I really enjoy chanting. I’ve noticed that when I chant it helps calm my mind. I have never experienced anything that calms my mind like chanting. It feels natural to me and I like it.

I don’t remember hearing about Krishna Consciousness in the past. I just always had a desire to read the *Bhagavad-gita*. I’ve seen the *Gita* in different book catalogs, and even though I could have bought one I never did. I arrived at Tomoka [Correctional Institution] on 11-19-09 and I was in the library looking around and I spotted *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*. I started reading it but didn’t get into it enough because I caught some confinement time and had to go without the *Gita*. While in confinement I overheard an inmate talking about the chaplain sending him a copy of the *Gita*. So I did the same and received one. I got your address from inside the book. That’s how I first heard about Krishna Consciousness.

When I read about Krishna Consciousness it confirms the unspoken thoughts and feelings I’ve always had about the subject of spirituality. It

manifests the truth into words that I already felt to be true, but was unable to express on my own. To me it’s like I’ve encountered the truth I’ve always known but was unable to explain. I expect Krishna consciousness to expand my awareness of the truth.”

Andre Dillard
Daytona Beach, Florida



Mohana (Love in Separation)

He’s off to the pastures, He’s gone out of sight
Her girlfriends console Her yet She’s still not right

Her blossom is wilting, now nothing is all
She’s shadowed from His light, in darkness She falls

Her sight has no target, without Him She’s blind
He’s not there to unlock the chains on Her mind
She and He are parted, two points but no line
Her Dark Cloud is gone now, She’s lost Her sunshine

The emptiness fills Her, a hole in Her heart
Each moment an eon now that They’re apart
An ocean of sadness in anguish She swims
Her hope sinks, She’s drowning, She’ll die without Him

No notes that can save Her, She longs for His flute

No music, no dancing, Her life’s song is mute
The feeling of RADHE, the apex of love
The essence of rasa in Vraj up above
So few understand Her, for this boon I pay
To be a manjari, to know Sri RADHE

Bhakta Carl Sheppard
Chipley, Florida

April 2010 Book Distribution Report!

Maha-Big: 22
Big Hard: 22
Big Soft: 71
Medium: 37
Small: 130
Magazines: 73

BTGs: 119
Freedom Newsletters: 52
Books written by devotees other than Prabhupada: 46

Other Material (beads, CDs, etc.):
5x Japa Mala
2x bead bags
2x BBT calendar 2010



This is the activity report of, Bhakta Dave, Bhakta Kevin, Bhakti-lata Dasi, Bhavananda Dasa and Candrasekhara 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)
- donate BOOKS, CDs, DVDs, pictures, japa and neck beads

At the moment, we have a great need for DVDs and music CDs. Any donation will be greatly appreciated!

Contact Mukunda Dasa or Bhakti-lata Dasi at:

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