



IPM News



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

December 2009 The ISKCON Prison Ministry Report

Changing Lives From the Inside Out!

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Change lives from the comfort of your own home!

By Bhakti-lata Dasi

Imagine if you could give Krsna consciousness to others without having to travel; bringing people to the feet of Srila Prabhupada without ever having to leave your house. Imagine you can do this service all year long, for years to come. at your own time and pace convenience

That is the opportunity that ISKCON Prison Ministry (IPM) is giving you if you are interested. IPM gives you the chance to preach one on one to someone who *wants* to know more about Krsna consciousness.

Inmates are often eager to find something more, an answer to their very tangible suffering. Many have hit bottom and are anxious for a way out, for a higher understanding. Many are *ready* to take up spiritual life seriously. And that's where you come in. You have the deepest, most confidential knowledge, given to you at no cost, and all you have to do is to give it to someone who is craving for it.

For me, IPM is Lord Caitanya's benediction. For years I nurtured the desire to distribute Prabhupada's books. I tried doing so in parking lots and on the street, but being shy by nature, it didn't work for me. Still, I wouldn't give up my desire to one day give Krsna consciousness to others. So when, in 1991, I saw an ad Candrasekhara had posted on the bulletin board of the Alachua temple, looking for IPM pen pals, I was immediately attracted. I am desirous of giving Krsna consciousness; I am shy by nature; I absolutely love to write; and I tend to be a homebody; this IPM service seemed custom made for me!

I have written hundreds of letters since then, and the novelty never wore off. Each time I go to the post-office, I feel this anticipation as I slip the key in the postal box. And each time I see the pile of letters waiting inside, a rush of joy passes through me. I feel such excitement, that I often start reading the letters as I am walking back

to my car; I can't wait to read who has what realizations; what new questions *my* inmates have; which of them has given Krsna consciousness to yet another inmate. Really, I can only see one downside to this service: it's highly addictive!

At the post-office: the ebb and flow of correspondence



Going in with letters and books to mail...



...coming out with a stack of new letters!

If you are ready to change lives from the comfort of your home, please contact us and we will discuss the details with you. Each volunteer chooses how many inmates they are comfortable writing to. Some volunteers write one inmate, some write 50. It doesn't matter; each inmate you write to will see his/her life changed.

Candramauli Swami:

"Writing letters is one of the few ways to bring Krsna Consciousness to those in prison. When they accept wholeheartedly what we have to offer that is our happiness and satisfaction. And when we meet someone who is intelligent and understands somewhat of the value of Srila Prabhupada's books then are happiness is complete."

What I Like About Writing Inmates

By Bhakta David Ehler

I like writing inmates because it brings me great joy knowing that I am sharing Krishna Consciousness with someone who would otherwise never receive it. Most inmates are incarcerated far away from temples and devotees. The only way for them to know anything about Srila Prabhupada or Krishna is if someone brings that knowledge *to them*.

Also, it is great seeing inmates grow from new bhaktas to experienced preachers. Through their correspondence with IPM devotees, many inmates become enthused and begin sharing Krishna Consciousness with other inmates. Some pass out issues of Back to Godhead, some place Srila Prabhupada's books in the chapel library, some even hold weekly classes on the Bhagavad-gita.

Lastly, I would say that I genuinely enjoy the close, personal relationships that I have developed with incarcerated bhaktas via our correspondence. The inmates that I am writing are *so eager* to learn about Krishna. They relish hearing about Krishna, His various incarnations, and the activities of His devotees. This level of gratitude among inmates is seldom seen in any other preaching field.

What the inmates have to say



“Our program has grown a lot. New men are becoming interested in Krsna consciousness. I give a Bhagavad-Gita class every day on the yard. Then we have our own worship service. Preaching is my life. And my friends always ask, “Why is it, no matter what we start talking about, we end up talking about Krsna?” And you know your friends see you as a priest when they say they’re sorry for letting a cus word slip.

We have many interfaith discussions. And so many faiths are coming to our worship service. Christians, Buddhist, Islam, Wicca, and even two Vedanta impersonalists. We all chant Hare Krishna together. And dance in great joy!

In prison there are many ways to trick men into some devotional service. Like honoring prasadam. After I offer my veggie tray to the Lord, I like to ask the men sitting at my table if they’d like something off my tray. I also like to buy a bag of Jolly Ranchers (candies), offer them to the Lord, then go around asking, “Care for a Jolly Rama?” The men simply love it. And can’t get enough!

At our worship, we try to engage everyone. Like the chapel orderly, by setting up a fan, or to bring a table, something, anything. And the chaplain, who lights the candle. He’s made so much advancement over the past 6 years, he was dancing down the hall, singing Hare Krsna maha mantra, matches in hand, last time.

Some men bought japa beads at our canteen and chanted Hare Krsna! They read Prabhupada’s books and preach to their friends.

Actually, due to wonderful devotees like you, this whole prison has become a holy Dhama! Because Prabhupada has come in the form of his books, CDs and DVDs.”

Bhakta James, Salem, Oregon

“I would like to say thank you for everything that you have helped me with. I appreciate it so very much, and thank you for showing me the way to our sweet Lord Krsna. Thank you for the recent Back to Godhead magazine; I enjoyed every article in it.

I also appreciate the books you sent. They sure have helped me in my spiritual life. The Gita is my favorite; I’ve already read it cover to cover three times and I’ve just started it for the fourth time. All I do with my time is read and chant; I rarely watch any T.V. It’s all garbage on the screen.”

C. Thornton, Leavenworth, Kansas

“Before I go any further thank you from the depths of my heart for taking the time out to correspond as well as educate me!!!

Yes I was at school, for which I’m a clerk, and a couple of dudes where discussing what they believe in and the peace of mind they in now. So I ask to explain and was told to write and I would receive a pen-pal to a guide me though.

I’m thrilled cause I’m trying to soak up all the knowledge I can!!!”

Bhakta Shawn, Susanville, Calif.

“I should be getting out before the end of this year. I definitely plan on visiting the Krsna center there and continuing in my spiritual growth. I feel that my life finally has meaning! I’ve spent my entire life caught up in material desires. My time here in prison and reading the works of Srila Prabhupada have made me realize how little this material world really means and what my true meaning of life is- Krsna consciousness!”

Bhakta Bradley, Beaumont, TX



November 2009 Preaching Report !

Set (SB or CC): 1 Caitanya Caritamrta Set

Maha-Big: 500 + pages: 15

Big **Hard**: 300 to 500 pages: 28

Big **Soft**: 300 to 500 pages: 9

Medium: 150 to 300 pages: 13

Small: 50 to 150 pages: 45

Magazines: 10 to 50 pages : 6

BTGs: 53

BOOKS not written by Prabhupada: 20

This is the activity report of Bhakta Dave, Bhakti-lata Dasi and a volunteer who wishes to remain anonymous.

If you are sending books and magazines to inmates, please contact us as we would love to include your scores in this monthly newsletter.



Want to help?

ISKCON Prison Ministry has a variety of needs you can help with:

1) We need enthusiastic **pen-pal preachers**. You can write one or more inmates: if you are interested, please contact us and we will discuss it with you!

3) You can become part of our *Adopt-an-Inmate* program by

- becoming a regular IPM monthly donor.
- Giving an occasional or even a one-time donation (every cent makes a difference in an inmate's life).
- sponsoring the postage for the *Freedom Newsletter*: \$100 a month

4) Donate:

- **books**

All books are welcome. At this moment, we especially need:

Bhagavad-Gita
Krsna Book
Nectar of Devotion
Nectar of Instruction

- Krsna conscious **DVDs** and **CDs**
- Krsna conscious pictures; so inmates can look at these windows to the spiritual world.

5) Have a little bit of time and know how to type? Please contact us: we have a lot of quotes from inmate letters that need typing.

If you are inspired by this preaching program and desire to help in any way, please contact us!



A Big Thank You to Our Donors!

Sashi Raina: \$50 Bhavananda Dasa: \$150

Linda, Radha & Mickey Singer: \$150

Sacred Threads (shipping): \$117.77

In addition, \$116 were raised by Mukunda and Bhakti-lata with an IPM table set up in November at the Alachua temple. We sold some extra books we had, copies of inmate art, and some tapes.

All our preaching efforts are possible only due to the generosity of the above few donors. We are most grateful for their generosity!

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Art by Bhakta Pedro