

# PRISON-ASHRAM PROJECT

Summer 1982

Newsletter

*Once someone asked a well-known Thai meditation master, "In this world where everything changes, where nothing remains the same, where loss and grief are inherent in our very coming into existence, how can there be any happiness? How can we find security when we see that we can't count on anything being the way we want it to be?" The teacher, looking compassionately at this fellow, held up a drinking glass which had been given him earlier in the morning and said, "You see this goblet? For me, this glass is already broken. I enjoy it, I drink out of it. It holds my water admirably, sometimes even reflecting the sun in beautiful patterns. If I should tap it, it has a lovely ring to it. But when I put this glass on a shelf and the wind knocks it over or my elbow brushes it off the table and it falls to the ground and shatters, I say, 'of course.' When I understand that this glass is already broken, then every moment with it is precious. Every moment is just as it is and nothing need be otherwise."*

*from WHO DIES? AN INVESTIGATION OF CONSCIOUS  
LIVING & CONSCIOUS DYING, by Stephen Levine*



## ON THE ROAD AGAIN . . .

We'll be away from our office for about two months this summer, from mid-June until mid-August, so it would be helpful as usual if you would hold off writing to us during that time. All our mail will be waiting for us when we return, and it will all be answered just as soon as we can get to it; probably by the beginning of September, we'll be caught up to date. We're going to Lama Foundation in New Mexico to be on Ram Dass' staff at a month-long "Retreat Into Love," which should be a good break for us after completing more than a year of housebuilding (we're now in our new home, at last). On the way to and from New Mexico, we'll hopefully be stopping to do a few prison workshops, including one at the Penitentiary of New Mexico in Santa Fe.

## TWO PROJECTS CANCELLED

The Pen-Pal and book projects (Inside-Out Postal Satsang and Prison Book Project), which we've been listing at a Cambridge, MA, address, have both folded for now. If you've written to them and not received an answer, please don't take it personally, there's no longer anyone to answer your letters. We tried to help the projects along for many years, but we're going to let them cease for awhile rather than try to find one more new home for them. If you're an "outside" person who wants a prison pen-pal or who has spiritual books to donate, you can still do that through us at our North Carolina address. However, if you're a prisoner, please don't count on us for matching you to a pen-pal or for being able to send an assortment of books. One of the main reasons the projects folded was that the ratio of prisoners to outside people was more than 100-to-1. There's nothing we can do about this, so it would be best not to rely on us for more than our usual newsletters and *INSIDE-OUT*. If we can do more, we will.

## SOME OFFERINGS FROM THE HEART

Dear Bo,

We have a limited number of copies of our video cassette series, *CONSCIOUS LIVING/CONSCIOUS DYING*, that we can circulate to prisons. The color video series is a three-and-a-half hour, eight-program exploration into life and death which was filmed during two nine-day retreats in Yucca Valley, California, led by Ram Dass and Stephen Levine. Some of the retreat participants were terminally ill, some were nurses, doctors, or counsellors who work with the dying; some were in grief over the loss of a loved one. All came to confront the reality of death and come to terms with their own mortality.

Where possible we prefer that the prison make a copy of our cassette for ongoing use within the institution, and return ours for further circulation. Where that is not possible, the cassette may be kept for as long as four weeks and then returned to use, at which point we'll send the next cassette in the series.

We ask in return that people who view the tapes and find them meaningful write a comment that will help us introduce the tapes to others who have not yet seen them. We would like to have our shipping costs covered if possible, but can probably absorb that expense if necessary.

Just to be is a blessing,  
Joseph Tieger  
Original Face Video  
Box 447  
Grass Valley, CA 95945

Dear Sita,

Thanks for inviting me to share some information about *TRIANGLES* in your newsletter. We are a worldwide organization using the power of prayer and meditation to invoke Light and Love for all humanity. Our co-workers come from all nationalities, races and religions. What unites us is simply our common purpose of lifting the human family a little closer to God.

This is a form of real spiritual service well-suited to prisoners, whose circumstances do not permit them to render a more "outer" type of service. Briefly, our practice is this: Three individuals (who need not necessarily be together physically; they can be anywhere) agree to link up mentally with one another at a certain time each day and then, visualizing their triangle and all other such triangles in the world as a global network circulating Light, recite the following prayer:

### THE GREAT INVOCATION

*From the point of Light within the mind of God  
Let Light stream forth into the minds of men.  
Let Light descend on Earth.*

*From the point of Love within the Heart of God  
Let Love stream forth into the hearts of men.  
May Christ return to Earth.*

*From the center where the will of God is known  
Let purpose guide the little wills of men;  
The purpose which the masters know and serve.*

*From the center which we call the race of men.  
Let the plan of Love and Light work out.  
And may it seal the door where evil dwells.*

*Let Light and Love and Power restore the Plan on Earth.*

For further information about *TRIANGLES* (including our free quarterly bulletin and other info.), write to:

Triangles, Dept. P  
866 U.N. Plaza, Suite 566-7  
New York, NY 10017

Dear Bo & Sita,

Bless you for all the excellent work you do. We would like to offer *SPIRALS* (magazine) to any prison that would like to have the publication in their library. If a prisoner finds it difficult to get the librarian interested, we will send copies directly to the prisoner.

I think *SPIRALS* is particularly helpful to those who are having to rethink the direction of their lives. We have articles on many subjects, most with a spiritual or positive thrust — alternative medicine, alternative lifestyles, nutrition, native American philosophy, the peace movement, alternative sources of energy, intuition, earth changes, sacred places around the world, and so forth.

We so support the work you do.

Vivienne Verdon-Roe  
*SPIRALS*  
Box 13157  
Oakland, CA 94661

## OTHER OFFERINGS . . .

- For prisoners suffering from Herpes Simplex Virus, an excellent free book is available, *YOU'RE NOT ALONE WITH HERPES*, by Tom Mitchell. Write to:

Skylite Communications  
Box 8597  
Chicago, Ill. 60680

- Prisoners can borrow, free of charge, from a large spiritual library operated by:

Lucis Trust  
866 U.N. Plaza, Suite 566  
New York, NY 10017

- Free booklets on Buddhism (Mahayana tradition) are available in English and in Chinese from:

Institute for Advanced  
Studies of World Religions  
2150 Center Ave.  
Fort Lee, NJ 07024

## LETTERS . . .

Dear Bo & Sita,

*I was very troubled recently due to my disappointment, frustration, and accordingly — depression. I thought that I was moving along rather splendidly on the path, learning truths and changing my ways, habits, etc. Then all of a sudden I was alone, totally alone, and in a spiritual rut, stuck you know. I had no one to talk to, to relate to; I wrote letters to places that were supposed to help, send spiritual materials and books, so that I could advance further. I started postal satsang with a person who sent me an introductory letter 30 days ago; nothing else, not a word. This all confounded and puzzled me, until finally it angered me. This led to my disappointment, frustration and depression.*

*Well, I rode this dark horse of misery and self-pity until it died. It took all this for me to see. I have been looking in books, other people's advice and comments, extensive outside sources for what was inside of me all the time. It's like the Indian sage Tagore said, "You can't get truth from books and other people, but you can be truth yourself." Admittedly the books and advice I've received have been and are a great help, they are tools, but I must open my eyes and heart to be able to use them. And now I have*

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I don't believe I'll get stuck again (at least not like that). I just read the lecture that Ram Dass gave at Univ. of Kansas (INSIDE-OUT, pp. 59-83), and it opened a lot of doors for me. Thank God for giving us his workers and teachers, like the two of you and Ram Dass, who work to enlighten the ones who suffer.

I'm still going to set up a spiritual group here soon, but for the present time I want to work on myself more, become centered and stable. I thought that I would need a lot of books and materials to explain myself and my purpose, but now I know this isn't necessary; I just need to cleanse myself so they can see my heart, and my love for them. Take care and bless you,

In universal love,  
CGR



Dear Folks,

I received the copy of SPIRITUAL COMMUNITY GUIDE you sent; I appreciate all the material. I've read INSIDE-OUT and have almost completed AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOGI. I've found both to be very interesting and helpful.

After glancing through the GUIDE, I realized I had some questions. I hope you don't mind being elected to answer them, because I'm not in touch with anyone else about these yoga and meditation matters. With all the choices and all the different types of training available, how do I go about directing myself? In AUTOBIOGRAPHY, Yogananda says that Kriya Yoga is "the" way. I imagine that everyone believes their way is the right way, and I'm also sure that many are heading in the right direction. But I'm also sure there are many impostors who seek only the money end of the spiritual journeys of others. I would like some advice, really any you feel might be appropriate. I feel comfortable with the Prison-Ashram Project and the material I've received.

I'd also like to relay this to you: My wife has been having some problems with her nerves, high blood pressure, etc. She's been home from work and was even afraid to drive too far from home because of the "attacks" as she refers to them. The family doctor prescribed some pills. They didn't work, so he prescribed stronger ones. They made her super drowsy and she felt terrible. I wrote down a breathing exercise for her, and asked her to promise to do this every night and to pray more and even meditate in the morning. Her letters have changed drastically (as people tell me mine have), and she feels better and better. She has quit taking the pills and what surprises me the most is she isn't worrying like she always has.

I sincerely hope this letter finds you well and in the best of spirits. Please take good care of yourselves.

With love,  
D.J.

Dear D.J.,

I'm really glad to hear that you were able to help your wife as you did even while you're inside the walls. That must be a very good feeling for both of you.

About your question — how do you direct yourself, how do you tell the "realies from the phonies" — don't feel alone. Those questions in a sense *are* our spiritual journeys. This process of endless choices — from a beginning meditation class to confronting our deepest "demons" — is the way in which we eventually learn all about ourselves. If we remain open and light enough so that the fear of "mistakes" doesn't paralyze us, our choices and actions will show us what brings us peace and what doesn't, what we're afraid of and what we desire, and perhaps most important of all, the realization that we are fully responsible for our lives by the choices we make.

Through practices such as daily meditation, our minds gradually quiet down enough to be able to *sense* our needs rather than *decide* what to do. As the noise of desires and fears dies down, our own personal path begins to reveal itself more clearly, until finally our "choices" become so obvious that they cease to be choices at all; they're just realizations of our next steps. Joseph Goldstein, a Buddhist teacher, once told me that it makes no difference *what* I do, but rather, the consciousness with which I do it. In that sense, you could study with a "phony" teacher and get very powerful teachings from it; the point being that *you're* the central issue no matter where you go or whom you're with. My Guru, Neem Karoli Baba, was notorious for sending his devotees away to study with other masters. The message seemed to be "go anywhere, study with anyone, do anything, and you'll still find me there." No fears about "wrong" teachings, no competitiveness with "rivals" or any nonsense like that. Just go anywhere, do anything; if you're seeking God, you'll always find what you seek. And conversely, if you're seeking something else — be it group identity, psychic powers, mystical experiences, bliss — then you won't find God even if you're with the Christ. My Guru also used to say, "When a pick-pocket looks at a Saint, all he can see are His pockets."

With this sort of light perspective, all of the decisions you ask about become so much easier, because the stakes change drastically. Instead of thinking that your decisions may mean the difference between your damnation and salvation, it becomes more a matter of simply choosing to study in a way that interests you. If it fails to hold your interest, then go elsewhere. Especially as you interact with teachers and groups who feel their way to be the best or only way, try to keep in mind that you already know where a teaching must lead you: into your own Heart.

Love,  
Bo



HAPPY TRAILS . . .

We're ever grateful for the continued blessing of being connected with you all. Hope you've enjoyed this newsletter as we've enjoyed sending it to you. May all of us just keep on truckin' toward becoming simple, truthful and loving. We'll be in touch when we get back from our trip.

Love as always,  
Bo & Sita



The Prison-Ashram Project is supported solely by unsolicited private donations.  
All contributions, grants, or trusts are always needed and welcomed.



*A Project of the  
Hannuman Foundation*

*Rt. 1, Box 201-N  
Durham, N.C. 27705*

**PRISON-ASHRAM PROJECT**

Non-Profit Org.  
U.S. Postage  
**PAID**  
Durham, N.C.  
Permit No. 205



*All religions are the same.  
They all lead us to God.  
God is everybody . . . the same blood  
flows through us all, the arms, the  
legs, the heart, all are the same.  
See no difference, see all the same.*

*— Neem Karoli Baba  
(Maharaj-ji)*