

[Prison lightworkers](#)

Category : [December 1993](#)

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Prison lightworkers

Their work makes the milk-toast karma yogi squirm. For over 20 years, Bo and Sita Lozoff have incarcerated themselves in a world most people know nothing about, or want to-prisoners. The souls they befriend have abused, been abused, robbed, been robbed, raped, been raped, killed, and some even killed while behind bars. In all of them, these two ardent worshippers of Lord Hanuman see God, buried, but there. Their guru Neem Karoli Baba directed: "Don't ever shut anyone out of your heart." Bo and Sita chose the hardest people to let in, cons.

When the flowers of the Hippie era finally faded, it was 1969 and reality dramatically dawned for the young couple as they found themselves nursing Bo's dying father in Miami. "His death touched us so deeply we found it hard to travel down the [old] road again." The next sobering samskara was hearing a judge's voice: "I remand you [Bo's brother] to the custody of the Federal Bureau of Prisons for a period of not less than twelve and not more than forty years without possibility of parole." "It was devastating," Bo recalls. "We wandered again, now with our newborn son Josh [now called 'Lakshmana'], and took up life in an ashram-meditation, yoga and long hours of farm work. Then we visited my brother in 1973, at the federal prison in Terre Haute, Indiana. Afterwards, it felt like time to put some energy back into the world and prisons were as much in need of help as any place I could imagine-ugly, barbaric, counterproductive and insane."

Thus was born the Prison-Ashram Project-now called Human Kindness Foundation-"offering common-sense spiritual friendship and helping people figure out how to discover their vastness in a 6'X9' cell." For two decades, Bo and his wife Sita have corresponded with nearly 2,000 inmates, reached another 200,000 with dharma literature, held hundreds of yoga workshops in over 400 prisons and published a prison newsletter. In 1985, Bo completed an unusual book dedicated to those in jails called "We're All Doing Time." With 78,000 copies now "behind bars," it has come to be called the "Convict's Bible." Its first 100 pages are packed with Hindu meditation techniques from hatha yoga to pranayama, kundalini/chakra

charts, pictures and quotes of souls such as Aurobindo, Anandamayii Ma and Gandhi, no-nonsense lessons on karma and kindness, mind laws and loads of love. The last half of the book is a heart rending collection of Bo's personal letters with those behind bars. A few excerpts follow:

Dear Bo, May God bless all of you lovely human beings at Prison Ashram. I am now dead-locked in a cell 24 hours a day and come out only for a 3-minute shower, 3 times a week. They handcuff you behind your back and escort you to wherever you are going. At any rate-how beautiful a monastery this is. The book Gandhi the Man had the tears just rolling down my face as he was such a beautiful human being-so much what most of us would like to be. I only wish I had that kind of real courage and heart and love. But like most violent people, I am a coward and my fear causes me to act like an animal. I do hope you have time to write, as I really love hearing from you. Love, Billy.

Dear Bo, We had a massive shakedown and they threw away my Bhagavad Gita, Teachings of Buddha and The Teachings of Lord Chaitanya. I realize that I should love everyone no matter who it is; but I can't find it in my heart to love the guards here. Would you please give me some advice because I really would like to love everyone. Much love, Larry.

Dear Bo, Too often prison takes away all the self-esteem while offering no glimpse of a means to build anything to take its place. The con seldom comes to realize that there is something within him that is better than what he's seen of himself-that the Divine can be found within him. Love, Jim

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Hinduism Today: How is it that so many convicts really respond to you? Bo Lozoff: First, we look straight at their murders and rapes, brutality and violence. We embrace it rather than shut it out. Our lineage is the Divine Mother's embrace. We embrace everybody. Maybe that's why prisoners trust us. Yet at the same time, we

don't accept that they don't need to do work on themselves. We're real clear with them about karma. But our guru's teachings remind us that these people are God. After having been cursed to rob and rape, now this is God endeavoring to return to His Godly nature, and we are privileged to help. Prisoners are in a real hell realm but [we tell them] still they can use that opportunity to root out some ego in a really phenomenal way.

When they come to us, they say, "I'm just desperately tired of being me. I hate me. I tried my religion. But basically, I'm the bad guy in my religion. I know I'm the bad guy. I don't need a preacher telling me again and again I've sinned. That's not helping me. So, you have any better news?" We say, yeah, great news. How about, "Everything you've done, right up to this moment, has clicked just according to plan. You don't have to erase the past. Let the past be what humbles you and creates your compassion. If you've committed rape, can you imagine ever feeling superior to anyone again? Use that shame to humble yourself." We teach them the law of karma and though you can't go back, you can change the tide, the future.

One of our friends, the guy who we think is going to be the resident manager of our new Kindness House, who did 10 years prison for a murder he didn't even commit, Terry Moore (right), was in touch with us during his years in prison and became radically spiritually transformed. He's a huge guy. When he saw two guys about to get into a fight he would go over, break it up and hand them a little xerox photo of Maharaji and say, "Go look at this guy for about ten minutes and then see if you feel the same." He figured he must have saved a hundred lives doing this over ten years.

HT: How did you find your guru? BL: When I was just a Jewish kid growing up in Miami, Florida, I was dreaming of this person I called my Magic Man for several years. Then in 1970, I picked up Ram Dass' book *Be Here Now* and saw the picture of his guru, Neem Karoli Baba. He was the one I had been dreaming about. I went to see Ram Dass. He told us Baba was a Hindu saint and considered an incarnation of Hanuman. He then told us the story of the Ramayana. From that day onwards, we started reading the Ramayana as a family tradition. I got obsessed with Hanuman. When Hanuman first meets Ram, Ram says: "He is most dear to me who has the steadfast conviction that he is the servant and that the Lord, in the form of all animate and inanimate creation, is his master." From the first time that I read that, I knew that that was my entire spiritual perspective. That's the Hanuman lineage-the lineage of service... I once was fortunate enough to have His darshan. We chant the 40-verse Hanuman Chalisa a couple times a day.

Terry Moore

Bo Lozoff wrote me and asked me to pen a few words for Hinduism Today about my experiences in prison and how Maharaji Neem Karoli Baba influenced not only myself but those around me. My first connection with him was through Bo's book Inside Out. By using some of the meditation techniques, I changed. I began corresponding with Bo and Sita and perfecting a simplified method of sharing Maharaji's teachings through Bo's books and Baba Neems's picture-the one with the big toothless grin. I learned from Bo to simply love those around me-be a friend and share the way to true freedom with those who asked. I kept pocket-size pics of Neem Karoli Baba with the big grin. The pictures were shared with every angry inmate who came to me for a shoulder or rap. I would say, "Please, sit for a moment, look at that face-try to stay angry. I bet that you cannot." Without fail, the result was a fragile smile and sometimes outright laughter. Always that person took the picture with him, and most kept them posted on lockers, walls and mirrors for a reminder to lighten up. Invariably, Neem Karoli's picture was a joyful, peaceful, calming influence wherever my travel's through Ohio's prisons took me. He is hanging in offices of case workers and psychologists and work places. He is in the heart of so many. One time an inmate, a friend, was angry and cursing me and assumed a threatening posture. I got quiet and thought what to do. That little voice of Love in my heart said, "Hug him." I obeyed and with all my heart I loved him. He tensed up. Then this great big muscle-bound black man burst out laughing. He then confided with me why he was so hurting inside. "Love Everybody All the Time," is still posted in many places in several prisons on 8 1/2" X 11" typing paper, I'm told.

In Loving Kindness, Terry Moore