



I offer my respectful obeisances unto Sri Krsna Caitanya and Lord Nityananda, who are like the sun and moon. They have arisen simultaneously on the horizon of Gauda to dissipate the darkness of ignorance and thus wonderfully bestow benediction upon all. CC Adi 1.2

**July/August 2015**

## *Krishna Kirtan's Continued Journey*



*For those of you who read the previous IPM NEWS, you will remember that inmate bhakta, Richard Chase—affectionately nicknamed “Krishna Kirtan” by Sarva-drik prabhu—was very well situated in a prison in Petersburg, Virginia where he had started what became a very successful and popular Hare Krishna program at the chapel library. Last year, however, he was transferred to a prison in Lisbon, Ohio where the chaplains were quite inimical toward Krishna Consciousness and who prevented him from starting a Hare Krishna program at their chapel. However, after some tribulations in Lisbon, Krishna Kirtan has been transferred back to the Petersburg prison, back in the swing of things! Sarva-drik prabhu is still visiting and leading amazing programs, which are enthusiastically attended by many inmates! Below Krishna Kirtan recounts the first dream he had of Prabhupada, in 2006.*

### **SRILA PRABHUPADA'S VISIT**

**W**hen I first discovered Krishna Consciousness in 2006, it was during the pre-trial phase of my incarceration. Right after my arrest, I was abandoned by those in my prior Christian faith. I was sure God had left me too. He was showing no mercy and my prosecutor was going for the throat.

Uncertainty, fear, hopelessness, and impending doom pervades one's spirit during pre-trial. It can squash God out of a guy's heart. During the depth of my despair, another inmate slid a magazine beneath my cell door. It was “Back to Godhead” and my life has not been the same ever since.

I learned, when I was overcome with those dark emotions that chanting Hare Krishna and reading Srila Prabhupada's books brought more light and relief than anything else could. The worse it got, the more I chanted, and the better I felt. I began writing to Bhakti-lata dasi and she answered every question, every concern, and returned letter for

letter. Her kindness was transcendental and she kept pointing me to Srila Prabhupada. It was difficult to understand at first- how a mere human could be so revered and worshipped. I soon came to understand Prabhupada is no mere human. He is Sri Guru.

As I continued to chant, a transformation began- I was becoming a devotee. It was as if Srila Prabhupada's words spoke directly to my heart, drenching it in love for Lord Krishna.

The Christian resentments I had toward God for not helping me turned into Vedic lessons of karmic responsibility. Everything regarding my fate began to make sense. Govinda, the reservoir of pleasure revealed His mercy to me- I could be doing life it weren't for him. I deserved so much worse than what I was getting. As I began to absorb these realizations, I started to find peace.

One night, lying on my bunk while reading Bhagavad-gita *As It Is*, I was slipping into sleep, the *Gita* straddling my chest. But, then I heard a sound to which all prisoners must be alert- jingling keys. Glancing through my door, I noticed bright color filling the small glass window the guards look through- a rare sight in this world of grey concrete steel. I rose, setting my Shastra on my pillow. A small, smiling man, my height, in brilliant saffron robes, glowed on the other side of the door. At that moment, the barrier glided open and there was Srila Prabhupada standing before me. My heart leapt. Instantly, I collapsed at his lotus feet, trying to gather the dust from them to smear upon my head as I broke into tears. He pulled me up, handed me a japa mala and said, "Chant 16 rounds of the Hare Krishna mantra each day." I took the mala and then realized I was still lying on my bunk, the *Gita* still atop my chest. I looked at my hand, the feeling of Tulasi Devi still lingering between my fingers. That wasn't a dream, I told myself. It was a vision. I knew then that it was my duty to spread Krishna Consciousness to as many inmates as possible. I sat up and the *Gita* fell into my lap, opened at the 18<sup>th</sup> Chapter, verse 66 jumping from the page, "Abandon all varieties of religion and just surrender unto me. I shall deliver you from all sinful reaction. Do not fear."

**Richard Chase**  
**Petersburg, VA**

**Note:** Please look for two letters from Krishna Kirtan in the *Inmate Excerpts* of this newsletter.

---

## Poem Corner

---

### Word Raga

by Bhakta Jon Holmstrom

The scientific fantasy,  
a stairway to the stars.  
Like carnivores  
they drive some metal cars.  
Money is so valuable,  
some paper solid gold  
but all your bills and politics  
can't cure your nasty cold.  
The zero on the blackboard;  
the answer of a fool.  
Is life just earning money  
and eating like a ghou?

Life cannot be zero;  
Krsna has His features,  
and all His cows and calves and bulls  
are not some soulless creatures.  
Lord Siva is the father of material affairs,  
and all the birds and animals  
have food and nests and lairs.  
Lord Vishnu is the Supersoul,  
the origin of thought.  
The cosmos is personal,  
it's not some empty pot.  
Hare Krsna music themes,  
composed of words.  
People who don't chant are like some wingless birds.



## Inmate Letter Excerpts

Dear Sarva-drik prabhu,

I just wanted to express my wonder at the Lord's mercy He took on me. It truly had everything to do with Sri-Sri Radha-Krishna and Sri-Sri Gaura-Nitai. I realized a couple weeks ago that Lord Caitanya is the most merciful of all the Lord's incarnations. And Lord Nityananda's mercy is SO infinite.

Anything could have happened prabhuji - anything. I owe Him EVERYTHING I have. It is all His anyway - but as I had mentioned - I'm going to be a different person when I get back which will have a LOT to do with my effectiveness as a Vaisnava. You can believe that the attendance at the service - especially when you return will be significantly larger. I know that many attended just because I asked them to, but perhaps I can attract more based solely on the principles of Krishna Consciousness and not because their friend "Yogi asked them to come."

It was so funny last night in the holding tank, waiting to get processed, a young guy who I thought was Hispanic looked at me and said "You are Hare Krishna?" I asked, "How did you know?" He said, "I read the Sanskrit on your arm." I asked him, "How do YOU know Sanskrit?" He said, "I'm from India. I'm Punjabi. I'm a Sikh but I studied Sanskrit." So I started saying the prayers and quoting Sanskrit from the Gita and he was amazed that an American could know as much. This spoke to me of the opportunities of preaching the Holy Name in India.

On the plane here, all shackled up and crammed-in, three to a row, I freely gave Harinam to two young black men who never heard of Krishna Consciousness. I explained to them how we are NOT the body.

**Richard Chase**  
**Petersburg, Virginia**

Dear Mother Bhakti-lata,

I am back at Petersburg, through Lord Nitai and Sri Radha's mercy. At the last kirtan that Sarva-drik attended here, there were twenty inmates and the room was *packed*. Chaplain Thompson and I are talking about moving our growing group to a larger space in the chapel. I am so blessed to be here and our group is so fortunate to have what we have. Sarva-drik prabhu also gave an awesome group Gita study course which we will be beginning soon.

I have been blessed beyond my wildest imaginings. To be able to preach Krsna consciousness is

so sublime. Being in Krsna consciousness gives us unlimited happiness even in this material world. Inmates especially need to realize this. There needs to be a KC program in every city, county, state, and federal institution. We need it desperately and I am so very blessed to be able to spread just a tiny fractional bit of it to others. The work that you, IPM, and all the Vaisnava-desire-trees are truly fulfilling the spiritual desires of all of us most fallen and conditioned souls.

**Richard Chase**  
**Petersburg, Virginia**

Dear Bhakti-lata Dasi,

Please accept my dandavat pranams. Enclosed is a meager donation for the seva the IPM provides so benevolently for those fortunate jivas who have heard the message of the Bhagavata, which is so munificently gifted to such fallen incarcerated souls such as myself by Srila Prabhupada. Forgive me for the thirteen years delay in repaying such kindness. May this donation somehow touch the heart of a prisoner as the IPM continues to touch mine. Prabhupada, ki, jaya! Your servant,

**Bhakta Thomas Shipley**  
**Appleton, Wisconsin**



I am so blessed and grateful to you, Lord Krishna and all who are able to help me in this endeavor... I pray and chant a minimum of six rounds a day and working my way up as my time, schedule, and opportunity allows in the prison environment, as well as constantly chanting verbally and in my mind at all times possible, while walking, working, eating, and more... as the scriptures tell us:

Ekam sat viprah bahuda vadanti, "The truth is one, it is spoken under various names."

**James W.**  
**Huntsville, Texas**

My name is Marvin Earl Carter Jr. and I'm an inmate at the North Central Unit in Arkansas. I have been following the Bhagavad-Gita for some time now. And I do study of other faiths but this one speaks to me a lot and I can feel it in my heart when I read of its divine grace. But I'm a man with a dark past, I was convicted of sexual assault. I had no sense of reason or faith in myself to live anymore until I found Krsna. He is truly a new part of my life and the way that I see things now.

It is just a little different for me as being a young Black man that is following Sri Krsna and studying the Bhagavad-Gita.

I am about thirty years old and the reason that I'm writing to ISKCON Prison Ministry is to ask you if there is some way that I can speak to people from the world that follows this path in life, so that I can better understand this way of life in prison. The only way to truly know how this life and path is lived is to be able to speak to people that live it. Someday I do wish to meet someone who shares the Hindu faith.

**Marvin C.**  
**Calico Rock, Arizona**



[My books were taken] The only thing I was able to keep was my Gita which is all I really need anyway. Association would be nice At least the prison accepts Krishna Consciousness as a religion though they will not work with me on the diet or faith items of any kind. We are surrounded by feed-lots and slaughter houses here and the darkness in which these people live in shocking. So me and the Lord are just silently waiting for a door to open. I make beads out of string with knots in them but the guards steal them when they find them and I can't chant in the open with them. I have found another

devotee here, Bhakta Doug Gaylor. I also have another young guy that is showing great interest here. I meet him in the gym and answer questions the best I can. He has a Gita and has a good gentle soul.

**Thomas L.**  
**Sterling, Colorado**

I wish to express my deepest thanks to you & the ministry for the prayer beads & all the books that you've sent me; it's really great; Hare Krsna! I'm really enjoying everything & I've been attending the Saturday meetings I am learning more each day! My chanting is coming along nicely yet I know I still have a long way to go; I've been doing four to six rounds (not enough!) but today, I've done nine rounds & the day/night isn't over yet :)! Please accept my gratitude & thanks again!

**Thomas C.**  
**Raiford, Florida**

Let me start by saying that it took me a while to grasp the teaching of His Divine Grace & of Bhagavad-gita, but the fog is beginning to clear and I am experiencing an awakening of self. I've had an ample amount of time to sit in solitude, chant & study the Gita, since that is the only book I now possess. It is truly changing my way of thinking, albeit slowly. Due to the circumstances of my life up until this point, I still carry around massive amounts of baggage and negativity. But by chanting and remembering to offer as sacrifice the fruits of my work, I am chipping away at that layer of illusion.

Truly, the influence of Krsna Consciousness is working in my life. I thank you with endless kindness for the services that you provide to those of us striving behind the concrete and steel walls. Sincerely,

**Tracy G.**  
**Polkton, North Carolina**





# Chaplains' Appreciation

7/2/15

We received the box and will pass on the Religious materials.  
We would like to thank you again for your Generosity and Kindness!  
Brightest Blessings to you and your Organization,

**Reverend Michael Sims**  
**Assembly of Ancient Paths Church**  
**Ellendale, Tennessee**

7/13/15

Greetings,  
I received the material you had sent. Thank you very much on behalf of our inmate in need, Alex George.  
Blessings,

**Chaplain Peter Roomet, Chester County Prison**  
**West Chester, Pennsylvania**

7/13/15

Greetings;  
I received your donation today at our facility. Thank you so much for the assortment of materials and the various subject titles, we really appreciate it.

Your great generosity and concern for the incarcerated is to be commended.

I wish you all the best.

Sincerely,

**Chaplain Michael Bunow, Men's Downtown Jail**  
**Modesto, California**

## THANK YOU to all our Supporters!

Thank you for sharing your heart with the inmates. 😊 Please forgive me if I forgot anyone, and let me know so I can add your name in the next newsletter.

### Our donors since last newsletter:

Candramauli Swami  
Shefali Majmudar  
Kamlesh Patel  
Nityodita dasa  
Mahasaumya & Kim  
Radha-Bhakti dasi (Canada)



### And our monthly Donors:

Anonymous donor  
Aritra Nath  
Amala Gaura dasa  
Bhavananda dasa  
Deepali Mittal  
Dina Sharana dasa  
Jitarati dasa

Kalindi dasi (Hopping)  
Maya Sudana dasa  
Mickey Singer  
Radha-Jivan dasa  
Radha Vinod dasa  
Ravi Jadhav  
Rene Waisvisz

Richard House  
Rupa Manjari dasi  
Shashi Raina dasa  
Stava Mala dasa  
Satyanarayana dasa  
Yudhisthira dasa



Lord Nrsimhadeva, by Kalki Wirth, Corcoran, California

# HOW CAN I HELP?

Many devotees feel inspired by this prison program and want to know how to participate.

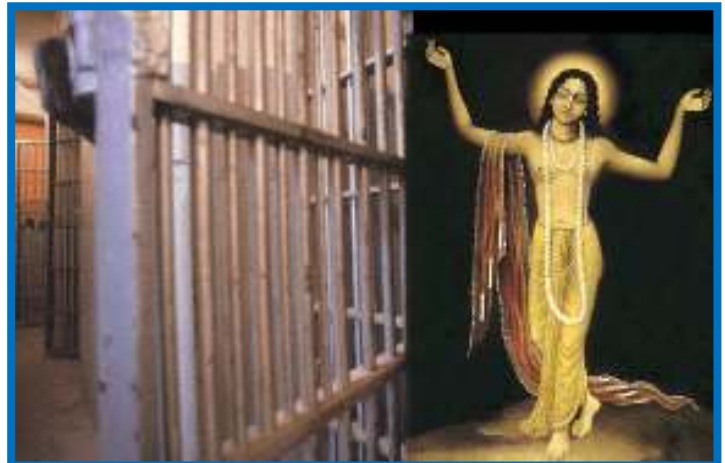
Here are a few ways:

- **PRESSING NEED OF THE MOMENT:** We have many japa malas, but not bead bags or counter beads to go with them. We need **280 bead bags and counter beads!**
  
- Correspond with one or more inmates.  
To be successful in this endeavor, you need to be motivated, to feel truly inspired by this service, and, also, to like/love writing. Of course, you also need to practice Krsna consciousness yourself, so your words have potency. If you would like to correspond with inmates, please email Kirtan Rasa Dasa at: [kirtanras108@gmail.com](mailto:kirtanras108@gmail.com)
- Give a one-time or a monthly donation (we provide tax-deductible receipts).
- Donate **DVDs** and **music CDs**: bhajans, kirtans (new or like new).

## ❖ 3 Donation Options

- 1) Send check or postal money order to:

ISKCON Prison Ministry  
3759 McCreary's Ridge Road  
NBU #46  
Moundsville, WV 26041



- 2) Donate through PayPal at: [www.iskconprisonministry.org](http://www.iskconprisonministry.org)
- 3) For automatic, monthly donations, you can do so on our website (with the PayPal button), or through your bank "Automatic Bill Pay" option, which is free and easy.

We can send you a **tax deductible receipt** at the moment of the donation or at the end of the year, as you wish.

**Questions? Inquiries? Please contact Mukunda dasa or Bhakti-lata dasi at:**

**ISKCON Prison Ministry**  
3759 McCreary's Ridge Road, NBU #46  
Moundsville, WV 26041  
[IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com)  
[www.iskconprisonministry.org](http://www.iskconprisonministry.org)

