

# IPM NEWS

*Dedicated to His Divine Grace  
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada  
Founder Acarya of ISKCON*



**ISKCON Prison Ministry / DBA of Vaisnava Outreach, INC.**

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.  
C.C. Adi 1.2

## March/April 2015

### ONGOING PRISON PROGRAM

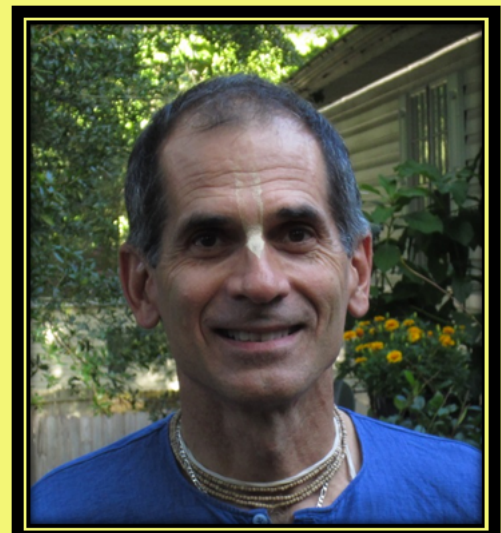
By Sarnga Thakur dasa

**W**e've been visiting Union Correctional Institution for over two years now. The population (2500+) is all men mostly over 50, with long or life sentences. Our group (of five regulars) is quite a mixture - men of Muslim, Christian, Jewish, and impersonal backgrounds. We meet in a classroom, a few minutes' walk from the chapel (I believe our kirtans were too loud for us to stay in the chapel building). The new Senior Chaplain is helpful and appreciative, but we definitely have to take the initiative to get the privileges the other more recognized groups have.

We center our two hours class time on the Bhagavad-gita. In the past our classes have been sessions of spontaneous questions and answers, with a kirtan at the beginning and at the end. Sometimes the process would get so intriguing that we wouldn't get to the Gita or even the last kirtan.

For the last month, however, we've tried a more organized approach where we share the reading of the

English verses, each person taking his turn. We read about fifteen verses per class. The inmates know what verses are scheduled a week ahead of time so they can read ahead, jotting down notes or questions to bring to the next class.



Sarnga Thakur dasa

We briefly discuss any points that come up with each verse, and if there is time, give a short class on a selected verse and purport. The group participation is a lot greater this way than if we simply talk or lecture.

We are concerned though about making the class too rigid in form, wanting to stay open to inspiration and spontaneity from any person.

Even with such a small group there are different levels of seriousness and practice. Gary and Walter seem to be the most committed to the daily life of Krsna consciousness, observing festival days and Ekadasi, chanting, reading, etc. The others - Thomas, Charles and Stephen- are mostly sharing how this element or that of Krsna consciousness fits into their perspective, often using the terms and principles of Krsna consciousness in their speech (sometimes correctly and sometimes not). We offer the "Jaya Om" prayers every time, and everyone bows down on the floor.

We have an unofficial library (books and kartals), which we keep in a locked trunk in our classroom. It seems that if we're discreet, and don't overdo it, we can bring books, BTG's, calendars, etc. and give them personally to an interested inmate without having to go through the

normal process of mailing them these items through mother Bhakti-lata. Bhakta Gary brings pictures and a cloth for our altar there. We're allowed at this point to bring granola bars and other pre-packaged treats, which we offer and share with everyone. We learned recently that we need to sign the Chaplain's list of attendees each week to record our presence for his records.

We would like to bring temple prasadam (especially on festival days), and DVD's of Srila Prabhupada to watch on the TV-DVD player there. Both are requests we haven't resolved yet. We brought these up to the previous senior chaplain, but we never got permission. We also don't have someone with the time to follow-up through emails and phone calls. We've received letters from at least two other inmates from different local facilities that would like a visit from us, but we don't have the volunteers to do it. Stephen has ordered japa beads. For them to receive something like beads in the mail they have to be registered as Hare Krishnas. Perhaps four of them are chanting japa. We sometimes chant japa together and then talk about the experience afterwards.  
Hare Krishna!

Your servant, Sarnga Thakur das



## Drops of Nectar

From Sridhara-syama dasa  
Dallas, Texas

"There is another unit I have been going to now for about four months. There is an elderly ex-Christian preacher there who now considers himself non-religious and practices a mish-mash of impersonalistic /Buddhist philosophy. However, he read through the whole Bhagavad-Gita in thirty-six hours; a span of three days. He has been regularly coming to my visits to this unit but has not started chanting or practicing Krsna Consciousness yet.

I have been thinking that if I can put a set of Srimad-Bhagavatam in his unit then he will be busy reading it for quite some time and will hopefully become a devotee. He is 65 years old now and described a very vivid out of body experience he had back in 1962 wherein he actually saw the four handed form of the Supersoul."



## Inmate Letter Excerpts

Greetings to you and Hare Krsna! Thank you so much for your precious words. I need the love and friendship of Krsna and His devotees to become the man of God I need to be. I am forty-seven years old and my life has been a mess. I am so tired of being lonely. Lord willing He will help me grow into a good man. I am praying that God will cleanse me and help me to have a pure, loving heart so I will never want to act out these animal instincts ever again. I need to stop seeing through eyes of lust. I want to have Lord Krsna's eyes to see everyone as a manifestation of the Lord, to be cherished and honored, not objectified and used for my selfish pleasures. Thank you for the books and the Jhulan Lila picture; it is lovely; it is my favorite possession. Thank you again.

**Patrick G., Dayton, TX**

The huge Bhakti bomb of books you sent got here. Malicious mail-room fiends did everything in their power to get rid of the books. I fought like a Tasmanian devil and achieved the following result/compromise: the books were sent to DOC Headquarters in Colorado Springs, were divided up, and then shot all over Colorado DOC like a big carpet bomb. Some even drizzled back here. They basically then floated through all kinds of rude (and frankly, bigoted) X-Man defense mechanisms and got sucked in regular and chaplains' libraries and--wait for it!-- most prisons in Colorado! Then later I'm in the chaplain's library and the guy goes, "*Hey, Yogi!*" (prison nickname), "*You want any of these free books?*" and right there or the top is "*Krsna, Israel, and the Druze*", a book I treasure so much now. What an adventure! Good work mataji!

**Douglas G., Sterling, CO**

Hare Krsna. I wanted to write you one last time before I get released in mid-march :). My correspondence with Srutadeva Dasa is going so well and I am learning so much from him. I can't thank you enough for setting me up with him to learn from. He's agreed to stay in touch with me upon my release and call him once a week or so. I'll be continuing his correspondence course and get established with Krishna.com. I'm very, very confident everything will be ok when I get released and get on my feet again as long as I NEVER let go of the Holy Name! Thank you for your association over these last couple years as well; always sending me such nice pictures of Srila Prabhupada as well as Sri-Sri Radha-Krsna. You have given me so much guidance in my path of Krsna Consciousness. I have a beautiful and very nice binder in which I've saved every

pamphlet, packet, and such which is very organized. I also have all the beautiful pictures safe and sound and will be using them every day during my japa, when I get out. Krsna has certainly kept me safe and protected after what happened to me with the guard damaging some books and so forth. I ended up using those monies on Krishna.com. Anyhow the library here and the large amount of books you donated here are starting to be read more and more as well. Almost half of the Eastern religion section is all Krishna Consciousness!! I think that's awesome and that eventually people here are bound to come to Krsna. :) I've been taking care of all of Srila Prabhupada's books every day. I'll be sure before I leave that someone I really trust will continue to keep them organized and neat. I think this was a very good place to donate these books too because in this place the turnover rate is so high, meaning many, many, many people will come across Krsna Consciousness material in a shorter period of time. Anyway, I wanted to share all this with you. Also, Srutadeva has a nice, recent picture of me I sent him and he was quite impressed of the transformation from my DOC picture he must've looked up, to the one he now has. That's the difference when you have Krsna with you at all times compared to when you don't. My goodness, it is so nice to have such nice support from ISKCON! I definitely don't feel alone between my family helping me get on my feet financially and ISKCON Prison Ministry helping me get on my feet spiritually. ☺ I truly cannot thank ISKCON enough; I really can't. May Sri-Sri Radha-Krishna continue to bless you and all the beautiful things ISKCON Prison Ministry continues to do for people.

**Bhakta Jeffery B.**

**Chippewa Falls, Wisconsin**

I have received your pamphlets and books. The books have taught me so much; where religion came from, what life's purpose is, how to properly practice religion, who and Krsna is (God), how to perceive other living beings and how to handle a lot of life's situations and circumstances that I've been going through and feeling. I was already a semi-devotee, follower of the Hare Krishna movement, but now I am ready to be a full-fledged devotee. I have learned so much more than I can write in this one letter. I am ready to chant. Thank you for the guidance you are giving me.

I would like to give a special thanks to minister Bhakti-lata Dasi for acknowledging my letters and replying with paraphernalia that is contributing to saving my soul. Thank

you! The work that you all do does more good than you might know. When you reply to people's letters it gives them a sensation of spiritual bliss, it's a feeling of getting an answer from a higher power. And the literature is what

we call soul-food (spiritual/positive, literature or message). The work that you're doing saves lives. I commend you.

**Jeremiah M.  
Menard, IL**

## Poem Corner

### Food for Thought

by Bhakta Patrick Bolerio

In response to the questions to myself  
I ponder the depths of solitude.  
Is there loneliness found in such an environment?  
Is there closure to life's enigmas?  
Found in the quietude of self-imposed isolation,  
Is there relief or madness, sadness or joy,  
Is there silence or the tumult of a myriad of ?'s  
unanswered  
Still raging in my puzzled mind,  
Do I seek appeasement for a troubled heart.  
Slumber for a restless mind,  
Answers to questions no longer,  
At the forefront of my life?  
I sigh a great sigh of relief, of deliverance. The dawn  
of a new day is at hand,  
Happy in my own personal space,  
Peace and quiet,  
Closure.

### Iron Bars Do Not A Prison Make

by Bali Maharaja dasa

Iron bars do not a prison make  
Mind Is Stricter Still  
Enemy Of The Soul Or  
Best Friend As Well  
Surrender To Krsna, The Lord Of The Heart  
Escape That Burning Hell  
Put Out The Fire  
Give Up All Material Desire  
Lay Aside The Phony Drama  
And chant  
Hare Krsna Hare Krsna  
Krsna Krsna Hare Hare  
Hare Rama Hare Rama  
Rama Rama Hare Hare

### Spring has finally come

by Joseph, P., Galesburg, Illinois

Spring has finally come  
Bringing with her the sweet  
Smells amongst soft breezes-perfection;  
This season is so beautiful.

Just like our dear Prabhupada  
He came for us, so pure, carrying  
Upon his lips the holy name  
Hare Krsna  
No, not even spring can compare.

I have given my heart to Krsna  
Laying everything else aside  
Body, mind and speech and serve Him  
Accepting only what He provides

He is my keeper, my light  
My lover and king  
Every moment of my life  
Krsnas praises I shall sing

All glories to You, O Syama!  
All opulent and Supreme  
All glories to You  
My eternal Lord and King



# News from Krishna Kirtan

If you remember from last IPM NEWS, Bhakta Richard (nicknamed Krishna Kirtan because of his love and enthusiasm for kirtan) had just been transferred to an institution in Lisbon, Ohio. He was very hopeful to establish a Krsna conscious program at this new location, as successful as the one at his last location in Petersburg, Virginia. Although at first the chaplains seemed favorable and friendly, they eventually did everything they could to impede the formation of such a program. After many unsuccessful attempts at reasonable dialog, Krishna Kirtan resorted to filing appeals to the prison authorities. Subsequently his cell was searched. All that was found was a Tupperware container with half a grapefruit and three orange quarters that had been stored with ice to preserve them longer.

The ice had melted and it was declared that the fruits, after analysis, were found to have alcohol content. Since the possession of alcohol is a major violation in prison Krishna Kirtan was put in solitary confinement. He was allowed to keep his Bhagavad-gita, but not his glasses without which he can't read more than the boldfaced verses.

Unfortunately, this situation is not unusual in the prison system where the so-called chaplains and other authorities are the kings of their kingdoms. The silver lining? It's possible that because of this so-called violation, Krishna Kirtan may be transferred back to Petersburg, Virginia. Krsna always act in mysterious ways....Please pray that this situation may be resolved within a short time.



## 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:

Puskar dasa  
Madan Gopal dasa  
Ranjan Mukerjee

M. Rangarajan  
Champak & Tarunika Patel



### And our monthly Donors:

Anonymous donor  
Aritra Nath  
Amala Gaura dasa  
Bhavananda dasa  
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Dina Sharana dasa  
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Kalindi dasi (Hopping)  
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Radha Vinod dasa  
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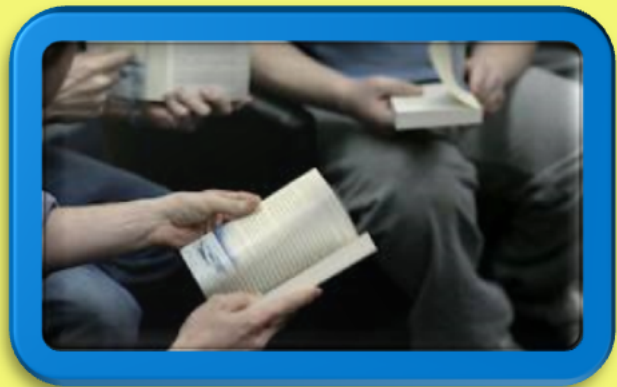
Richard House  
Rupa Manjari dasi  
Shashi Raina dasa  
Stava Mala dasa  
Satyanarayana dasa  
Yudhisthira dasa

# HOW CAN I HELP IPM?

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

Here are a few ways:

- 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  
PO Box 2676  
Alachua, FL 32616-2676

- 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:**

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