

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

## IPM NEWS

ISKCON Prison Ministry / DBA of Vaisnava Outreach, INC.

*“In this age, Kali-yuga, to kill the demons means to stop their demonic activities by the weapon of kirtan, Hari-sankirtan, which is spread by Lord Caitanya's associates.”*

*Srila Prabhupada in London, March 10, 1975*

**Sept/Oct 2019**

## **DEVOTIONAL SERVICE IS MOST IMPORTANT TO ME**

**By David Burkman**

Dear Mother Bhakti- Lata,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

I received the ten BTGs' you sent me as the mail room guy knows me now and said he will look out for me since the other staff in there are lazy and inmate haters- [especially when they are] non-Christians. I can definitely share the extra BTGs as. I find that many people are more willing to read magazines at first than the Bhagavad-gita.



Ujjvala Das had been coming regularly again until just a few weeks ago, when he was taking a few weeks off. He kindly loaned me his kartals and, on the weeks he was gone, I was able to lead the service, involving lessons such as the one on Lord Nrsimha's appearance. That day I read the story of His appearance and the attendees and I discussed the importance of this pastime. I also lead kirtan and then Lord Nrsimha's prayer, which some of them tried to sing with me. We also worked on learning a text from the Bhagavad-gita and the importance of that text. I have also gotten the one aspiring devotee to come out on the recreation yard on Sunday mornings to do kirtan.

On Lord Nrsimha's appearance day I fasted until dusk, led the service at the chapel, and then came back and made cherry cheesecake, kitchari, potatoes, and a fruit salad with homemade yogurt, which I offered to the Lord and His associates before sharing the prasadam with the aspiring devotee and many others in my living unit. I have moved out of the mental health unit as a mentor and the aspiring devotee is still a part of that unit. I am so grateful that Kṛṣṇa allowed me to give such a nice service. I also broke fast with not only the offerings but also by singing His song, Lord Nrsimha's pranayama, and mantra. It is the best I could do in the circumstances, but it felt right.

So, I quit my job here after doing some serious introspection and listening to Kṛṣṇa's subtle signs. I am able to devote more time to my devotional service whereas I was stagnating in the mentor job and the unit situation created problems with me practicing devotional service, which is most important to me above all. I still struggle at times with my devotional service as you can see in my [written] realizations and it can be tough at times, surrounded by so many meat-eating selfish ignorant souls; their energy can sometimes get to me. I also know how my energy gets to them too [in a positive way] and I see the possibilities of being immersed in such groups, but it still tough for a non-pure devotee like myself. I also long for the association with other devotees and that is what I speak of when I mention loneliness from association because I am the only serious aspiring devotee in this facility and, while blessed with another aspiring devotee here, I long

to associate with more advanced devotees than myself. Ujjvala does his best considering the situation and I always look forward to those moments each week when he is able to come. I just wrote back to Śrutadeva a few days ago and am grateful for his association as well.

Yes, I chant twenty rounds a day, but not purely, as I find sometimes my mind wandering even when recalling Kṛṣṇa's pastimes, sadly enough. Sometimes I manage a few pure- non offensive rounds but it varies daily as I have yet to develop pure taste. I do find though that many times I am sad when I finish my rounds, as I want to keep going; yet, while chanting the rounds I struggle. Go figure.

As to my practices of offering arati; because at the moment I am limited, I offer prayer oil on a Q-tip instead of incense, and a handheld light for the ghee lamp, as that is the best I can do for those items. However, I am able to also offer water, a flower/ leaf/ plant, a handkerchief, and a feather for a fan. I also do the prayers, Premadhvani, prayers to Lord Nrsimha, and even the Tulasi puja. The Tulasi puja I sing three different prayers and mentally offer the various items and circumambulation focusing on a Tulasi plant I cared for before going to prison and such. I always chant Sri Sri Guruvastaka in the early morning as part of the service. At 7:00 AM, I do guru puja after greeting the deities [pictures] by singing the Sri Brahma Samhita, I also offer Them nice eatables for breakfast such as fresh fruit, oatmeal, and nuts. It is not perfect temple standards but I am trying. [I pray that] resolving some of the issues with the BOP [Bureau of Prison] will happen so I can increase the standards.

**P.S.:** The homemade Indian food I make in here is very popular. I never eat the chow hall [cafeteria] food and make all my own from uncooked food items. It is great for spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness and Kṛṣṇa's mercy. A guy here had a laddu (super popular in here) yesterday and was telling everyone else to have one and how they were "Hare Kṛṣṇa balls" (his exact words). He began telling how great Hare Kṛṣṇa people are, his time around the Dallas temple as a kid, his remembrance of these "balls" being just like these,

etc. I was smiling the whole time and answering questions in between. Mind you, he is a big, physically imposing, illegal Mexican drug dealer and gang member with tattoos all over his body—even his face. Yet, he lit up like that little child he once was and “infected” those around him with that energy as the laddus I made quickly

disappeared. He is another one who, when he sees me, he does the Pranams hands and says “Hare Kṛṣṇa” to me. I smile and offer Pranams and say “Hare Kṛṣṇa” to [him, who is] another jivatma, and to Kṛṣṇa who resides as the Paramatma in all of us. Jaya Kṛṣṇa!



## Inmate Letter Excerpts

Last night Andrew received the package you sent him. He said THANKS! He reads the Gita and Srila Prabhupada’s other books every day. I told him that he should write you a letter to tell you how the books you sent him have helped him. So far I’ve seen, you are the only person in the free world who has shown him any kindness. I also received the books you sent me. I keep Kṛṣṇa consciousness books on display on my bunk for anyone who’s interested. Thank you.

**Gerald N.**

**Lake Butler, Florida**

I found the answer to my caffeine addiction and my food compulsion—chanting!  
The more I chant, the better I get. I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I listen to my Kṛṣṇa CDs every day. Pray for me.

**Sean C.**

**St. Peter, Minnesota**

Namaste and Hare Kṛṣṇa, Beloved Vaisnavas!  
It’s been approximately a decade since I was in last contact with you. Anyway, I’m back and Sri Sri Radha-Kṛṣṇa won’t let me get away. They always draw me back to acknowledgement of my real constitutional position as their eternal servant-Haribol!

I am not nearly four months into my 39th year in prison. I arrived in 1980 at age 24 and I’ll be 63 on

3/15/19. I will be out in five years with Lord Kṛṣṇa’s mercy! My first memorable encounters with ISKCON devotees was in 1971 on Bourbon Street in New Orleans. I was attracted to Bhakti at first sight and I still am.

All glories to Srila Prabhupada

**Jerry R.**

**Crestview, FL**



Thank you for the booklets. I enjoyed them. The letter and the booklets you sent made me understand more than I have known before. I have been into Hatha Yoga for many years. This is new and so far I have enjoyed learning and reading about Bhakti Yoga and chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa. It’s relaxing while I meditate. I hope we can keep this up. I would also like to know if you have any ministries in Conroe, Texas at all. If so, I would like

to go to one when I get out and continue to learn this path to spirituality. I hope my letter finds you in the best of health. May Lord Kṛṣṇa bless you!

**Anthony M. D.**

Hare Kṛṣṇa! Thank you for the books. I received them gladly. I've learned that the world in which we live in is a vast illusion and that I should not become attached to its material existence. Prior to reading the books, I had some knowledge on Karma, but now it has expanded. One other thing I learned is that by chanting the Maha Mantra, I can free myself from distrust, misdoubt, and anxiety. I've studied a little of the *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is*. The inmate who had a copy of this book was later transferred to another unit.

**Johnny F.**

**Pine Bluff, AR**

Just to let you know that all the books including the Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta, with the religious materials, has arrived. Our kind regards to you, the devotees, and this ministry, in providing us these priceless transcendental books and religious materials. We are in debt to your kind service. May Kṛṣṇa continue to bless you and this ministry.

We are overwhelmed that the devotees gave us support and such a beautiful gift. We are ecstatic!

With much appreciation, we thank you for providing to a bunch of rascals and helping us in achieving Bhakti and giving us all a chance.

In His service, your humble servant,

**Charles B.**

**Tennessee Colony, Texas**

**[SEE HIS THANK YOU CARD BELOW, SIGNED BY HIS GROUP OF BHAKTAS]**



**Above: Charles B.'s Thank you card, signed by his group of bhaktas**





## The New IPM Website is LIVE!!!!!!

[iskconprisonministry.org](http://iskconprisonministry.org)

After years of dreaming of a better, more modern IPM website for the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada, today it finally manifested. I felt like crying out of joy! Kṛṣṇa helped me make this desire a reality by inspiring Svarbhanu prabhu to embrace this project as his service. I am so very grateful to him.

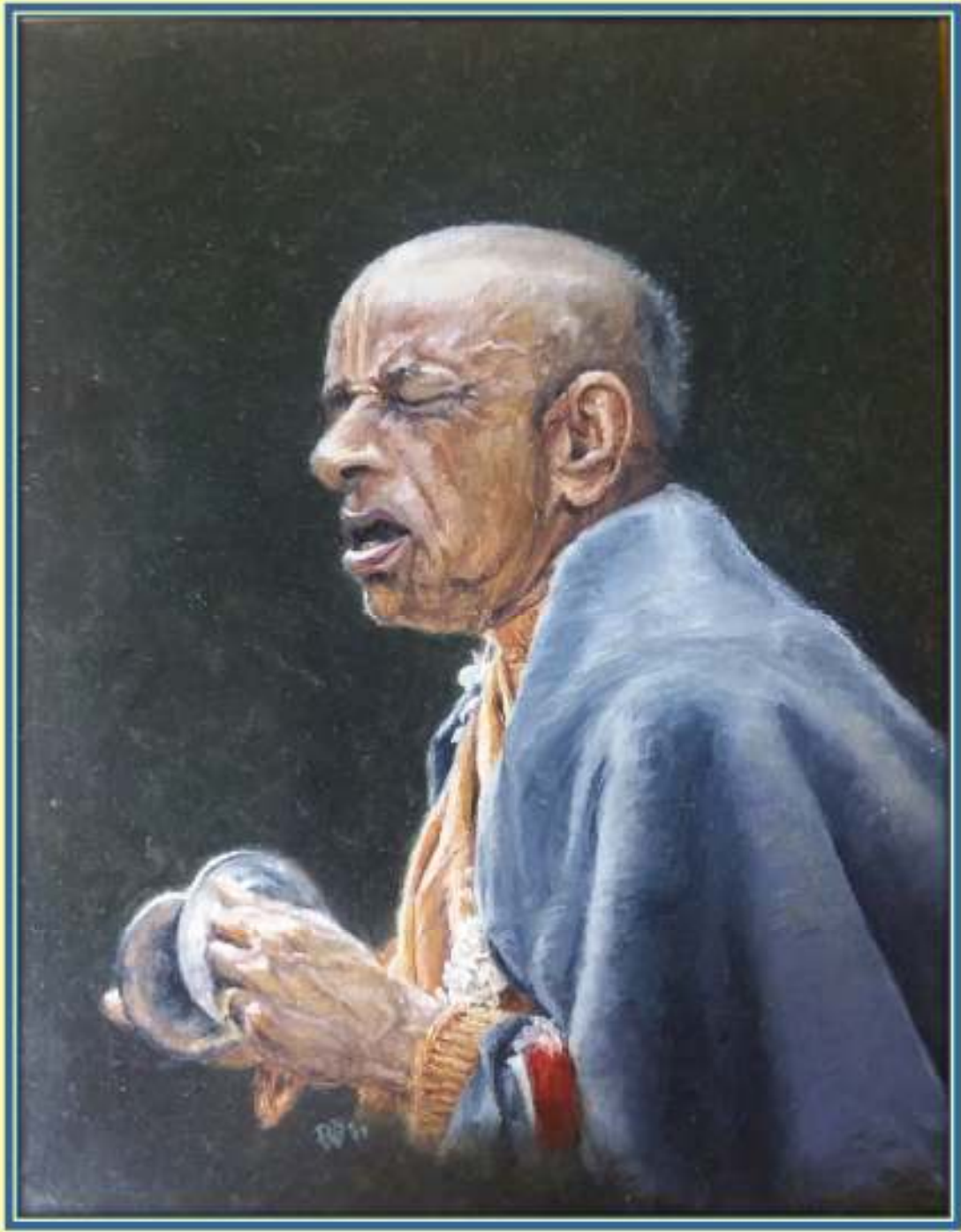
For the very first time, all of the inmates' artwork is beautifully displayed and easily accessible to all of you. You can double click on any drawing or painting to enlarge it and read which inmate created it. A most wonderful website! 😊

All of the inmates' writing is similarly easy and pleasant to browse through.

This website is a splendid vehicle to share all the prison ministry preaching nectar with all of you. I pray you will derive inspiration from it and take pleasure in exploring it!

**Your servant, Bhakti-latā Dasi**

**Inmate Art!**



**Painting by inmate Bhakta David Burkman**

# THANK YOU to ALL our SUPPORTERS!

Your generosity is what keeps this program going! 😊 If I forgot anyone, please forgive me and let me know so I can include your name in the next IPM NEWS.

## Our donors since last newsletter:

Amal Bhakta Swami  
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Śrutadeva Dasa  
BTG Office (500 back issues of BTGs)  
Anonymous

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## And our monthly Donors:

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Anonymous (you know who you are:  
thank you!)

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## 3 Donation Options

- 1) Send a check or postal money order to:  
ISKCON Prison Ministry  
PO Box 2676  
Alachua, FL 32616
- 2) Donate through PayPal at: [www.paypal.me/IPM](http://www.paypal.me/IPM)
- 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.

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