

“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

Jan/Feb 2021

IMPROVING OUR SERVICE

By Bhakti-latā Dasi

Hare Kṛṣṇa, dear devotees!
Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to
Srila Prabhupada!

It is such a wonder to me how quickly the years roll by and the time to compose the first IPM NEWS of the year comes around once again. As usual, I feel a deep sense of accomplishment, awe, and gratitude.

A sense of accomplishment because so many new and precious souls came in contact with the great science of bhakti-yoga. A sense of awe



because Prabhupada's books deeply touch the hearts of people from all walks of life. And a sense of gratitude because so many soft-hearted devotees from all over the world—volunteers and donors—are lending me a hand not only to maintain this program, but to expand it as well, for the benefit of thousands of inmates.

In the course of this year a couple new volunteers took the responsibility to write to an inmate or two. Most recently, three devotees from the Bhakti Center in New York have started corresponding with and sending books to a few inmates. That is very encouraging and I am very thankful.

As devotees, we want to do our service the best way we can and are always looking for ways to improve it, for the pleasure of Srila Prabhupada. Here are a few of the ways Kṛṣṇa inspired me to improve the prison ministry in 2021.

This year, for the first time, I am upgrading the monthly *Freedom Newsletter* from black and white to **color**. This is very enthralling not only for our regular inmates, but also for inmates who have never heard about Kṛṣṇa before. The beautiful color pictures easily attract their attention. Due to the pandemic, most inmates have been in lockdown for months, not being able to leave their cell for walking outside in the yard or even to take their meals (a very basic, insufficient meal is delivered to

their cells every day). The monthly newsletter is therefore even more important than before, and seeing some color in the midst of their dreary, black and white world, goes a long way to uplift their spirits.

I am also adding ten inmates to both our *Freedom Newsletter* and *Back to Godhead* mailing lists, going from 150 to 160 inmates.

Inmate Louis D.M., from Raiford, Florida, wrote me recently,

“This is the first holiday season in some years that I have not been lonely and depressed, and I’m in solitary confinement.” [solitary confinement means that one is alone in a cell, 23 hours a day, with only ½ hour for a shower and ½ hour for a stroll in the yard, by oneself; and during the pandemic, even these little moments of freedom were limited]

This is the kind of feedback that increases my enthusiasm to keep pushing myself so that more and more souls receive Prabhupada's mercy.

So again, my thanks to all of you for supporting the prison ministry one way or another. Let's pray that more and more inmates are touched by the inconceivable mercy of Lord Caitanya and Lord Nityananda! 🌸



EXPERIENCE KRISHNA CONSCIOUSNESS

By **Tim Homrighausen** —Inmate in Coleman, Florida (now released)

It is sometime during the summer of 1968. Mom, Dad, and an older brother and sister are returning to the U.S. from a trip to Germany where they, along with many Gospel Evangelists, attended the World Congress on Evangelism.

On the way to the airport, through the window, I saw a van moving, in which a baldheaded man—with some sort of paint drawn on his face—sat. He appeared to be wrapped in some sort of orange sheet. Our eyes met and held for maybe five or six

seconds, although it seemed like several minutes. I was nine years old.

After arriving at the airport, I noticed, across the large parking lot, a van from which several people, with pony tails on the back of their otherwise bald heads, were getting out. They were wrapped in orange sheets that flowed like long robes with tube-shaped objects hanging around their necks. Even then, I had a feeling of kinda knowing them; a sense of familiarity.

By the time we reached the building, these people had disappeared somewhere inside the terminal. Just as we were entering the walkway, my ears picked up the sound of music or drums, off in the distance.

A few minutes later we noticed my family welcoming us back and we waved excitedly then walked to meet up just outside of the baggage claim.

As I looked through the window on the other side, I saw, off in the distance, a crowd of orange robes that were moving around appearing to be dancing.



My ears tuned in on the drums and again made a connection with the people from the van. Again, there was a feeling, a comfortable feeling, like I knew these people somehow. As we were walking toward the baggage claim, we were getting closer to the drums. For just a moment or two, I seemed to forget about seeing my folks.

Somehow, as best I can describe, a feeling of pride came to me; it felt as though I knew the drummers and was somehow connected with the whole group of baldhead, ponytail, orange sheet, face make-up people.

II

While in Miami, Florida, weekly trips were made into Coconut Grove to get my sister to and from private Oboe lessons. I was a pre-teen. The highlight of those rides was always being able to go by Bongo Park (Peacock Park) and notice the hippies having a good time in the park.



On one such passing, my entire being was once again touched and stirred as I recognized the orange robes, drums, singing and dancing. The car window was rolled down and I could hear the drums and recognized the beat. The feeling of connection I felt

was so very warm and fuzzy that it could almost be compared to hugs from my Grams or Aunt. Even similar to the remembered feeling of hopping into my father's lap as a very young child. Different, but somehow the same. So I began to look forward to the twenty minute drive to Coconut Grove and back.

Many times, it was just the hippies and even then, I imagined hearing the drums, cymbals and singing in a very mystical kind of way; I didn't feel so much a curiosity as a sense of attraction and familiarity. It's not very easy to describe, but those that know how it is, know how it is.

III

Although I feel as though there could be no higher degree of intimacy as the first moments of eye contact with a devotee through the windows of moving vehicles in NYC traffic, it wasn't until the Holiday Season of 1973—as young teenager—that I actually spoke with one. It was on Jackson Square in the middle of the French Quarter in New Orleans, Louisiana, as, it was but a few miles bike ride from my neighborhood.

One day, right on Jackson Square, there they were: a whole group. Robes, ponytails, painted faces, drums, cymbals, and all! I heard the drums from blocks away and so, needless to say, I pedaled faster to get there. I locked my bike in haste and the very next thing I knew, I was right next to the dancing, singing group. My feet began to move as the



sensation I felt went beyond curiosity, beyond attraction and the experience became one of belonging and participating. (As I have come to learn, each and every experience is unique unto itself, yet it is more intimate, deeper and intense each and every time... or so it was with me... still today.)

So, there we were and, as the group was constantly moving, spinning and swirling, within a few

months, I found myself just a few feet from one of the drummers and surrounded by orange robes. Once again, a brief moment of eye contact with a devotee, the drummer, and he gave me a most kind, compassionate, understanding nod, the same kind that came from my grade school science teacher as I correctly recited the

periodic table. Or maybe even the nod from my father when I stood to offer my seat to another. Still, not easy to describe, but very deep and intimate... a nod? Deep and intimate? Yes! Very much so.

As the rhythm picked up and the robes were flowing and swirling higher and faster, my way was made back toward the edge of the group. The group was moving quickly and as I got a little further away, an orange robe was beside me. He said "You believe in God don't you?" My answer was "Well, yeah. My dad is a Pastor of a Church here. He is also Chairman of the Board for the Federation of Churches and was the Bishop of the Church in several states as President of the Southern District of the Lutheran Church." The devotee said that their Guru probably knows of my dad. He added that they would be going soon and asked if I would go with them to where the Guru was. I had a strong feeling of mystique and curiosity... a Guru?! And he knew about my dad? I was soooo OK with going with them.

The robes spread out for more than half a block keeping a very brisk pace along the sidewalk toward the edge of the French Quarter. A van pulled up and several devotees got in and sped off. The rest of us turned left onto Esplanade Avenue and continued until we arrived at a big, old mansion.

I went to the backyard area, drank cups of cold fruit juice and was then invited inside and led to where an older man was sitting on stacks of colorful cushions. There were several orange robes around and there was someone massaging his shoulder when he

asked me to approach him. I positioned myself a few feet in front of him as others



were kneeling and bowing around me. The feeling of mystique was incredible, yet not as much as the warm, fuzzy calm that overcame me as I looked into the eyes of this older man, past his robes, colors, and painted stripes on his forehead and nose. When he spoke, it was only his voice that I could hear as he asked about my dad.

When I started answering he interrupted me, "I know that. Tell me about your relationship with him." I said "Well, I'm one of his sons and..." He stopped me again and said, "This too I realize. Tell me how you are together with him." I thought for a second, not sure what to say, then I let him know "Well, I massage him sometimes too" (he was being massaged as we spoke.) He said "Oh, show me how." And with that, he excused his masseur and motioned for me to rub his shoulder. As I was doing so, he asked how I learned. I let him know that my dad would rub my neck, scalp or shoulder and ask "Can you do it like this?" So I did it how it was done to me. With that, he motioned for his masseur to rub my shoulders while I was rubbing his. I felt it and did the same to him. I felt like I was in the living room, and when I noticed the others there, their faces were in question and awe. He said to all "Now this is succession." Everyone chuckled. I learned later that he, the Guru—Sri Prabhupada— was the man from India that brought Kṛṣṇa movement to the U.S.

I cannot recall or speak of this without the hairs on my arms and neck standing up, with goosebumps, as it is happening now [as I am writing this]. I get misty-eyed as I recall when, later on, I massaged my dad again and he asked, "Where did you learn that? Keep it up. You have a real talent there." Then my dad asked me about "things" and "How's it going" and "What have you been doing lately?" You see, he knew simply by my touch that I recently had a significant experience.

I told him about meeting my Guru and, as best as I recall, he did know of him and might have even spoken with him somewhere, somehow and probably from the position of Church leader, or perhaps a scholar. It is too late for me to ask my dad, as he left the planet (as he used to say) in June of 2017, at the age of ninety-three.

My dad understood and accepted very well that the human body is but a temporary vessel or garment for the eternal that abides within. He passed that knowledge to me from a very young age.

IV

For many years to come, devotees appeared many times, on many different occasions, in many different places. Even on Bourbon Street in New

Orleans—at the height of all the madness and revelry—the drums and cymbals sounded as a group sang and danced right down the middle of the crowded street. Or, passing through any airport in any city, the robes, drums and cymbals were there.

As a young Marine, in the late '70s, passing through California on to the Far East, only a couple of times was I disappointed to not, at least, hear the drums.

They were in La Jolla, California, Malibu Beach, Long Beach, the train stations. And even when I experienced Disney Land; it was the devotees I saw before getting through the gates to Mickey and Space Mountain.

I was reminded of my childhood and I started to notice the general public. How obvious it was that the movement was continuing to grow at an incredibly rapid rate. Even the general public now had a sense of familiarity with the devotees. Later, although much was the same, something had changed though. It seemed that the joy and bliss that emanated from and surrounded the devotees was now an energy of hard work and perseverance, as weary skepticism swept through the general public. While on Okinawa, Japan, in 1977, word was passed that the Guru I had met left his body. It was then that I learned who he was as I listened to the news broadcast.

V

Some years passed and I was back in New Orleans. One day I heard the drums and followed to find them gathered on the Mississippi River front, in the French Quarter.



For the first time, I was moved to tears by the song and dance of the Kṛṣṇa mantra. Finally, after so long, I again experienced the warm, loving joy and bliss emanating from the group of devotees.

VI

As time passed, I maintained a warm affinity toward the devotees, yet remained on the fringes. From time to time, sticks of incense were offered to me by devotees the times I got close enough to the drums.

In 1993, on the campus of Florida State University, in Tallahassee, I met and spoke with a devotee. He was inviting people to gather at the House/Temple and I went.

We spent some time that evening, just the two of us. He read from the Bhagavad-gita and sang as he played the harmonium. We sang Hare Kṛṣṇa Hare Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Kṛṣṇa Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare. (The first time I had sung was with George Harrison during his song “My Sweet Lord” on the radio.)

Our paths continued to cross as I was on campus for a weekly event. Sometimes there would be a drum circle and the devotee would join as did I, for an hour or so. It was neat hanging out with a devotee at a social event.

When summer was turning into fall I was dropped off in Gainesville, Florida by the chickie-babe that I had been traveling with all summer. It was my first time being around a community of devotees that were not in robes and singing and dancing. They were people during everyday life.

I did not know right away that there were Kṛṣṇa devotees living where I was. What I did know, very quickly, was that it was a spiritual place and community.

I was met there with understanding, compassion, care, concern, love and wisdom. This was obvious to me in the way these people lived and communicated with, not only each other, but anyone, including me. It did not take long to learn that the main diets were vegetarian or vegan. The property/community attracted many people from all directions.

There was a devotee there that I would visit and he would play his drum and we would sing and dance. He also read to me from the Bhagavad-gita. I became one of four people that helped with the maintenance and upkeep of the property and houses. We became friends and shared a lot of love and good times.

The local Temple catered and hosted a big lunch on the UF campus. There were many orange robes around and through the Quad, leading, teaching, participating and sharing. We would eat, sing, dance, chant and listen as a devotee read aloud.

VII

I departed Gainesville and went all the way down highway 1 to Key West. It is there that I have been for the past twenty-some years.

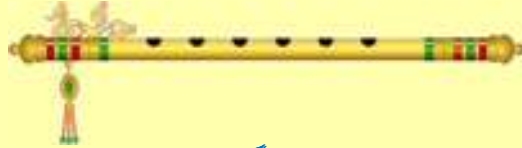
When back home for a couple of weeks at a time, I enjoyed visiting Gainesville. It is there that I met a devotee from Alachua. I was invited to Alachua for an event in a house there. At least a hundred

devotees jammed into the house for sankirtan, a lecture, and prasadam.

Today, I write from a Federal Prison. There is a devotee here that carries Kṛṣṇa Consciousness with him. I now have literature and fellowship in practice. There is a Swami and another devotee that come from Alachua to visit. I consider myself in *Gurukula* [devotee school] during their monthly

visits. I was asked to write and share my experience with Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

What I can say now, in closing, is that Kṛṣṇa consciousness is a verb. It is an *action*. It is more than a lifestyle. It is a *way of life*. While I eat, sleep, dress, walk, talk, think, meditate and just be... me as I am... open and teachable in all that I am and all that I do. Especially in how I interact with and treat others. Haribol! 🌸



THE BACKBONE OF IPM: OUR VOLUNTEERS

Below is an alphabetical list of the volunteers I (Bhakti-latā Dasi) am in regular contact with. Each of these precious devotees play an important role in this prison preaching and I am very thankful to every one of them.

Some volunteers write inmates, some type excerpts from inmate letters, some mail the monthly *Freedom Newsletter*, some mail the *Back to Godhead* magazine, and some visit and do programs in prisons.

A few volunteers asked to remain anonymous. And I have probably forgotten to include a few names, so please forgive me. 🙏

There are, of course, many other devotees who do prison preaching but I am only naming those I am personally aware of and in contact with.

Alexander Seibel
Ananta Rasa Dasi
Andrea Suarez
Balabhadra Dasa
Bhranti Dasi
Brajarani Dasi
Candra Dasa
Candraskhara Dasa
Candramauli Swami



Danielle Leonard
Ekanatha Dasa, UK
Govindanandini Dasi
Jamuna Jaya Dasi
Jhadu-Thakura Dasa
Madan-Mohan Dasa
Manasi-Ganga Dasi
Nandini Radha Dasi
Paul Mazella



Pritam prabhu
Ramaniya Dasi
Rambhoru Dasi
Sarnga Thakura Dasa
Sarva-drik Dasa
Śrutadeva Dasa
Svarbhanu Dasa
Ujjavala Dasa



Inmate Letter Excerpts

Hare Krishna thank you again for sending me the newsletter. It make my heart very happy. My friend from India just move to my dorm and he wrote a letter to you to ask me about a Bhagavad-gita. I pass him the BTG magazines and got him some books from the library —books that you send to us. He chant the maha mantra every morning at 4:30 AM with me. Thank you so much for be there for us. Also, my daughter is chanting, my mom too, and they read the Gita every day. Love and respect always. Your servant from the monastery here in Monticello.

Bhakta Eloy M. — Monticello, Florida

[This inmate came across a book and wrote to BBT India address he found in the book]

I am sitting in the Linn County jail. I came across a book with your address in it, “Elevation to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.” For a man, age 57, what books would you recommend me to learn more. Could you send me some?

Michael McG.—Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Thank you for the books. Even the Christians and Odinists are attracted to Kṛṣṇa’s magnificence and are studying the books you send me!

Jeremy B.—Arcadia, Florida

I have several small books which I let anyone interested read, and invite questions and discussion. The small books stay in circulation, as there are many interested inquiries/inquirers.

Gerald N.
Defuniak Springs, Florida

Thank you again for the books. I've read the Sri Isopanisad and the Teachings of Lord Caitanya several times. Every time I read them I get something new out of them. The more I read the more at peace I am. Sound funny coming from a man in prison for murder. I cannot wait to read the books Srimad Bhāgavatam I don't know if you or someone else sent a lot of books to the chaplain but I think he has all of them. When the lockdown from Covid is over I will go over there to see about checking them out.

I do not have any real questions at this time for as soon as i have one i turn the page and it gets answered.

Jeffrey H.
Lancaster, Ohio

I have decided, after a year of steady 20 japa rounds daily without missing a day no matter the circumstances, that I should challenge myself to also further my dedication and chant at least 25 japa rounds daily. I enjoy it so much and know I can do

at least that amount reasonably without failing at my vow.

David B.—Danbury, Connecticut

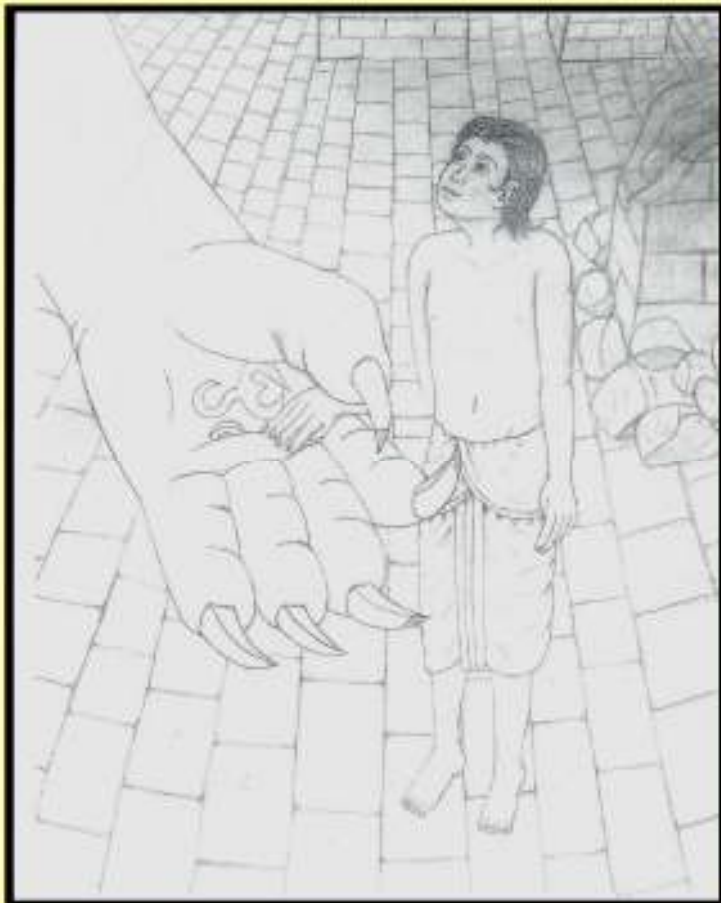
Dear folks at ISKCON Prison Ministry:
I am currently serving a life sentence here at Santa Rosa Prison and I have already done over 16 years of incarceration. The experiences in prison can be quite stressful and sometimes traumatizing. I'm currently in a wheelchair and have disability issues that I'm trying to rehabilitate myself with physical therapy, yoga stretches and poses, etc. I like yoga because its exercises are slow and striving for progress daily; not perfection.

But I've come to realize that an important part of my practice is missing. I'm a novice and have been only utilizing a yoga magazine that's not very thorough and complete. What I feel is missing is the spiritual aspect of yoga, or the essence of its core. The Quieting Calm and Meditation dynamics. So I looked in my prisoner resource list and found you folks.

You caught my attention with your ad about living a Godly, peaceful and joy-filled life no matter what my circumstances are. I would like that help very much so I can better cope with the adversities of prison life.

Please send me some free literature on the study and practice of Bhakti-yoga."

David E. —Milton, Florida



LEFT: Drawing by Bhakta Andy
—Petersburg, Virginia

**Lord Nrsimha taking Prahlada
Maharaja's hand.**

IPM BOOK DISTRIBUTION IN 2020

Prabhupada's Books total: 3,430

Breakdown:

Booklets: 2,309

Small: 688

Medium: 81

Big: 109

Maha-Big: 243

Books by other devotee authors: 277

BTGs: 1,661

BBT Art Calendars: 50

CDs: 179

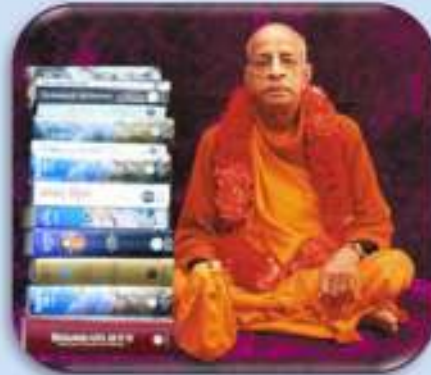
MP3s: 2

DVDs: 13

Japa Mala sets: 57

Neck Beads: 1

Incense packs: 18



GRAND TOTAL of all Books and BTGs in 2020: 5,368

Srila Prabhupada, ke, Jaya!!!

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:

Ajay Gajjar

Ananga Manjari Dasi (Australia)

Candramauli Swami

Hridayananda Maharaja

Inmate Anil Nayee



Inmate Jeffrey Hoke

Inmate Jeremy Brown

Inmate Jose Arango

Melba and Jose prabhus

Pradyumna Dasa

And our monthly Donors:

Amala Gaura Dasa

Aritra Nath

Ashutosh Bhardway

Bhavananda Dasa



Chris Roschbach

Deepali Mittal

Dina Sharana dasa

Gene and Claudine Moore

Jitarati dasa
Kalindi Dasi (Hopping)
Maya Sudhana dasa
Mickey Singer
Pritam Dey
Radha Vinod Dasa
Ram Tulasi Dasa and Ananda Shakti
Dasi Rene Waisvisz
Richard House



Sahadev Dasa
Satyanarayana Dasa
Shashi Shefali Majmudar
Raina Dasa
Vegavati Dasi
Vikram Kumar
Vraja Kishore Dasa
Yudhisthira Dasa
Anonymous (you know who you are: thank you!)

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 (or look for IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com)
- 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.

ISKCON Prison Ministry
PO Box 2676—Alachua, FL 32616
IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com
IskconPrisonMinistry.org

