

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.”

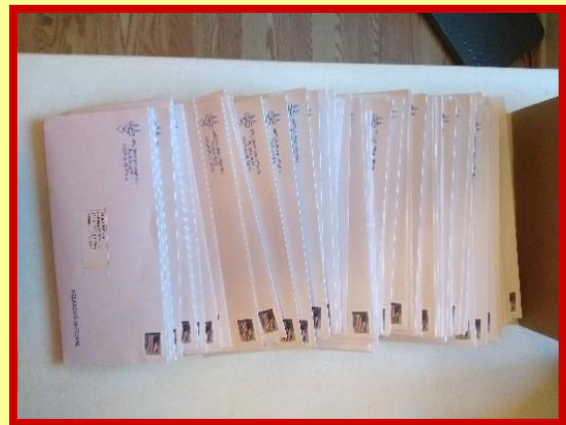
Srila Prabhupada in London, March 10, 1975

Sept/Dec 2022

REACHING OUT TO WOMEN'S PRISONS!

By Bhakti-lata Dasi

Two weeks ago I finally worked on a project I wanted to tackle for the last three years. Because there are far more men's prisons than women's prisons, for the last thirty-five years or so, the majority of books have been sent to men's prisons and, consequently, most inmates who write us are male. I have been desiring to give more women the gift of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Having a skeleton crew, I never found the time or help necessary for this major undertaking. But recently I felt that this project couldn't be delayed anymore, even if it meant that something else has to be



temporarily delayed (that's pretty much the name of the game, with so many aspects of IPM asking for attention).

I am very, very glad to announce that letters have been sent to all of the 125 women's prisons to which IPM had never sent books previously. And one week later, seven chaplains have already requested material: books (including a full set of Srimad-Bhagavatam), BTGs, DVDs, and CDs. To make sure that all chaplains who agree to take a set of Srimad-Bhagavatam can receive one, Jitarati prabhu generously sponsored sixty full sets! And Premvilasa prabhu sponsored 2,000 back issues of the Back to Godhead magazine!



Above: stock image

What gave me the final push to see this project through is that recently a sincere soul, Bhaktin Kimberly, wrote to me for books. She's been so enthused and dynamic after reading Srila Prabhupāda's books that she inspired other ladies to join in. There is now a core group of six women who chant, read, and discuss Kṛṣṇa consciousness every day. And they have a once-a-week, two-hour program at their chapel library, which is attended not only by them but by other

women they invite and also curious souls who come just to check things out. Recently twenty women attended the program! Since I haven't been able to reach their chaplain, however, I send them books regularly and they place some of them in the chapel library. It will take some time but we will build a nice library in this way.

It is this fired up group of six women who inspired me to push beyond my limits to finally reach out to all the USA women's prisons I found on the internet. Kṛṣṇa is so kind!

I am in regular contact with Kimberly. I am so very touched by these women's budding spirit for

devotional service. I thank Srila Prabhupāda for keeping the prison ministry going through all our supporters and well-wishers (all or you readers), and for using me as one of his instruments to reach out to his new daughters. Following are excerpts from Kimberly's letters. I hope you enjoy this transcendental preaching nectar! 🙏



Meet Bhaktin Kimberly —Ocala, Florida

The following are excerpts from recent letters form Kimberly.

8/1/22

Hare Krsna Bhakti Lata Dasi.....I am so grateful that I received another email from u today!

Stephanie said she would like a devotee. She is actually an exceptional student and she reads her Gita everyday she recites the books well and memorizes all the events and who's who she even ran to me because she found some secular book that had krsna in it.....she is coming along quickly.



Thank you for sending the info on the two holy days we will do our best and follow the directions you gave us....Krsna knows our heart and our situation and that we are doing the best we can considering our circumstances.....our love and devotion is pure and our desire is genuine.....Yes there are always questions smile!!! However I think we understand the

philosophy and we find most of our answers during our study time and we read everything!!!!Ha-ha! We do our chant daily and do kirtan when we get together. Remember you sent most of us beads; the only two who do not have them are Elizabeth and Chelsey everyone else received beads/bag. Everyone does their rounds that is a must. Some have problems avoiding meat mainly because of our cafeteria the only option is vegan and we do not get milk with that meal they don't have just vegetarian? We mostly self-select from the regular tray which is not easy because they use some type of animal product in most things.....we do our best. I always tell the ladies Krsna knows our situation. I gave everyone the instructions and they are busy doing their writings for Prabhupāda [for Vyasa-puja]....they are excited! Please keep me informed as to what the chaplain says and I will let you know when we receive the books.....thank you for all your support as always! Much love and respect.....Hare Krsna!!!!

I wanted to drop you a quick note to let you know that I just received the August newsletter and the July/August BTG magazine in the mail.....smile! They were addressed perfectly and stamped plus I received them fast! Thank you so much.....I will share them both with the others.....we had our service today and we spent about thirty minutes going over what you sent me concerning both holy days.....everyone is writing for Srila Prabhupada.....you would be proud! We spent the remaining time doing kirtan.....I just wanted to let you know that I received the mailwith much love and respect.....Hare Krsna.....

8/7/22

I feel this type of service is definitely for me so I will continue once I am released. I already assist here so I will just continue doing what I do now if it is in Krsna's will..... I am grateful to Krsna for everything and for every experience!!! I understand the ins and outs of the system and feel I can be of great service to Krsna!! There are so many searching for meaning to their lives....and others who are just lost and feel alone! I understand the importance of having a support system and serving! I love serving Krsna and if this is where I need to be to serve right now then I am all too happy to be here.....I explain Krsna loves us and wants us to love him.....as we study together I see the love growing.....



Sometimes it is difficult for them to understand why we show so much respect for Srila Prabhupada.....as one lady explained—she feels as if she is cheating on Krsna.....smile! I read to them to get a better understanding of his purpose and why the respect should be shown. It is truly Krsna's mercy that I am able to serve! I am grateful for you and all your support! Thank you!!!! Before I forget... I wanted to let you know that I received the books! Thank you! Receiving them is so much faster here!!! You mailed them on the first of Aug and I picked them up on the third!!! Krsna is so wonderful!!!! Also.....we had over twenty people come to study and chant with us last week!!! Some were curious as this is new to them and the others were invited.....let's see if they come back this week? I will keep you updated..... Hare Krsna.....

8/8/22

We have much to be grateful for.....we are blessed to have you and we appreciate all u do! You can try to send one CD/DVD and a few books to the Chapel and let me know so I can let my supervisor know and we will be expecting it. I'm not sure how open he is going to be towards our faith I do know he is Christian but there are other religions represented here and he is familiar with their traditions so we are hopeful he will respect our chosen faith...

I am happy to know you are contacting other women's facilities that is an excellent idea!. I know there are other ladies who will benefit from the books being available. It's funny because this facility was closed down a year and a half ago and when we got here we were unpacking books that had been stored prior to closing and sure enough there was three books here!!! One Gita and three others..... I smiled when I saw them and proudly placed them on the shelf! See Krsna knew we would be here and since nothing is by chance we all know this is His will!

I would like to send you some artwork.....we have sketch pads and colored pencils and we each are making something for Prabhupada and will display it at our service on the two holy days this month but after that I would like to send the work to you. It is a gift from their heart and made with love and devotion (for Srila Prabhupāda).

We have an excellent level of respect and love for each other. I almost forgot.....yes I received both pictures just fine and they are in my photo gallery

on my tablet. I will share them with the others this week...it's funny because as I mentioned we currently have a two-hour service time on the calendar each week and we were scheduled to Thursdaysthis week we did meet on Thursdays however due to scheduling and available space we are now meeting on Saturday afternoons from two pm till four PM, which is even better for most of us.....so it turns out that we were blessed with two services this past week!!!! It was great for us to have the space twice even if it was just for this week. We are a very tight knit group and we share everything and yes we each have our own paths and every experience is individual, however we are one unit and encourage each other and study together and we share everything and are kind to one another and have the up most respect and love (warts and all ha-ha!) Thank you for reminding us; it only confirms that we are on the right path! ..hope your project is going well and that you are near completion for the list of women's facilities. Again we thank you for your support and love.....till next time, Hare Krsna!

8/10/22

Good morning.....I received your email.....thank you. First, yes you have my permission to use my letters/emails I trust you. Second, thank you for clarifying prasadam I think I made a typo....smile! What I meant to say was no matter if we only have one or two apples.....we offer whatever we have to krsna first then we split it evenly amongst us.....sometimes we have nuts or milk we purchase ourselves from canteen and we offer it then we eat them.....sometimes we only have water..... I did receive the one package of books....I am on the list to go to property today so I am sure it's the second package. Next, smile! You can send Chelsey and Elizabeth their beads directly to them here at any time [they now have their beads].

Thank you for the guidance on explaining Srila Prabhupada to the ladies. It's funny because Stephanie gave an example that it was similar to the Christian religions Jesus.....they state that the bible says there is only one way to get to God and that's through Jesus They have been taught that there is

but one way and everything else is New Age or false beliefs or even a trick of Satan! They ask what's the difference? Who's correct? I told you ha-ha! These ladies study and really want answers.....obviously they have issues with other belief systems hence why they are with us! I applaud them because this is not an easy path to follow especially in prison here in the Bible belt.... We deal with prejudices from everywhere! Even our own peers! They call us a cult or fairy worshipers or tree hugging hippies, blah blah blah! I have heard them all! However I personally could care less! I know what is real to me and what I believe! I have even had volunteers from churches during my stay try to convert me and steer me away from my beliefs! They tell me their way is the only way and Im going to die and go to hell if I don't change my belief! I never argue but tell them thank you and walk off.....so like I said it's not easy! Bullies are everywhere! That's the main reason I came to a faith and character-based facility because this program allows you to practice whatever faith you choose freely. I'm not going to say it's easy but it is way!!!!!! Better! I can't or don't try to control what people think about my beliefs as long as they are allowing me my right to practice my faith I can deal with the rest.....for now! Smile! This happens even out in society so it's nothing new. This is why outside support from ISKCON is important in here.....they are not allowed legally to discriminate and if they are aware we have a religious organization supporting us the issues are less and they ensure our needs are met. Anyway....I'm glad



you are having fun with your project. You should be getting close to the end if you are now on the prisons in Texas ha-ha! We sincerely appreciate your love and support.....till next time.....Hare Krsna.....

8/15/22

Hare Krsna. Things are good here.....we had service on Saturday

afternoon! It was beautiful! We had four new people visit and they expressed their desire to come back.

We are working on our projects [Vyasa-puja offerings]. I will forward the work of those who wish to share as soon as they are complete. We will

be having service on both holy days the 19th (Janmastami) and 20th (Vyasa-puja).

I lent one of the women the Krsna book from our little "library" It's beautiful. I have one whole shelf labeled Krsna.....I placed two of the pictures you sent me with a cloth and a battery-operated candle.....it's all we have but we love it!

You may not be aware of this but on our tablets we can watch movies/videos/music etc.....we have a free video section and we choose from the various religious videos and can download them to our tablet.....there are Christian, Jewish, Catholic ,Jehovah's witness, etc.....this is just an idea for you but a lot of States now have tablets and use JPay.....so you could reach a whole lot of people if there were videos placed on the free video section ? I'm not sure how you would do it exactly? But I

think you just have to have a technical person.....smile!!! Contact JPay.com about placing videos/talks/etc., on tablets.

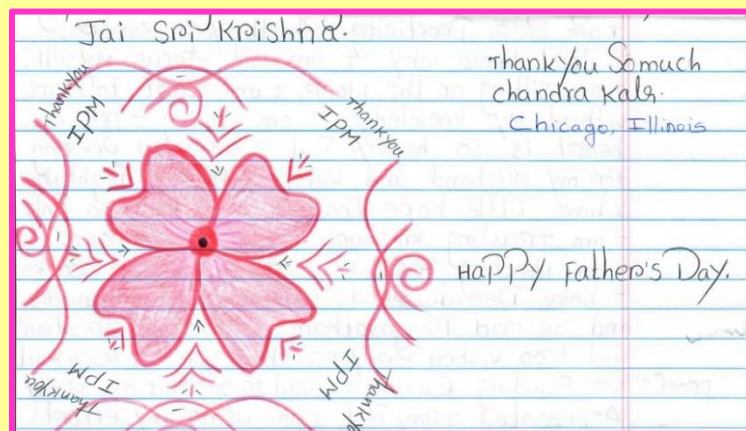
They also have a free book option on our tablet but that's a whole other subject.....ha-ha! I always see other religious organizations' videos and think to myself how I wish our Kṛṣṇa videos were on the tabletslet me know your thoughts.....smile! Have a great day and thank you again for all your support and love.....Hare Krsna 🌸

NOTE: if any devotee would like to take up this project of adding Kṛṣṇa conscious content on prison tablets, please let me know. I cannot help with this but I would love to hear if someone tackles this great project. IkconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com



ABOVE: Crocheted bookmark by inmate Rakesh P. —Alden, New York

RIGHT: Drawing by inmate Chandra K. —Chicago, Illinois



LEFT: Drawing by inmate Atul Kṛṣṇa dasa

Chaplains' Appreciation

7/5/22

Dear Bhakti-lata Dasi, don't apologize regarding the timing of your note. You didn't even owe me a response. But it is wonderful to hear from you. Patients who have received the "Gita," either at my suggestion or their request, have treasured them. An inspiring story:

When I introduced myself to one patient, he did not acknowledge my presence. I saw he was carrying a yoga book, so I offered him a book on Buddhism. He responded to me and said he would like one. I then mentioned the Bhagavad-gita; he came alive! He thanked me more than once for giving him this resource. After a few weeks here, he was much improved. He was extremely grateful to have the Gita during his recovery. He turned out to be a lovely young man. I will keep an eye out for the magazines and let you know when they arrive. Blessings.

Chaplain Sara Goodman
U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
Los Angeles, California

7/7/22

Thank you so much for your recent donation of Bhagavad-gitas.

It is through the generosity of organizations such as yours that we are able to provide religious reading materials throughout the facility.

Again, thank you for your donations. We will keep your contact information on file for future requests. Sincerely,

Rev. Karen Hanson, Senior Chaplain
Pinellas County Sheriffs, Office
Clearwater, Florida

8/3/22

Yes, we accept CDs and DVDs. We would be grateful for magazines. We currently have 15 current practicing Hindu in our facility, but have others curious, so it would be nice to have a few extras for them. We do have a Spanish population, but they are primarily Catholic. I don't receive many requests from them, but if you would like to send a couple Spanish books, it's always good to have a couple on hand when asked for it.

We are very grateful; as a chaplain I always want to ensure our individuals here receive support in their religious beliefs and organizations that help us like this, truly make a difference here.

Chaplain Christopher Back
Miami Correctional Facility
Bunker Hill, Indiana

8/22/22

Gadsden Correctional Facility [for women] has received your offer to send in material pertaining to Hindu Religion. We will greatly appreciate the material that you have for us.

Marissa McClellan
Secretary of Programs
Gadsden C.F. —Quincy, Florida

8/25/22

Greetings and Namaste नमस्ते. I hope this email finds you well!

We were very excited to read a message from a colleague that your organization was offering free Hindu books for prison inmates. It means a lot to me to have a variety of religious traditions represented in our chapel, including in our library. We sometimes have Hindu inmates, and we also have a lot of inmates who like to be educated about many different religions, so the books and other material would be very welcome and useful.

Rabbi Joseph M. Kolakowski, Chaplaincy Program Director
SCI Waymart —Waymart Pennsylvania

Janmastami Offering

by Bhakti-lata Dasi

This year I decided to celebrate Janmastami by spending ten hours in the IPM office, catching up with everything. It was very blissful! On the right you can see all the books that were processed that day, for the pleasure of Lord Krishna. Three institutions received books for the first time. Haribol! 😊



Latest Rules for Florida Prisons

Recently, all **Florida State Correctional Institutions** have transitioned to an electronic mail delivery format. Unfortunately, this means that Florida inmates are no longer allowed to receive any snail mail (either letters, books, or magazines).

All letters are now sent to the same PO Box where they are processed in an electronic format and emailed to the different institutions. From there, they are sent electronically to the inmates' tablets. Some institutions give a tablet to all their inmates, to use while they are incarcerated there. Others have to go to a prison kiosk where they have access to their mail on a computer.

Inmates who, as a result of their housing designation or status, are not permitted to access kiosks, kiosk services, or tablet services, have their scanned mail printed and delivered to them.

The reason behind this new rule is that apparently paper is now a drug threat in prisons. Drugs are sprayed on paper and smoked by the inmates, or something like that (I am no expert). All I know is that now any letter, book, or magazine is seen as a potential drug risk. Kali-yuga in progress!



By Kṛṣṇa's grace, however, some Florida institutions (like Bhaktin Kimberly's) still accept snail mail (religious information, books, and magazines) if the envelopes are stamped "Religious Material". IPM has had stamps professionally made for that effect. We are in the process of finding out which institutions allows such snail mail and which are not. 🌸



New Schedule for IPM NEWS

By Bhakti-lata Dasi

Dear devotees and supporters,

Some of you may have noticed that this year there were no March/April and July/August issues of IPM NEWS. That is because it has become increasingly challenging for me to create **both** a printed, monthly newsletter for the inmates (*Freedom Newsletter*), a bi-monthly electronic newsletter for the devotees (*IPM NEWS*) **and** keep up with everything else that needs to be done for this service.

I have therefore decided to publish the IPM NEWS every four months instead of every two months. Not only will this allow me the time to continue giving the inmates the support they need, but it will also make each IPM NEWS issue more substantial in content (more nectar for you to relish all at once 😊)

So, following this present issue, the next IPM NEWS will come out in January 2023.

🙏 Thank you for your understanding. 🙏



Inmate Letter Excerpts

Hello! Thank you for the newsletters and magazines. I have found such peace, happiness, and contentment in all circumstances since I found Krsna and yoga studies.

Thank you again from my heart for this enormous, miraculous gift! This has really changed me, my life, and I'm off all mental health drugs for anxiety and depression and absolutely better than ever before. And for a substantial amount of time. A loyal devotee,

Brindel S.—Ocala, Florida

Greetings my friend. My name is James, and I am an inmate at a State Prison in Pennsylvania. I am currently serving a 4–8-year sentence for theft. Since my incarceration I have been doing some real soul searching and trying to figure out my purpose and the path that best suits that purpose. I have been reading a lot of Buddhist and Hindu literature and I can relate to most of it. I am intrigued and very much interested. I am currently reading Bhagavad Gita AS IT IS by Swami Prabhupada, which is how I ran across your address.

If you would have the means to send me any of Prabhupada's other books, I would be forever grateful for any help that you could provide. My friend, I am, like I said, lost and am on a spiritual quest to find my dharma. If there is any way that you could guide me to some sources that could help me to understand the big picture of life, please do. In closing I thank you for your time and attention to this letter, and I look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

James H. —Bellefonte, Pennsylvania

Yes, FINALLY! On July 22nd I received the DVD of the movie about Srila Prabhupāda [“*Hare Krishna! The Mantra, The Movement, and the Swami Who Started it All*”]. Then on July 24th, upon my request, it was played throughout the dorm's unit video system, which was open for approximately 250 inmates to view. The video ran from 7pm – 8am – it played about 8 or 9 times! The night of July 24th I watched it three times in a row, and on July 31st for the Hare Krsna worship class, four inmates watched it again. And we have plans to watch it again and again. Jai! Ki Jai!

Bhakta Jason

THANK YOU to ALL our SUPPORTERS!

Your generosity is what keeps this program going! ☺ Because of a senior moment, I may forget someone, so please forgive me, and let me know so I can include your name in the next IPM NEWS. 🙏

Our donors since last newsletter:

Nanda Dasi
Nartaka Gopal Dasi
William Robinson
Ishani Chowdhury
Jitarati Dasa
Premvilasa Dasa
Robb Fullmer
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And our monthly donors:

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Vamsidas Dasa
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Vraja Kishore Dasa
Yudhisthira Dasa
Anonymous (you know who you are:
thank you!)

Four Donation Options:

- 1) Send a check or postal money order to: **ISKCON Prison Ministry, PO Box 2676, Alachua, FL 32616**
- 2) Donate through PayPal: IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com
- 3) Donate through pay.google.com to iskconprisonministry@gmail.com
- 4) 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 will send you a tax-deductible receipt at the moment of the donation, provided you give us your legal name and mailing address.

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