

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*

**May/August 2023**

### THE SADHANA SERVICE!

*Note from Bhakti-lata Dasi: since October 2021, Bhaktin Kim has been practicing Kṛṣṇa consciousness. She is imbued with Lord Caitanya's mood of sharing this matchless gift with others and has started a very successful group of like-minded souls. Her enthusiasm is so infectious that I sometimes playfully call her “Utsāha” (which means enthusiasm in Sanskrit). Here are some highlights from her letters from 2/3/22 to 5/26/23. She is now also corresponding with Ramaniya Devi Dasi.*

2/3/22

I am currently in the only institution in Florida that is Faith and Character based... This facility encourages all its residents to actively practice their chosen faith... There are currently about fifteen of us who are listed as Hare Kṛṣṇa. For a while no services were offered to us... However, our senior chaplain has graciously set a time and space for us to study and meditate/chant. We have a wonderful sanctuary with equipment to



show videos/DVDs and CDs. We only have what I have received from you. Our service name is “Sadhana Service”.

2/17/22

Others also come and sit in our service as we have to keep it open to everyone... We have some Buddhists, one Hindu and several Messianic Jewish and Christians who attend. They have expressed their desires to change their religion preference to Hare Krishna. We had

twenty-three people in class today, which is a fairly large group for a compound of this size... We only have 425 women in total.

I am doing the best I can here to guide our group as I was the only one here originally listed under the Hare Krishna faith and who requested a service time... I am not by any means qualified and do not feel nearly worthy enough to do this alone. However, my karma is as such and I am doing my best. I am merely a woman trying to live and practice my chosen faith. I am asking for any guidance you may be able to provide.

2/27/22

When we meet, we usually read, and study for thirty minutes then use an hour for chanting the maha-mantra... Our group is growing, and the original members are faithful and supportive. We wish to further our studies and understanding... It took me a year to get recognition and longer to get a day/time spot at the chapel for us to be able to meet.

1/24/23

Hare Krsna Bhakti Lata.....So we had our service time.....we were only allowed thirty minutes and were advised that it was for self-study until we can get a volunteer and schedule a regular weekly service ...we didn't complain because one thing we've learned is that it's a process in FLDOC.....lol! We will eventually get there. Krsna is soooooo good to us! I was so excited to write you because even though it wasn't perfect, we did have service time.

2/18/23

We have two new ladies now.....they have been studying with us for quite a few months. They are great! Amber and Samantha both put in the request to the chaplain to have their religious preference listed as Hare Krishna. I usually wait a while before I request books, etc. for any newcomers just to see if they are serious. But both these young ladies are serious and dedicated. Amber goes home around the same time as I do but Samantha still has a few years to be here.....it's unfortunate as she is very bright and truly wants to follow Krsna! The first time she chanted she came to me all happy and teary-eyed expressing to me " it just felt right ". I smiled as I completely understood.

2/28/23

We are preparing for Gaura Purina.....we'll fast till moonrise.....we only have the items we purchase ourselves from our canteen(store). They only have a few vegan/vegetarian items to buy but we make do.....milk, nuts, beans, pita bread, dried potatoes, etc.....we prepare the items together for Krsna.....we offer prasadam and share afterwards..... those of us that have money pitch in to get enough for everyone

and we are grateful to be able to offer what we have to Krsna.....we have our make shift alter with a towel and flowers (I made them out of paper) and our pictures you sent. We do our best and Krsna see our hearts and efforts.

3/3/23

Haribol..... in hopes that you are well! Everyone here is good. We had our service this afternoon and everyone brought all their books.....I must say they were so happy and excited to see all the material you sent! We are so grateful. All the volumes of Srimad-Bhagavatam are safe on our shelf.....everyone is taking turns with each volume, and they can go to the chapel and check them out and exchange them as necessary...

We are preparing for Gaura-Purnima.....I asked Ramaniya to walk me through the festivities... For a long time it was only myself so I did what I could....then last year new the ladies came, and now we are here.....we have several attending this year.....we plan on meeting and performing kirtans, japa, singing, prasadam, and explaining the meaning behind the celebration, etc.....we will be using a white sheet and some paper flowers I am making, plus the pictures you sent prior....that will have to be our altar....We will be allowed a bag of vegetarian foods the kitchen is preparing for us, plus we will be bringing our own items.... milk, nuts, etc. it is wonderful and exciting.

3/13/23

Haribol.....in hopes that all is well. We are good. I wanted to let you know that we received the second set of Srimad-Bhagavatam. Now we have two of each volume so its quicker for us to read. We stored each set in the libraries and we exchange the volumes as needed. These two sets are perfect and should be sufficient.... Thank you.

We had a wonderful time during Gaura Purnima. It was beautiful! We used a sheet for the altar and posted pictures you provided us.....I made pretty flowers out of paper and we placed food items on the altar. All the ladies were so helpful....we also had a table for us that we decorated. We each read scriptures or an article pertaining to Gaura Purnima. We prayed and had a nice talk....we even tried our hand at dance this time.....smile. We were so happy to be able to meet and celebrate. Thank you for your guidance and direction. Ramaniya was also very helpful and explained to each of us the meaning behind the celebration.

Ramaniya has been so wonderful! The ladies are very excited to receive guidance from her....I think they are keeping her pretty busy with all their questions.....smile! All of them tell me " wow! She's

so quick ....smile! and she explains things so clearly " I am so grateful you asked her to write to us!!! That's all for now..... we appreciate you! till next time.....Hare Kṛṣṇa

4/3/23

As to our service...things are coming around and they are starting to respect our beliefs and are more aware of our needs. They have been pretty accommodating for our observance of Gaura Purnima.....so we are pleased. I know it seems strange to those who do not understand, but they are at least respectful and trying!!! I am happy you are trying to reach the chaplain because once they know you have support from your religious organization, they treat you much differently! Up until now all we've had is me and they do not respect me (smile) they want an outside minister/volunteer. They are well aware that I am the inmate coordinator/contact person on the inside for us and that I receive instructions, study material, etc. from you directly but you actually talking to him and establishing that contact will definitely change things.....right now all they have is my word and the fact that we are an approved religion on the FLDOC approved religions list so they are obligated. Getting volunteer/s are the number one priority now ...this will solve quite a lot of issues.....plus they will have a contact person if they have any questions concerning our practices.....it will cut down on the prejudice somewhat knowing that not only are we serious about our service but we have a bona fide society supporting us.

5/21/23

I am thrilled to finally be getting somewhere! When Mr. Mahoney was here from Tallahassee, I showed him your email where you said you turned in the previous forms, way back in October, and Mr. K. was standing there looking puzzled. Mr. Mahoney stated that this was unacceptable for this to be taking this long and advised him to take care of this ASAP. Mr. K. advised me to contact you and he would see to it.....I am happy he is remaining true to his word.

5/26/23

Haribol!!!! I am so happy things are finally moving along..... I always had faith that if I kept fighting for my God sisters, Kṛṣṇa would make a way! I am strong and enthusiastic as you well know.....smile! We have dealt with a lot of prejudices and even though one of our rules to this program is "do not disparage the religious beliefs/traditions/rituals of another" that does not happen.....it even comes from staff.....Kṛṣṇa used me for this assignment and I am passionate and will do what I feel is required of me! Kṛṣṇa gave me the desire, drive and inside

knowledge and also placed me in a position where I could be of best service! The right place at the right time so to speak with the important people who could help.....I am grateful and humbled by this whole experience. Mr. Patrick Mahoney is the head honcho.....smile.... from our home office of the FLDOC in Tallahassee.....he is the director of programs. Always know that you can contact him if there are any problems. Also, Mr. Kovalyshn.....is from Tallahassee and he is the regional director of the chaplaincy dept.....he handles this program directly and all chapels and chaplains (he is the big supervisor over all the chaplains in his assigned region) I spoke to him myself a few days after I spoke to Mr. Mahoney.....Thank you for following up as well and we are all so excited! Sometimes in this environment people lose interest if they feel there is no outside support and when we are not treated or respected as well as other religious faiths.....they get discouraged. So this is BIG.....first it will give the sisters more knowledge and instruction to get closer to Kṛṣṇa.....secondly it lets the staff know that we have outside support and lastly it's the fellowship! Thank you for going the extra mile and following through.....for a lot of years I was alone in this and studied from the few books I had.....Kṛṣṇa found me (or should I say I found him haha) at the lowest point of my life!

In 2016, I found a book and the picture on the outside was so beautiful I picked it up and read it.....over and over!!! I found another book shortly thereafter and started reciting the mahamantra.....so, for years that was it.....just me.....some people would ask me and I would tell them about Kṛṣṇa.....all I knew was that it felt right.....later that same year, I suffered a great personal loss; I did not think I would make it. But Kṛṣṇa was what got me through.....I read the Gita and then I found the address for ISKCON and started corresponding with this first sister you had writing me (Mother Bhranti). Then I received books and I started our Sadhana Service.....and the rest you know.....smile. It has been so humbling, and I now have a better understanding and more knowledge. I said all this to get to this; even if it's just one person (like I was) it is worth it.....one person at a time is all it takes. Anyway.....again I thank you and will be forever grateful....[I'm sharing this to show] how important reaching those like me really is.....I'm sure you already know... smile... you've been doing this a while lol. Oh, before I forget; they now just call us *Krishna Consciousness*, rather than the Sadhana Service.....Thank you for your generosity.





## Volunteer Profile: Ramaniya Devi Dasi

*Note from Bhakti-lata Dasi: I have had the pleasure of knowing Mother Ramaniya for thirty-years and I can say that she is the emblem of honesty, simplicity, and humility, and that she embodies the spirit of the Sankirtan movement of Lord Caitanya. Nothing is more important to her than giving Kṛṣṇa to one and all, sometimes at the sacrifice of her own comfort. I am honored to share this service with her. At the moment, Mother Ramaniya corresponds electronically with dozens of inmates who have the good fortune of her association. In her own words:*

I have always liked to share Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Years ago, I used to write letters to prisoners. At that time Candrasekhara prabhu was overseeing IPM. I did not have a computer then, so all my letters were handwritten.

I have always been engaged in preaching activities but when Covid arrived and we were all in isolation, I couldn't preach the way I used to. Kṛṣṇa then put me in contact with Bhakti-lata prabhu and she reconnected me with the prison ministry. I am very happy with this service. It keeps me very happily engaged.

These prisoners are there for some reason, and they now have time to think about what they did that got them there, and how they may find a way to improve their life. I realize that I am also in a prison, and I will not get out of it until I improve, and I need help to do so. In this way we are all in the same boat. I am in a better situation than the inmates are right now, so I can share with them the ways to get out of the bigger prison altogether.

Often, inmates come in contact with Kṛṣṇa consciousness out of curiosity, but in the process, they end up practicing it, even if their desire to serve Kṛṣṇa is not so strong. Any gain in our relationship with Kṛṣṇa is never lost. They may not be so serious about religious practice, but they still get purified by hearing and chanting about Kṛṣṇa. Most of them receive books, and in this way, they are getting in touch with Srila Prabhupada. They are so fortunate in that way. Many of them share Kṛṣṇa consciousness with the cell-mates and that is to their benefit as well. Even if they do not continue with their practice after they get out, they still were in touch with Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa will now never let them go, even if they are not aware of it. 🌸



## FLORIDA'S ELECTRONIC STATUS —by Bhakti-lata Devi Dasi



In a very unfortunate turn of events, in the past few months, all Florida state prisons (and a few in North Carolina) have transitioned to an all-electronic mail delivery format. This means that Florida inmates are no longer allowed to receive books, magazines, and newsletters.

All paper correspondence has to be mailed to the P.O. Box, and from that location, letters are scanned and emailed to the different institutions. From there the mail is read, approved, and sent electronically to the individual inmates, on a tablet.

Some institutions lend tablets to the inmates while they serve their time there. In other places, some inmates have their own tablets, otherwise, they can access their mail at a kiosk within the prison.

However, for inmates who, as a result of their housing designation or status, are not permitted to access tablets or kiosks services, their mail is scanned, printed, and delivered to them, at no cost.

This is quite regrettable, as these inmates can no longer receive Śrīla Prabhupada’s books, with a very few exceptions where the reception of religious books is still allowed. What brings me comfort is that, in the last fourteen years, I have sent as many books and BTG magazines as possible, to as many Florida institutions as we could, and a lot of these books are still either in their chapel and general libraries and circulated from hand to hand.

Mother Ramaniya took it upon herself to correspond with dozens of inmates through their closed prison email systems, of which there are many: CorrLinks.com, JPay.com, TextBehind.com, GettingOut.com, SmartJailMail.com, and Securustech.online.com.

Our monthly inmate newsletter, the *Freedom Newsletter*, is sent electronically to a few inmates whose institutions are partnered with TextBehind.com.



My concern is that it is entirely possible that in a few years’ time, other States will follow suit and transition to an electronic system as well. In the meantime, we continue to send as many books, BTG magazines, newsletters, CDs, DVDs, and japa/neck beads as possible, while we still can. The rest is in Kṛṣṇa ’s hands.

The prison tablets offer a variety of content, including a great quantity of spiritual items from different religious groups such as Christians, Buddhists, Moslems, etc., but only a couple devotee kirtans. Many inmates have inquired if we can upload bona-fide spiritual content from the Hare Krishnas. They are very anxious for it.

The silver lining is that this situation is that there is a **great service opportunity** just waiting for the right person. It consists of making Śrīla Prabhupada’s digital books and DVDs available on the inmates’ tablets. You would need to first contact the company JPay.com and inquire about their requirements to upload new material into their system. After that, you will need to contact the BBT and let them know the process to make this happen, and then be the in-between person if needed. This service will require some time and patience; a labor of love.

It is a mightily worthy “rhinoceros” to chase for Śrīla Prabhupada’s pleasure and, in my opinion, an absolute must. There is no doubt that whoever takes on this service will be showered with blessings, as *thousands of inmates will come in contact with Kṛṣṇa consciousness for years to come.*



If this opportunity speaks to you at all, please give it some serious consideration. This is the kind of far-reaching preaching opportunity that doesn’t come around every day. And, like Arjuna received the credit of winning the Kuruksetra war — although Kṛṣṇa had already decided the outcome— you could be the one to receive the credit of bringing thousands of souls to Kṛṣṇa in one fell swoop.

If you are seriously considering, please contact me at: [ISKCONPrisonMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:ISKCONPrisonMinistry@gmail.com)



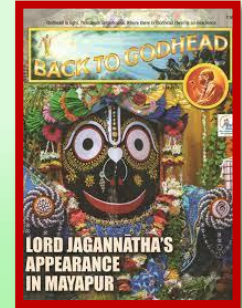
## Chaplains' Appreciation

A few months ago, we offered chaplains the opportunity to receive back issues of the ***Back to Godhead*** magazine for their shelf for free material. Many chapels have those shelves from which inmates can take what they want. Up to now, six chaplains took up this offer, requesting 10 to fifty magazines monthly.

Yes, I would appreciate any materials you are willing to donate for this faith group. Ten copies of the BTG magazine monthly would be sufficient as this group only has a few adherents at this time in this institution. Any materials you would be willing to donate would be a great addition to my library. Thank you and many blessings.

**Chaplain Stacy Shaffer**

**Dept. of Corrections / Marienville, Pennsylvania**



We would like to receive twenty magazines monthly. Thank you very much.

**Chaplain Kevin Bone**

**MCCF / Eagleville, Pennsylvania**

A stack of back issues of BTG monthly would be great! Let us begin with fifty, please.

We would love to have the book series Srimad-Bhagavatam as well.

**Chaplain Moses**

**Fluvanna C.C. / Troy, Virginia**

[Last October, Chaplain Kolakowski wrote:] From what you sent us (BTGs), I put one copy in the library for inmates to borrow and put the rest out for inmates to take and keep—whatever I put out from you disappeared quickly— so if you want to send more copies of BTG, I am sure someone is interested in them.

[We now send them fifty copies monthly]

**Chaplain Kolakowski**

**SCI Waymart / Waymart, Pennsylvania**

## POEM CORNER

### THE RIVER

By Bhakta Carl Sheppard

Yamuna, Yamuna, the water of love  
 Flowing in Vrndavana, both here and above  
 Your liquefied mercy, it washes away  
 Illusion, confusion, for one drop I pray  
 You're purified purity, clarified clear  
 It's really no wonder why you are so dear  
 To gopas and gopis who bathe in your flow  
 Or do they create you, I'm not sure I know  
 For there in Vrndavana, where prema's complete  
 You drink up the mercy of Their lotus feet  
 And then you distribute that mercy to those  
 Who come down to your shores and thus your

fame grows

Oh most holy river, please rinse out my heart

Please cleanse me of maya, please help me to start

To make some advancement, then perhaps someday

Like those Vrajavasis, near your shores I'll stay.

### WHEN YOU CHANT

By Bhakta Sean Curry—Minnesota

When you chant, you'll feel the bliss  
 This is something you just can't miss  
 Chanting makes you happy and pure  
 Maya's the sickness, Krishna is the cure  
 So chant every day, without fail  
 Krishna is the freedom, material world's the jail





# Inmate Letter Excerpts

I am fine, thanks to our Lord who has been so compassionate towards this fallen soul. I understand now why it is so hard to get initiated as MAYA is so strong that it has trapped me under her spell of family, lusty feelings, monetary issues, and a plethora of things that have happened to me. But Lord Govinda has kept me afloat even though I do not deserve His mercy.

I have been doing Japa, reading, studying, praying, and trying to stay Krsna Conscious all day, every day. I humbly pray for you and all Vaisnavas every day. I have also been receiving the BTG, the Freedom Newsletter, and correspondence from my devotee pen pal [who desires to remain anonymous], who also sent me a beautiful art calendar for 2023. Hare Krsna! Haribol!

Humbly, the servant of the servant of the servant of Sri Krsna. Bhakta Jose.

**Jose A. — Fairton, New Jersey**

Please let Bhakti-lata know that I'm very appreciative of all she has provided me with in terms of books, magazines, newsletters, and printouts. I have everything nicely organized and labeled for easy study. I'm doing my best to incorporate all that I'm learning, and I still have previous religious ideologies that tend to color my thinking process when I read something revelatory. All I ask is for patience as I evolve into a new understanding filled with many new paradigms that are challenging my thinking.

I finally received my property slips just now! I'll probably be picking up the books on Monday or Tuesday at the latest. Let Bhakti-lata know I'm ever so grateful for all she is doing to assist me resource-wise to help me incorporate Krishna Consciousness into my daily life.

Oh, I'm using the cut-up pencil technique outlined in the "Alternatives for Japa Beads" she sent me. [That method consists of cutting up pencils in 108 small pieces, then hollowing up the centers; the pieces are then strung on a string.] As long as the length is no longer than 40" (inches) and we don't wear it on the yard, it's allowed as part of our religious property.

One last thing: I'm having issues receiving devotional pictures that display Lord Caitanya or

Lord Nityananda because the mail officer mistakes them for females with what appears to be bare chests! [Note: this issue arises once in a while in the prison system] Can you believe that! If these pictures get sent to me, then the back of the picture needs to have the name and clearly state that it is a male devotee/deity, or it will be withheld from me. Thanks.

**Victor R. — Kingman, Arizona**

Hello, my name is Javaughn and I am so grateful for the books that I have received from you all. Initially my brother introduced me to Krsna consciousness, but I never had any books to study and apply the knowledge from. Besides, they don't have any of these types of books here in this prison library which is unfortunate because I believe everyone should be able to attain this knowledge and the secrets to life. You guys have changed my life for the better and I am forever in your debt.

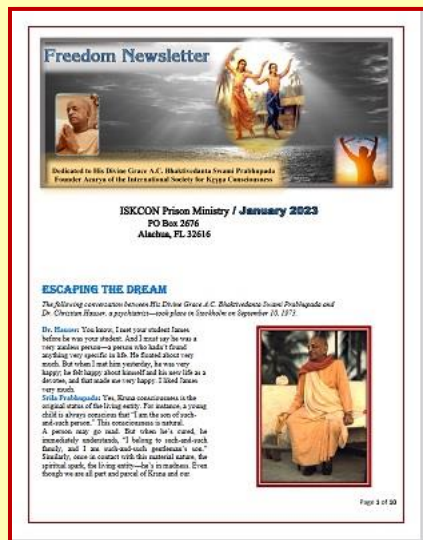
What I have realized so far since chanting at least once a day is that the response from chanting is in this form of bliss, or spiritual happiness, which is a much higher taste than anything in this material world. The more I do it the more I don't want to stop because I feel so at peace and no longer feel any stress or anxiety, just pure happiness.

I am still learning more as I study the books I've received, and I will read them over again for better understanding. I am deeply grateful for all that you guys have done for me.

**Javaugh S. —Malone, Florida**

First, I would like to thank you for your previous donation to our library. The materials have been put to good use. Second, the Eastern Religious Class here is flourishing, due in no small part to your generosity. Word has spread about our brotherhood and positive energy!

**Daniel F. —Tennessee Colony, Tex**



# 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:

Anthony Kaiser -inmate  
Dennis Law -inmate  
Hari Pada Dasa (Ohio)  
Hridayananda Dasa  
Kamlesh Patel -laptop  
Mark Barnett



Mike Conway  
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Rakesh Punn, inmate  
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Anonymous (you know who you are:  
thank you!)

## 4 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) or look for [IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com)
- 3) Donate through <https://pay.google.com/about/> to [iskconprisonministry@gmail.com](mailto:iskconprisonministry@gmail.com)
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