

Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta
Swami Prabhupāda
Founder Acarya of the International Society for
Krishna Consciousness (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

Jan/April 2024

Please check the 2023 IPM book distribution results on **page 5**

A HAPPY YEAR!

By Bhakti-lata Dasi

Happy New Year is a common greeting on January 1st. When I hear it, I cannot help but think of what makes a year happy. A happy year for devotees means lots of hearing, chanting, and giving the many forms of Kṛṣṇa to others; His holy name, His prasadam, and, of course, His books!

With this standard in mind, I can truly say that 2023 was a happy year for the prison ministry. And spiritual happiness being —by its very nature—

ever increasing, I am expecting the year 2024 to be even happier. Happier for the devotees involved, and happier for the hundreds of inmates recipients of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mercy.

Although this service is ecstatic and I have always felt I was meant to do it, I sometimes feel as if I am running out of steam; the



pressure is unrelenting, though it is a very good position to be in as it always keeps me on my toes. When the end of the year comes, I naturally take a look at all that has been accomplished, and all the souls that have been touched and whose lives have been transformed by the magic of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and I feel renewed and reinvigorated to tackle another year. Especially special to me is the moment when I tally all the books distributed (see page 5) ; I feel like a kid opening presents. I have a sense of joyful anticipation and I can practically hear conchshells being loudly sounded in the ether! This end of the year review helps me see my service from a bird’s eye view and enables me to truly appreciate

the beauty of carrying on the mission of Lord Caitanya and the immense privilege of assisting Śrīla Prabhupāda in His preaching mission.

I thank all of you, donors and well-wishers, for making this prison ministry a reality. And a very special thanks to my sensible and steadfast husband, Mukunda dasa, without whose support (mental, spiritual, and physical) I wouldn’t be able to remain steady in my service, year after year. He is my rock.

I am looking forward to all the ecstatic preaching adventures that , Kṛṣṇa willing, 2024 will bring. 🌸

BOOKS DISTRIBUTED 2023

MAGAZINES	SMALL	MEDIUM	BIG	MAHA	BTG
125	215	24	45	339	to donate to monthly
11	11	11	11	11	150x6=900
12	12	12	12	12	4,181
10	10	10	10	10	10
10	10	10	10	10	245
10	10	10	10	10	10
10	10	10	10	10	10
10	10	10	10	10	255

Part of the book distribution tally page I keep on my desk at all times.

Left: 2023 -filled in.

Right: 2024 -brand new canvas!

BOOKS DISTRIBUTED 2024

MAGAZINES	SMALL	MEDIUM	BIG	MAHA	BTG



IPM HAS A SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE FOR ME

By Sujan Dasi

My name is Sujan devi dasi (pronounced Sue-John). It was my great fortune to join the Hare Krishna movement in 1969 and become Srila Prabhupada’s disciple. In the early 90s, I took up the service of editor/proofreader for *Torchlight Publishing*, a devotee-owned company that produced many Vaishnava books. Later on, to help support my growing family (4 wonderful children!), I spent over 10 years as an editorial consultant for a local government agency. Now living in the New Raman Reti community in north-central Florida, I jumped at the chance to use my editing skills more directly in the service of the Lord and His devotees once again by assisting with the inmates’ monthly *Freedom Newsletter*.

The ISKCON Prison Ministry has a special significance for me: there is one person who has told me that his first contact with Krishna

Consciousness was through a friend who had previously heard about Krishna while in prison. The friend shared what he had learned, got this person to become vegetarian, and taught him how to chant japa. This person is now my husband, who has been a devotee since 1973. So I am seeing the value of this



preaching program on a daily basis! I am thrilled to hear the stories from those who have started practicing Krishna consciousness even while imprisoned and am always remembering how Srila Prabhupada said that there is no impediment to developing Krishna consciousness. ISKCON Prison Ministry ki, jaya! 🌸

PROGRAMS at LOWELL CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTION

By Bhakti-lata Dasi

Do you remember, in past newsletters reading about the *Sadhana Service* at the Lowell Correctional Institution, in Ocala, Florida? Mother Devaki and I were in the process of getting approved to be volunteers and it was a maze of red tape and inefficient bureaucracy. Well, our patience and tenacity paid off and we were finally authorized to go visit the ladies there.

It was my first time going to an in-person prison program. Although I had attempted to do so in the past, obstacles had prevented me from going. Seeing as there's always more service than I can do in the office, I took it as Kṛṣṇa's mercy. But my desire remained and I was elated to finally be given the chance to experience this aspect of prison preaching.

A few months before we could visit, seven to nine ladies were meeting together. Unfortunately, by the time we were allowed to visit, only three participants remained. When Mother Devaki and I went for that first two-hour program, these three ladies attended, along with two other curious souls. Their leader was Bhaktin Kimberly. She was as enthusiastic in person as she was in writing. Everyone introduced themselves, then we had a kirtan—their first kīrtana. We also read from *Bhagavad-gita As It Is*, and answered their questions. They were very appreciative of the time we took to be with them.

A few days after this program, Bhaktin Kimberly was released. On her way to her family, she stopped by the temple with her friend Beth, who is very open to and inquisitive. Mother Devaki, Mother Jahnava and I greeted them. In anticipation of their arrival, we had gathered some prasadam plates and maha sweets, which they greatly appreciated. Kimberly even brought home some prasadam to her daughter (who also loved it).



ABOVE: First visit to the Alachua temple. From left to right: Devaki Dasi, Bhaktin Kimberly, Bhakti-lata Dasi, Beth

Mother Devaki and I went for a second program, and the two following weeks I went on my own. I brought the movie *Hare Krishna!* for them to view. It was very interesting to see the effect it had on them. When I first arrived, one of the ladies was very downtrodden; her cell had been searched and all her things scattered. Another was very sad because she missed Kimberly. But by the end of the movie, their faces were bright and they were smiling. They were chanting in time with the movie's closing kīrtana. For a time, their spirits were freed from the oppression of prison life. I was touched to witness their transformation.

The third week I came armed with a mrdanga. A friend had taught me a simple beat, as I had never played before. After passing through security, I walked across the yard playing and singing softly. It is the first time I turned so many heads! Being fifteen minutes early, I stood outside the chapel door and a few ladies gathered around and some asked questions. It was ecstatic.

On my fourth and last visit, the ladies listened to an audio CD of Prabhupāda singing Hare Kṛṣṇa. The ladies shared that they felt very peaceful afterwards.

I hope that more devotees will be inspired to visit this and other prisons. I myself am bound to my IPM office service and am satisfied that from here I can reach hundreds of inmates and support the service of many volunteers in the USA and abroad. Still, I am very grateful to have been given the privilege of experiencing a few in-person prison programs, as it has deepened my understanding of the inmates' lives behind bars. 🌸

Note: I stay in contact with Bhaktin Kimberly. She has an altar in her room and, although she works six days a week, rebuilding her life, she gets up at 4 AM to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa. She says she'll never give it up. She and Beth are planning another visit to the temple in June.



ABOVE: Bhakti-lata Dasi in front of Lowell Correctional Institution

Monthly BTGS to the CHAPLAINS

A few months ago, I offered all the chaplains on my contact list to receive monthly back issues of the *Back to Godhead* magazine for their chapel libraries. Up to now, fourteen chaplains took up that offer. They distribute these magazines to the inmate population and anyone interested can have one. In this way, **292** back issues of BTG are sent monthly.



That's not counting that bi-monthly every new issue is sent to 160 individual inmates.

BTGs are like candies in the prison system. Each magazine is passed from hand to hand. Even inmates who are not particularly interested in Kṛṣṇa Consciousness will readily pick one up; these magazines are very attractive, being of high quality and filled with appealing pictures. Even if an inmate doesn't read much of the text, he/she will at least thumb through it to look at these colorful pictures. In the black and white world that is prison, these magazines are like magnets.

Great opportunity for seva

For this to continue, the prison ministry is in great need of a **sponsor** for the shipping cost— **\$250 per month** — of these monthly BTGs to the chaplains.

If you feel called to sponsor this item, please contact Bhakti-lata Dasi at: IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com



Inmate Letter Excerpts

I've got several books my daughter has ordered for me, the *Bhagavad Gita As It Is*, *Nectar of Devotion*, and *Kṛṣṇa*. Since getting all of these, I've learned a lot about life; why I'm here, what happens after death, and who is God. I know that I have a lot more to learn, but I am determined. I am trying to eat vegetarian here, but the quality of food is low. There are also no other Krishna devotees here that I am aware of.

Ron R. —Terre Haute, Indiana

Hare Krishna, Advaita Prabhu! Haribol! Thank you for sending those pictures. I always enjoy getting pictures from y'all. Everything has been going well, very well for me in here. Here I have been blessed with opportunities to preach to inmates and teach about Krishna consciousness. Not any formal

scheduled appointments, but I make my way to certain inmates on scheduled days and tutor them in Krishna consciousness. So I make kind of like house calls. Currently, I have seven different people learning from me. I read scriptures from *Bhagavad-Gita As It Is*, and *Bhagavad Purana* and answer questions. Currently a friend of mine in my own

quad (housing unit) chants Japa with me, and I have taught him how to offer [his food so it becomes] *prasadam*. Here at Blackwater, the seed of devotion has been planted.

Every other day, I have random inmates that come up to me and ask, "Is it possible if you can teach me about the Vedas?", Or, "I want to learn about Krishna". It is funny because they always offer to pay me to

teach them and I always decline the offer. It is already my job to preach and render service. I do it



for Radha-Krishna, so why should I do it for my own personal gain? I'd rather see them go to Goloka Vrindavan than for me to go.

Bhakta Alexander P. —Milton, Florida

Progress is slow and tedious but nothing is impossible with the causeless mercy of the Divine. We all do our part to provide example by what we say and do. I am done with the transcendental approach of Yoga that I have been studying for over two years. After reflecting on the scriptural statements in the Bhagavad-Gita, in regard to this subject, I decided to dedicate my full attention and efforts entirely to Krishna Consciousness only. Many thanks for all the resources that have aided immeasurably in my awakening and decision. My humble obeisance and gratitude. Hare Krishna!

Victor R. — Kingman, Arizona

I loved *A Place of Sandalwood and Roses!* I really liked her different perspective and it was a delightful change from the more testosterone-tinged accounts. Helps fill out and balance the story and I just wish it was longer. By the way, I read everything you send me. I would be a bigger fool

than I already am and rather disrespectful to you if I didn't'.

David B. — Danbury, Connecticut

Hello, International Society for Krsna Consciousness. My name is Joshua Creely, I live in Boulder Colorado. I'm residing in the county mental ward. I want to have association of a pure devotee. I have undertaken a strict vegetarian diet and have begun fasting for discipline and fortitude. Could the Hare Krsna movement sanga write as a pen pal with me in correspondence?

I really want to know more about the life of a bhakta, mendicant. I have been inspired by Swami's books and life to find insights in talks about God and my moral duty in this life. I need the contact of others who are like me – wanting to find the way back to Godhead.

A Vaishnava is in my heart and I want to be part of the Krsna society, movement to please Krsna. I want to learn more about reality and peace. Would someone loyal to swami's mission please write back to me and form an alliance of friendship and brotherhood that I may one day wear the yellow robes of the Vaishnava. Hare Kṛṣṇa.

Joshua C. —Boulder, Colorado

2023 IPM BOOK DISTRIBUTION

Śrīla Prabhupāda's Books total: 7,174

Breakdown:

Booklets: 97

Small: 5,735

Medium: 554

Big: 87

Maha-Big: 701

Books by other devotee authors: 162

BTGs: 3,479

BBT Art Calendars: 60

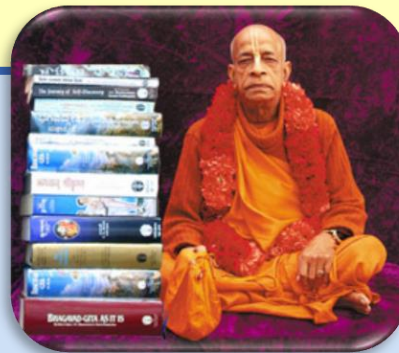
CDs: 186

DVDs: 54

MP3: 1

Japa Mala sets: 15

Neck beads: 11



GRAND TOTAL of
Books and BTGs combined: 10,815

Śrīla Prabhupāda, ke, Jaya!

CHAPLAINS' APPRECIATION

7/17/23

Thank you for your email. It might be a good idea if you could send me two paperback Bhagavad-Gitas so that I may have them on hand to respond to any future requests. The patient who receives the magazines and newsletters asked me about them recently, so he will be very happy to receive what you sent. Please keep sending the magazines and newsletters to me for him. I will advise you when he is discharged. Thank you for your continued support of our patients.

Monica Maghrak
Spiritual Support Dept.
Torrance, Pennsylvania

9/4/23

Yes, that would be wonderful. As we continue to add to our library any and all donations would be of great interest to us. Whatever you are able to send can and will be utilized.

Rev. Stacy Allan Shaffer
Marienville Pennsylvania

10/12/23

I have just received your generous donation of two boxes of materials.

On behalf of SCI Forest and the individuals who may benefit from these materials we are thankful with a grateful heart.

These materials are in the process of being logged and labeled into our Religious Library and will be made available as soon as that task is complete.

Thank you again and may you be blessed as you continue to minister through your generosity.

Many Blessings.

Rev. Stacy Allan Shaffer
Marienville, Pennsylvania

10/5/23

We received your much appreciated Donation; we were able to actually give an Inmate in Confinement material today during rounds. We had one inmate come to the time slotted for their service and he was surprised with the donations. I cannot thank you enough for your compassion for the Inmates here at N.W.F.R.C. M/U and Annex, I was able to share some material with the Senior Chaplain of the Annex.

Thank you again.

Chaplain Dante Hill
Chipley, Florida

11/15/23

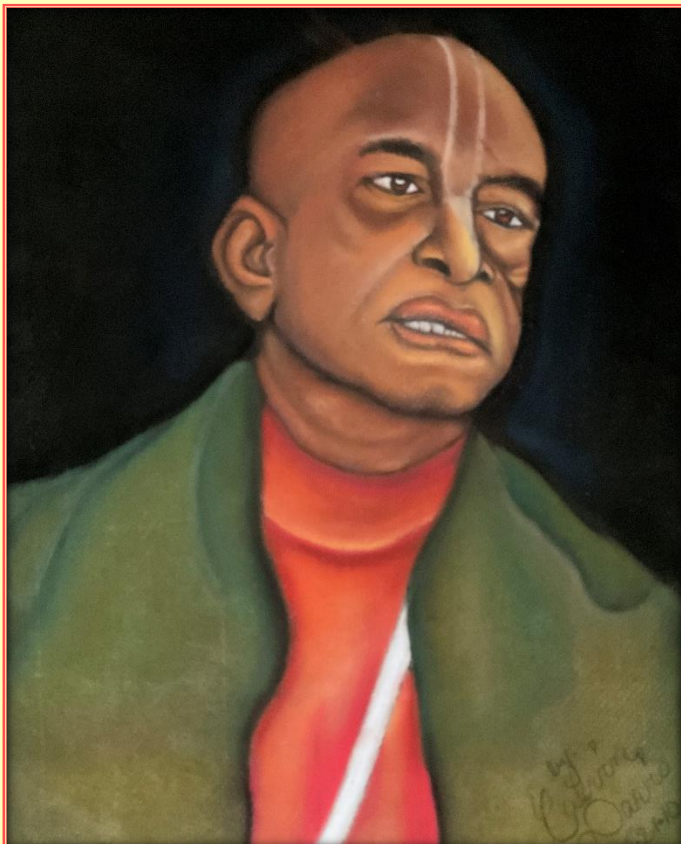
Today I picked up from the warehouse 2 boxes. Thank you!

Chaplain Hochman —Fairton, NJ

Inmate Art!



ABOVE: Painting of Lord Nrsimhadeva by inmate Calvin D. —Oregon



LEFT: Painting of Śrīla Prabhupāda, by inmate Calvin D. —Oregon

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:

Candramauli Swami
Gopal Rasamurthy
ISKCON silicon valley
Mark Barnett
Radhikesh Dasa & Premanjali Dasi
Robert Barnett — Kansas inmate
Sachidevi Dasi
Vaisnavi Iticat



And our monthly Donors:

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Maya Sudhana Dasa
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Shashi Shefali Majmudar
Radha Vinod Dasa
Raina Dasa
Rāma Kīśora Dāsa
Śrutadeva Dasa and Deanna
Vikram Kumar
Vraja Kishore Dasa
Yudhisthira Dasa
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: [Paypalme/IPM](https://www.paypal.com/US/merch/p/ISKCONPrisonMinistry) or look for IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com
- 3) Donate through [Google Pay](https://www.google.com/pay) 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.

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