

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*

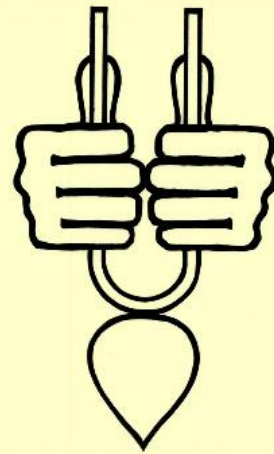
**Sept/Dec 2024**

### **A TREASURE TO SHARE** — Cooperating for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Pleasure

By Bhakti-lata Dasi

ISKCON Prison Ministry (IPM) exists *only* because we have something valuable to share. If Śrīla Prabhupāda hadn’t sacrificed so much in order to give us the most valuable treasure, we would have nothing of special significance to give to others. And even with a treasure to give, not much would be done without a team. Śrīla Prabhupāda told us that we would show our love for him by cooperating with one another, and it is through that cooperation that the prison ministry is able to give Prabhupāda’s message to thousands of inmates every year.

IPM also plays a role in fulfilling Lord Caitanya’s desire to bring Kṛṣṇa consciousness to every town and village. Prisons and jails are indeed like



villages whose inhabitants suffer greatly, isolated from the outside world.

I am so thankful to all the devotees willing to sacrifice for Prabhupāda's mission. IPM is a collaboration between those who volunteer their time to write to inmates, those who donate books (and other material), those who donate funds to ship books and buy office supplies, those who help in other ways (like typing inmate letters for the newsletters) and also those who pray for our success.

IPM has been going strong since the early 70s. That's over fifty years. I was given the great fortune to be part of this ministry for twenty-one years; six years as a volunteer and fifteen as the director. I have had my hands full with inmate correspondence, sending books to inmates and chaplains, tending to office needs (ordering supplies, taking care of necessary red tape, etc.), coordinating volunteers' efforts, writing the two newsletters, and staying in contact with chaplains and inmates' friends and family members, etc.

IPM is also not stagnant; it is forever expanding, with new developments to feed our enthusiasm, and also obstacles to keep us on our toes. An example of a new development is that this year, eighteen chaplains asked to receive back issues of *Back to*

*Godhead* magazine (BTG) on a monthly basis (see article on page 5).

An example of an obstacle is that in the last couple years, a few states have adopted the new prison policy of transitioning the prison mail system from snail mail to electronic mail. There are now four states who have adopted this system and many more will follow in a not-so-distant future. Although there are institutions in those states that make exceptions for religious and legal material, it is a new reality the prison ministry has to adapt to (*you can read more about this in the Sept/Dec 2023 IPM NEWS, on page 2*). In that new electronic prison mail era, the inmates are given a tablet on which they can access their scanned mail. That obviously causes a problem as far as receiving Prabhupāda's books,. We are therefore in the process of making Śrīla Prabhupāda's books available on the inmates' tablets. For the last year we've been gathering all the necessary information and, I hope, this new frontier will have been conquered by the time the next IPM NEWS comes around in January and you will be able to read all about it. Stay tuned!

Again, I want to thank all of you who are part of the fabric of this prison preaching service, in one way or other. May we continue to collaborate for Śrīla Prabhupāda's pleasure for years to come. 🌸

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## **KRSNA WILL ALWAYS OUTLAST US**

**By inmate David B. —Danbury, Connecticut (in 2023)**

Prabhupada said a good cook should be able to cook anywhere with anything and make delicious food to offer to Krishna. I grew up with this same belief and I enjoy doing so [in the prison kitchen] and grateful Krishna has given me this gift to benefit others while providing service to Him as well. It certainly opens many doors/hearts in here.

I really always have loved sharing cultures/beliefs/faith/ideas with others and find in doing so wounds begin to heal, rifts are bridged and misunderstandings are cleared. It must be done with an open mind and an open heart but I believe no matter their relationship with our Father, we are all still siblings and while we will at times argue over this or that, we still can love and respect each other as well and recognize our similarities while

honoring our differences that are part of being individuals. I find many people state they believe in a higher power.

Our inherent categorizing of religions also leads to a stereotyping that I come across a lot and have worked hard with my own mind to overcome. I find it enjoyable to shock someone out of such notions in kind, compassionate ways. Take for example, two Indian-Canadian brothers in here. Their family was once Hindus but "converted" a few generations ago to Muslim and moved to Canada where the brothers were born and raised with trips to see family in India. Then they meet me. A 6'2" white guy who not only knows their culture better than they do but is also a follower of the Vaisnava traditions. You should have heard the conversations

of telling their wives about my making Indian dishes —especially making paneer— and even laddus (or, as they called them, those egg-shaped thingies). They even borrowed my MP3 player and, while they don't understand Sanskrit, they listened to some of the many bhajans I have on there and they were really shocked. I have met other Muslims here as well and some are Pakistani, which also are shocked to find a Vaisnava their midst, and one who they get along with great.

Their reactions remind me a lot of the experiences when Prabhupada brought devotees from America and Europe to India for the first time. It is just interesting to us that such is also happening now in the BOP as well. It certainly is entertaining as much as it is enlightening to them. I like to think our talks also help heal the wounds I see in them that happened and continue to happen between our faiths.

There is an Orthodox Jewish man here who I also spoke to at length on topics of the Torah, Talmud and even the Kabbalah, as he is a scholar of it as well. A few days ago he asked me if I could secretly get him a copy of the Bhagavad-gita, because he saw it referenced in a Wayne Dyer book he was reading and thought it very interesting. Needless to say, I got one of the chapel clerks to check out one of the ones you donated to the chapel, in my name, and gave it to the Jewish man to read. We have had some interesting conversations since. I find that this is the case with many I have spoken to who pick up the Bhagavad-gita.

One staunch Catholic even proceeded afterwards to read the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam [which is in the chapel library] because of how the Bhagavad-gita deepened his faith as a Catholic. An ex-cop who is also Catholic has also befriended me and we have long discussions on how all the faiths are different ways of acknowledging the Supreme Personality of Godhead with different results for different faiths depending on where one is at in their spiritual development. Being in here is tough for him for many reasons but his mental health has greatly improved since we started associating and discussing topics of a higher plane. Srita Prabhupāda, through his books, most definitely gave this world a great gift and gave me that ability to have such interactions. Jaya Srita Prabhupada!

By the way, we did indeed have to move. This time it was to the auditorium where at first they did not have enough cots for all eighty-two of us. They had to go out and buy some that day, then everyone less than three feet from each other, two showers, two bathrooms/toilets and one telephone. No television to babysit the inmates and a lot of complaining. Personally I didn't mind but I did get COVID a second time while over there and testing positive put me (and many others who were close to the original persons that were the vectors) in a lockdown in the cell with another inmate for at least twenty-three hours a day for two weeks. Again, I didn't mind at all as it let me do things like read and write after my roommate went to sleep. I find that if I let go of expectations (attached to the outcome) and ride the flow instead of trying to swim upstream I am not stressed and things work out as long as I take shelter of Krishna. Of course, me being the stubborn soul I am, I will go for the challenge of swimming upstream just to see if it is another option (and sometimes it is) but now know when to turn around when the current is too much. I see it is Krishna's way of saying "no." Of course, if I don't heed Him I will eventually tire as Krishna certainly will outlast us.

There are times when I get comfortable because things are, by my perception, going well. My chanting is not as focused, my prayers not as sincere, my monkey-mind running all over. Then by Krishna's mercy, the illusion is ripped away and I am thrown into a situation where I can only place my faith in Krishna as all the rest is not in my meager means of control. These upheavals give me the chance to remember who is really in control and instead of completely acting out against the stimulus, I turn to Krishna and Narasimha to weather the storm, increase my faith and surrender unto Him. I can be stubborn, but Krishna is kind to keep helping me find the path again and again to make it back home to Him. When you offer yourself in the service of Krishna, you better have your armor at the ready and be prepared for anything. You may be sent into the most hellish places to fight numerous demonic forces, but this does not mean you will be overwhelmed, so long as you have faith in and devotion to Krishna.

When you are forced to deal with other people 24/7 and cannot get away from them, I find that no matter how demonic their behaviors and actions are, there is also another side to everyone. I cannot

help but develop compassion for every person even if I don't like their behavior and actions. Outward appearances are also rarely accurate and some of the toughest looking and acting persons are the hungriest for Krishna and have a kind soul hidden and protected by the exterior. This prison sentence is really helping me to be less judgmental and be more compassionate toward even the "worst of the worst" and see they are all really just God's lost children, looking for love and acceptance but not knowing how to get it.

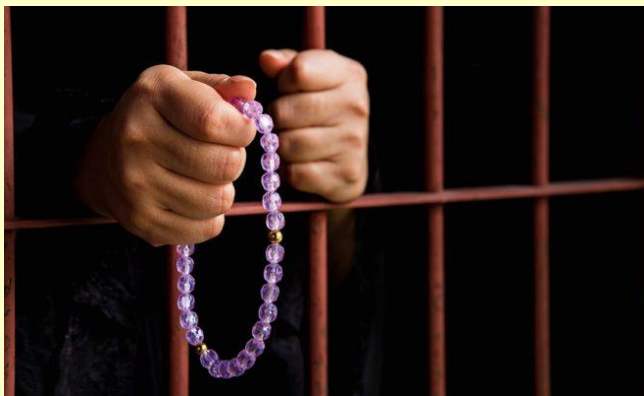
I shared my books with an aspiring devotee here. He read every one of the books I shared with him. He is getting out of here in eleven months and through him, his adopted teenage son is also very interested [in KC] and so they say they will be visiting at least the Boston temple once out of here. There is also a new aspiring devotee I have engaged and he seems very hungry for knowledge. I gave him some of the mantra cards you sent and he says he is going to write to you as he'd like to be put on the newsletter mailing list, if possible, and would also like to have a Bhagavad-gita, as I don't have any more to give out. So far his actions seem to say he is seriously searching and very interested in it all. I'll let him speak for himself in his letter.

I am doing well, continue to keep up on my 35 rounds daily of japa, but find my mind wandering at times when I offer aratik. I am working on doing better at this now after such a lapse in concentration due mainly, I believe, from the chaotic surroundings. I mainly keep to myself in my cell when not out working on a project, and read at least three to four hours every day. It is, therefore, always shocking when I hear the news or catch a glimpse of the television, magazines, etc. around here. I see all of it with eyes that are unused to such droll and worse sensory input. I

have learned to be detached from such and just put my faith in Krishna no matter what the outcome of everything comes to be. People ask me all the time when I am going to do this or do that, or what do I have planned daily, weekly, etc. They don't get how I manage to get so much done in this environment without the usual issues and "drama" they encounter/have themselves. Krishna talks if we listen and I am but a young child who is just beginning to learn the language and wow! So, I am doing just fine. :)

I had a good-ole-boy Christian ask me what I thought of Jesus. At the beginning of my answer I could see he was dismissive but, as I explained the transcendental truth, he re-engaged, eyes lit up, and he became involved. He disclosed to me that he had spoken to another "Hindu" once and he had thought that "Hindus" were "a little off." I told him that everything I told him was not my speculation but scripture I was merely repeating. I can tell that our conversation certainly got him thinking. In here, inmates are constantly concerned about hierarchy and what job, and level in said job, they hold is very important to who they see themselves as — a very materialistic way of viewing everything. I occasionally find myself getting swept up in this but I also find that with a little reflection and effort I can stand apart from the mad scrambling and drama involved and yet still be just as well respected if not actually more so.

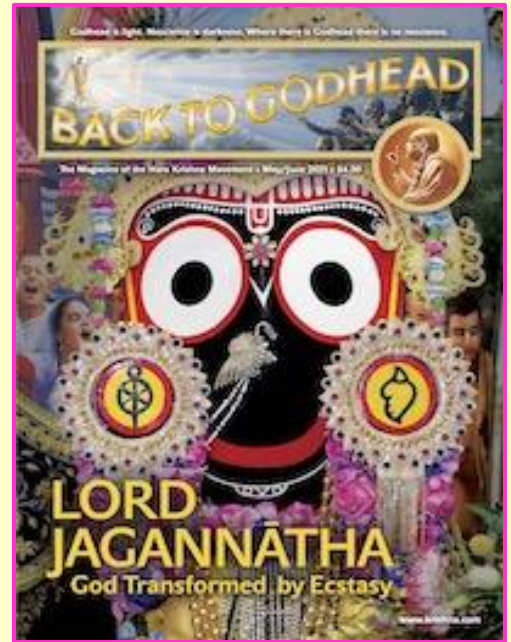
I am finally learning that I don't need to comment or get involved in mundane conversations because I realized that when I do so, all I am doing is trying to show off instead of reining in my ego and being humble as a devotee should be. Such behavior otherwise is damaging and hurtful and does not further us spiritually. 🌸



## MONTHLY BACK ISSUES of BTG

There are now 18 chaplains who receive back issues of BTG (*Back to Godhead* magazine) on a monthly basis. We send them the magazines and they make sure those end up in the inmates' hands. Unbeknownst to them, they are effectively acting as book distributors on Śrīla Prabhupāda's behalf, thus benefiting not only the inmates but themselves as well. 😊

Each chaplain receives between 2 to 50 BTGs (as per their request), and we send them a variety of different issues. All in all, 377 back issues are distributed every month! 🌸



**Left:** New batch of BTGs coming in the office.



**Below:** The BTGs nicely organized in the shelves, ready for easy packaging.



## MY HEART IS LOST TO KRSNA

By Jivananda dasa brahmacari  
—Salem, Oregon

In the early morning,  
The moonlight shines on the wall.  
I hear the prison pet peacock,  
Make it's lonely high-pitched call.  
I'm free, cause Krsna is with  
me,  
I just believe, and my eyes cry.  
There's a boat on a  
transcendental ocean,  
Chanting his Holy name, I see  
Krsna inside.  
Then, I'm in a Boat of  
Transcendental Knowledge,  
Where a blind man comes and now he sees.



The fire of material existence is completely  
extinguished,  
Crossing over an ocean of miseries.  
Krsna, You're the Transcendental Thief.  
Not only butter, You also steal hearts.

You ride in on Your Holy  
Name,  
With real life and bliss  
You make Your mark.  
With You I never feel lost  
or empty,  
My heart is lost to You.  
You have captured my  
heart completely,

My heart is lost to You. 🌸



## CHAPLAINS' APPRECIATION

5/14/24

Thank you so much, we have received 3 boxes and  
an envelope of magazines.

I have placed the books and the magazines out on  
the shelves for our students to review and study. I  
already had a student ask where the Srimad-  
Bhagavatams were.

**Chaplain Christopher Back**  
**Logansport Juvenile Correctional Facility —**  
**Indiana**

8/13/24

Dear friends, I hope this message finds you well.  
I am writing to extend my sincere gratitude to the  
ISKCON Prison Ministry for your generous support  
of the inmates at the Montgomery County  
Correctional Facility. Your commitment to serving  
the incarcerated community is deeply appreciated,  
and the impact of your contributions has been  
profoundly positive.

I wanted to inform you that we no longer require  
monthly donations of back issues of the *Back to*  
*Godhead* magazine at this time.

Thank you once again for your unwavering  
dedication and support. Please extend my thanks to  
everyone involved in this noble effort. Should our

needs change in the future, I will be sure to  
reach out. Warm regards,

**Chaplain Kevin Bone**  
**Montgomery County Correctional Facility**  
**— Pennsylvania**

8/13/24

Thank you for your recent donation of *Back to*  
*Godhead* magazines.

We are implementing them into our Chapel  
Library and they will be available shortly for  
the entire population to borrow. Thank you  
again and many blessings.

**Chaplain Shaffer —Pennsylvania**

8/5/24

Bhakti-lata Dasi,  
Yes! Wonderous! I will need to rely on your  
charity as I have no budget. I can put all four to  
good use. Send the physical DVDs please.  
Thank you so much for your thoughtfulness  
and generosity.

Peace, Blessings and Joy!

**Chaplain Dave Rink**  
**Chippewa Correctional Facility —Michigan**



# 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 the last newsletter:

Charles Thomas, inmate  
Dhira Govinda Dasa  
Dr. William R. Robinson  
Inmate Anil Nayee  
Inmate Charles Thomas  
Ishani Chowdhury  
Linda Voith

Mark Barnett  
Nimal Hemphill  
Puskar Dasa and Sukhada Dasi  
Pradyumna Dasa (Scotland)  
Saranagati McGlin  
Vegavati Dasi



## And our monthly Donors:

Amala Gaura Dasa  
Aritra Nath  
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Bhavananda Dasa  
Chris Roschbach  
Deepali Mittal  
Dina Sharana dasa  
Elizabeth Elson  
Gene and Claudine Moore  
Jitarati Dasa  
Kalindi Dasi (Hopping)  
Kanva Dasa  
Maya Sudhana Dasa  
Mickey Singer  
Pancaratra dasa & Atita Guna dasi



Premananda Dasa  
Ram Tulasi Dasa, Ananda Shakti Dasi  
Rene Waisvisz  
Richard House  
Sahadev Dasa  
Satyanarayana Dasa  
Shashi Shefali Majmudar  
Radha Vinod Dasa  
Raina Dasa  
Rāma Kīśora Dāsa  
Vegavati Dasi  
Vikram Kumar  
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: [www.paypal.me/IPM](http://www.paypal.me/IPM) or look for [IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com](mailto:IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com)
- 3) Donate through [pay.google.com](http://pay.google.com) to [iskconprisonministry@gmail.com](mailto: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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