

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

May/August 2026

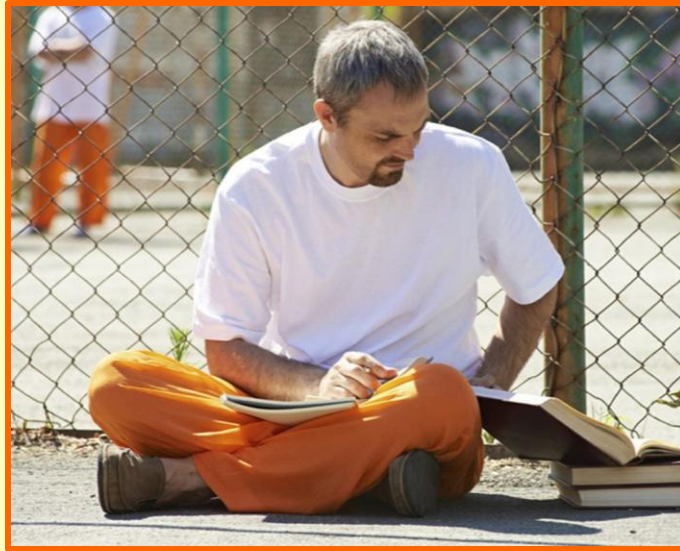
BRINGING LIGHT INTO DARKNESS

By Bhakti-lata Dasi

There are few places as full of darkness and despair as prisons. There, inmates are isolated from the world, surrounded by bad association, with deplorable food, an almost constant threat of danger, without true guidance and with few opportunities for growth. It's a life in survival mode. Prisons are filled with criminals; in other words, prisons are filled with ideal candidates for the mercy of Lord Caitanya, who came especially to save the most fallen. Prabhupada spread this mercy all over the world; he even visited the New Delhi prison, in 1962, where he said, "If you give me the chance to speak to all the members of the Jail, it is quite possible for me to turn them into ideal characters." The prison ministry is an attempt to assist him in this work.



Prison life is miserable. In the “free” world, we have moments of material satisfaction and happiness, with new experiences and ample opportunities. Those elements are almost non-existent in a prison environment. Prison means a lot of anguish, loneliness, oppression, anger, and frustration. The monotony is crushing. Each new day only brings more of the same; eating poor, unappealing food, uncomfortable sleep (often in suffocating heat), and pointless routines. Day after day. And for those who are there for life, there’s not a lot of light at the end of that tunnel. In that profound material wasteland, what inmates need the most is a sense of purpose and direction. Coming in contact with Kṛṣṇa consciousness gives them a practical way to connect with Kṛṣṇa. All at once, they have a purpose, a way of life, and a mission. Once they know about the holy name, they have access to Kṛṣṇa is the most powerful way. They can utter Kṛṣṇa’s name and Krishna is there with them. They just need to think about Krishna and Krishna is there with them. They can talk to someone about Krishna, share a book, and Krishna is right there with them. Kṛṣṇa consciousness can be practiced anywhere, anytime, by anyone. It is the most portable means of self-realization; the greatest gift.



Devotees can bring light to inmates by helping them to see Kṛṣṇa’s presence even in the darkness of prison life. In a conversation with a reporter, in 1974, Srila Prabhupada said, “God is everything. God is darkness, also. Therefore the Srimad-Bhagavatam clearly defines God as ‘that being from whom emanates everything that exists.’ Light exists, yet darkness also exists. So just as light emanates from God, darkness also emanates from God.”

The real suffering is not to be in prison; the real suffering is to not be able to see Kṛṣṇa while in prison. Devotees can help inmates by putting them in contact with Prabhupada through his books (and sometimes through his audio recordings and videos). Prabhupada said that “religion means to abide by the laws of God.” To be able to do that, one need to know who God is and what His laws

are. To get that information, one has to receive it from someone who has it, who has realized it. Prabhupada imparts this knowledge in his books.

A name of Kṛṣṇa is “Dina Bandhu,” “Friend of the poor.” We have the privilege of introducing inmates to their best Friend, their eternal Friend, who has always been, is always, and will always be with them. With this most meaningful of connection, their life is changed forever. Even if their external circumstances don’t change, their life becomes enriched in the most impactful way. And

sometimes, even their external circumstances change. Some even experience practical miracles.

For example, an inmate had been in solitary, where mail was not allowed; however, for some inexplicable reason, the guards gave him the ten back issues of BTG I had sent him. He was really surprised, delighted, and completely bewildered as to how that

was even possible.

Another inmate recounted that he had feelingly prayed to Kṛṣṇa, declaring his intention to surrender to Him. The very next day he was given a prison job that was coveted by many but rarely obtained, and that without him having even requested it. Everyone around him was astonished. One time an inmate told me he had dreamed that Prabhupada had visited him in his cell, smiling radiantly, and speaking some Sanskrit verses.

There are even many chaplains and other prison officials who appreciate and are favorable to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Some chaplains partner with us to assist in bringing Kṛṣṇa consciousness to the inmates. A chaplain in Nebraska asked me to send him 25 Freedom Newsletters every month, and he gives them to inmates; he’s been doing that for the last couple of years.

And for over a year, when we had the funds, I was sending about 382 back issues of the BTG to 18 chaplains (some wanted 5 copies, some 50), and they would hand them out themselves. That was a fantastic program.

A few days ago, I received the following email,
“*The Bhagavad Gita As It Is helped me a lot in my life and I would like to order a copy for the library here. I am an academic instructor at LCF. I am also wondering how I can help to reverse the ban on the Bhagavad- Gita As It Is.*”

—**Diogo Segovia, Lake City, Florida**

On the subject of the ban on the Bhagavad-gita As It Is, the lawsuit has been filed. Some new outlets have picked up the story. You can view this short video from TimesXP on [YouTube](#).

And here is an [article](#) that had been written before the case was filed.

Thank you, all of you (volunteers, well-wishers and donors), who make this prison ministry possible. It is truly a team effort.

Please pray that I may have the determination and stamina to do this service for years to come. 🙏



LAWSUIT FILED

On April 21st, 2026, Amarendra prabhu, aka David Liberman (picture on the right) filed a federal civil rights lawsuit in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Florida challenging the Florida Department of Corrections’ statewide ban on the **Bhagavad-gītā As It Is**, by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda.



The plaintiff, Rakesh Patel, an inmate at Jefferson Correctional Institution in Monticello, alleges that Prison Officials and the FDOC’s Literature Review Committee have unlawfully prohibited him from possessing his primary sacred scripture, in violation of the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) and the Religion Clauses of the First Amendment.

According to the complaint, prison officials banned **Bhagavad-gītā As It Is** on the grounds that it is “written in code or otherwise not reasonably subject to interpretation by Department staff,” and that it is “detrimental to the safety, security, or rehabilitative interests of the facility, or likely to create a risk of disorder.”

The lawsuit asserts that these justifications are offensive, factually incorrect, and discriminatory, noting that the **Bhagavad-gītā** is a central scripture for hundreds of millions of Hindus and related traditions worldwide. The text is widely used in academic, religious, and correctional settings throughout the United States, and mainstream scriptures such as the Bible and Qur’an are routinely permitted in Florida prisons.

The case is pending in the Northern District of Florida, Tallahassee Division.



NEW TEAM! —By Bhakti-lata Dasi



NEW JERSEY DEVOTEES TAKE ON THE DISTRIBUTION OF THE BTGs

To start with, I want to express my deepest gratitude to the previous donor (who prefers to remain anonymous) for his incredible generosity in sponsoring the BTGs (new and back issues) for about seven years.

At the beginning of 2026, Dhira Govinda prabhu, a devotee from New Jersey, stepped forward to sponsor the new issues of BTG for at least one year. Mother Govindanandini (an IPM volunteer since 2012), also from New Jersey, called me with the good news. Although it was wonderful news, I was feeling an incredible pressure at the prospect of continuing to send the BTGs while juggling so many other IPM projects. After we discussed this at length, Govindanandini generously offered to take the responsibility of coordinating everything with Ijya prabhu (from the BTG office), so that the BTGs would be shipped to New Jersey. She also connected with a third devotee from the same community, Mother Pooja, engaging her in mailing the BTGs. So by the devotees' selflessness and compassion, the inmates will continue receiving all the new issues of BTG. It makes such a difference in their lives! And each magazine is passed from hand to hand so that each issue is read by many inmates.

Thank you, Dhira Govinda prabhu, Mother Govindanandini and Mother Pooja. I deeply appreciate your service!

If you feel inspired to sponsor, or help sponsor the distribution of the BTG to the inmates for the coming year(s), please email me at:

IskconPrisonMinistry@gmail.com



Dhira Govinda prabhu and late wife, Mother Radhe Svam



Mother Govindanandini



Mother Pooja

Another volunteer to thank

For about 24 years, one of our volunteers has been incredibly steady in writing to inmates and sending them books. Such a patient, dependable service is praiseworthy. Although this devotee desires to remain anonymous, still, I want to acknowledge all the hard work. This devotee's help has been essential to make sure all inmates hear from us and receive Prabhupada's books.

Thank you!

(You know who you are 😊)

Chaplains' Appreciation

On behalf of the Farmville Detention Center Chapel Department, we would like to thank you for your generous donation. Your thoughtfulness and kindness have been a great source of support for our facility, and we are deeply grateful for your contribution. Your donation has been a great help to our detainees, and we know that it will have a positive impact on their lives.

Thank you and have a great rest of your day.

Sincerely,

Chaplain Thomas

FDC Chapel Department —Farmville, VA

I want to thank you for your generous donation made to The Miracle Chapel Library. | had been amazed to see how many people are interested in the life of Krishna, and the studies of the Bhagavad — Gita. The Buddhist group, which is open to the studies, has taken charge on study deeper the teachings on the material provided. As we do not have a volunteer yet, one day has been selected to be in the library by them and enrich their knowledge provided by you, following the videos, audios and books.

I know that there are men here that find comfort and encouragement in all the books you provide. Your ministry is a valuable tool for helping these men to cope with the situations that the prison environment brings. Also if there is a way they can get direct mail, it could be looked into approvals to do so.

Thank you for the support your organization provides to the men here Okeechobee Correctional Institution's Miracle Chapel. Sincerely,|

Chaplain Rev. E. Botley —Okeechobee FL

On behalf of Spiritual Services, Chaplain Joe extends his deepest gratitude for your recent donation of the religious Your generosity is a blessing and deeply appreciated by all the patients here at the Department of State Hospitals.

Thank you as well for your faithful partnership. This donation supports our patient's spiritual growth and bible study classes.

For your tax records, DSH-N's Tax ID is 68-0309373 along with an enclosed receipt.

Should you have any questions or ideas to collaborate, please contact me at (707) 253-5540 or by email at dshnsheps@dsh.ca.gov. In Gratitude,

Heather J Lopez, Volunteer & Donations Coordinator —Napa, CA

Inmate Artwork



ABOVE: left and right:
Crocheted bracelets made by
Bhakta Rakesh P. —Connecticut

Inmate Letter Excerpts

For some time now of observing the inmates and staff in here I see so much action towards trying to enjoy the senses and seek a happiness they never find. The pettiness they exhibit and treat each other usually like animals arguing over resources and hierarchy. They love their meat and this place reeks of it as do they and cannot understand why I am physically repulsed by all of it. They (staff and inmates alike) run around miserable in their condition while dreaming that the work they do, the posturing, the gambling, the television watching and rap music all matter and will give them what they seek. Many cannot fathom why someone like me refuses to



participate in any of it. To see such glaring ignorance saddens me and reminds me that I once too was similar in nature. Many cannot understand that those same actions led by the materialistic thinking not only placed these souls into their present condition but also will keep them in such a deplorable state even if they get some of the material gains they seek.

I am also saddened that they don't see a need to change either. I wish I could help them more, but I am a fallen soul too and I am just not that far along myself that I can rescue them all from their ignorance –I do keep trying though I feel many times that I am not doing enough and not trying hard enough. Ha! The self-doubt alone causes me to realize that I fail at times to surrender and trust in Kṛṣṇa.

Kṛṣṇa kindly placing people in my path that are His devotees to help steer me back to Him as I once was when I was a child before I turned away from Him. Sure, I still feel the pull of maya but at least I can see it now and I pull myself away when I realize that I am not on the right path. And now when I realize my misstep I turn and run to the shelter of Kṛṣṇa through chanting His name, reading about Him and His associates and devotional service as best as I can. In doing so, I find the truth that not only does Kṛṣṇa reciprocate many times over, but I also find myself trying to help others who struggle with these issues too any way I can.

As I walk by the television rooms, maya draws my eyes to the screens. Ads for beauty products, items being sold using physical beauty of females, the latest and greatest hits songs your old (a few years old) for a brand-new car! Such a waste of resources and lack of direction of lives. These inmates watch this stuff with engrossed fascination that I cannot fathom. I never understood the “American” lifestyle and even less so now. It is a good reminder for me of the traps that maya lays and that the only true opulence and lasting wealth is of Kṛṣṇa. Hare Kṛṣṇa!



I am on adventures and love challenges and meeting new people of other cultures. I love all it means to live adventurous and yet a part of me was worried that if I surrendered to Kṛṣṇa and His work, my life as it was could no longer be in the future. Yet, after reading Shyamsundar's Vol 2 of 'Chasing Rhinos with the Swami' I realize how foolish such a notion was really. I can have adventures beyond my imagination it's only the reason for such adventure that will change.

David B. —Danbury, Connecticut

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:

Bhartrihari Dasa
Charles Bailey -inmate
Daruka dasa
Dhira Govinda Dasa
Gopal Ramamurthy
Guillermo Renteria-Novoa -inmate
Mark Barnett
Pradyumna Dasa



Rishi Parmar
Stava Mala Dasa
Trivikrama Chebrolu

And our monthly Donors

Amala Gaura Dasa
Aritra Nath
Ashutosh Bhardway
Bhavananda Dasa
Chris Roschbach
Deepali Mittal
Dhira Govinda Dasa
Dina Sharana dasa
Claudine Moore
Jitarati Dasa
Kalindi Dasi (Hopping)
Kanva Dasa
Maya Sudhana Dasa
Mickey Singer
Pancaratra dasa & Atita Guna dasi



Premananda Dasa
Ram Tulasi & Ananda Shakti prabhus
Rene Waisvisz
Richard House
Sahadev Dasa
Satyanarayana Dasa
Shashi Shefali Majmudar
Radha Vinod Dasa
Raina Dasa
Rāma Kīśora Dāsa
Svarbhanu & Cindy prabhus
Vegavati Dasi
Vikram Kumar
Yudhisthira Dasa
Anonymous (you know who you are 😊)

For Donations:

- 1) PayPal handle: ISKCONPrisonMinistry@gmail.com
- 2) 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

ISKCONPrisonMinistry.org