

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

March/April 2018

DYING IN PRISON

By Bhakti-lata Dasi

One of the inmates who has been in contact with the prison ministry since 2009, Bhakta Sasha, now has terminal cancer. He is fifty-seven years old. The prospect of dying is overwhelming for everyone, but having to die in prison is even more daunting. Prisons are not known for their warm, loving atmospheres; they are cold and impersonal at best. However, Bhakta Sasha is armed with Prabhupada's teachings and graced with the holy name and he is taking full advantage of it.

Premvilas prabhu, from Columbus Ohio, has generously sponsored a Srimad-Bhagavatam set for him to read. Hopefully he'll have time to read it

all before he passes away. Due to prisons' regulations, I cannot send him the whole set at once, so I send him two volumes at a time so that when he finishes a volume he always has the next one ready.



Bhakta Sasha writes:

“Thank you for sending the first and second cantos of Srimad-Bhagavatam. I have just finished the first canto and was intrigued by the in-depth description of all the friends and kinsmen of the armies from the Bhagavad-Gita. From the demigods to the demons—like Kamsa and Sisupala— to King Yudhishtira and his actions which determined the future of the Pandavas. It really helps me get a better grasp and understanding of how the saga has carried the words of Sri Kṛṣṇa to the Kali-yuga.

I start my day at 2 AM, showering, cleaning my room, and doing laundry. I now have pure vegetarian meals. I do not think about how I feel. I take it one day at a time. I am only concerned about staying Kṛṣṇa conscious. I spend my day reading and listening to my Kṛṣṇa CDs. I own no other kind of CDs. My day begins with the Daily Temple Program CD.

There are a few CNAs (certified nursing assistants) and RNs (registered nurses) here that are

Kṛṣṇa conscious. They were surprised to see that I spend my days in this way.

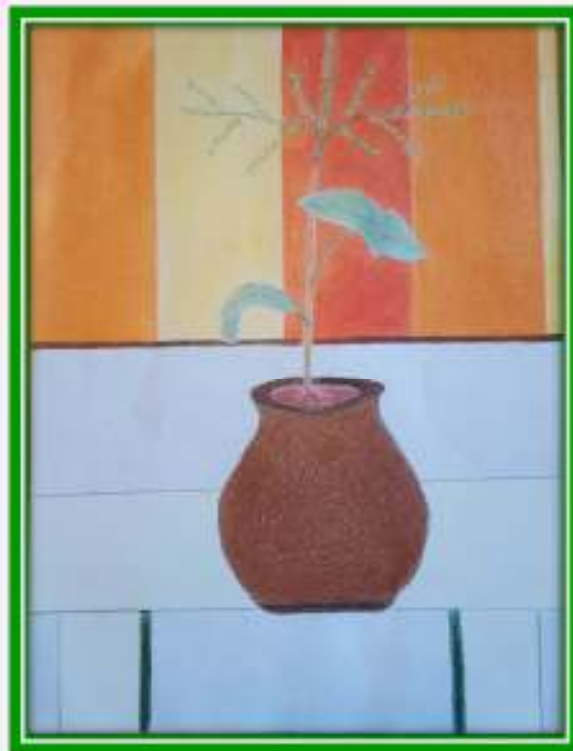
Unfortunately, in this particular unit, everyone has only 6 months or less to live.

Every day I also let other patients read some of my other books like *Coming Back*, *A Second Chance*, and *Holy Jail* (the book by Candramauli Swami, about prison inmates).

I only want my last breath to have Kṛṣṇa on it. Reading and hearing bring me so much peace of mind and calm in my everyday life. It’s a battle, but I resist taking any strong dose of morphine. I want my days to be lucid; I only ask for some to take the edge off my pain.

I am going to close for now as I tire easily while concentrating on writing the proper words to express my thoughts. Until my next letter. I bid you peace, joy, love and happiness in everything related to Kṛṣṇa.

Hare Kṛṣṇa. Bhakta Sasha”



Tulasi Devi-drawing by Bhakta Sasha

Chaplains' Appreciation

Dear Partners in ministry,

I want to thank you for your generous donation of religious literature. Donations, from friends like you, enable inmates to learn and grow in their faith. Your generosity is deeply appreciated. Our inmate religious library benefits from these Hindu faith resources. Thank you!

Chaplain Jon Shonebarger
Trousdale-Turner Correctional Center
Hartsville, Tennessee

Inmate Letter Excerpts

I am very grateful for you all sending the two pamphlets. I truly enjoyed both. Just from these I learned the meaning of the Hare Kṛṣṇa chant and how it brings the peace of consciousness. Even those around me have begun to chant it also. It's amazing to see within these walls of violence. The Reservoir of Pleasure has taught me so much that I didn't not know; who is Kṛṣṇa, what our consciousness is, and who we truly are. I am truly attempting to attune myself to Lord Kṛṣṇa's teachings and guidance. And I would so much love to receive a Bhagavad-Gita As It Is.

Steve M.
Leaksville, Mississippi

I received the two books. The *Reservoir of Pleasure* has given me a great pleasure and enlightenment. I can feel it is the transcendental plane and this is something of interest to me. But more so is the spreading of the love of Kṛṣṇa spirit, which is my purpose. I've learned that we are constantly in

touch with Kṛṣṇa in all ways and if our senses are open and pure we can receive the insight during our daily living experience. If possible I would love to understand the yoga and its relation to cultivation of spirit. Any books you choose to send me will be welcome!

Dwayne D.
Newport, Arkansas

I am writing to tell you how much I enjoyed the two booklets. I've learned a great deal on how to reestablish contact with Kṛṣṇa (God), without guilt, shame, or waiting eternal punishment. I chant the Kṛṣṇa mantra almost daily and feel peaceful/blissful when done. I would very much like to receive the Bhagavad-Gita As It Is, but am excited to receive any and all books you can send me.

Brent P.
Suffield, Connecticut

I am writing you this letter in hopes of gaining new friends and guidance in my spiritual journey. I spent most of my life searching for peace in drugs and as a result of addiction I got sent to prison.

To make a long story short, about a year ago I read a copy of the Gita (I don't have one now though I would love to have one if you can help). Anyways, this book totally changed the way I looked at life. I began meditating (although I don't know if I'm doing it right) and I feel a definite connection to Krishna. I need some direction and someone to talk to about my questions. There is so much I don't know but I want to learn.

The only reason I know of the Palace of Gold [*in West Virginia*] is because I'm from Wheeling and I have driven by it a few times.

I really hope there is someone there willing to take some time to teach me. I am 100% ready to devote my life to this spiritual journey. It seems that happiness only comes when I close my eyes and picture Krishna's smiling face. Love and blessings,

Robert H.
Mt. Olive, West Virginia

I am a seeker—devotee of Lord Krishna—and I was hoping that you could assist me on my journey. I'm looking for any literature that I could study and build on. I've been a devotee for 2 ½ years now and I would love to continue to build my relationship stronger with the Godhead. If you could provide me with any help possible, it would be greatly appreciated. Thanks. Your friend,

Kelvin B. J.
Raiford, Florida



I just finished reading the book *Five Years, Eleven Months* by Vishaka Devi Dasi. I want to let Visakha know how much I appreciated it. I like memoirs anyway, but a memoir by a devotee is like icing of the cake.

Her words in the book are down-to-earth and very well-written. I find her experiences encouraging and very uplifting at a sad time for me personally, at the recent passing of my mother and terminal illness of my younger brother.

I'm sure her story will be a positive touch for many. In fact, the day I received your book, I talked with a prison guard about it and she's eager to read it but she will have to wait because my new pal Jason, a new inmate in my dorm, is reading it. I have been sharing Kṛṣṇa conscious books and literature with him.

So thank her very much for all the work she put into this book.

Gerald N.
Monticello, Florida



THANK YOU to ALL our SUPPORTERS!

Your generosity is what keeps this program going! 😊 If I forgot anyone, please forgive me and let me know so I can include your name in the next IPM NEWS.

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