

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 2019

FROM MURDERER TO VAISNAVA

From a Russian Article

In 1990, in Russia, during the criminal investigation of Andrey Sudarikov, the police was about to close the case due to the lack of evidence of the committed crime.

However, a Bhagavad-Gita As It Is came into the hands of Andrey. Having avidly read the blessed Holy Scripture, Andrey became spiritually reborn and he confessed, to the stunned investigator, the crime he had committed, thereby signing off on a death sentence for himself.



Later on, his penalty was changed to life imprisonment as a form of experiment by the authorities. However, Andrey was able to find spiritual liberation. He gave up all his evil habits and started to lead an ascetic lifestyle, strictly following the spiritual vows of the Hare Krishnas.

Andrey studies theological Vaishnava courses of the Bhakti Shastri by correspondence and preaches non-violence to his cellmates and other prisoners. In the early 2000s, he received spiritual initiation and now signs his letters with a new name - Prabhu Das.

In 2002, by the grace of the devotees from Vologod, Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai deities came to stay in his cell. This event was covered in one Russian news portal:

“The altar with Krishna saints of Chaitanya and Nityananda, who lived in Bengal more than five hundred years ago, was installed in the cell of the prisoner, Andrei Sudarikov, who is serving a life sentence at the OE 256 \ 5 facility in the Vologod region.

According to the press service of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) within the Russian Federation, this event was carried out by the activists of ISKCON during

their visit to the correctional institution. In addition, the activists of the Oasis-108 Hare Krishna charitable mission, distributed exotic Indian sweets to all the prisoners and donated white oil paint to the colony authorities for their upcoming anniversary of the institution.

With the permission of the prison authorities, an altar of Krishna was erected in the cell of the prisoner Andrey Sudarikov. Twelve years ago, while under an investigation, Sudarikov turned to the Vaishnava religion and voluntarily confessed the crimes he committed. After receiving a life sentence, he devoted himself entirely to religious practice and even enrolled in correspondence theological Vaishnava courses.

The ceremony of the altar installation of Chaitanya and Nityananda was held amidst the sounds of ancient hymns and mantras performed by Oasis-108 volunteers.”

Below is a 15 minutes YouTube video: an excerpt of the movie called *Thieve’s World* which was filmed by Finnish and Russian journalists about the life of Andrey Sudarikov (with English subtitles):

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nBaGLVpJAi4>

Below: Prabhu Dasa in his prison cell (**left**) and the devotee who installed the deities for him (**right**):



Inmate Letter Excerpts

I have been chanting and meditating on the name of Kṛṣṇa. I do not understand what you mean by “rounds”. I go through the mantra and focus my thoughts on who and what Kṛṣṇa is while controlling my breathing. I’ve gotten to 10-15 minutes before the random thoughts start surfacing. I’ve noticed and increased sense of calmness and patience since I’ve been doing this. I’ve also become more aware of the pull and urge of sense gratification and I observe the orchestration of the modes in the behaviors of myself and others. I find myself observing the actions and conversations of those around me and from what I’ve learned from studying the Bhagavad-gita: I see! I like and appreciate that Kṛṣṇa consciousness deals with fact and not speculation. Literalness and not hypotheticals. That brings assurance and builds faith. I am very much eager to learn more and become a better devotee, or should I say transition into becoming a devotee.

Vincent C.
Gainesville, Florida

“I’m writing your organization today to hopefully learn more about Krishna Consciousness. This has been a desire of mine for a while, however up until earlier today I had absolutely no idea how to pursue this at all – until a fellow I’ve only barely spoken to before randomly approached me this morning, turned out to be a serious devotee himself, and gave me this mailing address. It was a pleasant surprise and a pretty big coincidence as well.

As a free man previously I had just begun involvement with yoga and studying Vedic philosophy when I squandered the opportunity with this period of incarceration, so it would really be a blessing to be able to learn more about such matters while still in here. Thank you in advance for any help offered at all.”

Bhakta C.
Havana, Florida

“I am seeing the number of Kṛṣṇa conscious books floating in dorms here increasing; also the number of bhaktas has correspondingly increased. Bhakta Eloy reports sankirtan in his dorm every day. Now, directly because of Kṛṣṇa conscious books, a sankirtan party each evening has begun, with at least three people

participating. This great news is bound to make your day! Thanks so much for your help.”

Gerald N.
Monticello, Florida

First I would like to thank you for what your organization is doing for the incarcerated. I have collected a group of prisoners who would greatly appreciate receiving religious books and other materials. I would be very thankful for any books you could send. It’s easy to get caught in your mind behind these walls and we all know suffering is of your mind. Rarely is there a time to sit (meditate) daily to actually clear your mind and free yourself from thinking, but a couple of us try. Thanks.

Warren N.
Burgaw, North Carolina



Dear Mother Bhakti-latā,
There are a few things that I’ve started seeing differently. Up until recently, I’ve always thought of our spiritual practices as the path leading to our ultimate goal, out of the misery of the material world, and into the love of Kṛṣṇa; the chance to go to the spiritual realm and live with Him eternally. But as I’ve had chance to study the bhajans of such saintly persons as Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur and Srila Narottama das Thakur, and the more I take into account the life of Srila Prabhupada, the clearer it become that my view of what bhakti-yoga is was purely egotistical, wishing personal wins for my sadhana. But I’m starting to see

that practicing bhakti-yoga isn't the path leading to any goal. No, it is the goal itself.

In the bhajan, "Kabe Ha'be Bolo," by Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur, this pure devotee of the Lord doesn't pray to go live with Kṛṣṇa, or to end his miseries, but to remember and serve Him now; to preach His glories to the world. He prays for strength in devotional service—in bhakti-yoga.

And Srila Narottama das Thakur's holy prayer is simply, "I desire the dust of Your holy feet in every birth I take" (from Vaisnava Vijnapti).

These great beings express over and over that the goal isn't to go home, but to serve their Beloved, Sri Kṛṣṇa. This is their desire—and the truest following of the path of bhakti-yoga—for when we

truly serve Him, all our goals are fulfilled. So it seems that our desire to return to Him, or our desire to leave behind the miseries of the material world leads us to practice bhakti-yoga. And when we truly and wholeheartedly engage in devotional service, when our hearts open fully to the love of the divine Couple, desiring nothing but Their joy, then we have fully realized our goal—that of practicing bhakti-yoga.

Maybe I'm stretching, but this seems the lesson so many great and pure beings are teaching, and it is also very much inculcated in the way you experience/explain your desire to please Srila Prabhupada and Lord Sri Kṛṣṇa in your service.

**Bhakta Joseph P.
Galesburg, Illinois**

Chaplains' Appreciation

Good afternoon,

We got your set today [Srimad-Bhagavatam]. The books are beautiful.

Thank you for your generous gift to our residents.

Blessings.

**Chaplain Pamela LeClerc
Falkenburg Road Jail
Tampa, FL**

This amazing set of books [Srimad-Bhagavatam] arrived in perfect condition! It will be given with pride to the Prison where we have the Followers that have received the other donated materials.

**Chaplain Michael Sims
Assembly of Ancient Paths Church
Military & Prison Outreach Ministry
Ellendale, TN**





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Bhakti-lata Dasi,
ISKCON Prison Ministry
PO Box 2676
Alachua, FL 32616

October 30, 2018

Dear Bhakti-lata Dasi,

I want to express my profound appreciation to you and to ISKCON Prison Ministry for the tremendous amount of Hindu religious books sent. They are a direct ministry to the Hindu population, and they offer perspectives for detainees of any faith. I know there are thousands of dollars' worth of books you have sent over the time of our association, and your generosity has continued. I am very grateful for your help in ministering to the detainee population here at our facility.

Again, thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard Barnes', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rev. Richard Barnes, Chaplain

Inmate Art!



Painting by Bhakta David Bukrman —Arjuna -“I only see the neck of the bird”-



More ABOUT BHAKTA SASHA

If you remember from the last two IPM NEWS, Bhakta Sasha is dying of cancer. Recently he had decided to stop any and all medication. However, after reading a verse and purport from Srimad-Bhagavatam, he changed his mind. In his own words:

2/10/19

“My question about passive suicide has been answered in SB 10.1.48 [see at the end of this letter]. My path will be guided accordingly [he will resume taking his medications].

As of this date, every question that my mind has asked has been answered by the Bhagavad-gita and the Srimad-Bhagavatam.

To show how powerful Kṛṣṇa works, my spouse, who had cut all contact with me because of me being Hare Kṛṣṇa, read some of the contents of *Beyond Birth and Death*, along with some of the other writings of Srila Prabhupada. She wrote me and said how much the writings and the Kṛṣṇa maha mantra has changed her for the better. She says that the mantra is sublime. She chants it regularly on her way to work. She says that the long commute in traffic gives her more time to chant the maha mantra and when she gets home all the stress from work is lifted. And she really enjoyed my last conversation with her about how Kṛṣṇa consciousness has changed my soul.

Let me close for now and again I offer my humble obeisances to the devotee who sent and bought the Srimad-Bhagavatam [Premvilas prabhu]

Your humble servant, Bhakta Sasha”

SB 10.1.48

TEXT: As long as he has intelligence and bodily strength, an intelligent person must try to avoid death. This is the duty of every embodied person. But if death cannot be avoided in spite of one’s endeavors, a person facing death commits no offense.

PURPORT: It is natural for a person facing untimely death to try his best to save himself. This is one’s duty. Although death is sure, everyone should try to avoid it and not meet death without opposition because every living soul is by nature eternal. Because death is a punishment imposed in the condemned life of material existence, the Vedic culture is based on avoiding death (*tyaktvā dehaṁ punar janma naiti*). Everyone should try to avoid death and rebirth by cultivating spiritual life and should not submit to death without struggling to survive. One who is not trying to stop death is not an intelligent human being. Because Devakī was face to face with imminent death, it was Vasudeva’s duty to save her, as he was trying his best to do. He therefore considered another way to approach Kāṁsa so that Devakī would be saved.



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.

Our donors since last newsletter:

Inmate Michael Querubin
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Anonymous (you know who
you are: thank you!)

3 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
- 3) 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 can send you a **tax deductible receipt** at the moment of the donation or at the end of the year, as you wish.

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