

THE PADAYATRA WORLDWIDE MINISTRY COMPLETED  
 A TOTAL OF 64 PADAYATRAS FOR ISKCON50  
 FROM GAURA PURNIMA 2014 TO DECEMBER 31, 2016

# padayatra

## WORLDWIDE

Newsletter 2017  
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LA RÉUNION



MAYAPUR



NOIDA

### PADAYATRA GRAND TOTALS

- 24 in India
- 22 with an oxcart
- 3 with a horse cart
- 19 with a palanquin
- 7 using vehicles to drive the padayatris from one place to another



NEW ZEALAND



ICELAND



SWEDEN



RUSSIA



SOUTH AFRICA



FRANCE



Prabhupada on his morning walk

This newsletter is dedicated to  
**ISKCON Founder-Acarya,  
His Divine Grace  
A.C. Bhaktivedanta  
Swami Prabhupada.**

*Srila Prabhupada had often pointed out the misuse of human advancement. People, he would explain, are so satisfied having a motor car that they do not look for alternatives without realizing that a motor car made up of a thousand pieces with all its advancement is more troublesome than the simple bullock cart.*  
Lokanath Swami

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Cover photo  
Czech Republic oxcart

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## EDITORIAL

*by Lokanath Swami*



### Introduction

*In 2016 ISKCON celebrated its 50th anniversary. Every ISKCON leader, member, project and zone was immediately inspired to jump into action. All festivals were geared at glorifying ISKCON and ISKCON's Founder Acarya, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada. We at the Padayatra Ministry gave serious thought as to how we could celebrate this auspicious event. So we pledged to organise fifty Padayatras during this Golden Jubilee Anniversary year. We appealed to everybody far and wide. The response was so overwhelming that we surpassed our own expectations. I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to all the organisers and participants who*

*assisted us in making this offering to ISKCON and Srila Prabhupada possible.*

### **We completed a total of 64 Padayatras for ISKCON50**

*Due to our previous experience with the Prabhupada Centennial celebrations, we knew that if we wanted to reach our target by the end of 2016 we had better start early. Gaura Purnima 2014 marked the inception date. The duration of these padayatras, excluding the ongoing and annual ones, varied from one day to one year. There were 22 oxcart padayatras, 3 with a horse cart, 19 with a palanquin, and 7 using vehicles in between towns and villages. Three devotees undertook*



solitary walks: the Walking Monk, Bhaktimarga Swami, Devarshi Dasa and Yasodadulal Dasa.

### **The heroes of the road**

Yasodadulal Dasa is clearly the hero of the day with his one year **padayatra** across New Zealand, first with Gaura Nitai Deities carried on a horse cart, then only accompanied by a mrdanga, a small bag, his big faith and beaming smile. When you see him it's easy to understand how our adventurous avadhuta padayatri touched people's heart and how Krishna reciprocated with his full dependence on Him. Being one of these few devotees belonging to the padayatri class, he then continued to exotic lands, Fiji and Assam. Who knows where he'll walk next? Being well over 60, he's demonstrating that the soul is always young and joyful.

The All-India Padayatra has been on the road non-stop since 1984, under the expert and devotional leadership of Acarya Dasa since Radhastami 2009. This party of about twenty young men are fired up about book distribution and sharing Krishna consciousness with others. They undergo many physical austerities and sometimes even risk their lives for the pleasure of Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara.

Another heroic unalloyed padayatri is Narada Dasa from Russia. After leading an energetic fund-raising campaign to raise sufficient laksmi to get the vehicles

and the devotees on the road, he led a blissful and colorful party of 70 devotees for 4 months, performing harinama and distributing thousands of books and magazines through 29 cities, covering a distance of 16 000 kms.

In the spirit of honoring Prabhupada's own 3 day Padayatra in 1952 near Jhansi, ISKCON Jhansi organised a 30 kilometre Padayatra following in Srila Prabhupada's footsteps by walking from Jhansi to Chirgaon.

### **Pleasant surprises**

There was a one day drive-and-walk tour organized by Bhakti Carudesna Swami in Togo. In Ahmedabad, Gujarat, Murali Mohan Dasa astonished us with a series of short walks. The padayatris who astonished me the most were Narottama Dasa and his friend Mukharavinda Dasa. These two young brahmacaris walked the very austere 654 kms from Johannesburg to Durban in South Africa in order to raise funds to purchase their new sankirtana van.

### **The vision for the future of Padayatra**

I'm also happy to announce the completion of my Padayatra Story Book. It was quite a challenge capturing the sheer volume of the contents in one book, or even in two books. The immediate plan is to post its

All glories to the Sri Krishna sankirtana, which cleanses the heart of all the dust accumulated for years and extinguishes the fire of conditional life of repeated birth and death. This sankirtana movement is the prime benediction for humanity at large because it spreads the rays of the benediction moon and enables us to fully taste the nectar for which we are always anxious.

(Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, Sikastakam)

entire contents on the Padayatra website. Abhay Dasa, one of the ex-padayatra America leaders, is currently working on the book reducing it to a manageable size while also giving it a format that will make it attractive and compelling reading for everyone. Stay tuned!

Besides continuing to enthuse, encourage and train young devotees worldwide to organize more Padayatras, even short ones, we keep suggesting to the organisers of World Holy Name Week to celebrate this festival - partially or entirely - through a Padayatra. With concerns for the environment and animal rights steadily increasing in most countries, it's high time that devotees of Krsna preach strongly about cow protection and ox power by practically demonstrating how useful these animals are. Oxcart padayatra organisers are encouraged to work with animal rights groups, and I suggest that all ISKCON farmers put their oxen behind a cart and do regular Padayatras, at least around their farms, chanting the holy names of the Lord. It would be encouraging to see new faces taking the initiative. ISKCON leaders are all very busy and there are many ISKCON projects in progress which we have to oversee. Become a leader yourself! Krishna helps those who help themselves.

One of these padayatra leaders is Chandrabhaga Dasi. Yes, Vaisnavis can do it also, all it takes is some solid determination and a strong desire to reach out to people. For 4 years she walked with her husband and a horsecart from Pennsylvania, America, to the border of Peru. She recently organized two padayatras - one in Sweden and one in Iceland. Based on all this we are considering giving her some greater responsibilities in the world of Padayatra.

I want to thank Gaurangi Dasi who's been organising, coordinating and managing the ministry for close on



to five years. She has done a sterling job. Gaurangi is thinking of moving on, but will stay connected and associated with the Padayatra Ministry. She will be available for advice, Padayatra shows and writing some articles. She wants to organize her own Padayatras in France, where she will also be engaged in several kinds of outreach programs. She is currently working with a team of French devotees on a book on oxen and cows, which will obviously talk about padayatra.

### **Finally.....**

I don't know how many more years Krishna will give me in this body. I just hope and pray that together during the rest of my lifetime, we can solidify this Padayatra Ministry and that the new generations adopt this padayatra, in as many ways that they like to adapt it. Preferably with bullock carts, of course! Did not Srila Prabhupada say that he wanted millions of such carts all over the world? No better time to start than right now. Let's go! ☺

# FROM GOBHAKSHAKA TO GORAKSHAKA IN TAMIL NADU

*How the power of the holy names turns cow eating villagers to cow protectors*

by Acarya Dasa



## Ready to cut the cow's head

On July 31st our *padayatra* India party camped on the outskirts of the Manalmedu Village, 10 kilometers away from the city of Karrur in the state of Tamil Nadu. There was an old age home nearby where many disabled, diseased and elderly people lived. We thought that because they could not walk to come see us we would go to them. So we went there and had a wonderful *kirtana* and Krishna *katha* for the residents. On the way we noticed a man very cruelly dragging a cow to the village. It was painful to watch, and we understood by the manner in which he was treating her that he was certainly going to kill her. A few of us followed him as he entered his village. When he reached his house we saw a large pile of cow flesh in front of it. It was very evident that he was preparing to kill the cow that he had hauled to his home. We were both horrified and really scared when we saw the big sharp instrument that he was going to use to cut the cow's head.

## Making arrangements for the *padayatra's* arrival

Sometimes when people see *sadhus* or devotees they tell them to go away or to get lost, but we could not just stand by and let this heinous act occur in front of our eyes. However, to our surprise, the man had seen us watching him, and he called us out, "Hey Maharajas! Come here. What are you doing here? What do you want?" Parthasakha Dasa, being from Tamil Nadu, had once instructed us to be very careful in certain areas, especially in places where there are dacoits and robbers. He even said that

some people would not even allow us to do *kirtana* in their area, therefore we were really terrified when this man called us. Uttering the names of the most merciful Nitai Gaurasundar we got closer to talk with him. We told him that we were *padayatri*s doing the *Char Dhama yatra parikrama* and that we were preaching the message of Lord Krishna all over India travelling with Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundar deities on a bullock cart. We then asked him if we could come to his village to do *sankirtana*. He listened attentively as we spoke and said, "Yes, of course, please come." I then said to him, "Okay, we will come, but first please clean this pile of flesh." While we were speaking he had forgotten about the cow that he was going to slaughter, and when we left he was busy making arrangements for the *padayatra's* arrival.

## The maha-mantra frees one from all sins

When we arrived at the village the man we had met earlier had informed everyone that we were coming. A group of around 150 people gathered around us and all of them participated in the *kirtana*, singing and dancing. When we asked them to raise their hands they would

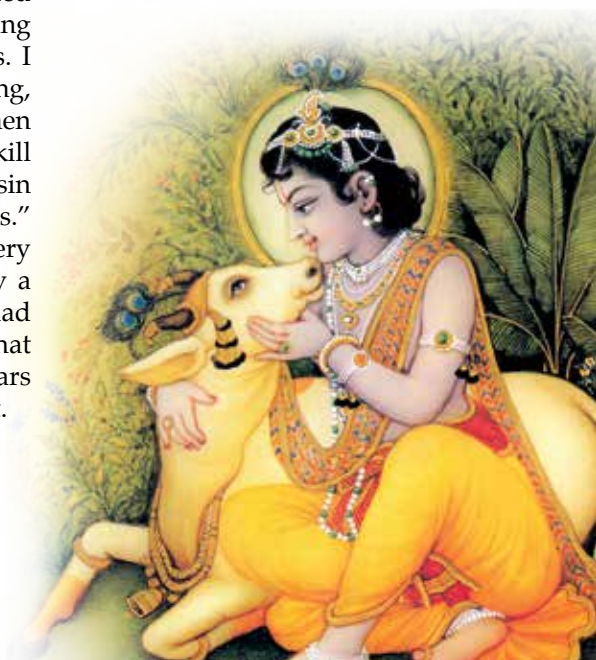
raise their hands, and when we asked them to chant the *maha mantra* loudly they would chant in a thunderous way. They simply did whatever we asked of them like innocent children. It was indeed the causeless mercy of the Lord, because nothing else could have allowed for this to happen. After the *kirtana* everyone took *darsana* of our two beautiful Lords and then we had some *katha*. I quoted a verse from the *Caitanya Caritamrta: kali-kale nama-rupe krsna-avatara* which translates as, "In this age of Kali, the holy name of the Lord, the Hare Krsna *maha-mantra*, is the incarnation of Lord Krishna." I explained that in Kali yuga Krishna descends in the form of His holy names, *Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama, Rama Rama Hare Hare*.

I went on to say that only by *harinama* will we be delivered from all the sins we have committed in this lifetime. I then narrated the pastime of Lord Rama when the monkeys were building the bridge to Lanka. The monkeys wrote the name of Rama on each stone and tossed them into the ocean, and when the stones hit the water they started to miraculously float.

I explained that the Lord's name can deliver even a stone – we are just like these stones heavy with sins, but if we chant the holy names we can be delivered. I noticed that some of the people listening to the *katha* had tears in their eyes. I further encouraged them by saying, "You are good people" and then asked them, "How can you kill cows? Killing cows is a big sin which brings heavy reactions." We later found out that every Sunday the villagers would buy a cow, slaughter it and eat it. It had become a sort of tradition that they were just following for years without any real reason behind it.

## "Why are you slaughtering cows?"

After the *katha* we served *kitchari prasadam* to everyone. When we distribute *prasadam* people usually all gather around us but this did not happen here. The villagers surprised us by forming a queue and then sitting in a line to honor *prasadam*, just like devotees do. A few people bought a *Bhagavad-gita* and with every book purchased, we gave them a free japa mala. Ladies were crying, expressing how fortunate they were that we had come to their village with the Lord. The man who was ready to kill a cow a while earlier came up to me after the program. He thanked us for coming to his village and reached out to shake my hand. I was wondering, "Should I shake his hand after he has killed so many cows?" I then took the names of Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundar and shook his hand anyway. He was so pleased. Then I told him, "You are a good man. Why are you slaughtering cows? If you want to eat meat, eat some goat." "But killing goats are also sinful", he replied, to which I responded, "But if you kill a cow you will take birth as many times as the number of hairs on the cow's body." Since he appeared to be the leader of the village we invited him to join us for mangal arati the next morning. I was thinking of this verse in *Bhagavad-gita: yad yad acarati sresthas tat tad evetaro janah* "Whatever action is performed by a great man, common men follow in his footsteps." ❀



# MINI PADAYATRA WITH MINI OXEN IN DIJON, FRANCE

*Tirou and Bali win hearts, not stomachs*

By Gaurangi Dasi



Lady bringing fresh vegetables and roots from her garden



## A low-key approach in the International City of Gastronomy

Due to the particular situation of the few Hare Krishna devotees in Dijon, a beautiful city of 152 000 people in the East of France, we decided to have a short low-key padayatra on Saturday November 12th. One reason was to reach our goal of 50 padayatras by the end of 2016. Another one was the desire of Rama Gopal Dasa, a 28 old devotee owner of two young oxen, to take his beloved kids on their first big outing as part of their training. He secured the legal permit to walk with them in a section of the city around Lake Kir - not the delicious kind of

kheer made of milk- but a visually tasty location nonetheless. Since that week-end also coincided with the annual Dijon fair, we wanted to attract the attention of the public to what many of them would eat there: the well-known beef Burgundy, a traditional French recipe consisting of the dead bodies of unfortunate cows and beef cooked in burgundy red wine. The fair was advertised on posters having a photo of these sturdy white bovines. With our *padayatra* locals and visitors would meet Bali and Tirou, the endearing live specimens of the very animals who usually end up in their plates and stomachs, and the only ones in the area that would be loved and protected till the end of their lives. In 2018 Dijon, included in

the Unesco world heritage list since 2010, will become the International City of Gastronomy. Its aim is to promote the " French Gourmet Meal", with an emphasis on wines. No need to say that the number of cows, calves, bulls, goats, sheep, chicken, frogs and snails (another specialty of Burgundy ) that will be sacrificed on the altar of this huge 20,000 m<sup>2</sup> complex will be phenomenal. Looks like devotees and animal lovers intending to raise the consciousness of humans regarding the treatment of animals have a huge task at hand!

There is no ISKCON temple in Dijon, but a small group of devotees of Krishna. One of them has a vegetarian restaurant in the center

of town, Le Shanti, where he plays Srila Prabhupada bhajanas all day long, holds kirtanas/bhajanas every Monday evening in the cozy cellar and regularly invites various Gaudiya sannyasis and sadhus to talk philosophy and Krishna katha. We invited some local devotees to participate in our *padayatra*, but all of them had to work that day, so we ended up being three with Ravi, a young man from Indian origins

brochures indicating we are Vaisnavas. We dressed normally and did not wear tilaka. I gave invitations to Le Shanti and brochures from an animal rights group exposing the horrors of industrial raising of animals and slaughterhouses, which gave me the opportunity to easily introduce the notion of karma and divine justice to the more receptive people. I knew they could learn more about Krishna and the philosophy in Le Shanti,

public, as Jaladuta had successfully done in the south of France. He chose young bulls from the Galloway breed, not very common in France, but because they do not have horns, which might be safer for people around them. He travelled to the nearby Jura mountains to buy his two kids, one year old Bali and six month old Tirou. He soon had them castrated by a veterinarian so they would switch from the passionate mood of bulls to the peaceful behavior of oxen.

According to Wikipedia the Galloway is one of the world's longest established breeds of beef cattle, named after the Galloway region of Scotland, where it originated, during the 17th century. It was then introduced in many parts of the world, such as Canada, the United States and Australia. After a foot and mouth crisis during the 1970s the breed is enjoying a revival, due to the demands of the beef market, as Galloway have high quality meat. Due to the climate of their native Scotland they have a thick double-layered coat that is wavy or curly. The coarse outer coat sheds wind and rain, while the soft, fur-like under coat provides insulation and waterproofing. This thick coat of hair insulates their bodies so well that they have a minimal outer layer of fat on their bodies; the coat sheds out in the summer months and in warmer climates. The average Galloway cow weighs 1000 to 1500 pounds and the average bull weighing 1700 to 2300 pounds. The Galloway is naturally hornless, and instead of horns has a bone knob at the top of its skull called the poll. They are naturally very docile animals who can live up to 25 years.

studying in Dijon. As we saw this afternoon it was just the right number for our low key approach. I had also invited members of Combactive, a very dynamic group involved in defending animal rights, and opposing cruelty and slaughterhouses, but it turned out they had their own program that day in the center of town. We're planning to work together in the near future and feature a seriously organized public event, possibly a *padayatra*, once Bali and Tirou are fully trained to walk in heavy traffic and comfortable to be surrounded by crowds of people.

Since we did not get the permit as a group of Hare Krishna devotees, we did not distribute any of Srila Prabhupada books or magazines or

after enjoying a vegetarian meal and reading some pages of the many books available for perusal.

## Tirou and Bali, two adorable Galloway kids

Rama Gopal received his oxcare training in New Mayapur from Jaladuta Dasa, who has been the care taker of his own oxen and the New Mayapur cows for a total of more than 20 years. After moving out from there, Rama Gopal decided to get his own oxen with the idea of putting them to work in the fields, and eventually to haul heavy things, transport goods, and walk on padayatra. He also had in mind to propose oxcart rides to the

Bali, being older than Tirou, behaves as his elder brother; having the same father, they are indeed brothers. They are now three years and two and a half years old respectively, and still behave like children who want to be free to play around. One day Bali, desiring to explore the world around him, ate some hot cinders from a campfire; happily he did not hurt himself, but probably learned a good lesson from that experience. Rama Gopal and



his babies moved from one place to another several times over the years, and, due to his parents' generosity, he just bought a small goshala for them consisting of a shed and a small yard. The goshala is located at the edge of Dijon, just a few minutes away from Lake Kir and the surrounding park, in the area of nurseries, which turned out to be a great advantage, as one owner of several nurseries lets Ram Gopal take his oxen to graze the rich grass and weeds between fruit trees. He started to teach them commands just a couple of months ago, after he received a wooden yoke from Jaladuta. Four days a week he puts the yoke around their necks, secures a long wooden pole to the pole to create some weight, and takes them to a meadow around the lake to teach them to respond to the four basic commands: "Dji" means "Right!", "Ho" means "Left", "Woo" means "Stop" and "Hop" means "Go". Sunday is their rest day: no training, no work, they can eat as much grass as they want in the meadow and the nurseries. Tirou and Bali are becoming a familiar sight to the many joggers and walkers, and they recently got featured in the internet version of a local newspaper.

By spending time around oxen we can see that they are individuals, with their

personality and preferences. Bali has a flickering disposition whereas Tirou possesses a more steady mood. Their personality also changes as they grow. Bali is now in his adolescent period, and he expresses his grumpy moods by mooing a lot. One time he refused to walk and just lay on the ground in protest. When younger, Bali was crazy for banana peels, but he now prefers sweet apples; Tirou is still very picky about his food; Rama Gopal has to present several times the same item before he decides to eat it.

### Ready at last to circle the Kir Lake!

As every Saturday, Ravi arrived early at the goshala to take care of Bali and Tirou –by brushing them and cleaning their shed and yard. While I decorated the cart Rama Gopal took advantage of the mild weather to trim some bushy trees surrounding the yard. Ravi's tender caring gestures were rewarded by a very loving kiss from Bali, which made him really fit his name, as "ravi" means 'delighted' in French. I was a little jealous not to get the same treatment, but I had to admit that I did not yet have a relationship with any of these oxen, besides giving them some occasional pats. So when Bali started to swoop on me in a displeased mood,

I thought it safer to retrieve behind a door as I did not want to have a close encounter with his 400 kgs curly body, even though this race of oxen does not have horns. Finally Ram Gopal forgot about his trimming and fixed the cart to a long pole that he connected to the harness fixed around the oxen necks. Everything seemed ready. Only one hour behind schedule! So we headed on the dirt path leading to the bigger road around the lake. But after only twenty meters the cart separated from the pole. No need to be an engineer to figure out what to do: I told Rama Gopal to fix a piece of wood perpendicularly to the pole and attach the rope around their intersection, and it worked. Patience not being one of my virtues, instead of fuming, I decided to do something positive -chant some rounds and help dress up Tirou and Bali.

The oxen looked so cute and elegant in the colorful outfits I had sewn entirely by hand, with a little help from my friends towards the end. The bright colors and designs attracted the attention of people walking a little distance away in the park surrounding the lake. To feel more part of the bovine family so dear to Krishna's heart, I sported my cow headset, with horns and ears the same color as the oxen. We felt very grateful to Lord Indra to be on our side that day: that Saturday was sunny, just a bit chilly, whereas the previous days had been rainy and colder. There was a good number of people walking their dog, running, jogging and bicycling around the lake.

### Meeting many friendly and curious people along the way

Since this padayatra was a long training day, both the oxen and Rama Gopal were tested. For the first half of the walk we heard more 'Bali dji! Bali ho! Bali woo! and Bali hop!' than "Hari Hari Haribol". Good thing Bali is the name of a great devotee who surrendered everything to Lord Krishna. This helped me reflect on the poor state of my own surrender. Young

oxen behave a lot like young kids who want to explore their surroundings, have a little fun and enjoy some sweet treats, so Bali was often veering to the side to eat some tasty grass, to walk on the smoother nearby meadow or maybe just to see how his master would react to his mischievous behaviour.

I copied an idea I had seen in Paris at a festival for alternative energies and against food waste : ask people to pose for a photo of themselves with the oxen while holding a panel of their choice. During the Alternatiba festival the panels said " I will use a bicycle", " I will not waste vegetables", and on this padayatra they said "I do not eat my friends", "I will stop eating meat", and "Oxen, cows and calves want to enjoy life also'. But I was so busy talking to the people, distributing brochures and taking photos that I did not have many opportunity to use these panels, even though I suggested it a few times. Will try this out in the future, for sure. Might have been too much of a big step for most people. Neither did I see many of them willing to take a few slices of prasadam mandarins I had put in a basket. Maybe people were a little reluctant to eat food offered to them by people they did not know.

### Talking about vegetarianism and cow protection

However, people were eager to pet the oxen and ask questions, such as "What are these?" Our answers: Galloway oxen, Not large goats as some people had suggested before, Neutered bulls, so they can walk and work peacefully, The animals you eat as steaks. "What are they doing here?": Taking their first big walk, Getting used to roads and people, Reminding you of what you eat. "Where are they from?" They are residents of Dijon, but the owner bought them in nearby Jura. Whenever one of the oxen would loudly bellow, I would translate his verbal message to the listeners, 'Love me, don't kill me, don't eat me! " Bali and Tirou melted many hearts that day, and at least made some people think of what they

eat, or rather of who they're eating. On my side, it looked like I found a way to Bali's heart, at least for a while, though his belly, by giving him cut apples. Whereas Tirou showed no interest at all in the fruits, Bali's eyes lit up and his tongue greedily extended towards my hand to catch the juicy treat as he kept asking for more. I had done the right thing by cutting the apples in two, as I knew that you never give an ox an entire apple, which can get stuck in his throat. Some oxen are indeed very fond of sweet fruits, and I've heard stories of one padayatra ox getting drunk on them, and another one throwing a devotee up in the air from behind to grab the oranges in front of her.

One middle age couple transporting their tiny Chihuahua dog in a basket attached to their bicycle were as much curious about the two oxen as was their dog, who kept staring at Tirou and Bali, apparently appreciative of the power and size of these two creatures in front of him. We talked for a while about animals being persons, souls in different kinds of bodies, and the disastrous karmic consequences of mass scale slaughter. The couple agreed with me, that terrorism against animals breeds terrorism against humans, and looked interested to check out Le Shanti vegetarian restaurant. Hard to say what dogs really think, but I noticed that none of them, especially the small ones, dared to venture too close to the oxen; they all kept a safe distance and abstained from any barking comments. They were probably as impressed as the humans were by these two beautiful oxen. One lady run to her nearby garden and came back with fresh organic vegetables and roots for the delighted oxen. When we walked on the most crowded side of the lake, small groups of people gathered around the oxen and listened attentively to what we had to say. As it was getting cooler and the sun was ready to set, we walked back to the goshala, crossing the park surrounding the lake.

The success of this mini padayatra was an indication of the impact it

would have once Bali and Tirou were more trained and with a larger group of participants, devotees and animal lovers. We hoped that some of the people we met that day seriously reflected on the plight of the millions of animals tortured and slaughtered and started to change their eating habits. Many people say they are reducing their meat consumption, eat more fish and less red meat, but I point out to them that fish also suffer and that the few animals they eat add up to huge numbers on a national level. The annual statistics for France alone are frightening: 5 millions of bovines, 6 millions of sheep and goats, 25 millions of pigs, 47 millions of eggs producing hens, 60 millions of rabbits, 85 millions of ducks, 700 millions of chicken and billions of fishes.

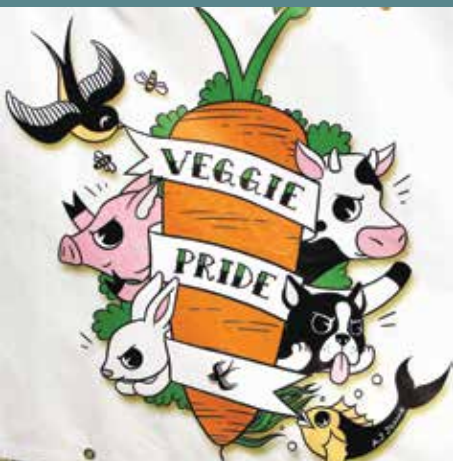
### Cow protection and ox power go hand in hand

When we talk about cow protection, we should not forget that it goes hand in hand, or rather hoof in hoof, with putting oxen to work. Otherwise, what will happen to the all the bulls that take birth? When bulls are neutered they are called oxen; they then loose their passionate nature and become very apt, and happy, to use their strength to work in the fields, to pull the handle of an oil-pressing machine, or to haul heavy loads. Padayatra is one of the ways to put them to work, and also to directly engage them in the service of Sri Sri Gaur Nitai by pulling Their cart. The experience of oxcart padayatras in western countries for more than thirty years has shown that their presence awakes the interest and affection of the public for these valuable animals, which often results in newspaper articles talking about cow protection ☺



# WORKING WITH ANIMAL RIGHT GROUPS TO RAISE AWARENESS OF COW AND OX PROTECTION

by Gaurangi Dasi



Paris 2016 Veggie Pride



Paris 2015 Veggie Pride



Nitai Gaurasundara Dasa selling prasadam at the Lyon Veggie Pride



Jyotirmayi Dasi distributing brochures for L214

## Animal rights is a major issue of the day

Over the past 10 years the cause of animal rights has come to the forefront. There are many shows and talks on TV and on the radio, many publications about the ethical treatment of animals, vegetarianism, the horrors of slaughterhouses, the inhumanity of industrial milk production, and so on. Many groups are actively involved in this battle, sometimes at great personal risks when they publicly promote their views and distribute their literature. I have a devotee friend living in the South of France who is very dedicated to this task. She works with a militant group called L214. This mysterious name refers to article L214 of the Rural Code legislated in 1976: it's the first time that animals are referred to as sensitive beings. The article says "Every animal, being a sensitive being, must be placed by its owner in conditions compatible with the requirements of its species." Unfortunately this article has not been seriously taken into account by law and has not changed cruel practices.

## Many people are taking great risks to save animals from violence and torture

Trying to save animals or speak for them takes a lot of courage. My friend Jyotirmayi Dasi told me that when members of the L214 group set up tables and displays in the street they sometimes get threatened and shuffled around, and those disguised as pigs spat at, by Muslim men who do not appreciate at all that someone speaks against their meat eating and slaughtering cows the "halal" way. Halal is the Arabic word for "permissible", and halal food is that which adheres to Islamic law, as defined in the Koran. The Islamic way of slaughtering animals or poultry involves cutting the jugular vein, carotid artery and windpipe of a live animal so that all the blood is drained from the body, as Islam religion do not allow Muslims to eat or drink blood. The use of a stunt gun is also forbidden, because they think that the animal is dead afterwards, which is not the case anyway. During the process of draining all the blood, a Muslim recites a dedication, known as tasmiya or shahada. Sometimes members of the L214 group enter the arena of the corridas (bullfights), a popular "entertainment" in the South of France, and chain themselves together as a sign of protest. They get

beaten up by the bullfights fans and the corrida employees, and are quickly thrown out. When they simply demonstrate near the entrance of the bullfight arena they ran the risk of being tear gassed by the CRS, the tough section of the police. The anti-corrida militants of the CRAC Europe group tried to prove that these corridas are just a show of torture and agony. After a five year legal battle the government finally decided to take these out of the Immaterial Cultural Heritage of France, which had been there since 2011. But practically, nothing much has changed, bullfights are still going on.

## My convincing experience at the Meat Out Day and the Veggie Pride

Devotees of Krishna might not want to expose the gory spectacle of slaughterhouses or face police clubs, but there are so many ways in which they could be more actively involved in raising the awareness of the public on vegetarianism, cow protection, ox power, animals being spirit souls and the bad karma incurred by all the atrocities perpetrated against other species. Vaisnavas distribute millions of books where all these topics are clearly explained, and nobody can deny that they have the power to

change minds and hearts. As far as finding new venues to reach out to people devotees have primarily used the yoga approach, with good success in some places, maybe because it's linked to India. But I think we have not explored enough the animal rights approach. My experience in this area has been very interesting, satisfying and convincing.

My first experience was at the Meat Out Day, while I lived in the San Diego temple in California, USA. Devotees had many booth with books, displays and prasadam, and even got to sing on stage. Back in France, I participated in several Veggie Pride events in Paris and other cities with Nitai Gaurasundara Dasa, ISKCON Paris' temple president. We mainly sold our vegetarian cookbooks and prasadam to stay low key, at the request of the organizers. For the past 2 years I've been participating in the Paris Veggie Pride by myself, equipped with different publications: our booklet "Vegetarian Life", our brochure "Vegetarianism and beyond" and the L214 pamphlets. I had my face painted like a cow and was carrying a sign saying "KARMA= ACTION AND REACTION" and the famous Bible quote, "You shall reap what you sowed". Since I was the only one with this kind of panel, I was much photographed and I also got interviewed by an alternative TV reporter. "Why are you painted as a cow?" he asked. "The cow is like our mother, she gives us nourishing milk, with which we make so many delicious preparations. According to the ancient sacred texts known as the Vedas killing cows is a very barbarian and uncivilized act. It brings very

heavy karma in the form of violence and war." Then the reporter asked me what I thought of the Thousand Cows Farm, an industrial dairy cows project being built in the North of France. "Auschwitz for the animals!" During the parade I was glad to meet Mira, another devotee very much involved in the animal rights movement. As I explained in the publication section of this newsletter, when I saw that the Buddhists and even the Muslims had one book about the cause of animals, I decided to write a book on cows and oxen from the Vedic perspective. Shortly after the Veggie Pride a devotee sent me material from the Mother Pritvi study group she was heading. It was about that very topic. A sign from Govinda, for sure!

## Devotees of Govinda, the Lord of Cows, could be more practically involved

I regularly distribute L214 pamphlets and our "Vegetarianism and beyond" brochures, which I always keep in my bag when I go to the supermarket, the post office, the market, the train station, the park or any kind of store. It's easy to give these pamphlets as people are more and more concerned about what – and now who- they're eating. Those walking their dogs are a good target. After a little chat I start to introduce the notion of karma -violence breeds violence- terrorism towards animals breeds terrorism against humans. In general people listen. One day I was kind of rebuked by a very conservative devotee who argued that it was not what Prabhupada wanted. Prabhupada so often said that we should judge things by their results. Maybe distributing

these brochures might be more efficient than giving out those with a picture of Krishna, accompanied with only one word "God". Only Krishna knows how many of these ended up being trampled under shoes or thrown in the garbage can. On one of my trip to Paris by train I gave an L214 brochure to a lady my age sitting next to me. After the usual talk on animals, vegetarianism and karma, I brought up the topic of Krishna. She was an open-minded Christian and we ended up talking religion and philosophy the whole way. I doubt I would have had the same results if I had first given her a brochure about Krishna. After all, God, Govinda, is the greatest animal lover.

Obviously, oxcart padayatra is a great opportunity to talk about cow protection and ox power. Several ISKCON devotees have taken their oxcart to Ratha-yatras or public events. Parasuram Prabhu is well-known for often taking his oxen to country fairs and parades in England, where they have a grand success. More oxcart outings and padayatras could be organized with animal rights groups who prefer to present the sweet side of loving and caring for animals rather than the bloody sights of slaughterhouses. Devotees in Dijon where I live are planning to organize an oxcart padayatra with such a group called Combactive. The cause of animal rights will only intensify. Thus it's time for more and more devotees to spread the message of Krishna consciousness by getting involved and show they really care for mother cow, father bull, uncle ox, and other family members belonging to different species ☺

# WORLDWIDE BULLOCK CART CULTURE AND OX POWER IS A RATIONAL ALTERNATIVE

By Lokanath Swami

## We can introduce many millions of such carts all over the world

On March 16, 1977 while our padayatra party was walking toward Puri, Srila Prabhupada wrote a letter to Nityananda Dasa, who was then head of the New Talavan farm community in Mississippi. While discussing self-sufficiency and the need to reduce dependency on electricity, Prabhupada mentioned bullock cart sankirtana, showing once more how self-sufficiency in our rural communities has to be linked to the use of oxen.

And oxen can be used for driving carts and preaching village to village. What is the question of killing them? Here in India our Lokanath Maharaja has successfully organized such a program and it is a great success. He has traveled all over India and everywhere they distribute books, prasada, and perform kirtana village

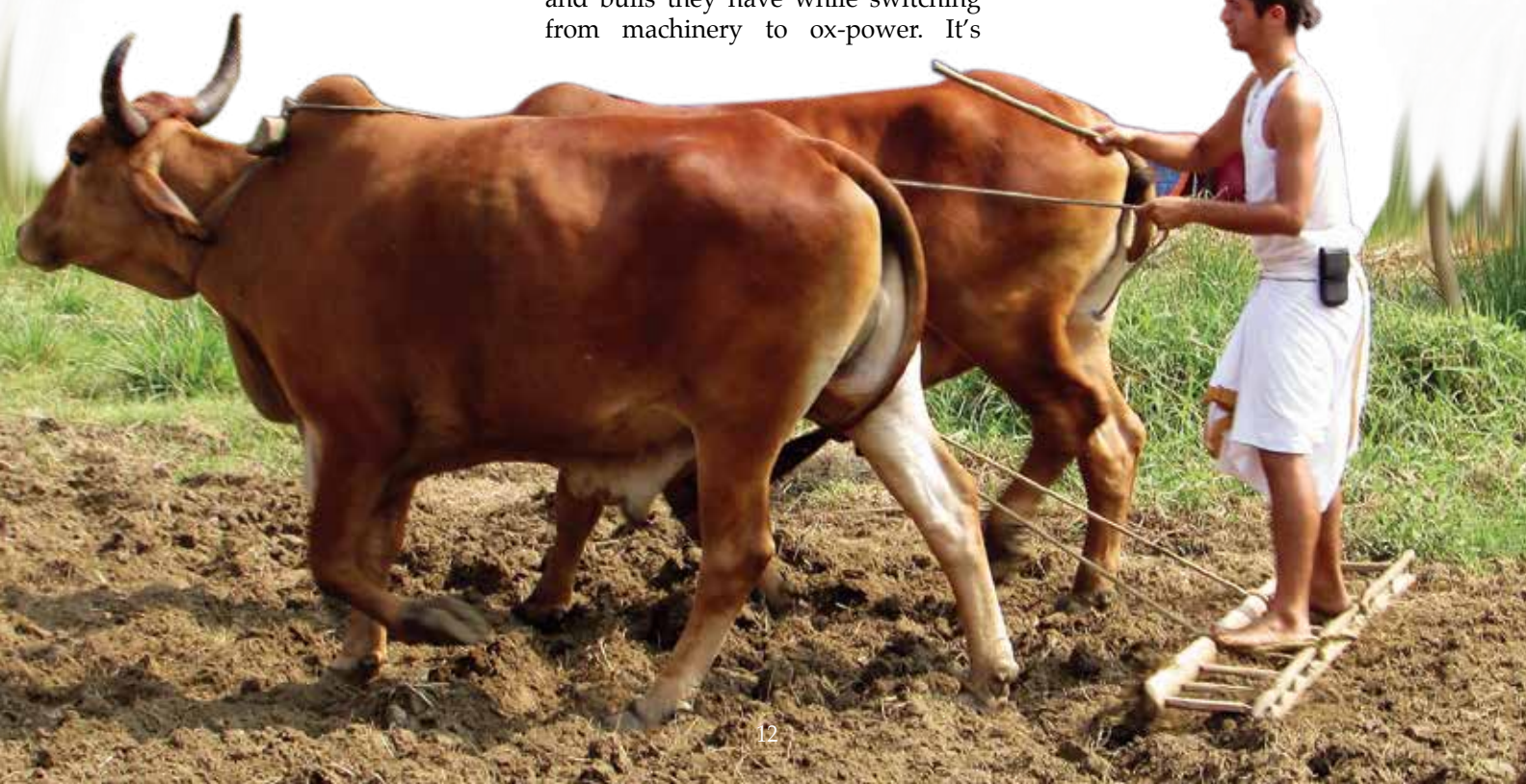
to village. Each night they stop at a different village. We can introduce many millions of such carts all over the world.

As far as you are able to adjust to a natural way of life, do it immediately. Our principle is that we are against nothing and for nothing – only for Krishna. We want whatever is favourable for Krishna.

## 98% of India's farmers depend on cattle-based agriculture

Some might think “many millions” of oxcarts an exaggeration; hardly anyone in the West seriously considers ox-power an alternative source of energy or transportation. In 2008, Balabhadra Dasa, director of the International Society for Cow Protection (ISCOWP), did a survey of the use of oxen on ISKCON farms worldwide. From a total of 396, only seventy-four were working. Most ISKCON farms these days struggle to take care of the cows and bulls they have while switching from machinery to ox-power. It's

possible to imagine in the context of petrol running out, a civilization founded on cow slaughter, and industry and oil-based power grinding to a halt, bullocks might again become a means of transportation and a source of energy. The Vishva Mangala Gou Grama Yatra, which traveled all over India in 2009 to raise awareness of cow protection, has presented statistics supporting this view: in 2004 Indian Railways transported 55.7 million tons of goods while oxcarts transported 278.5 million tons. Trains carried 511.2 million passengers while oxcarts carried two billion passengers. Many of the half a million villages in India still don't have asphalt roads, but oxen can pull carts with ease even in hilly regions. They're also so strong they can carry very heavy loads. According to Vishva Mangala, 98% of India's farmers depend on cattle-based agriculture, so for them employing oxen on their small holdings is a natural choice.



Typical scene in Maharashtra villages

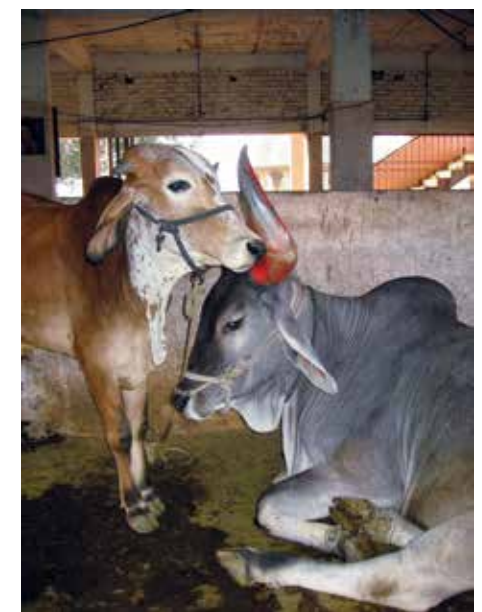


Garbage collection in Mayapur Dham

## During a severe economic crisis Cuba reverted to ox-power

When threatened, society can respond and make necessary adjustments, as the crisis that shook Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 demonstrates. When the Russian Federation announced it couldn't maintain oil delivery to Cuba at current levels, Cuba responded by cutting all oil imports. Entirely dependent on fossil fuels, the Cuban transportation, industrial, and agricultural systems were paralyzed. Although the government managed to avoid its people's starvation, hunger was prevalent when food production

was cut by 80%. But the positive consequence was that the government developed organic agriculture and permaculture, diversifying its agricultural products, supported the development of co-ops and alternative means of transportation (including oxcart), and shifted from mechanical to animal labor. With the need to protect labor-intensive farm animals, the government restricted cow killing and imposed penalties, including lengthy jail terms, for the sale and eating of beef without government permission. That people in a time of severe economic crisis reverted to ox-power and limited cow consumption is indeed very encouraging ☺



ISKCON Pandharpur oxen

## USE THE RIGHT WORD

**Bull:** a male bovine animal that has not been castrated before sexual maturity; used for breeding

**Ox (plural: oxen):** a male domestic bovine animal that has been castrated, used chiefly as a draft animal, sometimes raised for beef

**Bullock:** another name for oxen in India and Australia

**Steer:** an ox less than four years old that has been neutered

**Beef:** - the flesh of a cow, bull, or ox, used as food  
-an ox, cow, or bull in a full-grown or nearly full-grown state (Plural: beeves)

**Stag:** a male animal (ox or pig ) castrated after sexual maturity

**Calf:** a young male (bull calf) or female bovine (heifer calf)

**Heifer:** female bovine that has never had a calf

**Cow:** a female bovine that had at least one calf

**Herd:** group of cows





## ALL INDIA PADAYATRA 2016 AT A GLANCE

By Radha Prema dasi

### Completing its sixth tour of India at the beginning of 2016

Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara, the focal point of All India Padayatra, are the most travelled deities in the world, having completed 6 tours of India, with Acarya Dasa as leader for the past 6 years. January 2016 saw the team navigating through several cities and villages in Andhra Pradesh. Then they travelled to Tamil Nadu covering cities such as Vellore, Chennai, and at the end of the month Sriperumbudur, the birthplace of Ramanujacarya. A grand total of 9,100 books were distributed in the Telugu language during the month of January.

### Visiting many places of Caitanya Mahaprabhu pastimes

When the party reached a neighborhood in the city of Chennai, school children who had decorated the entrance with rangoli, offered flowers to Their Lordships and received Them with much pomp and glory. It was around Chennai that Sahadev Dasa, a Russian devotee and ardent photographer, happily joined the party for his first padayatra. Most padayatris spent the month of March in Mayapur and on the Navadipa Mandal Parikrama, where they took darsana of the various places of pastimes of Caitanya Mahaprabhu. Feeling renewed inspiration the devotees continued their padayatra on the streets and roads of Tamil Nadu, where the local branch of the Back to Godhead magazine had printed 40,000 special issues in the Tamil language in

honor of the All India Padayatra.

Padayatra India is a continuous pilgrimage. In South India padayatris got to visit many places where Lord Caitanya walked to and through during his South India tour. On Janmastami they found themselves in Srirangam under the shelter of Lord Ranganatha, a two-armed form of Lord Vishnu reclining on the divine serpent Ananta Sesha. They got to have darsana of the deities carved by Lord Caitanya. On September 12th the party arrived in the city of Thanjavur, where the Sri Panduranga temple houses the beautiful deities of Lord Vitthala and Rukmini Maiya. Lord Caitanya also took darsana of these deities.

### Tolerating all kinds of austerities and challenging situations

With the onset of summer, padayatris endured challenging conditions which included sun strokes, prickly heat rash, various kinds of bruises, lack of drinking water for bullocks, poor accommodation, encounters with dangerous snakes, but still they continued to feel sheltered by Guru and Gauranga. On the 11th of April, ably assisted by Smita Krishna Dasa, the president of ISKCON Chennai, the party traveled to the famous place of Pakshi-tirtha, which Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu had visited during His South Indian tour. One incident took place on entering the city of Tiruvannamalai, 180 kilometers away from Chennai. Acarya Dasa was assaulted by a policeman who later asked for forgiveness for his behavior. From Salem the party traveled to Dharmapuri to preach in the nearby villages. Lokanath Swami joined the



team there and danced to the ecstatic kirtanas. The book score for June was an amazing 13,144.

### Celebrating its 32 years on the road

Lokanath Swami's desire to combine ratha yatra and padayatra was fulfilled in Ayyampettai, on September 17th. September saw the All India Padayatra party celebrate Radhastami and their birthday in Thanjavur. Maharaja reflected on the instruction

Srila Prabhupada had given him 40 years before, on Radhastami 1976, to start a bullock cart sankirtana party in India. He noted that this padayatra is the mother of all other ISKCON padayatras, because it has inspired so many other walks around the globe. Maharaja proudly announced that the 'All India Padayatra' had completed its 32 years and was now entering its 33rd year of its holy walk through the holy dhamas.

### Starting another Char Dham yatra

It was on December 16th, in the holy city of Rameshwaram in the state of Tamil Nadu that the All India Padayatra completed their Char Dham yatra, the pilgrimage to the four most revered places in India. They had started their yatra in Dwarka on April 16th, 2011 and from there travelled to Badrinath, Jagannath Puri and finally to Rameshwaram.



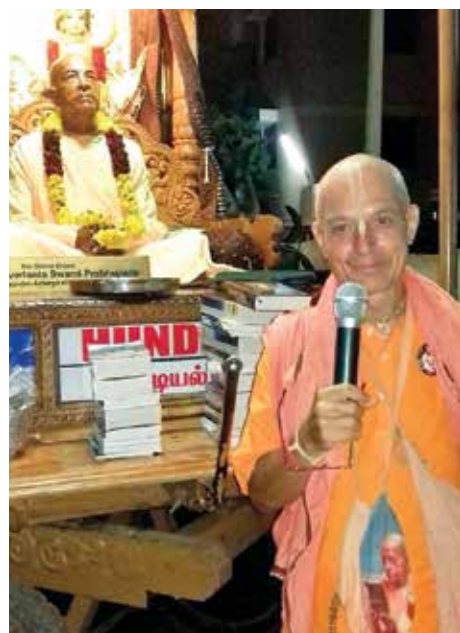
## RISKING OUR LIVES TO GIVE THE HOLY NAMES IN A RIOTOUS CITY

By Acarya Dasa



Dharmaraja Dasa giving lecture to padayatris

On August 6th 2016 we travelled to the city of Dindigul in Tamil Nadu. We noticed that there were many churches and masjids (mosques) and very few hindu temples. Our party forged ahead but before we could enter the city we were stopped by some policemen. We tried to explain to them our purpose –to spread the holy names- but they wouldn't listen and refused us entry. At this point we were at a loss as to where we were going to spend the night, so the police told us to camp at the outskirts of the city 2 kilometers away. The police officials were kind enough to send two police constables to remain with us while we were there. They were concerned for our safety, since there had been some conflicts in the community.



him to let us into the city, even saying that we would enter at our own risk. We explained our mission again, 'We want to spread the holy names wherever we go. The holy names are not just for Hindus, whoever hears the holy names gets spiritual benefit. We are chanting for love and peace.' We quoted that verse, *dina hina yata chilo hariname udharilo* (the holy names delivers all those souls who are lowly and wretched). Finally, after all this persuasion, he agreed to let us go on the condition that while in the city we would be under constant police protection. He told us that there were riots in the city between Muslims and Hindus during the Ganapati festival. The people celebrating the festival were drinking alcohol and playing loud music, and because of these disturbances there were some conflicts in the city. "Don't worry, we told him, our music is spiritual kirtana. The Lord Himself has sent it to Earth and it is soothing for every soul."

As we entered the city 4 police vans travelled in front of our party and 4 more behind us. We held a grand kirtana with some of the people joining us and many more coming to honor carnamrta which we had begun distributing. We were very surprised

indeed. Our party moved through the city without hindrance despite the heavy traffic, thanks to the assistance of the police officials. 'Who could stop the Lord if He wants to go to His children and give them darsana?' I thought. This was how all the Hindus, Muslims and Christians were blessed by seeing the Lord and hearing the holy names.

The police officials were astounded. They couldn't believe that there had been no arguments or violence while we were in the city. In fact they told us "Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundar are very merciful, but you, Their followers, are even more merciful. You risked your lives to give the holy names to each and every person in this city. All glories to you!" I replied, "The Lord is the doer and protector and we are just instruments in His hands." The police constables who were accompanying us were so inspired that they asked the official in charge whether they could continue staying on duty with us, sadhus, explaining that they wanted to be with us. They enjoyed being in the association of devotees – such is the power of the holy names -and as a result the police officials protected us right up until we left the Dindugal district ☺

The next day we continued with our regular morning program of mangala arati, chanting, Bhagavatam class on the theme of the glories of the holy names and prasadam. We were happy to see that the police constables also got up and attended the morning program. They even asked us, "Can we also chant?", and requested japa beads. We told them, "Yes, of course, harinama is for everyone" and gave them japa malas to chant on. While getting ready to go on sankirtana we noticed a few Muslims gathering nearby and checking out our padayatra cart. They were probably thinking we were some 'anti-social' group, so we walked up to them and told them about our aim- to propagate the holy names. After assuring them that we had no other objectives they realized we were harmless. Yet we were still not allowed to enter the city.

Sometime later a police official in charge of the city approached us. We pleaded with him to allow us into the city but he explained that the rules here are different from other places in India and therefore, he could not let us go. He may not have been able to let us into the city at this point, but he was certainly interested in padayatra – he stayed with us for two hours, first taking darsana of the Lord and then having prasadam with us. The whole time we were still trying to convince

## 2016 BOOK SCORES

GRAND TOTAL: 97,727 BOOKS

### CATEGORIES

**Soft cover and magazines:** 68 966 S1, 698 S2, 1171 S3

**Hard cover:** 26 892 H4

**Bhagavatam:** 43 sets

**Caitanya Caritamrita:** 2 sets

### TITLES

**Maha Big Books:** *Bhagavad-gita, Krishna book, First canto of Srimad Bhagavatam, Prabhupada Lilamrita, Ramayana*

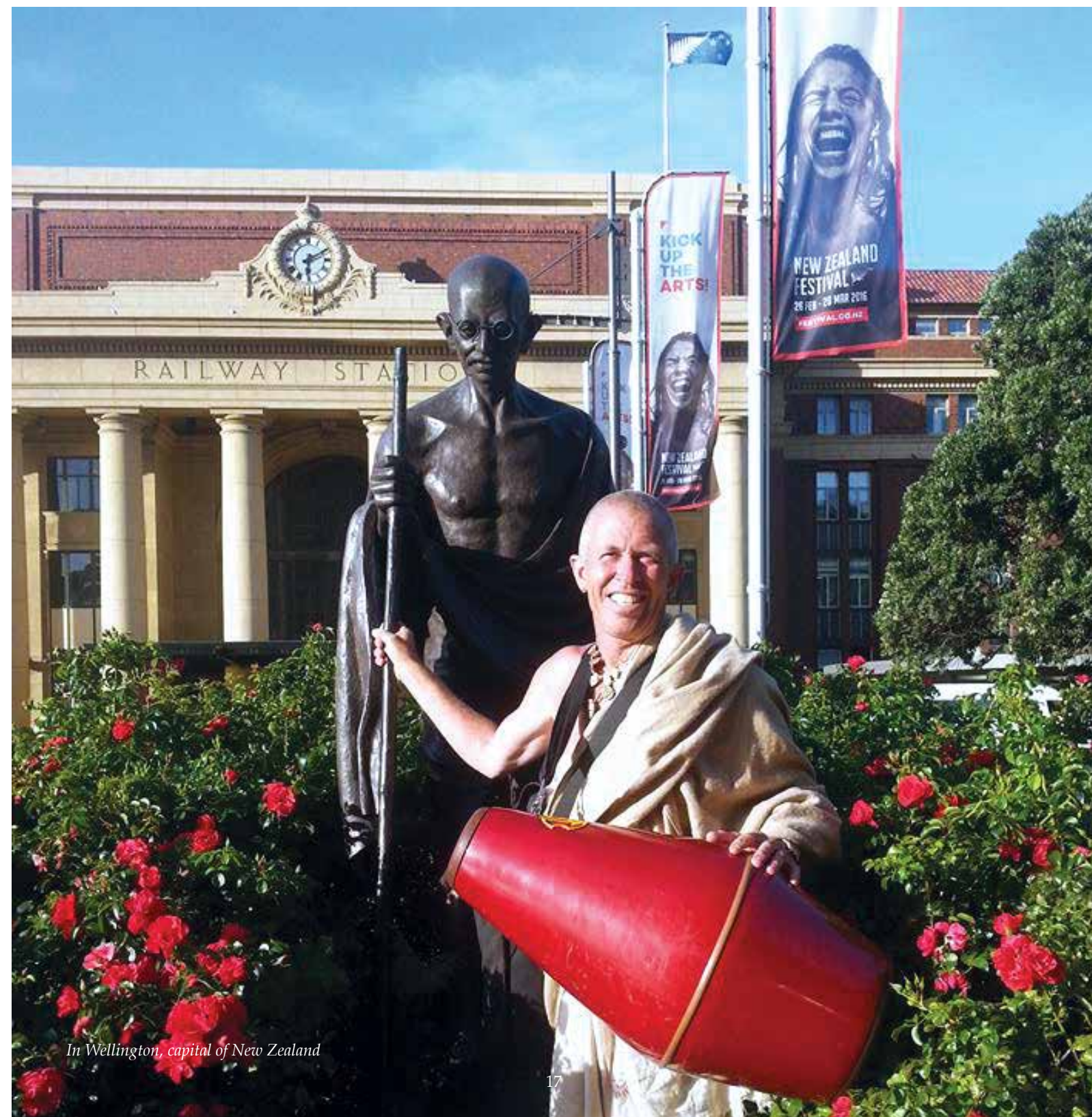
**Big books:** *Science of Self-Realisation*

**Medium books:** *A Second Chance*

**Small books:** *Raja Vidya, Teachings of Prahlad Maharaja, Beyond Birth and Death, The Laws of Nature, Back to Godhead*

# ONE HAS TO DIE TO LIVE: *adventures of a travelling preacher traversing New Zealand for an entire year with a horse cart and then by foot*

By Yasodadulal Dasa



In Wellington, capital of New Zealand

## Spirit South padayatra with Rasaraja the horse

On July 4, 2015, after two years of preparations, we held the inauguration of our 2500 km padayatra through the North and South islands of the country. It was like the launching of a new ship. We smashed coconuts like champagne, squashed lemons



under the iron wheels, initiated a big horse whose name transformed from Samson to Rasaraja. It was my 60th birthday, and I had begged of my wife to consent to my walkabout for a complete year; thankfully she understood. We called the padayatra, 'Spirit South' because that was the direction I was heading and the inner meaning also struck. I was a struggling sadhaka dealing with the onslaught of the lower modes but wanting to make a shift. Pilgrimage is a great way to make a shift – it means letting go of the unwanted and moving forward with that which is only absolutely essential. One has to die to live.

Off I went with Rasaraja, a strong Irish gypsy horse, a rustically stylish 100 year old wooden cart through a mid-winter snow storm. I headed out alone, or should I say, Nitai Gaurachandra, Srila Prabhupada and I set the vessel's compass for that far distant southern-most tip of New Zealand; from down under to up above walking from the Bluff to the Cape. Just getting down to the Bluff, the starting point, was a 600-800 kilometer trek through

many mountain ranges, vast tracks of almost uninhabited country, crossing hundreds of braided rivers, through sylvan glades of native forest and open farmlands scattered with thousands of dairy cows. I was well aware that the season would slowly change which is why mid winter was a good time to leave since spring would come next. One must die to live. Things could only get better, but as the equinox winds kicked in, they held over New Zealand and we rode storm after storm heading south.

On the cart I carried a few hundred pounds of gear: cast iron pots for cooking on the open fire, a rugged canvas swag for sleeping in the outdoors (temperatures reached -10 degrees Celsius at times), several layers of clothing (which in extreme cold were worn all at once) and a tin trunk with deity paraphernalia and Prabhupada's books for distribution. The solid iron wheels rattling along the road became a familiar hum like the strumming of the sarod musical instrument, the clip clop of the hoof, as steady as a drum, and the tiny sweet bells dangling on the cart tinkled in the wind.

### Krishna's unbelievable reciprocation

I loved the spontaneity and excitement of the experience. I always felt that Radha and Krishna were alongside me and that Prabhupada was happy with my efforts. There were always people to help. I very quickly learned to see God within the hearts of all people. Krishna responded with unbelievable generosity. It was an incredible challenge, filled with the mystery of the unknown, heightened with risk and yet surrounded in the security of knowing my Lords and Masters were always there. They stretched my limited, well sized faith, into an ocean of conviction that God Himself is ever present. He is a hands-on "Superman" Who works His magic into every moment. One gets addicted to the intoxication of witnessing the fix He injects into the bloodstream of His surrendered devotee. I felt far from fully surrendered, but whatever little

steps I took He ran ahead and made all arrangements. All that way I just glanced at Them and would feel, "Yes, They are pacing it out, claiming Their detached ownership and sovereignty over New Zealand - the only real way to bring the black man, the white man and the yellow man together."

Every day there were so many people who heard the Hare Krsna mahamantra, saw the Lord, tasted Their prasadam, chanted the holy names, took Srila Prabhupada's books or just wondered, "What the hell are these guys doing?!" Cities, towns and outback posts, tourists and locals, farmers and business merchants, priests and beggars, cats who ran, dogs who barked, birds who flew, beasts who bolted or danced alongside the ratha, all for the pleasure of Nitai Gaurachandra. I must have chanted "he govinda, he gopal" to thousands and thousands of cows who came right up to the cart for darsana.

### A new beginning with 'Spirit South – Going North': less is more

After the mysterious disappearance of Nitai Gaurachandra there didn't seem to be any reason to take the horse and cart anymore. The horse transformed into a red balarama mrdanga and the maha-mantra itself became the living force. 'Spirit South' took on a new identity, 'Spirit South – Going North' with the catch phrase "less is more". It was a new beginning to walk on alone with next to no possessions. "One robe, one bowl" meant all I had to worry about, besides whatever little shelter and food was required to keep this simple pilgrim heading north. In retrospect, Krishna was kind. He took away everything, leaving only the bare essentials. It would have been too difficult to manage the horse and cart in the much more intensified traffic highways north of Christchurch. In fact, it would have been impossible. One has to die to live.

I found myself even being able to exercise the freedom of not having to ask for assistance. People throughout



New Zealand seemed to recognize my complete dependence and they opened their hearts naturally. When you look like you can take care of yourself they leave you alone, but when you hang it out and leave room for Krishna to play a part, He seems to enjoy coming up with everything that is needed in very novel ways.

The media soon picked up on my story and followed me all the way, even though I was now without the grand presentation of a travelling temple. They seemed to welcome the simplicity and uncomplicated message. After all, our deep tradition and philosophy holds in its essence the answer to all sociological, physiological, environmental and political problems. "Less is more" means less matter and more spirit. I found people everywhere merely overloaded with matter and screaming out to know about spirit. One has to die to live. There were 20-30 television interviews, newspaper and magazine articles reaching an estimate of 800,000 to 1 million people. More than a third of New Zealand's population came to hear Krishna's name and hear about Prabhupada's 50th anniversary. After all, this is our family business. It was evident to me there is simply not enough salesmen and saleswomen in the marketplace, since everyone wants our product. It was always such a

simple exchange, they would give me shelter and food and I would trade with highly valued spiritual knowledge assuring my new found friends that it is the subtle that moves the gross.

### Practicing humility by being alone and vulnerable

Being alone and vulnerable meant I had to be very accepting of whatever situation Krishna put me in, and in a sense, the position of a transcendental beggar demands the practice of humility. It also enhances the ability to have a compassionate heart and to even be open to receive the gems of wisdom that others outside our faith are willing to share. After the subtle art of befriending my hosts with a genuine relationship, in a one-on-one loving exchange they could appreciate that this beggar, although free of possessions, had so much to give spiritually. I could feel the benediction of Sanatana Goswami giving me the mercy to share Krishna consciousness with the common people in an ordinary way and yet injecting some highly potent spiritual medicine.

In the last 45 years New Zealand's family of devotees has grown significantly and has spread out throughout the country. There are now devotees everywhere, so I was able to take shelter in their homes, ashrams and small temples. They also seemed to benefit by having some fresh blood pass through. With those of the 'outer' family I would only stay "as long as it takes to milk a cow" and those of the inner family of devotees, 2 or 3 nights were enough to share and move on with good will. Their homes became like small sheltered ports for my small boat that was mostly out there roughing it out on high seas.

At my age, when this old body seems rightly fit to be taxiing on the runway of vanaprastha life, it is definitely good practice to take test flights to see if the wings will hold out for the big flight. We all have to move on alone, fully dependent on the winds of our faith. For many of us the ultimate flight for transcendence, the sannyasa ashram

or the mood of exclusive dedication to Radha Krsna, seems to be still parked in the hangar. But some day, could be any day after 50. We may have to bring it out and wind up the motors if we are going to cross to the other world – the ultimate padayatra.

### "I could go on doing this forever"

'Spirit South – Going North' continued on its destined path for another 1500 kilometers right up into the top end of the North Island. 'Spirit South – Going North' secondary meaning is the moving of the force from the lower chakras up to the higher chakras of the heart and consciousness. One has to die to live.

A significant element of change was the ethnic diversity as the currents converged into Auckland, the largest city in New Zealand. In particular, the influence and cultural significance of the indigenous people of New Zealand, the Maoris, has been dominated and materially eclipsed by encroaching Western material influence. On the open road there was a lot of time for deep introspective thought and copious amounts of harinama sankirtana. Playing the red drum, putting up a beat good for walking and the constant steady repetition of the maha mantra played on the heartstrings. After 5 to 6 hours of chanting kirtana each day the soul was soaring and the body puffing like a steam train trying to catch up. It all came to an end too early. I could go on doing this forever. However, I was looking for a significant sign of auspiciousness that Krishna would indicate He was pleased. And He did smile on me the very last day of our padayatra ☺

For more exciting reports, poems, photos and videos of his padayatras in New Zealand, Assam and Fiji:

HYPERLINK

"<https://www.facebook.com/spiritsouthnz>" <https://www.facebook.com/spiritsouthnz>

# SURPRISING TRIBAL ENCOUNTER IN THE MIDDLE OF A DENSE FOREST

By Yasodadul Dasa

It happened in June 2016 while I was walking by myself in New Zealand with only my mridanga and a hand bag, after the horse cart was gone. As I turned the corner in town, chanting with the drum, he came in close. An odd looking man, dark in complexion, fierce in demeanor. Growling, as he grazed in close to my body, threatening in pose, grimacing as he spat out a harsh abuse. It was only a glimpse in the street...then that disturbed person disappeared.

Two days later I was walking through rugged hills with dense forest all around. I was alone, playing on the drum and singing out the mantra loudly. At one point I could feel the vibration of another person, a strong personality, at a distance but closing in intentionally. After a short time, the airy sense of my pursuer became obvious and I felt compelled to turn around and see who was following me. The man was about 150 meters off, tall, with long striding gait, grey /black

hair tied in a top-knot- a .rather strange and imposing sight in such an isolated environment. I turned back and continued to walk at my own steady pace, but he never let up. I could feel his strong mental pull ensnaring me in his urgency to catch up. What did he want? Why was he following me? He had now reduced the distance between us and was quite close. There had been no verbal exchange, not even a wave or a nod. Because he was coming from behind, it was intimidating. Out of anticipation and fear of the unknown, my hair was standing up like heckles on the back of a dog. SUDDENLY I had to turn around and face the man. Yes, it was the same man who was shouting abuses at me back in town. Quickly this idea passed through my mind: now he has come to physically abuse me! Would he 'take me out?' in this lonely place, where no one would know if I went missing?

He now swooped in very close, we were face to face. He was dark skinned with warrior tattoos on his face. He was wearing a black woolen turban, a black sweater and a scarf that covered his mouth. He was rather big and athletically muscular. His dark smoldering pupils glared from intense white eyeballs. He came right up to me, holding a very grave and serious face, then he reached out with his long arms towards my throat. Then, as if expressing great relief, he cast his lanky body around my shoulder .in a manly embrace and in an almost desperate voice he said "Please ...please, forgive me. Forgive me! For the last two days, I couldn't sleep, I felt I was carrying the load of guilt and heaviness of my offence; it followed me for days after you left. Please forgive me" ☺



# CZECH REPUBLIC 2016: DOUBLE IT, DOUBLE IT AGAIN, AND KEEP ON INCREASING ...

by Muni Priya Dasa



## Getting congregation members to sponsor books

The story of this year's Czech *Padayatra* began in autumn 2015 when we were thinking how to best celebrate the 50th anniversary of ISKCON and how to please Srila Prabhupada. Our first beacon was Lokanath Maharaja's appeal to organize at least 50 *padayatras* around the world. This was our first "DOUBLE IT" moment - to double the number of *padayatras* in Central Europe. This year we managed to again have a *padayatra* in Czech Republic and also to inspire our brothers and sisters in neighboring Slovakia to revive the tradition of Slovakian *Padayatra* and hit the road too.

Another answer to the question, "How to please Srila Prabhupada?", concerned the number of books distributed. This was our second "DOUBLE IT" moment! In 2015 we

distributed 2000 books in two weeks, so this year it meant that at least 4000 books must go out. It sounded crazy but we immediately made the decision public and started to take practical steps. We first extended the duration of the walk by one week and made sure we had enough books in advance. But our greatest efforts went to obtaining sufficient number of experienced book distributors as well as new ones. We also wanted to distribute 50 small sets of Srimad-bhagavatam, therefore we made an offer to the congregation: they could donate for any amount of books which we would then distribute in their name. Overall we got sponsors for 1382 books.

## Padayatra : too hot to drink but too sweet to resist

*Padayatra* itself was like a hot sugarcane syrup: so hot it was nearly impossible to drink it, but so sweet that most of

us were very eager to drink it again and again for the whole three weeks. To cool us a little bit, Krishna sent us a few cloudbursts. The worst one was so strong that the wind started to push our cart although it was stationary. Soaked by continuous torrents of rain we had to put a big ladder under the wheels to stop the cart from moving. Frequent evening rains affected attendance of our cultural programs, but since this year we had bet on intense Facebook advertisement and bought two spacious folding tents, we still had an attendance of at least 60 to 100 people, even during the rain. It may not look like much but Czech towns and villages are like ghost towns during summer. It often happens you meet only two or three people outside during the day. Compared to last year, the gross number of visitors increased by 50%, from 1200 to 1800: we are celebrating 50th anniversary of ISKCON, aren't we? We distributed several hundred



plates of tasty prasadam consisting of potato pakoras, cucumber raita and fresh cherry tomatoes, besides the hundreds of bananas which flew off into people's hands. During surveys and competitions we gave more than 200 prizes to happy winners. These prizes were mainly Srila Prabhupada's books, but kids could also choose toy cows, pictures of Srila Prabhupada and Krishna, and the first three winners got maha garlands.

**Sankirtana madness unleashed on padayatra to reach the goal of 5000 books**

And how did it go with our book quota? At the beginning it was hopeless. Every day we were behind our quota, but Krishna appreciated our determination and the long preparations we had made, and gradually we boiled up to a right working temperature -around 108 degrees Celsius. We had several strategic meetings preceding *padayatra* and daily "war councils" during the whole walk. The most important thing was that we managed to secure the participation of a heavy cavalry sankirtana unit from the Prague temple (Czech Republic being a small country, this "heavy cavalry" consisted of three brahmacharis in a sankirtan van ). Our own *Padayatra* sankirtana party was also running full speed during all three weeks and occasionally we were joined by other sankirtana warriors from Czech Republic and Slovakia. Gradually we got to the right rhythm and the goal of 4000 books was becoming a reality. Sankirtana devotees were distributing on and on, everywhere and to everybody. All other services were managed in such a way that book distributors would have maximum support and ideal conditions for their sadhana and distribution service.

After two weeks it was clear that we would be able to distribute 4000 books and the hope started to arise that we could reach the 5000 book target. The 50th anniversary and 5000 books go nicely together, don't they? That's how we thought, which unleashed a veritable sankirtana madness on *padayatra*. What was the result? By the end of the walk we had distributed 5141 Srila Prabhupada books, which is one and a half times more than what we did last year.

**Fantastic programs organized in the aftermath of padayatra**

During this *padayatra* Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundar have revealed Their sweet hidden plan and us *padayatris*, although sweetly tired and exhausted, celebrated Their wonderful victory in ecstasy. The nectar continued even after *padayatra* had ended. As we did last year during evening programs, we had also collected questionnaires with contact information of people who had serious interest in our future programs and events. Once *padayatra* was over we started sending them a small internet magazine called "Peace and health" which contains information on practical topics such as relationships, work and health. It also contained an invitation to a program that we had arranged in the towns through which we walked. And it turned out that the number of these programs went up to three. Only two months after the end of the summer *padayatra* we have already organized several successful lectures, concerts and cooking courses, and we are now preparing more lectures for one high school. In one of these towns we launched Saturday feasts two times a month and we even got a personal support from several members of the city council. The mercy of Lord Gauranga and Nityananda is limitless and a few drops also fell on our



unqualified heads. We beg all of you, dear Vaisnavas reading this report, for your blessings to be able to continue this ecstatic preaching program year after year.

**The motto for our 2017 Padayatra: DOUBLE IT!**

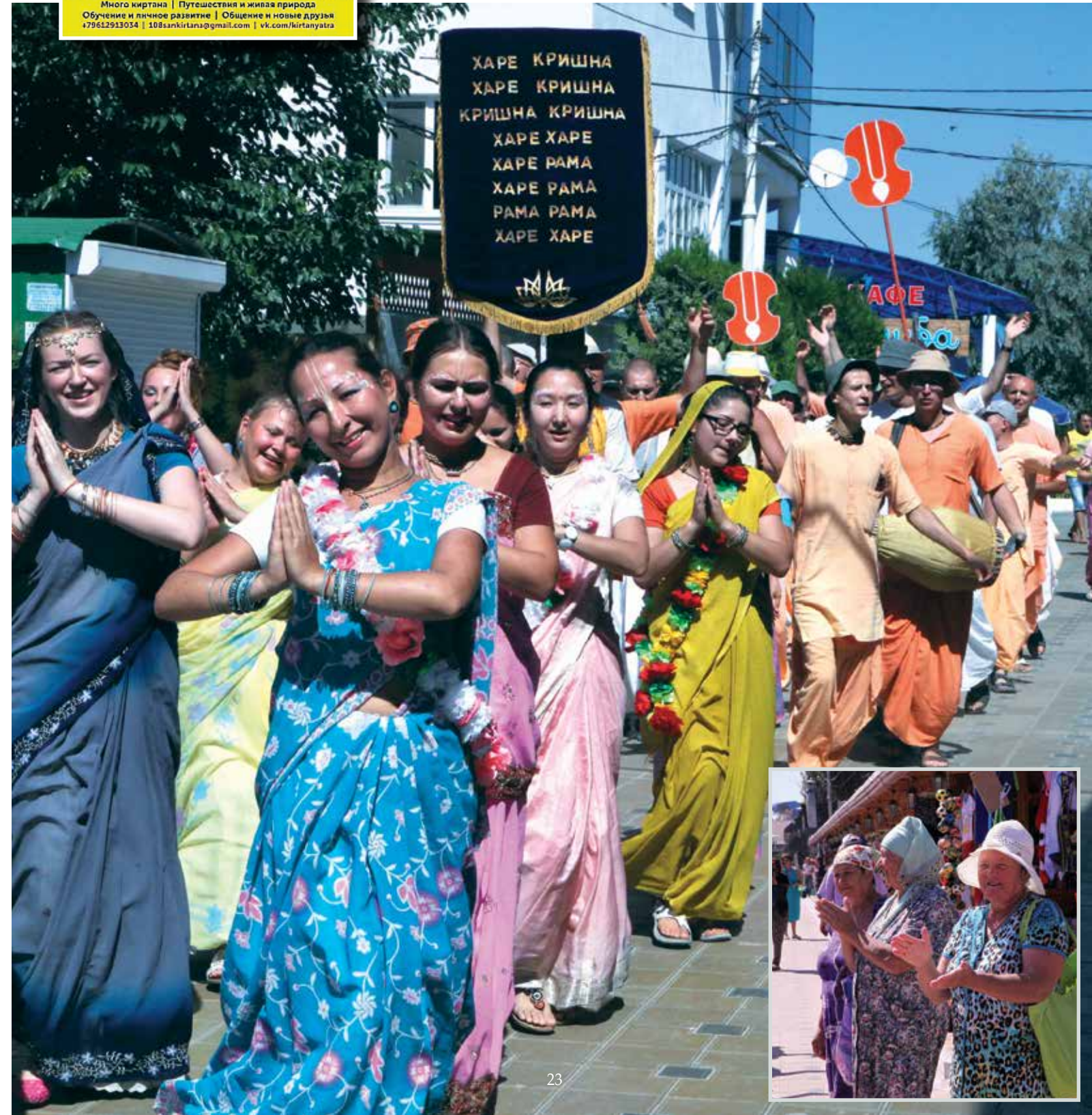
Like last autumn we are now already preparing our 2017 *Padayatra*. Guess what is our goal? "DOUBLE IT!" We beg your blessings to distribute at least 10 000 of Srila Prabhupada's books. So far we organized a two day sankirtana seminar which was attended by 50 devotees. The result? Several devotees decided to prolong their participation in Prabhupada's Christmas marathon, others set higher quotas for themselves, some decided to begin distribute occasionally and one devotee decided to distribute fulltime.

Dear *padayatris* brothers and sisters, what about you? Will you leave us alone? Join us! The year 2017 is coming soon and the 51st anniversary of ISKCON will never happen again. DOUBLE IT! Double at least something: the duration of *padayatra*, the number of devotees participating and, if it's possible, the number of books you distributed in 2016. Because the world has gone mad, it is getting increasingly more and more crazy, and every man and woman today needs Srila Prabhupada and his books! 🙏



# FOUR MONTH RUSSIAN PADAYATRA

by Narada Dasa





On May 13th 2016, we set off for our *padayatra* in Russia, mostly travelling around in vehicles due to the long distances between towns, and doing harinama sankirtana as much as possible in the towns and villages we crossed. We also managed to hold an ISKCON50 commemorative bullock cart *padayatra* in the village of Ershov. We were initially planning to be on the road for 3 months, but we managed to gather enough laksmi to be able to travel for 4 months, thanks to our book distributors and the devotees who had kindly made donations to help us out.

**Facts and figures:**

- ❑ Duration: 120 days
- ❑ Travelled through 29 cities, covering a distance of 16000 kms
- ❑ 69 devotees (39 men and 30 women) participated
- ❑ 3080 books of Srila Prabhupada and 350 'Golden Age' magazines distribute
- ❑ 50 hours of temple kirtana
- ❑ 150 hours of harinam sankirtana in the streets



*The little girl who just could not get enough of Krishna and His devotees*

Our party traveled to the city of Rostov where we held our first harinama in a park. During the kirtana, a little girl around 4 years old was passing by with her mother. They stopped to watch the harinama and after a while the little girl, who was really enjoying the kirtana, began to dance with us. In fact she danced throughout the whole harinama. When it was over she became very sad and started to cry so sincerely that her mother asked us where the next harinama would be held. The next day mother and daughter met us at another park; both were very happy to see us and this time the mother also joined the dancing. Two days later I met them during a Sunday program with Prabhavishnu Dasa, and I asked them how they were doing. The mother said that every morning the first thing her daughter asks her is if they are going to the 'Hare Krishnas' that day. The girl just couldn't wait to meet the devotees. Both mother and daughter appeared to be very happy during the program, and I recently heard that now they are attending a bhakti-vriksha group ☺



**WALKING 654 KILOMETERS FROM JOHANNESBURG TO DURBAN IN SOUTH AFRICA TO RAISE FUNDS FOR A SANKIRTANA MINI BUS**

*by Narottama Dasa*



This journey started with an intense eagerness to bring back enthusiasm, life and energy to our brahmachari ashram. So, my friend Mukharavinda Dasa and I decided to walk 654kilometers from the city of Johannesburg to the city of Durban in South Africa. We had never done anything like this before and we were not athletes, but the idea to raise funds to buy a sankirtana bus became the driving force behind our bravery.

As part of our preparation to walk the 654kilometers, we practiced walking 47kms from Johannesburg to the city of Pretoria on weekends. We quickly realized during our practice walk that it would be unrealistic to walk 47 kms each day. So, we decreased the number of kms to 30 to 35 a day, which brought the number of days we would be on the road to 18. We knew that the walk would be very challenging, but once we started, turning back would not be an option. Also, the prospects of being assisting to

purchase a mini bus for our preaching and travelling sankirtana party was so encouraging and enlivening that little attention was paid to the fatigue and tiredness of the body and mind.

**Walking to raise funds**

The brahmachari ashram is a very important ashram in our movement and is essentially a group of individuals who have decided to make themselves available 7 days a week, 365 days a year, to not only develop their own spiritual lives but also to help spread Krishna consciousness. So if the brahmacharis are not happily engaged, they will go and find engagement somewhere else. Brahmacharis are also a minority group and since we personally do not have beautiful track records as cutting edge preachers, who would listen to our plea for a sankirtana bus? We realized that every temple is raising funds for different temple projects and



are fully absorbed in temple matters. So, walking 654 kilometres was our way of loudly crying out and begging to whoever would listen –to help us acquire a mini-bus that we could use to take our movement to every town and village.

**Book distribution along the way**

During the first few days of our journey, we distributed a few books and pamphlets, but we soon ran out of stock. And so, for the rest of the way when people would inquire as to where we were heading, dressed up in unusual attire, preaching would ensue, followed by an exchange of contacts details. We had taken only a few books because it was difficult to carry more while walking. We already had our tent which weighed around 5 kilograms and fastened it to a trolley (another 3 kgs) that we pulled behind us as we walked. The trolley was also attached to our backpack which



Many challenges on the long and dry road

weighed an extra 15 kilograms. We took turns pulling the trolley after every 15 kms.

Initially, we were going to have a helper drive a car with our belongings and snacks, but there was a mechanical issue with the car and it had to go in for repairs. We had postponed the walk two times before, so, not wanting to delay the walk again, we decided to get a tent and camp as we travelled. We stayed at a petrol station or we would ask people to let us use their patch of land for the night, with an agreement to vacate at around 7 am the next day.

#### Many challenges on the long and dry road

We faced many challenges during our journey. In some towns, we would arrive late at night and would have to go house to house asking home owners for permission to camp in their yards. There was usually only one out of every five of them who would agree to our proposal. Then we would set up our tent. At the end of an entire day of walking all we wanted was a warm welcome home, but for us, this meant arriving home and building our own house. This was the most challenging and exhausting part of our journey. On the fourth or fifth day of the walk, I could not sleep at night because both my knees hurt so much to the point where I couldn't even feel my legs. I had to use knee-cap guards and ankle-cap guards to support my joints after that. When I recall what we had to go through, tears start to gather in my eyes.

Another challenge was that though we needed to drink a lot of water while walking, we could not carry too much, for carrying more water meant increasing the already heavy weight on our shoulders. At one point we even ran out of water and had to walk for 8 to 10 kms dehydrated.

#### Great encounters

We met wonderful people along the way, many of whom tried to assist us in some small way or other. Many motorists and truck drivers would stop to give us a lift, only to become struck with wonder when we explained that we were walking to Durban, a distance that takes them 3 to 6 hours, but would take us 18 days to cover. They were always interested to hear about where we came from, and why we were walking, which gave us a chance to talk about bhakti yoga.

On a very sunny day, alongside the highway from Johannesburg to Durban, the police stopped us to check if everything was okay. The security officers patrolling the highways would also occasionally do so. The officers would comment by saying that they had never seen anyone doing what we were doing.

We did two newspaper interviews as we travelled. One interview was covered by the Escort Newspaper and the other by the Daily News when we reached Durban. The only exciting part of the walk was when we would sit down and talk about all the preaching programs and all the wonderful harinams we were going to perform if we could somehow get the mini bus we needed. Otherwise, there was really no excitement or fun standing and walking on both your legs for 30 plus kms day in and day out for 18 days.

Our 654 km *padayatra* ended on November 9th. It took us 18 days to complete it, through rain, thunderstorms, sun, heat, loneliness, hunger, thirst, fatigue, dizziness, night, morning, sounds of heavy trucks, fumes, farms, long roads, horses, snakes and all for a very good cause –just so we can share the bliss, the joy, the happiness and excitement of Krishna consciousness with all our friends

from village to village, and township to township in our new sankirtana bus.

The results of our fund-raising efforts After our 18 day *padayatra* we still did not get enough money to buy the sankirtana minibus that we intend to purchase, which costs 599,000 Rands ( US\$ 44,321 = 41,642 Euros). At the planning stages of the walk we thought that devotees will just be coming running in numbers to assist with donations and that we will purchase the bus cash. It was my first and craziest fund raising campaign, so austere that whoever heard of it was thunderstruck with shock. Devotees living in South Africa know how far Durban is from Johannesburg. We thought whoever hears of this campaign will immediately want to be part of it. We also thought, "Millions of rands leave the country whenever the fundraisers for the Temple of the Vedic Planetarium make their turn in South Africa." This was going on in our minds, and this raised our hope and gave us the needed strength to take the walk.

#### We still need your help

At the end of our 654 km walk, we had raised only R10,000 (US\$ 740 = 700 Euros), and now we have about 10% of the total amount needed. We are still hopeful to collect more as not all those who pledged *laksmi* have yet come through. And there are two generous devotees who came to the rescue: one swami pledged to match the amount that we collect, and a GBC chairman pledged to contribute the same amount. Our fundraising officially stopped at the end of January 2016, but we are continuing until the goal is reached. Our immediate plan is to put a deposit for this bus and then pay monthly installments.

You can still make a donation to the following account:  
Bhakti Yoga Club. ABSA Club  
Savings Account number: 9321589126  
Sandton City Branch, South Africa  
**For more info,**  
**contact: Narottam Dasa :**  
**bluboy.yoga@gmail.com ☺**

## HOW ARE WE PERCEIVED BY THE PUBLIC?

by Gaurangi Dasi

#### Doing a survey is a good way to know

I was very happy to see that the most dynamic Czech *padayatra* leaders used two years in a row the simple survey I had suggested. The results were very positive: devotees got to know people better and have a more personal contact with them. It's common psychology that everyone feels valued when asked their own opinions and suggestions on various topics. The survey questions were about people's personal experience of the *padayatra* festival, their understanding of the public chanting, their perception of the Hare Krishna movement and the devotees' lifestyle, and, for those who had read some of Prabhupada's books, what they had learned from them. The surveys were also designed to gather favorable contact, which further fructified in the form of successful lectures, concerts, cooking courses, visit to one high school, Saturday feasts and support from members of a city council. When devotees are eagerly requested to come back, it's a sure sign that they touched some hearts and minds.

Conversely, I was also a little disappointed that not more *padayatris* around the world did that survey. Maybe they were too busy with various services, organizing, trying to induce someone to buy a book or take a *Padayatra* pamphlet or a cookie, or chanting and dancing along with the crowds. When men, women and kids join the dance, twirl around with abandon, keep up with the mrdanga beat with a big smile on their face, no need to ask them how they feel about the harinama. But what about the dozens of persons who might gawk in amazement at the spectacle of exotic clad Westerners leaping up in the air, in total oblivion of what's going on around them? What do these

people think? How do they perceive the Hare Krishna devotees? Are they ready to inquire what's behind this exuberant and colorful show? Will they ever know that these strange looking people are chanting the names of God and that it's part of the ancient practice of bhakti-yoga? Will they think they could also adopt these spiritual practices one day? Good questions to ask. In general *padayatris* distribute brochures informing the public about these topics and referring them to some of our websites or temples. They also sell books and magazines, profusely or modestly, depending on the country they're in. From the devotees' side, it all looks fantastic, and it is indeed valuable.

Still, the question of how ISKCON devotees are perceived by the public remains a vital one for the success of our preaching mission. Hridayananda Dasa Goswami is very concerned about this factor in Western countries, which Srila Prabhupada came to deliver from impersonalism and voidism, as his pranam mantra indicates. Maharaja is equally concerned that in general devotees don't sufficiently care about what people think of them when they go on harinama, distribute books or present the philosophy of Krishna consciousness. He relates his own experience of recently witnessing an enthusiastic harinama party in the US: nobody - except a few drunkards - stopped to hear the devotees, or even look at them. Maharaja has a lot of wise things to say on making the presentation of Krishna Consciousness relevant to the Western world, and that's the reason for his whole Krishna West approach and programs. We hear many wonderful stories of how Srila Prabhupada's books save some persons' lives. We also heard that simply by touching these books people will be benefited, but should we not be more

happy that they read and understand them? Maharaja stresses the point, as Srila Prabhupada himself did many times, that we should preach according to time, place and circumstances. Obviously people, culture, customs and attitudes are different in different countries in different parts of the world, and people's reactions may also differ at different periods of history, when the political situation, people's concerns and interests change. In his excellent Communication seminar Anuttama Prabhu, director of ISKCON Communication worldwide, taught us that if we want to have effective communication with a person or a group we have to consider their needs, their interests and their concerns. How do we respond to people's concerns? Do we inquire about their interests and even consider them? What is our attitude toward people? It's obvious that if we want people to respect and hear us, we have to also respect them and be willing to hear what they have to say. If we have a condescending or arrogant attitude towards people and the good aspects of their western culture, how in the world can we expect them to be open to our message of peace and love?

Observing and analyzing people's reactions to what we say or do is a reliable way to know how they feel or what they think about us. The best way to know is to ask them. Feedback is always useful, whether individually or collectively. ISKCON devotees could benefit more from their encounters with people by hearing and learning something from them and, if necessary, adjusting some of their strategies accordingly. *Padayatra* is the ideal place for these choice exchanges, as devotees are in contact with the public day and night for a day, a week, a month or even for years.

#### India: when feedback and surveys are less needed

In the voluminous *Padayatra* Story book we filled up page after page of the fantastic receptions *padayatris* received and are still receiving in many countries around the world, especially

in India. During the triumphant 1984-1986 padayatra from Dwarka to Mayapur through South India, the international party got to experience what Indian hospitality means. City officials, entire villages welcomed the party with flags, banners, arches, trumpets, kirtana parties, school bands in uniforms, rows of virgin girls carrying water pots, firecrackers and sometimes fireworks. People washed the devotees' feet, hosted them and fed them up to their necks, to the point that Jayadvaita Swami commented that the biggest austerity on padayatra was trying to figure out what to do with all the prasada people would offer you. Obviously, accommodating a party of 150 devotees, six bullocks, a camel, and an elephant wasn't easy. If there were three thousand residents in a village, all would attend the pandal evening program. In Indian culture one is trained to receive guests – especially sadhus – as if God Himself was visiting. Unfortunately, this culture has changed over time, but it was still natural in the villages in 1984. In recent years several attacks on *padayatris* and the stealing of Balarama the ox confirm the fact that times are not the same any longer in Bharata Varsha.

#### Warm reciprocation with people in North, Central and South America

India is not the only place where *padayatris* were received with open arms. In practically every one of the 106 countries padayatra went through, there are many tales of kindness, generosity, and even change of hearts, sometimes also with a few reports of less happy incidents -after all, we're still in the material world. Candrabhaga Dasi, who walked for four years from Gita Nagari, Pennsylvania, to the border of Peru, with her husband and a horsecart, has a lot to say about her contacts: "People approached us while we were cooking, worshipping, or taking care of the horses. Some came to meet us on the road after seeing us on local television news. Several observers phoned their local newspapers, which responded with accurate articles. This Padayatra America achieved much goodwill

and made many worthwhile contacts. Through our website we received many positive messages from the people we met. Here is what Leann and Michael C. Farley from Virginia wrote us, 'We have been extremely honored and blessed by getting to know our new friends, Avadhuta and Candrabhaga. These two ambassadors of Krishna have truly touched our lives. They have exhibited amazing humility, patience, and grace. Our lives have been enriched through our experience with padayatra. We will always keep them and their mission in our thoughts and prayers.'.....Contact with the rural population increased significantly south of the US border. All day dozens of visitors came to our camp starting as early as mangala-arati. People were eager to hear and participate in the 'spiritual chanting,' and many bought books in Spanish. Everybody wanted something from us- a flyer, a stick of incense, a card, or a photograph – and they were never too shy to ask. The preaching became more successful when people saw the Deities, the santitos ("little saints"), as the pious Catholics called Them. Because it was the people's custom to honor and serve statues of their Catholic saints, Sri Sri Nitai-Gaurasundara touched their hearts. Villagers spontaneously displayed devotion to the Deities by bringing gifts of flowers, fruit, and vegetables, reverently touching Them and offering Them heartfelt prayers."

#### Irish people also loved padayatris

And then we have more wonderful stories of Ireland, Canada, and so many other countries. Padayatra organizer Parasurama Dasa recalls his 1989 walk through his native Ireland: "I was surprised at how the local people looked after us – providing us with jugs of milk and baskets of fruit and vegetables along with anything else we needed. Sometimes they even did our laundry. Monasteries never refused us – offering beds, rooms – all facility – and often, donations. Even in India I had not experienced such kindness. The Christian monks would sometimes come to mangala-arati and evening arati. Often they

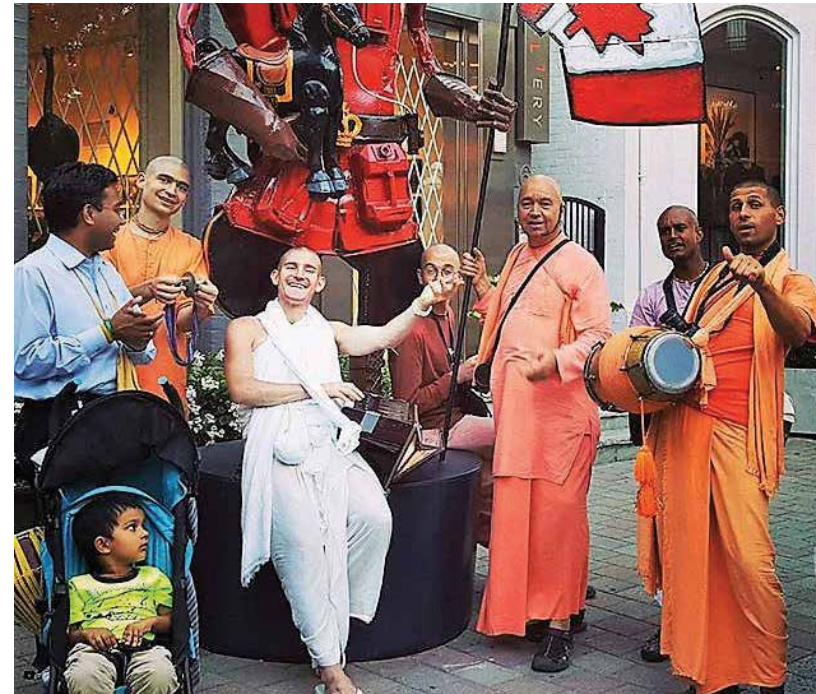
were vegetarian, and our exchanges with them were far from superficial. Sometimes we would bring Srila Prabhupada and Nitai-Gaurasundara into their church to perform arati. They were accepting us as devotees of God." Irish Tribhuvantha Dasa continues, "The amazing thing with padayatra in Ireland was the reaction of the Irish people, who clearly loved the whole thing. You can always tell when something is pleasing to Srila Prabhupada because everyone becomes happy. As we went from village to village, town to town, we were received with a very warm welcome. People could see that we were a big happy family just trying to make people aware of what we believed to be the Absolute Truth. I think it was, without a doubt, the biggest preaching ever seen in Ireland. The whole country knew we were there."

#### The main thing is to make connections with people on a very human level

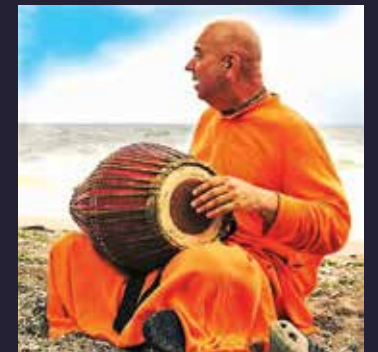
On Bhaktimarga Swami's website you can read all the adventures and realizations of the Walking Monk during his four one man treks from Coast to Coast across his native Canada. Maharaja prefers the term "reaching out" to "preaching," which sometimes carries negative connotations of fanatical religionists trying to push their dogma onto others without paying attention to individuals. "I let people come to me, he says. I try to understand their pulse, and then to be sensitive to them. I then make friends with them and share with them Krishna consciousness. When you go out in your robes, people ask you for blessings and to pray for them. People are in need of counseling, and they want to talk....It's the people you meet who make it worthwhile. I feel enriched and benefited, and grateful that my guru has blessed me with the life of a nomad. The main thing is to make connections with people on a very human level. So many of us are just so lonely, and the most important thing is to connect personally. Kindness is a religion in itself. In fact, the most difficult aspect of the walk was going through a long stretch where there

Contd Page 30

# ANECDOTES FROM THE WALKING MONK



Taking a little time off of walking to partake in sankirtana in posh Yorkville, Toronto, with the Nam Ruchi group



USA: Walking 1000 miles (1600 kms) from Butler, Pennsylvania, to Seward, Nebraska: May 11 to August 6, 2016

By Bhaktimarga Swami

#### Staying fit to serve the Lord

I met up with a middle aged woman when her trail and my trail converged. I asked her if she walks every day and why. "I walk every day because I want to be fit to serve the Lord and others." I believe she came up with a perfect answer.

#### Pieces of wisdom

In Bristol, Indiana, one man with a corporate appearance pulled over in his vehicle and asked if I could share some wisdom. Two things I offered to deliver. 1 – Human beings are meant for walking. 2 - Humans are meant for spiritual life.

#### Better avoid fighting

"Can you teach me how to \*fat\*?" The

young African American from Toledo, Ohio, meant, 'fight', assuming that all monks know martial arts. I told him I could teach him how to avoid fighting, and how to lead the lifestyle of gentleness. "Whenever you need to defend," I said, "use wisdom before you use the weapon."

#### The Krishna factor

My second installment of walkers for the day in Chicago were from the Youth Bus Tour originating from Florida under the able guidance of Manorama Das. My message to them at the final step at a pier and a lighthouse was, "Try to see everything as Krishna being present, such as we read about in the 10th chapter of Bhagavad-gita. Try to absorb the power of the waves by the lake, the smells in the air, the feel of the wind. This is the Krishna factor."

#### Walking to make internal inventory

"He's a Trip Monk", read the caption of the Atkinson's News Tribune for an article by Ben Hohenstatt. "If you saw a man with a shaved head in orange robes in Illinois Valley Thursday, that wasn't an oddly dressed flagger... "The walk is to encourage people to have a workout and a work in,' the 63 year old monk said." Introspection! Looking within! To make internal inventory! These are my messages to the public and the media.

#### The spirit of love for the Creator

Iowa is full of corn. I grew up amidst corn fields. "I feel at home," I told Emily of the Muscatine Journal. She later quoted me, "The swami said cars have caused a disconnect among people, also saying that they had made us cold, callous, and creating a loss



in neighbourliness. He hopes that the universal understanding about walking will help people's spiritual awareness." She informed through her article that I was a Bhakti Yoga instructor. Bhakti is the spirit of love for the Creator, and the practice of it has roots in India. It is the spirit that like the Mississippi River (which I just

raining profusely my traditional garb sometimes tears, so I decided to forgo it until sunshine came in.

An officer pulls over. "He can't get me for wearing orange," I thought. That's what convicts wear in prison. He said he got a call from someone said there's a person walking. "You're walking



walked) flows. And it flows through all people, countries, and races. Additionally the article mentioned that I'm a member of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness. Yes, I am, Emily, proudly, and thank you.

### I'm a spirit in motion !

In Williamsburg, Iowa, rains came down for hours and I was holding up the umbrella while trekking. After some time I found it cumbersome to hold onto it, so I just let the rain and the wind do what they wanted to do. Instead of resisting I chose to accept and free myself from those elements. You can get to a point where you realize, "I am not this body, I'm actually a spirit – a spirit in motion." Now, this was the one day I wore civilian clothes, shirt and pants. When

near the mental institute," said the officer. He was apologetic.

### Starting the second part of the US walk from Nebraska to San Francisco in May 2017

I finished the first part of the US walk in honor of ISKCON50 at a place called Seward, Nebraska. Part two will commence in May of 2017 and end in September in San Francisco. Most days I walked 20 miles. Many evenings I would have speaking engagements, always meeting and elaborating on the divine words of Srila Prabhupada from scripture, from the Bhagavad-gita, or from the book, Krishna: The Supreme Personality of Godhead, to communities all over America where there's interest in devotion. The Gujarati community especially helped to give my team a place to stay where

there were no temples. We did not have to camp out one night, although I'd enjoy the outdoor sleeping. My support team of individuals, who came mostly in shifts, were all second generation men - Gopal Keller, Abhimanyu Arjuna, Uttamananda, and Mandala. Near the end of this summer trek, Mandala and I had experimented on nighttime trekking, it was for one good reason - the daytime was unbearable with heat. We would begin walking by 9 pm and finish by 3:30 am on some days. We exercised some tapasya in this regard. Yes, it has been a steamy summer.

I hang up my shoes for some months, and will revisit them when it is time to hit the road to make our way to San Francisco to celebrate the first Chariot Festival of Ratha Yatra for its golden jubilee. It will also coincide with a half century of the summer of love. Love? What kind of love? For the love of Krishna, of course. (August 2, 2016 at Cherry Hills, Nebraska)

In 2018 I hope to walk a portion of the famous Camino Santiago de Compostela (The St James Way), which runs through parts of France and Spain ☸

**Bhaktimarga Swami**  
*the Walking Monk*

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*Contd Page 28*  
was no human interaction." During his walks across Canada, his message of simple living and spiritual healing, and his concerns about the excessive use of cars was broadcast all over the country, due to his personal attitude and the equally personal reciprocation of the media people ☸

# HIGHLIGHTS OF SOME OF THE 64 ISKCON50 PADAYATRAS



Noida padayatra party entering Vrindavana



Jhansi procession

NB: The following articles are summaries of the original articles. You can find the entire articles, as well as reports of many other ISKCON50 padayatras, and their corresponding photos on the padayatra website (padayatra.com).

### NOIDA TO VRINDAVAN

By Shyam Gopal Dasa

A party of 50 devotees of ISKCON Noida near Delhi performed a 15 day bullockcart padayatra from Noida to Sri Vrindavan Dham. The second day we reached a factory called 'Priya Gold' owned by a Mr. Aggarwal, who kindly received us all by garlanding Gaura Nitai and the devotees. We did kirtana for his factory employees, and many of them purchased books and had prasadam afterwards. The third day we stopped at the AYS

School where we gave a lecture and had a kirtana for the children who really enjoyed themselves while dancing enthusiastically. On day 7 we visited 'Jeevan Singh Degree College', where the principal - a follower of Srila Prabhupada - happily purchased a set of Bhagavatam books, sponsored our evening prasadam and invited us to do harinama in his village. During the walk a few reporters came to meet us where we were staying and interviewed Vanshidhar Dasa, ISKCON Noida's temple president, about the padayatra. On October 15th we reached Vrindavan, where 50 devotees from NOIDA joined us for harinama. Pancha Gauda Dasa, the temple president of ISKCON Vrindavan, and a group of devotees gave us a warm welcome at the Krishna Balarama Mandir. We decided to stay one more

day as the 16th was sharad purnima, the beginning of the holy month of Karttik, and also the first day of the ISKCON Vraja Mandala Parikrama. Thousands of devotees from all over the world participated with us in the Vrindavana parikrama. In total we distributed more than 2,000 books and more than 20,000 plates of prasadam.

### TOGO

By Bhakti Carudesna Swami

On December 17th 2016, a group of 50 devotees from West Africa, did a 56 km safari padayatra, a combination of driving and walking while doing harinama in a few big towns and 12 villages. After a bitter beginning in Aflao where the devotees got tear gased by the police who was chasing an illicit seller of gasoline, everything went smoothly. People



Ahmedabad Gujarat



Togo, West Africa



Iceland Backpack fun

greeted us, some stopped their cars to see what was going on and on many occasions a good number of them came to join us to dance in the kirtana. This padayatra was a festival of book distribution, with 246 big books, 38 medium books and 20 small books. There is one gentleman we will never forget. As we began to drive away from a village after our harinama, one man started to run after us, shouting, "Please, who are you? Where do you come from? What are you doing? What books do you have in your hands?" We reluctantly stopped because we were late for the next town. We were happy we did because the man ended up buying many books and chanting the Hare Krishna maha mantra with us without any difficulty. When we arrived at the Benin border in Hilaconji in the evening some custom officers joined the chanting and dancing and some police officers bought books. Before going back to the Lomé



Assam Exotic cart

temple Bhakta Godson, the best book distributor of the party, organized an emergency reception at his nearby house and treated the party to coconut water, fruits and soft drinks. So we went from tears of fear to tears of love. Enthused by this first experience, we are planning to organize a bigger padayatra every year.

**BOLIVIA**

By *Nayana Manjari Dasi*

Our first padayatra took place in the city of La Paz with a team of 28 devotees. We only took the deity of Lord Caitanya because the people of Bolivia are mostly Catholics who sometimes take a single image of the Virgin Mary or another saint out onto the street. So, we thought that they would be more able to relate to Lord Gauranga alone. It seemed to work as one passerby exclaimed, indicating Lord Gauranga, "Look, there's an Angel!" The second 3



Latur in Maharashtra, India

day walk took place on the Inca roads in the Andes Mountains. The journey was very treacherous, especially "The Devil's Climb", so we kept the deities safely in a pouch.

**SWEDEN**

By *Chandrabhaga Dasi*

Our 7 devotee team held a 7 day padayatra in Gotland, one of Sweden's largest islands. In Slithe we found a large immigrant community from Bengal; these families were Muslim by practice, but very easily accepted our books. Two young ladies joined our harinama for some time. My 6 year old daughter Anapayini took many opportunities to bring children she met to our base camp in the campground, which was sometimes followed by interesting conversations with their parents. We visited 7 villages and distributed 75 'ISKCON 50th anniversary' magazines and 70 books.



UK Parasuram driving oxcart

**NEW MAYAPUR, FRANCE**

By *Sundar Gopal Dasa*

Devarshi Dasa and I organized a 5 day 'Walk for Peace' around the New Mayapur farm. For the first four days a group of about 20 devotees led by Janananda Goswami drove to a main city in the area and inundated it with harinama. On the last day, padayatris danced the 8 kilometers from the neighboring village of Luçay-le-Mâle, to the farm. We were accompanied by Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai and Srila Prabhupada deities riding on a beautiful oxcart driven by Jaladuta Dasa. We distributed a total of 190 books, 90 '50th anniversary' magazines and hundreds of flyers inviting the public to a special evening program, which was attended by thirty guests. Devotees unanimously agreed that from now on they would organize such a padayatra around New Mayapur every year.



Mayapur to Katwa deities



Fiji Harinama everywhere

**UK: HASTINGS TO BRIGHTON**

By *Radha Raman Dasa*

This "Pilgrimage for Peace" from Hastings to Brighton was the first

oxcart padayatra held in mainland UK after more than 20 years. The party of 20 devotees, accompanied by Mahavishnu Swami, was led by Dayal Mora Dasa and Parasurama Dasa, who has organized and participated in more padayatras than any other ISKCON devotee in the world. On the first day many children were attracted by the padayatra, so much so that they cried and followed us until we were well out of sight. On the second day a police vehicle kindly escorted us through a difficult part of the road even though their presence was actually causing more traffic. Three special guests joined us the third day: Jai Nitai Das, temple president of ISKCON London, who greatly facilitated this walk, along with his wife Bhava Bhakti Dasi and a famous kirtana lover, Janananda Swami. When we reached Eastbourne Pier we received a lot of newspaper publicity in print and online coverage 🌟



Sweden Chandrabhaga Dasi



France Approaching New Mayapur



Malaysia In front of ISKCON Teluk Intan



Yasadadulal Dasa and team

Country, State And City	Present day organisers	Dates	Duration (in decreasing order)	Number of kms walked	Oxcart
	<b>2 CONTINUOUS PADAYATRAS</b>				
1 All-India padayatra	Acarya Dasa ( leader since Sept 2009)	Sept 1984 till ....	32 years and still walking	around 87,000	YES
2 Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states (India)	Visnuswami Dasa	End of 2012 to end of 2015. Jan 2017 till...	3 years and 2 months	around 2,000	YES
		<b>11 ANNUAL PADAYATRAS</b>			
3 Vraja Mandala Padayatra (India)	Parasuram Dasa	Month of Kartikka	One month	268	YES
4 Dehu to Pandharpur, Dindi (India)	ISKCON Pune & Laksmi Narayan Dasa	June/July 1996 till today	18 days	250	YES
5 Czech Republic	Muni Priya Dasa & Nrsimha Caitanya Dasa	Summer 1993 till today	2 to 3 weeks	110	YES
6 Aravade to Pandharpur (India)	ISKCON Aravade (Maharashtra)	2001 till today	1 week	110	YES
7 Odisha (India)	ISKCON (Bhubaneswar)	Kartikka 1992 till today		130	YES
8 Lithuania	Ananda Gaurangi Dasi	Summer 1995 till today	1 week	130	Vehicles
9 Slovenia	Lalita Govinda Dasa	Summer 2001 till today	1 week	130	Ox, horse or hand cart
10 Solapur to Pandharpur (India)	ISKCON Solapur (Maharashtra)	2006 till today	4 days	70	YES
11 Mauritius	Pancatattva Dasa	1984 till today	1-2 days		YES
12 Guyana	ISKCON Georgetown		2 days		NO
13 South Africa Durban	Durban devotees	2012 till today	1 day		NO
	<b>PADAYATRAS ORGANISED SINCE GAURA PURNIMA 2014</b>				
14 New Zealand	YasodadulalDasa	July 2015 to July 2016	1 year	around 3500	Horse cart
15 Russia	Narada Dasa	May to August 15, 2016	3 months		Vehicles 1 day oxcart
16 USA: Butler,Pennsylvania to Nebraska	Bhaktimarga Swami	May 11 to August 6, 2016	3 months	1609	NO
17 Kolhapur to Nasik (India)	ISKCON temples and centers in Maharashtra	March 29 to May 31, 2014	64 days	960	YES
18 Russia	Narada Dasa	June to Sept 2014	2 months	960	Vehicles
19 USA: Boston, New York to Butler	Bhaktimarga Swami	Sept 20 to Nov 10, 2015	52 days	1548	NO
20 Russia	Narada Dasa	July 10 to Aug 25, 2015	5 weeks		Vehicles
21 Canada	Bhaktimarga Swami	May 24 to June 29, 2014	36 days	around 1,200	
22 South Africa: Johannesburg to Durban	Narottama Dasa and Mukharavinda Dasa	Oct 23 to Nov 9, 2016	18 days	654	NO
23 Noida to Vrindavana (India)	Krishna Bhakta Dasa & Noida team	Oct 1 to 15, 2016	15 days	around 200	
24 Sri Rangam to Kumbakonam (India)	Prasanna Shyam Dasa	Feb 10 to 23, 2016	14 days		YES
25 New Zealand North	Yasodadulal Dasa	In 2014 and 2015	12 days	160	NO
26 New Zealand South	Yasodadulal Dasa	In 2014 and 2015	12 days	100	NO
27 Kharad to Pandharpur (India)	Kharad Youth Center in Maharashtra	July 5 to 14, 2016	10 days	150	NO

Country, State And City	Present day organisers	Dates	Duration (in decreasing order)	Number of kms walked	Oxcart
28 France: Angers to New Mayapur	Devarshi Dasa	July 2015	9 days	190	NO
29 Iceland	Chandrabhaga Dasi	July 28 to Aug 5, 2016	9 days		NO
30 Sweden	Chandrabhaga Dasi	July 1 to 8, 2016	8 days		NO
31 New Zealand	Yasodadulal Dasa	In 2014 and 2015	8 days		NO
32 Hungary	Bhakta Peter	Sept 2015	7 days		NO
33 Dudhsagar to Mir. Beach, Goa (India)	ISKCON Goa	Nov 27 to Dec 3, 2015	7 days	77	YES
34 Mayapur to Katwa (India)	Istadeva Dasa	Dec 20 to 26, 2016	7 days	80	YES
35 Ahmedabad (India)	Murali Mohan Dasa	January 2016	5 days		YES
36 England: Hastings to Brighton	Parasurama Dasa and Dayal Mora Dasa	May 30 to June 3, 2016	5 days		YES
37 France: Around New Mayapur farm	Sundar Gopal Dasa and Devarshi Dasa	August 1 to 5, 2016	5 days		1 day with ox cart
38 Zambia	Govinda Dasa	March 25 to 27, 2016	3 days		Bus and walk
39 Mauritius	Pancatattva Dasa	April 15 to 17, 2016	3 days	23	NO
40 Mauritius (South)	Pancatattva Dasa	August 5 to 7, 2016	3 days		NO
41 Slovakia	Yasomati Dasi	August 27 to 29, 2016	3 days		YES
42 Bolivia: Andes	Nayana Manjari Dasi	Sept 23 to 25, 2016	3 days		NO
43 Jhansi (India)	Dasarath Dasa	December 2016	3 days	30	NO
44 Fiji	Yasodadulal Dasa	End of 2016 and 2017	3 days		NO
45 New Zealand around Christchurch	Yasodadulal Dasa	end of 2014	3 days		NO
46 Assam Rural areas	Yasodadulal Dasa	Dec 31 to Jan 1, 2017	2 days	30	NO
47 Assam (Vaishistha )				40	
48 Assam ( to Parasuram kund)				108	
49 La Réunion	Nrsimha Tirtha Dasa	July 15 to 17, 2016	2 days		NO
50 Suriname	Govinda Madhava Dasa	July 7, 2014	1 days		NO
51 USA, Detroit	Jambavan Dasa	May 14, 2016	1 days		NO
52 La Réunion	Rama Gopal Dasa	July 23, 2016	1 days		NO
53 SouthAfrica: Johannesburg	Padmanabha Dasa	August 9, 2016	1 days		NO
54 Malaysia at Mayapur Baru	ISKCON Teluk Intan	August 14, 2016	1 days		NO
55 Bolivia	Nayana Manjari Dasi	Sept 18, 2016	1 days		NO
56 Latur (India)	ISKCON Latur	Oct 24, 2016	1 days	8	YES
57 France: Dijon	Gaurangi Dasi and Rama Gopal Dasa	Nov12, 2016	1 days	10	YES
58 Togo in West Africa	Bhakti Carudesna Swami	Dec 17, 2016	1 days		NO
59 New Zealand	Yasodadulal Das	In 2015 (Christchurch suburbs)	1 days		NO
60 Ahmedabad Gujarat to64 (India)	Murali Mohan Dasa	5 walks in 2016	1 days		NO

## OXEN STORIES

### *Glorious vaisnava oxen*

by Istadeva Dasa



Gaurasundara's service. He rushed toward us and broke the bamboo gate with his horns. He tried to move ahead, but the next gate was made of iron. When Bhima realized he could go no further, he looked up at us, and we could see thick tears of separation flowing from his eyes. Our hearts melted and we felt very sorry for him, but we knew he was in Mayapur-dhama for good and that the devotees would take good care of him until the end. Eventually, on one Ekadasi day, seeing that Bhima was getting weaker and weaker, devotees started to do nonstop kirtana for him. They put some carnamrita in his mouth, and Bhima left his body that same night.

Many of the *padayatra* oxen left their bodies in holy dhamas and in unusual circumstances. Krishna pulled the Lord's cart for twelve years and left his body in Vrindavana during the Makara-sankranti festival. After walking all over India, Nitai left his body in Pandharpur-dhama, Dvaraka in Tirupati, Balarama at our ISKCON Bangalore farm, and another bullock at Radha-kunda. This proves that even animals can take part in the sankirtana movement and receive the blessings of Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai, as Srila Prabhupada had explained. He even said that these *padayatra* oxen would go back to Godhead ☸



The *padayatra* bullocks are very special. I always pray to Krishna that if He has to put me in an animal form in my next life, He should make me a *padayatra* ox. When we live with the oxen and take care of them, we can see that each one of them is an individual, with his own personality, mood, likes and dislikes. Usually, when a devotee massages one ox, the others come around and nudge the devotee so he'll massage them too. Once, in Bihar, a bullock named Dvaraka refused to go forward. So Sanak Sanatana moved on with the *padayatra* party, leaving him behind under a tree. As soon as we had walked a few meters, he came running at full speed to join us. There was a devotee named Bhagavatapriya, who would always behave very strictly with our ox, Balarama. Once, when we were in Mayapur, we had left Balarama to move about freely in the deer park while Bhagavatapriya was receiving initiation. Right after his initiation he tried to display his commanding attitude towards Balarama by calling out his name, but the ox rushed toward him, lowered his horns, and flung him through the air. Balarama had not appreciated or forgotten the harsh treatment he had received. When Bhima became too old, we retired him in Mayapur. As the *padayatra* party was leaving Mayapur we could see that Bhima didn't want to be separated from Nitai-

## OXEN STORIES

### *Protected by her friend Krishna the ox*

By Sangita Dasi



and noble ox had protected me in this trying situation was a great experience for me – all the more because Krishna, unlike his white partner, Balarama, was usually tame and gentle. Anyone could approach him and pet him without fear.

A few years later I was in Vrindavana, ready to tour some holy places with a couple of friends, when one of them decided to stop at Kurma-rupa Prabhu's goshala. I knew Krishna had retired there after his long years of service on *padayatra*, but when we got to the goshala we learned he had left his body just the night before. I felt so grateful Lord Krishna had brought me to the goshala on that day and allowed me to offer my obeisances and last greetings to my bull friend, who looked as pure and beautiful as ever. Later the devotees built a small samadhi for him at the goshala. Lord Krishna protects His devotees through His own surrendered souls, in whatever body they may be ☸



This happened on *Padayatra* India in 1996, on the walk from Vrindavana to Dwaraka. One day in Gujarat we stopped in a village where the people had probably never seen a white woman before. A group of villagers, all men, approached me, laughing and joking, and started to surround me. Feeling disturbed, I left that spot and went to the place where the *padayatra* oxen were staying, peacefully eating grass. But the men followed me there, still laughing and joking. So I went to sit right at the hooves of our bullock Krishna. As his name suggests, Krishna was black, he had a majestic gait, and being of the Kankrej breed, had large, towering horns. The men approached me again but suddenly, Krishna turned toward them, made a tumultuous rumbling noise with his nose, and headed in their direction. To my great relief, the men became afraid and fled. After that, Krishna resumed his peaceful nature and quietly returned to eating grass. To witness how this beautiful

*"The bull is the emblem of the moral principle, and the cow is the representative of the earth. When the bull and the cow are in a joyful mood, it is to be understood that the people of the world are also in a joyful mood. The reason is that the bull helps production of grains in the agricultural field, and the cow delivers milk, the miracle of aggregate food values."*

*Srimad Bhagavatam 1.16.18,  
Srila Prabhupada purport*

# OXEN STORIES

*Never got such loving reciprocation from an animal before*

by Sarvatma Dasa

Once on *Padayatra* Maharashtra Istadeva and Sanak Sanatana had gone to Gujarat to buy some oxen. On their way they happened to find themselves at a place where the police had just caught a truck filled with bulls on its way to the slaughterhouse. So the devotees rescued three animals from that truck and brought them to *padayatra*. They named them Govinda, Vitthala and Gopala. Vitthala was very lazy whereas Gopala was very kind and hardworking.

At that particular time there were only six devotees on *padayatra*, so everybody had to contribute a lot. I was a pujari but had to do other services also. One day Mohana Rupa, our leader, asked me to drive the bullock cart so he could distribute books. Since we had to walk 18 km he told me to go fast with the oxen and put the Deities to rest when we arrived. I was trying to go fast, but the oxen weren't following my commands. I talked to them, rubbed them, and twisted their tails, but nothing worked. So I gave them a good kick, especially Gopala. I felt bad, but I had to do it. After that, they walked.

That evening there were not many people where we stopped for the night, so we didn't do a public program. I wasn't feeling good about having beaten the oxen, so I gave them nice food to eat, gour (raw sugar) with cottonseed cake – a feast for them. I especially put a lot of gour into Gopala's bucket. After he finished we had Gaura-arati. From a distance I saw Gopala sitting, nicely chewing his cud, so I went to see him after the arati. After brushing him I spoke to him. "Why were you so lazy today? We are very few devotees. We had a long way to walk, I'm sorry I had to beat you." As he rested on his back, I sat down near him, rubbing his neck and gently speaking to him. Slowly he started licking me with lots of affection. In my whole life I have never had such loving reciprocation from an animal.



*The policewoman who got a little too close*

by Krishna Vilasini dasi



Once in Florida in 1991 we pulled off on the side of the road to a grassy area and went to sleep. In the middle of the night we were awakened by the glare of eight headlights and the sounds of police officers. Eight policemen had come to investigate - some neighbours had probably reported us earlier- and they had gathered around the oxen for a photo. As one policewoman came a little too close to Nakula, one of the oxen, he threw her up in the air and she landed on her buttocks. She got up laughing and showed how the ox had happily struck her in her bullet-proof vest. Everyone laughed, and the captain said he would post the picture at the station to show the rest of the officers their unusual discovery ☺

## Ox tale scoop

by Parasuram Dasa

This happened in 1995 at the time that the BBC Radio was planning its first live program for the Whole Earth Show in Dorset. Motorized vehicles were strictly prohibited on the grounds, as the organizer wanted a completely 'natural program'. So he directed the BBC truck to me, as I was bringing our two oxen to the show. The sight of the huge truck towed by the beautiful animals was quite unusual, and the incident was reported by a local newspaper ☺



Admirers of Rupa in Sweden



Parasuram choosing oxen at the Vrindavana goshala



Loading Ram on truck in New Zealand

# ENGAGE OXEN ON PADAYATRA

## Oxen or horses?

- Horses move faster and are more passionate than oxen.
- Oxen are more calm, predictable, and mellow than horses.
- Oxen are easier to train, more stable and feeding them costs less.
- Oxen are more robust than horses and less likely to get injured.
- To shoe an ox is more delicate because his morphology does not allow him to stand on 3 legs, but is less expensive than shoeing a horse.

## Present the importance of ox power and cow protection

- In Western countries the beautiful and unusual oxen are always stealing the hearts of children and people, especially of old folks who had worked with them during their youth. In America during the 90s, once the *padayatris* started to walk with an oxcart, newspaper reporters came without prior notice and numerous newspaper articles were written on the importance of cow protection.
- The presence of these gentle animals also provides daily

opportunities to inform the public about the many benefits of vegetarianism. Most *padayatra* organizers have chosen oxen for preaching purposes, showing that these powerful animals are valuable, meant to work hard and not to be eaten.

## Engage ISKCON farms' idle oxen

- In many ISKCON farms oxen are sitting idly all day long, getting fat, but they are happy to work hard. *Padayatra* gives them engagement and direct service to the Lord by pulling His Deity cart. Prabhupada said that the *padayatra* oxen would go back to Godhead.

## Feel closer to Krishna

- The presence of the oxen reminds us of Govinda and Goloka Vrindavana. Lord Krishna, as the Lord and protector of cows and oxen, is very happy when His dear friends are cared for with love and affection, and used in His service. When Govinda, His cows and oxen are satisfied, so are we.

## Where to get your oxen?

- First decide how many you need to pull the cart(s) and if you'll need some spare ones so they can take turns
- ISKCON farms in your area
- Borrow or buy them from farmers or cattle raisers
- Rescue them from slaughterhouses or trucks driving them there
- Consult experts in the field (ISCOWP)
- Consider their breed, endurance, age, health, training and experience in pulling carts
- Check the update of their required vaccinations and if they need a travel permit

## Check your legal requirements

- Get the required permits for using a bullock cart on the roads (which ones?), in cities
- Permits for transporting oxen within a country and/or across borders
- Get an insurance in case of damages caused by the animals
- Make sure you have the required vaccinations by the start of your



Yoke used on *padayatra* Spain



All dressed up in New Zealand



Ox cover in Australia



Metal shoe wallah in India



Parasurama Dasa getting the ox shod before his annual Vrindavana padayatra



Parasurma calming ox down while shoeing



Aurelio supervises lunch in Greece



Oxen attraction in England



Shoe from Cattle Shoof

*padayatra*. Better inquire months in advance as there could be some quarantines and delays, if the animals come from another country or live around sick cows or other animals

### Get shoes for their hooves

- Oxen working in the fields do not need shoes, but if they walk a lot on roads covered with asphalt, their hooves will wear out faster than they grow. If their hooves wear out the ox will not be able to pull the cart for at least three weeks until the hooves grow back again.
- Shoeing has to be done regularly, depending on the condition of the road. The animals might need shoes right from the very beginning.
- Inquire what kind of shoeing is available in your country: you might still find some men doing it in India, but very rarely in the West.
- Metal shoes: most of them last for one month. Get them tailored-made for each hoof or buy the standard size shoe, and get a good supply of them for the road. *Padayatris* in India developed a simple system for shoeing oxen themselves; they purchased professional shoes, good nails

and all the necessary equipment in a big city before leaving, took their time to do the job and even got better than the nail-wallahs.

- Rubber shoes; they are very easy to use and put on the hooves and are an excellent way to protect sore hooves. They can be found in specialized stores and are easily available in England and New Zealand (Shoof International Ltd. P.O. Box 522 Cambridge, New Zealand). You can also make your own shoes with rubber tires.

### Get your harness and yokes

- The type of harness you use will greatly affect the amount of useful power generated since the harness is the "transmission system" of any animal-drawn implement.

### Decorate your oxen

- Bullock covers add a festive finishing touch to the parade. Use materials that can be easily washed as they get dirty quickly and avoid metal trimmings that can also rust
- Paint their horns with bright colors, add colorful balls to the tips of the horns (also a safety device)
- Make a forehead shield of a

triangular shape

- Don't forget bells and necklaces

### Train the oxen before the walk

- Ideally the trainer should have worked with oxen for at least 2 years before taking full responsibility of the animals on the roads.
- It's better that the person who trained the oxen is the one who will be with them during the walk.
- Take the time to train the oxen properly: it takes at least 2 months for the animals to learn how to pull a heavy cart and respond to a command.
- Think of the security since the oxen will have to walk on busy roads and not panic in heavy traffic or amidst a noisy crowd.
- Read the "Ox training handbook", by Balabhadra Dasa (director of ISCOWP), "Ox Power Ki Jaya!" by Paramananda Dasa and "Ox power handbook", by Parasuram Dasa

### Give them the proper food

- Oxen like the same food every day.
- Their main diet: oats and fresh grass. In India: rice grass, millet (bhadra and juri grass), corn grass, dahl skin, green corn grass
- Special treats: roughage, bread,

gur (raw sugar), fruits (cut apples, grapes, oranges, etc.)

- Don't let the animals eat grass alongside the road: they will get into a habit and do it
- when they are supposed to pull the cart.
- No spontaneous eating in the neighbour's field: tie the animals if necessary
- If you get an ox from a distant place, consider the diet he is used to already. In India, if you take an ox from Maharashtra and give him a different food than the one he's used to, he will die. The sturdy Konkraj breed from Gujarat are an exception: they are very strong and can tolerate changes in food and climate.

### Take good care of your four-legged padayatris

Follow the ISKCON cow protection standards: Standard 7 Travelling and Preaching Programs of the Minimum Cow Protection Standards are part of the ISKCON law 507. It was composed by cowherds internationally. The standards can be downloaded at [HYPERLINK"http://www.iscowp.com"](http://www.iscowp.com) <http://www.iscowp.com>

- Best to have the same trained caretakers during the entire walk. He/she can train a few assistants for various tasks.
- Consult specialists and specialized books on ox diseases.
- Give them proper shelter and protection: wherever the animals stay at night, someone must stay with them (several oxen were stolen in poor countries)
- Find a field, a farm or some public land in a city

- Bring what you'll need:
- Brush to clean the animals
- Buckets for oats and water (large enough for their heads).
- Ropes to tie the animals with.
- Hay storage container: on *Padayatra* India one trolley was used for storing the oxen's food and their buckets
- A tarp to provide shelter from the rain and sun
- A broom and a shovel to clean up after them: even though cow dung is pure and holy, your average city dweller will not appreciate his street or sidewalk being polluted, and you might get a fine, and certainly abad reputation
- Plan in advance what you will do with the oxen when they get sick

### Use trailer equipped to transport animals

- Rent a special animal trailer
- Inquire about travelling permits, as in some countries there are strict regulations concerning animal transportation

### Be concerned about the security on the road

- The cart driver should know how to drive safely and handle the animals on the road: the animals can get scared in heavy and noisy traffic
- Drivers have to be very careful since *Padayatra* will be held responsible for damages caused to pedestrians, motorists, vehicles or private property

### Make arrangements for the oxen retirement and their departure from this world

- The oxen who have served on *padayatra* deserve a peaceful place to end their lives. In India *Padayatra* leaders sent the old and tired oxen to ISKCON farms to retire and quit their bodies surrounded by the holy names and caring devotees
- The four-legged *padayatris* who have served the Lord faithfully for many years should be honoured with a special ceremony when they depart from this world ☺



Understanding the language of love



Yoke in Australia



Yoke in Czech Republic padayatra

#### INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE



1. Clean hoof and trim to a natural shape. Remove any excess toe.

2. Search for cause of lameness and treat as necessary. Test Shoof for size.



3. Wet packet of Copper Sulphate for approximately 1 minute.

4. Bandage unopened packet on to hoof. Simply tuck in the end of bandage.



5. Apply Shoof. Tie tightly and securely. Cut off loose ends. When animal walks packet will burst.

6. Remove after 7-14 days by cutting the string at the side.



### LIKE HARI VILAS, PURIFY YOUR LAKSMI BY BECOMING A STAUNCH PADAYATRA SUPPORTER

Hari Vilas, aged 70, is a resident of Noida, a big city located about 40mns from Delhi where Lokanath Maharaja has established the gorgeous temple of Sri Sri Radha Govinda. This generous devotee is a strong supporter of ISKCON. He donated for the Noida temple construction, the Devotee Care program, and also Padayatra. Since four years he has unselfishly been serving the All India Padayatra by giving 5% of his daily income to support the devotees on the road.

His job is to sell gas cylinders to thousands of customers, and he also owns a petrol station. This busy devotee has deep insights. "I have realized that by serving the devotees my laksmi gets purified", he humbly says. "The *padayatris* are bearing so much discomfort by walking village to village all over India and preaching the message of Lord Krishna. They must all be very dear to the Lord, being with Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara twenty-four hours a day, continuously serving and pleasing Them. So, if I serve such wonderful devotees, I will also get the mercy of the Lord."

So inspired is Hari Vilas by the devotees on Padayatra that when they visit Noida and go on harinama sankirtana in different areas of the city he walks along with them just to experience the simple living and high thinking that these *padayatris* experience every day. In this manner he has walked over 100 kms with them.

May all the readers follow in his footsteps and also get the mercy of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai!

**To make donations: Contact Padayatra Ministry or give directly to Lokanath Swami**

OFFICIAL ISKCON PADAYATRA WEBSITE  
[www.padayatra.com](http://www.padayatra.com)

WEBSITE MANAGER AND WEBMISTRESS:  
**Lilasuka Dasi**  
"lilasuka.lok@gmail.com"

### PADAYATRA WORLDWIDE MINISTRY

Please send all news, articles, reports, photos, questions and suggestions to the Padayatra

Ministry's coordinator,  
**Candrabhaga Dasi**  
"candrabhagad@hotmail.com"

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

*If you want your padayatra photos to be printed in this newsletter, please*  
**SEND US GOOD PHOTOS OF HIGH RESOLUTION: USE A GOOD CAMERA, NOT A CELL PHONE!**

TO TAKE YOUR PHOTOS  
(The resulting photos have very low resolution and of a very poor printing quality)

### THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS FOR THE 2017 ISSUE

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GAURANGI DASI, France  
LADU GOPAL KANAYA, Noida



Sundar Gopal Dasa



Prahlada Dasa



### Lokanath Swami Maharaja

He's been the Padayatra Worldwide minister for more than 30 years. In the fall of 1976 Srila Prabhupada instructed him to replace the two German Mercedes buses his preaching party was traveling in with two vedic bulls and go preach village to village by bullock cart. Shortly after Lokanath Swami led his first bullock cart party from Vrindavana to Mayapur, which lasted 9 months. Then, in 1984 the GBC asked him to lead a 19 month 7000 walk from Dvarka to Mayapur via South India to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Lord Caitanya's appearance. Since then Maharaja has kept walking on various padayatras worldwide and inspiring devotees to adopt this simple but efficient preaching tool.

### Gaurangi Dasi

Ministry coordinator from 2012 till Gaura Purnima 2017. She produced 2 Padayatra manuals and 5 annual newsletters, organised seminars, booths, displays, slide shows, and worked with Lokanatha Swami on the Padayatra Story Book for more than a decade. Now available for advice, slide shows and inspirational padayatra katha.  
"gaurangi.lok@gmail.com"

### Candrabhaga Dasi

Candrabhaga's got padayatra in her blood. Between May 2003 and August 2006 she walked with her husband and a horsecart from Pennsylvania, USA, to the border of Peru, after crossing all of Central America. She recently organized two padayatras - one in Sweden and one in Iceland. From Gaura Purnima 2017 she will take on some coordination responsibilities for the ministry. We are certain she will enthuse and convince many devotees to at least try out padayatra for a while

## THE PADAYATRA WORLDWIDE MINISTRY TEAM

and, of course, to show the example by organizing more walks herself. Let's note that all the Vaisnavis in the Padayatra Worldwide Ministry team are disciples of Lokanath Swami. Like father, like daughters...  
"candrabhagad@hotmail.com"

### Lila Suka Dasi

Lila Suka has shown much dedication and steadiness in assisting Gaurangi Dasi with research, compilations, and especially editing reports and articles for around 5 years. She's always expanding and improving her services, the latest one being to manage the Padayatra website since one year.  
"lilasuka.lok@gmail.com"

### Govinda Nandini Dasi

Govinda Nandini is always ready to render any service to assist her spiritual master and those who serve him. For more than 10 years she's been doing research for the Padayatra Story Book and humbly assisting the ministry with correspondence, compilations, and further research.

### Jayabhadrada Dasi

Without Jayabhadrada we would not have regular reports, photos and book scores from the All-India Padayatra. Since she speaks Hindi and very good English, she faithfully calls Acarya Dasa, Padayatra India leader, to get news from him and then writes articles in English based on her phone talks with him.

### Radha Prema Dasi

When she's not busy as a teacher or a grandmother, and especially assisting Lokanath Swami with his books, Radha Prema has written several articles for the newsletter and acted as one of the final editors for many other reports.

### Yadukulesvara Dasa

When asked by Sanak Sanatan Dasa, one of the All-India Padayatra leaders, to start and manage the Padayatra website, this kind Czech devotee immediately agreed, even though he

had no experience of padayatra itself. He managed the website (padayatra.com) from Gaura Purnima 2006 till the end of 2015, and then assisted Lila Suka Dasi when she took over that service.

### Rasa Bihari Dasa

Rasa Bihari Dasa, based in Goa, works on the lay-out and has designed new look of the Padayatra Newsletter. We're very happy with his expertise, willingness to enter an intense one month long marathon at the time of production. This issue is his second one. In the past the ministry had to pay all those doing the lay-out, but now Rasa Bihari does it for free as a service to his Guru Maharaja.

### Istadeva Dasa

As a previous All India Padayatra leader, Istadeva never lost his taste for Padayatra, even though he has now settled down in Mayapur with his wife and 3 children. He recently organised the oxcart padayatra from Mayapur to Katwa in West Bengal and regularly assists the managing staff of the annual ISKCON Navadvipa Mandala Parikrama.

### Nrsimha Caitanya Dasa

Nrsimha Caitanya participated in the Czech padayatra since his childhood, his first service being to hold a flag. His father, Muni Priya Dasa, has been coordinating the 2 week summer oxcart padayatra in Czech Republic since 2007. Since more than 5 years, Nrsimha Caitanya has been assisting his father. Since it's a small team, he has learned how to do everything so he knows a little bit from each service. But his real expertise is in preparations, advance party and organisation at the base. He's willing to share his knowledge and act as an advisor for all those who want to learn more about padayatra.

« bh.prahlad@gmail.com »

Note: Go to the padayatra website if you want to see the face of all these devotees ☺

## BOOK PROJECT ON COWS AND OX POWER

By Gaurangi Dasi

Since a few years, Radhika Dasi, a devotee living in Paris, has been heading a study and research group named "Mother Pritvi" (a name for Bhumi or Mother Earth). Its goal? To show how to live in harmony with the Earth, the cows and the oxen. Radhika had already done lots of work when she came to discuss her project with me, and I was immediately interested in making a book out of all the material gathered. During the 2016 Veggie Pride in Paris I had bought two books on animal rights, one by Mathieu Ricard, a famous French Buddhist monk, and another one by Al-Hafiz B.A.Masri, a muslim Imam born in India and now living in England. She felt that one book was missing on the market of French books about animal rights, one written by Vaisnavas.

**Some of the themes that will be presented in this book**

Cows and oxen are useful, even for vegans

Using oxen does not go against modernity and productivity

Protecting cows and oxen is not opposite to the ecologists' aspirations. These animals, especially through cowdung, are important factors in the maintenance of the ecosystems.

Cows and oxen are symbols of civilization

Understanding and communicating with bovines

Daily use of milk products, cow dung and urine

Suicide of Indian and French farmers

The karmic consequences of killing mother cow and father ox

The book will include quotes from the Vedas, Srila Prabhupada and various famous personalities, historical narrations, poems, photos and paintings.

If you have any material to contribute to this book; please contact Radhika Dasi (lucile.rousseau@gmx.fr) and/or Gaurangi Dasi (gaurangi.lok@gmail.com)

## WHAT HAPPENED TO THE PADAYATRA STORY BOOK THAT'S BEEN ADVERTISED FOR A FEW YEARS ?

By Gaurangi Dasi

For those who do not know, for more than ten years, Lokanath Maharaja and I had been working on a book exclusively about Padayatra. The purpose of that book is to not only give a detailed history of Padayatra's development and achievements, but also to inspire the next generation to carry the torch for the next ten thousand years for this very important ISKCON program.

As there has been what seems like unlimited ecstatic history of Padayatra from its beginnings in 1976 in India to its spreading around the world till today, the sheer volume of material made putting it all in one book, or even in two books, quite challenging. The immediate plan is to post the entire contents of this book on the padayatra website, maybe one day make an ebook out of it, and eventually print the two volumes it will necessitates if we get some generous sponsors.

Fortunately, last year, old-time padayatri Abhay Prabhu from the US got on board the book team. He has extensive experience in writing and editing, and has much front-line padayatra experience himself in California, India and Fiji. I first asked Abhay if he could reduce the voluminous manuscript, entirely expertly edited by Kaisori Dasi, and keep the essence. "When I first read the manuscript with a view towards reducing it, it was a little overwhelming, and I asked what nectar can I remove" said Abhay prabhu. "Then I sat down with Lokanath Maharaja in Noida for a series of interviews. That's where I really tried to get the essence of padayatra's message he wanted to send".

Abhay found that there is actually some details about Padayatra's origin that are not commonly understood. "I think many devotees will be quite surprised by some previously unknown details His Holiness Lokanath Swami has revealed about Srila Prabhupada's final pastime. "If you want to know what they are, you are going to have to buy the book", Abhay added with a smile.

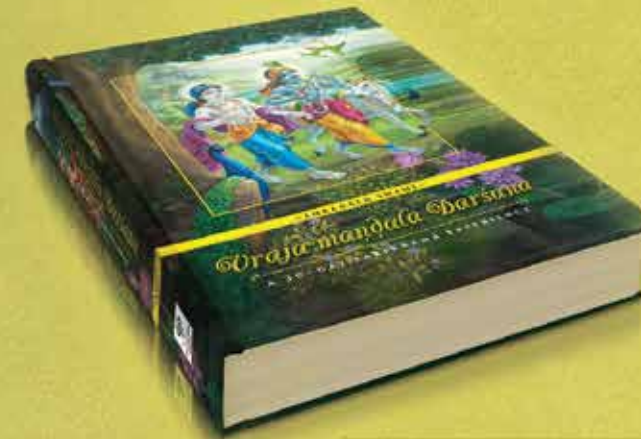
Using the Noida interviews as his guide, Abhay is currently working on getting the book to manageable size while also giving it a format that will make it attractive and compelling reading for everyone. In fact, he's writing another separate book based on the first one Lokanath Swami and I worked on. Stay tuned to the Padayatra Website and the Padayatra Newsletter for more information.

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—Rādhānāth Swami

"For me, Lokanāth Mahārāja's *Vraja-maṇḍala Darśana* is not only a guide through Vṛndāvana but a means to live in Vraja while I serve in Hungary. I urge the readers of his book to use it not solely as a guide through Vraja, but as a guide through life back to Kṛṣṇa."

—Sivārāma Swami



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