



# padayatra

## WORLDWIDE

2018 Newsletter  
PLEASE POST IN YOUR TEMPLE

Harer nama harer nama  
harer namaiva kevalam  
kalau nasty eva nasty  
eva nasty eva gatir anyatha

*"In this age of quarrel and hypocrisy,  
the only means of deliverance is the  
chanting of the holy name of the Lord.  
There is no other way. There is no other  
way. There is no other way."*

Brahan-naradiya Purana[38.126]

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna  
Krishna Krishna Hare Hare  
Hare Rama Hare Rama  
Rama Rama Hare Hare

हरे कृष्ण हरे कृष्ण  
कृष्ण कृष्ण हरे हरे  
हरे राम हरे राम  
राम राम हरे हरे

ХАРЕ КРИШНА ХАРЕ КРИШНА  
КРИШНА КРИШНА ХАРЕ ХАРЕ  
ХАРЕ РАМА ХАРЕ РАМА  
РАМА РАМА ХАРЕ ХАРЕ

হরে কৃষ্ণ হরে কৃষ্ণ  
কৃষ্ণ কৃষ্ণ হরে হরে  
হরে রাম হরে রাম  
রাম রাম হরে হরে



ataeva saba phala deha' yāre tāre  
khāiyā ha-uk loka ajara amare

*Distribute this Krishna consciousness movement all over  
the world. Let people eat these fruits [of love of God] and  
ultimately become free from old age and death.*

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu (CC, Adi-lila 9-39)



*Prabhupada on his morning walk*

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

*“I am glad to learn that in Philadelphia they are increasing sankirtana. It is our life and soul. Sankirtana should be increased as much as possible. Side by side is book selling. Then our mission will be successful.”*

(Letter to Rupanuga, Sept 4, 1974)

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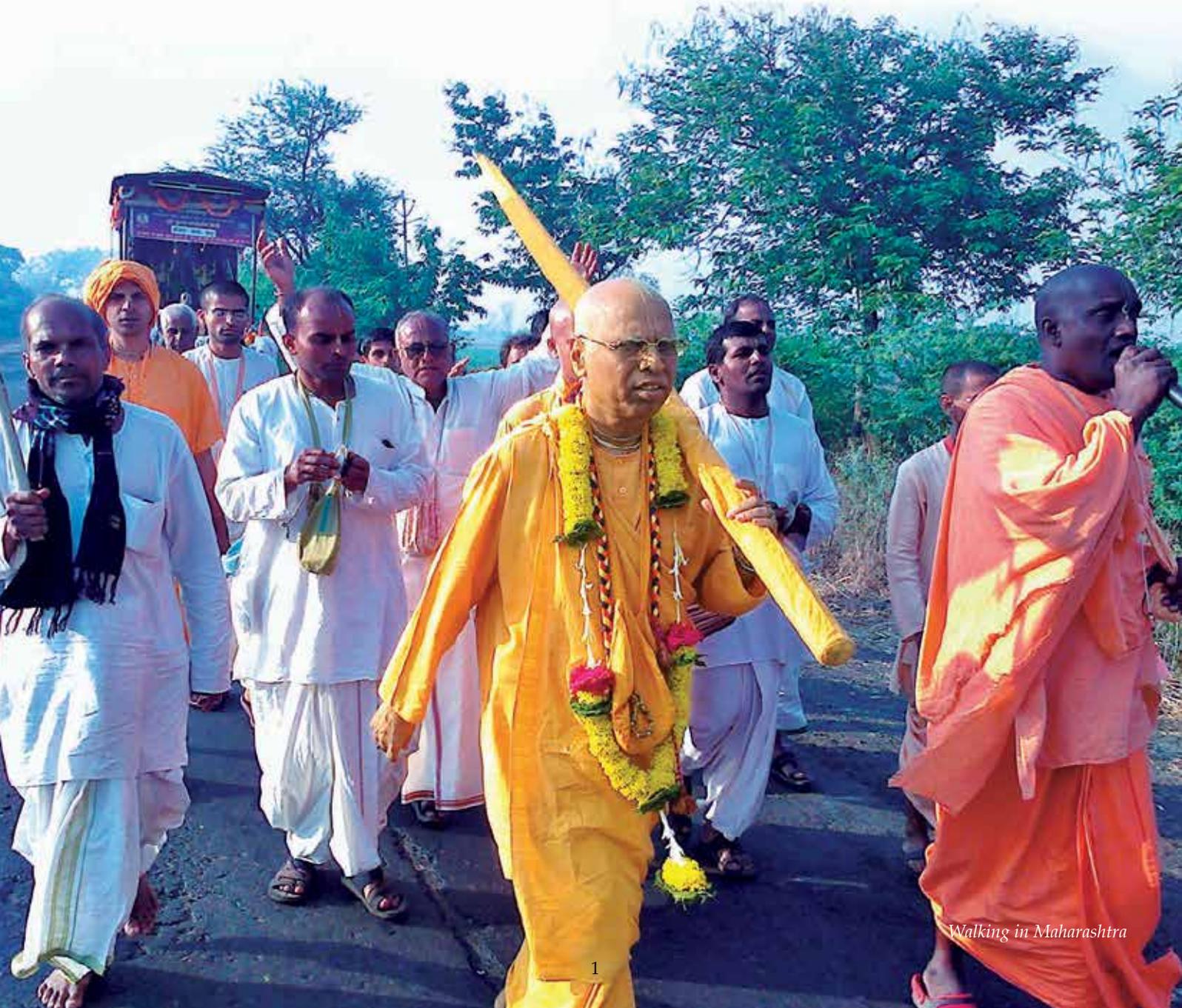
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# EDITORIAL

by Lokanath Swami

*After ISKCON's 50th anniversary the Padayatra Worldwide Ministry invited all of you to walk your talk and to implement your ideas about your padayatra undertakings. These could have included plans, whether modest or spectacular, around your city or farm, or around your country or continent. To date it gives me great pleasure to announce that from the beginning of 2014 to the end of 2017 a total of more than 70 padayatras were undertaken. This number does not reflect the fact that some padayatras have been taking place every single year over long periods of time, up to 24 years in some cases, and that there are two continual padayatras in India.*

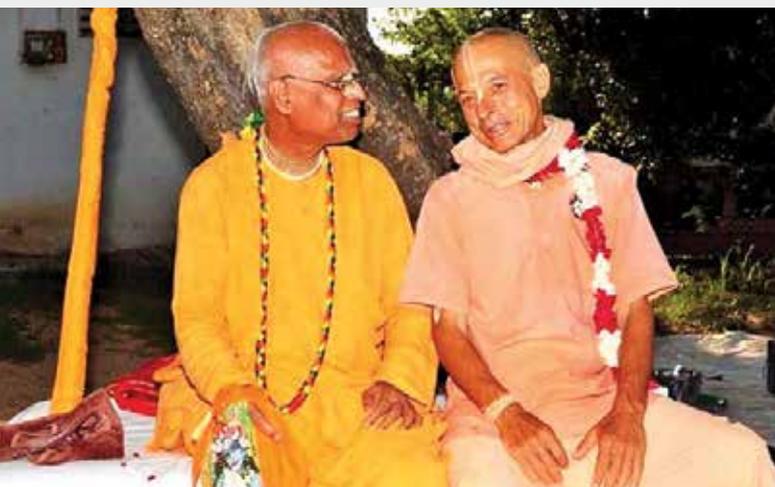


*At the beginning of 2018 we are now encouraging you to talk your walk - talk about your future walks, and seriously consider the benefits, both individually and collectively, of the Padayatra program.*

*2018 is indeed a very pivotal year for ISKCON, as its succession plan vision will be seriously discussed at the ISKCON Leadership Sanga (ILS) taking place in Mayapur in February. The overarching theme of this international sanga is to “keep the wheels moving” - an expression Srila Prabhupada took from the Indian Railway. The theme of this sanga given by the ILS organizers, is very heartening to padayatris. We padayatris have modified and expanded this theme to “Keep the bullock cart wheels rolling and your feet walking”!*

*Prabhupada stated, “It’s the business of every employee, whether a train driver, a fireman or a clerk in the office, to do their bit so that the wheels never stop. If the wheels stop, business stops”. He wanted our ISKCON movement to keep the wheels moving. This provides an opportunity for people all over the world to receive the mercy of Lord Caitanya. Gopal Bhatta Prabhu, the main ILS organizer, has adopted this concept as a significant focus for ILS 2018. Speakers will explore the challenges, and the opportunities for ISKCON as it continues to shift into the hands of the next generations.*

*In this newsletter, the leaders of the Padayatra Ministry discuss the relevance of the padayatra programs in today’s world for all generations. They further discuss*



*Lokanath Swami with padayatra veteran Akhiladhar Dasa*

*the efficacy of this strategy in making the mercy of the Golden Avatara available to millions of people in every nook and corner of this planet. We also discuss how the new generation could get involved, and the absolute necessity for some of them to assume leadership roles, and become committed to a vision shared by the present Padayatra Ministry.*

*This year we saw many splendid walks. Muralimohan Prabhu, a congregation member of ISKCON Ahmedabad, each month organised one day padayatras. Every walk attracted more than one hundred devotees. The devotees successfully spread the holy names of the Lord and distributed many books. These one day padayatras served as an inspiration to neighbouring ISKCON temples in Gujarat. Very recently ISKCON Baroda devotees walked to several villages in and around the outskirts of Baroda. ISKCON Vallabh Vidyanagar devotees walked to Dakor, the holy city where Dwarkadish Ranchodrai is worshipped. Then Yasodadulal Prabhu came all the way from New Zealand to Mahatma Gandhi’s Sabarmati Asharam in Ahmedabad. He was inspired to walk in Mahatma Gandhi’s footsteps to Dandi. In keeping with Gandhi’s historical protest march against salt taxation, Yasodadulal has chosen the theme - “Enough salt... Chant Hare Krishna.” He walked alone, carrying a veena like Narada Muni, constantly chanting and singing the glories of the Lord. He was warmly received wherever he went, winning the hearts of the pious Gujaratis. On the way he interacted with them on a one on one basis as well as addressing gatherings in the evenings in his hosts’ homes. His walk caught the attention of the leading newspapers in Gujarat who appreciated and publicized it.*

*This year also saw ISKCON Tirupati in full preparation for padayatra, procuring the cart, bullocks and getting padayatri power ready. I am hopeful that ISKCON Tirupati will launch their padayatra very soon. I am excited to learn that their plan is to have a permanent padayatra travelling around Tirupati and the state of Andhra Pradesh.*

*Our All India Padayatra Party has done some amazing book distribution in the state of Kerala during*

2017. During the first nine months of this year they distributed 88198 books. In the May World Sankirtana Newsletter they were placed second in all the temple categories with only Mayapur ahead of them. Every day they are distributing hundreds of Bhagavad-gitas and other big books, pleasing Srila Prabhupada with their fabulous book distribution.

I'm very happy to announce that Avadhuta Siromani's padayatara book "*\*Fulfilling a Prophecy\**" is now available. It will take you on the four year journey, beginning in North Virginia, America, and ending near the border of Peru, of a determined couple with nothing else but a moving temple-wagon pulled by horses, Deities of Nitai Gaurasundar and sometimes a few accompanying devotees.

It is not surprising that Srila Prabhupada's last desire was to go on bullock cart padayatra to Govardhana. Padayatra was very close to his heart. He believed, "we can have millions of bullock carts all over the world" – thus suggesting how easy it can be to fulfill the

prophecy of Lord Caitanya in every town and village by using this approach. Being a powerful visionary, and a pure devotee of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, Srila Prabhupada was undoubtedly supremely empowered to spread the sankirtana movement all over the world through every means possible, and Padayatra was clearly one of these.

I would like to take this opportunity to convey my heartfelt thanks to the very competent team of devotees serving the Padayatra Ministry under Gaurangi Devi Dasi. They have done a sterling task of organising seminars, collating information from padayatras taking place all over the world and continuously updating the website. Due to unforeseen circumstances our team members will be minimizing their involvement and commitments. For this reason and considering the ILS 2018 conference theme, we want to reconstitute a solid team to continue with the padayatra program in the future. We are looking for volunteers. Do step forward and keep in touch with us by contacting Gaurangi Devi Dasi (gaurangi.lok@gmail.com)

## **GOLDEN OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE THE GOLDEN AVATARA BY ASSISTING THE PADAYATRA WORLDWIDE MINISTRY**

**URGENTLY NEEDED: Devotee to upload articles, photos and films to the Padayatra Website and also to edit photos :**

you'll need a good internet connection and we'll train you how to do that service.

**Persons with good knowledge of English to compile articles from notes and edit reports and articles (Even if you edit just a few, it will still help us)**

**Reporters for different padayatras to send regular articles, reports and photos to the Padayatra Ministry. (It can be for a temple, a country, a yatra, or a specific padayatra)**

**An enthusiastic and efficient padayatra lover to replace (or substantially assist) Gaurangi Dasi, the present Padayatra Worldwide Ministry's coordinator.  
Must speak good English.**

**Please contact: Gaurangi dasi [gaurangi.lok@gmail.com](mailto:gaurangi.lok@gmail.com)**

*(NB: I will be in Mayapur, India, for the February 2018 ILS, the following Gaura Purnima festival, all the way to the end of March)*

# I'M NOT TOO FOND OF WALKING: WHY DO I LOVE PADAYATRA?

*by Gaurangi Dasi*



*With the All-India Padayatra team in Mayapur*

## Love at first sight

The first time I saw padayatra and Lokanath Swami was in 1986, when the padayatra party arrived in Mayapur after their 19 month tour of India to celebrate the 500th anniversary of Lord Caitanya's appearance. I remember petting the beautiful oxen, feeling instant attraction and affection for them, and being very amazed that devotees had walked hundreds and even thousands of kilometers around the sub-continent. To me that fantastic program certainly smelled of maha austerities: intense heat, constant crowds, lack of privacy, mosquitoes and other annoying creatures, what to

speak of all this walking. During my youth I was asthmatic and hid behind trees during gymnastic classes so walking hundreds of kilometers was not what I considered fun. But I always liked to travel around, experience different situations and meet new people, so the idea of spreading the holy names while traveling with a deity cart and a large group of Vaisnavas of different nations seemed quite appealing. Besides, these devotees were literally following in the footsteps of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu around the sub-continent.

During my childhood in a small French village I used to marvel at the gypsies



*2014 ISKCON Leadership Sanga*



*With Bhima during the 1991 England Padayatra*

constantly on the move over hills and vales in their horse-drawn carts and caravans. Their way of life evoked in me a sense of freedom, discovery and adventure that conjured escape from the boredom of routine. Attracted as I was to having my cosy little corner wherever I would go, just as the gypsies had in their caravans, I was perturbed by their reputation – true or false – of stealing. I was also somewhat repulsed by their unsavoury way of making a living by collecting the skins of rabbits people had discarded after killing and eating the poor animals. Their shouts of “Peaux de lapins (rabbit's skins!) could be heard all over the place.

## **Lord Caitanya is coming to travel on Padayatra America!**

In 1988, more than thirty years down the road, I was serving in the San Diego temple in California when I heard another call, a transcendental one this time: "Nitai-Gauranga are coming!" Yes, yes, Sri Sri Nitai-Gaurasundara were coming to California to travel with Padayatra America from San Francisco to the Mexican border! They were going to move from town to town to drown the American people with the nectar of the holy names. I anticipated the spiritual episodes that would soon take place and felt fortunate that I would be a part of Gaura Nitai's twentieth-century lilas. I was a little disappointed that we would not have a bullock cart as in India Padayatra. Regardless, the Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta was gonna come to life in America thanks to the mercy of Srila Prabhupada and his faithful servant, Lokanath Maharaja – and I was not going to miss that golden opportunity for anything.

I met Lokanath Maharaja for the first time during padayatra's inaugural festival in Berkeley in 1989. I was struck by his simplicity and kindness, as well as his dedication to fulfilling his spiritual master's desire. My first service to Padayatra America was to make outfits for the deities and keep devotees in the area informed about the West Coast walk. San Diego temple president Badrinarayana Prabhu gave me permission to join padayatra for some time in the sankirtana van I was already travelling in. As I was not inclined to walk too much I found other services: making maha mantra signs, ferrying some devotees around, assisting the advance party, taking photos, writing reports, talking to the people we met, and so on.

The following year I engaged for a while in the same services on Padayatra East Coast, adding some more: participating in the Prayer Vigil in Washington DC in the middle of winter to fight against religious discrimination, setting a Padayatra booth during several East Coast Ratha-

yatras to inform devotees through the Padayatra America newsletter, selling paraphernalia to raise funds for our programs. I had caught the infectious virus of the padayatra fever and could no longer be content based in one location. I needed the change of sceneries and activities, the excitement that Padayatra constantly provided – and best of all, in my role of chauffeur I could participate without too much walking! It was while the padayatra was passing through Connecticut that I was reinitiated by Lokanath Maharaja in an idyllic setting by a forest lake before Sri Sri Nitai-Gaurasundara. Looks like They had things in mind for me.

## **Six months on the road with Padayatra Europe**

In 1991 I left the United States for good to join Padayatra Europe, which was then in England. In Newcastle in a freezing May I took up my position as driver of my new sankirtana van, which I used to store Srila Prabhupada's books and drive the book distributors to the towns and villages around the padayatra route. It rained every single day during the two months of Padayatra England, a situation which helped me develop a great admiration for the devotees who walked cheerfully in the cold and the rain, and piled up into a tent at night, while I happily retired to the tiny but private space of my Renault van. During the walk through Holland I took a break from the road to begin compiling the first padayatra manual, and then in the autumn continued with the padayatris on their walk through France, which I rediscovered after an absence of seventeen years.

Being a padayatra lover and a disciple of the Padayatra Worldwide minister, in 1992 I found myself recruited at the Padayatra Worldwide office in New Delhi, where I became responsible for many of the items designed to promote padayatra (and soon Prabhupada's centennial, when Lokanath Maharaja became the minister of that celebration) around the world.

## **Writing the history of Padayatra Worldwide**

Five years after leaving India my Guru Maharaja asked me to work on the revised edition of the padayatra manual, which included the experience of padayatris over a period of twenty-five years in more than 100 countries. Maharaja was already thinking of doing a book. Seeing the abundance of extra material and stories at hand – we used only the practical aspects of padayatra for the manual- and that I was good at compilation and writing, he asked me if I could do it. This book would cover the entire history of ISKCON Padayatra since the first walk from Vrindavana to Mayapur in 1976, on which nothing had even been written so far in any of the Padayatra Newsletters or on our website. This first padayatra was missed out, and Maharaja wanted to see that published.

After the recordings of the memories of Maharaja and other devotees were transcribed I embarked on the compiling, interviewing and writing monumental task. There were so many thrilling adventures where we could see the direct hand of the Lord, that's the part I loved he best. However, after a few years, I began to feel overwhelmed by the immensity of the work at hand – it felt like climbing Mount Sumeru. In a moment of discouragement I had a very vivid dream which rekindled my enthusiasm for this writing project. I was standing in a corner of an altar in front of the deities of Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara, the Padayatra deities, just gazing at Them. Then Lokanath Maharaja entered the temple room, and at that moment They displayed the most blissful, luminous and loving smile. They were just so happy to see Their servant that They started to dance and jump on the altar. I then realized how dear Maharaja was to Their Lordships for bringing Them to the doorstep of thousands of people all over the world on the Padayatra cart, and for propagating the holy names of the Lord on a grand scale. Soon after that dream Gauranga sent me a few dedicated and qualified helpers and eventually the book got edited and

finalized. But it was very voluminous! After having a devotee trying to reduce it to a more sellable and practical size, Maharaja recently decided to print it in three volumes in 2018.

## Lokanath Swami and I soon reaching seventy

During the years I was busy working for my maintenance Padayatra was still on my mind. One day I realized that there was no more Padayatra Worldwide office, no more coordination of the padayatra activities, no more solid promotion, besides the one done by Lokanath Maharaja, no fresh news on the Padayatra website since more than ten years, and that the devotee struggling to produce an annual padayatra newsletter was a super busy temple president. Gauranga Mahaprabhu inspired me to get in action again. With the help of some devotees we updated the website, produced a more substantial newsletter, did some promotion through booths and seminars during the ILS, and built a small dedicated team. It's how I ended up coordinating the Padayatra Worldwide Ministry for around six years. I loved Padayatra but was hankering to engage in other services dear to my heart and not die frustrated: being more absorbed in the holy names, Krishna and Gaura katha, writing my own books, reaching out to people through various presentations

and sharing what I have learned in almost forty years of service in ISKCON through workshops and seminars, including some on padayatra of course.

Last summer a health alarm made me realize that I could quit my body any time. The same could happen to Lokanath Maharaja, our beloved Padayatra Worldwide minister. Then what would happen of the ministry and of Srila Prabhupada's desire to have millions of sankirtana bullock carts all over the world? I knew that somehow or other, by the grace of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, the All-India Padayatra would continue. There were many good reasons to think that the annual padayatras that had become a tradition in some temples or yatras would keep going, and that new walks would be started by adventurous vaisnavas or vaisnavis. But still the need for organization, coordination, promotion and information remains. I'm realizing that the new generation is not ready to drop everything else in order to fully serve Srila Prabhupada's mission; they are certainly very sincere but are also -and rightly so- concerned with their career, maintaining their families and having some retirement money at the end of their lives. Of course, taking proper care of one's responsibilities does not exclude becoming dedicated to an ISKCON project, in order to keep the wheels moving into the distant future.

## Who will take over the Padayatra Worldwide Ministry and get all of Gauranga's mercy?

I'm now praying to Nitai Gaurasundar that They send us a small group of capable and enthusiastic young devotees willing to assume the responsibility of the Padayatra Ministry. Like Jayadvaita Swami, who recently resigned from his service of BBT trustee, I'm also willing to retire from my service of coordination. Like Maharaja, I'm also ready to train, assist and give advice to the new team members. Long life to the Padayatra Worldwide Ministry!



California 1989

## PADAYATRA WORLDWIDE MINISTRY

Please send all news, articles, reports, photos, questions and suggestions to the Padayatra Ministry's coordinator:

**Gaurangi Dasi:** [gaurangi.lok@gmail.com](mailto:gaurangi.lok@gmail.com)

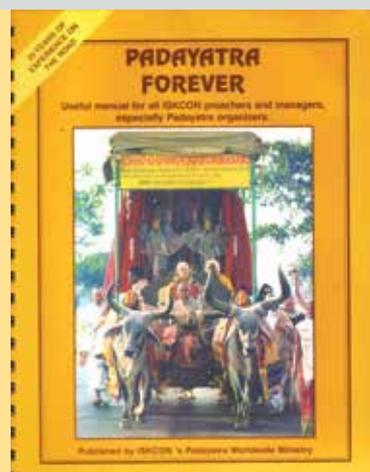
### IMPORTANT NOTICE

SEND US GOOD PHOTOS OF HIGH RESOLUTION:  
USE A GOOD CAMERA, NOT A CELL PHONE

if you want your photos to be printed in this newsletter.

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

Download the Padayatra Manual from the Padayatra Website for inspiration, instructions, information and practical tips



# VOICES OF WORLDWIDE PADAYATRIS

## The continuation of Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara's lilas is there on padayatra

*Parasuram Dasa:*

Lord Caitanya started the sankitana movement in the house of Srivas Thakur in Mayapur, but then, accompanied by the Vaisnavas, He took the holy name onto the streets. They never went back to the spectacular private kirtanas that took place in Srivas Thakura's house. The Golden Age is available, as long as we have streets to chant on. The continuation of Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara's lilas is there on padayatra, where we can be fortunate enough to be part of it. Prasadam, books, harinama, deity worship, cow protection, festivals. It's a real adventure, as Srila Prabhupada said "an adventure in surrender". My only saving grace when it comes time for me to stand in front of Yamaraja is that I was a padayatri.



*Parasuram on his first padayatra in Ireland*

*Parasurama Dasa, a native from Ireland now serving in UK, is the very personification of the padayatra spirit. Since 1990 he has organised more padayatras than any other ISKCON devotee: Ireland, England, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Finland, Iceland, Portugal, Luxembourg, Andorra, San Marino, Tunisia, Egypt, Malta, Cyprus, Israel, Palestine, Lebanon, Jordan, several African nations, and so on. Since 1994 he's been heading a bullock cart padayatra party around Vraja Mandala during the month of Kartika.*

## I want to always be engaged in distributing the holy names

*Ayodhyanath Dasa:*

I love padayatra because it's the only request that has been made by my Guru Maharaja, Lokanath Swami. Each time we meet he is always inquiring about padayatra, because padayatra is his life and soul. I have a natural inclination towards padayatra, because it is very dear to Srila Prabhupada and it's linked to the direct instruction of Mahaprabhu to propagate the holy names all over the world. Being part of this mechanism of distributing the holy names, I feel immense pleasure while reaching out to new people, experiencing and sharing the joy of releasing the holy names. For me there are no other sources of satisfaction than this seva. I don't need moksa, liberation. I want to always be engaged in this service of harinama sankirtana, distributing and distributing and again distributing the holy names to the fallen souls.



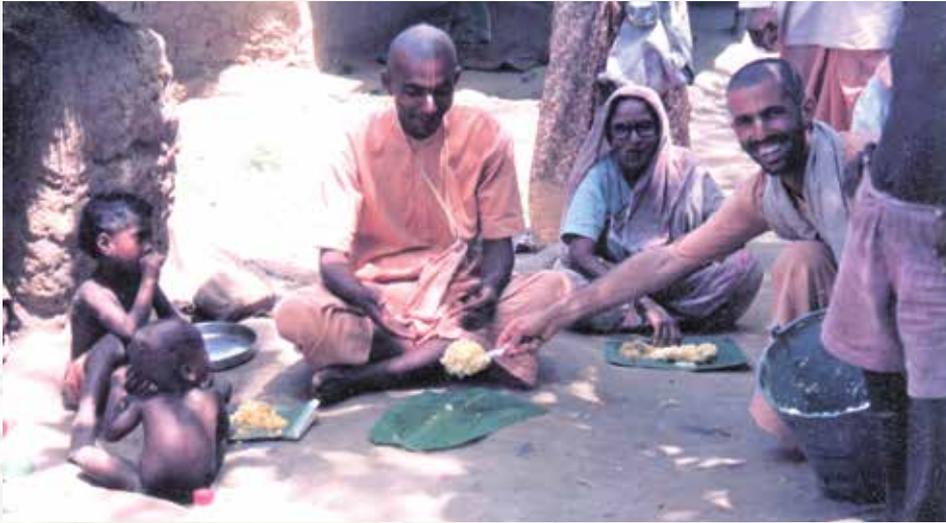
*Ayodhyanath Dasa*

*Ayodhyanath Dasa is now 57 years old. Since 1995 he has been organizing and serving Padayatra Mauritius and he also organised padayatra in the islands of Rodriguez, Madagascar, and La Réunion.*

## Padayatra India gave me a new life in ISKCON

*Svetadvipa Dasa:*

I had read a lot about padayatra in Mauritius in the mid eighties and I very strongly desired to join the party. I also loved to be with Lokanath Swami. So, after overcoming lots of difficulties, I joined Padayatra India in 1989 in Maharashtra when I was 29 years old. Upon reaching the crew in the town of Locknaden, north of Nagpur, as I was about to enter the hall where the padayatris were staying I was shocked to hear a loud and strong voice, "You buffalo brain, drunken



*Svetadvipa (center) with Jaya Vijaya*

rascal, get outttt...!!!!". It was none other than Jaya Vijaya Prabhujji, our American padayatra leader, chasing one drunkard away.

I loved padayatra because Jaya Vijaya made the yatra so loving, so sweet, very well organized, and much more. Although it was very austere at times and very tough being around padayatra Jaya Vijaya gave us lots of enthusiasm and strength to never give up. He made our journey very homely and had lots of space in his heart for all of us like a very caring elder brother or like a father. He would take a lot of time to explain to us the history of all the holy places we visited and gave us nectarean narrations of the pastimes of the Lord or His great devotees that took place there. Without Jaya Vijaya I would never have been able to go around India two times.

This padayatra program helped me to understand Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON deeper, and I learned to appreciate and love more our society and the wonderful devotees who are part of it, especially our sannyasis. I am really indebted to Padayatra India for having given me a new life in ISKCON.

*Svetadvipa Dasa is a native of Mauritius. On and off he participated in Padayatra Mauritius and walked 7 years on the All-India Padayatra, completing 2 tours of India.*

## **Padayatra taught me the true life of a pilgrim**

*Prasanta Dasi:*

I joined Padayatra India on April 28, 1987, in Rishikesh, while the party was about to walk to Badrinatha. Everything about the experience was refreshing - the simple life on the road and the Himalayan atmosphere. Like other padayatris I took turns carrying chota Gaura Nitai on Their palanquin. We picked wild mountain flowers on the way for Them, sat around Them and sang as They took Their breakfast, waiting eagerly for Their remnants. I loved to bathe in the Ganga and dry my clothes on the clean white and grayish pebbles on her banks, sometimes hiking for half an hour or more downhill to reach her waters, and climbing up back to the camp in time for the afternoon meal. We ate lots of potatoes, rice and dhal, often served while sitting on the road itself as there were no other flat surfaces anywhere else. When we hankered for some sweet, I and an Italian friend would sometimes peep into the rare tiny shops in the villages we encountered, but to find only a few grams of raw sugar, which we would buy and relish like mad women.

On the last day's stretch we walked and sometimes climbed from 5.30am to 4pm, with only a cup of black

chickpeas in our stomach. After we reached Badrinath Dham, it soon became dark and cold. We waited for prasadam, but the kitchen crew had not arrived yet. Late at night, in a frenzy, we gathered around large woks set on wooden fires, filled with potatoes cooking in water. We picked some out, trying to find soft ones that we could eat, soon to retire from the useless effort, back to our sleeping quarters in anticipation for the next day's darsana of Lord Badri Narayana. Austerities did not hurt. Padayatra taught me the true life of a pilgrim. I learned to keep only a few possessions, to share, and to value what was essential and really mattered - to live to see the Lord and give Him to others. I also distributed books. On the invitation of Lokanatha Maharaja, I remained on Padayatra for two and a half years, on and off as I got increasingly involved with the publication of the Padayatra Newsletter. I later on joined the Padayatra Ministry office in Delhi in 1990 to assist spread padayatra worldwide.

*Prasanta Dasi: I walked for around two and a half years through North India, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Bengal. This included two Vraja Mandala Parikramas, the first Navadvipa Mandala Parikrama and a two month stay at the 1989 Kumbha Mela.*



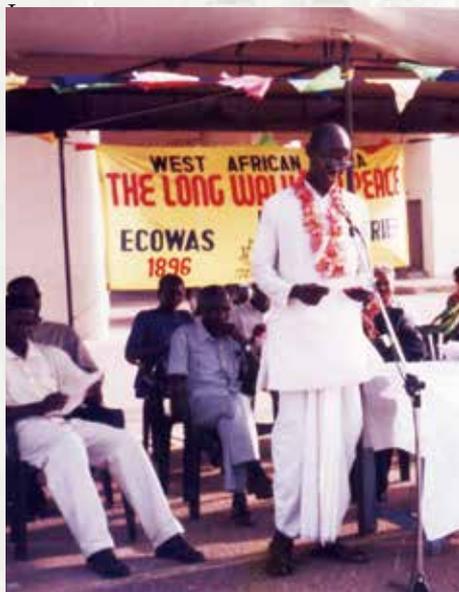
*Prasanta visiting the 91 France padayatra*

## Padayatra is a real desire fulfilling program

*Srivas Dasa:*

Padayatra is indeed a real desire fulfilling program. I love padayatra because it is an ecstatic and powerful preaching program which brings a lot of people in touch with Krishna consciousness and serves many purposes. First it brings devotees together to associate intimately for days, resulting in building good relationships. As the members chant and dance together, it purifies their consciousness and allows them to experience the bliss of the holy names. While I was on padayatra in Nigeria it offered me the opportunity to meet many people, as we travelled from town to town, village to village. The austerity of sleeping in different schools every night and honoring simple prasadam was purifying. It brought detachment in my life and the realization that travelling on the road to distribute the holy names and Srila Prabhupada's books is a great spiritual activity.

*Srivas Dasa, a native from Ghana, is the zonal supervisor for West Africa. He was part of the 1996 padayatra in West Africa which was conducted as part Srila Prabhupada's centennial program. It covered 7 countries, from Nigeria to Sierra*



*Srivas in Ghana*

## I got to render many services to Lokanath Swami and Padayatra America

*Vrindavana Lila Dasi:*

My first Padayatra was in 1989 in California on the walk from San Francisco to Tijuana at the Mexican border. I was 22 years old at that time. Our full time Padayatra team consisted of about 20 devotees. We had the most beautiful Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara Deities traveling with us, and I was blessed to have Them live in my apartment in Los Angeles for a few months before They got installed. Our Padayatra America office was right across from my home, so I got the opportunity to render different services in the organization of our first ever padayatra in America. I was in charge of the legal aspects of our walk, getting permits from the police station of each town and city we would walk with our padayatris. I also assisted with some fund-raising and whatever other services I was given.

My Guru Maharaja Lokanath Swami joined us for our entire walk, making him the leader of our Padayatra America 1989. He blessed me by giving me the blissful service of being his secretary during padayatra and some time before while he was staying in California. In this way I had much of his saintly association. Once while walking together I shared with him how when I was a little kid in Argentina I had the desire to join the Catholics during the annual long pilgrimages they did towards a cathedral or a church. They would walk day and night, while singing and playing musical instruments in glorification of Jesus. Guru Maharaja replied, "Your dreams have come true, but now you are singing and walking to glorify Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu, the Lord Himself and the father of Jesus."

In this way and for that reason Padayatra has touched my heart and fulfilled my long cherished desire.



*Vrindavana Lila (right) on the 90 Prayer Vigil in Washington D.C.*

beloved Guru Maharaja and all the other padayatris was very spiritually rewarding. Being on the road with a travelling temple has taught me that a temple is actually within our hearts, where Sri Krishna resides. I felt very fortunate to be able to travel with our beautiful Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara. Usually They resided in our Padayatra America bus, which had been nicely transformed into a temple room and They also stayed at different "motel Patel"- motels owned by Patel families from Gujarat- or whoever hosted Them for the night.

I also used to distribute books and "simply wonderful" maha-prasadam sweets. It was very ecstatic and I had so many wonderful experiences. Once in a very small town, I gave a book to a Spanish speaking man who was wearing a T-shirt with a photo of our Srila Prabhupada! I asked him if he knew who the person on his shirt was and he humbly replied he had no idea - a friend of his had given him the shirt. I explained to him who Srila Prabhupada is, and then he happily accepted a book and gave a donation. Padayatra helped me to regain and strengthen my faith in the holy names and Lord Caitanya. It taught me the importance of saintly association, in being austere for the Lord and how wonderful it is to share this knowledge with everyone we meet.

*Vrindavana Lila Dasi participated in many padayatras besides the West Coast USA Padayatra in 1989, she also walked on the East Coast USA, India, Sweden, Belgium and Luxembourg.*

## Padayatra is educating devotees how to live with oxen the simple life of true sadhus

*Giri Govardhan Dasa:*

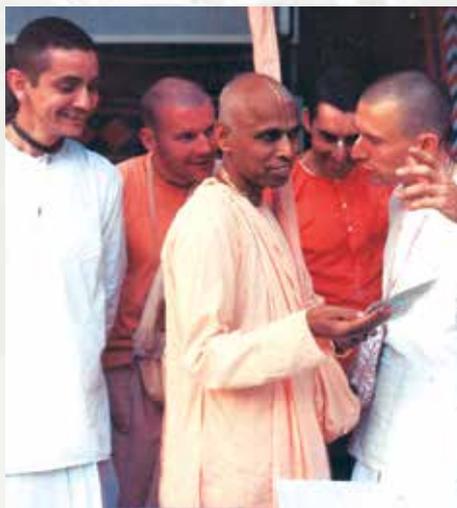
I like the direct preaching opportunities padayatra offers, especially in villages, where in general the older folks have not been too much influenced by the media. Young people who now are less than thirty years old have not heard too much about the devotees. So most of these villagers are pretty innocent, they don't know anything yet about the Hare Krishnas, so they have a fresh view of us and no prejudices towards us. They appreciate us for who we are, all the more when they see us living simply, even austerely, and travelling as pilgrims, far from our castles. About 30 years ago ISKCON France owned the famous Ermenonville castle near Paris, which had been the residence of French writer Jean-Jacques Rousseau. This attracted opposition and even hostility. And the New Mayapur temple in the center of France is also a castle. In the minds of French people castles have been associated with aristocracy, wealth and comfortable living so our humble padayatra caravans pulled by friendly oxen was a happy change for those who had known the Krishnas during their very opulent era. Like them, I enjoyed padayatra for being the simple and austere life of a sadhu, a devotee of God.

The oxen and the padayatra lifestyle are here to educate devotees how to live without gadgets, with what nature easily offers. I believe that the demons will end up sinking their own boat (their materialistic civilization) and that oxen and a simple lifestyle will then have their full meaning in our New Mayapur farm community and in ISKCON in general. When the world will be a total mess, devotees and people in general will be able to understand that. Until that time we have to maintain the place and the right spirit because the question is

not to know if this will happen, but when it will. Everybody is postponing solving the real problems of existence.

To live on padayatra is the best experience of a true sadhu's life, a life in which we depend on Krishna for everything: the weather, the people we meet, the food and the lodging we'll have. It makes one's life free of anxieties and mental problems become less important. While chanting our rounds we have to keep in mind that the day will come when everything will be between Krishna and us at the time of death, and if we have not prepared ourselves before our mind will capsize along with our body.

*Giri Govardhana participated in both French padayatras: for a while in the North in 1991 and for one month in the South in 1992. He also walked one month and a half with Padayatra India in Gujarat and in the Himalayas*



*Giri Govardhana (left) on the 91 France padayatra*

## On padayatra we are all in the same boat

*Nitai Gaurasundara Dasa:*

I like padayatra because it's very simple and lively preaching, and on padayatra all padayatris are in the same boat. Gurus, sannyasis, senior devotees, bhaktas and bhaktins, men and women all live and travel together,

eat the same prasadam, and overall undergo the same kind of austerities -heat and cold, honor and rejection, elation and distress, and so on. The 91 France Padayatra is also a sweet memory for me because my wife Ananta Rupini Dasi was still alive then - she left her body 13 years later, in 2004. Her health was then very fragile and because of her asthma, she needed to rest often in our camper van.

Our padayatra party had a positive effect on the population, especially in the villages we crossed. People were smiling and seemed happy to see us, all the more because not too much is happening in these rural areas of France. The oxen attracted more attention than the deities, as many old farmers fondly remembered the oxen they used in the past. We had a few very friendly receptions by mayors and their village councils; they honored us and Srila Prabhupada and gladly accepted our Bhagavad-gita. I can truly say that this 1991 padayatra generated the most positive newspaper articles we ever had in our country, even though some reports were gently humoring the padayatris or were rather ignorant of the fact that we were devotees of Krishna, and not Buddhists. Walking in the name of peace, and chanting always win hearts!

*Nitai Gaurasundara Dasa participated in the 1991 Padayatra in the North of France.*



*Nitai Gaurasundar with his wife Ananta Rupini Dasi, and Lassigny's mayor*

## Padayatra is a way to please my spiritual master

*Krishna Baladeva Dasa:*

Srila Prabhupada instructed my guru, Lokanath Maharaja, to travel to all the towns and villages of Bharat to spread the holy names. Then Maharaja gave the same instruction to his disciples. At one of our disciples' gathering he told us, "Organize Padayatra in South Africa. Do it to the best of your abilities" So for me Padayatra is a way to please my spiritual master. Attaining the lotus feet of the Divine Couple in the groves of Vraja is simple – one simply has to do what pleases the spiritual master, for he is an intimate servant of Srimati Radharani. They will smile when They see the smile of satisfaction and approval on his face. And that will bring smiles to our own faces also. After all, we are striving to do "para upakara" - the highest welfare work.

India has the mood, facility and the religious tolerance of a country where padayatra can flourish, but Guru Maharaja also wished to have padayatras in South Africa, so a few of his disciples organized some. I savor each and every second I spend on padayatra with the devotees, reaching out to the innocent public and spreading the transcendental sounds of the holy names. What I feel at the end is not fatigue, but a sense of hopelessness that I cannot do more –and that weighs me down. Nama-hatta, bhakti vriksha programs and temples tend to be static, but padayatra is ecstatic. It is the only outreach preaching medium we can capitalize on to spread Krishna consciousness widely. Guru Maharaja never does anything in small or half dosages. Padayatra is no exception and the Padayatra India book scores speak for themselves.

*Krishna Baladeva Dasa lives in Durban and has been helping with the organisation of the padayatras in South Africa since a few years.*



*Krsna Baladeva Dasa*

## On padayatra you get out of your comfort zone

*Lalitamrita Dasi:*

As a young girl I always used to read comics and stories about cowboys and Indians in the wild west of America, camping outside under the stars, riding horses or walking all day through the forest, always engaged in some adventure. But then I thought, "Aah! The world has changed, and now you cannot just roam around and sleep outside and just basically live outdoors..." But when I found out that on padayatra you can do that, and much more, with a group of people who are fun to be with. I knew that I would like it even before doing it, and it so happened that I liked it all the way.

Padayatra is special because you get out of your comfort zone, you are always with some other people, brushing teeth together, sleeping together, and eating together. You lose privacy and you get companionship, which turns out to be a good deal. There is a special bond that is created with people who live together like this; even if they don't become close friends there is a sense of 'we walked together' and this works as a very powerful team building tool. It is creating a community.

In my life padayatra brought a

wider perspective on life, especially a perception that life is happening outside closed doors and not inside, even though most people spend their lives indoors.

I remember many sunny days when I was at work or at home, and I would just watch the sunny day outside and let it pass by. I now know that if it is sunny outside, it means I should go outside the house and spend time there – bicycling, walking, swimming, talking to people, doing something, going somewhere. In the past, when most of the world population was living in villages, and there was no electricity and no running water inside the house, even no toilets – life was very different. Days were spent doing activities like carrying the water from the well, forests and fields were used as toilets, and as soon as it got dark everybody went to sleep, in order to wake up before sunrise. In general life was happening outside of the house, in nature, gardens, forests, near rivers, lakes, seas, tending cows, washing clothes, picking fruits from the fields or just doing something altogether. In this modern day and age there are not many activities like that to be done, that is why I appreciate that padayatra is still one of them.

*Lalitamrita Dasi is 39, from Croatia, and she has been participating in the Slovenian summer Padayatra since 2013.*



*Lalitamrita Dasi*

## I never found that bliss again any place else

*Bhaktin Nicole:*

I like to chant Hare Krishna with other devotees, and padayatra is the best place for that. I also love to talk about Krishna consciousness to the people we meet on the way. I had fun running after the cart whenever I was lagging behind the party. I remember with great pleasure the times we were all sitting around a camp fire during our Bhagavatam class and breakfast when the weather was getting chilly as we were approaching New Mayapur at the end of October. In fact, what I love best about padayatra is that we live outdoors all the time. I don't like to be stuck between four walls, I prefer to live outside: the mind and body feel better and disease has less of grasp on me.

After padayatra the bliss was finished for me and I never found that bliss again any place else.

*Bhaktin Nicole spent 2 months on the 1991 padayatra in France.*



*Nicole (left) on 91 France Padayatra*



*Rukmini today*

## Waiting all year long for the time to go on Padayatra Orissa with Gaura Govinda Swami

*By Rukmini Dasi*

I participated in the Orissa padayatras organized by the Bhubanesvar temple in 1992, 1993, 1995 and 1996. I was then respectively 12, 13, 15 and 16 years old. My parents, who lived in Bhubaneswar at the time, let me go under the supervision of senior matajis who were looking over me; usually we were always in a group so there was no problem. The first year I was the only young girl, then in 93 and 94 an Australian family came with their six children. They followed our padayatra with their own bullock cart, so their small boy could stay on the cart. The first two years we walked between 10 and 35 kms each day for one and a half to two months. I walked almost every single kilometer of the entire padayatra.

### A happy life with continuous chanting, simple prasadam and friendly receptions

All year long I was waiting for the time to go on padayatra. It was an adventure and we chanted all day long. I loved kirtanas so I sang in all of them. When we woke up, it was mangala arati kirtana, then we started to walk after breakfast, around 7 am. We chanted all morning long and when we arrived in a village around noon we had a big kirtana with the villagers, followed by the preaching program. After prasadam we walked and chanted all afternoon, and in the evening we had the sandhya arati kirtana before the preaching program. There was very little time without sankirtana, and that program fitted me very, very well. At the beginning of the padayatra we were fighting with each other to have either karatalas or flags, but at the end we were arguing not to have them because it got tiring after a while. Besides the chanting I liked the

prasadam a lot, even though it was very simple, and as an adolescent I had to eat a lot. In the morning we had what they call in Orissa chuda, rice flakes with smashed bananas, some grated coconut, and some yogurt if we were lucky, and a few worms, if we were even more lucky. For lunch we had rice and dalma, rice with a few pieces of vegetables, or rice and dahl. We lived on what the villagers gave us. In later years we also had capatis in the evening. This menu did not seem austere to me as I loved rice and dalma.

In fact I loved everything on padayatra. At night we slept in the classrooms of small children schools, where all the tables and benches had been pushed in one corner. We each had our bucket and small lota and we bathed at the water pump in the courtyard. There were different times for women and for men. In general the weather was warm in the day and rather cool at night, we had a sleeping bag and a jacket. One time it rained during three days in a row, so we all got soaking wet. During one of these rainy nights we were sleeping in a school that had holes in the roof.

I loved this kind of life. I was with people I liked a lot and, as I was the youngest devotee, everybody was very kind with me. It was adventure to be in a new place every day, with a different type of reception. Sometimes we were welcomed by the village kirtaniyas, it was super. Each village has their own type of kirtana and the people did their very best so the padayatra party would feel very welcomed. Sometimes when we arrived, they washed our feet, dried them, put a garland around our neck and a sweet in our mouth, and then serve us a refreshing lemon drink. When we crossed villages mostly inhabited by muslims we walked fast while chanting very softly - we were careful because in one of these villages people threw stones at us, they thought we were worshiping idols. In these kinds of villages people did not say a word to us whereas when we walked through Vaisnavas



1992 Bhubaneswar Padayatra ( Rukmini with the ponytail on the right)

or Hindu villages women did their ululating sounds, people were happy to see us and chant with us. One time I was lagging behind the party with Gunacuda in a village where almost everybody, including women, looked drunk. It was getting dark, men were trying to grab us, and I got really scared, but no hurt came to us. The best times were when we were a small group, it was more like a small family, there was a lot of solidarity between us. It became more difficult in later years when there were many more devotees on padayatra; there were some kinds of tension between Indian and Western devotees and the Indian brahmacaris were not happy because there were more women.

### Witnessing the influence of the All-India padayatra of Lokanath Maharaja

I remember the village of Anandapura where the All-India padayatra had walked through with Lokanath Maharaja in 1986. At that time many people had become devotees so when our Orissa Padayatra came through it was like a huge family festival. All these Vaisnavas invited the padayatris for prasadam. One of these families had many boys, most with names of the sons of Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakur: Lalita Prasad, Krishna Prasad and so on. They were Vaisnavas before the first padayatra came to their village. There was one boy towards whom I

had lots of affection because he just loved to chant. It was amazing how he managed to sing for hours on end. Not only was he chanting and dancing all the way with great enthusiasm, he was walking ahead of the party, then turning back, walking with us, then moving ahead again. In this way he walked about 2 to 3 times the distance we covered. A lot of times I did not even eat in the evening because I was so tired, and I could not wait till prasadam was served, around 10 pm. Usually I fell asleep before that time so I gave this boy my quota of capatis. He was happy because he was not on the list of those who could have capatis, as he was not present the day the list had been done.

Sometimes we were so tired we were just dragging our bare feet - at one point of the walk we all had a toe exploded from having walked so much on the ground (either tar or earth with stones) without shoes - surprisingly we had less blisters when we walked barefoot. It was not mandatory to walk barefoot, but I liked it, I was used to it. I would never have accepted to wear shoes and I walked the entire padayatra without them.

### The powerful presence of Gaura Govinda Maharaja

The years I was on Padayatra Orissa were special because Gaura Govinda Maharaja was there. He gave so

much importance to padayatra and gave us so much energy when we felt discouraged. He did not walk with us because of troubles with his legs but he was very much present. During the day he stayed in a guesthouse, working on his translations of Prabhupada's books into Oriya and in the evening he gave classes at the evening public program. He used to stay in one guesthouse 3 to 4 days before moving to the next one on the padayatra route. When we arrived in a district few people attended the first evening, then the crowd got bigger and bigger each time, up to 200 or 300 persons, which included people of nearby villages. There were always many more people when Gaura Govinda Maharaja gave the lecture. Maharaja was a very powerful preacher and he was attracting lots of people,

Since I had been living in Orissa with my family since I was 12, I could speak some Oriya. Every evening Maharaja insisted that I speak to the public in Oriya. I was telling them that material comfort and money were not everything in life, or a source of happiness. The proof was that us Westerners were now adopting their own culture and philosophy. Then I spoke about the maha-mantra and made them chant Hare Krishna very loud, and then raise their hands. Villagers loved to hear me speak Oriya, it made them smile and I think they were touched also. Sometimes I lost my voice because I was literally shouting in the mike. Even then the padayatris asked me to go back on the stage to make people sing.

I know that Padayatra Orissa has changed a lot since 1996. Devotees do not walk so much, only a few kms. They concentrate more on preaching programs and sometimes stage up to 3 theatre plays a day. There are also more westerners from different countries. From what I heard, it's still wonderful.

*As a child and a teen ager Rukmini Dasi participated in the Orissa padayatras organised by the Bhubaneswar temple in 1992, 1993, 1995 and 1996.*

# 24TH CZECH SUMMER PADAYATRA: CAPTURING THE RHINOCEROS

by Nrsimha Caitanya Dasa



## Setting up the rhino chase

In 1971 Srila Prabhupada wrote in a letter that, "We should always be enthusiastic to try for capturing the rhinoceros. That way, if we fail, everyone will say, 'Never mind, nobody can catch a rhinoceros anyway,' and if we succeed, then everyone will say, 'Just see, what a wonderful thing they have done!'"

The rhinoceros after which the Czech Padayatra team was chasing symbolically represented the distribution of 10,000 books, twice as many as 2017. From the beginning, it was clear to us that this was not going to be an easy target. We faced several challenges that ranged from quarrels and fights with the security of a shopping center, to the dislodging of the padayatra cart roof while travelling. However, we experienced the most critical moment on August 2, in Frydlantnad, Ostravici.

## A very serious test in Frydlant

After a short break at noon, a group of six devotees led by my father Muni Priya prabhu went for a harinama before lunch. As they walked through a gas station and stopped at the island to cross the road, a speeding car approached from the opposite direction and smashed into the harinama party. The broken bodies

of the devotees were strewn across the street. My father, Loka Saranga prabhu and Nitai Caran prabhu from Croatia, were seriously injured and taken to the hospital by helicopter and ambulance. When I arrived at the scene of the accident, the rescuers had already left. A red car with damaged front fenders was parked near the petrol stand and debris of harmonium chips and fragments from the crash were scattered around.

Some of us travelled to Ostrava to visit the injured while another group of devotees went to Frydek-Mistek to see Nitai Caran. Throughout the journey to the hospital, we chanted for the injured devotees, praying to Krishna to protect them. Goura Karuna prabhu, who was distributing books during the harinama, had photographed the entire accident scene and uploaded it to Facebook. We were touched by the many calls of concern we received from devotees across the country. That evening I requested that we keep the evening program slightly shorter than normal.

At the emergency reception, we were informed that my father had suffered a broken forehead, a dented skull, a swollen brain and a broken rib. We found him at the neurosurgical Intensive Care Unit, where he was lying on a stretcher with a badly swollen face and a bandaged head.

His eyes were buried under dark red swellings, but he was conscious. We heard that Loka Saranga had to be coma induced, and was hooked onto several tubes to keep his body from collapsing. He suffered serious damage to his lungs. I got a message about Nitai Caran whom I learned had only suffered a slight concussion and a few bruises, and was scheduled to leave the hospital within a few days.

## The chase for the rhinoceros continues

Although we were distressed about the accident, and worried about the seriously injured devotees, I had to take a decision about padayatra. There were ten more days ahead of us, and we had already distributed about seven thousand books. There were about forty devotees on padayatra who waited for further instructions. I fondly recollected what my father said some time ago: "books must be distributed, even at the cost of one's life." Although I had the urge to give up everything, I knew in my heart that we had to complete this padayatra as a sacrifice for Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara. After fifteen days, padayatris had already distributed more than half of the desired quota and evidently capturing the rhino was a real possibility.

Since the previous month of April,

Muni Priya had been organizing the route, the accommodations, book storage and the programs' venues. After a discussion with Pada Pankaja prabhu, I informed the devotees of the situation, and asked them if they wanted to continue with the padayatra. Everyone unanimously agreed that the padayatra should continue!

In the days that followed, I was amazed and touched by the reactions of international and local devotees to the accident. Generally, they enquired about the health of the injured devotees and pledged their prayers for their healing. I began writing messages on Facebook and later sending many emails about their health status, especially of my dad and Loka Saranga. Special prayers were offered in Mayapur and Vrindavan, and an offering was made on their behalf at Simhacalam in South India. In Slovenia, devotees increased their chanting and throughout Bohemia and Moravia, and other parts of the world, dedicated kirtanas were organized. On our Czech padayatra, devotees continued with book distribution, evening programs and harinamas with much enthusiasm. Rajaram prabhu who had retired from padayatra, returned to offer invaluable organizing support.

Kamala Manjari, my mother, and I visited my dad and Loka Saranga daily, while the forty dedicated devotees continued to offer a full evening program under the leadership of Sankirtan prabhu. The program consisted of the regular features and a drama performance, "Liquid Beauty" by bhaktas Adi Purusa and David Svec. The dances by Sarasvati, the daughter of Loka Saranga, and the competition for children organized by Bhaktin Miri were received with much delight. Kamalapati and Riksaraj prabhush alternated in leading kirtana. During the entertainment, the large group of book distributors led by Purusottama Ksetra prabhu continued their quest to capture the rhino.

The devotees powered ahead with much determination, inspired by the

prayers and blessings of Vaisnavas from all over the world. I was in daily contact with Bhaktivaibhava Maharaja, who, apart from the health of the injured devotees, was very concerned about the legal aspects of the accident. Regular reports were sent to Kadamba Kanana Maharaja and to the Minister of Padayatra, Lokanath Swami. Janananda Goswami also expressed great concern for the injured devotees.

## Capturing the rhino

Ten days after the Frydlant disaster, the padayatra party arrived in Sedlnice, the last stop on our route, having distributed an outstanding total of 10 894 books. This was only possible through the grace of Srila Prabhupada, under the protection of Sri Nrsimhadeva, and by the mercy of the beautiful Deities of Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara. The rhinoceros had been pursued and successfully captured!

The accident in Frydlant mobilized the ardent devotees, and we learned an important lesson that in this world there is danger at every step, even during harinama on a sidewalk. Devotees across the world petitioned the Lord in prayer for the recovery of the injured devotees, Muni Priya and Loka Saranga. Both are recovering well after surgery. The doctor has estimated that Muni Priya who suffered short-term memory loss will recover fully within three years.

## Looking ahead

After the accident we started to think more seriously about the local laws and regulations because we could easily have been violating a few, like stopping cars and distributing books from bikes. In the future we will definitely pay more attention to traffic safety on the road and perhaps the padayatra route will avoid big cities. During this padayatra, we neglected a fundamental safety rule, as there was no red banner regulating passing cars. Next year we will return to the tested system of two banner-bearers

watching the procession from both sides. This is a demanding service because one has to be constantly vigilant and cannot immerse oneself in harinama like other devotees.

Finally, I would like to thank the devotees for all the prayers, emotional support and financial assistance given to families of the injured devotees. My deepest appreciation goes to those devotees who took part in this year's padayatra, especially those who endured many challenges while chasing after the rhino! I am truly honored to have been part of this spirited team of devotees.

Please join us for the 2018 Czech Padayatra, as we will celebrate its 25th anniversary!

NB: The complete article is available on the Padayatra website

## Muni Priya Dasa: On padayatra I'm never bored! That's why I like it.

*(54 years old Muni Priya Dasa, is a full time padayatri in Czech Republic since 2005, and Czech Padayatra leader since 2007)*



## Hari Priya Dasi: I get energy from directly preaching to people

When I am on padayatra it seems that my life really has meaning. There is a wonderful synergy given by the circumstances because everyone and everybody has to pull the same rope together so that padayatra could reach its final destination. Everything is conditioned by this successful end and therefore there are very special relationships on padayatra. Sometimes it may be physically difficult for me but the direct preaching is so powerful that I can get energy back from the

responses that we receive from people. Not only my direct family is there but with all those other devotees we make one big spiritual family. I pray that my body will allow me to continue with padayatra for many more years.

*(54 years old Hari Priya Dasi is Muni Priya's wife, and has been full time on the Czech Padayatra since 2005.)*



*Hari Priya garlanding a winner of the dancing and singing competition*

**Nrsimha Caitanya Dasa: It's ever fresh, adventurous and spiritually stimulating**

On padayatra I can be fully engaged in devotional service according to my talents. I like to organize things, shop around, drive a car around, do harinama, clean, set up a stage and so on. There are so many services on padayatra, and as a part of the management team, I usually end up doing all of them during the course of the walk. Padayatra is ever fresh, adventurous and it stimulates me to make more endeavours in Krishna consciousness.

*(Nrsimha Caitanaya Dasa is 27 years old, son of Muni Priya and Hari Priya. He is a full time padayatatri since 2005, and Czech Padayatra co-leader since 2007.)*



*Nrsimha Caitanya on accordion*

**Loka Saranga Dasa: Padayatra is the best of everything!**

Padayatra is the best, therefore we like it so much. Krishna is also the best and that's why we like Him the most too.

*(41 years old Loka Saranga Dasa has been coming to the Czech Padayatra since the nineties; he does harinama, cooks and acts in the plays.)*



*Loka Saranga with his wife Kamala Manjari and kids*

**Bhakta Adi Purusa: A great opportunity for advancement**

Padayatra is giving me the great opportunity to be in the association of devotees while engaged in front line preaching and thus to make rapid advancement in Krishna Consciousness.

*(17 year old Adi Purusa was on his first walk this year. He set up the base, served as commander and actor in the plays.)*



*Adi Purusa leading harinama*

**Jagan Mohini Dasi: Padayatra is the driving force of my spiritual life**

Padayatra has always been the driving force of my spiritual life. Every year I can taste nectar for a short time and then carry it inside me for so long. It is a mercy for which I am grateful; thanks to this mercy I can fulfill my promise to my spiritual master and at least for a moment be involved in spreading Krishna consciousness.

*(25 years old Jagan Mohini Dasi is a working mother who has been coming to the Czech Padayatra since 1995. She serves as the head pujari and brings her very nice daughter with her every year.)*



*Jagan Mohini (right) and her sister Tulasi Maharani*

**2017 BOOK DISTRIBUTION SCORES OF PADAYATRA INDIA: 106109 books**

S1 = Small-soft	S2 = Medium-soft	S3 = Big-soft	H4 = Maha big (hard, 500+pages)
Raj Vidya, Teachings of Pralhad Maharaja, Beyond birth and death, Laws of nature, BTG	Second Chance	Science of Self Realization	Bhagavad-gita, Krishna Book, Srimad Bhagavatam, Prabhupada Lilamrita, Ramayana
35,592	200	7193	63 124

**Top distributors for the month of December 2017**

Kaunteya Sakha Dasa	1629 books
Suryavamshi Dasa and Mangal Nitai Dasa	724 books
Diranayak Dasa	620 books

# A FEW HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ALL-INDIA PADAYATRA IN 2017

*by Acarya Dasa*



This year has been special because we have been blessed with the association of several sannyasis. Vedavyas Priya Maharaja joined us for several days, Rupa Ragunath Maharaja travelled with us for one month and Bhakti Vinod Maharaja helped us a lot during our journey in Kerala. After walking in Karnataka, then in Kerala for five months we are currently moving through Tamil Nadu in South India.

## **Kerala: a very significant stop in Cochin**

One of the year's highlights was traveling through Cochin, a very significant city for us, ISKCON devotees. On Friday, August 13th 1965 the cargo ship Jaladuta on which Srila Prabhupada was travelling set



*Udupi Krishna*

sail from Calcutta. The next day it reached Cochin where Prabhupada's volumes of Srimad-bhagavatam had arrived from Bombay. The books were loaded onto the ship before leaving for America. We all took darsana of the memorial plaque installed by ISKCON Kerala in memory of Srila Prabhupada. All the padayatris decided that one day we would board a boat and do sankirtana there in memory of Srila Prabhupada's voyage on the Jaladuta. While taking a cruise on the very waters that Srila Prabhupada sailed on, we all thought of the sacrifices he made to bring Krishna Consciousness to the world. Prabhupada experienced many struggles to deliver Krishna Consciousness to us; if it were not for him we would be suffering here in this material world.



With the chief of the Udupi Pejawar Matha



Chanting at the Udupi Religious Convention



Rupa Raghunatha Swami in Cochin

## Prayer instantly answered

Kerala was very good for book distribution. As we made our way through Kozhikode, a lady approached the padayatra cart crying. After paying obeisances to Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara she stood crying and looking deeply at the Lord with folded hands. Turning to us she said, "Can you please give me a Bhagavad-gita?" She happily took it and touched to it to her head. Then she explained, "In a temple of Lord Vishnu, nearby, just a few minutes back, I was praying intensely: 'O Lord! I have a strong desire to read an original Bhagavad-gita. Please help me.' I came out of the temple, saw your cart and heard the announcements about Bhagavad-gita. Thank you very much, your Lord on the cart is very merciful!"

## Karnataka: visiting the famous Udupi Krishna temple established by Srila Madhvacarya

After visiting the famous Sri Laxmi Janardan temple in Kapu we walked to Kodavoor Grama, a quaint village 6 kms from Udupi in the state of Karnataka. It has a beautiful sandy beach known as Malpe Beach. The history of the Udupi Krishna temple is closely associated with this beach. Once there was a huge storm in the sea near Malpe beach when the great saint Sri Madhvacarya was present at the shore. He saw a ship caught in the storm and with just the use of his shawl he helped the ship reach the shore safely. This ship was coming from Dwaraka and in appreciation for his help the sailors offered Srila

Madhvacarya all the goods that were on the boat, but he asked only for the big lump of gopichandan and carried it back to the matha. The statues of Lord Krishna and Balaram were inside the gopichandan and Madhvacarya installed the beautiful murti of Lord Krishna in Udupi and the deity of Balaram at Malpe beach.

On November 23rd we reached Udupi, which is said to have attained the status of Vaikuntha, the kingdom of God, because the Supreme Personality of Godhead came and stayed there in response to the desire of His pure devotee Srila Madhvacarya. As we reached town we were warmly welcomed by Rakta Govinda Prabhu, president of the ISKCON Udupi, and the congregation devotees. They did all the arrangements for our comfortable stay and had planned nice preaching activities for our 3 day visit. We all went to have darsana of Lord Udupi Krishna along with padayatra Deities. The chief of the Pejawar matha had gotten the news that padayatra was in town, so he welcomed us with his group and did a special puja to Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara. He is generally very busy but he likes ISKCON a lot and has lot of respect for our movement.



Cochin Cruising on the waters sailed by Srila Prabhupada on his way to America

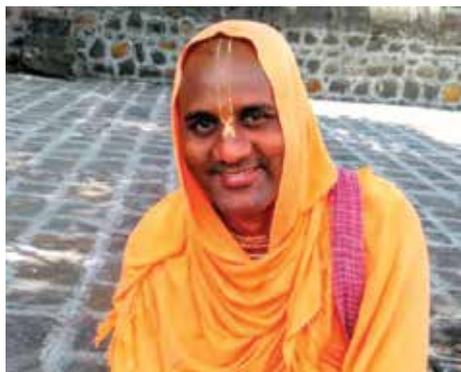
## Three fantastic days at the Udupi Religious Convention

All padayatris and devotees of ISKCON Udupi were invited by the chief of the matha to attend the Religious Convention (Dharma Sabha) from November 24 to 26. As we entered the big pandal sitting hundreds of thousands of people we were welcomed by the coordinators of the program and called on stage for kirtana. Everyone joined us in chanting the maha-mantra and every day we were called on stage. The congregational devotees helped us at the book stall we had arranged. During the next two days we did mangal arati in the pandal. The best part was that whatever was cooked during the convention was first offered to our Lordships Nitai Gaurasundara. On the last day each one was gifted a bag by the organizers of the Dharma Sabha. The news of Padayatra India attending the religious convention and of the chief of the Krishna matha worshipping our Lordships was flashed in all local newspapers, so that later, wherever we went for sankirtana nobody stopped us. Even the policemen helped us in traffic and while crossing roads. Our 3 day book score in Udupi was fantastic: 1651 maha-big books, 30 big books and 195 small. It was a wonderful experience!

## WHY THEY STAY ON THE ALL-INDIA PADAYATRA

**Ekeshwar Dasa** (38 years old): Srila Prabhupada and my Gurudev Lokanath Maharaja love padayatra, so

I also love padayatra. My 40 days on the Pandharpur Padayatra made me very serious in my devotional life. The daily routine is such that a padayatri is totally absorbed in serving the Lord and as a result the body also remains healthy. I can distribute Prabhupada's books and always get darsana of Gaura Nitai



*Ekeswar Dasa*

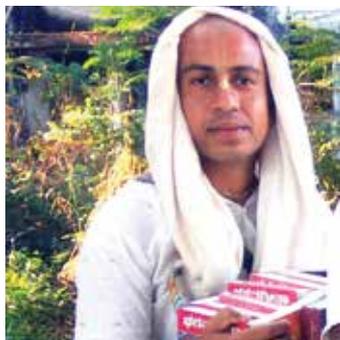
**Matsyavatar Dasa** (28 years old, from Satara, Maharashtra): The spiritual happiness I get on padayatra is very special - I did not get it anywhere else. During my one year on padayatra I developed lots of tolerance and humility and the ability to undergo austerities. Prasadam distribution is done on a large scale so wherever we go people get the mercy of Gaur Nitai. The oxen of padayatra are very special because whoever sees them take photos of them. They are very silent and carry the Lord on their shoulders. Our Gurudev says this is their last birth and that they will get liberated. Once in Kerala I suffered from Dengue, and at that time all the padayatris took great care of me. Acharya Prabhu, our padayatra leader, and Krsnadev Prabhu took me to the



*Matsyavatara Dasa*

house of a doctor devotee who treated me for 10 days. The padayatris gave me time to rest, and when I was able to walk they happily welcomed me back. I was overwhelmed by their love and affection.

**Bhakta Prajeesh** (40 years old, from Kerala): Before knowing anything about Krishna consciousness, I wanted to travel through the villages in different states of India. After reading Srila Prabhupada's transcendental books, I was interested in book distribution, but I could not do that regularly before joining Padayatra. On padayatra I am so fortunate to be able to distribute books every day and travel through the villages too: both my wishes are fulfilled.



*Bhakta Prajeesh*

**Sri Krishna Dev Dasa** (46 years old) : When I am on padayatra I feel like I am in Goloka because I am fully dependent on the Lord. When the Lord's chariot stops -we stop. When the Lord rests - we rest. When the Lord stands in the rain we also stand in the rain. It's been three years since I joined 'The All India Padayatra'. We all have many different services on padayatra. When we were in Kerala recently I was part of an 8 devotee party who distributed many books. Acarya Dasa, our leader, takes good care of all the padayatris. He makes sure that we all attend mangal arati everyday and that we are taking care of our sadhana by practicing proper hearing and by reading Srila Prabhupada's books daily. He is a very inspiring and motivated leader and he is a very important part of my life on the road.



*Krishnadev Dasa*

Srila Prabhupada said that if anybody concentrates his mind on distributing Krishna's books then he is always thinking about Krishna. This is samadhi -and it is something we have come to realize more and more on padayatra. The more books distributed the more one's quality of chanting increases. Whenever we come in contact with people who are interested in Krishna we take their telephone numbers and preach to them even after we have left their village or city. These activities help us realize what living a happy life is like. Padayatra is like ISKCON's army. When a devotee joins padayatra he has no chance of developing an attachment to any place since we are always on the move. Anyone who is part of padayatra can achieve the spiritual goal of life. If you complete your japa before 7'o clock, read Srila Prabhupada's books everyday for a minimum of one hour, hear from Srila Prabhupada and your Guru, associate with devotees and are punctual -then automatically Nitai Gaurasundar gives you mercy.

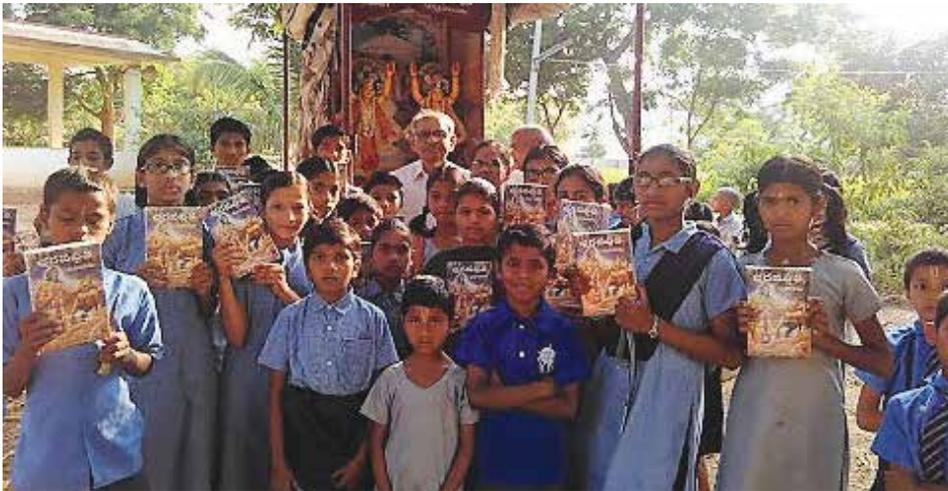
**Suryavamshi Dasa** : On Padayatra I get the chance to have darsana of many holy places, to take bath at many holy kundas and tirthas. Each padayatri becomes instrumental in distributing the holy name as Mahaprabhu has instructed us; He's expecting this from us. Padayatra brings change in everybody's life who comes in contact with it. We go to schools and college, where the students and teachers respond very nicely to our program. Padayatra also provides me an opportunity to meet people across India and to understand the current situation of our society.



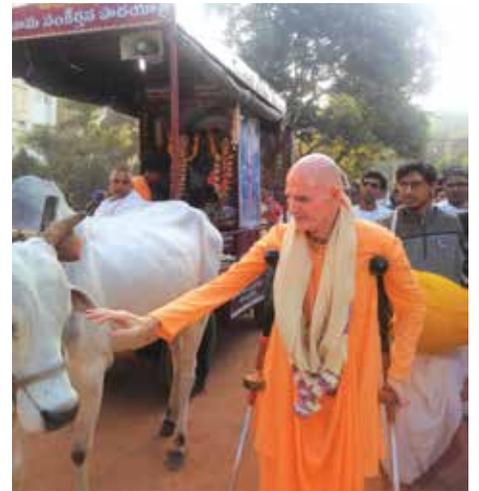
*Suryavamshi Dasa*

# THE ANDHRA PRADESH/ TELANGANA PADAYATRA CELEBRATED THEIR 5TH ANNIVERSARY

*By Visnuswami Dasa*



*Narsampeta school for orphans*



*Bhakti Raghava Swami*

I was impressed by Prabhupada's instructions about bullock cart padayatra. It looked very interesting and attractive to me, so in December 2012, without any previous experience at all, I started a bullock cart padayatra in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Since then a part of that state had become the new state of Telangana. I thought that it might go on for a few days or even a month, but by grace of Krishna and the mercy of the Vaisnavas we managed to be on the road for 5 years. I don't know how it happened, I was like a dream. People are attracted to padayatra.

## **I'm so happy riding a bullock cart!**

Nowadays motor vehicles are a common thing but traveling with a bullock cart is unique and special. While we cross villages everyone approaches us, people of all ages, men, women and children, the educated and the uneducated. If we travel in a motor vehicle we meet a limited number of people, and it produces so much pollution. But on bullock cart

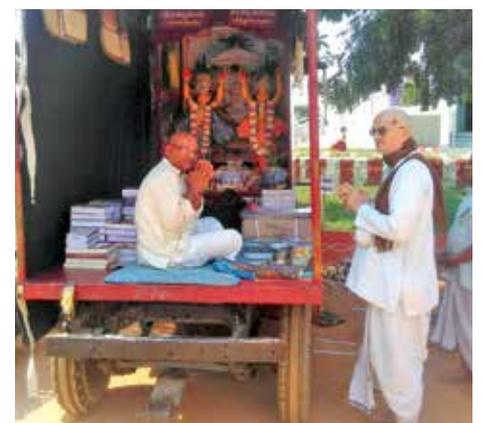
there are no accidents, and we do not need a driving license. I am so happy to be riding a bullock cart and to have the association of these gentle oxen.

Recently we had the visit of Bhakti Raghava Maharaja and Anandamaya Prabhu, in charge of the Hyderabad BBT. On December 6th, to celebrate the 5th anniversary of our padayatra, we distributed Bhagavad-gitas to the youth of the town of Chowtuppall in the Bhonagiri district. 15 Gitas were sponsored by a local devotee of Krishna, so we could give it free to many people. At the moment we are walking in the Hyderabad urban area.

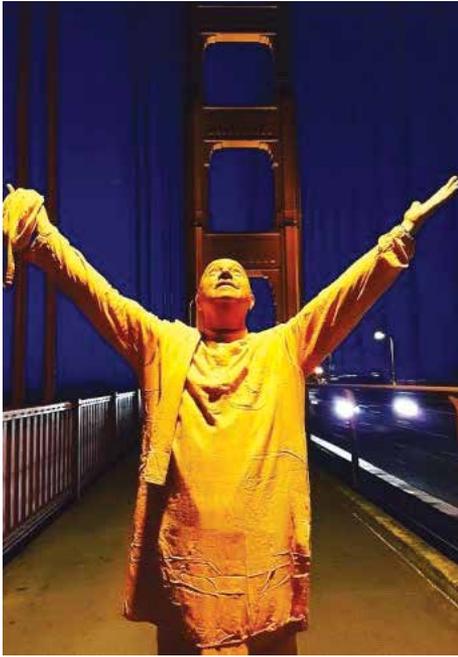
**In 2017 we covered 180 villages and towns and walked 1200kms. We distributed 14 sets of Srimad-bhagavatam, 2,200 big books, 1,500 medium and 25,000 small.**



*Visnuswami with visitors*



*Anandamaya Prabhu*



At the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco

*NB: This article was based on Madhava Smullen's article on the ISKCON News website and from diary entries of Bhaktimarga Swami.*

On September 20th, 2015, Bhaktimarga Swami undertook an epic padayatra in the United States in honor of his guru Srila Prabhupada, and to celebrate the 50th anniversary of ISKCON. Popularly known as "the walking monk", he has gone on foot across Canada from coast to coast four times, and has trekked across Ireland, the Fiji Islands, Mauritius, Trinidad, Guyana, and Israel, to promote a more simple, healthy and spiritual lifestyle.

### **The first leg of the padayatra: Boston to Nebraska via New York and Butler**

This padayatra was undoubtedly the most meaningful to him. It began at Boston's Commonwealth Pier where in 1965 Srila Prabhupada first reached the United States on the steamship Jaladuta from India. Two hundred ISKCON devotees from all over the East Coast had joined Bhaktimarga Swami. The celebrations included visiting the former YMCA where Prabhupada stayed and worked on his Srimad-Bhagavatam.

# RETRACING ISKCON'S BEGINNINGS IN THE UNITED STATES THROUGH PADAYATRA

## WALKING 3550 MILES (5713 KMS) FROM BOSTON TO SAN FRANCISCO



Program with children

Maharaja then retraced Prabhupada's journey from Boston to Butler, western Pennsylvania, where he had spent an entire month with his sponsors, Gopal and Sally Agarwal. Maharaja then continued on to New York City, where Srila Prabhupada officially registered ISKCON in 1966. Bhaktimarga Swami chanted under the famous "Hare Krishna tree" in Tompkins Square Park, where Prabhupada led some of the first public kirtanas in the western world.

On November 10th, 2015, our Walking Monk concluded the first 907 mile (1460 kms) section of his walk, and on May 11th, 2016, after a winter break, he resumed his walk from New York to San Francisco to revisit the historical places of growth of ISKCON. The first leg of this walk covered around 966 miles (1555 kms) and ended in Seward, Nebraska in August 2016.

### **Walking the second leg in 2017: Nebraska to San Francisco, California**

The second leg began in May 2017 and covered approximately 1600 miles (2575 kms), before ending in San Francisco on September 15th. On this leg Maharaja had to negotiate



Colorado

Highway 50, which is referred to as "The Loneliest Road in America". His route also took him on Lincoln Road, the first transcontinental highway in the United States, built in 1913.

Every day, he walked for about 20 miles (32 kms) through challenging terrain and weather conditions. In June he crossed the Great Basin Desert in Utah and Nevada where he endured intense heat 1000F (38 0 C) and complete isolation. However, in the evenings he relished the cool air and chanted "magic ally", and without distraction under the stars.

Bhaktimarga Swami experienced increased traffic in Nevada because of the August vacation. This meant more interaction with people who were intrigued by the walking monk, dressed in orange robes. They would offer food, drinks and money and were awestruck by the idea of interstate walking. Along the way, the walking monk chatted with passing motorists, gave informal interviews and blessings, and spoke regularly at programs arranged by his assistants. Local newspapers and radio stations often conducted interviews, fascinated at this unique personality passing through their area.



*Walking for America*

He essentially spoke about Srila Prabhupada's arrival in the United States 50 years ago, and his continuing mission. His subject matter also included some of the social challenges that he had observed along his trek: loneliness, drug addiction, depression – and how Prabhupada's view was

that the solution to these problems was ultimately a spiritual one.

Bhaktimarga Swami also entreated people to go back to the basics – to walk more instead of taking the car, to see the wildlife and touch the earth, to take time away from our devices, to meditate, sing, and pray more and to talk to our neighbors.

### **Completing an epic six month walk**

The United States padayatra took six months to complete. It covered an incredible distance of 3550 miles (5713 kms) which spanned several states. This included a corner of Michigan, moving through Massachusetts, Connecticut, New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Nebraska, Colorado, Utah, Nevada, California and Hawaii. On September 15th, Bhaktimarga Swami completed this epic United

States padayatra after a sensational trek over the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco. He was joined by senior disciples of Srila Prabhupada, Vaisesika Das and Nirkula Dasi from nearby San Jose, and Canadian helpers, Hayagriva Das and Bhakta Marcel for the last four miles. Together they retraced the path of the original Jagannatha Festival that took place half a century ago in San Francisco- the first ever Ratha-yatra Festival in the western world, carrying Lord Jagannath, Baladeva and Subhadra on the back of a decorated flatbed truck.

Bhaktimarga Swami ended this grand marathon walk in a "peaceful and meditative mood," on the soft sands of the Pacific Ocean, amid rolling white clouds and blue skies. He prayed that Srila Prabhupada would be pleased with this pilgrimage and hoped that Krishna had a broad smile at the end of this padayatra "of the heart."



## THE 40 DAY BULLOCK CART PADAYATRA IN MAHARASHTRA BY ISKCON PANDHARPUR

*By Ekeswar Dasa and Sri Krishna Dasa*



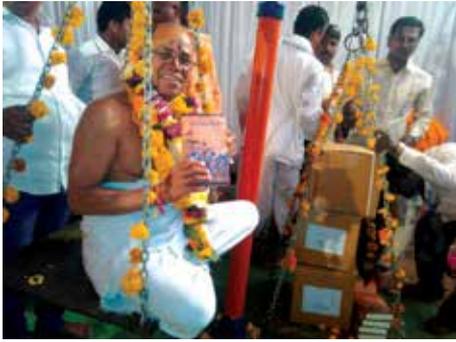
*Walking back to Godhead*

One day in 2017 the temple president of ISKCON Pandharpur, Prahlad Dasa, suggested that we should start a padayatra from the holy city of Pandharpur, the Vrindavana of Maharashtra. He had traveled with the All India Padayatra for about 10 years, so he shared with us his realizations on the great impact padayatra has on the minds and hearts of people. Besides, we had all the necessary resources:

carts, tractors and oxen. Lokanath Maharaja was very pleased with our decision and gave us his blessings.

### **A memorable stop at Gopalpur Hill, considered non-different from Govardhana Hill**

Early morning on November 15th our enthusiastic team of 20 members assembled at our Sri Sri Radha



*Book distribution ki jaya!*

Pandharinath temple near the cart carrying Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and Srila Prabhupada. We first stopped in the village of Gopalpur where we visited the famous Vishnupada temple. It is located on Gopalpur Hill, which is considered non-different to the sacred Govardhan Hill in Vrindavana. Lord Krishna is said to have visited Pandharpur along with His cows, and that pastime is still celebrated there today. In this temple one can see Krishna's footprints embedded on a stone slab along with the hoofprints of His cows. Next we walked to the small village of Eklaspur where we performed sankirtana; in the evening we sang the gaura-arati prayers in the main square, followed by more kirtana and dancing. The highlight of the evening was the screening of a video of Srila Prabhupada. Balarupa Rupa Dasa spoke about the glories of Prabhupada and the holy names. The evening ended with a distribution of kitchari prasadam to all the villagers. For the next 39 days, we started the day with mangala-arati, chanted

our rounds, listened to a Srimad-Bhagavatam class, and then moved to our next scheduled destination. We walked between 15 to 20 kilometers daily. In most villages we organized cultural programs which included dance recitals, dramatic performances and sloka recitation. Devotees also gave lectures on the glories of the holy names and the Bhagavad-gita -books being the basis- the importance of tapasya, and Srila Prabhupada's ISKCON mission and vision. The cooking team travelled with us and residents from the different villages came forward to help. They graciously donated food items like grains and oil and assisted us in procuring suitable accommodation. Panduranga Krsna Dasa rode on his bicycle for the entire duration of the padayatra and he was thus able to reach the extreme places in the villages that the walkers could not go to. He also distributed pamphlets and announced the evening program. On December 11th the congregational devotees of Barsi organised a wonderful Gita Jayanti festival with a dana yajna. The president of nearby ISKCON Solapur, Parthasarathi Dasa, also attended the program.

### Remembering the great Vaisnava Tukaram Maharaja

When we arrived at a place called Hanuman Tekadi, we made several announcements about the evening sankirtana program. We were pleasantly surprised to see that all the

villagers had already gathered for the program. The matajis in the village had prepared a special village menu for us consisting of bhaji (vegetable curry) and rotis of bhakari (millet). The katha on Tukaram Maharaja, a Maharashtrian saint and devotee of Lord Vitthal, had special appeal to this audience. Tukaram was a Vaishnava who strongly preached the holy names of the Lord throughout his life.

On December 14th Lokanath Maharaja joined us in Madha. We were delighted and very eager to have darsana of our beloved Gurudev. Maharaja enquired about our health and the different services that we were performing; when he joined us for nagar sankirtan, the devotees were jubilant. Maharaja was equally blissful walking with the padayatra and we could see how special this padayatra service was to his heart.

Our padayatra ended on December 24th in Pandharpur. All the padayatris thoroughly enjoyed the combination of culture and adventure on this inspiring padayatra. For these devotees padayatra meant taking full shelter of the Lord.

### PADAYATRAPANDHARPUR IN NUMBERS

40 days, 20 devotees, 20 towns, 407 kilometers, 4,441 maha big books and 1,000 Bhagavad-gitas



### THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS

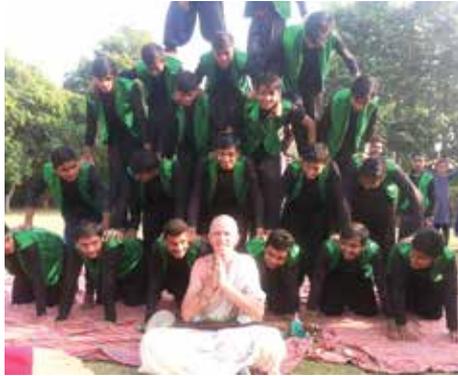
<i>Sundar Gopal Dasa</i>	<i>France</i>
<i>Ladu Gopal, Noida</i>	<i>India</i>
<i>Giri Govardhana Dasa</i>	<i>France</i>
<i>ISKCON Pandharpur</i>	<i>India</i>
<i>Gaurangi Dasi</i>	<i>France</i>

**Purify your laksmi by becoming a staunch Padayatra supporter :**  
*Contact the Padayatra Ministry or give directly to the Padayatra Worldwide minister, Lokanath Swami*





This flier includes a quote from Srila Prabhupada (SB 3.15.8) explaining how, by the Lord's arrangement, every living entity gets what they need for their subsistence.



*School program*

## **"Enough Salt! Now take Bhagavad-gita!"**

What could I do to draw public attention to with my little insignificant padayatra which paralleled Gandhi's Salt March? At the age of 62 (Gandhi was 61) I began the 22 day journey (the same amount of days Gandhi walked) on November 22nd, concluding on the full moon of 4 December. Although I began as one man and my influence over others was that I would also finish alone, still it was important for me to have a message that would take my yatra just that one step further above the worldly limitations of nationalism. My idea was to launch it on to the pure transcendental platform. I began with the simple words, "Enough Salt!", but it soon became apparent that such a hidden message was too subtle for the general public to pick up on. As the walk progressed and the ISKCON book marathon started coming on, my mantra changed to "Enough Salt! Now take Bhagavad -gita!" It fitted well because Gandhi was a strong advocate of the Bhagavad-gita.

My walk was covered by one of the world's leading Gujarati newspapers -Gujarat Samachar. In the article I explained how the teachings of Srila Prabhupada and the instructions of my spiritual master, Lokanath Swami

Maharaja, have inspired me to undertake many different padayatras, mostly in my native New Zealand, but also in Fiji. My quest to gain media attention climaxed in the city of Surat, where I was able to fascinate the television media enough to give me ten minutes prime time on Gita Jayanti, November 30th 2017. This strong 'soundbeat' on the brihad mrdanga (media press) afforded hundreds and thousands of viewers to remember Krishna and His famous song. With such good publicity I was also able to promote a very favorable impression of Srila Prabhupada and his ISKCON. In this way some satisfaction came in adding my little part to the momentum that Srila Prabhupada had began - "an ISKCON that would change the world in its darkest hour."



*Spreading his message*

Salt is a product that India could produce on its own shores. Similarly, Bhagavad-gita is also a home grown product that civilized humanity cannot live without. Salt could only be ingested in small amounts but Bhagavad-gita is a product that the world cannot get enough of. Srila



*Zee TV presenters take Bhagavad-gita*

Prabhupada wanted us to propagate it and export the goods to every country of the world. Pepper is also a sought after spice grown in India and sent out from there to all parts of the world. Pepper has the potency to increase digestion and cure many diseases of the belly so in this light, the Bhagavad-gita As It Is can be seen as the pepper.

## **Feeling the presence of Krishna all the way**

This enlivening 400km walk took me through many villages, towns and big cities as well as rural areas and forests, where fewer people lived and worked the land. Such an experience reveals the truths of Srila Prabhupada's purports. Padayatra brings the Bhagavad-gita alive. It becomes a way of life.

Travelling alone forces one to cultivate strong faith and trust in Krishna's protection. Over the period of one month on the road, not once did I have to ask for food or shelter. I felt the presence of Krishna all the way, guiding and providing. People would question, "You are alone?" "No," I would say, "Krishna is always with me." Somehow, others witnessing my total dependence on Krishna would activate "the Krishna' existant in everybody's heart. The wholehearted generosity of very pious Gujarati people throughout the journey kept me alive and well. Their persistence to see any guest as an opportunity to serve God was a refreshing reminder of a culture that once pervaded the entire planet. It is my experience that every time you "wing it out there" taking risk for Krishna's pleasure, He enjoys in a spontaneous way, and thus reciprocates in a playful and joyous love for His dependent child. It was a great satisfaction to share spiritual wisdom and inspiration with those persons who had an enthusiastic interest.

The language barrier made it sometimes materially difficult, but the simple singing of the Hare Krishna



Arriving in Dandi 400kms later

maha-mantra infused a spirit that dissolved all differences. Somehow through God's grace, we were able to connect and my simple part was just



Dandi memorial site where Gandhi picked up salt and became lawbreaker

to throw a spark into the dry grass to set it ablaze. I enjoy the elements of variety and surprise that only the padayatra experience can turn on. Sometimes out under the stars on a string chattai (bed) hovering above cow dung spread floors and eating smoked flavoured rotis. At other times, mixing socially amongst the wealthy Patels and vastu mansions feasting on srikhand, Gujarati style pakoras, khadi and rice, concluded by sleeping on palatial beds with en suite bathrooms. Krishna always seemed to play the right card at the right time, even at times, throwing in the Joker. There was always something humorous or astonishing.

Various challenges and tests arose along the way of course. Concerning my health, there was nothing that couldn't be overcome because of the protection of Lord Narasimhadeva in Sridham Mayapur. Following the route, once I got bewildered and lost in the same vast estuary mudflats that Gandhi himself struggled to cross over in the middle of the night. My survival instinct and confidence that the Supersoul always accompanies the individual as His best friend helped me to persist and push on in times when it was almost ridiculous to continue. Often, all of a sudden, Providence would change and the sky would open up to show a new way through. Every pilgrimage has its tests, but in retrospect those times become the highlights. Treading the path of no return sometimes demands surrendering everything.

### The various purposes and benefits of my solitary journey

Such a journey was undertaken as an attempt to share the mercy that one receives in one's life. The giving of gifts is always satisfying and brings great joy and of course, by giving one receives. This is the lesson from the story of Sudama Vipra, another famous personality who appeared in the same village as Gandhi. The other purpose of such a trek was centered around the self. It involved a personal

endeavor that required introspection and one comes face to face with one's own strengths and weaknesses. It is important to perform some tapasya or yajna in order to know one's self and establish one's relationship with the Supreme.

Another personal slant to my Dandi yatra was focused on searching out the roots to my wife's ancestry. Karadi was the last village en route to the sea. This is the famous place where Gandhi spent 22 days planning his revolution in a grass hut. It is also the place where the British arrested Gandhi. Coincidentally it is also the place of origin of Ramila's (my wife) paternal grandfather. He emigrated to New Zealand when he was 21 years old in the very early 1900's. However, when he returned to India at some stage, he could not go back to New Zealand. In those years he became a freedom fighter in Gandhi's wake.

I felt compelled to conclude my yatra with a small ceremony. Although the rest of the world would know nothing of my walk or my message, it seemed fitting to place Srila Prabhupada's special Bhagavad-gita As It Is in the hands of a small statue of the Mahatma, who sits under some beautiful banyan trees that commemorates the spot of his last public gathering in Dandi. At that historic place on that day I felt in my own small way that I had made history and that somehow my humble efforts to uplift the consciousness of humanity in this dark age of Kali was appreciated by the guardian angels of devotion to Sri Hari.



Closing arati in Dandi

# PADAYATRA MAURITIUS 2017: A TRILOGY

by Ayodhyanath Dasa



People offering a lamp to Damodar

## A three-day padayatra in April

In 2017 Panchatattva Dasa and I organized three padayatras in our native Mauritius, a country often referred to as an ancestral melting pot. The first one started at Cluni Kovil with about 50 devotees joining us for a 3km walk, after which we were welcomed at a new devotee's home for kirtana, pravacan and prasadam. A huge crowd had assembled for the harinama. On the second day the two hour walk ended in Banane, a village surrounded by trees, rich vegetation and spectacular views. About 200 people had assembled at the Shivala Hall, where a regular program took place, with ekadasi prasadam at the end. On the third day, for the very first time, our padayatra party stopped at the Radhe Gopal Godham Gosala at Dubreuil. We were warmly received by Vaikuntha Pati Dasa, and Suryanarayan Dasa who is in charge of goshala seva. The idea of stopping there was to showcase this recent initiative and to create awareness of the cow as a core component of agriculture, health and environment.

## Chanting and walking during World Holy Name Week

On September 10th we organized a Kirtan Mela at the idyllic Dubreuil goshala. It was held with padayatra, which continued for 2 days between the 15th and 17th. This double event left many new devotees very inspired to preach and to assist with goshala services.

## Month of Kartika: more than 4,000 people offered a lamp to Lord Damodar

The entire month of Kartika saw Padayatra Mauritius once again take to the streets of several villages. The small group of dedicated devotees walked daily from 6.30pm – 9.30 pm, thus giving residents the opportunity to offer lamps to Lord Damodar. The daily sessions were intense and had the devotees rushing around to people's homes, knocking at doors, requesting them to offer lamps. Other devotees walked and distributed sweets while chanting. Almost four thousand



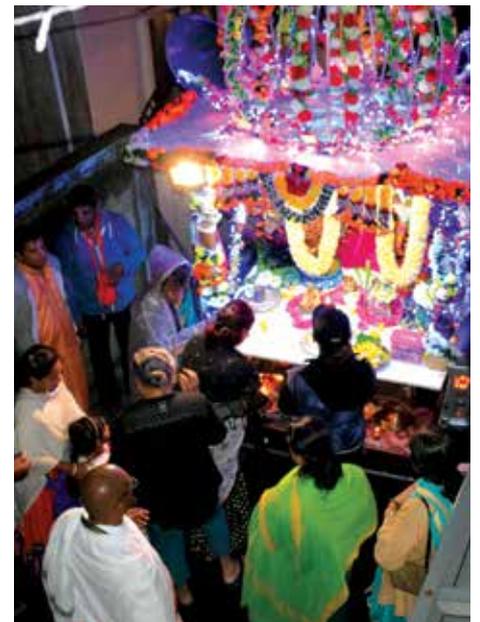
World Holy Name Week team

people on the island were thus given the chance to offer lamps, and got the benediction of the Lord. This service has been introduced four years ago and devotees have maintained this tradition every year since.

This padayatra concluded at the village of Quartier Militaire, where the local devotees organized a successful event. Although it rained heavily, about 200 people joined the harinama which was followed by a big feast sponsored by bhakta Yovin and others.



Ayodyanatha leading kirtana





*Oxen always win hearts*

Our 'Pilgrimage for Peace' began on July 17th outside the main gate of the Canterbury Cathedral - the mother of all pilgrimage sites in the UK. The padayatris were blessed by the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral for a safe journey, providing an auspicious start to the festival of peace. The opening ceremony was also attended by Cathedral officials, local dignitaries, members of the Canterbury interfaith group, as well as members of our local Hare Krishna community, each representing different facets of Canterbury's diverse spiritual landscape. The Dean of the Cathedral was captivated by our beautiful draft oxen from the Bhaktivedanta Goshala, namely, Balaram and Govardhan. That evening we were featured on the ITV Meridian evening news, and after this report we became quite well known in the area.

### **Deeply touching people's hearts**

A core team of twenty five devotees, from both Soho Street temple and the Manor, were a sight to behold,



*Doyal Mora leading the party*

# ENGLAND: BULLOCK CART PILGRIMAGE FOR PEACE FROM CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL TO FOLKESTONE

*By Dayal Mora dasa and ISKCON London Communication team*



*Kent harinama with Mahavishnu Swami*

colorfully dressed with bright faces and chanting with great enthusiasm to the blissful kirtana of Mahavishnu Swami. Padayatra is a sublime way of bringing the devotees together as a transcendental temple on wheels, by which we involve onlookers in devotional service. Padayatra very easily attracts the minds of the people, and anyone who has been on padayatra and experienced this atmosphere will know some magical pastimes whereby devotees have touched the hearts of people they meet and left a deep impression on them.

John and his wife, owners of the Hatchets Farm House Campsite, were so enchanted with what we were doing that they allowed the whole group including two huge oxen to stay there free of charge! They also contributed hay and vegetables for our animals and some organic products for us. Jill, owner of Sandwich Leisure Holiday Park which was our campsite on Tuesday evening was so happy

to have us stay. Even despite some disturbances familiar to the presence of the Hare Krishnas, she still didn't charge us a penny and was beautifully smiling ear to ear as we departed the next morning.

### **Offering hope and an alternative to hate and violence**

Temple President of the ISKCON centre in London, Jai Nitai dasa, shares: "The news of the recent atrocities happening across the country have shaken our world. The Padayatra is a way for us all to come together and show that we stand united against hate, and offer prayers for those who have lost their lives." Through the walk, the devotees reminded people who see them walking that in these seemingly fearful days of war, suicide bombings, climate change, social tensions and economic uncertainty, a simple self-sufficient life in harmony with Mother Nature and God's will is always available as an alternative.

The weather was exceedingly pleasing most of the time with glorious sunshine tempered with a cooling sea breeze and a little splash of rain sometimes in the night when we were safely tucked up in our respective tents. We were surprised to hear of weather warnings and localized flooding in nearby areas because by some divine arrangement we were completely unaffected.

We walked through the beautiful Kentish countryside; curious cows and nimble horses peered at us over their fences and the kirtana was strong as ever! Devotees were so happy and content with the knowledge of just how many living entities were benefiting from hearing these holy names. As we neared the end of the padayatra, devotees mentioned it would be nice to keep going; one devotee even expressed his desire to go for a full year in this style. Everyone was in a blissful mood as we settled down at our final campsite atop the famed White Cliffs of Dover. Afterwards I made my way to Czech to participate in their longstanding and admired padayatra to receive inspiration on how to improve the UK contribution in future years. All glories to the Sankirtana Movement of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu!



*Giving an old man a chance*

# THE 16TH ANNUAL PADAYATA IN SLOVENIA

*by A.R. and Gaurangi Dasi*



*Protected from the rain around Bir Krishna Goswami*

## **A new format with a small cart and no animals**

The 16th annual padayatra in Slovenia which covered 130 kilometers across ten villages was done in a new format. In the past devotees used a horse or an ox to pull the large cart carrying the deities of Nitai Gaura Nataraja, but for the last two years they opted for a hand-drawn deity cart. The format was also changed given the declining health of the padayatra leader, Lalita GovindaDasa - he has been the main organizer of this event for fourteen solid years, assisted by Ljubiana's temple president Ananta Das. Using the new format was less complex, but the planning and preparation for this event, which started three months in advance, was no less demanding.

The padayatris consisted of a motley group of participants that included temple devotees, congregational members, visitors, and about twenty youth from different countries. The party size varied from fifty to eighty devotees from different countries including, amongst others, USA (California), England, Serbia and Croatia. Ananta Dasa acted as a

communication's person ensuring that the different groups of participants remained unified throughout the walk. This year's padayatra was very special because we were joined by two GBC members for Slovenia: Prahlanananda Swami walked with us for twelve days, and Bir Krishna Goswami for a few. Laxmimoni Dasi gave a few inspirational lectures, the main subject being the glories of Lord Ramachandra and His great servant Hanuman, who is the emblem of bhakti and loving selfless service. Devotees were moved by her stirring presentation, feeling enthused to follow the example of Hanuman, and they enthusiastically continued their walk to preach the glories of bhakti.

**"Why have you skipped our street? We were waiting for you!"**

At the front of the procession was Lalita Govinda on his bright green bicycle, merrily riding back and forth to occasionally check out if the devotees were following the planned itinerary. Then came the devotees pulling the cart, and behind them the dancing

Vaisnavis in their colorful devotional clothes, moved rhythmically as in a choreographed musical. The group of ladies was followed by the kirtana leader, surrounded by men or women, depending on who was leading. At the back were devotees pulling trolleys carrying the sound system, books, cookies and water bottles. In general the weather was very suitable with the sun shining brightly and occasional rain. We could feel and taste the sweet air emanating from the fragrant flowers in the villages through which we travelled.

In order not to miss a single street or a single house, Lalita Govinda suggested that we meander through the roads around the villages. On one occasion, we skipped a street, and a man living on that street addressed the devotees from the front of his house, shouting, "Why have you skipped our street? We were waiting for you, and you are not coming!" This gesture touched us all. In the village of Trzin, one of the most developed and richest towns in Slovenia we could easily see how the sankirtana was impacting on the residents. An old lady whose home had an enchanting garden, drew the curtains aside upon hearing the sound of kirtana. She saw us singing and clapping and immediately she began to clap her hands with great pleasure, mesmerized with the singing and dancing outside her window. Generally, people were curious and interested in our padayatra party - they were very friendly and open-hearted. People opened their windows, smiling and waving from their balconies, and many came out of their houses to meet the amazing procession. Some began clapping and dancing to the beat of the music. Essentially, everyone was attracted by the sweet music of the kirtana. The padayatris were filled with joy and it was evident from their effulgent faces that they were transported into another realm.

We could see how the sound of kirtana was changing people's hearts and filling them with nectar. This sankirtana movement is just like a moving honeybee hive that

distributes nectar to everyone who is ready to accept it. These are the moments that make you believe that this Hare Krishna mantra is not a material sound, but a transcendental sound coming from another world. Different groups reciprocated with us in different ways: children by smiling and laughing, dogs by barking and birds by their lyrical chirping. In one morning class he gave Ananta Dasa pointed out that jivadaya – mercy to all living entities – is an essential principle of bhakti-yoga, and that devotees by nature are extremely compassionate towards other living entities.

No home was left behind, unvisited. Devotees feverishly distributed Srila Prabhupada's books and pamphlets, while others gave out vegan cookies to people they encountered. Some were dancing, others playing different instruments such as mridanga, harmonica, drum, accordion, flute and sometimes even an electric guitar. There were three cardinal things that everyone did – walking, dancing and singing each waking day from one village to another.

### **Outings to beautiful tourist spots**

Going on padayatra also means to spend time in touristic places like Lake Bled, an emerald-green, glacial lake in the Julian Alps of the Upper Carniolan region of northwestern Slovenia. People from all around Europe come there to enjoy the beauty of wild nature. For us it was a good opportunity to share with these visitors the spiritual beauty of the holy name. People were very intrigued and they approached us with various questions to understand Krishna consciousness philosophy. It occurred to us that people are indeed in search of spiritual truths. We were sure that our harinamas gave them exposure to the absolute spiritual reality!

We also went to Lake Kocevje, which is described as one of the cleanest lakes in Slovenia, and which offers many options to relax your

body and soul. On one of the very hot days, Lalita Govinda organised a picnic on the bank of that lake and the padayatris enjoyed a refreshing swim in its clear waters..On the final day we traveled to the town of Port of Roses by the Adriatic Sea. This is unarguably one of the most attractive places and it was no wonder that it was packed with tourists. We were watched by hundreds of people who were either sitting in their boats, enjoying the sun and the sand, or standing on their surfing boards riding back to the shore. It was the finest and most lively harinama of the entire padayatra.



*Young people enjoying the harinama*

### **Happy endings**

In the evenings when we returned to the temple, there was generally a special treat waiting for us-delicious homemade, multi-flavored ice-cream, both the regular style as well as the vegan option made by the hands of our very own leader. We would like to pay tribute to Lalita Govinda Dasa for his enduring padayatra service. It is our prayer that Their Lordships, Nitai Gaura Nataraja, will bless him with good health, to plan further walks in the years to come.

In total we distributed 940 books, 2500 pamphlets and around 9800 coconut vegan cookies made by none other than Lalita Govinda himself. This padayatra left us feeling enthused to participate yet again in 2018.It is our desire that others will join to experience the bliss and pleasure in our endeavor to take the holy names to every town and village in Slovenia!

# OTHER PADAYATRAS DONE IN 2017

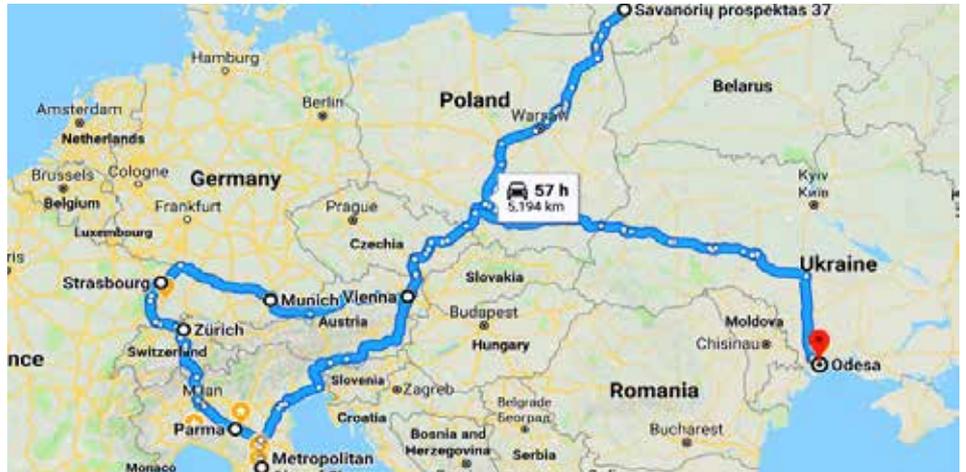
Besides the continuous, annual or long padayatras described in the previous articles, many more walks took place in 2017. Since this newsletter is too small to thoroughly cover all of them, we are only mentioning the main features of each one. You can find the complete articles and all the corresponding photos and videos on the padayatra website ([padayatra.com](http://padayatra.com))

## **A 5194 km Russian style padayatra across Europe**

Headed by Narada Dasa, a party of 8 to 18 devotees of Vaisnavas and Vaisnavis from Russia and Eastern Europe traveled by car from Kaunas in Lithuania to Odesa in Ukraine with Sri Sri Nitai Gauranga. They crossed many other countries: Poland, Czech Republic, Austria, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, France and Germany. Due to the long distances, devotees only walked on harinama in some towns and villages. During these months on the road they held 4 public festivals, 10 home programs, distributed 1000 prasadam packets and a total of 2500 books (200 maha big, 200 big, 100 medium and 2000 small).

## **The 31st annual Vraja Mandala padayatra of Parasurama Dasa (Uttar Pradesh, India)**

During the month of Kartika Parasurama organizes his annual oxcart padayatra in Vraja at the same time as the ISKCON parikrama. As usual he distributes large quantities of small books and prasadam bananas and shows various films on cow protection and other devotional topics. You're welcome to join this blissful and dynamic small group.



*Europe Russian style padayatra*

## **Annual 18 day Dindi yatra from Pune to Pandharpur (Maharashtra, India)**

Every year in the month of July devotees of ISKCON Pune organize a Dindi padayatra from Dehu (Tukaram's birthplace near Pune) to Pandharpur via Pune. While walking with their bullock cart along the thousands of other pilgrims also chanting names of God, they do harinama and distribute hundreds of books and magazines.

## **The 25th annual padayatra of ISKCON Bhubaneswar (Orissa, India)**

This 20 day bullock cart padayatra organized by ISKCON Bhubaneswar has been taking place every year in Orissa at the end of Kartika since 1992. Many devotees from different nations participate in this exciting preaching adventure, filled with many public programs, amazing receptions, friendly exchanges between devotees, out of this world harinamas, substantial prasadam and a minimum of walking.

## **Annual Dindi padayatra from Aravade to Pandharpur (Maharashtra, India)**

This year there were more than 130 participants along with 10 temple bramacharis. Devotees distributed around 1000 books and conducted 2 Kirtan Melas, dramas, evening programs, and organized a beautiful Rama Navami festival. Aravade is a small village in Maharashtra about 90 kms from Pandharpur. It is also the place where Lokanath Maharaja took birth and was raised among cows and oxcarts. He established a beautiful temple com museum, which is very popular in the area.

## **Lithuania: demonstrating the power of cooperation, friendship and love**



*Lithuania Ratha-yatra Padayatra*

The 2017 Padayatra/Ratha-yatra organized by Ananda Gaurangi Dasi took place on June 13-18. Devotees were blessed with the presence of five inspiring sannyasis. Madhavananda prabhu joined the party for a couple of times and gave an enlightening class about Lord Jagannath. Besides the usual Ratha-yatras in the main cities, this year the devotees took risks by going to the very small city of Mazeikiyai, where local devotees had organized the entire festival. All the devotees were shocked to see so many people; it seems that the whole city had gathered there for the Ratha-yatra. People also joined the procession by pulling the ropes of the chariot, dancing on the sidewalks and just staring from their windows. The other pleasant surprise was to see that the local devotees had organized tents with prasadam, henna tattoos, sari photo shoots, books and yoga stands and a tent for children. These Vaisnavas thus demonstrated the power of blessings, of cooperation and of friendship and love! They were really united in purpose and were so eager to make this happen and share this mercy with the people of Mazeikiyai. At the end of the padayatra Niranjana Swami urged devotees to plan a ratha-yatra in every city in order to bless all those unfortunate conditioned souls who don't know anything about the Lord of the Universe.

Video link of Padayatra 2017: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHsZujd6E3Q&feature=share>

### **Latur (Maharashtra, India)**

ISKCON Latur organized their second padayatra from July 12th to 17th. The group of 35 devotees walked the 84 kms from Latur to Tuljapur, a town well-known for its 'Tulja Bhavani' temple dedicated to Goddess Bhavani, which attracts pilgrims come from all over India. The main attraction was the bullock cart carrying the deities of Jagannath, Baladev and Subhadra Devi as well as the Gaura Nitai deities. All the padayatris were enthused, motivated and blissful after this padayatra/Ratha-yatra. They

distributed 100 big books and 200 Back To Godhead (BTG)

### **5 day World Holy Names Padayatra from Vallabh Vidyanagar to Dakor (Gujarat, India)**



*Vallabh Vidyanagar in Gujarat*

The devotees of the ISKCON Vallabh Vidyanagar temple, headed by Sachinandana Dasa successfully completed their second padayatra in September. The five-day walk, named 'The World Holy Names Padayatra', started from the Sri Sri Radha Giridhari temple in Vallabh Vidyanagar and ended at the Sri Ranchor Rai temple in Dakor. The party consisted of temple devotees, congregation members and 'ISKCON Youth Forum' students. In the village of Selun Asit Krishna Maharaja joined the group; in his evening class he encouraged the padayatris very much, saying that padayatra is a very important program for all of humanity. September 12th was the realization session during which everyone shared amazing insights. Two elderly matajis said that previously they could not walk long distances but now, due to the mercy of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, they had been able to complete the entire padayatra. Another Vaisnavi recounted how she distributed Bhagavad-Gitas to three Muslims who promised her that they would read it daily. Afterwards, feeling separation from the Deities, the devotees all prayed together 'Dear Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundar, please accept us in Your eternal sankirtana yatra—we are not interested in doing any other yatra if You are not present.'

The last day padayatris arrived at Meethi Leemada, the place where Lord Dwarkadish had once stayed. It is said that He touched the branch of a neem tree and that that branch had become sweet due to the Lord's touch. There the party received the balya bhoga maha-prasadam of Lord Ranchor Rai, whose darsana - and raj bhoga maha prasadam -they got afterwards in His temple.

### **The 4 day Pandharpur parikrama in the land of Saint Tukaram (Maharashtra, India)**

On February 4th ISKCON Pandharpur organized their fourth parikrama with 250 participants from all over India and abroad from the ages of 14 to 65. One of the highlights was the participation of Navayogendra Maharaja. On February 6th padayatris celebrated the day Saint Tukaram was initiated by Lord Caitanya in a dream. The next day was Jaya Ekadasi, a day particularly revered in Pandharpur. That day ISKCON devotees joined the thousands of dindis (kirtana groups from other Vaisnava groups) in chanting and dancing to the sound of the holy names. Then they all went to take darsana of Lord Vitthala in the main temple. Navayogendra Maharaja was very moved by seeing the black Lord with His hands on His hips, and he spent some time with the pujaris.

### **The 19th annual Dindi yatra from Solapur to Pandharpur (Maharashtra, India)**



*Solapur substitute oxcart*

The 3rd week of January devotees of ISKCON Solapur, headed by temple president Parthasarahi Prabhu,



*Solapur Dindi very popular with ladies*

performed their 19th padayatra from Solapur to Maghawari. This year they did not use the bullock cart as it was already used for the larger Pandharpur parikrama. On the party of more than 100 there were many more Vaisnavis than Vaisnavas. Since many of them are good singers, they led many kirtanas and bhajans during the 4 day walk. Travelling through small villages the padayatris distributed around 400 books, big and small and every day they served a minimum of 200 plates of prasadam, and 500 in big programs. In most villages the sarpancha (leader, mayor) came to welcome the party. In one village they met another traveling Dindi group. By seeing the ISKCON devotees dance and chant with such enthusiasm the pilgrims and the local people stopped their own bhajans and ecstatically participated in their harinama. Although the Solapur devotees were very tired they also started jumping and dancing. They just could not stop!

### **A 2 day pilgrimage in a remote mystical oasis (Assam, India)**

On December 31st 2016 Yasodadulal Dasa started a 40 kilometer padayatra pilgrimage in Assam, the very place chosen by Krishna to acquire His 16,000 queens. Accompanied with a group of 150 local devotees Yasodadulal walked from the famous Kamakhya Devalaya to Vashistha ashram. The local people related to his attractive but double-edged theme, "Save Earth Now". This slogan

directly addresses the current world ecological and environmental crisis. It can also be used to deliver the deeper spiritual message that the solution to all material problems is, in fact, a spiritual answer. Before beginning his walk he had made good friends with Mohit Sharma, the Deloi (mahant) of the famous Kamakhya Mandir, who gave his sincere blessings. Along the route the padayatris were met by a favorable police department, who gave us their total support escorting the extensive party. The Minister of Railways of Assam walked with them for two days. All these dignitaries, as well as the Vice Chancellor of one of the local universities were duly presented with garlands, Bhagavad-gitas and prasadam. On their arrival at Vashista Asram on January 1, 2017 Yasodadulal met the head pandit there, who spoke these meaningful words, "Yes, if we take good care of the mother Earth, she will take good care of us."

### **A blissful week-end walk for the devotees of Baroda (Gujarat, India)**



*Baroda Deities*

On Nov 11th and 12th ISKCON Baroda devotees walked the 32 kms from the Baroda temple to the small town of Mahuvad where there is a famous temple of Ranchor Rai, crossing 7 villages. In the village of Ranu the sarpanch (mayor) of the village offered arati to the Gaura Nitai deities. After a delicious feast Vamshidhari Prabhu, Baroda's ISKCON Youth Forum's director, gave a small speech and a vote of thanks to all the devotees who made this padayatra successful. A total of 60 to 80 devotees were on the road: elderly, young, women and children, all of them looking very blissful. The devotees distributed 160 Bhagavad-gitas, 200 small books and some BTG magazines.

### **A 2 day padayatra to promote the 'Bricks of Bhakti' in Raichur (Karnataka, India)**

On March 4th the devotees of ISKCON Raichur held their first 45 km padayatra from the city of Raichur to the pilgrimage village of Mantralayam, also known as Madhwacarya Mutt. Temple president, Varada Krishna Dasa, organized this 2 day padayatra to engage the congregation in a spiritual activity that would help propagate Krishna consciousness. The party consisted of 40 padayatris (38 men and 2 women) and a motor vehicle which served as a cart to transport Gaura Nitai and the banners. The arrival of the Vaisnavas was a new experience for the villagers of Gunjahalli who had never heard kirtana or seen devotees dancing so happily before. After doing harinama around the village and talking some Krishna katha the padayatris distributed tamarind rice, sambar and curry sabji prasadam to 100 villagers. Everyone was very receptive to the program and the villagers thanked the devotees for visiting their village. In Mantralayam, a village visited by thousands of pilgrims, they met with Subudhendra Teertha Swami of the Mantralayam Mutt and asked him to bless their 'Bricks of Bhakti' initiative, an eco-friendly program for the construction of a new ISKCON temple in Raichur.

The program encourages people to come help make environmentally friendly bricks for building the temple, they even carried a few with them to show everyone.

### One day joy filled padayatra in Ahmedabad (Gujarat, India)

On November 13th the devotees of ISKCON Ahmedabad set off on a short padayatra. More than 85 devotees participated in the procession led by the deities of Sri Sri Nimai Nitai and Srila Prabhupada who were carried on a palanquin. Then came the vibrant sankirtana party with the women in colorful attire upfront and the men at the back. The highlight of the padayatra was the performance of the special nritya (dance) by the devotees, a dance very similar to the form used by the devotees during the Polish Festival headed by Indradyumna Swami. It was a jubilant scene of dance and music. People were chanting the holy names and dancing with such love for the Lord. At the end a sumptuous feast was served to everyone who attended the padayatra. Because the book marathon had officially started, devotees also distributed 25 big books and 175 small books during the walk.

### Padayatris team up with Food for Life in Durban, South Africa



Durban, South Africa

On September 9th, the first day of 'World Holy Name Week, a group of about 60 devotees including the Lotus Park Nama Hatta providing blissful

kirtana took to the streets of Lotus Park, a residential area located 20 kilometers south of the city of Durban. At the head of the procession was a beautifully decorated palanquin carried by the devotees. It was transformed into an exquisite mobile temple with Srila Prabhupada seated on top, and Sri Sri Gaura Nitai in front. Weeks prior to the event devotees had networked with the local municipality requesting permission to host this event and the officials made two police vehicles available to escort the procession. Many people who were intrigued by the sounds of the karatalas and the melodic kirtana came out of their homes to take darsana of Their Lordships. On either side of the main road were teams of devotees distributing prasadam sweets and Srila Prabhupada's books. At the rear end our 'Food For Life' vehicle distributed free hot meals to spectators and householders. The walk ended at a devotee's house with a feast for all the walkers. They distributed more than 100 books, and were very thrilled to team up with Food for Life who distributed about 600 plates of hot prasadam.

### One day Peace Walk in Togo (West Africa)



Togo Group photo around Bhakti Carudesna Swami

On December 23rd ISKCON Lomé organized its second one day padayatra in Togo under the leadership of Bhakti Carudesna Swami. Around 45 devotees from different countries of West Africa walked the 27 kms route from Lomé, the country's capital, to the town of Adetikope, where they chanted and sold books at the booth they had at the

huge trade fair that was taking place that week-end. The devotees became the center of attraction for everyone at the fair and their prasadam was very much appreciated.

### Annual one day city pilgrimage and discovery tour in Detroit (USA)



Detroit pilgrimage

On May 6th a party of 20 devotees led by Jambavan Dasa walked through the city of Detroit in a pilgrimage meant to increase their dependence on the Lord. Concomitant with their desire for internal development, was also the opportunity to chant in public and reach out to others in order to share with them the beauty of Krishna consciousness. Each year many appreciative people thank the devotees for just walking through their neighborhood.

This walk is also an opportunity to learn more about the Motor City while stopping at certain historic locations. This year they visited several interesting places: Our Lady Queen of Heaven, an art deco style church, which in and of itself is quite rare; the expansive and serene Mt. Olivet cemetery; the site of the famous Eastown Theater—once a place of pilgrimage for music fans throughout the country; the historic Indian Village neighborhood; and the beautiful Belle Isle—the site of Srila Prabhupada's morning walks in the Renaissance City. Those who go on the walk gain an invaluable experience that make them able to better connect with those they are trying to help.

# IN MEMORIAM

## Krishna Vilasini Dasi's taste for the holy names and padayatra takes her all the way to Panama in Central America

By Gaurangi Dasi

### Attracted to harinama from the very beginning

I met Krishna Vilasini on the 89 Padayatra America and spent time with her on the East Coast padayatra while we were both based in the Potomac temple in Washington DC. In the course of working on the Padayatra Story book of Lokanath Maharaja, I interviewed her and her husband Saunaka several times to record their heroic adventures, which you'll be able to read soon in the upcoming books. Locan Dasa's statements are taken from Facebook pages and other details of her life from an interview of Saunaka by one of her godsisters.

Krishna Vilasini's legal name was Victoria Anne Heyda. At the end of the sixties she took Bhagavad-gita classes from Hamsadutta Dasa at the University of Berkeley in California. He was then the president of the Berkeley temple on Durant Street. On the 8th of Feb 1969 she joined the nearby San Francisco temple, where she took first initiation from Srila Prabhupada; a year later she received second initiation from him in Los Angeles.

**Locan Dasa:** Krishna Vilasini was a very special devotee. She was immediately attracted to harinama and there are photos from that period showing her blissful absorption in the holy names. She was a sold out enthusiastic bhaktin whose only ambition was harinama and preaching. We got married in the spring of 1970, but her heart was in the chanting and I was the attached grihastha. In 1971 we started a temple

together in Portland, Oregon, and then moved to San Francisco where we had our first child. Krishna Vilasini walked during the Ratha-yatra festival in Golden Gate Park and gave birth to our baby girl at 2:00 am the next morning. Srila Prabhupada called it "natural childbirth" and named the baby Ratha.

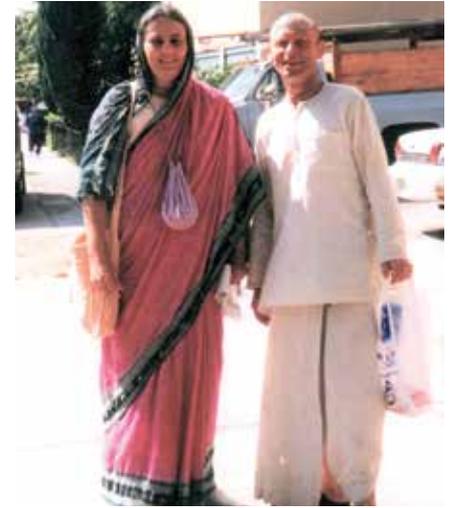
### Her meeting with Padayatra America Deities, Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara, changed the course of her life



Nitai Gaurasundara Padayatra America Deities

After Portland the couple moved to Los Angeles (LA) so Locana could do his business and help the Fate museum located there. It there, in 1989, that Vrindavana Lila Dasi showed her for the first time the murtis of Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara who were then residing in her apartment until they got installed on May 29th for the Padayatra from San Francisco to Tijuana. Her whole life changed after this encounter. An Italian devotee named Sangita Dasi taught her how to sew for the Deities and she made a few outfits for Them.

**Locan Dasa:** We were married for 22 years. We parted in 1993 when her irrepressible desire to go on padayatra required that she join the traveling party as the only woman on the team. Saunaka Prabhu was the leader and she was put in a position of working with him every day as his secretary and bookkeeper. Under the circumstances



With her husband Saunaka Dasi in North Carolina

it facilitated her service much better for her to OK a divorce and allow her to marry Saunaka. There was no ill will between us, it was all done to facilitate her ardent desire to spread the holy name around. And that she did. Many, many souls were touched by Saunaka and Krishna Vilasini and his austere band of padayatris.

From then on, Nitai Gaurasundara directed her life during the austere and blissful years she spent on padayatra with Saunaka, and They accompanied her till the very end in Vrindavana. The biggest losses in her life were the departures of Srila Prabhupada in 1977, of her siksa guru, Srila Narayan Maharaja, in 2011 and of her beloved daughter Rasa Priya Dasi (previously named Ratha) the following year.



Feasting at a Motel Patel in California (her daughter Rasa Priya on the right side of the photo)

**Padayatra in North and Central America: depending on the Lord in the midst of a variety of austerities and a maze of dangers**



*Prayer vigil in Washington DC*

Krishna Vilasini participated in the 1989 Camino real padayatra from San Francisco to the Mexican border. That's where she met Saunaka Dasa who was one of the pujaris of Nitai-Gaurasundara. In 1990 the GBC asked Padayatra America to continue the dharma-yuddha (fight for religious freedom) on the East Coast of the US in preparation for the next step in the Robin George case: a final appeal to the US Supreme Court. Mukunda Goswami, then head of ISKCON Communications, invited Padayatra America manager Badarayani to join the operations in their Communications Office established at the Potomac temple in Washington DC. Krishna Vilasini became the Padayatra secretary. She also participated in the 24 hour prayer vigil on Pennsylvania Avenue, which runs between the White House and the Capitol and near the Supreme Court, meant to attract attention of the medias and the public. It was the month of February- winter - and devotees had only a rug on the sidewalk in front of a massive stone edifice to sit on. It was very cold (-3° C = 26° F), and they had to chant through rain and snow and winds that blew their signs over.

On June 29, 1990, Padayatra America began its East Coast walk from Boston to Miami. Saunaka assisted the leader, Badarayani Dasa. Everything was going well - the preaching was good and people seemed impressed by the simplicity and happiness of the devotees' lives. But from the very beginning of padayatra in the US

Lokanath Maharaja had wanted a traditional bullock cart pulled by trained oxen as on Padayatra India. But the devotees thought this impossible in America.



*Arrival in Miami*

**Krishna Vilasini:** Srila Prabhupada once said that "impossible" is a word found in a fool's dictionary. And he was right. While walking in Virginia we met a man who had traveled all over the US with a wagon pulled by mules. Krishna was giving us a big hint and some tangible direction: if an ordinary man could travel in this country with his mule wagon, surely Lord Caitanya's sankirtana padayatra party could do it with an oxcart. We phoned different ISKCON farm communities looking for oxen, but with no success. When we had all but given up hope, suddenly Kamra Dasi, from Alachua, Florida, called our Potomac Padayatra Office and said she and her husband, Vrajendranandana, had some brown Swiss oxen and a wagon that very much wanted to travel with on padayatra. This was amazing. They didn't even know we were looking for oxen. It seemed the Lord really wanted this to happen. That's how we got Balaram and Nakula.

After Badarayani's untimely departure from this world in December 1990, Saunaka became leader of Padayatra America. Krishna Vilasini assisted him on the road, where she worked with the media, and at the Office in Washington, DC, where she raised funds and produced the "Padayatra America Newsletter." Her poor health prevented her from walking for more than three months. Finally the party arrived in Florida on March 11th 1991, and settled in for several weeks at Alachua's New Raman-reti community. It was a time to gather

spiritual strength in the association of the local devotees and fix up the cart by adding cabinets.

**Krishna Vilasini:** From the beginning of my stay on padayatra I noticed the many miracles the Lord would arrange just so His program could go on. On the morning of Rama Navami we decided to leave Alachua the next day to resume the walk north of Jacksonville, but we had no laksmi to rent a trailer to transport the oxen, buy petrol for the bus and van, or cover various other necessities to get us back on the road. By the following morning somehow, by the grace of the Lord, we had enough to continue. This happened over and over - we'd get down to nothing and begin to wonder what would happen next. We always went on with our preaching service, and then Lord Krishna made some amazing arrangements and we were able to survive. To live and preach like that may sound difficult, but the on padayatra devotees found it spiritually rewarding. It also created a special potency - in the padayatris' presence people would feel an unusual, previously inexperienced purity and dedication.

After Florida Saunaka and Krishna Vilasini, with a few other padayatris, continued to Mexico, Belize, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and Panama. They did much preaching, made many friends, changed of few hearts, and got regular newspaper articles. But the list of difficulties was a long one: intense heat, mosquitoes, gnats, frequent rainstorms, the worse roads in South America (sometimes muddy, slippery, with potholes or steep grades on both sides), guerrilleros attacking travelers in the jungle and robbing them of all their possessions, remnants of a twelve-year civil war in El Salvador and communist Sandinistas were still active in Nicaragua, landmines, thieves stealing oxen, a 15-m tsunami inundating the coastal town just 15 km from their campsite, illness similar to malaria, delays at the borders while waiting for entry permits for the oxen, and so on. These heroic padayatris



*Padayatra Costa Rica team*

learned to turn negative events into positive ones by turning more to Krishna. During their padayatra from Boston to Panama via Florida, from June 1990 to January 1993, they covered a distance of 3814 kms (2370 miles).

### **"Swing Lo' Sweet Chariot': an amazing departure from Vrindavana**

At some point Krishna Vilasini and Saunaka, both disciples of Srila Prabhupada, accepted Narayan Maharaja as they siksa guru. When their 1996 US padayatras were over they went to live in Vrindavan in one of Maharaja'asrams near the Yamuna. They had brought Nitai Gaurasundara with them.

**Saunaka Dasa:** "I could easily write a book about her. As in any society when the leader leaves there is much confusion. While residing in Narayana Maharaja's society we were banned from entering India for 16 months. Happily, with much help from some persons in India we were able to enter again. When we got back in December 2016 some devotees were still threatening to kick us out of Vrindavana forever. Krishna Vilasini was so sad. She told me that she was not going to leave Vraja. The girls of the ashram told me later that they went out with her for three days straight. She would sing the well known Negro Spiritual "Swing Lo' Sweet Chariot Coming for to carry me home..." and just cry and cry. She was asking Krishna and Srila Prabhupada to take her away. At that time she was a little sick but it was not so bad. She got congestion in her lungs for three days but on the third day she was breathing normally again and had

some strength. I gave her some green herbal tea and some other drink, and she looked happy.

That morning, a little before 10 : I left for the Sri Sri Radha Damodar Mandir, and she was all right. Ten minutes later Narmada Dasi, one of girls staying at the asrama, called me that something had happened. I ran home quickly. Krishna Vilasini was still bright and smiling, but I fell into total shock to see that she had left her body. I could not function for three days. Other girls also noted that the glow of her body was still there after many hours and she still had her emblem in the form of 'her slight smile.' Others did everything for the cremation ceremony. Our Brijbasi neighbors helped, they loved her. The burning ghat is located 2 kilometers from our house but the owner of our rented house declared that she should be cremated right by the Yamuna in front of our house. He said, "She made so much effort to come back and see her Yamuna right here. She practically cried each day just to come back to her room, her Deities and her Yamuna. We will cremate her right here." Of course some people opposed this idea saying that the wind had been blowing continuously from the North towards the city of Vrindavan for three days and that her ashes would fall on important temples. The fire was very bright and flares went straight up. Amazingly, at 6 pm, when the fire was lit up the wind suddenly stopped. Despite those auspicious signs I was still very sad and aggrieved to have lost my dear wife. It was March 31st, 2017, the fourth day of what is called Navaratri, the nine days before Lord Rama's appearance. The erudite pandits all agreed that she left at a very good time. They also informed me that that day the expansion of Durga Devi was Kushmanda, who is the effulgence of Surya, the sun god. Putting these elements together, along with her singing about a chariot, I deduced that a Golden Chariot had come to take her away.

The following days many residents of Vrindavana were talking about that

elegant lady with a particular slight smile. They also pointed out that they never heard bad words from her mouth. I for one , will miss her very much. I know she still walks by my side because we did so much service together. She actually appeared to many devotees, asking them to take care of me (her Saunaka). That is no joke. " Saunaka thought that maybe the chariot Krishna Vilasini was singing about could have been the chariot of the Sun god, but I'm more inclined to think that it was a transcendental padayatra chariot. In any case, I'm sure she reached a very glorious destination, protected as she was by Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara, her beloved Deities.



*Steep climb in Costa Rica at Cerro de la Muerte*

### **Premarnava Dasa, leader of Mauritius padayatra for 15 years**

*By Ayodhyanath Dasa*

### **Becoming the Padayatra Mauritius leader**



Premarnava Dasa was born on 21st December 1959 in Mauritius. He joined ISKCON in 1982, got initiated by Lokanath Swami, and in 1990 he worked with the Padayatra team, becoming very instrumental in organizing padayatras and other festivals, a service he would keep doing for the next 15 years. He also cooked and did Deity worship, offering aratis to Sri Sri Radha Golokananda in the Phoenix temple. He was very expert at preparing kitchari, which was his seva to the devotees during big festivals. Nobody cooked kitchari like he did. We shall certainly miss this tasty kitchari, which reflects his love (prema) for the Lord and His devotees, as his name indicates. Premarnava got married in 2005 then 3 years later his wife Radha Prema Dasi died of cancer.

When he acted as the secretary/organizer of Padayatra Mauritius, Premarnava was always very enthusiastic. He did his service very nicely, accepting challenges and never feeling hopeless. Despite being unhealthy - in his last days he was unable to walk - he was always present in the padayatra meetings, still doing his service. His departure is a big loss for me and I'm missing the soldier whom he was.

I have spent most of my life in his association and I always get inspiration from him to focus more on my padayatra service to my Guru Maharaja, Lokanath Swami. Premarnava was very direct and humble, never criticizing anyone or using harsh language. He was admired by devotees as well as non-devotees, whomever he was connected to. He was always ready to help any person in need and was thus recognized for his generous attitude. I could never find any fault in him. Several times he told me that when Srila Prabhupada visited Mauritius in September 1975, he was a kid playing by the road at Rose Belle Shivala and he saw Prabhupada passing by in a car.

### **Both playful and serious**

He was not only my friend, and

gurubhai (godbrother), he was like a family member: my wife, Sri Manjari Dasi, my kids Prishnee and Ayodhya Dasi were very much attached to him. He used to play and do some mimicry with them, entertaining them, laughing with them and making them laugh. In any situation he was versatile and playful, at times in a childish mood, but always serious on important issues discussed during meetings.

I'm sad he departed from this world but I have been left with very nice memories of him. I would like to narrate one incident that happened while we were on a holiday trip to La Réunion Island on January 2000. The main reason of our visit was to see if we could organize some padayatra there. The day we flew, we heard that a breakdown of the computerized system might happen. We boarded a small plane with only four persons aboard, his nephew Srinu, a lady, him and me. The plane was empty as people preferred not to fly that day, even if the flight was only one and a half hour long. Premarnava insisted that I made arrangements for him to be settled in the cockpit next to the pilot, which is strictly forbidden for security reasons. Seeing him arguing with me and gesturing like a child the co-pilot was influenced and one by one, he allowed the four of us to go in the cockpit next to the pilot. It was a great experience for us.

### **Miraculous recovery of lost documents**

When we landed at the St Denis airport, we saw emptiness everywhere. We entered a very luxurious bus - almost empty also- to reach the residence of a friend names Jacques. Premarnava was behaving like a child, jumping from one seat to another, admiring the beautiful landscape of the island. Jacques had been participating in the Mauritius padayatra a few times so he requested us to arrange for a padayatra in La Réunion. On the fifth night before going to bed I requested Premarnava to go to the travel agency to confirm our return tickets. Here

came the bad news: he had lost his purse which contained our passports, visas, tickets and pocket money. I knew it was his habit of losing things. We were stuck. What to do? He searched for many hours. Considering his childish nature I didn't know what to do with him; finally I appeased him and requested him to have a little rest. I told him that in the morning we would see what could be done. Around three in the morning I was still unable to sleep and I prayed Krishna to be merciful because I could find no solution. I knew he had been searching here and there, but in vain.

The next day we went to the police station and the Air travel agency: we were informed that the procedures to again apply for our passports, visas and tickets could take one month. My God! I felt so helpless and Premarnava began to cry at the police station. I was very upset, so we requested the police to announce the loss on the radio and that a reward would be given to the person bringing our lost tickets and documents. Feeling totally helpless and unmotivated, we returned home to Jacques' house. We were so upset that we didn't take our meal that day. Premarnava was always seeking advice from me, so he asked me what we should do now. He jokingly replied, "Now my mind is stuck. Go to sleep. The Bramha muhurta hours will reveal something, don't worry." We woke up early the next morning and took our bath. I told him, "Don't bother me, chant your japa, pray to Krishna, as this is our only hope. Don't worry, everything will be ok, just concentrate." For nearly four hours we really chanted our rounds in a helpless mood.

At nine in the morning we decided to go and continue our search at the bus company which was only a few kilometres away. We rushed to the bus stop and tried to stop a few buses, but they didn't stop. We kept running after buses, all in vain. At last there came a bus who picked us outside the bus stand area. We stepped in the bus, feeling tired, with a pale face, and still arguing together. The driver noticed

us and asked, "Sir, are you looking for this?" as he handed us the purse which still had all our money and tickets. Feeling overwhelmed I embraced the driver, and Premarnava gave him one hundred euros, which the driver adamantly refused to accept. He said "No, no Sir, it's my pleasure. You got your belongings back and you seem to be pious persons. Hare Krishna people, yes?" That was quite an experience, and we were so elated to see the way Krishna took care of us.

### **Sudden departure and cremation on the bank of the Yamuna**

Premarnava Prabhu left us on January 13th 2016 at the age of 57 while on pilgrimage in India. He visited Badrinath and Haridwar and several other places. He had gone in the Himalayas, despite my unwillingness for his visit to India in the winter. I am into alternative medicine and I knew he was not in good health. I had previously warned him not to venture in cold weather but he insisted and made this trip. Due to the intense cold he got a severe heart congestion and left his body in a hospital in Delhi. His cremation was organized by devotees from the Noida temple and the cremation rituals were done on the bank of the Yamuna River. A feast was served on his behalf in the Vrindavan temple, at the same time that a yajna was organized for him in his native Mauritius: during seven days intense kirtanas were done at his place by the devotees of the Padayatra Mauritius team. I think all this was planned by Krishna for his auspicious departure. Thinking of Premarnava's character, services and past activities give me great pleasure and inspiration. After he left I took over his service and I am now trying to organize a solid padayatra team in Mauritius.

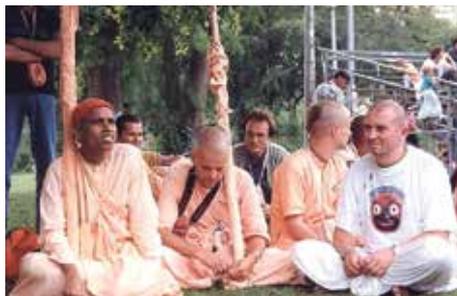
### **Niramaya Dasa, leader Of Belgium and Luxembourg padayatras**

*By Gaurangi Dasi*

Note: I met Niramaya Dasa a few times:

in 1910 on Padayatra Holland, then in 2014 in Spain, where I interviewed him about his role in different padayatras, and at the 2015 Ratha-yatra in Noida, near Delhi. I also gathered details of his life from devotees who knew him.

### **From Argentina to Holland, Radhadesh and finally Spain**



*During the 1991 Padayatra in Holland*

Niramaya Prabhu was born in Argentina, South America, in January 1950. He got his first initiation from Srila Prabhupada in New Mayapur, France, in June 1976 and his brahmana initiation from Lokanath Maharaja during the 1991 padayatra in Holland. For some time he lived in Amsterdam, Holland, where he married Puspanjali Dasi, from whom he got two sons. Then he moved back to Spain and in the early eighties he again lived in Radhadesh, before finally going back to Spain in Malaga, near the local ISKCON temple. He was living close to the beach and was giving massages to tourists for his livelihood. As a member of the ISKCON Malaga community he was always willing to help, especially during and before Janmastami, but in the last two years his health got worse and he could not do as much as he used to. One month before his departure he got a stroke from which he did not recover. He got weaker and weaker and needed constant care as he could not take care of himself anymore. The Malaga devotees took him to a hospital and visited him as often as they could. He left this mortal world on December 16th 2017 early in the morning. Unfortunately at that time there was no devotee present with him, but we are sure the Lord remembered all his services and his love for His holy names.

### **Becoming the leader of the 1991 padayatra in Belgium**

In the summer of 1991 Padayatra Europe crossed the English Channel and started its walk in Holland. On July 22 a group of 108 devotees from 15 countries assembled in Amsterdam for a 7 hour harinama parikrama of the sites of Prabhupada's pastimes. Niramaya was one of them.

**Niramaya Dasa:** In 1991 I was living in the Amsterdam temple, doing service in the Benelux, and the temple authorities asked me to take brahmana initiation from a guru whose qualities I could admire. I had met Lokanath Maharaja in Amsterdam and at Radhadesh and had been impressed by his devotional mood. He also liked chanting Hare Krishna, an activity I also enjoyed. So I thought, "The best I can do is to take initiation from Lokanath Swami, since everywhere he goes he's chanting Hare Krishna." After I got second initiation I thought the most suitable thing for me to do was to join the padayatra, so I asked Maharaja if he would allow me to manage padayatra in part of the Benelux. He agreed, and I became the new organizer for Belgium. As I was a grhastha I took my wife and two kids with me. My wife cooked and my children walked.

After attending the Ratha-yatra in Antwerp, the padayatris walked to Brussels. During their 2 day stay there Niramaya organized programs with the friends of Krishna living around. He met a Catholic priest, who let the devotees stay at his spacious Boy Scout center. It had many rooms equipped with showers. Devotees could do their whole sadhana program there, bathe, do laundry, cook, and hold Srimad-Bhagavatam class. From Brussels the padayatris walked through the French-speaking part of Belgium to a beautiful place called Sept Fontaines. Unfortunately, the walk had to stop at that point because the main party had to return to England and another group had to go to Lille to prepare for the weekend festival during which Padayatra France would be inaugurated. Since the party was

one day and a half behind Niramaya proposed to Lokanath Maharaja that the France party goes to France with the cart and oxen and that he and four other devotees continue the walk from Sept Fontaines to Lille so as not to break the mood of the padayatra. Maharaja agreed to this proposal.

**Niramaya :** People appreciated our padayatra very much. Some said, "I don't know what religion you are, but the fact that you are walking for the welfare of the world is something I really respect." People gave us vegetables – mostly potatoes, broccoli, and cabbage, which all grew in the area. After we finished our walk to Lille, we came back to Radhadesh.

A couple of years later, in August 1993, a group of devotees from Radhadesh decided to complete the Benelux section of Padayatra Europe by organizing a one-week walk through Luxembourg. Niramaya was one of the organizers. They had a horse-drawn cart and a van to carry the tents, cooking equipment, and devotees' luggage and to do advance party work. Since there is not much going on in Luxembourg, the residents of that country were happy to see the colorful walking festival, and they welcomed the devotees nicely by

offering a field for camping, water for bathing, vegetables and some words of appreciation.



*Niramaya loved kirtana*

### **Shyamasundar Dasa, a pillar of the 1989 Padayatra America**

*By Vrindavana Lila Dasi*

In 1989 Syamasundar Dasa (then known as Shyamananda Dasa before receiving initiation by Hridayananda

Dasa Goswami) served Padayatra America for the entire 4 month walk from San Francisco to Tijuana, the Mexican border town south of San Diego. He rendered a wide variety of services: making videos, taking photos, driving the padayatra van, running errands, picking up padayatris who were lagging behind the party, assisting with cooking, being the personal servant of Lokanath Maharaja, and doing whatever else was needed. He met his future wife, Mani Manjari Dasi, on that padayatra; she also left her body many years ago. Shyamasundar passed away on May 17th 2016 in his apartment in New Dwarka (Los Angeles) due to epilepsy.



*Shyamasundar on the 89 padayatra from San Francisco to Tijuana*

### **One more padayatra in Maharashtra: Introducing Gaura Nitai during a 14 km padayatra from ISKCON Jalgaon center to Maniyarkheda, site of the future temple**

On December 16th a group of 150 devotees from Jalgaon, including many Vaisnavis, and students from the Nasik BACE performed their first padayata under the guidance of Caitanya Jivan Dasa and Paramatma Dasa, president of ISKCON Jalgaon. By the Lord's arrangement Ram Govinda Maharaja was doing a preaching tour in that area at that time, so he guided the organizers. The goal of this walk was to make Jalgaon's public aware of the ISKCON center in their town

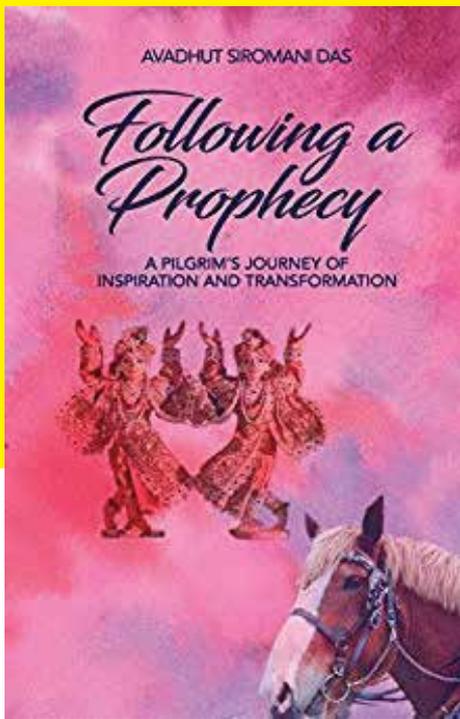
and of their upcoming temple in Maniyarkheda. Devotees had brought the Gaura Nitai Deities from the Nasik BACE (Bhaktivedanta Academy for Culture and Education), a residential facility for college students and young unmarried professionals.

In Maharashtra people hardly know about Gaura Nitai so devotees made announcements to explain that They are same as Krishna Balarama in Vrindavana. Padayatris distributed about 2000 books (Bhagavad-gitas, Krishna books, Bhuvaikunthas , a book on the holy city of Pandharpur, and small books). This padayatra became the talk of town and the topic of many newspapers' articles. In Maharashtra the bullock cart is always honored and respected, what to speak when the Lord is riding on it. People

were just amazed to see The gorgeous Deities and so many devotees happily walking and dancing around Them.



*Jalgaon Padayatra cart*



**Lokanath Swami: The heroic narration of a 14,000 km journey across North, Central and South America undertaken against all odds**

This book graphically illustrates how Avadhuta Siromani was able to successfully negotiate his preaching activities in the remotest town and village during this epic journey using two horses as the “engines” of the padayatra. His astuteness in resolving problems and taking on challenges, minor and major, during the journey bears testimony to Avadhuta prabhu’s resilience to continue undeterred.



*Padayatra’s route*

# FOLLOWING A PROPHECY: THE BOOK OF AVADHUTA SIROMANI DASA THAT WILL MOVE YOU TO THE CORE



*Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundar*

Together with his travelling companion, Chandrabhaga Dasi, Avadhuta had to wade through deep water and knee high snow to move forward. At every corner, there was a challenge to be negotiated, be it mountainous terrains, narrow paths, bridges, or difficulties in locating suitable resting places for the Deities. Most of all, on such a journey, one needs dependence on Krishna which is unwavering because padayatra means one is totally vulnerable to the elements – the weather, the traffic and the constant stream of people with differing moods. In this book he describes differing reactions of curious onlookers, many of whom were intrigued and others overwhelmed at the sight of the spectacular Deities.

**Ambarisa Dasa: A story of faith, love, and willpower**

This book is about a remarkable spiritual journey, filled with drama, tears, and inspiration. It is about an astonishing personality, Avadhuta Siromani, and his tenacious fight for survival while trying to serve his

beloved Lords under the most dire and harsh conditions. It is a story of faith, love, and willpower. It will be inspiring to anyone who reads it... Personally I will always be there to encourage him and offer my friendship. He has earned my love, admiration and respect and we can all draw inspiration and courage from his incredible journey.

**Krishna Dharma Dasa: A book full of potent spiritual faith gems**

A gripping read chronicling an external pilgrimage full of adventure and courage, and also an internal journey filled with uplifting spiritual realizations. When I finished reading it I felt inspired to delve deeper in my own spiritual journey. This book is full of potent spiritual faith gems ... I cannot recommend it enough.

**Chandrabhaga Dasi: A pilgrim’s inward journey**

We can never repay the great gift Srila Prabhupada has given us and we should always remain indebted to him and the previous acaryas. In return, he has simply asked us to try to share Krishna consciousness with others all around the world, in such a way the acaryas will be pleased. In following the desires of the spiritual master, it may so happen we will be confronted with sacrifices, both great and small, in order to dovetail our lives towards this goal. Following A Prophecy showcases a pilgrim’s inward personal journey



*Stop at a Louisiana school*

and the symbiotic inspiration that takes place on such an outreach mission. It reveals the transformation that arises when giving one's life to this mission, and demonstrates a universal human need for transcendence throughout different cultures and peoples. This book also gives technical insights to those who are interested in taking up such a long animal powered journey.

## Excerpts from the book

### Sharing an alternative way of life

The idea of proselytism had never appealed to me. My intention was not to have engaging philosophical discussions. I was raised in a strict Catholic tradition, but grew up spiritually when I came to the Vaisnava tradition. Therefore, I was sure I had the tools needed in order to relate with people from different backgrounds. The intention was to share an alternative way of life, a way of engaging our life by following the prophecy which said that the Holy Name will reach every village and town of the world. The essence of the preaching was going to be simple: wherever you go and whoever you meet, just share about Krishna and the Holy Name, and this seed will fructify.



*Walking on a 1 mile long bridge in Texas*



*Avadhuta Siromani with Balaji*

### Practical advice on horses from an Amish friend used to travel by horse wagon

Here is the advice of a Mr. Bukerman, a friend from an Amish community where its residents all travel by horse wagon, work their land with draft horses, and do not use electricity: 'Crossing America in a draft wagon requires a lot of determination and a good knowledge of horses. You must keep in mind that in order to have a successful journey you must see your horses as your best friends. Never eat before they have taken their meal and remember that they will be the engine of your journey.' Over the years I internalized these words and by practicing it I found that these horses were not just pulling a wagon, but were a vital source of support and inspiration to me to never give up.

### Depending on Krishna works!

It was remarkable how, even though we embarked on this journey with only enough supplies and money for a week, we received overwhelming support by people whose lives we had touched. Without this assistance we would never have been able to continue. We were witnessing what faith could do. We could not help but see Krishna's hand in it all, personally arranging things.

People coming forward to help with food, hay, services and prayers

It had become quite normal for people to gather around us when we stopped at small towns. They would come and ask questions, take pictures of the Deities and almost everyone would agree we needed prayer to uplift the world. It was touching how nearly all those who would visit would bring some sort of provision to offer. Unfortunately, we could take only what we absolutely needed and no more for fear that the weight of the wagon would become too much of a strain for the horses. Therefore, on some occasions, I had to turn down gallons of drinking water, fruits, canned vegetables, peanut butter and potatoes, which had become a common offering.

### Tolerance brings satisfaction to the heart

On the road we could expect visitors at any time, be it while we were taking care of the Deities, sleeping, taking prasadam, bathing or even when we were using the toilet outside. It was definitely awkward at times but it taught me tolerance: it meant opening my space to share with others. Having such tolerance brings great satisfaction to the heart.



*Preaching is the essence*



*Escorted by horse riders in a Mexican town*

### **A Christian priest pointing to me as an example of faith**

One evening, a priest from a Christian church arrived in his truck full of adolescents. We welcomed them and started to speak about our mission. He then said something very interesting, and asked one of the youth present whether he had faith in Jesus. The boy said, "Yes". The priest turned and looked at me saying, "This gentleman is an example of faith. We can learn from him so that we can have some faith in Jesus' teachings, and the way he wanted us to live." People came to see us and never left empty handed, for they always left with inspiration in their heart.

### **Nothing else to do but tolerate the austerities**

In Southern Virginia temperatures were rising up to 100°F (38°C). The mood in the heat became slow, activity was limited and the only thing we wanted to do was rest. Mosquitoes, ticks, poison ivy, heat; all of them were there to help us tolerate. Life on the road is obviously austere, with no privacy or comfort. Our horses Balaji and Kana seemed undisturbed by the every day changes. They remained sober throughout, always fixed and independent of external circumstances. Chandrabhaga was also doing well. She liked being on the road despite the inclement weather, even though poison ivy was really testing her. If she desired to be there, I thought, then the Lord will give her the strength to continue.



*Curious school kids in El Salvador*

### **Appreciations from a man who hosted the padayatri on his farm to take care of the horses' hooves** (Mike handed this letter to them before they left)

"Our quiet retreat here in Louis County, Virginia, is named Shamba Salama, which in Ki-Swahili means "Peaceful farm". During the past five weeks it has been graced with the presence of Padayatra. We have been extremely honored and blessed by getting to know you and your mission. You have touched our lives, exhibiting amazing humility and grace. Our lives have been enriched by this experience, we will always remember you."



*Sharing Krishna consciousness with everyone they met*

### **Abundant and positive newspaper articles**

News reporters always came wherever we went. We treated all of them with much dignity, so naturally their articles were also nice. This is an extract from an article from The South Enterprise newspaper (Virginia State, USA):

" On a pilgrimage to someday reach South America, a young devout couple of the Hare Krishna faith - a religious order from India- recently passed through Southside Virginia on their way to Argentina. After checking on them regularly during the night and generous generous donations of horse feed, the police escorted them through town and down HG46 where they headed for the North Carolina border. Hare Krishna followers are devout in their service to God and do not look to convert those they meet -they only wish to spread the word that each person should regularly work at improving their personal relationship with God (called Krishna in their belief system) through their own religious practices, wherever they may be, in order to enjoy a more fulfilled, spiritual-led life."

### **A scary night encounter with the dangerous mareros of El Salvador**

I lay down on the floor of the wagon at about ten-thirty, hoping to get some rest because I had to awake early the next morning for mangal arati. My short slumber was interrupted moments after by fifteen young and dangerous looking men. I instantly understood they were gangsters looking for trouble



*Attracting a crowd at Cartago farm*

and they had stopped just across from our wagon. I could hear them talking among themselves, trying to figure out what to make of this scene. A foreign man dressed in bed sheets, sleeping on the floor of a horse drawn wagon in what looked like the middle of nowhere. One of them, as arrogant and fear-invoking as young hoodlums can be, swaggered towards the front of our wagon and looked around daringly. If anyone wanted to pick a fight he made it known they would not leave with their lives. These young men were 'mareros' a local gang that was everywhere in this country. They did not operate like the 'guerillas' (an illegal armed group), but nevertheless they posed an enormous problem for the political stability here. They were delinquents, involved in petty theft, assault and numerous other criminal activities, and they were dangerous. They are a force to be reckoned with, being well organized, with a following of 10,000 strong all over the region. They have their roots in the suburbs of Los Angeles, and gradually became an organization and spread operations throughout South Mexico, Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras.

There was little I could do should they choose to harass us, vandalize what little we had or take our lives. In that moment of utter vulnerability I thought, "If the Lord wants to protect us, nobody could kill us!" So I shook myself fully awake, and decided to go speak to them. But what would I speak of to these people? I thought. Talk of God? Hmmmm...? Yes, I had to be straightforward and confident, that was my plan, fearless and equipoised, whatever happens will happen. I

picked one of them from the deadly fifteen and said to him, "My friend, we are walking on a pilgrimage trying to glorify God. We walk and pray for the good of everybody and now I am extremely tired and must go to sleep because tomorrow at three-thirty in the morning, we must wake up to continue".

He did not appear to understand a word I was saying. It was quickly becoming a dangerous situation. In a confused and threatening tone, he asked how we had come here. I explained the horses pulled the wagon and that we left the north three years ago. He paused for a few moments in an effort to comprehend how this foreign man with a strange accent, had come from the north travelling only by horse and wagon to speak of God in his land. Finally he said, "What? You came here walking with a horse from the USA?" "Yes my friend," I replied. He understood and once he did, he started to thank me for coming to his country. He said, "This is Salvador my blood country and these are my people. We are very happy you came here. You are welcome. Do not worry. Go to sleep. In my area you will not have any problems!"



*Chandrabhaga Dasi*

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## Presenting the mission and the Deities to millions of TV viewers in Costa Rica

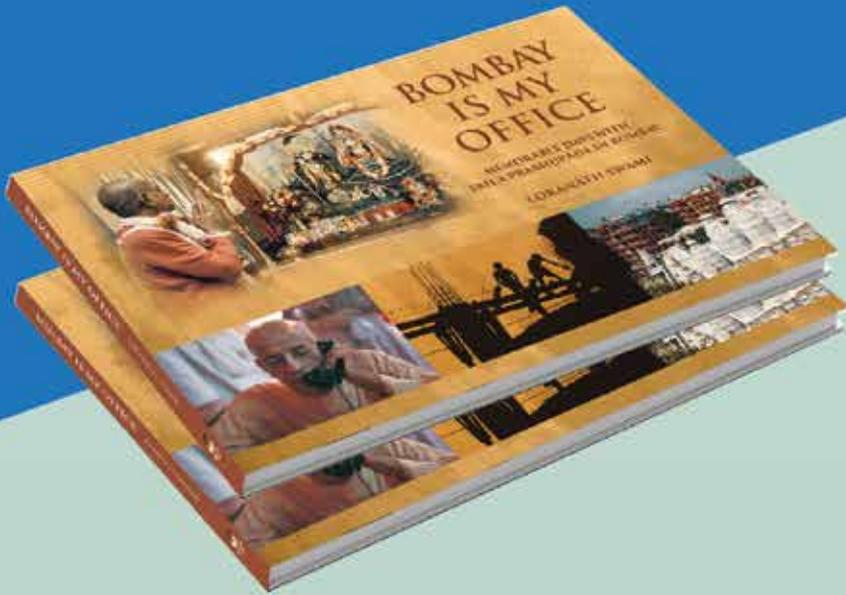
Padayatra's main focus is to plant seeds of Krishna Consciousness in people's hearts and the media was a powerful tool to do that...It was my experience that 99% of all the articles and television interviews were very impressive and the Deities were always beautifully presented. It was a privilege to be an instrument in those wonderful pastimes of Guru and Gauranga...

In San Jose, the capital of Costa Rica, the local television did a feature on us, and in the interview they asked things describing the program, our mission, what we wanted to share with the Costa Rican people, where the Deities came from and other questions. These were basic questions, but it was good for people to hear these details for their purification. When the interview was done I asked them for a copy of the video once they had done the final edit for television. I asked them not to remove or cut anything because I wanted the Deities to be in the shoot. During any interview I would always speak close to the Deities so They would be on television also. In Costa Rica we had been on many different television shows and it seemed everywhere we went everyone was well informed about our mission and vision, and the image from the reports was always positive. I was certain the positive television coverage influenced a positive response, therefore people were friendly and helpful.

# BOMBAY IS MY OFFICE

MEMORABLE DAYS WITH  
ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA IN BOMBAY

LOKANĀTH SWAMI



Śrīla Prabhupāda made a promise to Their Lordships, Rādhā- Rāsābihārī. He said: "If You just stay here and stand in this tent, I will build a beautiful palace for You." He felt quite bound by it.

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- 264 pages (297 x 210 mm)
- Interviews and personal experiences
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—Gīrājā Swami

*Bombay Is My Office* is a personalized account of an almost incredible story that historically shaped the worldwide Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Lokanāth Swami witnessed this story, and his sweet, magical writing style gives us the eyes to see Śrīla Prabhupāda as he fearlessly overcomes insurmountable challenges with grace and compassion.

—Rādhānātha Swami

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