



ISKCON (International Society for Krishna Consciousness: His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada)

# PADAYATRA WORLDWIDE

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NEWSLETTER 2015



On the road in Vraja Mandala 2014



South Russia



New Zealand



South Afrika



Lithuania



# PADAYATRA WORLDWIDE

Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami  
Founder-Acharya of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness

## NEWSLETTER 2015



“The basic principle is this:  
Induce them to chant and take prasadam.  
You’ll be successful... If they have got  
little brain then *kṛṣṇa-upadesa*; other-  
wise, Hare Kṛṣṇa *upadesa*. Chant Hare  
Kṛṣṇa. Yes, go village to village. It is a  
very noble attempt. And if you sincerely  
preach, Kṛṣṇa will give you intelligence,  
no doubt.”

(Instructions given on September 1976 by Srila Prabhupada to Lokanath Swami and his team before they started their padayatra from Vrindavana to Mayapur)

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Cover photo of Parasurama's Vraja Mandala Padayatra by Dharmatma Dasa

### EDITORIAL

By Lokanath Swami

As you may have already heard or read, the immediate goal of the Padayatra Ministry is to celebrate ISKCON's 50th birthday with 50 *padayatras* from Gaura Purnima 2014 till the end of 2016. We are inviting all the devotees worldwide to participate in this glorification of ISKCON and Srila Prabhupada. This goal is very feasible, as Padayatra is basically a low-cost project of variable duration that can be carried out in many different styles - a one-man venture like Bhaktimarga Swami in Canada; a weekend *padayatra* as an outing for the congregation around your city or your farm; a summer *padayatra*; an annual walk or a continental or trans-continental walk. *Padayatra* can be done in different ways, according to the geography of your country, your available time, resources and manpower: with a bullock cart or a cart pulled by a horse, or just as an extended *harinama* with a palanquin carrying Sri Sri Gaura Nitai.

You can walk and drive if you live in a country with long empty or desert stretches, or you can walk and fly (or take a boat) if you want to move from island to island. You'll be able to get more ideas, tips and practical guidelines from the Padayatra Manual which you can download from our Padayatra website.

Another reason why we think this goal of 50 *padayatras* is within our reach is that the Padayatra Ministry achieved a much larger goal in the past. At the time of Srila Prabhupada's Centennial in 1996, we offered 105 *padayatras*, some of which took place during the Padayatra Week which was scheduled just before World Holy Name Day. In fact, the Silver Jubilee of ISKCON could well be the occasion to revive the Padayatra Week. Every year World Holy Name Week is gaining more and more momentum and scope. What better way to celebrate it than with a *padayatra*, as devotees in Mauritius are already doing?

The last reason to be very optimistic about reaching that goal is that to this day there are already 30 *padayatras* done, on the road or scheduled. During Srila Prabhupada's centennial we counted the number of countries where a *padayatra* took place, but for ISKCON's 50th birthday each different *padayatra* in the same country is counted as one, unless they are continuous or annual walks. This new system allows us to honour the various *padayatras* taking place in India and other large countries.

Besides Padayatra India, on the road since Radhastami 1984 and now on its sixth tour of the country, there are several other *padayatras* going on in India. The party of Visnuswami Dasa has been travelling with bullock cart in Andhra Pradesh for almost two years. Every year four *dindi yatras* are taking place in Maharashtra and a well-attended *padayatra* in Orissa. A two week-walk took place in Tamil Nadu, and other walks are planned in Tirupati, Kanya Kumari, Kerala and Goa.

Looks like it's time for anniversaries. 2014 marked the 500th anniversary of Lord Caitanya's walk from Puri to Vrindavana, where He performed the Vraja Mandala Parikrama, and the 500th anniversary of His travels through



Maharashtra, which devotees celebrated with a two month dindi from Kolhapur to Nasik. 2015 is the 50th anniversary of ISKCON foundation with the arrival of Srila Prabhupada in America. ISKCON Mayapur and ISKCON Kolkata are planning together a *padayatra* from Mayapur to Kolkata in conjunction with the anniversary of Srila Prabhupada's boarding the Jaladuta in Kolkata. Padayatris will arrive in Kolkata to celebrate Srila Prabhupada's departure to America on August 13, 1965. Padayatra is a good way to celebrate this event, since Srila Prabhupada is the ambassador of the Holy Name to the western world.

This year I took part in many *padayatras*: Czech Republic, Padayatra India, the *Dindi* from Dehu to Pandharpur through Pune, the walk retracing Lord Caitanya's travels in Maharashtra, the annual ISKCON Vraja and Navadvipa Mandala Parikramas, and the Sri Ksetra *parikrama* in Jagannatha Puri. I was very happy to see that *Padayatras* are thriving. I also feel very much encouraged by the statements of Nrsimha Caitanya Dasa, a 24 year old devotee who's been active in the management of *padayatra* in the Czech Republic for

the past seven years. Having been well trained by Rajaram Dasa, the previous Padayatra leader, and his own father, Munipriya Prabhu, the present leader, he's very concerned about training new devotees and expanding the program.

As a result the Czech team is planning to go to Slovakia for one week after their own walk in Czech Republic. In this way they want to create awareness about *padayatra* in the hope of igniting a few sparks. Nrsimha Caitanya also hopes that Padayatra will inspire more devotees to distribute books to and preach to the villagers, especially if they are your next door neighbours.

The benefits of organizing a *padayatra* and participating in one are many, for you, your temple, your yatra, your country, and the general public. In this newsletter we listed only fifty of them. You also can have experiences and realisations similar to the ones of Padmalaya Devi Dasi, who participated in the 2014 walk in South Russia: "I cannot compare this experience of *padayatra* with anything else, and I'm not sure it is possible to do so, as each moment on *padayatra* is unique, transcendental and filled with happiness. ..The in-

structions of our senior *padayatra* leaders to render service to the other devotees have changed my life. Each participant on *padayatra* is a unique devotee, very dear to the Lord. It was on *padayatra* that I really understood that the best preaching is by our own example, and that I was ready to sacrifice my entire life for the *sankirtana* mission of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, in order to be like these senior loving devotees. The brightest memory of my entire life is the taste I experienced during the *padayatra*. I wanted to chant the maha-mantra, to read Srila Prabhupada's books and to serve with an intensity of desire I had never known before. »

Whether you live in a city or a village, in Asia or in South America, whether you're a *brahmacari* or a busy grhastha, young, old or in-between, let's all have a grand celebration for the Golden Jubilee of ISKCON by chanting, dancing, feasting, preaching and enjoying together on *padayatra* ! Please help us achieve that goal of fifty *padayatras* for the pleasure of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and Srila Prabhupada. Do not hesitate to contact the Ministry's coordinator. We are here to assist you.



# ISKCON PUNE'S 18TH DINDI WALK

by Toshan Nimai Dasa

## FROM DEHU TO PANDHARPUR



### Walking along one million other pilgrims

The *vari* or *dindi* from Dehu to Pandharpur via Pune is hailed as the greatest walking festival celebrated by the devotees of Lord Krishna who appeared as Lord Vitthala in the holy *dhama* of Pandharpur in Maharashtra. The literal meaning of *vari* is “the undertaking of the annual pilgrimage to Pandharpur”.

The pilgrims or *varkaris* are men and women, young and old, from all walks of life, age and socio-economic status. They walk alongside each other, never for even a moment being aware of their differences or status. They are all united in their faith in Lord Vitthala, who awaits His meeting with over one million of His devotees walking from Maharashtra and north Karnataka while constantly chanting *Jaya Jaya Rama Krishna Hari, Jaya Jaya Rama Krishna Hari.*”

### Dramatic singing and dancing from all the varkaris, men and women alike

The principle of simple living and being fully dependent on God is visibly conspicuous during the entire *vari* walk. Most of the pilgrims carry only as much luggage as can be fitted into a small handbag. They either cook in open fields along the way or eat whatever is arranged by the hosts in the town of their next destination. At night they sleep wherever a place is available – in schools or on the open ground.

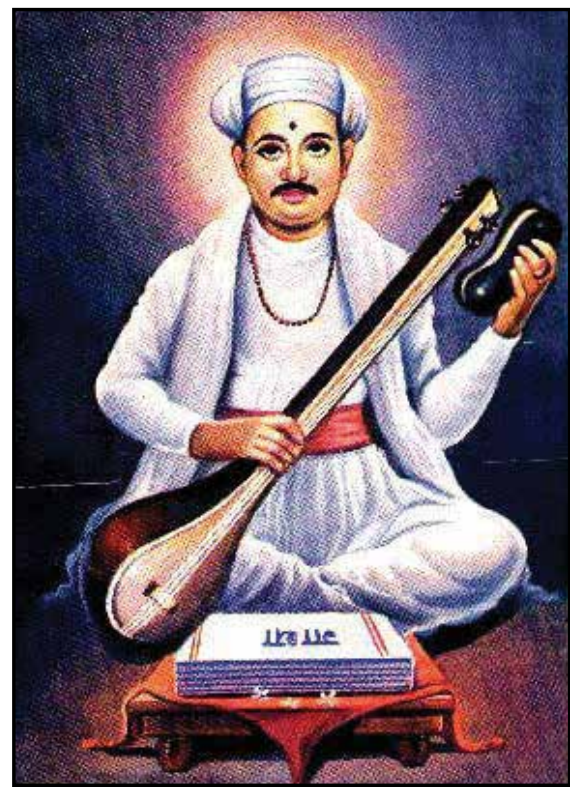
Many ladies carry a tulasi plant on their heads while walking. Undaunted by the scorching heat of the sun or even occasional rains, the pilgrims persevere and cover 10-15 kilometers everyday. The *varkaris*’ cheerful spirits are not dampened by the austerities of the walk. They are constantly singing traditional *bhajans* in their local languages, mostly Marathi, and chanting the holy names of Krishna while playing various instruments. The men in the *vari* sing so expertly in Indian classical music tunes that I couldn’t believe these simple village men possessed such prolific talents, and yet they would use it only for the glorification of God. Accompanying this musical feat, there are daily discourses on *Bhagavat Dharma* and very dramatic dancing, with the men gyrating, forming circles while holding hands, making rows and then running between the rows, all this accompanied with facial gestures which I am not able to describe. The ladies’ dancing was also extremely energetic. Many people say that ladies are kept in bondage and are not given sufficient chances to progress



in Vedic culture, but after seeing their dancing I realized that these ladies were more free and happy in expressing their ecstatic emotions than their so-called advanced city counterparts.

### Joyful receptions for the pilgrims

This year marked the 18th anniversary of ISKCON Pune’s participation in the Dindi Yatra. On June 19 2014, 140 devotees from ISKCON Pune started from Dehu, birthplace of one





of the greatest saints of Maharashtra, Sant (Saint) Tukaram. The participants consisted of around 70 *matajis* led by Satyavati Devi Dasi, 21 young *brahmacaris* from ISKCON Pune's Devotee Training Program, some senior *brahmacaris*, and men from the Pune congregation. A few devotees from other temples also participated.

The *padayatra* was presided upon by the beautiful Deities of their Lordships Gaur Nitai riding majestically on the bullock cart. The procession lasted for 18 days with a one full day stop to rest. The walk through villages, cities, mountains, plain terrains and along the fields exposed the *varkaris* to a variety of different experiences. Our ISKCON procession was like a boat travelling in the vast sea of other pilgrims. Everywhere devotees were welcomed with colorful rangolis, flags, festoons and a display of massive hoardings on the important squares of the city put by local municipal corporations or politicians, and shop owners.

Hoardings are some kinds of panels made of flex boards (plastic), generally the size of a big rectangle. They portray pictures of Lord Vitthala, great Maharashtrian saints such as Tukarama or Dnyaneshwar or contain welcome messages for the pilgrims. The *varkaris* were received with great joy and given fruits, water, and prasada along the way.

### Life at the ISKCON camp

Laxmi Narayana Prabhu, an enthusiastic and experienced *padayatri*, led the whole team. He has the valuable experience of leading a bus book distribution party for many years, and originally he comes from a village. All these assets made him the suitable person to lead the party, which he has been doing for many years. The devotees embraced the austerity of getting up very early in the morning and taking cold baths in open areas. The day would start at 4:30 am



with the *japa* session, followed by mangal-arati and the *Srimad-Bhagavatam* class. Laxmi Narayan Prabhu inspired and stimulated the devotees in the morning *Bhagavatam* classes with the teachings of Prahalada Maharaja. He would tell them that just as Prahalada Maharaja never asked the Lord for any protection but was given it, similarly all the *varkaris* walk without much arrangement and Lord Vitthala takes care of them.

The devotees started walking around 8:30 am. The melodious *kirtanas* along the walk and the graceful dancing of devotees attracted onlookers wherever the procession went. After Gaura-arati Laxmi Narayan would give classes for the *brahmacaris* based on his personal experience and realizations as a long standing *brahmacari* in ISKCON. He was assisted by Parthasarathi Prabhu, who took care of the other management details. Sripad Seva Prabhu and Sachinandan Vighraha Prabhu never disappointed the devotees with their expert cooking skills. Needless to say it was a challenging task to cook wholesome meals daily for over a hundred devotees. It is their dedication and desire to serve that makes it possible year after year. Many villagers freely donated vegetables and milk for our prasada. Such generosity, as well as having a truck carrying all the kitchen utensils such as a

stove, gas cylinders, and cooking ingredients, made it possible to prepare breakfast items like *poha* (chipped rice), *upma*, and *idlis*. Lunch would include *sabjis*, *chapatis*, rice, dhal and a sweet.

### Enthralling the crowds with devotional dramas

ISKCON devotees performed short street dramas along the way, based on different stories such as the sparrow's determination to retrieve her eggs from the ocean and Garuda's help, excerpts from *Bhagavad-gita*, the three types of austerities (Hiranyakashyapu's in ignorance, Dhruva's in passion, and Srila Prabhupada's in transcendental goodness).

The Indian BTG had published a special issue dedicated to this pilgrimage, and devotees distributed 13,400 copies of it. Along with that, we distributed 300 copies of *Bhagavad-gita* and hundreds of other books, such as Lokanath Swami Maharaja's books on Lord Vitthala and Pandharpur dhama.

At the final destination of the day devotees enacted dramas based on stories such as Kailash, the *brahmana* and the cobbler, the life of Saint Purandar Das (a great devotee of Lord Vitthala), the prodigal son, Ambarish and Durvasa Muni -which tells us of the dangers of offending *vaisnavas*- the boatman and the scientist

story, the Kazi and Lord Caitanya story, and many more. These dramas completely enthralled the audience. At night, devotees would generally stay and rest at local schools or sometimes in the houses of villagers who generously opened their homes. It was in this manner that the entire distance of more than 200 kilometers was covered and the padayatra devotees reached their final destination, Sri Pandharpur Dham. There they were happily received by the ISKCON Pandharpur temple devotees. The pinnacle of the padayatra was the special interactive session with Lokanath Swami Maharaja the last day. Maharaja distributed *prasada* and gifts, acknowledged and thanked the participants for their various services, spoke encouraging words and shared valuable realizations.



**Dr. Vishal Oza:** The continuous chanting of the holy names and the simple life of the *varipadayatra* has inspired my spiritual life. I was affected by observing the simple and austere life of the other *varkaris*. I offered medical assistance to the devotees. One elderly lady cut her

hand deeply and needed stitches. I applied the dressing onto her injured hand and she never complained about anybody and she was perfectly calm. This incident and many similar experiences touched my heart and I look forward to joining the pilgrimage again in the future.

## TRIAL BULLOCK CART PADAYATRA IN TAMIL NADU

by Sadasivananda Dasa

In February 2014, during the ISKCON Leadership Sanga in Mayapur, a few devotees, including myself (manager of the Pudukkottai center, later used as the *padayatra* office), met with Lokanath Swami to discuss our project of establishing a padayatra exclusively for Tamil Nadu. Istadeva, a previous Padayatra India leader now residing in Mayapur, kindly sent an experienced *padayatri*, Sri Krishnananda Dasa, to assist and guide our new Tamil Nadu team, who got in action right away. On April 3rd Jayapataka Swami launched the padayatra, even though there were still a few final touches to be added to the cart and the altar. The plan was to initially travel in a couple of districts in the central part of Tamil



Nadu on a trial walk with the Deities of Sri Sri Dayala Nitai-Gauracandra, and see how it went before going on a full-fledged tour of the entire state. Three devotees, including the leader, Prasanna Shyam Dasa, traveled for two weeks to Madurai, crossing 15 villages, holding 2 home programs and 2 public programs, and distrib-

uting 20 Bhagavad-gitas and 100 BTGs. After the trial run, Prasanna Shyam couldn't take it forward as he didn't have enough devotees. He's now trying to organize a solid team, mainly of Tamil-speaking devotees.

Contact: Prasanna Shyam Dasa:  
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# ONE MONTH VRAJA MANDALA PADAYATRA WITH PARASURAMA DASA

by Dharmatma Dasa

## A Dynamic International Party

The 28th Vraja Mandala Padayatra/ Parikrama started on October 8th, 2014 at the same place and time as the annual ISKCON Vraja Mandala Parikrama led by Lokanath Swami and his team. As usual this Vraja padayatra was led by Parasurama, an Irish devotee living in the UK, assisted by an international team.

There was Arjuna and Krishna Mayi from the UK and Estonia, veterans of 12 and 8 *padayatras* respectively, Loka Saranga and Madhu Pandit from the Czech Republic, Vaikuntha Vijaya from Russia and myself from the US.

Parasurama organized the whole thing, he drove the oxen the entire time, distributed *prasadam* and books, guided and patiently engaged the rest of us. He certainly fits the description of the busy person mentioned in this popular saying "If you want something done, ask a busy person, as he's always got time to do one more thing."



Bhakta Charles from Vrindavan and Vanamali Govinda also joined us for the first week along with Abhay

from Mayapur, who strayed from the ISKCON Parikrama Party to join us from time to time. He's a sweet young devotee who has a lot of experience with oxen, and he leads nice kirtanas. In total we were five *grhasthas* and five *brahmacaris*.

For the first few days going through Vrindavan and Mathura we would camp with the large ISKCON *parikrama* party (around 1,300 devotees) but we would go on our own to distribute bananas and booklets. In general we would come into their large camp to take prasadam and spend the night. As we entered the countryside we went more and more into small villages that the *padayatra* had visited over the years. There we would have *kirtana* and show our movies at dusk. At times we would spend the night in the villages or on the outskirts. Generally we would not be far from the ISKCON Vraja Mandala Parikrama group, travelling like them through the twelve forests of Vraja.

## Adventures with the oxen

Our party consisted of an 18 year old oxcart graced by small Gaura Nitai, Lord Narasimha and very small Jagannath, Balarama and Subhadra Deities. Meena, the ox with downward pointing horns - which apparently is auspicious- and Narottama, with a beautiful set of large horns, were the driving force. Both were veterans who'd done this service over the years. The cart was definite-



ly showing its age. Before we left Vrindavan, Nekram Prabhu put some yellow paint on it, changed the wheel bearings, pumped up the tires and gave the cart a thorough washing, but the frame has serious rust problems so the cart will need to be replaced in the near future.

Parasurama has a battery system run by solar panels on top of the cart. It was malfunctioning so we had to resort to alternatively charging the two large onboard batteries that power the sound system and movie projector. On the back of the cart is a large picture of a smiling Srila Prabhupada, and the maha-mantra in Hindi. The back inside of the cart has a beautiful Krishna *lila* picture, and on either side of the cart is a large Hare Krishna mantra in bright red.

It's always an adventure being with Parasurama. Sometimes you feel that everything is happening on a wing and a prayer. In others words things aren't entirely prepared but you're hoping they'll succeed. Usually you do a lot of praying and really have to depend on Krishna. For me as a first-timer it was a wonderful adven-



ture. I've survived and relished two Scandinavian Ratha-yatra Tours with Parasurama and crew so the *padayatra* was the next step, an equally challenging and interesting experience.

Our oxen come from the Krishna Balarama Mandir *goshala*. Parasurama tries to pick ones that he's had good experience with previously, but they're not always available. So sometimes it's hit or miss. At one point we had to trade our black and white ox as he was constantly making unsolicited left turns, sometimes into traffic, vendors stalls, and parked cars. Parasurama had to constantly remind me not to pass too close to him lest I get gored. He had this look in his eyes that said, "I've got to find my way back to the *goshala*." Maybe he was pretty smart after all, and he got his wish.

The original oxen were shod at the *goshalla* in Vrindavan, but when we traded the black and white ox for another, the new one needed to get shod, as walking on the pavement and gravel roads are hard on their hooves. Now that tractors are replacing oxen for farm work, there are fewer men who shoe oxen, thus it took a while to find one. The man uses a strategically placed rope to gently bring the ox to the ground and into a position where all four hooves are accessible and then proceeds to nail the iron shoes on. It was a little stressful on the ox as it was blazing hot but Parasurama was sitting at the ox's head, soothing him.



A funny sight was Parasurama steering the oxen and distributing bananas and books at the same time, which led to a few near misses. Luckily Indians are used to this and nothing untoward happened. Thankfully the bullocks have an automatic pilot feature built in, and they just plod along when Parasurama has his back to them and half of his body digging deep into the bin of bananas.

### **40,000 books, 9 tons of bananas and some hard hitting movies !**

Each year Parasurama prints 40,000 small books, thanks to Bhima Prabhu and the Mumbai BBT.

On the average we distributed 300 kg of ripe banana *prasadam* every day, which in a month adds up to 9,000 kg (close to 20,000 pounds). The bananas and books are all paid for with donations that Parasurama secures over the year. Pretty amazing!

When we arrive in a village with the oxcart, the Deities, the books, the bananas and the *harinama*, it's like the circus has come to town. It's a big sporting event for the children. They get very excited, climb on the cart with great joy (once a large group of children was trying to topple over the cart) and, very enthusiastically, fight for the banana *prasadam*. That's why







it's easier to throw the bananas rather than individually hand them out.

The adults get into it also, but it's all done in a good spirit – no violence or nastiness. Everyone's very happy, except maybe a few of the real small kids that didn't get a banana.

Every year Parasurama makes a hard-hitting movie in Brijabasi which covers topics such as cow slaughter in India, the illusion of material happiness, and the importance of Krishna consciousness, so it definitely hits home. Before that movie we showed the Little Krishna Series.



This wonderful padayatra service brings to the villagers of Vraja a much needed personal interaction with ISKCON devotees. Sadly, some of the large and small ISKCON parties come to the places of pilgrimage, in or near the villages, but don't interact with the local villagers, besides taking photos of them and discarding garbage by the wayside. There's not many personal connections. Over the years Parasurama has developed nice relationships with so many of the

villagers. He brings out the Krishna consciousness in them and their children. We give freely and don't expect anything from them in return, which has a profound effect on them. Then they become very anxious to render some service.



In the evening I was going out doing *madhukari* (begging prasadam from door to door), usually in pitch black, as the majority of the small remote villages don't have electricity. I was very humbled to see how the *brijbas* were very happy to give us *rotis*, dal, buttermilk and *dahi* (yogurt). Once we saw a well with a sign attached to it saying, 'With love from Rajan, Anju, Nalin, Anshul, Chadha from London UK'. Parasurama explained that these devotees had donated *laksmi* to have this much needed well built in the village. He's the one who had it built and put the sign to honor these generous devotees.

### Close contact with the Brijbasis

Everything we did, whether it was the mixing of the oxen's food, cooking, bathing, sleeping, and so on seemed to fascinate the villagers. Some of the

villages were very remote and rarely visited by foreign devotees so we became the biggest show in town. They would be there at night as we pitched our tents and when we woke up they would be waiting for us. It could be a little unnerving but they were mostly very friendly and harmless except for a couple of the village punks whose only way of getting attention was to do or say something foolish.

In most of the villages that we crossed, villagers would come out and feed our bullocks grains as a sign of appreciation. They really see them as the symbol of religiosity, and they are dependent on the cow and the oxen for their livelihood and maintenance. I was very moved by this exhibit of reverence for father bull.

One day we passed through a larger town and the teachers came out to invite us in their school. There were at least 20 classrooms of different levels and ages. The children were well behaved and joined in reciting the maha-mantra and enthusiastically took part in *kirtana*. They chanted Hare Krishna like pros. We distribut-



ed notebooks, pencils, bananas and booklets. I especially liked the baby class. It was such a wonderful experience. So sweet and happy ! Again the simplicity of it all is heart warming. You don't need so much to be happy!

### A few scary moments

Once we had a few very scary moments. I was up front doing *kirtana* when all of a sudden there was abig commotion and a lot of shouting.



One big white bull had charged our oxen, knocking anyone in his way, getting things flying around, including a few kids. Happily no one was hurt or injured. This white bull was the head of this small village; he really was a beauty, big, strong and powerful, and very territorial. The villagers are probably used to dealing with this type of thing, but Madhu Pandit was not. He grabbed a large bamboo pole and fearlessly went after the bull, who reluctantly retreated, and was then quickly fended off. I will not forget the look he gave Madhu with his big red eyes.

Another time, as we were walking to one of the bathing *ghats* we were summoned by some devotees who needed help rescuing a young bull who had a broken foot. He was very fearful and undoubtedly in a lot of



pain, so he resisted attempts to be led to the awaiting truck that was sent from the animal shelter. After some effort and close calls of getting hit with his sharp horns, the devotees, again led by Parasurama and Arjuna, held on to him and he was loaded into the truck. Everyone was very relieved and happy as the alternative was probably death for him.

### **Sweet but exhausting & purifying**

When Parasurama advertised for devotees to join his party, he said they should be somewhat physically fit. Even at 71 I considered myself to be in good shape so I signed on. For me, with my *pita* constitution, the extreme heat was the biggest problem. We generally walked from 3 to 20

kms per day doing *harinama* and distributing. It was exhausting at times but we always had a lot of water to get us through it. Sleeping out in or near the villages and the main *parikrama*, rinsing out our cloth daily and bathing either out of buckets or at the village wells, was just wonderful and exhilarating from my perspective.

Parasurama Dasa: What makes Pa-dayatra special is you have about six hours of *harinama* daily, Deity worship, book and *prasada* distribution, preaching programs and cow protection.

Vraja is Lord Krishna's home, it is called Vraj *Dhama* or sometimes Madhurya *Dhama*, and the sweetness can also be seen in the mood of the local people, the Brijbasis.

We stopped at Surya Kund, the place

worked the oxen in the fields. The temple is well maintained and the *pujari* very friendly. We slept inside the temple and bathed

from the well outside next to the bullocks. Bathing in the moonlight next to dozing oxen while looking out over this beautiful Surya Kund gives you a beautiful taste of Vraja.

I was doing great for fifteen days, full of enthusiasm and strength, albeit, a little frazzled by the heat, but I came down with severe food poisoning after taking village food one evening. I was running a high temperature and every bone in my body ached and I had constant diarrhea. I struggled to make it to our next stop at Varsana where we had modern and clean facilities but it was too much;



where Radharani would worship the Sun-God. It is a wonderful and long walk to get there and we distributed books and bananas to many villagers we met on the way. You really get a sense of sweet village life. Groups of ladies and girls carried water pots and cane on their heads while singing sweet songs, and men and boys

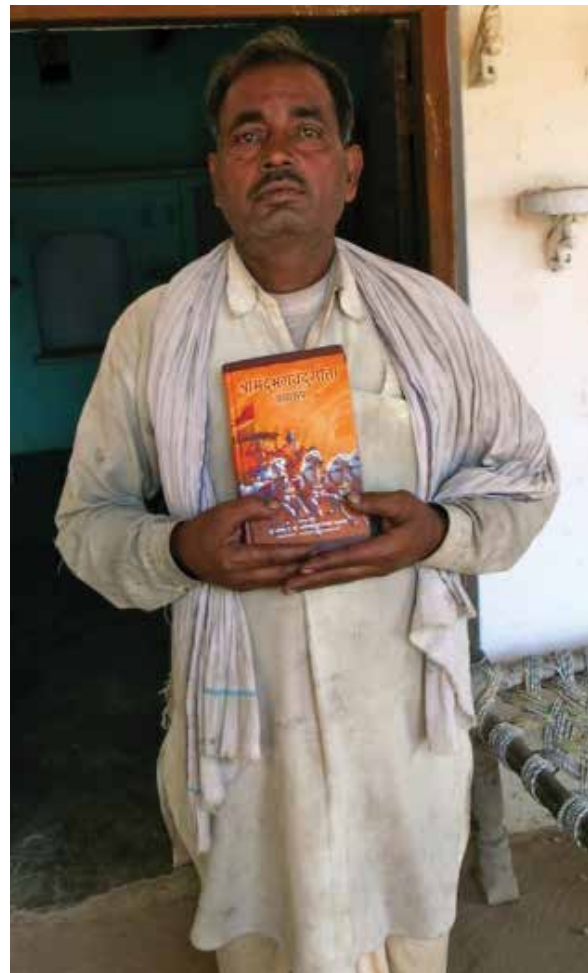
so I returned to where I was staying in Vrindavan.

There my host saw my plight and took me to the Bhaktivedanta Hospital on the Parikrama Marg where I was diagnosed with a severe stomach infection stemming from the food poisoning. The doctor admitted me and gave me two bottles of electro-



lytes and a heavy antibiotic and anti parasitic and medicines for the pain and diarrhea. After four days some of the symptoms abated and my host gave me a small amount of banana, *dahi* and plain rice made by his wife. His father was a doctor so he had some experience. I decided to return to the US, twelve pounds lighter, not sure how long it would take me to recover in Vrindavana.

In retrospect it was one of the most wonderful experiences in my life. To be wandering the forests, villages and roads that were blessed by the lotus feet of Lord Krishna and His Associates is more than I can fully fathom. I know my sickness was due to my past and present sinful activities and was meant for my purification. My thanks go out to Parasurama for his amazing service to the Holy Dhama and for inviting me to take part in my small way.





# ANDHRA PRADESH

## ALREADY TWO YEARS ON THE ROAD!

By Visnuswami Dasa

### A small but dynamic party

The Padayatra Andhra Pradesh party might only have four to five devotees – at the moment Srinivas Sevananda Dasa, Ramanuja Dasa, Chandra Mouli, Umamaheswer and myself – but our preaching is still potent and effective, especially in villages. We are proud of our book scores: 310 big books and 2,000 small books for the month of March 2014, 335 big books and 2200 small books in April, and 250 big books, 40 medium and 2,500 small ones in August. Of course we distribute books all the time, these are just samples.



Sometimes devotees travel with us for a few days. At the end of January 2014, two Russian devotees joined us in Jagannath Puri: Kavicandra Dasa and Jai Tirtha Dasa. They performed melodious *kirtanas* and engaged in book distribution. Alas, seven days later they left for Sri Mayapur Dhama.

### Wonderful festivities for Gaura-Purnima

On the 19th of March we celebrated Gaura-Purnima in the city of Khammam. This joyous celebration included *nagar sankirtana*, *abhisheka*, *chappan bhoga*, and *krsna-katha*. More than 150 people attended our festival, and we distributed *prasadam* of yellow rice and *ponga* (a rice

preparation from South India) to more than 500 people that day. We stayed in Khammam for 40 days, daily walking to different locations in the town and distributing books. This was a great success.



### Lively harinam in my native village

On October 12, our bullock cart party reached the village of Dantthalapally in the Warangal district, which happens to be my birthplace. In the past I had already performed *harinam* there many times with other devotees. As a result there are now around ten persons chanting *japa* regularly, and many interested people. A group of thirty devotees offered us a warm reception and garlanded us to the sound of a lively *kirtana*. On the 16th we had a program of chanting and preaching, attended by eighteen devotees and thirty villagers.

Finally on October 23, 2014, we approached the city of Hyderabad, capital of the Telangana State. However, two problems stopped us from entering the city: finding grass for the oxen and having to walk through heavy traffic. So we just kept walking in the surrounding areas.

### An appeal for manpower

At the beginning of the year we had constructed a 6 x 11 feet (1.8 m x 3.3m) cart, made entirely of gal-

vanized metal sheeting, and turned it into a regular kitchen. The cost of approximately Rs.130,000 was covered by the Padayatra party, Raghava Goswami Dasa, and a loan from my family. It was pulled by two oxen, but due to a shortage of manpower, we only used that kitchen for 25 days. The oxen and the kitchen cart are currently housed in my home village, waiting for new padayatris to join our team.

Since the beginning of our walk on December 2, 2012, Padayatra Andhra Pradesh has passed through 335 villages and travelled more than 2,100 km in five districts. We have distributed 5,250 big books, 4,500 medium and 50,000 small ones.

We are now heading towards the Basara of Adilabad districts to attend the Godavari River Puskaralu, a twelve day festival that comes every 12 years. With nearly 1 million people daily taking a holy bath in the Godavari River we are planning to sell at least 500 books each day. With the mercy of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and our enthusiastic efforts, we hope to reach our goal, to cover at least 1,000 villages and distribute 100,000 books.



Above: Serious new chanters

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# A 64-DAY PADAYATRA MARKS THE 500<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF LORD CAITANYA'S TRAVELS THROUGH MAHARASHTRA

By Vraja Prema Dasa

## A joint effort between Maharashtra temples & preaching centers

On the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's visit to Maharashtra during His south India tour, the WIDC (Western Indian Divisional Council, which includes all the ISKCON temples and centers in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa) organized a Sankirtana Padayatra from Kolhapur to Nasik. Devotees followed the very same path which the Lord had taken - also walking and visiting the same places He visited Kolhapur, Aravade, Pandharpur, Satara (Krishna-venna Sangam), Pune, Mumbai, Wada, Tryambakeshwar and Nasik.

This oxcart *padayatra* started on March 29th 2014 in Kolhapur and ended on June 1st in Nasik. Lokanath Swami was its chairman and I the overall coordinator. A core team of 8-10 devotees walked the entire way, including some well-trained devotees to take care of the Deities and the two oxen Arjuna and Vrindavan.

This was the first padayatra walking between several ISKCON temples and centers in a relay system. Each temple or center was assisting the *padayatra* core team by taking care of a specific phase along the route and organizing *prasada*, accommodations, *satsanga* programs and *kirtanas*. The *padayatra* was divided in eight phases. Hundreds of devotees from 13 to 70 years old participated in this pilgrimage with great enthusiasm, some joining for a phase or two or just for a few days.



Lokanath Swami joins the party from Tasgaon to Aravade

## Walking in the footsteps of Lord Caitanya

Since Mahaprabhu had entered Maharashtra through Kolhapur the first phase began from our ISKCON Kolhapur center in the presence of Rama Govinda Maharaja, who spoke on Gaura lila. Around 150 devotees from different temples and centers in Maharashtra had gathered in front of the padayatra cart for the morning program, after which we headed towards the temple of the self-manifested Deity of Mahalaksmi (Ksira-bhagavati).

Maharaja and I took the small Sri Sri Gaur-Nitai Deities inside the temple. That was a historical moment, as Lord Caitanya had en-



Sri-Sri Gaura-Nitai enter the Laksmi Mandir



tered this same temple only five centuries before. The *Caitanya-caritamrita* (*Madhya-lila*, 9.281) mentions that Mahaprabhu also visited many of the 250 temples in the city, such as the Langa-Ganesh temple and the Cora-parvati temple.

The first day we covered around 27 kms. It was very hectic because most of us were walking such a long distance for the first time in our life. The next days we divided the walk into two parts, also because of the high summer temperatures, from 35°C to 45°C. We walked from 6:00



am after the morning program till 10:30 am, took lunch and rest in the afternoon, and then got on the road again in the evening from 4-6:30 pm.

There was a good arrangement for juices, cold drinks and plenty of water. Many villagers came forward to take darsana and give donations in the form of grains, vegetables and grass for the oxen.

On arrival we did the evening program which consisted of *sandhya arati*, a lecture and *prasada*. On the fourth day we took lunch and rest at the beautiful Sri Ram Mandir in Sangli. Lokanath Maharaja's niece had arranged the evening program and prasada at their house in nearby Kaulapur. Maharaja came there with his senior disciples and gave a special lecture on Mahaprabhu's Maharashtra visit. He also joined us for some time on the way to Aravade, his native village.

When we arrived there he and senior devotees from ISKCON Ara-



Pandharpur Padayatra group near the Chandrabhaga River

vade welcomed us at the entrance of their Sri Sri Radha Gopal Mandir. The proof that Lord Caitanya did travel via Aravade is that on the path from Pandharpur there is a village called Gaurgaon, obviously named after Gauranga.

### Holy bath in Pandharpur Dhama

We had arranged for padayatra to arrive in Pandharpur on April 10 because the next day was Chaitra Ekadasi (Kamada Ekadasi), when thousands of people gather from all Maharashtra. When our *dindi* reached Pandharpur so many other *dindis* were gathered together in Lord Vitthala's temple. Our padayatris did a huge *harinama* and made thousands of people dance.

The next morning we all took bath in the holy Chandrabhaga (also called Bhima) River and did an *abhiseka* of the *utsava-murtis* of Sri Sri Gaura-Nitai. Then our *dindi* of around 200 devotees entered the temple of Lord Vitthala. After 500 years, Gauranga Mahaprabhu was again entering the Pandharpur temple in His *murti* form to take *darsana* of His beloved Lord.

Sundarlal Prabhu led a very wonderful kirtana, and everyone was jubilant, turning on themselves while holding their ears with their hands, the right hand holding the left ear, and the left hand the right ear, a symbol of asking forgiveness for one's offenses. After darsana devotees did nagar sankirtana through the city.

The *Caitanya-caritamrita* (*Madhya-lila*, 9. 283 to 303) narrates that during His eleven-day stay in Pandharpur, Lord Caitanya was invited for lunch by a *brahmana* who had very much appreciated His ecstatic dancing and chanting. At the end of the meal the *brahmana* informed Him that Sri Ranga Puri, one of the disciples of Sri Madhavendra Puri, was residing in that village in the house of a *brahmana*. The Lord rushed to that place, immediately manifesting ecstatic symptoms at the sight of Sri Ranga Puri; both cried tears of love while embracing each other.

They spent six to seven days together, continually talking about Krsna. When Sri Ranga Puri left for Dvaraka, Lord Caitanya stayed four more days in Pandharpur, taking bath in the Bhima River and visiting the temple of Lord Vitthala.

The next day, padayatris participated in *mangal-arati* to Sri Sri Radha Pandharinath in the ISKCON Pandharpur temple.





## Satara to Nasik via Pune, Mumbai and the Wada farm

In Satara we went to the Krishna-Venna *sangam* where Mahaprabhu had taken bath. In the presence of more than hundred devotees we held an *abhisheka* of the *utsava murtis* of Gaura Nitai right in the river bed. Then devotees visited many local ancient temples, including the one where Sri Chaitanya Mahapra-

Nagar where Chowpatty devotees had arranged *prasada*, accommodation, a drama and *krsna-katha*.

Because the oxen could not walk properly on the road from Tilak Nagar to Juhu, we used the tractor to pull the cart and walked along doing *harinama*. The next day was Narasimha Caturdasi and Lokanath Maharaja performed *kirtana*, *pravacan* and *nagar sankirtana*.



bhu had obtained the *Sri Krsna-karnamrita* of Bilvamangal Thakur. Every day there was *krsna-katha* by Pune and Nigadi senior *brahmacari* preachers. The Pune devotees gave us a warm welcome. Radheshyam Prabhu, president of the New Vedic Cultural Center, did *kirtana* and walked with the party for two days.

After a halt in Kharghar we headed towards ISKCON Juhu in Mumbai. On the way we stopped in Tilak

We had been disappointed by the initial low participation of devotees in Mumbai, and thanks to Juhu temple president, Braja Hari Prabhu we had 70 devotees walking to the ISKCON Mira Road temple. That day we distributed *halava* instead of our usual peanuts and sugar packets.

After Mumbai we continued with 26 devotees to the Virar center, then reached the Wada farm project which at the time had 35 residents. Rupa-ragunatha Dasa organised dynamic *satsanga* programs there, as he had done all along the route. From there we walked to Tryambaka, 28 kms from Nasik. Lord Caitanya had also visited the *murti* of Lord Siva called Tryambakesvara.

## A wonderful closing festival in Nasik

After the Deities and the devotees took bath in Rama kund the padayatris had darsana of various holy

places of Nasik, Kala-Ram Mandir, Kapildhara and Panchavati Taktet. Due to heavy rains during our stay in Nasik we could not do *nagar sankirtana* only indoor programs.

On June 3-4, ISKCON Nasik, temple president Gopalananda Dasa and Narasimha Kripa Dasa organized a big closing festival. After the welcoming of VIPS and guests, there was an *abhisheka* of Sri Sri Gaur Nitai, roaring *kirtanas*, and a ceremony with the distribution of certificates.

Lokanatha Maharaja talked about Lord Caitanya's travels through Maharashtra and His visit to Nasik. He explained that we were also reminded of Sri Rama, since Nasik is located near Panchavati, the place where Lord Rama had traveled to and spent some time. It was in Panchavati, on the banks of Godavari, that Sita was kidnapped by Ravana. Five hundred years ago, when Lord Caitanya walked through this area, it felt like Sri Rama coming back. As the overall coordinator, I thanked everyone for their cooperation and support. From 9.30 pm onwards a delicious prasada feast was served to all the devotees.

We estimated that close to 50,000 packets of peanuts and sugar crystals prasada were distributed along the way. Needless to say that there was lots of Gaura-katha - we had close to fifty preachers during the whole dindi- during the morning Bhagavatam class and every evening after sandhya-arati. News about this event were published in 35 national and international newspapers. Contacts with the media and organizing press conferences were done by a very dynamic lady, Srimati Lucky Kulkarni, who had been sent by the WIDC chairman, Gauranga Prabhu from ISKCON Chowpatty. This padayatra was successful due to the cooperation of the Vaisnavas in Maharashtra and the blessings and intense desire of Lokanath Swami Maharaja.





# ODISHA 2014

CONTINUING THE TRADITION STARTED  
BY SRILA GOUR GOVINDA SWAMI IN 1992



By Bhaktin Ekaterina,  
two Olgas, and Varshani Dasi  
(Russian devotees from the preaching  
center in the Kuzminki area of Moscow)



Padayatra in Jagannath Puri, India

## Padayatra Odisha teams up with Padayatra India

In 1992, Srila Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja started an annual padayatra around Odisha, and this tradition continues up to this day. During the month of Kartika devotees walk from village to village in the middle of the Odishan jungles, all the while chanting the holy names.

In 2014 the main leaders and participants from the Odisha group were Advaita Acarya Prabhu, Madana Mohana Prabhu, Trailokanath Prabhu, Gunarnava Prabhu, Dhruva Maharaja Prabhu, Aksa-Hari Prabhu and others. This year was different as the Bhubaneswar devotees did not bring their own Deities and their own bullock cart. Instead, on October 12, they teamed up with the Padayatra India party who was then walking in Manoharpur in the district of Kendujhar; they travelled with them during the whole 21 days of their *padayatra*, until October 31st. Only six devotees from the Padayatra India were there,

including Acarya Dasa, the leader, because the other padayatris had gone to participate in the Vraja Mandala Parikrama. There was very good cooperation between the two parties, and we were very much inspired by their dedication. We could see how the Padayatra India devotees were so nicely organized - they have much more experience- and how they are very effective in their preaching tactics. We learned a lot from them, and we hope that in our future padayatras we will imbibe their expertise.

## Jumping out of the car to join the kirtana

For us, the padayatra is a much anticipated event. Our prayers to Sri Sri Gaura Nitai every year include: "Please, take me with You on *padayatra*!" By Sri Sri Guru and Gauranga's mercy, ten western devotees from Russia, France, Estonia, and Ireland ended up on Padayatra Odisha. It was a very intense journey right from the beginning. We started from Moscow,

and when we arrived in India we went straight to Bhubaneswar. The very next day we set off to join Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's padayatra army, passing by the airport to pick up another fired-up devotee. The trip took a few hours and it was already getting dark. The time for the evening *nagar-sankirtana* was drawing closer, and the devotees were calling us on our cell phones, asking: "Where are you? Come quickly! We are waiting for you!" We were burning with the desire to join the *kirtana*. When we finally arrived in the village of Dhenkikote, we saw in the distance the effulgent flood of the *sankirtana* party getting closer and closer. We did not even wait for the car to stop. As it slowed down, we jumped out, finally joining the sweet nectarean *kirtana*. All the villagers were participating. Nobody stayed home.

Every day, beautiful Nitai-Gaurasundara, along with Srila Prabhupada, were seated on Their chariot pulled by two powerful Kank-



rej oxen from Gujarat, distributing to one and all the most sublime benediction. The six magnificent oxen were creating a sensation with the Odishan villagers who had never seen such beautiful large bulls in their lives, because in Odisha, the cows and bulls are somewhat short. A deep friendship developed between the Russian devotees, and the oxen, especially Nanda and Nrsimha.

### Undaunted despite rain and heat

Every morning the padayatra moved on to its next destination, accompanied by an enthusiastic harinama, paying no attention whatsoever to the heat or bad weather. The high spirited devotees distributed books, held school programs, and enthusiastically chanted and danced. We especially want to point out the kitchen devotees, whose service is so important, as all the padayatris depend on sumptuous *prasada* to get the strength to perform their services. The kitchen department devotees were serving everybody tirelessly, all the while keeping themselves unnoticed. The Lord especially values the service of such selfless and humble servants. They cooked rice and dalma, a traditional Odiya dish, along with *subjis* and other preparations for the transcendental pleasure of Their Lordship Sri Sri Nitai-Gaurasundara. One evening we witnessed how devoted the padayatris are to their service. It was raining heavily but that did not deter them from performing *gaura-arati*. The sound of the *kir-tana* attracted the villagers and the whole square filled up very quickly. The rain was no match for the pleasurable chanting of the holy names of the Lord.

### Everybody can take part, even a five-year old girl

Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu's mercy is boundless, unbiased and unconditional. Overlooking our disqualifica-



tions, He bestows His mercy to one and all, especially those who are very simple hearted. Every day, many village people followed the cart for quite a distance. On October 26, when we started from a village named Kantiapada, one small girl about five years old joined our harinama. She was obviously from a very poor family. On this particular day we walked more than 8 km, and the girl walked barefoot and danced with us the entire way. Later, when we came to know





that she had followed us all the way, we asked, “How were you able to walk such a long distance?”

She hung her head and only shyly smiled in answer. Devotees gave her Sri Sri Nitai-Gaurasundara’s maha-prasada and then drove her home.

While leaving the car she smiled, waved at us, and happily ran home, clutching the garlands to her chest. Every day we were witness to such touching events. Srila Prabhupada’s mercy is so great that through the congregational chanting of the holy name, he unifies all souls into one big family.

On October 27 we observed Srila Prabhupada’s disappearance day. People from different villages joined us to glorify Srila Prabhupada.

October 31st was the last day of our combined padayatra, but we didn’t want to leave each other’s company.

The next morning we saw the Padayatra India devotees and cart off with a somewhat heavy heart. We were really happy to see them again at the ISKCON Krsna Balarama Mandir in Bhubaneswar, Srila Prabhupada’s last founded project, in front of Srila Gour Govinda Swami Maharaja’s samadhi.

Our paths met once again a few days later in Jagannatha Puri, and our happiness knew no bounds! At the end of this Odishan padayatra I realized that the strength that pulls us to happily undergo the austerities and difficulties that we encounter on padayatra comes from Srila Gour Govinda Swami and his followers.





Report by Abhiseka Dasa &  
Vaikunthaloka Dasa

## Arriving in Mayapur for the 2014 Gaura Purnima festival (Abhiseka Dasa)

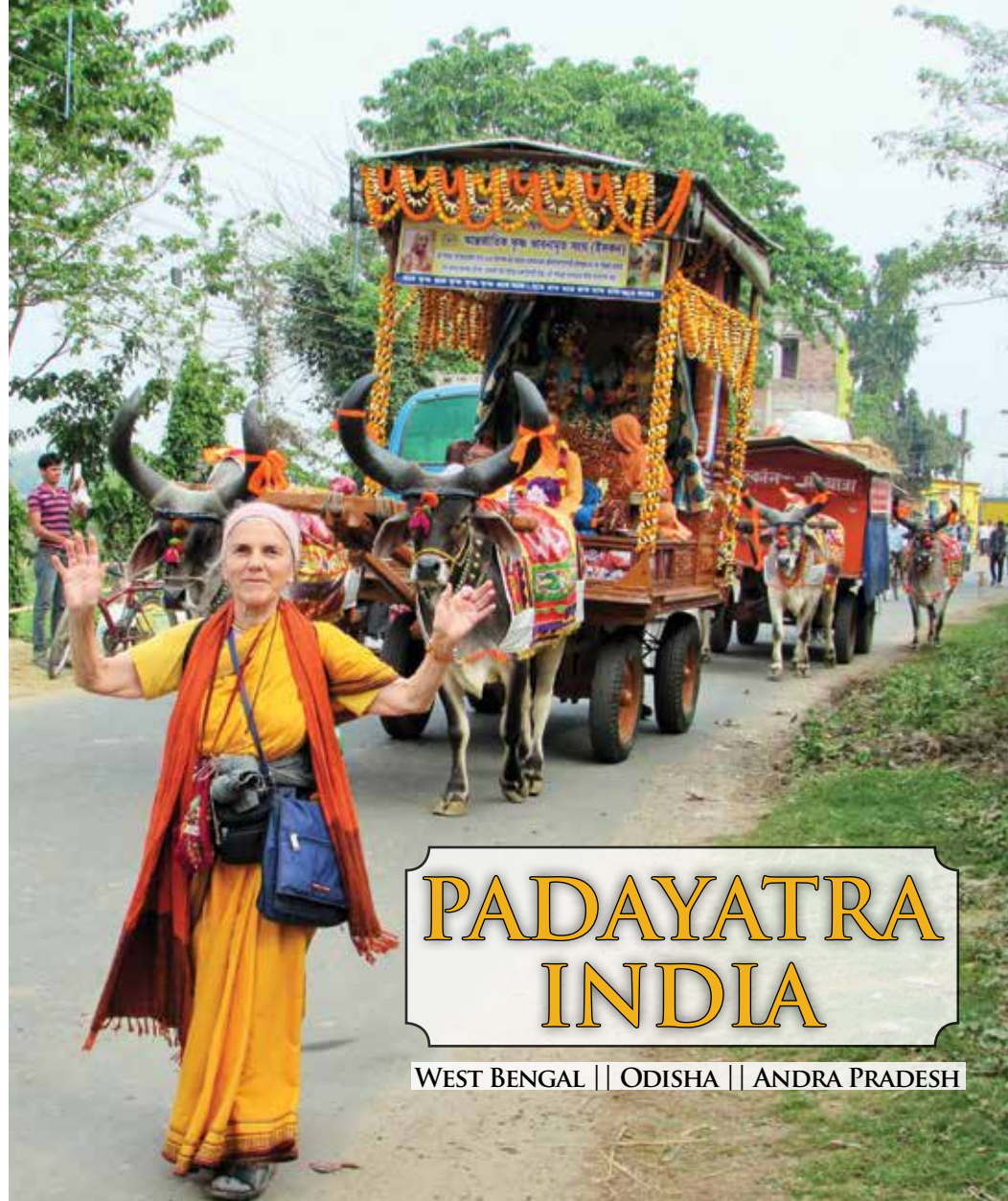
On February 27, 2014 Padayatra India, led by Acarya Dasa, walked the last kilometers from Lord Jagannath's temple in Rajapur to Mayapur's Candrodaya Mandir. This marked the return of Padayatra India to Mayapur after ten long years. The *padayatris* were welcomed at Yoga Pitha by a joyous *kirtana* party. Following the two Mayapur elephants, Vishnupriya and Laksmipriya, the



party kept swelling as it got closer to the Nama-Hatta building where Lokanath Swami and a large group of international devotees welcomed the travellers with *kirtana*, garlands, joyous cheers and even some cakes for Sri Sri Nitai-Gaurasundara.

The oxen usually rested in a nearby field or at the *goshala*; they deserved some rest after months of intense service on the road. The Deity cart remained stationed in front of Govinda's Restaurant during the entire festival, except when the *padayatris* participated in the Saturday night elephant procession or went out for a little walk.

When they brought the six Kankrej oxen near the Deity cart, the animals became instant celebrities, attracting devotees and visitors alike. Such



## PADAYATRA INDIA

WEST BENGAL || ODISHA || ANDRA PRADESH

impressive and majestic oxen do not exist in West Bengal.



A large sign placed near the cart gave the public more information about the purpose of *padayatra*, and invited onlookers to offer support and donations. Besides taking a well-deserved break from the demanding pace of life

on the road, the *padayatra* party also took part in the 25th Navadvipa Mandala Parikrama. The ever smiling and beaming face of Candra Vamsi Dasa, the pujari distributing *caranamrita* from the cart, was a living testimony to the blissful and transcendental nature of Padayatra (below).





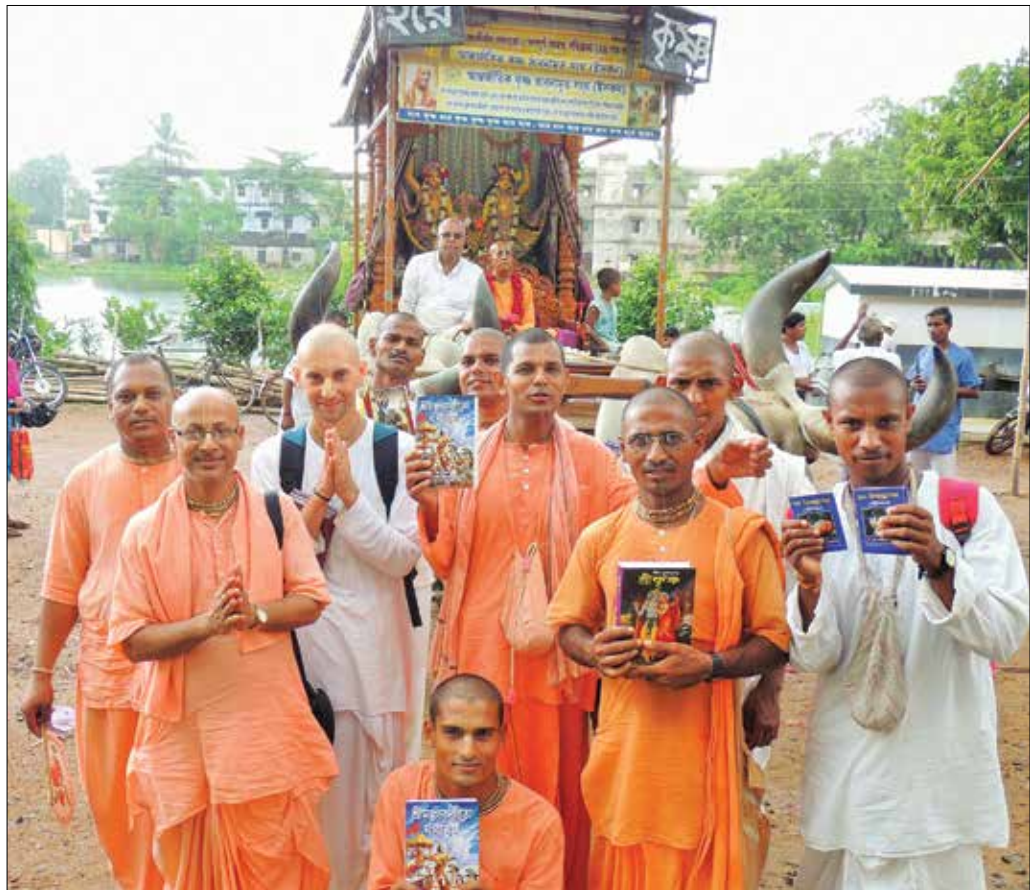
## Padayatra India teams up with the Nama-hatta devotees in West Bengal

On March 19th, Padayatra India left Mayapur towards the villages of Bengal. We visited several places of the pastimes of Lord Caitanya and His prominent devotees: Advaita Acarya's home in Shantipur, Haridasa Thakura's *bhajan sthali* in Phulia, Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura's home in Birnagar, Mahesh Pandit and Jagadish Pandit's home in Chakdaha, the location of the famous Panihati rice festival, and Sivananda Sena's home and Isvara Puri's birthplace in Kumarahatta.



ISKCON Nama-Hatta devotees assisted us from the very time we hit the road. Vasudev Nandan Dasa from the Nama-Hatta head office in Mayapur, later replaced by Sudama Sakha Dasa, were our main preachers. With other local ISKCON Bengali devotees they cooked daily bhoga offerings for the Deities, served prasada, and most importantly helped us organize evening programs in each village. The program consisted of *nagar sankirtan*, Gaura arati, book distribution, *Bhagavad-gita* lecture, *japa* session and devotional video shows. Mostly women and children came to the program, and danced with great enthusiasm.

As soon as people heard the sound of the maha-mantra coming from the *padayatra* cart, they ran out of their homes to get the Lord's *darsana* and some *prasadam* from the Deity cart. *Padayatris* and Nama-Hatta devotees enthusiastically distributed an increasing number of books in Bengali. In just ten days, from April 20 to 30, they sold 3 *Bhagavatam* sets, 2 *Caitanya-Caritamrita* sets, 400 big books, 4,400 *Back to Godhead* magazines, and 8,000 small books.



Bengalis warmly welcomed the *padayatris* with *maha-prasada* feasts. Although friendly, most people do not seriously follow their spiritual tradition, they eat fish and chew pan while wearing sacred *tulasi malas*. We were very disturbed to see so many shops openly selling beef. Most of the population of Bengal is non-vegetarian, except for ISKCON and Gaudiya Math followers.

The last days in Bengal took place during the rainy season. It rained ev-

ery day. On some days it rained so hard that all we had to do to take a shower was to stand outside for a few seconds. Yet we continued our regular program of *sadhana*, book and *prasadam* distribution and evening *harinamas*. As a result, while in Bengal, Padayatra India distributed a total of 5 000 maha big books, 87,500 small books and prasadam to more than 210,000 people. Roughly one million people received the *darsana* and *caranamrita* of Sri Sri Nitai-Gaurasundara.

## Celebration of Padayatra India's 30th anniversary in Pandharpur (Vaikunthaloka Dasa)

On September 2, Radhastami day, a group of devotees celebrated Padayatra India's 30 years on the road. Many of them had come to ISKCON Pandharpur from all over India, especially from the Maharashtra temples and preaching centres, to participate in this joyous double celebration. While the balance of the Padayatra



India party was travelling in Odisha, Acarya Das and two other *padayatris* joined Lokanath Maharaja and about 800 devotees to hear the glories of Srimati Radharani. The evening was set aside for Padayatra *katha*, during which Maharaja and *padayatris* such as Akhiladhara Dasa, a Prabhupada disciple who has been on the road in India for many years, shared their travel experiences, adventures and realisations.

### Tasting the famous Gopinath's khira in Remuna

On August 4th, our Padayatra party entered Odisha. We stopped in the village of Chandra Ishvar, home of the large ISKCON temple of Sri Sri Radha Gopinath, where Gauranga Prema Maharaja gave inspiring lectures during the morning and evening programs.

Devotees from the local Nama-Hatta centers joined our party, assisting us in many valuable ways, including the distribution of books in Oriya, the local language.

In the town of Jaleshvar we visited the famous new temple of Kaliya. We also stopped in the village of Remuna, where the famous *lila* of the theft of *khira* (sweet rice) took place. Over 500 years ago, the great saint Madhavendra Puri was traveling to Puri to get some sandalwood for his Sri Gopal Deity in Vrindavana. In Remuna he saw the delicious *khira* offered to the Sri Gopinath Deity. He desired to taste it so as to offer it to his Gopal Deity. Since Madhavendra Puri only accepted food that was offered to him, he left the temple without tasting the *khira*, as none was offered to him. After finishing his worship of Sri Gopinath, the pujari lay down to rest. In his dream Sri Gopinath instructed him: "Get up. I hid a pot of *khira* under my garment for my devotee Madhavendra Puri. Go and give it to him" The pujari did as he was told. Since that time Go-

pinath is known as Khirachora Gopinath (the one who stole *khira*). We also got to taste this divine *khira*, but at the cost of 25 rupees for each pot. It was well worth it.

### Walking in Lord Caitanya's footsteps

From November 8 to 15 Padayatra India was based in Jagannatha Puri at the ISKCON Bhaktivedanta Ashram, a very beautiful place on the beach, just four kilometers from the samadhi of Haridas Thakur. During this time we received the visit of four sannyasis : Lokanatha Swami, Radha Raman Swami, Bhakti Rasamrita Swami and Bhaktivinoda Swami, who took turn giving lectures. As they were staying in the Royal Hotel two kilometers from us, we had many very inspiring meetings with them, either at their place or ours. We really appreciated their invaluable personal contact and the blessings they showered upon us.

On November 16th the Padayatra India party, accompanied by Lo-

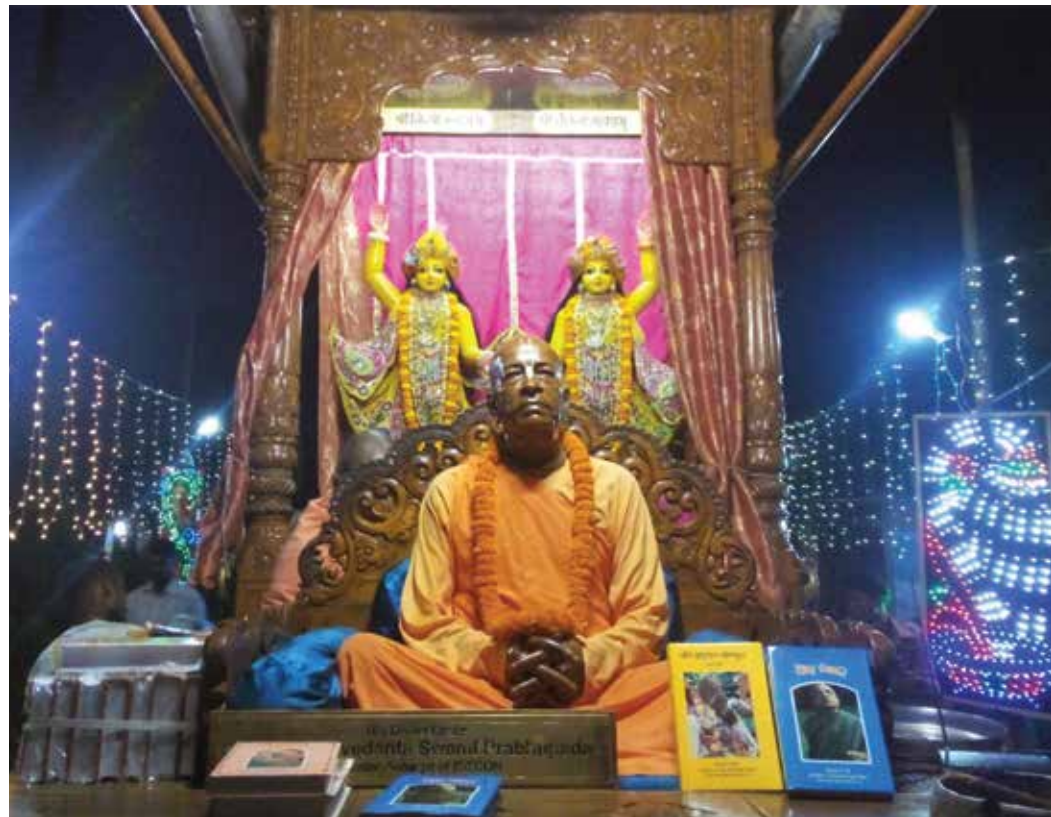
kanath Maharaja and a lively *kirtana*, walked on the seashore towards the ISKCON Puri temple. On the way we stopped at the hotel where some GBC members were staying. There Lokanath Maharaja and some GBC members made a presentation of Padayatra India. After relishing nice *prasadam* at the ISKCON Puri temple we went to the Gundica temple.

The next day we arrived in Danda Bhanga at another ISKCON temple. It is the place where Lord Nityananda broke Lord Caitanya's *danda* and where Lord Caitanya got the *darsana* of Kakreshar Mahadev. The following day we went to the temple of Sakshi Gopal.

During the month of Kartika five devotees from Padayatra India travelled with the Padayatra Odisha party from Bhubaneswar, while the rest of our party went to Vrindavana to participate in the annual Vraja Mandala Parikrama.

After Orissa our party is heading to Hyderabad.

Contact Acarya Dasa (Hindi and Marathi): 0989 0939782





# YASODADULAL DASA REVIVES THE PADAYATRA SPIRIT IN NEW ZEALAND

Since February 2014 Yasodadulal has done four small padayatras in New Zealand with different teams.

His mood is to go on short walks with a mission. The first one in the far North called “Pioneer & Pilgrims Tour” lasted ten days and included a group of twelve national devotees, men, women, youth and children. The second one in the deep South, “From Schist to Saffron dust” covered 100 kms in ten days. The six-men team consisted of two devotee fathers - Yasodadulal Dasa, Reagen and their sons plus a horseman friend. On the third, an eight day padayatra “Lessons on the Mountain,” the two participants were father and son, Yasodadulal Dasa and Dhananjaya. On the fourth padayatra, twenty Christchurch devotees walked for three days around Christchurch with a F.I.R.E. theme : Freedom In Real

Existence.

The 5th padayatra was a one day motorized journey called the ECO (Everybody Come Over )Tour. Thirty devotees travelled in a bus around various suburbs of Christchurch City. The tour did a circuit of devotees’ homes, taking darsana of their Deities, hearing Krsna-katha and sharing light prasada. The Padayatra Deities, Sri Sri Nitai Gaurachandra, Who were named after the Temple Deities that were destroyed in the 2011 earthquake, were carried on and off the bus into many homes of devotees accompanied by a lively kirtana. Inside the houses His Grace Bhurijana Prabhu told stories of Krsna’s Vrinda-



davan lila, including picnicking with the gopas, the killing of Aghasura and the Brahma vimohan lila.





# SUMMER PADADAYATRA IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC KEEPS EXPANDING



by Kasturi Manjari dasi

Summer 2014 : Our 21st Czech Padayatras was such a blissful and unforgettable event! We walked for sixteen days in the South Moravia region of the Czech Republic. This year's *padayatras* was special in many ways. At the beginning of the walk approximately thirty devotees from the Euro Bus Tour joined us for three days. These enthusiastic young devotees from different countries were a great source of inspiration for us.

During two evening cultural programs they danced, performed a mime show about a soul trapped in the material world and a *mridanga* show similar to the ones done by Mayapuris, with two drummers playing different techniques to entertain the public.

One of the Bus Tour participants did an attractive show of different dancing styles ranging from *bharat natyam* to Bollywood dance. There was also some *bharat natyam* from our dancers, and the Shyam performance, which was more like a drama dance about the soul lost in the material world and its final reunion with Lord Krishna.

Then, a historical moment occurred: after ten years, Lokanath Swami, the Padayatras minister, visited our Czech Padayatras. His holy presence was so transcendental and sweet that

we were immediately transferred directly to the spiritual world! He also participated in two evening programs for the public, where he addressed the crowd and led lively *kirtanas*.

When we arrived in Hodonin, the biggest town of this year's route, there was a yearly folk festival, and our great *bharat natyam* dancer, Lila Mohini, had the opportunity to dance on the main stage for twenty minutes, while some 1100 visitors were eagerly looking at her performance, admiring her skills.

Altogether, we held 13 evening programs, with a total of approximately 1200 guests. During these programs, we distributed around 2600 coconut sweets, 591 packs of *prasada*, and 800 *maha* bananas thrown from the cart. Different TV stations came to shoot us three times.

We distributed a record number of books (2,862) which is almost the double of last year (1,473 books). Another memorable fact is that our beloved ox Nanda, who is now fifteen years old, walked with us for the tenth time. That was his last *padayatras* though, he now deserves some rest on the Krsnuv Dvur farm where he will be well taken care of. He really did a great job throughout the years and we will miss him a lot.

If we look at our 2014 Czech Padayatras as a whole, it was simply

wonderful, and we want to expand it even more for the next years!

*Padayatras bhakta vrinda ki jaya!*

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# THE IMPORTANCE OF TRAINING OTHERS

GAURANGI DEVI DASI INTERVIEWS NRSIMHA CAITANYA DASA FROM THE CZECH REPUBLIC



Gdd: Since when have you been active on *padayatra* in Czech Republic ?

NCd: Every summer since 2004. I was coming before but I became active in management during the summer of 2004.

Gdd: When was the first time you went on *padayatra* ?

NCd: It was about 17 years ago. I was then seven years old. All I remember is that for one breakfast Nandan Acarya Prabhu had made special rice; it was very simple but very good.

Gdd: You were then 7 years old. What did you do ?

NCd: I was riding on the cart and having fun with the other kids. Later my service was to walk in the back of the party, using a flag to slow down cars. I did not want to go on *harinama* because I was scared. I was too self-conscious and I thought that everybody was watching me, so I felt uncomfortable.

Gdd: That has changed happily!

NCd: Until 2004 we came to the summer *padayatra* for just a few days, because *padayatra* was either too far from our home or Rajaram Prabhu had taken it to some other countries. In 2004 we stayed on *padayatra* for one week, then went back home, and came back after three days. 2004 was also the year

Lokanath Maharaja visited *padayatra* in Czech Republic for the second time.

Gdd: What other things did you do on *padayatra* ?

NCd: I was also taking pictures. There are many pictures from 2005 to 2009 which were taken by me.

Gdd: How did you come to be part of the management team ? Were you trained more by Rajaram Prabhu or by your father, Munipriya Prabhu ?

NCd: I would say both. My father is taking care of the external cultural aspect of *padayatra*, organizing the programs, doing advertisement, having articles published in the newsletters.

Rajaram taught me practical things about the internal workings of *padayatra*. His most important instruction was to take very good care of the devotees. For example, when they wash their clothes in the morning before walking with the cart, they hang them on a rope. Rajaram instructed the advance party, usually consisting of two or three devotees, to take the clothes down and hang them again in the new place so that they would be dry when devotees arrive.

Gdd: It's very personal care. What are the other things he told you about taking care of devotees?

NCd: He always said that devotees need very nice prasadam and to take good rest, otherwise they are not inspired. He did not like it when someone was lazy, and he could be heavy with them, but he always mixed his chastisement with some jokes. He was like the father of all devotees on *padayatra*, and those he chastised took it like that. He was very personal with people and had a non-sectarian way of preaching Krsna consciousness. He did not stress that people have to become monks or go to the

temple. He was always simple with everyone, and talked to them in ways they could relate to.

Gdd: Since how many years are you organizing *padayatra* with your father ?

NCd: Since 2007. In 2005 Rajaram wanted to give the responsibility to somebody else, and it was given to my father. Since then he had several devotees doing advance party, the main one being Gadadhar Prabhu, but when he got married he could no do it any more. We had nobody to do the advance party, so I agreed to do it with another devotee, who also had other services on *padayatra*. I did this for two years and that's how I became involved with organization.

Gdd: So, do you want to continue with this service ?

NCd: Of course I want to continue with *padayatra*, but I like to give service to others. Rajaram Prabhu asked me to train other devotees so that's what I would like to expand on.

Gdd: Do you like to train others ?

NCd: Yes, because I don't know what will happen to me, or to anybody else. Some devotees just stick to their service, but when they leave there is a big gap. I think that when we start doing a service, we should immediately find another devotee and train him so that he can replace us in future.

Gdd: That's very good, a long term vision. Anything can happen, we can get sick or die. So, how are the other young devotees - the second generation devotees - cooperating with you ? Are they interested ?

NCd: They like *padayatra*. Some come for a few days, from time to time. Lila Mohini Dasi is special, she comes every year to do *pujari* services and *bharat natyam* dance. The *padayatra* is more like a holiday, it's



not like the strict life in the temple, therefore it is quite attractive for my generation.

Gdd: Yes, on *padayatra* there is something for everybody. You told me that you wanted to take *padayatra* to other countries ?

NCd: Yes, Srila Prabhupada said we can have millions and millions of such carts. Bhaktimarga Swami is walking alone, it's also *padayatra*. I like things we are doing now, with the cart and public programs. I think there is a certain preaching field which is not developed enough, especially for farm communities, and that is village preaching. *Padayatra* is a very good tool for this. Because from the farms the devotees usually go to preach in the cities, but they can and they should also preach in nearby villages.

Recently I was thinking that *padayatra* could be done like a fair, every year we could go the same route, just changing the nightly cultural programs. In Czech we have a farm and a devotee community in the countryside, and the Prague temple has also moved to a village, but we do not preach to the villagers living around. Sometimes I hear that the people in villages in the Czech Republic just know us a cult, in fact they do not know who we are, because we preach and distribute books only in the cities.

Gdd: Book distributors do not go to the villages ?

NCd: Not much. At one time they were doing everything, the villages also. There was a big wave of book distribution in the nineties, but now there are not so many book distributors, so they are focusing in the big cities, because in the villages you won't meet as many people as in the towns and cities.

Gdd: In fact *padayatra* is perfect for villages. We can see that in the villages of India, it's so easy to organize a program, find hosts for the

party and a place to keep the oxen... Any problem to be hosted ?

NCd: Usually it's OK. So far we managed to have free accommodations almost everywhere. In big cities or towns we have to pay rent for a stage for the program. We could have some places for free without a stage, but we want to have a stage program on the main square.

Gdd: It seems that your programs are very successful, I see you're targeting the children and in this way their parents also come along.

NCd: At one point, when some brahmacharis wanted to take over, they were saying that the main thing on *padayatra* was the procession and book distribution, and that the evening program was just something extra, but now I see that although we distribute many books on the way, the procession is like a big advertisement for the evening program.

Gdd: Yes, people leave these programs with a good impression of the Hare Krishna devotees. I see that you make them participate a lot.

NCd: Yes, we make everybody chant and dance. People buy books, kids participate in the dancing contest and the girls get gopi dots. When some of the people who got books on the road come in the evening we encourage them a little more to read them, and like that they're starting their spiritual life.

Gdd: Czech Republic is one of the rare countries to do *padayatra* every year for the past 21 years now. Do you want to continue every year?

NCd: I think we could make at least five *padayatras* every year. It's not that we would have to be actively participating in all of them but I would like to inspire others to lead. In Czech our Prague temple is now located in a village on the outskirts, then we have farm about one hour drive from Prague, plus a nice community of devotees called Nava Nandagram in another village close

to Brno, the second largest city after Prague. That makes already three places in the countryside that can have their own *padayatra*. Next year we are planning to go to Slovakia for one week after our own walk in Czech Republic. In this way we want to create awareness about *padayatra* and we hope to ignite a few sparks, so to speak. I have a secret meditation about doing *Padayatra* around New Simhacalam in Germany. Now we have only one pair of oxen that can work and just recently we bought a new pair of young oxen that will do this service in following years. There are many devotees around who like *padayatra*, others who joined the movement on *padayatra* or were on *padayatra* for years, so we just need to ignite the spark again and things will start moving.

Gdd: I see that the *padayatra* seed has been planted in many hearts already. Are you hopeful it will continue to grow and produce many fruits and flowers in the form of more walks?

NCd: Yes, with the mercy of Srila Prabhupada and Sri Sri Nitai Gaurasundara.





# PADAYATRA SOUTH RUSSIA

## UNDERSTANDING & PRACTICING THE ESSENCE OF DEVOTIONAL SERVICE - SERVICE TO THE VAISNAVAS

By Padmalaya Devi Dasi

This year, by the mercy of Srila Gurudeva, I was able to participate on *padayatra* for the first time. I cannot compare this experience with anything else, and I'm not sure it is possible to do so, as each moment on *padayatra* is unique, transcendental and filled with happiness.

### **Challenging times with heavy rains, inundations, mud and cold**

Thanks to the mood of the senior devotees who took very good care of the *padayatris*, we easily accepted all the austerities we encountered on the way - the ascetic life in the forest, taking bath in freezing rivers and having our tents inundated with water.

We travelled in the forests of South Russia for about one month. I vividly remember one place where we camped out, a forest near the town of Lermontovo. We had a tough time there due to the bad weather conditions. It was sunny during the day but at night our party experienced a harsh downpour of rain. It rained so much that the roads had become muddy, and the puddles of water that had formed during the night wouldn't even dry up during the day because of the cold weather.

We witnessed cars getting stuck in the mud and rivers turning cold and muddy from the constant rain. Our lives were made very difficult indeed when it came to washing our clothes and bathing. Whenever we did our laundry in the river, the clothes would get covered with a layer of mud, and because it was so cold and damp they wouldn't even dry. The heavy rains

had also caused inundations on the banks of the rivers, making bathing very problematic: we had to jump from the shore of the river onto a rock and then into the water. When we wanted to come out of the river after having taken our bath we had to grab onto fallen trees and roots sticking out from the sides of the river bank. It was very slippery, and we would often fall into the river, along with all the things we were carrying.

### **The important thing is not where we render service, but with whom**

I went to *padayatra* to distribute Srila Prabhupada's books and was prepared to tolerate all kinds of austerities and trials to accomplish that goal. However, after having been on *padayatra* for some time, I came to the realisation that this was not the essence of the many services we offer to the Lord. What is important is not how many books one distributes and hearing the devotees praise you with *Ki jaya!* during the morning program, but with whom I do this service. On *padayatra*, the word 'I' does not exist, we are a large team, a big family.

Bala Gopal and Vijay Gopal Prabhush, the two *padayatra* leaders, once said, 'The important thing is not where we render service but with whom.' These simple words encouraging us to serve the other devotees have penetrated deep into my heart. By their own example these senior devotees inspire others to do wonderful things. So now I try to live by using this simple rule: if I see that one devotee has left her

clothes to soak in a bucket because she did not have time to wash them, I wash them myself. Or if someone has left behind some dirty kitchen utensils, I see that it's for me to do it, as Lord Caitanya Himself would probably have done the same thing. The *Caitanya-caritamrita* mentions the services that the Lord rendered to His devotees : garlanding them, serving *prasada*, and even washing their clothes. These instructions of our *padayatra* leaders have changed my life. I try to remember how each participant on *padayatra* is a unique devotee, very dear to the Lord.

### **On *padayatra* I wanted to serve with an intensity of desire I had never known before**

This summer I really understood that the best preaching is by our own example. When I saw all the love that was in the heart of Bala Gopal, Vijay Gopal and Maha Shakti Prabhush, the only thing I then wanted to do was to become like them. As I said before, the essence of *padayatra* and our preaching is not the number of books distributed or the number of *harinamas* we did. *Padayatra* changes people's heart and makes them become devotees. It was on *padayatra* that I understood that I was ready to sacrifice my entire life for the *sankirtana* mission of Sri Caitanya Mahaprabhu, in order to be like these loving senior devotees, and not because Srila Prabhupada had promised that the Lord would bring back to Him all the book distributors in this very lifetime. I saw with my own eyes how the method given by Srila Prabhupada is working. The brightest





memory of my entire life is the taste I experienced during the *padayatra*. I wanted to chant the maha-mantra, to read Srila Prabhupada's books and to serve with an intensity of desire I had never known before.

I also understood that there is no life after *padayatra*. I tried two times to leave *padayatra*, each time asking my temple leader to do it just for a little time, but then I understood that it was not possible for me to go away. The taste I received on *padayatra* does not allow me to now live the way I used to live before. Each place I find myself in - the temple, my home or on *sankirtana*- is *padayatra*. Because *padayatra* is not the place where it happens, but it's a mood of service. It's only with this mood that it's possible, not only to sell books in the street, but also to give Krsna to people. My only desire is to be able to stay in the company of these exalted devotees and that Krishna allows me to serve them one way or another.

#### Four month *padayatra* in South Russia

by Narada Dasa

Last summer we walked from June to September in a district of South Russia, starting from Essentuki and proceeding towards Suhumi. We did *harinama* in all the cities and villages we went through with our Deities called Doyal Nitai Vijay Gauranga. Our *padayatra* party varied from 22 to 35 devotees: 5 to 20 locals and others from Belarus and Ukraine. The party was composed of one *brahmachari* (myself), three children, four teenagers, two *vanaprasthas* and a majority of *grihasthas*.

Our procession was done Indradyumna Swami's style, i.e. one loudspeaker amplifying the *kirtana* and two lines of devotees chanting and dancing, with beautifully dressed *matajis* gracefully dancing in front. During our walk I conducted a two-week Harinama Sankirtana course. It gave a history of the Sankirtana Movement from Lord Caitanya's times to today, some knowledge and practice of Vaishnava musical instruments (*mridanga*, *karatalas* and harmonium) and the basics of singing and dancing.

**Rasika Dasi:** The people we meet are receptive to our *harinama*, they dance, accept our *prasadam* sweets and buy books. Sometimes the police arrests us and takes us to the Police Station, but even there we continue chanting and distributing books.

In Russia there are many atheists and radical Christians, and those people often complain about the presence of the Hare Krishna devotees. Since the government does not always allow *harinama* we tried to organize it in a very nice way so that nobody complained. But sometimes the police stopped the *harinama* and took the entire group of devotees to the police station to check our papers,

which usually took from one to six hours. But we still sold books there.

We distributed a total of 8,000 BBT books and 2,000 *prasadam* sweetballs. The highlights of our *padayatra* were the visit to the Vaishnava rural community of New Varshana Dhama (fifteen devotees and two cows) 20 km from Nosorossiysk, the *harinama* in Sochi, place of the 2014 Olympic Games, the visit to the Black Sea, the participation of Danishtha Dasi and Sri Radha Dasi, the two *sankirtana* leaders from Kazakhstan, and the presence during the entire walk of two wonderful teenagers, Madhavi and Narayani. Let's not forget Maha Shakti Prabhu, who kept everybody on *padayatra* in a jolly mood with his good jokes.



Vijay Gopal and Bala Gopal





# THE WALKING MONK COMPLETES CANWALK 4

By Nitai Priya Devi Dasi

In 2013, Bhaktimarga Swami, “The Walking Monk”, began his fourth trek across the planet’s second largest country – Canada. He temporarily left the marathon road to see to other duties, and in September 2013 he concluded one leg of his pilgrimage in Taber, Alberta. The westbound “Canwalk 4” reconvened on May 24th, 2014 from Taber and ended on June 29th in Burnaby.

The Walking Monk: It’s been one big-time adventure once again trekking a great piece of the globe, Canada. I ventured through this land with its multiple eco-systems, seeing it in awe and offering it a service.

## “Walking the Wisdom of the Road” documentary features “The Walking Monk”

On this leg of the marathon, Bhaktimarga Swami was temporarily joined by Canadian filmmaker Michael Oesch, who had contacted the Walking Monk as a fellow trans-Canada walker. The two became fast friends, as those who have shared the perils and priceless moments of crossing Canada’s pristine and rugged natural beauty are bound to do.

Oesch was producing a documentary, “Walking the Wisdom of the Road”, and wanted to include Bhaktimarga Swami’s presence and perspectives on walking in his film. Oesch joined the Walking Monk and his trusty support persons, Daruka and Karuna Sindhu, for the first few weeks of the trek. Bhaktimarga Swami recounts: “In comparing notes of treks of both Michael and me, you could hardly tell we were different people. We both like the self-imposed life of simplicity, the naps in

graveyards, and sleeping in a tent at night, interacting with other travelers, encountering wildlife, and the securing of wisdom that comes from the road.”

## Growing interest in « Tales from Trails »

Bhaktimarga Swami’s presentation, “Tales from Trails” was much sought after and celebrated in the towns he visited. Audiences gathered at community centers and yoga studios to hear of his adventures and insights, which were well documented by media attention. Media coverage had become a regular feature of Maharaaja’s daily life when walking through populated areas. When comparing the different phases of Canwalk 4 he noted that the first leg of Canwalk 4 had substantial and inspirational participation from local schools, and while the second leg through the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia was not as geared towards these encounters, it had other, albeit, harrowing highlights: “I wanted to get off the beaten path and walk the old route the Greyhound (bus line) used to struggle with on the dangerous switchbacks and corners. Daruka couldn’t drive on that old road, it was too neglected and not road worthy for a car, so we were much more in the wilderness. We saw bear dung around, and we were a little concerned, ‘Are we going to be okay?’ It was part of the old Dewdney Trail which had to do with the gold rush.”

## Taking his final steps to Krishna’s lotus feet

You might expect that such a feat - a man in his 60’s completing his 4th



To know the land you must walk the land

cross-Canada walk - would end with balloons and streamers, fanfare and such, and deservedly so! Yet Bhaktimarga Swami reflects humbly on his Canwalk 4 conclusion ritual: “Generally, I go for touching the nearest ocean when putting closure to such a pilgrimage. But this time I had the desire to take the final steps to the lotus feet of the Krishna Deities at the ISKCON temple in the heart of Burnaby, British Columbia.”

Bhaktimarga Swami: The very final step was actually a full obeisance before the magnanimous avatar of Krishna, Sri Chaitanya, who was a popular mover of legs – a pilgrim Himself. My heart did indeed melt momentarily as I glanced at the smiling brass image of the Chaitanya Deity. There is power in the Deity. I could feel it, especially now.

I lost some pounds. I lost some karma. From trees we learn tolerance; from the wind, creativity; from water, gravity; from the sun and moon, energy; and from people, hospitality and kindness.

I was determined to make this a quiet finish as far as a marathon pilgrimage is concerned. It doesn’t require a big hoopla necessarily. It’s a walk for peace, after all – inner peace. And the walking is only meant to continue.

And continue he will. Bhaktimarga Swami plans to honour Srila Prabhupada’s journey from Boston to New York, and the upcoming 50th anniversary of ISKCON in just that way.

For more information and to read about his daily walking adventures, please visit [www.thewalkingmonk.net](http://www.thewalkingmonk.net).



# SHORT REGULAR PADAYATRAS IN SURINAME

By Partha-sakha Dasa



## Walks usually ending at Hindu temples

Since 1996 we have organized several *padayatras* in Suriname, a small country in South America with a population of half a million people, about 45% of them Hindus. The first *padayatra* took place in October 1996, the year of Srila Prabhupada's Centennial. We walked for one whole day in the capital of the country, Paramaribo, and ended with a festival at the ISKCON temple. Around 70 devotees participated, included dev-



otees from Guyana, Trinidad, and the Benelux. Around that time we also held another two day *padayatra* in the Nickerie district, located 230 km from the capital and bordering Guyana. This district has a large Hindu community and ISKCON devotees have a Nama-hatta center there, headed by Govinda Madhava Shyam Dasa.

Nickerie's capital city, Nieuw-Nickerie, is the second largest city in the country with 50,000 inhabitants.

That *padayatra* was attended by the same amount of participants as in the first walk, but this time more local people joined the procession which ended each day at a Hindu temple – the Rama Mandir and the Sri Vishnu Mandira- with lecture, *kirtana* and full plates of *prasada* for everyone.

The sweet taste experienced in the past *padayatras* inspired us to organize more walks in 2004 and 2011 in Paramaribo and Nickerie with 50 devotees each time. In 2004 we even



managed to have an oxcart. Many people, especially the Hindus, were attracted by the *kirtana*. They waved to the devotees, offered *pranams* from their balconies, and came out of their houses to see the procession and receive *prasadam*, a book or a pamphlet.

## Cow puja to inaugurate the 2014 padayatra

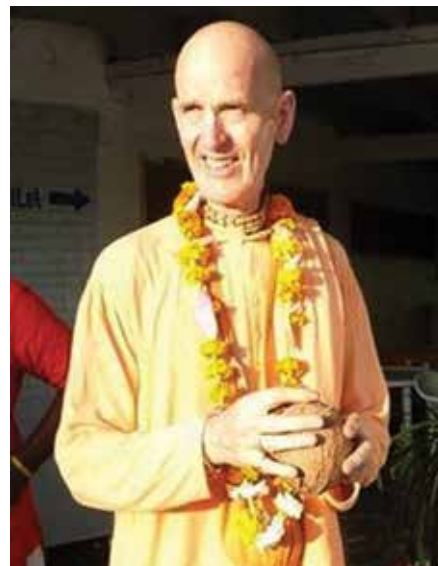
Our last *padayatra*, held in Nieuw-Nickerie on July 7th 2014, was attended by 50 devotees and guests. It was organised by Govinda Madhava Syam Dasa, Janakinath Dasa, a former president of the Suriname *yatra* visiting from the Netherlands, and myself. We started the walk by worshipping Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and offering a special *arati* to *go mata* in the *nama-hatta* centre. The cow came from a local farmer who was enthused to engage his animal in the *puja*. The cow and her owner got so enlivened by this experience that they walked half of the

route with the procession before returning home.

## ISKCON devotees : first to hold a religious procession in the Nickerie district

We had a simple but elegant hand drawn cart to carry Sri Sri Gaura Nitai. As usual we were escorted by the police – five policemen on bikes, and two on motor bikes. It is their rule, as they want to ensure a peaceful and orderly procession, with no religious clashes. The policemen were so kind that they also added an ambulance at the end of the procession, in case medical attention was needed. For Nickerie it was a big thing.

While walking through the town we distributed *burfi* and other sweets, many pamphlets but no books alas. Everyone was blissfully chanting and waving colourful flags. As much as I can recall only ISKCON has ever done such a religious procession in the Nickerie district. At the end of the day we held a dynamic program at our Nama-hatta centre with *kirtana*, full plates of *prasada* and an enlivening lecture.



Janakinath Dasa



# PADAYATRA REVIVAL IN SOUTH AFRICA



by Radhaprema Devi Dasi

Given the repressive laws in South Africa prior to 1994, the idea of *padayatra* was at best not possible. Post democracy meant that there was greater freedom to exercise religious and cultural activities. That's why, on September 3, 1994, one hundred chanting and dancing devotees wheeled the country's first *padayatra* cart along the main street of Durban to the city hall, with the mayor of Durban, Mike Lipchitz, cutting the inaugural ribbon. In 1996 *padayatra* went with the same Deity cart and a Prabhupada murti to each of the thirty nama-hatta centers in greater Durban. It happened mostly on weekends, usually ending with a hall program.

## The 2012 padayatra to the Temple of Understanding in Durban

The idea of doing *padayatra* again in South Africa emerged during a visit of Lokanath Swami to the country. A small group of enthused disciples, headed by Sadhana Shakti Dasi and her husband Bhakta Vinod, took her guru's request as their instruc-

tion and launched *padayatra* South Africa on November 10, 2012. With the excellent support of the Sri Sri Radha-Radhanath Temple of Understanding and the congregational devotees, about 140 devotees, including men, women and children, joined the ten-kilometre long *padayatra*. The venue for the launch of *padayatra* was significant: the Sri Laksmi Narayan temple hall in Mobeni Heights. Srila Prabhupada only visited South Africa once, and it was in this hall, on 8 October 1973, that in his address to the congregation he indicated his desire for an ISKCON Temple to be built in Chatsworth, a sprawling township about 14 kms from Durban, the largest city in the Kwazulu Natal province. Amid great struggles, but driven by Srila Prabhupada's instructions, the devotees completed the Sri Sri Radha Radhanath Temple of Understanding in 1985.

For the 2012 *padayatra* to the Temple of Understanding devotees built a lightweight aluminium palanquin and artistically decorated it with flower garlands of brilliant yellow and red roped around the pillars



of the palanquin where they gently placed the life size *murti* of Srila Prabhupada. In the Indian township of Chatsworth people offered water and fruits to the *padayatra* party. Women and children rushed out of their homes, waving enthusiastically, trying to get a glimpse of Srila Prabhupada whom they assumed to be a real person being carried on a palanquin. En route, the support offered by the





business community, which included the tiny corner plaza shops and the large manufacturing industry, was overwhelming. The *padayatra* party thought they would meet scorn and hostility, but the group was pleasantly surprised by the reception offered to them by the Christian and Muslim communities. The fact that Muslim businessmen were appreciative of the *padayatra* party can be attributed to the fact that the idea of pulling a chariot is not entirely new to the Muslims. In South Africa, in the early 1990's a major Muslim festival called Mohurram was celebrated by the Indian community. And thus, the traditional offering of fruit, water and money we received were in the spirit of piety already known to the many that we passed on our way back to the temple.

Along the road, devotees distributed Ekadasi *prasadam*- packets of roasted peanuts, sugar candy, raisins and coconut flakes. The vibrant *kirtana* lured both the shy and the intrepid onlookers to rhythmically move to the music. Children ran alongside the palanquin, hoping to get a response from Srila Prabhupada! A support crew distributed fruit and water to devotees during the long and hot walk. As Srila Prabhupada looked on from his palanquin, the devotees enthusiastically distributed his books (500 that day). Even elderly *matajis* walked the entire distance.

During the subsequent week-end *padayatras* held in the townships of Phoenix and Welbedacht in the same province, the Deities of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai, along with the small Prabhu-

pada *murti* of Sadhana Shakti Dasi, replaced Srila Prabhupada large *murti* on the palanquin. The distance was reduced to about four kilometres because it enabled a more intense preaching program with the target communities, including the distribution of *japa* beads.

### **Burlington Heights 2014 : giving mercy to the poor in a high crime area**

In 2014 three *padayatras* were held in KwaZulu Natal. Both of them started in rather affluent areas and ended in the poorer section of the town. On July 5th a group of devotees embarked on a 6 km *padayatra* from the Temple of Understanding in Durban. The devotees, largely disciples of Lokanath Maharaja, undertook this spiritual walk as part of the celebration of their Guru Maharaja's forthcoming *vyasa-puja*. Another *padayatra* started in the affluent area of Burlington Heights, an exclusive suburb that boasts opulent homes with lavish designs. Our chanting in this area did not draw out the people, although a few endeavored to take a peek. Of course the high security walls meant to protect its residents from theft to their property insulated them from any sounds on the street. After a short downhill walk, we entered the poor area which stands in stark contrast to the palatial homes and well maintained roads we had just left behind us. The area that we were targeting is mostly populated with low cost housing for the unemployed and the poor. It is predominantly occupied by the African com-



munity and the main purpose of this *padayatra* was to get the devotees to preach to this community. Unfortunately the area is not safe and the necessary arrangements for police escort and private security had to be made prior to the event. Crime in this area is rife and people have been killed for simple items like cell phones and shoes. Our police escort consisted of two vehicles with four police officers clad in official police uniform and carrying batons and guns. Although we felt safe in the presence of our Gaura Nitai Deities, we had to take precautions to protect the devotees who undertook this *padayatra*, especially the older ones and the children.

The transcendental chants cut through the crisp morning air and within seconds the little children had come out from their homes driven by curiosity. A few of them walked alongside the chanting party, others clapped spontaneously while the rest looked on, intrigued at the sight before them. This was clearly a first, and the sweets and books were received with cupped hands and bended knees. Devotees distributed about 50 books –Srila Prabhupada's books translated into isiZulu, the name of the language spoken by the African citizens in KwaZulu Natal. Children also understand English as they attend the local school where English is the language of instruction. As the books and sweets were being distributed, unhurried mothers coaxed their children to participate in the offering of sweets. Even the dawdling man, slumped on the roadside, after a night of revelry, glanced quizzically at the deities. As we meandered our way across the streets, we noticed the luscious vegetables growing in small garden patches before the homes. Equally interesting were the homes and roadside industries which consisted of car wash and repair facilities, tuck shops and tables with fresh green vegetables for sale such



as spinach, potatoes and tomatoes – staple food for most. Tuck shops are little shops operating from people's homes – they build a small section alongside their home and stock it with daily goods like bread and cakes. Many of these home owners are employed by factories and also as maids/helpers. Clearly, with this *padayatra*, we had touched the residents of Burlington Heights in a distinct way, and importantly negotiated Srila Prabhupada's books into the modest homes of the underprivileged and hopefully into their hearts.

**Kartik 2014: padayatra teams up with Food for Life and nama-hatta devotees in Verulam**



On October 25, during the last days of Kartika, another *padayatra* was organised in Verulam, a town 28 km north of Durban. Although it is mainly inhabited by Indians, over the years it has become populated by other race groups. There is also a growing African population who have moved in and settled informally in this area. The *padayatra* route was designed in a way that took us through a relatively affluent area towards a very poor community in an informal settlement. It is not unusual in South Africa for communities who have no fixed dwelling to gravitate towards more affluent towns and cit-

ies which gives them better opportunities to earn a living. These areas are often referred to as squatter camps or informal settlements. The homes are generally made of wood and tin and are constructed overnight. Because of the Human Rights Declaration, moving these residents is not easily possible. The residents came out of their homes with much enthusiasm and accepted *prasadam*. Of course, entering such a settlement is ordinarily not possible without police escort. We were aware of the risks but did not take a police escort this time, as the area was more familiar to many devotees. We drew comfort from the fact that Their Lordships were with us and, feeling safe in Their merciful

embrace, ventured forth.

The *kirtana* session headed by Madhumangal Dasa was vibrant with synchronised melodies from the three sets of *karatalas*, two *mr-dangas* and two *djembe* (African drums). These drums are very familiar to the African communities, given their origins in central Africa. The staggering men reeking of alcohol danced boldly and a few children in ragged clothes enthusiastically ran alongside the deities, thus receiving the mercy of Gauranga Mahaprabhu and Lord Nityananda.

The Food for Life team served about 600 plates of deliciously hot



*biryani* to the poor and needy, who thankfully received them. *Biryani* is a dish where a variety of vegetables and rice are cooked together. It is a common preparation especially for Food for Life South Africa. It has been estimated that almost 30% of South Africans are food insecure. In Verulam it meant that there was no certainty of a next meal for many of its residents. In its vision to create hunger free zones, Food for Life South Africa presently feeds 10 000 children daily.

Laxminath Dasa, a stalwart food distributor (several million plates in his lifetime with ISKCON) cooked the meal with the assistance of a visiting Chinese scholar who distributed the *prasadam* with much joy. On this unusually cold day for Durban, the warm meal was relished by all. Little children came out of their homes with their own utensils for second helpings. Over 86 books were sold within a few kilometers of the *padayatra*. This was a joint effort by devotees from the different nama-hattas in Verulam and Phoenix, a nearby Indian township, as well as the Food for Life representatives. At the end of the *padayatra*, the devotees were treated to a sumptuous lunch feast prepared by Paripurna Radha Devi Dasi's house in Verulam.



# TWENTY YEARS OF PADAYATRA / RATHA-YATRA IN LITHUANIA

by Ananda Gaurangi Devi Dasi



## An attractive blend of Padayatra, Ratha-yatra, harinama and cultural program

When the Lithuanian *Padayatra* started in 1995, it was well received by the citizens who were essentially inspired by their newfound freedom and independence from USSR in 1991. *Padayatra* Lithuania has since become a colorful annual event, traditionally held at the end of June. This festival presents an interesting fusion of *Padayatra* and Ratha-yatra ideas in the form of a decorated hand-driven Ratha-yatra cart carrying the smiling Deities of Jagannath, Baladev and Subhadra (who came from Jagannatha Puri many years ago), and long *harinamas*. Krishna Katha Prabhu was the organizer from 2001 to 2011, and I've been doing it ever since. I don't have a special organizing team but I find devotees to take charge of different departments

-*prasada* distribution, book distribution, garland making, and so on. I also consult with some senior devotees and get advice from the previous organizer.

This traveling festival takes place in all the biggest cities, Vilnius (the cap-

ital), Kaunas, Siauliai, and Palanga. During the *harinamas*, we distribute Srila Prabhupada's books in Lithuanian and *prasadam* sweets, which are well received by both young and old onlookers. Whenever possible we include a simple cultural program with devotees performing *bhajans* and dances on a carpeted stage. We plan to increase the duration and variety of these cultural items in the near future.

Travelling is done by bus, and rent-





ed accommodations arranged in advance. There are about fifty devotees in the bus party, both young and old, *brahmacaris* and *grhasthas*. We noticed that more young devotees are joining our bus party in the past year. There is also a Harinama Team who always joins our party: about twenty *brahmacaris*— mostly from Estonia and a few from Lithuania— who travel on their own bus, and the six devotees of the Deity team in their own car. Devotees join our procession for a while along the way, especially in the bigger cities. The highlight of our tour is the final Ratha-yatra taking place at the resort city of Palanga, which attracts both devotees and the general public.

The presence of wonderful guests makes this an exceptional event every year. Travelling *sannyasis* have a heavy schedule but *Padayatra* Lithuania has been blessed with the presence of Bhakti Caitanya Swami since the very beginning and our Lithuanian *sannyasi* Bhakti Saran Santa Goswami. For the past few



years we also got the regular visits of Nruhari Prabhu, a senior UK devotee spending most of his time in New York. Being a great saxophonist he enlivens our *padayatra* very much.

### Padayatra Baltic 2014

The 2014 Lithuanian *Padayatra* was held from June 16 to 22. This year, it extended to the Baltics with a Ratha-yatra and a few *harinamas* in the capital city of Estonia, Tallinn. So

we called it *Padayatra* Baltic 2014. It was a tiring drive to Tallinn and by the end the devotees were weary but very inspired. The Ratha-yatra in the rain was a fun experience. The most notable introduction to *Padayatra* 2014 was an innovatively refurbished chariot for the Deities and a new and comfortable car with special seats for the Deities.

Again this year we were blessed with the presence of Bhakti Caitanya Swami, whose presence has become synonymous with *Padayatra* Lithuania. It can no longer be imagined without his association. All the inspiration, all the shakti, advice, support and maintenance of our festival come from him. Bhakti Saran Santa Goswami usually participates in all the Ratha-yatras, although he doesn't travel with the *padayatris*. The Estonian Harinam Sankirtana team was there as usual. The number of constantly travelling *padayatris* reached 70, which included the bus party and the Deity team. With local devotees joining in different cities there were about 100-150 devotees participating in every Ratha-yatra. The last one, which was also the biggest, took place in the resort city of Palanga. This Ratha-yatra attracted devotees from all over Lithuania and the number rose to 150. For such a small country as Lithuania, this is truly a big number. The center of Palanga was flooded with the holy names, beautiful colours and happy faces. All the sincere souls created a devotional atmosphere inspiring people to chant and dance together. The duration of the Ratha-yatra, from four to six hours, depends largely on the size of the city. Prior to the event, we have to get a permit from the government. In some cases the city does not allow the cart procession because of the limited infrastructure of the roads, and *harinama* is the most convenient. Then we do it without Jaganath, Baladev and Subhadra because



They are too heavy to be carried on a palanquin.

Each day of the *Padayatra* took the following format: staying in different hotels or guesthouses, having an early morning program with *Srimad-Bhagavatam* classes given by Bhakti Caitanya Swami, breakfast, Ratha-yatra, and lunch. Thereafter we would go back to the place where we stayed. If not too late, we would fill some evenings with melodious *kirtanas*.

In 2014 we distributed lots of *prasadam* (about 1500 sweets during each Ratha-yatra) and 1000 books, the biggest ever. During the two largest Ratha-yatras we also held a cultural program with traditional Indian dances and *bhajans*. On the last morning, we had a book distribution awards and then gave recognition and expressed our gratitude to every single devotee who worked tirelessly to make this wonderful festival possible by giving time, efforts and laksmi. *Padayatra's* expenses are always far greater than the income, and we are very grateful to all our generous sponsors. It was a truly joyous moment when Bhakti Caitanya Swami inspired us all with his words of encouragement and when Bhakti Saran Santa Goswami spoke on the importance of book distributors.

*Padayatra* Lithuania 2015 is planned for June 15-20. We will have a Ratha-yatra in Vilnius, Kaunas, Siauliai and, as usual, in Palanga. The detailed program of this festival will be made available shortly on the *Padayatra* website.

Bhakti Caitanya Swami is confirmed and we are hoping to have many more special guests this year.



# MAURITIUS CELEBRATES WORLD HOLY NAME WEEK 2014 WITH PADAYATRA

By Ayodhyanatha Dasa



As in previous years Padayatra Mauritius organised a *padayatra* to mark World Holy Name Week 2014. The walk was scheduled from the 3rd to the 5th of September. The first day started off from the Henrietta bus station located in the center of the island. However, due to heavy rain, only about fifteen determined devotees participated in this 4km walk to a Siva temple called the Glen Park Vacoas Shivala Hall. Devotees stopped at covered places along the way –bus stands and verandas of shops- where onlookers could bring offerings to the Deities. At the end of this austere but blissful day the padayatris relished hot herbal tea and spicy kitchri served by Shatrughna Dasa.

In the evening, cyclonic conditions were declared over Mauritius, so the following two days of *padayatra* were postponed to a week later. On the 13th the *padayatra* team started off from the place where they had left off ten days before. The procession comprised about twenty men, seven women and three children. The powerful kirtana vibrated through the streets of Vacoas, inspiring onlookers to join the chanting and dancing. On that day the temple president of Hare Krishna Land in Phoenix, Ajay Caitanya Prabhu, and other leaders such as Pancha-Tattva Prabhu and

Vrishabhanu Prabhu joined the party, inspiring the padayatris to dance and sing with greater enthusiasm. Devotees distributed packs of *bundi* sweets (a sweet made from chick-pea flour) along the way. The walk ended at the Vacoas Kabir Mandir presided by Visnu Tattva Deities and various demigods, like in most Hindu temples in Mauritius. The priests warmly welcomed the devotees, and expressed their appreciation of this walking event. A full feast prepared by the *padayatra* Mauritius devotees was served to everyone present : rice, salad, *dahl*, *kofa* balls, *rasgulas* and lemon drink.

The next day, the walk resumed at the same Kabir Mandir and ended at ISKCON's Hare Krishna Land in Phoenix. The local village people served orange juice and sweets (*laddus* and *gulab jamuns*) to the *padayatris*, and many also joined the *kirtana* procession for a while. Upon arrival at Hare Krishna Land, all the devotees did *parikrama* of the temple three times and then entered the temple hall for an ecstatic *kirtana*, followed by evening *arati* and class. The successful three-day *padayatra* ended with another sumptuous feast.

## Padayatris organise special harinamas during Kartika

Every day during the sacred month of Kartika, *padayatra* Mauritius organises *harinamas* in different towns and villages. The party is accompanied by Sri Sri Nitai-Gaurasundara, Srila Prabhupada, Nrsimhadeva and Damodara Krishna. During the *harinamas*, the devotees stop at different homes and public places so that the residents of the area and passerbys can offer a lamp to the Deities. All



the way the devotees sing, dance and distribute packets of halava and *bundi* to everyone they meet. Many of the people are such enthusiastic recipients of the Lord's mercy that they chant and dance with the harinama sankirtana party.

The last day of Kartik is Ganga snana day, and thousands of Mauritian Hindus go to the beach at Flic en Flac to worship Mother Ganga. Then they spend the rest of the day enjoying themselves at the seaside. The *padayatra* team had *kirtana* at that beach all day. The *padayatris* also joined the Food for Life team in preparing and serving to the crowds free pakoras, juice and a very popular dish in Mauritius called *briyani*, a sabji cooked with rice.

The day ended at twilight with the chanting of the Damodarastaka prayers. Hundreds of lamps flickered in the night, their light reflected in the Indian Ocean, while the chanting of the devotees filled the air. The devotees' hearts were filled with bliss and all looked forward to Kartik 2015.





# SLOVENIA: ECOCARAVAN 2014

by Urukrama Dasa

## A two-part padayatra in two different regions

This year's summer *padayatra* set off at the village of Kuteževo near Ilirska Bistrica and concluded in the town of Velenje, 170 km away, in the north-eastern part of the country. The distinguishing feature of the 2014 Ecocaravan was its division into two parts in different regions. The first part took place in the south near the Croatian border, walking towards the town of Postojna.

The second part kicked off at the village of Gornji Grad in the region of Celje. Many devotees and *padayatra* supporters participated. During the week, the number of participants totalled between 35 and 40, and on weekends it rose to 50 or more. We could count 8 matajis during the week and more than 15 on weekends. On the average there were around 3 children; among them young Narayan and 6-year-old Kalandi were undoubtedly among the most active. There were also a few devotees in their sixties. All glories to our eldest participant, 76 year old Bhavananda Ray Prabhu!

## Visit of advanced souls and dignitaries

We have always been honoured and inspired by the presence of notably advanced souls – this year again we had the great pleasure of welcoming Prahladanandana Swami and Kratu Prabhu. We were encouraged by their remarkable lectures as well as by their presence in *sankirtana*, where both unveiled unparalleled spiritual strength. Among the important people and dignitaries paying honourable visits to *padayatra* were school principals and mayors. They very kindly offered us facilities to stay



for the night, mostly in elementary schools and gym halls.

## Big book distribution and prasadam scores for a small country

*Padayatri*s distributed more than 1,900 Śrīla Prabhupada's books to Slovenian and tourists who were eager to gain spiritual knowledge. Quite an impressive number! We firmly believe and hope that by reading these books they will get inspiration through Paramatma, and thus seek spiritual answers and solutions to their daily challenges and problems. We equally hope that they will eventually join us in our endeavours to raise people's awareness about the importance of going beyond the animalistic mentality prevalent in our society. We also distributed around 3,500 leaflets on our Ecocaravan project and more than 15,000 delicious coconut biscuits. As we know prasadam, a gift of mercy, is the indispensable and secret weapon of the devotees. It is also well worth mentioning that during this *padayatra* the full-size Deities of Sri Sri Nitai Gaura Nataraj were travelling with us. Lalita Govinda Prabhu, our paramount event organiser and project



initiator, took the most precious care of the Deities and their transport.

## No adventures without dangers

In everyone of our *padayatras* there has always been some special situation, either comic or dangerous, and the 2014 Ecocaravan was no exception. Just before arriving in Postojna we experienced a good rush of adrenaline. As our procession could not walk on the narrow road which was dangerous due to heavy traffic, we had to use the grassy border of a landing field, with the permission of airport authorities. The situation was rather exciting, but we feared that somebody might get hurt as we saw a plane arriving on the horizon. Everything ended well though, and the plane started its landing just after we reached the opposite side. One more evidence that Krishna protects His devotees, no matter the situation.



## LEGALITIES

Legalities involves obtaining various permits and examining a vast number of local laws which vary from country to country and state to state.

### **CREATE A NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION**

Advantages: funds raised independently can be legitimately banked. You can also issue tax-exempt receipts, get cheaper vehicle insurance and protection against an accident or law suit against ISKCON.

### **PERMITS AND LEGAL DOCUMENTS**

#### **1) Permits for:**

Walking: In procession on the streets and sidewalks.

Driving: Ox or horse carts on public roads.

Distributing books and prasadam, collecting donations, holding festivals and carrying large signs and banners.

#### **2) Legal documents:**

Insurance for all Padayatra vehicles and trailers and valid driver's licenses for devotees.

Updated vaccination certificates and insurance for the animals as Padayatra will be held responsible for the damages caused by the animals to destruction of private property or rampaging a farmer's field.

Personal identification papers (passports, visas and permits ) to be carried by everyone .

#### **3) Other documents:**

Always procure next of kin and medical details.

Written permission for minors: Minors admitted only with the parents' written permission.

Waiver for all participants: All walkers sign waivers giving up their rights to sue Padayatra against any accidents.

#### **4) Practical considerations:**

Timeous application of permits. Originals are kept with Padayatra organizers and copies issued to:

Procession leader

Sankirtana book distribution leader

Ox care taker

Communication team

Advance party crew

### **DEALING WITH THE POLICE AND VARIOUS AUTHORITIES**

#### **1) Deal personally with them:**

Inform them of your plans in detail by giving them the exact number of carts, animals, people, banners, loudspeakers, route to be followed and the exact schedule of events.

Provide names, contact numbers of leaders and devotees responsible for permits and security.

#### **2) They are here to help you:**

Giving advice and providing an escort for the parade.

Suggesting better routes and places for accommodation.

### **DON'T OVERLOOK IMPORTANT DETAILS**

#### **1) Noise restriction:**

Consider the "disturbance level" if planning an enthusiastic mangal-arati outdoors or close to private habitations and enquire about the legal hours to make noise.

#### **2) Cart escort:**

Devotees acting as escorts of the cart and traffic controllers should wear bright safety jackets and carry specific signs (Stop! Slow down. Slow vehicles, etc.)



## THE ROUTE

The main service of the advance party is to drive and check the entire route.  
**CONSIDER ALL THESE IMPORTANT FACTORS**

**1) Time factor:**

How much time do you have for the walk?

Will the walk be done in one stretch or different sections?

Do you have to be at a particular point at a specific time for functions/ festivals. These need to be planned and advertised well in advance.

Make a detailed schedule including walking days, rest periods, festivals, etc.

Plan a reasonable daily walk. The average daily walk is around 8 miles (14 kms).

**2) Legalities related to the procession format:**

Permission might be required for harinama with palanquin on country roads and city streets as well as for a procession with carts and oxen. Ensure you are abiding by the rules of the road.

**3) Number of people you'll meet:**

These vary depending on your route and your target: do you want to avoid large congested cities, especially if you have an oxcart, or walk mainly through small towns and villages?

**4) Special events taking place:**

Let your route coincide with a Vaisnava festival and/or public events taking place in the area.

Prepare an alternative plan with the help of the authorities. Leave the carts and oxen behind and drive the devotees to the festival location.

**5) Weather conditions and topography of the roads:**

The performance of the animals and daily progress of the devotees will depend on the weather (cold, damp, searing hot, rainy ), topography (flat, hilly, mountainous) and road conditions.

**6) The advance party:**

This party takes note of the exact mileage between different cities and villages, road condition, road blocks, construction, bridges or passages with low overhead clearance, etc.

It inquires from the local population and officials about public events or planned road repair in the area.

It makes an accurate map by chalking out a continuous route and getting all the details (names of the roads, streets, villages, towns and cities). Makes sure the route matches the itinerary on the map.

It keeps track of the location of the accommodations, festivals, home programs, special visits, etc.





# SPECIAL STORIES

## NOT A NIGHTMARE, JUST VILLAGE KIDS GOING CRAZY FOR HALAVA

By Vaikunthaloka Dasa

It happened in 2014, while Padayatra India was in Uttar Pradesh. One day we stopped in the Siva temple of a small village. That evening I was very tired and I laid down my sleeping bag under a tree, because there was not any other free space. It was approximately 9 pm, and our evening program had not yet ended. I quickly fell asleep in spite of the fact that it was very noisy. I was peacefully sleeping and having happy dreams when suddenly a crowd of wild screaming children ran directly over me, some with their shoes on. Was I having a bad dream? You can imagine how I felt in this situation. I did not understand what was happening and I did not know what to do. After some time I realized that it was the village children who had trampled me. I learned that some local man had come around the devotees' camp to distribute a bucket of *halava* he had made, which generated an instant queue. When children from a distant place heard about the queue for halava they quickly surrounded the man from all sides. All at once they began to pull him to try to snatch some of the delicious sweet from him. Bucket in hand, the man jumped on a small elevated mound of earth to continue his distribution from a safer place. The children followed him there, but it happened to be the place where I was sleeping. Since there were no other place to go I had to try to go back to sleep in the same place, all the while praying to Krishna that He saved me from the enthusiasm of the children for halava. Happily the man with the *halava* was gone, and bucket probably empty by then.

## PARTICIPATING IN THE LARGEST WALKING EVENT IN THE WORLD

By Ekacakragram Dasa

In July 2001 a group of devotees, all dressed with *dhotis*, *kurtas* or *saris*, participated for the first time in the biggest walking event in the world: a four-day walk in the area of Nijmegen in Holland. The event, organised by the Holland National Walking Federation, had been taking place for the past forty years. Depending on their age and gender, participants can choose walking three distances: 30 km, 40 km or 50 km. Of course one can do less, but they will not get an official medal from the Queen. Devotees went with *harinama* and *prasadam*, and danced and chanted for the entire 30km, but it was a little too intense for the devotees and a little too much for the public.

So the next year we just did one hour of kirtana and chanted japa during the walk. We got many opportunities to talk with people during the walk, as there was nothing else to do besides walking. People got an opportunity to ask the questions they had wanted to ask for many years. There were about forty devotees and congregational members coming and going during the four days. Fifteen devotees walked the entire four days, including Bhaktimarga Swami. I took the opportunity to introduce him as a famous walker in Canada, who was in all the newspapers and on TV. People were very impressed to hear he had walked 8,500km at an average of 35km a day for nine months. He is a very kind *sannyasi* who has the art of listening to others, so he was very appreciated by everybody, and I let him do the preaching all day. Over the four days a total of 45,000 people participated in the three categories of walks. Everybody had to wake up at 2.30am and assemble in the middle of the city at 3.30am. It was a very special atmosphere to see so many people ready to walk together early in the morning. It was such a nice experience having mangala-arati and walking with so many people, talking all day about Krsna, and associating with devotees. We became well-known in the camping ground. It was a kind of holiday, exhausting physically but mentally very refreshing.

## FOLLOWING IN THE DANCING FOOT- STEPS OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

By Shyamasundara Dasa

This happened in Italy during the walk to Assisi in 1990.

In the first village we went to, Lokanath Swami was telling the devotees not to be afraid to preach and he showed them what to tell people, "Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not new. We want to make your faith alive. All the saints are saints of God."

Satsvarupa Maharaja had sent as a gift a large painting of St. Francis, and the devotees put it on the cart with the *murti* of Srila Prabhupada.

The banner read, "Peace Walk to Assisi: Homage to St. Francis of Assisi."

So people could see that the devotees of Kṛṣṇa revere and glorify all saints, not just those of their tradition. In fact we camped for a few days at the bottom of the hill where St. Francis performed austerities, and also went to the cave where he used to pray. We, the Hare Kṛṣṇa devotees, felt that the saint was very much present with us, maybe even more than with some of the Franciscan monks, with whom we had friendly exchanges overall.

In one monastery the priests were eager to hear more stories of India, and in turn they told us stories of their saints. In one church there was a statue of St. Francis with raised arms, and one young *padayatri* boy thought it resembled devotees chanting in *harinama*. Unfortunately one of the monks was not favourable to the devotees and created problems.

In another monastery one Franciscan monk was complimenting us for the beautiful way we were dancing. He was so happy to look at the devotees, for it reminded him that St. Francis was also dancing for the Lord.



Walk to Assisi



Assisi Padayatra cart



Assisi Franciscan monks



# FIFTY GOOD REASONS TO GO ON PADAYATRA OR ORGANIZE ONE

You will be....

1. Getting purified and rejuvenated by chanting and serving all day long
2. Fulfilling Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's desire to see the holy name resounding in every town and village of the world
3. Uniting different kinds of devotees around Srila Prabhupada and the holy names
4. Engaging the oxen in serving Their Lordships instead of keeping them idle on our ISKCON farms and goshalas
5. Getting in shape by walking, dancing, and engaging in physical activities like setting up the *padayatra* camp, washing pots or shoeing oxen
6. Escaping your daily routine, either at home or in the temple
7. Seeing directly the hand of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai in daily events and miracles
8. Traveling in the company of devotees and a cart carrying the Deities of Sri Sri Gaura Nitai and Srila Prabhupada
9. Trying out new services : cooking, advance party, reporting, organising, contacting with the media, taking care of the oxen, and so on
10. Distributing Srila Prabhupada's books the easy way, with the harinama party in the background
11. Having lots of healthy spiritual fun and adventures
12. Going on a transcendental vacation with your kids and family
13. Developing your dormant affection for oxen by living around them and caring for them
14. Erasing the misunderstandings you had with some devotees by serving closely together (there's no time to keep grudges for long on *padayatra*)
15. Preaching the best way, by showing to the public a group of happy and loving devotees of Krishna
16. Engaging people in the Lord's service by receiving fruits, flowers, vegetables, hay or grass for the animals, a place to camp, refreshments, shelter in the rain, etc.
17. Purifying the much polluted ether of the world
18. Practicing our motto « Simple living and high thinking »
19. Discovering the joys and fun of austerities
20. Living in nature by camping, bathing in rivers and oceans, or gathering around a camp fire
21. Relieving the anxiety Lord Caitanya feels by seeing the plight of the Kali Yuga wretched souls
22. Leaving all your electronic gadgets behind for a while
23. Understanding and practicing the essence of devotional service –service to the Vaisnavas
24. Discovering your own country and area the best way, on foot
25. Getting the best media coverage you could ever hope for
26. Explaining to ignorant people the difference between an ox, a bull and a large goat !
27. Reawakening the sleeping souls encaged in plants, trees, insects and birds' bodies
28. Making passersby smile, wave, forget their misery for a while, and maybe chant and dance with the *padayatra* party for a few kilometers
29. Taking a shower in the open on a rainy day
30. Loosing the few extra kilos you got by eating too much maha. prasadam at the temple
31. Learning how to play new musical instruments to accompany the kirtana
32. Forgetting your car, house, bank balance, job, material possessions and anxieties
33. Using your two God. given legs for what they have been designed . to walk
34. Lying down wonderfully exhausted after a full day of service and sleeping like a log
35. Helping to dispell the misconceptions people may have about the Hare Krishna devotees
36. Opening a window to the spiritual world by joyfully participating in the colorful *harinama* procession

37. Getting your kids away from TV, internet and video games, learning Krsna conscious games and rendering various services
38. Establishing deep friendships with the devotees, your hosts and the people you meet on the way
39. Feeling you are part of a wide, wonderful and variegated spiritual family
40. Giving people the knowledge they so much need to find peace and happiness
41. Participating in one festival after another, enjoying one sumptuous feast after another
42. Going to mangal arati under the stars
43. Getting to appreciate devotees you never really knew
44. Marveling at the wonders of Krsna's creation
45. Seeing this world for what it really is, a place of birth and death and suffering
46. Serving the Vaisnavas in so many ways, big or small
47. Walking your way back to Godhead
48. Forgetting your difficulties, troubles and challenges, or getting a new perspective on them
49. Learning to depend more and more on Krishna
50. Realizing your great fortune of taking part in the Sankirtana Movement of Lord Caitanya

## BOOK TO BE RELEASED IN 2015

### **VRAJA MANDALA DARSANA** by Lokanath Swami

This book is a vivid presentation of the experience of taking part in ISKCON's yearly Vraja Mandala Parikrama. The readers will be taken through a sacred, thirty-day tour of the twelve forests of Vraja. All along they will remain immersed in the most important activity - hearing

about the wonderful pastimes that Lord Krishna, His friends and companions performed in these places. Each day of the parikrama is represented by a chapter of the book. By reading from your own home you will be transported to Vraja within your mind and heart, your faith will

be reinforced and you may well be blessed to personally undertake this pilgrimage and walk in the holy dust of Vraja with devotees from all nations.

This 400 page book includes route maps to facilitate your navigation and photographs to enhance your meditation on the Lord's abode.





## OFFICIAL ISKCON PADAYATRA WEBSITE

www.padayatra.com

Website manager: Gaurangi Dasi

gaurangi.lok@gmail.com

Webmaster: Yadukulesvara Dasa

Contents (regularly updated):

Reports, schedules, contacts

Newsletters (to be downloaded)

Padayatra manual (to be downloaded)

Photo gallery

Videos

History of Padayatra

Songs, poems and much more

## PADAYATRA MINISTRY

Please send news, articles, reports, photos, questions and suggestions on how to improve the Padayatra Newsletter and the Website to the Ministry's coordinator Gaurangi Dasi gaurangi.lok@gmail

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## THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS SPONSORS:

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Prahlad Dasa, ISKCON Pandharpur

Jayatirtha Dasa

### 2015 Issue:

Sundar Gopal Dasa, France

Prahlad Dasa, ISKCON Pandharpur

Gaurangi Dasi





# CELEBRATE WITH PADAYATRA!

## ISKCON'S 50<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY IN 2016

The Padayatra Ministry pledged to have 50 Padayatras by the end of 2016!  
Thirty have already happened or are being planned!

## CELEBRATE!

### WORLD HOLY NAME WEEK

September 24 - October 4, 2015  
(India, Asia, Australia)  
till October 3 (USA)  
(Mauritius has been doing it for years)

### SRILA PARABHUPADA'S ARRIVAL IN AMERICA

October 3-4, 2015  
Will you be the fortunate soul  
to organize a padayatra for this event?

### SRILA PRABHUPADA BOARDING THE JALADUTA

ISKCON Mayapur & Kolkata are planning  
a joint padayatra from Mayapur to Kolk-  
ata. Padayatris will arrive in Kolkata  
to celebrate Srila Prabhupada's  
departure to America on August 13, 1965

### OTHER GROUPS' WALKS, FESTIVALS & SPECIAL EVENTS

Italy's Annual Walk of Peace to Assisi,  
Spain's St Jame's Holy Walk,  
Holland's National Walking Federation  
UK various parades and festivals

### YOUR GURU'S VYASA-PUJA (Already done in Durban, South Africa)

### THE SIMPLE JOY OF BEING ALIVE AND ABLE TO CHANT THE HOLY NAMES

Which can be done anytime,  
anywhere and for any occasion

