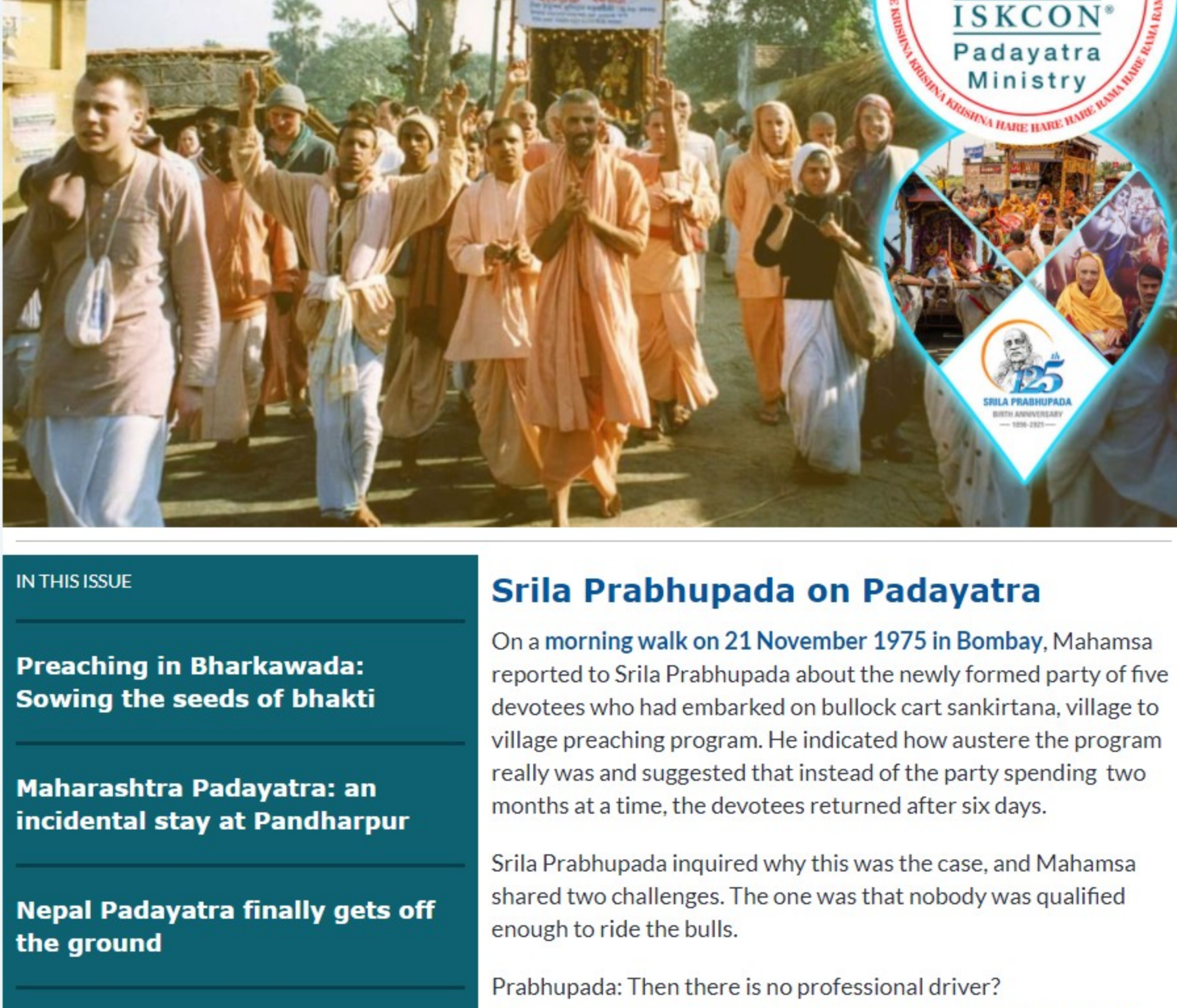


PADAYATRA WORLD

'Walking... Preaching... Distributing



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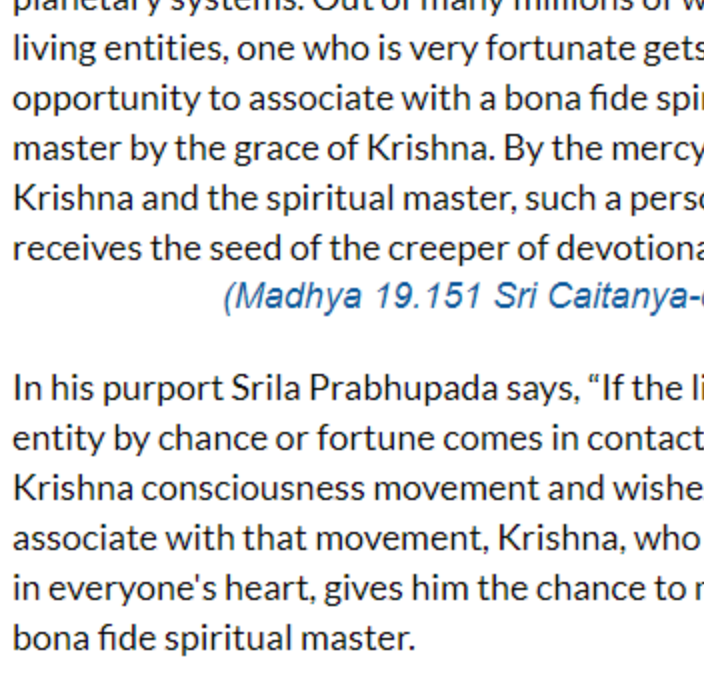
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Srila Prabhupada on Padayatra

On a morning walk on 21 November 1975 in Bombay, Mahansa reported to Srila Prabhupada about the newly formed party of five devotees who had embarked on bullock cart sankirtana, village to village preaching program. He indicated how austere the program really was and suggested that instead of the party spending two months at a time, the devotees returned after six days.

Srila Prabhupada inquired why this was the case, and Mahansa shared two challenges. The one was that nobody was qualified enough to ride the bulls.

Prabhupada: Then there is no professional driver?

Mahansa suggested that they had worked a plan around this by planning to hire one driver to take care of the bulls. He noted that the second problem was the defective axle of the cart was a little defective. Otherwise the program was a great success.

Prabhupada: Oh, that is success. People were coming. Mahansa said to Srila Prabhupada that someone met him at a temple in Hyderabad and told him that after a village program, farmers were congregating each evening and doing kirtana instead of doing nothing which was their usual habit.

Prabhupada: Just see how quickly there will be response. Therefore I was insisting, "Go village to village, town to town." Caitanya Mahaprabhu's prediction: prthivite ache yata nagaradi. Mahansa agreed and Srila Prabhupada said: "So it will never be foiled. Let us now begin village to village."

International Society For Krishna Consciousness Founder Acarya
His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada

PREACHING REPORTS

Preaching in Bharkawada: Sowing the seeds of bhakti

brahmanda bhramita kona bhagyaavan jiva
guru-Krishna-prasade paya bhakti-lata-bija

Translation

"According to their karma, all living entities are wandering throughout the entire universe. Some of them are being elevated to the upper planetary systems, and some are going down into the lower planetary systems. Out of many millions of wandering living entities, one who is very fortunate gets an opportunity to associate with a bona fide spiritual master by the grace of Krishna. By the mercy of both Krishna and the spiritual master, such a person receives the seed of the creeper of devotional service. (Madhya 19.151 Sri Caitanya-caritamrita)

In his purport Srila Prabhupada says, "If the living entity by chance or fortune comes in contact with the Krishna consciousness movement and wishes to associate with that movement, Krishna, who is situated in everyone's heart, gives him the chance to meet a bona fide spiritual master.

It is incredibly joyful to see an entire village becoming devotees. The villagers have even started observing Ekadasi! Ordinarily people are not immediately inclined to take up Krishna consciousness so easily, but when this happens, it is indeed beyond our wildest imagination. It is in explicable how the consciousness of an entire village can be elevated within a month!

We are witnessing how the Lord is showering His mercy on them. Acarya Prabhu and the All India Padayatra team have planted the seed of bhakti securely in their hearts. The villagers have become inspired by the service of these pure devotees. What is happening in this village can be referred to as a "revolution in consciousness." The Lord selected this village to shower His mercy in so many ways. A great Vaisnava Pancha Mukhi Mahadev is staying there, so the Lord selected Bharkawada as a place for the Padayatris to stay in the heart of the village for 45 days. Without the lockdown the Padayatris would have stayed for just 2 days!

This is all about the mercy of the Lord and the villagers are now part of the fortunate group of people to be touched by associating with the Krishna consciousness movement, and then receiving the seed of the creeper of devotional service.

Initially you were not allowing to the Padayatris to stay in your village and now you can't leave them nor forget them - herein lies the power and mystery of Krishna consciousness.

Lokanath Swami



Maharashtra Padayatra: an incidental stay at Pandharpur

Since the second lockdown, we have taken shelter of ISKCON Pandharpur. It has been more than two months that we have been here, celebrating Gaura Purnima in this beautiful village of Pandharpur.

Initially we had no plans to visit Pandharpur and had planned a different route. While in Sawantwadi, we received a call from our spiritual master, HH Lokanath Swami, who inquired about our well-being. He also invited us to the Gaura Purnima celebration at Pandharpur because the pandemic figures were increasing daily and there was a strong possibility of a second lockdown being declared.

We immediately accepted Maharaja's invite, rerouted and marched towards Pandharpur. We reached Pandharpur on March 26 to a warm welcome with sankirtana at the entrance by the devotees of Pandharpur. We were all fortunate to have darshan of our beloved spiritual master, and our Padayatra inspiration, HH Lokanath Swami. It was deemed a double blessing with both Lord Vitthala and our spiritual master in the same place. Being in Pandharpur meant that we could have darshan of our Gurudev and his auspicious association.

We all attended a grand Gaura Purnima celebration along with the sannayasa ceremony of our god brother, Ekalavya Dasa, now Sri Krishna Chaitanya Maharaja. It was a mesmerising location with the Chandrabhaga River as a spectacular backdrop to this esteemed ceremony.

Our oxen were put under the care of Pandharpur goshala. On Padayatra we miss the formal morning programs of the temple and the association of senior devotees. So, it was a very remarkable arrangement by the Lord as we engaged in different services in the temple and attended all the programs arranged by the temple.

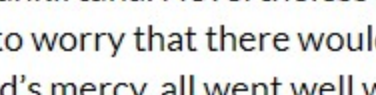
As much as we were relishing our stay in the dhama, I constantly thought about a Padayatri's core responsibility: to walk and preach. It excited us to hear that on June 3 that there was a chance that lockdown would be eased, but unfortunately this did not happen. It troubled me not to move ahead, and I met with Guru Maharaja and asked for permission to start travelling again. But Maharajaji said, "It may be a problem for all of you and again you will be stopped at some place with no resources. So, one thing can be done, you can go on sankirtana in the nearby villages of Pandharpur dhama." I was overjoyed with this plan and so were the other Padayatris. We were joined by the temple devotees in the sankirtana programme as suggested by Gurudev.

On the first day we travelled on the main road of Pandharpur and to the nearby residential area. At 10 a.m. we were ready with Their Lordships on the chariot at the gate. After performing sankirtana we moved ahead. It was a very unique experience in the dhama with the many more devotees who joined us. The villagers took darshan of Their Lordships and Srila Prabhupada. As we would usually do, we distributed books and prasada. The people welcomed us and joined the sankirtana. Our oxen were clearly satisfied to resume their services for the Lord.

On the second day at Stegson Dhuma, the ladies came out and offered arati to Their Lordships and washed the hooves of our oxen. Many of them sang and danced with us. For the children of the village, this turned out to be a grand event. Schools were closed and it suited them perfectly to join the sankirtana without any restriction.

The third and fourth days the Bullock Cart Sankirtana Party circumambulated the awe-inspiring Vitthala and Jagannath Temples in Pandharpur. The final remaining two days were spent travelling to the colonies in Pandharpur and Gopalpur. Here we attended a program at the home of Raghavendra Dasa and also went for darshan of Lord Gopal and Visnupada, the foot prints of Lord Visnu. The plan for the next days would be to travel to the other nearby villages until the lockdown was lifted, after which we planned to move ahead.

Damodara Lila Dasa (Padayatra leader)



Nepal Padayatra finally gets off the ground

The Nepal Padayatra was launched on January 19, 2021. The inspiration behind this was our dearest Guru Maharaj, HH Lokanath Swami who met with Patri Dasa from Nepal at an ILS meeting in Mayapur.

In this meeting, Lokanath Maharaja asked Patri Dasa from Nepal [Regional secretary for Nepal]:

"Why not have a Padayatra in Nepal?"

After some discussion, Patri Dasa was so inspired and took Maharaja's words to heart and discussed it with the local devotees on his return to Nepal. A friend of Patri Dasa, brahmachari Sahasranama Dasa from Ukraine who has been serving in Nepal for the past 12 years loves village preaching and community and farm services. By the sole endeavour of Sahasranama Dasa, this Padayatra commenced.

Another devotee, Prem Harinama Dasa from Pune, who has participated in the Dindri yatra in Pune and also served in Padayatra assisted Sahasranama Dasa. Sahasranama Dasa has invested his own money around 5 lakhs to purchase the oxen and to cover the cart construction.

He collected books from the temple for distribution. He is very happy on Padayatra and there is no doubt that he loves to go walk and visit different villages to preach. That's the life of a Padayatra!

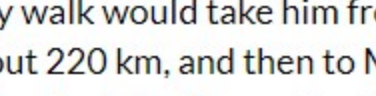
Padayatra is generally not possible in hilly regions and 70% of Nepal is hilly. With that in mind, Padayatra was inaugurated at Mirchayia Bajar, Siraha district. Walks are in place to travel to Janakpur dhama. Accompanied by spectacular Gaura Nitai Deities, they start planning at 10 a.m. Evening programmes are held daily, and sankirtana and book distribution are ongoing in every village and town they enter.

The cart has a unique design, the brainchild of Sahasranama Dasa, who single-handedly started the Padayatra. Prem Harinama Dasa helped him to start the programme. Where there is a will, there is a way. Starting a Padayatra, there is no need for many devotees or intense preparation. If one has a strong desire to please Guru and Gauranga, one can accomplish this service single-handedly.

Nepal is a case where just two devotees are successfully spreading the holy name in remote areas. These committed two are so charged with enthusiasm and are immersed in the devotional mood to please Srila Prabhupada. They have two oxen, Gaur and Nitai. At present the book distribution scores are not high but it is anticipated that as the awareness for Padayatra increases the scores will increase. Srila Prabhupada's kirtana are played on loud speakers and this intrigues people who want to hear more. It forces them out of their homes to take darshan of the Deities while Sahasranama Dasa and Prem Harinama Dasa distribute books, and in the evening they have sankirtana.

They move from one place to another and cook for themselves on wood stove and sleep where ever they get shelter, even on paddy grass. Their purity in service entices people to walk and sing the holy name with them. On the back of the wagon the words "Purna jivan ko lag" are scripted in Nepalese which means that Padayatra will go on to the end of life. The bullock cart also sends out a message about cow protection, and save Nepal. To this effect, the mahā-mantra is inscribed on the other side of the cart, allowing people to read the mantra.

Daya Gopal Dasa [Sankirtana preacher Nepal]



Uttar Pradesh Padayatra on the roads after lockdown

On April 29 while we were in Aligarh, the advance party went out in search of a "new home" amid lockdown discussions. As we moved ahead in search of shelter, we saw a board with the name "Jaya Krishna college" emblazoned across it. It was amazing to see a college with such a name. The college is in Bhartrim, a village in Lodha Tehsil in the Aligarh District in Uttar Pradesh. We met Mr K. S. Chavan, a retired police officer owner of the college. We stayed there for about a month, with the Chavan family helping us with whatever we needed.

Padayatra means to walk and preach. For an entire month we were locked down in one place without sankirtana or book distribution. Although we were attending morning programs and reading books, we constantly felt incomplete within. Even our oxen had started to become restless. Ordinarily they would walk for about 12 kms. daily when we are on the road. The lockdown confined them to sit in one place. In order to exercise them, we would walk them to an open field. If they are not exercised then it is extremely difficult for them to get started again. I could sense that they were also sad and restless from sitting in one place. They also wanted to resume their services to Their Lordships.

Finally after one month, we moved ahead on June 1, in spite of the lockdown not being totally lifted. We moved ahead nonetheless. By that evening the lockdown was introduced again by 7 p.m. and fully closed on Saturday and Sunday. When we reached the first place, Gabharna, which is a town and a Nagar panchayat in Aligarh district, people were reluctant to join us in sankirtana. Nevertheless we kept on with our sankirtana. Book distribution was also impacted. We started to worry that there would be yet another lockdown and Padayatra would be brought to a halt again. By the Lord's mercy, all went well while we stayed in a school and performed sankirtana in different parts of Gabharna.

Next we went to Khurja, which is a city in the Bulandshahr district. Then we entered Bulandshahr, after which we arrived in Meerut. The highlight of the travel was that seven new devotees have joined us now we have grown totalling nineteen devotees in all! This is what makes the sankirtana so powerful because things start becoming favourable and slowly but surely people are beginning to join sankirtana and inviting us for house programs. It is extremely hot with temperatures exceeding 45 degrees. This does not deter us and we start out at 6.30 a.m. to cover a maximum distance while it is cooler. At 9 a.m. we stop to have our prasada, and then continue to walk to our scheduled destination.

Rituvipha Gaurachandra Dasa (Padayatra leader)

THE PADAYATRA SONG

This song was written and sung by Lilavati Dasi in 1991 during Padayatra in England. It is inspiration and describes the joys of Padayatra service in every way.

You are encouraged to learn the words and the melody and be energized while on Padayatra.

Pack your bags, pack your beads
Bring your wellies too
What do you mean, you haven't heard
It's the latest news
We're going on Padayatra
To spread the holy name
What! You can't make it
It's really quite a shame.

Chorus: Haribol! Haribol!

Walking down the country lanes
The sun is beating down
Dancing in the kirtan
Transcendental sounds
We haven't seen a sign post yet
Although we've walked all day
Oh Krsna, we're not surprised
It's back the other way.

Chorus: Haribol! Haribol!

We're going on Padayatra
Fulfilling Srila Prabhupada's dream
In every town and village
You'll hear the holy name
From Lord Caitanya's Padayatra team.

Chorus: Haribol! Haribol!

Prabhupada came with us
Travelling on the cart
Everyone is chanting
Singing from the heart
The sun goes down
And evening falls
But where's Parasurama?
Shh...you might wake him
He's underneath the cart.

Chorus: Haribol! Haribol!

Some say when you're on the road
Life is quite austere
But oh we're eating sweet rice
It's coming out our ears
Chanting the anaphie in perfect harmony
Lord Caitanya's with us
It's bliss, serenity.

Chorus: Haribol! Haribol!

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