

**THE OX POWER HANDBOOK**

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami, Shрила Prabhupada. A transcendental gentleman who astounded us all with his perfect understanding of matters spiritual. We are still struggling to grasp a tiny portion of what it means to live in the way he so clearly presented. May he grant us the strength and perseverance to try and serve his mission.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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### WHAT'S THE PROBLEM ?

During the months of July, August, September and October of 1991 the padayatra devotees travelled from Amsterdam to Paris and then South to our New Mayapur farm community. The majority of our journey consisted of travelling through intensive farm land. It looked impressive, massive fields of crops stretching beyond the vision of the human eye. Land rich in cash crops. Every inch of the land used to it's full potential. As soon as one crop is harvested the seeds for the next batch is planted. Great combine harvesters rape the land. From an external point of view this looks like a positive step for mankind. But the reality is different. In France only one per cent of the population are working in agriculture. Whereas a family can be maintained nicely on four acres of land.

"By Gods arrangement anyone in any part of the world can live very peacefully if he has some land and a milk cow.

*Shrila Prabhupada..*

Yet these highly industrialized farms consisting of hundreds of acres of land are going bankrupt. Two days after Paris Rathayatra the farmers were demonstrating through the streets of Paris dumping truck loads of grains on the roads, and brutally killing some livestock in public as a protest against the government. It doesn't seem to make sense, how is it that

their system is not working? Is it the Krishna factor? They take a nice occupation like farming and turn it into an industry, Any hint of the mode of goodness is removed. In the words of Shrila Prabhupada:

**"The more we go on increasing such troublesome industries the more we squeeze the vital energy out of the human being and the more the will be dissatisfaction of the people in general. Although a few can live lavishly by exploitation. The production of machines and machine tools increase the artificial living fashion of a class of vested interests and keeps thousands of men in starvation and unrest."**



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The farming community were busy buying very technical machinery which was unnecessary. While trying to cure one problem, they have created many others problems. Using bigger tractors means that the wheels compact the earth and the minerals in the soil and because of this a deeper plough is needed, which disturbs the land and the minerals in the soil. So much money is needed to maintain and run such equipment. Always competing for the latest model. Borrowing from the bank and trying to pay back the interest rate. Buying more machinery in an attempt to avoid the government taxes on your profit turnover. They produce grains for planting which are hybrids, that can't reproduce for the following year, needing more and more fertilizers and pest insecticides. A whole artificial environment emerges based on money and exploitation.

**"The sufferings of human society are due to a polluted aim of life, namely lording it over the material resources. The more human society engages in the exploitation of undeveloped material resources for sense gratification, the more it will be entrapped by the illusory, material energy of the Lord and thus the distress of the world will be intensified instead of diminished."**

*Shrila Prabhupada.*

The general population needs to see an example of the farming system which Shrila Prabhupada had envisioned. Example is better than precept, unless the oxen plough the land then our movement is still only in book form. We have to



show this Godless society how to use these natural gifts of mother Earth, even if in the beginning we have to work very hard to achieve it

**"The materialistic advancement of civilization.... ultimately ends in war and scarcity. The transcendentalist is specifically warned to be fixed in mind, so that even if there is difficulty in plain living and high thinking he will not budge even an inch from his stark determination."**

*Shrila Prabhupada.*

**"For protecting the cows and brahminical culture the**

Lord who is very kind to the cow and the brahmins will be pleased with us and will bestow upon us real peace."

### SURELY THE TRACTOR IS MORE PRACTICAL AND WILL SAVE US A LOT OF WORK

What does Shрила Prabhupada have to say about the tractor?

"The tractor has spoiled the whole society. Because there is the tractor then there is no use for the bull. Then what are you going to do? What to do? What to do? And then you will cut their throat. You will see. It is sure to come. If you do not use the bulls for ploughing, one day you will say "let us cut their throats."

*Shрила Prabhupada instruction to Tejlyas.*

"Formerly transport was by bullock carts. The bulls were employed for agricultural purposes, for drawing carts. So there was no necessity of motor cars, motor tractors you don't want the bullocks. Therefore kill them, how can you utilize them? Therefore you must have a slaughterhouse to kill them. And as soon as you kill them then you have to eat them."

*Shрила Prabhupada lecture 5/2/72 L.A.*

In India the government is encouraging the people to buy

tractors and machinery, electric pumps etc, the Western influence. The simple farmer buys a tractor thinking that this will make my life easier, free me from having to work hard. But he has to save so much money to purchase one, buy the fuel, repairs, government tax, insurance, etc. Now when you go to a village in India the biggest business happens at the garage for tractor repairs and at the petrol stations. Now the farmer has to work so much harder to maintain this standard, which means exploiting the land to such an extent that it becomes a desert. Whereas before the time of the tractor a simple farmer with a few acres of land would work four months of the year and have enough grains, fruits and vegetables to supply his family for the entire year. So what is



progress?

"All these natural gifts are dependent on the mercy of the lord. Everyone is acting under the influence of material nature and only a fool thinks they can improve upon what God has created."

*Shrila Prabhupada*

### WHAT SRILA PRABHUPADA SAYS ABOUT THE CAR!!!

"I could come here walking or in another vehicle. So there was no difference. It would have taken a little more time. But we are thinking because we have got this motor car instead of a bullock cart we are advanced in civilization. That is the mistake. Because either you travel on bullock cart or in motor car, your business is to transport yourself from one place to the next. That's all it may save some time. You may feel some extra pleasure. No pleasure actually. Rather bullock cart is more comfortable because this motor car you are always thinking. "There may not be any accident. "Yes always you are afraid. And there is happening accident. Recently one of our devotees has died. So many people are dying. So this material advancement of life means you create little convenience and side by side you create so many inconveniences. That you must. You have created motor cars. That's alright, but side by side you have created death by motor accident,



so many."

*Shrila Prabhupada.*

Morning Walk

Rome, May 25, 1974

*Satsvarupa:* We should go on the walk. The cars are coming on the road.

*Prabhupada:* So we shall walk? (break) ...containing three passengers, wasting petrol. Similarly, hundreds and thousands and millions of cars and buses are running all over the world, simply wasting petrol.



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*Bhagavan:* When there was the oil crisis in the United States, they were giving reports how some person would go in his car, go ten miles in a big car to buy one pack of cigarettes.

*Prabhupada:* Stick to your own place and grow your food. There is no question of transport. Little transport is required, that bullock cart. Krishna was being carried on bullock cart. There is no use of petrol. Use simply the bull. They are already there. Utilize them. No. The bull should be sent to the slaughterhouse. Petrol should be used.

Morning Walk Rome, May 27, 1974 740527MW.ROM

*Bhagavan:* How far can a bullock cart travel in one day?

*Prabhupada:* At least ten miles, very easily, very easily. And maximum he can travel fifteen miles, twenty miles. But when we are localized, we don't require to go beyond ten miles, five miles. Because we have created a rubbish civilization, therefore one is required to go fifty miles for earning bread, hundred miles, hanging.

*Dhananjaya:* Like in Los Angeles.

*Prabhupada:* Why Los Angeles? Everywhere. In New York they are coming from hundred miles. From the other side of the island. First ferry steamer, then bus, then so on, so on. Three hours, four hours, they spend for transport.

*Satsvarupa:* Is this an ideal solution or a practical one?

*Prabhupada:* This is practical.

Cont.

*Prabhupada:* No, no. Our society will be ideal by practical application.

*Satsvarupa:* If we stopped all the transportation industry, there would be huge unemployment. It would be a great...

*Prabhupada:* No, no, we are not going to stop employment. We live like this. You see. If you like, you live like us.



*Bhagavan:* Example.

*Prabhupada:* Example.

*Satsvarupa:* Not that we dictate to the... Not that we are going to force everyone.

*Prabhupada:* No, we are not going to force anyone. "Our mode of living is like this. If you like you can adopt." Just like we chant Hare Krishna mantra. So we are not forcing anyone that "You also, you must chant." No. We live like this.

*Dhananjaya:* So in fact, Shрила Prabhupada, we should start using bullock carts.

Morning Walk Rome, May 27, 1974 740527MW.ROM

*Indian man:* Car is a necessity Swamiji, don't you think so? Car is a necessity.

*Prabhupada:* Not necessary, what is the use of a car if you locate yourself to get everything. Then your necessity. Then where is the use of car? If you require car, you have a bullock cart. That's all why should you hanker after petrol, oil, machine, this, that so many things. Why?

Room conversation Mauritius October 5 1975



### ECONOMIC REASONS FOR COW PROTECTION.

"With only these two things cows and grains humanity can solve it's eating problems, economic problem. All other things but these two are artificial necessities created by man to kill his valuable life at the human level, and waste his time in things which are not needed."

*Shрила Prabhupada.*

Such a life style can be seen in any Indian village and can be

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realized only by sitting behind a pair of oxen while ploughing the land. This simple living is to help us to concentrate our minds on Krishna. Shрила Prabhupada said that we should live in such a way that our minds becomes free to hear the Krishna book.

"The cow is the mother because just as one sucks the breast of one's mother, human society takes cows milk. Similarly the bull is the father of human society because the father earns for the children just as the bull tills the ground to produce food grains. Human society will kill it's spirit of life by killing the father and mother."

*Shrila Prabhupada.*

*Shrimad bhagavatam 3.3.4.*

The next symptom of the age of Kali is the distressed condition of the cow. Milking the cow means drawing the principles of religion in a liquid form. The great rsis and munis would live only on milk. Shрила Sukadeva Gosvami would go to a householder while he was milking a cow, and he would simply take a little quantity of it for subsistence. Even fifty years ago, no one would deprive a sadhu of a quart or two of milk, and every householder would give milk like water. For a Sanatanist (a follower of Vedic principles) it is the duty of every householder to have cows and bulls as household paraphernalia, not only for drinking milk, but also for deriving religious principles. The Sanatanist worships cows on religious

principles and respects brahmanas. The cow's milk is required for the sacrificial fire, and by performing sacrifices the householder can be happy. The cow's calf not only is beautiful to look at, but also gives satisfaction to the cow, and so she delivers as much milk as possible. But in the Kali-yuga, the calves are separated from the cows as early as possible for purposes which may not be mentioned in these pages of Shrimad-Bhagavatam. The cow stands with tears in her eyes, the sudra milkman draws milk from the cow artificially, and when there is no milk the cow is sent to be slaughtered. These greatly sinful acts are responsible for all the troubles in present society. People do not know what they are doing in the name of



economic development. The influence of Kali will keep them in the darkness of ignorance. Despite all endeavours for peace and prosperity, they must try to see the cows and the bulls happy in all respects. Foolish people do not know how one earns happiness by making the cows and bulls happy, but it is a fact by the law of nature. Let us take it from the authority of Shrimad-Bhagavatam and adopt the principles for the total happiness of humanity.

Shrimad Bhagavatam Canto 1: Chapter Seventeen, Text 3  
Purport

### TAKE THE RISK

Should we take the risk, anything could happen on the road. The oxen could get hit by a car, could run away, maybe get stolen, cause havoc in some city centre and kill dozens of people? These are some of the many doubts and questions asked by devotees who are worried about the prospect of Padayatra in their country or the idea of travelling outside the temple grounds with the ox-carts. The first thing is that the ox trainer must be very dedicated to this service and be a competent devotee or else the oxen will prove to be a great expense, a poor example of ox-power and will discourage devotees rather than encourage them to adopt to the principles of simple living and high thinking. Sure there is a risk involved. " Padam. padam vipadam na tesam.... " On one occasion in Holland the Padayatra was attacked by a crazy person in a car. He tried to run the devotees over, even to the



point of reversing his car at the devotees. Fortunately the devotees were quick enough to dodge the car. The aggressor then proceeded to get out of his car geared for a fight. The air was electric with violence. But Krishna protected us in the form of two plain clothes police men, who jumped out, knocked him to the ground and then bundled him away in their car. It was revealed the following day in the newspaper that the aggressive man was a wanted criminal. Krishna will always protect those who accept voluntary inconveniences in order to please the Lord. This dependence and protection can be seen on Padayatra on a daily basis. One day while staying in a cottage with his holiness Satsvarupa Das Goswami I

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posed the question to him. "Guru Maharaja, there are risks involved in bringing oxen around the towns and villages of Ireland. "We were planing on a four month padayatra around the country, taking part in many rock festivals and preaching programs where problems were bound to arise. A festival in Ireland usually meant that there would be thousands of drunken youths out to 'enjoy'. Satsvarupa Maharaja said he'd think about the pros. and cons. of the bullock cart preaching program in the Western world. After his daily walk he returned and to me and told me how he had seen so many cows and bullocks in the fields. All of them are to be brutally murdered and no one is protesting on their behalf. "So even if there is some risk involved we should still preach, since when has preaching been easy, at the same time we should do things intelligently and not take unnecessary risks. "So due to Krishna's mercy we managed to walk through Ireland, England and part of Europe, through all the major cities without a single accident not even a scrape on a car. If we don't work the oxen then they might as well be dead.

### TRAINING THE DEVOTEES IN VARNASHRAMA.

*Shrila Prabhupada:* What the oxen will do?

*Nityananda:* Plough the fields.

*Shrila Prabhupada:* Yes. That is wanted. Transport, ploughing fields. That is wanted. And Unless our men are

trained up, Krishna conscious, they will think "what is the use of taking care of the cows. Better go to the city earn money and eat them.

New Orleans August 1 1975

"Every one should be trained as vaishnava. At the same time he should work in different position for management. So if our men are not prepared Tamala Krishna Maharaja for doing the plough work, then what is the use of purchasing land?"

Morning walk Vrindaban 12-3-1974

*Shrila Prabhupada:* This is the cycle, that we should



produce immense food. Grains both for the animals and for the men. And there should be cooperation: Just like the cow and the bull. The bull helps ploughing. That is the original system. Now they have invented tractors, what is called? Tractor?

*Madhuvisa:* Cultivators.

*Shrila Prabhupada:* And the bulls are being killed. Why they should be killed? Engage them in tilling the field. They will have occupation. There is immense land. So there will be no question of unemployment. And the machine it works hundreds of men's labour and hundreds of men become unemployed. So unemployed means devil's workshop.

Room Conversation Melbourne July 2 1974

*Shrila Prabhupada:* This man is unemployed and if we engaged him for ploughing, will he do that.

*Paramahansa:* I don't think so. (laughter)

*Shrila Prabhupada:* Just see.

*Amogha:* That's too hard. That's work. We don't want to work like that, we just want some easy job

*Shrila Prabhupada:* Then you suffer

*Srutakirti:* That would mean they had to leave the city. They



don't want to leave the city.

*Shrila Prabhupada:* Then go to hell

Morning Walk Perth May 15 1975.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF COW PROTECTION ?

1. The cows remind us of Krishna in Vrindavan. Krishna would carry a rope for tying the cow's hind legs while milking. And a horn for calling them, while Balarama would carry the plough.

2. Milking cows will regulate us, free us from the mode of passion.

3. Shrila Prabhupada says in the first canto of the Shrimad Bhagavatam that it is the duty of every house holder to have cows and bulls as house hold paraphernalia, not just for drinking milk, but also for deriving religious principles. Shrila Prabhupada asks us to simply accept in from scriptures.

4. Oxen can do so much work around the farm, pulling trees out of the forest, cutting hay, wheat, and transporting them, and ploughing the land. Mother Earth is very pleased to have her surfaced scratched by the plough which is powered by oxen. She finds tractors to be very disturbing.

5. The cow will give milk.

**"Cow milk is particularly essential for developing the finer tissues of the human brain so that one can understand the intricacies of transcendental knowledge."**

SB 3.57 purport

6. The oxen can be used for preaching. Padayatra has proved itself to be one of the best ways to bring the holy name to every town and village. Ox-cart rides around the temple. Visitors to the temple are very attracted to the cows and oxen. At Bhaktivedanta manor the oxen can collect the sankirtana books from the B.B.T. and do other transporting tasks outside the Temple. The oxen can attract the media

**"Ploughing by the bulls instead of tractor. Bulls can be engaged in ploughing and transporting. Nice bullock carts village to village for preaching. Make the farm the centre**



and go ten miles this side, ten miles that side, ten miles this side, etc. With four bullock carts. Sell books and preach and live peacefully on the farm. People used to engage the bulls for this purpose. So there is no problem which way to utilize them. First of all this artificial way should be stopped and the bulls should be engaged in ploughing and transporting and smashing the grains. To avoid machinery, petrol, machine oil by nature's way."

Letter to Balavanta 3-1-1977

### KRISHNA AND THE COWS

The cowherd women, riding on the bullock carts, were dressed very nicely with excellent garments, and their bodies, especially their breasts, were decorated with fresh kunkuma powder. As they rode, they began to chant with great pleasure the pastimes of Krishna.

Shrimad-Bhagavatam Canto 10: Chapter Eleven, Text 33  
Translation

Sukadeva Gosvami said: After Vasudeva advised Nanda Maharaja in this way, Nanda Maharaja and his associates, the cowherd men, took permission from Vasudeva, yoked their bulls to the bullock carts, and started riding for Gokula.

Shrimad Bhagavatam Canto 10: Chapter Five, Text 32  
:Translation



Thus hearing about the pastimes of Krishna and Balarama with great pleasure, mother Yasoda and Rohini devi, so as not to be separated from Krishna and Balarama for even a moment, got up with them on one bullock cart. In this situation, they all looked very beautiful.

Krishna: Chapter Seventeen :Extinguishing the Forest Fire

All the trees on the bank of the Yamuna, all the cows, bulls and calves were full of pleasure because of Krishna's appearance there.



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Shrimad Bhagavatam Canto 10: Chapter Eleven, Text 34  
:Translation

For the cowherd men and the cows, Krishna is the supreme friend. Therefore He is worshipped by the prayer "Namo brhmanya devaya go brahmana hitaya ca." His pastimes in Gokula, His dham, are always favourable to the brahmanas and the cows. His first business is to give all comfort to the cows and the brahmanas. In fact, comfort of the brahmanas is secondary and comfort for the cows is His first concern. Because of His presence all people would overcome all difficulties and always be situated in transcendental bliss.

Shrimad Bhagavatam Canto 10: Chapter 8, Text 16 purport

So we can see that cow protection is the activity of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Sri Krishna. Krishna is known as Govinda and Gopala, He carries with Him the horn for calling the cows, and the rope for tying the back legs of the cow together when He milks them. And Balarama carries the plough. When the Lord was very young ( about four years old ) He was known as Vatsala because He looked after the calves. As He grew up He got the responsibilities of minding the cows, driving them through the twelve forests of Vraja, He then became known as Gopala.

Shrimad Bhagavatam Canto 3: Chapter 2, Text 29  
Translation

Today in India you can see so much devotion towards the cows. When the winter comes the villagers make coats for the oxen and cows out of sacks. the don't want the cows to catch a chill. Sometimes the people would bring their oxen and cows into their house at night and they would sleep else where. On padayatra I would often bring the oxen into our room, whether it was a dharmshalla or school room. The devotees would wake up in the morning for mangala arotika to find their four legged friends sleeping beside them. It is not uncommon to see a pious village woman give her first chapatti to a cow as an offering before her family takes their meal. Cows are so dear to the Lord that you can actually bath the Lord (in his Arca-Vigraha form) in their urine, and use their stool to purify



a sacrificial arena. One day mother Yasoda wanted Krishna to wear a pair of shoes to protect His tender lotus feet and to take an umbrella to protect His head from the sun. He told her that He would do it only after she would get shoes for all the cows and calves, and that she should get an umbrella for all the cows as well.

### BULLOCK CART SANKIRTAN

#### A PERSONAL HISTORY

To understand the present we have to examine and understand the past. History is the study of the effect the past has on the present and the future, and trying to understand the often complex relationship between them. To fully understand padaytra, its impact on preaching and the profound effect it undeniably has in the lives of those who try it, we have to take a look at its roots.

So where do we begin? For me it was arriving in Brindaban, having just driven from Germany with two large busses filled with devotees. Hamsadutta had, at the fag end of his time as GBC in Europe toured the temples with the offer to "anybody who was fried with temple life" to join him on this incredible adventure. I was a new bhakta and discussed the idea that was understandably buzzing around the brahmachari ashram. With my mechanical skills I must have appeared to be an ass(et) and Hamsadutta requested me, against the advice of the temple president, to go with him. It was an "intersting" trip, but that story is for another time. Ultimately we arrived, and



Hamsadutta and Lokanath were both freshly danda sanyassis. The busses were fully equipped to function as travelling temples, so with a few final adjustments they were ready to go. Our travels led us north visiting every town and village, we performed harinam, lectured on the philosophy, had a film show and distributed copious amounts of books and prasadam. With a crew of thirty to forty fired up devotees, and two new sanyassis the preaching force was pretty formidable. So we started touring, first to Himachel pradaesh then onto Jammu and Kashmir, the cool hill stations of India, soon, as is often the case some devotees fell foul of the wide variety of diseases that exist in that part of the world

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and left the party. The buccaneering mood that Hamsaduuta propounded in the west was tempered with his new position as a sanyassi, his combination with Lokanath and the India factor and soon alienated some of his devout followers on the party. Things began to look like they were falling apart. The other major factor, and one that I feel was the real reason that the bus party finally stopped was that the mode of preaching was actually inappropriate. The aim of our preaching was to get people to become attracted to Krishna The Supreme Personality of Godhead. When we arrived in any town with our big busses, projectors akimbo, digitally watched, air conditioned 21st century sunglassed sadhu profile, it was a total distraction from our preaching aims. The People came and asked the horsepower of the busses, what time it was, how far could our projectors project? They were bewildered by the context of our preaching and forgot the content. This is the nub, Krishna got hidden by the technology. This not only happens in India but also in the west. When school parties and others come to visit we may try to explain the importance of protecting the cows and bulls and our ideal vision of a simple, ecologically sound society, but they cannot see any trace of that in our temples, and often remark that there seems to be a gulf of difference between our preaching and the reality of plastic plates and carparks chock-a-block with cars.

So with this in mind we can now go on to our discussion of

bullock cart sankirtan as padayatra was then called. One aspect of Shrila Prabhupada's genius was in keeping the ultimate goal insight and not overcomplicating the way things are done. As a jiva stuck in a western conditioned body and mind, complicating things has become a way of life for me, so much so that during one of the initial padayatra formation meetings when Shrila Prabhupada was outlining the aim of padayatra I voiced a doubt to the value of preaching in the villages by bullock cart. I felt some insecurity due to lack of realisation, Shrila Prabhupada was requesting us to travel without any reliable form of transport, (as initially he said we could "hitch-hike" from one village to the next). He also told us that we should not keep any stock of grains, just collect



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whatever the villagers would give, cook and distribute as prasadam and rely on Krishna. A real goswami mood, unfortunately not matched by my godas comprehension. My limited understanding of Krishna Consciousness aside, I had the faith that Shrila Prabhupada was acting for my spiritual welfare and I threw myself into the programme with as much enthusiasm as I could muster. It worked, naturally, as Shrila Prabhupada said it would, we went to the heart of the village, the well, performed Harinam sankirtan, announced our programme in the evening of Lecture, kirtan, arotika and prasadam distribution and went around the village collecting whatever they gave. The ingredients varied according to the area we were in and sometimes the lack of variety would become a little wearing. I mean living on halavah for a couple of weeks has it's drawbacks! We also experienced some difficulty getting rides from one place to the next, well that's wasn't really the problem it was more the relaxed pace that Indian village life. Yes, they would take us, but it wasn't going to be for the next month or two! They wanted us to stay, perform our sankirtan and enliven their lives with Krishna consciousness, it was wonderful, some of the sweetest moments of my life were on that programme. But as we had arranged to meet Shrila Prabhupada at the Kumbha Mela we needed a more regulated schedule to meet our deadline. When we reported to Shrila Prabhupada that we couldn't easily get rides in a time frame that suited our itinerary he displayed his usual dynamic mood and rather than stick on the point lent us the money to purchase our own cart and bulls. An interesting lesson in itself. With our newly painted saffron cart and two



beautiful white Zebu bullocks we felt ecstatic. The simplicity of the project evaded all forms of envy, there was nothing to be envious about. We had what every Indian villager had, almost the simplest form of transport available. The pure and gentle ox. It was an amazing change in pace, we no longer roared around the countryside, from coast to coast. We majestically strode, taking in all the atmosphere of Bharat Varsha, the rich cornucopia of smells, sights and sounds. But the real eye opener was not the effect that India was having on us but the effect that our preaching was having on the Indians. Did our seeming reduction in paraphernalia decrease our preaching? No, factually it increased the time people

spent talking about Krishna with us. No longer were we bombarded with mundane enquiries about our equipment, we had gained not lost from the simplification of our preaching. A very significant realisation. If we want to impress people with external shows of wealth or importance, it will ultimately detract from our preaching potency. Shrila Prabhupada tried very hard to present Krishna consciousness in an uncompromised fashion. If we accept that Krishna is the all attractive Supreme personality of Godhead, then there is absolutely no need whatsoever to embellish that pure truth with anything. We don't need frills, we need purity, sincerity and dedication. That is undoubtedly some of the main factors that Padayatris will highlight. The simplicity of padayatras is what gives it a special mellow. It is fulfilling one of the basic needs of the devotee, to have a simple life. We often quote, simple living and high thinking, but we have few opportunities to actually do it. In the original charter of ISKCON, Shrila Prabhupada stated that one of the primary aims for the society was to create a place of pilgrimage, for the devotees to relish the pastimes of Krishna. So using a bullock cart is the method to reach that place of pilgrimage.

### THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OXEN AND THE TRAINER

The person who training the oxen should be the same person who is going to be working the oxen. There must be only one master, one set of commands, otherwise the animal will certainly be confused. Oxen are not so intelligent and it's easy

to confuse them. If in the beginning you have different people training them and working them, the training will be very ineffective, and the oxen will never learn properly. Only when the oxen is well trained can different persons work him, they must all have learned the same commands and techniques. The point is not to confuse the simple minded oxen with a whole new program. There is a certain rapport that you develop with the cows, and oxen. To understand how they think and act, what they can and can't do, we should never put such sacred animals into distress. In this way a strong relationship between the trainer and the oxen develops. It should not be that as soon as you enter the field that all the animals try to run away from you. They should develop faith



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in you, which is based on experienced-so their experience of being with you should not be like meeting the Yamaduttas. If the animal is abused physically or verbally or on the other extreme not controlled with a strong enough hand, then the animals will rebel in one way or another and not preform up to your expectations. Unless the oxen is well trained and well driven, they aren't very useful. Oxen like to work hard but they need a person to push them to do it. You want them to pull with their maximum strength, as hard as they can and as long as they can. The relationship is that of a master and servant. The master is firm and kind, he never abuses his servant. But he is very demanding and he expects him to preform nicely. The relationship has to be established. It has to be very clear, more so than with a person because the ox is an animal.

### HOW OLD SHOULD HE BE ?

It is always best to train an oxen before they are two years of age. I have trained many oxen who were six or seven years of age. Those oxen who had been eating grass all their lives, being a burden to our temple, and then all of a sudden some little weak devotee is trying to drag these powerful beasts around the field. The first thing is that they have big horns, are four times my weight, wild, not frightened of me, whereas I'm shaking at the knees. I tie one oxen to the training ring, hit him with a stick and there is no reaction, it looks like he didn't feel a thing. I get a bigger stitch but still there is no improvement-no reaction, he stands there and looks at me as if to say "what



are you trying to do, Baba ?" After a while he has enough, starts to run snaps the rope, as if it was a little piece of cotton. And than drags me up a hill at great speed. The spectator devotees keel over laughing. It took me a lot of sweat and swearing to get that oxen trained. The ideal way to train the oxen is to get him when he is only six months old. Give him a basic training, and then when he is two years old start working him. He will respond to your commands after a few lessons to refresh his memory. It's a lot easier to push around a six month old oxen, than a massive fully grown beast, who can with ease overpower you. One important point to note is that you can't work an oxen at hard labour

until he has grown up because his growth can be prematurely stunted if he has been using up his food to create working rather than for growth in his body. Before engaging in hard work the oxen should be almost full size, which is at about two years of age, or a little younger. The ox continues to grow after that age for many years—his body fills out and gets bigger.

### NAMING THE OXEN

The oxen should be given a very simple one or two syllable name. The is a practical tool. It is used constantly while working the oxen to address him. His name is important and should be able to distinguish it from the commands and also from the other oxen's name. It should not be three or four syllable names. Two syllables at the most. We like to have every thing to remind us of Krishna, but it is not so appropriate to give an oxen a name of Krishna because often you are not addressing him in a reverential mood. Sometimes we may have to treat him very roughly because he is actually a less intelligent animal, that may be required in order to get his attention, although rough treatment should not be a regular thing. If you are very expert, it will almost never be required. A simple name should be chosen. Like Jai, Burfi, Dharm, Bheema, Nandi... etc. Don't call him by different expressions like "boy," "come here boy." You address like "get up Jai," "Burfi whoa." It may seem like a simple thing but it is very important.

### THE PLACE

Before you start the lessons you must find a nice place to train him. That place should be flat and even. The ring should be set off from the residential area or any area where there are a lot of people around. Because outside activity will be a big distraction to the oxen when he is being trained. Also you have to discipline the oxen, which will not be understood by innocent bystanders. So you should train them as far away from the public as possible. The trainer will need that space in order to concentrate on what he's doing.



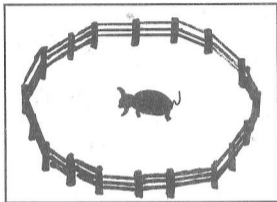
### ONE MUST BE FIRM

You have to take the oxen off the mental platform by giving him strong, clear commands. They will work very hard, be loyal servants and come to fully depend on your instructions, following them without hesitation. On the other hand if your instructions are vague and unenthusiastic they will adopt all kinds of bad habits, all disguised to avoid hard work.

"One must be strict, you must also be determined and see it as a matter of life and death. The animal's life is useless unless he surrenders. I can say for myself that my whole personality was transformed by this experience of working animals, and having to overpower them in this way. Previously I was a very mild mannered person and never had any opportunity in my whole life to get heavy with anyone, what to speak of a poor helpless animal. But being in this situation with the animals I could understand that if I didn't overpower them then their lives would be wasted." *Paramananda Das.*

### THE FIRST LESSON: IN THE RING.

We described the trip to the ring and some other preliminary points on how to handle oxen and who should handle them. Now the ox has entered the ring and the gate is closed behind him. The first thing is to simply let him explore. When you shut the gate behind him he might walk up to the gate and sniff it and try to see if he can get back out again. Then he will



walk around the ring to different places, stand still and look around, maybe look around for some other cows. If he sees anybody he may start mooing-" Help, Help." Allow him to freely explore the ring and calm down because he will probably be a little bit nervous.

After a few minutes, when he settles down, it is a good idea to approach him to comfort him a little bit. It is important to be very demonstrative, both when You are pleased with the ox and when you are displeased with him. There should be a very clear distinction between your pleasure and your displeasure. As I mentioned previously, everything should be



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overemphasized because you are dealing with a dumb brute who doesn't speak the English language. So to let him know that you are his friend and that he is not actually in a dangerous or threatening situation, you approach him slowly. Hold out your hand and pat him. Stroke him on the head and behind the ears and at the same time speak some kind words like, "good boy, good boy." Very, demonstratively, very, clearly. Make it very clear that you are being kind to him. You are complementing him. Your pleasure or displeasure will motivate the ox and show him when he has done right or wrong. When you compliment him and comfort him and indicate that you are pleased with him, you will see a change in him. His anxiety will be greatly reduced.

A lot depends on how you give rewards. If you reward the ox in such a way that he fully, comprehends that he has done what you wanted, it will be a big help to you in fixing an impression on his brain. His fear of you is what makes him resist training and that fear can be removed by systematically rewarding the ox when he does right. If he has confidence in his master, and understands what he wants of him, he will be ready and willing to obey every command that is given him.

When you see that he is calmed down and is actually waiting to see what is going to happen next, then you can begin to teach him the first command which is "get-up." That means to go forward.

Before I explain this, I want to explain the use of the lash which is a vital tool that you must use to train and work the

oxen. The lash could be made from a fairly rigid green stick that has some spring in it. It shouldn't be too heavy or you won't be able to move it around quickly and easily. It may be an inch at most at the butt tapering down to a half an inch at the tip. In the training ring it is good to have a long lash, the stick about four feet long. Then on the tip of the stick you would have a piece of rope with a knot on the end, not heavy rope, but rope that is very flexible and snaps easily, or else a strip of leather, also not too thick. That piece should be about two feet long. With the lash you hit the ox in different places to indicate what you want him to do. With each command there is a certain way to use the lash to indicate to the ox what he should do. He learns that if he doesn't respond, the more



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he resists, the harder the lash comes down. So he is actually working on this fear principle. That has to be understood. You must establish this very clearly and strongly right from the beginning. Once he has understood a command, if he doesn't obey it, the alternative is immediately pain. The ox must understand that this is not a partnership and that you are going to have it your way all the time. But as soon as he becomes submissive and obeys "our commands promptly, you stroke his head and treat him kindly. If he is smart, he will very quickly adapt to this new situation and it will almost never be necessary to hit him hard. With some oxen, the training may take longer but eventually they get the idea and it no longer becomes necessary to hit them.

Ideally the lash is just an emergency tool that you carry with you. After having been fully trained, the ox should respond to the commands without any indication by the use of the lash just by the word; it is called "broke to the word." That means simply by saying the commands, the ox responds fully. It is not even necessary to tap him with the lash unless there is some emergency situation coming and something has to be done very quickly. For instance, you want him to stop all of a sudden and he isn't expecting it so just for extra security you use the lash to make sure that he understands, because if he doesn't stop right away, something bad will happen. We don't want to become dependent on the lash. It is an emergency tool that we keep with us all the time and we use it on oxen that aren't fully trained. The oxen should be broke to the word or they won't be so useful for many kinds of work.



You cannot always be right next to every ox using the lash to show him what you want him to do. If you want to ride on a wagon or if you are working big teams of oxen and you can't talk to the oxen and have them respond nicely it is not practical. So there is good reason for this careful method of training.

Now you are standing in the centre of the training ring with your lash. The ox is standing somewhere in the ring, probably near the edge along the fence facing away from you. Now we are going to teach him to go forward. We start with this because the easiest, most natural, and obvious thing

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for the ox to do is to just start walking forward. The command is "Get-up", and the action with the lash to indicate the command is a swat on the rump, on the back side of the ox. At the same time as you hit you say, "Get-up," simultaneously the command and the action to indicate the command. They must be done simultaneously so the ox understands the relationship. When you hit him on this command "Get-up," you can also start walking toward him thereby indicating with your whole body that you want him to move forward. When you hit an animal on the rump it is natural for him to be propelled forward because he wants to get away from the lash. He will probably start walking around the edge of the ring. He may only take a few steps at first and then stop, not really understanding what you want him to do or what is going on, So then you hit him again right away, Again shout, "Get-tip" at the same time and follow after him, walk after him, make him go forward. If you want, give him a little push to indicate to him that you want him to go forward. He will start again, maybe walk a few more feet and then stop.

At this point you might stop if you think he has understood that you wanted him to go forward, and he has actually done it. Now you can reward him. You should have a whole act that you do when you are pleased with him, that you repeat the same way every time so he gets to know when you are pleased. You put the lash under your arm and hold it there so it is sticking out behind You. He doesn't really see it very much and he is not afraid that you are going to hit him with it.

Walk slowly up to him and pat him on the head and say, "Good boy, good boy." When you see that he is calmed down again then step back. This time just hold the lash up in the air and don't even hit him with it. Just threaten him from behind and shout, "Get. up!" and see if he has understood. If an ox is smart, it is possible that even that quickly, even after a couple of times, he will have made the connection between the word and the action and understood what you want him to do. So try it. Don't be overanxious to hit him. You don't want to hit the ox ever when it is, not necessary because then he starts to develop fear of you in a bad way. The less excitement and punishment used, the better. Just like with people, if they are well-intentioned and we out of intolerance



or impatience, get angry at them, then they become mistrusting. So test the ox and see if he understood the command. If you yell, "Get-up!" and he doesn't move, then hit him again on the rump, hard, so that there 'is no hesitation on his part, "Should I do it or should I not do it." No! the command and motion should be so strong that there is no mental doubt. "I must go forward. This is so severe and extreme that I can't even think of not doing what he said. No question about it." And then once again he will step forward.

I would like to interject here that during training, the individual nature and disposition of your ox must be considered carefully, It is not possible to give hard and fast rules for teaching a command. I can give the basic principles and guidelines and methods but it is going to differ according to the animal that you are working with. He may be very smart, stupid, lazy., or nervous. You have to be sensitive to what is going through this animal's mind and respond accordingly. In other words, if you sense that the animal understands your command, but won't comply because he is just obstinate, then there would be some call for severity and discipline. But if you sense that he doesn't understand you, that he hasn't learned any thing, which is the case just as often as not, then you cannot discipline him. To discipline an ox when he doesn't understand what you are asking of him will just make things worse. He will just develop fear of you and will not be able to listen to any thing you say. He will become filled with anxiety when he sees you approaching him.



Remember! When we are dealing with a dumb creature that it must be very difficult for him to understand our motions, signs and language, something like ourselves trying to understand a foreign language. We should never get impatient with him because he doesn't understand us or be surprised when he does things wrong. We should find some simple means to work on his understanding rather than on the different parts of his body. That is why I said that the trainer should have worked with cows and bulls for two years. There are very sensitive and subtle perceptions involved here in order to not spoil the ox. This surrender you are demanding from him is difficult. So You have to be very

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familiar with these animals and be able to interpret their different motions. You have to know how to use your body and voice so that they understand you. If a person hasn't had this experience, there is a very great chance that he is going to spoil this ox right from the very beginning because he won't be able to tell whether the ox is being obstinate or if he is actually just confused about what he is supposed to do.

The full import of the command, "Get-up!" is to go forward with no question of stopping until told to stop. Right now we are not concerned with teaching the ox to stop. We just want him to start walking upon hearing "Get-up" and to continue walking around the edge of the ring without stopping. The more he understands the command, the longer he will continue to walk. In the beginning you follow him, standing a little bit towards the centre of the ring but behind him so it is clear to him that you want him to continue walking. It is almost like he is running away from you. If he starts to slow down, he might be preparing to stop, so be ready with the lash. Have the lash poised up in the air so if he looks back at you and sees it, that may be sufficient to keep him going. But if you see that he is about to stop anyway, then come down with the lash and hit him again and say, "Get-up!" and he will start going again. Then when you see that he has got the idea, let him stop. Or if he starts to get in too much anxiety about the whole thing, becoming bewildered by so much pressure being put on him to do something new, confined in a little ring, then let him stop. Let him calm down. Go up to him again with the lash under your arm,

stroke him and tell him, "Good boy, good boy." He has been a good boy. He did what you wanted. After he has calmed down step back and tell him again, "Get-up!" Don't hit him hard unless it is necessary. If you think that he has got the idea a little bit, then just tap him on the rump with the lash and "Get-up!" and he will probably go with just that. But once again, if he just takes one step and then stops, hit him harder. You will find that a half-hour is the maximum time that you can spend in one lesson, teaching one command. The pressure and anxiety on the ox increases more and more, due to being confined for so long in such a new situation. The idea is that after that time, he doesn't really learn anything. It is just a matter after that, of practice. It is good to have a

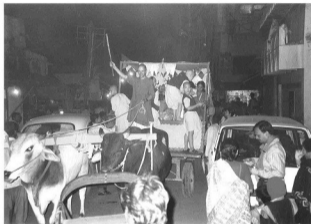


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lesson every day for up to a half an hour. Never teach more than one command in a lesson because that is confusing to the ox. Repeat the lesson daily until it is learned perfectly and then go on to the next command. Every day you can go over the commands that you have already done. Don't go into the lesson with great expectations. You should be prepared for the ox to make small increments of advancement every day. You may come across an ox that will learn quickly, but you also don't want to be too pushy and don't be frustrated if all that happens the first day in the ring is that ox just gets used to being in the ring. When you first bring the ox into the ring, there is a lot that you might not know about him. It is even possible that he is untrainable. This has to be considered. I have had some oxen that were so nervous and spooked that they were untrainable. Even after repeated lessons, they were like an insane person. I was unable to reach them no matter what I did. Some of these oxen changed as they got older. We went back to them when they were three or four years old and they were completely different and able to be trained. So the fact that an ox can't be worked with at a younger age doesn't necessarily mean that he will always be useless.

When an ox doesn't understand in this first lesson that he is expected to walk around in a circle in the ring, it is indication that he is not going to be trainable, because it is so obvious and natural in this situation to walk around in a circle. Actually the training can hardly be done unless the ox will do this. In several cases, I found that such an ox, at least for the time being, is useless. If, when you hit him and tell him to get up,



he just backs up and walks around in circles or walks across the ring, and has no idea what is going on, this is a strong indication that he is useless.

Another thing that might happen that indicates that an ox is not really qualified to be trained, at least for the time being, is if he actually tries to jump out of the ring. He becomes so frightened by being in the ring with you and by being hit with the lash, that he actually tries to jump over the fence. This is a very bad sign. It has happened to me, so I thought I would mention something about how to deal with that situation. Suppose you have a big ox and even though

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the fence is six feet high, he tries to jump over it. He gets his front legs over it but of course he can't jump high enough. So his whole body comes down on the fence and breaks the boards and he ends up stuck on the fence, front legs on one side and back legs on the other side. He is hanging on some boards and he can't move. He can't go backwards and he can't go forwards. So in a situation like that you have to be very careful because already something very bad has happened. He became so scared that he did this crazy thing and now he has gotten hurt, which can have a permanent effect on his relationship with you.

The psychology is that being in a training ring is a new and frightening situation for an animal like this. He is simple-minded. He doesn't have any intellectual capacity. His reasoning-powers are limited to his past experience, so he is looking at your actions to try to understand what is going on. If somehow or other in this situation he actually gets injured, he connects this with you. So it is a psychological disadvantage for you in trying to get him to surrender to you and trust you. He is fearing some bodily harm so if harm actually does come to him, then his fear has been justified and it may make a lasting impression on him. First impressions are the most lasting. If, in spite of his fear, no harm comes to him, then he should gradually lose the fear.

At all times when training or working oxen, you should be extremely careful not to let them get injured while trying to sincerely and submissively follow your commands. For

example, if you tell an ox to 'get-up', he takes one step, falls down in a hole and hurts his leg, then next time you tell him to 'get-up' he may hesitate. As soon as he hears the sound, "Get up!" he may become filled with anxiety because last time he got up for you, he hurt his leg. So you have to be careful.

Now the ox is stuck on the fence, so don't try to make him jump backwards or forwards. First of all, Just try to calm him down. Approach him slowly and pet him. If he is very big and heavy and you can't lift him over the fence, have some one stand with him to see he doesn't get excited and start struggling and injure himself. Get some tools and take the



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boards off the fence so he can free of this position without further excitement. I have seen an animal fall down and get stuck and the teamster, out of impatience and brutishness, just hit him to make him get up, instead of taking off the yoke or, with a horse, taking off the harness and making it easy for him to get up. Just to assume that he is being obstinate and start hitting him only further aggravates the situation. The animal may struggle to get up and only to hurt himself more in the process.

Once he is freed from being stuck on the fence, I would hook a good strong rope on to his halter and tie him up inside the ring so he can get used to it. If you immediately turn the ox loose after he tried to jump out, he might conclude that his attempted escape was successful and that would encourage him to do it again. It would reinforce this very foolish thing that he did; he tried to escape and succeeded. That is a very negative type of experience for training the ox to be obedient. So, without further ado, just tie him up inside the ring and leave him there until you think that when you let him out, he won't feel like he succeeded in escaping from the ring. You might want to leave him in there the whole day. Maybe even bring him some hay and water. Let him get used to being in there.

Whenever you tie up an animal, the rope should not be long. It should be short enough so that he can't get his leg over the rope. That means that the distance from his nose to the post to which he is tied would be, at most, two feet. That way he would have enough rope to lie down but it is not so long that



he could try to jump over the fence again, nor could he get tangled up in the rope by putting his feet over it. If you have an animal on a long rope, there is always a chance that the rope will get tangled in his feet, and he may fall down and start struggling to get free and get seriously injured. This is especially dangerous on a hillside, but certainly a training ring would be on flat ground. Just for your information, you should never leave an animal tied on a hill or a slope, because if he falls down he can get tangled up in the rope or stuck in some awkward position, and break his neck. I have seen that happen with both horses and oxen. Having been left tied somewhere, the animal got tangled in a long rope, fell down



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and, while struggling to free himself, broke his neck and died. So certainly this is something to be taken seriously and to be avoided at all costs.

When you have finished the lesson, the return from the ring should be done in the same way as the trip that I described to the ring in the last lesson. It should be uneventful and you shouldn't try to teach the ox anything on this trip. I never like just turning the ox loose from the ring because it makes him more inclined to get out of the ring during the lesson. If the moment the gate is opened he is going to be free, it will encourage him to anticipate his release too much. So I always like to lead him somewhere, to the barn or some pasture where he is staying, any facility some distance away from the ring. Once he learns a little bit how to 'get up', you can use that command to make him walk, but don't make a big thing about it. You want this trip to be uneventful.

### "GET-UP" AND "WHOA"

In the first lesson I described how to teach "get-up." The ox probably got some idea of the meaning of the command and that you walk in a circle around the ring when you shout, "get up" so got a little acquainted with the lash which he had never seen or felt before. Again the trip to the ring should be done with extreme caution. Your ox might have been traumatized by the first lesson and might realize as soon as you start toward the ring that he is in for another lesson and another period of confinement in that little training ring. He

might be very obstinate about going out there So the same patience and care that was described previously on this trip, Don't try to use the command "get demanding of the ox. Make the trip uneventful and, have extra people around to help insure that the ox doesn't get away from you. After he is in the ring, let him explore for a couple of minutes until he relaxes. Approach him slowly. Stroke him and tell him he is -a good boy. Now step back toward the centre of the ring and test him by shouting "Get up" You can have the lash in your hand held straight up in the air so he sees it, but don't hit him with it. First test him to see if he remembers the command. If he doesn't remember, then follow the same procedure that was followed in the first lesson.



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On the command "get up" the ox should walk forward and not stop. The better he knows the command, the longer he will walk. You should keep working on him until he does not stop except on command. At first you are using your body language along with the lash by following closely behind him so that it is very obvious that you want him to move forward. As the ox learns what is expected of him, move away from him more and more. Eventually, stop following him altogether. Just stand in the centre of the ring and tell him to "get up". Increase your expectations of him gradually. Ultimately, he should follow the command without being hit or threatened with the lash. You might not reach this point within the second lesson. It might take a week of lessons to gradually increase his understanding to the point where you can just stand in the centre of the ring without following or threatening him and say "get up" and have your ox walking around the ring.

At first, while positioned in the middle of the ring, spin around in a circle as the ox walks around so you can watch him. That visual contact has a definite motivating effect on him. Usually when he hesitates and starts slowing down, you can see he is watching you and trying to figure out if he can get away with stopping. In that case repeat the command without the lash and see if that works. If he still doesn't speed up, lunge after him quickly and crack him on the rump with the lash. Get him off the mental platform. Your ox will always be testing his limits, therefore you have to make your expectations crystal clear.

When he has succeeded in walking continuously around the



ring on the command "get up" without being threatened except by your stare, then stop staring at him. Just stand in the centre of the ring and have him walk around the circle. The ox is aware when you are looking at him so if he is behind your back, he may try to get away with something. Stand with your lash poised, like a cat ready to pounce. When the ox is behind your back and you see him out of the corner of your eye starting to slow down or if you hear him stop, turn around and pounce! Shout the command again and hit him on the rump. Then immediately go back to the centre of the ring and expect him to keep walking. If he keeps walking around you a couple of times without your watchful eye, then

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reward him. Rewards should always be given when the ox does something right, especially if it is something new and he did it right first time. Then return to the centre of the ring and ask him to "get up" again.

When the ox will walk continuously around the edge of the ring on command, without you even watching him, then he has really understood the meaning of "get up". Once again it may take a number of lessons to arrive at this point. Lessons should be short and given every day if possible. That is the most effective way of training. You will find that your ox will learn quickly. Your trip to the ring should become easier every day. When the has really understood "get up" you can start to use it as you walk from the ring. Walk next to him on his left side, holding a lead rope and tell him to "get up"

The next lesson is "whoa", this shouldn't begin until you feel the "get up" command has been fully understood. When you try to teach two commands at the same time to the ox he just becomes confused, and it reduces your effectiveness with him. It is harder to fix a strong impression on his mind if you have two things going on in his mind at once. Hopefully up to this point the command "whoa" has not been used. If it has been used casually without the ox having been taught the proper meaning of the word, it makes the lesson more difficult. The first time you say "whoa" you have to be sure you are in a position to associate an action with that command, this will teach the ox the right meaning. In other words, when you say



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“whoa” you must make the ox stop. “Whoa” means stop and stand still and not move until you are told to move. It is the opposite of “get up” which means to walk and not dare to stop unless told to “whoa” When we say “whoa” to the ox, we want him to understand the he should stop completely, stand still and not dare to move until he is given some other command. We can't over-emphasize the importance of this command. Your life may depend on a hearty “whoa” being understood by your ox. You will find yourself in situations where your animals must quickly respond to the “whoa” command, or yourself and others may be put into danger.

Introduce this command while the ox is walking around the ring. When he wants to stop anticipate it and step in front of him, hold up the lash and shout “WHOA”. This usually works well because your ox already wants to stop and you are just taking advantage of his laziness! Then stand back out of the way, toward the centre of the ring and tell him to “get up” again. After he has walked around the ring, again step in front of him, hold up the lash and say “whoa”. This usually works if the ox wants to stop. If he doesn't want to stop and you step in front of him he may shy off to the side and try and walk around you. In that case you can understand that the threat to him was not strong enough to show him what you wanted.

The next thing to do would be to use the lash. You can either hit him on the nose with it or on top of the head. Just as hitting him on the rump propels him forward, so hitting him on the head is the message to stop. You have to be careful not to hit



him on or near his eyes. He will always close his eyes to protect himself and may develop a bad habit of squinting whenever he sees the lash.

As we have discussed previously, the action to indicate the meaning of a command should be swift and sure. It should be as strong as necessary to make it crystal clear to the ox that “whoa” means to stop abruptly and not take another step. When he stops, then you reward him. Put the lash under your arm, approach him and reward him. Let him calm down and repeat the lesson.

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When you think he has understood the meaning of the command a little bit, test him by asking him to stop when you know he doesn't want to stop. That is an increase in the training. That is the next step. Tell him to "get up" let him walk a few paces, then shout "whoa" and crack him on the head with the lash. It is important to teach the ox that once he is told to "whoa" he must not move until further notice. In order to show him this, you must stand right by him when he stops. If he starts to move be ready to show him again by your action and command that he may not move. As soon as he starts to take a step you shout "whoa!" and if he doesn't respond then hit him with the lash. When he is standing still the start to walk away from him to test and see if he understands that he may not move. Gradually walk further away until he tries to move and the immediately reinforce the command again. Go back to him and shout "Whoa!" and tap him with the lash and make him stand still. Walk all around him in a circle, patting him on the back, but watch him closely. If you see him about to move or attempt to take a step then immediately repeat the command and make him stand still. By doing this you can get the idea across to the ox that the command "whoa" means to stop and not to move until further notice. This is absolutely essential "whoa" doesn't mean stop for a few seconds then start walking again. This is a most annoying and dangerous habit, and must be stopped right from the very beginning. When you feel your ox has understood that he may not move, then tell him to "get up" again, Whenever you tell him to stop make sure he stays in the spot and doesn't move. Test him by walking around him. He

should completely understand that whenever you tell him to stop, there he must stay. He must stand still and not move. If you are careful in teaching this command and practise firmness in two or three lessons you will have an ox who will stop at the word "whoa" and will stand still in any circumstance and any excitement.

"Whoa" is one of the most abused of all the commands in the regard that people say it at many inappropriate times. Whenever you want the ox to do something different than what he is doing, they say "whoa". When they want him to slow down or calm down a nervous ox who is already standing still they say "whoa". Then the animal will not



understand the real meaning of the command "whoa". You should never say "Whoa" to an animal who is standing still. He will become confused about the meaning of the word if you do that. When you want an animal to slow down, there are other commands. If you give a command lightly when you don't really intend the ox to obey it he won't develop the proper understanding or respect and you may endanger yourself and others.

### "GEE" AND "HAW"

I have two training rings. One is 24 foot in diameter and the other is 48 feet in diameter. teaching "gee" and "haw" the larger ring is better because there is more room to walk across the ring when you make a turn. First I teach "haw" because it is easier to teach than "gee." "Haw" means turn to the left. You are leading the ox from the left 'side with a halter and lead-rope on him. Walk anticlockwise around the edge of the ring so that you are on his left side the fence is on his right side. Command him to "get up" when he is walking along nicely, then you the lash on his right side somewhere his ears and his mid-back and tug on the rope and say "haw." When you do this your ox should turn. If he just continues to walk straight and doesn't understand that you want him to turn, then you have to turn his head with the rope. If you turn his head around, he has to follow his head. He can't keep walking straight with his head turned. that you make him turn, at least a little bit at first, so that he doesn't misunderstand the command. When you tap him with the lash on his right side

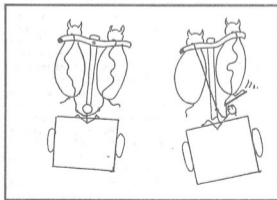


anywhere from behind the ears the better, middle of his back. We want to reserve his rear end for propelling him forward with the command "get-up" and his front part up to his ears reserved for "gee" and "haw" left and right. It good if he understands that anywhere you tap him area, on the right side, means that you want him to turn left, because you will be in different, positions when you are walking next to the You might be behind them or up in front of them and not always be able to tap them in the same spot. But if you have a few feet of leeway, that makes it more practical If you want him to tun 90 degrees you may have to repeat the command several times until he comprehends. The smartest ox I ever

## THE OX POWER HANDBOOK

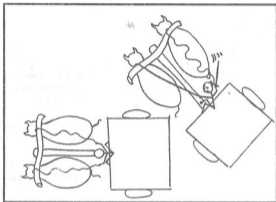
worked with learned in one day. On the second day he without the lash. But it may take considerably longer with some oxen. I have found these two commands, "gee" and "haw," may longer to teach than any of the others because there is a little more subtlety involved. BuEby - completes the turn. Then tell him "get-up" and walk For across the ring. When you tell your ox to "haw." he should continue to turn to the left until you him to "get up" again, which will signal to him that he has turned far enough and now he can resume walking straight ahead. Otherwise how is he to know how far you, want him to turn and how sharp, In the future, when he learns the command better, he can understand by the tone of your voice or the repetition of the command more than once that you want him to turn just a little bit or very sharp When he reaches the opposite side of the ring, say "whoa." Pat him on the head and congratulate him en for turning so nicely. Give him a minute to gather his equanimity. Then tell him to "get-up" and again walk anti clockwise around the ring and repeat the same procedure. Tap him on his right side, tug him to the left, and say "haw" at the same time, When you see that he is showing some sign of understanding the command, which may not be in sure the first day, then try telling him "haw" and tapping him with the lash but without holding the rope. Put the lead rope over his neck and walk alongside him, Just use the lash and tell him "haw" and point so he doesn't get used to you tugging back to the rope. When you are working him under normal circumstances, you won't be holding lead-rope. except, when he has learned to turn without you pulling on the rope, you can stop using the

lash and just use the command "haw," expecting him to continue turning until you say "get-up" at which time he should walk straight ahead from whatever position he is in at the time you give the command. I think you will find that for every 45 degrees that the ox turns, you'll have to say "haw" again to make him turn another 45 degrees The number of lessons required to teach this command may vary dramatically from one ox to another become confused, Ultimately, you should to work them from either side, but the standard procedure is to walk on the left side. To teach "gee" you have to push the ox off that there is a little more subtlety involved. BuEby - tion Ln a proper atmosphere, an ox can learn these v@ well. Also you will @md, especially "gee"



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and "haw," that a great deal of their learning will take place after they start working. As long as you are very careful to be consistent in how the command bott in your word and your iom, SCMD vsuroa,iui ox because lie doc:.ii't It-.11-ii .. take a lot of repetition. Once you are confident that your ox has learned can teach him "gee" which is to @on to have found this a little more difficult to use that simple method of with the lead-rope. He Always remember that You I working, the oxen from the left side most of the time so you should maintain that position during the lessons. If you switch side they will When you have turned about 90 degrees, tell him to "get up" and walk straight across the ring. Stop when you get to the other edge of the ring and congratulate him. Then you can proceed again and repeat everything. When teaching these commands, don't forget to use your ox's name. It is important that he learns his name so that he can distinguish commands that you make specifically to him when he is working in a team. especially these "gee" and "haw" commands are used that way when you are making a very sharp turn, the ox on the outside of the turn is commanded to go "gee" or "haw," depending on the direction you are going in, and the ox on the inside of the turn is actually commanded to back-up at the same time. It is something like pivoting on a point and he actually has to back-up. once your ox has learned "gee" and "haw," it is lot easier to take him out of the ring and walk around to practice. Now he has learned all the commands. If you want to stop him you can stop him hi with "whoa" and if you want to turn him left or right you can do that. At least he has the idea. When you take him out of the ring to practice, at



first you have the right to show him that you want him to it in that direction. Your oxen might be quite - and to push them around in one direction or another may not be so easy. This is a good reason to continue the oxen when they are very young. The smaller they are, the easier it is to push them around and is show them what you want them to do. They tend to be more submissive when they are young you give When teaching "gee," you want to walk clockwise along the edge of the ring with the ox walking .. alongside of you. If you walk anticlockwise, your ox won't be able to turn right. Stand to the left of your ox and tell him to "get up" Then tell him "gee," push his head over

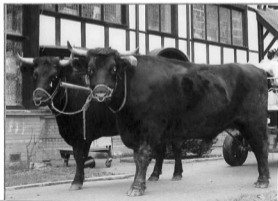


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to the right, and tap with the whip on his left side. From the last lesson he has already picked up on the idea of turning and then straightening out when you say "get up". So this isn't quite like starting from scratch. Your ox will already be used to the idea of turning. He might understand very quickly when you tap him on the left side that you want him to turn to the right should have a lead rope on him to make sure that he doesn't get away. You can alternate the commands of "gee" and "haw". Give him a lot of practice turning in both directions and stopping, starting, and backing up. It is just like going out for a drive to practising manoeuvring. I found that I can also teach the ox to turn while backing up. This makes the ox very manoeuvrable in tight situations. If you are in the woods and you want to back the oxen in between trees to hitch to a log or if you are hitching the oxen to a wagon and you want to back them into a tongue, it comes except in very handy if they know how to turn when backing up. Stand in front of the ox holding his halter. Tell him "back-haw" and guide him back and to his left. You are actually walking him in a anticlockwise circle backwards. Do the opposite with "back-gee." He'll soon get the idea and then you can switch over to the lash. Tap the ground in front of him to get him going back and then tap his side to turn him left or right, and, as usual, repeat the verbal commands simultaneously. Then, when he is responding well, drive him with the, word

### "BACK UP"

The command for backing up is simply "back" plus the ox's name-" Back, Buck back." What physical action you do to indicate this command will depend on your ox. Here's what I do. With one hand I hold the ox by his halter from underneath his chin and push him backwards, and with the other and I take the butt of the lash and tap him on the forehead and say, "Back, Buck back." Generally the ox will take a step or two backwards, which is all he needs to do. But remember, the tapping with the butt of the lash may have to be sharp. Now stop and let the ox gather his wits, and then repeat the procedure. So You have to be careful not to let the ox bump into anything when backing



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up. -Otherwise he won't trust you because he can't see behind himself. If by your instruction he bumps into something, he will become fearful and hesitant to follow you. To obey you, especially with this command, he must trust you. Later on, when you have your ox hooked up to some implement or wagon and he has to back up - a very awkward and uncomfortable task - he will have to have been carefully and patiently trained, and he must trust you. So this method of tapping the ox on the forehead and pushing him back with the halter is good initial training. But later, when you're working the ox, to get in to the ideal position every time you want him to back up may be difficult, so you'll have to use the lash more. But that comes later. For now, concentrate on teaching your ox to back up as I described above. He can be in the ring or out, but he shouldn't be hooked up to any wagon or load - not yet. Once your ox begins to associate the word "back" with the idea of walking backwards, try hitting him with the lash, try hitting him with the lash across the front of his legs instead of the front of his forehead. You should find that after a while you don't have to hit him at all; just hitting the ground in front him as though threatening to hit him on the legs should be sufficient. Ideally, however, an ox should respond to just a spoken command: "Back, Buck. Back. Back." That comes with practice. It's important that the ox learn to back up straight. In an attempt to get away from you or to try and see where he's going, he'll tend to turn one way or the other as he's backing up. That is bad. Turning while backing up requires a



different command - one he should learn later - but on the command, "Back" he should just go straight backwards. If he's not trained to do this properly from the beginning you'll have a difficult time getting him to backup a big wagon load of wood or hay. His tendency will always be to back up in circles, which isn't very useful. Unless you tell him otherwise, he should back

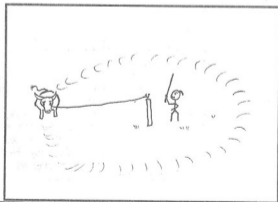
## THE OX POWER HANDBOOK

straight. I've found a helpful technique for teaching this to an ox who's having trouble understanding the commands. Stand him beside a wooden fence or any kind of straight fence. You stand on one side of the ox with the fence on the other side and tell him "Back" If he tries to turn one way, he bumps into the fence, Find - and if he tries to turn the other way, you're standing there with the lash he has to go straight back. Some oxen may not require this, they might understand right from the beginning that you want them to go straight back. But for a lot of oxen this command is difficult, especially later when they find themselves pushing a load back. It requires practice and very good training. If you give an ox a good foundation of consistent, patient training in the beginning, the later training is easier. You'll find that when you take the ox out of the ring, hook him up to something, and put him to work, it's like starting the training over again, because he's in such a new situation. He has to learn everything again in the new working situation. He may have learned "Back," but once he has a big load to push backwards, he's not going to be sure up what you mean. He's going to think, "This is something different and new. I never did this before." So it's critical that the basic training be done carefully. Don't be discouraged if it takes a lot of repetition day after day to teach an ox this command. You should have infinite patience, and then you will very satisfying result.

### AN ALTERNATIVE RING

### PROGRAM

One technique I found to work even more effectively than Paramananda Prabhu's ring, is to take a large stake, knock it into the ground. Attach a rope about six meters long to it. To the other end you attach the rope to the oxen's head collar. (You can buy a large size horse head collar and this will fit the oxen.) Lead the oxen around the ring a few times, till he gets the idea. We are going to teach the commands to "get up" and "whoa." Keep a grip on his collar and walk with him sometimes telling him to whoa, tug on the collar to let him know what you want. If he doesn't respond you will need to yell at him "bad boy do what your told," and if he still



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doesn't respond give him a smack. The same program with the command "whoa". When he gets it right you must show that you are pleased with him, give him a carrot or piece of bread or something he likes. After a number of lessons you can reduce the amount prashada you give him and replace it with a friendly slap on his neck, after a trained oxen does plenty of service it's nice to reward him with plenty of food. You now continue the same commands while standing in the centre of the ring armed with a stick. Tell him to "get up". And if he doesn't respond give him a smack on the back side, this will get him going. And there is only one way to go, around. If he slows down or stops give him a crack of the stick, at the same

time give the command "get up. "Soon he'll get the idea that he can't run away and he must obey the command. After a few minutes give the command to "whoa, "give the rope a little tug as well. The command "whoa" should be pronounced "whooooo". It must be loud enough for the oxen to hear, and must be distinct from the command to "get up," with a sharper tone of voice. When the oxen stops on the command of whoa, drop the stick and walk over to and congratulate him, develop the relationship. He must learn to trust you. After a few lessons he'll understand the program, and he will be able to follow your instructions by hearing and you will no longer need the stick to get him going.

## THE OX POWER HANDBOOK

Eventually the oxen should be able to GO, STOP, TURN LEFT, TURN RIGHT, and REVERSE, simply by hearing the command of his master.

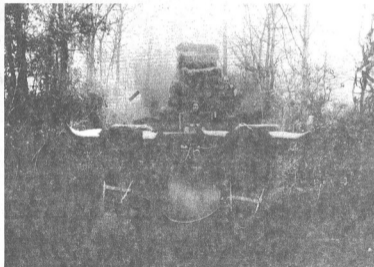
### ALTERNATIVE CRASH COURSE NUMBER 1

It shouldn't happen if you organized, but if you want an oxen trained up in at a weeks notice, here's one method that works. On one occasion we had three days to train up two oxen before we were to enter Brussels for a festival. And on another occasion we were entering Paris with four pretty old swiss brown oxen who had never seen a cart before what to speak of pulling one and had never walked on a public road. Yet as were leaving Paris the oxen were walking perfectly along the busy motorway. You should of had a lot of experience at working oxen before trying this. he first thing is that the oxen should have nose rings, other wise you are sure to crash into someone's car.

#### DAY ONE;

You take the oxen out of the field, attach a rope to their nose. For each oxen you will need one person to lead him, otherwise the oxen will start fighting among themselves. So on padayatra we would simply walk the oxen on the road for about ten miles. The idea is that the oxen will soon get used to the idea of having cars whiz by, get used to the oxen trainer, and get used to obeying orders. After ten miles the oxen will

be pretty tired, especially if they have never done a days work in their life. It usually takes a few days of hard work before the oxen gets strong enough to comfortably cope with his service. One very important point is don't drop the nose rope, if the oxen walks on the rope his nose is sure to bleed and this



**SPEED THE PLOUGH** When their tractor broke down, members of the Here Krishna community of Bhaktivipants Manor decided to opt for a cheaper, Greener method of farming, and use oxen to pull the heaviest of farm machinery. Pictured working on the Manor's 16-acre farm in Leitchmore Heath, Hertfordshire, are Krishna devotees Parasurama and Alton Jones with Burpity and Jays. The Krishna community has run the manor for nearly 20 years after it was given to them by George Harrison.

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is very disturbing to everyone. Also never tie him up by the nose rope, you can do a lot of damage if you are not conscious.

### DAY TWO;

Take the two oxen and put them in the yoke. They may not like it at once but after a few hours of walking they will soon adjust to walking with a yoke on their necks. Which means that they have to get used to walking together. Then lead the oxen for about ten miles.

### DAY THREE;

Now yoke the two oxen together and then attach the cart to them. And off you go. Stay in front of the oxen, holding onto their nose ropes for control. In this way you can lead them on any kind of road. It may also be helpful to have a person sitting on the cart with a stick to encourage the oxen onwards. It is best to only walk the oxen about eight miles the first day, and give them a rest in between the journey. They will be wiped out and so will you, it's a very intense program. There is also a lot of pressure there, if you cause an accident it may screw up the whole program, devotees will lose faith in the practical aspect of ox-power.

### DAY FOUR;

Follow the same program as day three. Continue this till you feel that the oxen are getting it together.

### DAY FIVE;



When you feel that the time is right you can attach the reins to the oxen's nose ring. So now you control the oxen from behind as well as from the front. The person who sits on the cart with the reins in his hands must be an experienced ox-cart driver. So gradually you begin to control the oxen from the cart while sitting down. The control transfers from the person leading to the person who is sitting behind driving. Gradually the person who walks in front does less and less until he is simply holding the slack rope. Soon the oxen develop their natural dharma and you'll be able to steer these oxen through the most difficult of streets. I have trained six fully grown oxen in this way. But the best system is to stick to the program as laid out by Paramananda prabhu.

### ALTERNATIVE CRASH COURSE NUMBER 2

In India you will not find any training rings or see anyone training their oxen. The system is that you get one trained oxen and one untrained oxen. Yoke them together. You then start off driving down the road as if nothing is unusual is happening. The new oxen will try to go fast or even run. The driver holds him back by pulling strongly on the reins. The oxen gradually gets the idea that if he runs or goes too fast he will hurt his nose and if he stops the driver will smack him on his back-side. The trained oxen keeps the cart from completely going out of control. Soon enough the new oxen settles into the program.

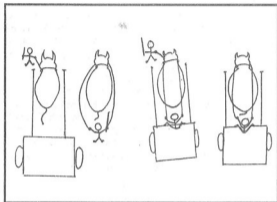
### HOW TO SAFELY DRIVE THE OXEN

After a number of lessons in the ring the oxen should know

1. Getup
2. Whoa.
3. Ghee.
4. Haw
5. Back.



At this stage you can put one oxen on a single cart using harness for a horse or else make a single yoke. Then lead him around the field. Having an assistant is necessary for this lesson. It is important not to overload the oxen, use a small cart, let him get used to the idea of pulling something. Remove the cart, attach the reins to him, and try ordering him to go forwards, to stop, turn left and turn right. command him from behind. He can not see you so he may get a little confused in the beginning. To turn left, give the command "HAW" pull the rein in your left hand. Tap him on the rear with your stick, while pronouncing the word "HAW,HAW," and when he turns tell him to get up and he will walk straight again. To turn right pull the right hand rein while saying "ghee" and tapping the oxen on the rear. Teach him "whoa" by pulling both reins. You should not have to pull too hard, this you learn by experience. After he has stopped don't let him walk on again on his own free will. This is a bad habit they can develop, accidents can happen this way. So if he moves tug the reins and say "whoa." If he persists in misbehaving give him a slap, let him know that you are not happy with him, call him a "bad boy." The ox trainer should be firm but kind at the same time. When the oxen gets used to being driven from behind, you can then harness him to a cart. Have someone lead the oxen for a few minutes and then continue driving the oxen using the reins while sitting on the cart as shown in the diagram. It is a great feeling to experience driving the oxen, a great sense of achievement Continue to drive the oxen in this way for a



number of days. Increase the load when you see he's ready. The next step is to get two oxen together. Harness them up and the connect them to a rope to a small log, and see how they respond. Stand in front of them, hold on to their nose ropes in case they decide they "want out." You'll find as they start walking that they will be out of time in their walking. One is sure to be faster than the other. After a while they will mellow out. Lead them around for a few days. Then connect them to a cart. When they get used to pulling a cart then connect the reins to their noses and start driving. Keep someone up front to help you. To drive a pair of oxen is a little like driving a tank, or a vehicle which has no steering



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wheel, but levers. The principle is that if you want to turn left, you pull the left hand rein. This action stops or slows down the oxen on the left hand side, and you hit the oxen on the right hand side at the same time, while giving the command "Haw". When they complete the operation straighten them up again by releasing the pressure on the reins and hitting the left side oxen with the command to "get up." This takes a little practice before you can get expert. When they learn this, you should be able to drive them through the most difficult of traffic or through the narrowest gaps without ever crashing or scraping any vehicles. You'll find that when you take a corner with a ox-cart that you'll have to take it wide as if your driving a truck, due to the length of the cart and oxen together

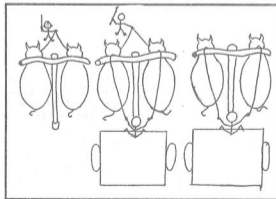
### BRAKES

One very important item is that the cart will need to have good brakes. The brakes should be in easy reach, best if you can use them with your feet, so as your hands are free for driving. When you drive downhill you don't want the cart to roll into the backs of the oxen. It will really upset the oxen. If this happens a few times the oxen will not want to walk downhill, they will give you a lot of trouble and develop bad habits. In India you won't find brakes on the carts. The driver pushes with his feet on the back side of the oxen to prevent the cart rolling into the oxen. But you can have accidents this way. Once when I was driving a ox-cart through the state of Maharashtra in India, we came to a steep hill. While going down the cart went out of control. We ended up balancing on

the edge of a cliff. Fortunately we were able to rescue the oxen and the cart without any casualties

### ALTERNATIVE TRAINING COURSE

Another system to get oxen used to pulling a cart was used by my friend Jaladutta prabhu in New Mayapur, France. As seen in the diagram he has one trained oxen pulling one cart and he tied a team of untrained oxen to the back of the cart. The first day they walked behind the cart connected to the yoke. In the back of the cart he put some hay. So the two untrained oxen were absorbed in eating the hay and forgot that they were wearing the yoke. The next day Jaladutta prabhu continued the



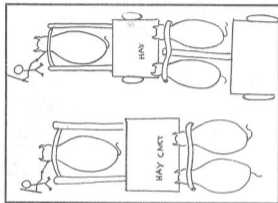
same program but this time he connected a small cart to the untrained oxen. They pulled this cart with out any problem because they were absorbed in eating hay. In this way the two oxen got used to working with each other.

**"Instead of using his higher intelligence to cultivate God consciousness so called intelligent men misuse their intelligence to produce many unwanted things. They work unnecessarily to posses artificial amenities. They think that they are being advised to return to a primitive way of life that is their misfortune."**

*Shrila Prabhupada*

### THE NOSE ROPE

The system in India is to have a rope going through the oxen's nose and around his head. In any market you can purchase these nose ropes, they are made from cotton and tapered at the ends. This rope is left in the oxen's nose and never taken out. I personally prefer to take out the rope everyday, because I'm afraid that the oxen may hurt themselves if they catch the nose rope in something. So I give the oxen nose rings, which can be bought from any vets shop. I then connect a chain from the ring that then goes behind the ears and horns and around then back to the nose, as shown in the diagram. After working the oxen I take their chains off. The nose rope or chain is connected to the reins, and this is how you control them. If you pull on the reins the oxen will stop. It is the same system as you would



have with a horse except it goes through the nose rather than the mouth. Before using this system it is best to get some experience at driving Indian oxen. The padayatra is always a good place for learning. One must be very careful with the oxen. Never let the oxen stand on the reins as he will hurt his nose, causing great pain. Never tie the reins to a gate or pillar, If they move and your not there to check them, they can rip their nose. If you are going to tie them up always tie the rope to the head collar. Always remember that these are special animals, they are Krishna's favourite animals, they should always be treated with great respect and love.

## THE OX POWER HANDBOOK

### SOME TIPS FOR ON THE ROAD OX-POWER

If the oxen are looked after nicely on padayatra then the devotees will be happy, and the journey will be very auspicious. The oxen should be the first priority, the oxen should be given sufficient hay and water before the devotees sit down to take prashada. The father eats first. Sufficient hay or grass should be there. An oxen eats nearly one full bail of hay a day. They should also be given some grains if possible. It is important not to overfeed them on grains, it is possible to kill them by giving the oxen too much barley. Avoid giving the oxen too much left over prashada. They will get sick if you give halava, dairy products, sweets etc. Contact your local vet to find out if there is a risk of catching disease involved in travelling through certain areas. They may be able to offer good advice to you. Carry a container of water for the oxen on the cart and a bucket. Some oxen prefer to drink a lot of water in the evenings. Never separate the oxen. They always want to be together, if you take one away to get him water or something, the other oxen will probably snap his rope in an attempt to find his mate, possibly do damage. Don't let untrained people guide the oxen, feed them, tie them up etc if you have to tie the oxen up at night, they should be tied up nicely. Very important not to give them too much rope they are sure to tangle themselves up in the rope and cause themselves an injury. Never put cows or oxen on pickets. (A long rope often used for horses to tie them up at the same time

long enough so as they can eat.) You should sleep near the oxen at night. Never tie them by their nose ring. The rope tied to their head collar should be short enough so as it will not be possible for them to step on it and long enough so the oxen can lie down comfortably.

### SHOES FOR THE OXEN

If your only going to be working the oxen around the farm or around the temple grounds then there is no need for your oxen to have shoes. But you plan on travelling out touring the country then obviously you'll need to put shoes on the oxen. Oxen could travel for about five days without any shoes, then

THE CORRECT AND SAFE  
WAY TO TIE UP AN OXEN



their hooves begin to get worn down too much. If they remain walking they'll go lame, and you're sure to get a reaction for not taking care of them nicely. In India the program is to call up the "naul walla" the local farrier. He comes out, puts the oxen on the ground. Ties them up, and nails the shoes on. In the same fashion as you would shoe a horse. The only difference is that you need two shoes for each hoof, due to the oxen having a forked shaped hoof. The shoes will last between two and three weeks before wearing out and falling off. A horse on walking on padayatra would need shoes every month, on padayatra the devotees walk a distance of about ten miles daily, in India a greater distance is covered. In India the shoes are horse shoes that have been cut in half. In Italy it is still possible to still see oxen working, and it is also possible to get a farrier to shoe the oxen. The Italians use a larger shoe. The system is that you walk the oxen into a cage like machine, called a "travaie." The oxen is strapped in and with a system of ropes and wenchers you are able to secure the hoof in order to hammer the nails in. In Italy they only put one shoe on each hoof. The idea is that you shoe the outer side of the hoof, and this side of the hoof becomes elevated enough to keep the pressure off the bare side of the hoof. In England I tried this system but it has only worked to a certain degree. I think that it is best to put two shoes on each hoof. While we travelled through Europe on padayatra, we would take large metal shoes as shown in the diagram, and nail them on to both sides of the hoof, meaning that each oxen had eight shoes. Reshoeing every three weeks. We used the same system as in India, to tie a rope around the oxen in such a way that it trips the oxen causing

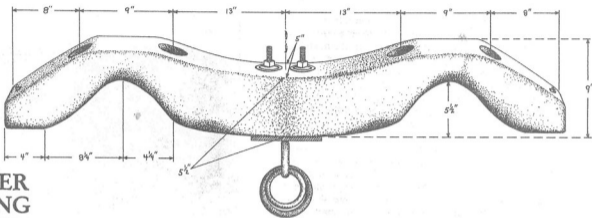


him to sit down. At this point we push the oxen down by the horns till he is lying down. The he has his legs tied together and the shoeing commences.

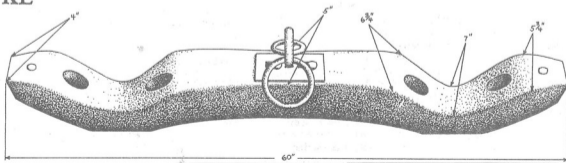
### A WORD OF WARNING :

You should not attempt to shoe an oxen with nails and metal shoes, unless you get properly trained by a professional farrier. If the nails are badly put in the oxen will suffer greatly and go lame. There is another way of shoeing them that may be the best if you are starting off and have little experience of shoeing oxen. It is possible to purchase plastic

# THE OX POWER HANDBOOK



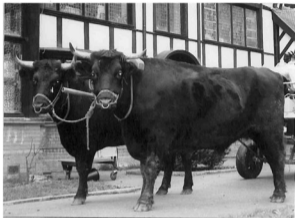
## MASTER DRAWING OX YOKE



shoes designed for cows and oxen. The best make I've come across are called "shoofs". Costing about £15 each. They are pretty easy to put on. They will last up to about eight weeks of constant use. To put the shoes on the front feet is easy, but the back feet are troublesome. They tend to kick a lot with their back feet. It may be best to put the oxen on the ground in order to put the back shoes on, or it is possible to buy a clamp from the vet that will prevent the oxen from kicking. It is best to remove the shoes every ten days in order to check the foot. The inner tube of a car tyre can also be used to make shoes, we found this to be a lot of work and the tube would wear out every second day. In Holland we tried nailing the metal shoe on to a wooden shoe which was then glued on to the oxen's hoof by quick drying resin, called Technovit 6091. We are now working on a new system which we will publish in the near future.

### Some Important Points:

When travelling on a program like padayatra, it is very important that the oxen are fed nicely and not over worked, this will ensure auspiciousness on your program. The oxen are the first priority. Don't give the oxen too much grains or too much left over prashada, they will get sick. Contact your local animal doctor and find out if there is a risk of disease for the animal on the route. Never separate one oxen from the others, even if it is just to get him some water, keep them together. They will snap their ropes in other to be in each other's company, possibly do damage. Don't let untrained people guide the oxen, feed them, tie them up etc if you have to tie



the oxen up at night, they should be tied up nicely. Very important not to give them too much rope Never tie them up by their nose ring.

### MAKING THE YOKE PART ONE

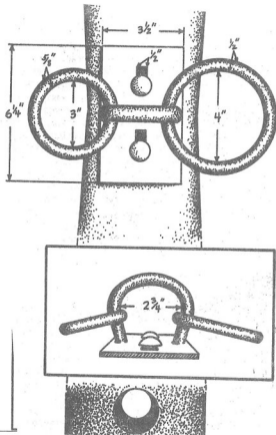
The yoke is the most basic piece of equipment you have for working an ox. It is considered to be one of the greatest advantages of working oxen rather than horses. With horse a somewhat complicated harness is needed to work the animal which requires a constant supply of rivets, leather, buckles and rings for maintenance and repair.

## THE OX POWER HANDBOOK

An ox yoke should be well made and very strong. The oxen are going to be completely dependent on this piece of equipment throughout their work. If it breaks, it could endanger the people with the oxen and the oxen themselves. It will be under great stress when the oxen are full grown, weighing perhaps a ton each, and are pulling with all their strength on this yoke. So it is definitely worth the trouble to make it in the best possible way.

There are many different styles of ox yoke. The yokes that I use sit over the necks of the two oxen I've seen head yokes that are simply strapped onto the horns of the oxen and don't sit on the neck at all. The oxen pull with their heads. I've also seen, in New England, what they call a sliding yoke. It is actually adjustable for different purposes. Different types of work might require the oxen to be different distances apart. For instance, when ploughing, we want the oxen to be quite close together. The yoke that is used in some Asian countries like India, with oxen that have a big hump on their back, can hardly be called a yoke. It is just a straight stick that leans

up against the hump on the ox's back. Our yoke has to sit over their necks because they don't have a hump of any substantial size and it is held on by what are called bows. A bow is made from hickory wood or ash wood--some kind of wood that will bend. It is actually carved into a rod and bent into a 'U' shape after being steamed and fits around the neck of the ox.



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The first thing in making a yoke is to get a log with a good straight grain, without a lot of knots, and big enough to make the yoke out of one quarter of it (See diagram 1.) The yoke could be made out of a half or even the whole tree but it would be weaker. So we don't want to waste our time to make an inferior piece of equipment. Even if good wood is not available in

your locality, you can usually purchase it somewhere else. If there are any sawmills near you they usually travel some distance; to get logs, and therefore have a greater selection than you might find on your own property. An ox yoke should be made out

of wood that is strong and doesn't split easily. Very coarse-grain wood such as oak is strong but splits too easily. Also oak is a very dense and heavy wood which is not so ideal for an ox yoke, although a heavy wood can be used. The ideal wood for a yoke is light and strong. The particular variety of tree that meets these specifications will differ all over the world. In the northeastern U.S basswood is very light and strong when it is dry. There is a tree called cucumber that is supposed to be quite ideal for ox yokes. Some varieties of poplar are good for yokes, being quite light and tough when they are dry, although I have tried poplar that cracked severely when it dried. where I live in Pennsylvania, the elm tree has proven best for yokes. Although it is quite heavy, it has very twisted grain and its consistency is gummy, not



brittle at all. those two qualities together make it almost impossible to split or break, and it makes a virtually eternal yoke, even though it is very dense and heavy. But it doesn't seem to bother our oxen. They have tremendous strength in their necks and can hold up a heavy yoke if necessary.

The type of wood that I am using is sycamore. I was satisfied with the grain of this wood but after it was made, I wasn't so satisfied with the checking. It checked, in other words, cracked, during the drying process more than I would have liked. But the yokes have since held up. They are in regular use and seem quite strong and they have stopped cracking. If

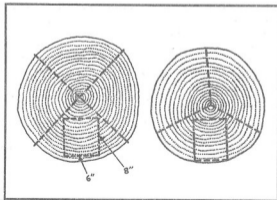


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you use wood that is already dry there will be less cracking, but it is much harder to work the wood. When you use a green piece of wood, it is soft and easy to work with even though it may be a hardwood. The traditional method of drying out yokes is to bury it in a haystack so it dries out very slowly. When wood dries out too quickly it tends to crack more, so the yoke would be buried in the hay and taken out the next year and it would be all dried out without any cracks. But I don't do that. I just oil it. I completely saturate the yoke with linseed oil. I find that it prevents the cracking to a great degree during the time the yoke is drying out, and it can be used in the meantime. The diameter of his log is about two and a half feet. In order to get the grain lined up so that it goes lengthwise across the whole yoke and gives maximum strength, we wasn't to make the yoke out of one quarter of the tree. Therefore, the tree has to be quite large. If you are making a six-inch by eight-inch, or a seven-inch by nine-inch yoke, you have to start out with a quarter that is at least a foot wide, so that by the time you get it trimmed down and squared it won't be too small. There is a two-inch difference between the depth and the width of the yoke that I am going to describe.

The yoke I am making here is six inches across the top and from the highest point to the lowest point it measures eight inches. If you have bigger oxen you might want to make it seven by nine. I've never made a yoke bigger than seven by nine. I don't think it is necessary for the strength of the yoke, and if you make it bigger than that you are really just adding extra weight on the necks of the oxen without any purpose. A

yoke should be designed to be as trim as possible without compromising strength. The log should be six feet long to begin with. To quarter the log I use wedges and a sledge hammer. Such a big log may take a lot of wedges in order to split. You may have to use some big wooden ones. Be careful to split the log evenly so you don't ruin it. It is possible that only one or two of the quarters will be good and the others will have lots of knots in. If you can't split the log with wedges you can resort to a chainsaw and cut it up that way. The diagram shows the end of the log. The dotted rectangle is the end of the yoke. If it is made this way the grain will run all the way through the centre of the yoke. This rectangle

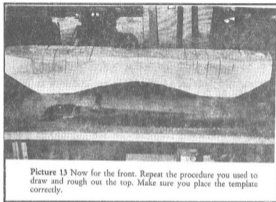


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should be laid out at both ends of the log and then lines drawn connecting the two ends. These are important guidelines for squaring the log. This rectangle should be laid out before splitting the log so you are sure the section of log will be big enough for the yoke. If a quarter is too small the you can divide the log into thirds. (DIA 2) Make sure to leave an extra inch around the lines. You may have to shift the layout a little due to irregularities or the unforeseen knot.

I use a broad axe for squaring the log. It is the ideal tool for squaring and hewing. It is flat on one side for hewing. It's broad cutting edge facilitates making a flat surface. To hew the log hit it at an angle and make notches, lower your axe parallel to the log and swing it right along the notches and they will all come off. In that way down to a flat hewn surface. Throughout this process you want to be careful to keep looking at the log and working on all four sides at once. Gradually work your way in toward your lines. Don't come too close to the lines because there may be some irregularities since you are working with a very rough piece of wood and working by eye.

Use an L square to check your angles. You want to get the right angles as you go around the log. Be careful not to take big chunks out of the wood when you hit a knot or if the grain changes in the wood, because it could spoil your yoke and make into a very ugly, messy, irregular thing. If you want to do a nice job you have to watch the grain carefully. If you see that the grain is changing and the axe is digging in too far, then you turn around and hit the chunk from the other direction.



Picture 13 Now for the front. Repeat the procedure you used to draw and rough out the top. Make sure you place the template correctly.

This hewing is not light work. In the right mood a log can be squared in a day.

The tools to finish the job are, the adze; it is used for the finer work for smoothing out the log, making it nice and flat and carving the yoke to it's final shape. I hit the adze with a heavy hammer. This hammer is made of copper which is a soft metal. A regular hammer which is very hard would destroy the adze if you repeatedly hit heavy blows on it. You could also use a dead blow mallet which is made from plastic filled with lead pellets. you can hit with quite an impact but it has some resiliency so it won't mark the adze. So the adze is

## THE OX POWER HANDBOOK

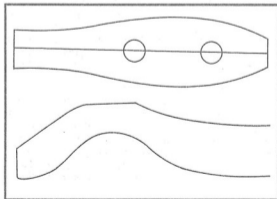
used for the finer stages of levelling and carving the piece of wood. You will get tremendous control over your piece of wood with this tool. You can hold it at different angles to cut any direction you want and as thick a piece or as thin a piece as you want.

The next two tools are a large sized plane and draw knife. I use these both of these to finish smoothing after finishing with the adze. First I use the draw knife to get out the bumps and ridges in the log, then the plane which is very helpful in coming up with a very flat square surface. During this time I have to be constantly checking with the L square because the successful laying out of a yoke depends on the corners being perfectly square. If they are not square, the whole layout of the yoke might be lop-sided which would make it considerably weaker due to not taking full advantage of the grain of the wood.

Now the log is squared, it is time to lay out the actual yoke. You should have two patterns made one for the top of the yoke and one for the front. (see diagram 3) First centre lines on the top and bottom, both ends and all around the middle of the wood. You have a choice where to lay out the yoke length ways because the wood is one foot longer the yoke. The thinnest part of the yoke is over the necks and the most stressful part is the centre, so try to avoid any knot or grainy irregularities at these points by shifting the pattern to the left or right, where it fits best.

When you draw the pattern on opposite sides of the wood,

make sure the two drawings are lined up together, so they exactly correspond to each other. Along the lines on the centre top of the yoke I put the holes for the bows which hold the yoke on the oxen. Drill the holes now because after you start carving the wood it is no longer square and you can't line up the holes to drill them properly. They have to be drilled at just the right angle, very straight so they come out in the middle of the bottom of the yoke. Otherwise the whole yoke will be lopsided. There are two holes for each bow, as you can see. These holes are two inches in diameter. I don't know any power drill, unless it is a big industrial drill press that will drill a hole this big. It can be done nicely with a hand auger.

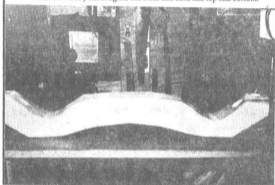


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The next step is to take a hand cross cut saw and make a slit every two or three inches within a quarter of an inch of the line. I do this all along the outer edge of the yoke, which makes it very quick and easy to chop these sections out with an adze. After all these slits are sawn, take the adze and very carefully hit it with the hammer and chop out all the blocks, changing direction so that you are always chopping downwards and with the grain. You have a rough edge which you can smooth out with the adze and hammer. The adze is the tool that you will use more than anything here. It is a small carpenter's adze, not a heavy hewing adze. It is meant to be used with a hammer. If it is too heavy and too large, you won't be able to handle it or control it easily.

Next we will work from the pattern on the front and the back of the yoke. Saw the slits almost to the line and chop out the sections carefully. Make sure you don't make any holes in the yoke. This big dip you see is where the neck of the ox goes. It is the most important part of the whole yoke and must be very smooth because it constantly rubs the neck of the ox and can make a sore if it is not smooth. If you were to take a big chip out of this section by accident or a gouge by hitting too deeply with the adze, it would ruin the whole yoke and make it necessary to carve down deeper, thus losing the strength in what is already the thinnest part of the yoke. Again the smoothing is done here with the adze and the hammer followed by the draw knife then the rasp. You should have a large, coarse tooth to work with along with your draw knife. At this point the irons get put on and any excess wood can be carved off and

Picture 14 The yoke roughed out front and back and top and bottom.



the edges sanded. Make sure the edges get all rounded out. It should be very smooth especially around the neck, so the animals never get irritated by irregularities in the wood. A sore neck on an ox can put him out of commission in a season when you need him most.

The only difference between the front and back of the yoke is in the back, where the yoke contacts the ox's neck. The back edge gets dished out more than the front to ensure the ox's neck doesn't get irritated.

The most stress on the yoke is on the centre part; so you can

## THE OX POWER HANDBOOK

see how it is thicker. You can see how the grain runs all the way through the yoke. If the yoke breaks, it is either right in the centre or at the ends. If the ends are not very strong they may break off when they bump into a post or tree. So they should be very strong. But, as a principal, wherever there isn't normally a lot of stress you should try to shave off as much wood as possible, so it is not heavier than need be. To rough out a yoke like this will take two days of steady hard labour. If you have a large band saw, you could do all of this roughing out in an hour, except for drilling the bow holes. To reinforce the ends of the yoke I put carriage bolts through the end. Please refer to the master drawing for measurement details.

### MAKING THE YOKE PART TWO

Paramananda prabhu has covered this topic very well, however I find this American style yoke to be too big and heavy for the average oxen. In Europe you have different types of yokes. In France the yoke connects to the oxen's horns. After trying out different yokes I have come across in my opinion the perfect yoke. It was built and designed by Bhagavad Bhakta prabhu. If you are short on time you can always buy a piece of wood, that has already been seasoned. I have bought a piece of ash which worked well, and was not too heavy. I also use solid metal bars as the ox-bows. These bars can either be used exactly the same way as the wooden ox bows or they can part in the centre and be joined together by a wing nut and bolt, as seen in the diagram.

The yoke is very important, the oxen must feel very comfortable in it. It should be made nicely as it will last you a lifetime

