

ISCOWP News

Our beloved Vraja, King of the herd, has passed away.

Vraja 1997

This is a memorial issue for our dear Vraja who passed away in October. He and his brother Gita were ISCOWP's first ox team. Their original owner was about to sell them for meat when ISCOWP purchased them. That was in 1991.

In their early years, they appeared at Hare Krishna festivals. For 3 years, they led the Rathayatra parades in many cities throughout the USA and in Canada. They became the face for cow protection and vegetarianism. Vraja was handsome and majestic and impressed the city crowds with his charisma.

He weighed about 2000 pounds and stood 7 feet to the tip of his horns. With his huge body, he plowed the earth at ISCOWP's North Carolina and West Virginia farm projects. As ISCOWP's herd increased to over 20 cows, new teams were trained and Vraja and his brother went into semi-retirement. Always the leader, Vraja took on the new role of "lead cow." He was the king of the herd, boss man, always concerned for every member's welfare, and loved by all his fellow cows.

In his last years, he developed arthritis, which slowly progressed. However, up until his last days he was able to pasture, remain the "lead cow," and maintain his proud and humorous spirit.



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ISCOWP Profile

ISCOWP was incorporated in the state of Pennsylvania, USA, March 1990, as a non-profit educational organization. William and Irene Dove (Balabhadra das and Chayadevi dasi) are its managing directors. They are disciples of His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada, the Founder Acharya of the International Society for Krsna Consciousness (ISKCON). Through their spiritual master's teachings, they have imbibed the practices and benefits, both spiritual and material, of lifetime cow protection. The tenets of cow protection and ox-power are universal and nonsectarian, available to all regardless of race, creed, or nationality.

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ISCOWP Editors note

Details in non-editorial articles and quoted comments by those other than the editors do not necessarily represent the viewpoint of the editors.

Letters

Vraja and Related Stories

From: Madan Gopal (das) RNS
(Chowpatty, Mumbai - IN)
Madan.Gopal.RNS@pamho.net
To: iscowp@earthlink.net;
[Noma Petroff](mailto:noma.petroff@bowdoin.edu);
Cow (Protection and related issues)
<Cow@pamho.net>
Date: 11/6/2006 6:48:01 AM
Subject: ISCOWP's famous Vraja ox passes away

Thanks for the heart rending but wonderful inspiring write up about Vraja. Here we can see how cows really have wonderful emotions.

I also had the good fortune to have a similar experience. The difference was that the occasion was of joy.

Once I had been to a farm of my devotee friend HG Dayanidhi prabhu. We reached there early morning. He has a few cows that were disowned by their owners and were left at a veterinary hospital. The owners got them admitted and never came back to get them.

So, he got some of the cows as the hospital authorities were or could not take proper care.

Now the cows were happy as they had enough to eat and a place to graze.

We reached the farm early morning and were doing our prescribed duties. We could also see that the pregnant cow would give birth today. So, that cow was not sent for grazing on the day. At around 10 AM the cow gave birth to a nice calf. As the calf lay on the ground, and the cow was licking the calf, one cow who was grazing with the herd around 200 meters away, came close to the shed and saw that a baby had been born. She started jumping and dancing in happiness seeing the new baby just as we humans celebrate. Then while

jumping, she circumambulated the cow and calf, and ran off to graze after being shooed away from the newborn calf by us.

We thought it was over. No, within a few minutes the whole herd came jumping and galloping to the shed and after seeing the cow and calf were all right, performed a group dance for a few minutes. The herd (only a few cows) was just jumping around the cow and calf, and we could see sheer joy on their faces.

All of us were just as joyful seeing the cows dance. This dance was like devotees dancing at climax of Kirtana.

After some time they had to be shooed away and all went to graze happily after having seen and welcomed the new one.

I hope this helps all to develop their love for Sri Krsna's most dear animal and human's friend.

Your Servant
Madan Gopal Das

From: amol108
To: devotional_nectar@yahoo.com
Sent: Wednesday, November 15, 2006 4:19 PM
Subject: [devotional_nectar] Krishna's cows..

Hare Krishna,

I wanted to share this with the devotional group to show more proof on the feelings of cows and animals.

My name is Rama Lila and I live in New Vrndavana. My mother and I live off the main road in the part we call Khadiravan, just behind Bahulavan. We rent a place from our landlord and next door devotee neighbor. There are other non devotee residences on the same road and right after our landlord there is a

farm. No one lives at the farmhouse but the owners still have a barn and cows in the field. Sadly, around here with the exception of New V. and ISCOWP, all the cows you see in pasture meet with the inevitable horrific end of the slaughterhouse. And sometimes one just forgets what they must go through.

One evening I came home from work and as I got out of the car I could hear the cows in the pasture below bellowing. I didn't think much of it as I hear them from time to time. Only this time it didn't stop. My mother said that the owner had passed by in the afternoon with his trailer, which they use to transport cows and horses to places. Well the cows cried all night and into the next day and beyond. It was heart wrenching as if you or I would cry for our lost loved ones.

I was reminded of the Holocaust survivor turned vegetarian who firmly believed of the link between mass killings of cows/animals and that of humans and of Srila Prabhupada who first voiced such comparisons in our world.

We can only pray for all cows and animals who are not as fortunate as ones like Vraja and pray for all humankind to develop true compassion.

Your servant,
Rama Lila dasi

*From: Shelda Bloomingdale
To: iscowp@earthlink.net
Sent: 10/25/2006 8:17:15 AM
Subject: Re: Vraja*

Dear Chaya,

I just wanted to share with you my experience Sunday morning when I accompanied Chaitanya to feed and count the cows.

As you know, the day before Vraja (16-year-old ox) had an accident. Due to his arthritis, he lost his footing and fell flat on the ground. It was a bit

scary for Chaitanya Bhagavat and me as we thought that maybe he would not get up. After awhile he got up, but he later lay down again. Once again, we were concerned that he would not get up, as he seemed exhausted. After resting awhile, he got up again. Witnessing his fall, the rest of the herd came running to the scene to see what happened.

The next day I went with Chaitanya on his morning service to the cows. He mixed the medicines in the grain for Vraja and got the bucket of grain for Gita. Since Gita was right at the fence patiently waiting (not), he fed him first. Chaitanya then went around the corner of the barn to feed Vraja. Vraja heard us and came up to the road. Chaitanya gave him his grains and brushed him a bit before we crossed over the fence to count the other cows who were up on the hill.

We crossed over the fence and Chaitanya started brushing Balaram. I then noticed that all the cows were coming down the hill towards us at a faster than usual speed. I thought that maybe they had seen Chaitanya giving grains and were looking for that, but they sailed past us just as if we weren't even there and went straight to the fence line where Vraja was still eating his grains. They all were straining to see how he was doing or so it seemed for they paid no attention to us. They just stood there watching him and seemingly stretching their necks over the fence out towards him, talking to him. He seemed to respond back to them as well, maybe reassuring them that he was better today. I don't know actually how long they were there conversing, because I was so engrossed in watching them communicate. It was such a joyful sight to behold.

It was really amazing to be given the opportunity to witness this first hand, you could tell that they were genuinely concerned about their friend and were glad to see him back on his feet

after his mishap yesterday morning. I have read about things like this before, as I am sure you have, but had never had the privilege to witness it. They truly do have compassion, respect, and love for one another, more so than most humans it would seem. Actually, I think most humans could learn something valuable from the cow-herd families. At least you can know that their reactions are honest and pure and not the fake concerns that most humans offer one another.

Well, I am so glad that Vraja is doing much better now and I am sure that everyone else feels the same.

Shelda Bloomingdale

The Truth Behind the Spinach Scare: Cheap Beef

By Christopher Wanjek
LiveScience's Bad Medicine
Columnist
posted: 26 September 2006
09:44 am ET

*From: hans jurgen kary
To: Lakshmikary@yahoo.com
Cc: iscowp@earthlink.net
Sent: 9/27/2006 7:06:33 PM
Subject: The Truth behind the SPINACH SCARE, please read , please forward to others*

When in Mexico, the saying goes, don't drink the water. You shouldn't eat the spinach either because it could be contaminated with the E. coli strain that has sickened close to 200 people in the United States and killed at least one, likely more.

The problem is our food production system is so complex that most of us cannot be certain where our food comes from. Even the U.S. government, after two weeks on the case of the spinach E. coli outbreak, has narrowed the source to, oh, somewhere in central California. Gee, you think? California produces

(Continued on page 4)

about three-fourths of the nation's fresh spinach, and Salinas Valley accounts for about three-fourths of that. These guys are sharp. But they aren't looking closely enough.

You excrete billions

E. coli, short for *Escherichia coli*, is a bacterium with hundreds of strains, most of which are relatively harmless in healthy individuals. *E. coli* is ubiquitous in the guts of cows and humans and is spread from cow to cow and from human to human through feces.

Humans excrete billions of *E. coli* bacteria with each bowel movement, which is why hand-washing is so important.

Cows don't have the luxury of hand-washing. When they are cramped into pens, ankle-deep in the manure of hundreds to thousands of cows, *E. coli* tends to spread. Bacteria can splash up on udders and get into milk; or get into intestines and contaminate meat during the slaughtering process; or pass through the cow in manure and ultimately end up on crops directly as fertilizer or indirectly by leaching into the water supply.

Most *E. coli* outbreaks in the United States are caused by a particular virulent and deadly strain called O157:H7. If you eat, you are at risk.

Meat eaters are at risk because most beef is loaded with harmful bacteria, often the bad *E. coli*, and needs to be cooked. Vegetarians aren't spared, as evidenced by the spinach *E. coli* outbreak. Organic consumers aren't spared; organic spinach can have *E. coli*. And raw food advocates are most certainly at risk, because cooking is the best way to kill the bacteria.

Local food is best

It's September. Every state in the union can grow spinach. In fact,

spinach is largely a cool-weather spring and fall crop. Why is California growing all of our spinach?

At work are the perverse forces of economic markets, not the forces of nature. The U.S. food production system has been fined-tuned to maximize profits for a small group of farmers, often corporations, holding vast acres of land.

Spinach from small, local farms could very well be contaminated with *E. coli* O157:H7. It simply wouldn't spread to other states, or to other cities for that matter. Health authorities would be able to identify the source of the bad *E. coli* within hours. And tons of safe spinach sold around the country wouldn't need to be recalled "just in case," as is the case now.

Small-scale farming inherently means fewer hands and fewer opportunities for contamination---bacterial, viral or parasitic---from field to fork. So while the small, local guys aren't immune to the kind of contamination problems that plague the big guys, the odds are in their favor.

Big, fat cows

While some food safety experts are unfairly bashing organic farmers and their reliance on manure for fertilizer, the real culprit behind *E. coli* outbreaks is the industrial beef and cattle industry. First, certified organic farmers are prohibited from using raw manure for 90 days before harvest of food for humans. Second, most organic farmers compost their manure, which kills most *E. coli*.

Industrial beef and dairy farms are disease-ridden cesspools. A growing body of evidence suggests that corn-fed cattle have higher counts of *E. coli* O157:H7 compared to free-range, grass-fed cattle, which seem largely free from this bacterium. The reason is twofold: Free-rangers come in less contact with each others' manure

compared to stressed-out cattle packed in feeding lots; and corn makes the cow's stomach juices more acidic, which gives rise to the acid-loving O157:H7 strain.

Also, mega-farms cannot get rid of their tons of O157:H7-rich manure. This sits in cesspools and ultimately contaminates the surrounding environment.

Switching back to free-range, grass-fed cattle would solve this problem. But beef would be more expensive, and some view this as a bad thing despite the epidemic of obesity and diabetes and the clear link between high beef consumption and colon cancer.

Zap those buggers

Look for Band-Aid solutions touted in the weeks to come, such as irradiation, with its cute, deceptive nickname of cold pasteurization. Irradiation entails zapping food with gamma rays, X-rays or electrons to deactivate harmful bacteria along with other stuff helpful in the food, like vitamins.

But with the unnatural process of irradiation, we can continue the unnatural but cheap practice of feeding cows corn, which they can't digest, so we can continue the unnatural process of consuming lots and lots of this modern invention called the cow.

Then maybe we can counter any adverse human health effects with expensive surgery or drug therapy. It's the American way.

Christopher Wanjek is the author of the books "Bad Medicine" and "Food At Work."





Vraja on right 1996

1991

Vraja saved from slaughter.
Participates in Hare Krishna festivals and Rathayatras throughout the USA.
Learns all his voice commands.
Attracts media coverage.

1992

Participates in Hare Krishna festivals and Rathayatras throughout the USA.
Finishes his training.
With Gita, becomes the energy power for "Seed to Sustenance" farming project in North Carolina.
Attracts Media coverage.

1993

Participates in Hare Krishna festivals and Rathayatras and other preaching events.
With Gita, is the sole energy power for "Seed to Sustenance" farming project in North Carolina.
With Gita, the training team for students.
Attracts media coverage.

1994

With Gita, the sole energy power for "Seed to Sustenance" farming project in North Carolina.
With Gita, is the training team for students.
Attracts media coverage.

1995

With Gita, is the sole energy power for "Seed to Sustenance" farming project in North Carolina and in West Virginia.
With Gita, is the training team for students and seminars both in North Carolina and West Virginia.
Attracts media coverage.

1996

With Gita, he is an energy power for "Seed to Sustenance" farming project and new ISCOWP farm in West Virginia.
With Gita, he is one of the training teams for students and seminars in West Virginia.
With Gita, leads the Rathayatra parade at New Vrindavana with additional ISCOWP young teams.

1997

With Gita, is an energy power for ISCOWP farm in West Virginia.
Vraja becomes king of a herd at the ISCOWP farm.
Leads New Vrindavan Rathayatra.

1998

With Gita, is an energy power for ISCOWP farm in West Virginia.
Vraja is king of the herd.
Leads New Vrindavan Rathayatra.

1999

With Gita, is an energy power for ISCOWP farm in West Virginia.
Vraja is king of the herd.

2000 – 2005

Vraja and Gita retire.
Vraja is king of the herd.

2006

Vraja is king of the herd.
Vraja passes away leaving his inspiring example for those who knew him in the past and those who came to know him in his last years.

Vraja Has Left Us

Vraja 8/21/06 Looking into the twilight



10/29/06

Dear Vaninatha prabhu,

Please accept my humble obeisances.
All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

It was a pleasure to read your letters, your history, and realizations. We were so happy to have Vraja adopted by you. But, there is some very sad news to tell you.

Yes, Vraja is the same ox you saw at the Washington DC Rathayatra in 1992. He and his brother Gita led many Rathayatra parades across the country. The potency of their preaching was beyond the preaching most of us devotees are able to offer to Srila Prabhupada. Vraja was so extremely handsome and noble that he attracted so many people to him.

If you look at our blog you will read how Vraja had arthritis for the last 2 years. Being old for an ox, they rarely live to 16 years, the arthritis was not a

surprise. We treated it with some alternative medicines, as allopathic medicines really had nothing to offer. However, in the last month he was struggling to overcome it and was becoming weaker. We hoped he would make a comeback like he had so many times in the last 2 years.

We kept him separate from the herd because he had fallen and was having trouble keeping up with them. He was in the loafing shed (geriatric barn) with the gate open and could roam the adjacent lawn. Radharani was also there with him as company. She is an old cow, 22 to 25 years old, but she is in good shape. The way the barns are laid out, Vraja had daily association with the rest of the herd.

A week ago, he lost his footing and fell flat on his side. Chaitanya Bhagavat, trained by Balabhadra, is taking care of the cows in Balabhadra's absence. (Since we do not take funds from ISCOWP for our personal income, Balabhadra is in a mall for the winter season generating

funds for ourselves. We do not collect enough to cover the cow projects and pay ourselves.) Chaitanya Bhagavat found him. Chaitanya talked to him and soon Vraja got up. However, Chaitanya noticed that he was walking less steadily than before.

When Vraja fell, all the cows came down the hill to see if he was okay. Ujala was moaning. Vraja got up and Ujala stopped moaning. The next day when Chaitanya went to feed Vraja, the herd came down the hill at a trot to see how he was feeling. They were stretching their necks over the fence to talk to him. He seemed to be assuring them that he was okay. Shelda Bloomingdale, a volunteer, was there and wrote about it. (You can find this story on page 3 of this newsletter.)

At this time, the weather was glorious, some cold nights but also some warm days. There were no flies or bugs, etc. Vraja was enjoying himself. He loved to be near the apple tree that was close to the house and ate almost all the apples. The night before last, Vraja must have fallen and could not get up. When we woke up in the morning, Chaitanya heard Ujala moaning and quickly got out of his cabin and ran in the direction of the moaning. Vraja was down near the apple tree. He was by the fence line and all the cows were around him. He had struggled in the night to get up, but could not. His face was looking up at the herd. He was very weak. Chaitanya chanted the Maha Mantra and two names of Krsna (Govinda, Gopala) in his ear. He then told Vraja he would be right back. Then he left to get me to see if there was something we could do. When we got back to him, he had left his body. The herd was still there. It was Sunday, 10/29/06.

We are very much missing him. He was such a noble soul. To the last days he remained majestic and noble

and we are happy that he did not have to linger in the barn for a long time. We are thankful that his last days were spent pasturing with the herd nearby. We are thankful that he heard the names of Krishna right before his death. We are also thankful that he obtained you as his adopter in his last days, that he wasn't forgotten by his admiring public while in his retirement.

were babies, he was the big protector and decided where the herd would go and who could do what. When anyone would come into the field, Vraja would approach first and analyze whether they were friend or foe. If a stranger came into the field not accompanied by one of us, he would chase them out of the field. When another cow went down, he would be right there supervising our rescue

"They need our protection and our love and in return, they will give their very life, their total dedication in service to us. Can anyone say that about a tractor? Does a tractor soften our hearts or teach us lessons of life? Can a tractor show us the interconnectedness of all living creatures on the deepest spiritual and emotional level?" Urvashi dasi

We are most sorry to give you this news, as we have been to experience it. We will eventually have a memorial to him on the ISCOWP web page, blog, and newsletter.

10/30/06

Today we buried Vraja in the field. Ray tried to do it while the herd wasn't looking, but near the end when Vraja was being covered with dirt, they figured it out and ran over to the spot bellowing. That bright moon evening they returned to the spot where he was buried. Bhima, Nanda, Gita, Surabhi, Vishaka, and Kalki sat in a circle around the spot where Vraja was buried. They were mooing and crying in memory of Vraja. It was as if they were holding a memorial service. Chaitanya Bhagavat joined them and the memorial service went on for several hours. The next morning Ujala was bellowing and Chaitanya Bhagavat found her kicking the dirt at the highest point of Vraja's mound and rubbing her face in the dirt. Then she looked up and joined the herd moving past Vraja's burial place and onto the barn.

Vraja was their lead cow. He was like their father or grandfather. Since they



1991 Vraja & Gita in Urvashi's yard

efforts. He would stand over all of us (he was 7 feet to the tip of his horns), watching.

Now Gita has taken up the position as King of the Herd. In fact, he had already taken up this responsibility when Vraja was not with the herd. However, Vraja still had the respect of the herd. He was sure to maintain a proud and noble stance, holding his head up high even when arthritic and at the time of death.

The pain of his separation will take awhile to pass after having protected and loved him for the last 16 years. We welcome any remembrance writings about Vraja to include in his memorial tribute.

Your servant,
Chayadevi

Remembering Vraja by ISCOWP Members

My dear longtime friend Chayadevi and all others with the ISCOWP farm,

I am so deeply saddened about the passing away of grandfather Vraja. What a wonderful being he was! Such a wise and kindhearted soul. I'm glad that I was able to spend time with him just two years ago.

I will never forget when Vraja and Gita stopped by my house for a few days for some R & R between the Los Angeles and San Francisco Rathayatras. They were just young kids then and just as cute as can be. You had saved them from within one day I believe, of being sold. I loved giving them my front yard as their home. How they caused quite a commotion when sighted by the cars that drove by! Many people came over to pet them, and they learned about your wonderful program of cow protection, a vegetarian diet, and how the oxen love to use their tremendous strength to work. That year I went to both Rathayatras and I could just see that they enjoyed being in the parades and getting so much attention and admiration from the crowds.

I also remember the previous year when you brought the fully-grown oxen Burfy and Lee (short for Lilananda) for an R & R stay. One evening after dark I was out sitting and talking with them and giving them big hugs and affection as they laid in my front yard, both of them over 1,000 pounds each. With

Balabhadra's encouragement, I laid on one of their sides. To this day I can still feel his warmth, and the sounds of his deep inhale and exhale with the up and down movement of his chest as he laid there in complete trust and contentment.

I don't think people realize just how gentle, considerate, and intelligent these huge beasts are. They need our protection and our love and in return, they will give their very life, their total dedication in service to us. Can any-

ing this to the attention of the masses. I wish for you all facility for your expanding service. I know that your hearts are heavy with the loss of Vraja and it will take time for both you and the animals to grieve his loss. My love and prayers go out to you.

Your friend and servant in the service of Srila Prabhupada,
Urvashi Devi dasi

All glories to Srila Prabhupad. Thank you so much for that glorious story

I just wanted to express my most sincere condolences on the passing away of Vraja. He is now in the spiritual world with Srila Prabhupada, Radha and Krsna.

With love,
Karuna Purna dd

Dear Balabhadra, Chayadevi, & Laksmi,

Please accept our humble obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada!

We were so sad to hear of the passing away of Vraja. What a glorious servant of Krsna. We will sadly miss him. We think of you often and look forward to our next visit. Hare Krishna.

Your humble servants,
Srutadeva das and Deanna Rose

My love to everyone,

Please just know that my heart and love as always is with all of you in this very stressful time, but also know that Vraj is home now and happy and young again, and able to move pain free and enjoy his life with Krishna. He had such a wonderful life and home with all of you. The work that he and Gita did over the years and the lives that they touched has been many, and he will always be in many hearts all over the world. Loved and treasured by so many humans, he knew that all his herd mates loved and respected him and wished him well and a speedy transition to the waiting arms of Krishna.

Please give my love to Chaitanya also as I know that he is going through a very difficult time with this. He had developed such a wonderful relationship with Vraj and loved him very much. You could see when the two of them were together that Vraj loved him as well and appreciated what he was doing for him.



1995 Vraja (on the right) leaning into the yoke when hauling wood.

one say that about a tractor? Does a tractor soften our hearts or teach us lessons of life? Can a tractor show us the interconnectedness of all living creatures on the deepest spiritual and emotional level? From these great animals we can learn all there is to know about relationships and our own false ego and hang ups that keep us from surrendering fully to the Supreme Personality of Godhead and being in harmony with all that is around us.

Prabhujis, all glories to your most important service to the people of planet Earth, and Earth itself. You have dedicated your lives so fully to bring-

about the departure of the great Ox Vraja. I too am sitting in a mall for Christmas, but by hearing this pastime I was immediately transferred to the woods of Gita Nagari bringing in wood with Balabhadra and the oxen. All glories to the oxen!

Gour Hari das

Dear Chaya, Lakshmi, and Balabhadra,

Please accept my respectful obeisances. All glories to Srila Prabhupada.



Top: 2006 Shelda Bloomingdale giving peanut butter cookies to Vraja

Bottom: 1993 Vraja and Gita on the mall in front of the USA D.C. capitol building

I know that this is going to be such a loss for Balabhadra and my heart goes out to him. I realize that it is a void that can never be filled, but I know that in his heart he will always be alive and with him every second till they are reunited again.

I know that it is going to be difficult for everyone because he was family

and so many years together will never be forgotten but treasured in rich and happy memories.

I didn't know him very long, but loved him very much just the same. I went to the barn a couple of times when he was lying down, and he let me give him a massage. I never did that unless he let me know that it was



ok to give him a good rub. He would turn his massive head around and those big eyes would say "Ah thank you, that felt so good." Then he would let you know when that was enough and he just wanted to rest. I am so glad that I got to give him his peanut butter cookies because you could see the smile in his eyes when he got them. Of course, I never did get them made big enough for him, but he liked them just the same.

Please stay in touch and know that I am always here for everyone and I treasure your friendship and want to be able to help anytime that I can and in any small way that I can.

Love Shelda

Dear Chayadevi Prabhu,

All glories to Srila Prabhupada. Please accept my humble obeisances. I am so sad to hear about Vraja. I'm sure all the prabhhus there must be feeling a great loss. If my adoption came through before he passed, then I am happy to know he was remembering me from so long ago. It is for certain, that Vraja networked with me when I first saw him in D.C. in '92, even though I was not fully aware of it then. That is the power of Krishna's cows. Now we have come full circle and we will continue to grow in understanding even more as the years go by, by grace of guru and Gouranga.

Tears are running down my face. I don't know what to say.

Krishna gives and takes away.
Blessed be His Name.

Your humble servant,
Vaninatha dasa brahmachary
10/30/06

Dear Balabhadra, Chayadevi, and Lakshmi,

I thought you would enjoy seeing this from a friend of mine. She had

come over to my house to see the oxen and also had brought her grandchildren to see them while they were at the Govinda's restaurant. Her grandchildren still speak of the experience.

Urvasi Devi dasi

Thank you for sharing this with me. I am very sad to learn of Vraja's passing. He served his time well on earth

Hari bol Lakshmi,

I am so saddened by this news as I was very attached to Vraja. I thank Krishna he was able to reunite me with my old friends before he would leave his body. In a way I am happy because I know he won't suffer from pain anymore. But it will take some time as you said to let go of such a wonderful and sacred soul. He



Top: 1992 Ananda fell in love with Vraja at the LA Rathayatra.

as he opened many people to a deeper perspective of these gentle beings. Thank you for bringing them to Ojai.

Dale

Hare Krishna,

I'm very sorry/happy to hear the sad/wonderful news of Vraja's glorious passing.

Thanks for all your hard work caring for Krishna's cows.

ysaf, Vidyananda dasa

served Krishna very well and I am sure Krishna wanted him back since he was away from him for quite many years fulfilling his service. I loved him very much and will continue to hold him in my heart and in my memories. If you and your family need anything please let me know. I can imagine how you feel. Not an easy situation to be in. I know how much your pita was attached to them. Please send my condolences to both him and your mata. My love to you and cookies for Gita. I know it must be very hard for Gita after so many years attached to his brother. I will write more to see how things are and how you are coping with everything. If I could be of service in

anyway please let me know. With all my heart and soul, Loving Vraja now and always.

Your most humble servant,
Ananda Vardhani D.D.

I also posted a remembrance on my blog.

[http://
walkingthefenceline.wordpress.com](http://walkingthefenceline.wordpress.com)

Vraja was a long term resident of New Vrindavan. Read the story of his passing and remembrances of him at Life With The Land and the Cows.

One day I was working in our garage when this pickup truck came flying out the lane from Balabhadra's and stopped in a cloud of dust.

"Do you know who lives at that farm?" the guy asked me.

"Yes", I replied, and he said "I just spent the last hour in a tree with my friend. A big bull chased us and we had to climb it to escape. He finally moved away a little and I was able to get down and make a run for the fence, but my friend is still up in the tree!"



I looked at him for a while, then asked, "Were you carrying a 5 gallon plastic bucket?"

His jaw dropped and he looked at me in surprise. "How did you know that?" he asked.

The reason I knew was that I had had similar experiences, and had guessed he had been carrying tools in a bucket. I forget why he was out in Balabhadra's pasture, but it was some legitimate thing, working on a phone line or something, and he needed small hand tools.

While I was still healthy and doing Farmer's Markets, and Balabhadra was still getting established, we used to clean out his barn in exchange for keeping the manure. I would back down into the barn and Tulasi and I would load 5 gallon buckets with the black gold. Having it in buckets made unloading and applying to the garden easier.

Vraja would come into the barn and be a real annoyance. He would get in the way. He would poke his horns in the buckets of manure and then toss his head. I tried to keep chasing him away but he was very persistent. I actually scheduled runs to the barn at the times I knew he would be out on the pasture where he couldn't see us. It wasn't that he was mean, but the chance he would step on your foot inadvertently or swing his head to chase flies and catch you with one of his long horns was a consideration. Mainly though, was being in the way.

Turns out it wasn't that he necessarily liked hanging out with us; some curiosity was there, but mostly it was the buckets. Balabhadra fed him grain out of one, so he was conditioned to expect some goodies whenever he saw one and would crowd in so he didn't miss anything. Hence, seeing someone in the pasture with a bucket, he naturally followed them and his enthusiasm for an expected treat had been misinterpreted as aggression. I still laugh visualizing those guys up a tree with Vraja waiting patiently below.

Madhava Gosh

In his own way, Vraja was a great preacher of Krishna consciousness and has now left his limiting material body

to continue his devotional service in another sphere. It's sad to see him go, but wonderful to contemplate his life.

Your servant,
Hare Krsna dasi

Haribol dear god-sister Chaya devi,
Jaya Srila Prabhupada!

I've been meaning to email you for some time now, and Vraja's passing was the impetus to finally contact you.



1995 Vraja (right) and Gita giving ox power demos at New Vrindavan

Vraja was a special soul and dearly beloved by the other cows and devotees, so I wanted to offer my respects to this soul in a cow's body.

You know I love the cows, and in my small way, I try to help them by using my artistic abilities. Have you seen my website?
www.saradiya.com

I remember you and your dear husband from Seattle. It's been years!

Hope all is well.

Jaya Srila Prabhupada! All glories to Lord Damodhara, all glories to all the devotees and all glories to all the beautiful cows!

Respectfully,
Your god-sister,
Saradiya dasi

I just spent the last hour in a tree with my friend. A big bull chased us and we had to climb it to escape. my friend is still up in the tree!

Remembrance from ISCOWP's cowherd Chaitanya Bhagavat

Vraja stood by the gate to greet me as I came out in the morning. He recognized I was endeavoring to give him association. Morning and evening he was there. He would see me coming and lower his head for me to rub him behind his horns. Then I wiped his eyes. He patiently let me. He loved to be groomed.

The other night after sunset, I approached the gate and he raised his head high as I let him lick my hand. His tongue was like rough sand paper. Rougher than his brother's

(Gita). He just kept licking till I had to switch hands.

He stopped after awhile, maybe 10 minutes or so. I arrogantly begin to walk away; thinking I pleased him by rubbing his nose and letting him lick my hands. He leaned into me with his neck and I realized he was waiting for reciprocation. He wanted a massage. He did something for me and it was time for me to reciprocate.

I daily noticed that it became harder for Vraja to walk. But still he had his sense of humor. He either liked to lick you or bully you. Janaka Mahajan daily experienced this as he had the service of filling 5 gallon water containers for the temple devotees.

As I made my way to the barn one morning, I saw Janaka trying to fill what appeared to be the last of the water containers. Vraja was standing next to the frostless hydrant, horns swinging in the breeze—not making it easy for old Janaka to fill the container.

I picked up my pace, not knowing how I'd help the situation but determined to try. (I am a very inexperienced cow man. But the only one around at the moment.) I took the container and begin to fill it for Janaka. Successfully I do so and Vraja walks away, disinterested but ever so graceful. Does our hero play favorites? Who's to say.

The Lord gives us charge of helpless beasts to protect them. But we are not their masters, we are their servants. To serve His bulls and cows is to give them pleasure which is to give Krishna pleasure. Vraja was the most excellent teacher in matters of false ego and surrender. He quieted my mind so I could see beyond my concepts of preference into active service.



1992 Vraja (on the right) leading the San Francisco Rathayatra in Golden Gate Park

"Our New Ox Team" 1991 Spring ISCOWP News

The plentiful rains had changed all the pastures to a luscious, mint green. It was a hot spring day, but the air was fresh and clean. As we drove through the fertile, rural back roads of North Carolina, we anticipated meeting 2 twin bull calves, our future ox team.

Their owner wasn't going to keep them much longer and would sell them at the auction where veal and beef farmers buy their animals. We wanted to tell him he could forget the trip because we would be glad to buy them instead. Anxiously we looked for the silo where we were to turn in at the left.

It is not common for a cow to have twin bull calves. They would make a perfect team since they were the same age, size, and already have an emotional bond between them. Certainly this was a God sent arrangement.

As the silo appeared at the curve of the road we turned left as instructed and drove onto the farm property. In the farmhouse yard there were several hutches (pens) housing newborn calves. All the hutches housed heifers (females) except for one where the twins were housed.

As we approached the twins' hutch, they perked their ears and strained their necks over the fencing to say hello. They had just been weaned from the bottle and did a good job of sucking on our hands, shirt sleeves, and anything else they could get a hold of. We were glad they were not afraid.

The farmer told us they were three months old, weighed about 250 pounds each and were the sons of the best cow in their herd. Then we told him about ox power. We explained how we would like to take

(Continued on page 14)

Hazards of Biotechnology

Part 1 by Chand Persaud for the ISCOWP News

Biotechnology is a method of gaining and maintaining corporate control over food resources. It involves genetic engineering, i.e., taking genes from one species and inserting them into another. For instance, genetic material from an arctic flounder, which is resistant to freezing temperatures, may be embedded into a tomato plant to prevent frost damage. Genetic engineering involves substantial overhead expenses and is capital intensive. In order to recoup these costs and generate a profit, the government provides corporations a temporary monopoly on the new technology in the form of patents, and maintains legal structures for the enforcement of intellectual property rights. In addition to these legal mechanisms, biotech firms develop genetically modified (GM) varieties that are engineered with terminator technology, rendering harvested seeds sterile. Farmers cannot replant these seeds after harvest. Rather, they must continue purchasing from corporate suppliers.

Clearly, genetic modification (GM) differs greatly from traditional breeding practices. This difference is reflected in the government's Genetic Modification (Contained Use) Regulations, which define GM as "the altering of the genetic material in that organism in a way that does not occur naturally by mating or natural recombination or both". In contrast, traditional breeding techniques allow reproduction to take place only between closely related life forms, e.g., tomatoes can cross-pollinate with other tomatoes but not with soybeans, and certainly not with pigs.

Genetic engineering violates natural boundaries within which reproduction occurs by crossing genes between unrelated species that would never crossbreed in nature, and it does so in an imprecise, potentially hazardous way. The genetic modification process is imprecise because it is impossible to guide the insertion of the new gene, and even if it were possible, genes do not work in isolation but in highly complex relationships which are not understood. Consequently, genetic alterations can lead to unforeseen interactions and unpredictable effects.

"Genetic engineering violates natural boundaries within which reproduction occurs by crossing genes between unrelated species that would never crossbreed in nature, and it does so in an imprecise, potentially hazardous way."

Biotechnology may contribute to the already serious problem of antibiotic resistant bacteria. Genetic engineers use antibiotic marker genes (which themselves were designed for antibiotic resistance) to transfer genetic coding from one life form to another. Antibiotics are then used to kill the cells whose genes were not successfully modified, thereby creating the possibility that bacteria living in the digestive tract of humans or animals could acquire antibiotic resistance from GMO foods eaten by the human or animal.

Virtually all genetically engineered crops contain genetic material from viruses, since the artificial insertion of virus genes is a very common practice in the production of transgenic crops. These virus genes may combine with genes from infecting viruses, and experimental evidence indicates the

new viruses created in this way may be more infectious, cause more serious diseases, and have a tendency to cross species borders. For example, the most common virus DNA used in genetic engineering is the promoter of the Cauliflower Mosaic Virus (CaMV), which is used in almost every case, including the Roundup Ready (RR) Soy of Monsanto, the Bt-Maize of Novartis, GE cotton and various varieties of GE Canola. CaMV has the potential to reactivate dormant viruses or create new viruses in all species to which it is transferred. Potential consequences include epidemics of new viruses and the development of cancer.

According to Dr Stanley Ewen, one of Scotland's leading experts in tissue diseases, eating genetically

modified (GM) food may lead to stomach and colon cancer. The CaMV virus used in GM foods is infectious, and could act as a growth factor in the stomach or colon, encouraging the growth of polyps. This is particularly troubling since the faster and bigger polyps grow, the more likely they are to be malignant. Ewen recommended that the health of people who live near farm-scale GM crop trials be monitored, as their food and water will be contaminated by GM material, which could hasten the growth of malignant tumors. GM products such as maize and soybeans are also fed to cattle. Cow's milk, cheese, or even a lightly cooked, thick fillet steak could contain active GM material and derivatives that can be directly ingested by humans. Based on these risks, which extend to a wide range of GM food crops, Ewen recommended a ban on GM crop trials

while their safety is tested on animals.

Commercial farming uses vast quantities of genetically modified organisms, thereby creating ample opportunity for generating new potentially hazardous organisms through recombination. Approximately 27 million acres of cropland in the United States is planted to RR soybeans, while in Canada canola accounts for about 7 million acres. Every cell in these genetically modified crops contains virus genes. There are about 50,000 plants in an average cornfield, with each corn plant containing about 1 billion cells, with each cell containing one CaMV promoter which is prone to recombination into more hazardous viruses.

Commercial agriculture incurs risks that are completely unnecessary. Organic yields are at least as high as those of the genetically modified crops used in conventional farming. Organic farming is better able to withstand droughts, and is also relatively immune to the upcoming and inevitable shortages of petroleum supplies. In contrast, commercial agriculture depends heavily on petroleum-based chemical inputs, in the absence of which conventional crop yields would fall sharply. Moreover, while organic production continues to grow rapidly in a competitive free market, conventional agriculture is heavily subsidized through direct farm payments, counter cyclical payments, crop insurance, and a network of research institutes and extension agents -- handouts that are critical for the survival of conventional agriculture. Finally, as taught by Srila A.C. Bhaktivedanta Prabhupada, the world produces more food than needed, and starvation is actually caused by unequal distribution, not by food scarcity.

(Continued from page 12)

"Our New Ox Team"

1991 Spring ISCOWP News

the calves and train them as a team. During the summer we would teach them to answer to voice commands, familiarize them to the yoke, and show them how to do light tasks as a team. He was fascinated, but he was not about to give them away free.

After we settled on a price of \$350 for both, we went over to the twins hutch. Although they were both so similar because they were twins, each one began to reveal their individuality. The one we decided should be given the name Gita, born two minutes later, was a little smaller and more delicately built. He was more pensive and sensitive in his interactions with us. The other one was a little bit larger, more aggressive, and quite a character. We named him Vraja after Vrajabhadhu dasi who donated the money to purchase him.

The next day we bought them to their new home. The first thing they wanted to do was run. Apparently they had been in their little hutch their whole lives and had never or rarely exercised. We put halters on them and with lead ropes we ran and ran with them until they didn't want to run anymore.

On that day, April 16, 1991, a lifetime relationship of protection with love was begun. A relationship that would show to humanity the practical reality of a harmonious relationship between man and his brother, the ox.



Fencing

In previous monthly letters, we have reported on fixing the old fence lines in certain areas of the farm. In one crucial area in the woods in which the postholes have been dug and wood posts have been inserted, Jason and Chaitanya Bhagavat are learning how to do the next step, stringing the wire. There are two types of fence. One fence is too keep animals in the area and the second is too keep animals out of an area. The difference is which side of the post the wire is placed. Since we want to keep the cows in the pasture, we are stringing the wire on the inside of the post or the pasture side. Then if the cows push on the wire, they will also be pushing on the post itself. If the wire is on the outside of the post, then when the cow on the inside of the pasture pushes on the wire they are only pushing against the staples that hold the wire in place.

We have already finished half of the fence and made "H BRACES" on the ends for extra strength. Slow work, as there are many little steps to complete the task. In between the two halves, we have left an opening with a simple gate. A team of oxen or a vehicle can pass through this gate to get to the wood lot on the other side of the pasture. If the job is done correctly, the fence will be sturdy and will last as long as the posts do not rot away which could be as long as 50 to 75 years depending on the quality of the fence posts.

The choice of wood for fence posts in this part of the country is locust. Locust fence posts, when allowed to dry properly, will outlast several applications of wire over the years.

We have finished this fence line and the cows have been switched back to the new pasture on that side of the ISCOWP farm.

Apple Harvest Party

Today (9/9/06) we had an apple harvest party. Shelda came from Marietta, Ohio to help. Chaitanya Bhagavat and Jason came and Kevin showed up too. Shelda attended our Harvest Workshop last year and ever since then has been coming to the farm to volunteer her services. Chaitanya is now living in the cabin on our farm and is being trained by Balabhadra in self-sufficient skills. Jason has been living at New Vrindavan for the summer and is coming to the ISCOWP farm to learn what he can from Balabhadra. Kevin stayed with us 10 years ago. He trained with Balabhadra and helped us get established here at the ISCOWP farm. He has now just moved back into the area.



We had two apple peelers operating. You stick the apple on the prong, turn the hand crank and the peels fall away and a beautiful spiraled apple is left. You can adjust the hand machine for different sizes of apples. Then you put the apple in a solution of water and lemon to prevent discoloring. Cut the apple spiral and either put the apple pieces on a drying rack or in the cooker to make applesauce or apple butter. We made a lot of dried apples because you can use them later to make apple pie and other baked apple preparations. We also made 48 pints of applesauce.

Of course, the best part is when we offer them to Lord Krsna and then taste the FRUIT of our labor!



ISCOWP News

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CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED

Reminder: Remove the Mud Phase 3

Most of you have received our fundraiser for the Remove the Mud Phase 3 campaign. Herein follows a reminder of that campaign. We want to take this opportunity to thank everyone that has donated to this campaign. So far we have collected \$13,000. At the beginning of next year, you will receive an annual report in which all our donors are recognized. For the past 16 years an annual report has been published. Thank you all for your generosity!

You already helped complete phase 1. The loafing shed (now known as the geriatric barn) was built where there once was a shed with a dirt yard which was dangerous to the cows due to deep potholes and deep mud. While replacing the dirt yard with cement, the shed was expanded to be the geriatric barn where the old and infirm cows can stay.

You already helped complete phase 2. The barn yard between the loafing shed and the big barns was once potholes and deep mud but is now a cement pad where the cows can be outside yet close to the barn.

You helped complete the gutters. The rain water from the two large barn roofs once fell into the barns and also



created a muddy ditch along the front of the barns. Now there is a gutter to direct the water away from the barns.

But there is one more area that needs your help which you can see in the picture on this page. The cows really like this area because the sun stays here for part of the winter day. They like to sit here and warm up. Also, if this area is level and stabilized, it will give them more room to move about in the barn. They don't like to walk in this area due to the potholes and mud.

Your participation in this campaign has been crucial to its progress. If you could help us again to finally complete this project, we and the cows would be eternally grateful. Whatever you can give will be greatly appreciated.

Here is what it would take to complete phase 3.

LONG AREA IN FRONT OF BARN

| | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|
| Fill Dirt (we have some) | \$3,500.00 |
| Excavating | \$2,400.00 |
| Rental of machines | \$1,000.00 |
| Cement | \$7,600.00 |
| Wire (cement reinforcement) | \$750.00 |
| Labor | \$1,500.00 |
| TOTAL | \$17,750.00 |

We pray this newsletter finds you well. May Lord Krishna bless you for your generosity to the cows.

We send organic produce gifts from our garden to all our donors. Please refer to the enclosed form.

