



*nama om visnu-padaya krsna-presthaya bhu-tale
srimate bhaktivedanta-svaminn iti namine*

*namas te sarasvate deve gaura-vani-pracarine
nirvisesa-sunyavadi-pascatya-desa-tarine*

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

The experience I am about to relate happened on the ISCOWP farm. I was in charge of the cows during the winter when my parents were away in the mall earning enough money to pay our personal bills. They are disciples of yours. They have taught me how to care for cows. I am most thankful to you and them for this cow seva knowledge because of the happiness that I, and others, can experience while caring for the cows and oxen.

When I went to check the cows Saturday morning (December 3), the first thing I noticed was that Balaram, Gouravani, Visaka, and Radha Shyama were out eating hay in the hay barn and grass in the driveway. As I looked for the break in the fence where they got out, I looked up and saw a cow lying down and not moving in the barn. I cried out to Krsna and started praying that whoever was down was just sleeping.

When a cow is dying, we like to give them some holy water and have a tape of Srila Prabhupada singing bhajans 24/7. I did not have time to do either. I am also very attached to all the cows.

I rushed into the new barn where the cow was down and discovered it was Veda. He was barely alive. This spring the vet said that Veda had a wasting disease called Johne's disease and it would just be a matter of time before his demise. The vet knows we do not put any of our animals down, but I thought he would last longer. The day before he seemed okay, not well but ok, not at death's door. I started singing to him the Nrsringa prayers and checked to make sure that he was not stuck, in fact was actually down, and nothing else was stopping him from getting up. At this stage, he was also very weak and could not lift his head. I went and got bedding to make him more comfortable and also hay and water to see if he would eat or drink which he did not. I could do nothing more at that moment.

After I did this I gave Vraja his medicine for his arthritis, fed the cows in the loafing shed and old barn, went back outside to fix the fence, and put the four cows back inside. After calling my parents to find out where the CD player and blankets were, I collected these items and I covered Veda with the blankets and turned on the CD player to continuous play. As I was doing this, I noticed that Krishna and Visaka were sniffing Veda. Then they each went to stand on either side of Veda and stand guard.

I had to run back to the house to get the Yamuna water and a calf's milk bottle to help me get water into Veda. As I approached the barn, I noticed a crowd around Veda, some were just standing there, and others were smelling him. My first thought was that he was dead, but then I saw that he had just taken a breath and I was relieved like you would not believe.

I gave Veda Yamuna water of which he only took a few tablespoons. While talking to him, I looked up and noticed that the gate on the loafing barn was hanging strangely. I went to the loafing barn and discovered that the gate was indeed on the ground, the inside gate was also broken, and all the cows with medical problems were not there but down below the barn hanging with some of the other cows. At this point, I freaked cause I knew I could not move Veda to a better spot since that would kill him, and I knew that I could not fix the gate and get the cows back inside by myself. I contacted my brother and he agreed to come early the next morning since he was already traveling too far away to come right then.

I went back to the new barn and spent time with Veda. At this time, he had about eight cows surrounding him so I went and starting feeding out more hay. About 20 minutes later Ujala started mooing strangely at Veda. I dropped what I was doing to see what was going on. Ujala and Krishna were trying to get Veda up. Unfortunately it did not work. I spent some more time with them and then finished my chores in the barn.

The next morning we had a coating of ice on everything, about 1/2 inch, and it was extremely cold like it has been for the last week (we have been in the teens). I suited up and went to the barn. As I walked to the barn, I noticed that Yamuna was standing awkwardly and was acting strangely. I went down to the lower barnyard, before I checked everyone in the barn, and helped her get into a better spot. I tried to get her moving towards the barn hoping to get her up by the silo so once the gate was fixed it would be easier to get her into the loafing barn. She did not want to go up there but kept on going towards my house.

At this time I went up into the barn to check on Veda and discovered that he had passed in the night, he was cold to the touch. I covered his face, turned around, and saw his mother watching me with a sorrowful look on her face. I went over to her and told her how sorry I was about her son. Throughout the day she was always within 10 feet of him. At this time, I noticed that the whole herd was also sad so I took the time to talk with them and to walk around and pet everyone. While I was doing this, the cows kept on checking on him by smelling him and trying to uncover him.

While I was waiting for my brother, I did my normal chores of feeding everyone and giving Vraja his grain and meds and Gita his grain. Now Gita was not that happy that Vraja was in the barn with him and pushed him down while Vraja was walking by. This really scared me since Vraja has bad arthritis in one of his back legs and he was recovering from an injury in the other back leg. Somehow, I managed to separate the two of them and get Vraja temporally locked back into the loafing barn which was not yet that secure. I then heard a vehicle coming and it was my brother Baladeva. I explained what had happened and showed him what the damage was and then we decided what we were going to fix and how. While we were doing this and gathering the tools we needed, Asha got it in her head that she wanted back into the loafing barn where Vraja was, and she was going to get in there all by herself, thank you very much! When Bala and I got back to the barn after gathering our tools, we discovered that Asha was with Vraja and they were both happy with that. Asha was born with bad hips and walks sideways down hills.

We fixed the loafing barn to where it would be really hard for them to take down the gate, now we had to get the cows back in the barn. Now you have to remember everything had about half an inch of ice on it so it was difficult to walk and do anything. Somehow we managed. Getting the cows back in is always the hardest part because you do not want everyone in, only a select few. This took us about an hour but they were all happy once they realized what we were up to. However, they only realized that once they were in the barn.

It takes at least a tractor or backhoe to move a dead cow and a backhoe to bury her or him in the cow burial area on the farm. We do not have a tractor or backhoe but the temple sends one with Ray who has been doing the temple farm work for over 10 years. He was not available on Sunday but came up the following morning on Monday.

When Ray came up on the tractor, we removed Veda from the barn and took him to the burial spot. We realized it was too slippery for the backhoe to come up, so we talked about it and he believed that he could bury him with the tractor. At this time we decided to restock the barns since he already had the attachment he needed to do that already on the tractor and in order to bury him he would have to go back to the barn and get a different attachment. We restocked and it took us about 4 hours. It was like 3 o'clock and he would not have enough time to go back to the barn, come back up, and bury him before dark. It was decided he would do it the next day. Also by this time, I was freezing since I had been at the barn since 9:30 am and it was only about 20 degrees, not counting the wind.

We buried Veda today, December 6. May he rest in peace and have fun playing with Krishna and the cowherd boys.

Written by Lakshmi Devi Dove

For:

ISKCON Ministry for Cow Protection and Agriculture
International Society for Cow Protection