

Padayatra Forever

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Sri Krishna Caitanya Mahaprabhu over six years He travelled and that was padayatra. Why the acaryas were walking and travelling and why did **Caitanya Mahaprabhu** traveled? This was to spread the glories of the Lord. **Lord Caitanya** left on his six years padayatra to establish the yuga dharma, the chanting of the holy names. Especially **Caitanya Mahaprabhu** and our Gaudiya vaishnavas have travelled to bring the holy name to more towns and more villages.

Caitanya Mahaprabhu was the inaugurator of this program and **Srila Prabhupada** took it up. **Srila Prabhupada** himself, in 1952, while he was in Jhansi, went on padayatra just a short one, not long one; but he did Padayatra for 30 kms from Jhansi to Chirgoan. In 74, this was shared with me by **Tribhuvanath Prabhu**. **Tribhuvanatha** and **Bhagavat Prabhu, Prabhupada** wanted to see them and they were going up, there in Bombay and they were excited what assignment Prabhupada was going to give and finally, when they met **Prabhupada**. **Prabhupada** said , “You go in Padayatra. You do Padayatra.” But then that did not materialize, **Prabhupada** was thinking and approaching his disciples, followers to take up this Padayatra program. Then, in 1976, the Padayatra finally happened from Hyderabad to Mayapur, half dozen devotees walked for 3 months that was of 1500 kms, and **Prabhupada** was there at the entrance gate of Mayapur to greet them, as I understand.

And then, **Prabhupada** wrote a letter to **Mahamsa Swami** who was in charge of the Hyderabad Farm. **Prabhupada** wrote, “Naturally the sankirtan men travelling with the bullock carts are blissful. It is **Lord Caitanya’s** engagement. Lord Caitanya personally travelled all over India for six years. His program

was simply kirtana and prasada distribution. Lord Caitanya never spoke philosophy in public. So continue this program. It is very pleasing to **Lord Caitanya.**" (**Srila Prabhupada's letter to Mahamsa Swami in 1975**)

We heard this, **Yasomatinandana Prabhu** shared this with me, and he said, during his visit to Gujarat in 1975, **Prabhupada** said to him "Please arrange bullock carts" He wanted to travel from village to village. He said he would travel with the padayatris.

There was a gentleman called Punjabi Parmananda and he had written to **Prabhupada** about taking up this Padayatra program and **Prabhupada** responded to the communication of Punjabi Parmananda saying, " Concerning your offering of doing Padayatra travelling touring from village to village, town to town. However my foreign disciples have the language defect, they can't speak the village language, otherwise I would have started this programme long ago. If some young men like you would join me then along with some foreign disciples can immediately take up this programme.

Take a note on what **Prabhupada** is saying "I am immediately ready" **Prabhupada** is willing to join such walk.

"If you are eager, please get hold of at least half a dozen young men like you, then with another half dozen foreign disciples, I can immediately take up this program and tour village to village and town to town. This is very effective. I know that." This is **Srila Prabhupada**, emphatically saying this.

I'm sharing this to you so that we would know **Prabhupada**, what was on mind of Prabhupada. There were so many things on this mind, books distribution, this and that. Certainly, this was one of those item that was very much on his mind and very dear to his heart. I know that because I have interacted with **Srila Prabhupada** and had many talks and correspondence, and I know how much he appreciated; he appreciated the Padayatra program

and so I'm trying to transfer these thoughts of **Prabhupada**, his will, if you want to call that on to you.

So that in future, so many of us will be no more. I would be no more but you will be here much longer. So, I just want to make sure you fully understand **Prabhupada**, what was his thoughts about **padayatras**. And of course, you know why Padayatra, the holy names needs to be brought in to more villages and more towns and what we distribute in **ISKCON** ? We distribute the books of **Prabhupada**, we distribute prasadam Krishna Prasadam and what else? We distribute Harinama. I think these are three big items also festivals this and that. When it comes to distribute or share, the holy name is on the top of the list and Prabhupada wanted to make sure the holy name spread far and wide and not to be limited only to the towns where there is **ISKCON**. What about every town? Every village? So, **Prabhupada** representing **Caitanya Mahaprabhu** also, and wanting to make **Caitanya Mahaprabhu's** predictions come true, this was **Prabhupada's** strategy, all about this Padayatra program.

In 1976, this is where in Delhi, I personally received this instruction of Padayatra on **Radhashtami** Day when **ISKCON** was in Lajpat Nagar only once in Feroze Shah Gandhi Road, you know the address this is all the way back to 1976. Prabhupada was attending **Radhashtami festival** at **Sri Sri Radha Parthasarathi Temple** and, on **Radhashtam**. **Srila Prabhupada** said, "You don't need to travel on the bus in India. Instead you can get one bullock cart and go and preach village to village all over India. It will be a great success."

We were travelling in German buses, **Hansaduta Maharaja**, **GBC** also that time, they came with the western buses and we were travelling all overnight in North India and we had a good time. We were enjoying the German buses, they have very special opening and closing doors, you push the buttons. Lot of people would gather around. It was a Mercedes bus; they would gather around just to see how the door opens, door

closes and we were having good time. But then, **Prabhupada** said, "Get down from the bus. Here's a bullock cart." It was a big sacrifice but we were happy.

So, then we started the first walk was from **Vrindavan to Mayapur**. **Prabhupada** gave us that destination. We received the instruction in Delhi. We went to Vrindavan, we organized everything and **Prabhupada** said, "You go to Mayapur." And on the way, we passed by Kanpur. I wrote to **Srila Prabhupada**, "**Prabhupada**, need some financial help for the Padayatra. We need money, we need men." I wrote to **Srila Prabhupada** and this was **Prabhupada's** response.

"Do not depend on outside help. Also for financial support, depend on **Krishna**." **Srila Prabhupada** sent me a **World Sankirtana** Newsletter, the scores of different temples and he said "Also book distribution. We are maintaining our huge establishment by selling books. That is wanted." And so, we took up book distribution seriously in Padayatra, and I would like to report the scores we achieved in 2015, 2016 and 2017. We distributed in **2015, 96,000 books** of **Srila Prabhupada** books in Padayatra. In **2016, 97,000** and in **2017, over 100,000 books** were distributed and that made Padayatra more than self-sufficient.

We have Padayatra president here, **Acharya Prabhu** for last 10 years, he has been managing Padayatra right here in front of you. They are saving funds by distributing books, they took a pledge of **5 lakhs for TOVP** and they are sponsoring some other projects and temples from book distribution on padayatra. Besides chanting the holy name, bringing into every town, every village, **Prabhupada's** books are going to all remote corners of India and they have gone around India 6 times 6 rounds. As we do temple parikramas, they have done Bharat Varsha Parikrama.

Then **Prabhupada** wrote to me again in 1976, "I am also happy to hear your very nice activities. I wish, I could have joined

you. I like your program very much.. If you continue this program you will be benefited, people will be benefited and every one will be happy.” Like this **Prabhupada** said, I like your program, he wanted to join padayatra.

Now, what more **Prabhupada** have to say to inspire us to keep doing this program? Then, in 1977, as we had a very successful bullock cart **Sankirtana** Party going in India, this is what **Prabhupada** wrote to **Nityananda**, our God-brother in America, New Talavan farm community and he said, “And oxen can be used for driving carts and preaching village to village.” Those goshala managers and goshala’s having bullocks and this was **Prabhupada** wanted to see that those carts are used for preaching village to village.”What is the question of killing them” and then he wrote, “Here in India, our **Lokanatha Maharaja** has successfully organized such a program and it is a great success. He has travelled all over India and everywhere they distribute books, prasadam and perform kirtanas village to village.”

And then you could read that highlighted statement and here Prabhupada wrote, “We can introduce many millions of such carts all over the world.” This is **Prabhupada’s** big thinking, he never thought small. We had only one cart going rounds which he thought was very successful then he’s talking of millions of carts. But this was not to be organized only by **Lokanath Swami**. From this, it is very clear, **Prabhupada** wanted his followers and his managers to take up this project, Padayatra, and spread the holy name around the world.

Then in 1991, GBC formed Padayatra Worldwide Ministry and this is the mandate – Padayatra worldwide ministry GBC Mandate.

“TO BRING THE CONGREGATIONAL CHANTING OF THE HOLY NAME TO EVERY TOWN AND VILLAGE OF THE WORLD THROUGH ORGANIZED PADAYATRA FESTIVALS.”

So, to execute the will of **Srila Prabhupada**, GBC took that

action and here is that mandate. So for Padayatra, we are on the road; you could do the calculation, that is how many? All India Padayatra on the road was on over the past 34 years from 1984 – 2018. And every day, they go to a new village to new village, to the new village, to the new village, to village.and thousands. I was looking at **Acharya Prabhu**, who is keeping the records. He took over about 9-10 years ago, and he was showing me the record started at Pandharpur, 10kms down the road, this village and he has all records of all the last 10 years. 10 years of Padayatra visits and their phone numbers and some contacts and they're becoming devotees as he goes back. He's our 5th President in last 34 years, there were four before. Also we've gone around non-stop.

And then in 1996 we organized 100th birth anniversary of **Srila Prabhupada** and everyone was thinking his disciples, how to glorify, what to offer to **Srila Prabhupada** on his 100th birth anniversary, so padayatra ministry also was thinking. **Pancharatna Prabhu** was with us in France or as a part of Centennial. So we took the pledge of organizing padayatras in 100 countries. Here is the list of all those countries. In fact it was 105 countries, we covered with Padayatra. And I think till date padayatris have walked over **250,000kms** and padayatri's do not take one step forward without chanting '**Hare Krishna**' at every step they are chanting.

So you could imagine, how many towns and villages His holy name has reached. And sometimes, I say and this is true that padayatra not only brings holy name to every town and every village but in between the villages and in between the towns we chant. Not only in the town, in the village, in between from one town to another, one town to another. So **Lord Caitanya Mahaprabhu's** prediction is coming true.

In 1977, probably you know this one thing, **Prabhupada** wanting to go on bullock cart. He was in the bed for months. He was not even able to get up and sit on his own. I also came to **Vrindavan** and wanted to travel and he said, "No no, bus will

not be good. Get me a bullock cart.” This is **Prabhupada's** thought, inconceivable **Prabhupada**.

And then, we have **Vraja mandal parikrama, Navadvip mandal parikrama**, the Padayatra becomes instrumental starting those Parikramas. Sri Kshetra Puri Parikrama is very very much there. Then **Bhakti Purusottam Maharaja** took over, I only go for inaugurating, cutting the ribbon and going on for 10 years? More than 12 years **Sri Kshetra Parikrama, Pandharpur parikrama** and this parikrama and that parikrama. also going on.

We have a manual, Padayatra manual, how to organize from beginning to finish, all the details and is available. Also, Padayatra Ministry website- www.padayatra.com.

Padayatra in AndhraPradesh/ Telangana – One grihasta devotee, disciple of **Bhakti Vikas Maharaja**, he had been doing padayatra all over Andhra, now Telangana since 2012. He has also gone on with his only team of not more than half dozen members. This 4-5 devotees covered so many villages, distributed so many books and everywhere. Just one gentleman, one grihasta, he leaves his family and his wife behind and he goes on a lot many time, most of the time he is on the road.

20 day bullock cart padayatra by **ISKCON** Bhuvanewar from **Gaura Govind Maharaja's** days, then after his departure, his followers has been organizing padayatras every year.

Pune to Pandharpur, his is an **ISKCON** Pune initiative, organizing this Padayatra every year for 18 days but a grand 50 temple devotees are PDC, they join and, they all have good time . Padayatras are a kind of retreat. Everyone likes Padayatra. There's a whole list and upcoming Padayatras, which is **ISKCON** Kanpur, is on the list. **ISKCON** Baroda and Tirupati is getting ready to have a Padayatra, that was all around Andhra Pradesh. There's a big list, as many temples organized padayatra every year. There's one day padayatra concept is

cropping up in Ahmedabad in Gujarat, 3 day Padayatra, 1 week Padayatra. **ISKCON** Noida devotees go from Noida to Vrindavan.

Please take this up. As I said in the beginning, you all are the doers, the temple presidents, you have to take this action to organize padayatra in your area and you see **Prabhupada's** will or legacy that he has left behind in the form of padayatra and we have to push it forward and you are ready? Show up hands all those who wish to be part of this initiative. **Hari Bol!**