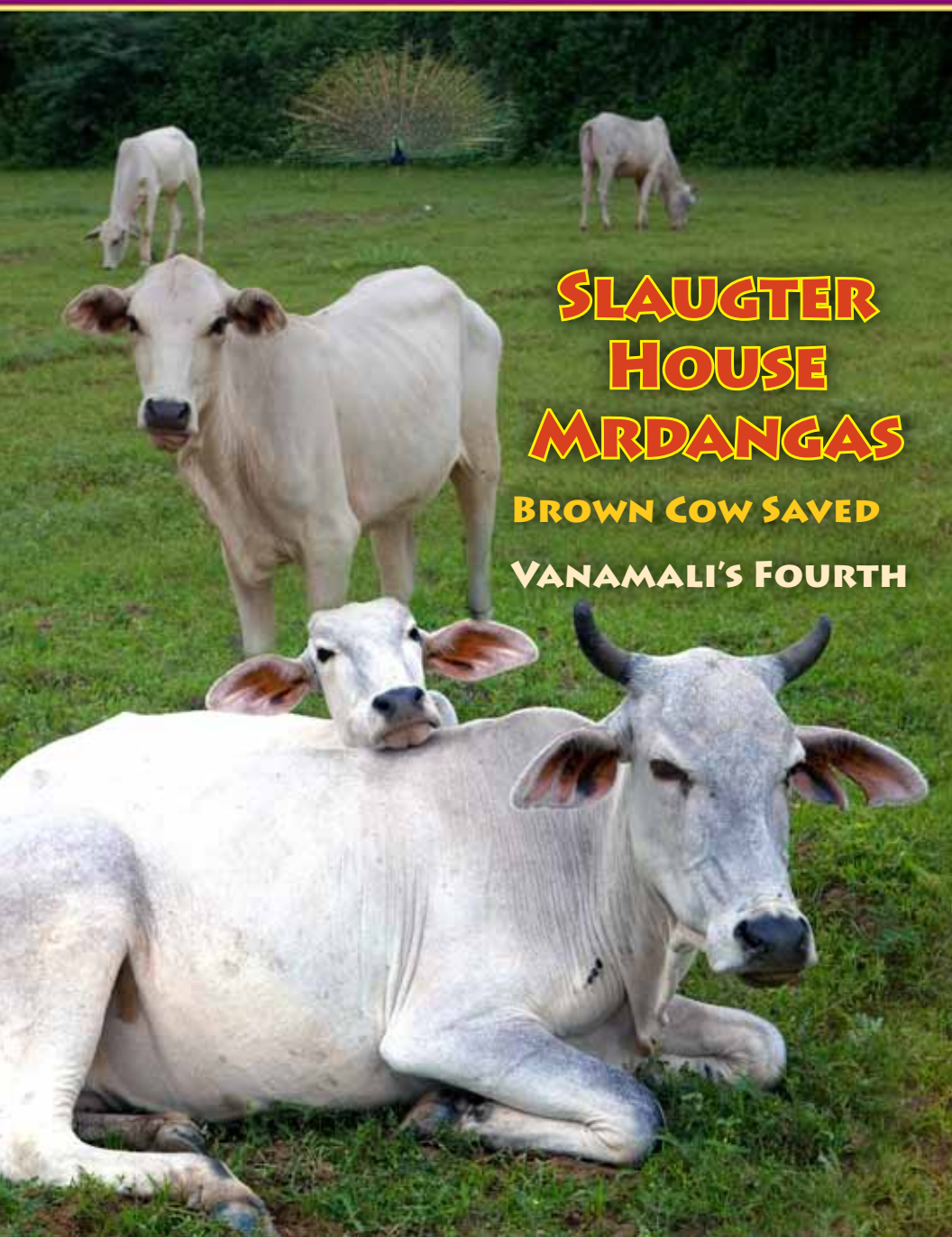


Sept. 2010



CARE FOR COWS

I N V R I N D A V A N



SLAUGHTER HOUSE MRDANGAS

**BROWN COW SAVED
VANAMALI'S FOURTH**



Care for Cows in Vrindavana
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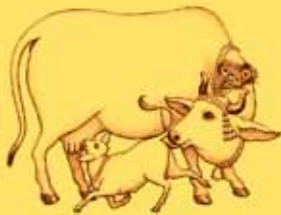
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CARE FOR COWS

IN VRINDAVANA

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Jaya Sri Guru! Jaya Sri Gopala!
Jaya Sri Go Mata!

Dear Friends,

“Although the cow is beneficial because one can draw religious principles from her, she was now rendered poor and calfless. Her legs were being beaten by a sudra. There were tears in her eyes... and she was hankering after some grass in the field.” SB.1.17.3

“The cow stands with tears in her eyes, the *sudra* milkman draws milk from her 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 endeavors for peace and prosperity, they must try to see the cows and 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 *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and adopt the principles for the total happiness of humanity.”

-- Purport by His Divine Grace A. C.
Bhaktidevanta Swami Prabhupada.

The CFC Staff

Care for Cows in Vrindavan is a Charitable Trust
registered in India, USA, Holland and Switzerland.

~ PORTRAIT OF THE MONTH ~



~ LAJJASILA & CALF ~



Sri Govinda -- He Who Gives Pleasure to the Cows

The purpose of kirtana is to please Govinda.
A crucial question arises:

**Will kirtana performed with
slaughterhouse Mrdangas please Govinda?**



Sri Mrdanga

SLAUGHTERHOUSE MRDANGAS

by Kurma Rupa Dasa

Sri Mrdanga is a sacred two-headed clay drum that is exclusively used to accompany devotional hymns chanted for the pleasure of Sri Govinda. The two heads as well as the bands that stretch them are traditionally made from the hide of a cow that died a natural death. Such hides are termed *ahimsa* indicating they are obtained without violence.

Ahimsa leather distinguishes Sri Mrdanga from slaughterhouse Mrdangas which use leather obtained by violence (*himsa*). **This significant difference is vital as cows are Sri Govinda's favorite creatures and He does not tolerate their abuse.** Sri Govinda

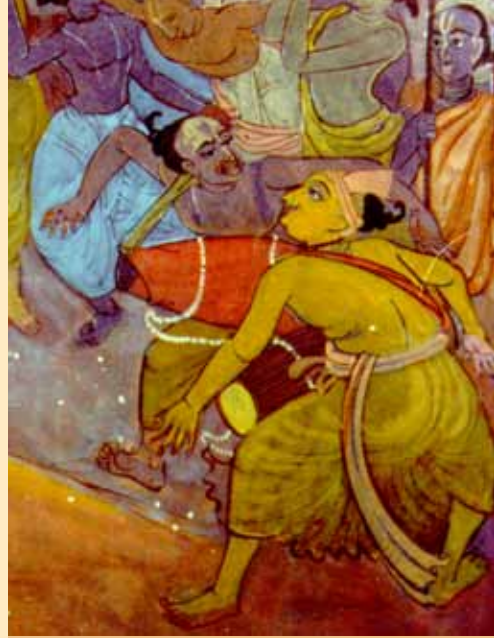
considers cows worshipable.

Mrdangas are mostly fabricated in Sri Navadvipa Dhama and Sri Vrindavan Dhama, the foremost places of pilgrimage for devotees of Krsna.

It is a known fact that India hosts more cows than any other country and is still well known as the place where the cow is considered sacred. Indeed in rural India, many Hindu families keep cows and regard them as their family members. It is not uncommon that cows and calves are kept in the house and often treated as pets. Thus when a family cow dies of old age, the leather can be used to make Mrdangas, harnesses for oxen and horses and other such purposes. In times past *ahimsa* leather was not hard to get.

However, with the advancement of Kali Yuga the Vedic culture is on the wane. The residents of India are losing their culture as Western values are being foisted on them by the mass media. One significant indicator of this trend is the fact that India is surprisingly the second largest exporter of beef in the world and aspiring to become the leading exporter of cow leather. Surprising, because cow slaughter is against the law in most Indian states...

As indicated in several of our previous Newsletters, illegal abduction of cows in India is commonplace. Cows are transported in inhumane ways to make-shift as well as modern



Kirtaneers playing Sri Mrdanga

slaughterhouses to be processed for their meat and skin. Thus whatever leather we find commercially available today is obtained from the brutal mistreatment of cows.

I am aware of only one source of *ahimsa* leather in Vraja, and it does not come close to supplying the increasing demand for Mrdanga heads. Thus the vast majority of leather available today is *himsa*, and therefore unacceptable for making Mrdangas.

During the last forty years there has been extensive international propaganda to



Inhumane transportation of cows



Krsna regards the cows as more important than the *brahmanas*

educate people regarding the worship of Lord Krsna in the process of *kirtana* as taught by Lord Sri Krsna Caitanya Mahaprabhu. The result of the propaganda is a growing interest in performing *kirtana* which of course increases the demand for Mrdangas.

The increased demand for Mrdangas prompts an increase in production but unfortunately

the profit motive prevents the manufacturers and buyers from questioning the sources of the leather they purchase. While the hide-sellers may claim their leather is *ahimsa*, it does not serve the business of the Mrdanga makers to investigate the veracity of their claims. Since Mrdangas made with *ahimsa* leather appear exactly as those made with *himsa* leather, what results, at best,

is an unspoken agreement not to inquire into the source of the leather, or at worst, the formation of quite astonishing yet effective rationalizations which allow all parties concerned to indulge in the production, sale and use of slaughterhouse Mrdangas with a clear conscience.

Since *ahimsa* leather sources are sparse and *himsa* leather sources abundant, any simpleton can conclude that the great majority of commercially produced Mrdangas are products of the slaughterhouse and thus unfit to use in glorifying Govinda. We must dupe ourselves in order to justify purchasing and using slaughterhouse Mrdangas.

In short, to deal in the Mrdanga trade today there is a desperate need for self-deception.

What are the alternatives? Buffalo, camel and goat leather are also available but are rejected because they are not as soft and do not produce as "sweet" a sound... and of course the nagging question still lingers if those hides are obtained without violence. If they are obtained by violence, they are also unsuitable.

Synthetic drum heads are a safe alternative but they are looked down upon by musicians with distinguished ears for they do not sound as "sweet".

But to whom do they not sound as sweet? To the musician, or to Krsna?

Is it the sound of the drum

that pleases Krsna, or is it the devotion with which His names are chanted?

Since the purpose of kirtana is to please Krsna, the crucial question is: Does kirtana performed with slaughterhouse Mrdangas please Him? Does He accept such glorification?

That people use slaughterhouse Mrdangas clearly reveals that their priorities are not proper.

In the *Nectar of Devotion* we read that Ganges water touched by fingernails is not fit for bathing the Deity; nor is a flower kept in an unclean pot fit to be offered to Him. In *Ramayana* we read how Vasistha requested Lord Rama to defeat the *rakshashas* who kept polluting the sacrificial arena to prevent the sage from completing the *yajna* effectively.

Are not slaughterhouse Mrdangas polluted? If so, is not the kirtana yajna thwarted by their use?

We do not use shoes, wallets, belts or clothing made from slaughtered animals. We shun ghee polluted with animal fat; milk mixed with chemicals and chalk; sweets with contaminated silver foil; but we accept slaughterhouse Mrdangas?

Some argue that the cows are largely slaughtered for meat and that the skins are only a by-product. This is at best an uneducated guess as even in Vraja trucks have been arrested full



Is it the sound of the drum that pleases Krsna, or is it the devotion with which His names are chanted?

of calves whose skins are much sought after by the shoe industry.

Others argue that since the cows are being slaughtered for meat, if we use their skin in the glorification of the Lord, at least they will get some benefit

despite their unfortunate end. This insidious rationalization cloaks the sin of animal slaughter in the virtue of mercy, its opposite. It's a scriptural fact that animal slaughter and meat eating destroy mercy, one of the pillars of religion.



Boycott slaughterhouse leather to decrease the demand for cowhide

Would we claim that killing our innocent mother and offering the inheritance for religious purposes would serve her benefit?

Why wait until the cows are slaughtered to benefit them? Why not benefit them by preventing their slaughter? Why not benefit them by protecting them and using their milk, dung, urine, *ghee* and yoghurt in the service of the Lord while still alive?

Why not boycott slaughterhouse leather to decrease the demand for cowhide and in this way be part of the solution instead of part of the problem?

Certainly the above options indicate greater concern for cows than those arguments which claim

to benefit them by using their skin for Mrdangas.

By purchasing slaughterhouse Mrdangas we increase the demand for cowhide and thus encourage slaughter and become implicated. This thoroughly defeats the purpose of *kirtana*, which, again, is to please He who gives pleasure to the Cows.

Remember those who are implicated in the slaughter of cows are the ones who raise them for that purpose; the ones who transport them; the ones who kill them; the ones who sell the meat and skin; the ones who cook the meat; the ones who eat the meat; in short, everyone who profits in any way from the slaughter.

Face it! If we use slaughterhouse Mrdangas, we are implicated in cow-killing. Bas!

If we are accomplices to cow-killing, how can we claim to be devoted to He Who pleases the cows?

The best course of action is to obtain *ahimsa* leather to make Mrdangas. If *ahimsa* leather is not available, we should use synthetic drum heads until it is.

We should be prepared to protect cows until they die a natural death and in this way acquire enough *ahimsa* leather to fulfill our requirements.

It is unacceptable to use slaughterhouse Mrdangas... especially when synthetic alternatives are available.

Using slaughterhouse Mrdangas because they sound "sweet" indicates that our first priority is not to please Krsna, but to please our musically trained ears.

Insisting on violence-free Mrdangas despite their so-called inferior sound indicates our priority is to please Krsna.

If we insist on using slaughterhouse Mrdangas and do not concern ourselves with whether or not Krsna is pleased by it, we slip on the razor's edge and stumble into *niyamagrahaha* -- following the rules and regulations only for the sake of following them and not for the sake of spiritual advancement. Rupa Gosvami declares this to be



Gopal, the Protector of Cows

one of the six faults that destroys Bhakti.

And if despite knowing how the cow suffers pain and fear after her throat is slit and she lies bleeding to death; how her body quivers after being disemboweled and having her hide ripped off; and if after all that, we stretch her skin over the clay shell and tune it to our fancy until it sounds "sweet," we have achieved a level of insensitivity which indicates we have already lost the quality of mercy and are well on our way in becoming irreligious despite our well-meaning and wholehearted participation in *kirtana*.

KESHAVA SAVES



Kesava Dasa is from Mumbai but now lives in Chaitanya Vihar, Vrindavan which is one of the prime areas cow rustlers frequent. Thus, Kesava keeps an eye on the abandoned cows in his neighborhood.

During the monsoon the cows have no trouble getting the food they require as the rains inspire

vegetation to grow all over the roadsides. Unfortunately, they are still exposed to the danger of speeding motorists.

Kesava noticed that this brown cow had a bleeding wound full of maggots above and below her tail area. He befriended her and accepted the difficulty of coaxing her along the two-kilometer walk

A BROWN COW



to Care for Cows. Once she settled in our staff laid her on one of the only dry spots in the barnyard and began to clean her wounds and remove the maggots. It turns out that she is a very good and cooperative patient.

Three days of dressing her wounds was all it took to get her cured, and that despite the pecking of several crows.





Above: Vanamali



VANAMALI'S FOURTH

Vanamali has been with us for more than seven years. She was given to us accompanied by her first calf named Samba who is now one of our working oxen in Belvan.

Her second calf was also a bull named Sravan who is sponsored by Dr. Sanjay Dahia from England.

Her third calf was Ekadasi who is one of the healthiest calves in the herd as Vanamali decided not to let anyone milk her so that Ekadasi could have all of it to

herself.

Vanamali is observing the same policy with her fourth calf, the mischeivous and pretty female calf you see below.

Vanamali's fourth calf has not been named as we are reserving the right to name her to the lucky person who decides to sponsor her.

At present the calf is enjoying the attention only the youngest in the herd are priveleged to.





Sri-Sri Radha Ramana

**ON JANMASTAMI 2010
SRI-SRI RADHA RAMANA
WAS BATHED IN 1,500 LITERS
OF COW MILK.
CARE FOR COWS WAS HONORED
TO SUPPLY A
SMALL PORTION OF THAT MILK.**

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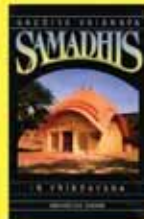
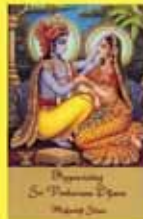
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Thank You From the Cows



The cows send their heart-felt thanks to those who assisted during August 2010

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Christian Kastner	Luci Mattinen	Taruna Rettinger
Daniel Laflor	Madhava Priya Dasi	Tomasz Zulawnik
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Hansavatar & Yogamaya	Nayan Ruparelia	William Yeung
Harshavardhan Raja	Nicholas Pascetta	Yajnavalkya Dasa

May cows stay in front of me; may cows stay behind me; may cows stay on both sides of me. May I always reside in the midst of cows. —*Hari Bhakti Vilas* 16.252