

June 2009



CARE FOR COWS

IN KRINDAVANA

Thailand's Royal Oxen

Smoked Cheese
secret recipe revealed

New Arrivals



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

Dear Friends,

What follows is an excerpt from *Village, Town and Jungle Life in India; Travels through India 1874 - 1902* by A.C. Newcombe.

"In the sacred city Amritsar, the bulls may be met in the narrow streets wandering about ownerless, and as free to jostle their way through the crowd as any other pedestrian. Though ownerless, they are under the protection of the whole community. They are often seen with garlands of flowers round their necks and are quite friendly towards strangers.

"I once saw, in a street of Amritsar, a bull walk in at the open door of a house. The whole family of Sikhs, sitting in a circle on the floor, rose and *salaamed* [respectful greeting] and made way for the animal to take what place he chose. If in want of food, the bull simply takes it from a stall where it is exposed for sale or from a family meal. Any inconvenience to the owners is obviated by their selecting and offering what he wants before he makes unintentional mischief in appropriating it himself. About the year 1870, such was the indignation aroused in Amritsar at the slaughtering of bulls for food for Europeans and Mohomedans, that one night all the Mohomedan butchers were killed."

Today's indifference to illegal abduction of cows and bulls for slaughter indicates a severe deterioration of Vedic culture resulting from the influence of the mass media.

The CFC Staff

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



Care for Cows in Vrindavana
is inspired by
A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada
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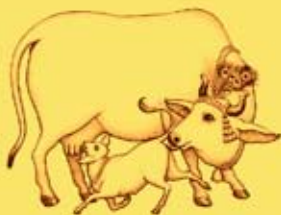
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CARE FOR COWS

IN VRINDAVAN

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Thailand's Royal Oxen

Perform the Ploughing Ceremony



The Ploughing ceremony is intended to provide morale for the farmers as well as make

After a night of heavy rain, a large crowd gathered at the Sanam Luang, the Royal grounds, in Bangkok Thailand on March 11th. Although a crowd gathered at the entrance of the festival site to catch a glimpse of the King's arrival, the majority of the people gathered on the perimeter of the grounds to witness the main event, the Royal Ploughing

Ceremony.

The ceremony, which is to ensure a good harvest for the upcoming season, is a festival that has its origins in Brahmanic rituals. The Ploughing Ceremony is said to date back to before the time of Lord Buddha more than 2,500 years ago, and its exact date is still set every year by Brahmin astrologers.

**An eyewitness report from
CFC Asian Correspondent
KrishnaMayi**



predictions about the year's crops.

Thailand is still an agrarian society with about half the country's population dependent of farming. The Ploughing ceremony is intended to provide morale for the farmers as well as make predictions about the year's crops.

The ceremony is called "Rak Na Kwan", which literally means "first ploughing auspices". Although the King, or members of the

Royal Family are present for the ceremony, the real stars of the festival are two snow white oxen named Pra Ko Fah and Pra Ko Sai.

During the reign of King Rama IV (1851-1868), the ceremony was performed with great pomp



Pra Ko Fah and Pra Ko Sai

with a procession of more than 500 people. It gradually fell into decline, and the current ceremony was revived in 1960.

The ceremony was personally presided over by the King of Thailand, HRH King Bhumibol Adulyade, for many years. Nowadays, as the King's age and health does not permit his personal participation, he appoints a "Lord" of the Ploughing Ceremony or Phya Raek Na, from an upper ranking member of the Ministry of Agriculture. The Apointee wears a ceremonial ring made with 9 gems (perhaps a *Navagraha* ring?) as well as a traditional jeweled costume.

At the onset of the ceremony,

the Phya Raek Na is offered three pieces of identical looking cloth to choose from. The cloths are of different lengths: four, five and six *kheub* (one *kheub* is approximately six inches).

The length of the cloth that is chosen indicates the amount of rain for that year: the shortest piece indicates a year with abundant water, the longest foretells little rain, and the medium one means a balanced supply of water, abundant rice and healthy crops.

The procession then moves into the center of the field where the Oxen are hooked up to the red and gold ceremonial plough and begin to plough the field in a large circle. The procession is headed by Brahmins who are dressed in white. The Oxen are decorated in golden cloth and other ornaments and are led by their attendants in red costumes and bare feet. They are followed by drummers in Green costumes, umbrella bearers, ploughers (who are dressed in a type of *dhoti*).

After the Oxen make three circular furrows, The Phya Raek Na, walking behind the plough, takes the grains carried in golden containers by four Thai maidens dressed as *Apsaras* and tosses the seeds over the ploughed earth. The Brahmin priests then sprinkle blessed water on the field and grains. After the grains are scattered, the Oxen plough the earth over the seeds for three more rounds.



A Brahmin priest scatters grains



After the grains are scattered, the Oxen plough

Although this took only 30-40 minutes, I was standing in an ankle-deep puddle and it seemed like they must've done at least a hundred.

When the ploughing is completed, the Oxen are un-leashed and are presented with banana leaf bowls containing seven types of food: rice, corn, beans, sesame seeds, alcohol, a type of alcohol and grass. The



the earth over the seeds for three more rounds.

Oxen's choice of food predicts the agricultural produce for that year. According to the predictions by Brahmin astrologers, a choice of corn or rice means an abundance of grains and plentiful fish; beans or sesame means plentiful fish and meat, water or grass indicates plentiful rain, food meat and agricultural crops; and alcohol tell of more efficient transportation system, good trade relations with other countries and a generally prosperous economy.

This year the oxen chose to eat sesame seeds and grass, predicting that the country will enjoy an abundance of rice and enough water for this year. The cloth chosen by the Phya Raek Na forecasted adequate water supplies and good harvests of fruits and rice.

After the prediction is read out loud to the crowd and the Oxen led to their corral, the crowd breaks down the barriers on the perimeter of the field and rush onto the freshly ploughed earth to dig up some dirt in order to



Spectators rush to the freshly ploughed earth

find a few grains of rice from the ceremony. This is sometimes mixed with a farmer's rice that he plants in order to insure a good harvest, or it is kept for good luck for the year.

I knew that the crowd breaks down the barriers and rushes to the field, but as there are very few foreigners who attend the festival the Thais surrounding me found it quite funny that I was in the middle of them as they got ready to run madly to dig up the earth. The crowd waited respectfully as



After the prediction is read out to the crowd the Oxen led to their corral



to find a few grains of rice from the ceremony

the crown prince and his wife left the ceremony and then busted through the barriers. I joined them, but as they were running madly to the field through the muddy grounds (losing shoes and other items in the process) I made a bee-line straight for Pra Ko Fah and Pra Ko Sai, the two sacred Oxen.

This was an excellent time to see them and as everyone else was digging up the earth of the place (and shamelessly stealing whatever plants were decorating the festival site), I was scratching those boys behind their ears and horns. Regal in their manner, and surprisingly clean after having ploughed in the mud for 40 minutes, they patiently waited as the crowd dug up the field before coming to them to receive their blessings.

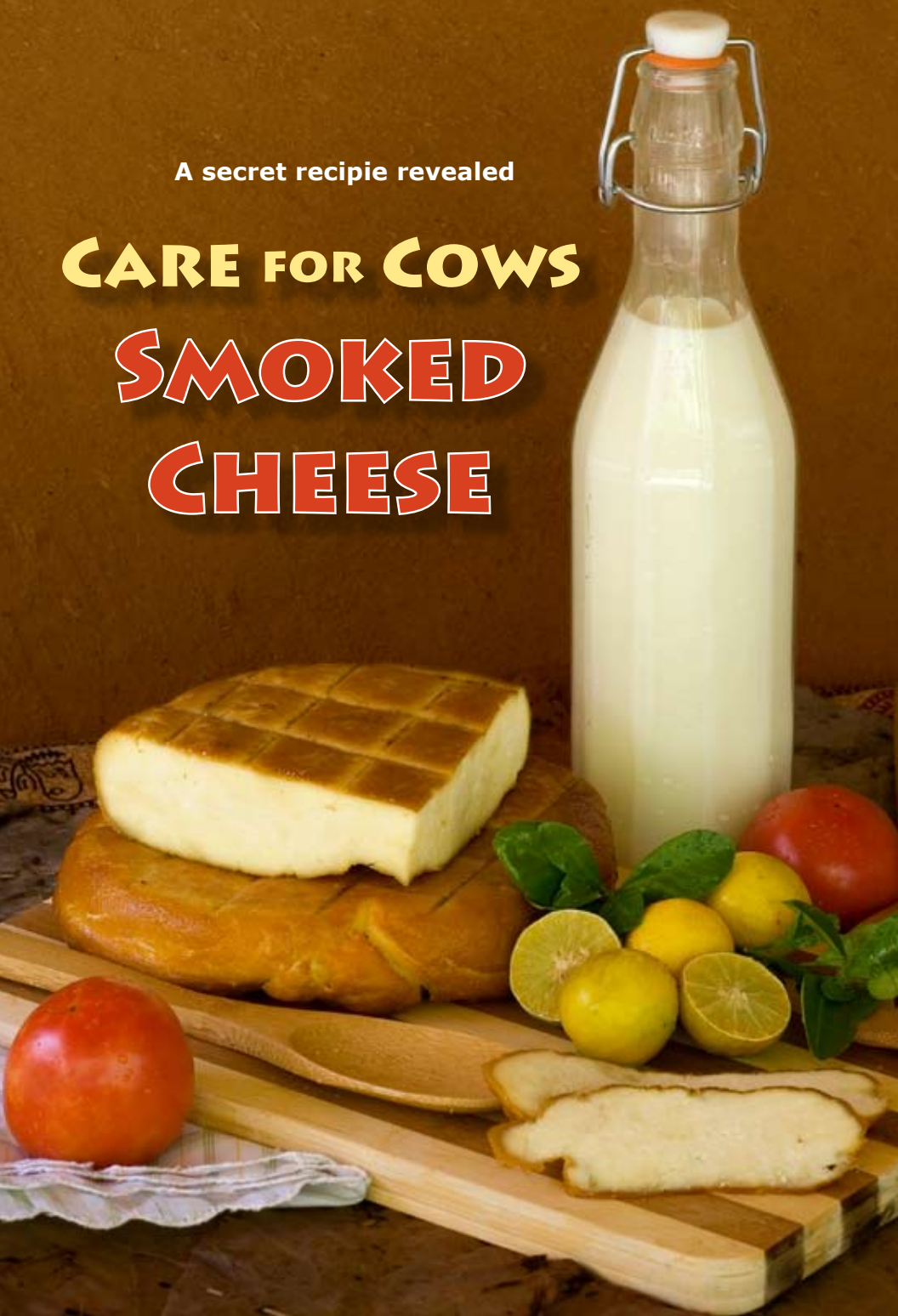
I moved around to the back side of the Oxen as the people's attention turned to the Oxen and it seemed that everyone wanted to touch them reverentially and take their picture. I was amazed at how respectful the people were to the oxen and left satisfied that there is still one remaining thread of Vedic culture intact in Thailand.



Pra Ko Fah, Krish Na Mai & Pra Ko Sai

A secret recipe revealed

CARE FOR COWS SMOKED CHEESE



HOW TO MAKE IT



1

Find an abandoned cow. Heal all wounds, remove all ticks, deworm and feed three times a day until her health is restored (approx. 3-6 months).

Get her pregnant and feed her sumptuously during the 10-month gestation period. During this time the cow should be groomed and kept clean and all efforts should be made to gain her confidence.



2

After the cow gives birth, let the calf drink all the milk for the first month and distribute any remaining milk to other calves in need.

(During this period gather the dung the cow passes during milking time and knead it into a smooth mass. Divide the mass into grapefruit-size balls and slap them on a wall facing the sun. These paddies can be from 5-8 inches in diameter and about one-inch thick - see photo at Step 6. Once they are dried, store them for later use.)

From the second month onwards let the calf drink the milk from two-teats and harvest the milk from the remaining two.

If the cow kicks or protests too much, you have failed to gain her confidence and should perform step 1 over again with a different cow.



3

Place the milk collected from one day in a suitable stainless-steel pot with a thick bottom. Bring the milk to a boil carefully preventing it from overflowing. Once the initial swelling subsides and the milk is at a rolling boil, pour fresh lemon juice into the mixture and lower the flame. The juice of one lemon per liter of milk should suffice. The milk should separate into curds and whey, but if not, add more fresh lemon juice until it does.



4

Remove the pot from the stove and pour out the whey until only enough remains to cover the curd. Estimate how much salt you would use to season the same volume of soup, then double it. Remove one cup of whey from the pot and dissolve the salt in it and then stir it back into the pot. Let it sit for fifteen minutes.

With a strainer separate the curds from the whey and place them in a colander lined with a clean cotton cheese cloth.

Note: Keep the salted whey in the pot for later use.

(Optional: sprinkle dried oregano or coriander leaves among the curds and mix thoroughly.)



5

Now fold the cloth tightly around the warm curds and place a weight on the mass for two hours. This will press the remaining whey out and solidify the curds into one block.

Next remove the mass from the cloth and set it on a drying rack for two hours.

Then place the block of cheese back in the salted whey and let it soak for two hours. This will enhance the flavor of the cheese.

Next remove the cheese from the brine and again let it drain for two hours on a drying rack.



6

Next gather two or three dried cow-dung paddies (from step 2), place them in a shallow pan and sprinkle 1 teaspoon of *ghee* on each one. Light the *ghee* and let it burn until the flame goes out and the paddies begin to smolder. Place the pan of smoldering paddies in the bottom of your oven and place the cheese on the oven rack directly above them. Close the oven and let the cheese baste in the smoke for at least one hour.

The mild heat and smoke will transform the outer layer of the cheese into a moist golden color and infuse it with a hearty smoked flavor.

This smoked cheese can be sliced and placed on toast; cubed and added to *dhal*, soup or salad. It can also be graded and used for stuffing *parathas*.

Should you not have the time to prepare it yourself, limited quantities may be available when you next visit Care for Cows.





Mahesh Advaita Dasa (Dr. Mahesan, Malaysia) and Ananda Sundari Devi have kindly sponsored newly-born Aksaya (above)



An abandoned dairy cow sits in the street unable to get up

NEW ARRIVALS



The Vrajavasis never fail to lend a helping hand



An abandoned dairy cow had been sitting on the road unable to get up for four days. Sanju and Amit Gautam were keeping her fed and watered and called for our help. She is old, eating very little and thought to be pregnant.

Upon arrival we discovered she has hoof and mouth disease (FMD) which explains why she has not been eating well. We have begun the treatment and are hopeful that she will be healed in a few days.



Recuperating on a soft sandy bed at CFC



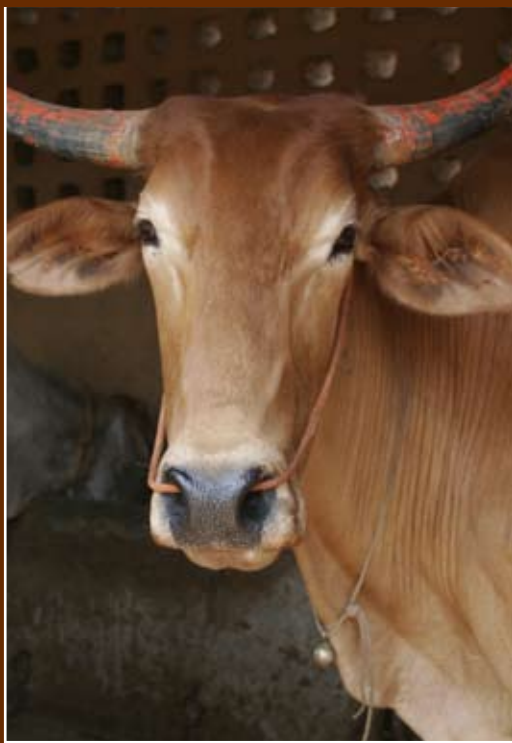
Krsna Murari



Nakula



Pran Govind



Shatrughna

NEW ARRIVALS



Krsna Murari (above) intimidates all challengers

The **Bhaktivedanta Swami Goshalla** has donated four handsome oxen to **Vrindavan Food For Life** who has increased their fleet of bull-driven school buses. At present they have six school buses transporting approximately 250 students to and from the **Sandipani Muni School** each day.

Care for Cows is hosting the new bulls along with seventy others at the Sundrakh facility.

Upon arrival there was a lot of huffing and puffing, coughing and snorting as the new oxen felt the need to establish themselves as the bosses of their new residence. There were several scuffles as our

older residents resisted.

Nakula, who is smaller in stature than the others (about 400-kilos), has proven to be the strongest of the new batch. He made short work of our 350-kilo Nandi leaving a grapefruit-size welt on his underside. In another scuffle Nakula picked up our 600-kilo Madhu and tossed him in the water tank!

Now that the pecking order has been established the dust in the bull-pen has settled and we are back to normal.

This week the bulls will be paired up and will begin their routes dutifully taking the Vrajavasi children to school.

Thank You From the Cows



The cows send their heart-felt thanks to those who assisted during May 2009

Alexandr Lukyashchenko

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Lisa Kubisz

Luci Wyatt

Madhava Dasa

Manish Bishnoi

Manoj Kumar Vadavat

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Mayapur Fiorentino

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Steiner Knudsen

Sujata Choudhuri

Sukania Venugopal

Sundararaman Thiagarajan

Tal Avital

Tracy Molina

Vaninath Dasa

Vyasapada Dasa

Yajnavalkya Dasa

Yogesh

Yogesh Weling

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