



Leela : Shri Gusainji

Shri Vitthalnathji, also known as Shri Gusainji, is the second son of Shri Vallabhacharya. He was given *Upnayan sanskar* at the age of 8 at Varanasi. Like His father, He had a deep connection to *Srimad Bhagavata*. Shri Gusainji followed in the footsteps of His father and embarked on several tours of India to spread the message of Pushtimarg. He also wrote many literary works (such as *Sarvottam Stotra*, the 108 names of Shri Mahaprabhuji). He is most remembered for His influence on the practices of *Raag* (indian classical music), *Bhog* (preparing and serving *Samagri*) and *Shringar* (fine dressing and adornment) we have today in Pushtimargiya Seva, particularly for His endorsement on the use of the arts (music, drawing, and dancing).

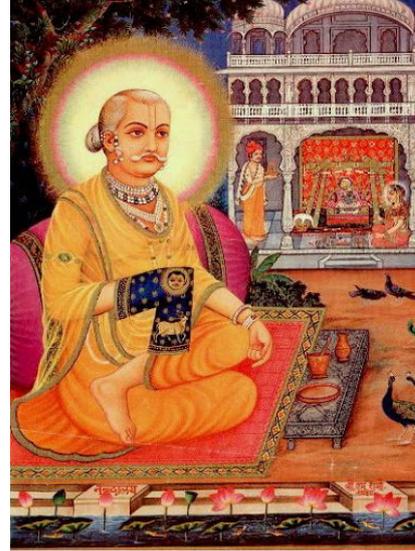
At the time of Shri Gusainji's dwelling (around 1542), India was ruled by Akbar. Akbar's desire for knowledge was sincere and he visited Gokul to meet Shri Gusainji. Their first meeting is highlighted to explain some of the most profound philosophical ideas of the Marg and it helps explain how masses turned to Pushtimarg to become enlightened to spiritual peace. Seeing and experiencing Shri Gusainji's spiritual knowledge and popularity amongst people, Akbar honoured him and gave him the title of "Goswami", which he is known by, even today. Shri Gusainji managed to expand the popularity of the sect in a way very differently to his father and brother by incorporating more of the colourful arts and extravagant elements of Seva we see in Pushtimarg today. He had a knack for explaining the most difficult philosophical point in simple terms. Even ordinary people could understand his teachings.

Shri Gusainji had many disciples around the country. His most celebrated disciples and their spiritual experiences are recorded in the 252 Vaishnavs *varta*. Later Compiled by Shri Hariraiji, these Vaishnavs are held up as the role models for all other Vaishnavs to follow.

Shri Gusainji also helped popularise many of the great *kirtans* (poems) of Krishna Leela, which were composed by the Ashta Sakha and are still sung in Vaishnav Havelis. The Ashta Sakha were extraordinary poets. This is because they were self-realised devotional poets who created poetry from their full comprehension and personal experience of Shrinathji. Originally, there were four poet saints in the court of Shri Nathiji. Shri Gusainji added four more poet saints to the existing, hence the name 'Ashta Sakha' (*Ashta* means 8, *Sakha* means Friends). Four of the Ashta Sakhas namely Shri Surdasji, Shri Kumbhandasji, Shri Krishnadasji and Shri Paramanandasji were the disciples of Shri Vallabh. The other four, Govindswamiji, Chhitsuamiji, Nanddasji and Chaturbhujdasji were the disciples of Shri Gusainji. They all were designated to sing as per *ashta-pore samay*, that is the eight darshans of the day (*which was covered in a previous newsletter*). We will cover the Ashta Sakhas in another newsletter.

Some of the best known manoraths were also initiated during Shri Gusainji's tenure as head of the sect.

His excellent abilities to explain excellent abilities to explain philosophical matters helped him win powerful friends in the political circles then. Some of his devotees included members of



the imperial family at Agra, members of the imperial court, and several important Hindu royal families of the times.

Gusainji is celebrated in Pushtimarg for teaching us the Seva that we perform of Shri Thakorji in our homes and Havelis today. He was very influential in promoting and enlightening people to the ways of Pushtimarg, and He remains one of the most important figures of our religion to this day.

Message From Our Spiritual Head Vaishnavacharya Shri Dwarkeshlalji Mahodayshri

VSUSA Pushti Samvad 2 - 26th July 2020

"There are 2 instances of questions that Damlaji was asked that are famous in Pushtimarg. One is when Damlaji was asked the significance of Shri Mahaprabhuji in his life and he explained *Daan se bado Daata* (The giver is more significant than what is given). The second is when Damlaji was asked by Shri Mahaprabhuji, "What do you see Gusainji as?" To which Damlaji replied, "I see Him as your son". Shri Mahaprabhuji later explains to Damlaji that Shri Gusainji is no different to Vallabh, to Himself, to Shri Mahaprabhuji. As is taught in this story, we too should see Shri Gusainji and similarly all Vallabhkul as Vallabh Swaroop."

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Basics Of Pushtimarg : Shri Vitthal Nathji's (Gusainji) 7 sons & the Nidhi Swaroops

Shri Gusainji married twice and had seven sons and two daughters. When He became of old age, He distributed 7 forms of Shrinathji to his 7 *baalaks* (sons). These 7 swaroops are known as the 'Saat Swaroops (forms)', or the 'Nidhi Swaroops'.

Below is a brief introduction to the 7 Swaroops of Shrinathji that Shri Gusainji's sons obtained from their father.

Shri Mathuranathji - He has a dark complexion, 4 arms and has an oval backdrop. He appeared from the embankment of Shri Yamunaji, near the village of Karnaval. He was first worshipped by one of Mahaprabhujis 84 Vaishnavs, Shri Padmanambhdasji and then passed on to Shri Girdharji.



Shree Mathuranathji



Shree Vitthalnathji

Shri Vitthalnathji - He is of fair complexion and has both His hands rested on His waist. He carries the conch shell in his left hand and a lotus flower in the right. His consort, Shri Yamunaji is with him and carries lotus flowers in both hands. He appeared from Shri Gangaji near the village Adel near Kashi and was given to Shri Gusainji's second son, Shri Govindrajiji.

Shri Dwarkadheeshji - He has a dark complexion and has four arms. He carries weapons in three hands and the fourth hand is bestowing blessings. His backdrop is square and he appeared through Lord Bhramas severe penance. This Swaroop was passed on to Shri Gusainji's third son, Shri Balkrishnaji.



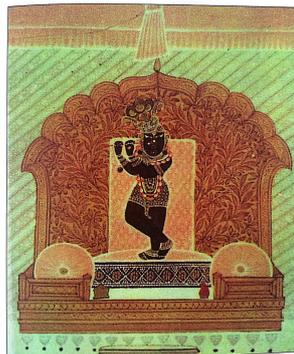
Shree Dwarkadheeshji



Shree Gokul Nathji
The Govardhan mountain was uplifted by this swaroop of Shree Nathji

Shri Gokulnathji - He has a fair complexion and 4 hands, of which two are holding the flute. His raised right hand carries the Govardhan hill and the lower left hand carries a conch shell. He is accompanied by Shri Radhaji and Shri Chandravali (one of the prominent Gopis of Thakorji). He was passed on to the fourth son, also called Shri Gokulnathji.

Shri Gokulchandramaji - He is dark in complexion and is playing the *venuji* (flute) He appeared at Bhramand Ghat along the banks of Shri Yamunaji in Gokul and was bestowed upon Gusainji's fifth son, Shri Raghu Nathji.

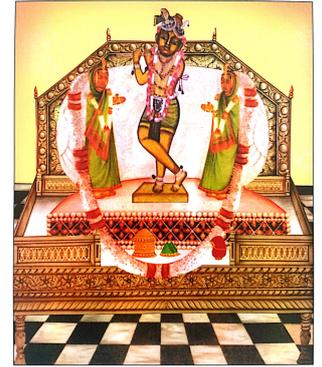


Shree Gokulchandramaji



Shree Balkrishnalaji

Shri Balkrishnalaji - His face is fair whilst his body is of dark complexion. He holds a laddoo sweet on his right hand and is crawling on his knees. He appeared from Shri Yamunaji, and Shri Gusainji blessed him upon his 6th son, Shri Yadunathji.

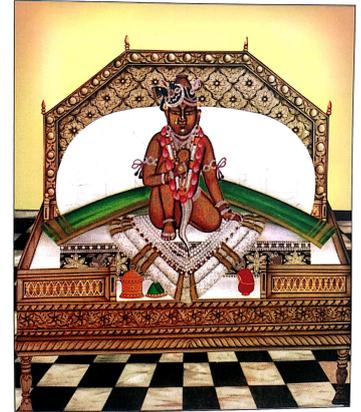


Shree Madan Mohanji

Shri Madan Mohanji - He is fair in complexion, holds the flute with his two hands and is accompanied by two Swaminijis. He appeared from the sacrificial fireplace of the Soma yagna. Shri Gusainji bestowed Him upon his seventh and youngest son, Shri GhanShyamji.



Shree Govardhanathji (Shreenathji)



Shree Navneet Priyaji

Besides the 7 Nidhi swaroops above, there are 2 main swaroops of Shrinathji that are of significance in Pushtimarg - Shri Govardhanathji and Shri Navnitpriyaji. The swaroop we commonly refer to as Shrinathji is called Shri Govardhanathji (as He appeared from the Govardhan hill; Shrinathji is simply short for Shri Govardhanathji) and is the original form of Shrinathji that Shri Krishna took. This swaroop was served by Shri Mahaprabhuji. When Shrinathji was given the freedom of choice upon whom He would like to reside, He chose Shri Gusainji's eldest son, Shri Girdharji. This swaroop now resides and is served in the Shrinathji mandir in Nathadwara, Rajasthan. Additionally, Shri Mahaprabhuji's personal Seva of Shri Navnitpriyaji was also passed on to His son Shri Gusainji and later His oldest son Shri Girdharji.

The 7 Nidhi Swaroops, Shri Govardhan Nathji and Shri Navnitpriyaji reside in different parts of Rajasthan, Vraj (U.P) and Gujarat in India, and are visited by Vaishnavs for darshan.

Excerpts taken from Pushtimarg...A Primer by Lalit Sodha D.C