

## Lessons From Our Spiritual Head Vaishnavacharya Shri Dwarkeshlalji Mahodayshri (Kadi, Ahmedabad)

Day 04 | Shrimad **Bhagwat Saptah Mahotsav**

**TOPIC:** Our Qualities and Our Nature

**CLICK HERE TO WATCH** (1:45:27 - 1:46:25):

<https://www.youtube.com/live/SzG9YdJufw?feature=share&t>

You [Thakorji] are the giver. When we give, we do so in such a way that that everyone knows and everyone can see. When you give, no one knows that You [Thakorji] are the giver.

That's why, Vaishnavs, be careful. Whenever He has given, be grateful to him daily. If you are not grateful, and somehow He takes it away, then with what face will you complain? If we were not grateful when He gave it, then when He takes it away, we have no right to complain.

We would go and thank a person that gave us a TV 10 times, but we don't say "thank you" to the one who gave us eyes. We would thank a person that gave us a car 100 times, but we don't say "thank you" to the one that gave us hands and feet. We remember the people that give us things, but we forget the one that gave us life.

If nothing else, daily at least fold your hands together and say "thank you very much Prabhu" to the one that gave us life. Be grateful for the family you've been given, the body, the relationships, the home you live in, all the happiness He's given. I can't even offer *mishri* (sugar crystals) to You, and You fill my stomach and feed me every day. I can't even offer You a 2x2 drawer and You give me such a big home. I don't do anything at all for You, and yet 24 hours a day You keep doing something or the other for me.

Think about it, the painstaking effort Prabhu takes for us. We can't even fathom it. I'm telling the youth especially, take just 2 moments and don't forget to be grateful for Prabhu, who makes our lives ideal. Whether it's through *mara*, through *paath*, through *Ashtakshar*, and if nothing else, then at least fold your hands and bow your head, but always remember His kindness. Start your bhakti with *Vandan* (bow down). *Vandan* has a lot of strength. The *Bhaqwat* begins with *Vandan* and ends with it too.

## Lila - Shri Yamunaji & Thakurani Teej

Thakurani Teej is an utsav celebrated on Shravan Sud Teej. This year, it will be celebrated on 19<sup>th</sup> August, 2023. The origin of this goes back to 1549 C.E. when Shri Mahaprabhuji was on his first "Prithvi Parikrama" (World Pilgrimage). Mahaprabhuji was only 14 at this time when He first set his feet at Shrimad Gokul (Town in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, India). He had a face full of *bhaav* and His lotus shaped eyes were filled with love for the Lord. His forehead was beaming with light. When this tender Swaroop of Shri Vallabh (Mahaprabhuji)

arrived here, apart from the twittering of the birds and the sound of the waves, there was no other sound to be heard.



Mahaprabhuji was glancing towards the two *Ghaats* (river banks) in front of him. Shri Vallabh then asked his sevak which of the two is Thakurani Ghaat and which one is Govind Ghaat. Just then, something unusual occurred; right from the gushing waves, a sixteen-year-old girl appeared in front of Shri Vallabh. She had a beautiful dark hue and had a very bright halo around her. She was adorned in hues of red, green and yellow. She was

also wearing a *mukut* (crown), necklace and earrings studded with diamonds and emeralds. She had a gentle smile on her face and a loving gaze.

All the sevaks who were with Shri Vallabh, including Shri Damodardasji, were amazed. With each step She took towards them, a lotus appeared. In a sweet *koyal* (Cuckoo) like voice, She told them that to Mahaprabhuji's right is Thakurani Ghaat and to His left is Govind Ghaat.

A wave of emotions rose in Shri Vallabh and He recognised the young girl, as Shri Yamunaji. As soon as She came closer, Shri Vallabh cupped both the palms of his hands in a gesture of *Namaskar*, bowed His head before Her and sang Her praise which flowed from His Shrimukh "Namami Yamuna Maham..." which we now know as Shri Yamunashtakam. This is the first of Sodash (Sixteen) Granths by Shri Vallabh (The Sodash Granth is the topic for this years Saptah Mahotsav in August).

Shri Yamunaji's Manorath is to give Bhakt's divine darshan of *Yugal Jodi* (Divine Couple – Shri Thakorji and Shri Swaminiji). One of the Ashtasakhas, Shri Surdasji visualised through his innermost eyes, the darshan of Shri Thakorji with Shri Swaminiji presiding over a *Hindola* (swing).



On this very bank of Thakurani Ghat, there is a '*Chakor*' Tree (a type of a tree) which is the embodiment of the 'Brahma', here both Shri Thakorji and Swaminiji swing in the *Hindola*.

## Basics Of Pushtimarg : Kirtan

Kirtan is one of the three crucial sevas offered to Shrinathji (along with Bhog and Shringar) as prescribed by Shri Gusainji. Singing or carefully listening to Kirtans has the ability to allow us to experience the leelas of Shrinathji. All the kirtans have been composed in present tense, and the lyrics are such that it gives you a feeling that any leela described in the kirtan is happening right now, in front of your own eyes.

These kirtans are special because of the *Ashtasakhas* (Eight friends) or *Ashta-chhap* (Eight designated) poets who have composed them. They composed and sang *pad*s (poetries) as they had darshan of the leela, allowing for these very vivid and meaningful recitations. These *Ashta Chhap* (Eight Designated) poets' *pad*s (poetries) are purely the revelation of devotional reflections of their personal experiences with Shri Krishna. By Thakorji's grace, their souls were experiencing an eternal blissful union with Shri Krishna and they perpetually participated in His divine Leelas.

Four of the *Ashtasakhas*, namely Shri Surdasji, Shri Kumbhandasji, Shri Krishnadasji and Shri Paramanandasji were the disciples of Shri Mahaprabhuji. The other four, Govindswamiji, Chitt Swamiji, Nanddasji and Chaturbhujdasji were the disciples of Shri Gusainji. They all were designated to sing as per the *ashta-pore samay* i.e. the eight periods of Shree seva and darshan.



Shri Surdasji is the most famous among the *Ashtasakhas*, who composed 125,000 *pad*s during his lifetime (108 years). Despite his physical blindness, he saw with his *Aantarchakshu* (Innermost eyes). Kumbhandasji is known for his depictions of his *anubhav* (experience) of the leelas of the *Yugal Swaroop* (Divine Couple - Shri Thakoriji and Shri Swaminiji). Parmanandasji sang the *mahima* (importance) of *Bal-Leela* (Infant form).

Most of the Kirtans are in Vraj bhasha (language of Vraj, India) which is the local dialect of the people residing in Vraj, and is hence easier to comprehend.

The *pad*s that we sing are based on the *rutu* (season) we are in and the time of darshan.

Each *Rutu* (season) has its own special *raag* (rhythm) in which most of the *pad*s (poetries) in that season are sung. These are the seasons: *Vasant* (Spring), *Grishma* (Summer), *Varsha*

(Monsoon), *Sharad* (Autumn), *Hemant* (Pre-winter), *Shishir* (Winter).

Kirtans are sung in a combination of *Raag* (Rhythm) and *Taal* (Beats). Some of the most frequently used *Raags* (Rhythms) include *Raag Malhar* (During Monsoon), *Raag Basant* (During Spring), *Raag Aasavari*, *Raag Malav*, *Raag Sarang* etc. The *Taals* (Beats) include *Taal Dhamaar*, *Tritaal*, *Chautaal*, *Chalti* etc. The most commonly used instruments include the Harmonium, the Jhanjh & the Tabla.



Darshan times also have their special set of *pad*s (poetries) for that time: *Mangla* (Wake-up & Breakfast), *Gwal* (Taking the cows for grazing), *Shringar* (Getting Dressed), *Rajbhog* (Lunch), *Utthapan* (Rising for Rest), *Bhog* (Dinner), *Sandhya Aarti* (Evening Prayer), *Shayan* (Sleep).

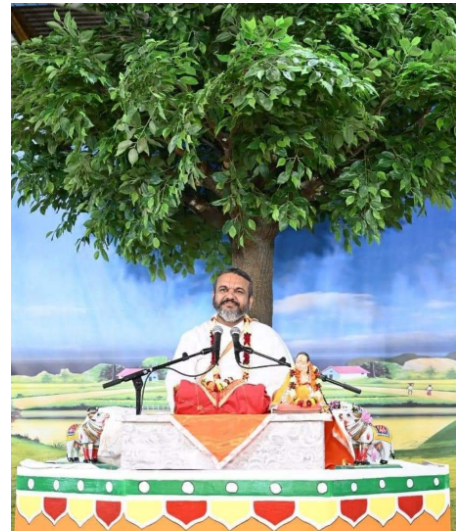
Special kirtans are also sung on various utsavs for e.g. *Janmashtami ke pad*, *Hindola ke pad*, *Vilas ke pad*, *Gangaour ke pad* etc. *Badhai* (Good wishes) ke pad can normally be sung on all occasions or on all utsavs.

All the kirtans are very close to Shri Thakorji's heart as they are sung by His *Priya Sakhas* (Close Friends). Therefore, Kirtan seva when done with the Bhog & Shringar seva makes it very special for Shri Thakorji.

If you really want to go back in time with Shri Thakorji, or even wish to come to closer to Shri Thakorji through seva, Kirtan seva is a beautiful way to do so. VSUK also arranges Kirtan classes. If you are interested, please contact **Chirag Tanna** from the Youth Group, who attends the classes : [+44 7939542637](tel:+447939542637).

## Experience of 84 Bethakji Katha By Kruti Dattani

Last year, from 20<sup>th</sup> August to 26<sup>th</sup> August 2022, 84 Bethakji Charitra Mahotsav was hosted by Vaishnav Sangh of UK in the divine presence of Vaishnavacharya Shree Dwarkeshlalji Mahodayshree (Kadi, Ahmedabad) at Harrow Leisure Centre in Harrow, London.



The stage was beautifully decorated like the trunk of a tree in a village, resembling the *Bethakji* where Shri Mahaprabhuji sat with his disciples. Miniature models of all 84 Bethakjis were also displayed, clearly depicting the different regions of the Bethakjis with their names. Jejeshri would do parikrama of all these Bethakjis with the Vaishnavs every day, giving Vaishnavs the *bhaav* (feeling) of doing *yatra* (travel) of all the 84 Bethakjis.



There were also Bethakjis placed for the manorathis to do seva each day. Every day began with offering Tilak, Malaji or flowers, and *Attar* (scent) for Shri Mahaprabhuji. After that, *Diya* (small clarified butter lamp) was lit and then Jejeshri would grace us with Katha.



We had different manoraths each day where the hall was decorated according to the manorath and the experience each day was simply divine. There were also dress codes according to each of the manoraths, which were beautifully followed by all the Vaishnavs. It was mesmerizing to see all the Vaishnavs co-ordinated in the unified *bhaav* (feeling or emotion) of love for Shri Thakorji.

The Manoraths were :

- 20<sup>th</sup> August – Shri Mahaprabhuji Pragatya
- 21<sup>st</sup> August – Shri Mahaprabhuji Kanka Abhishek
- 22<sup>nd</sup> August – Pratham Milan
- 23<sup>rd</sup> August – Shree Mahaprabhuji Vivah Khel
- 24<sup>th</sup> August – Champaran ma leela mevano Chhappan Bhog
- 25<sup>th</sup> August – Shree Mahaprabhujino Parivar
- 26<sup>th</sup> August – Thakurani Ghat par Chunri Manorath

Although all the manoraths above were very special, a couple of them totally took us back in time to the era where our beloved Shri Mahaprabhuji & Shri Yamunaji did various leelas with Shri Thakorji. Shri Mahaprabhuji's Pragatya Utsav was celebrated by Jejeshri Himself, turning it into a divine experience.

The Vaishnavs were overjoyed on the *Pragatya* (Birth) of their beloved Shri Mahaprabhuji and the celebration was as grand as Thakorji's Nandotsav.

Chunri Manorath gave us the bliss of doing the Manorath in Shree Yamunaji itself. Every Vaishnav in the entire hall could feel the spiritual *jal* (water) of Shri Yamunaji flowing through the *Chunris* (long yards of beautiful fabric) passing across the hall and showering blessings.

Kirtans were sung throughout, further elevating the experience. Everyday, katha was followed by *Prashad* (Food offered to Shri Thakorji).

It was a memorable lifetime experience for all. A massive thank you to all the Trustees, Volunteers, Caterers, Manorathis and the Donors to make this event such a beautiful experience.

**This year again, the Vaishnavs are looking forward to the Sodash Granth Saptah which will be held from 12<sup>th</sup> August to 18<sup>th</sup> August 2023. For further information, please refer to the Upcoming events section.**

## Getting to Know Youth Group Members

**Name:** Reema Kotecha

**Committee role:** Joint Secretary and National Events Coordinator - organising & managing our nationwide events (online and in person), liaising with & supporting regional reps and other committee members, helping with the organisation/record keeping of committee meetings

**What I do:** Trusts fundraiser at The Royal Marsden Cancer Charity - working with philanthropists to raise money to help fight & treat cancer

**What I enjoy:** Dancing, watching movies, engaging in community service work, travelling, trying new foods, and all things Bollywood!

**Something I couldn't live without:** My water bottle

**Favourite Food:** Thai

**Fun fact:** I grew up in Malawi and speak the local language, Chichewa!

**What I love about Pushtimarg:** There are so many types of Seva available for anyone with whatever skillset and I feel so close with the whole community.

**What I'm looking forward to with the youth group:** Meeting everyone in person and getting to know them better!

**What I enjoy about the youth group:** The opportunity to engage & socialise with like-minded people of similar ages and the chance to use this combined energy for the greater good of the Vaishnav community & beyond

