

Granth - Mangalacharan

The Mangalacharan is recited as the first step for any activity, either *Laukik* (worldly) or *Alaukik* (divine). The word *Mangal* means Auspicious and the word *Acharan* means behaviour. Hence, Mangalacharan literally means Auspicious Behaviour. It has been beautifully composed by Shri Gusainji (second son of Shri Vallabhacharyaji), and indeed invokes positivity upon reciting.



Any beginnings can be made auspicious by first remembering and bowing down to the divine auspicious lotus-like feet of Shrinathji and his various forms. The various forms of Shrinathji represent different emotions of joy and happiness i.e. Shri Govardhannathji, Shri Navneetpriyaji, Shri Mathuradhisji, Shri Vitthaleshi, Shri Dwarkadhishji, Shri Gokuleshprabhu, Shri Gokulchandramaji, Shri Madanmohanji, Shri Balkrishna and Shri Natvarlalji.

After worshipping Shri Thakorji, the divine preacher Shri Vallabhacharyaji, his son Shri Gusainji, his seven gracious sons, their descendants and Shri Yamunaji, who conferred on us the blessing of *Brahmasabandh* (the initiation of the religious journey) are also remembered within the Mangalacharan.

Shri Vallabhacharyaji's dust particles from his lotus-like feet takes away all the anxieties we may face by eliminating them from their source. One often worries about things beyond their control for example, the past, the present and the future. One big worry often has lot of small worries attached to it. One also often finds oneself in the darkness of the unknown. In such a situation, one must not worry about things they cannot impact. For instance, when turning on a flashlight in the dark, you will only be able to see until some distance. Therefore, one must only think about what can be seen and not beyond the flashlight. By taking a few steps at a time - the whole path will be crossed smoothly. This light of the flashlight can be seen to represent that knowledge given to us by Shri Vallabhacharyaji, Shri Gopinathji, Shri Gusainji and their descendants, to whom we bow down and prostrate at their feet.

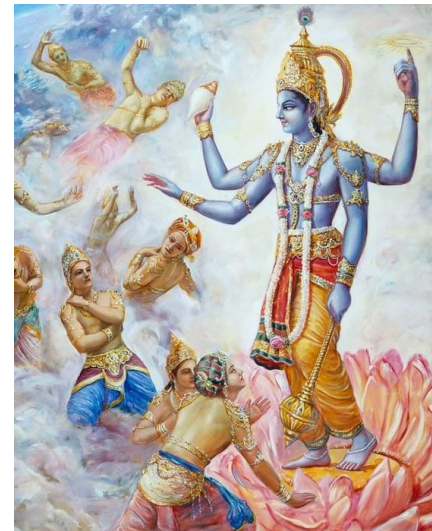
Within the Mangalacharan, we also bow down with folded hands to Shri Krishna, the perfect Purushottam, who is residing in the heart of Shri Mahaprabhuji in the milky and nectarine ocean of

leelas (acts), and who is worshipped by thousands of devotees, and who is the treasure of all. A devotee is blessed and fortunate to have been given the human form that has the capability to connect with the Lord Himself.



Lord Shri Krishna's leelas and teachings, are also offered respect, and are in the hearts of the devotees in the form of scriptures (Srimad Bhagwat) which describe the following in various chapters and sections: *Janma Prakarna* (subject of birth), *Tamas Prakarna* (subject of dullness), *Rajas Prakarna* (subject of passion), *Sattvik Prakarna* (subject of serenity) and *Gyan Prakarna* (subject of knowledge).

By bowing down again and again to the Supreme and its forms, one surrenders everything to Shri Thakorji and Shri Mahaprabhuji and also gets rid of *Ahankar* (ego). This humbleness is also of utmost importance before starting anything as it allows us to recognise that the true doer is Shri Thakorji.



To conclude, after remembering and paying respect to the Lord, the Guru, the *Leelas* (acts) of the Lord and the Scriptures with teachings of the Lord, one feels fully satisfied, fully blessed and is hence, now ready to make an auspicious beginning.

Utsav - Diwali

Diwali is celebrated on the 15th day of the Kartik month in the Hindu calendar and this year will fall on the 12th of November, with the celebrations commencing on the 9th and concluding on the 15th. Diwali is one of the most famous and widely celebrated festivals throughout Sanatan Dharma. It is observed in a very unique way in Pushtimarg specifically. Pushtimargya Vaishnavs celebrate Diwali over six days starting on *Rama Ekadashi* and ending on *Bhai Beej*. Diwali Seva in Pushtimarg not only includes all the quintessential Diwali traditions such as *deep daan* (donation of small lamps) and *Rangoli* (sand art) but also includes *Manoraths* (desires) like *Hatdi*, *Govardhan Puja* and *Annakut* which is explained in detail below. Additionally, Diwali in Pushtimarg is also around *Leelas* (acts) of Shree Krishna.

The first day of Diwali in Pushtimarg is *Rama Ekadashi*. *Rama Ekadashi* marks the start of the Diwali season. On this day a *Gopi*, a milkmaid in Vraj, called Rama gave the *vadhai* (well-wishing) of Diwali to Yashodaji hence marking the beginning of the *vadhai* of Diwali within Pushtimarg specifically.



The second day of Diwali is *Vagh Baras*. *Vagh Baras* is after the day of *Rama Ekadashi* which marks the start of the Diwali season. In general Hinduism, *Vagh Baras* is a day in which the cow and calf are venerated therefore this day is also known as *Govatsa Dwadashi*. *Vagh Baras* is usually also seen as a day to repay one's financial debts. However, in Pushtimarg, *Vagh Baras* is associated with a specific *Leela* (act) of Shree Krishna and Lord Brahma. Lord Brahma heard about Shree Krishna's glory and how he performs miraculous and divine acts which were seemingly impossible for a boy who appeared to Lord Brahma as a simple child playing with his friends and herding the cows. On observation of this childlike and innocent nature of Shree Krishna Lord Brahma doubted Shree Krishna's divine nature. To challenge Shree Krishna, Lord Brahma stole all the cows when they went far while grazing as well as the cowherd boys and took them to his abode - *Brahma lok*. Shree Krishna immediately understood what was happening and who was responsible. As a result, Shree Krishna simply assumed the forms of both the cowherd boys and cows for a year until Brahma noticed and was incredibly bewildered at the sight of Shree Krishna enjoying his lunch with his friends and cows who were supposedly still asleep in his *Brahma lok*. Brahma, utilising divine vision understood that all of the cowherd boys and cows were expansions of Shree Krishna leading Brahma to ask for forgiveness and returning the original cowherd boys and cows to Shree Krishna.

Dhanteras is the second day of Diwali. *Dhanteras* marks a day in general Hindu practice on which Hindus give thanks for their wealth. Yashodaji celebrated this festival, according to the *Kirtan Sahitya*, by washing her material wealth "*Dhan dhovat Nandrani*". However, for Shree Krishna and the *Vrajvasis*, their true wealth is their cows. Therefore, they celebrate *Dhanteras* by washing and decorating their cows. Additionally, on the day of *Dhanteras*, the *Manorath* (desire) of *Deepmalika* (the lighting of diyas in front of Thakorji) and *Hatdi* start in *Shayan Darshan* (evening Darshan). *Hatdi* is a small pavilion decorated with mirrors in which Thakorji sells various sweets and other goods which are used in the Govardhan Pujan. Thakorji sits in the *Hatdi* alongside different stock to sell as well as weighing scales in order to sell to the *Vrajvasis*.



The third day of Diwali is *Roop Chaturdashi*. Today this is also known as *Naraka Chaturdashi*, On this day Shree Krishna defeated the demon Narakasur at the request of His wife Satyabhama who was enraged by the way Narakasur treated his wives and other women. The story of Narakasur is very significant as it highlights the importance of association. Narakasur was previously seen as incredibly pious and devout, however, through his association with a demon called Banasura he became demonic in his character, highlighting the importance of the environment that one surrounds themselves with. In Vraj, on this day, Yashodaji awakens Shree Krishna early in the morning and bathes Him with *kesar* (saffron) and *abhyang* (a paste consisting of *chandan*, *kesar*, *amla* and *phulel*) and adorns Him with beautiful clothes and ornaments.

The fourth day of the festivities is Diwali. On this day the manoraths of *Hatdi* and *Deepmalika* are continued and at this day they reach their peak with elaborate and beautiful Rangolis being drawn in front of Thakorji in *Shayan Darshan* whilst He sits in the *Hatdi* selling masses of stock to the *Vrajvasis* (residents of Vraj) for Govardhan Pujan the next day. On Diwali, Shree Krishna performs the *Leela* of *Kan Jagaai* in which He goes to the *gaushala* (cowshed) and invites the cows in their ears to attend early and participate in the Govardhan Pujan. Alongside the decoration of *Hatdi* and *Deepmalika*, there is also the placement of *Chopat* (a game) in front of Thakorji during *Rajbhog Darshan* (afternoon Darshan) alongside his other toys. However, as in Vraj there is a tradition of playing *Chopat* throughout the night of Diwali, *Chopat* also has its place in the *Shayan Darshan* (evening Darshan).

Govardhan Puja takes place on the day after Diwali and is one of the most important festivals within Pushtimarg. Usually on this day, the inhabitants of Vraj would offer veneration to *Lord Indra* (the God of rain) to make sure there was rain for their crop. However, Shree Krishna convinced the *Vrajvasis* to worship Mount Govardhan and the cows instead of Lord Indra as He

hills they should worship Govardhan. Shree Krishna then directed the Vrajvasis to utilise all of the objects that they intended to use for the worship of Indra to the worship of Govardhan. Then, during the puja, according to the Shrimad Bhagvatam, Krishna transformed himself into another body to gain the confidence of the gopas, saying 'I am the mountain' the huge form ate the lavish offering. Seeing this, Indra was infuriated that the Vrajvasis had abandoned him and had taken refuge in Shree Krishna and sent destructive rains down to Vraj. However, as the Vrajvasis had taken shelter in Shree Krishna He effortlessly lifted the Govardhan mountain and sheltered them, which humbled Indra's arrogance as he realised the true nature of Shree Krishna. Thus Shree Krishna is known as Indradaman - the one who humbled Indra. This symbolises the way in which Shree Krishna directs his devotees from material divinities towards the Supreme Goal.



In addition, the process of Shree Krishna protecting the Vrajvasis with Govardhan is symbolic of *Pushti Sharan* (shelter) in which through His grace Shree Krishna protects the souls which have surrendered to Him. Therefore, this day, Govardhan Puja is done by offering milk, water, Yamuna Jal, Ganga Jal, Abil and Gulaal on Mount Govardhan across all Havelis. Also on this day in Havelis and the houses of Vaishnavs (with the permission of their Guru) Annakut is offered too Thakorji. The term Annakut is composed of two words - Anna and kut. Anna refers to grain or rice and kut means mountain - therefore a mountain of rice is offered as a necessity in Annakut. This mountain of rice has a specific *bhaav* (intention) in its decoration. The heap of rice symbolises the heart of Shree Krishna, *gugra* (name of a delicacy) is made and placed in the top and in the sides of the heap which symbolises the head and arms of Shree Krishna. Alongside this, a multitude of different *samagris* (delicacies) is offered to Thakorji. This Annakut is considered to be a yagna meaning a traditional fire offering in Pushtimarg.

The final day of the Diwali celebratory period is Bhai Beej. This day celebrates the Leela of Yamuna Ma. On this day, Yamuna Ma invited her brother, Yamraj, the Lord of Death to Her home. He was incredibly impressed and overcome by her love and welcoming nature and therefore wanted to grant her a wish in

return. Therefore Yamuna Ma, who always cares for her children, asked that those who perform Yamuna Snan and Paan - the drinking and bathing of the water of the Yamuna would never have to suffer in Yamlok - the abode of Yamraj. Therefore, many bathe in the Yamuna on this day and celebrate her graceful boon. Additionally, it is also a tradition on this day for brothers to visit their sisters - therefore tilak is done to Thakorji on behalf of his sister Subhadraji.

Kirtan: Rang Dhanashree

Dekho ri Hari bhojan khat

See Hari eat with a thousand arms

Sahas bhuja dhari jeanvat hain, itahi kahat gopani sauna bat

Over there He is talking with the Gopis

Lalita kahati dekho ho radha, jau teraian man bat samai

Lalita says to Radha, "See, there He is!

The One who inhabits your heart"

Dhanya sabi Gokul ke vasi, sang rahat Gokul ke nath

Blessed are all those who live

with the Lord of Gokul

Jeanvat dekha Nand sukh dino, ati anand Gokul nar nari

Nanda is elated to see Him eat

All the men and women of Gokul are also full of joy

Surdas-swami sukh-sagar, gun-agar, nagar, dai tari

Sings Surdas, "Krishna is an ocean of bliss and full of virtue

Now He dances to the beat of the Gopis' clapping hands

Tirth - Girirajji

There was a huge mountain made of dark stones situated in Vraj (region in Uttar Pradesh, India). On this mountain, were peacocks and monkeys, cows, and tigers, all living in harmony with each other. Cowherds and cattle herds lived around this mountain. They had hundreds and thousands of cows who gave so much milk each day, enough for a river to flow. This mountain was hence named Govardhan. "Go" means cows and "Vardhan" means nourishment. It is the same mountain that Shri Thakorji had manifested with Shri Swaminiji as the home for His *leelas* (acts).

In 1409 C.E., on the day of Nag Panchami, a cowherd lost of his cows and started climbing the mountain in search for her. There, a divine left hand, dark in colour, curved up as if lifting something, appeared from the top of the Govardhan mountain. The *Vrajvasis* (residents of Vraj) were amazed by this miracle, and were wondering as to what it might be, when an old wise man suggested that it must be the Swaroop of Shri Krishna when he had lifted the Govardhan mountain for 7 days with his left hand.

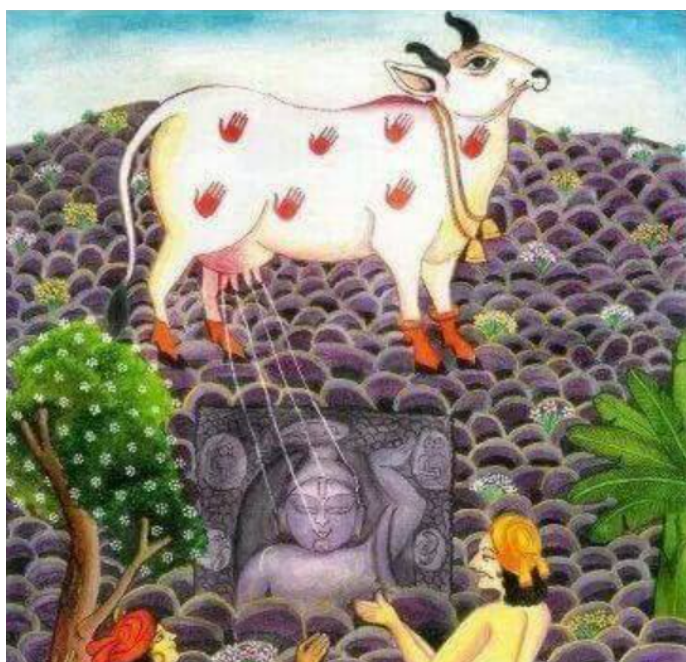
He reminded them that 5000 years ago, in *Dwapar Yug* (the second cycle of time in the history of the world), when *Indra Dev* (Lord of rain) had opened rain and storm on Vraj, young 7-year-old Krishna had saved the village by lifting the mountain on the little finger of His left hand, and all the *Vrajvasis* had come and taken shelter under it. After the storm ended, the *Vrajvasis* worshipped this left hand, and that the hand appeared must be that left hand. The villagers were mesmerised listening to this and started worshipping the arm, which came to be known as "*Urdhva Bhuja*" meaning upward arm. On praying to the *Urdhva Bhuja*, the desires of the villagers would be fulfilled, and their problems would be solved.

69 years had passed since this event happened, and one day in the month of Vaishakh, the *Mukharvind* (divine beautiful face) of that left hand, appeared over the rocks of Govardhan. It had big

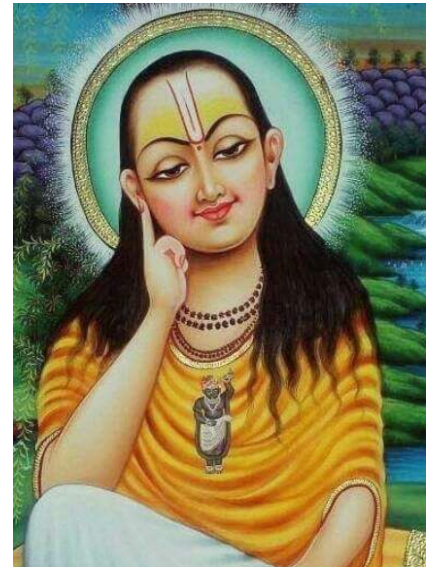
beautiful downcast eyes, a strong square jaw, lips like petals of a lotus and colour that was like dark rainy clouds. It was an adorable face. On the same day, far away from this miracle in Vraj, a baby was born in the eastern district of Champaranya in India, to a learned Telugu Brahmin family. His name was Shri Vallabh who is today also known as our beloved Shri Mahaprabhuji. From this day forward, all those friends who had played with Shri Krishna in *Dwapar Yug* started taking birth in places around Vraj.



On the foothills of Govardhan mountain, there was a village named Anyor, where lived a cowherd named Sadu Pande. One of the cows in his cowshed was called Dhumar, who was a direct descendant of a cow who had lived in Shri Krishna's father, Nandbaba's house. During the grazing time, the cow grazed and played with other cows, but before sunset, she would wander away, climbing up the Govardhan mountain, and would then return. This went on for 6 months, then Sadu Pande noticed that Dhumar's milk production had gone down. He, hence, started following her. When he followed her to the top of the Govardhan mountain, he saw Dhumar stop above the face and left hand of the deity of Govardhan and release her milk. Sadu Pande stood stunned as the adorable divine face opened His mouth and let the milk flow directly in, relishing every drop. Sadu Pande's heart filled with joy, and then the divine face started talking directly to him, narrating His various leelas. He also requested Sadu Pande to feed him with the milk of Dhumar twice everyday. On returning, Sadu Pande, narrated this to his family and his daughter Naro, would go up to the mount Govardhan twice everyday and offer Dhumar's milk to Shri Thakorji.



Few years passed by when Shri Thakorji continued to amaze the Vrajvasis with His leelas. This was also the time when Kumbhandas met Shri Thakorji and they both became best friends. On the other side, Shri Vallabh had now grown up to be a young and intelligent scholar. He was learned as well as pious. He was to start a philosophical journey across India, when a sweet voice like music came to Him and said, "I have appeared on the mountain of Govardhan as Govardhannathji. The Vrajvasis have seen my face, and they wish to see all of me. But I will wait for you until I come out. So come and find me as soon as you can. Do my seva, teach my seva to the others. The *jeevs* (souls) from my Krishna avatar are all here and waiting for you to guide them. Come to me." Shri Vallabh felt like His life had found its meaning. This came to Him like the calling of everything He was meant to be.



Seeking the Lord who had beckoned him, Shri Vallabh travelled towards the North, until he reached the Govardhan mountain, which was so huge, that its shadow fell in the Yamuna River. He made a stop at Anyor where Sadu Pande welcomed and hosted him and his disciples in his home. There, Shri Vallabh again heard the same sweet voice, "Arey Naro, get me my milk". Shri Vallabh immediately recognised the voice and Sadu Pande told him how the divine face appeared. As soon as Naro returned, Shri Vallabh asked for left-over drops of milk in the bowl and for the first time, consumed the same as Shri Thakorji's *prasadi* (blessed food). That night, Shri Vallabh and Vrajvasis had discussions about scriptures and Shri Vallabh told the Vrajvasis that it is the same *swaroop* (form) of the Lord of the world, Shrinathji Himself, of which Nandbaba and Yashoda Maiya had done seva thousands of years ago. Also, Sadu Pande, surrendered himself to Shri Vallabh as a disciple.

The next morning, at the first crack of dawn, Shri Vallabh set off from Sadu Pande's house to climb Govardhan mountain. When he was still a few yards away, the divine face, filled with excitement, climbed out from within the rocks and started running towards Shri Vallabh. The two embraced as if they had known each other forever, as if they had been separated for ages, throwing their arms around each other. That was a divine sight for the sore eyes and is today known as "*Pratham Milan*" meaning the first meeting. That day, Shri Vallabh made a meal of cooked grains for Shrinathji, and for the first since His appearance, Shri Thakorji ate a morsel of rice, which we even today, call as *Sakhdi Bhog*.

Shri Vallabh, then adorned Shri Thakorji on a throne, made a temple for him and adorned him with white cloth, peacock feather and a *Gunja Mala* (made from beads of Rosary Pea plant). In the next few weeks, Shri Vallabh started arranging everything that Shrinathji would require in the guidance of Shrinathji Himself and gradually prescribed the entire *seva pranali* (procedure for service) in detail. From food to garments, adornments to darshan, he designed it all keeping the comfort and content of Shrinathji in mind. Shri Vallabh later travelled the whole of India and established "*Pushtimarg*", the path of grace, guiding all the pious *jeevs* (souls) that had been lost from Shri Krishna for ages, back to Him.

This is the same Lord Shri Krishna, who in this original form, currently resides in Shrinathji, *Nathdwara* (place in Rajasthan, India). The stones of Govardhan, on the other hand, thus have the imprints of the leelas of Lord Shri Krishna and the mountain holds a special place in the hearts of the devotees. The *pooja* (prayer ritual) and *parikrama* (circumnavigation) of Govardhan is done even today, taking one back to the time when Lord Shri Krishna used to perform His *leelas* (acts).



Shri Girirajdharan ki Jai!

- Shri Girirajji in Jatipura in Vraj, India – Mountain in Vraj, India where Shri Thakorji spent his childhood and later appeared as Shrinathji
- *Gau Mukh* (mouth of a cow) - Grass fed to cows is equivalent to feeding Lord Himself
- Shri Mahaprabhuji – Our beloved spiritual Guru

Q - What is the difference between Dussang and Satsang ?

A – Spending time with those when it doesn't remind you of the Lord is Dussang and spending time with ones who always remind you of the Lord is Satsang. If you have such people around you who will remind you to bow down to the Lord in respect, do *seva* or sing for the Lord; consider yourself to be very lucky. That person could be anyone, any family member or any friend. It is a blessing to be connected with such people and one must always have them in their lives.

Meet the Youth

Name: Mahima Dalal

Committee Role: London West Representative, I keep in touch with all the youths in the London West area and keep them up to date with any events, meet ups, volunteering opportunities and many more. Also hear if anyone wants to talk, meet up and wants any help or advice



What I do: Project Manager for a Mobile Industry company

What I enjoy: I love to read in my spare time, watch new movies & TV shows. I also enjoy traveling and going to new places to try new food

Something I couldn't live without: My kindle! It comes before my phone

Favourite Food/Colour/Person: Pizza & Palak Paneer / Red / Harry Styles

Fun Fact: I puked in Ikea once and my mum shared the story on BBC Radio 1

What I love about Pushtimarg: It brings me joy and happiness; I am always learning something new and being able to incorporate that to my day-to-day life

What I'm looking forward to with the Youth Group: All the upcoming events such as the Katha in August and the Diwali Magazine. Some upcoming meet ups in London, also interacting with other youths

What I enjoy about the Youth Group: Meeting new people, volunteering and helping the community

Did you know?

Q - Why is Gunja Mala (Necklace Made of beads of Rose pea plant) adorned to Shri Thakorji at the end of Shringar?

A – Gunja Mala has four colours: black, white and red beads bound with yellow thread. It was first adorned by Shri Vallabh to Shri Thakorji after their "*Pratham Milan*" (first meeting) in Vraj. There is a significance of the beads of the Gunja Mala, the four colours represent four different groups of Gopijans: Yellow of Swamniji i.e. Radhaji, White of Chandravali, Red of Lalitaji and Black of Kumarika Shri Yamunaji. These are also the exact four colours in Holi arrived from *Chova* of Shri Yamunaji, *Chandan* of Swamniji, *Abil* of Changravali and *Gulal* of Lalitaji. This Mala, hence captures the *Bhaav* (emotions) of all the *Vrajbhaktas* (devotees in Vraj). Hence, once the entire Shringar is done, Gunja Mala is adorned in remembering all the groups of Gopijans, and Shri Thakorji is very pleased.

Q - What is considered as Shri Thakorji's Mukh (Face)?

- A – Following are considered to be the Shrimukh (Face) of Shri Thakorji:
- *Agni* (fire) in *Yagna Kund* (fire pit) – Fire in sacred fire pit is considered as face of the Lord and is hence, always lit as a witness of religious rituals and important events like marriage, house warming, etc.
 - *Brahmins* (caste in India designated to serve as priests and/or spiritual teachers) - that's why *Brahm Bhojan* (feeding Brahmins) is considered equivalent to feeding Lord Himself

Upcoming Events

- Monthly National Zoom Satsang
26th November & 17th December at 10:30 AM

Contact **Vicki Mehta** (07972 211 622) for more information