

Granth - Aashray nu Pad

Source: https://youtu.be/K6dnH5pPXwc?si=ValP6kvV_L9JC79u

Aashray nu pad was composed by Shri Surdasji, who was one of the Ashta-Sakhas (eight friends) of Shri Thakorji. Shri Surdasji had composed more than a hundred thousand songs for Shri Thakorji. Once he was asked that why does he write only for Shri Thakorji and not for Shri Mahaprabhuji? At that time, he replied that he sees no difference in Shri Thakorji and Shri Mahaprabhuji. All his compositions are for both as they are one and the same. He then added that the composition he was then going to sing was the summary of all his compositions put together so far and then he composed Aashray nu Pad "Dhrad In Charanan Kero Bharoso... Dhrad In Charanan Kero...."

Aashray literally means shelter. On doing Seva (serving) and Satsang (singing Gods names) all day, we receive the "Fal" (return) in the form of Aashray (shelter) of Shri Mahaprabhuji's lotus feet.



Picture denoting Surdasji in front of Shri Thakorji

On reciting the Aashray nu Pad, each verse denotes each of the following: *Dharm* (righteousness), *Arth* (prosperity), *Kaam* (desire), *Moksh* (salvation) of a *Vaishnav* - all of this is achieved as a *fal* (fruit).

It means that one must firmly believe and surrender oneself to the feet of the Lord. In Pushtimarg, the *Dharm* (right act) of a *Vaishnav* is to have *Daas Bhaav* i.e. completely surrender to the feet of Shri Thakorji as a *Sevak* (one who serves).

Attaining the Darshan of the lustre of the "Nakhchandra" i.e. nails of the feet of Shri Vallabh, the ten nails of the feet representing the 10 types of *Bhakti* (devotion), which bring light into the otherwise dark world; this light is the *Arth* (true wealth) for a *Vaishnav*.

There is no other "Saadhan" (tool or way) in this *Kaliyug* (age of darkness) to attain the grace of the Lord. It hence also fulfils the *Kaam* (desire) as a *Vaishnav* does not feel the need to seek anything else once he has the grace of the Lord with him.

Shri Surdasji, being "Dividha Aandhro" i.e. doubly blind by physical eyes, selflessly does the invaluable seva for the Lord without expecting or asking for anything in return. It hence, implies that he has firm faith in the Lord and that a devotee must also, without any doubt, completely surrender oneself to the Lord forever. This itself gives *Moksh* (salvation) to the devotee.

Hence, one successfully attains all the four types of *Purusarth* (efforts) i.e. *Dharm*, *Arth*, *Kaam* and *Moksh* on reciting Aashray nu pad after doing Seva and Satsang. Aashray nu pad, therefore, is of utmost importance and the *Rashtagaan* (anthem) of Pushtimarg. It is sung as the twelfth and the last Leela (Act) of the Leela *Kram* (order of activities) of the day for Shri Thakorji.

One must also recite Aashray nu pad every night before going to bed in order to reaffirm ones surrender to Shri Mahaprabhuji's lotus feet.

Utsav - Shri Gusainji Patotsav

In our Pushtimarg sampradaya, *Utsav* (festivals) play a very important role. Celebrating different festivals not only brings us joy but also helps us establish all kinds of relationship with our dearest Shri Thakorji.

In this article, we are going to discuss about Shri Gusainji Pragatya Utsav (*Pragatya* meaning appear, and *Utsav* meaning festival) and why this day is also famously known as Jalebi Utsav.

Shri Gusainji Pragatya is the birthday of Shri Gusainji, the second son of Shri Mahaprabhuji. The Utsav falls on 9th day of dark fortnight of *Magsar* month (as per Hindu calendar). Shri Gusainji, also known as Shri Vitthalnathji means one who removes *Avidya* (ignorance) by knowledge and establishes the soul in Pushtimarg.

Gusainji's Pragatya (Birth) Story

When Shri Vallabh (Shri Mahaprabhuji) was on His visit to Pandaharpur, Shri Vitthalnathji expressed His desire which was very close to His heart to Shri Vallabh and asked Him to promise to fulfill it. Shri Vitthalnathji expressed His desire by stating 'Hoon Nandan, Tame Taat' meaning He wished to be the son and Shri Vallabh to be His father.

Just before the pragatya of Shri Gusainji, a brahmin bearing *Japiji* (used to carry Shri Thakorji) with *Swaroop* (idol) of Shri Vitthalnathji arrived at Mahaprabhuji's doorstep and presented Him with the *Swaroop* and requested Him to make him His devotee. Thinking this as a wish of Shri Krishna, Shri Vallabh placed the *Swaroop* in Haveli and accepted Brahmin as His devotee.

Shri Gusainji is also considered an incarnation of Shri Vitthalnathji and in this way, Shri Krishna was united with Shri Vallabh in the *Swaroop* (form), gifted by the Brahmin, and also as a child (Shri Gusainji).

During the time of incarnation of Shri Gusainji, Shri Vallabhacharya settled down with his family in Charnaat near Varanasi and on the auspicious day of Magshar Vad Navami in 1572 Samvat as per Hindu Chronology (i.e. 1516 C.E.), Shri Gusainji was born. Gusainji's birthday falls on 9th and this figure of nine according to Hindu scriptures and calendar is considered the complete number, signifying Pushti Poorna Purshotaam (the

full and complete incarnation). It is the day of incarnation of the Lord himself. Just like in Krishna avatar where Baldevji (Balaramji) was first born and Shri Krishna was born second, Shri Gopinathji who is Baldevji's avatar was first born to Shri Mahaprabhuji and then Shri Gusainji the lord himself was born second. Hence Shri Vallabh's agony of separation of Shri Krishna, which He was constantly going through, came to a pleasant end.



Shri Gusainji is also considered an incarnation of Shri Vittahnathji and in this way, Shri Krishna was united with Shri Vallabh in the Swaroop (form), gifted by the Brahmin, and also as a child (Shri Gusainji).



Darshan of Shri Gusainji's Swaroop at Shrinathdham Haveli, London

Gusainji's Key Contributions to Pushtimarg:

- Shri Gusainji continued to establish the tradition of singing religious (*Paads*), kirtans - in praise of Shri Thakorji - by appointing 4 additional devotees along with previous four appointed by Shri Mahaprabhuji, calling them Ashta-sakhas (eight friends, poets)
- He was the protector of cows, and he stopped the killing of the cows
- He was also honoured by the name of 'Goswami' – Lord of cows, by the emperor Akbar and is continued to this day
- He is the pioneer of inclusion of Raag, Bhog and Shringar in Shrinathji's *nitya* (daily) and Utsav seva which are the main pillars of our Pushtimarg dharma, and which are practiced today in the seva of Shrinathji
- Shri Gusainji also wrote various holy scriptures amongst which includes 'Sarvottam Stotra' and 'Shri Vallabaashtak' both of which are in praise of Shri Mahaprabhuji, which are still recited by Vaishnavas today
- He was a great painter, an artist, vocal singer, a poet, musician, and he devoted all his gifts to the service of God. He was only 10 years old, when he created his own *paad*. The lyrics and the *bhaav* of the kirtan's *paad* was so exotic, that even Shrinathji was pleased with the kirtan

- He has among his followers rich persons, poets, artists and persons of all the classes, irrespective of caste, creed or colour. Though there were a number of disciples of Shri Gusaiji, the 252 Vaishnavs are very well known for their service and are recorded in the scripture with the same name
- One of the best-known *manoraths* (acts of pleasing Shri Thakorji), Chappan bhog was also initiated during Shri Gusainji's time
- On Sharad Purnima's darshan, Shri Gusainji was honoured by the emperor Akbar and was gifted an enormous diamond that rests today on Shrinathji's chin and since then it has come to occupy a special place in the shringar of Shrinathji's. It was given the name of Chibuk
- He too, like Shri Mahaprabhuji, has taken efforts to travel around India to spread the ideology of Pushtimarg. His '28 Bethakji' (a seat where Pushti thoughts were learned and propagated) are very well known and been followed by our Pushtimarg sampradaya
- Shri Gusainji presided over the earth graciously for 72 years. He had four daughters, and seven sons and Shri Gusainji distributed the seven *Swaroops* (idols) of the Lord to his seven sons and set up seven Havelis for them. These are known as 'Nidhi' Swaroop. (*Nidhi* means one's personal and most previous wealth)

Jalebi Utsav

The story behind Jalebi Utsav is very interesting. One evening Shri Gusainji visited Gokul to perform seva of Shri Navneetpriyaji. On the same day, 8th day of dark fortnight of Magsar month (1 day before Shri Gusainji's Pragatya Utsav) at Shri Girirajji mandir, Shri Ramdasji (head priest) was offering shringar to Shrinathji and Shri Kumbhandasji was reciting Kirtans.

At that time, Shrinathji said, "Ramdasji, Kumbhandasji do you know that on my birthday, Shri Gusainji arranges grand celebration. And it's my wish to surprise him and celebrate his birthday, in a grand manner." Shri Ramdasji enquired as to which *samagri* (food offering) he should prepare, and Shrinathji responded that it should be JALEBI "Raas Roop Jalebi Sidh Karo". Shrinathji explained that life of Vitthalnathji (Gusainji) is filled with 'Ras' (full of sweet thoughts) and there is no better way to celebrate than to serve and enjoy full of sweet Jalebis.

After seva Shri Ramdasji gathered all the *sevaks* (volunteers) and told them "*Raas Roop Jalebi siddh karvani che*" (we need to prepare jalebis), as tomorrow is the pragatya day of Shri Gusainji and it is Shrinathji's wish to celebrate in a grand manner.



Shri Sadu Pande became excited and said he will bring the *Ghee* (clarified butter) and *Mendo* (wheat flour) for the *samagri* from his house. Shri Kumbhandasji went home and found out that he had no money for the *samagri*. But without getting disappointed, he decided to sell his 2 oxes and 2 cows and gave the money to

Shri Ramdasji to buy the *samagri*. Shri Ramdasji ordered some sugar with this money. All the sevaks got together and made jalebi the whole night.

Next day, on the day of *Magsar vad Navami*, jalebi was offered to Shrinathji during Rajbhog. Shrinathji gave *aagya* (permission) to Kumbhandasji to recite Shri Gusainji ki *Badhai* (celebration paads). Shri Kumbhandasji recited the kirtan and this made Shrinathji very happy. Shri Gusainji was incredibly surprised to see such celebrations on his birthday organised by none other than Shri Thakorji himself.

Now from that day onwards until today, on the Utsav of Shri Gusainji, Jalebis are offered to Shri Thakorji in all the bhogs offered to him right from Mangla to Shayan bhog which Thakorji accepts whole heartedly and lovingly partakes. For that reason, this Utsav is also known as Jalebi Utsav.

One small Kirtan by Krishnadas in Raag “Kanhro” for all to sing along on this auspicious day:

*Pram Krapal Shri vallabhndan,
karat Krupa neej hast nai mathe,
Je jun saran aye anusarhi, grahi sonpat
Shri Govardhannathe..... (1)*

*Param udar chatur Chintamani,
rakhat bhavdhara bahi jate,
Braj “Krishnadas” kaaj sab sarhi,
jo jaane Shri Vitthalnath..... (2)*

Meaning: Shri Vallabh’s son Shri Vitthalnathji is most merciful to anyone who surrenders to Him as He holds His hand and leads Him to God (Shri Govardhannathji). He (Shri Gusainji) is very polite and kind to all the beings and wants all Pushti souls to unite with God so says “Krishnadas” as he praises Shri Vitthalnathji.

Also, Jeeshri in his recent katha in Ahmedabad on 28th Dec’23 stated that our actual Pushtimarg year starts from Janmashtami when Shri Krishna takes birth and enters into our lives, and if you don’t get to celebrate all the Utsavs in Pushtimarg at least try to celebrate three main Utsavs of Pushtimarg in a year - 1. Your Thakorji’s Patotsav (birth tithi of your Thakorji you worship at home). 2. Shri Mahaprabhuji’s Utsav. 3. Shri Gusainji’s Utsav. Because without these three Utsavs no other Utsavs would have existed for us to celebrate and Shri Mahaprabhuji’s and Shri Gusainji’s Utsav is very near and dear to our Thakorji which He Himself likes to celebrate.

Param Dayal Shri Gusainji ki jai!!

Tirth - Vraj

Shri Krishna spent 11 years and 52 days in Vraj and most of His childhood *leelas* are memorialised in this place, in its temples, in its *kunds* (lakes) and its *vans* (forests). Vraj is the backdrop to Shri Krishna’s life, and the atmosphere we attempt to recreate in Seva as Vaishnavs is inspired by the inhabitants and the environments of Vrindavan. This means it is integral for a Vaishnav to visit Vraj to understand the *Bhaav*, or emotions which the *Vraj Vasis* (residents of Vraj) hold as it is believed that their Bhaav for Shri Krishna is incredibly exalted. Every place in Vraj is considered to be strongly divine and sacred as Shri Krishna walked through Vraj daily barefoot with His friends and herding His cows. Vraj houses places where Shri Krishna played with His brother Shri Dauji (Balaram) as well as places in which He courted Radha, and each place holds an imprint of His divine acts (*Leelas*). Therefore, Vraj is a very revered and sought-after place of pilgrimage for Vaishnavs. One important fact that Jeeshri highlights when discussing Vraj is that Vraj is not a

historical place, where things happened in the past tense. Shri Krishna is eternally performing His Leela’s in Vraj – therefore Vraj should always be considered in the present. There are many holy places in Vraj which are incredibly important to visit. One of them is Shri Giriraj, the mount Govardhan which is central to Vraj . Shri Giriraj is honoured as the *Kul Dev* (family God) of all Vaishnavs and is the same mountain which Shri Krishna lifted to protect the Vraj Vasis as well as from which the *Swaroop* (form) of Shrinathji appeared from 500 years ago. The temple in which Shrinathji used to reside in still remains. Therefore, it is necessary to see Shri Giriraj when one goes to Vraj. Many will do *Parikrama* (circumambulation) of Shri Giriraj by walking around the mountain. Another key place to visit in Vraj is Yamuna *Ghat* (banks). There are eleven Ghats of the Yamuna in Vraj which are all associated with different Leela’s of Shri Krishna. Just as Giriraj is our Kul Dev, Yamuna Ma is our *Kul Devi* (family goddess) and therefore is honoured in Vraj. Alongside this, Shri Krishna and His friends bathe and play in the waters of the Yamuna, and the banks of the Yamuna hold witness to the divine Raas Leela.



Additionally, it is believed that every time when one visits Vraj, they must start their trip by paying their respects to Yamuna Ma in Her river form before visiting any other religious places as it is through Her grace that one has been given access to the spiritual land that is Vraj. In the Shrimad Bhagvatam, the *Gopi*’s (milkmaids of Vraj) are called Vrajangana, or a part of Vraj after bathing in the Yamuna, highlighting how Yamuna Ma’s *Krupa* (grace) is necessary to reach Shri Krishna. Additionally, Vraj houses many Bethakji’s of Shri Mahaprabhuji. One incredibly significant one is on the banks of Yamunaji on Vishram Ghat. At this Bethakji Shri Yamunaji appeared to Shri Mahaprabhuji, who composed the Yamunashtakam on that spot.

Alongside this there are a multitude of other places to visit in Vraj which are all associated to a specific Leela of Shri Krishna. For example, Radha Kund is a lake Shri Radha and Her friends built using their bangles and filled with water and therefore is highly revered. Other places include Kusum Sarovar where Shri Radha comes to pick flowers for Her friends and have secret conversations with Shri Krishna.



This includes: Madan Mohan Mandir, Radha Shyamsundar Mandir, Radha Damodar Mandir, Radha Gokulananda Mandir, Radha Raman Mandir, Radha Gopinath Mandir and Govind devji Mandir. These Mandirs are known as the *Saptdevalay* of Vraj and are some of the eldest and most historic Mandirs within Vraj. There are also many places in Vraj in which Shri Krishna's Leelas are still occurring, one of these places is Nidhivan. In Nidhivan it is said that Shri Radha and Shri Krishna and the *Gopis* (milkmaids of Vraj) still come every night to the forest to dance the *Raas-Leela* which has led the forest to be closed every night to preserve its sanctity. Therefore, Vraj is home to many magical and divine places which are incredibly dear to Shri Krishna.

Did you know?



Q - When should one seek *Brahmsambandh* for their children? Is it recommended they are given *Brahmsambandh* a young age or should one wait till they become of an understandable age?

A – Parents must seek *Brahmsambandh* for their children as soon as they are of such age when they are able to hear and speak clearly, so that they can speak the *Brahmsambandh* Mantra clearly. One

need not wait till they grow up completely as at that time the circumstances may or not be appropriate. Once a soul attains *Brahmsambandh*, Shri Thakorji accepts the soul and then Shri Thakorji Himself will draw the soul closer to Him with time. One

must trust Shri Thakorji entirely with this as Thakorji has promised Shri Mahaprabhuji that once He has accepted a soul through *Brahmsambandh*, He shall never let go

Q - When are cow toys offered to Shri Thakorji during seva?

A – For *Nitya Kram* (daily routine), cows can be offered to Shri Thakorji during *Shringar* and during *Rajbhog* when *Khand Paat* (serving tables for various offerings to Shri Thakorji) are offered.

Apart from that, cows can be offered during *Utsavs* and appropriate *Leelas* for eg. *Gaucharan Leela*. Also, during relevant *Manoraths*, cows can be offered to Shri Thakorji. One must, however, note that everything must not be offered everytime, for example cows must not be offered during *Shayan*



Q - What is the *bhaav* of offering *Tulsiji* (Holi Basil) with Shri Thakorji's *Samagri* (offering)?

A – *Tulsiji* is dearest to Shri Thakorji. It is considered to be an earthly avatar of Shri Lakshmiiji. Also, the word "Tulsi" means immeasurable. The offering of this leaf removes any doshas in the *Samagri* and hence, becomes worthy for Shri Thakorji



Meet the Youth



Name: Milan Jobanputra

Committee Role: Photographer, capturing the amazing events held by the VSUK youth

What I do: Was into engineering now a Graphic Designer

What I enjoy: Going for long walks

Something I couldn't live without: My music

Favourite food/colour/person: Italian food, crimson colour, person is Steve Jobs

Fun Fact: I play the guitar

What I love about Pushtimarg: The flexibility it offers allowing people to come together under one roof

What I'm looking forward to with the Youth Group: Learning new things about Pushtimarg through the newsletters and monthly satsangs

What I enjoy about the Youth Group: Meeting the wonderful personalities and engaging in amazing conversations with them