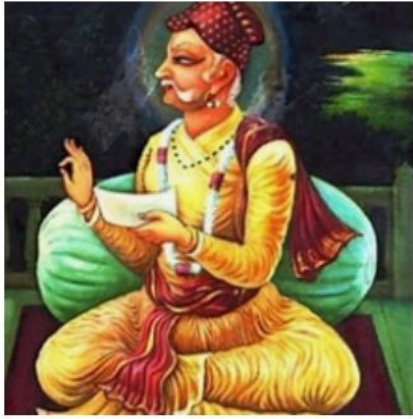


## Granth - Shikshapatra

(Source: Series of Shikshapatra Saptah starting from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67JWVXggrSk>)

*Shikshapatra*, literally meaning educational letters, was written by Shri Hariray Mahaprabhuji to His younger brother, Shri Gopeshwarji. Shri Hariray Mahaprabhuji and Shri Gopeshwarji were born in the fifth generation of Shri Vallabh. They were the sons of Shri Kalyanrayji and the grandchildren of Shri Govindrayji, who was the second son of Shri Gusainji, who was the son of Shri Vallabh.



Shri Harirayji was a great scholar, poet, and philosopher of Pushtimarg. He enriched Vaishnavs with literary works in Sanskrit and Vraj languages. He always gave supremacy to the sentiment of surrender for Shri Krishna and considered Himself *Haridas* (One who serves the supreme forever).

*Shikshapatra* is the most widely known of his numerous works. Although Shri Hariray Mahaprabhuji wrote this collection of 41 letters to His brother Shri Gopeshwarji, they must be read as though they have been personally written to each Vaishnav. The episode about when and how these letters were written is heartwarming. Shri Gopeshwarji and His wife were very devoted to the worship of Shri Krishna. Shri Harirayji once felt that Vahuji (Shri Gopeshwarji's wife) was unlikely to live longer. His brother would, hence, face immense grief as he would no longer be able to serve Shri Krishna with Her, therefore Shri Harirayji started writing to Shri Gopeshwarji daily to help Him escape His forthcoming grief.

Shri Gopeshwarji always kept Himself busy in the *seva* (service) of Shri Thakorji and, hence, could not read through the letters for 6 days. On the 6th day, Vahuji passed away, but letters from Shri Harirayji kept coming. He still couldn't read until on the 9th day, when one of the Vaishnavs noticed the letters and insisted Him to read. On reading them, Gopeshwarji found the letters very useful and enlightening, which also took away his grief. He then wrote an explanation of those letters; the version with this explanation is known as *Badi Shikshapatra*.

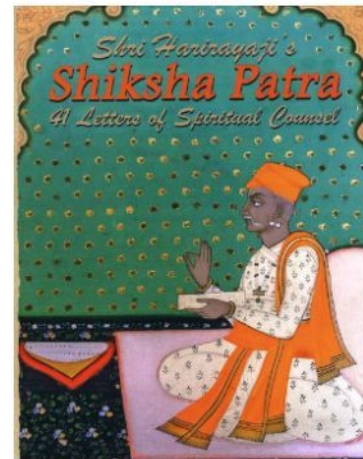
These 41 letters are in *shloka* or *sutra* (poetic) form and teach about the minute characteristics of Pushtimarg. Later, they became known as the *Bhagavad Gita* of Pushtimarg as they became useful for every Pushti devotee, guiding them at every

stage in the path of *Pushti Bhakti*. It has been said that if one has any problem, if they open *Shikshapatra* with complete faith, the page that unfolds holds the solution to that problem.

The first of these letters discusses the responsibilities of a Vaishnav. It says that one must at least do *vandan* (bow down with respect) daily. Also, a Vaishnav must do *Ashtakshar mantra jaap* (chant) daily. Only humans have the capability to do *Darshan* (glimpse of the Divine) and say *Bhagwad naam* (taking the name of the Lord), so one must thank Shri Thakorji for giving us this beautiful human life.

It explains that the mind might wander toward negative thoughts, but one must shift the focus to Shri Thakorji's leelas (episodes). This way, one will always be *prassann* (joyful).

Shri Hariray Mahaprabhuji further explains the principles of *seva* (Shri Thakorji's service and any form of help for everyone). Every Vaishnav must do *seva* and encourage and support those who wish to do *seva*. The first principle of *seva* is that if someone accepts our *seva*, we must be grateful because that *seva* will ultimately be added to our good fortune. The other principle is that who can do *seva* of Shri Thakorji. He explains that only those *jeevs* (souls) from whom Shri Thakorji wants to accept *seva* will be able to do *seva*. This is irrespective of the financial status, age, race, gender, facilities, etc. There are lots of people with all the wealth and facilities however, they are still unable to do the *seva* of Shri Thakorji, as Shri Thakorji gives *alaukik samarthyas* (divine strength and capabilities) to those from whom He wants to accept the *seva*. Also, it is essential to give Shri Mahaprabhuji's *kaani* (on behalf of) to Shri Thakorji when offering *seva* to Him. It also teaches us that the next day, if we feel more excited to do the *seva* than the previous day, then it's a sign that our *seva* has been accepted by Shri Thakorji. Shri Thakorji's *darshan* is the ultimate *phal* (fruit or positive outcome) of *seva*.



The second letter talks about the *Swaroopanubhav* (experiencing the characteristics) of Shri Thakorji. The third letter explains various forms and effects of bad company. Shri Hariray Mahaprabhuji also, through His letters, describes the attributes of a Vaishnav, and one of the most significant characteristics is the company a Vaishnav keeps, which is very important. One must keep in the company of those who respect one another and those who have *bhaktibhaav* (Emotion of Devotion). Good



company always gives satsang ("Sat" means blessing and "sang" means company).

In the *Shikshapatra*, all aspects of leading a fulfilling life are covered, including the importance of the emotion of sacrifice, particularly the sacrifice of worries. Shri Hariray Mahaprabhuji also explains the emotion of patience and trust in detail, especially utmost trust in Shrinathji, Shri Yamunaji and Shri Mahaprabhuji.

The letters end with the Principles of Pushtimarg and the absorption of the characteristics of Pushtimarg into life.

## Tirth - Dakor

Dakor, located in the Kheda district of Gujarat, has a rich historical background that dates back centuries. It is prominent for its temple of Shri Ranchodrayji and Shri Harirayji's *bethakji* at Gomati River. In Mahabharat times, Dakor was covered with *khakariya* (neem) trees. Dank Rishi performed *tapasya* (penance) here and received darshan of Lord Shiva. Lord Shiva stayed as Danknath Mahadev, and the place became known as Dankpuri, then Dakor. Later, Lord Krishna and Bheema later passed through this area, where they drank from the pond, creating the Gomati *talav* (pond).

In Dwapar Yuga (The third Yuga of the four yugas), when Lord Krishna, accompanied by Akrurji (His maternal uncle), travelled from Vrindavan to Mathura, they confronted and defeated the tyrannical king Kansa. Lord Krishna then installed Ugrasen, Kansa's father, on the throne of Mathura. However, the two widow wives of Kansa returned to their father, Jarasandh, the powerful king of Magadha. Jarasandh, enraged by the death of his daughters' husbands, vowed to destroy the dynasty of Krishna and Balaram and, hence, repeatedly attacked Mathura and defeated them.

He also sent his companion Kalyawan to fight Krishna, who had a peculiar boon that allowed him to absorb his opponent's energy and hence not be killed in any direct warfare. Shri Krishna suggested to Kalyawan that they fight one-on-one so the innocent don't get killed. The moment they reached a lonely place, Krishna ran off from the field towards the city of Dwarka, which was a safer and more fortified place for his people. A baffled Kalyawan chased him, thus naming him Ranchod (One who escapes the battlefield).



In the town of Dakor, located a few hundred kilometres from Dwarka, an ardent devotee of Lord Krishna named Bodana lived. Every six months, Bodana would travel from Dakor to Dwarka on foot and offer *tulsi* (holy basil) leaves to Dwarakadhish, the presiding deity of Dwarka. As Bodana grew older, he expressed his concern to Dwarakadhish that he might be unable to make the trip anymore due to his advancing age.

Hearing Bodana's plea, Lord Krishna, in his "Ranchod" form, told him that on his ensuing visit to Dwarka, he should bring a bullock cart with him, and Lord Krishna would accompany him to Dakor. Accordingly, Bodana, despite poverty, went with an old and broken bullock cart to Dwarka. However, upon looking at the old and damaged bullock cart, the priests of Dwarka asked him why he had brought it with him. Bodana replied that he had done so to take away Lord Krishna. They did not believe him, but nevertheless, they locked and sealed the sanctorum of Dwarka Temple for the night. At midnight, Lord Krishna broke open all the doors, awoke Bodana and told him to take him to Dakor in the bullock cart. Lord Krishna requested Bodana to rest in the bullock cart and Himself drove it until the vicinity of Dakor. It is also believed that they rested for some time, touching, and holding a branch of a neem tree, and since that day, this neem tree is found to have one sweet branch, though the rest of the branches are bitter.



In Dwarka, on finding the image of the deity missing, the priests followed Bodana and reached Dakor. Frightened, Bodana hid the image of the deity in the Gomati River and faced the priests. But one of the angry priests threw a spear at him, and he fell dead, immersing into Leela. While hurting Bodana with a spear, it also hurt the image of the deity hidden in the Gomati river, and the water turned red with Lord Krishna's (Ranchhodrayji's) blood. Thereafter, with the help of local priests, Gopal Jagannath Tambekar and Peshwas, the Ranchhodray temple was established in Dakor with the original Ranchhodrayji's idol enshrined by Bodana.



The Gomati *ghat* (stairs or a passage leading down to a river) is located on the banks of the Gomti Lake, which is just a two-minute walk from the Ranchhodray temple. Like other holy *ghats* across India, it is considered an auspicious place for pilgrims to take a ritual bath before visiting the Ranchhodray Temple.

There is also the *bethakji* of Shri Harirayji, located near the Gomti Ghat and Ranchhodray Temple in Dakor, where He performed discourses on the Shrimad Bhagavatam and taught on the philosophy of Pushtimarg. Dakor is one of the seven *bethakjis* of Shri Harirayji. It is known that he brought essential changes in



the worship method of Shri Ranchodrayji in Dakor. Also, before moving to Dakor, while Ranchodrayji's Swaroop was in Dwarka, Shri Mahaprabhuji and Shri Gusainji used to meet Shri Ranchodrayji. Every Rath Yatra, Shri Gopallalji visits this site and has His *utsav bhog* (special offering).

The *Swaroop* (idol) of Dwarkadhish reappeared later in Dwarka when the residents prayed to Him. This idol was then moved to Bet Dwarka (a small island near Dwarka). The current *Swaroop* (idol) appeared after this and is found in the Jagat Mandir in Dwarka.

## Sanjhi Utsav

(Source: <https://pushtimarg.net/pilgrimage/kotvan/>; <https://vrajdwar.com/utsav/sanjhi>; <https://www.nathdwara.in/sanjhi.php>)

Sanjhi is fifteen days, starting from Bhadrapad Shukla Poonam to Amas, within Pushtimarg, where the Gopis worshipped Mata Sanjhi, the Goddess, with the intention of being granted Shri Krishna as a husband.

### Shyama Sakhi's Leela

During days of Sanjhi, Thakorji dresses up as Shyama Sakhi to join the Gopis in creating the Sanjhis. The Sakhis are impressed with Shyama Sakhi's talent and how effortlessly and beautifully she makes Sanjhis. Shyama Sakhi stayed with Shri Radha and her Sakhis for the duration of the Sanjhi period in Barsana. Due to this, Leela of Shri Krishna; during Sanjhi, Shri Thakorji is dressed as a Sakhi in seva.



In remembrance of these *leelas*, daily in Pushtimarg, different Sanjhis are created depicting different locations within the 84 Kos Vraj Mandal, including the different *kunds*, *bethakjis* and *ghats*. This is also because, during this period before Nav Vilas, also known as *Pitru Paksh*, there are no other religious festivities or activities, so the people of Vraj would use this period to do Vraj Yatra. Many were unable to do so due to worldly duties, so through the medium of Sanjhi, they were able to experience the Yatra in their own homes. The Sanjhis are placed in front of Shri Thakorji during Sandhya Darshan in the evening. After the Sanjhi is taken away the next day during Mangala Darshan, the practice of circumambulating the Sanjhi is used to represent the completion of the Yatra of that specific place in Vraj.

There are four different types of Sanjhi in Pushtimarg as elucidated by Shri Harirajji Mahaprabhu:

1. **Sanjhi made of flowers** - represent the bhaav of Shri Radhaji
2. **Sanjhi made from leaves** - represent the bhaav of Shri Chandravalliji
3. **Sanjhi made from powders** - represent the bhaav of Shri Lalitaji
4. **Sanjhi made on water** - represent the bhaav of Shri Yamunaji

Sanjhi usually commences with a Sanjhi of Vishram Ghat on the banks of Shri Yamunaji. This is because Sanjhi represents a Vraj Yatra, which always commences with Shri Yamunaji's Pujan. Thus, Sanjhi starts in the same way. On the last day of Sanjhi, Kot ni Sanjhi, consisting of *gopis*, *dwarpals*, animals, and many different buildings and structures, is made. This is done to represent the entirety of Vraj in Kotvan. Shri Yashodaji once requested Shri Krishna to show her his different leelas; therefore, in order to fulfil his mother's wish, Shri Krishna created many different chowks and kunds showcasing his different Leelas for Shri Yashodaji to enjoy in Kotvan. Therefore, Kot na Sanjhi represents the amalgamation of all the different Leelas, on the last day of Sanjhi representing the whole Vraj Yatra.



### Kirtan - Ari Tum Kon Ho Ri

This Kirtan describes a confrontation between Shri Krishna and Shri Radhaji, as the Gopis go towards Kusumvan to pick flowers for Sanjhi.

**Ari tum kon ho ri pyaari tum kon ho ri? Ya baan me phulava  
vinana hari?  
Nehalaganko banyo bagecha  
Phoola rahi phulavari**

"Hey, who are you lovely one? Have you come to pick flowers in the forest?"

The garden is falling in love with you,  
The flowers have begun to bloom."

**RamKrushna banavari aaye golotyo day pyaari  
Tav Lalita has khayo Shyamaso  
Yaha Vrishabhanu dulari  
Tiharo kaha lage yaha ban me, rhokyo ghel humari?**

RamKrushna, the gardener persists, "Why don't you answer lovely one?"

This is when Lalita laughs and answers,  
"This is the daughter of Vrishabhanu.  
But what in this forest belongs to you? That you bar our path?"

**Shyam sakha, sakhiyan samajave, hut na karo tum pyaari  
Kunj, dhormal, phal, phulan ki ho  
Humahi kare rakhawale,**

Shyam and his friends explain to them, "don't be stubborn girls  
All the canopies and vines,  
All the fruits and flowers you see here,  
We own and them and protect them too."

**Shri Radhaju phal phula liye  
Bhinjaso mala savari  
Surshyam, Shyama mukh nirakhat ekatak rahe nihari  
Ari tum kon ho ri pyaari tum kon ho ri? Ya baan me phulava**



## vinana hari?

Radha picks her flowers,  
Heedlessly sewing her garland.  
Sur Shyam stares mesmerised,

Having overcome the pain of separation from this divine beloved  
“Hey, who are you lovely one? Have you come to pick flowers in  
the forest?”

## Events - Janmashtami Utsav

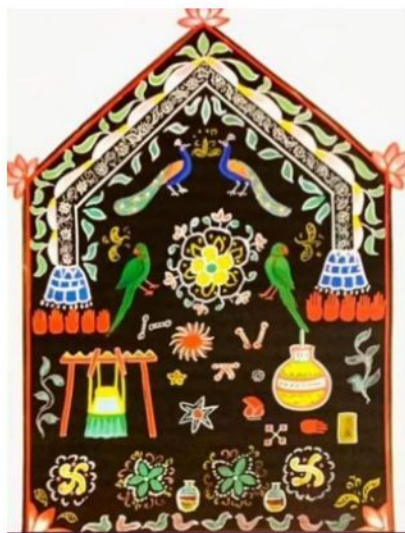
The National Vaishnav Youth Group monthly online *Satsangs* resumed in September'24 with the topic of Janmashtami Utsav and had great participation.

The history of the episode of the birth of Lord Shri Krishna and how He reached *Nandbaba's* abode in Vraj (Area near the banks of river Yamuna in Uttar Pradesh, India) is widely known and covered in the VSUK Newsletter Edition 22 ([Link: Youth Newsletters - Vaishnav Sangh of UK](#)). In this edition, other aspects of the days leading up to the Janmashtami Utsav, *seva prakriya* (schedule and methodology of service to Shri Thakorji) of that day, and the *utsavs* celebrated after Janmashtami shall be covered.

*Badhai Kirtans* (celebratory songs) start a month in advance on Ashad Vadh Atham to show our eagerness and enthusiasm for Thakorji. *Badhai* is sung with affection and sweet feelings. Since it is a *Mahamahotsav* (grand celebration), *Badhai* is sung on behalf of both mothers: Yashodaji and Rohiniji, the wives: Shri Yamunaji and Shri Chandravali, the eternal bond: Shri Swaminiji and other Gopis with *Kumaraika bhava* (little unmarried girls).

Shri Thakorji's clothes are dyed with *kesar*(saffron), dried and then stitched on Panchami. This signifies the surrender of our five *karma indriyaan* (physical organs), five *gyaan indriyaan* (sensory organs), and *mann* (mind) to be drenched in Shri Thakorji's colour. This is then adorned by Shri Thakorji on Janmashtami; this pre-birthday ritual brings the sweetness of mother's touch to the celebration.

Shri Thakorji's *Chhathi Utsav* (celebration on the sixth day after a child is born, also the day they are named) was celebrated the following year, one day before Janmashtami, i.e. on Bhadra Krushna Saptami. This is because the celebration of Shri Thakorji's manifestation lasted for a year, and in this, Yashodaji and Nandababa ji forgot about the Chhathi ceremony. Next year, when it was time to celebrate Shri Thakorji's birthday, they remembered the Chhathi ceremony and conducted it. This day, decorations are done with sixteen objects, such as the Moon, Sun, Swastik, *matki* (Claypot), *palna* (Swing), Toys, etc.



Janmashtami Utsav, then, falls on the 8th day (Ashadh vad Aatham / Aashtami) of the Krishna Paksha in the Hindu month of Shravan. On the day of Ashtami, *Mangla* happens earlier than other days. Thakorji is offered Panchamrut Snan (bath with five elements: milk, yoghurt, honey, ghee and sugar). Shri Thakorji is adorned with special shringar, including the Kesari Vastra prepared earlier with silver edge, saffron *Kuleh* (Turban), 5 *Jod Chandrika* (Bundle of 5 peacock feathers), *haar* (type of necklace), *traval* (type of necklace) made with white-red-green stones, etc. Tilak is offered, and the *Pichhwai* (Backdrop) is a heavy red/orange /maroon colour. The mirror, toys, and *bansuri* (flute) are made of gold or studded with coloured stones. In the evening, Shri Thakorji sits in *Jagran* (stays awake) until midnight, when Shri Thakorji's birth is celebrated with the sound of (*Shankh*) conch and *Ghant* (bells).



Nandmahotsav is celebrated the day after Janmashtami. It represents the immense joy and bliss experienced by Nand Baba, Yashoda, and the residents of Vraj. From this day, Shri Thakorji swings in *Palna* (Cradle) until Radhashtami.

Jogi Leela is celebrated on Bhadra Krushna Amavasya. On this day, Shivji came to do *Darshan* of Shri Thakorji in the form of a *Sadhu* (saint) and insisted on seeing him. Shivji had a snake around his neck, so Yashodaji hesitated to hand Shri Thakorji over to Shivji. Suddenly, Shri Thakorji started crying, and nothing could pacify him until Yashodaji handed him to Shivji. There is a temple of Asheshvar Mahadev outside the Nandbhavan in Vraj even today.





Radhastami ki badhai (Celebration of Shri Radhaji's upcoming birthday) begins 7 days before the actual day on Bhadra Shukla Pratipada. From that day onwards, birthday celebrations of eight Sakhis (Friends) also start, and Shringar is offered to Shri Thakorji on these days with the *bhava* (emotion) of each sakhi every day for 8 days.

Bhadarva Sud Pancham celebrates Radhikaji's *paramsakhi* (best friend), Shri Chandravali. Shri Gusaiji is the manifestation of Shri Chandravali.

Bhadarva Sud Chhath celebrates Radhikaji's favourite *sakhi* (friend), Shri Lalitaji. Her complexion is reddish. Her main seva is *paanki biri aarogave* (offering betel leaf). She used to also play the musical instrument *Veena*.

Baldevji was born in Swati Nakshatra on the 6th day of Shukla Paksha of Bhadrapad month. He was the 7th child of Devaki and Vasudevji, but with the help of Yogmaya, the womb was transplanted to Vasudevji's second wife, Rohini ji, who was residing in Gokul. He is considered to be the incarnation of Sheshnag, the serpent associated with the deity Vishnu. He is also known as Dauji, meaning elder brother, and Balabhadra, meaning strong brother. Vishakhaji was born on Badra Shukla Saptami. She is most treasured by the entire group of sakhis. Her complexion is fair and bright, like the lightning. She likes to wear the garments, which remit the beauty of stars. She dresses up the divine couple in beautiful clothes of various colours.

On the 8th Day of Bhadara Shukla Ashtami, Shri Radhaji was born to King Vrusbhan and Kirti Raniji in Barsana at mid-day. Narad Muniji, Garg Muniji and Shandalya Muniji came to Barsana to see Her. She did not open Her eyes until Shri Thakorji was born and appeared before her. Seva is the same as Janmashtami, and Dadhi leela kirtans are sung in praise of Swaminiji. Dadhi Leela was performed when Thakorji appeared on Earth, and Nandbawa called the Dadhi community artists to sing and dance.



## Word Search - Yamunaji

M	U	K	U	T	K	A	N	C	H	A	N	I	I
A	L	M	A	C	A	N	T	U	I	K	M	J	L
M	M	C	T	R	R	R	V	A	R	D	I	A	R
V	I	S	H	R	A	M	G	H	A	T	I	U	L
N	H	O	A	L	E	U	L	L	O	L	G	T	V
N	K	A	K	H	L	U	I	L	T	A	S	K	A
N	S	I	U	I	U	S	U	R	Y	A	D	E	V
A	O	T	R	Y	E	K	A	L	I	N	D	I	T
M	A	K	A	T	H	S	A	N	U	M	A	Y	M
K	A	A	N	A	A	Y	A	M	R	A	J	V	D
A	A	M	I	L	Y	K	R	G	A	S	V	L	A
D	K	M	A	J	A	U	I	T	H	D	N	T	J
J	L	J	A	A	T	M	A	H	A	R	A	N	I
M	K	T	A	L	M	A	G	T	D	H	Y	S	Y

SURYADEV  
JAL  
THAKURANI  
VISHRAM GHAT  
YAMUNASHTAKAM  
LOTIJI  
MUKUT KANCHANI  
KAMAL  
MAHARANI  
YAMRAJ  
KALINDI

## Last Month's Word Search Answers

Word Search - Mahaprabhuji

### Across

- 4 - Champaranya
- 5 - Ekadashi
- 6 - Subodhini
- 7 - Sarvottam
- 8 - Agnikund
- 10 - Illamagaruji

### Down

- 1 - Bethakji
- 2 - Mukharavind
- 3 - Yamunashtakam
- 4 - Somayagna





## Did you know?

### Q - Why is Shri Thakorji's mukut (crown) vaanko (slant)?

A - Because Shri Thakorji has Daan Bhaav (Emotion to Give) and He is willing to share even the top-most Shringar (ornament) with everyone.

### Q - How does one find out how to do seva every day?

A - To start with, one must simply read the seva prakaar pustak (guide book for procedure of serving) everyday. It will give information of tithi (date), it's importance and the specific seva prakaar of that day. This way, knowledge can be built about seva as well as about Pushtimarg.

### Q - Why does the Swaroop (idol) of Shri Thakorji in Bet Dwarka have His eyes closed?

A - After the initial Swaroop moved to Dakor, residents of Dwarka prayed to Shri Thakorji to appear in front of them. Shri Thakorji gave them a timeframe after which He was to emerge from Bindu Sarovar (Lake). People, however, could not wait and extracted Shri Thakorji sooner. Hence, the idol is small and also has closed eyes. The Swaroop in Dakor has His eyes wide open, looking at Vaishnav's and is four-armed.



## Meet the Youth

**Name:** Amar Chotai

**What I do:** Guest Experience Host at the London Eye

**What I enjoy:** Playing golf, eating out, going to the cinema. Going to watch Arsenal men's & women's football when I can. Going out for long walks too.

**Something I couldn't live without:** Gunnersaurus (Arsenal mascot who I have a replica of in my room)

**Fav Food, Colour, Person:** Pizza, Red, Tiger Woods

**Fun Fact:** I passed both of my French and Gujarati GCSEs a year early.

**What I love about Pushtimarg:** It offers something different and provides the opportunity to learn new things, and become closer to God.

**What I'm looking forward to with the Youth Group:** Meeting everyone again and getting myself involved in upcoming events.

**What I enjoy about the Youth Group:** Getting to see everyone and meeting new people, as well as offering my service to God every time.



## Upcoming Events



# Pushti Satsangs ANNOUNCEMENT

## Jay Shree Krishna

Happy Diwali and Nutan Varsh Na Abhinandan!  
As you know, we are currently celebrating several Utsavs: Diwali, Annakut, Je Je Shree's 50th, Suvarna Jayanti, Tulsi Vivah, Shree Gusaiji Utsav, and Christmas period. Due to these events, we have not held our regular monthly Satsang gatherings.

We will resume our monthly Satsang from  
**SUNDAY 26<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025**

Looking forward to seeing you all at  
Shrinathdham Haveli Annakut, which is  
on Saturday, 9th November Thank you

Minaben Popat  
07958 436 586

Shiluben Patel  
07828 208 181

Devyaniben Vora  
07896 680920

[vaishnavsangh.org.uk](https://www.vaishnavsangh.org.uk)

<https://www.facebook.com/vaishnavsanghofuk/>

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