

6.1 Pushtimarg in nut shell

Shri Nathji, literally the "Husband of the Goddess of Wealth", has a magnificent mansion in the Rajasthani town of Nathadwara, India. This sumptuous 17th Century mansion serves as a seat of the Pushti Marg, a Vaishnav sect founded by MahaPrabhu Shri Vallabhacharyaji in the 15th Century. Expounding his philosophy of "Shudhadvaita", the great Acharya set up the Pushti Marg, the Path of Grace, with divine blessing in Gokul. Vallabhacharyaji wrote a number of great Sanskrit works to expound his philosophy, and was honoured as an "Acharya" by the South Indian Emperor Krshnadevrai of Vijaynagar¹.

The sect flourished under his son Shri Vitthalnathji (popularly called Shri Gusaiji), and soon adopted the graceful lifestyle of the 16th Century royal courts of North India. He introduced raag, bhog and shringar to the traditional methods of seva. Gusaiji ordained a complex set of rituals to be followed throughout the year for the comfort and pleasure of the Lord. Daily and festive routines were set up by Shri Gusaiji to make sure the haveli functioned efficiently even when he was touring India to spread the message of Pushti Marg².

During Mughal ruler Auranzeb's vicious anti-Hindu policies, the Goswamis of Vraj judged the area to be too dangerous to live and practice their faith. Apart from GokulNathji and his descendants, other Goswamis immigrated to various parts of Rajputana - the only secure Hindu controlled area in North India at the time. Over the centuries, these Nidhis have come to reside in various parts of India, some even returning to Vraj.

In time, ShriNathji moved away from the original temple at Mount Govardhan and moved to Nathdwara. Temple servants still serve ShriNathji as the "beloved prince of Vraj" as envisioned by Gusaiji³. They treat the Lord with all the respect and deference due to a reigning monarch. Hoards of devotees who come to the Haveli for a darshan, see the Lord as "Ladelelal", the endearingly mischievous son of Yashoda.

Gosaiji and his decedents have kept alive the spirit of the sect around India. The current Tilakayat (the goswami in charge of looking after ShriNathji's Haveli at Nathadwara) is a direct descendant of Shri Gusaiji and he is the first amongst his peers. Along with about 150 other Goswamis of his clan, he is in charge of the spiritual welfare of the sect⁴.

Shri Gusaiji established seven separate Havelies for his seven sons in Gokul. Two other svaroops he inherited were also given prominent place in the sect. All in all, Shri Gusaiji set up nine main forms of the Lord to be worshipped by his disciples. These are commonly called "Nidhies" of the Lord. Nidhi means an ocean / limitless / infinite. The Nidhi svaroops are indeed the oceans grace, offer limitless honours and infinite wealth for those who have the great responsibility to look after them. Here I have listed the various Nidhis and where they currently reside⁵.

6.2 Shringar Seva

One of the most beautiful things about darshan in a Pushti Margiya haveli is the way the Lord is adorned. It's usually very tastefully done, with just the right amount of jewellery, beautifully combined, wonderfully coordinated and artfully displayed. The clothes are equally elegant, though understated and always in keeping with the weather. "Bling" is usually kept to the minimum and only used on festive occasions. For those who interested in learning how to do the Shringar seva, here are a few tips.

In Pushti Marg, we have Thada-svaroop, Lalan and Chitraji. We also occasionally worship the footprints, handprints, hand-written scripts and footwear of Shri Mahabraphuji, Gausaiji and other balaks. Thada-svaroop – These are the icons that are standing – eg - ShriNathji, Mathuradhishji, Dwarikadhish, Gokul-Chandramaji etc. Lalan – Baby Krushna, crawling on the floor. Balkrushnaji and Navnit-Priyaji are good examples of these. Chitraji – Painting or picture of Thakorji⁶.

Thada-svaroop

These are usually three-dimensional. Sometimes the icon is completely three-dimensional and sometimes it's created in high-relief, leaving a backing piece to give added strength and stability to the sculpture. Truly three-dimensional svaroops like Vitthalnathji or MadanMohanji can be clothed as you would cloth yourself – just in miniature. Pagh etc can be tied around the crown or bun of the hair on the head. Sometimes, pre-made paghs, kleh etc can be stuck at a jaunty angle, slightly to the side of the head. Jewels can be worn, with strings going over the shoulders. The mass of strings at the back can be kept tidy by twisting them all together and sticking them neatly to one side. Some svaroops, like GokulNathji are complicated to adorn due to close arrangement of hands and lack of space between them. Even with MadanMohanji and Gokul-Chandramaji, it is difficult to adorn with a lot of jewels as these can't pass between the hand and the body, they have to cascade over the left arm. If we are not careful, these can look askew and off-centre. The thing to do here is to make some malas with more beads on the left shoulder than the right. This way, the strings that have to pass on to the right can disappear between the wrist and the body without upsetting the balance of the jewelled arrangement. Other malas can have their full complement of beads and these can be arranged to pass between the arms or the other side, depending on the size of the icon. In Havelis, a leaf shape is cut out of lagau (sticky material made with wax, soot etc) to suite the size of the icon and malas are arranged on that. This lagau is than stuck to the body of the Lord, making the malas look exactly in line. Small Gaps left between longer malas, are filled in with short malas with very long strings. These short malas are carefully placed, with their long strings hidden by the bigger malas around them. Sometimes, large lockets / pendants are set with only a few beads around them. These short malas are arranged in such a way so as to look like part of the longer strings of pearls and emeralds. Svaroops carved in high relief, such as ShriNathji, Dwarikadhishji etc have no space at the back for you

to pass the clothes through and through. Clothes for these svaroops often have to be cut to pre-prepared templates and stuck or tied on to the sides of the icon and the stele. As there is no gap at the shoulder level, the strings have to pass discreetly over the stele. Having a thada-vastra helps as this helps to tidy up and hide the straggling threads. In Havelis, sticky substance called "lagau" is liberally used to keep the malas in place. Depending on the colour of the svaroop, the lagau can be black or honey coloured. Shringar such as earrings, pagh, mukut etc have to be "flat" where possible. These are stuck on using lagau. Curved eyes are usually made of enamel and applied at an angle so as to look down. The most emotive eyes are curved, almost into a semi-circle. These are amazingly effective and look very poetic and romantic. However, eyes are sometimes made to look "up" as well as "straight ahead". It all depends on the bhav of the vaishnav or the lila being celebrated⁷.

Lalan

In South Indian temples, free-standing, three dimensional svaroops have a stick added at the back, in line with the shoulder, so that a large number of necklaces and garlands can be placed to extend the shoulders of the Lord. Hence the icon of Tirupati can be seen with garlands that seem to go beyond his physical form. In Pushti Marg this idea is used for the shringar of the Lalans. Lalan is usually very small. It is difficult to get more than a couple of necklaces upon his slight frame. From afar, these would be difficult to see. To overcome these difficulties, two sticks are placed on either side of the Lord to extend his shoulders by a considerable amount. These sticks allow the mukhiyaji to adorn the Lord with several malas. In this arrangement, the right hand holding the butter-ball is beautifully framed, emerging from a cascade of malas. You can see this in the chitraji used as the margine on this page. Usually, Lalan has gadji's Shringar to extend the jewels from his person to the throne. This is the only way numerous jewels can be offered to a svaroop that is so small.

Gadiji's Shringar

For all shringars, it's best to start with the longest mala first. That way you set up a frame work within which you know you can build up to the central figure of the Lord. This is especially true for gadiji's shrungar. Once the main malas are offered, any gaps can be covered up by adding smaller malas with long strings. These fill out the gaps, particularly in the middle, near the central pendants. A hasadi or a large pectoral can be placed near the neck to cover the gaps near the top. On a gadiji, the odhani covers the back of the Lord and also covers up all the strings and lose ends at the back. Observe the shrungar carefully in a haveli and you will see that the pendants of the malas line up, with the ones at the top lying on top of the malas going downwards. This can only happen if the malas are worn from outside in. Flower garland(s) are placed at the end, to provide a fragrant, colourful frame for the whole shringar. These are placed on the outside, so they can be added and taken away with ease. In a haveli, the Lalan's gadi is usually tilted up at a small angle. Gold kadas, a small stick or some such device is usually placed there to tilt it up. This automatically makes the lord "look up" directing his gaze at the vaishnavs. Gadiji on which the Lalan sits is usually smaller than the gadi of the main throne. It is this smaller gadiji that has the shrungar laid out on it. As the Lalan is often transported between his palana and main gadiji in the inner-sanctum during the day, having two gadis helps. The Gadi with the Lord and his shringar is smaller and easier to transport than the main gadi. It is this smaller gadi that is transferred between the different thrones. This allows the mukhiyajji to transport the Lord without having to re-set the gadiji's shringar everytime they move him.

Chitraji's

Clothes used for Chitraji are somewhat simple. Like a cushion cover, these are slipped on, covering the edges. Depending on the weather, it could be made from cotton, silk or quilted material. Now-a-days, Chitrajis also have “flat” clothes tailored to look like dhoti, char-vagh, gherdar etc – similar in every way to the clothes of the thada-svaroops carved in high relief. These are stuck on top of the chitraji. Jewellery for chitraji usually consists of malas and flat shrungars for the head. Lagau is used to stick all this on the chitraji. The cloth around the chitraji hides the strings that go up and over the top edge.

On the whole, the amount of shrungar used oscillates between festive and non-festive days. As a simple rule of thumb, pearls are predominantly used in the summer, heavy kundan and glittering gem-stones are used in the winter and gold / enamel used during the spring. Monsoon sees the use of most colourful jewellery, pearls, and stones, gold at all. Pearls are worn throughout the year, as is gunja mala, as both are easy to wear and match most clothes. An array of head gear (pagh, kuleh, dumala etc) is worn throughout the year to match the season, bhava or the festival being celebrated. This is usually adorned with various ornaments made from silk, feathers, gold, silver, gems etc. Strings of pearls and emeralds usually add an elegant touch to it all. Wonderful descriptive names are given to these, such as chamak chandrika, tipara, mor-mukut, kalgi etc.

Tempting as it is, it's best not to overdo the shringar. An understated elegant look with just a few choice pieces can sometimes look more appealing than a mountain of tat. It is best to invest in a few pieces that are well made and will set off the simplest of shrungars. A simple row of red rubies or green emeralds can be set amidst pearl necklaces to set it off very nicely and can match the colour of the Lord's clothes. Glass and imitation jewellery is just as good as the real stuff – remember – it is bhav that is an essential ingredient in seva^{8,9}.

6.3 Raag, Bhog, Shringar

Since the time of Acharya Shri Vitthalnathji (Shri Gusaiji), Raag, Bhog and Shringar took on a new significance in the sect. He highlighted the importance of transforming people's natural addiction to material things to spiritual. In an imperial age when artistic and cultural achievements were reaching new heights, Gusaiji recognized the need to evolve the more austere form of Shri Vallabhacharyaji's form of worship into something more elaborate. In order to make God available to the people of his own time, Shri Gusaiji expressed the basis of Pushti Marg in a way that the modern man / woman could understand and follow¹⁰.

At a time when new modern musical instruments were being introduced (tabala, sitar etc), new musical modes and raags were being devised, Shri Gusaiji helped preserve the purest form of ancient Indian music - Drupad. He helped resurrect interest in the original Indian music and through his active encouragement, he helped revive popular and imperial interest in Drupad. Tansen, the greatest musician of Akber's court, converted to Islam to further his career at court¹¹. Later, impressed by the divine court of Shri Nathji, and the music it produced, he converted to Pushti Marg and returned to Hinduism.

Shri Gusaiji was a connoisseur of fine things in life - spiritual and material. Just as he helped preserve the best of the old world, he also took ideas from the best of the new world. Many of the bhogas (food items) introduced during his time reflected the culinary delights introduced / invented in the modern India of his time. For example, the jalebi we all eat with such gusto, and a central feature of the bhog during Gusaiji's utsav, was a new delicacy at the imperial court in Agra. Many regional, courtly and folk delicacies were introduced at the time. Soon, the kitchens of Shri Gopal at Gopalpura were cooking fine delicacies that were certainly the envy of all¹².

Even in dress code, new, modern dresses were added to the wardrobe of purely south Indian dress of dhoti & uparna. Ghardar jamma, charvaag, achkan were offered to the Lord on festive occasion. These dresses preserve the haute couture of Medieval India.

It is in Shringar that we see some of the best fusion of this ancient and modern ideals. The age old paagh was now decorated with expensive strings of pearls, rubies and emeralds, a style very much in vogue at the imperial court. Aigrettes with plumes of peacock feathers (at court they wore feathers from various exotic birds) were studded with precious stones, chokers worked in gold and precious stones replaced the enamel ornaments of the previous era. Soon, like the royals of his time, ShriNathji also began to be dressed head to toe in a glittering array of jewels¹³. Even his socks and shoes (mojadies) were embroidered with real jewels. In this way, Shri Gusaiji helped save the embattled Hindu sense of self-confidence by introducing a new court at Govardhan. A court that could rival the imperial court of Agra and yet be its best friend, thus embodying the very spirit of the time.

Many of the greatest politicians of the time, rulers and courtiers alike, were drawn to the court of ShriNathji. Akber himself came on a number of occasions to converse with Shri Gusaiji and even managed to obtain darshan of the Lord during Sharad Purnima. During his many visits to Gokul he was even allowed to attend the regular darshans of Shri Navnit Priyaji. Taj begam, the chief queen of Akber and mother to the heir, was a deeply religious woman who was a devotee of Shri Gusaiji. Tansen, Birbal and Raskhan were devotees too. Many Rajput kings prided themselves in being devotees of the sect¹⁴.

This had a great impact on the fledgling sect at the time. It absorbed many of the customs (purda for example) and ideas of the esteemed devotees of the time. Gifts from the royal played a great part in helping to shape the modes of Shringar that were offered to the Lord at the time. Many jewels of that era are still offered to the lord and are worn on special occasions. One of the most important jewels offered at the time is the diamond that is worn

in the "chibuk" (chin) of the Lord. Akber offered this during his Sharad Purnima darshan and since then, it has come to occupy a very special place in the shringar of Pushti Marg¹⁵.

It is not known exactly when pichoies were added to the "Shringar" portion of the darshan, but the idea of using soft furnishings to transform a room was well known at the time of Shri Gusaiji¹⁶. It is more than possible that coloured and embroidered cloth may have been hung in the inner sanctum of Shri Nathji from the earliest time. Painted pichoies were added later and later still, more and more of them were commissioned and preserved to commemorate special events.

Over the centuries, this idea of progressive infusion has been carried out by several enlightened Goswami balaks. New festivals, such as Teej and Ghoomar have been added. New foods and musical instruments (such as sarangee) have been added to further the raag, bhog and shringar, much espoused by Shri Gusaiji¹⁷.

6.4 Ashtayam seva¹⁸

In Vallabh sect there are two kinds of services:—

- (1) Manasee (mental)
- (2) Kriyatmika (Physical)

Through meditation God is served in manasi seva. In Kriyatmaka seva there is

- Nitya seva or Ashtayam seva
- Varshotsava seva.

Ashtayam seva is the regular service of God for eight yam or eight prahars music has its own distinct role in it because, in the service of eight prahars there are varied ragas sung in different different prahars. The ashtayaam service has been divided into eight parts:

- Margala
- Shringar
- Gwaal

- Rajbhoga
- Uthapan
- Bhoga
- Sandhya
- Aarati
- Shayan

Mangala:

Mangala's time is early morning 4.30, through mangala aarti and singing of ragas sung at early morning God is awakened by blowing conch shell. It is followed by bathing of God. Along with 'snanadi seva' that is done after mangala aarti there is anurag, khandit and daahi mantha bhava that is included in morning services.

Shringar:

After mangala God is adorned and decorated. While doing Shringar there is singing of the verses. In Shringar clothes and ornaments are offered to the lord as per the season.

Summer	Winter	Spring
Ornaments made by Pearls and flowers.	The nine precious stones and ornaments made by them.	Meena (Precious stone of blue colour) and ornaments made by it.

Season	Color of Dresses
Spring	Yellow Dresses
Summer	White Dresses
Rainy Season	Green Dresses
Autumn	White Dresses
Winter	Red Dresses
Shishir (Winter)	Blue Dresses

Gwaal:

Shringar is followed by ‘Gwaal Jhanki’. Along with gaucharan the verses of makhan choree and vatsalya bhava are sung.

Raajbhog:

After Gwaal’s (cowherd boys) pasturage food is offered to God. The verses related to offering bhoga to God are sung. After bhoga God takes rest at noon hours.

Utthapan:

After the rest at afternoon God is again awakened at post meridian hours. There is the scene of gocharan. The ragas of ‘madhyanha kaal’ are sung during this service.

Bhoga:

In Pushti sect, God is served like a baby. Just as we are eager to watch the activities of a child every moment similarly God is also served like a child with the same curiosity. Again there is the display of ‘bhoga Jhanki’. Krishna roop, Gopidasha, Murali (flute) and Gopa bhava enriched verses are sung. Bhoga is also offered as per the season. As per the seasons there is the provision of raga service. Raga is the one that pleases the mind makes it blissful. Through music God may be pleased, God could be made joyous this is the primary bhava which is evident everywhere in Pushti sect.

There is Five times bhoga seva:-

- Mangal Bhoga
- Gwal Bhoga
- Raj Bhoga
- Uthapan Bhoga
- Byaaroo (before sleep).

After bhoga betel – leaves are offered. In the bat ta two sweet meats (laddoos), in mun patta paan (betel leaves with other ingredients) and Jhaari (a pitcher with slender neck and a spout) of water is kept near the vigrah. Right from Shringar to the time before shayan bhoga the shree vigraha is adorned and decorated.

Sandhya Aarati (Evening Prayer):

After coming back from ‘gocharan’ there is the bhava of the arati of Shri Krishna by mother Yashoda. At this time there is the Jhanki of Godohan. This bhava is supported by the singing of ragas sung in the evening.

Shayan:

This ‘Jhanki’ comes after the exhibit at the time of twilight. It includes the dinner of the lord. The verses of sanyog shringar of Nikunj bhavana are sung.

Haveli Sangeet

Gosaiji Shree Vitthalnathji introduced the art of devotional music to appraise the leelas of Lord Shree Krishna. Shree Vitthalnathji appointed his eight sevakas of different culture and tradition to perform devotional music to appraise Shreenathji that made the great combination of Indian Art. The Haveli Sangeet is based on Drupad Dhamar tradition of Indian classical music. The various instruments used in Haveli Sangeet, includes pakhawaj, sarangi, dilruba, tanpura, vina, flute, jhanz, tal. Above all selection of instruments are based on the seasonal manorathas and timings. Since 500 years Haveli Sangeet is one of the essential part of pustimarg. Kirtan (Haveli music) is more or less similar to any other Indian

music except for one major difference that other music is mainly meant for public entertainment while kirtan is meant & sung for the joy of the deity in front of the deity or in absentia, it being bhakti. The devotee by singing kirtans in this manner gets his mind more & more absorbed in the swaroop & the sport of God. However, there are some other minor differences in the composition of raga, which we have underlined in our link of” Pushti Bhakti Sangeet (Raga) “Kirtans can be divided mainly in two categories: Related to the super qualities of God and describing the swaroop & the sport. The first one can be sung at any time but the best period for that is the time when worship (seva) is not being performed or in absentia. The second one can be sung in front of the deity at the time of worship according to the incident of the worship. They are sung in various proper ragas according to the season & according to the time & incident of the worship for e.g. at the time of awakening in the morning, bathing, offering shreengar & Bhog etc.

6.5 Dhrupad

The Dhrupad composition style in Indian classical music, progressed a lot in 15th century. There are basically two reasons for the progress of this style since this style was widely accepted in all the vaishnav sampradayas, this style was very well preserved in vaishnav temples. This style was also widely appraised by Royal families and kings. From A.D. 1486 to A.D. 1518, the king Mansingh of Gwalior, in madhyapradesh, with the help of Rakshu, Bhame and Baiju made a lot of progress in the Dhrupad style. Many talented musicians were encouraged by the state and began to take an interest in singing Dhrupad. Even the famous singer in the court of Akbar, Tansen, was a keen follower of the style.

Dhrupad Style of Composition

Famous musician Shree Bhav Bhatt Pandit, in his work “Anup Sangeet Ratnakar”, has defined the “Dhrupad i.e Dhruv-pad” as the style of singing the divine sports of Purusha in which shrungar Rasa is there in Sanskrit, or in other languages, and it is sung in Ragas with

Alapchari. The first stanza of Dhrupad composition is sung after every other stanza of the composition. It is than known as “Dhrupad Dhammar”. In Dhrupad, the kirtans are sung in 4 differernt ways.

- Sthaayi
- Antara
- Sanchari
- Aabhog

Generally the pada in Dhrupad is composed of 2 kadis i.e. 4 stanzas. The first stanza is sung in Sthaayi, second stanza in Antara, third in Sanchari and forth in Aabhog. This sangeet is also known as “Mardani Sangeet” or “Jordaar Gaayan”. Two important aspects are a must to sing Dhrupad sangeet

(1) Best knowledge of swargyan

(2) Best knowledge of Raga

At the beginning of each performance, Alapchari is done and then the kirtan is sung.

Four branches of Dhrupad sangeet are famous:

- Gobarhani Baani - according to Krishna mat.
- Nauhaari baani - according to Shankar mat
- Daaguri baani - according to Bharat mat
- Khandaari baani - according to Hanumat mat

Amongst these four Banis, the “Gobarhaani Bani” is accepted in pushtimarg. The root of the word “Gobarhaani” is from “Gobar’ i.e. cow’s dung. “Gobar” is regarded as very pure in Hindu Culture. Vrajbhaktas use to make (Mountains) from “Gobar” and use do poojan and sing the songs of praises and thus, this style of singing came into existence.

In Dhrupad sangeet, approximately 36 ragas are accepted as important. They are sung in various different taals. Taal is the division of time through which the tempo of music is controlled. Taals like Chautaal, Dhamaartaal, Ada chautal, Charchari taal etc are used.

In 18th century, people's interest in music began to change. Different types of music came into vogue and Dhrupad style came to the verge of extinction. Fortunately, the havelies of Pushti marg preserved the ancient style and even now, Dhrupad is sung in the Pushtimargiya havelies.

Dhrupad Sangeet in Pushtimarg

In the 13th century, in accordance with the wishes of Shreenathji, Shree Mahaprabhu Shree Vallabhcharyaji installed the physical swaroop of the Lord Shreenathji at Shree Govardhan Mountain in a small temple. At that time, Shree Kumbhandasji, a devotee who was also a poet, used to live at the Jamunavata village near the mount Govardhan. During a darshan of Shreenathji, Kumbhandasji experienced all the leelas of the Lord Shree Krishna, as performed in the Saraswatkalp¹⁹. Shree Mahaprabhuji instructed him to sing kirtans before the Lord. So the first kirtan of Pushti Marg was sung by Shree Kumbhandasji in the presence of Shreenathji, at dawn, in Bilaval Raga and Dhammar Taal. Kirtan sung had the bhav of a Khandita – spurned lover, as mentioned below²⁰:

1st Stanza - “Sanjh ke sanche bol tihaare” - Sthaayi

2nd Stanza- “Rajani anat jaage Nandnaadana, aaye nipat savaare” ||1 Kadi|| - Antara

3rd Stanza- “Aatur bhaye neel pat odhe, peere basan bisaare” – Sanchari

4th Stanza-“Kumbhandas Prabhu, Govardhandhar, bhale ju bachan pratipaare” ||2 Kadi|| - Aabhog

This kirtan is known as Khandita Kirtan. Shree Mahaprabhuji and Shreenathji became pleased with Kumbhandasji's seva. After Shree Kumbhandasji, other poet bhaktas were established at the Haveli²¹.

- (1) Shree Surdaji, who in the first meeting with Shree Vallabhacharya, sung a very famous Kirtan describing the birth of Lord Shree Krishna in Saraswat kalap and it is still sung when bathing the Lord with Panchamrut at Janmashtami. “Vraj bhayo Mahar ke put...”
- (2) Shree Paramananddasji, was also very famous kirtankaar and composed “Paramanand Sagar”, a collection of the padas composed by him.
- (3) Shree Krishnadasji ,was a Patel from Gujarat. He was also a great Kirtankaar. He learned to play the Veena while performing the kirtan seva of Shreenathji.
- (4) Kumbhandasji, as mentioned above, he was the first vaishnav to be appointed as a poet / singer in the divine court of Shree Govardhannathji.

The above four sevaks of Shree Mahaprabhuji were the great poet bhaktas and did the kirtan seva for Shreenathji and sang the kirtans in Dhrupad style. They used Tanpura, Mrudang, Jhanj and Veena during their musical seva^{22,23}.

During the period of Shree Mahaprabhuji, the daily routine of kirtan seva was very simple. After the construction of new temple of Shreenathji, paid for by Purnamal Kshyatriya, Shreenathji the seva became more elaborate and more temple servants were employed²⁴.

After Shree Mahaprabhuji, when Shree Gusaiji Shree Vitthalnathji i.e. Younger son of Shree Mahaprabhuji became the Acharya, Shree Gusaiji expanded the three aesthetics of seva i.e. Raag, Bhog and Shrunigar. At that time, Shree Gusaiji also increased the seva prakaar in Raag, Bhog and Shrunigar of Shreenathji. Shree Gusaiji himself was expert in playing Veena²⁵.

Shree Gusaiji set up the complete daily and utsav seva and kirtan schedule of Shreenathji for Eight Prahars. For that he appointed eight poet bhaktas known as “Ashta Chaap” for the seva of Shreenathji. Amongst the eight poet bhaktas, five poet bhaktas were the sevaks of Shree Mahaprabhuji i.e. Shree Kumbhandasji, Shree Surdasji, Shree

Paramananddasji, Shree Krishnadasji and Shree Vishnudas Chippa and other 3 were the sevaks of Shree Gusaiji i.e. Shree Govindswami, Shree Chaturbhujdasji and Shree Chittaswami²⁶.

After some years, the composer of “Shree Ramcharit Manas” Shree Tulsidasji’s cousin brother Shree Nanddasji became the sevak of Shree Gusaiji. Due to the old age of Vishnudas Chippa, he requested other form of seva which would be less strenuous for him. Shree Gusaiji appointed him as a watchman of the haveli at Gokul. Shree Nanddasji was then substituted in place of Shree Vishnudas Chippa. Thus finally the Ashtachaap Mandal was formalized by Shree Gusaiji in A.D. 1602²⁷.

Shree Gusaiji also gave the agya to some of the non-pushtimargiya vaishnavs to do kirtans before Shreenathji. Bhaktas like Shree Haridasji and Shree Vyasdasji from Vrindavan were some of them²⁸.

Development of Dhrupad Sangeet in Pushtimarg

The famous performer of Kirtans and Scholar of Dhrupad Sangeet Shree Champakbhai Nayak has divided the tradition of Dhrupad Sangeet into 3 eras²⁹.

- A.D 1500 - 1650
- A.D. 1651 – 1800
- A.D. 1801 – 1950

The starting phase includes poet bhaktas like Shree Kumbhandasji etc. who were the sevaks of Shree Mahaprabhuji. Next phase included the kirtankaars who were the sevaks of Shree Gusaiji i.e. Shree Govindswami etc. This phase includes the period of Shree Gokulnathji too, an active supporter of Dhrupad Sangeet³⁰.

The second phase includes Shree Hariraiji, encouraged kirtans and he himself also composed many kirtans in Vraj language and other languages for Shreenathji. Shree Hariraiji was a scholar and a great poet too. In the same period, Shree Dwarkeshji Bhavnaware also

composed several kirtans and uplifted the Dhrupad Sangeet. Shree Vrajdhishji also composed many kirtans which could attain the position in the Pushtimargiya Kirtan Routine. The Kirtans composed upto this era were included in the Kirtan Pranalika of Pushtimarg³¹.

In the last and third era, the nation and pushtimarg experienced a little change in the Dhrupad Sangeet. Influenced by other forms of classical music, especially Khayaal. Today, modern kirtankaars sing with the mixer of Khayaal music in it.

When Shree Govardhaneshji became the Tilakayat, at that time most of the swaroopas of Pushtimarg migrated from Vraja to different parts of Rajasthan and Gujarat. As a result, different kirtankaars got distributed to several different parts of Gujarat and Rajasthan. Three different regional Styles have emerged in pushtimarg for kirtans³²:

- Nathdwara and Kankroli tradition
- Gokul, Mathura, Kamvan, Kashi tradition
- Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Surat, Jamnagar, Junagadh and Porbandar tradition

The period after A.D. 1950 can be called as modern period for Dhrupad Sangeet. In the last 40 years, the kirtan tradition of Pushtimarg has changed a lot. Experts in Dhrupad Sangeet have become fewer and far between. When Dhrupad Sangeet seemed all but extinct due to lack of musicians, the well-known kirtan kaar and music maestro Shree Vitthaldas Bapodara came forward and started a revolution to rejuvenate the Sangeet. He started the initiative to teach the Dhrupad Sangeet to youngsters and thereby preserved the rich tradition of Dhrupad Tradition. He started the learning centers at various different places across India and in amongst the foreign lands where the diaspora has settled. He conducted short kirtan classes all over the world. Along with Shree Vitthaldas Bapodara, other kirtankaars of Pushtimarg like Shree Madhusudan Khambhodaja, Shree Ghanshyambhai Champaklal Nayak from Ahmedabad, Shree Jamnaprasad Sharma from Mumbai etc took participation in this process and started teaching the Dhrupad Sangeet³³.

Today, several Goswami Acharyas of Pushtimarg has also attained excellence in Dhrupad Sangeet. The Goswami Acharyas like Goswami Shree Gokulotsavji (Nathdwara-Indore), Goswami Shree Rasikraiji (Mathura-Porbandar), Goswami Shree Kalyanraiji (Surat), Goswami Shree Vrajeshkumarji (Kankroli-Baroda) and other Goswami Acharyas has attained excellence in Dhrupad Sangeet³⁴.

Kirtan of Pushtimarg

In the rich tradition of Pushtimarg of about 525 years, we have a huge collection of Kirtanas/Padas. The Ashta Sakha i.e. 8 poet Bhaktas of Shree Vallabhacharyaji and Shree Gusaiji composed numerous padas and sung them in various Ragas. Even Shree Gusaiji composed kirtans in Sanskrit³⁵.

- Shree Kumbhandasji composed about 400 padas.
- Shree Surdasji composed 125,000 padas but only 5000 have survived to present date.
- Shree Krishnadasji composed 1200 padas.
- Shree Paramananddasji composed 2000 padas.
- Shree Govindswami's 400 padas.
- Shree Chittaswami's 200 padas.
- Shree Chaturbhujdasji's 200 padas.
- Shree Nanddasji's wrote 300 padas, included in the Kirtan pranalika.

The Kirtan Literature is mainly classified into two parts:

- The padas describing the divine sports of Lord Shree Krishna i.e. Bhagwad Leela padas
- The padas describing the Mahatmya i.e. greatness of Lord³⁶.

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