

SHRI KRISHNA'S SACRED FORMS

"Always reflect on Hari's form with conviction. See and touch Him directly. Always make every movement for Him." Shri Vallabhacharya (Nirodha Lakshana).

The Beloved appears according to the devotional sentiments of the *bhakta*. In the Path of Grace, Shri Krishna appears in innumerable ways to fulfill the devotional desires of his *bhaktas*. He is the Lord of Sweetness and makes everything sweet. Shri Krishna's form, *lila* and inner mood are only accessible when the mind and heart become bound to Him. The worship of Shri Krishna's *Svarupa* (the adoration of His divine form), allows the sensitive *bhakta* a rare chance to experience Him within this world. Blessed *bhaktas* are *nirguna*, that is, they live beyond the effects of the material creation and are full of His divine presence.

If God remained abstract, there would be no place to garland Him. If He had no feet, how could He run with the cows? If He had no face, then there would be nothing to look forward to. In the Path of Grace, the transcendent becomes a child or a lover and then plays with the *bhakta*. The supreme reward is to experience Shri Krishna here, with God-given senses. Shri Krishna is a householder and enjoys living with the devotional family where everything is dedicated to Him. His *bhaktas* live on His *prasada*, His free flowing grace. The Supreme may be infinite, without beginning or end, but He takes on a delightful form for the sake of His *bhaktas*. In their company Shri Krishna becomes complete.

All of the Shri Krishna *Svarupas* in the Path of Grace are equally Krishna. The main Krishna *Svarupas* of Shri Gusainji's household are still worshipped in northern India with great devotion and detail by his descendants. These Krishna *Svarupas* vary in size, color, form and *lila*, but they all share a common connection to Shri Vallabhacharya and his son Shri Gusainji. Shri Gusainji established them with his seven sons. They are all self-manifested *Svarupas* and appeared either from fire, water or earth. They have provided numerous divine souls with direct divine experiences and to have their darshan is indeed auspicious.

Shri Gusainji presented his oldest son Shri Giridharji with three Krishna *Svarupas*, Shri Nathji, Shri Navanita Priyaji and Shri Mathureshji. Shri Gusainji's other sons, Shri Govindaji, Shri Bala Krishnaji, Shri Gokulnathji, Shri Raghunathji, Shri Yadhunathji and Shri Ghan Shyamji each recieved one Krishna *Svarupa* for their personal worship.

The sons of Shri Girdharji became the heads of two Pushti houses. It was Shri Nathji's wish that He reside with Shri Girdharji's second son, Shri Gopinathji. Shri Gopinathji received the worship of Shri Nathji and the Child Krishna form of Shri Navanita Priyaji. He was enthroned on the highest seat of the lineage. To this day, his descendants are called Tilakayats, the heads of the Pushti lineage. Shri Nathji's temple, the only temple Shri Vallabhacharya ever established, is considered to be the main temple of the lineage.

The younger son of Shri Girdharji was presented with Shri Mathureshji and became the head of the first seat. Shri Gusainji's other six sons became the heads of their own seats. Today these eight lineages are each lead by the descendants of Shri Gusainji's seven sons and their ancestral homes house the main Krishna *Svarupas*. They are centers of *Pushti Margiya* lineage, worship and culture. Each home has its own unique form of Shri Krishna and the modes of worship vary from house to house, for Shri Krishna interacts with His bhaktas

in infinite ways. Now hear about the main *Svarupas* in Shri Vallabhacharya's Path of Grace.

SHRI NATHJI

Shri Nathji is considered to be the main *Svarupa* in *Pushti Marga* and thousands of pilgrims visit Him every day in His temple in Nathdvara Rajasthan. He not only affords His intimate bhaktas the experience of His inner reality, but is also the liberator of all types of souls. Shri Gusainji explained to his disciple, a renounced Brahmin, His divine nature, "Shri Nathji is the Supreme Lord of the lila bower. He stands by the door of a cave on the Govardhan Hill and calls all of His lila souls with His raised left hand."

His closed right hand rests on His hip and contains His hidden nectar essence. Shri Nathji's left hand first manifested on top of the Govardhan Hill in 1410 A.D. In 1479, when Shri Vallabhacharya appeared, Shri Nathji's face manifested from the Hill. In 1493 A.D. Shri Vallabhacharya was called by Shri Nathji in Jharkhand to come to the sacred hill and establish His *seva*. When Shri Vallabhacharya and his party reached the Govardhana Hill, Mahaprabhuji climbed the Hill and embraced Shri Nathji. He then established His worship and adorned Shri Nathji with a *dhoti* garment, *gunja* bead necklace and peacock plumes. He named Him Gopalji, keeper of the cows. Shri Gusainji called Him Shri Govardhan Nathji and his sons later called Him, Shri Nathji, a name which continues to be used.

Construction of Shri Nathji's temple started in 1500 A.D. and twenty years later Shri Nathji's temple was finally completed. Shri Vallabhacharya returned to the Govardhan Hill to install Shri Nathji in His new temple. While Shri Nathji resided in Braja, He had to be moved three times to protect Him from the Mughal forces. When Akbar became

emperor, he stopped all destruction and looting of Hindu temples and during his rule, Shri Gusainji found the proper environment to enhance the modes of divine worship that are still emulated and practiced today in Shri Nathdvara and other centers of Pushti worship.

The period of tolerance ended with the accession of Aurangzeb to the imperial throne. His armies commenced an orgy of destruction and looting of Hindu temples in Mathura and a decision was taken by Tilakayat Damodarji, then a mere boy, and his uncle Shri Govindji, to move Shri Nathji to safety. On the 18th of September 1670 A.D. Shri Nathji, concealed in a bullock cart, set forth from Mount Govardhana. Some two years later, when Shri Nathji's chariot got stuck in the mud in Sinhad, Rajasthan it was understood that it was Shri Nathji's wish to reside there. A temple was constructed for Shri Nathji and He was installed there on the 10th of February 1672 A.D. The village came to be known as Shri Nathdvara.

The divine reason for Shri Nathji's travels to Rajasthan are revealed in the story of Ajaba, one of Shri Gusainji's 252 blessed bhaktas. In her account it is explained that Shri Gusainji once visited Sinhad, the current day town of Nathdvara and princess Ajaba became his follower. Shri Gokulnathji explains...

Ajaba then began having Shri Nathji's darshan. He would talk, laugh and play dice with her. Shri Nathji daily appeared to her, but if for some reason He didn't, on that day she would not eat or drink anything until He came before her...

One day, Shri Nathji was detained at some other bhakta's house and He did not make it to Ajaba's. On the following day, He arrived after lunch and Ajaba was totally distraught. Shri Nathji then laughed and played with her. Later that

afternoon as He was about to go, Ajaba told Him, 'I will not let You go.'

"But I must. As long as Shri Gusainji is here, I have to daily return to My temple on top of the Govardhan Hill. Don't worry, I will visit you daily. After Shri Gusainji leaves this world, I will come and stay in your town, in your room for a very long time. I will not go anywhere else. I will become very famous and will give everyone darshan."

"How I can trust You?"

"My words are true. Don't worry, I will daily come to you."

From that day, Shri Nathji visited Ajaba Kunvari every day after His temple on the Govardhana Hill closed...

In this way, Shri Nathji fulfilled His promise and later moved to Nathdvvara in Mewar, Rajasthan.

On Shri Nathji's left are two smaller *Svarupas*, one of Madan Mohanji, a standing, flute-playing Krishna, as well as tiny Bala Krishnaji, a *Svarupa* of infant Krishna crawling on the floor, holding a ball of butter in one hand. This *Svarupa* was found by Shri Vallabhacharya when he was bathing in the Yamuna river. There is also a *shaligrama* acquired by Shri Vallabhacharya in south India. It is kept to Shri Nathji's right as well as a *Giriraja Shila*, a tiny stone from Mount Govardhana, picked up from the mountain when Shri Nathji left the Govardhan Hill. There is also a single wooden sandal called a *paduka*, that was worn by Shri Vallabhacharya. All of the main places of worship in the Pushti Marga have other forms of Shri Krishna or items related to Shri Vallabhacharya or Shri Gusainji established in the worship alongside the main Krishna *Svarupa*.