

THE UTSAV

SHRI KRISHNA'S FESTIVE YEAR



ANNAKUT
(Kartik Sud Ekam - 1)

Pushti Elucidation:- After Rajbhog preparations are done for Govardhan Pooja. Offer tilak to Girirajji After Govardhan pooja God comes to consume AnnaKut. Samagri can be offered as per capacity.

This is the most renowned festival of pushti Marga. It commemorates the lifting of Mount Govardhana by Krishna to protect the inhabitants of Vraja from the rain-storms sent by a wrathful Indra when the people of Vraja stopped their annual sacrifices and offerings to him. The image of Shrinathji with its raised left hand is in the posture Krishna adopted when he raised the mountain.

On this day, Shrinathji wears a dress similar to the one he wears at Diwali. A gokarna mukuta, a crown with raised edges resembling the ears of a cow, is an additional head-dress.

A huge mound of rice, representing Mount Govardhana, weighing 125 maunds is arranged in the Doltibari and a huge gunja, a sweet cake, is placed on top of it. This represents the head of Vishnu, and four other sweets on four sides of the rice mound represent the four weapons of Vishnu. This also recalls Krishna's role as the Lord of the Mountain when he miraculously produced several hands to eat the offerings of the villagers, thereby giving joy to them.

During Annakuta, a great variety of eatables is spread out in the Nijamandira, Manikotha and Doltibari. Cows are beautifully decorated with peacock feather plumes on their heads and colourful jhumachas, tassels, dangling on either side. Ghungharu, anklets, are tied to their hooves. These make a melodious tinkling sound as they come into the Govardhana Puja Chowk.

The backs of the cowherds and the cows are marked with red hand inprints, red being the symbol of anuraga, love. The impression of the hand suggests Krishna's full protection to the cowherds and their cows.

The image of Navanitprigaji is carried in a palanquin and placed on the steps of Suraj pol. A symbolic mount Govardhana of cowdung is erected in the Govardhana Puja chowk and a stone from the original mountain is placed on it. Arati is offered to the Mount and the cows are fondled and made to play in the chowk.

The priests and servants standing around Govardhana hold a green branch of the karena tree, symbolic of Lord Ganesh, so that the event may be observed without any untoward incidents or disturbances. At the day's end, Bhil tribals are allowed to loot the mountain of rice as a special favour.

It is not surprising that, on the day after Annakuta, Shrinathji is fed only chiehdi, a mixture of rice and pulses. This light diet is required after the heavy meals of the previous day.