
Seva in Pushtimarg

Project – Certificate Course in Vallabha Vedanta

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1. INTRODUCTION

Seva in **Suddhadvaita brahmavada nirguna pusti bhakti marga** (“Pusti Marg”). Is it based on the scriptures? What are the foundational concepts? What its role towards bhakti as desired by Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya the founder of the marg? What is its significance as a method of devotion?

Is it as an activity causing wastage of time, money and energy? Is it a practice of a method of devotion that cannot be understood by logic? Is it more of drama and less of spirituality? Is it relevant in current times in the modern context?

Is seva in pustimarg highly ritualistic and rigid? Does it have various requirements (e.g ‘aparasa’, ‘shingar’ etc). Does it require substantial time, space and money and therefore cannot be followed by ordinary followers in their home?

Is it that many people born into pustimarg families continue their beliefs and practices more out of social and cultural customs rather than the purposes as desired by Sri Vallabhacharya.

What is the relation between devotee (sevak) and the Sevyā Svarupa? Is the reward / phal of seva different from that of Katha?

This project is divided into the following sections:

Chapter 1: Introduction – Sri Vallabhacharya and Scriptures, Pustimarg based on sound philosophy, Sevyā Svarupa and Significance of bhakti (devotion)

Chapter 2: Seva – Framework – Brahmasambandha and Seva, Seva necessity and requirements, Seva and Bhava, Seva and Kathaa

Chapter 3: Summary

1.1 Sri Vallabhacharya and Scriptures

Vallabhacharya accepts only scriptures as authority for the knowledge of God. He clearly and categorically explains that Brahman can be known only through the scriptures. However, Vallabhacharya also agrees that knowledge obtained by other means for e.g perception or inference etc, if it is in consonance with the “Sastra” (i.e. not contradicting the Sastra) then it can be accepted.

In the Anubhashya, Sri Mahaprabhuji defines Shastram while giving commentary on the First Chapter, First Section, Second Sutra "Janmadyasya yatah shastrayonitvat" as: “*Shaastiti (Shaasti iti) shastram vedah*” - That which governs is the Shastram as per the Vedas.

According to Sri Vallabhacharya the following four scriptures together constitute a unified system conveying unanimous meaning. These four are complementary to each other and each one removes the doubts arising out of the previous one.

*“Veda Shri Krsna Vakyanani Vyasa Sutrani Chaiva Hi
Samadhi Bhasha Vyasasya Pramana Chatushtayam ”*

Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya regards Bhagvata Purana as the conclusive phase of the revelational process of the quartet of the divine words: 1. Sruti i.e. the heard primary revelation 2. Smriti i.e. the recollected revelation 3. Sutra i.e. the pondered revelation and 4. Bhagavata Purana i.e. the revealed vision in meditation of Maharsi Badarayana Vyasa.

The Vedas which are senior most in time are a base of spiritual knowledge. The Gita is the superstructure and the Brahma Sutras, the complete edifice, but the Bhagvata is regarded as the beauty and charm of the completed edifice. For knowledge, first of all, we should turn to the Vedas, in case of any doubt in the teachings of the Vedas; we must seek guidance from the Gita. The doubt with reference to Gita should be resolved by the Brahma Sutras. In case any doubt still remains, then, we must seek guidance from the Bhagvata.

Sri Mahaprabhuji therefore states in Sastrartha Prakran – “*Utaram Purva sandhka varakam Parikirtitam*”

According to Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya all the Pramanas, Vedas and words of Lord convey a unanimous meaning. “*Sarvesham Vedvakyanam Bhagwadachsaamapi Shroutoartho Hyamev. Atra Sarvesham Pramananaam Ekvaavrthimaah Sarveshamiti*”.

He also says: “*Arthoymev Nirivbhairapi Vedvakye Ramayanaha Sahitbharatpachairatrehe Anyeshch Shastravachaneih Sahatatvasutre Nirnitayte Sahyayam Harina Sachev*”

This is the meaning of all the Veda sentences, of Ramayana and of Mahabharata with Pancharatra of all other Sastra vachans with Bramhasutra and thus he very emphatically declares that only those who speak the meaning of Vedas (Sastras) in accordance with "Krushnavakya" are true Bhagwats.

“*Krushnavakyanusaren Sastrarth Ye Vadanti hi Te hi Bhagwataha Prokta Suddhaste Bramhavadinaha*”

Scriptures describe the Supreme reality in accordance with the different approaches and eligibilities of different persons. None of such description can ever be totally wrong. Every piece of description proves to be partially true, if read, alongwith the other descriptions. With only such approach we can arrive at the broader view of the Supreme Reality. The Lord always reveals Himself to all within the frame of different capacities of understanding. Therefore Naiyayikas consider Him as only the creator, Mimansakas as only action, Vedantis as only Supreme self, Sankhyas as instrument, some other Sankhyas as merely a knowledge or a knower, or as a foundation of knowledge. These are all partial facets of the One Supreme Reality revealed to the different thinkers or seers. All of them might have pondered or experienced according to the respective aspects that God has revealed before them. Hence differences in their narration is a natural consequence akin to that of blind men and an elephant. (Subodhini)

Sruti says “*Sarve veda yat padamamananti*” all the vedas have one purpose to teach the nature of “Brahman”.

Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya interprets the Sastras (scriptures) explaining the vedas never questioning the vedas. Pusti bhakti marg is based on this understanding of the scriptures.

1.2 Pustimarg based on sound philosophy

Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya studied the major scriptures (Vedas, Upanishads, Darshans, Vedangas, other philosophies like Jain, Charvak etc) in his early childhood and youth. He discussed and debated other philosophies. However, he was not content with just scholastic accomplishments, and was worried as to how he could help divine souls to realize their true self and achieve enlightenment and therefore established his Pustimarg. Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya's pusti bhakti marg is a religion which is based on a very clear and sound philosophy to guide Pusti beings on the path of devotion.

The details of the philosophy can be understood from his thoughts as given in many of his works both short treatises and elaborate works which are based on the scriptures.

Anubhasya: Commentary on the Brahmasutras. Brahmasutra is the basic text of all Vedanta. In the bhasya there are four chapters, in the first chapter Vedanta vakyas describing the nature of "Brahman" are described, in the second chapter the view points of other systems are repudiated, without repudiating the other systems, the third chapter deals with the means, the discussion revolves round the birth of Jiva, qualification of Jiva for mukti, the fourth chapter describes the "Phala" includes discussions on sravana etc , Pusti and Maryada, the eternal nature of lila etc.

Tatvarthadipnibandha : Contains three Parts - Sastrartha-prakaranam, Sarvanirnaya-prakaranam, Bhagavatartha-prakaranam.

'Sastrartha' is an essay on the Gita. 'Sarva-nirnaya' contains the opinions of Shri Vallabhacharya on all the principal schools of philosophy and religion. 'Bhagavatartha' explains the scope and meaning of Bhagvat Purana.

Subodhini : commentary written by Mahaprabhuji Sri Vallabhacharya on Bhagvat Purana. The depth of Sri Vallabhacharya's teachings can be understood from the fact that Shri Vallabhacharya has described the meaning of Bhagvat Purana from seven different angles:

- Sastra (Meaning of Bhagvat as a whole)
- Skandha (Meaning of entire Skandha)
- Prakarana (Meaning of Prakarana)
- Adhyaya (Meaning of Adhyaya)

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- Vakya (Meaning of sentences)
 - Padas and (Meaning of words)
 - Aksharas (Meaning of characters)

The first four meaning are given in the Bhagavathartha-prakarana, the third chapter of the treatise "Tatvartha-dipa-nibandha' while that of the last three meaning is given in the "Subodhini' commentary.

Sodashagrantha : Sixteen short treatise most of them written by Sri Mahaprabhuji in response to the questions of specific disciples about central topics of the path of devotion which include in addition to others, topics related to:

- Worship (Seva) of the Lord Krishna
- Initiation to the path of worship and grace
- Worries about worship
- Refuge in and surrender to Lord Krishna
- How love of the Lord becomes stronger
- Reward of worship

Others: There are many other works of Sri Mahaprabhuji. This includes Bhashya on Jaimini Sutra, Bhashya on Gayatri, Purvamimamsa-Bhashya-Karika, Sukshmatika' a commentary on Bhagavat Purana, Bhagavat Dashama-skandha Anukramanika, Patravalambanam, Shiksha-shloka, Shri Purushottama-nama-sahasrm (One thousand names of Sri Krsna from Bhagavat Purana), Trividhalila-namavali etc.

The foundational concepts of the marg are given in the above works. As can be seen in his various works as mentioned above, Sri Vallabhacharya unified the views of the scriptures and gave us the most resplendent of the philosophies called Suddhadvaita brahmavada nirguna pusti bhakti marga alongwith the supremely blissful path and way of life with an important message "*Sastram avagatyam, mano-vak-deheih Krshna sevyah*" - having understood the scriptures, serve Sri Krsna with mind, speech and body.

A piece of wood has fire latent in it but unless it is brought out by ignition process by its contact with fire the wood cannot give service in cooking etc where fire is most needed. So without the knowledge of god the soul will not know its relation to God. An important

purpose of the philosophy of Sri Vallabhacharya is also to help the soul become aware of their relationship with God.

1.3 Sevyā Svarūpa

Mahāprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya says in Siddhāntamuktavali **“Atastu brahmāvadēna kṛsnē buddhīrviyatam”** The devotee (sevak) and the Sevyā Svarūpa are Brahman.

Brahman by its own volition for its sport, covering its own blissful nature takes the form of Jiva. “Sa ekaki na ramate”, “Sa dvityamaucchatye”, tadatmanam svayamakuruta”, eko ham bahusyam prajayeya .

“Mamaivamso jivaloke jivabhūtaḥ sanātanaḥ” - Those that have come in this world becoming the individual-souls are all my own particles, “amso nanavyapadesat” Jiva is a part of Brahman itself.

According to Sri Vallabhacharya God is the whole (amsi) and the individual the Part (amsa). There cannot be a whole without a part and there cannot be a part without a whole. Therefore, the basic relationship between a soul and supreme soul is of whole and part. This “Tadatmya” being a part of him and belonging to him is the root of the path of devotion (bhakti) and is also the foundation on which the main pillars of Sharnagati, Samarpan and Seva are based.

We souls are his parts; he is the whole. So, it is duty of the parts to worship whole; just like leaves of a tree serve the tree. If a soul fails to do so, its creation is of no use for the whole. This implies that devotion should be Nirguna and Nirupadhika; rather than Saguna & Sopadhika. It means it is not to seek any favour from Him, but is a natural act, at the level of soul rather than intellect or mind. Sri Bhagvat Puranam compares it with the flow of water of river Ganga towards Ocean; absolutely purposeless.

What is the relation between Brahman, Parmatma, Bhagwan and Kṛsna? Sri Vallabhacharya says in Nibandha:

Vedante Ch Smrutao Bramhalinga Bhagwate Tatha |

Bramhoti Parmatmaeti Bhagwaniti Shabdayate ||

The same Brahman is called "Brahman" in Vedanta in Smriti (Gita) he is called Parmatma and in the Bhagvat he is called as Bhagwan. God in Upanishads is known as Brahman, in the Gitaji as Sri Krsna-Vaasudeo-Isvara and in the Purans as Parmeshwar or Parmatman. Although known by these different names it signifies the same Supreme God or Brahman.

Shri Vallabhacharya says: "Param Bramha Tu Krushno Hi" (Siddhanata Mukta). Sri Krsna is the Supreme Brahma and, therefore, He is the greatest of all.

Shri Vallabhacharya explains in the Nibandha. "The atomic Brahman can also be all pervasive. Krishna sits in his mother Yashoda's lap and founds the entire creation." (Sastrartha), (अण्वपि ब्रह्म व्यापकं भवति कृष्ण यशोदाकरोडे स्थितोऽपि सकल जगदाधारो भवति).

In the Nibandha Sri Vallabhacharya also says: "Brahman is sakara i.e with form and at the same time Brahman is vyapak i.e without any limitation in time, space and object. Moreover he resides as " Antaryami i.e soul of every soul. So the Sevy Svarupa is God himself. Therefore, the Seva and worship that a devotee does is of Sri Krsna. If the devotee thinks otherwise he would be guilty of great offense"

"Everything is Brahman (omnipresent by its nature), but in the case of Sevy Svarupa there is something special. Sri Krsna incarnates in the house of the devotee in the form of Sevy Svarupa"

It is said in the Bhagvat Purana: "By your extreme grace you manifest all the forms that your devotees contemplate with their devout sentiment"

An ideal devotee has to relish Brahman as Krsna and realize Krsna as Brahman. In principle, Sri Madhvacharya says, even roaring sound of oceanic waves sing the Lord's glory. However, Kirtan pranali in Pustimarg is more of an expression of devotee's bhava and relation with his Thakorji. Kirtans in Pustimarg also reflect the Pustimarg philosophy for e.g

*"Govind tiharo swaroop nigam neti neti gaave
Bhakt hetu shyamsundar deha dhare ave"*

The vedic passage "Neti Neti" deny in the Brahman all the earthly attributes while other passages affirm in Brahman all divine attributes. For the sake of his sport alone he develops himself into the universe, it is not exhausted into the universe but remains transcendent.

Residing in the heart it becomes “antaryami” and existing outside though agamya becomes gamya by meditation and devotion.

Ashtachhap or Ashtasakha devotees constituted a unique lineage of devotional expression that flowed from their personal experience with Sri Krsna as experienced and relished by them. Their poems reflect true divinity and the foundational philosophy of Pustimarg. For example Paramanandasji says:

*“Nirguna brahma saguna dhaari leela taahi ab sut kari mane
Rasik Shiromani Nandanandan”*

Brahman is avyakta without bhakti and is vyakta with bhakti.

1.4 Significance of Bhakti (Devotion)

Sri Vallahacharya writes in “Subodhini”

*“Guptanandah yato jivah
Niranandam jagad yatah
Purnanando hari tasmad
Sevyah sarvaih sukharthibhih”*

Bliss remains concealed in beings. Sri Krsna has created the universe and beings out of his own divine self but Bhagvan has concealed his attribute of bliss in beings. Hence the perfect bliss can nowhere be found except in Bhagvan Sri Krsna.

Sri Krsna says in Gita

*“Purushah sa prah Parth!
bhaktya labhyas tvananyaya”*

One who is greater than even, Akshara-Brahma, that Supreme Being (Shri Krishna) is obtainable only through devotion.

I have preached three methods by which man may achieve the highest good: 1. Method of knowledge (Gyan) 2. Method of action (Karma) and 3. Method of devotion (Bhakti). 1. Method of knowledge is useful for those who are disinclined to be indulged in action and fulfillment of volition. 2. Method of action is useful for those who are over-inclined to fulfillment of volition. 3. Method of devotion is appropriate course for those who are neither totally disinclined nor over-inclined. (Bhagvata Purana).

Sri Vallabhacharya writes in the Nibandha - “In Purvakanda (i.e. Sanhita, Brahmana and Aranyakas of the Vedas) the aspect of action (Karma) of Brahman is prescribed. The Uttarkaanda (i.e. is the Upanishads of the Vedas) the aspect of knowledge (Gyan) of Brahman is described. The totality of Brahman is described in Bhagwat Puran i.e. the above said two divine aspects/powers as well as the divine person Himself. The different rituals and meditations related to various rewards that the Vedas prescribe, concerning the various subordinate divine forms of Him, are nothing but the partial expressions of His powers of action and knowledge while Bhagwat Puran emphasizes the devotion for Krsna who is the Supreme reality/ person and whose divine sport is this entire creation. So all sort of ritual, meditation and worship of all sorts of minor deities, ultimately belong to the One Supreme God.

Therefore every worship is justified because all such worships alongwith their objects are merely one or other part of the Supreme worship and the one Supreme object viz. Krsna. The liberations, too, achieved through such partial worship of the parts of the Supreme Divinity are different partial expressions of one Supreme Liberation. Thus, our commitment for the method of action, prescribed by Vedas, makes our mind blissful. Our commitment for the method of knowledge, described in Upanishads, makes us partake the Brahmic nature (i.e. we realize our essential nature of omnipresence omniscience, etc. as our innermost reality). Our commitment for the method of the devotion, narrated in Bhagvata, for Krsna should be treated as a sign that He is pleased with us.

Therefore, which method one should adopt is not a real issue but to which method one can really be committed to is the only real issue. All the three methods are fruitful ones, according to respective eligibilities and respective commitments.”

In light of this basic presumption, Sri Mahaprabhu clarifies that in present age, method of action and method of knowledge both have become quite difficult to follow or adopt. Method of devotion is comparatively easy.

Sri Vallabhacharya mentions in his Krsnashraya treatise that in the. present Kali age, all good paths have disappeared and hypocrisy reigns. Even the holy areas have become impure, the mantras. have lost their effectiveness, and the religious teachers are mostly full of pride, while the Vedic ritual has lost its value. Sri Vallabhacharya saw devotion to para brahma Krsna the best spiritual solution.

In the path of Gyana i.e. knowledge, only our soul can experience his bliss, as our senses get apart while liberation. While in the path of devotion, he can be experienced with all our senses in tact. So Sri Mahaprabhuji sarcastically states that just like a person having vision when kept in the dark feels uncomfortable, his experience with soul alone can't be Phala for a soul having senses.

Sri Acharyaji clarifies in Sarvaniryana Nibandha "*Param atra na sarveshaam Phalmukhadhikaar, Kintu yeshu Bhagawat kripa, Kripaa Parigyaanam cha maargruchyaa Nishchiyate*" means Why everybody is not following Pushti Bhakti Marg because those who are graced by God, only can perform Lord's Bhakti/devotion as per the path shown by him. The interest/liking in Pushti Bhakti marg in any soul, is the parameter to identify the grace showered on that soul by the Lord.

Sri Vallahacharya states in ~Pushti-Pravah-Maryaadaa "*Bhaktimaargasya Kathanaat Pushtirastiiti Nischaya*" means from the scriptural teaching of the path of devotion which is not caused by desire for achieving any of the worldly rewards like money, fame, comforts or other-worldly rewards like heavenly pleasure but it is an unconditional love for God, then it is a certain that there is grace.

Only those who are selected by him as divine souls, are able to follow a divine path, not all as explained in Bhagawat Gita, by Lord as "*Dvoubhutasargo Lokesmin daiv aasur evacha*". Amongst these divine souls, the selected ones by God in the path of devotion, only can offer devotional Seva.

The uniqueness of Pustimarg lies in the importance given to devotion by staying at home and living in society which is considered a major hurdle in other marg's. So what about the disturbances in devotion that we come across on day to day basis on account of living in a home in society? Well, we need to tactfully cross these hurdles as directed by our Acharyas. We are promised to receive the divine bliss of his love at our doorstep!

2. Seva - Framework

In his treatise Pustipravaha- maryada-bheda Sri Vallabhacharya says: “Bhagavad-rupa-sevartham tat shrshtih” - The world of Pusti-beings has been created for performing the worship of Bhagavan’s Svarupa.

2.1 Brahmasambandha and Seva

Sri Mahaprabhuji Vallabhacharya was concerned with the upliftment of divine souls. He had noticed that people were spiritually divided and felt that the Vedic rituals had lost their significance and that mantras were mostly ineffective. In such a time, he thought, "what is the fate of the blessed ones?" They had become oblivious of their own Svarupa; the Svarupa of Bhagavan, their relation with Bhagavan and their duties towards Bhagavan. They are also full of various impurities making their connection with Brahman very difficult.

In order to turn Pushti-beings to their original duty of doing Bhagavan’s worship, Bhagavan ordained Sri Mahaprabhuji Vallabhacharya to manifest the devotional path of Pusti and granted initiation mantra of Brahma-sambandha.

The worship (Seva) of Sri Krsna is the context of Brahmasambandha. The brahmasambandha ceremony by the initiating guru is also in the presence of the Sevy Svarupa of the devotee.

The main components of the mantra are – Self dedication motivated by the agony of many lifetimes of separation from Krsna with a desire to now completely belong to Krsna and to not use anything that has not been offered to Krsna. Having taken the initiation, the devotee should offer (samarapana) all his activities to Sri Krsna. Further the impurities, defects (dosa) in Pushti beings will not hinder or invalidate worship of Sri Krsna. Defects as well as all other qualities, possessions etc have been offered to Sri Krsna in the mantra. So even though those defects remain, they do not prevent worship. The defects are not removed but become inoperative in Seva.

The Brahmasambandha mantra lived in its true spirit reflects (awareness and pain on separation from the Lord, Samarapana (Offering dedicating body, senses, life breath, and inner faculties as well as spouse, children, house, relatives, wealth and this world or any other along with soul) and Sharnagati (I am yours).

Pusti beings have to be careful that they do not become complacent on getting Brahasambandha diksha, thinking that you are now liberated. A wise person shall not take just one dip in Ganga and come out to swim in sewage water. He shall regularly keep on taking dips in Ganga for lifetime. That apart, Sri Mahaprabhuji instructs that activities which do not seem useful in samarpana should always be restricted.

Pustimarg emphasizes on Mahatmagyana and Sneha i.e. knowledge of his divinity and love on part of the disciples. Bhakti has been defined by Acharayacarana as "*Mahatmya janapurvastu sudrdhah sarvato adhikah sneho bhaktiriti proktah taya mukti nacanyatha*". Bhakti svarupa has been explained as "Sneho bhaktih". When one understands that Bhagvan is the soul, sneha takes place. Bhakti means sneha in Sri Krsna. "Para brahma Sri Krsna snehatvam". The meaning of Bhakti is, all exceeding unflinching love for the God following the awareness of his greatness. This divine awareness-cum-affection is the true definition of the devotion for God.

As explained in the Brahasambandha diksha devotion = Sneha (love) + Service (seva). This service involves utilizing all of our belongings and self to serve God. So a follower is expected to daily perform his Seva. Such a service as per this program provides conducive environment for his sneha (love) to grow. Acharayacarana also explains in Bhaktivardhini - to strengthen the sentiment of devotion one has to nurture the seed of it i.e the worship of Krsna is to be performed in one's own house.

Sri Mahaprabhu Vallabhacharya founded a system of "Seva" or worship of our Lord Shri Krishna, which can be performed and practiced by everyone, in this modern life, at their homes, while leading an ordinary life, discharging one's duties, after consecrating and dedicating (samarpan) everyone and everything to his Seva Svarupa. This depends entirely on the Grace of our Lord Shri Krishna, showered on an aspiring devotee, who does "Seva" or service of our Lord Shri Krishna, regarding our Lord as the Supreme Purushottama, with a spirit of complete consecration, dedication and devotion. The Lord, in turn, guides this devotee to attain "Pure and Total Devotion" in him.

2.2 Seva necessity and requirements

According to Sri Vallabhacharya service of Sri Krsna is not a duty but a requirement. It is a necessity. Instincts like eating and breathing are natural to sustain life. Similarly service of Sri Krsna is a necessity of Pusti beings. The very existence of a follower of Pusti devotion is meaningless without Sri Krsna's Seva. Sri Vallabhacharya has accepted the devotion and service of Sri Krsna as the devotee's way of life. Hence he has shown a way of life where Sri Krsna remains at the center of each and every activity such as waking, eating, drinking, sleeping, doing job and work, etc. Such kind of service can subsist at no other place except at the devotee's house.

To make a mind concentrate in Sri Krsna, Sri Acharyaji shows a remedy in Sidhantmuktavali' and 'Bhaktivardhini' as "*Chetastatpravanam seva tat sidhhyaiyee tanuvittaja....*" *Bijdhardhya prakarastu griheshitwaa swadharmataha. Avyaavrito bhajaet krishanm poojaya shravanadibhihi*" means to concentrate on Shri Krshna and to consolidate the seed of devotional sense, Pusti bhakta should start devotional worship of Sri Krsna in his own house by his own body-wealth -mind with the co-operation of other family members, observing rules of varnashram dharma as per an individual capacity and also performing worship as prescribed in scriptures of Bhakti. He is required to perform Krsna Seva as a prime concern and thereafter he may get involved in other business. Here an objectionable ego and attitudes of possessiveness can be refined by offering one's own body and one's own money (Tanu-Vittaja seva) respectively for Sri Krsna- worship and it helps in Chitta viniyoga i.e. employing mind in the service of Sri Krsna. Being a part of the cosmos created for His divine sport, Jiva thus fulfils the purpose of its creation when it imparts services to him.

A sincere devotee wishes that he utilizes his all resources for Seva. But often he is unable to do so. E.g. the wealth accumulated for this divine purpose gets consumed for other things like treatment for disease. The relatives do not participate in Seva. The heart & mind remain occupied in family responsibilities. Isn't it disheartening?

Shri Mahaprabhuji says that in Atmanivedana we declare all our belongings but not each. So if an item or two are left out from utilization for Seva, it does not make it a matter of concern. Though we should make sincere first attempts to utilize each belonging for Seva, we should not insist too much and start worrying instead of enjoying Seva in case it can't be utilized. Shri Harirayji says - we can't escape from our family, social or national duties. We can't kick out our relatives from house if they don't help in Seva. We need to tolerate them, at the same

time keeping safe distance from them, like a lotus in mud. At the same time we should have faith in our almighty Lord, capable of using our belonging on his own as and when he desires so. Most importantly we should retain our mood of devotion in spite of facing uncomfortable situations.

The essence of the requirements of Seva can be understood from a statement of Sri Mahaprabhuji in 'Sarvnirnay nibandh' as "*Yensyaannivrittishchitte tat krsna saadhayed dhruvam*" what delights our heart, acquired by a decent lawful means, an ownership of which not shared by anybody else and which pleases our mind is the thing, that should be offered to Sri Krsna in his worship. That which you relish and that which makes you happy to share with thakorji, should definitely be offered to your Sevyā Svarupa.

"Tat Sukha" i.e ensuring Sevyā Svarupa's sukha is the main consideration in all activities. Vrtrasura says in Bhagavata..... "I don't desire heaven not the post of Brahman the creator, nor do I desire to be Emperor of the world, nor the Lord of the nether worlds, I don't lust after yogic powers, not even freedom from rebirth. You Lord are everything to me. I desire nothing else." That is the voice of a true bhakta, Sri Vallabhacharya says that without the Lord's grace, that type of devotional attitude cannot exist.

An incident of Kumbhandasji also helps us to understand the relationship with the Sevyā Svarupa. Kumbhandasji kirtans were very popular. Emperor Akbar also heard about his fame and became anxious to hear his kirtans. Therefore he sent his men to call Shri Kumbhandasji to his palace at Fatehpur Sikri. Kumbhandasji did not want to leave Shri Goverdhannathji and go to Emperor Akbar. However, being his order, (unwillingly) he had to go to Fatehpur Sikri. Emperor Akbar pressurized Kumbhandasji to sing kirtans. Deeply aggrieved because of separation of Shri Goverdhannathji, he sang the following pada:

"Bhakt ko Kaha Sikri Ka Kaam
Aavan jaavan Panaiya tuti bisri gayo Hari Naam".

Meaning: What has a devotee to do with Sikri. On the contrary by coming and going he wore off his chapals and in addition he had to abstain himself from worship of Shri Hari.

Had Kumbhandas any greed of money or any such thing, he would have flattered the Emperor instead of singing such a song. Being pleased by this, Akbar told Kumbhandasji to ask for whatever thing he desired. Kumbhandasji at that time requested him that please do not call me again any time.

In 'Siddhaant Muktavali' Shri Achaaryaji explains the characteristics of Seva as "*Krsna seva Sadaa Kaaryaa Maansi saa paraa mataa,*" It is essential all the time that Pusti bhakta engages himself in seva. Basically Seva means to get mind engrossed in Krsna. When a mind is totally occupied by Shri Krshna in such a way that even if the rituals of Seva are not carried out physically, it continues to prevail in the mind. This type of intense worship of God in the mind cannot happen with any specific effort, but it happens effortlessly. This is termed as 'Maansi Seva'.

2.3 Seva and Bhava

Sources of Bhava are divine experience of the devotees and scriptures. Therefore, as the experience differs Bhava also differs. We must consider that Sri Thakorji whom we worship in our house, as the ultimate divine authority, Sri Krsna himself (Who became the Lord of Vraja). He is everything for us and with this in our mind we have to worship him.

Sri Mahaprabhuji explains in Chatursholaki "*Sarvada sarvabhaven Bhajniyo Vrajadhip, svasyaayameva dharmo hi naanyah kvaapi kadaachana*". The devotee should worship the Lord of Vraja at all times, with total love (and/or: with all/every sentiment). For this alone is his rule of life. Never and in no circumstances is there any other.

"Sri Mahaprabhuji advocates that we should worship our Thakorji as an Emperor of Vraja. Sri Mahaprabhuji states in "Subhodhini"

***Nisadhan falaatmaayam pradurbhutosati gokule
Tataevasati neinaschitayamehike parloukike***

When Sri Krsna was born in Gokul, the Vrajbhakta who do not know and cannot follow the rituals to get elevated/ liberated, got the ultimate goal. Vraj bhaktas who were very simple people could become carefree from these worldly matters and their ill effects. That is why one should emulate sentiments of Vraja-devotees in all activities of Krsna-worship in one's house.

Sri Acharyaji says in "Sanyas Nirnay"

*"Kondinyo gopikaha prokta guruvaha sadhanam cha
tadbhavo bhavanaya siddhaha sadhanam nanydhrishyate"*

Kaundinya and the Gopikas have been proclaimed the gurus of such renunciation. And the means of attaining it is theirs; love is brought to perfection by meditative imagining, no other means is needed.

Sri Krsna, in our house is to be treated as 'Aalamban Vibhav' around which all other sentiments (Bhav) rotates. Affection in the heart drives other acts of mind-body-speech for devotional worship. This outside devotional behavior in the form of mind-speech-body is called 'Anubhav'. Worship of our Lord with ornaments and dresses, singing Kirtans describing Vraj Leela etc are called 'Uddipanbhav'. It facilitates our Lord to become our 'Alamban'. In other words, our love affection or sentiments resided in our heart towards our Lord are manifested outside in the form of an idol (Alamban-vibhav).

To emulate a sentiment of Vraj devotee like a parental affection (Vatslya bhav), Sringar bhav, Sakhya bhav (freindship), etc. in our Krsna-worship, is called 'Sanchari-bhav' (a temporary sentiment). 'Sthayi-bhav (a permanent sentiment) is derived from all these above sentiments putting together i.e Vi-bhav (Aalamban-vibhav & Uddipan-vibhav), anu-bhav and sanchari-bhav. Sthayi-bhav (a permanent sentiment) is love affection towards our Lord due to relationship of Soul & Super-soul (Aatmaa & Paramatmaa) between a devotee and a Bhagwan. This gets developed and progresses based on understanding of Brahman, Self and relationship between Brahman and beings.

There is no spiritual method which does not have drama. No grace without drama. Seva is an outlet of our inner sentiment. A sentimental approach towards divinity i.e worship of the Sevyā Svarupa is drama.

One of the best means to experience God is "bhava", divine feeling for the Sevyā Svarupa residing in one's house. One must always serve him with bhava, the unconditional loving attitude. It is also said worship with bhava the Lord of bhava.

The "Svarupa bhavana" itself is the "Alaukika samarthya" the ultimate "Phala" i.e Pushtimargi becomes capable of experiencing Aadhidaivika Svarupa and Aadhidaivika Lila of Sri Krsna here only and with his present body-senses.

2.4 Seva and Kathaa

We should engage our three faculties – speech-body-mind - in devotion. Shravana-Kirtana-Smarana are for speech, Padasevana-Archana-Vandana are for body and Dasya-Sakhya-Atmanivedana are for mind. Though each of them can be done in isolation as well, the preferred program is that of a cyclical revision. By voluntarily getting engaged in this cycle, we can achieve total involvement in devotion.

The one, who cannot maintain Seva, should feel the separation as the Vrajbhakta felt, when Shri Krshna went to Mathura and feel the excitement of Vrajbhakata when they listen to stories of Shri Krshna by Uddhavji. As per the preaching of Sri Vallabhacharya, those who cannot do Sri Krsna's service should resolutely adopt the course of Kathaa. They should do Gunagaan of Sri Krsna, should study Bhagavat, Vaartaa, Shiksha-patra, Grantha of the sect etc.

"He enters through the ears and sits upon the love saturated lotus heart and removes the souls impurities like the autumn floods purge impure waters. Whose heart is pure, never relinquishes Sri Krsna's feet." (Bhagvata Purana).

"By repeatedly hearing about the Lord, divine inclination is aroused. Narada says, in this vein. in the Bhagavata. "My inclination towards the famous Lord Krsna came about by listening to every word about His sport." (Bhagvata Purana)

In Seva Thakorji is a painter and makes a devotee do his seva as he desires, while in Kathaa the devotee is the painter. Though the "Phala" of both Seva and Kathaa are likely to be the same 'Bhagwan ev hi phala sa yatha avirbhaved bhuvi' - The Lord Himself is the Phala as he descends on the earth. Given a choice wouldn't a devotee be with Thakorji and do seva and kathaa both rather than only kathaa?

The depth and divinity of Pustimarg can be understood only by living it the way expected by Sri Mahaparbhujii..

3. Summary

Sri Harirayji compares our worldly life = Sansar to water and Prema to fire; if allowed to contact each other, the plenty of water shall extinguish the mild fire. In other words, our worldly desires and related associations can deprive us of the spiritual love for the Lord, our precious possession. The more you get into the worldly affairs, the more you go away from him; to the extent that even devotion gets influenced by mundane desires like money, popularity, etc.

The entire program of Sri Mahaprabhuji is such that a devotee's day to day activities and entire life are driven towards devotion thereby making Thakorji and everything related to him his Sansar. Over a period of time as devotion develops and grows our hearts are not left with any garbage of worldly desires. Although the purpose of the program is Thakorj's pleasure and not of any treatment and nothing else. The program has a built-in potential to harmonize our Aahanta (I-ness) and Mamta (My-ness). Sri Vitthalnathji says that a devotee involved in his service may not wish to acquire the knowledge of the Brahman and liberation from sorrows of this world, but it happens on its own because of the program. In Siddhantarahasya, the process is praised as one of divine purification, like merging of sewage water in holy river Ganga.

The main sentiment of Pustimarg can be understood from the following passage:

“I am yours”, “You are mine in the form you exist in front of me – Sevyā Svarupa”, “You have created the world for me, now we both will create a world in which both us will live”

The depth and beauty of Pustimarg seems to be that though “Brahman” may exist in many forms, God willingly takes a form as desired by a bhakta for his bhakti, gives him an opportunity to create a world as pure as he can for his bhakti, and is ready to live with him as he normally would and becomes totally dependent on him. This is the “Bhagvat Sambandha” through which both the bhakta and bhagvan become alive in a world created by both of them where both exists for each other.

Sri Vallabhacharya says that the Lord's appearance itself is grace. Seva is an adventure where thakorji many a times reflects his nature of kartum (to do), akurtum (undo), anyatha kartum (do otherwise) and more so when one thinks of the worship during different “Ritu's” (season), festivals etc with different kirtans, vastra, shingara, bhog etc, when one sees the “adbhut karmane” and also the “kreedati” (sport) that Thakorji does in the devotees Jagat (Sansar).

Sri Vallabhacharya's marg is a pure and divine marg. The affection for God must not be caused by any other motive or conditional because motivated or conditional love for God cannot be regarded as the expression of Pure-Self-delightment. It is rather a polluted one. Sri Vitthalnatha, in a short treatise named "The Swan of Devotion", clearly says that any devotional practice done due to motive of earning livelihood or fame, etc. is merely a worldly profession like farming. Moreover it is sinful, also, like using holy water of Ganges in toilet, after defecation.

Bhakti is a bhava and Seva an anubhava. Sharnagati a bhava and Samarpan an anubhava about which it will be very difficult to write in any project. Though an attempt has been made to write about Seva in this project just as "Brahman" is "Asabdam", "Seva" in Suddhadvaita brahmavada nirguna pusti bhakti marga is also "Asabdam".

|| Natva harim sadanandam ||

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