



# Pushti-sect & Modernity

Ajshah

# **PUSHTI-SECT & MODERNITY**

( A Translation of

“Pushtimaarg Ane Adhunikataa” in Gujarati )

**ASIT SHAH**

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# **Pushi-Sect & Modernity**

. ASIT SHAH

## Prelude

Elderly people tell children : “You don’t understand anything, don’t follow any instructions or beliefs, just go on arguing, always confront. However if our elders told us anything, we used to obey them always”.

The new generation tells elders : “You scold me always, keep me away, always sideline me by saying ‘you will never understand’, respond to every logic of mine by abusing me, expect me to just silently go on doing what is being told. Quite unlike our teacher at the coaching institute ! ”.

The problem is of language and lack of communication. The youngsters of the new generation have their distinct personality. They are unable to immediately adjust to the conventions, customs and traditions. So it is necessary to focus on their thoughts. Anyone will love inheritance if it is worthy preservation & useful. Having a tradition full of spiritual gems is not adequate ; it is also important and necessary to make it available to the new generation in the language they understand. As long as the Raamcharitmaanas does not contradict the original Raamaayana, there is no problem. Bhageeratha, who knew the glory of goddess Gangaa, liberated his ancestors.

As compared to the present situation, the conditions were quite unfavourable 100 years ago. An entire generation came into existence which was educated in the British syllabus & system. That generation knew more about Copernicus, Shelley, Byron or Karl Marx than about Kalidas, Kautilya or Kartikeya. They used to see the Indian culture through the eyes of the Britishers. So it was indeed challenging to make authentic history and literature available to these new followers of our Pushti-sect without any tampering. On one hand there was anger among the elders against modern printing of the ancient literature and on the other hand there was a deprived new generation, which was left at the mercy of its own wisdom, destiny and the world.

I dedicate this book to ShreeMoolchandra Teliwala, who was the pioneer. In spite of having financial, health & family problems and opposition from elderly people, he took up this challenge. He led a

team of dedicated scholars to publish Pushti-Margiya literature in contemporary book form, which was available only in hand-written manuscript form till then. He also brought awareness in the old as well as the new generation through the periodical magazine 'Venu-Naad' to transfer this invaluable heritage.

This book of mine is an attempt to follow his footsteps. You may find it difficult to understand, but I only know to serve an essence in the form of the essence and not in the form of a flavoured drink. Ignorant speakers & writers of Pushti-sect often serve their ideas like an artificial drink, borrowed from the other sects, "for the benefit of general masses" ! At least, this book will be a better option.

The need of the hour however is not for interpreters like us. Rather, it is about understanding oneself and making others understand in the language known by each other at the family level ; If we wish to live together, if we wish to live even after death, if we do not wish to live like a detached leaf. If the readers take an initiative in this direction by using this book as a reference, the writing and reading of this book will be meaningful.

This is an English translation of my original book "Pushtimarg Ane Aadhunikata", written in Gujarati in the year 1993. It still seems relevant, I think, or may be more now ! I am thankful to Vallariji - Pratyushji Meharshi and Atulyaji Sharma, who have translated this book & Kalpanaji Ved, for her inputs as a first reader.

Pl. note that here 'he'-'his'-'him' means 'he/she'-'his/her'-'him/her' as appropriate. However 'He'-'His'-'Him' are exclusively used for Prabhu or ShreeMahaprabhuji-ShreeGusainji as appropriate.

**Asit Shah**

**Instructions for reading:**

1. This book is very thought-provoking. Please do not read it before going to sleep.
2. Daily the elderly people should read its five pages and children three pages.

3. A new entrant in Pushti-sect should read this book at least twice, while the old seasoned Pushti-sect follower should read it at least four times.

**Warning :**

Reading this book is unpardonably injurious to the mental and financial health of people who are retailers, whole sale distributors, agents, customers, helpers or advocates of readymade Dharma.

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## 1. Introduction

*"I read a rare interview of an Italian director Federico Fellini, a maestro in the world of cinemas. Fellini says that television has changed everything. People viewing it do not even have to move ; they stay at home. They need not put on any particular attire. From their bedrooms or even bathrooms, they watch television ; sometimes wearing only inner wear and sometimes even without that. Images that appear on TV screens are usually very small and devoid of any splendour or grandiosity. These images appear out of the furniture meant for comfort & luxury. People watch television while sitting on a chair, gossiping with friends, drinking or eating or talking over the telephone or at times even while romancing ! In doing so, Fellini says- 'there is no respect'.*

*Here it is not respect in the ethical sense; but an indication of the lack of an intense wait for what is being shown on the screen. The remote-control switch is in the viewer's hand. He can instantly switch it on or off as per his whims and fancies. It does not matter whether it's a Pope's sermon or a poet's recitation. Viewers getting even slightly bored can shut them up immediately by pressing a button and switch over to a football match. The viewer feels that he is powerful. He can hop from one country to another. He can move from Christ to a football match and from an art exhibition to pornography in a jiffy. TV is a mysterious and terrifying thing that has penetrated quite deep & close to mankind. Fellini says that it is almost impossible to predict what this little thing can lead us to.*

*TV has completely crushed the prestige of old movies ... the audiences do not go to watch them, rather those movies come to them via an idiot box for one and a half hours.*

*For TV, Fellini has given a unique and accurate metaphor : an open mouth in the house that spews everything out like a mathematical stupid. War, current affairs, religion, God - the TV like a mixer spins all of these and cooks it like a paste of mashed potatoes. Everything has been destroyed forever by breaking it into tiny pieces. The purpose of this strange demonic diabolical invention is to provide information, to enlighten the ignorant, to give happiness and wellness and to make the audience aware; but because of some mysterious reasons or cunningness, the purpose of giving*

*information or displaying the culture has vanished. Like a flood ... it destroys everything. Everything has become meaningless."*

*( Translation of a passage from a Gujarati book "Kshan Tatkshan"  
written by ShreeLaabhshankar Thakar ).*

\*

Not only just about the TV, same can be said about modernity in its entirety as well, that "there is no respect". Even if we take the ethical/moral meaning of 'respect' here, it remains equally appropriate. Today, this wave of modernity and disrespect has flooded every sphere of life.

In the field of education, tuitions and coaching classes dominate. Students harass teachers, hold them captive for hours, behave unethically during examinations and/or sabotage the schedule by resorting to agitations. Except for the studies, all other unfair activities go on openly in colleges. Teachers and other employees promote this disease for their petty self-interest. Dirty games of funds and politics are played in managing of educational institutes.

Doctors and lawyers are no longer respected as much as they used to be, during the days of freedom struggle. The people who have social-service in mind are exceptions in these professions today.

Games are no longer games. Players openly violate the rules or code of conduct both on and off the field. They disrespect the umpires/referees, selectors or players of the competing team, take drugs, rely more on power rather than the skill/technique and prefer a negative over a positive style. They play for money and fame under the constant fear of getting dropped from the team. The umpires and selectors are also always under stress. Time and again, the spectators become aggressive and halt the play. The media gives more importance to sensational news rather than the game. Apart from all these, even the national and international politics interfere in sports. The enjoyment and fun are not visible anywhere. Team spirit too is visible only as an exception.

Pandit Bheemsen Joshee had expressed his frustration in an interview given some decades back. He said : "Now-a-days, we do not get disciples like the ones in the earlier times. We learnt to sing

by practising (Riyaaz) for fourteen years and that too for thirteen-fourteen hours a day. Now, however, the students are eager to become a 'Star' or be recognized as an 'International Talent' within two-three years." Many old singers often say that though the audience has increased now, the ones having a thorough understanding of the art are hardly five per cent among them. Within half an hour, people start getting up & moving, yawning, conversing/shouting, munching and drinking. The experiences of the other artists like the dancers, painters and dramatists would also generally not be different.

Even the field of religion is not an exception to this. That too has become like a battlefield of Kurukshetra. Public service, service to Prabhu, satsang, self-study, chanting, penance, yoga, gyana, karma, pilgrimage, kathaa, renunciation, household life - nothing is thriving.

\*

On one hand, it is this modernity and on the other hand, it is the Indian culture. To what extent it is ours' in today's era is a subject matter of deep thought. But we can definitely call it "Indian" in the sense that it had flourished in India. We can also call it "a culture of respect" – "Atithidevo Bhava", "Gurudevo Bhava", "Matrudevo Bhava" ; rivers, trees, stones, fires, animals, birds, ancestors, descendants – just respect, respect and respect for all ! Even today, amidst the din of modernity, when its chirping is heard or remembered, it brings cheer in the autumn of our modern life. It appears as if spring has replaced autumn for a moment.

Pushti-sect is a tall peak in the mountain range of Indian culture. It is true that time and space cannot bind the path of grace. A follower of Pushti-sect can be non-Indian and can be fair, black, yellow or red-skinned. But his spiritual practices should be according to the Indian culture. The Indian culture is woven in the spiritual practices of Pushti-sect like a thread woven in a cloth. But that is the case of the true tradition. In the on-going activities under our banner of Pushti-sect, only modernity and sheer disrespect prevails. Therefore, in today's era, it has become essential for all true seekers to use their sense of discretion.

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## **2. Sources and Causes of Respect-disrespect**

Modernity is undoubtedly a product of the West. Yet one thing is certain that even there, it is considered as a distorted version. Hence It is not proper to consider modernity as an authentic Western culture. Fellini's interview highlights this fact.

In Western culture, there is a respect for humans and, to some extent, for human creations. But there is a feeling of hatred towards nature, natural creations, animals and plants. Its origin lies in the Bible.

One of its beliefs ; that Adam, the ancestor, was an inhabitant of heaven and had came to earth as a punishment for committing the original sin, arouses hatred for the earth. It does not allow the feeling of affinity towards the earth. Another belief is that the soul is only in us humans ; not in animals & plants. Everything, living and non-living, has been created by God only for the consumption of humans. This belief compels the followers to believe that humans have no duty towards them. Suppose a company gives a car to its employee for use, then it is owned by the company and if the employee does not need it, the company can use it for its work as well. But here, God has created the universe only for humans ; it is of no use to Him. There is no need for the employee to maintain the vehicle well, considering it as the property of the company. He need not care for it. Then where will the respect come from?

Christianity had allowed only humans and God to remain on the list of the respected, which were later dethroned by Science and Technology. Medical Science can create artificial birth, life, death, organs and everything. Science itself has snatched away the crown of God and is capable of doing all such tasks, which were once considered that only God can accomplish.

But Science is also capable of doing all that which only the devil/Setan can ! Deadly weapons like atom-bombs can kill the human race altogether like insects. And then some of its inabilities also come to the fore, like the prediction or prevention of pandemics / earthquakes / volcanic eruptions / famines / cyclones / heavy rains / meteoric destruction. That's why Science itself has not remained respectable. Like a pet animal, whether it is good or bad depends on its user or rider.

Apart from the Bible and Science, there are many things that have come up or flourished in this century, which are born enemies of respect - life in densely populated cities, mass media that bombard information, low-class entertainment, commercialization, increased importance of time and money, artificially created demand, easy access to everything in abundance, selfish leaders, indiscipline, malpractices, etc.

Political ideologies are also no exception to this. Whether it is democracy or communism, the duty of a citizen ends in merely being an ideal citizen and the duty of rulers ends in fulfilling the primary needs of the citizens. There is no bigger moral, ethical or spiritual/religious goal that needs to be aimed at. The public does not give respect to the rulers, believing them as superior, but rather expects the rulers to serve them. The rulers consider the citizens as merely vote-banks. Only money is respected in economic ideologies like an Open Market Economy. A person does not feel satisfied after earning money, but wishes to spend it off quickly or to throw it at the family members or creditors.

Selfishness and irresponsibility are increasing in both families and society. Parents leave their children in hostels or in the care of servants and children in turn send their old parents either to old age homes or keep them as servants. The incidents of crimes, suicides/mass shootings and accidents are increasing day by day, not to mention addiction, adultery, etc.

If it goes on like this, the emerging worst scenario has already been predicted by the ecologists / environmentalists. We must retreat.

\*

The Indian attitude towards the world is quite different – filled with a sense of intimacy, full of gratitude.

According to the Upanishads, when alone, Prabhu desired to play. So He Himself assumed various names and forms with whom He could play. Everything - gross or subtle, visible or hidden, immovable or movable - in the universe are all forms of Prabhu. The whole creation including mankind are created only for Prabhu's play and all forms are assumed by Prabhu Himself. Apart from that,

Prabhu also incarnates in the forms of a fish, a tortoise, a pig, Hayagriva, Narasimha, etc. If there is so much of intimacy between the creation and Prabhu, what to talk about human beings? There are differences or diversities or variety in the universe and it will remain so because Prabhu's wish is like that. But all these differences are assumed by Prabhu Himself for the sake of His divine play.

Based on this basic belief, our religious scriptures promote this concept of differences for the sake of play. One may treat a tree as a Guru like Dattaatreya, or treat them as a benevolent gentleman, or as Prabhu, or even as an adopted son. Everything is permitted while keeping the tree and the humans in tact.

Respect is only possible when the respect-giver

- (i) gratefully acknowledges the differences between him and the one whom he respects,
- (ii) after understanding himself,
- (iii) understanding the respectable,
- (iv) by using his limited personal capacity to understand-interact-relish.

The causes mentioned above crush our understanding or personal capacity or gratefulness or knowledge of being different. This destruction does not let us deal with the world in harmony & be normal, thereby harming ourselves and the world.

We need to follow the laws of creation. It cannot happen that the rules follow us. The rules follow the truth only, not our will. Quite like a medical treatment, any spiritual practice can never be such that it suits the seeker 100% from the very beginning, day one. If the seeker keeps on practising, then over a period of time, it suits him ; just like a sugar-free tea or milk. To make it suitable, the seeker needs to change oneself in order to align with the prescribed spiritual practice. The spiritual practice can't be modified to suit him. It is rather aimed at achieving the desired result, like liberation or bliss. Having forgotten this fundamental fact, our Pushti-sect is facing a dilemma today. Utter confusion is prevailing.

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### 3. Bhagavat-Sevaa

*“Daily he used to go for parikramaa of ShreeGovardhan early in the morning. Then he used to have the Darshan of ShreeNaathjee. Later he used to go for having Darshan of ShreeGusaainjee and his sons at Naathdwaaraa. Thereafter, he would take Prasaad after offering food to Dhwajaajee. This was his daily routine. . . ‘ShreeGusaainjee never speaks to me. What is the reason?’ - This doubt used to make him worried. . .*

*On the day of Deewalee, he thought : ‘Today I will have to go late for having Darshan, as ShreeNaathjee will take lunch after Parikramaa. Meanwhile, let me engage myself in some Sevaa. . .’ So he started sweeping the entire path of the parikramaa and did not leave a single pebble. He thought that ShreeThaakurjee and ShreeGusaainjee shall walk on this path and their feet are very soft. Lest they get hurt by these pebbles. . .*

*Seeing this, ShreeGusaainjee said to this Vaishnava, ‘O Vaishnava! Till day, you were doing activities only for your own upliftment. But today, you did not worry about yourself and did Sevaa. That is why, I spoke to you today’. . . From that day onwards, this Vaishnava stopped worrying about his upliftment and started doing Sevaa, considering Sevaa itself as the ultimate fruit of the means. After that, ShreeGusaainjee used to be always pleased with him. Knowing that ShreeGusaainjee is happy, he also used to be happy.”*

*( The Story of a Virakta Vaishnav in 252 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

\*

*“After quite some time, when Rukminee’s body became very weak, she thought: ‘It would be good that I leave this body now. What is the purpose of keeping a body which cannot be used for Prabhu’s Sevaa ?’ ”*

*( The Story of Sheth Purushottamdas Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

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*“After some time, her elder son died. . . Her younger son also died in a few days. Then Ammaa started crying a lot. . .*

*BhaavPrakaash - She used to treat both her sons like toys of ShreeThaakurjee. Ammaa used to cry because she thought ‘With*

whom ShreeThaakurjee play with now ?' So ShreeThaakurjee was pleased with Ammaa, telling her not to cry. He was unable to bear her suffering. Had she cried for the loss of her sons, ShreeThaakurjee would not have spoken to her."

( The Story of Ammaa Kshatraanee in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).

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"ShreeAachaaryajee Mahaaprabhu bathed ShreeThaakurjee with Panchaamrit and handed Him over to this couple for Sevaa. Later some Vaishnavas from Simhanand had come for ShreeAachaaryajee's Darshan. ShreeAachaaryajee told them : 'This couple are mine. Therefore please ensure that they do not face any trouble'. . .

Their parents condemned them saying : 'Earlier you were pretending to be an ascetic. But now, your livelihood depends on the alms of Vaishnavas. You have left your home and gone to reside at someone else's house. You are calling yourself a devotee by having ShreeThaakurjee with you, but your aim is to loot people'. . . On hearing all this, the wife said : 'Our parents are right. What did we have earlier? We didn't even have a penny. Vaishnavas have provided us with all belongings, considering us as the disciples of ShreeAachaaryajee. Now we are happy. But ShreeThaakurjee will not be pleased. He will not consider it as His Sevaa. We have abandoned our Dharma. We definitely deserve this condemnation. Why? Because we went to ShreeAachaaryajee's shelter to please ShreeThaakurjee and so started doing Sevaa, not because we wanted people to worship us. Have we become Vaishnava in the desire for our praise ?' . . .

After that . . . the couple left that place along with ShreeThaakurjee without informing anybody about it. Thereafter, they went to Aagraa and settled there... Recognising their pure Bhaav, ShreeThaakurjee started revealing His own feelings to them."

( The Story of a Kshatreeya couple of Simhanad in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).

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"ShreeAachaaryajee said : 'Right now, your mind is occupied with earning money. Therefore, Bhagavad-Naam will not help you. You go to the sea-shore and there you will find wealth in its waves.

*Whatever manorath of ShreeJagannaathjee you have thought of, fulfill that with that wealth. Only after that, I will initiate you.' ... On this, Narhardaas said : 'Yes Mahaaraaj ! My mind is still engrossed in earning money to earn fame. I want to spend money as per my wish. My father too should hear this and feel ashamed that ShreeJagannaathjee is such a deity !' . . . Then he got made many clothes, ornaments, sweets for ShreeJagannaathrayjee from that wealth...*

*He fulfilled all his manorathas and went to ShreeAachaaryajee and after doing dandwat pranaam, he requested ShreeAachaaryajee : 'Mahaaraaj! Kindly shower your grace on me and give me your refuge. Now my mind is not distracted. Now I only want your refuge.' Then ShreeAachaaryajee initiated him by giving the Ashtaakshar & the Brahma-Sambandh Dikshaa. After that, Narhardaas understood the principles of Pushtimaarg properly. He then told ShreeAachaaryajee : 'Mahaaraaj, I did a very wrong thing by troubling ShreeThaakurjee to acquire wealth for the sake of my fame. I am the most vicious person ! What is there in one's fame? There is no gain but a loss in transcendental life. I really feel ashamed. I took money from ShreeThaakurjee and did manorathas with His money. And due to my ignorance, I believed it is my promotion !. Now please give me your refuge and explain how ShreeThaakurjee will bestow His grace upon me and how shall I be able to change my transcendental destiny.' Then ShreeAachaaryajee told him : You start ShreeThaakurjee's Sevaa."*

*( The Story of Narhardaas Braahmin in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa).*

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*"Santadaasji's body became very weak, so he slept on the floor. All the Vaishnavas from Aagraa surrounded him and asked Santadaas, 'If you wish, we will take you to Gokul.' On this Santadaasji said, 'In such a situation, do you want me to blow my ashes in Gokul? I could not do any Sevaa of Gokul throughout my life."*

*( The Story of Santadaas Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

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*“ShreeAachaaryajee asked the son of Gopaaldaas : ‘Where has Gopaaldaas gone? Gopaaldaas’s son replied : ‘Mahaaraaj ! He has gone for the sake of Sevaa of ShreeThaakurjee.’ On hearing this, ShreeAachaaryajee was quite displeased. . . In the mean time, Gopaaldaas arrived there and did dandwat pranaam to ShreeAachaaryajee. ShreeAachaaryajee asked him : ‘Where were you?’ Gopaaldaas replied : ‘Mahaaraaj, I had gone to earn my living in order to fill my stomach.’ After hearing Gopaaldaas, ShreeAachaaryajee was very much pleased with him and said, ‘A Vaishnava should speak only like this. He should not take the name of ShreeThaakurjee’s Seva while he is going to earn his living.’*

*BhaavPrakaash - While going even for some work of Sevaa, a Vaishnava should say that he is going for some personal or worldly work. This is the tradition of Pushtimaarg. He should not reveal his Bhagawad-Dharma. Such a Vaishnava is a true devotee. But the others take the name of Sevaa even in their worldly activities for sake of fame.”*

*( The Story of Gopaaldaas Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

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Why should one do Sevaa i.e. What is the purpose of Sevaa? Regarding this aspect, many Pushtimaargiya speakers & listeners are completely immersed in their traditional lineage of ignorance.

Having done Atma-Nivedan while taking Brahma-Sambandh Dikshaa, everything we possess, whether temporal or transcendental, is only for Bhagwat-Sevaa. ShreeHariraayjee says that one’s body etc. are meaningful only if they are able to do Bhagavat-Sevaa. ShreeAachaaryajee says that the purpose of creation of a Pushti-Jeeva itself is to do Bhagwat-Sevaa. Thus, the purpose of all Pushti-Jeeva’s creation & life is to do Bhagwat-Sevaa. There is no purpose of Sevaa itself. We will not get any benefits if we do Sevaa. If one desires to get something by doing Sevaa, he will only be distressed. Everything will be lost in this dilemma. ShreeAachaaryajee only gives assurance that if you continue to do Bhagavat-Sevaa &/or Kathaa with allegiance throughout your life, your Bhaav towards Bhagwaan will not deteriorate. Your love and refuge towards Prabhu will be maintained. And also please understand that this Bhaav in Sevaa and Kathaa will also be retained

due to His Grace. There is no question of heaven or Vaikunth in this. Our sect does not believe in the principle that one will be liberated if he just takes the Brahma-Sambandh Dikshaa or just takes Bhagvat-Naam for as little time as required for a mustard seed to stay on top of the horn of a bull. We believe that if one forgets Bhagvat-Naam even for a moment, one is quite likely to undergo Aasuraavesh (demonic influence).

This is the situation. ShreeAachaaryajee does not want to hide anything from anybody in this regard. Shree Hariraayjee clearly says that one must do Sevaa throughout one's life as one's own duty as per the guidelines laid by ShreeAachaaryajee ; neither for any benefit nor for any enjoyment, neither for any fame nor as per one's own whims & fancies and nor with any malafide intentions.

Sevaa is so divine that it can become an unachieved goal or an ideal of life for a devotee who has done Atma-Nivedan.

Bhagawaan has described four types of devotees in the Gita:

**A.** Aarta Devotees (the distressed devotees)- They worship only to get liberated from their pains ; illnesses or sorrows or bad luck, etc.

**B.** Arthaarthee Devotees - (who wish to acquire wealth) – They worship only to get an affluence in their temporal and transcendental life.

**C.** Jigyaaasu Devotees - (the Knowledge Seekers) - They worship to know Him.

**D.** Gyaanee Devotees (the Self-Realised) - They worship Him even after knowing Him.

The first three are the devotees who worship him with certain desires in mind, whereas the fourth one is without any desire. He worships Bhagwaan only for the sake of worshipping Him. Pushti-Maarg gives direction only to the fourth type of devotee. Arthaarthee also is a devotee, we cannot deny it, but he cannot be a Pushti-Maargi. He is a heinous Pravaaha-Maargi. ShreeAachaaryajee says - "शुद्धाश्च सुखिनश्चैव ब्रह्मविद्याविशारदाः भगवत्सेवने योग्याः, नान्यः।" That means a person who is pure, happy and Brahmvidhyaa-Vishaarad (possessing perfect knowledge of Brahman) is only eligible to do Bhagvat-Sevaa. Aarta devotees are not happy, Arthaarthee devotees are not pure, as they have so many unfulfilled

desires in their hearts. The Jigyassu devotees, being the seekers of knowledge, give up Prabhu's devotion as soon as they attain the knowledge. The devotee who does not do Bhakti for any purpose only can be a lifetime devotee. For others, it is like: "Now that I have achieved what I wanted to, what is the point in worshipping Him now."

If viewed from another angle, the only purpose of Sevaa is Prabhu's pleasure and the one & only achievement of Sevaa is also Prabhu's pleasure. Having been pleased with the devotee, It is quite natural that Prabhu will bestow His love, attachment and addiction (Prem, Aasakti and Vyasana) towards Himself to the Pushti-Jeeva and will make him feel His own divine bliss just like Vraj-Bhaktas. ShreeAachaaryajee is quite optimistic about it. But it does not mean that - "We are doing Sevaa for the past thirty years but still, ShreeThaakurjee does not speak to us ! So why should not we give up sevaa?" ! In this Pushti-Maarg, Prabhu's grace is the only governing factor. ShreeAachaaryajee does not give any assurance that Sevaa will surely give you all these divine experiences. But the only assurance is that if one continues to do Sevaa as per ShreeAachaaryajee's guidelines, things will not worsen further, and the possibility of enjoying divine bliss will not reduce. But "by doing Sevaa we will surely be successful" is a misunderstanding. The cloud, by nature, showers rain without any expectations ; If the pot is strong enough to hold it then the cloud will definitely fill it with its water, otherwise the water will spill over and flow out. By doing Sevaa, we become such strong pots, eligible to hold that divine bliss. But it is totally up to Prabhu whether He wants to fill it or not. It is quite likely that the pots made by the skilled artisan ShreeMahaaprabhujee will attract Prabhu at the first glance, as ShreeAachaaryajee is quite capable of understanding inclination of Prabhu, but after all, it is just a possibility.

Sometimes, the plays or movies of famous actors or directors also flop. There is definitely a risk factor in whether your daughter will be happy after marriage in spite of sufficient scrutiny. The optimistic parents do not lose heart even after listening to the sad stories of failed marriages. We should also be aware of the risks associated and start Sevaa.

It is indeed a difficult task to sustain such an optimistic initiative throughout our life. ShreeAachaaryajee knew this very well & therefore preached in SarvaNirnayNibandh how we can remain PURE, HAPPY and a BRAHMAVIDHYAA-VISHAARAD throughout our life and by remaining so, how we can do Bhagwat-Sevaa.

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The first & foremost requirement for this is to find an able Guru. A Guru should himself be pure, happy and a Brahavidhyaa-Vishaarad. He should himself be doing Sevaa throughout his life. ShreeAachaaryajee goes on to the extent of saying that the disciples who have the desire to do Sevaa should first examine a probable Guru on this touchstone. The examination is very simple - Whether a Guru is practising Sevaa himself or not ? Whether he is doing Sevaa wholeheartedly or with any other mundane motives like fame ? Whether he has got the knowledge of BhaagwataPuraana or not? The one who does Sevaa with all his heart will not be a mere preacher or only a bookworm. He will not be an Artharthee having other mundane motives or an Aarta venting out his pains. If he has acquired in-depth knowledge of the BhaagwataPuraana, he will not be having a flickering mind of a Jigyasu. He will always be engrossed in such Bhakti which is only achievable through Sevaa, according to the principles narrated in the BhaagwataPuraana.

ShreeMahaaprabhujee has brought His descendants into this world to grace His disciples. His dynasty is full of quite capable Gurus like ShreeGokulnaathjee and Hariraayjee. Now also, such Gurus are there, although a few. And if not as a rule then as an exception, there will be such Gurus in future too. Still, if one is not able to find a Guru with such characteristics in his time or region, he should start sevaa as early as possible by considering ShreeAachaaryajee Himself as his Guru. Due respect and honorable treatment should be given to a Guru and one must do Sevaa as per the guidelines prescribed by him.

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To be able to do Sevaa HAPPILY, ShreeAachaaryajee tells us to do Sevaa with whatever facility, capability, and belongings we

have - "यथालब्धोपचारकैः". Do not miss anything. Whatever Prabhu has given to you, do Sevaa happily utilising them.

*"ShreeMadanmohanjee (ShreeThaakurjee) used to share His feelings with Gadaadhardaas. Earlier Gadaadhardaas used to visit his clients to perform rituals and used to bring home from them whatever he needed. But after becoming a Vaishnava, he gave up all this. He stopped going there. Whatever donations he used to get sitting at home, from occasionally visiting clients, he would subsist only on that. He did not believe in hoarding. One day, by the will of the Prabhu, no client turned up to give anything to him. Hence he offered only water to Prabhu in Mangalaa, Shringaar and Raajbhog. After that, from Utthaapan to Shayan also, he offered only water. But he did not borrow any money from anybody. . . A client came and knocked on his door at late night and gave him four rupees, some clothes etc. and said : 'Today I performed the Shraaddha ritual in my house, so please accept this donation on account of the same.' Gadaadhardaas was quite upset as he had not offered any food to ShreeThaakurjee that day & so was quite eager. So he went to the market with a rupee immediately. . . He bought ready food and bathed and offered it to ShreeThaakurjee. After Shayan, he invited and gave the entire Prasaad to Vaishnavas. He did not eat anything and slept hungry. But he was quite happy, because even on that day, he could offer something to ShreeThaakurjee and Vaishnavas, quite like he used to do everyday. After that, he bought raw food for three rupees the next day and prepared recipes & offered them to ShreeThaakurjee."*

*( The Story of Gadaadhardaas Braahmin in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa).*

In this story, the sermon is not about inactivity or passivity but it is about not hoarding more in the name of Sevaa by becoming active for earning more than required. Whatever you have for Sevaa, be contented with that.

*"So he came along with his family and ShreeThaakurjee to Adail. He stayed there for a few days but was short of money. Therefore, he used to offer only chickpeas to ShreeThaakurjee. On a leaf plate, he used to place one handful of chickpeas believing it as daal, another handful as rice, one more handful as Kheer. Likewise*

he would take the names of vegetables, etc. and put one handful each of chickpeas separately. ShreeThaakurjee used to consider them accordingly and eat them wholeheartedly accordingly. This was his daily routine. One day ShreeAachaaryajee visited Padmanaabhdaas's home at the time of offering Raajbhog . . . Seeing his practice, ShreeAachaaryajee became compassionate and guessed that there is a shortage of money in his house, so he is doing like that but he is not putting any extra effort on earning more. He has tremendous perseverance and that is the reason why ShreeThaakurjee is pleased with him. . .

He asked ShreeMathuraanaathjee (ShreeThaakurjee) : "Mahaaraaj ! If you wish to go to ShreeAachaaryajee's house then there will be a variety of food available. But I will be able to offer you only whenever and whatever I have.' On this, ShreeMathuraanaathjee replied : 'I like whatever you prepare, so whatever you offer I shall eat lovingly.'"

( The Story of Padmanaabhdaas Braahmin in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).

No doubt that ShreeThaakurjee should be offered the best food available, but what is the best food will be decided based on the capability of the individual and not merely on the basis of the quality or the price of the food.

"That Braahmanee was very innocent and had no money. So she used to offer water to ShreeThaakurjee in an earthen pot. She had only earthen utensils in her kitchen and her house was also very small. The kitchen, Mandir, food for ShreeThaakurjee, everything was in the same small place. She was not much accustomed to the code of conduct for sacredness in the sect. Her eyesight too was not good. But she used to do Sevaa with a lot of affection. . . Then one day, a Vaishnava complained to ShreeAachaaryajee about it : 'It would be better if ShreeThaakurjee is given to some other Vaishnava so that His Sevaa can be properly done.' On this, ShreeAachaaryajee replied : 'ShreeThaakurjee does not get pleased with money, actions, adherence to code of conduct. Love towards Him is what really matters. That Braahmanee has an intense love for ShreeThaakurjee. In whichever manner she does Sevaa,

*ShreeThaakurjee accepts it as appropriate ! ” ( The Story of Adail’s Braahmanee in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

*“Then he came to Shreenaathjeedwara and started serving there. His duty was to wash the utensils twice a day. He would wake up six hours before the wee hours and after bathing, used to go to Mathuraa to fetch a potful of river Yamunaa’s water. He would return before Raajbhog. After that, he used to wash the utensils, clean the kitchen, etc... In the evening, he would again wash the utensils, clean the kitchen and then go to sleep. This was his daily routine of Sevaa. But ShreeGovardhanNaathjee did not like it. One day ShreeGovardhanNaathjee complained to ShreeAachaaryajee : ‘Your disciple is embarrassing me.’*

*BhaavPrakaash- The reason for this is - had he been doing this Sevaa with sentiment and love, Shreenaathjee would have been chasing him everywhere. But Govinddaas Bhallaa was of a Taamasi i.e. furious nature, therefore he was doing Sevaa egoistically. . . He was torturing his body under influence of ego.”*

*( The Story of Govinddaas Bhallaa Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

You should offer ShreeThaakurjee whatever is the best possible within your scope. If you are using a silk/velvet bed sheet for yourself and providing a cotton bed sheet to ShreeThaakurjee, it will be disrespectful. But this does not mean that you should sell your entire property / borrow money / steal / beg to offer a diamond necklace to Him. Bhagavat-Sevaa is a lifelong affair and it has to be retained from generation to generation.

*“The money that Kshatraanee had was all spent and she was left with nothing. So she used to spin yarn after her routine chores of Sevaa. She used to survive by doing Sevaa from the money she used to get out of it . . . Then ShreeThaakurjee said : ‘Mother! Why did you borrow money to make sweets for me? I very much like the Rotee with ghee & sugar sprinkled on it, what you make for me normally. It becomes very difficult to return the debt. When the creditor asks you to return, there can be distress. So you should not do this. Now onwards do not borrow money from others. I like the Rotee spread with ghee, so prepare it. Then, the Kshatraanee used 29to do accordingly. When she could sell more yarn, she would use*

*it for making sweets, otherwise she would only offer Rotee with ghee.”*

*( The Story of A Kshatraanee in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

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ShreeAachaaryajee says that our (a) home, (b) family and (c) mind; in other words our outer as well as inner self, should be calm to enable us to do Sevaa HAPPILY.

(a)

The place in our house where ShreeThaakurjee resides should be decently decorated. Daily after making that place beautiful, we should lovingly decorate ShreeThaakurjee with clothes and ornaments.

Ours' is an era of two-in-one or three-in-one ; popularly known as Jugaad. People have a desire to use everything for two or three purposes. Even if there is no obvious alternate use, people find two-three uses of a thing using their fertile brain. They even use ambulances for transportation & conveyance during a curfew ! But the mind does not move with the times. It has its own character. It is not trapped within the boundaries of time and space. A child may belong to India or America, but his attraction towards a flying object remains the same. Human beings liked flowers in the era of Kaalidaas and they like it even today. Thousands of years ago, lovers used to love even after earning infamy and even today there are people who fall in love ignoring condemnation by the society. That is why, the preaching about the mind given thousands of years ago are relevant even today. The WORK FROM HOME job trend may be leading to a scenario in which the office / a factory / a shop / a class is run from home. But the mind does not accept all this. If the circumstances are not conducive, the mind is bound to become restless. It is not in our control. It would be better to let it control us. Use your intelligence only to decide the correct path and thereafter create such an ambiance that your mind moves forward on that path. You decorate the place of Sevaa so that your mind gets engrossed in Bhagwat-Sevaa. You decorate ShreeThaakurjee so that your mind gets involved in ShreeThaakurjee. In that too, if you strive for perfection and create stress, there is no point. Instead, you should decorate ShreeThaakurjee lovingly. Keep the ambiance pleasant so

that the home feels like a home, the place of Sevaa feels like a place of Sevaa. Your mind automatically will get engrossed there and it will be calm and keep both you and your ShreeThaakurjee happy.

(b)

To ensure peace in the family, ShreeAachaaryajee says that if the family members (spouse / children / parents) are conducive for Sevaa & enthusiastic, you should make them participate in Sevaa. If they have no interest, then don't force them ; do Sevaa yourself alone. But if they are against it, if they are creating hindrances in Sevaa, abandon them. It is explained in the treatise Navaratna that you should not worry about your family members' destiny. Just because at the time of Brahma-Sambandh you had intimated to Prabhu about them also, it is not certain that they will participate automatically. Whichever way Prabhu likes is appropriate for all. And if they are getting involved more than you, then too you should not worry about it.

*“Then the mother of Purushottamdaas went to his wife’s mother (her daughter-in-law’s mother) and said : ‘My son and your daughter both have tied a TulseeMaalaa around their neck. Both of them have become devotees ; what shall we do now?’ On this, that lady replied : ‘Let us go and force them to remove their Maalaas ; threatening that otherwise both of us will commit suicide.’ So both of them went to the couple and said : ‘Remove your Maalaas immediately else you will be responsible for the sin of our death.’ Then Purushottamdaas called some of his close relatives and told the mothers in their presence : ‘This Maalaa is more precious for us than our head. We shall never remove it even if you behead us. And why are you bothered with this Maalaa ? If you wish, you may stay with us and we shall give you whatever you want. If you want to stay separately, we shall arrange for another house along with a servant for you. We shall ourselves too do the best we can, for you. And if you want to live in this house, please do so. We shall move to another house. Whatever you choose, we are ready to act accordingly. But please do not create a nuisance. However, we shall never remove this Maalaa under any circumstances. Also, we shall not eat or drink anything served by both of you unless you become a Vaishnav yourself & wear a Maalaa.’ . . . But their mothers did not*

*agree to this proposal and when Purushottamdaas and his wife went to sleep, both of them committed suicide by jumping into the well in the backyard of their home. . . Then all their relatives told that the couple would have to take a bath in Ganges to wash away the sins ; else they would boycott the couple. Hence, the couple left for Prayaag . . . They came to ShreeMahaaprabhujee and said : 'Mahaaraaj ! Whatever you said turned out to be true. Our mothers committed suicide and we are out of the conflict now. Now please install Bhagwat-Sevaa.' . . . ShreeAachaaryajee bathed ShreeThaakurjee with Panchaamrit and handed Him over to Purushottamdaas. They stayed in Adail for a few days to learn all the activities of Sevaa and then left for their home at Aagraa. They invited all their relatives and the Braahmins for a lunch & thereby doused the flame of social condemnation. Thereafter, both of them started doing Bhagwat-Sevaa."*

*(The Story of Purushottamdaas Kshatree & his wife in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

(c)

*In order to acquire inner peace, ShreeAachaaryajee says : "Think of our abusers (whether harassing us verbally or physically) as our well-wishers. It may be that Prabhu, through them, saves us from distraction and also disengages us from their company. With this understanding, we should bear such pains of abuse. Moreover, we should always remain detached and contented."*

*If something happens in our favour, it is very easy to accept it as Prabhu's grace, but if something is happening against us, it is difficult to accept it as His grace. For that, what we need is a vision which grasps only virtues in everything. It is very easy to say that everything in this universe is Prabhu. But at the same time, it requires real courage to digest this fact.*

*"One day Pancholeejee requested ShreeGokulesh : 'Mahaaraaj ! You are capable, so why don't you shut the mouths of people who abuse or condemn the devotees ?' On hearing this, His Holiness replied : 'You shut the outlets of your body that have been given to you to expel the waste & watch the fun. Then come to me to narrate.' Pancholeejee said : 'Mahaaraaj ! By doing so, we will fall ill and eventually die.' Then ShreeGokulesh said : 'Unless such*

*abusers act their part of drama to clean, the devotees will not remain pure. It is the grace of our Prabhu that such abusers are placed around us. So we should never get angry with them. To wash a soft cloth, a mild cleaning agent is required. Devotees are quite soft. That is why Prabhu deutes such abusers to clean the vices of devotees with their soft boneless tongue !”*

*( Haasya-Vachanaamrit of ShreeGokulnaathjee ).*

The reclusion and satisfaction which arise out of such an excellent virtue-grasping vision of a devotee are not like that of an ascetic or a Gyaan-Maargiya. Instead they lead the devotee towards the refuge and the love of Bhagwaan. Also, such a reclusion and satisfaction blossom only because of refuge in Him and love for Him.

*“Then that Braahmin asked the Vaishnav : ‘I have a magical gemstone ; would you like to have it?’ The Vaishnav asked : ‘What is so special about it ?’ The Braahmin replied : ‘One can get as much wealth as desired from this stone.’ Then that recluse Vaishnav said : ‘What will I do with that gemstone? I just need a handful of flour everyday. The Almighty will give me that. Since Seth Purushottamdaas has a family, he spends a lot of money, so you better give it to him.’ . . . To this, Seth Purushottamdaas replied : ‘I do not need this gemstone.’ . . . The Vaishnav asked Seth : ‘ Why did you refuse?’ ... Seth replied : ‘If The Almighty will give you one kg then why He will not give me ten kgs? Is He short of wealth? Oh, Braahmin! Have you gone mad ? Why should I depend on a magical gemstone & abandon ShreeThaakurjee’s refuge ?”*

*( The Story of Seth Purushottamdaas Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

While keeping a mindset of such an austerity and satisfaction when tolerating the pain, we should remain certain that all these matters will be there only till my body is there. Once I leave this body, I am definitely going to be liberated from all this. With such self-confidence, we should not allow our minds to get distracted. This is the preaching of ShreeAachaaryajee.

What happens is that, for a few days, an ordinary man also can tolerate pain, become austere and have satisfaction. But if he does not have this confidence about his liberation, then in the long run his disturbed mind destroys his involvement in Sevaa and forces

him towards Anyaashraya (other's refuge). Or it pushes him towards praying to Prabhu for the removal of his sufferings. It does not allow him to be a devotee who is happy and free of desires.

ShreeAachaaryajee says that all these sufferings will end only when you die ; you cannot change your luck or the outcome of your past Karmas. Therefore, quite like an employee who keeps on working even unwillingly and waiting for the end of his duty hours, you also keep on bearing the suffering till your time is up. And have confidence like an employee, that once the working hours are over, you will reach your home where you will find peace. If you are not able to avoid suffering despite all the efforts, then think about the pleasure you are going to get in future and keep yourself happy, only then you will be able to do Sevaa with joy.

*"Later Santdaas's body became very weak so he laid on the floor. Then the Vaishnavas from Aagraa gathered there and asked him : 'If you wish so, we will take you to Renukaa Teertha. Or if you wish, Mathuraa is a big holy city, we shall take you there.' To this, Santdaas said : 'Mathuraa and Renukaa will not be able to gratify me. I remained in the shelter of ShreeAachaaryajee throughout my life. Now in my last hour, you want me to take refuge in a pilgrimage! If I do so, it will be an obstacle in my divine life.'*

*BhaavPrakaash- . . . and what is there in the body? Taking refuge in Bhagwaan is the highest attainment. Let the body fall anywhere - that's it."*

*( The Story of Santdaas Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

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Apart from the loss of calmness under the influence of temporal sufferings and pains, our mind may waver and hence not be PURE enough to do Sevaa. The causes for this can either be (a) external or (b) internal.

(a)

In order to survive in this world, it is necessary to do some job or business. So one should choose a career which is ethically appropriate & in alignment with religious guidelines. One should go to earn his livelihood only after completing his daily routine chores of Sevaa. In this race to earn money, it should not happen that one's mind gets completely engrossed only in earning his bread. For that,

daily he should recite, read and retain in mind the contents of the holy books like BhaagwatPuraana, etc. - ShreeAachaaryajee says so. Staunch devotees have this capability to remain involved in divinity while earning also. But a nomadic fresh devotee should at least bring back his mind to its divine stable, once his job duty or business hours are over.

*“Santdaas was quite rich, having a business turnover of a lakh of rupees of that era. But he lost all his money in business, in theft and in penalties levied by the king. After that, he was left with no money. But he was happy that whatever ShreeAachaaryajee had predicted turned out to be true. He was left with a working capital of 24 Paisas. He took that and started selling pebbles in the downtown market of Aagraa city. He used to keep separate stacks worth one Paisa each. He never used to speak to anybody. Visiting customers themselves used to pick up one stack each & keep the paisa there in exchange. He used to earn two and a half paisa daily. While sitting in the market, he used to read holy books. . . At night, he used to distribute the Prasaad of gram, worth half a paisa, among Vaishnavas after Satsang. This was how he lived.”*

*( The Story of Santdaas Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

(b)

To overpower the internal causes that distract our mind, ShreeAachaaryajee says : "Do not allow your mind, speech and actions to get occupied in futile matters. Keep no expectations from anybody. Keep your mind under control and focus on Prabhu. Having full faith in Prabhu, in whichever way you are able to maintain your livelihood, keep on doing that."

*“Earlier Padmnaabhdaas used to do Kathaa at his home in Kannauj city and used to sit above the ground level on Vyaas-aasana. Whatever he needed for his livelihood, he used to get everything sitting at home. He never had to go to anybody’s house. . . Then ShreeAachaaryajee recited one Shloka from Nibandh. . . Padmnaabhdaas made a pledge that he would not earn his livelihood through Kathaa. . . Then ShreeAachaaryajee said : ‘Shree BhaagwatPuraana’s kathaa for earning livelihood is prohibited ; but you can continue with the other scriptures like Mahaabhaarata for this purpose, as you are a Braahmin and it is your profession.’ To*

*this, Padmanaabhdaas said : 'Mahaaraaj ! Now that I have vowed, I will abandon this profession altogether.' Then ShreeAachaaryajee said : 'You have a family, so how would you maintain it?' To this, Padmanaabhdaas replied : 'I will not be a story-teller for my livelihood anymore and I will visit my clients to perform rituals for my living.' Then he used to visit his clients' home to make his living. They gave him a lot of respect. One day, Padmnaabhdaas felt ashamed : 'Earlier I never used to go to anybody's house to earn my living, but now after becoming a Vaishnav, I am going to others' houses for begging! This is not correct. Earlier I had only a sacred thread tied around my neck, so collecting alms was alright. But now I have a Maalaa around my neck, so it is inappropriate to go for begging.' So he once again took a pledge that he would never visit anyone's house for earning his living. To this, ShreeAachaaryajee asked him again : 'What will you do now?' Padmanaabhdaas replied : 'Mahaaraaj, I will adopt the profession of a trader to earn my living.' Then he used to sell pebbles, wood etc. but he never thought otherwise. He did Sevaa throughout his life. He was so firm on his decision."*

*( The Story of Padmanaabhdaas Braahmin in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

In order to insert the thread of our mind into the hole in the needle of Sevaa, it is absolutely necessary to hold it steady. For that, all other matters in our life and our expectations associated with them should be ignored. To get rid of the restlessness of the mind, it is necessary to have a firm trust on Prabhu.

In old times, the business was a traditional lineage legacy. The goodwill in the market was of utmost importance. People had a firm trust that "the way my ancestors earned their living from this business, I and my future generations can & will also follow the same". That is why there was calmness in business. The king was sure that he and his future generations would also be kings ; quite unlike today's rulers, who have a short-sightedness to accumulate wealth by hook or by crook within five years. If a businessman was in debt, he would somehow try to return all the money, to save his forefather's goodwill and ensure that his son lived with dignity in

society. He used to honour all his commitments and treat his customers with respect.

Today that trust is lost. There is no dearth of people who borrow money and run away to another city or who take loans from the banks and escape to settle in foreign countries. The worst part is that such people are praised in the society. Everybody is under stress due to this condition of the entire society. Everybody is living life under the fear of a dark future. People do not get peace even after hoarding a commodity to loot the public & thereby earning a huge profit. Meritorious students, sports persons and actors are under severe stress at the sight of a bleak future. Due to this tension, the mind becomes restless and is not able to differentiate between the good and bad deeds and gets perplexed. This is the biggest curse of modernity.

Nowadays 20-20 & one day cricket matches have become quite popular instead of 5 day's Test matches. In them, there is the stress of score at every moment. Batsmen are under the stress of scoring runs while bowlers & fielders are under the stress of not allowing the batsmen to score runs by any means. It is not important how the runs are scored, it is also not important how they are stopped ; the main aim is to somehow score them and somehow stop them respectively. Playing too many such matches takes a toll on the player's concentration and technique. All the experienced players accept this thing in one voice.

Sevaa in temples has become a victim of similar mishaps. Vaishnavas are in a hurry to do manorathas, while Trustees and Goswami Mahaaraajs are in a hurry to earn as much as possible. No one has an assurance of tomorrow !

The ship of Pushtimaarg will sail only on firm trust. The building of Sevaa will stand only on the strong foundation of faith. The flickering mind is just like a heap of desert sand ; sometimes it moves here and sometimes there.

ShreeAachaaryajee never asks anyone to give up efforts of earning money. But at the same time, he wants his disciples to abandon the tendency of taking refuge in money ; by running around too much to make the business flourish. Do not trouble Bhagwaan for your livelihood, you earn it yourself, but have trust only in Him. By

doing this, you will be free from all tensions and will be able to do Sevaa with a peace of mind. A seasoned farmer does not leave hopes of monsoon if there is a drought one year. "संशयात्मा विनश्यति".

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To enable us do our Sevaa HAPPILY, ShreeAachaaryajee instructs that we should offer only those things to Prabhu that do not cause discomfort to us & thereby Prabhu. Whatever is considered popular in the society such as mangoes, grapes etc. or a pearl necklace should be offered. Food items or ornaments bought through our earnings from ethical means and the ones that are our favourite should be offered. Also, the recipes or ornaments which we have been thinking of offering since quite some time and are very dear to us should be offered. By doing so, we and our Prabhu, both get happy. Other than the above mentioned - offerings which are difficult to get due to high price or scarcity, or are irritating – should be avoided. Too hot/spicy/sour/bitter/hard/sticky recipes, Keertans that make a lot of noise or heavy ornaments that pierce the skin should not be offered.

*"Then that broker said : 'I have ninety-nine thousand rupees with me. If it becomes a lakh then I will be known as Lakheshwari. I spend only four Aanaas to make my living and save eight Aanaas. . . Please prescribe me Sevaa such that I do not have to spend any money.' To this, ShreeGusaainjee said : 'You do Maanasi-Sevaa. You will not have to spend any money on that.' . . Then ShreeGusaainjee explained to him the entire ritual of Maanasi-Sevaa for daily routine as well as for the festivals. So he started doing Sevaa accordingly. Every day, he used to install Prabhu into his heart and do His Sevaa with full concentration and BhaktiBhaav. . . Thereafter he went to ShreeGusaainjee and requested him to install ShreeThaakurjee. Then all his wealth was made available for use in the Sevaa of ShreeThaakurjee.*

*BhaavPrakaash- . . . In Pushtimaarg, Prabhu accepts a Jeeva according to his nature. . . Therefore, a Vaishnava should do the Sevaa of ShreeThaakurjee in whatever way he can. He should not*

*keep himself away from Sevaa.” ( The Story of a miser in 252 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

It is clear from the above that in Sevaa there is no place for competition or show-off. There is a saying in Gujarati : “A short person who tries to walk along with a tall person, will surely fall ill if not die.” A person should offer only such items which engage his mind in Sevaa. He should not try to cheat his mind by offering Him anything which he either does not like or he has to take great pain to acquire it. Also, he should not cheat Him by not offering his favourite items. Elsewhere in Nibandh, ShreeAachaaryajee writes that it is not important in Sevaa to provide abundant or less. The emphasize is on doing Sevaa according to your individual capacity. Only then Sevaa would be maintained without gaps.

\*

To become HAPPY, we should not do Sevaa just for namesake. Instead, we should do even petty Sevaa, like washing ShreeThaakurjee’s clothes, ourselves with devotion.

*“And Daamodardaas used to bring water for ShreeThaakurjee himself. One day, his father-in-law came to his house and said : ‘We feel ashamed in our community because you yourself are bringing water. Please do not do that. You have so many maids : you can ask them to bring it.’ ... The next day Daamodardaas picked up one pot himself and asked his wife to pick the other one. His wife was also a devotee so she did not object to it and both of them carried the pots and walked to & fro of their father-in-law’s shop to bring water. Seeing this, his father-in-law rushed to his house and pleaded : ‘I apologise that I asked you not to bring water. You may continue doing so but please do not ask my daughter to bring water. I will not say anything to you in future.’”*

*( The Story of Daamodardaas Sambharwaalaa in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

*“One day the king of Kaashee thought of meeting Seth Purushottamdaas. The king lived on the opposite bank of the Ganges. From there he came to meet him early in the morning. At that time Purushottamdaas was wearing just a small Dhوتي and was accumulating cow dung in stable. Seth’s servants told him : ‘The king is coming to meet you. Please change your attire and sit on a sofa to*

*meet him.' To this, Seth replied : 'Let him come. Why should I be afraid of the king ?' Then the King came. Seth met him with his dirty hands in same small Dhoti attire. The king was a wise person and hence said : 'Sethjee! You are great. In this world, only you are able to give up your ego.' Seth replied : 'Being a house-holder, I should do these household chores'."*

*( The Story of Seth Purushottamdaas Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

Our mind has a peculiar character : it does not get attached to even dear things all of a sudden. The society may prefer readymade things, but it is not necessary that the mind would also like it. If one buys a cloth & gets clothes stitched by a tailor after several visits for giving measurements etc., it gives more comfort to the mind rather than the readymade ones. The bread earned through hard work gives much more satisfaction than the sweets received for free. A film/ffotball match for which you have stood for two hours in a queue to buy tickets will give pleasure for more than two days. If a painter works for a month on a painting, he gets quite involved in that painting. A poet does not have to put in extra effort to remember his poetry ; it goes into his memory in the process of its writing itself. If a soldier had fought a war, its image remains clear in his memory for his life time as if it was fought just a day before. A mother's love for her child, irrespective of the fact whether he is disabled or ugly looking, is natural ; as she has kept him in her womb for nine months. A person knowingly or unknowingly gets involved in the work which he does with passion. However, he is not able to relish the joy for which he is not ready when it comes suddenly. The enjoyment he gets from getting involved in the task of his passion generates a special respect in him towards that task. He feels that it is his own work. If somebody condemns or praises that creation, he takes that as a criticism/compliment given to him. If someone praises the meal prepared by a housewife, she feels appreciated and that increases her self-confidence. One doesn't get such ardent feelings on the receipt or the loss of a ready-made thing.

That is the reason, ShreeMahaaprabhujee asks everyone to do even tiny tasks of Sevaa all by oneself. Only then you can enjoy Sevaa.

\*

There is no doubt that on the path of devotion, sentiments are dominant and not actions. That is the reason the mind plays a dominant role here. But that does not mean that if our mind is not getting involved in Sevaa, we should give it up. Also, it does not mean that Sevaa being done without the involvement of the mind is useless.

*"One day, somebody said that if you do something without involvement of mind then if something goes wrong, it is not your fault. To this, Shreejee replied that try to consume poison without your mind getting involved & see if you die or not, and eat ghee even without the involvement of your mind to see whether you get nourished or not !"*

*( HaasyaVachanaamrit of ShreeGokulnaathjee ).*

The root cause is that we get bored as we are lazy.

*"One day, Shreejee said that someone was suffering from asthma. He was panting even when his wife was feeding him. His wife asked him : 'if I am feeding you, why are you still panting?' To this, her husband replied : 'Who is putting effort to chew? Is it your father?' That means even chewing his meals was burdensome for him !"*

*( HaasyaVachanaamrit of ShreeGokulnaathjee ).*

*"One day, Shreejee recited one Shloka and explained its content that Jeeva is not left with any means; everything is already done by ShreeThaakurjee. Then Pancholee asked : 'Mahaaraaj ! Is it so that Jeeva does not require to do anything?' To this, Shreejee replied : 'What ShreeThaakurjee needs to do, He will do. But if Jeeva does not do what he is supposed to, will his father do it on his behalf ?"*

*( HaasyaVachanaamrit of ShreeGokulnaathjee ).*

If one gets bored and gives up, it won't work. The duties can't be skipped.

Hence, the general guidelines in the scriptures for PURIFICATION of the inner and the outer body should be followed in practice. ShreeAachaaryajee instructs that (i) one should adhere to a daily routine of rituals such as Agnihotra, etc according to his potential, (ii) should altogether give up prohibited activities, and (iii)

also should keep various senses under control. These three things should never be abandoned, otherwise the mind will distract you and will not allow you to achieve your goal.

One philosopher has said : "If a stone falling from the hilltop had consciousness, it would have said 'How nice the experience of downfall is !' " The fact is that nobody likes an advice which is for his betterment and instead follows the one which is not good for him ! A businessman gets fun in earning money through hoarding and black-marketing. An adulterous man or woman does not feel ashamed of what he/she is doing. The repentance is known as repentance because it is always felt afterwards; at the time of doing an offence, we always enjoy it. This joy makes us forget everything such as our wisdom, shame, discipline, senses, etc. When drunk, nobody feels the pain. If we do not restrain our mind with our intelligence and willpower, it enslaves itself to the senses and leads us on the wrong path. Abandoning daily routine rituals, doing prohibited activities and leaving our senses uncontrolled in the name of devotion is a loss-making business. The history & Puraanas are full of stories of foolish people who had attempted to do such things. If these three things are kept intact, Sevaa will automatically be retained. Otherwise, only Prabhu is capable of bringing back to normalcy a rogue mind.

*"Then Govindswaamee told ShreeGusaainjee : 'Mahaaraaj ! You are wearing a sort of a mask in front of people. You are doing Vedic Karmas outside while ShreeThaakurjee is installed inside your home !' To this, ShreeGusaainjee said to GovindSwaamee : 'The path of devotion is quite like a flower and Vedic rituals are like thorns.*

*BhaavPrakaash – A flower will not blossom if left unprotected. The Karm-Maarg as mentioned in Vedas is just like a fence to save the flower of Bhakti. Hence, without the fence of Karm-Maarg, the flower of Bhakti cannot be preserved and without safety, the flower will be ruined."*

*( The Story of Govindswaamee in 252 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

In today's perspective, benevolence, service to the nation, etc should also be included in the list of our duties.

\*

But these are only medicines and we should not mistake them for food. If the entire land is filled with thorns, where would the flowers bloom? Therefore, ShreeAachaaryajee says that the association of all three is an obstacle. The rituals or duties etc. adverse to Sevaa should be quickly abandoned. While doing this, we should think about the difference between the petty outcomes of these rituals and the divine result of devotion. If we do not give up in such a manner, the mind shall not remain PURE.

*"Once ShreeGusaainjee went to Kaashee. It was the day of a solar eclipse. Therefore ShreeGusaainjee went to Manikarnikaa Ghaat to take a bath. Having duly bathed ShreeMadanmohanjee (ShreeThaakurjee), Rukminee also came to take bath there, when she came to know that ShreeGusaainjee had gone there... ShreeGusaainjee asked Rukminee : 'After how long have you come to take bath in the Ganges?' Rukminee replied : 'Mahaaraaj ! I have come here after twenty-four years.' Hearing this reply from Rukminee, ShreeGusaainjee's heart was filled with emotions and he thought that she was so engrossed in Sevaa that she did not get time even to take a bath in the Ganges !"*

*( The Story of Sheth Purushottamdaas Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

*"ParamaanandSwaamee was tired, because he was awake the whole night. So he also slept.*

*BhaavPrakaash - One doubt that comes to our mind here is why ParamaanandSwaamee went to sleep? He was wise and knowledgeable and he knew quite well that he will not get the benefit of Jaagaran (awakening) by sleeping one and a half hours before the end of the night. The reason is - ParamaanandSwaamee is a Pushti-Jeeva related to Leelaa. He only wants ShreeThaakurjee and does not want any benefit of Jaagaran. On the day of Ekaadashee, he did Jaagaran so that he could take more Bhagavad-Naam in the guise of Ekaadashee. He did not want any benefit of Ekaadashee as prescribed in the scriptures. That is why, he slept for one and a half hours before the end of the night. He thought that by doing this, he will not get the benefit of Jaagaran, but nobody could snatch the benefit of Bhagwad-Naam from him. Why had he slept ? Because if he had not slept, he would feel tired on the next day. And on that day*

*also, he had to do Keertan till late in the night. That is why he took the refuge of Bhagwad-Naam instead of Jaagaran and, therefore, slept."*

*( The Story of Paramaananddaas Braahmin in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

Normally, we are not convinced in our hearts that Sevaa is our prime duty. To paraphrase the words of Laabhshankarbai, we lack an intense wait due to a lack of respect for Sevaa. The result of this is - our life and our religious activities resemble mashed fried potatoes, with tiny pieces of Sevaa, benevolence, service to the nation, etc. We get engaged for two hours in one activity and two hours in another. The result is that we spoil both. If one studies commerce for five consecutive years, he can become a graduate. But if you study arts, science & commerce for two years each, you will not achieve anything. Take your time in deciding which stream you want to join. And once you select, proceed only in that direction. You can have attachments towards other streams only as much as is necessary, just like you take a medicine in a small proportion. Leave all adultery after marriage, otherwise you will be under the stress of losing your spouse and the situation will go out of control.

\*

Once, if with a true heart, you dedicate your body, mind, family and wealth to Sevaa ; there will not be any issues left. ShreeAachaaryajee says - Your allegiance to devotion will go on increasing once Prabhu starts entering your heart, and you will be able to maintain Sevaa forever. You will get HAPPINESS while in Sevaa.

*"And the younger daughter of Padmanaabhdaas was unmarried... One day, one Vaishnav said to him that there is one groom who is a disciple of ShreeAachaaryajee, but he is Sanodhiyaa Braahmin. Hearing that the boy is a disciple of ShreeAachaaryajee, Padmanaabhdaas forgot everything about the social relationship norms. The Vaishnav said that the boy is a good Vaishnav, so marry your daughter to him. Padmanaabhdaas immediately agreed. . . Tulsaa, the elder daughter of Padmanaabhdaas, said : 'But he is a Sanodhiyaa Braahmin and we are Kannaujiyaa Braahmins, so how is this engagement possible?' To this, Padmanaabhdaas said :*

*'Whatever has happened, has happened' . . . After that, Padmanaabhdaas married his daughter to the boy. The community people were not happy but they could not do anything. . .*

*BhaavPrakaash - There is a fear of Laukik-Vedic till you do not have a firm affection. When you have intense love for your Prabhu, you will not have to worry about anything. No Laukik -Vedic issue can create any hindrance in your life."*

*( The Story of Padmanaabhdaas Braahmin in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

This is a natural process. This is not something very big, out-of-the-world or a super-natural thing. A small child gets so engrossed in his play that he forgets about his meals and does not care about day or night. When a German poet named Goethe read Kaalidaasa's Shaakuntalam, he was so pleased that he started dancing keeping that book on his head. If we read the biographies of many scientists, we find that they were engaged in some new discovery without caring whether it was a day or night. The point is that whatever activity you do, you should take it naturally and not set the wrong targets for the same. Many housewives and senior citizens spend three to four hours a week maintaining a beautiful small garden around their houses. If this joy of gardening itself is the goal, then even if they continue to spend their whole life doing that, they will never get bored. They will always have a desire for planting new seedlings. If we take our studies or sports as our hobby, we will have interest in it throughout our life. Instead, if we take it abnormally - to accumulate wealth or fame or for sake of clearing the examinations - at some point we will spend 12-14 hours in a day on it and at some point not even 12-14 minutes ! So do not set wrong goals - like propaganda of our sect or education of our Dharma or the attainment of liberation or Vaikunth - against Sevaa. Just do it naturally, and you will start enjoying it.

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At this juncture, there is a possibility of an attack on Sevaa from another direction. Kaamdev unsuccessfully tried to distract Naaradjee from meditation many times. In the end, having accepted his defeat, he bowed down, garlanded him and said : "Mahaadevjee got very much annoyed with me but you are greater than him ; you

did no harm to me.” On getting this kind of respect from Kaamdev, innocent Naaradjee was illuded. So later, during a ceremonial gathering of groom selection, when Prabhu changed his face like that of a monkey, out of anger he cursed even Prabhu ! Using appreciation as a tool, Kaamdev ultimately won despite losing. Similarly, at some moment, the mind loses balance and the person who is doing Sevaa becomes egoistic. He feels himself at the top of the world. While giving respect to Prabhu, he starts expecting respect from Prabhu. Sometimes the cobwebs of his ego, which one had before initiation, start creating hindrances in his Sevaa. An ant cannot kill an elephant but certainly bite it. And if the elephant is not careful, sometimes it falls into a valley under the pain of a simple bite of a small ant.

As a person goes on climbing to new heights, the chances of his downfall increase manifold. A thing which may not be an obstruction at an elementary stage may become a huge hindrance at a higher stage of practice. We saw this in the example of Naaradjee. If our intellect is convinced that Sevaa is our prime duty, it is an excellent thing. But if we cultivate an ego of being a devotee doing Sevaa, in the end it hits the spirit of Sevaa. Sevaa should cultivate humbleness in us. Having understood this, if the Jeeva gives it up, it is well and good, otherwise Prabhu has to take trouble for this. That is why ShreeAachaaryajee says that having understood that everything in this world is Brahman, respect all. Think of yourself as a tiny self and appreciate the dignity of even mundane worldly things. Do not get attracted towards them but, at least, have respect for them. On one hand is the vision of the Bible, full of hatred for this world, and on the other hand is the vision of ShreeMahaaprabhujee, who sees only Bhagwaan in everything in this world ! The difference is striking, just like that of the earth and the sky.

Other than that, never ever be egoistic and never expect Prabhu to respect you.

*"Raamdaasjee used to remain sacred throughout the day. He used to take even water and Beeraa in Aparas. Such was his routine of Sevaa. The amount of daily offerings was also considerable. He also had a lot of money. But in a few days, most of the money was spent.*

*BhavPrakaash - The intention behind this is - he was proud of his wealth a little, therefore ShreeThaakurjee wanted to remove that Anyaashraya (refuge in others) and instill in him a sense of humility. .*

*. . . Then Raamdaasjee started buying things on credit from a shopkeeper. So he was in debt... ShreeThaakurjee went to that shopkeeper in the disguise of Raamdaas and paid all the debt... Raamdaas came to his house and thought that he will not stay at home anymore. He will take up a job of a servant somewhere. Then he took a horse and some weapons and came to Prayaag to work as a soldier. He was unable to maintain his Aparas in that situation. So, he started taking food etc. everything without Aparas.*

*BhavPrakaash - The intention behind this is - he was a little bit proud of his Aparas and also thought that nobody could maintain Aparas like him. ShreeThaakurjee removed this ego in him & conveyed that such an Aparas for which ShreeThaakurjee had to take trouble is not worth maintaining.*

*. . . Then ShreeAachaaryajee said : "He is blessed. He does not trouble ShreeThaakurjee. No one has patience like him.*

*BhavPrakaash - The reason for this appreciation is as follows. What can be achieved by maintaining a very stringent Aparas? Understanding the duty of a follower is very difficult. Even when he had spent all the money and got trapped into debt, he did not lose his patience. His mind was always engrossed in ShreeThaakurjee. He did not worry at all. Later he was not happy when ShreeThaakurjee paid all his liabilities. Instead he started working. Now he became humble and his mind too is engaged in ShreeThaakurjee. In this sense, ShreeAachaaryajee said that he is blessed."*

*( The Story of Raamdaas Saaraswat Braahmin in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

*"Having got the Darshan of ShreeNaathjee, the King came back to his tent and said to his queen : 'Please go to Giriraj mountain to get the Darshan of ShreeGovardhanNaathjee, it is awesome.' To this, the queen replied : 'In order to maintain our tradition, only if they can cover me with a veil all around, I shall go for the Darshan.' . . So all the arrangements were made and the queen came for the Darshan with a veil all around her and the doors were closed for the*

public. Then ShreeNaathjee opened the doors. The crowd rushed for Darshan and pounced on the queen. Due to this, her clothes were all torn off. She felt too embarrassed . . . To this, the King said : 'I had warned you earlier that ShreeNaathjee is the Lord of Vraj ; He has never allowed anybody to be covered in a veil.' At that time, Paramaananddaas was singing this Keertan... कौन यह खेलवे की बानि (This is not the way to play). . . Hearing this, ShreeAachaaryajee raised an objection & instead suggested changing it to भली यह खेलवे की बानि (What a nice style to play)."

( The Story of Paramaananddaas Braahmin in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).

Indeed, Prabhu does us good by redeeming us from our egos. We, being Jeevas, may feel it bad initially. But whatever Prabhu does for us is for our good. With the self-confidence of being Prabhu's servant and the firm belief that He is the master, a devotee can easily face the minor adversities coming in his way in life. Having this in mind, he neither loses respect towards Sevaa nor towards Prabhu. The incident may be one & the same, but a devotee sees it in the context of Bhagwat-Leelaa, while others see it as their own mischief. There is a huge difference between the two approaches. A highly distorted ego leads a person to believe that whatever he is doing, whether right or wrong, is Leelaa while whatever hinders him, is evil ! Anyway, all these have been dealt with in detail in Shikshaapatra.

Here for the first time, ShreeAachaaryajee gives the preaching of becoming a BRAHMAVIDHYAA-VISHAARAD, saying that everyone doing Sevaa should regularly read ShreemadBhaagawatPuraana respectfully without any other motive or pretence. Only then one would be able to retain humility and remain non-egoistic.

The simple meaning of BrahmaVidhyaa-Vishaarad is to know properly the character and Leelaa (divine game/drama) of Prabhu. The character of Prabhu is - He has taken all the forms in the universe. And the Leelaa is - Prabhu has created all kinds of Jeevas such as Pushti, Pravaah, Maryaadaa as also non-living objects in which there are vast differences. He has formed the rules given in

the scriptures, just like the rules in a game, which everybody has to strictly follow ; and He Himself behaves like a naughty child who, at every step, violates these rules and graces some people and pulls them into the game. Neither are we supposed to break the rules nor Prabhu is going to be bound by these rules. No doubt that there is no difference between Him and us, but ultimately we are just like His toys or at the most, players in His divine game. How to do justice with both - His character & Leelaa - in our life can be understood only when we regularly study ShreemadBhaagawatPuraana.

And more importantly, we can become capable of enjoying His character & Leelaa, both. His character is such that one forgets His Leelaas and His Leelaas are such that one forgets His character ! Arjuna started trembling after seeing His ViraatSwaroop (the all encompassing form) and ShreeYashodaajee became angry with Prabhu after facing many complaints of His stealing butter and eating soil ! ShreeAachaaryajee gives priority to both, so that we are able to consistently do Sevaa throughout our life. Therefore, He wrote many distinct commentaries like ShreeSubodhineejee, BhaagwataarthaNibandh, PurushottamSahasra-Naam, TrividhaNaamaavalee and 10-SkandhaAnukramanikaa on ShreeBhaagwatPuraana. He also wrote the ShodashGranthas which are again based on the essence of BhaagawatPuraana, which contain preachings for the disciples. For those who are not able to understand even that, He has instructed as a last resort, to continuously chant AshtaaksharMantra fearlessly, without any ulterior motive.

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Other than these, ShreeAachaaryajee emphasizes on wearing the TulseeMaalaa, marking the Tilak on the forehead, fasting on the four Jayantees, etc. as per the traditions of Vaishnava Dharma. In this list, we should also include the characteristics of a Vaishnava as explained by ShreeGokulnaathjee, Soordaasjee, Dayaaraambhaai, Narsimh Mehtaa, etc. On acquiring these characteristics, one becomes PURE and thereby eligible to do Sevaa.

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ShreeAachaaryajee praises such a Vaishnava who does Bhagawat-Seva throughout his life remaining pure, happy and

Brahmavidhyaa-Vishaarad. He says that a Brahmagyaanee ( a person who has the knowledge of Brahman) feels the bliss of Brahman only with his soul, while a devotee enjoys His bliss with all his faculties i.e. his body, senses, family, etc. at home !

But the one who is graced by Him only experiences His bliss ;  
कृपा बिना सिद्धि नव थाय (Without His grace, nothing is possible).

ShreeGusaainjee says that it does not matter to a blind person whether the Sun is there or not. Similarly, for the one who is not graced by Him & who in turn, is not interested in this Path of Grace, it does not matter if he does Sevaa or not. It does not matter at all.

How different are these above mentioned divine and honourable characters of Sevaa from the ugly and repulsive form which we have moulded it into today ! The difference is vast, just like the quality of water of Gangaa river at the Gangotree and at Kaanpur!

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#### **4. Sevyaswaroop (Deity)**

The poems of poet Kalaapee are quite like a peacock's call to its beloved ; that leave an intense unforgettable impression on every Gujarati medium school/college student. The expression of sentiments therein touches our heart. The poet's heart responds to even small incidents in nature with sentiments :

*O birds ! Peck with pleasure, or sing a song ;  
Why to fly away leaving your play, out of my fear ?  
Quite like the cow eating grass near you, am I  
Could never harm you, can I?*

*(Translated poem from Kalaapeeno Kekaarav).*

The poet very well knows his precious asset. All that he begs from Prabhu is that this wealth should remain safe -

*I shall bear the pain of wounds, as in the past I bore  
Never counted, will not count, let there be more.  
Oh! many more will there be, piercing my heart  
Should never become hard, Prabhu ! Grant me this art.  
Still beating with feelings is my heart, maybe in a mess  
If this I lose, I shall get emptiness.  
May it shatter into pieces, being soft, with wounds of dart.  
Should never become hard, Prabhu ! Grant me this art.*

*(Translated poem from Kalaapeeno Kekaarav).*

Indeed, if there are no sentiments left, there is no charm left in life.

*"If you search the schoolbag of a child, you will find so many things! A child's treasure may contain bus tickets, broken pens, pebbles, paper chits and even the tangled thread of a kite ... A pebble is worthless for the rest of the world, but as soon as it finds an owner who is a child, it becomes a precious toy. There is nothing in an empty matchbox, but as soon as it reaches a child, it becomes a telephone... In this world, only a child has the ability to transform futile objects into the objects of joy. The involvement of a child in an empty matchbox is so intense that it appears as if it is full."*

*( Translation of a passage from a Gujarati book "Pavanee Vyaaspeeth" written by ShreeAnil Joshee ).*

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The involvement of a true devotee in devotion is also such that Prabhu considers the water offered by him as the water of the river Yamunaa and a handful of gram as more than a Chhappan-Bhog. The Midas touch of a devotee's sentiments transforms the mundane things to divine. Prabhu, who resides in Vaikunth, is the husband of Lakshmi, rides on Garuda and wears KaustubhMani, rushes towards his devotee to relish the tiny items offered by His devotee. The taste of fruits offered by Shabari is quite unique !

Some fools consider devotion as just flattery to Prabhu, but it's not like that. The fundamental difference between sycophancy and devotion is this sensitivity and the total involvement that it causes. Even if a devotee scolds Prabhu, he does so whole-heartedly ; and even if a sycophant praises, it is quite like his boneless tongue, that is superficial without any involvement or sentiments. The devotees of Vraj don't mind going to hell by giving the soil of their feet as a medicine, but they cannot bear their Prabhu's stomach-ache. What an amazing sensitivity !

How should a Pushtimaargiya do Sevaa? The precise answer is "with sentiments". The only key to open our understanding of Sevaa is sensitivity. Why do we decorate ShreeThaakurjee with a particular ornament on a particular Utsav, why a particular recipe, why only this cloth, why do we sing a Keertan of this particular emotion, should we do this first or that, should we place this near or far, why we should be quick at times and when we should not rush - all these can be very well understood only on being sentimental.

Once there was a sensitive mother. Her son was suffering from a disease since birth due to which he was unable to eat sweets. So this sentimental mother herself also gave up eating sweets. If such a mother gets initiated into our Pushti-sect & installs ShreeThaakurjee at her home, then the only instruction needed is that she should look after ShreeThaakurjee quite like her son. She will understand on her own that she cannot eat anything without offering first to ShreeThaakurjee, ShreeThaakurjee is the enjoyer of the best things, the essence of life is in ShreeThaakurjee's Sevaa, there can be nobody dearer than ShreeThaakurjee, ShreeThaakurjee might get tired, someone can cast an evil eye on her ShreeThaakurjee so she should hide Him, the only outcome of

Sevaa is His pleasure, she herself has to serve her ShreeThaakurjee, she has to do all other chores after Sevaa of ShreeThaakurjee in daily routine, Sevaa has to be according to the seasons with respect to Keertan-food-cloth-ornaments-perfume, etc.

And indeed, if one asks how to quit Sevaa, then the answer to this question is also the same – “with sentiments”. ShreeAachaaryajee says that if (i) your body has become very weak or (ii) by your Sevaa your family or your neighbours are getting embarrassed or (iii) your senses have started becoming unresponsive because you are engaging them forcefully in Sevaa or (iv) you become adamant for your Aparas or proportion of offering, etc. in such situations you should discontinue Sevaa. It is secondary whether it will be good or bad for Jeeva if he gives up Sevaa in such circumstances. The primary concern here is - our ShreeThaakurjee will find it uneasy if we continue to do Sevaa in such situations. Sensitivity towards Prabhu compels ShreeAachaaryajee to give such instructions. He says that either you remove these obstructions or give up Sevaa ; both cannot be kept on simultaneously.

The prominence of love on the path of devotion is because of its ability to strengthen our respect for Prabhu eternally by making us sensitive. Prabhu is left with no option but to bow down helplessly in front of His devotee due to the pleasant burden of his love ; one that neither suffocates Him nor crushes Him. That is why in spite of being a great devotee, if a person becomes displeased with Him and stops talking to or looking at Him (i.e. Maanbhaav), it is not praise-worthy. Love filled with humility which can keep the sensitivity alive is highly appreciated here. Even the knowledge of His glory is appreciated here only if it can enhance our sensitivity to make it long-lasting. Asceticism is also useful here only if it restricts our attention on the other matters and helps attend only Him with an intense sensitivity. The importance of grief of separation is only if it augments our sensitivity.

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We do not know where our sensitivity has been lost nowadays. The screams of a traveller or a pedestrian who has met with a road accident fall on deaf ears; he moans in pain and instead

of helping him, people rob him of his belongings ! Quite often we hear/read news of lynching, stabbing, rapes, etc. We see low level conflicts everywhere; be it parliament or elections of local bodies or cooperative societies, or joint/ divided families.

*“You can see that the green skin of raw mango is not separate from the mango itself. You cannot remove this skin using your nails... But as soon as this mango ripens i.e. becomes mature, the yellow skin can easily be peeled off the fruit with our nail. And the kernel of this mango does not get excited at all if the skin or the pulp is removed from it.*

*I feel that maturity makes a person lose his sensitivity in the tiresome process of ripening in the journey of life. He becomes thick-skinned or dead-skinned. A child or a raw person is very sensitive and has a sensitive skin. The rawness in a person never allows him to compromise with values. The rawness tastes sour, quite like a raw mango, making an offender uncomfortable. Whereas maturity always compromises. It adopts the policy of being ‘goody-goody’. It can make one ignore gross violations. I feel that in the other words maturity is compromise with the society under compulsion...*

*It seems that the way grass is required to ripen a raw mango, grass in the form of society is required to make a person matured. A person becomes mature lying in the grass of the world. He lies there till he is rotten for which we celebrate his Amrit–Mahotsav / diamond jubilee / his sixtieth birthday. Devotional poets Narsimh Mehtaa and Meeraabaai were the most immature livewire persons of their era, That is why, even after so many centuries, their words seem mature or as relevant today as they were in the past. I think that maturity is a disorder quite like diabetes of the soul. Maturity is a royal disease... The attack of maturity is so severe that man has started drinking alcohol to escape from it... Mankind is tired of this maturity. The terror of civilized etiquette has placed the human soul on display in a showcase.”*

*( Translation of a passage from ‘Pawanee Vyaaspeeth’ ).*

*“On one hand, medical science is violently attacking human beings under the disguise of science and on the other hand, the human-centric thought process of medical scientists motivates them to practice violence on other creatures. In the very beginning of their*

*studies, the students learn about the anatomy of frogs, crabs and cockroaches after dissecting these innocent creatures. And then, they study the effects of drugs on dogs and cats. Once the experiment is over, the dead animals are thrown into the dustbin unscrupulously without any hesitation. During the study of psychology, monkeys are cruelly chained and kept in cages and subjected to many experiments, merely to observe how the monkey's behaviour changes. In medical seminars & conferences, articles based on such lethal experiments are read and discussed... It is really difficult to judge what benefit humans get from such experiments meant for their wellbeing. But it is an undeniable harsh reality that they definitely cause harm to the innocent animals. Medical researchers cannot hear the cries of these poor creatures ! Can we expect such medical professionals to feel the pain of human patients with sympathy when they cannot hear the screams of these speechless creatures? They lose all their sensitivity... Such Intensive Care Units, known as pressure cookers in the US, are used to keep patients in a cool environment connected with all kinds of electronic equipments quite like a machine, but away from the warmth of their relatives."*

*( Translation of a passage from a Gujarati book 'Tabeebeekshetre Himsaa'*

*written by Dr Manu Kothaaree and Dr Lopaa Mehtaa ).*

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The truth is that sensitivity does not die, but the person foolishly or cleverly diverts it to other matters under the influence of his ignorance or intelligence.

*"A green parrot quietly comes and sits near a raw mango hanging on a mango tree. The branch just shakes a little. The beauty of this greenery is such that the eyesight of whoever sees it improves and the eyes become clear. But if a trader goes under the same tree, he sees many business opportunities like making a variety of pickles, selling wood of the tree, etc. If a child happens to go and see this tree, he will immediately pick up a stone so that he can hit the mangoes to make them fall down so that he can eat it. A weary traveller finds comfort in seeing it as a roof and sitting in the tree's*

shadow.” ( *Translation of the same passage from ‘Pawanee Vyaaspeeth’* ).

A nurse who worked at a hospital for the elderly in Switzerland was found guilty. She willfully committed the offence of negligent treatment of the elderly which resulted in the death of 23 senior citizens. She said in her defence - "All those who have died were already living under the shadow of death. Their relatives were also very busy with their own life after leaving them here. Why should we waste energy, time and money on their treatment ?!

We do not understand whether the hospital is meant for the patients or the patients are meant for the hospital !

Every year Ganeshotsav is celebrated with a lot of fan fare on a very large scale in Mumbai. Various communities, suburban associations & societies compete with each other & install big idols of ShreeGanapati. For 4-7-10 days, there is a hype visible everywhere in the form of glowing noisy celebration. The roads are decorated with lights. Nowadays, a set is made in the background on the stage revealing some current social/political content. Bollywood songs are played for 14 hours a day on loudspeakers and movies are shown late at night. Free lunches & dinners are served at many places. People drink heavily and dance while participating in the immersion procession. TV Channels broadcast it live from these spots. Comparisons are based on all these grounds - whose celebration was more grand, who showed better movies, who served what in Prasaad, whose decoration was better, who could gather more crowd... These matters are considered more significant than ShreeGanapati. The festival of Navaraatri also shares a similar story.

The Story of Pushti-sect is also no different. It faces a similar fate. Nobody is sensitive to SevyaSwaroop ShreeThaakurjee. Nobody is worried about His pleasure or displeasure. Some are focused on the wealth of the temple while others are worried about the expenditure. Some calculate the income from the temple while some are concerned about their own popularity. Some count the number of footfalls. Some are sensitive towards the rich ladies coming to the temple while some focus on the poor ladies. Some are sensitive about the mothers and some about the sisters, some about the rich businessmen while the others about the manager and

trustees, some have a concern about the temple staff members while the others about the Manorathis & donors. Some notice the Saamagri while others are interested in Prasaad. Some are worried about the time-table of Darshans while others are about the prices of various Manorathas, some are concerned about the board displaying the list of Manorathis while others about the nameplate of brass or stone, someone is worried about Aparas not being followed while another one is bothered about some liberty from it, some about cooking and some about Keertan, some about Shringaar and some about decoration, some about the crowd while another about peace, some about the donation-box while another about the gift-receipt, some want to make new contacts while others are worried about uniting the followers, some are there to find the right candidate for their daughter's/son's marriage while others are there to spoil such a relationship by condemning, some are there to get the latest news to gossip while others want to debate on current affairs, some are worried about the propaganda of Dharma while others about its exhibition, some are worried about the uplift of the masses while others about their own prosperity, some are sensitive about 6 while other about 56, some have concern about 7 or 8 or 14 while the others about 84, someone is sensitive about his control on the temple while another about the hold on the Vaishnavas, someone is worried about being called as a great devotee while another about being called as Pushti-Purushottam in person or ShreeVallabh himself, some come for passing the time while others come for grabbing the opportunity, some are worried about their footwears kept outside while other about the wallet in his pocket... All of them are highly sensitive about their own interests. You can never deny this fact. But is there anyone who has some sensitivity left for ShreeThaakurjee ? None, never. ShreeNaathjee might be wondering whether the Thor (one kind of sweet dish) offered to Him is harder or the hearts of His so-called devotees !

Nowadays, ShreeThaakurjee is kept standing in front of the food offered to Him for seven to eight hours while wearing so many heavy ornaments, so that people can have His Darshan. The fried recipies are served in the iron utensils itself. Very heavy or unhygenic food items are offered to ShreeThaakurjee, which even a

well-built young boy of 25 years of age would find difficult to digest. At times there is a series of Manorathas continuously going on for more than one or one and a half months. How much more should I write?

All this is nothing but an absolute dishonour of ShreeThaakurjee due to maturity and over-exposure. What kind of character of ShreeThaakurjee was narrated by ShreeMahaaprabhujee and what have we imposed on Him ?!

\*

This lack of our sentiments towards ShreeThaakurjee and instead focussing on petty matters related or unrelated to Him is nothing but a surge of mundaneness or extroversion.

*"In the twentieth Vachanaamrit, there is a narration of the event of Annakoot offered to ShreeNaathjee along with the seven ShreeThaakurjees of the family. ShreeGiridharjee requested ShreeGusaainjee to give permission for this Manorath as this was ShreeNaathjee's wish. ShreeGusaainjee hesitated, thinking that such an event would reduce the divinity of the devotees. But what to do if ShreeNaathjee's wish is like that ? So all the seven ShreeThaakurjees were brought to ShreeNaathjee's temple. ShreeGusaainjee's daughter & son-in-law were residing nearby. They used to do Sevaa of their own ShreeThaakurjee separately. After offering Annakoot to her ShreeThaakurjee, the daughter eagerly thought of going for the Darshan of the 8 ShreeThaakurjees at ShreeNaathjee's temple, considering it as a pleasant surprise. When she went there, ShreeGusaainjee saw her and asked : 'Have you come after doing Sevaa at your home ?' His daughter replied : 'I have offered Raajbhog to ShreeThaakurjee and have come for Darshan here.' To this, ShreeGusaainjee scolded her saying : 'You have not completed your Thaakurjee's sevaa and have come here ! Is your ShreeThaakurjee someone else ?'"*

*( ShreeKaakaaVallabhajee's Vachanaamrit ).*

Quite like the statements of Dr.Kothaaree and Dr.Mehtaa, I too can state that the human-centric and self-centred ideology inspires our sect's misguided followers to indulge in violent behaviour towards ShreeThaakurjee & His loved ones. It is difficult to judge

how much we will benefit by thus trying for our wellbeing. But indeed it surely hurts ShreeThaakurjee & His loved ones a lot.

In fact, nobody gets any temporal or transcendental benefit from this. In His Shikshaa-shlokee, ShreeAachaaryajee warns all the followers – the descendents of His lineage addressed thro' ShreeGusaainjee and ShreeGopeenaathjee and all the disciples of His sect through His address to Daamodardaasjee, etc. - that Prabhu is not a subject matter of disrespectful or insensitive behaviour just like an ordinary earthly person, and never think about Him thus ; otherwise you will definitely face extroversion ( Bahirmukhtaa ) and all your senses and body, etc will become a prey to destiny. Even in SiddhaantMuktaavalee, He has stated that one is bound to deteriorate in spite of & because of being close to Prabhu ; in case he does Sevaa with any purpose other than devotion, due to his ill intentions and ill deeds, under the influence of extroversion.

There is nothing above Sva-Sevya ShreeThaakurjee in Pushtisect. Only such a Sevaa, which enhances respect and sensitivity towards our ShreeThaakurjee, or at least maintains it, is worthy doing. If you do not have respect for Him, then put efforts in that direction and wait for its arrival. But do not be in a hurry to start Sevaa immediately without having respect for Him. Otherwise unnecessarily you will be unhappy and make Him uncomfortable too. If you are already doing Sevaa and you feel that your respect towards your Prabhu is declining as you continue doing Sevaa, then it is still not late. Start introspecting ; you will be saved. In case the treatment is possible with medication, go for it and if it requires a surgery, get it done ; but retain respect for & sentiments towards your Prabhu. If respect is in tact and you are not able to do Sevaa, still you will be on the track of Bhaktimaarg. But if you do not have respect and still you are doing Sevaa, you will no longer remain a devotee. Do not do Sevaa with any other considerations such as for attaining worldly desires, do not take your Prabhu for granted and do not disobey Him.

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It is only recently that we have entered into such a misery. Otherwise, for a good reason, Pushtimargiya Vaishnavas used to have this pride that the way we do Sevaa with sentiments & respect,

the followers of Maryaadaamaarg do not do even have a fraction of it in their Pooja rituals. Once ShreeGusaainjee was so sad when Prabhu was offered big pieces of Brinjal vegetable that he thought of taking Sanyaas ; thinking that what is the purpose of being in Grihastha-Ashram if we are not able to keep our Prabhu happy ?!

*“Naaraayandaas used to do ShreeGokulchandramaajee's (ShreeThaakurjee's) Sevaa nicely. He used to feed grass to cows after duly washing it. Lest there be dust particles in the milk ; ShreeThaakurjee is very delicate! ... He did Sevaa like this for a long time. After that, his body was tired due to age. Then, one day, ShreeThaakurjee said to Naaraayandaas : 'Wish for something.' To this, Naaraayandaas replied to ShreeThaakurjee : 'I beg only one thing to you that after my death, please move to ShreeGusaainjee's home & accept their Sevaa.' On this ShreeGokulchandramaajee was very pleased and said : 'You only wished for my pleasure and nothing for yourself.'”*

*( The Story of Naaraayandaas Brahmachaaree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

*“Naaraayandaas used to take so much care that the dust particles on the grass should not go into the cow's stomach. Whereas nowadays Vaishnavas are not worried even if dust particles go into ShreeThaakurjee's stomach ! Leafy vegetables should be washed at least thrice, but they don't wash even once. For them, Dharma is only for exhibition, not a whole-hearted affair.”*

*( Vachanaamrit of ShreeRanchhodlaaljee Mahaaraaj of Ahmedabaad ).*

Nowadays, knowingly or unknowingly, people have developed a liking for ShreeThaakurjee's Darshan with ornaments and decoration, but they have most probably lost the respect and sensitivity towards Him. (If one is fond of watching cheap movies, then his lustful attitude towards women also becomes quite similar. This is popularly known as objectification). The shopkeepers grab this business opportunity to sell stickers/ pictures/ posters related to Prabhu. Some people name their shops or bunglows after Prabhu. Some people get such pictures printed on their wedding cards or publicity pamphlets. Once viewed, the card or pamphlet is thrown in the dustbin. These cards or pamphlets are bound to have such an

unfortunate end anyway, but at the same time we are showing disrespect to our Prabhu. As Fellini has said about the movies on a TV, these stickers/ pictures of Prabhu appear on luxurious furniture. Viewers see them while relaxing on chairs, chatting with friends, drinking, eating, talking on the phone or even romancing. There is no respect there. ShreeThaakurjee's Darshan, etc. are never meant for such unrestrained use.

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Fellini is not blaming just the Television for growing disrespect towards the old movies. If we pay attention then he is condemning the ambience in which those movies are being watched on the TV. If one is going to watch a movie in a theatre, then there are not many family members with him. And the darkness itself gives him a kind of outer and inner privacy, which is essential to give the film its due respect. There are no external disturbances such as guests or telephone calls. You cannot sit as you like, you cannot wear clothes as you like, in a theatre. Man behaves decently with a conscience that, in spite of spending money, he is watching a film among well-mannered people.

Public theatre is definitely a good place to watch a film. However, it is not practical to worship thus. Sevaa-Kathaa needs to be done every day throughout life, not for only three hours a month. You can enjoy a movie made by another person by buying a ticket in a theatre owned by a third person. But in worship, so to speak, one has to make a movie of oneself, one has to enjoy it only with Prabhu. Responsibility and freedom both are negligible in a theatre, but both are foundation stones in any religious practice. There you can't criticise society.

That is why one should make & retain the ambience conducive for Sevaa in one's own home only, even if some extra effort is necessary for its upkeep. And one should always be alert that ShreeThaakurjee is seated in front of you. This sort of minute fear is essential in Sevaa.

*“ShreeThaakurjee is seated in person in our home, but we do not respect Him. If a husband & wife are engaged in a funny conversation loudly near ShreeThaakurjee & a guest arrives*

*suddenly, they feel shy and stop conversing. Then why do they not feel the same in front of ShreeThaakurjee ? That means they have not understood ShreeThaakurjee well. So until we understand ShreeThaakurjee well, we may do Sevaa for years but that Sevaa will not be fruitful. That means we should first understand ShreeThaakurjee well. After that if we do Sevaa, it will become fruitful.'*

*( Vachanaamrit Of ShreeMattujee Mahaaraaj ).*

That is why, while commenting on ShreeAachaaryajee's preaching in Bhaktivardhini – that in order to let the Beejbhaav (seed) of Bhakti grow with a firm-root in our heart, we should worship ShreeKrishna while residing in a home – the commentators explain that here home = a conducive home for worship. If we make our home's ambience conducive to ShreeKrishna's Sevaa and then if we worship ShreeKrishna, only then we will be able nurture the seed of Bhakti in our heart.

*"By the grace of ShreeAachaaryajee, Prabhu is seated in our house. We have to remain alert quite like a yogi, who holds a mercury fluid carefully in his palm, to get the benefits like the ones from a wish-tree. Else the mercury drips down & gives no benefit. Such is our case too."*

*( From ShreeGopeshwarjee's Commentary on ShikshaaPatra written by ShreeHariraayjee ).*

*"And in the village where Madhav Bhatt lived, a wealthy man was also living with his big family. His son died all of a sudden... So he came running to Madhav Bhatt and started crying non-stop. On seeing him crying thus, Madhav Bhatt felt pity for him... The wealthy man went running back to his home and saw that his son was alive. So he celebrated & praised Madhav Bhatt saying 'See, Madhav Bhatt is a true devotee. He just said that my son would be alive and he is alive now !' At night, Madhav Bhatt thought that he had made a blunder. He thought 'in society, there are many people who are full of sorrows. So it is not advisable to stay here any longer ; I will deviate from my Dharma.' So then he left that village in the middle of the night carrying ShreeThaakurjee with him.*

*BhaavPrakaash - Therefore a Vaishnava should think twice before even showing mercy to anyone. Due to the manifestation of his greatness, he had to leave his village in order to protect his Dharma. Otherwise he would have been troubled a lot later. Therefore one should live quite like an ordinary person in the society. Thereby his Dharma shall be saved. Neither ShreeThaakurjee nor Vaishnava shall be troubled. Madhav Bhatt was quite virtuous, but still he had to run away from his village. Therefore a Vaishnava should think twice before doing anything."*

*( The Story of Madhav Bhatt Kashmeeree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

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The real wealth of a Pushti-sect's Vaishnava is having respect and sensitivity towards his ShreeThaakurjee. ShreeAachaaryajee, in Shikshaashlokee, states that the pious sentiments for our Prabhu is everything for us. If we have Bhaav (feelings) towards our Prabhu, we will be fit to survive in this world as well as the transcendental world. Therefore we should always continue to do Sevaa of our transcendental Prabhu. Prabhu shall take care of our welfare.

In fact respect and sensitivity towards each other are very important to maintain a healthy & durable relationship ; whether with Prabhu or with a fellow human being or even an animal.

*"A grandfather poses like a horse and makes his grandson sit on his back. At that time, the grandson knows that he is seated on both, a horse as well as his grandfather. Similarly, the grandfather knows that his rider is both, a grandson as well as the male rider. Keeping the whip in hand, the grandson lightly whips his grandfather and says 'O horse ! Move.' In doing so, he accepts that the grandfather is his horse. But in case he leashes the whip powerfully, he immediately asks his grandfather 'Have I hurt you grandpa ?' Thereby expressing his awareness that it is not merely a horse he is riding on but his grandfather. The grandfather also behaves in that manner and follows the instructions of his rider. But in case the rider falls off then he immediately asks 'Are you hurt, my dear?' thereby remembering that he is his grandson. The child should neither forget the horse nor the grandfather ; only then it will work. Likewise the grandfather can neither disobey his rider nor forget that he is his*

*grandson ; only then the play can go on. Else it is quite possible that the play will halt at any moment."*

*(Translated from ShreeJyoteendra Dave's  
'VaangmayaChintan').*

If both parties are virtuous, they can maintain a respectful and sensitive relationship for the life time, just like the king of Mewaad Raanaa Prataap and his horse Chetak. And if not, then even a husband-wife or a father-son will not be able to live together. What kind of a relationship do we want to have with Prabhu, only we have to decide.

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## 5. Satsang

According to a survey, an average American child watches at least 25,000 murders on the TV & Theatre screens till he is 18 years of age. They form gangs and keep weapons in their pockets throughout the day while in their college or school. They do not hesitate using them for settling petty disputes. Juvenile criminals are increasing day by day. Teachers, parents, neighbours and relatives all have their fear. Before giving advice or scolding the child, they think a hundred times.

As Laabhshankarbai says, the purpose of inventing this unknown demon gadget (TV, Mobile phone, etc.) was to provide information, enhance knowledge, give happiness and good health and increase the awareness of a person ; but due to unknown reasons and cunningness, that very purpose of sharing information and showing cultural diversity is lost. Like a flood, it destroys the concept of value system in society. TV and mobile phones are very mysterious and dangerous things which have deeply penetrated human life. In future, what not these small gadgets will do, is almost impossible to predict.

In London, a survey was conducted on school-going children less than twelve years of age, who were regularly drinking milk. The result was alarmingly one-sided : 97% children had never seen a cow or a buffalo physically and had no idea of their size or shape. Most likely, they would have been regular viewers of the TV.

Why so ? If a human bites a dog, it becomes a news item in the media, but if a dog bites a human, it is not ; because what is surprising about it ? What's sensational in it ! Busy parents escape from the responsibility of explaining the reality to their children by providing TV/newspapers/magazines/mobile-internet. But the media shirk their responsibility ; they serve the content full of sensational news with a disclaimer that viewers have to be discrete ! In the end, all unnatural things seem natural to readers/viewers. Responsible frank filmmakers, who title their films that show the dark side of the police force as 'Ardhasatya' (= half-truth) , are exceptions. Outcome ? Excitement, anxiety.

*"Life is being nourished in such a way that man has become addicted to excitement. If he reads the newspaper in the morning*

*and there is no exciting news, he will fold it back and keep it aside telling his neighbour : 'There is nothing new to read in today's newspaper.' Our mindset has become such that we do not relish simplicity. We don't seek peace. Our eyes are constantly hunting for excitement. The media is quite like dacoits ; roaming around in hunt of prey in the form of sensational stories and news... The audience, being hungry for excitement, licks such sensational stuff. Our film-makers also have noticed this weakness of people and that is why they also make masaalaa films full of blood-shedding, stunts, songs & dances, etc."*

*(Translation of a passage from 'Pavannee Vyaaspeeth').*

ShreeJyoteendra Dave states in 'VaangmayaChintan' -

*"Assuming that the audience means ordinary people having ordinary taste, those who create & serve cheap provocative content often defend themselves saying : 'What can we do? We are just offering people the content that they like. They don't appreciate a quality product, even if we make one. Classic masterpiece dramas don't work nowadays. Should we not look at our stomachs?'*

*These people who look only at their stomachs, do not look at their hearts. It is alright if they do not look at their brain, but the question that arises is why their attention is not drawn towards their heart which is just above the stomach...*

*It is entirely wrong to put the blame on people's taste to defend one's despicable creations. If we look at it from another angle then the purpose of any art is not only to provoke a particular taste/interest but it should also focus on nurturing it to make it civilised. The essential task of any art is to make the pleasure of the sense objects transcendental and procreate its taste in a subtle way to the enjoyer. Having relished any form of art, the enjoyer should not only get satisfaction but also peace. The art creation which procreates cheap emotions can neither give satisfaction nor peace. Such creations only provoke. We can understand this with the analogy of anti-stress medicines and intoxicant drugs. While the former helps in relieving tension of the nerves thereby making a person sleep, the latter makes the person intoxicated and eventually leads to unconsciousness. This is the difference between a cheap and an excellent art."*

ShreeAnil Joshee further writes - *"Nowadays it is difficult to find even one field where excitement is not expected. Everyone is hunting for 'something exciting'. One buys lottery tickets, reads detective stories and watches loathful movies... A good poem, a good essay or a well-written article no longer appeals. Shakespeare, Kaalidaas, Shelley, Byron - all these writers are placed in the museum. No one has time to read such long masterpieces anymore. If there is no time to read, the question of contemplation does not arise at all.*

*..... Because of this mentality, now we are not able to produce an Albert Einstein or an Isaac Newton. We are not able to give birth to Rabindranath Tagores or Ghalibs. But we have been successful in choking traffic on our roads with Maruti cars. The culture of safari suits and briefcases has grown to such an extent that we no more get excited by the changes taking place in the universe."*

\*

Though man has become habituated / die-hard / seasoned, his sensory system is still very tender.

Nowadays there is a disorder called jet-lag. Because of these jet planes, the world has become so small that within a single day, one can have lunch in Mumbai, breakfast in Dubai and dinner in Europe. But every country has a different local time; if it is night in India then it will be morning in America. Everyone has his own biological clock ; a fixed time for waking up, eating and sleeping. In the place where he spends most of his time, his body-clock gets adjusted according to the sunrise and sunset of that place. On moving to a new place/environment, the biological clock gets disturbed. Various systems of the body get upset due to this change. It takes almost a month for the body to settle down in the new environment. This settlement period is not only full of sicknesses like a cold/fever/insomnia/indigestion but the behaviour also becomes crazy, weird and intolerable. It is said that under the effect of this Jet-lag, the Russian premier Khrushchev took out his shoe and banged it on the table during a meeting at the UNO headoffice in the USA !

A small turbulence in the sensory system can provoke a person to this extent. So it is dangerous to play with the character of our mind and body.

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In simple terms, if we want to understand bad-association/company (dussang), then it is nothing but a disorder like a Jet-lag. However, it is much more dangerous than Jet-lag, because it is such a chronic disease that one can't get rid of it within a month ! BhagwadGita states - ध्यायतो विषयान् पुंसः संगः तेषु उपजायते, संगान् संजायते कामः कामान् क्रोधो अभिजायते, क्रोधाद् भवति संमोहः संमोहात् स्मृतिविभ्रमः, स्मृतिभ्रंशाद् बुद्धिनाशो बुद्धिनाशात् प्रणश्यति. Attending the objects of our senses > Their association > Their desire > Anger > Fascination > Loss of memory > Loss of intellect > The end. This infection caused by bad association (Dussang) is lethal.

In our sect, after taking the initiation of Brahm-Sambandh, becoming a dedicated servant of Prabhu becomes the character of a follower and all the things that upset this character are bad-association (दुःसंग).

Therefore in Navratna, ShreeAachaaryajee says that we should in every way associate ourselves with Bhagavadiya-Vaishnavas (pure devotees) who have done Atma-Nivedan and always contemplate the Bhaava of AtmaNivedan (intimation of self). This is the definition of good-association (सत्संग).

\*

Satsang is also of two types: *"What is ongoing right now is nothing but Shikshaa = preaching. It is not Bhagvad-Vaartaa. This is right and that is wrong, we lack in this, we should do like this - this is what is being discussed right now. But what we call Bhagvad-Vaartaa is : as ShreeMahaaprabhujee used to tell Daamodardaasjee : 'Damalaa, It has been long since we have had any Bhagvad-Vaartaa'. The discussion related to only Leelaa is known as Bhagvad-Vaartaa. ... For learning or preaching, there are texts like 84 Vaishnav Vaartaas, 252 Vaishnav Vaartaas and ShikshaaPatra etc. But for Leelaa, there are Keertanas."* (Vachanaamrit of ShreeRanchhodlaaljee Mahaaraaj of Ahmedaabaad ).

Out of these two, the preaching and teachings are to maintain our RESPECT towards our Prabhu and Bhagvad-Vaartaa is to maintain our SENTIMENTS/BHAAV for Him.

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Our reverence towards our Swa-Sevya-Prabhu will be retained for long only when we understand our own as well as our Prabhu's character within the limitation of our individual nature and accordingly maintain the awareness of our differences with gratefulness. That means we have to retain (i) the limitation of our individual nature (ii) our understanding about ourselves and our Prabhu (iii) the awareness regarding our differences (iv) gratefulness.

(i)

Out of excitement, at times we cross the limits of our true nature. Psychologists say that an adolescent, on exposure to obscene films or books, is likely to dream about the women around him - such as female teachers or aunts or female neighbours - as an object of enjoyment and considers himself as a grown up male enjoyer. Under the influence of movies and books flooded with violence, he dreams of shouting at & injuring those who are creating even a little bit of trouble for him. The writers & makers of such obscene & violent content often argue : "After all, every male child is a male and would become an adult one day. And the females who come in contact with him are also women ; aren't they? After all, the whole society has rotten. Isn't everyone a thief and deserves to be punished ?" ! I have never heard any mischievous rioter, when being taken away by the police, arguing : " After all, we all have evolved from monkeys ; haven't we ?" ! There is something like civilisation and culture which has kept this notorious attitude in check. It is foolish to assume that the "truth after all" is the only truth.

Nowadays, it is very easy to acquire knowledge. The knowhow of manufacturing a bomb or looting a bank or committing cybercrimes are easily available online / offline. The important thing is how to digest this knowledge. Nowadays, discussions are on about educating the adolscent boys about child birth, but nobody thinks about its inevitable ill effects. Anyway.

The various things in the universe have come into existence carrying their exclusive nature. The lotus blooms in the morning,

whereas the water lily blossoms at night. The mango fruit ripens in summer whereas the orange grows in the winter. Likewise people are of mainly three types i.e. Saattvika, Raajasa and Taamasa. They are also subdivided into Braahmin/Kshatriya etc. Sometimes they are seen as two genders male/female and sometimes as children/adults or rich/poor or foolish/shrewd. Subal and Tok are childhood friends of Krishna and Arjun also is His friend, Sudaama is a friend and Uddhav too is a friend. All of them are His friends, but their nature is quite different.

Prabhu is so capable that he can acquire any nature as per the nature of the person he encounters. He states so in the Bhagvad-Geeta : "ये यथा मां प्रपद्यन्ते तांस्तथैव भजाम्यहम्।". The way a devotee approaches Him, He responds accordingly. That is the reason why it is not necessary for a Jeeva to transgress the limits of his nature. In the Upanishads alone, 32 types of Brahmvidhyaa (the various paths of knowledge to know Brahman) are shown and any one out of them is sufficient to give the knowledge about Brahman. "वेदैश्च सर्वैः अहमेव वेद्यः।" says Prabhu in the BhagavadGeeta, meaning all the Vedas impart my knowledge only. As the devotees of Vraj were divine Taamasic in nature, Prabhu responded to them with Taamasa-Leelaa, whereas with Yaadavas of Mathura, he did Raajas-Leelaa. Although Kansa was afraid of Him, He Himself was afraid of mother Yashodaajee ! ShreeGusaainjee says that if Prabhu does not follow the nature of His devotee, and suddenly He steals the devotee's mind at one stroke, the devotee will feel this sudden shock and therefore Prabhu's kindness will not be established. Also there will be no variety or charm in such a Leelaa that can encourage devotees to sing them for centuries ; no supremacy of Bhaktimaarg. Arjun started shivering on seeing the Viraat Swaroop (magnanimous form) of Prabhu and started requesting Him for the withdrawal of that form and once again become His charioteer. How can Gopis digest the sermons of Uddhav which only describe His formless, attribute-less nature? If they cannot digest the sermons of Uddhav, then will they agree on it even if Prabhu says so?

If our nature is preserved within its limits, our sentiments (Bhaav) will be intact, joy in life would be intact and we will be able to sustain our Sevaa. That is why ShreeAachaaryajee has written Jal-Bhed, where it has been explained how much a Pushti-devotee would benefit or get harmed by listening to the preachers of different levels such as Samsaari, Mumukshu or Mukta (worldly, seeker or liberated) of various religious practices prevailing in Bhaarat. The list of preachers who are helpful is quite short and their big limitation is that they are rare. They are not available on hire for 7 days as and when needed. We should always prefer the association (Satsang) of Vaishnavas who belong to our sect and the ones who have no expectations, are pious and inspire unconditional love for Prabhu. Otherwise, we should regularly do self-study of our holy books.

And such Vaishnavas/books should have the nature & tastes that align with our sentiments (Bhaav). If we have Baal-Bhaav or Sakhaa-Bhaav towards our ShreeThaakurjee ( He is our child / friend ) while that companion preaches us to develop only Kishor-Bhaav or JagadGuru-Bhaav ( He is our lover / Guru ) , then the bud of our Bhaav will wither. The ears accustomed to listening to over-cries of separation will cause irritation at the time of union with Prabhu. That's why ShreeHariraajee warns that irrespective of the other person's fame or great lineage, before entering into an association with him, we must check his Bhaav. It is quite obvious, because we have to do Satsang for the sake of maintaining & enhancing our respect towards our Prabhu by not crossing the limits of our nature. So if such limits are crossed, our sentiments get evaporated ; then what is the benefit of such Satsang ?

If someone feels that we are trying to be narrow-minded or are trying to create a dividing fence around, let him feel so. Our Aachaaryaas do not bother about anybody while showing the right path. They never aspired of becoming a Jagad-Guru. Their only concern is with the sentiments in the hearts of Vaishnavas towards Prabhu ; not their own popularity. They consider this respect and sensitivity towards Prabhu as valuable as our Prabhu Himself. That is why they preach us with an emphasis to nourish our sentiments by getting rid of our laxity, neglect & pride and instead do Satsang.

*“One day Seth Purushottamdaas was returning from the house of a Vaishnava at midnight.....*

*BhaavPrakaash- By this, it is conveyed that Seth was a prominent devotee but still he, on his own, used to go to another Vaishnava’s home for want of Satsang. Satsang should not be skipped. Why? Because ShreeAachaaryajee has written - “पोषकाभावे तु शिथिलम्”, the lack of nourishment will cause the mind to lax, causing a decline of devotion. Satsang is nourishment of our Bhaav.”*

*(The Story of Seth Purushottamdaas Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa).*

Therefore, rather than mixing the three streams of Karm-Gyaan-Bhakti unnecessarily, thereby creating a mess, whatever sentiments or nature we have acquired by our fortune, we should try to retain & nourish them only.

(iii)

Let’s take the third one now. To maintain our sentiments and nature, our intellect should be firm that there is a difference between Prabhu and ourself. If a follower of the path of knowledge (Gyaan-Margiya) develops a sense of non-duality, it is desirable. But this feeling in a devotee will be an obstacle to relishing the Leelaa of Prabhu. That is why the association of a Gyaan-Margi is not beneficial to us & should be avoided.

There is a lot of emphasis given to this sense of duality in Raamaanuj and Maadhva sects, as also Islam and Christianity. But the extreme is undesirable here also. The devotion can not breath and last long in this extreme sense of duality. The need is to maintain a balance. In Pushti-sect, the feeling of Him being our Swami or Master is as necessary as Him being not different from us. That is why ShreeAachaaryajee in philosophy declares the non-duality between a Jeeva and Brahman, and considers its knowledge = BrahmVidhyaa-Vishaaradtaa an essential part of the eligibility of a devotee in our sect. But while preaching worshipping, He does not encourage this non-duality and instead carefully promotes a more appropriate sense of duality that is conducive as a part of Leelaa.

(iv)

To retain gratefulness, we must cultivate & nurture a feeling of humility and deprival of means in us, and a feeling of Prabhu being gracious.

Nowadays, we do not even consider Sevaa as our duty, but still, it can be understood that if we do Sevaa for 2-4-6-8 hours a day, we might develop a pride of doing Sevaa. There are very few wrestlers who are not proud of their muscular bodies ; they display it everywhere quite often. Similarly a devotee may also feel proud due to his good fortune, and may intend to exhibit this good fortune in front of the people who are not doing Sevaa or sometimes, even in front of Prabhu.

Nurturing the feeling of humility and deprival of means keeps our mind under control. We belonged to a caste as low as a Chandaal (the one who disposes off corpses) but somehow we became a queen ; not because of our virtues but because of the grace of the king (Prabhu). Our only virtue is that the King is pleased with us and that is the reason why we got an opportunity to serve Him and will continue to get it. We have not got this Sevaa for eternity like a land ownership document in our heritage. It is because of our fortune and His mercy that we have been given this opportunity: "नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन, यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः तस्यैप आत्मा विवृणुते तनुं स्वाम्।" The Upanishad says here that He is not accessible by chanting/intellect/listening ; whoever is chosen by Him gets Him. He reveals His character to such a chosen one. Due to the these feelings of gratitude, our RESPECT towards our Prabhu remains intact.

(ii)

To maintain RESPECT, It is quite necessary to understand the character of (a) our Prabhu, (b) His great devotees and (c) ourselves.

(a) *"BhaavPrakaash - ShreeAachaaryajee says in Subodhini - Thaakurjee becomes unhappy if someone has the following two kind of feelings in His Leelaa or His Swaroop ; One Asambhaavnaa (doubting possibility) and second VipareetBhaavnaa (imposing the opposite).*

*Asambhaavnaa is like : ShreeThaakurjee danced with the Gopees who were the wives of other Gopas ! How could ShreeThaakurjee eat at the homes of the devotees of the lower castes ? The food which ShreeThaakurjee touches may become impure ! Why did ShreeThaakurjee, being of Aaheer caste, have food without taking a bath? ShreeThaakurjee is suffering from such and such disease. ShreeThaakurjee eats food daily in a limit, so how can He eat so much Annakoot (a grand feast)? ShreeThaakurjee has become old now. Why did ShreeThaakurjee do this Leelaa? - These types of ill reasoning should not be done about ShreeThaakurjee. Because in PurushottamSahasraNaam it is said that He is 'TarkaagocharKaryakrit' = the actions of Prabhu are beyond logic. They cannot be understood by anybody by simply applying logical reasoning. He possesses all kinds of power of doing, not doing and doing it another way. These are all examples of Asambhaavnaa. And VipareetBhaavnaa is like : ShreeThaakurjee's mouth will smell bad so we should make Him brush His teeth in the morning. He should be provided with a latrine & a toilet. Vraj is spread over 84 kos (i.e.252 km), so how could He roam around the entire Vraj in a day? There were thousands of cows in His home ; how could He milk all the cows? He had taken birth in Vraj earlier ; now where is He in that Vraj? He is not visible anywhere in Vraj now. Even the banned plant products-vegetables-root cultivations have been created by ShreeThaakurjee, so what is wrong if we offer Him carrots, onions, radishes, etc.? How could one ShreeThaakurjee dance with so many Gopees at the same time? These are examples of VipareetBhaavnaa. With such feelings about ShreeThaakurjee, we will make Him unhappy. So one should not do so."*

*( The Story of Jagannath Joshee in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

(b) Whatever the devotees of Vraj did in a fervent spirit, we do not deserve to do in the absence of such sentiments. We cannot worship Katyaayani or Indra.

(c) *"We do not remember our character, that is why we are very much confused. Who am I? Where do I have to go? What is my duty? - all such understanding is lost by Jeeva, making him wander here and there."*

*(Vachanaamrit Of ShreeRanchhodlaajee Maharaj of Ahmedaabaad ).*

ShreeAachaaryajee says that Jeeva can be considered to have achieved his goal if he remains within his true self. But a human being spends his whole life just to understand his true self. Who is he? Is he a human or a male or an Indian or a hindu or a braahmin or a father or a husband or a Vaishnava ..... who is he and who he is not, if this is known, only then everything can be resolved. Scriptures are very practical on this. That is why they preach according to the ego of an individual. They do not wait for a person to attain a particular ego of a higher stature. It is your duty to follow a particular instruction given by the scripture till you retain that particular ego. ShreeAachaaryajee says that if you have an ego belonging to a particular varna & aashram, then your top priority is to honestly follow the instruction related to them. Even the worship of Prabhu is not a priority for you.

But the things change once you do Atma-Nivedan (a promise made to Prabhu at the time of Brahm-sambandh initiation). ShreeAachaaryajee and ShreeHariraayjee compare this with the changes in the life of a hindu lady after her marriage. *"She starts having a sentiment that that person to whom she is married is her husband. Similarly, a person who gets Brahm-sambandh, starts feeling that ShreeKrishna is his Swami. Just like all the limitations of a lady that are there before her marriage do not hinder her married life, no defect of a Jeeva becomes a hindrance in serving Prabhu after Brahma-Sambandh Deeksha. If a married lady befriends other males, eats food prior to her husband, offers her husband meals after consuming them first and occupies herself with other priorities, it is considered inappropriate. In the same fashion, it is improper if the initiated Jeeva*

*consumes food without offering it to Him and takes refuge in other deities. Quite like a rich married woman, who through a messenger, offers everything best to her husband, an initiated Jeeva should offer everything, whatever best he has, to Prabhu through the devotees of Vraj. As the lack of understanding of exclusivity for her husband is a hindrance for a married lady, it is the same for the initiated Jeeva. Therefore, just like a married woman who protects her loyalty to her husband with the help of near and dear ones, an initiated Jeeva too should always contemplate his promise (sentiment of Brahm-Sambandh) to his Prabhu with the association of similar devotees.”*

*(A passage from ShikshaaPatra of ShreeHariraayjee ).*

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SENSITIVITY is at the core and the topmost here.

The mind and body can rebel and distract a person from his spiritual practice in four ways – Laya, Vikshepa, Kashaaya and Rasaaswaad. If the mind decides to do something but the senses or the body do not co-operate e.g. while doing Sevaa or Satsang, the body starts falling asleep, this is called Laya. If the mind does not get involved in the spiritual practice and at that time gets occupied instead in other matters – like buying a footwear/car/flat/raw material for production at the factory - it is known as Vikshepa. If the mind becomes stunned like a statue while worshipping, as if it has touched some electric wire, it is Kashaaya. And the last is Rasaaswaad. In this, the mind gets involved in petty matters related to that spiritual practice and gets satisfied there itself, such as getting impressed by the decoration of the Hindola of flowers, recipes like Boondi Laddoo, Mohanthaal etc.! Ah ha ha!

Every spiritual practice is laborious and the joy therein is as rare as the rain only during the monsoon in a year. To get that, we need to have the thirst like that of a Chaatak (A bird that drinks rain water in Swaati Nakshatra), we need to have sensitivity in the heart, we need to have a burning desire/thirst for it. Prabhu who is seated in our house, is not rare for us due to the blessings of ShreeMahaaprabhujee. Still, due to the lack of intense sentiments of

intimacy, we remain far away from Him even if we are standing next to Him.

Nowadays, the members of a family, even though living under one roof, do not live together due to generation gap. Even when they stay together, both are living in different times. Actually, they have no sensitivity towards each other, no sympathy towards each other.

Many people have a question in their mind that ShreeKrishna was born 5000 years ago, according to historians and in another Yuga, according to the scripturists. So how practical and logical is it to worship Him today?

Well, the sensitivity can transgress the boundaries of region/era/species. We can feel the agony of Arjuna if we have sensitivity. We can get engrossed while watching the Raam-Leelaa. Sensitive sage Valmiki got so upset witnessing killing of one out of a pair of Crane bird that he cursed the hunter man. The heart of a sensitive devotee JadaBharat worried about a new-born deer. Sensitive French people can enjoy the movies shot by Satyajee Raay in the Bengali language-ambience-story line. Love grows despite the distance, if there is sensitivity. And if it is not there, then the need for a divorce arises even or because of living with each other.

Sensitivity cannot be produced in bulk or fragments by any physical process. The process is the same for good association (Satsang) and bad association (Dusang). "संगात् संजायते कामः" = association creates desire. If you keep on doing Satsang, if you keep on contemplating Bhagwat-Swaroop, Leelaa and the attributes of Bhagwaan, the desire for Bhagwat-Sevaa will arise, you will start thirsting & craving for it. Then if you start doing Sevaa, your mind will get involved in Sevaa. There will be no Laya, Vikshepa, Kashaaya or Rasaaswaad. Hence you should regularly do Satsang.

*"Once Shreepaat asked : 'Mahaaraaj ! How can we ensure that our mind remains surrendered to the lotus feet of our Prabhu?' Then Shreejee replied : 'Just make repeated efforts of remembering Him in the heart. With such an exercise regularly, it is possible. By continuously pulling a rope over a stone-wall to draw water from a well, there is a scratch mark created on the stone. In the same way, the mind also can retain an impression with repeated efforts. If a*

*rope can produce a scratch mark on the stone-wall, then why can't the mind retain His lotus feet's impression ?" ( HaasyaVachanaamrit of ShreeGokulnaathjee ).*

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It is absolutely necessary to be careful while doing Bhagvad-Vaartaa. For that reason, ShreeAachaaryajee has written PanchPadhyaani, wherein various types of listeners have been described. Depending on the eligibility of the listener, what should a speaker say and what he should not is thereby explained.

*"... And Leelaa - Keertan should be done only in the presence of a devotee of higher stature. If an ordinary follower of our sect is listening, our basic principles should be explained & Keertan of learning should be sung. If a biased hater critic of our sect is listening, one should remain silent and chant Prabhu's name and Leelaa in our own mind. One should not exhibit his Dharma to outsiders."*

*( 24 Vachanaamrit of ShreeGokulnaathjee ).*

The stone at the top of the well gets scratched only when the shoulders of the persons who pull the rope start paining ! As a matter of fact, it is not a scratch but a sort of carving. The only achievement of life is to have a permanent impression of Prabhu in our minds, like the carving on the stone. We should preserve it.

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In the life of a devotee, the need for Satsang is as much as a one-time meal or a Vitamin pill, but unfortunately we are not doing Satsang even as much as a mouth-freshener. We do it only once a week just for a change. During the previous centuries, if there was no devotee of our sect available for Satsang in one's own village, people used to walk willingly 8-10 miles daily to do Satsang. Whereas nowadays, we get books, audio/video recordings, etc. online / offline at our convenience sitting anywhere in the world at any time. We are getting it also. But still, we are unable to overcome our laxity & neglect due to carelessness.

*"Damodardaas said : 'I heard it but could not understand it'. For the one who does not understand, many things can be taught. But nowadays we think that we understand everything and that is the*

*reason that nothing new is left for us to understand ! ... 'Now this person is at least doing something, but the other person does not even do this much' - thus think people. Earlier people never used to look at things like this. With such a mindset, there is no hope of progress."*

*(Vachanaamrit of ShreeRanchhodlaaljee Mahaaraaj of Ahmedaabaad).*

There is a dire need to re-evaluate Satsang, and to understand its scarcity. It should be done every day with personal involvement after proper mutual verification by the preacher-listener. If something is not understood, then we must ask our Guru or a senior Vaishnav having more knowledge. But we should never neglect Satsang. And we should be alert about bad-association (दुःसंग) & stay away from it. The third Shikshaapatra should be referred for more details.

It may be an era of jet aircrafts, but we just have to walk on the rough road of our mind to be in intimacy with Him. The destination is not far away, but because of this we become complacent and lazy and prefer to sleep, quite like the hare of the famous story. There is a need to move towards our destination slowly but steadily like the tortoise.

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## **6. Bhagvat-Sevak (Servant of Prabhu)**

Nowadays, housewives have been brain-washed to believe that the washing powder/soap that produces more foam/lather is better for cleaning. It is not so in reality, but since this belief is popular, every detergent/soap manufacturer is unnecessarily increasing the content of such ingredients that produce more lather. These lather-producing ingredients, being insoluble in water, clog the drainages in cities. Whereas in villages that do not have underground sewer lines, they get in & form a layer on top of the water in ponds or rivers. Thereby, the oxygen in the air is prevented from getting dissolved in that water, causing the death of the underwater creatures like fishes, etc. by suffocation, because they can survive only on the dissolved oxygen.

It is said that nowadays, it is pre-decided to have eight to ten reels of masaalaa in Hindi films irrespective of the storyline : one song is sung by the hero to lure the heroine, then one reel of comedy, then a duet is sung after they fall in love (generally shot at a tourist hot spot or in the rain), one song during separation from each other due to some misunderstanding, one song at the villain's hideout, one reel for the stunt scenes thereafter and one reel showing the reunion in the end. It is believed that regardless of the story, this much masaalaa has to be there to make a film a hit ! If the story does not have situations conducive for songs, it is twisted to accommodate songs. Even accomplished directors have not been able to save themselves from getting dragged into this trend.

Religious affairs are also quite similar. Peace and harmony, tolerance and fraternity, "मज़हब नहीं सिखाता आपसमें बैर रखना" (Religion does not teach us to hate each other). "There should be no mixing of religion and politics." .... Two reels are imposed by politicians. Four reels are donated by media : "Dharma should inspire its followers to work hard, it should inspire a doctor to work day and night to serve people, it should motivate a student to do his studies day and night, it should preach people to eradicate the ills of the society such as differences of caste and creed, it should help youth to give up alcohol/drug addiction, it should help the older generation to give up cigarette and alcohol addiction, it should bring about a positive change of heart in criminals to become good citizens, it

should persuade terrorists to come back to main stream, it should motivate people to do social work in times of calamities or normalcy, it should encourage the administration staff to refuse bribes, it should encourage artists, soldiers, sports persons, administrators, entrepreneurs ...” The outcome is that all religious sects have become masaalaa sects on losing their unique identity, have become secular sects ! In many religious sects, such half-hearted disciples have acquired the top position and have created a sort of layer on the surface. They do not allow the sincere followers to practise their religion peacefully with a dedication. Nobody give a damn about Dharma. They do not think whether Dharma would be able to bear so much of load? Will the holy river of religion not get polluted by washing away so much of society’s filth? Is the religion meant to take care of sinners only? Will pious people ever practice religion or will they preach only in newspapers or deliver live-lectures !

Swami Vivekaanand was the first to emulate Christian missionaries, pitching for social work under the banner of religion, and now almost all Hindu and Jain sects are following the same practice. The followers of religious sects have become more like volunteers doing social work rather than true followers of Dharma.

*“In the contemporary capitalist format of society, the meaning of equality has changed. Equality means automatic similarity. Human beings have lost their identity. Nowadays, the meaning of equality has become similarity; not unity. Everyone does a similar job, everybody gets similar entertainment, everybody reads the same daily newspaper, everybody’s personality traits are similar and all have similar thoughts ...*

*... Contemporary society presents this principle of equality for a reason. They require manpower to work in factories, that too in large numbers, which can work as a team peacefully without any friction. Everyone should obey the same orders and yet they should feel that they are enjoying their freedom to behave as they wish. And just like how the quality of the produced goods in such factories must be consistent, the people cultivated by society too must be uniform. That’s how they define equality.*

*What is the result? Man has become like an automatic machine. Everyone fears for his own safety. Therefore he strives to*

*be a part of the crowd and does not spare any effort to align himself with the thoughts, feelings and working style of the crowd. Everyone has lost his independent thoughts and feelings."*

*( Translation of a passage from 'Premnee Kalaa' of Dr. Amrit Raaningaa ;*

*an intent-translation of 'Art of Loving' authored by Erric Fram ).*

This masaalaa indeed suffocates the true seekers practicing religion.

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The uniqueness of the path introduced by ShreeAachaaryajee is that the initiated person becomes the servant of Prabhu, instead of becoming just ShreeAachaaryajee's disciple or a social worker or a volunteer. Significant one among many such contributions made by ShreeAachaaryajee in Hinduism is that He well-established profoundly that Jeeva is Prabhu's servant.

In His writings like TattvaarthadeepNibandha and ShodashaGranthas, He proclaims quite emphatically : *"I am writing this essay only for the Saatvik devotees of Prabhu. ...The sole duty of a soul is to serve Krishna who is the son of Devaki. ... It is an illusion and irony that even after attaining the knowledge of the scriptures, learned people do not become devotees of Krishna. They remain tied to this material world. ... The eligibility of Karma-Gyan-Bhakti paths has ceased to exist in this Kaliyug. Still, if we do Krishna-Seva with devotion, the same Kaliyug becomes fruitful for us. ... Not understanding this very essence of scriptures and getting influenced by many of their distorted interpretations, even Saatvik people do not do Bhagawat-Sevaa. So I have started writing this essay. ... By nature, Jeeva is Prabhu's servant. ... Being in Prabhu's service always is the essence of my principles.... The only purpose of the creation of the Pushti Jeevas is for Prabhu's sevaa. There is no other purpose. ... It is well known that a resident servant dedicates himself totally to serve his master. Similarly, the followers of this sect should live life by surrendering it to Prabhu. ... The prime duty (Swa-Dharma) of a Pushti-Margiya is to do sevaa of ShreeKrishna, the lord of Vraj ; nothing else, never. ..."*

Perhaps it is a bigger day in the life of a Pushti sect's devotee when he sees himself as His servant, than simply understanding that Prabhu is his master,

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This vision is not attained quite easily, and then being PURE and HAPPY may not be conducive for it, but rather a hurdle. Therefore, ShreeAachaaryajee begins with VIVEK, the preaching of BRAHMAVIDHYAA-VISHAARADTAA, to evoke the sentiment in Jeeva that he is a servant of Prabhu.

Briefly in Vivek-Dhairya-Aashray and in detail in Nibandh-Bhaashya-Subodhini, ShreeAachaaryajee has explained that the understanding that "Whatever happens in this world is according to His wish" is a must for a devotee. This world has been created by Him to relish His divine play, so to think that "We own something" is inappropriate. When everything is made for His enjoyment then we are also made for His service. By cultivating such a spirit at the level of thinking, (i) praying to Prabhu for mundane/divine things, (ii) ego or pride, (iii) stubbornness during emergency and (iv) insistence that overrule ethics – all these should be abandoned at the practical level. In a nutshell, this is VIVEK = the intellectual ability to differentiate. Thereby, we can overcome the tendency typical of a knowledge-seeker devotee.

But "the foreign hand" continuously works against our spiritual development and progress ! "Establishments collaborate and conspire" to ensure that a true devotee never becomes HAPPY ! ShreeAachaaryajee however does not ordain to retaliate. Instead He preaches DHAIRYA = perseverance.

A servant of Prabhu should bear pain and sufferings with patience. We should not allow our mind to be distracted in times of sorrow. We must consider it as the result of our past deeds or as the will of Prabhu. How small is a Jeeva, how much effort can he put in to retaliate against these sufferings, how abundant are the sorrows and how powerful is the will of Prabhu ! Keeping this in mind, a devotee should cultivate his approach & viewpoint towards Prabhu as also his body, relatives, etc. in line with the preachings of ShreeAachaaryajee in Vivek-Dhairya-Aashraya and ShreeHariraayjee in the 10th ShikshaaPatra. Doing so he can bear

physical/spiritual/divine sufferings caused by spouse/other relatives/ wicked and anti-social elements till death. Once you die, it is all over ! In case an effortless retaliation is possible by the will of Prabhu, then we should not insist & keep on suffering unnecessarily. At the same time, by controlling our speech, body and mind, we should also restrict those senses which tend to run after material joys, as that tendency may cause further pain and suffering for us and may cause obstruction in our blissful BhagawatSevaa. Ultimately that may force our beloved Prabhu to sweat for keeping us away from Laukik (mundane) and Vedic matters, while we bear the sufferings arising out of our own ignorance. If this perseverance is retained, we will not become aggrieved distressed devotees. Instead we will be able to attain happiness and fitness for ourselves and in turn will be able to please our Prabhu as well. If this is not possible, then we should accept it as Prabhu's will and strive for His refuge.

Sometimes "a local hand" also becomes an obstacle in the path of progress and development. Like (i) we have such an ego that "I take care of everybody in the house" or "I am the only one responsible for the uplift of all my disciples" but those so called dependents under influence of good earning of wealth/knowledge start questioning us, insulting us, behave rudely with us ! (ii) Sometimes we may have a desire to achieve material or spiritual attainments or we may have an acute urge of obtaining a title/award, but (iii) instead we get only the devotees' abuses and insults ! (iv) We become miserably sad and want to somehow come out of our sufferings but even after putting in all our efforts, we fail. (v) Sometimes we commit a sin. (vi) We betray a devotee. (vii) We fear. (viii) In no way are we able to make progress in our devotion. After all, the above ones are nothing but our mundane indulgences; our inclination towards money and worldly matters. ShreeAachaaryajee preaches us to take AASHRAY = to surrender to the Prabhu through our mind, body and speech thereby taking refuge in Him so that we can overcome our desires. Surrendering to Prabhu will uplift us and make our minds PURE and fit for Sevaa.

However, for this we need a firm faith only in Him. We should stop willingly worshipping other Gods and visiting their temples for praying in order to get any mundane / transcendental benefits. We

should be content with what has been conferred on us and engross ourselves in the service of our Prabhu, leaving behind the greed of unacquired wealth, titles and other achievements. Without abandoning the acquired wealth, we should also cultivate emotional detachment from it. Whatever we do as a routine during the course of the day, we should not forget our refuge in Prabhu.

If there is no grace, the path of devotion is quite difficult, especially in Kaliyug. Having said that, if we remain pure, happy and Brahmavidhya-Vishaarad, Prabhu too would like to accept our Sevaa. But if we continue to be distressed or a wealth-seeker or a knowledge-seeker, Prabhu too may get fed up with us and make us leave Sevaa. Hence we should retain our sentiment of being a servant of Prabhu by maintaining VIVEK, DHAIRYA & AASHRAY.

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Nowadays, the new generation feels that the old people who are engrossed continuously in Bhagavat-sevaa and are not doing anything else, are inactive, worthless and mad. They also think that it would have been better had they contributed something to society. On the whole, these old people are not a nuisance to others while they live a peaceful, healthy and stress-free life as compared to the so called "Gems of the society". But in the opinion of the ignorant new generation, it is counted as their dark side, their minus point. But the reality is quite different.

*"Nowadays, there are many scams going on in the name of "Worship". People desire to attain Prabhu but do not want to change even an iota in their fraudulent behaviour. In the medieval times, people used to do severe penance to attain Prabhu, but today nobody tries that hard. There is a distance of thousands of miles between our daily routine and our religious values. Man wants to practise devotion, but the purpose behind it is to get materialistic wellbeing. He seeks Prabhu's help just to reach the pinnacle of prosperity ! ...*

*An activity, according to modern thinking, means to achieve an external goal by the use of our energy. A relatively older view however prioritises the inner effort of a man, irrespective of any outside change.*

*Man is not free as far as his external activity is concerned. He is driven by other motives. Many times, he does not even have any idea why he is running after something. Envy, ambition, greed - these are such impulses. For example, a person is working day and night because he feels lonely and unsafe, whereas another one is working very hard either to accumulate wealth or is inspired by some ambition. ... In all these cases, he may appear to be active, but in reality he is inactive... Love, on the contrary, is an activity, wherein a person exercises his inner power. This power can be applied only in a free environment. There is no scope for intimidation or coercion in it.*

*... One person sits peacefully and does meditation in one corner of his house or in a cave on a hill. His only aim is to attain Prabhu and nothing else. From the point of view of worldly standards, he would be considered inactive because he is not doing any productive work. In fact, the process of meditation is the best of all worldly activities, because it connects the soul with Prabhu."*

*( Translated from 'Premnee Kalaa' ).*

Doubtlessly Bhagawat-Sevaa is the best activity. Majnoo was a useless person from the point of view of the world. However, you will need to wear the glasses of love to appreciate him, the vision of love.

Whether you consider Majnoo a useless or a useful person, an active person or an inactive person ; one thing is for sure that you should not fall in love unless you are prepared to forget all your hunger and thirst when roaming around in the street of Laila like a stray dog. Otherwise you will regret later. Similarly, you should take the initiation of Brahma-Sambandh only when you are committed to devoting your life completely to the service of Prabhu. Otherwise, it would be better to keep yourself busy in your worldly affairs and mind your own business.

I do not consider any mother who is bringing up her children as an inactive person, although many modern educated women think otherwise.

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The spirit of being a servant of Prabhu should be instilled in the childhood itself ; the attainment of Vivek-Dhairya- Aashray is possible only later at a mature stage. For this, it is necessary that children should be brought up in the ambience of Bhagawat-Sevaa. Nowadays, parents themselves are not very active in inculcating values in the minds of their children and they leave the children at the mercy of schools and social media. So at a tender age itself, they develop a sort of perverted consumer instinct to such an extent that they cannot even imagine becoming a servant of anybody. As quoted earlier, *"The remote switch of a TV is in the viewer's hand. He can instantly switch it on or off as per his whims. It does not matter whether it's a Pope's sermon or a poet's recitation. The viewers getting even slightly bored can shut them up immediately by pressing a button and switch over to a football match. The viewer feels that he is powerful."* Such children can not become obedient children, good students, good life partners, good friends or even good parents ; leave aside becoming devotees or servants of Prabhu. Like their parents, they give priority to their selfishness and materialistic wellbeing. This preaching of ShreeAachaaryajee - *"Our master shall not be pleased if we do not engage our body and mind in His Sevaa ; quite like a husband who will not be pleased if the wife is not sent to her in-law's house by her parents due to their emotional attachment to her"* - does not appeal to them. Every follower of our sect should listen to this preaching of ShreeAachaaryajee very carefully and should get engaged in Bhagawat-Sevaa. Only then will the initiation of Brahm-Sambandh be meaningful.

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Now let us take up the left out matter of lather ; the contribution to society by an individual. The ocean of Bhagawat-Sevaa itself will produce the lather. Mere the appeals, through statements in the newspapers, neither settles any dispute nor brings any peace between the two parties. By faithfully following Dharma, a person becomes satisfied, pure and happy. Therefore, the possibility of such a person getting disturbed and then becoming violent reduces naturally.

Contribution to the society can be made in many ways and not necessarily through social work alone. Some people inspire society by giving sermons and some do so by living a virtuous life to set an ideal. Some people can help society by simply doing no harm to it.

There are many people who take oath at the time of Brahm-Sambandh initiation but there are only 84 or 252 among the thousands who live a life as per that oath. ShreeAachaaryajee used to ask everyone before initiation if they would not mind giving up mingling with their social circle & start living like a servant. So if you agree to it, only then you come for initiation, Otherwise please go away ; enjoy your association with your society, forget associating intimately with Prabhu.

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## **7. AACHAAR ( BEHAVIOURAL CODE OF CONDUCT )**

Nowadays Yoga is trending. Radio, TV, internet, newspapers, Aashrams, hotels, sports training centres – everywhere, the information and training regarding various Aasanas are being given. Doctors claim that Yoga helps significantly in treating patients with various diseases. Artists, sportsmen and even astronauts proclaim to benefit from Yoga. Not only Yogis but ordinary people also have started giving training of yogaasanas. Social groups and clubs organize lectures, exhibitions and training sessions on Yoga. The speakers draw our attention to the so called scientific approach of our Rishis. They also tell us how our sages have suggested simple, effective and cheap methods to maintain our physical health. Swamijis leave the Himalayas and descend to the cities in the plains for the sake of urbanites. They demonstrate & explain to them how a particular Aasana is helpful in curing a particular disease.

But Patanjali's YogaShaastra does not think so. According to it, the practice of Yoga is meant for concentration of our mind and not to improve our physical health. The Yoga consists of eight steps and that is why it is known as Ashtaang-Yoga. The first step in this process is Yama = Ahimsa (being non-violent), Satya (speaking the truth), Brahmacharya (following celibacy), Asteya (not stealing), Aparigraha (avoiding accumulation of undesirable wealth). The second step is Niyama = Shoucha (Cleanliness), Santosh (satisfaction), Tapa (tenacity), Swaadhyaya (Self-study), Eeshwar-Pranidhaan (meditation focused on Prabhu). Thus the body and mind become pure by following these 2 steps. Thereafter, the Aasanas are taught to cultivate the physical discipline that is essential for the onward journey. The real war starts after that. The first step is to take up the challenge of training the involuntarily functioning respiratory system and bringing it under your control which is known as Praanaayaama. Once you pass that test, the willpower developed thereby can enable you to do Pratyahaara, that is, to bring back your mind and physical senses from the external mundane objects. If this is achieved then you are asked to do Dhaaranaa. You are asked to create a mental idol within your mind with closed eyes. The next level is Dhyaan. Dhyaan means training your mind to meditate ; focusing on the idol that you had

created in your mind at the Dhaaranaa stage. And finally, all these become the basis for achieving the final stage i.e. Samaadhi, which is nothing but uninterrupted meditation with full involvement. In this whole process, we do not find any official indication anywhere of the treatment of diseases !

Many such illusions arise due to not understanding any sectarian practice in its entirety. Important things seem trivial while the secondary things appear to be primary. Unknowingly, we start disrespecting the sectarian practice.

Whatever place the Aasanas occupy in Yoga, the behavioural code of conduct or Aachaar-Aparas occupies in our sect.

*“In society, the one who has taken a bath walks with caution to protect himself from the open drainages. Likewise, sacred people need to be careful in all respects, quite like the food prepared for ShreeThaakurjee that needs to be preserved to enable it to be offered. Vaishnava-dharma is similar to that. Only if it is taken care of, then it will be retained.”*

*( The Story of Krisnadaas Adhikaree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

*“The flower on a plant cannot survive if it is not protected. Similarly, Karma-Maarg (the path of Karma) which is prescribed in the Vedas is like a fence of thorns built around the flower-like path of devotion. Therefore, the flower of Bhakti-Marg cannot survive without the protection of the fence of Karma-Maarg.”*

*( The Story of GovindSwamee in 252 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

It is not that these etiquettes are necessary only in the practice of Yoga or Bhakti, they are also necessary for watching TV or working in a factory. As quoted earlier, *“The viewers do not have to do much movement.... While watching TV, they do not care about their clothing also. Sometimes they watch it wearing their inner-wear, sometimes without clothes, from the bathroom, from the bedroom. ... The images on TV appear out of the luxurious furniture around it. People watch TV while sitting on a chair, gossiping with friends, drinking or dining or even talking over the phone or romancing. In doing so, Fellini says - There is no respect.”*

There is no doubt that manners/etiquette or behavioural code of conduct should be followed, but it should be evaluated from the

perspective of the entire sectarian practice ; with a sense of proportion. Over-respect is also as harmful as disrespect ; “Extremes should be avoided everywhere.” We should not promote the fence of aachaar at the cost of our flower-like worship.

Essentially Aachaar-Aparas have been introduced in our sect to prevent any probable disturbances or adversities coming in the way of our worship.

*“Mind and body should remain occupied in doing something. The one who follows Aachaar-Aparas remains busy with that. But anyone who do not, is quite likely to become ill-mannered & may behave unruly.”*

*(Vachanaamrit of ShreeRanchhodlaajee Mahaaraaj of Ahmedaabaad ).*

*“... While doing Japa, our lips should not open even a little bit. This way the Japa needs to be done ; experiencing it in the heart only. The beads of Maalaa should not be exposed... We should not speak while doing Japa ; The body and mind should not be allowed to flicker. The eyes should be closed so that mundane things are not visible. We should not treat the act of Japa and Sevaa as ordinary worldly acts. If you consider this as a worldly act, Prabhu will not allow you to continue and there will be hindrances. That is why, we should not forget the glory of Japa and Sevaa. The moment we forget this glory and take it lightly, we will become lazy and hence ignorant and thus would become foolish and attracted towards worldly things. With such attractions, we will ultimately become Bahirmukh (aloof extroverts) from ShreeThaakurjee.”*

*( 24 Vachanaamrit of ShreeGokulnaathjee ).*

If the fence remains, the glory- beauty and fragrance- of the flower will also remain intact and it will not be affected by mental fluctuations.

However, the importance of etiquette is not more than that of a fence around a plant. If we do not want the flower of Bhakti to bloom, then there is no point in putting a fence around it.

Nowadays, paid employees are recruited in the houses or the temples of our sect. Those poor unfortunate people are actually devotees of Shiva or Devi and we force them to follow the rule-book (Aachaar-Aparas) of our sect by making Brahm-Sambandh initiation

mandatory for them ! Do initial steps which are equivalents of Yama-Niyama like abandoning of Anyaashraya (refusing to accept other's shelter), etc. exist in our sect or not ? Can we take a jump and start straight away with the equivalent of Aasanas ? Who has told you to force unfortunate people to observe those etiquettes? If a wolf were to be dressed in a dog's skin, would you still employ him to guard your sheep? Likewise, will we open our eyes only when the flower is completely plucked away, damaged or destroyed ?

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If there is any thinking behind Aachaar-Aparas in our programme, then it is this foresight to build a fence before planting a flower plant. One may call it a scientific vision so to say, but essentially it is the proficiency of our gurus.

Nowadays, a new breed of elderly speakers-writers has cropped up, which is idle and mad after science. With the "noble intention of showing the right path to the misguided young generation", it draws our attention to another "scientific vision" in the preachings related to Aachaar :

*"Applying Tilak on the forehead presses two nerves and through acupressure, it protects you from many diseases. The turmeric present in Kum-kum controls Kafa, the lime controls Pitta and, the sandal controls Vata. Tulsee is the best anti-bacterial medicine. Tulsee is a mosquito repellent. Tulsee protects you from several diseases. By putting a leaf of Tulsee in the food items, bacterial infections can be prevented. If the Tulsee-dala, which is dedicated to the lotus feet of ShreeThaakurjee, is applied on the eyelids, it improves one's eyesight and sharpness of the brain. The Vaishnava who takes a bath wearing Tulsee-Maalaa does not suffer from skin diseases. If the chanting of a Mantra is done with Tulsee beads in hand, the hands remain infection-free for 24 hours. Taking Charanaamrit helps in improving the deficiency of calcium in the body. Since exercise helps in improving the activation and cleansing of the senses, every Vaishnava should do ShreeThaakurjee's Sevaa at least for two hours a day. As a matter of fact, by doing Sevaa and Smaran (recollection of Prabhu), the exercise is automatically done. After dinner, before going to bed, one must read some religious book because this will not only lead to a sound sleep but also make your*

*mind stress-free. Wrapping the Yagyopaveet (religious thread) around your one ear will clean your urinary system and around both ears will clean your urinary system and colon both ; because the veins of the ear have a direct connection with the brain and the brain controls the intestine and kidney. If you take Doodhgar Prasaad in the morning, there will be a relief from diseases. In the scriptures, women have been instructed to observe isolation during menstruation cycle and not to touch food items ; this has been scientifically proven. In America, they found at the end of a research that when women workers used to touch the wine in the factory during their periods, the wine used to get adversely affected.” !*

One day, these people will start saying that the Scriptures forbid adultery ; now this too has been proven by the scientists. They say that adultery causes AIDS, so no one should indulge in adultery ! I don't know where this postmortem of Aachaar will stop ! And what will it not dissect ?

Two hungry Fakirs came to a Muslim female saint Rabia. She prepared two Chapaati equivalents for them. Suddenly, a hungry dog came there. She fed both the Chapaatis to that dog. After some time, a maid of a rich man brought some Chapaatis for her. She counted them and found that there were eighteen Chapaatis there. Rabia said to her- “Either you have brought less Chapaatis or these are not meant for me.” The maid took back the Chapaatis and returned after some time. She accepted her mistake and handed over twenty Chapaatis to Rabia. The Fakirs saw all this and could not understand anything. Rabia said- “Quran says that when you feed a hungry animal, Allah gives ten times of that. That is why I sent the maid back the first time.”

Why can't we have such a firm faith ? Why do we need the crutch of science to walk on the path shown by our scriptures? Do we truly believe in the statements of ShreeAachaaryajee ? ShreeAachaaryajee appreciates even the uneasiness and malaise of a devotee. Is it not a sign of disrespect to Him to propagate Him as a physiotherapist or an aayurvedic doctor? The true devotees who feel that life is wasted if it is devoid of Sevaa ; will they ever consider this Sevaa to be a therapy for diseases ? Such export

quality persons are not in their senses. Dharma is not handicapped, in reality, their allegiance to the sect is completely paralysed.

Why should the legacy of their half-hearted faith be passed on to the younger generation? Has this younger generation tied a chain/belt/sacred thread of science to their neck? Is that the reason for serving them such nuisance material just to convert them back? Just show me a single young man who instead of wheat only eats the unprocessed skin of raw wheat which is rich in vitamins! Have you ever seen a matrimonial advertisement in the newspaper that an NRI boy wants a girl who takes 400 calorie diet and her blood group is B positive? No youngster is mad after science.

There is no better evidence than faith in any spiritual sectarian practice. A follower of Dharma does not require any scientific proof for preachings.

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The back up of science is required for scandals :

*“Medicinal-science does not enjoy the support of science. The collaboration and similarity of science and medical-science is just a show-off. The medical world has some vested interests in taking the shelter of science. Science also puts its stamp of approval on it and covers it with a mask of charity. Medical-science cannot do anything for common diseases related to ageing. Medical students, researchers and doctors, when faced with this fact, take refuge in science and thereby avoid facing this reality.*

*The profession of doctors has become similar to the police due to blindly running after medicines and the equipments. The moment a symptom of any disease is noticed, the doctors handle it like a miscreant & suppress it forcefully. ... A healthy & fit person, who is enjoying his life, suddenly loses his enthusiasm, to become a worried & tired patient. Why so? Because the doctor has just measured his blood pressure and declared that he has high Blood Pressure ! In fact, medical-science is not sure about the exact ideal and dangerous level of blood pressure till date ! ... There is not a single aspect of medical-science where such practices of police-politics have not been adapted. Due to this, people have to suffer physically, mentally, socially and economically. ...*

*There is another reason for the above scenario. The doctors frequently organise big conferences, get-togethers, workshops, etc. The purpose of all these is very clear- It is to prove in front of the general public, other doctors and their own conscience that medical-science is progressing day by day. In such meetings, there is no discussion about how many mistakes/errors medical-science has made. Or not a single significant research has been done in the past year. Celebrities are called for the inauguration of such events. ... Even in that, if one or two doctors come from abroad, the media makes headlines for them. ... There is no one to break the illusion that after spending money, a disease shall disappear.”*

*( Translated from 'Tabeebeekshetre Himsa' ).*

If somebody is doing this kind of drama & fraud to earn his bread, it could be understood. But in spiritual practice, what is the need for such drama? If the younger generation has the inclination, they themselves will come forward. “The behavioural code of conduct of the sect is quite like a fence around the flowering plant” - what is illogical and difficult to understand in the above statement ? Does this young generation not wear a uniform at school or follow the office dress-code ? Then, why will they not apply a Tilak or wear a Maalaa?

Did ShreeGokulnaathjee put his life at stake and save the Maalaa-Tilak just because it keeps the mosquitoes away and works as an acupressure treatment ? Is this the only glory of these spiritual signs? In reality, nowadays the metallic templates or wooden casts are used for applying Tilak, but in those days; they were not in use. Instead the line of Kum-Kum was drawn with the help of a stick. That is why ShreeGokulnaathjee once forgot to join the two straight lines. Where is the question of acupressure in it? There was no pressure applied then. Normally, many so called scientific evidences are such half-baked.

There is a basic difference between science and spiritual practice. Science is a continuously progressing field, it is changeable. There is no final truth in that. Newton was right till the theory of relativity of Einstein was not proved. DDT was beneficial till we knew about its dangerous after-effects. The spiritual practice, however, is more or less well-settled. What is beneficial and what is

not is firmly decided by the statements of the scriptures-Aachaaryas and the experiences of the former seekers. "Shree Krishna is Parabrahm (ultimate reality) untill we get another counter-evidence"- Such things do not work in spiritual practice. Today, my mind says - "He is my husband" and tomorrow it says - "No! I don't like him, I consider another person as my husband." ! The social norms of marriage cannot stand on such a wavering mindset. It is necessary for the follower of a religion to have faith, whether or not confirmed by his intellect.

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Fortunately, now they are less, but if you look back and see, the writers and speakers of the sixties and seventies used to even see communism or socialism or Gandhism in the teachings of ShreeAachaaryajee ! And that thought process influenced them so much that they used to think that Karl Marx was not the father of communism ! Fortunately, no one has been able to trace out a Free Market Economy in ShreeAachaaryajee's sermons as yet. However, this is the prevailing practice in the temples in the name of Pushti-Maarg - where ShreeThaakurjee is of high voltage and Prasaad is available at low cost, there are definitely more customers - and there are many people who are ready to prove that just like applying a Tilak with the help of a template/cast, this too is a 500-year-old tradition ! An enthusiastic, ambitious editor of a magazine is the only requirement ; it does not matter if his allegiance to Pushti-sect is superficial ! Anyway!

If Aachaar-Aparas are taken in the right perspective and its glory is understood and followed with respect, then our sensitivity will turn even a thorny fence into a flowery vine. Having properly understood the concept behind it and its spirit, we will not feel its burden :

*"Tulsee is very dear to Bhagwaan, so we should not pluck it for any reason other than for offering it to Bhagwaan. . . Its name is Vrindaa who was the wife of Jalandhar. She is married to Bhagwaan on every Prabodhini Ekadashi. So we should dedicate it every day and on the days of Utsavas in front of the lotus feet of ShreeThaakurjee. We should have the knowledge of the glory of Tulsee. She is a Pushti-devotee... Vaishnavas are eligible to wear the Tulsee Maalaa. The chanting also is done with Tulsee Maalaa in*

*hand. That is because Tulsee is quite dear to ShreeThaakurjee. We should eat Tulsee Patra only after smelling it ; not before that. We should have a Tulsee Kyara (plant inside a brick-structure) somewhere in our homes, light a Diya (earthen lamp) near the Tulsee Kyara, decorate it, worship it, do circumambulation of Tulsee every day, nourish it with water... And the glory of Tulsee is known to all the four Vaishnava Sects. So, it is a must to have Tulsee saplings in our homes. Since if Tulsee is there, then ShreeThaakurjee would definitely be there. That is why ShreeAachaaryaMahaaprabhu initiated Jeevas through Tulseejee. ShreeThaakurjee's lotus feet are very dear to Him which is why Tulsee is dedicated to the lotus feet. While dedicating Tulseejee to the lotus feet, we should chant the GadhyaMantra (given at the time of initiation). Tulsee- Dala containing three leaves should be placed in front of His lotus feet and one leaf should be put in each Saamagri (food item). And it should be put while chanting Panchaakshar Mantra."*

*( 120 vachanaamrit of ShreeGiridharjee Mahaaraaj ).*

A shopkeeper never says "I am closing the shop". Rather he says "I am moving the shop further" (Dukaan Badhaa Rahaa hoon). He does not have to put extra effort into saying this. If there is sensitivity and respect for the shop, such words can come naturally to him. While if sensitivity & respect are missing, modern women do not feel any pain even if it takes half an hour for make-up, but applying vermilion (Bindi) on the forehead or wearing the MangalSutra gives them a lot of pain/discomfort ! Upto what extent can a person go in order to follow Aachaar guidelines is a personal matter and there is no scope for bullying. But if Prabhu has given us brain and capability, then we should protect the flowery plant by putting a fence without becoming negligent.

Aachaar covers all the three : our mind, speech and action ; not action alone. It is necessary to emphasize on all the three. Entirety will come only when all the three are bound by a single string. While offering Him food, if we also verbally request Him to have it and the mind also does the same with similar enthusiasm, only then the flower of our Bhakti will bloom. In such Bhakti, neither speech nor mind nor the body will create any hinderance, everything will fall in line. For a newly married housewife, there is no other thing available to please the husband in the in-law's house ! What else can Bhaktyaachaaropadeshtaa (= preacher of Aachaar of Bhakti) ShreeAachaaryajee say other than giving this advice at the time of giving a farewell to Jeeva !

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## **8. VrajYaatraa – BaithakYaatraa ( Pilgrimage)**

Russian doctors say that if you want to remain healthy, eat a little less than your appetite. The unsatisfied little hunger will produce digestive juices in your stomach. There is no other suffering in remaining a little hungry. But over-eating can cause many diseases.

Whether it is about food or love, every human being has a limit or capacity. It varies not only from person to person but also keeps changing according to the season, the circumstances and the age of the one and the same person. A sense of proportion is a must in love as it is in eating.

But nowadays setting records is trending ! Everywhere, there is a hype of the Guinness Book of world records. One person out of every thousand is very desirous to see his name in that book. If someone dares to go for it, it is fine, but people start doing unnatural & crazy things for it. Somebody grows his moustache up to 18 feet while the other eats 72 idlis in 5 minutes, someone runs 500 miles in reverse direction while the another one eats 22 tube lights, and somebody spends three days among poisonous snakes ! A couple in Australia kissed each other's lips non-stop for 36 hours ! If Kaalidaas listens to this, his heart will stop beating ! If we ask the best of the happily loving married couples, their total time of kissing each other even in an entire year might not be 36 hours !

This ghost of record-setting is haunting the religious leaders also. The jugglery of numbers is increasing day by day in religious events too. Saptah, Athhaae, Navaahn Paaraayan,  $8+3+9+9+9+9+9 = 56$  Bhog, 108/Sahasra/ 1008 Paath/ Loti/Kundi Yagya, 1.25 lakh Japa, Akhand Naam Keertan ; numbers echo all around. Every sect has joined this blind race. One sect in Gujarat even gives an account at the end of their event, like: so many people visited this event, so many took an oath to follow a religious life, so many took an oath of quitting smoking of cigarettes, so many took an oath to quit liquor ... They earn wide publicity in the newspapers and thereby become famous in the world.

On one side, there is an increase in the facilities and on the other side there is media. People neither have to try hard to do unnatural things nor to propagate its news. In such a scenario, for how long can the rein of wisdom survive ? The prevalent thing in the

world today is - 'Throw money and get publicity'. Where is the dearth of Manorathis? The delay is only in somehow getting an organizer.

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The problem is not in getting the ingredients to prepare, or spreading the aroma of the seasoning in meals, but in eating it ; in digesting it after consumption and in bearing its after effects.

The situation is quite similar during pilgrimages (VrajYaatraas, baithakyaatraas) as well. Respect and sensitivity in the heart lasts for only two to three Baithakjis or night haults ; sooner or later it evaporates. After this, some people start feeling homesick, while some miss the facilities at home and start finding flaws in the facilities and arrangements of the tour. Some people find that the first baithakji was better managed than the third one and some feel that a particular day's journey was longer than the previous day's journey. Some miss Satsang-Pravachan while some miss the Raasamandali. Some have a desire to write a letter to their homes, while others are in a hurry to return home. Someone starts getting frequent headaches and the other starts banging his forehead. Some start making new social contacts and some start quarreling. Nowadays, in VrajYaatraas you can see a bank, a post-office, diesel generators, cars, radios, folding cots and different types of Chaat carts ... Like a row of zeroes without being preceded by any digit. Every facility is provided for the convenience of the so called pilgrims. The only formality left is that the government declares these trips as a tour instead of a pilgrimage in order to collect tax !

Visitors keep these bitter memories in their minds life-long even after they return home. The desire to go on such tours again, ends there - "There was no proper arrangement and oh my Lord ! Such people ! Such hot weather ! ..."

It is okay if only the tourists feel troubled, but the people living there also suffer. There is filth, scarcity and inflation everywhere. The competition of filling a Jhari and offering sugar (Misri) in a baithakji is so intense that the day is not far when ShreeAachaaryajee's name will be registered in the Guinness Book of World Records ! Can one have that much water and sugar in a day? That too within a second, or else it is taken away to fill it again by the next visitor !

With all the above, the short-term effect is that we and ShreeAachaaryajee become unwell. The long-term effect is that Vraj – the residents of Vraj – the lord of Vraj & Pushti-sect – its followers - ShreeAachaaryajee earn a bad name. The organizers remain busy managing the tour throughout and once the tour gets over, they also get so fed up that they want to forget the ‘O’ of organising. Who benefits from all these?

*“Once the emotions evaporate away, only action is just a drama, nothing else. In drama, all the nine Rasaas are there but still, it is only a drama. All the actions may be there but without emotions, they turn out to be a drama.”*

*(Vachanaamrit of ShreeRanchhodlaljee Mahaaraaj of Ahmedaabaad ).*

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*“The Vaishnavas from Surat, Gujarat and from the south used to go to Gokul to have Darshan of ShreeGusaainjee. On the way, they used to stay at KrishnaBhatt’s home in Ujjain. ... And when they used to depart from his home, KrishnaBhatt used to advise them : ‘ as you all are going to Gokul, ensure that you earn something by going there. Please do not do any such thing whereby you lose whatever you have earned by now.’*

*BhaavPrakaash - He meant that if you get Darshan of Vraj-Prabhu-ShreeGusaainjee, retain it in your heart. And do not retain the flaws of people living there in your heart. This is the meaning of earning and losing.”*

*( The Story of KrishnaBhatt in 252 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

The records are worthless in any spiritual practice. If a walk of just a mile in Vraj or a visit to even one Baithak preserves & promotes our divine sentiments, it is worth doing. But if the sentiments get evaporated away, a journey of entire Vraj spanning 84 Kosa or 84 Baithaks will not be able to elevate you above and beyond these 84 lakh births. The important thing here is that we should improve ourselves a little bit naturally forever, rather than artificially and significantly but only for a limited period like 24 hours or 7/9/40 days. Health gets better not by eating more but by improving the digesting capacity.

*“Naaraayandaas started working as a Chief Secretary of the State. The workload used to be substantial and he was not able to get any leave. However he had a burning desire to go to Gokul and have a Darshan of ShreeAachaaryajee. So Naaraayandaas hired a servant. ... That servant always used to be with Naaraayandaas and frequently used to ask Naaraayandaas - ‘Bhaiyajji, when will you go to Gokul for ShreeAachaaryajee’s Darshan?’ To this, Naaraayandaas used to reply to him- ‘Yes I will go soon.’ The eyes used to get wet and he used to get engrossed in Leelaa-Bhaav for a while. Again when he would continue to work, the servant used to remind, again he used to get engrossed in Leelaa-Bhaav. ... Thus, throughout his life, he used to remember ShreeGokul and ShreeAachaaryajee & his mind remained emotionally involved.”*

*(The Story of Naaraayandaas Kaayastha in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

A Gujarati poet Sundaram says - “I will love all the beautiful things in the world. And whatever is not beautiful, I will make it beautiful by loving & loving it. ” Vraj and Baithaks are beautiful and pleasant. There is no doubt that all the needful facilities are not there, but this minor ugliness or discomfort should be made beautiful by our love for that place ; not by providing or getting facilities there. If we reject a girl on the ground that she is unable to give us the desired facilities, we will not get another girl who is so nice. And if we impose facilities on her, then under the veil of facility, her natural beauty will disappear, just like Champaaranya. We have no choice but to love instead. (Many planners every now & then appeal to contribute a lot for investing in the grand redevelopment work of Baithaks in entirety rather than repairing, thereby destroying their beauty. May ShreeGusaainjee save us from such planners).

It hardly matters whether you are near or far away, if you have a true love or desire. If there are only facilities, you will not relish it even if you are close to it. Can a garden-like place, attached with a facility where a thousand people can bathe together, retain its calmness that can give you peace and divine experience? So, please prevent an accident and keep a safe distance. Always keep a sense of proportion in mind. If you don’t enjoy doing Sevaa in Sevaasthali i.e. your home and also don’t enjoy loitering in Vraj,

which is the Leelaasthali of ShreeThaakurjee, please be assured you won't belong to any place. You will only wander here and there.

Our ancestors were so starved for pilgrimages that even after the completion of one pilgrimage, they were not satisfied. Some of them used to take it up every year. Their lifestyle was so simple, austere and full of hardships that they never differentiated between home and their journey. They were habitual of walking. If we, the descendants, copy them, we will surely fall ill if not die. We should follow our elders in intent but should not imitate them in content.

Food is neither good nor bad ; it is our digesting capacity which is good or bad. Normally ghee is good for everybody. But a person, who has a high cholesterol because of facilities, should not take it. The fault does not lie with Ghee or Vraj or Baiithak.

It is in the hands of an individual whether he wants the kiss to be made a respectable momentary expression of love or a tiresome drama. The case of pilgrimage is similar to this. *“If liquid mercury is in the hands of a Yogi, it will be safe and will give benefits like a wish-tree. But if it is in the hands of a casual person, it will drip down from the hands and will not give any benefit.”*

( ShikshaaPatra ).

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## **9. Public Manorathas**

In an advertisement of butter, it is claimed : Apply it on anything – be it Chapaati, Bhaakhri, Poori, Idli, Dosa or Samosa - it will make it tasty. In the advertisement for biscuits, it is shown that everybody from children to elders like them. In the advertisement for soap, ladies from all the states are shown using it. In the advertisement for coffee, it is shown that it is popular around the world.

As another prong, the manufacturers of toothpaste condemn toothpowder, whereas the soap manufacturers condemn Indigo (the blue dye), Ayurvedic product makers condemn artificial beauty products while the manufacturers of mineral water condemn normal water.

As the third prong, every manufacturer develops an entire range of products. Every soap manufacturing company is making cheap to expensive, small to big, bathing to washing soaps of many brands. In the market, toothbrushes, refrigerators, cars, etc. are available in many sizes. Sunmica and paints are available in different colours and textures.

Annulment of variety among the consumers, creation of differentiation in outcome and the inevitable tendency to reject both in one way or the other ; the other name for this confusion is **MARKETING STRATEGY**. Attract everyone to the product and present it in a way that creates a market for the product, in order to attain prosperity. Then maintain this established market by not allowing the consumers to use other products, by showing them flaws in the other products. However, after using your product for a long time, if the consumer is getting bored, then keep introducing novelty, like an old wine in a new bottle !

Manorathas in public is a similar delusion. Everyone is lured by the advertisements placed in the newspapers and pamphlets. Announcement is made that it would give a rare divine benefit and it is one of its kind, organized never before. Later on, fearing boredom after frequently organizing it, a variety and novelty is introduced by announcing new Manorathas !

Nowadays, there is a wide product range of Manorathas in the name of Pushti-sect : those related to BhagawatSevaa

(e.g. Hindolaa-Palanaa-Phoolmandali-Daan-Horikhel-ChhappanBhog etc.), related to BhagawatKathaa (e.g. Nandotsava-RukminiVivaah-TulseeVivaah etc.), related to Vraj-BaithakYaatraa (e.g. Kunawaaraa,Tapelee etc.), related to ShreeYamunaajee (e.g. Lotee, Chunaree Utsav, YamunaaYaag etc.), related to ShreeAachaaryajee (e.g. SarvottamYagya, Folding Thermocol 84 Baithak exhibition, Charitra Saptaaah including Vivaah Manorath etc.), & miscellaneous (e.g. DhaadhiLeelaa, Raas, Dhwaajaajee, SomaYagya, PurushottamYagya etc.) ... This is not an ordinary delusion !

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Though the reality gets faded in this glare, it always exists nevertheless.

This world is a creation full of variety, so it is impossible to deny the variety among the individuals. The kind of a girl a boy wants to marry depends entirely on the specific inclination of that boy, even if he has grown up in a household-society-state-religion-language-culture similar to the other boys. Everyone has a unique choice. Someone's dream house is small while others like a big house, someone wants a simple one while others want a grand one, some dream of a peaceful one and others an energetic happening one, some wish one with a joint family and others with a nuclear family, some on river banks, others on the beach, some on the hill top, others near the railway/metro station.

However, there is no difference in the outcome. It is not necessary that a married life will be happy only if both the boy and the girl are good-looking, virtuous & well-educated. There are plenty of examples where the married life of a disabled couple, who accept each other to team up with mutual assistance, sympathy and understanding, is more long-lasting and pleasant by virtue of a strong foundation. There is joy in swimming as well as in paddling boat/motorboat rides. There is also pleasure in horse riding, cycling and in glider flying. Some people like Masaalaa tea and others like a hot strong coffee. Some have the habit of sleeping & getting up early and others have the habit of sleeping late & getting up late.

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Spiritual practices in India, especially in the path of Devotion, do not attempt to bulldoze or blame this diversity, but accept it with

respect. There is neither a need to keep a range of products nor to mix Karma-Gyana-Bhakti. What is needed is to have flexibility in the rules of the sect such that a person can move in the direction of his interest and still make progress.

In case of the range of products, there is a tendency of specialization in the long run ; some doctor becomes a specialist of the right ear while the other of the left ear so to say ! One person only sings Keertans while the other becomes only a Manorathi, making financial contributions.

If one eats Khichdi in all his meals day and night, his liking also becomes that of a mixed nature, just like the Hindi film music lovers ; he does not like unique Indian classical, Western or folk music any more. When it is not possible to give justice to even one spiritual path in one life span, how is it possible to give it to all the three at once ? If we get exhausted in monogamy, why try polygamy !

An appropriate practice is the one in which there are many diverse elements corresponding to the different interests of the followers, and a follower, who enthusiastically practises one/two/five of those many elements, can simultaneously get the unique joy of those one-two-five elements as well as of the whole practice which contains those many elements. In this process, he neither has to forgo his likings nor his spiritual practice. Neither one has to flip sects to satisfy his tastes nor to kill his tastes for the sake of practice. Development can take place without damaging the environment. The likings themselves cultivate respect and sensitivity towards the practice and Prabhu. Neither does one get habituated of seeking the satisfaction of his likings from worldly things, nor is he used to continue the spiritual practice in a disheartened state of mind.

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At this juncture, art and spiritual practice part their ways. Art develops, enriches and refines our likings in its own sphere. Spiritual practice, on the other hand, engages our likings to move forward on its path.

Nowadays, the claimant organizers and advocates of Public Manorathas are conspiring to erase this fine dividing line and along with it, to trample the joy of engaging in devotion.

Mrs. Keertidaa Gohil writes in 'Pravasi Janmbhoomi' newspaper dated 22-1-93 - *"There is a lot of development happening in all the types of art, but earlier, people used to participate in them personally whereas now, they are becoming mere observers on a large scale. Art means the method of expressing-displaying your unique talents & skills through various mediums. And through this expression-display-performance, we get self-satisfaction and our sensitivity increases. At social level, people meet each other, exchange ideas, life moves forward and there is joy in living life. Just as housewives have broken their boundaries and left their homes, art too has left our homes and spread everywhere. But because of that, the tradition of getting the satisfaction and happiness in doing something has now completely disappeared. As a result, people have become quite dry and insensitive. Everything is readily available. The importance of festivals has diminished and so has the expression of individual art. Despite achieving great heights, art is shrinking in the lives of people."*

*( Translation ).*

It is sheer injustice that people accuse or praise ShreeGusaainjee for initiating & promoting Public Manorathas and art in general, without understanding & explaining to others His expertise or intent in arranging the NityaKram (Daily routine) and the UtsavKram (Festival routine) in Sevaa (such as Keertan, Vastra, Shringaar, Food offerings, Perfume etc.). ShreeGusaainjee did not promote the art and the likings of individuals, rather He promoted their participation in the service of the Lord (Bhagawat-Sevaa). Otherwise would He give pabbles to Taansen for singing ? What could have been the artistic difference between the singing of Taansen and GovindSwamee ? The difference was from the point of view of spiritual practice. ShreeGusaainjee's vision was quite like that of a true Rajhans (flamingo), which can make out the distinction between water and milk. It is a coincidence that the legacy of art is still surviving in Pushti-sect, which is a delightful outcome due to a crop of disciples who are gifted/talented artists. However, the heritage of sevaa as a tradition thrives and it will ; this is a destiny set by ShreeGusaainjee. There is no doubt that He Himself is an excellent connoisseur of art and an excellent artist Himself, but more than that He is the co-founder and guardian of the Pushti sect. Krishnadaas Adhikaree invited a prostitute's daughter to

Shreenathjee's temple to sing and dance there, not to promote the dancing and singing of the prostitutes, but to dedicate her dancing and singing as an art form for the service of Prabhu and thereby facilitating liberation of an artist Jeeva by attainment of Prabhu.

Let every Pushti-Margiya ask himself. His experience will confirm that Public Manorathas lead to the destiny of becoming merely an observer. Art, likings and Sevaa, all three gradually evaporate from our life. All that is left is only drama and an ugly display of Nav-Rasa. As the sentiments evaporate, the respect and sensitivity vanish. We are not left with time to do introspection to understand our interests. We also do not understand the tradition of Keertan-Saamagri-Shringaar. What to speak of evaluating & praising the expertise of our Aachaaryas !

Today how many Pushti-Margi Vaishnavas who are going to the temple for only darshan know thoroughly about Keertan-Saamagri-Shringaar ? Can they even name them ? How many, out of them, know it through only darshan and how many have learnt this by doing it themselves ? How many, out of them, are doing this as a profession and how many are doing it as charity? Out of those also, how many are doing all this out of interest, how many with some calculations & considerations and how many are doing it unwillingly under compulsion ? And how many, out of them, are doing it lifelong on a daily basis? Only they, who do it everyday with interest have passed the test of our sect. What kind of education are these so called school-like temples giving? And how are they contributing to the uplift of the devotees?

Manorathas are only a part of Sevaa. Just like Sevaa, Manorathas too have to be done privately on our own. They should not be promoted by sacrificing our Sevaa or at the cost of our interest. Junk food or snacks are only to bring variety to the meals, one can't survive only on them. If we take it as a whole meal, we will surely fall sick. The flood of Manorathas destroys art, interests, faith, allegiance, aashraya, respect and sensitivity - everything ; just like how the TV does. It breaks them into tiny pieces and finishes them forever. May ShreeGusaainjee save us from these alchemists of marketing.

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## 10. GURU

Indeed if the prominent wise gentlemen become egoistic, start doing worship only for their own benefit and behave sinfully, then Prabhu Krishna is the only refuge for ordinary people who are ignorant of the principles.

The most harmful thing for any respectful culture is petty and precarious leadership. If the leader is strong and capable, the culture can still survive all the adversities of time, region, prevailing circumstances. This sect bore the attack of Badshah Jehangir but still survived under the able leadership of valorous Aachaarya ShreeGokulnaathjee. However, even if all the circumstances are favourable, the foundation gets shaken under inept leadership. If the Prime Minister of the country completely swallows the decision of the High Court (which follows the constitution), and then instead of leading a fight against corruption, accepts it without hesitation by saying "It is all-pervading", then the general public will also go with the flow by saying "यद्यदाचरति श्रेष्ठः". And if the flow is large, then the scholars who know the principles also will be drowned away. No one knows when it will become international, but surely corruption will immediately engulf the whole country.

In a way, the leadership does not look petty on paper. There are so many 'Prabhus in person' roaming around here and there ; not only in our sect but in all the sects all over the world. One friend of mine used to say that perhaps Prabhu might have changed his idea of taking the Kalki incarnation, considering their abundance ! But the pettiness is there to such an extent that it is clearly visible to the naked eye.

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Meeraabaai went to meet ShreeJeeva Goswami in Vrindaavan. He sent a message through somebody that he would not meet her, as he did not see the face of any woman. Meeraabaai said, "I thought there is only one male in Vrindaavan and that is ShreeKrishna ; Where did this second one appear from?"

As a matter of fact, this is a million dollar question which every Guru and disciple of the path of devotion should ask and contemplate about : Where did this second one appear from ? In our sect, there can only be one deity worthy of worship and that is

Prabhu. A Guru could be a friend, a philosopher and a guide but he can never be the deity of worship, can never be a goal. The first and foremost requirement of Bhakti-Maarg is a duo of a deity and a worshipper. Yes, it is true that if there is no Guru, a person might face difficulty at every step. But only because of this limitation, the presence of a Guru is not a compulsory requirement. That is why, ShreeAachaaryajee says in Nibandh- If you are not getting a qualified Guru, you need not delay doing sevaa ; start KrishnaSevaa yourself. Other matters can be taken care of in future.

A Guru is not necessary for us to worship, but to guide us. It has been said in Chhaandogya Upanishad that even the gods can only preach Atma-Vidhya and Deva-Vidhya. They cannot preach the course of action that a particular seeker should follow to achieve a goal. Karna had all the knowledge needed to become a qualified warrior but he had no instinct of what to do if the chariot wheel got stuck in the mud in Kurukshetra. In such times, you will need a Guru. Only a Guru can tell you what to do when, especially in such a situation. That is why, ShreeGopeenaathjee says that it is the responsibility of a Guru to be the steersman through his teachings and help his disciple, the seeker, who intends to cross this material ocean by using his body as a boat. ShreeAachaaryajee also says in Navaratna that Sevaa should be done according to the instructions of the Guru.

The ineptness or pettiness of a leader or a Guru is in this matter of guidance for the course of action.

*“Even after two hundred years, the words of a French philosopher Voltaire prove to be true: ‘The doctors do not have much knowledge of the medicines they are prescribing. They have further lesser knowledge about the disease they intend to treat with those medicines. More than that, they do not know anything about the person they are treating.’ The lack of knowledge of the medicines makes the doctors perpetrators of violence. That is the reason why we can see the adverse effects of the medicines nowadays. It is not surprising that an exclusive list of the diseases that are caused by medicines, known as iatrogenics, is trending.” ( Translation of a passage from ‘Tabeebeekshetre Himsa’ ).*

Regarding the state of affairs in Pushti-Sect today, I can also state that many Gurus do not have much knowledge of the doctrines of the sect and tend to misinterpret them too. Furthermore, they have even lesser knowledge of the common problems faced in Sevaa being performed by a devotee, to counter which they need to preach. To make matters worse, they have absolutely no idea about the mindset of the disciple whom they are preaching to. Lack of knowledge of the principles of the sect makes those Gurus the organizers of Manorathas, out of ignorance. The ill-effects of such so called treatment (discontinuation of Sevaa in devotees' homes, lack of allegiance in the sect, etc.) are clearly visible. A new list of the dramas that arose from such programmes, which we call Rasaabhaasa (disruption) in Rasa-Shaastra (scripture of aesthetics) and public exhibition in law (as listed above, associated with Sevaa – Kathaa - Vraj/BaithakYaatraa – ShreeYamunaajee - ShreeAachaaryajee), is trending. And it is not surprising but shocking and quite unfortunate.

That is why ShreeAachaaryajee also warns the followers of this sect in Nibandh that one should first check whether a male descendant of Him, who is aspiring to be a Guru, regularly does Krishna-Sevaa, that also without hypocrisy or other ulterior motives, & has the knowledge of the essence of ShreeBhaagwatPuraana. Once you are convinced that the above qualities are there in the person, only then make him your Guru.

If the Guru is proficient in ShreeBhaagwatPuraana, then he would be a PHILOSOPHER who knows the principles ; being well-acquainted of the medicine. If he himself is completely engaged in KrishnaSevaa, he would face-understand-resolve the difficulties arising in his routine of Sevaa and therefore as a GUIDE he would be capable of suggesting the right path to his disciples ; being well-acquainted of the disease. If he himself does Sevaa whole-heartedly without any conceit or any other such considerations, then he would also carry the sentiments of a servant and hence, would be able to understand the feelings of the other servants of ShreeThaakurjee. Quite like a FRIEND ; well-acquainted of the patient.

*“Then someone told KumbhanDaas ‘your son KrishnaDaas has been killed by a tiger’ ! On hearing that, KumbhanDaasji fainted. ... ShreeGusaainjee saw that many people were standing near KumbhanDaasjee. At that time, they said to Him : ‘Mahaaraaj ! Kumbhandaasjee is a great devotee but the loss of a son is too painful ; nobody can bear the pain of such a loss.’ On hearing this, ShreeGusaainjee said : ‘He is not suffering from the pain of loss of his son. His pain is different. You do not understand his grief. He is suffering from the pain of separation ; of not being able to have ShreeNaathjee’s Darshan during this period of mourning of 12 nights. That is why he has fainted.’ ... Then ShreeGusaainjee loudly said : ‘KumbhanDaas ! Come in the morning for ShreeNaathjee’s Darshan. You will get the Darshan of ShreeNaathjee.’ On hearing ShreeGusaainjee’s words, KumbhanDaasjee got up immediately and humbly bowed down in front of ShreeGusaainjee and said : ‘Mahaaraaj ! Who would understand the feelings of my heart other than you?’ To this, ShreeGusaainjee replied : ‘I know that the mundane miseries of the material world can never touch you.’ ”*

*( The Story of KumbhanDaas Kshatree in 84 Vaishnav Vaartaa ).*

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*“Erik Erikson has made a golden rule for doctors : ‘Give a patient that treatment which you would not mind giving to your own body. If you are not willing to cure yourself with that treatment, do not give it to your patient.’ ... Dr. Alvarez saw that in his hospital, many doctors and surgeons were also suffering from the ulcer in the stomach. But in his 25 years of engagement with the clinic, he remembered only 1 doctor who had undergone a surgery. That doctor also agreed for this kind of surgery under emergency after trying all the other treatments, as there was no other option left.”*

*( Translated from ‘Tabeebeekshetre Himsa’ ).*

Why then, do the Gurus of Pushti-sect today, do surgery of the Grih-Seva of their disciples for frivolous reasons? Where does this insistence of the well-water go when a Guru himself is on a foreign/countryside tour? If a Shaiva or a Shaakta Brahmin can be employed in Haveli-Sevaa on salary, then why can a Vaishnava not do Sevaa of his Thaakurjee in his home, if one or two members of his family do not follow our sect? If a Guru can take meals in a

public function of his caste and sometimes also eat on the street, then why is this rule applied to Vaishnavas that they can do Sevaa only if they take a pledge never to take unoffered food? The circumstances under which a Guru is compelled to do such a thing can be faced by a Vaishnava too ; this possibility cannot be denied. Similarly the insistence on offering Sakhdi is also a perversion, because ShreeThaakurjee accepts everything including Sakhdi for the sake of our pledge of not taking unoffered food. He has not fixed any rate for His visit to our house, that whoever offers Him Sakhdi, He will go only to his home and will accept his Sevaa only.

I do not mean to say that a Guru should take all the liberty and also give it to his disciples. But first, a Guru should enjoy/suffer living his own life as per the traditions without taking any liberty and then he should preach it to his disciples. If one intends to preach to his disciples not to eat jaggery, then first he should leave it. "आप सेवा करी शीखवे श्रीहरि'."

Leave aside the matter of examining the characteristics of a Guru, even if you see the ambience around them, immediately ShikshaaShlokee comes to mind. Everyone has forgotten the lesson taught by the Mahaaraaj Libel case. There are no traces visible of Bhakti-Sevaa-Kathaa. What we see is indulgence, luxury, laziness and lack of study. They are not able to refrain from their addiction to the so-called close Vaishnavas and servants. What one can see is rampant arbitrariness, favouritism, isolation, misconduct and corruption instead of devotion.

Many people may not be able to bear these words, but I cannot bear this situation. I firmly believe that it is neither the right nor the duty of the disciples to see/find flaws in their Guru. But it is both the right & the duty of the disciples to see what is in the interest of their Gurus, especially in modern times. I too have written so with only this duty in my mind and not with any fault-finding mentality.

*"Once Vaishnavas of Dholka & Kuha while taking leave requested : 'Mahaaraaj, please do not look at our deeds'. On this ShreeGokulnaathjee replied : 'If you do such things then I shall have to look at it twenty times.' "*

*( HaasyaVachanaamrit Of ShreeGokulnaathjee ).*

All that is now left is the belief to consider a Guru above all ;  
"गुरुर्ब्रह्मा। गुरुर्विष्णु गुरुर्देवो महेश्वरः गुरुः साक्षात् परब्रह्म"। Parbhu  
Himself says in the eleventh canto of ShreemadBhaagwatPuraana  
that an Aachaarya should be considered as my incarnation. To see  
him as a mortal entity is a misbehaviour out of envy towards him. But  
the same thing is also said for a Vaishnava in our sect. The  
preaching is to consider Hari-Guru-Vaishnava as equal in our mind &  
heart.

But in dealing with these three, there is a hierarchy that needs  
to be to be followed. There is not just one level of respect. E.g.  
Prasaad is a divine purifier, yet one has to wash hands after touching  
it if he wants to start cooking. Prabhu has incarnated in this universe  
in various forms to play various games. That's why we have to give  
respect in various ways. Goswamee Aachaaryas who follow the old  
traditions do not allow people to touch their feet in front of  
ShreeThaakurjee-Yamunaajee-Giriraajjee-BhaagwatPuraana or  
Baithakjee. In such a situation, if someone gives them cash as a gift  
unknowingly, they do not keep it with themselves but send it as a  
donation for the use of cows. They ensure that their leftover food  
never ever be given to the Vrajwaasis. Similarly, Vaishnavas familiar  
with the etiquette of Pushti-sect do not say "Jai ShreeKrishna, how  
are you?" etc. to each other in front of a Guru or ShreeThaakurjee.  
We keep so much subtlety in our Aparas that even after touching the  
Paadukaajee, we wash our hands before doing any other Sevaa.  
And even if we accidentally touch someone who is not in Aparas  
while in front of ShreeThaakurjee, we remain in Aparas and don't  
need to bathe again.

If we start giving the deserving respect to others and behave  
as is appropriate for us, the condition of our sect can improve a bit.  
The rest is His will.

*"The Somayagyas, in its true sense, were done by  
ShreeAachaaryajee and that too in large numbers. So He was on a  
mission in the true sense. He still continues doing it in the form of his  
descendants. What does a host (Yajmaan) do in a Yagya? He kills  
an animal and sacrifices it in the fire of the Yagya. That animal finds  
a place in heaven while the host reaps the benefit of this good deed.*

*Now let us see what ShreeMahaaprabhujee does. He gives refuge to a human and places him in front of ShreeThaakurjee. In a Yagya, an animal is sacrificed so it dies. But in this Path of Grace, a human taking refuge need not die. The sacrificed animal gets heavenly bliss and that too for a limited time. Whereas here, a Jeeva gets transcendental joy of devotion and that too for an infinite period. The animal blesses only once it reaches heaven. Till such time, it abuses the host for killing it. But in Mahaaprabhujee's path, the joy and blessings are there right from the very beginning. That means that ShreeMahaaprabhujee is doing the true Somayagya”*

*(Vachanaamrit of ShreeRanchhodlaaljee Mahaaraaj of Ahmedaabaad ).*

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## **11. Brahm-Sambandh Deekshaa (Initiation)**

Nowadays, democracy has lost its real character and has become a system of vote bank politics or mobocracy. Just as a rich person shows off his money, a political leader shows off his vote bank time and again : they hold rallies, demonstrations (Dharnaas), block the roads/highways and announce bandhs. And just as a rich man works hard to protect his money, political leaders work even harder to protect their vote banks. For this, they are ready to go to any extent to compromise, which is completely irresponsible and serves only their own interest. The mob becomes indisciplined by this appeasement of the vote bank. Anti-social elements dominate the crowd and the voices of wisdom are silenced forcefully or helplessly. Thus, a directionless leadership ultimately invites the downfall of the leader as well as the followers.

*"Nowadays, the most regretful situation is that the writer / content-creator does not walk on his own path but follows the path which is liked by the audience. He has established himself in the business of creating only what people like. When the author himself has become the slave of the choice of the masses, how can he uplift the taste/choice of the society to a higher level? ... Today's writer is behaving like a chef of a hotel rather than an owner ! Daily, he cooks food according to people's taste and serves it to them. He lives under the illusion of his popularity when the people praise his recipe-like content. ... How can such a writer give direction to society? How can he inspire the new generation? ... How can language survive in such circumstances? What else would happen to language if not its downfall? To maintain relationship with language is one thing but entering into adultery with language is totally another thing."*

*( Translated from 'Pavannee Vyaaspeeth' ).*

What is noteworthy for a political leader and writer, is mandatory for a religious leader too.

*"One day, while walking on a road, ShreeMahaaprabhujee saw a dead python lying on the road, surrounded by plenty of ants eating it. Having seen it ... ShreeMahaaprabhujee said to his disciples that this python was a Mahanta (Guru) in his previous birth. To earn his living, he had made a lot of disciples but he was not capable of uplifting them. A person is liberated only if he does*

*Bhagwat-Sevaa or takes Bhagwat-Naam. But this guy had become a Mahant (Guru) only to fill his stomach. That is why, after his death, he became a python in this birth while the disciples became ants. They are biting him & are telling him : 'Oh, sinner ! If you did not have the capability to uplift us, why did you make us your disciples? Why did you waste our life? I am also feeling sorry seeing him in this situation. ... ShreeAachaaryajee revealed this case to convey that a Guru should make many disciples only after properly estimating his own capabilities.'"*

*( From Nijvaartaa-Gharuvaartaa ).*

ShreeGusaainjee therefore states - "विचार्येव सदा देयं कृष्णनाम विशेषतः। अविचारितदानेन स्वयं दाता विनश्यति॥" (A Guru should always think before initiating a person, especially regarding Krishna's name. If he gives Krishna's name or initiates without assessing the person, only he will be responsible for his own downfall then.)

That is why in our Bhaaratiya culture, the emphasis is given on donating only to deserving people. Manusmriti goes to the extent of saying that instead of imparting his knowledge to the undeserving ones, a Guru should make his knowledge extinct along with him. This is in the interest of the Guru as well as the knowledge.

Becoming a guru is not as easy as opening a passport office ; it is an occupation of great responsibility. A potter takes only ten minutes to prepare a pot, and a sculpture also takes about a month to make a statue, but it takes a lifetime to mould a disciple. However what is expected is not to produce ten children who are rogues, rather it is to produce one or two brilliant children who do not become a burden on society. It is sheer madness to have an ambition to gather a crowd of disciples.

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Nowadays, Brahma-Sambandh initiation has become a religious programme in itself or a part of a religious programme. An announcement is made a day in advance that whoever wants to take this Deekshaa (initiation) should keep a fast on that day and come the next day to take Deekshaa. Sometimes the Mantra is recited on the mike for the sake of a thousand people at a time, who need to

listen & chant it. A confused ruler, a chaotic state ! If the beginning of a tale itself is so disrespectful, how will its ending be a happy one ?

*“84 and 252 Vaishnavas used to make a request : ‘Mahaaraaj ! Please shower your grace & take us in your refuge’. Nowadays, nobody makes a request like that. That is why they were given refuge by showering grace but now nobody is showered with grace ! Nowadays, sentiments have become extinct and it has become a matter of formality. Brahm-Sambandh initiation is taken just because the elders insist on it. Nobody considers it as their pious duty.”*

*(Vachanaamrit Of ShreeRanchhodlaljee Mahaaraaj of Ahmedaabaad ).*

It is not right for a Guru to sacrifice newcomers, who are ignorant of the principles of this path, under the influence of a few stubborn prominent elderly Vaishnavas. The way a disciple should examine a Guru, the Guru too should definitely check a disciple.

And the test is also not that difficult and time-consuming ; just a bit of self-restraint is required. One has to verify whether the deekshaa-seeking person has the grace of Prabhu or not. A simple test of this is whether the person is interested in following our sect seriously after initiation or not. Does he have the necessary respect and sensitivity towards the character-attributes-Leelaa of PushtiPrabhu or not? This can be revealed by just asking 2-3 questions.

The universe is full of variety ; “तुलसी इस संसार में भांति-भांति के लोग।” Not everyone can become a Pushti-Margiya. The people who call Pushti-Maarg a religion of the whole world neither understand Pushti (grace) nor Maarg (path), neither do they understand the world nor Dharma. Kumbhandaasjee used to say that he had only one and a half sons. (Actually he had seven but as they were not devotees (Bhagvadiya), he never counted them as his sons). Any thing is good only for a particular person at a particular moment and in a particular proportion. If you save a drowning person, he will bless you. But if you take out a fish from the water, it will die. Real fun lies in obeying the laws of creation, not in breaking or twisting them.

That is the reason that ShreeGusaainjee had forbidden a Maryaadaa devotee Tulseedaasjee from taking Brahm-Sambandh initiation and told him that there were many like him in this path but there was only one like him in his own path. He asked Tulseedaasjee to remain where he was, in order to maintain the glory of both the paths.

If every Guru of Pushti-sect maintains such self-pride and self-control, it would indeed bring glory to the Pushti-sect. Then, there will not be any pressure from the prominent followers to give the Brahm-Sambandh initiation for petty reasons, like for the sake of serving water to other Vaishnavas or filling Jhari in a Baithakjee.

Oh, brothers ! Please do not make our house an inn !

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## **12. Epilogue**

*"Once Kalyan Bhatt humbly asked that some people say that a devotee achieves his goal only if he has love in his heart. But love cannot be attained even if we work hard ; it can only be achieved by Prabhu's grace. Then what is the purpose of this conversation (satsang) ? Through conversation alone, love cannot be attained. On hearing this, ShreeGokulesh said that Prabhu can be attained only through love... That is why, love should be definitely served. Now how to serve love? The answer is – by being in the company of devotees, because a devotee possesses love... At times, Prabhu gifts love to a Jeeva, but if he does not give due respect to that love or does not nourish that love by discussing it with the devotees, he will not be able to digest it. Prabhu is influenced by love. Therefore, we have to take utmost care of love."*

*( Haasya Vachanaamrit of ShreeGokulnaathjee ).*

*"One day KalyanBhatt humbly asked ShreeGokuleshPrabhu : 'Mahaaraaj ! We can do Prabhujee's Darshan in our hearts or through Kathaa or Sevaa. When a devotee is narrating Bhagvad-Vaartaa, one listener enjoys it in its entirety, the other experiences it a little and the third one does not experience anything. The fourth one enjoys it like a war story ! Kindly clarify this variation.' ShreeGokulesh replied : 'The hearts of people are not the same in all, they are of various types. Therefore their experiences vary*

according to their heart. One variety is like the sky or not having it ; no objects of the senses can touch it. The second is like a Vajra (weapon of god Indra, made out of bones) ; neither does any object touch it nor is it touched by any object. The third type is like steel ; nothing else can pierce it but fire certainly can. The fourth type is like stone ; it can be shaped by sculpting but fire cannot do anything to it. The fifth type behaves like gold. Though it is hard by default, if put on fire, it becomes soft & malleable from within and it can be shaped. But once heat is taken off, it again becomes hard and no softness is left in it. Similarly some people's heart becomes soft during Satsang (the good association) but again becomes hard and dry when deprived of Satsang. The sixth type is like sealing wax. With a little bit of contact with fire, it becomes soft, but it solidifies again. The seventh type is like candle-wax. It gets & remains soft with ease with a little heat. The eighth one is like ghee. It is soft by nature and even with our palm's heat, it becomes further soft. Similarly, possessing such a heart which is permanently softened by Bhagwad-Vaartaa is not possible without the grace of Prabhu. The ninth type is like home-made butter. It is immaculate, bright, nice, soft and sticky. It is not hard at all. It is not dry, is free of impurities and full of fragrance. Prabhu resides in such a heart. This is even better than ghee. The tenth and final category is a heart like nectar. It is famous for so many virtues that it is difficult to describe it completely. Nectar is famous for its virtue of immortalizing whoever comes in contact with it. A devotee with such a heart uplifts even the despicable to its own level. Prabhu also fulfills his wishes and remains subservient to him. People with such a heart are the prominent devotees."

( HaasyaVachanaamrit of ShreeGokulnaathjee ).

"There are people in this world who have never experienced love, allegiance, adventure or concentration. There should be a clear picture of a fully healthy condition in front of a person. If such a picture is there in front of him, he would be able to compare his condition with it. We can understand sickness only if we know what is a good health."

( Translated from 'Premnee Kalaa' ).

*“अस्माभिरेवं लिखितं निरपेक्षैः स्वभावतः।*

*स्नेहेन सर्वथा चित्ते धीयतां यदि रोचते ॥*

*I have written this without any expectations, just following my instinct. If you like it , let it be inscribed in your heart with love."*

*( ShikshaaPatra ).*

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Whenever an Adhikmaas (an additional month in almost every 3rd year in our Hindu Calendar) comes, I remember Goswami ShreeGovindrayjee

Mahaaraaj of Surat. He used to instruct his disciples who were offering only Ansakhdee or Dudhgar to ShreeThaakurjee : "Why don't you take a pledge to offer Sakhdee during this month? If there is no hindrance and you are able to continue doing so with pleasure for a full month, do continue forever as well. If there is some hindrance, discontinue it after this month & continue your current routine. If you feel that it would be an offence to do so, then don't worry ; I will bear the punishment of your offence." By following his instructions, many of his disciples started and continued offering Sakhdee to ShreeThaakurjee.

Readers ! All of you also attempt to live like true followers of the Pushti-sect for a month. Make an attempt to be free from the web of readymade Dharma. If you are successful in this experiment, the benefit is all yours. And even if you are not successful, no harm will be done to you ; you will be there where you were. The wholesalers & retailers of readymade Dharma have an eye on you, they are not dead. There are many good sects in this world other than Pushti-sect as well. But one must give it a try at least once. In the life, it is better to set a higher target and miss it than setting a lower target and achieving it. JayShreeKrishna.

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Thereafter, Roop-Sanatan asked Shree Aachaaryajee : "Who are these Vaishnavas with you?" ShreeAachaaryajee replied : "They all are my disciples." Then Roop-Sanatan asked : "Mahaaraaj, your path is Pushti, then why are your disciples so thin & weak?" On hearing this, ShreeAachaaryajee replied : "I had forbidden them from entering this path, but they did not listen to my warning. Now they are bearing the outcome of that." Thus, ShreeAachaaryajee told implicitly . . .

BhaavPrakaash- . . . ShreeAachaaryajee said "In spite of being warned not to enter this path, they did not listen to me. Therefore they are bearing the outcome of that". Quite similar to when ShreeThaakurjee had said to the Gopis of Vraj to go back to their homes in the Raasa-Panchaadhyaayi, the Gopis did not listen to Him and therefore relished the outcome of the Raasa-Leelaa. Now, ShreeAachaaryajee gave a warning to His disciples as ordain in the Veda. The discipline of Veda is such that whoever comes to you for becoming a disciple, you should initially say no at least once, for judging his firmness and allegiance to the sect. After that, if he still has the inclination, he should be initiated and he will achieve the desired goal. Thus, a person who is asking for initiation, should be discouraged initially : "Do not enter this path." As this path belongs to the devotees of Vraj. Once they surrendered and dedicated themselves completely, they were abandoned all the material pleasures of life like meals, etc.

Once ShreeKumbhandaasjee requested ShreeAachaaryajee to explain to him the tenets of Pushtimaarg. ShreeAachaaryajee graciously described the 84 offences, the main characteristics of Raajasee, Taamasee and Saatwika devotees, and explained the routine of Pushtimargiya-NityaSevaa. He also explained the Bhaava of Bal-Leelaa and Kishor-Leelaa. After that, He told him that people will shy away from asking such questions in the future. Only those who are blessed by ShreeGovardhannaathji will ask such questions and act accordingly. Only devotees like you will ask. The future will be full of adversities and people will neither ask nor tell. . .

BhaavPrakaash - Why? Because the milk of a lioness needs a gold vessel for its retention. Similarly, only a true devotee can retain the Bhaav of Bhagavad-Leelaa and the Bhagavad-Dharma in his heart.