

Mangalacharana
(The Stanza of Benediction)

*Namo bhagavate tasmai, Krishnayadbhuta-karmane
Rupa-nama-vibhedena, Jagatkridati yo yatah.*

Bow to Bhagavan Shri Krishna, The doer of wondrous acts;
Who is cosmos, in varied forms, names;
Who sports, Whence is cosmos sprung.

Meaning: Prostrations to Bhagavan Shri Krishna, who is the performer of wonderful deeds, who is the very manifestation of the universe, who plays His sports in different forms and names, and from whom the whole universe has sprung up.

*Jayati Shri Vallabharyo, Jayati ca Vitthaleshvaraprabhushriman,
Purushottams-ca taishca, nirdishta pusti-paddhatir jayati.*

Hail to revered Shri Vallabhacharya! Hail to honorable Lord Shri Vitthala!
Hail to learned Shri Purushottamaji! Hail to the path of Pushti manifested by them!

Meaning: Victory to revered Mahaprabhu Shri Vallabhacharya! Victory to honorable lord Shri Vitthalesha Prabhucharana! Victory to learned ¹Shri Purushottamaji! And Victory to the devotional path of Pushti manifested by these great Acharyas!

1. An eminent scholar Acharya who wrote commentaries on almost all the works of Shri Vallabhacharya, and composed many independent works of his own.

Dharma

(Means to attain overall upliftment)

Physical and mental well-being of the human being depend upon food and learning. Only those people who have got the sound body and the sound mind can make progress in their life. But how does the Jivatma' (individual-soul) that enables us to speak, walk and think, makes development?

The human soul is made sublime by practicing Dharma. Hence, the means of sublimating the soul is called "Dharma". Who made this Dharma? In reply to this question it is stated in Bhagavat-Mahapurana:

Dharmam tu saksad bhagavatpranitam.

Meaning: Bhagavan Himself has constituted Dharma-Niyama (dos and don'ts for mankind).

Dharma is a godly constitution for the betterment of the mankind. This constitution is carefully preserved by primitive sages in the holy scriptures like Veda, Sutra, Smrti, Purana etc. These scriptures are known as Shastra. Shastra means: The sacred writings which regulate, guide or rule human conducts. If one follows Dharma, Bhagavan is certainly pleased with him. That is why one should practice Dharma. Ultimately the real sublimation of the human being lies only in Bhagavan's pleasure.

Marga-Sampradaya

One should seek admission to a good school and study under an efficient teacher in order to obtain learning. Similarly, in order to obtain religious learning or wisdom, one should seek admission to a religious school, known as [Marga](#) or Sampradaya. To obtain admission in any Sampradaya one has to match both one's own goal with the goal of the Sampradaya and one's ability and inclination to attain goal the way Sampradaya preaches to attain.

A number of Dharma-Margas or Sampradayas are as old as Bharat's culture itself is. Today this false belief is being spread out that our social unity breaks down by different Dharma-Sampradayas. In a way power-loving political leaders spread jealousy, quarrels and disquiet in society by exciting groups of labourers, farmers, employees, students, Adivasis etc. belonging to different languages, provinces, districts and castes. Should we believe, then, that any language or province etc. is an element that disunites all classes and breaks up the social unity! Or if we believe in it, how can we be free from it? In fact, different Sampradayas are the centres to provide training regarding religion. They are such types of schools that enhance moral prosperity of the society together with spiritual promotion. Because of these Sampradayas wise people experience all-pervading necessity and well-being of religion in society and not of disunity and divisibility.

In fact all scriptural Sampradayas have come into being for the people of different nature by the command of Bhagavan. All Sampradayas have got different fields of working. Hence, in the ideal form, there should not arise any question of conflict, opposition or rivalry of one Sampradaya with any other Sampradaya. For example, there are innumerable schools, throughout Bharat, that impart learning and training of different subjects to people of different classes and groups. When our social unity and indivisibility is not endangered by these innumerable schools, how can the social unity and indivisibility be harmed by our Schools of Dharma which can be counted on the tips of our fingers? Hence, we should understand that the tradition of Bharat's Dharma-Sampradaya is not the symbol of narrowness or divisibility but it is the symbol of universal and all-pervading necessity. If we can look into the all-pervasiveness contained in this variety, there remains no reason of any fear or doubt. Thus, we have seen the true nature and significance of Dharma-Sampradaya.

There are various Sampradayas in Sanatana-Hindu-Dharma. Every Sampradaya consists of its distinct goal, known as Sadhya or Prameya and; means to attain its goal, known as Sadhana.

Marga:

Sect, tradition, cult, system or school of thought. Despite of having subtle difference Marga and Sampradaya are used interchangeably. To understand the difference it can be said metaphorically that the Marga (Karma-Jnana and Bhakti) is like a highway whereas the Sampradaya is like a lane. There are various Sampradayas in these three Margas. For example, in Bhakti-Marga Shri Vallabhacharya, Shri Ramanujacharya, Shri Madhvacharya, Shri Nimbarkacharya etc. have established Sampradayas on the ground of the scriptures.

Guru (The Preceptor)

He who initiates the inquisitive disciple and imparts the knowledge of the doctrines of the Sampradaya is called the Guru. Without the Guru it is not possible either to have entrance into any Dharma-Sampradaya or to acquire the true knowledge of Dharma-Sampradaya. Hence, the Guru has got a very important place in Sampradaya. Says Shri Gusainji:

*Ajnana-timirandhasya, jnananjanashalakaya;
Cakshurunmilitam yena, tasmai shrigurave namah.*

One who by using collyrium-stick of knowledge
In the eyes blinded by darkness of ignorance;
Opens and enlightens our eyes
To that revered Guru we bow down.

Meaning: We prostrate respectfully before the Guru who, by using the stick of collyrium of knowledge, opens and enlightens our eyes that have become blind by the darkness of ignorance.

Mahaprabhu Shri Vallabhacharya

Incarnation:

Shri Vallabhacharya is the [proclaimer](#) of the Pushti-Bhakti-Marga. So he is the Guru of all the followers including his lineage.

Innumerable divine individual-souls, so dear to Bhagavan, were extremely miserable as they could not find any simple, straightforward way to reach nearer to Bhagavan. To relieve these souls from their sorrows, Bhagavan sent Shri Vallabhacharya on the earth and ordained to uplift divine souls by showing them the way of His devotion. In response to the commandment of Bhagavan, Shri Vallabhacharya descended upon the earth and discovered the path of Pushti-Bhakti for the upliftment of the divine souls. That is why in Sarvottama-stotra Shri Vallabhacharya is complimented by the name of 'Daivoddhara-prayatnatma'. It means: One who is actively devoted to the upliftment of the divine souls that are dear to Bhagavan.

Path-Settler:

Together with the Pushti-Bhakti-Marga Shri Vallabhacharya also propounded the Sarana-Marga i.e. the path of resort/surrender, in the interest of those divine souls who are not qualified to follow the path of Pushti-Bhakti. The path of surrender is not only conducive to the path of devotion but also a distinctively independent way to reach nearer to Bhagavan.

Theory propounder:

As the greatest God, Bhagavan Shri Krishna is beyond all gods and goddesses. This world is nothing but a modified manifestation of Shri Krishna Himself. Therefore, He indwells in every sentient and insentient object and yet he is also distinct from all of them. Thus, in spite of becoming world Shri Krishna does not lose His identity. For establishing such an extraordinary theory Shri Vallabhacharya is praised as: 'Sakara-brahmavadaika-sthapakah'. It means: An establisher of the great doctrine of the Embodied Brahman who himself is the material and efficient cause of living and non-living entities of the universe.

The Divine Fire

Incarnation of the Divine Fire, in the form of the mouth of Bhagavan Shri Krishna, Shri Vallabhacharya is glorified as 'Vaisvanarah'. It means: The divine fire.

Dearest Guru:

As dear to all divine souls, he is known as 'Vallabhakhyah'. It means: One having the beloved name: Vallabha. The knowledge of the wondrous beauty of Bhagavan

Shri Krishna, such as Shri Mahaprabhu imparted, has never been done by anybody else before. Hence, he is praised as: “*Shri Krishnajnana guruh*”. It means: The Guru who bestowed the knowledge of Shri Krishna as the Supreme Brahman.

The Father:

He got married at the behest of Bhagavan so that the preaching and the propagation of *Pusti-Bhakti-Marga* may go on incessantly in future. He was blessed with two sons: Shri Gopinathaji and Shri Vitthalanathaji. So he is praised as:

Bhuvi-bhakti-pracharaika-krite-svanvayakrt pita.

Meaning: The father who procreated the offspring like his own self for the promotion of devotion on the earth.

Proclaimer: As against the speculative philosophers and theologians, Acharyas who have accepted the scriptures as the supreme authority have never propagated themselves as the inventor of a new philosophy or theology. Very politely they considered themselves as the proclaimer of the scriptural truths, which were forgotten in the course of time.

Shri Gopinathaji

In the following verse Shri Purushottamaji delineates the character of Shri Gopinathaji, the elder son of Shri Vallabhacharya:

*Shri Vallabha-pratinidhim, tejorashim dayarnavam;
Gunatitam gunanidhim; Shrigopinatham-ashraye.*

The Representative of Shri Vallabha, The storehouse of effulgence,
The ocean of compassion, Who is beyond worldly attributes,
The treasure of transcendental attributes, I take refuge in Shri Gopinathaji.

Meaning: I take refuge in Shri Gopinathaji, who is the representative of Mahaprabhu Shri Vallabhacharya, who is the storehouse of effulgence, the ocean of compassion, who is beyond all earthly attributes and who is the very treasure of divine attributes.

Similarly, Shri Vitthalanathaji pays his obeisance to his elder brother Shri Gopinathaji and extols him in the following verse:

*Yadanugrahaato jantuh, sarva-duhkha-tigo bhavet;
Tamaham sarvada vande; Shrimad Vallabha-nandanam.*

A being, by whose grace, does go beyond all the miseries of the world,
To him, always my obeisance be, the son of Mahaprabhu Shri Vallabha.

Meaning: I always prostrate to Shri Vallabhacharya's illustrious son Shri Gopinathaji, by whose divine grace, the beings go beyond all the worldly sufferings.

From his early childhood Shri Gopinathaji was keenly devoted to the divine worship and remembrance of Bhagvan. He used to take his daily Prasada (left over of the divine food offered to Bhagavan) only after reciting the entire Bhagavat-Purana with all its eighteen thousand verses. For this reason, very often he could take his Prasada at the interval of about two days. This was very sad-sorrowful for his mother. Shri Vallabhacharya took a note of this. So, for Shri Gopinathaji he composed Shri Purushottama-Sahasranama-Stotra i.e. hymn of one thousand names of Shri Krishna, as the essence of the whole of Shrimad Bhagavat-Purana.

When Shri Vallabhacharya went to the abode of the eternal Lila, Shri Gopinathaji was entrusted with the title of the Acharya of the Sampradaya. He composed a fine work named: Sadhanadipika. In this work he has explained the doctrines of Pusti-

Bhakti-Marga. Like Shri Vallabhacharya, he also insisted on performing the Vaidic-Dharma together with doing the divine service of Bhagavan.

Shri Vitthalanathaji

Like his elder brother, Shri Vitthalanathaji, the second son of Shri Vallabhacharya, was deeply attached to the divine worship of Bhagavan. Though he was originally named as Shri Vitthalanathaji, he is well-known in the sect by the names of Shri Gusainji and Shri Prabhucharana.

When Shri Vitthalanathaji was quite young, Shri Vallabhacharya bestowed upon him a beautiful Svarupa (idol) of Shri Bala-krishna for worship. He also set him up with a piece of Thor (sweets) to be offered daily to ¹Shri Thakurji in Mangala-Bhoga (morning breakfast).

One day Shri Vitthalanathaji offered Thor to Shri Thakurji. Shri Thakurji began to eat Thor with love and delight. Seeing this Shri Vitthalanathaji thought that if Shri Thakurji ate away the whole piece of Thor, not a bit would remain there for him. So he leapt forward and began to pull at the Thor forcefully from [Shri Thakurji](#)'s hand. Shri Vallabhacharya was very much pleased to see this tug-of-war between the two. Then he sent for another piece of Thor and gave it to Shri Vitthalanathaji. When this child of such extraordinary qualities grew up, he adorned the title of Acharya of Shri Vallabha-Sampradaya as an illustrious personality of power and glory.

When Shri Gopinathaji left this world, Shri Vitthalanathaji took over the charge of the Acharya of Pushti-Marga. He always kept himself actively devoted to the preaching and promotion of the sect. That is why in Namaratnakhya-stotra he is designated as:

Pitr-pravartita-patha-pracara-suvicarakah.

Meaning: One who is given to pious thought of spreading the path propounded by his father. And:

Gobrahmana-prana-raksa-parah satya-parayanah.

Meaning: The Caretaker and protector of Cows and Brahmanas and the treader on the path of truth.

He wrote a number of hymns, Granthas (treatises) and commentaries on the works of Shri Vallabhacharya to impart the knowledge of the Pushti-Marga.

1. **Thakur** = The master. In Vaishnva sects the word: ‘ShriThakurji’ is used for the deity. Devotees who are dedicated to Lord Shri Krishna or to the incarnation of Lord Shri Krishna are called ‘Vaisnva’.

Shri Yamunaji

Bhagavan Shri Krishna graced the **Vraja-province** and played numerous pastimes and sports on the banks of Shri Yamunaji. Shri Yamunaji is extremely dear to Lord Shri Krishna. She is like a mother to all of us. Shri Yamunaji, who holds such a wonderful character, is the sister of Yama, the god of death. Shri Vallabhacharya extols her in The Hymn of Shri Yamunashtaka:

*Namostu yamune sada tava caritram-atyadbhutam,
Na jatu yama yatana bhavati te payah-panatah;
Yamopi bhagini-sutan kathamu hanti dushtanapi,
Priyo bhavati sevanat tava harer-yatha gopika.*

I always bow to you, OYamune! Extremely wonderful is yourcharacter!
Yama can't inflict pain on those who sip your holy water,
How can Yama harass children of his sister, Howsoever wicked they happen to be?
Those who be take to ShriYamunaji, Become dear to the Lord as Gopis became.

Meaning: If we sip the holy water of Shri Yamunaji with devout sentiment, we become free from the fear of Yamaraja, the God of death, howsoever wicked we may be. How can Yamaraja harass the children of his own sister? If so compassionate Shri Yamunaji showers grace upon us, we, too, by resorting to her, can become dear to Bhagavan as Gopas and Gopis (cowherds and cowherdesses) of Vraja became. Our obeisance always be to Shri Yamunaji, so gracious to us.

Vraja-province: Vraja-province is situated in the state of Uttara-Pradesa of modern Bharat. It includes places of pilgrimage like Gokula, Mahavana, Govardhana, Vrandavana, Nandagama, Barasana, Kamavana etc.

Shri Krishna

Narrating Himself in the Gita, Bhagavan Shri Krishna states:

*Aham krtsnasya jagatah, prabhavah pralayas tatha;
Mattah parataram nanyad, kincidasti dhananjaya.*

I am the creator of the whole universe, And the destroyer as well,
Higher than I There's nothing; Whatsoever, O Arjuna!

Meaning: I am the origin and I am the end of this whole universe. Know this, O Arjuna! that there is nothing beyond Me here.

Bhagavan has made this universe as His playground. All gods-goddesses, human-beings, animals insects and insentient objects are mere toys for Bhagavan to play with. Gods and goddesses like Durga, Ganapati, Siva and others, too, worship Bhagavan Shri Krishna as their master. So Mahaprabhu Shri Vallabhacharya in his work Siddhantamuktavali states:

Param brahma tu krshno hi.

Meaning: Shri Krishna is the Supreme Brahma and, therefore, He is the greatest of all.

Bhagavan saw that His devotees on the earth were utterly miserable without Him. Their sufferings and harassments at the hands of demoniac people knew no bounds. So the gracious Lord descended upon the earth. (When Bhagavan descends upon the earth from His abode of Vaikuntha for the upliftment of his devotees, it is called 'the incarnation' of Bhagavan. When the Svarupa (idol) of Shri Krishna is handed over to the disciple for personal worship, it is also called the incarnation in the Pushti-Marga). Thus, Bhagavan descended upon the earth and graced Shri Nandarayaji's home, family and village by His presence. Innocent Gops and Gopis of Vraja-province were blessed by Him to have the benefit of performing His divine service. The demons and devilish people played havoc in Vraja. Shri Krishna killed all the wicked people and made the Vraja-dwellers free from fear. So, in his work Catuhsloki Shri Vallabhacharya states:

Prabhuh sarvasamartho hi; tato nishcintatam vrajet.

Meaning: Lord Shri Krishna is omnipotent. Hence, O devotees! Be absolutely free from worries.

Ajamila was wicked and sinful. He had done no good deeds in his life. He had a son named 'Narayana' whom he loved very much. Narayana is one of the names of Bhagavan. So, when he lay on his death-bed, he called his son by uttering his name 'Narayana', and soon he breathed his last. He was, of course, a sinner but Bhagavan granted him salvation, since he uttered the name of Bhagavan, though on the pretext of his son!

Putana had come just to kill Shri Krishna. Though she was motivated by pretence, she at least wished like a mother to feed Bhagavan with milk from her poisoned breast! For this reason Bhagavan granted her instant deliverance. So bounteous is Lord Shri Krishna! Howsoever sinful a person may be, but if he entreats Bhagavan from the bottom of his heart and say, "O Lord! I have come to take refuge in you. Except you, I have none whom I can call my true kinsman" Bhagavan will certainly give him shelter and take him in his refuge. In 'Shri Krishnasraya-stotra' Shri Vallbhacharya states:

Papasaktasya dinasya; krsna-eva gatih mama.

Meaning: Happy or unhappy, sinful or sinless, wealthy or poor, source-ful or source-less all should verily take refuge in Shri Krishna.

Who else should one resort to leaving Bhagavan Shri Krishna who is the God of all the gods, extremely gracious, omnipotent and the cause of all causes?

Jiva-Jagat

(The Individual Soul and the Universe)

Things that aren't having in them the respiratory system those who cannot breathe, they are called Jada = insentient, inanimate objects. The earth, the water, the light, the air and the space are Jada = insentient. Animals, birds and human beings that are having in them the respiratory system are called Jivas = sentient-animate beings.

Brahma is all:

When we look at these insentient objects and sentient beings, nowhere do we find the Supreme Being Paramatma in them, nor do we discern that they are related to the Supreme Being, as no such relation is apparently visible. Everything in this world seems to be independent of one another. But the reality is different. There is nothing in this world that is not united with the Supreme-Being Bhagavan Shri Krishna. How can, then, the insentient things and the sentient beings have their independent entity

separate from Bhagavan? Can we separate the clay from the pot or the gold from the ornaments? Let us try to understand this thing still in a better way.

In Upanishads Brahma is described having three attributes: Sat, Cit and Ananda.

1. Sat: The state of being or existence of any object.
2. Cit: Consciousness and
3. Ananda: Endlessness, All pervasiveness or Supernatural Divine Attributes (Anantata, Vyapakta and/or Aprakrta Alaukika Dharma).

When Brahma manifests with the attribute of "Sat" only, concealing the attributes Cit and Ananda, that manifestation of Brahma is known as Jada/Jagat, the insentient world. And when Brahma manifests with the attributes Sat and Cit concealing Ananda, that form of Brahma is called Jiva, the being. Thus, it becomes clear that there is no essential distinction between Brahma and Jada-Jiva. The distinction that we see is due to our inability to see the true nature of Brahma or of this universe.

Like the sparks that emanate from the fire, all the sentient-beings and the insentient-objects, have emerged from Bhagavan Shri Krishna long ago. A drop of water, even when we take it out of the sea, has in it the saltiness and the liquidity of the sea. But in comparison with the sea, these qualities are quite meager. The sea is extremely vast, while the drop is utterly small. Like this, beings like us are extremely small in comparison with Bhagavan. But as we have sprung from Bhagavan, we are the offsprings of Bhagavan. Hence, Bhagavan Shri Krishna specifically states in the Gita:

Mamaivamso jivaloke jivabhutah.

Meaning: Those that have come in this world becoming the individual-souls are all my own particles.

How much affinity brims over in these words of Bhagavan Shri Krishna! It sounds as if a father feelingly says about his children: "These are my children!". Is it not our prime duty to worship Bhagavan Shri Krishna, the Father of the universe, so affectionate and kind to his children? But, how regrettable it is that most of the people do not understand this thing!

Bhagavan has entrusted different sorts of roles to different sorts of beings in this world which he has created for playing His sports. In our ignorance we fail to understand the duties Bhagavan has assigned us to do. We can know this only when

Bhagavan Himself makes us know or through the medium of eminent personalities. Showing us our duty in this world, Shri Vallabhacharya states in the work: Pusti-pravahamaryada-bheda:

Bhagavad-rupasevartham tatsrstih.

Meaning: Bhagavan has created Pusti-beings for the service of His own divine form.

Shri Vallabhacharya propounded the Pusti-Bhakti-Marga (Devotional Path of Pushti) by the divine ordainment of Bhagavan so that Pushti-beings can worship Bhagavan. So, let us discuss what is meant by Pushti-Bhakti-Marga.

Pushti-Bhakti-Marga (The Devotional Path of Pushti)

Bhagavat defines 'Pushti' as under:

Posanam tadanugraha.

Meaning: 'Pushti' means the grace of Bhagavan.

So, Pushti-Marga is a path of dedication, which could be achieved and followed only by the grace of the Bhagavan. Bhagavan is gracious. He bestows his grace upon numerous beings in a number of ways. The Teacher in a school may compel a student to sit at the back, if he is inattentive in his study and is not obedient. But he will gladly accord the front row to that student who learns his lessons attentively and who abides by the commands of the teacher. Similarly, Bhagavan, too, bestows His grace upon beings to more or less extent. Let us not forget here that essentially all the beings are equal for Bhagavan. If the grace of Bhagavan is received unevenly, it is just a part of Bhagavan's [Lila](#) (sport). So, Bhagavan specially favours those people who come to his refuge without any sort of selfishness and bestows upon them the benefit of doing his service.

The beings on whom such grace of Bhagavan has been showered, have nothing to worry about their worldly and transcendental life. Bhagavan Himself takes care of Pushti-beings and does all that is in their benefit. Perhaps, for any reason, if such beings are not in position to do the service of Bhagavan, He does create favourable circumstances for them to perform His service conveniently, and does not let them remain aloof from His service. Hence, Shri Vallabhacharya in the Book of Siddhanta-muktavali says:

Anugraha Pushti-marge niyamakah.

Meaning: The grace of Bhagavan is the sole governing factor for those who are the pedestrians on the path of Pushti, here and hereafter and in seeking after the fruit and the fulfillment of the fruit.

For this reason, the path in which everything of the devotee is accomplished by the grace of Bhagavan is called the Pushti-sect, the path of the Divine Grace. One cannot enter into this path without the grace of Bhagavan. If we say: "Pushti-Marga is the sect of attaining the grace of Bhagavan", we are mistaken in understanding Pushti-Marga in its true perspective. Having the grace of Bhagavan is the fulfilment of the very first condition for our entering into this sect. What other grace remains to be obtained by the blessed being after he has entered into the Pushti-Marga? Now that

he is a blessed follower of Pushti-Marga, the only thing he has to do is the divine service of Bhagavan in order to cultivate the divine grace. The persons about whom it cannot be decided whether they are graced or not should not be allowed to initiate into this sect. Such is the clear-cut dictum of great ancient Acaryas which must be followed by all the Gurus of the Sampradaya. In this way, we have come to understand why the path that is propounded by Shri Vallabhacharya is called the PUSHTI MARGA the Path of Divine Grace. Now we shall discuss what is meant by Pushti-Bhakti-Marga.

We all wish that we may have all happiness and no pain. This kind of our desire or effort to accomplish this goal is called Purusharatha, the object of the human life). We try our level best to fulfil this desire. Some people perform sacrifices, some do the penance and some others go on pilgrimage in order to get rid of all their sins and to obtain salvation. They make efforts to amass wealth in order to obtain the object cherished most by them. But he who is the true-hearted Pushti-Devotee desires to obtain neither the salvation nor even the heavenly kingdom. For him, the divine service of Bhagavan is the only Dharma the only object attainable in his life. Bhagavan Himself is his real wealth. The only longing he feels in his mind is to have the Darshana of Bhagavan and to do the divine service, and he believes that his only salvation lies in keeping himself always firmly attached to Bhagavan. A truehearted devotee forgets all his sorrows in his devotion to Bhagavan and experiences divine bliss. For this reason, this Marga is called the Pushti-Bhakti-Marga, the devotional path of Pushti.

Every religious sect possesses certain peculiar established upholding and criteria. These upholding serve the purpose of sound pillars for the Sampradaya to stand upon. Now let us consider these peculiar established upholdings and criterias of Pushti-Bhakti-Marga.

Lila: Action or sport of Bhagavan without any imperfection or worldliness.

Bhagavad-Ashraya
(The Refuge in Bhagavan Shri Krishna)

The firm resort in Bhagavan is the foundation of Pushti-Bhakti or Pushti-devotion. It is not even possible to imagine Pushti-Devotion without having steadfast and single-minded resort in Bhagavan. A man carried away into a torrential river sees his doom before his very eyes. But, when all of a sudden, he catches a piece of wood, he heaves a sigh of relief and feels firm faith in his mind that he has been saved. Similarly, in the howling worldly 'I-ness' and 'My-ness', when a man is forcibly dragged towards sickening sorrows, ailing infatuation and leering lustfulness, suddenly the remembrance of Bhagavan illumines his heart establishing his faith in Bhagavan and relieves him from tortuous worries. Devotion can take place only when such steadfast resort in Bhagavan is established in the state of equipoise. A child becomes free from all its worries by depending upon its mother and father in good faith. The child keeps remembering its mother and father in all moments of joys and sorrows. In the same way, if we give up resort in other gods and goddesses and leave aside all means such as sacrifice-pilgrimage-mantra etc., and go only to the refuge of Shri Krishna, gracious Bhagavan will surely remove all our sorrows and miseries. In the Gita Bhagavan has given solemn promise of fearlessness to Arjuna:

Sarva dharman parityajya, mamekam Sharanam vraja.

Meaning: Leaving aside all your duties; come to my sole refuge.

In the book of 'Vivekadhairyashraya' Shri Vallabhacharya, states:

Aihike paraloke ca, sarvatha sharanam harih.

Meaning: One should, by all means, go to the refuge only in Bhagavan Shri Krishna, giving up all worries as to what will happen to me in this world and in the world hereafter.

When we take shelter in Bhagavan with full confidence that He is the only doer of all that happens to us, it can be said that we have whole-heartedly resorted to Shri Krishna. Devotees like Dhruva, Prahalada, Gajendra (the Elephant), Pandavas etc., too, resorted to Bhagavan and pleased Him and so all their sorrows and miseries came to an end.

Anyashraya-Tyaga (Renouncing The Resort in Any one other Than Shri Krishna)

Anyashraya means the resort in gods/goddesses other than Shri Krishna. Anyashraya is considered as the greatest sin that causes obstacles in devotional path of Pushti. In simple language it can be said that Anyashraya is nothing but deviation from one's object and course to attain the object. Therefore, Anyashraya could be in the form of (1) resort in gods and goddesses other than Shri Krishna or it could be in the form of (2) having admiration and/or adoption of some other course/courses, different from the course prescribed by Shri Vallabhacharya. Similarly, it could be in the form of having admiration in some other fruit different from that, which is going to result after the completion of the course prescribed by Shri Vallabhacharya.

What will be the outcome if one takes resort in many gods and goddesses? Let us see.

An old woman went to the river to bathe. All of a sudden her leg slipped and she started to be dragged into the river. She with the hope that some one might come to rescue her began to pray gods one by one. Gods started to go to save her on hearing her call. But no sooner did they start to stand up to go, than the old woman would utter the name of another god. So the gods who had already stood up on their legs to go, would again sit down. Thus no god could go to save her and ultimately she was drowned. This anecdote explains that if the old woman had called only one god, she would not have been drowned. Similarly, if we take resort in many gods, we, too, shall meet the same sorrowful plight as this old woman met. Hence, when one has already taken refuge in any one god, one should stop seeking shelter in any other god, worshipping any other god and praying to any other god for anything.

Only Shri Krishna, who is the God of all gods, is Bhagavan. So the follower of the path of Pushti should never leave Shri Krishna and take shelter in other gods and goddesses. Shri Vallabhacharya states in the book of “Vivekadhairyashraya”:

*Anyasya bhajanam tatra, svato gamanameva ca;
Prarthana-karyamatrepi, tatonyatra vivarjayet.*

Meaning:

1. One should worship no other gods or goddesses but Shri Krishna
2. One should never go, on one's own accord, to other gods and goddesses with or without a purpose to have [Darshana](#) etc.
3. One should never pray to any other gods or goddesses to grant anything.

This instruction of Shri Vallabhacharya regarding the renouncement of resort in any other god should not be taken to express any disrespect to other gods/goddesses. It should be taken to mean strengthening resort in Shri Krishna. Shri Vallabhacharya clearly says that Shivaji, Durga, Ganapati and other gods/goddesses are devotees of Shri Krishna and they perform their respective duties under the lordship of Shri Krishna. Hence, all of them, being devotees of Shri Krishna, are respectable to us. But one and only one, who is worthy of worship, as far as the Pushti-sect is concerned, is Shri Krishna, the revered God of all gods.

Darshana: Beholding / observing. To behold one's deity, by visiting temples or at one's own home, is considered as a kind of devotional practice.

Diksha (Initiation)

Before getting admission to a school, a student has to fill in the admission-form. He is allowed to study only after his admission-form is accepted. Similarly, to join any religious sect obtaining initiation, prescribed by that sect, is inevitable. Mantra-Diksha means initiation through the Formula. It has been laid down in the scriptures that performing any ritual without being initiated becomes futile and fruitless.

Provision of the initiation in religious sects consists important motivations such as:

- **Eligibility Test:** This is the right time when guru can ascertain whether the candidate is eligible to join the sect, so that no undeserving person may intrude into the sect.
- **Sanctity:** The candidate may obtain sanctity in conformity with the established tradition of one's own sect.
- **Acceptance & approval:** By the rite of initiation a candidate secures his place in the sect. Now he is recognized as a companion by other followers.

Sharana-Diksha (Initiation for resort)

The name of the initiation for entering into the Pushti-Marga is Sharana-Mantra-Diksha. In English we may call it “initiation through the formula of resort”. This Diksha is also known as ‘Astaksara-Diksha’ or “Nama-mantra-Diksha”. Astakshara-Maha-Mantra' is the Sharana-Diksha-mantra of Pushti-Bhakti-Marga. As this Mantra consists of letters, it is called ‘Astakshara-Maha-Mantra’.

A student who seeks admission to the second standard must have passed the first standard. Similarly, to get admission into the Pushti-Marga one must have some qualifications as under:

1. Of all gods and goddesses Shri Krishna is the greatest God.
2. No god other than Shri Krishna can uplift.
3. It is an unpardonable sin on the part of the disciple of the Pushti-Marga to go to the refuge of gods and goddesses other than Shri Krishna.
4. Trust in Shri Vallabhacharya and his system.
5. The fruitfulness of the life of the Vaishnava lies in going to the refuge in Shri Krishna and in spending life as His humble servant according to the doctrine of the Pushti-Marga.

If at least these five criterions are deeply rooted in one's mind, it will mean that one is eligible to join the Pushti-Marga. It is to be remembered here again that if one receives Sharana-Diksha, but at the same time does not give-up resort, worship, beliefs, rites, Mantra-Japa etc. of other gods & goddesses; such Diksha becomes worthless. Hence, being a Bhakti-sect, the renouncement of resort in other gods is indispensable in the Pushti-Marga.

To preach one of the prime duties after acquiring Diksha, Shri Mahaprabhu states in the book of ‘Navaratna’:

*Tasmat sarvatmana nityam, Shri Krishnah Sharanam mama
Vadadbhireva satatam; stheyamityeva me matih.*

Meaning: Therefore, to show one's gratitude, devotion & regard, devotee should recite constantly & wholeheartedly the Mantra: “Shri Krishnah Sharanam mama” by keeping this devout sentiment in mind: “O Shri Krishna! Only you are my refuge”.

There is one general rule for any Diksha-Mantra: whenever initiated person forgets Diksha-Mantra or the meaning & sentiment of the Diksha-Mantra and gives up the reciting, Diksha turns out to be good for nothing. It loses its force and efficacy. The knowledge that is written in books is almost of no use especially when it is not retained in intellect. Same is the case with Diksha-Mantra. Just wearing garland of Tulasi in the neck can serve no purpose. Shri Vallabhacharya, therefore, says in the book of ‘Navaratna’:

Nivedanam tu smartavyam; sarvatha tadrsair janaih.

Meaning: The Nivedana-mantra, the mantra of self-surrendering, with total dedication, with its meaning & sentiment should be contemplated with the staunch, experienced and faithful followers of the Pushti-Bhakti-Marga.

Diksha-Mantra is like a map of the path of Pushti-Bhakti. If the map is lost, the unfamiliar traveller wanders off the way, and does not reach his destination. This can happen with any such follower who forgets the Diksha-Mantra or the meaning&sentiment of the Diksha-Mantra and gives up the reciting of the Diksha-Mantra.

Sharana-Marga (The Path of Refuge)

It is said earlier, Sharana-Mantra-Diksha is the first step to follow the Pushti-Bhakti-Marga. The fruitfulness of Sharana-Marga lies in cultivating ability such as faith, knowledge of the doctrines and rituals, devotional sentiment, obedience, family understanding etc. to perform divine service of Bhagavan Shri Krishna. In order to achieve above goal the follower of the Sharana-Marga has to obey certain rules such as: the Vaishnava

1. Must recite the Diksha-Mantra.
2. Must recite the sacred writings such as Sodas-Granthas, Shri Sarvottama-Stotra, Shri Purusottama- Sahasranam- Stotra etc. of Shri Vallabhacharya and of other Acharyas of the sect.
3. Must study deeply all works from, preferably, one's own Guru or from any other learned followers.
4. Must study Shri Bhagavat-Purana, in order to attain comprehensive knowledge of Bhagavan Shri Krishna.
5. Must study the literature regarding the life of the disciples of Shri Vallabhacharya and Shri Vitthalanathaji, known as “84 Vaishnava-Varta” and “252 Vaisna-Varta”. And in addition to this
6. Must stop all those practices like worship of other gods & goddesses etc. which goes against the principle and the object of Pushti-Marga.

Vaishnava-Cihna (Auspicious External Marks of the Pushti-Vaishnava)

Firm faith in Shri Krishna, devotional sentiment, the renouncement of refuge in other gods and the initiation of the surrender can be said as the internal characteristics of being a Vaishnava. Whereas, [Tilaka](#), [Mudra](#), [Cakra-Gada-Sankha-Padma](#) and the [Tulasi-Mala](#) could be considered as the external marks of the Vaishnava.

There are numerous religious sects in Bharata. The believers in Shiva draw [Tripundra](#) on their foreheads. The believers of Goddesses draw Tika on their foreheads, while the devotees of Hanuman apply Sindura. Likewise, Shri Vallabhacharya has stated in his work “Sarvanirnaya-Nibandha”:

*Sankhacakradikam dharyam, mrda pujangameva tat;
tulasikasthaja mala, tilakam lingameva tat.*

Conch disc et cetera be held, With clay on the upper arm;
The garland of tulsi in the neck, And Tilak-Mudra on the forehead.

Meaning: The male Vaishnavas should apply the marks of Tilaka, Mudra, Sankha etc. on the forehead, on the upper arm and on the different parts of the body with [Gopichandana](#) and [Kumkum](#), and should wear garland-wreath, made of Tulasi-wood, in the neck.

Thus, it can be seen that the external marks are different in all sects. As a uniform is an identification of a school, the external marks serve the purpose of identification of the followers of different sects. At the same time these marks contain certain devotional and divine sentiment. For example, Tilaka is a symbol of the feet of Shri Krishna. It reminds of one's Dharma and self-surrender to Bhagavan.

[Tilaka](#): The Vermilion vertical mark of ‘U’ shape on the forehead.

[Mudra](#): Mark of Mantra.

[Cakra-Gada-Sankha-Padma](#) : Weapons & other holdings of Vishnu: wheel with sharp edge, mace, conch and lotus respectively.

[Tulasi-Mala](#): The Tulasi-Garland.

[Tripundra](#): The ash-mark on the forehead with three horizontal lines.

[Gopichandana](#): Clay of the Gomati river.

[Kumkum](#): Red turmeric powder / saffron.

Pushti-Bhakti (Pushti-Devotion)

Pushti means the grace of Bhagavan. It is only by this grace of Bhagavan that everything of a devotee in this world and in the hereafter world is accomplished. Hence, we can obtain this devotion to Bhagavan only when He bestows His grace upon us. Shri Vallabhacharya gives the definition of devotion in His work Shastrartha-Nibandha as under:

*Mahatmyajnana-purvastu, sudrdhah sarvatodhikah;
sneho bhaktiriti proktah, taya muktirna canyatha.*

Meaning: When one has developed deep-rooted and utmost love for Bhagavan, preceded by the knowledge of the greatness of the lord, it is called Devotion to Bhagavan. One can obtain salvation only by this devotion and in no other way.

When the devotee feels such genuine devotion for Bhagavan, he remains totally engrossed in the worship and the remembrance of the Bhagavan. There are two aspects of devotion:

1. [Mahatmyajnana](#) and
2. Sneha.

Let us now discuss both these aspects:

Mahatmya-Jnana:

Mahatmya means the glory grandeur or greatness. And the comprehensive knowledge of Bhagavan's glory, grandeur or greatness is called Mahatmyajnana. 5Veda, Purana, Smrti, characterizations of devotees etc. describe the Mahatmaya of Bhagavan. For example, some magnificent event of Shri Krishna from the Bhagavat-Purana and Mahabharata can be cited:

One day, while playing Shri Krishna ate clay. When Shri Yasoda, the mother, came to know this, she angrily asked Shri Krishna to open His mouth. And lo! As soon as He did it, the entire universe was seen in His little mouth!! Similarly, once Arjuna requested Shri Krishna to show His divinity. And when Shri Krishna showed him His Virata-Svarupa, Arjuna began to behold everything including the sun, the moon, stars, the earth, the heaven, the hell etc. Shri Krishna incarnated in the form of Nrsimha in order to protect His child-devotee Prahlada from the devilish designs of his demon-father. To know such an astonishing character is to know the Mahatmya of Bhagavan.

Sneha = Affection

Those who do not have the knowledge of the greatness of Bhagavan cannot worship Bhagavan. As the knowledge of Bhagavan's greatness increases, the devotee begins to develop more and more respect, faith, confidence etc. in Bhagavan. As a result of this, emergence of love and affection takes place automatically. Here it is to be noted that affection in Bhagavan could be of two kinds. 1. Motivated by self-seeking interest and 2. un-selfish and pure. If the affection for Bhagavan is backed by temptation to achieve any kind of personal or impersonal object, it can be called selfishness and not devotion. Human affection for Bhagavan takes the form of devotion only when it becomes free from the worldly motives, no matter whether they are personal or impersonal.

No deed, howsoever simple or excellent be it may, can be done properly without having, at least, some qualification. All beings in the world are the Amshas i.e. the divine-particles of Bhagavan. So by virtue of this relationship all beings are naturally humble attendants and servants of Bhagavan. However, one has to obtain at least some qualifications so as to do the service of Shri Krishna.

Mahatmyajnana:

*Mahatmya jnana purvastu sudradhah sarvatodhika
Sneho bhaktiriti proktah tayamuktir nachanyatha.*

1. Preceded by the Knowledge of Lord's greatness,
The unflinching, and the utmost as well;
Love for Bhagavan is devotion call'd,
Only by it can salvation be, not by other means.

Brahma-Sambandha

(The Relationship with the Supreme Being)

Whereas the 'Initiation for Resort' is the qualifying initiation to follow the path of surrender, within the realm of Pushti-sect, the Brahma-Sambandh-Diksha (Initiation for The Relationship with the Supreme Being) is the second qualifying initiation to follow the path of devotion. To obtain this second initiation a candidate must have at least following qualifications. The candidate:

1. Must have obtained the Sharana-Mantra-Diksha.
2. Must be reciting the Diksha-Mantra.

3. Must be reciting the sacred writings such as Sodash-Grantha, Shri Sarvottama-Stotra, Shri Purusottama -Sahasranama -Stotra etc. of Shri Vallabhacharya and of other Acharyas of the sect.
4. Must be studying deeply and/or revising all the above works from, preferably, his own Guru or from any other learned followers.
5. Must be studying Shri Bhagavat-Purana, in order to attain comprehensive knowledge of Bhagavan Shri Krishna.
6. Must be studying the literature regarding the life of the disciples of Shri Vallabhacharya and Shri Vitthalanathaji, known as “84 Vaishnava-Varta” and “252 Vaishnava-Varta”.
7. Must have stopped all those practices worship of other gods and goddesses etc., which goes against the principles and the objects of Pushti-Marga.

(Unexceptionally, these are the life-time duties for the followers of the path of Resort and Devotion, both) And in addition to this, the candidate:

8. Must be fully prepared to perform worship of Shri Krishna with utmost desire. Of course, according to the doctrines of Pushti-Bhakti-Sect.

It is the pious duty of the Guru to ascertain whether the candidate has above qualifications. Without that Guru must not grant the initiation.

Presuming that a candidate has all the requisite qualifications, enumerated before, can he do Bhagavat-Seva, the worship/service of Shri Krishna without having the initiation of Brhma-Sambandha? No. It is not allowed, at least, in the Pushti-Bhakti-Sect. Initiation of Brahma-Sambandha is a formal sanction for starting the devotional course according to the principles set by Shri Vallabhacharya. Therefore, in religious sects the initiation is as necessary as obtaining admission in any educational institution. Having everything necessary for study e.g. books, pens, pencils, a compass-box etc. does not qualify a candidate to enter into school and start his course without obtaining formal admission from the school authority.

As said earlier, all beings in the world are the Amsha, Divine-particles, of the Supreme Being Shri Krishna. So by virtue of this relationship all beings are, by nature, humble attendants and servants of Bhagavan. Initiation of Brahma-Sambandha, therefore, does not establish this relationship, it just helps in recalling this forgotten relationship. So, after obtaining this initiation, a devotee gets united with Shri Krishna in the bond of Master-servant. Every relationship demands some kind of faith, affection, duty and sacrifice. By this initiation a devotee dedicates himself together with all his belongings and relationships to Shri Krishna. Now, what

should be the next course for him? Shri Vallabhacharya states in his work “Siddhanta-Rahasya”:

*Sevakanam yatha loke, vyavaharah prasiddhyati;
Tatha karyam samarpyaiva, sarvesam brahmata tatah.*

Just as in this world everywhere,
Servants' duty to serve their masters is known well;
So should be done by one dedicating all to Bhagavan,
Thereby all things being related to Brahma become divine.

Meaning: Just as servants' duty to serve their lords is known well and has earned recognition everywhere in society, so one should do one's duty to serve Shri Krishna by dedicating all to Him. Thereby all things, as they come in contact with the Supreme Brahma, become divine.

This initiation is also known as ‘Atma-nivedana’. ‘Nivedana’ means to make known, to declare, to proclaim. Declaration of oneself along with one's animate and inanimate belongings in the favour of Shri Krishna is called ‘Atma-nivedan’ the declaration of the dedication of the self alongwith those that are related to self'. Initiation for Resort and Initiation for Self-declaration should be obtained from the qualified male descendents hailing from Shri Vallabhacharya only. Shri Vallabhacharya says in his work “Siddhanta-Rahasya”:

*Brahma-sambandha-karanat, sarvesham deha-jivayoh,
Sarvadosha-nivrttir hi.*

Meaning: By realizing the intimate relationship between Shri Krishna and the Jiva i.e. individual-soul, all flaws of body and soul are removed. They become divine.

Some children happen to be very mischievous by nature but their parents do not drive them away from home. This is because parents consider them as their own. Parents' natural affection for children restrict them to do so. Similarly, how-so-ever blemishes we may have in us, but on our having made “declaration of self-dedication”, Shri Krishna considers us His own and because of this He accepts our service without minding our drawbacks. Here, we should always keep in our mind that there is vast difference between the un-mindfulness of Shri Krishna and our being faultless.

The sacred formula i.e. Mantra of the Brahma-Sambandha initiation was accorded to Shri Vallabhacharya by Shri Krishna Himself.

Guru's Qualifications

Definition:

One who gives the initiation of the sacred formula to the disciple and imparts the knowledge of the doctrines of the sect is called a 'Guru'. The Guru is also called the guide. Hence, it is the duty of the Guru to:

1. Lead his disciple on the path of devotion,
2. Restrain his disciples and prevent them from going astray,
3. Preach the knowledge of the sect,
4. Infuse his disciple with inspiration to perform worship of Shri Krishna,
5. Make constant efforts to enhance the devotional sentiments in his disciple towards Shri Krishna.

Together with this, being an obedient follower of the Pushti-sect, Guru must not miss to exercise the precepts of his own Dharma. One should seek such a Guru who is truly devoted to his duty. But, how to recognize such Guru? Shri Vallabhacharya has given the clue in these words:

*Krshna-seva-param vikshya, dambhadi-rahitam naram;
Shribhagavata-tattvajnam, bhajet jijnasur-adarat.*

Seeking one who is devoted to Krishna's worship,
Devoid of hypocrisy and pretence as well;
The knower of the essence of Shri Bhagavat,
With reverence to him the disciple should resort.

Meaning: One should seek and choose such a Guru who is deeply devoted to the worship of Shri Krishna, who is free from greed, conceit, hypocrisy, pretence etc. and who has the knowledge of the essence of Shri Bhagavat-Purana, and one should resort to him respectfully.

With the help of other writings of the Acaryas, above said clues can be elaborated in the following manner. One who desires to do the worship of Shri Krishna should receive the initiation after having ascertaining first whether the initiator is having in him the following qualities or not.

1. The Guru as the bestower of initiation should be;
 - A. One who performs the worship of Shri Krishna in his own home in a manner prescribed by Shri Vallabhacharya.
 - B. One whose behaviour and beliefs are not contradictory to the doctrines of Shri Vallabhacharya.

- C. One who performs the worship of Shri Krishna with the full conviction that it is the goal in itself and not the means to attain anything else.
 - D. One who performs the worship of Shri Krishna himself with one's own money & wealth as any ordinary disciple does.
 - E. One who neither asks for any cash or kind nor accepts anything for the worship of Shri Krishna even if some people offer him on their own accord.
2. One may be performing worship but if one worships with greed, conceit, hypocrisy or pretence; then such a person is not worth-becoming the Guru. Hence, the Guru should be one who does not worship publicly and who does not intend to earn praise and money by the exhibition of the worship.
3. The Guru as the bestower of initiation should be one who knows the essence of Shri Bhagavat-Purana as it is the foundation of the path of devotion.

Being a propounder of the Pushti-Sect Shri Vallabhacharya is verily the Guru of all the followers, including the descendents of the his own, yet in accordance with the ordainment of Shri Vallabhacharya, the initiation should be received from the qualified male descendents of the lineage of Shri Vallabhacharya. If the initiation is received from any unqualified Guru, both the initiator and the receiver of the initiation meet with their downfall. The disciple fails to reach up to his destination and the initiator, due to his inability, leaves his disciple wandering off the path instead of leading him on the right path, and in the end this results into an unpardonable offence on his part.

We have seen that the initiation should be taken through the Guru who possesses the prescribed qualifications. In the second initiation a devotee proclaims before Shri Krishna: "O Shri Krishna! I am your servant and everything that belongs to me is for your service".

But is this all? Is it enough to utter this much? Is this the end of all duties? No, not in the least. The duty virtually starts only after initiation.

On having initiation, it becomes the duty of the devotee that he may fulfil the vow of dedicating all that belongs to him that he had made before Shri Krishna by holding Tulasi-leaves in his hands. This vow could be fulfilled only when it is materialized by dedicating physically everything in the service of Shri Krishna that had been proclaimed at the time of initiation.

Sarva-Samarpana (Total-Surrender)

Explaining in his book “Siddhanta-Rahasya” (The Secret of Doctrine), what course one should adopt subsequent to the second initiation, Shri Vallabhacharya says:

Nivedibhih samarpyaiva, sarvam kuryad iti sthithih.

Avowers should first dedicate all to Shri Krishna
And then do everything this is the decorum.

Meaning: Those who have made Atma-nivedana i.e. self-submission to Shri Krishna should do all their works after making submission to Shri Krishna every time and all those things they want to consume, must invariably be dedicated first to Bhagavan.

Shri Vallabhacharya has, here, shown the distinction between ‘Nivedana’ and ‘Samarpana’. ‘Nivedana’ means: (verbal) acknowledgement before Shri Krishna that all that is ours belongs to Shri Krishna. ‘Samarpana’ means: dedication of everything physically in the service of Shri Krishna that had been proclaimed to dedicate at the time of initiation. In what way should the Samarpana be made? Shri Vallabhacharya says in his book “Siddhanta-Rahasya”:

Tasmat adau sarvakarye, sarvavastusamarpanam.

Therefore, at the outset of every work we undertake,
All objects first must be dedicated to Shri Krishna.

Meaning: Before we do any work or before we use any object, it should be dedicated first to Shri Krishna.

Sometimes there arises a doubt: Devotees, of course, dedicate offerings to Shri Krishna but who knows whether Shri Krishna accepts them or not? Shri Krishna Himself resolves this doubt in the Gita by these words:

*Patram puspam phalam toyam yo me bhaktya prayacchati
Tadaham bhaktyupahrtam; asnami prayatatmanah.*

Tulsi-leaf, flower, fruit, Water whoever offers me with devotion;
Overpowered as I am by devotion I do relish it with soul subdued.

Meaning: Whosoever offers Me with deep-rooted devotion anything, be it even a Tulasi-leaf, a flower, a fruit or water, I am so much overpowered by devotion that I do relish it with My soul subdued to My dear devotee.

In Pushti-Sect, followers dedicate apparently everything not just Tulasi-leaf, flower, fruit or water to Shri Krishna at the time of initiation and that too with the mediatorship of Shri Vallabhacharya. Even then why does Shri Krishna not accept our offerings? But it is to be remembered that if one deviates from the prescribed devotional course of Shri Vallabhacharya, he withdraws his influence or mediatorship and then there is no guarantee for the acceptance of one's offerings by Shri Krishna. It can be understood with the help of one historical event:

Kishoribai was a poor disciple of Shri Vitthalanathaji. Some devotees, out of pity, brought her fine food-stuff to offer her Thakurji i.e. deity. Gladdened with the thought that He will be pleased, she prepared offerings and presented it in front of Thakurji. But lo! What to talk of eating, Thakurji didn't even cast a glance at the offering!! When she wanted to know its reason, Thakurji said: "Why did you accept that food-stuff for me? Why should I eat that which is owned by somebody else and not by you?" On hearing these words she realised her fault.

In this incident Thakurji teaches that if a devotee offers anything by asking from somebody else, or offers such object upon which he doesn't have his legal ownership, howsoever he may go on offering those things to Thakurji but to no avail. Not only Thakurji won't accept them but He will be much more displeased with this non-Vallabhian way. While defining Seva (service/worship) Shri Vitthalanathaji has forcefully discarded this type of practices as Seva. This can be understood by the historical incident of celebrated devotee Shri Padmanabhadasa.

In short, offerings received from other people, on demand or without demand, can't be offered to Shri Thakurji. Only those offerings can be offered which are solely owned by the devotee. If any kind of object belonging to others is held before one's own Thakurji, even by mistake, that object stands as good as unoffered, as it happened in case of Kishoribai. Thakurji does not accept it. Here, one should keep in one's mind that the consumption of unoffered objects is strictly prohibited.

Asamarpita-Tyaga (Abandonment of Unoffered Objects)

Just as the water of another river, or the water of a canal or the rain-water that mingles into the water of Ganga, turns out to be the Ganga-water, similarly, when all our belongings are dedicated to Shri Krishna, they become pure and divine. Making the use of such incorrupt and divine things, not a bit of impurity will enter into the devotee any more. If a devotee takes in use those objects which haven't been offered to Shri Krishna, or those which haven't been accepted by Shri Krishna, Impurity inflows by the means of those objects. By using such unoffered objects the devotee deviates from the divinity. His distance from Shri Krishna broadens. Hence, in his book “Siddhanta-Rahasya” Shri Vallabhacharya commanded:

Asamarpita-vastunam, tasmad-varjanam-acaret.

The objects that are unoffered;
Therefore be given up.

Meaning: Forsake all those objects that are not offered to Shri Krishna.

Just as contact with dirty water makes one dirty, similarly, using things that are unoffered and void of contact with Shri Krishna, makes the devotee impure. Devotee's mind deviates from the divinity and he goes away from Shri Krishna. Hence, one must abandon unoffered objects. Without performing Seva in one's own home, abandonment of unoffered objects is not possible.

Krishna-Seva (The Service of Shri Krishna)

Definition:

In the work of “Siddhanta-muktavali” Shri Vallabhacharya says:

Cetastat-pravanam seva, Tatsiddhyai tanuvittaja.

Meaning: Through the dedication of one's own body and money into the service of Shri Krishna, at one's own home, when the devotee's mind gets attached with Shri Krishna, it is called ‘Seva’.

Here one question arises: Can one attach one's mind to Shri Krishna by the means of muttering prayers or austerity or meditation or pilgrimage etc.? One can, but not at

the cost of Seva. Shri Vallabhacharya says that for Pushti-devotee Seva of Shri Krishna is everything: prayers, austerity, meditation or pilgrimage, too. When Shri Krishna Himself resides in devotee's home, what is to be achieved through pilgrimage, austerity or by any other means?

The secret of 'Tanuvittaja':

But one question still remains: how can one's mind get attached just by the dedication of one's own body and money into the service of Shri Krishna, at one's own home?

Let us see.

It is the tendency of the human mind to feel attraction towards any object with which it comes in contact. The longer and the closer the contact, the greater is the attraction it feels towards that object. Of all things in the world one's body is the closest. After that, the family-members, then the home, the wealth etc. All these objects remain, in some way or the other, closely associated with our mind. Moreover, the impressions of good as well as bad deeds committed by the man in his earlier births also remain stuck to his mind. For this reason, one's mind remains constantly attached to all these things. Therefore, Shri Vallabhacharya preaches to perform worship of Shri Krishna through one's own body and wealth in one's home. When these dearest things will be employed in the worship, where else human mind will go? It automatically will get attached with Shri Krishna through one's body, family, wealth, home etc. This exactly is the secret that lies behind Shri Vallabhacharya's preaching.

Partial dedication is futile:

Suppose somebody is dedicating only his body in the worship and not wealth etc.- that is to say he is doing worship as a payee of somebody else by selling his labour just like labourer Mukhiyas (priests) or as many money-grabber Goswamis do in temples/Havelis -then the part of his mind will certainly remain busy with unoffered things like wealth, family or home. Not only this, his mind will remain occupied only with the thought of accumulating the money. The temptation of money received in the name of deity and consumption of unoffered things are considered as the causes that bring total destruction of values in this sect. Similarly, if somebody is employing only his wealth in the worship and not his body- that is to say, he is not doing worship personally but supplying cash-kind in temple/Haveli just as most of the followers do today -then part of his mind will certainly remain busy with unemployed body and home. Not only this, employing somebody else in the worship does not help in enhancing devotional sentiment, instead, it enhances one's egotism. Thus the partial dedication of I=body and MY=wealth, home, family etc., in the worship results in the deviation of the devotee's mind from Shri Krishna. Not only this, purchasing or selling the worship of Bhagavan is considered as an unpardonable

sin in the Pushti-Bhakti-Sect. It kills the very sentiment of loveful devotion of Shri Krishna. Therefore, in his commentary on the work of “Siddhanta-muktavali”, Shri Vitthalanathaji says:

The worship that is performed through some person on payment of salary, or the worship that is performed with the money received from others is worship only in name (no worship at all).

Elaborating this statement Shri Purushottamaji says:

Devotion such as this has been shown nowhere in so many types of devotion as Bhagavan has shown. Those who earn their livelihood by making money in the name of Bhagavan’s worship are called as ‘Devalaka’, great sinners of the lowest category.

Total surrender:

Total surrender-of-one's-self-with-all-the-belongings is the most important principle of Pushti-Sect. This principle is shattered to pieces, when the partial dedication of I = body and MY = wealth, home, family etc., in the worship is practiced. When the doctrine of total-surrender is apieced, the edifice of the devotional path of Pushti will topple down. For all these reasons Shri Vallabhacharya says:

The only worship in which there is complete attachment of the mind to Shri Krishna is ‘Tanuvittaja’, worship of Shri Krishna that is performed with one's own body, one's own wealth and with the co-operation of the members of one's own family.

The place of worship:

The performance of such type of ‘Tanuvittaja’ worship is possible only in one's own home, and not in the public temple or Haveli. Therefore, Shri Vallabhacharya commanded in the work ‘Bhakti-Varddhini’:

Grhe sthittva svadharmatah.

Meaning: By following the duties of one's Varna and Ashrama the worship of Shri Krishna should be performed dwelling in one's home.

Nature of the Worshipped:

As per the theory of Brahama-Vada being omnipresent and omnipotent, [Brahama](#) is available everywhere in every name and form. The holy scriptures say, wherever and

in whatever form a devotee wants to worship god, He manifests Himself in that form. Therefore, the Svarupa i.e. idol enshrined in devotee's home is none but the Supreme Brahma Shri Krishna Himself and not a statue. The presence of the god in the form of idol is not imaginary. It is like an incarnation caused by the devotion.

Heartstrings for the Deity:

The Svarupa, who resides in the devotee's home for the worship, is all-in-all for devotee. By holding such devout sentiment in the heart, one should perform the worship. Shri Vallabhacharya says in 'Chatuhshloki':

Sarvada sarva-bhavena, bhajaniyo vrajadhipah.

Always and by all-soul;
Should the Lord of Vraja be worshipped.

Meaning: One should perform the worship of Shri Krishna i.e. the Lord of Vraja, with all the sentiments of one's heart forever.

Uninterrupted Worship and Remembering:

Human mind is fickle by its nature. So if the devotee remains without the worship or remembrances of Bhagavan even for a small amount of time, his mind will deviate from Bhagavan and will go astray. Hence, in 'Catuhshloki' Shri Vallabhacharya says:

*Atah sarvatmana shashvat, Gokuleshvara-padayoh;
Smaranam bhajanam capi, Na tyajyam iti me matih.*

So, with all-soul, for ever,
Of the lotus-feet of the Lord of Gokul;
Remembrance and worship withal,
Be not given up: This is my conviction.

Meaning: As one wishes that one's mind may never be separated from Bhagavan, one should never leave aside the worship and remembrance of Bhagavan. One should keep on worshipping and remembering Bhagavan through one's mind, speech and action.

Assistance in Seva:

At the time of initiation the devotee dedicates his family-members to Bhagavan. So, just as he employs his home, wealth etc. in the worship of Shri Krishna, similarly he

should employ the members of his family in the worship of Shri Krishna. Otherwise, his dedication remains imperfect.

Here one question arises: What to do if all the members of the family are not inclined to co-operate in the worship? Shri Vallabhacharya resolves this problem by saying:

*Bharyadiranukulashcet Karayet bhagavat-kriyam
Udasine svayam kuryat; Pratikule grham tyajet.*

The wife and the rest if favourable be,
They be made to participate in the service of Bhagavan;
Indifferent if they be, one should serve by one's own self,
Unfavourable if they are, one should leave home.

Meaning: If one's wife and other members of the family are found to be favourable, they should be incorporated in the worship of the deity. If they remain indifferent, one should perform Bhagavan's service by oneself; but if they are adverse and unfavourable, in that case one should leave home.

Those members of the family, who are enthusiastic to participate in the service of Bhagavan, are indeed blessed by Bhagavan. With this understanding, they should be incorporated in the service. But those members of the family, who are indifferent in this matter, should not be forced to participate in the service. One should reconcile that so is the will of Bhagavan. In that case one should perform by oneself all the service as much as possible. But one should never stay under one roof with those who cause obstacles in the service.

Thus, very briefly we have discussed various topics related to the Service. Every disciple of any sect, at one or another time, faces difficulty while following his path. Whom shall he approach in that case? And, in case somebody, when approached, shows some way-out, how will he know whether that which has been shown is right or wrong?

Brahama: Brhama, Paramatma and Bhagavan are the three names of the Supreme Reality, used in different contexts. In the context of metaphysics/philosophy, 'Brahma'; in the context of individual-soul and the function of regulating the creation Paramatma; and in the context of incarnations and Lila 'Bhagavan' are generally used.

Siddhanta-jnana (The Knowledge of the Doctrines)

While studying, sometimes, if a student faces any difficulty, he consults his teacher. In case a teacher is not available, he consults some senior student. Sometimes, it may so happen that he may not get even a teacher or a senior student who can solve his problem. In that case, he himself will have to go through his study-books and find out its solution. Similarly, if any complication takes place while following one's path, at first one should consult an efficient Guru. In his treatise 'Navaratna' Shri Vallabhacharya says:

Sevakrtir guror ajna.

Service be performed in accordance with;
The instruction of the Guru.

Meaning: In the beginning followers do not know the intricacy of the principles of their path. So disciples should follow the path in accordance with the commandment of the Guru.

In case the Guru is not available, one should obtain the guidance from the senior devotee who-

1. Belong to the Pushti-sect, and
2. Who has comprehensive knowledge of doctrines, protocols, rituals etc., of the sect.

One should never consult those whose conduct is contradictory to the doctrines of Pushti-sect. May be, such self-centered people will mislead a devotee to go astray in order to serve his own selfish end. Hence, when one can't get a worthy Guru or guide, then the only alternative left is to consult to the original texts and commentaries of the leading preceptors such as Shri Vallabhacharya, Shri Gopinathaji, Shri Vitthalanathaji and others, and also of the succeeding preceptors like Shri Gokulanathaji, Shri Kalyanarayaji, Shri Harirayacharana, Shri Purushottamaji and others.

Even otherwise, it is Shri Vallabhacharya's dictum that disciples should perform worship in the light of the scriptures. Hence, followers should invariably study the works of preceding preceptors of the sect. If followers have not studied the original works to some extent, anybody can mislead them from the path into an opposite

direction. But at the same place, if they have studied even the ABC's of the doctrinal works they shall at least be in the position to understand what is what and whose advice is in accord or whose out of accord with the doctrines of Shri Vallabhacharya. Explaining 'Dussanga' i.e. bad-company in his work 'Shikshapatra' Shri Harirayacharana says:

*Yo vadatyanyatha-vakyam, Acharyavacanat janah;
Samsrtiprerako vapi, Tatsango dushtasangamah.*

One who speaks otherwise,
Than what Shri Vallabhacharya has said;
And even makes others move world-ward,
His company is the company of the wicked.

Meaning: If any person speaks otherwise and contradicts what Shri Vallabhacharya has said, and even gives advice so that the follower may turn away from Bhagavan, the company of that man should be taken as the company of a bad fellow. Even if the Guru himself gives such a piece of advice, the disciple should consider his company as bad-company and so forthwith avoid it.

Dana-Devadravya (Donation-Ownings of God)

Believe it or not-say it or not, Bhagavan is the soul owner of the universe. So, when a devotee dedicates all his belongings to Bhagavan through the sacred formula-mantra of Brahma-sambandha, he just reconciles and acknowledges this reality in the presence of the Bhagavan and the initiator Guru. (Therefore, there is no question of the transfer of ownership). Along with this reconciliation, the devotee redefines his relationship with Bhagavan that Bhagavan is the Master and he is an humble servant. It is the duty of a servant that he may live upon whatever objects his master gives him by his grace. Hence, being an humble servant of Shri Krishna, in all the dealings of the life the devotee should take in his use what is 'Prasada' or 'Samarapita'. (The object that has been offered to Bhagavan is called 'Samarpita'. And that which has been given back graciously to the devotee after it has been relished by Bhagavan is called 'Prasada'). This is all about Samarpana i.e. dedication.

Very often when something is given to somebody with the sentiment that now onward this thing will not remain that of mine'. Such transfer of the ownership cannot be called 'Samarpana' i.e. dedication, but it is called 'Dana' i.e. donation. The donator withdraws his right of ownership from the thing that is to be donated and makes the receiver its owner. Similarly, when the devotee offers to the deity something with the sentiment of the donation, it cannot be considered as Samarpana or Dedication according to the scriptures. In spite of being the owner of the universe, now the deity becomes the sole owner of the donated object, in the legal or moral sense too. And, the donator ceases to be its owner. That is why the donated object becomes 'Devadravya', the object owned by the deity. Therefore, according to scriptures, the donator or any other person can no more consume that 'Devadravya', donated object, be it even Prasada.

Nowadays, in the [Havelies](#) and temples, the deity is offered the gifts and the donations received from followers in the name of deity and worship. These offerings become the property of the deity and not of any Goswami-Maharajs, Mukhiyas, trustees or administrators and followers. Therefore, be it a Prasada, none of them has any right to consume anything out of it. If anybody consumes such Prasada that is owned by the deity, he becomes the sinner. In his commentary on the treatise of 'Navaratana', Shri Vitthalanathaji writes:

Dane hi na svaviniyogah.

Meaning: What is donated should not be taken in one's use.

Refer also to Shri Vallabhacharya who states:

“One who uses Devadravya- what belongs to deity, will not be worthy of being called my disciple. And if my disciple is a devout person, he shall never take anything that belongs to the deity. In case he takes, he will become a great sinner”.

Thus, whatever is offered to the deity as donation/gift it becomes Devadravya i.e. the belonging of the deity and one should never take it in one's use.

Pushti-sect is the path of surrender. When the devotee dedicates anything to the deity, his legal or moral right of ownership is not withdrawn from it. Through dedication, it is only the ego of being its owner (my-ness) that is dedicated. This is the reason why no sin is committed by using the object that has been dedicated to the deity. But here it should be kept in mind that only that object which is solely one's own belonging can be dedicated to the deity, according to the commandment of Shri Vallabhacharya. If some other person offers any thing owned by him, for the deity, forthwith it becomes Devadravya i.e. the property of the deity. The historical event of Kishoribai teaches that the deity never accepts and relishes the object that is owned by others.

Haveli: Residence of the Goswami preceptor.

1. Refer also to the historical events of Santadas (84 Vaishnava-varta:) and Binakara (252 Vaishnava-varta).
2. Refer also to the historical events of “Two Vaishnavas both of whom saw worms” (252 Vaisnava-varta:).

Devalaka

(One Who Adopts Worship as a Source of Income)

Pushti-sect is the path of devotion without any worldly and otherworldly desire. If there is any desires in the least it is to perform the worship of Shri Krishna in this birth and in the hereafter births. This is called ‘Nirguna-Bhakti’ or ‘Pushti-Bhakti’. In his ‘Subodhini’ commentary on the Bhagavata-Purana Shri Vallabhacharya says:

The worship that is performed with a sense of duty or to wash away sins or to dedicate the fruit of deeds or with the mind full of greed-jealousy-pride etc.-is no devotion at all. The worship that is performed with mind full of such selfish sentiment is nothing but a

mere drama of devotion. Such a mean-minded worshipper earns defaults in place of devotion.

That is why it is said in the scriptures:

*Devarcanaparo yastu, Vittartha vatsaratrayam;
Sa vai devalako nama, Havya-kavyesu garhitah.*

One that is given to the worship,
Day in and day out to earn one's own livelihood;
Is, by the name of 'Devalaka' known,
And is to be avoided from sacrificial rites.

Meaning: The Brahmana who adopts worshipping as a source of income for his livelihood is called 'Devalaka'. And so, he is to be debarred from the performance of rites and ceremonies of sacrifice, oblation and offering after the dead etc.

Whosoever offers donations, gifts or food-stuff to such Devalaka, becomes a sinner. One should take a bath even if he is touched by such a Devalaka -this is what scriptures evidently say. In the commentary of the treatise, "Siddhantamuktavali" Shripurusottamaji writes:

“One who practises the worship of the deity motivated by selfish designs to earn wealth and self-appraisal, is an imposter and "a filthy Devalaka”.

This statement implies that if any person asks for money or food-stuff or anything from others for his own deity or accepts them when offered by somebody else, he should be taken as an imposter, a filthy Devalaka. Hence, according to Shri Vallabhacharya, it is a heinous sin to perform the worship of one's own deity in order to earn money or fame. Bhagavan Himself is the true wealth of a devotee- by keeping such divine heartstring in one's heart, when one performs the worship of one's deity, it truly becomes devotion.

Shravana-Kirtana-Satsanga
(Hearing-Singing-Associating with the Good)

After performing worship, the devotee becomes busy with worldly entanglement. In such a situation his mind deviates from the God. That it should not happen so and the remembrance of the God may remain with him for ever it is extremely necessary for the devotee to engage himself to hearing uttering, remembering, reading, singing, discussing or studying the history-name-hymn etc. Just as the medicine is taken to cure diseases, similarly, Shri Vallabhacharya instructs strictly to study Bhagavat-Purana attentively and habitually in order to drive out anti-devotional impulses that have entered into the devotee's mind. It is desirable to learn Bhagavat-Purana from the learned Guru or such devotees. Never, never the devotee should hear or learn the Bhagavata-Purana from those who narrate it to make money. Condemning those who treat glorification of the God as money-making business Shri Vallabhacharya says in his book 'Jalabheda':

Jalarthameva gartastu; Nicah ganopajivinah.

Like dirty water that lies lowly in a pit,
Are those that live by singing praises of the God.

Meaning: Those who sing praises of the God to earn money should be considered as dirty water that lies in a pit.

People keep themselves far from dirty water. Similarly, disciples of the path of Pushti should keep such lowly people at arm's length, considering it as the wicked company. A faithful follower should never seek company of such people who take a disadvantage of the devotion-minded followers. Therefore, the devotee should seek company of those who are void of any monitory or other selfish motives. Shri Vallabhacharya says this with regard to Bhagavat-Purana:

*Pathaniyam prayatnena Sarvahetuvivarjitam,
Vrtyartham naiva yunjita Pranaih kanthagatairapi.*

Bhagavat be read by ourselves.
Absolutely without any mean-motives;
Never be it used as means to earn living,
Until you breathe your last.

Meaning: The disciple should study Bhagavat-Purana by himself without entertaining any worldly or otherworldly desire of any kind. The disciple

Pushti-sect must never treat Bhagavat-Purana as a means to make money even though life may depart from him.

It is a strong conviction of Shri Vallabhacharya that Bhagavat-Purana is identical with Shri Krishna. Hence, Shri Vallabhacharya gives more importance to Bhagavat-Purana than even Veda or any other Puranas. The vivid and beautiful narration of Shri Krishna as the Supreme Being along with Brahma-vada that is given in Bhagavat-Purana is not to be found even in Vedas, Upanishads and other Puranas.

Brahma-Vada

In Catuhsloki-Bhagavata, Bhagavan explains the Brahmavada in this way:

*Ahamevasamevagre, Nanyad yat sadasatparam;
Pascadaham yadetacca, Yo'vasisyeta sosmyaham.*

Only I was there in the beginning, none else,
All living, lifeless objects that are seen, it's I,
After the dissolution of the whole existence,
Whatever may remain, it will be none else but Me.

Meaning: Before the emergence of the universe, I was there. There was none else but Me. At present whatever living and lifeless objects are seen, it's all Me. And after the dissolution of the whole universe, whatever may remain as the only residue, it will be only Me, none else.

In simple words it can be said that:-

- Shri Krishna is the creator of the universe.
- Shri Krishna Himself has become the universe.
- Shri Krishna is the Master of the universe.
- Shri Krishna will be the residue after the dissolution of the universe.
- Shri Krishna
- is the divine person, in spite of being omnificent-omnipresent-omniscient and omnipotent power.

To be more precise: Whenever, however, wherever, by or through whatever, out of whatever, for whatever, of whatever, to whatever; in the material form or conscious form or divine form, whatever happens -it is all-in-all, the Lord Himself. This is the notion of the Brahmavada.

Pramana (The Authoritative Means of Valid Knowledge)

The authoritative means of valid knowledge is called 'Pramana'. Whatever we see e.g., a car or a tree, our eyes become the means of knowledge in seeing it. Our ears become the means of knowledge through the sound. Words of the elders and writings of the historians become the source of knowledge regarding the history. We have neither seen well-known kings such as Rana Pratapa, Sivaji or Manasinha nor we have witnessed their heroic feats. However, we know much about them and we also believe them to be true, not as a matter of mere blind faith but as rational knowledge. Similarly, an ordinary man cannot find the answer independently with his own intellect of the questions as to: who created this world, how this world was created, from what this world was created, when this world was created, how the God looks like, how the God can be seen or attained etc. Godly scriptures like Veda, Purana etc., and the sages like Shri Vallabhacharya, who have experienced the reality are the only rational means for an ordinary man to find out the answer of those questions.

In fact, scriptures of the Sanatana-Dharma are so voluminous that if somebody devotes the whole span of his life in the study of the scriptures, it will not be enough to fathom their oceanic knowledge. Perhaps some person may be able to read all the scriptures, even then, it is very difficult for him to understand the underlying significance of all the scriptures. This is because, all the subject matters in the scriptures have not been written only for a single person. Different subject matters have been depicted in scriptures so as to suit to the people of different nature and quality. For this reason, at some places, some contradiction seems to have crept into the matters of scriptures. It is altogether a different thing so far as a highly intellectual person is concerned, but it is beyond the capacity of ordinary people to understand all the scriptures by them selves. Here, Shri Vallabhacharya shows a short and sweet way out of the above problem. As in all educational systems the curriculum starts with the simplest subject matter and as the student gains the higher standard, the subject matter gradually becomes complex. Similarly, in the beginning one should study only those scriptures in which there is no contradiction or vagueness and which brings out the very essence of all scriptures. For this reason, Shri Vallabhacharya says in his work 'Sastrartha-Nibandha':

*Vedah Shri Krishna-vakyani, vyasasutrani caivahi;
Samadhibhasha vyasasya Pramanam taccatushtayam.*

Vedas, Shri Krishna's Gita,
Brahmasutras as well,

And Bhagavat of Vyasa;
All the four are means of knowledge.

Meaning: In the first stage of acquiring knowledge; Vedas, Gita, Brhma-Sutras along with Jaimini-Sutras and Bhagavat, all these scriptures having one harmonious unity or as they stand united reciprocally, are the means of knowledge.

The essence of all the scriptures that we come to know is only this:

*Ekam sastram devakiputragitam
Eko devo devakiputraeva,
Mantro'pyekas tasya namani yani
Karmo'pyekam tasya devasya seva.*

Greatest scripture there is, that is sung by the son of Devaki.
Greatest Godhead there is, that is the son of Devaki.
Greatest Mantra there is, that is the names of Shri Krishna.
Greatest duty there is and that is the worship of Shri Krishna.

Meaning: The Gita that is said by Shri Krishna is the quintessence of all the scriptures. Bhagavan Shri Krishna is the only Godhead. The names of Shri Krishna are the greatest Mantra. And the worship of Shri Krishna is the best duty.

Samanya-Dharma (General duties)

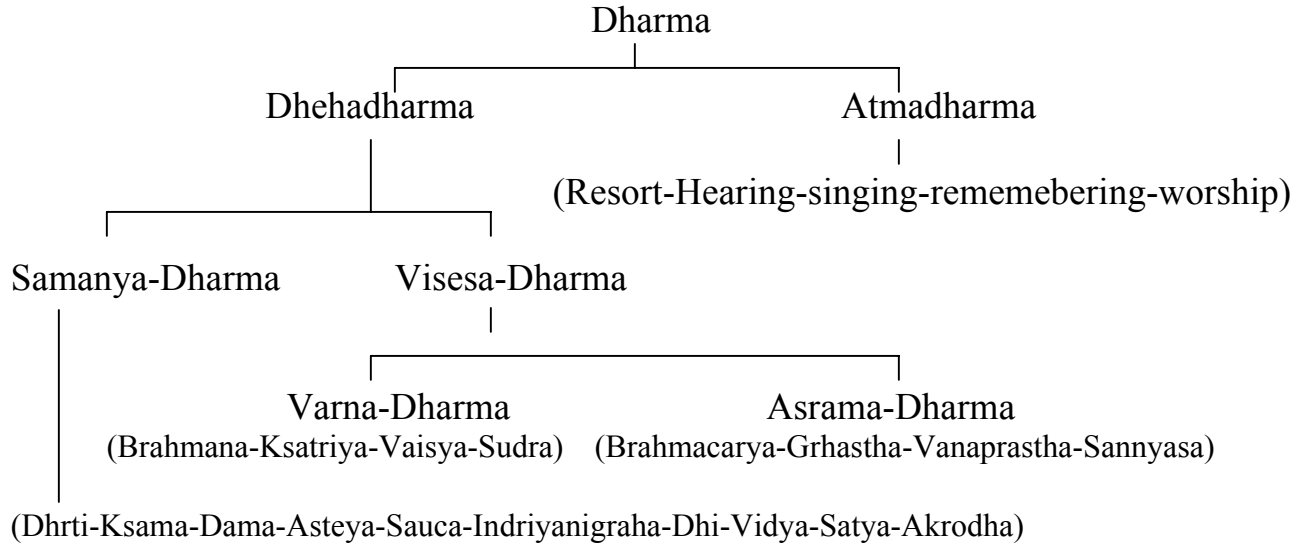
There are two categories of Dharma i.e. duty. One is Atma-Dharma i.e. duties related to the human-soul and the other is Deha-Dharma i.e. duties related to the human body. Worship, remembrance etc. of Shri Krishna is called the Atma-Dharma. It is also known as Antar-Dharma i.e. intrinsic duties. Whereas, the Deha-Dharma is known as Bahya-Dharma i.e. extrinsic duties. This is narrated in Veda, Smṛti, Purana etc.

Deha-Dharma is of two kinds: Vishesha-Dharma = specific duty and Samanya-Dharma = General duty. The Specific-Dharma is prescribed on the basis of Varna and Ashrama. It narrates do's and don'ts of the four classes: Brahmana, Ksatriya, Vaisya and Shudra; and of the four stages: Brahmacharya, Grhastha, Vanaprastha and Sannyasa. The general-Dharma is applicable equally to all the classes of society and all the stages of life. In Manusmṛti, Samanya-Dharmas are enlisted as under:

*Dhṛti-kshama damo'steyam, Shaucamindriyanigrahaḥ;
Dhīrvidya-satyamakrodho, Dashakam dharmalakshanam.*

Meaning: Satisfaction, mercy, tolerance, non-stealing, purity, control of sense, knowledge of dharma and soul, truth and cool-temperament- these ten are the elements of Dharma.

All these Dharmas are truly called “Sanatana-Dharma” or “Vaidic-Varnashrama-Sanatana-Dharma” i.e. everlasting Dharma of Varna and Ashrama, commanded by the Veda. Today people know this by the name of “Hindu-Dharma”. The following table explains fairly well the classification of Dharma.



1. Dhrti: Satisfaction.
2. Kshama: To be kind to all; never to think ill of anybody.
3. Dama: Tolerance. Treat equally joys-sorrows, respect-insult etc.
4. Asteya: Never to steal, not to snatch away other's belongings unjustly and un-righteously.
5. Shauca: To maintain purity in accordance with the scriptures.
6. Indriyanigraha: To prevent all senses like hands, legs, mind etc. from indulging in un-righteous acts. Not to be over-involved in any mundane pleasures.
7. Dhi: To acquire the knowledge of Dharma and of protocol tradition culture etc.
8. Vidya: To acquire the knowledge of Atma-Dharma.
9. Satya: To speak the truth, to be on the side of truth, not to indulge in wrongdoings.
10. Akrodha: To keep mind in control, not to be angry.

These ten Dharmas are beneficial to the entire humanity. The practice of these Dharma is helpful not only in improving one's social life but also in one's Pushti-devotion. Along with practicing devotion, as far as possible, one should also observe the Vishesh-Dharma as instructed by the scriptures. But one should always keep oneself away from Adharma i.e. unrighteousness and Para-Dharma- Dharma of other people and hypocrisy.

The cow has been given an extremely important place in Dharma. The cow is extremely dear to Shri Krishna. Shri Krishna has been named 'Gopala' only because

He nourishes and takes care of the cows. For devotees the cow is not only a holy animal but also is regarded as the mother. It is said for the cow:

Matarah sarvabhutanam, Gavah sarvasukhaprada.

Mother of all beings,
The cow is bestower of all happiness.

Hence, it is our sacred duty to nourish and protect cows that are so dear to Shri Krishna.

Dinacharya (The Daily Routine of the Devotee)

Laziness is the greatest enemy of one's progress in life. Hence, we should shake off our lethargy and get up early in the morning. If we begin the day with good deed, it will pass fairly well throughout. As soon as we get up in the morning, the very first thing that we should do is to behold the portrait of Shri Vallabhacharya. If the deity is enshrined in home, one should go to the temple and should prostrate devoutly. By saying ""Jay Shri Krishna" to all the members of the family one should receive blessings from the elders. After having bath the devotee should apply Tilaka and take Caranamrta i.e. the sacred water and clay. Then with the permission from the elders one should perform worship of Shri Krishna as long as possible. If the Mantra of initiation is not remembered it will lose its efficacy and will automatically become null and void. Hence, one should necessarily recite it. Sitting in a quiet and pure place by putting respectfully a portrait of Shri Krishna in front side, concentrating the mind in Shri Krishna, the devotee should recite the Mantra. If the devotee is conversant with the works of Shri Vallabhacharya, he will never face any difficulty in his course. Hence, everyday he should insistently read works like Shodasha-Grantha etc., and also necessarily recite Bhagavat and the Gita as far as possible. A devotee can recite them any time of the day after having bath but it will be better if he does it in the morning.

If the devotee is initiated by Brahma-Sambandha, he must not consume unoffered things. Hence, he should insist on consuming the Prasada of what is Samarpita i.e. dedicated to Shri Krishna. Here, it must be remembered that the objects of one's own belongings and which are offered to Shri Krishna can become Samarpit-Prasada. Any sort of addiction is detrimental for one's personality. So, all kinds of addictions should be given up.

In the spare time, doctrinal works of leading preceptors, the life and works of 84-252 devotees, Bhagavata-Purana and the literature pertaining to one's sect should be studied. One should participate in the gatherings of the followers of one's own sect, where the religious & devotional topics are discussed. It is the prime duty of the Gurus to impart to their disciples instructions and knowledge of the doctrines. If any person is reluctant to do so and does not preach the doctrines of the sect, he is certainly not fit to be entitled as a Guru. Therefore, fortunately, if any preceptor is within reach, he must approach him for studying the doctrinal works of the sect and should frequently request him for it as a right.

One should extend one's helping hand as far as possible and cooperate wholeheartedly in any good activities related to the sect. One should strongly protest against those people who use evil tongue and do evil deeds against one's sect, Shri Krishna and Sanatana-Dharma. Followers should neither participate even in places of one's own sect wherever nefarious activities in contradiction with the principles of Shri Vallabhacharya are going on, nor they should co-operate in such activities directly or indirectly. Even going to such places and cooperating in such activities is a heinous offence and no offence can be greater than that. There are some selfish and pernicious people within and without the sect, that do such activities which are made to wear the mask of the Pushti-sect. They do it mischievously with devilish designs to present the instructions and doctrines of Shri Vallabhacharya in a distorted, deceitful and misleading way. One should beware of such imposters and masqueraders and wherever possible should courageously expose their evil designs.

It is very sacred duty of a disciple to persuade again and again to those people who act against the principles of Shri Vallabhacharya out of ignorance. However, this is possible only when the disciple himself has the deep knowledge of the principles. Hence, at the end, come, let us prostrate at the lotus-feet of Shri Vallabhacharya and pay obeisance to Him. Let us pray him that he may bless us with the wisdom, faith and strength that may inspire us to follow our path in the right direction and the right spirit.