

2.0 Introduction

When Joy and Supreme Bliss incarnated as His face, a flow of immeasurable grace descended to enlighten divine souls. He became the Beloved, Shri Vallabh. This Beloved Vallabh, knower of the inner Veda, son of Lakshman Bhatt, became a sun to the lotus of devotion. When its petals opened, the fragrance of bhakti, the adoring practice became available to those who could fathom the call. They became Shri Krishna's beloveds. Come join us as we take a look into Shri Vallabh's life and Lila. His Path is Grace-filled and his principles profound. Compassion is the seed and Nectar is the reward. Beloved Vallabh has appeared as Krishna's own face. When there is need for spiritual adjustment in this world, that is, when the paths of dharma and devotion are covered with the impurities of this age of strife, an incarnation or wonderful saint arrives to make the world an easier place to experience His remarkable Presence. Shri Krishna promises in the Gita, "Whenever anti-dharma forces prevail, I take birth again and again, for the establishment of dharma."

India has been blessed with numerous avatars of God and honored by birth of mahatmas, gurus and saints. Great thinkers are the beacon, inspiration and pride of our extremely rich culture, civilization and history. Such mahatmas have offered so much scientific and spiritual knowledge to the world. One special amongst these great souls is Shree Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhu, a scholar, philosopher and preacher of the highest distinction. He appeared for the upliftment of divine souls. In fact it is said that Shri Krishna Himself came into the world in the form of Shri Vallabhacharyaji in order to save Hinduism. He founded the Pushti Marg: the path (Marg) towards the grace (Pushti) of God.¹

During the times of Shri Vallabhacharya's appearance, northern India had been conquered by the Mughals. The Vedic dharmas were in distress. Shri Vallabhacharya explained the situation precisely, "All the spiritual paths have been destroyed in India. Hypocrisy is rampant." The paths of loving devotion had become obscure, the holy places filled with business-minded people and the mantras ineffective. It was time for Shri Krishna's face to appear as Shri Vallabh, the giver of the priceless award, the extremely generous one who would not be understood by those devoted to physical matter. The scene was ready and the time was ripe for the Beloved Sun of Devotion to arrive for the benefit of the pure-hearted.²

Shri Vallabhacharya was not only a Saint but a great philosopher. Both philosophy and religion are the steps to Reality i.e. God. Actually he was the founder of Pushti Marg. He left his home and went for his first Prithvi Parikrama at a tender age of only 13 years. He lived for 52 years but completed many tasks which were not possible by mere mortals.³

2.1 Biographical Sketch

Shree Vallabhacharya: (A. D. 1479–1531) was the second son of Lakshamana Bhatt, a Tailangana Brahmin. His ancestors were men of deep learning steeped in Vedic Lore and the Hindu scriptures. They lived in Kakarvad o Kakumbhakar, a town on the southern bank of the river Krishna, presently in the state of Andhara Pradesh⁴.

Shri Vallabh was born in the year 1478 A.D. (Vikrami Samvat 1535) in Champaranya near Raipur in Central India. He was the son Of Shri Laxman Bhatt and Illama garu. Shri Vallabhacharya's parents were Brahmin, natives of the Andhra, Region of Southern India. Shri Laxman Bhattji was the descendant of Yagnanarayan Bhatt, to

whom the Lord had promised on the completion of a 100 Somayagnas that the Lord himself would be born in his family. In the Year in which Shri Vallabh was born there was a rumor that there was going to be an invasion in the city of Banaras (Varanasi). So Shri Laxman Bhatt ji left Banaras with his wife, who was pregnant, and started from their house at Hanuman Ghat in Benaras to go to his native village in Andhra Pradesh (South India). On the way when they came to the little forest of Champaranya Shri Illamaji had severe labour pain and gave birth to Shri Vallabh. This was only the seventh month of the pregnancy period so all were not sure whether the child would survive. At first Shri Vallabh did not cry or make any sort of movement that a new born baby makes. Even when Shri Laxman Bhattji tried a few things he did not respond. So all of them thought that the child was born dead and so they continued with their journey leaving Shri Vallabh behind in the forest.

At night the Lord himself came to Shri Laxman Bhattji and told him to go back and pick up the child who was the incarnation of the Lord himself. Shri Laxman Bhattji sat up from his sleep and decided to go back to the spot where he had left Shri Vallabh, though he thought that the child might have perished alone in that forest. On returning to that place all of them saw that Shri Vallabh was playing and had the thumb of his leg in his mouth and a ring of fire was lit up around him to protect him. All those present, along with Shri Laxman Bhattji himself, were astonished on seeing this scene. After a while all of them regained their senses and Shri Illamaji picked Shri Vallabh in her hands as the ring of fire disappeared. They took Shri Vallabh back to Varanasi instead of going to their native place. On their way they stayed in Chauda Nagar for performing some of the initial sanskaras such as the namkaran (naming of a child). After a few days they returned

to Varanasi.⁴ Great persons are believed to have been born under extraordinary circumstances and so was the birth of Vallabhacharya.

2.1.1 Education

Shri Vallabh was interested in studies from his early childhood. When all the other children of his age were busy playing with toys, Shri Vallabh used to play with books.⁵

Shri Vallabh is very soft, sensible and divine from childhood only. At the age of 6 years instead of different kinds of toys provided to him he used to play with religious books instead⁶.

His education commenced at the age of six with the study of vedas. Lakshman Bhatt himself was a learned man and so he took keen interest in his child's education. He engaged the best tutors who were well versed in their subjects. When he was 6 years old Shri Laxman Bhatt ji engaged good teachers to teach Aksharhashya, Adhyatma Vidya (education of the Vedas) and Shad Darshan (six systems of Indian Philosophy) to Shri Vallabh.⁶

Care was taken to impart Vallabhacharya's education in Sanskrit. Rasa-Lila portion of the Bhagwata particularly appealed him. The Ras-Lila was also represented in wall-Paintings at his house. He generally sat and went in deep within himself looking to these wall paintings. His parents entertained high hopes of his future greatness as a leading religious teacher and a founder of a new system of Indian Philosophy⁷.

Shri Vallabh acquired command on these subjects. In no time Shri Vallabh had learnt all the things that the teachers could teach at times surpassing his teachers with his

sharp reasoning and brilliant thinking powers. Soon at the age of eleven he had surpassed his teachers with his intensive thinking and sharp reasoning.⁸

2.1.2 Astonishing Talent

Within only two years of initiation at the tender age of 11 years Shri Vallabh began discussing the intricacies of the meaning of the various doctrines such as Vishishtadwaita, Kewaladwaita, Dwaita, etc. In a most critical manner. This surprised all those who met him.

In Kalasri, Shri Vallabhacharya was involved in a philosophical discussion on Khyativada (doctrine of Error) with some scholars. Vallabhacharya explained various kinds of Khyatis, resorted to by the Buddhists and the followers of Samkhya, The Naiyayika, The Vaisheshika and the Mimansa Schools. The scholars were perfectly satisfied by this explanation.

Vallabhacharya's next stopping point was Vyankateshwara and Lakshmana Balaji. Here Ravinatha tested his learning in the Vedas, particularly in his knowledge of the Vedic Mantras. Vallabhacharya correctly recited hundred mantras, not only from beginning to the end but also in the reverse order. Then he was questioned about the true nature of Tamas (Darkness). Vallabhacharya explained Tamas as a negative quality contradicting Vaisheshika School who conceive it as a positive quality. It was particularly in this town that he made a strong impression on the public as an embodiment of knowledge. He was applauded as a Bala Saraswati.

Shri Vallabh was a very bright and good student of all the aspects of the Hindu society and achieved their thorough knowledge at a very tender age. When Shri Vallabh went to visit his uncle in Vidyanagar a Shastrarth (discussion) was going on between the

Vaishnavas and the Mayavadins. Shri Vallabh came to know from the locals that the Mayavadins were going to win in a day or two. Hearing that the Mayavadins at a certain stage were scoring a victory over their opponents, Vallabhacharya determined to Participate in the discussion with a view Shri Vallabh started asking questions to the Mayavadins, who till then were on the verge of winning the discussion. The Mayavadins had no answer to the questions asked by Shri Vallabh and they finally accepted defeat. On this day Shri Vallabh established a new school of thought known as the Shhudhadvaita.

Krishnadev Rai then decided to perform a Kanakabhishek (a bath in water of pure gold) of Shri Vallabh. He not only weighed Shri Vallabh with gold but also gave him vast wealth. But Shri Vallabh took only 7 gold coins because he wanted to construct a temple of Shrinathji and gave the remaining wealth to the poor.⁹

2.1.3 Three Pilgrimages during his life

Shri Vallabhacharya decided to go for pilgrimages so as to impart knowledge of concept of Indian Brahama. At that time people were confused in lots of false misconceptions and lots of wrong principles were prevalent in society. Shri Vallabhacharya felt the need to educate the common people and show them a right path, for this purpose he started Spiritual journeys. The approximate time taken for these Journeys was approximately fifteen years. Shri Vallabhacharya ji went for three such spiritual journeys. The purpose of those spiritual journeys was to show human beings their exact position and restoring the principles of Upnishadas and Vedas. He opened the way of Religion to everybody irrespective of Caste, Creed or Sex. He walked down Barefooted approximately Fifteen years for educating the people and for restoring the lost glory of Vedas and Upnishadas¹⁰.

Shri Vallabh completed three pilgrimages during his life. Shri Vallabh's aim of undertaking these pilgrimages was to meet as many people as possible and teach them his philosophy. Shri Vallabh wanted to reach all the Daivi Jeevas (Human beings) who were there on this earth and take them back to God by giving them the Brahma sambandh Diksha. He met lot of human beings during the three Parikramas and gave them Brahma Sambandh whereby they were accepted by Lord Krishna.¹¹

First Pilgrimage:

His first choice for first pilgrimage was for South India, as south India was the land of the Birth of great Acharyas like Shankara, Ramanuja, Bhaskara, Nimbarka and Madhva. It has many seats where scholars from different parts of India met for discussions and debates on philosophical and religious subjects. It was free from political disturbances, it was the center of Vaishnavism. A large part of south India was ruled by the Hindu Kings of Vijayanagar. He travelled on foot with a few followers. He made brief halts at various places and delivered lectures on Bhagvata and other subjects. Those who come to scoff and to dispute with him, became his true followers¹².

During his first Pilgrimage he proceeded to Chitrakuta and then moved to Champaranya where he gave discourse on the Bhagvata. Then he directed his course to Siddhipada Vriddhunagar and Stambhadipura and finally reached Agrabiara where the sacred thread ceremony of his younger brother Keshava was performed. Next he visited Mangalaprastha where he had discussion with Dhondhi, who was anxious to hear Vallabhacharya's views on the subject assuming sacrificial cult the only means of liberation. After satisfiying Dhondhi, Shri Vallabhacharya visited many places including Kundinpura, Kalasri, Vyankateshwara, Lakshmana Balaji, Vijaynagar, Pampa Sarovara,

Mount Rishyamuka, Prema-madhuri, Shiva-Kanchi, Vishnu-Kanchi, Shri Rangaji, Chidambaram, Mannar Gudi (Dwarka of the South), Madhurai, Rameshwaram, Dhanush-Kodi, Chandragiri, Dhavalpura and Mathura. He ends the first phase of his 1st pilgrimage on Thakurani Ghata under a shami tree at Gukula.

During first pilgrimage he had words and discussions with lot of scholars and eminent spiritual gurus. Preached Bhagvata. He preached his theory of Suddhaadvita in a convincing and persuasive manner that people understood the concept very easily and became his followers. He told people that the word is Physical, Spritual and Divine. The theory of unreality is fallacious¹³.

The Second Pilgrimage:

When He reached Gokul his mind was revolving on the important question of restoring people to the right path of devotion. During the first phase of his pilgrimage he observed that people are divided not only politically and culturally but also spiritually and religiously. Besides, the lives of many were not in the consonance with the scriptural teachings. He felt that Vedic rituals had lost their significance and the mantras were ineffective. The holy places lost their sanctity, and priestly class were corrupt and those that betook to religious instructions, lacked purity. He gave a theory of Pushti-marga according to which the ultimate way to attain Moksha is complete devotion towards Lord. The only way is by self-dedication or consecration of self, wealth and all other material things. The limitless love for God and complete devotion towards the Lord is the only key to unison with the lord¹⁴.

Shri Vallabhacharya started his second pilgrimage from Pushkara (near Ajmer) which has a temple dedicated to God Brahma and then entered a forest known as

Ambica-Vana on Mount Abu on the northern border of Gujarat. Proceeding southwards, he crossed Rajputana (Rajasthan). Siddhapur was the first place visited by him. Here he had discussions with Mayavadins. Then he visited Patan which was a stronghold of Jainism. Here he had discussions with Jain Sadhus. At Patan he preached his doctrine of Pushti-Marga to the Vishnavas and made them his followers by the Brhma-Sambandha Ceremony. From Patan he proceeded to Vadanagar and Visnagar and finally reached Khelaru. From Kheralu he proceeded Dakor, then to Bharuch and reached Surat which is on the southern banks of river Tapi. Going further he halted at Durvasa-Kshetra (Dumas), here he had discussion with a person practicing penance for attaining God. Penance is physical self-torture. Shri Vallabhacharya explained that for God-realization, only love of God is essential. He explained that The Gita says- God cannot be seen through penance or through the study of the Vedas or by the rituals. God can be realized through single-minded devotion¹⁵.

His next halt was at Bhanu Kshetra (Jambusar) in Baruch district. Here he gave a religious talk to the Jambuvat Brahmins of the place and then reached Kapisha Kshetra known as Kavi. At this place he had discussions with Samkhya School on the topic of Prakriti (Matter). His next visit was at Bahucharaji. Here he came into conflict with the followers of Vama Marga who used wine and flesh in religious ceremonies. Acharyaji told them that wine drinking is a sin and eating of flesh is forbidden by the Scriptures¹⁶.

Then he went to Tagadi, a place near Dhanuhdka. Hundreds of people were attracted to his religious discourses here. He spoke about the Lila of Lord Krishna in his childhood as described in the Bhagvata. He taught the parents how they should treat their children. He said that the children should be loved as the images of God. Even if they are

mischievous they should not be punished. Corrective punishment is not justified. Children will improve of their own accord in obedience and service by love of their elders. He gave them a new approach towards their children¹⁷.

From Dhandhuka, acharyaji proceeded to Veravaal, the place which is associated with the memory of the Hindus as a place where Lord Krishna passed away from the world. On the way he visited Junagarh, the birth place of Narsinh Mehta, a great Vaishnava saint and Poet. Preaching his doctrine of love and grace of God, Acharyaji reached Dwarka where he had controversy with the followers of Shankaracharya on the authenticity of the Bhagvata. Here he met with lot of people and give them their teachings. Acharyaji then proceeded to Rohari in Sindh, then to Mount Prahlad on way to Punjab. First he visited Kurukshetra and had discussions with various schools of Bhagvata like Jagadananda, Vasudeva, Ramananda, Shankarananda, attended his discourses on Bhagvata. In Kurukshetra he found lots of scholars who worked well in Vedas and Upnishdas, but not in Bhagvata, whereas to Acharyaji, Bhagvata is the greatest and holiest book. He had discussions regarding the true nature and form of Bhagvata with the scholars in Kurukshetra. From Kurukshetra Acharyaji proceeded to Haridwar, Lakshman-Jhoola, Kedarnath and finally Badrinath. Spent some time writing books. He visited Kanoja next, at Naimisharayna he gave a talk to a large audience, on the importance of Devotion. He said, “Knowledge without devotion is useless. Knowledge has for its goal, liberation, which is not the goal of the devotee. He seeks the Grace of God which is possible only through sublime self-less love. On the authority of The Gita, one can say positively that devotion is a better means to God-realization than knowledge¹⁸.

Acharyaji then proceeded to Ayodhya and then to Prayaga and Mount Vindhya. He turned to eastwards visiting Sivaganga, Manikarnika, Harihar-Kshetra, Gaya, Gangasar, Vaitrani and Jagannath-Puri. Here he answered four controversial questions asked to him by giving proper explanations and references. He answered all the four questions in one verse which says, “The Gita is the Chief Scripture, Lord Krishna is the chief God, ‘Lord Krishna is my refuge’ is the chief religious discipline.” and service to Lord Krishna is the chief religious discipline. After that Acharyaji’s next visited Mount Mahendra and crossing the river Godavari, returned to his village, Agrahara. Here ends the second phase of his pilgrimage¹⁹.

Third Pilgrimage:

This period extends approximately over four years. During this period Acharyaji revisited some of the places of his first and second pilgrimage and renewed his earlier associations and contacts with his followers. Giving his religious teachings and showing right path to people confused in various superstitions he successfully completed his third pilgrimage. He returned to Varanasi where he stayed for some days. He studied a lot and wrote many books here which are showing path to the following generations.

During all the three parikramas Shri Valabh imposed three arduous rules on himself. They were:

1. Do the Pilgrimages barefooted. (He walked 12000 kms barefooted in his life)
2. Never enter a village or city but always stay on its outskirts.
3. Never wear stitched clothes. (He wore only a dhoti and a small piece of cloth known as an Uparana throughout his life)²⁰

Shree Vallabhacharya used to meditate and talk to his followers in a peaceful surrounding areas. The places he used to stay during his spiritual journeys are called Baithaks and there are total eighty four “Baithaks” all over India and they are still regarded with great reverence by the Vaishnavas. He undertook various pilgrimage tours to various places expanding his teachings and perfecting his doctrines.²¹

2.1.4 Married Life

Acharyaji now settled in Varanasi and accepted Mahalakshmi, the daughter of a Brahmin named Devambhatta, in marriage, after duly consulting his mother. The marriage was celebrated on an auspicious day in the presence of a large gathering of relatives and followers²².

When he was in Pandharpur, Shri Vitobha told him to adopt (Gruhastha Dharma) i.e. to get married so that the Pushti Marg could be propagated for generation after generation. Shree Vallabhacharya settled down in Varanasi and accepted Mahalakshmi the daughter of a Brahmin called Madhu Mangalam He had two sons.²³

2.1.5 Eminent Scholar

Shri Vallabhacharya being a great scholar had written innumerable books²⁴. It occurred to him that if he wanted to preach his message of devotion to God and God’s grace called Pushti-Marga, he should put his thoughts in writing. He embodied each principle of his doctrine that illumined his mind each in a small tract. He wrote 16 tracts which serve as keys to the understanding of the system of Pushti-Marga.^{25,26}

The important works of Vallabha are:

1. The Yamunashataka
2. Balabodha
3. The Sidhanta-Muktavali (A Necklace of Pearls of Principles)
4. Pushti-Parvaha-Maryada
5. Sidhant-Rahasya
6. Navaratna (Nine Gems)
7. Antah-Karana-Parbodha
8. Vivekdhairyashreyanirupan
9. Krishn-Ashreya
10. Chatuh-Saloki
11. Bhakti-Vardhini
12. Pancha-Padya
13. Jala-bheda
14. Sanyasa- Nirnaya
15. Nirodha-Lakshana
16. Seva-Fala

2.1.6 Death

Shri Vallabhacharya ji devoted his entire life to educate, Bhagwad seva and Pushti-Marg. He is a great Teacher, Philosopher and a religious Guru and wrote many books. In between he got suffered with illness at the place of Ganga Sagar Sangam. But he struggled with these diseases with great confidence. But irrespective of diseases he continued with work of literature and commentaries on religious granths. During this

time he again caught in certain disease. So now he came to know that his last time has come. So he decided to take Bhaktimargiye sanyas. As he believes Karam margiye sanyas not good. He also wrote a book named Sanyas Nirnaye condemning Karam margiye sanyas. So he went to his wife for seeking her permission for Bhaktimargiye Sanyas. But she refused, then he left Adele to Paryag in 1530, where he took Sanyas Vidhipoorvak. Then he went to Hanuman Ghat in Kashi. He remained in Paramahansashram Position for seven days.²⁷

At this time Gopinath ji and other people came and asked for his last words. Then he wrote Three and a Half Shaloka on a sand.²⁸ He did all this because of his great love for lord Krishna.

2.2 As a Social Reformer:

He treat everyone equal. Every human was equal for him.²⁹ He opened the way of Bhakti for all irrespective of Caste and Creed. Out of 84 Mahanubhavas of Viashnav Prampara were from different castes and creeds. He opened doors to all for bhakti.³⁰ His message about Pushti-Marga-the path of God's Grace- universal religion of love embracing all kinds of people, was intended for all the rich and the poor, the Brahmins and the untouchables, the young and the old, the learned and the illiterate and even for those ostracized from society for immoral conduct.³¹ He combined three aspects i.e. Bhakti, Gyan and Karma so gave a new dimension to the society and Devotion.³² He Contradicted Misconceptions prevalent in society and tried to fetch people from darkness to light.³³ He taught the parents how they should treat their children. He said that the children should be loved as the images of God. Even if they are mischievous they should not be punished. Corrective punishment is not justified. Children will improve of their

own accord in obedience and service by love of their elders. The way of punishment will only make them worse. Criticism and fault-finding will only develop a hate –complex in them and will make them hostile and disobedient in later life. He gave them a new approach towards their children.³⁴

Awareness against Suicide

He explained that suicide is the greatest sin against God. It cannot be justified under any circumstances. It is also a violence against human nature for love of life exists in every man. There is no justification for suicide. It is self-inflicted, One's body is the temple of God, and one is supposed to be its protector. Thus religiously and morally suicide is the greatest sin to God and the society.³⁵

Showing People the right way of life

He showed right path to many people who are in bad habits like drunkards, the wicked, robbers, thieves, and so on saving them from the evil way of living. He showed them the light of Pushti-Marga which led them to right path.³⁶

2.2.1 Vallabhacharya as A Renovator of Social Life

The achievements of Vallabhacharya in social life in his time should be estimated in the light of the above words of Dr. Radhakrishnan. He made the content of the Hindu Dharma, relevant to his times. Besides being a great Philosopher, a great religious teacher and a mystic, Vallabhacharya was also a great social thinker. Although he spent most of his time in visiting various parts of the country and preaching religious guru, he was not isolated from the social life of the time. He came in contact with men of all orders in the society, observed and studied their ways of life and was convinced that the old Vedic form of the Hindu Religion had little chance of revival in that age. The ceremonies,

performed by the priestly class and the followers of the Hindu faith, were practiced only mechanically. Under the name of Dharma wrong things were perpetrated. The social body of the Hindu society in general, was showing signs of feebleness, it was losing health fast, and there was little hope of its recovery from degeneration and decay. Vallabhacharya felt that Hinduism could not be preserved and rescued unless some strong timely doses in the form of reoriented religions and social concepts were injected into it. He saw that the malady had gone deep into the bowels of the social body. He therefore, suggested certain reforms. He thought that the Dharma required reorientation. The Dharma taught by the Smritis was losing its grip on popular mind. It was misunderstood, as signifying performance of sacrifices, practicing penance, observing rules of purity, visiting holy places, exercising mental discipline, devoting life to knowledge and worship but the fact that it is inclusive of all these and yet much more was missed from the popular mind. What is called Dharma is an internal urge and inclination of the mind expressed in the form of one's duty to one's self, to society, to mankind and to God. He believes that if the Dharma does not improve the relations between men and men, and if it does not point the way to the union with God, it is no Dharma. The true nature of Dharma makes a man fearless and prevents him from doing injustice to others by harming their interests, or disturbing social solidarity and creating tensions causing disruption of the social orders. It makes him discriminate between what is socially good and bad. It makes him prefer social good to individual good. It also makes him free from 'I-ness' and 'mine—ness'. It implies the purity of heart and not of the body only. It is not self-love but is universal type of love, which triumphs over distinctions due to caste, creed and color. Vallabhacharya was a spiritual social reformer. He conserved the

spiritual values, by suggesting new reforms in outer social practices. It was his belief that social reforms without religious control was good for nothing. His social philosophy is based upon the sense of Dharma-as universal Dharma i.e. Love to all as God's creatures.

The marks of Dharma are fearlessness, purity of heart, contentment of mind, sincerity, compassion to all creatures, and service of mankind. All these are good. If Dharma is not related to God, it has no value. The Heart of one devoted to Dharma, overflows with love for all. It delights in doing well to all, and helping them in their needs and difficulties, according to one's ability. It treats all creatures equally as God's beings. It loves truth and justice, and desists from harm or violence. It establishes harmony everywhere and realises oneness of God in all beings. It is a Dharma of the heart and not of the intellect. Vallabhacharya applied his mind to it for a long time in formulating his view on the real nature of Dharma, and taught it to the people as a panacea of all the ills-social, religious political or spiritual. Before prescribing this, he made a correct diagnosis of the disease of the social body. The Hindu Society not only survived the Islamic attacks but had a long lease of life under the impact of his social philosophy. This is the greatest service by Vallabhacharya to the Hindu Society. He was a reformer, who reformed the society without any disturbance in social life. According to him, sudden change in the existing order of the society, was a blow to it. He did not root out the tree, but removed the cancerous part from it.

2.2.2 Institution of Class System

He believes that a man's class depends upon his qualities and not upon his birth. The caste is not hereditary. If a Brahman possesses the qualities required of his class, he should be regarded as a Brahmana, but if he does not possess those qualities, even if he is

born as a Brah-man, he should not be considered as a Brahmana. He is unfit as a Brahmana, but a Brahmana only in name. This rule applies to all classes. A man may have been born in any class but if he lacks the qualities of that class, he should not be recognized as a genuine member of that class. So, birth should not be considered as a criterion for ascertaining a class or a caste. The orthodox people, however, believe birth alone as a criterion for determining the caste of a person. In the days of Vallabhacharya, the old class system de-generated into innumerable sub-divisions of castes within castes, and only birth, and not the qualities, became a chief rule of social order. Under the caste system inter-marrying, even among the members of the divisions of the same caste were forbidden.

Vallabhacharya saw the evils of the caste, and wished to re-form it, but he did not want to aim a blow at the old class system, because that would be anti-Vedic and demolishing a very ancient institution, which gave shelter to people for thousands of years and was very useful, in the preservation, harmony, and integration of the social order. His attitude to caste was that of renovation and not of demolition. He looked upon that problem, philosophically and religiously. The economic and cultural considerations were subsumed under these two. The qualities which form the very basis of these class-divisions are innate in them and their functions are external expressions. The qualities are the mental equipment of the class and the functions its physical expressions. The deciding factors for the class according to the Scriptures are the qualities of knowledge—

2.2.3 The Hindu Muslim Unity

Vallabhacharya kept himself away from politics, but believed in Hindu-Muslim unity through culture and religion. Just as he has thrown open the portals of his faith to

the Shudras and the untouchables, so also he threw them open to the Muslims, if they were very ardent about it. Under his influence, the Muslim rulers relaxed their attempts of proselytising the Hindus to the Muslim faith. His son Vitthalesha followed his father's liberal policy in this matter. He was a very practical Acharya. He thought that the solidarity of the Hindu community could be maintained by that liberal policy. Emperor Akbara honoured him for his catholicity and fellow-feeling. He often visited him to have his Darshana and listen to his sermons. He conferred upon him the honorific title of Goswami and also granted him and his descendents some privileges, viz. the grazing of his cattle, non-molestation of his cows, protection of his property and exemption from taxes by special firmans. Sometimes some legal cases of complicated matters between the Hindus versus the Muslims were referred to his arbitration by the emperor. His son Jahangira following the footsteps of his father showed his sympathetic attitude towards Vallabhacharya's faith. The records of this faith are full of many notable examples of the Muslim devotees. Some of them may be referred to here.

Alikhana Pathan, who was in charge of the land of Vraja as an administrator, during the regime of Sikandarshah Lody, the emperor of Delhi, was initiated in the path of Pushti. He was a disciple of Vithaleshji. He used to offer divine service to the image of Thakurji Madan Mohanji—a form of Krishna. He always attended Vallabhacharya's discourses of the Bhagavata. He had so much love for Vraja—where Krishna spent early days of his life, that he had issued strict orders, banning the plucking off leaves or cutting of the branches of the trees in that land. He made his permanent residence in Vraja. It is said, that he was so much fascinated with the love for Krishna that, he used to wander like a mad man in-search of Krishna. His daughter Khan Jadi, also was devoted to the

service of Lord Krishna. She was an ardent lover of his faith. She remained unmarried and spent her life in experiencing pangs of separation from Krishna. It is said that Krishna, pleased by her devotion, blessed her with His revelation to her.

Tansen, known as the King of Musicians at the court of the Emperor Akbar, accepted Vitthalnathji-the son of Vallabhacharya, as his preceptor. He has composed some songs in praise of Krishna's lila. One Muslim lady Kunjari, who was very thirsty, and was on the verge of death was saved by Vitthalnath, by giving her water reserved for Divine service, embraced his faith and set an example of an ideal devotee. Baghwan though a muslim accepted the discipleship of Vitthalnathji. Rasakhan was a great favorite of Vitthalnathji. He was a great devotee of Krishna. Like; Suradas, a great poet of Hindi, he himself wrote many songs describing the lila of Krishna. Rasakhan's 'Kirtanas' are sung, even now, before the image of God in the holy shrines of the Pushti Marga. Many Hindus went to him for receiving instructions in religious matters. There is a story of a Pathan boy, recorded in 'Two hundred and fifty two Vaishnava followers of Vitthalnath' that, when he accepted the Vaishnava faith, his parents were opposed to it. They requested the Muslim ruler of that place to dissuade him from changing his faith. The ruler used all possible methods of coercion to give up his new faith, but he was firm like a rock and did not budge even an inch from his resolve of accepting the faith of the Pushti Marga, so, the ruler had to allow him his wish.

There are many such examples of the Muslims, having embraced the faith of Vallabhacharya. If any deserving Muslim expressed his willingness to accept his faith, Vallabhacharya did not object to it on the ground of his being Muslim. He would not recommend interdining and intermarrying between the Hindus and the Muslims but he

would not shut the doors of religion against them as they were equally qualified for a religious life, according to the Hindu scriptures.

From these examples we can say that Vallabhacharya and his son Vitthalesa made a large contribution to the Hindu-Muslim Unity, which is unparalleled in history during the Muslim regime. It is a unique achievement and triumph of his religious policy even in the political field.

Vallabhacharya had a sympathetic regard, even for the so called untouchables. He admitted them to the path of devotion. In his faith, there are some notable devotees, whose examples are recorded in the books. According to the stories of Eighty four Vaishnavas and The stories of Two hundred and fifty two Vaisnavas, one Patho Gujar was a favourite of Vitthaleshji. It is said that one Chauda, a follower of Vitthaleshji, who belonged to the untouchable class, was specially favoured by Vitthaleshji on account of his extreme yearning for the Darshana of Shrinathji. One Chahuda—a follower of Vitthaleshji defeated learned scholars, in a controversy concerning religious matters. Vallabhacharya and Vitthaleshji were very liberal to the untouchables. They did not deny their right to religious life. They had the same rights for devotional life, as the other Hindu castes, provided they were clean in their food and dress, and were really sincere in their desire for being admitted to the path of devotion. Though the Hindu society was reluctant to remove the social restrictions against them, Vallabhacharya, without interfering and disturbing the status quo made them fit for religious life, preserving of course the spirit of the Smritis and other scriptures. The way of acquiring fitness is cleanliness of body and food, purity of heart by virtuous conduct, etc. and the desire for a devotional life. If they possess these qualities, they are fit to contact holy men, attend

religious sermons, participate in singing divine songs, and to have the Darshanas of God's image in the shrine from a distance.

2.2.4 Attitude towards Women

Towards women in general Vallabhacharya's attitude was highly advanced in consonance with the religious spirit of the scriptures. He regards them as equals of men. He accords them the same position, which was held by them in the Vedic period when, they enjoyed rights equal to those of men for a religious life. Husband and wife both took part in the sacrifices. Wives offered prayers with their husbands. They were not precluded from the study of the Vedas. The girls were allowed to put on the sacred thread. Some women like Maitreyi and Gargi could participate in philosophical discussions. Some women like Vac are famous as composers of the Vedic hymns. There were two types of women, Brahma-Vadini, who remained unmarried throughout life and devoted their time to the learning of Brahma-Vidya, and others who were Sadyovahini, who married. This position of women began to deteriorate from the time of the Mahabharata and, in subsequent ages in consequence de-generation of women reached the climax. During the age of Vallabhacharya the position of women, under the impact of Muslim civilisation, was the lowest. They were very backward socially, economically, and culturally. Vallabhacharya endeavoured to ameliorate their position in the religious way. During the Smriti period, women suffered from various disabilities, which included, religious disability banning them from the pursuit of the Vedic study. In this respect they were put on par with the Shudras, but the Gita made the ban futile by admitting women to the path of devotion (B.G. X-32).

Vallabhacharya, does not make any distinction between men and women, because they are identical in having souls. According to him, the devotees having the body of a man or of a woman, but possessed of the qualities like love, steadfastness, Self-abnegation, penance etc., are better qualified for God's love than mere males or females, devoid of these qualities. So merely having a woman's body does not qualify her for devotional life, but the above qualities. The Gopis who possessed these qualities are ideal "women, fit for God's grace. He pays them highest tribute of eulogy by calling them-the Gurus in the-path of devotion. In the Karika portion of his Subodhini, Vallabhacharya says that women alone are fit for the bliss of devotion and their husbands can acquire fitness through their wives (Bhg. X-29). In the Subodhini on the Venu Gita, (Bhg. X-18-5) he says that the love of the type of a woman for her lover is the real- love in the Pushti Marga for God-realisation. It is an ideal love, because it is free from vulgarity of sexuality and capable of sacrifice, suffering and facing all kinds of difficulties, trials and tribulations (Bhg.S.3-14.K.-13) In his opinion a woman is a better teacher even than an Acharya, because knowledge or instruction received from her has an immediate effect on the recipient. In his sympathy for women, he says that if a tear falls from the eyes of a woman on account of her molestation or persecution by men, the earth will lose its fertility. Vallabhacharya is always full of praise for good women, though he condemns wicked, women. They are a bane, a cause of men's downfall and degradation. Hearts of bad women are like those of wolves. (Bhg. X-33-40) He supports love marriage as an ideal marriage and ignores-even a caste-barrier, if it interferes with it. One Ramdasa, a disciple of Vallabhacharya who ill- treated his wife and abandoned her, was advised by him to re-concile with his wife. He accepted his advice and lived with his wife a happy

life. Rana Vyasa and Jagannatha Joshi, both the disciples of Vallabhacharya saved one Rajput lady from death by burning on a funeral pyre as a Sati after her husband's death. The lady was advised by them to seek guidance of Vallabha-charya, which she did and turned a new leaf in her life. He sympathised even with prostitutes, by admitting them to the path of devotion (The story No. 9 in 'Eighty four Vaishnavas)'. One Krishnadasa, one of the eight poet disciples of Vallabhacharya's faith, having been captivated by melodious music of one prosti-tute made friendship with her and presented her to Lord Shrinathji, before whom, she used to sing songs of God's lils. The marriage of a son of one Bania with the daughter of a minister, who was Rajput by birth, was approved by Vitthaleshji when he knew that they were sincere in their love. He and his son Vitthalesji did not openly encourage inter caste marriages, but if among the Vaishnavas, a youth and a girl of different castes really loved each other and married, they did not object to it: There are examples of women belonging to the Shudra and aboriginal classes who were accepted in this faith for devotional life. Several of them experienced God's love. He exhorted his disciples to get themselves married, so that as husband and wife they both would devote themselves to the joint service of God. The object of a householder's life, according to Vallabhacharya, is service of God and not enjoyment of sexual pleasures. The married life is to be enjoyed with a view to getting children, who can be helpful in the service of God. Husband and wife are advised to love each other, live in peace and do service of God together. A Vaishnava must not shun his wife, unless she proves a hindrance to him in the service of God. He is even bound to maintain her even then.

2.2.5 Attitude to the Vedas

The Vedas are the earliest sacred works of the Hindu, trustworthy for philosophical and religious knowledge. They are four—Rig, Sama, Yajur and Atharva. The word 'Veda' means knowledge. These 'Vedas' are so called, because, they are repositories of knowledge. They give knowledge about two subjects—(a) sacrifice, and (b) Supreme Reality. The portion of the 'Veda' which deals with Sacrifice is called 'Purva Kanda' and the portion dealing with knowledge is called 'Uttarkanda'. Sacrifice is independently treated in the works called 'Brahmans' and knowledge in the 'Aranyakas' and the Upanishadas.

Shamkara accepts only the Uttarkanda as an authority and Jaimini only the Purvakanda. Ramanuja, and Vallabhacharya accept both, as of equal importance. According to him, there is no opposition between these two parts, because sacrifice and knowledge are the two powers of God, each of which is given independent treatment in each Kanda. Although Shamkara accepts the authority of the Upanishadas, yet, when he is perplexed about the nature of Brahman which is described both as Indeterminate and determinate, he prefers the former Brahman to the latter, and rejects the Shritis supporting determinate Brahman.

So according to Shamkara all Shrutis are not equally valuable. In such a case, he will not resort to the Shrutis but to reason. He says that, if there is a conflict between the Shrutis and reason the latter must be given preference to the former. Thus, Shamkara does not accept the entire Vedas consisting of the Purva Kanda and the Uttara Kanda as authoritative. Again he does not accept all the Shritis from the Uttara-Kanda as authoritative. Vallabhacharya, on the other hand, accepts the entire Vedas—consisting

of both the parts as authoritative and of equal value. As for the Shritis, all are trustworthy, without any exception. He is against making any distinction in the body of the Vedas. The Gita is the speech of God, but the Vedas are the vital breath of God. It is a crime to dissect the body of the Vedas into limbs or parts and recognize some parts as genuine and reject others. Purva Kanda deals with God's power of work and the Uttara Kanda, on God's power of knowledge; both are integral and necessary, each co-operating with the other, for the organisation, preservation and maintenance of the body, in the form of the whole Vedas. Vallabhacharya has noted this point in his 'Anu Bhasya' commentary on the Brahma Sutras (1-1-7). Work and knowledge belong to Dharmin—God, so there is no opposition between the two (B.S. 1-1-3). He says that those who accept only one part of the Vedas neglecting the other, ought to be ignored. They interpret the Vedas not as they are but as their fancy guides them. It militates against the spirit of the Vedas which are not to be explained arbitrarily. The Vedic truth is cent per cent purified gold. It is not to be undervalued by a mixture of any base metal in the form of extraneous matter. Any attempt towards distortion or perversion of the Vedic truth by wrong interpretation, deserves downright condemnation (Bha. II-7-37K). Vallabhacharya accepts the Vedas as an exclusive authority. He rejects other Pramanas such as perception, etc. They may be good for knowledge of worldly objects, but not for the knowledge of God. He holds the Vedas in the highest esteem. He attaches so much importance to the Vedas that he says that everything written in it, even though it may seem to our scientific mind, impossible, incredible or fake, must be believed in, because sometimes, incredible things mentioned in the Vedas, should be accepted as indicative of events in the future. The Vedas are not only trustworthy for the past, but also for the present and the future. They are not like

historical works, written with a view to describing the past happenings, but are the writings which serve as guides to the individuals and they nations, 4n their spiritual development, for all times. They are universal and perennial works, useful to those who serve inspiration and guidance from them, for spiritual development.

By the knowledge of the Purva Kanda, one knows the nature of sacrifice which represents the action-form of God and by the knowledge of the Uttara Kanda, the nature of God as knowledge and realises Him. Each part is complimentary to the other. He, who has known the entire Vedas, will understand that the object of the Vedas is to teach the supremacy of devotion as a means of God-realisation. The real sacrifice or work of a devotee is service of God by consecration and the real knowledge, the know-ledge of the Love-form of God and His realisation by His grace.

2.2.6 Institution of Sacrifices

It is a very old institution—as old as the Vedas. It is the main subject of the 'Purva Kanda' of the Vedas i.e. the 'Samhitas' and 'Brahmanas'. It is accepted by Jaimini as the main teaching of the Vedas. It was discarded by the Buddhistic school in to and partially by Shamkara, who, however, accepts its utility as a purificatory means of mind which is essential as a preliminary condition to one seeking spiritual development through knowledge. Ramanuja and Vallabhacharya both recognize its utility for a religious life. The Gita has also recognized its worth. But the Gita says that every action of a man is a kind of a sacrifice and it should be done for the propitiation of God. It should be performed as one's religious duty without regard of fruit. The Gita supports the Vedic sacrifices also and asserts that those who enjoy the gifts of God without offering them to Him are sinners. (111-13). It explains the philosophy of the sacrifice by identifying not

only the sacrifice but also all its accessories with God (III-15). It enumerates different kinds of the sacrifices, viz. sacrifices to be performed by materials, by self-control, penance, Yoga, austere vows, wisdom, study of sacred texts etc. (IV.26-30), Having thus mentioned different kinds of sacrifices, the Gita observes, that of all kinds of sacrifices, that of knowledge is the best (IV-33). It should be noted here that the Gita teaches the value of a sacrifice to Arjuna who is recognized by Krishna as his devotee. It means that his sacrifice must be of such a kind that it may help him in achieving the knowledge of God. Vallabhacharya classifies sacrifices into three kinds—(1) Those performed for the fulfillment of one's desires, whose goal is attainment of heaven (2) Those performed without desires, but for spiritual, happiness. (3) Those performed solely with a desire of God-realization, for the goal of union with God and enjoyment of His bliss. These three kinds of sacrifices are called by him as Adhibhautika, Adhyatmika and Adhidaivika sacrifices. He, being an Acharya of the Bhakti cult, appreciates only⁴ the last type. In his faith, he has evolved the Divine service mode, which to him is the Adhidaivika sacrifice. He follows the Gita concept of a sacrifice, but suggests that the highest kind of a sacrifice— the Adhidaivika—is a means of God-realisation. The sacrifices mentioned in the Gita III & IV are all included by Vallabha-charya in the first two divisions given above. The last division, Adhidaivika, is his own discovery, a unique contribution to the teaching of the Gita. He has accepted the sacrifices and divides them into high, higher and highest types, and teaches that those who seek God must practise the highest type in the form of the service of God.

Every selfless act of an individual's life, rendered as service to humanity or to God is deemed by him as a sacrificial act. The highest kind of a sacrifice is the service of God.

Self-Control (Yoga)

'Yoga' is one mode of spiritual life as recommended by the Svetasvataropanishad. The Gita also teaches it as one of the disciplines for God-realisation which differs in its meaning of the Yoga from that used by Patanjali, the traditional founder of the Yoga system. The Gita uses the word Yoga in the sense of union with God'. Each chapter of the Gita is titled as a particular kind of Yoga, by which the soul can be united with God. Patanjali does not understand it in that sense, but as a spiritual effort to attain perfection through control of body, senses and mind, and through right discrimination between Purusha and Prakriti, Chapters V & VI of the Gita deal with the Yoga or self-control as a mental discipline. It is defined variously in the Gita as 'proficiency in actions', state of equipoise' and 'freedom from all pain and misery'. Gita's concept of the Yoga: is not negative like that of Patanjali. According to Patanjali, it is supra-conscious concentration in which the meditator and the object of meditation are completely fused together, without consciousness of the object of meditation (God). Gita's Yoga is the state of union with God in which the individual self enjoys the eternal bliss with Brahman. (VI-28). It is not enough that the senses and mind should be withdrawn from the worldly objects, but that they should be directed to God. They should be always engaged in thinking about God and experiencing God's love. A Yogin, who directs his mind and senses to God and experiences God's love, is the highest Yogi.

Vallabhacharya recommends it for union with God, in which a devotee can enjoy bliss of God's love, which is the aim of his life. This love is to be experienced in two states in the state of service time, and in the state of non-service time, when the devotee should engage his mind in thinking of God and experiencing pangs of separation from Him. Vallabha-charya substitutes the word Nirodha as a better word, than the Yoga in place of Patanjali. In Patanjali's method, mind is to be controlled by suppression; but Vallabhacharya's method is the method of sublimation by which the desires of the devotees are not suppressed but they are enjoined in the service of God.

Vallabhacharya adumbrates three divisions of Yogas (1) the inferior kind by which one seeks. To possess certain supernormal powers (2) the mediocre kind, by which one seeks liberation (3) the superior kind which is for experiencing God's love only. However he recommends only the last one. In short, he says that the aim of Yoga is not merely mind control but participation in God's bliss, in union with God. It is a positive way in which the mind, though detached from worldly love, is attached to God, seeking God's love. The value of Yoga is recognised, only if it proves to be helpful in the soul's union with God.

2.2.7 Tapas-Penance

The old idea of Tap as- ' Penance5 'voluntarily suffering pains5, is not acceptable to Vallabhacharya. Inflicting pain on one's body is not a desirable and good method for God-realisation. Many a time it has produced disastrous effects on one practicing penance and has failed as a method of mind control. If penances are not directed to experience God's love, they are good for nothing.

They have, however, their value in experiencing God's love, in the state of the soul's separation from God. It is not suffering, self-inflicted bodily pains or tortures; but rather a mental state of v enduring pangs of love in separation from God. Such penance is highly commended. It is not an independent means, but is one of the ingredients of devotion of the love-type in the Vyasana state.

2.2.8 Prayers

Prayers are a chief feature of Christianity, Islam and some other religions. They also constitute one of the features of Hindu-ism, but to Vallabhacharya the idea of prayers for asking boons of worldly kinds from God is not commendable. Prayers are good for the purification of heart, but should not be resorted to, for asking favours from God, such as securing health, wealth, chil-dren, power, victory, fame etc. That is not the proper use of prayers. By asking for these, through prayers, the devotee betrays. His trust in God. Does not God know his wants? Why should he, then, pray for these things? Again by asking for them, he may get less than what God might have otherwise blessed on him. He must know that his life is strictly ordained by the Will of God which is always for the universal as well as his individual good. If one suffers from any difficulties, he should think that God has sent them, for his spiritual development. ‘Sufferings are sometimes ordeals for testing the true love for God. One does not know what is behind God's will. It is the duty especially of a devotee, to sub-mit himself humbly to God's will and do his duty cheerfully and fearlessly with faith in God, and God is sure to protect him. Ask-ing for worldly things is not true devotion. A devotee of God seeks only the love of God, so his devotion must be free from personal desires. In his Viveka Dhairya Ashraya, Vallabhacharya says, “What is the good in doubting the

purpose of God by offering Prayers? All things, everywhere, belong to Him and all power is His. In 'Nava Ratna Grantha' he admonishes that also devotee should be free from all anxieties. In troubles, he should remember God and think that they are blessings in disguise from God. He, however, does not doubt efficacy of prayers. They have also value but Vallabhacharya says, that they should be resorted to, for securing the love of God. Prayers may be offered for the purification of one's heart, and freedom from the sense of egoism; but not for procurement of worldly gifts from God. Hymns in praise of God called stotras should be sung, instead of prayers. They will tend to increase only faith in God. By praising God, we accept His mastery over us, and become conscious of His guardianship, which gives us strength enough to resist against dangers and difficulties. The Gopi-Gita in the 10th book of the Bhagavata is the best prayer. It is the prayer by the Gopis, who expressed in it their ardent longing for God's revelation (Darshana). The prayer of demon Vrutra, in the 6th book of the Bhagavata, is a well-known typical example of an ideal prayer. In his prayer, he did not ask for heavenly happiness, Yogic powers, the position of a creator, liberation and sovereignty over the whole world, but asked for God's love only. He says "Oh, God, I do not ask from you for anything except you. If I have you, I have all. If I do not have you, although I may have all, I have nothing. Like a newly born bird anxiously waiting for the arrival of its mother, or a hungry calf for its mother-cow, or a woman long separated from her husband, I have been anxiously waiting for you. Oh, my love, come to me and bless me". The prayer offered by the maidens of Vraja to Katyayani for a boon to have Krishna as their lover, is the highest type of prayers. The prayer of Kunti, the mother of the Pandavas, offered for acknowledgment of obligations of God, and that of Bhishma, expressing repentance, on

the point. Of death, are of the second type, and that by Gajendra in the Bhagavata, for rescue from an alligator, is of the lowest order. For a follower of Pushti Marga, the ideal prayer is the prayer by the Gopis or the prayer by the maidens of Vraja to Katyayani.

2.2.9 Faith in God

Unshaken faith in God is most essential for seeker of Gopis love. Even the slightest deviation from it, will poison the love for God. Faith should be a guiding principle in a devotee's life. This faith must be in one single form of God, to be singled out by a devotee, out of many forms of God. Love for God must not be directed to many Gods and Godidesses, but should flow continuously and straight to one God, without diversion. God's love is the root of devotional life. As the growth of a tree requires sprinkling of water, to be poured over the root and not the trunk, branches and leaves etc: so, for the growth of devotion, our love should be directed only to the root of all i.e. God. It should be nurtured with care and precaution with a calm spirit of resignation to God. Faith in Vallabhacharya's teaching is a cardinal principle as in Christianity, to be maintained at all costs and risks. Vallabhacharya makes it imperative for the devotee. On all occasions such as, of misery, evil, sin, lack of devotion, harassment from the devotees and the members of one's family, one's masters and servants, in poverty, difficulty of maintenance, sickness, ill-treatment by the disciples, opposition from society etc. (V.D.A.-11-13) God should be remembered. One should never be faithless, for, it is a hindrance in religious life. Vallabhacharya is a monotheist in a strict sense of the term. He believes only in Krishna as God. Faith according to him is faith in Krishna only, not even in other incarnations of God or in Gods and goddesses. It is a pre-condition to the devotee's getting love for God.

2.2.10 Morality

To the Hindu mind, just as light is inseparable from the Sun, so is morality from religion. The Smriti works are considered as Works prescribing the ethical rules for various classes. But they are at a discount now a days. Rules of morality are derived from within, and not from outside. These rules are not static. They have to be changed under new circumstances. Our morality has three aspects. One for one's own self, second for the society in which one lives, and third for the attainment of liberation. First two are relative, but the last one is absolute. Vallabhacharya's approach to morality is from the stand point of devotional life. In this respect, he has been influenced by the Gita and the Bhagavata. For him, devotional life presupposes morality. It is rather a seed of devotion. Since devotion is for the love of God, our moral behaviour must be compatible with love of God. It must be an aid to devotion. In devotional life, they often go hand in hand. If devotion is a substance, it is a shadow. If devotion is the sun, it is its disc. In spite of this, a devotee may have to ignore morality at times, when it hampers his devotional act. Morality should conduce to the development of religious life. The Gita regards it essential for all religious men, whether men of action of knowledge, recluses, the Yogins or devotees. While emphasizing its importance, the Gita analyses the concept of morality under certain virtues which are deemed necessary either for devotion or knowledge. In Ch. XII the virtues described are the marks of a devotee and those in Ch. XIII, the marks of a man of knowledge. Dr. Ranade believes that all the moral virtues taught by the Gita are as exemplifications or specifications or exfoliations of the one central virtue of God-devotion. Virtues of a Sthita-Pragna in Ch. II are virtues expected of a devotee. Having stressed the - need of cultivating moral virtues, the Gita says that for God-realisation,

one may go beyond morality. (XVII-65). This is called supermoralism. This is to be reached by transcendence of the gunas of Prakriti, which is possible only either by continuous stay in the purified Sattva or by inviolably unswerving devotion called Avyabhicharini Bhakti. This in the language of the Gita is called Bhakti Yoga, whose aim is God realization where there is enjoyment of bliss from touch with God-Brahmasamsparsa. Vallabhacharya appreciates moral virtues only in their being an aid to the service of God. A man may be an ideal moralist, his life may be exemplary to others as a most virtuous man, but if he is cut off from devotional life, his virtues are not worth any salt, for, Vallabhacharya believes that the end of virtues is to realise God. The Gita discriminates between the divine virtues and demonical ones and asserts that the divine virtues are conducive to liberation and demoniacal ones to bondage. In his work 'Tattva Dipa Nibandha', he says that although all moral virtues are worth having, still, if one is not able to practise them all, these three should not be ignored. They are (1) compassion to all creatures, (2) contentment with what you have, and (3) complete restraint over senses. In his work 'Viveka Dhairya Ashraya' he mentions, Discrimination, patience and Refuge in God as chief virtues of a follower of Pushti Marga. Being conscious of the difficulties in practising the moral virtues, strictly in conformity with the scriptures, he has relaxed their rigidity, by making... allowances in special circumstances, but in acts done with reference to God, he cautions that the moral virtues are to be practised according to one's ability and means or circumstances, but the acts which are not moral should be completely shunned and that the senses should be perfectly Controlled. The sum and substance of all this is that morality is valued only as an aid to devotional life. It must be Helpful in God-realisation. If it interferes with it, then

there is nothing wrong in discarding it for, to a devotee love for God and God's love is the only goal of life.

2.2.11 Institution of Property

Question of property, whether it should be private or public is a burning question of the present time. In Vallabhacharya's age all property in the possession of an individual was respected as private. The rights of the possessor were not overridden even by the state, but Vallabhacharya's view in this matter is that although the property earned by a man is his private property, a devotee who has taken a vow of consecration must regard it as God's property. He is to hold it only as a trustee and use it in the service of God. A devotee has no right to appropriate it for his personal happiness or for the happiness of his family. This does not mean that he has to be indifferent to the needs of himself or of his family. It only means that before using anything which is a devotee's possession, it must be first dedicated to God, and then it should be used as God's favour by him and the members of his family. There is no objection to earning wealth and increasing property, but it should be used only in the service of God and in rendering help to the needy in the name of God. Holding property is not a sin, but not to use it in God's service, is a sin. It is God's property, and as such, must be used for God's purpose. It is wrong if we believe that we acquire property by our own intelligence or by the sweat of our brow. It is God's will, that a man acquires property. He has, no doubt, to make efforts for it but the reward depends on the will of God. By a vow of consecration, the devotee of Pushti Marga forgoes his title of the ownership of his property and transfers it forever to God. He can, however, spend it in satisfying the minimum of his wants to enable him to render undistracted service of God. This is how Vallabhacharya has removed the evil of

private property. Property used in the service of God is not an evil though it is even private.

2.2.12 Wealth

He has no objection to the earning of money. A house-holder needs wealth, for the up keeping of his family. He should, earn money in an honest and truthful way by following the profession of his class. Money itself is not an evil but its wrong use is an evil. The Right use of money is to spend it in the service of God. In *Tattva Dipa Nibandha*, he says that a true devotee should renounce wealth completely, for it is an obstacle in experiencing God's love. If, however, it is not possible to renounce it, it should be used in service of God.

Vallabhacharya did not discriminate between the rich and the poor. Society might have created differences among them; but to him, both are equally fit for admission to the path of devotion, provided they are earnest and pure of heart and sincere believers in God. There were many rich people among his followers like Raja Ashakarana, Raja Todarmala, Sheth Purushottama of Benares, Birbal, and others; but he was always affectionate towards the poor in general. At times, he inquired about their financial circumstances and helped them in their difficulties. He did not consider money as an evil by itself, but exhorted his followers, to earn it in honest and truthful ways and not to be a slave of it. He told them, "God appreciates better the service of the poor than that of the rich. It is not the means but love behind them, which is of utmost importance in the service of God." He regarded money as a gift of God and, as such, it belonged to God. So it should be used in the service of God. Personally he rigidly adhered to this principle in his own case.

He never used any gifts for his personal use. He declined to accept gift even in the form of a large quantity of gold presented to him by king Krishfiarai of Vijayanagar on the occasion of his victory over the Pandits of the Shamkara School in a religious dispute. He advised the king to distribute it among the Brahmanas. One Narharadasa, a Godia Brahmana, earned a lot of money from his business, and requested Vallabhacharya to accept from him a gift of a big amount of money, but he declined and asked him to present it to God Jagannatha. He did not believe in hoarding money. His life being simple, his personal wants were very few. He could do without money even in extreme need. Most of his followers came from the class that was wedded to poverty. They knew that wealth was a cause of pride which was a great hindrance in devotion. Narandas one of his followers, considered money, as 'refuge'. Santdas Chopada, who had once seen palmy days in his life, by a sudden frown of fortune was reduced to extreme poverty. His daily earning fell low to 2 pice only. Though he was monetarily in extremely straitened circumstances, he did not condescend to accept the gift of gold coins from a fellow, Vaishnava Narandasa. Padmanabhadasa, a Pandit and reciter of the Bhagavata and whose devotion to Vallabhacharya next to God, accepted poverty voluntarily and devoted himself to the service of God. He had so much impoverished himself that he had nothing to present to God as food in his daily service, so he had to present parched gram to the image of the Lord. Vitthaleshji, the son of Vallabhacharya, also followed his father's example. He, no doubt, received gifts from his followers but made them over to God. In conformity with his father's precept, he would not accept ill-gotten money, nor money which he thought proved hindrance in due service of God. He was against hoarding money. Once a big merchant, wished to present him a big amount of money as a gift. He

went to see him just at the time when Vitthaleshji was engaged in the divine service. He was disappointed, for, Vitthaleshaji declined his gift, which according to him, was a cause of mental disturbance when he was engaged in God's service. One Kayastha of Surat, who was a Suba to the Emperor of Delhi, made to him an offer of Rupees fifty thousand if he would arrange for his Darshana of Thakurji before its scheduled time, but no response was received from him. Similarly, he refused to accept the big amount of money offered to him as gift by two rich women, Ladbai and Dharbai. One poor man Patel by caste who came to pay his respects to him, along with other rich people was hesitating, because he had nothing to present except a garland of flowers; but Vitthaleshaji himself relieved him of his anxiety by asking for it. The two works—'The stories of Eighty four Vaishnavas' and 'The Stories of Two hundred and fifty two Vaishnavas' are full of such accounts. He believed that earning money or not earning it, depends upon the will of God. If he gets money it is to be used in God's service. If one is poor he should regard his; poverty as a blessing from God; and render service to Him. Service to God does not require means, but only absolute surrender and love for Him.

2.2.13 Hospitality

Hospitality is a prominent characteristic of Vallabhacharya's faith. The Gita says, "A man who eats food without offering it to God is a great sinner. He does not eat food but sin. The food which he eats is nothing but God's gift."

Vallabhacharya prohibits every Vaishnava from eating food before its presentation to the image of his Thakorji. It is the duty of Vaishnava not to eat the food presented to God as food, but take it as 'God's prasada (favour) which should be shared by other Vaishnavas. A Vaishnava never fails in his welcome reception to another Vaishnava visiting his

house as his guest. He expects that some Vaishnavas as guests should bless him by their visit. Even a poor Vaishnava would heartily welcome the day, when a fellow Vaishnava visits his house. He will spare no means in extending his warm welcome to him. Krishnabhata of Ujjain was well known for his hospitality to the Vaishnavas. He was sad if no Vaishnava was his guest. Being rich, he honoured them with gifts of money and other things needed by them. There is a story recorded in 'The Stories of Two Hundred and Fifty two Vaishnavas' about one couple of Gujarat, whose poverty was so extreme that their daily saving did not exceed a pice. In spite of their poverty, they did not yield to any one in their hospitality to the Vaishnavas. From his daily savings he made a fortune of a rupee, which was spent in purchasing a saree (a garment) for the wife. Now, one day it so happened that some Vaishnavas visited their house. They were in difficulty because they had no means to buy food stuffs for their reception. But the husband with the concurrence of his wife, sold that Saree, and purchased food stuffs, and entertained the visitors, the wife during their stay hours remaining away from the sight of the visitors in a naked pose. There have been examples of the Vaishnava devotees who have preferred starvation to reluctance in hospitality to the Vaishnavas. Such a high sense of hospitality is rare.

2.2.14 Art

Vallabhacharya's Pushti Marga is distinguished from other Hindu Religions by its special recognition of Art in religious life. There are various theories about Art. The modern school holds the theory of Art for Art's sake. Ruskiri in the West declared its end to be moral. If art does not lead to moral life, it is not worth having. The Hindu theory of Art in the earliest days of the Vedas was that it must be religious, It must enable one to

realise God. It is not meant for demonstration or appreciation or reward. Vallabhacharya's view is that the purpose of Art is to be instrumental in the service of God- It has no other aim except experiencing love, of God by a devotee. The pictures, music, dance etc. have value in so far as they are instrumental in the service of God. Just as the end of knowledge is release from worldly bondage, so the aid of art is release from worldly bondage, not only release, but attainment of God and a blessing of participation in His bliss. In other words, Art is valued by Vallabhacharya only as a means of experiencing or realising God in religious life. In ancient India, every temple had on its walls pictures depicting scenes from the Mahabharat, the Ramayana and the Bhagavata, so that those who saw them had inspiration for religious life. The Vaishnava temples have pictures depicting Krishna's lilas, described in the Bhagavata. On particular festive occasions, screens called Pichawai, with scenes of Krishna's lilas are displayed behind the image of Thakorji in the shrines of Vallabhacharya's faith. The idea behind it is not decoration, but making the devotees remember and contemplate upon God's lilas. Vitthleshji was a great lover of art, not only that, but he himself was a painter. A beautiful picture of Navanita priyaji, his deity, is preserved to this date in the Vaishnava temples of Bombay. On festive occasions beautiful Artis, full of pearls and colours are drawn by the ladies in the shrines. These Artis were originally drawn by the ladies of Vithaleshji's family. During the spring season, the curtains with pictures beautifully drawn, in dried and wet colours are still a characteristic feature of the paintings, indicative of the use of art in the service of God. Similarly, the Sangis also constitute a feature of divine service in the Vaishnava shrines during a particular season. Though art in this school is essentially religious Vallabhacharya does not exclude moral life from the religious. According to

him, religious life implies moral. It is not opposed to morality. The pictures of Krishna's lilas evoke love in the heart of a devotee for Him. While he beholds them; his soul feels - that it is in the presence of God. The presentation of Art, on each day, has its specific characteristic according to the occasions of festivals and the seasons.

2.2.15 Music

Like painting, music is not for self-pleasure or demonstration or appreciation from others. Vitthalesha himself was a great lover of music. He used to sing his own before his deity. At each time of divine service, music of Kirtans by Suradas, Kumbhanadas, Parmanaddasa, Govindadasa etc. describing Krishna's various lilas is deemed essential. Not only that, but the music for the morning service is not to be repeated at noon time or evening service. The music selected, fitted the time of service of each day and varied not only according to the days, but also according to the seasons. The matter and the tune both varied. This is a specialty of Vallabha-charya's religion. He was “fully aware of the idea that Rasa is the soul of poetry, which is variously expressed according to the emotion it involves. Vitthalesha composed some songs in Sanskrit in praise of God and his poet disciples Nandadasa, Govindaswamy, Ghitta Swamy and Chaturbhujadasa composed them in the Vraja Bhasa language. Suradasa and other disciples would sing songs before the deity or the Vaishnavas but not, before non-Vaishnavas. They would not sing even before the princes and the kings under threats or temptations of reward. It is said that one Kumbhanadasa, disci-ple of Vitthaleshji, by Akbara's order, was conducted before him to sing some music, for, his fame as the best singer had reached Akbar's ears and it made him eager to hear him. Kumbhanadasa was reluctant to go but his men forced him to go with them. When he was taken before Akbar at Sikri, the latter asked him to

sing some song. He was reluctant to comply, with Akbara's desire but circumstances compelling him, he had to sing a song in which in a direct way he gave him a taunt for asking him to sing. He said, "I am a devotee of God. I sing only before my God and not before others." Akbar being noble-hearted did not take his reply as an offence, but in appreciation offered him a reward; but he declined and said, "Oh, emperor, if you are really pleased, do not ask me to sing before you again. My song is only for my God." Similarly Suradasa declined the offer of Akbar to sing something in his praise for which he would get a big reward, but he scorned the reward and scoffed at the very idea of singing for flattery, It is recorded in the life of Govindaswamy, a poet disciple of Vitthaleshaji that one day Akbar, coming to know of Govindswairi's fame as a singer, desired to listen to his songs; He himself went to Gokula where Govindaswamy was staying, and disguising his identity, listened to his music in Bhairwa raga. Akbar was much impressed, but Govindswamy learnt that his music was heard by Akbar. He was deeply touched in heart. He was sad because it was heard by a non-Vaishnava. From that day he did not sing before God in that tune.

Dance as an art also finds place in the service, of God. Krishna danced with the Gopis. So in imitation of Krishna's. Rasalila, sometimes, performance of the Rasalila enacted on special occasions.

From these, one would know that Vallabhacharya's Pushti Marga appreciates Art as a means for experiencing love for God. Apart from that it has no value. Neither Art for Art's sake, nor Art for morality's sake, but for God's sake is his principle.

2.2.16 Cow-Protection

The Sect of Vallabhacharya is well known for cow-protection. God Krishna was a great lover of the cows, and Himself used to graze cows in the forest of Brindavana in the company of the cowherd boys. Of all the animals, the cow is considered as the most sacred by Vallabhacharya and his followers. His son Vitthalanatha was honoured with the title of 'Goswamy'—the protector of Cows, by Emperor Akbar. Appreciating his love for the cows, the Emperor issued a special 'firman' (order) allowing the grazing of Vitthaleshji's cows free of tax and prohibiting cow kill-ing in the locality where he was residing. A similar order was issued prohibiting the killing of birds also. The title of 'Goswami' since then, has. Become hereditary for all the descendants of Vitthaleshji. A noble example of Cow saving from the attack of a lion by his disciple, son of Kumbhanadas has been recorded in the book 'The Stories of Eighty four Vaishnavas'. Although the cow-protection is a very common feature of the Hinduism and the Jainism, it has become a sort of religious sentiment among the followers of Vallabhacharya. It is tantamount to cow- worship. Every Shrine has a Gaushala (a place where the cows are kept and maintained) attached to it. Even in the daily divine service, the cows of metal are considered necessary in place of the living cows, A special day: called Gopashtami—a day for the cow-worship-is celebrated as a festival day, as a token of cow worship, on the eighth day of the month of Kartika every year, His disciples. Suraidasa and others have composed, songs in which Krishna's sports and the grazing of the cows have been reverentially described. Shri Harirayji a descendant of Vallabha-charya, has written a beautiful song in Sanskrit entitled “Krishna's love for the cows”.

For the benefit of the readers to enable them to understand that Vallabhacharya was an Acharya of liberal views, requiring high standard of behaviour in social and religious life, we shall give heroes some of his thoughts from his Subodhini on various topics.

2.2.17 Fitness of a Spiritual Teacher

One must have a teacher for getting knowledge. Knowledge is not possible to acquire without a teacher. Learning is not simply studying the books, but mastering knowledge, making knowledge as one's own, through the Grace of God. (Bha. S. 1-7-44). Under the influence of a teacher the pupil will imbibe good or bad qualities of his teacher, therefore a teacher must himself develop good qualities and be free from falsehood, pride, passion, anger and revenge (Bha. S. 1-17-40). A pupil should seek his teacher's grace, but only that teacher who himself seeks God's grace is worthy and fit to be a teacher. For a pupil, service of the teacher is necessary for obtaining knowledge from him. The Teacher's life should be stainless and exemplary. He must be, not only, well versed in the scriptures but should have realised God.

2.2.18 Good men

Compassion, uncommon learning, and thinking are chief virtues of good men. They are free from egoism. (10-4-32-30) They are God-possessed, and they behave in accordance with the inner voice of God in relation to others. They are equal minded to friends, and foes (10-1-58) and they respect the traditions and religious practices of the scriptures (10-2-5). They keep themselves away from distractions hindering meditation of God. Their mind, speech and senses are always directed to God (10-13-2). They have no secret to hide from others. They love all and hate none. They are well wishers of all

creatures (10-24-4). They are immune from self-love. Their goal of life is only God. They are sympathetic to the poor and the distressed (12-2-6). Their hearts are pure i.e. free from passion, hatred etc. They are the saints whose minds are not disorganized or distracted by any worldly concerns. They are always calm-minded. (1 Or 11-25) They purify the sinners by their company (11-2-28). They are like the sailors that lead the boats safely through waters to their destination (11-2-29). They never visit the houses of others unless to confer blessings .on them' (10-8-4). If they visit any persons, they favour the poor (10-10-9).

2.2.19 Truth

Truth is essence of the knowledge part of the Vedas. 'It is identical with knowledge. One should speak truth in an inoffensive language. Unpalatable truth should not be uttered. Truth, harmful to others must not be spoken. (2-13-13) Truth is identified with supreme knowledge in the Vedas. It is the supreme vow. A man devoted to truth does not suffer fall or degradation in his life. Truth unites one with God. A lover of truth regards it as the attribute of God. Untruth may be spoken only in an extremely exceptional case when life is in danger 10-4-4) but for one seeking God by the path of devotion, truth is incumbent on him. It is the best means for a religious life.

2.2.20 Speech

Speech is divine. It is the gift to the lover of God for rendering service to Him. On every occasion one must speak truth only. Speech is an important factor in establishing congenial relation-, ship between one individual and another in the society. It should be tempered with sweetness. It works a magical effect in healing the afflictions of human beings. The speech of a good man reveals the marks of invariability and constancy. Bad

words are more destructive than arrows. Pain caused by them cannot be easily healed. The words of the fools, are full of censure, and de-void of wisdom. They should be disregarded like the howlings of the jackals by a lion.

2.2.21 Anxiety

A devotee who has dedicated his life to God, should not entertain anxiety at any time. God according to the Pushtimarga (path of Grace) will not give worldly status to his devotees. God is the Lord and ruler of all and He will do everything according to His Will for the good of every one. He should attribute every occurrence of his life to the will of God. Even if it happens that one is not on the right path in the service of God, it should not make him anxious. A man, who has dedicated his all to God, either through ignorance or knowledge, has no cause for anxiety. In all matters, he should surrender to God, and be guided by Him, and there will not arise any cause for anxiety. Freedom from all Ends of anxieties inclusive of worldly, spiritual and divine nature is a chief characteristic of a true.

2.2.22 Lover of God

The State of anxiety indicates the devotee's lack of faith and love for God. The occasions of mental anguish should be taken cheerfully as indicative of God's blessing. As a social thinker, Vallabhacharya has thought of every problem on its merit intrinsically, in conformity with the spirit of the Hindu Dharma. Social conventions are respected by him on their internal worth of spirituality. He did not believe in economic progress as such, without moral and spiritual progress. He was not a politician or a social reformer. He was a philosopher- cum-religious teacher. His yard—stick for measuring social progress, is spirituality and religiosity, which does not admit of any barriers

between a man and a man or one class of people and another class of people. The criterion of real social progress lies in the integration of different communities and in their mutual co-operation, acts of justice, fellow-feeling and service of God. These are necessary for maintaining general equilibrium peace and happiness of social life. He has not considered social philo-sophy as a separate subject but includes it under the philosophy of God. The world, as the greatest society, is not to be treated separately from God. The world is God's creation and all the souls are His parts. As there is no difference between these and God, the social relations of men belonging to different communities and nations should be honored as being not man-made but God-made. Each one has some role assigned to him by God to play in God's world. Hence social relations must be based on love only. The reforms needed must be on that consideration. Vallabhacharya thinks that a social man with an ideal of service to humanity at large should be a believer in God. An atheist, with his moral code of behavior may be a good man, but a theist whose faith in God is inviolable is better; for he sees God in all his dealings with worldly people. He hesitates to do injustice to any person, by his thought, words, and actions. To him, God is the father of all beings and men of different nationalities and religious communities are brethren.

A true social worker, if he is a believer in God, will consider the whole world as the Kingdom of God and various beings in it as the flowers of the garden of God. For the Divine life the self-love must undergo transformation by benevolent and just social acts and acquire the character of the universal love which should be further refined and converted into most precious gold of the divine love. Social love is the intermediate stage between the self-love and the divine love. Social service is a step to the attainment of the

divine love, which is the peak to be reached by devotion of the Divinity. Mere knowledge of the Sciences of Sociology, Social Philosophy and Ethics cannot help social workers in his work of introducing changes in the society for its betterment, unless he is guided by the light of religion, which alone will enlighten him with the knowledge that any service in the cause of society, is the service of God. Even humanism or humanitarianism, destitute of the inner light of theism or belief in God is a failure in its zealous and arduous endeavors to achieve desired social good. The message which Vallabhacharya gives to all servants of Humanity is 'Be good and loving to all men, because they are God's men'³⁷.'

2.3 His Theological Orientation

He was a saint as well as philosopher. My own words ---- He opened a new era of Bhakti and devotion for God. He opened the way to God for everybody. He involved everybody irrespective of caste, creed and economic status. He simplified the way to reach God and simplified the rules and regulations. He give stress on complete devotion and love for God. He gave a new simplified way of Bhakti called Pushtimarga.

Shri Vallabhacharya used to say that attaining Moksha is described in Sankhaya shastra as well as Yoga Shastra. In sanjkhyashastra Moksha is said to be obtained by Tyaga. He give stress that Tyag must be from Heart.³⁸ He was as great philosopher and by the time he was ten he had acquired mastery not only over the six systems of Indian philosophy, but also over the philosophical systems of Shri Sankara, Shri Ramanuja, Shri Madhva, Shri Nimbark as well as Jainism and Buddhism. His erudition and intellect amazed everyone. He was called "The Wisdom Child, the Master of Speech". Vallabh's main interest remained in reading the Shrimad Bhagavatam, the sacred text that reveals

Shri Krishna's lilas. He was particularly fond of the Rasa Lila chapters wherein the Blessed Lord dances with thousands of Gopis, all enlightened dairy maids, under Vrindavan's autumnal full moon. His father's home was adorned with wall paintings depicting the divine event and Shri Vallabh often sat before them, oblivious to everything else. He understood the inner essence of Shri Krishna's congregation of nectars.

Shri Vallabh was a genius of dharma and everyone was astonished by his wisdom. Although he had many teachers and gurus, Shri Vallabh considered his ultimate guru to be the Gopis of Vrindavan and concluded that Shri Krishna is the means as well as the reward and appears before those who have pure devotion. He taught a Path of Grace wherein everything is saturated with devotion, and known through love. Shri Vallabh focused on the Gopis of Vrindavan, the gurus of bhakti-devotion and found Shri Krishna's lovely lilas within their homes. He knew that when their bhakti is emulated, everything is attained. The story of love is an amazing affair and his conclusion was, "Always, with every divine feeling, worship Shri Krishna, the Lord of Gokul."³⁹

Young Vallabh never wore any sewn cloth nor anything on his feet. He travelled wearing only a light cotton dhoti and shawl. The eleven year old's lotus feet purified the earth wherever he went. He knew that the path of devotion needed to be resurrected. Meanwhile, the teachings of Shri Shankaracharya had swept through India and the young Vallabh felt that Shankar's teachings wherein the world and ultimately even Shri Krishna were both false and that devotion was inferior to knowledge was misleading the people. Shri Vallabh's mission was to revive the Vedanta truth of the One Joyous God who lives in all things, whose creations are free of fault and Maya and who can be known through dedication and self-less devotion. As Shri Vallabh carried his message across India, He

became known as the “Remover of the theory that this world is an illusion.” He saw everything as purely Krishna and only Krishna. He is the purest non-dualist.⁴⁰

His two sons requested him to guide them and give his last message. As he had taken a vow of silence, he wrote a few words on sand; which were as follows: - “Listen to my last words. I foresee a time when you will forget God and become engrossed in worldly matters. It is likely that you will become slaves of your passions which will turn you away from the path of Devotion. Instead of rendering service to God which is your primary duty, you will fritter away your time and energy in idle pursuits. But if you follow my advice, God will not forget you. You should believe that Krishna is our God and never slacken your faith in him and then he will surely protect you. You should regard him as the be-all and end-all of your life. Your ultimate good lies in serving him, which should be done with all your heart, mind and soul. Trust in his protection. Remember him always in all thoughts, words and deeds”.⁴¹

During his trip to Gokarna he was invited by the king of Vijaynagar and he was received with warm welcome. Here he started to introduce his views on Vedas, Gita, the Brahma-Sutras and the Bhagvat. The King requested him to settle down but he wished them and proceeded giving them the following message:-“You should all be good and religious person – Not a God fearing man but a God loving man. Speak the truth. Be just and honest to all. Treat all persons equally. Have faith in Lord Krishna and surrender yourself to him. Be charitable and never harm the hungry and the weak. Realize that service to men and animals is service to God”.⁴²

Wherever he went, Shri Vallabh revealed Shri Krishna’s truth and refuted all other theories that contradict the true spirit of the Upnishadas. Shri Vallabh became

known as, “The one who established the teaching of Brahmavada, where everything is Brahman and nothing but Brahman.”

The Beloved extracted the essence of all teachings and wherever he went, he implanted a divine view in the minds and hearts of the people. He always retreated to isolated places and became known as “A lover of solitude”. In the inner recesses of the world and the heart, he contemplated the movements of the Beloved of the Gopis. He understood Shri Krishna’s inner essence and passed that priceless gift to others. No qualified person was barred from his path of loving devotion. He was the up lifter of all and gave his followers something even beyond liberation and enlightenment. He gave them Shri Krishna’s nectar.⁴³

2.3.1 Brahma-Sambandh

While in Gokul, Shri Vallabhacharya was deeply concerned about the question of restoring the people to the path of devotion. Lord Krishna appeared before him in the form of Shreenathji and told Shri Vallabhacharya to initiate the people on the path of Complete Self Surrender to the Lord with Love and modesty and simplicity through Brahma-Sambandh. The Lord promised Shri Vallabhacharya that He would accept the services of all the devotees initiated with the Brahm Sambandh. Brahma-Sambandh is a means of complete dedication and surrender of self to the Lord. Brahma-Sambandh means the establishment of a renewed relationship between the soul and God in which the soul accepts the relation as a servant (das) with the Lord as the Master. With this new relation with God, the soul becomes completely free from all sins provided it remains faithful to the vow of surrender it has taken and it goes on growing in the Grace of God. The Lord accepts the services of such devotees. In this way Shri Mahaprabhuji initiated

Damodardas Harsani with the Holy Mantra. This made Damodardas the first Vaishnava in the path of Divine Grace i.e. Pushti Marg. Now anybody could take brahma-Sambandh, irrespective of caste, creed, race, color, wealth, age or sex. He gave Brahma-Sambandh to many people and wrote a stotra, Siddhanta Rahasya to explain the importance of Brahma-Sambandh and the basic principles of Pushti Marg.⁴⁴

He gave Bhakti Marg - Devotion, Love of God, and Implicit Surrender. He said that Bhakthi marg is for anyone. It is just surrendering in totality. This path of Devotion is where one renounces everything and leaves everything to God. It is the easiest path and one needs to have faith in God to be able to walk this path. Pushti Bhakti – grace filled, bountiful, overflowing love, Liberation has no bliss in itself. The Ananda (bliss) aspect of Shri Krishna is what a Pushti devotee seeks through his devotion. This Ananda lies nowhere else but in Shri Krishna's Bhakti alone. Pusti Bhakti can never be practiced with expectation in return. Hence it is called "Bhaituki", i.e. without a reason, or "Nishkama" or desire less. He said that Jeev-atma – is part and parcel of God. Daivya Jeev (righteous, god-fearing) + Asuria Jeev (materially inclined with negative traits)

Vallabha accepted four basic works as authority:

- (1) The Vedas
- (2) The Bhagavad-Gita
- (3) The Brahma-Sutra,
- (4) The Bhagavata.

The order of these works, we are told, is most logical, as the doubts in each preceding work are removed by the one that follows. The doubts in the Vedas are therefore to be removed in the light of the Gita and so on

After deep study and practical experience Shri Vallabhacharya introduced a simple way to attain God by following simple principles and rules. God himself showers His grace on His Pustimargya Vaishnavas and we obtain spiritual nourishment thereby.

- Instead of ritualistic worship (puja) the emphasis is on elaborated Seva (service) and bhakti of Lord Krishna to fulfil every kind of happiness of the Baal swaroop – thus mind remains fully engaged and focused on a personal God which reinforces our devotion.
- In this Bhakti Marg, Pushti Vaishnavas perform Seva along with responsibilities of family and society life.
- Pushtimarg is do not renounce life to become sanyasis, but perform their Dharma duty to life and Seva to Krishna with support of family.
- As per Hindu tradition one has to be initiated by a Guru to follow Pushtimarg, and our gurus are from the lineage of Mahaprabhu Vallabhacharyaji.
- Griha Seva – personal service performed at home to a personal God Swaroop.
- Seva can be performed after initiation/permission of Vallabhkula through taking of Bhrama Sambandh
- God is invited HOME rather than sought OUTSIDE
- Unlike most ritualistic Pujas (honoring, adorations for attaining blessings or other material things), this Pushti Seva is undertaken selflessly without asking for any returns or rewards – just out of pure sincere love and devotion.
- Always the mind is focused only on Krishna = “BHRAMAVAD” = all is Krishna

- Tulsi kanthi necklace, and Tilak ‘U’ for males, red Bindi and saree for women are the main symbols.⁴⁵

2.3.2 Nirodh Lakshanam

Shri Vallabhacharya wrote a book named Nirodh Lakshanam. He gave his philosophy in this book. He opens new dimensions of devotion and Bhakti in this book. He gave the theory of Nirodha, which means full devotion in God leaving behind all the worldly things. By diverting the mind in Lord’s praise and singing songs in this praise is the ultimate way of Moksha (self-realization) ⁴⁶

2.3.3 Devotion Based on True Love for God

Shri Vallabhacharya emphasized on devotion through love not by fearing God. He believed that devotion through true love is the devotion without ailments and is the true form of devotion. This gives immense pleasure to Human soul. Here we assume lord as a child and do all the rituals for him as child with love. ⁴⁷

His last words for his devotees is, Not to leave lord and never forget Lord if it happens you will be in a big trouble and you will be perished by Maya.¹

He explained the meaning of Religion in his words as Loving God and all creatures is Dharma. He told that man has three types of duties

1. His duty to himself
2. His duty to Society
3. Duty to God.

He explained some virtues and he clarify that these are the means to God-realization which is the chief concept of Dharma. He told that without these virtues one cannot

qualify for God-realization. Whether one wants to realize God through work, knowledge, penance or devotion, all these following virtues must be cultivated.¹

- Fearlessness
- Absolute Purity of Heart
- Absorption in meditation for self-realization and the satvic form of charity
- Control of the Senses.
- Sacrifice
- Study of the scriptures
- Penance
- Straightforwardness
- Truthfulness
- Absence of Anger
- Renunciation
- Peace
- Refraining from malicious gossip
- Compassion to fellow-Creatures
- Abundance of Grace
- Mildness
- Sense of Shame
- Abstinence from idle pursuits
- Absence of Self-Importance

2.4 His Contribution towards Bhakti and Bhakti Sangeet

Shri Vallabhacharya started the rich tradition of Kirtana. He utilized the spiritual and magical powers of Music to reach God and Please God. He started Pushtimarga style of devotion. This style is purely based on Kirtana. Kirtana means songs of pure love in praise of God. Shri Vallabhacharya make such system of devotion in which there is everything was based on music. All ceremonies from Dawn to dusk involved music. Shri Vallabhacharya first time started this musical tradition of Kirtana at temple of Shri Nathji at 'Govardhan Mountain'. He saw a Farmer singing very beautifully. Shri Vallabhacharya appointed him as musician in Temple of Shri Nathji.⁴⁸

Shri Vallabhacharya developed a highly organized musical Kirtana tradition in Pushtimarga which was based upon our traditional classical music. Ragas and different singing styles were used in this Kirtana parampara in a well-organized manner. Here the rituals were said to be incomplete without music. Indian Ragas were beautifully and logically used in Pushtimarga music. This Pushtimarga musical tradition was highly logical and scientific. Starting the daily routine with some morning Raga like Bhairav, Dev Gandhar, Pushtimarga Kirtana use Ragas like Asavari in between, Ragas like Poorvi, Kalyan in the evenings and finally complete the day with Raga Bihag the raga which produce sleeping effect. Shri Vallabhacharya used to say that singing for God i.e. Kirtana gives immense pleasure to our soul which a human being can't get from anywhere else. So it is recommended to be indulge in praising God through Kirtana.⁴⁹

Shri Vallbhacharya wrote in his Book 'Nirodh Lakshan' that the level of pleasure and satisfaction in singing songs in the praise of Lord can't be found anywhere else in the world. So he advised humans to leave all other things and keep busy all the time in

singing in the praise of lord. He made Kirtana an essential part of Daily rituals in the temples.⁵⁰

All the activities, all the rituals involves music. While starting the day when priests go for waking up the lord, Bathing of Lord, Shingar Bhog, Arti, Pooja and Sending lord back to Bed for rest, these all ceremonies are completed with the music and Kirtana. Very logically Indian ragas in accordance with time theory were chosen for these rituals. In this way Shri Vallabhacharya initiated a logical and a rich tradition of Kirtana in Pushtimarga. One more thing Shri Vallabhacharya did for Bhakti Sangeet is simplification in the Poetry and Lyrical section. Earlier language of bhakti was Sanskrit and it was very difficult for common people to understand as well as sing those prayers but Shri Vallabhacharya ji took the initiative and converted the prayers in Braj bhasha. i.e. Local language. In this way singing songs in the name of the lord became very meaningful and common people get attached to these prayers in a very natural manner. These prayers became the part of their lives very easily.⁵¹

2.4.1 Unique Style of Devotion (Seva Vidhi)

Shri Vallabhacharya's greatest contribution in promotion of Bhakti Sangeet was developing a system of doing all the rituals and customs with music and using Indian ragas for prayers. Here we discuss in brief the system of devotion developed by Shri Vallabhacharya ji known as *Seva Vidhi*. The First significant change he made was replacing Sanskrit Mantras with Padas of Braj Bhasha. He felt that it was quite difficult for common people to deal with Sanskrit mantras and they feel it difficult to connect with Sanskrit mantras. So he replaced Sanskrit mantras with Braj Bhasha songs, which lead people attach with prayers naturally.

2.4.3 Various Steps in Seva Vidhi ⁵²

1. Waking up the Lord
2. Madhupark Samarpan
3. Bathing of Lord
4. Clothing of Lord
5. Offering Food to Lord
6. Taking Lord back to Bed for Rest

All these activities involves prayers and songs of praise of God in specified Indian Ragas in accordance with time theory of Ragas. In these prayers Padas of Braj Bhasha are used. Shri Vallabhacharya replaced Sanskrit Mantras with Padas of Braj Bhasha. This step helped in propagation and promotion of Bhakti Sangeet in two ways. Firstly nature of Braj Bhasha is very sweet and secondly it was local language and easily understandable to common people.

2.4.3 Singing Style of Pushtimargiye Sangeet

The singing style of Kirtana was definitely Dharupad Dhamar Shaili of Indian Classical Music. As Pushtimargiye Sangeet developed in the reign of Raja Man Singh Tomar of Gwalior. The areas of Gwalior, Agra Mathura and Vrindavan paved the way for development of Dhrupad. Shri Vallabhacharya ji, Swami Haridas, Raja Man Singh Tomar, Kirtankar Kumbhan das they all were contemporaries. And this era was of Dhrupad singing style. All the books of that time contains references of Dhrupad singing. Hence one can assume that surely the singing style used in Pushtimargiye Sangeet was Dhrupad style⁵³.

These Songs are known as Vishnupadas. According to Acharya Kailashchandra Dev Yajurvedi ‘Brehaspati’ ji the basic difference between Dhrupad and Pushtimargiye Kirtana or Vishnupadas is as follows. In Vishnupadas more emphasis is given to lyrics or poetry. Words hold more importance in Vishnupadas and music is secondary. Music is used as medium to praise lord with beautiful lyrics. But the singing style of Vishnupadas is same as Dhrupad style prevalent at that time⁵⁴.

2.4.4 Raga Used in Pushtimargiye Sangeet

In Pushtimargiye Sangeet, Kirtana is not for pleasing Lord. It is a made essential part of Seva by Shri Vallabhacharya ji. Instead of Matras, Vishnupadas are sung. Kirtaniya (Singer) keep on singing Vishnupadas and during that all the rituals and customs for Lord are done. This is purely based on Indian Ragas. This system was very logically and scientifically classified. Timely Ragas are used from Morning to evening. Let’s have a brief look on various Ragas used in Pushtimargiye Sangeet⁵⁵.

Raga used	Ritual in Seva
Bairav	Mangalacharan (wake up Lord)
Ramkali	Mangalacharan (wake up Lord)
Vibhas	Bathing of Lord
Lalit	Bathing of Lord
Bilawal	Shingar of Lord
Dhnashree	Bhog offerings to Lord
Sarang (in Summer Season)	Bhog offerings to Lord
Poorvi	Evening Prayer (Aarti) of Lord

Gauri	Evening Prayer (Aarti) of Lord
Yaman	Sleeping time of Lord
Kahnada	Sleeping time of Lord

Lot other Ragas are also use during different seasons and different occasions like Raga Kalyan, Raga Nayaki, Raga Bihag, Raga Sorath, Raga Nat. Raga Asavari, Raga Devgandhar, Kahmaj, Adana, Suha, Makauns, Raga Jaitshree⁵⁶

Main Talas used in Pushtimargiye Sangeet⁵⁷

- Dhamar
- Adachartal
- Adi Tal
- Jhap Tal
- Sool Tal
- Jhoomra

Eight poet musicians got recognized by the name of ‘Ashta Chhap’ who Propagated and worked in promoting and carrying forward the great tradition of Kirtana. These eight were not only great poets but Great musicians too. Names of these eight great people are;

1. Shri Kumbhan Das ji
2. Shri Surdas ji
3. Shri Krishan das ji
4. Shri Parmanand Das ji
5. Shri Nand Das ji
6. Shri Chaturbhuj Das ji

7. Shri Govind Swami ji
8. Shri Chhit Swami ji

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