

CHAPTER. I.

VALLABHA-SAMPRADĀYA-ITS GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT.

(I).

Introductory.

In the History of India the mediaeval period was rich in religious activities. The Vedic age was something belonging to the times of yore. The creative period of the Upanisads, of the Epics of Buddhism, and Jainism, when thinkers propounded and propagated whatever theories they thought correct, was just a memory of the past. The orthodox brahmanism of the Mīmāṃsists was too old to have its sway upon the Masses and even the classical systems like the Sāṅkhya, Nyāya and Vaiśeṣika lost all their freshness and vigor. The Hinduism-including Buddhism, Jainism and Brahmanism, was in a dire need of invigoration. Its flow was limited and its vision was conservative. While the Pandits were engaged in hair-splitting controversies, the masses could not understand anything and lived in serene blissful ignorance. The controversies, however, did not stop there. The development of various sects, owing allegiance to the popular Gods of the Purāṇas also added to the chaotic conditions of the time. The Vedic duties of valour and power lost their importance with the emergence of new Gods and Goddesses like Nārāyaṇa and Śiva, Śakti and Gaṇpati. Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism became more and more powerful and competed with each other for supremacy.

The Śākta Sects⁷ was also trying to get a field of its own. All these sects were again divided into various sub-sects. The followers of these sub-sects quarrelled with one another and all of them looked down upon the followers as well as the deities of the rival sects.

In this state of affairs Śaṅkara came like a powerful whirlwind. He tried to uproot the old controversies and petty theories and gave a sound philosophical system to Hinduism^{ism}. But his theories proved too high for the people; his reasoning appeared too powerful. The light that was shed by him was a blinding flash. He said that Brahman alone is real and everything else is unreal in the highest sense. All the souls, the wide world with all its variety, all our weal and woe, all that we see and do—everything is false. There is no dualism. "I am God". "I" am not different from "GOD". The difference upon which this world subsists are only māyā and therefore unreal. ^{Even} From the God whose form, attributes, virtues and greatness, we have imagined, is not real in the highest sense. We may say that God has created us, but really speaking we have named him, we have fixed for him a particular form, we have thought that he has no vices. The personal God is a product of ignorance. Brahman is just Being. It can be described only negatively because it is beyond the power of our speech.

Śaṅkara's teaching, even though appealing to reason, was a powerful flood that drowned all beliefs and practices. Thus while it was hailed in the highest esteem from some quarters, it was vehemently attacked and severely condemned by others. Naturally a human being wants a God and he has something of feeling in him besides something of thinking. The evaporation of the God in the scorching heat of Śaṅkara's logic was somewhat too much for a Hindu to bear.

There were also other forces at work. As we have already stated, the Systems of Vaiṣṇavism and Śaivism, the origin of which goes to a very early period, were popularized in the South by the Tamil saints, Ālvārs and Nāyanamārs. They, especially the former, carried the masses with them by their teaching of simple and sincere devotion depending upon the grace of the highest Lord.¹ Their hold on the masses was very strong. They penetrated deep in to the country and reached the common folk with their easily understandable and even appealing theories. The monism of Śaṅkara was naturally outright rejected by the people.

Another force, still stronger came from the aliens. Hordes of Muslims came from the Northwest and brought with them a new

1. For a discussion of the probable dates of Alvars, see

Bhendarkar: Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism etc. P. 68- 71.

religion, simpler and more powerful, and strongly backed with military strength. The age-old Hinduism was not only old but was also conservative and had so many divisions and distractions within itself that it failed to unite and give a common front to the menacing, destroying power that came with the Muslims. With Koran in one hand and sword in the other, the foreigners came to India. They massacred the masses, looted their property and broke their idols. The Hindu kings were not weak but they lacked the unity that was required to fight the Muslims. They were so engrossed in fighting with one another that they could not give a united front ^{against} a common foe. India was not one nation; it was a land of petty principalities. All the princes tried to encounter the mohammedans singly, while others showed callous indifference and slowly and slowly all of them were defeated. The northern part of India was grabbed by the Muslims first who later on turned their attention to the South. The spread of Islam in India is an unforgettable chapter in Indian History, full of treacheries and treasons, murders and conversions.

This had a shaping influence on the Indian life and thought. People who used to live and work quietly without ~~worrying~~ caring for the political changes till then, could not continue their way of life any longer in the same manner. Hinduism became more and more conservative as the Hindus were enslaved in a larger number. Islam could not wipe out Hinduism

completely in spite of all this but it made Hinduism turn more and more inwards. There was an air of cynicism and the common men wanted something to fall back upon. Here comes devotion-the whole-hearted devotion to God, combined with a strong unswerving faith that God alone will save them and their religion. It can be said that Hindus might have given prominence to devotion because of that. While thus we can find out the impact of Islam on Hinduism, it may also be said that Hinduism especially the philosophical part of it, had its influence on Islam.² Whatever may be the opinion regarding influences, it can not be controverted that the philosophical absolutistic trend in Indian theories had to change over to the religious and the theistic side on account of this contact.

~~When~~ When the infiltration of Muslims was slowly but strongly carried on towards the South, attempts were also being made in another direction. Vaisnavism, which started as popular religion of the Sāttvatas became a powerful and popular faith of the people. But it was not in the fold of the orthodox Hinduism just as was the case with the Vedāntic or mīmāṃsist system. While it was not a heterodox system like Buddhism or Jainism, it drew largely from the Purāṇas and the Mahābhārata, the --- pāñcarātrasamhitā and the later and definitely sectarian

2. We may not enter into a discussion on the influence or counter-influence, for which see Ramahrisinha Dinkar: Sanskritike cāra adhyāya: adhyāya III.

Upanisads. It was not evolved, as it were, from the earlier Upanisads. A number of Vaisṇava Ācāryas came forward^d to graft the branches of Vaiṣṇavism on the age-old Vedic tree. Śaiva ācāryas also followed in their footste^ps and tried to connect Śaivism with the Vedic literature.

(II)

Ācāryas.

Śaṅkara's commentary on the Brahmasūtras is the earliest extant commentary. It is possible, however, that he might have followed other commentators whose works are not with us. Śaṅkara was followed by Bhāskara who flourished in about 900 A.D. His commentary which is known as the Bhāskara-bhāṣya³ is not a sectarian work and does not favour either Śaṅkara's views or those of Pāñcarātra Vaiṣṇavas. He advocates the theory of Bhedābheda, upholding equal reality of both unity and plurality. In his theory Bheda is aupādhika or due to limiting adjuncts, the reality of which is also admitted. Another commentator Yādavaprakāśa propounded in the eleventh century the ^Bdrhmaparināmavāda, a theory of the transformation of Brahman. He happened to be Rāmānuja's preceptor for sometime.

Rāmānuja was born in the first quarter of the eleventh century in Shriperumbūdur. He lived at Conjeevaram in his ~~you~~^{you} t youth, as a student of Yādavaprakāśa. He could not however

3. Radhakrishnan: Indian philosophy Volume II P.670.

agree to the Advaitic interpretations of his teacher, and so left him. He studied carefully the prabandhas of the Ālvār saints side by side with the vast Sanskrit philosophical literature. Yāmunācārya, who was impressed by this youth, thought of appointing him as his successor to the apostolic seat at Shreerangam. Unfortunately Rāmānuja could not see him at the time of his death. As a successor of Yāmunācārya, he lived at Shreerangam and toured South India. He also visited the noted holy places of North India, converting many persons to Vaisnavism. He renounced the world perhaps because he could not live a happy married life. As a sannyāsin he was very popular among the masses. His important works are Vedāntasāra, Vedāntadīpa, Vedārthasaṁgraha, and the Bhāṣyas on Brahmesūtras and the Bhagavad Gītā. His Śrībhāṣya is a very brilliant work of mature scholarship.

Rāmānuja propounded viśiṣṭādvaita or qualified monism. As against Śaṅkara, he ~~he~~ believes in the reality of the world. In his opinion the world and the individual souls are the gross forms of the non-sentient or acit and the sentient or cit respectively; and are thus effects of the subtle acit and cit. Both cit and acit constitute the body of Brahman. The causal form is Brahman with the subtle cit and acit while ~~the~~ the effect form is Brahman with the gross cit and acit. Brahman is qualified or viśiṣṭa by the cit and acit; there is thus oneness between Brahman on the one hand and the cit and acit on the other on the ground of the body-soul analogy.

---Oneness between the cause and the effect can also be understood as the Brahman with the gross cit and acit is the cause and the Brahman with the subtle cit and acit is the effect.

In this way Rāmānuja maintained the ultimate reality of the world and the jivas. In his opinion the Highest Lord Viṣṇu is endowed with all the virtues and is devoid of all the vices. He can be realized not by knowledge alone as contended by Śaṅkara but by devotion. Rāmānuja can be credited with being the first Ācārya who tried to evolve Vaiṣṇavism and Bhaktimārga from the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavad Gītā and the Vedānta-sūtras. He also holds Viṣṇupurāṇa in very high esteem. The Bhakti, which he advocates is however the same as meditation or Upāśanā preached in the Vedic literature. It is thus slightly different or modified from the sincere and ardent devotion of the Ālvārs depending upon the grace of God alone. Rāmānuja's system is however peculiar in as much as it accepts the pañcarātra theory of vyūhas.

Rāmānuja was followed by Nimbārka, son of Jagannātha and Sarasvatī. He was a Telugu Brahmin living in a village called Nimbā. While his death date is uncertain, he is said to have flourished in the latter part of the eleventh century after Rāmānuja. His Sect is called Śaṅkaraśāstrīya. His commentary on the Brahmasūtras, called Vedāntapārijātasaurābha, is a very small work. His another work Siddhāntaratna, popularly known as Daśaślokī gives the essence of his --- system in ten verses. His theory is called Dvaitādvaita or

Bhedābheda; thus admitting both identity and difference. The world, the jīvas and God are different from one another, but they can also be called identical in so far as the first two are dependent upon God for their existence. The difficulty, however, is that his system has not been well explained and elaborated. There are two important points which deserve special notice. Firstly, Nimbārka differs basically from Rāmānuja in his teaching of the path of devotion. Rāmānuja, in his enthusiasm to find an Upanisadic backing for his--- advocacy of Bhaktimārga, makes Bhakti almost similar to meditation or contemplation. Nimbārka, on the other hand, does not change the original character of Bhakti and puts emphasis ~~more~~ on love and devotion. Secondly, 'the great difference between the two teachers is, that, while Rāmānuja confines himself to Nārāyaṇa and his consorts Lakṣmī, Bhū, and Līlā, Nimbārka gives almost an exclusive prominence to Kṛṣṇa and his mistress, Rādhā, attended on by thousands of her female companions.' ⁴

Madhva was born at Kallianpur in Udipi Taluka of South Kanara district. His father's name was Madhyagehabhatta and his own name was Vāsudeva. In the beginning he was a disciple of one ~~Acutar~~ Acyutaprekṣa^ā who was a follower of Sāṅkara; but as it happened in the case of Rāmānuja, Madhva also parted with his teachers and proclaimed his own

4. Bhandarkar: Vaisnavism, Śaivism etc. P. 93.

dualistic philosophy. He lived a fairly long life of 79 years. He went on ^texpensive tours of India, discussing, debating and finally putting down the theory of Māyā. He is also known as Ānandatīrtha, Pūrṇaprajña and Madhyamandāra. His important works are a commentary on the Brahmasūtras, Anuvyākhyāna, commentaries on the Bhagvad Gītā and the Upaniṣads, a gloss on the Bhāgavata-purāṇa, a commentary on the first forty hymns of Rgveda, Bhāratatātparyanirṇaya, and several other prakaraṇas. Jayatīrtha's commentaries on his Brahmasūtra-Bhāṣya and Anuvyākhyāna are very brilliant.

Madhva's system is the sharpest criticism of the system of Śaṅkara. He condemns Śaṅkara and criticises Rāmānuja. He believes in five eternal distinctions, (1) between God and a Jīva, (2) between God and inanimate objects, (3) between Jīvas and inanimate objects, (4) between one Jīva and another, (5) between one inanimate object and another. He is not prepared to admit monism in any case. He thinks that God is only the efficient cause of the universe and not the material cause. He upholds the path of devotion and admits the grace of God in attaining to the state of final liberation. Even though Madhva interprets the Upaniṣads and Sūtras so as to teach his dualistic doctrines, he relies more upon Purāṇas. He holds the Bhāgavata Purāṇa in very highest esteem. The principal difference of Madhva's system from those of Rāmānuja and Nimbārka is that

unlike the former he does not support the orthodox Pāñcarātra theories, and does not accept the Rādhā-kṛṣṇa element which is found so prominent in the system of Nimbārka.

Coming to the last Vaiṣṇava Ācārya before Vallabha, we are not treading on sure ground. Viṣṇusvāmin is said to have flourished in the thirteenth century. It is stated that he has written commentaries on the authoritative works of the Vedānta but none of them is extant. Some scholars however have advocated the theory that Vallabha belonged to the same school and only restated his position. Prof. G. H. Bhatt of Baroda has considered this question fully. He has shown that Viṣṇusvāmin actually taught a dualistic theory and the alleged connection between the two does not appear to be correct. The learned Professor has also given reasons that might have led to the rise of such theories.⁵

~~You~~ We would also note here two Ācāryas who belonged to Śaivism and not Vaiṣṇavism. Śrīkantha alias Nīlakantha lived in the fourteenth century. He has written a commentary on the Brahmasūtras and interpreted them in the light of Śaivism. He followed, in fact, in the footsteps of Rāmānuja.

5. cf. Prof. G. H. Bhatt's papers on the subject read at the 7th and 8th all India Oriental Conference. See Proceedings of the A. I. O. C. Vol. VII p. 449 ff & Vol. VIII p. 322 ff.

He attempted to give a systematic reconciliation between the two traditions, that of the Vedas and that of Śaiva Āgamas. He rejects both the absolute identification of Śaṅkara and the absolute distinctions of Maḍhva. ~~Substituting~~ Substituting Śiva and Ambā for Viṣṇu and Lakṣmī, he generally accepts the theory of Rāmānuja. That is why he is often referred to as a thief of Rāmānuja's doctrines—Rāmānujamatacaura.

Another commentator of importance is Śrīpati Paṇḍitācārya, who flourished in c.1400 A.D. His Śrīkarabhāṣya is a valuable work in which he upholds the theory of Bhedaḥbhedā. The author has commented upon the Sūtras from the Vīraśaiva point of view.⁶

6. Three important writers posterior to Vallabhācārya should be noted here. Śuka who lived in c.1550 A.D. propounded a dualistic philosophy ; while Vijñānabhikṣu (c.1600 A.D.) explained the Sūtras in the light of the Sāṅkhya theories. His system is known as Avibhagādvaita. Lastly , there is Baladeva (c.1725 A.D.) who taught the Acintyabhedaḥbhedā. cf. C. Hayavadanrao: Śrīkara Bhāṣya of Śrīpati Paṇḍitācārya Vol.I. Intro. p.221.

(III)

Popular Movements.

While on the one hand the Learned Acaryas commented upon the authoritative work in Sanskrit, and propounded their own Systems, the masses were, however, led on the other hand by the popular saints and teachers who carried on their activities in regional languages which could be easily understood by all the people. Their method was simple and their approach was sincere. They did not enter into the dialectical feats of scholars. They did not discuss and debate absolutism, monism or dualism. They just sang the songs in praise of God and through these simple and beautiful songs they could reach the heart of the common folk. They threw away the barriers of castes. They opened the doors of religion to any sincere man or woman who aspired to find out the truth. The path of devotion taught by the Acaryas was certainly for the benefit of the lower classes but they were too learned, too orthodox and too much engrossed in their own hair-splitting controversies of isms. A number of saints have flourished in North India and while some of them actually established their own systems, there were others who did not care to do that.⁷ Rāmānanda, Nanak, Kabir, Pipa and Dhanu, Sena and

7. For a study of these saints see Chaturvedi: Uttarī Bharataki Santaparamparā.

Raidas, Miranbai and Padmavati, Namadeva and Narasinha Mehta and Tukarama—all these and many more lived and preached their faith for the uplift of the weltering men and women of India. Rāmānanda was a pioneer in bringing about radical reforms. He did not care for castes and creeds, he taught in the regional languages; and more than that he substituted the Radha-Kṛṣṇa worship by the purer form of Sita-Rama worship. He was followed by Kabir, Tulasidas and many others.

Another point which is worthy of note is that these teachers did not care for the political changes in India. Who ruled India was not for them to see and think. Whoever adored the thrones of Delhi and other capitals, they went on with their own teaching, unmindful of the ruling powers. People had rather religious consciousness than the political consciousness. They were used to the suppressive power of Muslim rulers. Gradually there arose a tendency to find out the common points between Islam and Hinduism and to effect a compromise between the two. Guru Nanak, Kabir and other saints turned their efforts in that direction.

The most important movement, contemporaneous^e with that of Vallabha was that of Caitanya in Bengal. The original name of Caitanya was Viśvaṁbhara Miśra. His father was Jagannātha and his mother Śacī Devī. He had one elder brother named Viśvarūpa, who was afterwards known as Nityānanda. Caitanya was born in 1485 A.D. He married at first with one Lekṣmī Devī and after

her death married another. He began his mission of life at the age of 23, when he returned from Gaya after making offerings to the manes. He denounced the ritualism of Brahmins, did not admit the distinctions of castes and preached faith in God alone and love for Him. He wandered from place to place singing songs in praise of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā. In 1510 A.D. he became an ascetic and did his work with a missionary zeal. After—travelling through various parts of India he returned to Puri and lived there for the last eighteen years of his life. He died in 1533 A.D. During his travels in India he had many disciples and had disputations with many scholars. Chaitanya, Nityānanda and Advaitānanda are called Prabhus in the school of Caitanya. Caitanya's pupils Rupa and Sanātana were brilliant writers, but the Prabhus themselves left no important composition. While Caitanya mainly preached ^aardent and sincere devotion to Hari, his Vedāntic theory as explained by his followers is very much ~~akin~~ akin to that of Nimbārka.

We may also take notice of one important movement which comes just after Vallabhācārya. Hita Harivaṁśa who was born in 1530 (or 1553) A.D. founded the Rādhāvallabhīya Sāṃpradāya, which teaches mādhyabhāva in Bhakti.⁸

8. For a study of this sect, see Vijayendra Snataka: Rādhāvallabhīya Sāṃpradāya-Siddhānta aur Sāhitya.

(IV).

Vallabhācārya.

Vallabhācārya's family belonged to the Bhāradvāja Gotra of the Taittirīya Śākhā of the Black Yajurveda. It was a Vellanāṭīya Brāhmin family of Andhra. One of the ancestors of Vallabha, named Yajñanārāyaṇa Bhaṭṭa was a wellknown Vaiṣṇava. One Gaṇapati Bhaṭṭa was the author of a book called Sarvatantranigraha, and his son Bālam Bhaṭṭa wrote Bhaktidīpa. Bālam Bhaṭṭa had two sons, Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa and Janārdana. Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa married Vallamāgāru, daughter of Suśarnā. He lived in Benares, moving about in the Society of great scholars of the time. Once a rumour about the Muslim invasion of Benares was spread and Hindus left the city. Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa started South-ward. In the course of this journey Vallamāgāru gave birth to Vallabha in Samvat 1535 (or Samvat 1529 according to some followers of the school) in Campāranya near Raichur. The family returned ^{to} Benares because the rumour of Muslim invasion was wrong. Vallabha was the fourth child of his parents, the others being Rāmakṛṣṇa, Sarasvatī, Subhadra and Keśava. After his Upanayana in the eighth year, Vallabha began his studies under Viṣṇucitta. He was a very brilliant student and mastered various Śāstras in a very short time. In 1490 A. D. Lakṣmaṇa Bhaṭṭa unfortunately passed away and the family had to return home in Southern India, when Vallabha was only eleven.

Vallabha's journey Southward was like the pilgrimage of a Brahmācārī. He came to Vijayanagara in about 1493-1494 A.D. At that time there was a prolonged debate going on between the followers of Śaṅkara and the Vaiṣṇavas led by Vyāsatīrtha, a follower of Madhva under the patronage of the great king Kṛṣṇadevarāya. When the former were on the point of winning, Vallabha could manage to go to the royal court with the help of one of his relatives. He reinforced the side of the Vaiṣṇavas, and after a long controversy defeated the opponents and propounded his Brahmvāda. He was then declared as the greatest teacher and was honoured with Kanakābhiṣeka, 'the golden anointing.' Vallabha's ~~so~~ followers have given very much importance to this event, as a glorious victory of his scholarship and power of debating. The historicity of it can, however, be easily questioned, as Kṛṣṇadeva came to the throne of Vijayanagara in 1509 A.D., whereas the Kanakābhiṣeka is said to have taken place in 1493-1494 A.D. It is likely that the event might have taken place later and not when Vallabha first went to Vijayanagara.

After this, Vallabha was approached by Vyāsatīrtha and others and requested by them to lead the Madhva Church. Vallabha however declined and started on a pilgrimage. He is said to have gone on pilgrimage thrice. As a pilgrim he visited many holy places and shrines, discussed and taught

his doctrines to many and gathered a large following. After the second round of pilgrimage, he married one Mahālakṣmī in about 1500 A.D. which is the year of the foundation of the shrine of Śrī Govardhananāthajī. Once at about the same time when Vallabha ~~was~~ was in Gokula on the eleventh day of the bright half of the month of Śrāvaṇa, he received at midnight the command of God to initiate the people in the new path that the God revealed to him.⁹ Unfortunately we do not know the year of this event.

After his third round of pilgrimage Vallabha settled down at Benaras and then shifted his head quarters to Adel, a small village not far from Allahabad. He stayed there for about twenty years and wrote important works. After settling down he built up his Sāmpradāya and put it on a firm footing. Many disciples came to him at Adel. His meetings with Caitanya are worthy of note. The records of these meetings are preserved by the followers of both, but the descriptions are biassed and colourful. The meetings must have, however, been very important and cordial, though the relations of their followers were strained.

When Vallabha was returning from Puri he received a call from God, but as his commentary on the Bhāgavata was still to be completed, he did not leave the world. He hastened to complete the work, but his scribe Mādhava Bhaṭṭa Kāśmīrin died having been shot by an arrow. He was again

9. cf. Siddhānta Rahasya. v.1.

called by God before he could complete this work. This time the call was too powerful. He thereupon decided to renounce the world and informed his mother and wife about his decision. One Mādhavendrapuri who was a follower of Madhva initiated him as a Sannyāsin. (According to some he was initiated by one Nārāyaṇendra Yati.) He then went to Benaras and at the Hanuman Ghat entered the holy river Ganges and disappeared for ever. It is said that a bright flash appeared at that spot and he went to heaven in the presence of many spectators. This happened on the 3rd day of the bright half of the month of Āṣāḍha in V.S. 1587 corresponding to 1531 A.D.

Vallabha was a great writer. He ~~is~~ is said to have written eightyfour works but the number is more legendary than real corresponding as it is to the number of disciples and shrines of the system. The most important work of Vallabha is his Anubhāṣya, which remained incomplete and which was completed by his son Viṭṭhaleśa. Similarly he is said to have written a commentary on the Pūrvamīmāṃsā Sūtras of Jaimini. Only a fragment of this has come down to us. He has also written the Pūrvamīmāṃsā Kārikās. His commentary Subodhinī on Bhāgavata Purāṇa is only on the first three books, on the tenth book and five Adhyāyas of the eleventh book of the Purāṇa. He is said to have written Sūksmatīkā on the same work but it is not extant. One of his very important work is the Tattvadīpenibandha in three chapters, and a commentary on it. The commentary is, however, found only on the first two chapters

and a portion of the third. The most popular works of Vallabha are ,however, his sixteen tracts or Ṣoḍaśagranthāḥ, which expound his religious teachings. Here also the Puṣṭi-Pravāha-Maṛīyādā-Grantha is not complete. He wrote other small works also like Paṭrāvalambana. In all he is said to have written thirty books, all in Sanskrit.

(V).

Vitṭhalanātha and his descendants.

Vallabha had two sons, Gopīnātha and Vitṭhalanātha. Gopīnātha was born in V.S. 1567. He was a sincere devotee of God, and ~~he~~ is said to have decided to take his food only after reading the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. As this took a long time, Vallabha gave him Puruṣottama-Nāma-Sahasra. This could be read in a shorter time. He died at an early age. He wrote two works Sādhana-dīpikā and Sevāvidhi. He had a son named Puruṣottama, who also died very young.

Vitṭhaleśa was junior to Gopīnātha by five years. He was born at Caranāṭa near Allahabad in V.S. 1572. It is said that he was given to worldly playfulness and resiled from that mood after being remonstrated by Dāmodaradāsa, a well known Vaiṣṇava. It is also said that he was sent by his father to study under Mādhava Sarasvatī but instead of attending to his studies, he just devoted himself to the study of Bhāgavata-Purāṇa. After ^{the} death of Gopīnātha and his son, Vitṭhaleśa

became the recognised representative of his father, and he planned various tours with the sole purpose of propagating the thoughts and practices of the Sāṃpradāya. He visited Gujarat for about six times, during the period between V.S. 1600 and V.S. 1638. He visited Jagannathapuri in V.S. 1616. After that he seems to have stayed at Adel, from where he moved to Bandhegadh. After staying there for a couple of months, he went to Gadha, which was ruled over by the --- famous queen Durgāvatī. He could foresee that the independent Hindu Kingdom of Durgāvatī was perhaps not going to last long. He left his residence at Gadha and went to Mathura and lived there in the 'Seven houses' (Sāt-ghara), built for him by Durgāvatī. However, he preferred the quiet smaller place of Gokula to the city of Mathura. In V.S. 1629 he made Gokula his permanent residence. He carried on his literary and other activities at this place. He seems to have had very happy meetings with Akbar, and became the recipient of the Royal Firmans. He had also connections with Raja Todarmal and Birbal. He ousted the followers of Caitanya from the worship of Śhī Nāthajī, taking advantage of these connections.

His family-life was quite happy. He married one Rukminī, daughter of Viśvanātha Bhaṭṭa and Bhavānī. He had six sons and four daughters by her. His seventh son

Ghaṇaśyāma was born of his second wife Padmāvatī. Two daughters of Gopīnātha, Lakṣmī and Satyabhāmā also lived with him. ~~In sp~~ In spite of bearing the burden of such a large family, he passed his time in devotion to the Lord Kṛṣṇa. He lived a fairly long life of seventy years and died in V.S. 1642 on the seventh day of the dark half of the month of Māgha.

While Vallabha propounded a new theory and established a system based upon it, it was left for Viṭṭhaleśa to put that school on a sound footing. He was a man of genius and knew how to propagate his beliefs and practices. He started all the practices of the Sāṃpradāya and gave it an artistic touch with his fine sense. He was an artist, painter, and singer. He incorporated that art in the service of the Lord. The worship was carried on in houses with separate rooms for bath and bed and dinner rather than big temples. He infused life in religion.

As a writer, Viṭṭhaleśa's contribution to the Suddhādvaita is great. There were, however, certain difficulties which he had to face at the outset. A family quarrel cropped up between himself and his sister-in-law, the widow of Gopīnātha. As a result of this, the widow went away with whatever manuscripts of Vallabha's works she could get. Many of the works were thus lost, and some of those that could be found were incomplete. Viṭṭhaleśa made it his mission to complete them. A part of the commentary on Tattvadīpanibandha. III, and the latter part of the

Anubhāṣya are from his pen. Further, he added many passages also in the body of his father's works. Besides these he has composed so many stories commentaries and shorter tracts. The most important of his works is the Vaidānmandana.¹⁰

We have already noticed that Viṭhaleśa had a large family. All his seven sons were sincere devotees and good scholars. All of them tried in their individual and collective capacity to propagate their faith which was then having a large following in the Western regions of the country. Viṭhaleśa distributed his seven images of the Lord Kṛṣṇa among his seven sons.

Gokulanātha, the fourth son of Viṭhaleśa, was the most prominent of all of the seven sons. He was born in V.S. 1608. He is famous for the fight that he gave to Cidrūpa who, because of his cordial relations with Jehangir could successfully manage to prohibit the use of the Tulasī-string which is one of the outward marks of the ^{Pu}ṣṭimārgīya Vaiṣṇavas. Gokulanātha saw Jehangir personally, convinced him of the Vaiṣṇava position, and got the ban removed. He has written some commentaries in Sanskrit on the sixteen tracts, the Subodhinī etc. He has also written stories of 84, and 252 Vaiṣṇavas in the Vrajī dialect. Though not much of an author, Gokulanātha was well-versed in various śāstras,

10. For a list of his forty eight works: see V.C. Shah:

Ṣṭimārgaṇaṇ Pāñcavaṇsa: p. 239.

and is said to have successfully carried on his controversy with Ćidrūpa. His contribution to the 'Suddhādvaita lies in the propagation and regulation of the Saṁpradāya. He is honoured as the third great man of the Saṁpradāya. He died in V.S.1697 at the age of 89.

Kalyāṇarāya, born in V.S.1625 was the son of Govindarāya, the second son of Viṭṭhaleśa. He has commented upon the sixteen tracts and has also composed some Kīrtanas. He had two sons, Harirāya and Gopeśvara. Harirāya, who lived a fairly long life of about 120 years, was born in V.S.1649. After Gokulanātha, he became a very important personality in the Saṁpradāya. Being a sincere devotee himself, he has written so many small works in Sanskrit, discussing and deciding various problems of the Saṁpradāya. The most important of his works are, however, the letters that he wrote to his brother Gopeśvara, who found consolation in them when he lost his wife. These letters known as--- Siksāpatras are written in simple language and are capable of appealing to the masses. They have been translated into Gujarati and Vraj and are often read in the religious meetings of the Vaiṣṇavas even to-day. He had many students whom he taught the principles and practices of his school.

Besides the teachers noted above, there were several

others who stayed at various places and contributed to the Suddhadvaita literature. Of these the immediate predecessors of Puruṣottama were Pītāmbara, Vrajarāja and Kṛṣṇacandra. We shall however refer to them in the next chapter, as their relation with Puruṣottama is very close.

(VI).

Spread of Vallabha-Sampradāya in Gujarat.

As Puruṣottama, the subject of our thesis, lived and worked in Surat, it would be proper to add a few lines in the introductory chapter, regarding the religious conditions of the province of Gujarat, before and during his occupation of the pontifical chair at Surat.

The charming and fertile land of Gujarat with its natural beauty of rivers and plains has been for ever the recipient of various ideas, religious and others. Gujarat claims to have been the holy land of Lord Kṛṣṇa and the Yādavas. The Rudradāman inscription of Girnar is the finest historical record of the existence of Vaiṣṇavism in Gujarat. One Cakrapālita is said to have built a temple of Cakradhara Kṛṣṇa in 456 A.D. In 526 A.D. there flourished in Vallabhā, a king Dhṛvasena who called himself Parama Bhāgavata. Poet Māgha, (9th century) pays homage to Hari in the first verse of his Śiśupālavadna. The inscription at Dhamadacha, dated 1074 A.D. begins with 'Om namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya' and praises the Varāha-incarnation. Hemacandra, (1088-1172 A.D).

refers to the existence of the Vaisnava temple in Patana, in his Dvyāśrīśyakāvyā. The prevalence of Vaisnavism has also been referred to by Someśvara (c. 1230 A.D.) in his Kīrtikaumudī and Surathotsava. Rājasekara in his Caturvimsatiprabandha refers to the building of the temple of Vīranārayana by Viradhaval (1233-1238 A.D.). One Nṛsiṃhāranya Muni wrote a work called "Viṣṇubhakti Candrodaya" in 1413 A.D. The inscription on the Revatī Kunda of Girnar, dated 1417 A.D. begins with the praise of Dāmodara who steals butter. Vaghela Mokṣasimha (1499 A.D.) is said to have protected the hosts of the Bhāgavatas. The king who reigned in Baroda in 1511 A.D. was a devotee of Govinda.¹¹ For the centuries the current of the Kṛṣṇa-cult- always came to Gujarat and was received there faithfully and enthusiastically, the more so because Dvaraka came to be known as the holy seat of Lord Kṛṣṇa. This had its effect upon the regional literature of Gujarat. A very powerful influence was welded by Gītagovinda of Jayadeva. We may note here the examples of Mayanachanda of Madana (V.S. 1500) and the Phāgu poem of Natersi (1495 A.D.), Vasantavilāsa. Gītagovind was actually translated into Gujarati in c. 1600 V.S.¹²

11. Gujarātī Sāhitya Bk. V: Madhyakālano Sāhityepravāha:
Ed. K.M. Munshi pp. 309-311.

12. Ibid. pp. 313-15.

Of the Sampradāyas, established by the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas of the South, that of Rāmānuja seems to have had its sway over the people of Gujarat for some time. The followers for of Rāmānuja are found in Gujarat even to-day. Shri. Munshi says that there is reason to believe that the Khijāda Māndir Sampradāya of Saurashtra is a branch of the same.¹³ Madhva and Āmbārka could not exercise any influence in Gujarat. The worship of Rāma, propounded by Rāmānanda, of the 'Sri Sampradāya, seems to have had its influence in Gujarat to a very great degree; in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. The well-known poet Bhalana, and his son Viṣṇudāsa were devotees of Rāma. One Miṭha Vaiṣṇava of Talaja wrote a tract on the characteristics of Vaiṣṇavas in V.S. 1587. Kabir, the famous disciple of Rāmānanda, had some hold on the lower strata of the Gujarati society in the seventeenth century. Poet Vaccharaja was a follower of Kabir. Dadu Dayala, was born in Ahmedabad in V.S. 1601 and was initiated in the fold of Kabir, by Kanai (or Budhan). He left Ahmedabad at the age of eighteen and established his seat at Narana, near Ajmer. The Dadu-Sampradāya had many followers in Gujarat.¹⁴

All these and many other sects and movements came to Gujarat. However, the immense popularity of the Purāṇis and the teachers of the Puṣṭimārga ousted them from the field.

The most important religion, not sect or movement that held its sway over Gujarat for centuries and which commands

13. (Ibid. p. 321).

14. (Ibid. pp. 323-4).

a large following even to-day is Jainism. It became the royal faith of Gujarat, when Kumārpāla Solanki accepted it at the instance of his teacher Hemacandra. With its rigorous emphasis on non-violence and good conduct, it could very easily appeal to the characteristically soft and tender nature of the mercantile community of Gujarat. It could not, however, stand the test of time any longer, and many Jains came over to the Pustimārga, when it was introduced by Vallabha and his son. The reason for this is not far to seek. While Jainism was old and worn out, the new faith was fresh and young; again the Pustimārga did not close the doors of happy and prosperous life while Jainism was rigorous and rigid. It may also be added that there is no God in Jainism, which is an ethical religion, whereas Vallabha taught of an eternally playful Kṛṣṇa. The appeal to the masses of this playful sportive God was naturally very deep.

The most important point, which we should note, is the political upheavals and anarchy in the country. The last Hindu king of Gujarat—Karana Vaghelo was defeated by Allauddin Khilji in 1297 A.D. For hundred years after that, Gujarat was ruled by the Subas appointed by the Sultans of Delhi. The invasion of Taimur Lang however shook the very foundation of the Delhi Empire and so the Subas took advantage of the weakness of the Central Government. They

were tempted by the circumstances to become independent kings. Zafar Khan proclaimed his independence and established the reign of the Sultanat in Gujarat in 1407 A.D. The kingdom saw illustrious kings like Ahmedshah and Mohammed (popularly known as Begado), but the Sultanat could not retain its power against Akbar. It was on the ^{year} 18th November 1572^{-73 A.D.} that Gujarat became a Province of the Moghul Empire. The rebellion of Muzaffarkhan proved abortive and once again Ahmedabad became the seat of the Moghul Viceroy. From an independent country, Gujarat turned into a Province of the Moghul Empire. The period, immediately following this annexation, was that of peace and prosperity. The Viceroyalty of Mir Aziz Koka, Shah Jehan and Dara Shikoh added to the security and prosperity of the people, and even though there have been occasional incidents like the plundering of Surat by Malik Ambar in 1609 A.D. and the feuds during the reign of Aurangzeb as Viceroy, ~~the picture on the whole~~ the picture on the whole is decisively bright. It was in this age that Vallabhācārya spread in Gujarat and its neighbouring areas.

Vallabhācārya in his travels visited Gujarat very often and moved at various places. He is said to have visited Surat, Broach, Morbi, Navanagar, Khambhalia, Pindar, Dekor, Dvarka, Junagadh, Prabhas, Godhra, Waroda and many other villages and cities. The visits are recorded in the literature of the Sāṃpradāya. The propagation of the Sāṃpradāya in Gujarat, however, goes to the credit of Vitthaleśa, who visited

Gujarat six times: (1) He came to Gujarat from Adel in V.S. 1600 (2) He repeated his visit from Adel in V.S. 1613 (3) In V.S. 1619, he came from Gadha (4) From Mathura he came to Gujarat in V.S. 1623 (5) and from Gokula in V.S. 1631 (6) Lastly, he came to pay homage to Dvārakādhiśa in V.S. 1638. It appears that he exercised his influence over Gujarat for nearly forty years. The visits of Vitthaleśa to Gujarat were incidental to his visits to the holy shrine at Dvarka. Vallabha himself visited Dvarka thrice and installed the image of Dvārakānātha at Bet Dvarka. Fortunately, however, Vitthaleśa could get enthusiastic and sincere associates who were devoted to him and who were working for the propagation and expansion of the Sampradāya. Vitthaleśa initiated one Nāgajī Bhaṭṭa, a Sathodara Nagar brahmin, who was an influential officer of the Government in Godhra. Nāgajī Bhaṭṭa was an intelligent pupil, who asked many questions to Vitthaleśa and got their answers. He not only accompanied Vitthaleśa during his travels in Gujarat but even himself went to Adel for paying homage to his preceptor. Bhāilā Kothāri of Asarva, near Ahmedabad, was another devotee. His Son-in-law Gopāladās^{who} was dumb got the powers of speech by chewing the betel-leaf offered by Vitthaleśa. This Gopāladās is the author of Navākhyāna, a popular Vaisnava poem which is responsible for the most tender feelings, with which the Mahārājas are looked upon in Gujarat. Whenever, Vitthaleśa visited Bhāilā Kothāri, many people

came to see him and embraced his faith. In Cambay also there was one Jīvā Pārekḥ who contributed much to the rapid spread of Vaisṇavism in Gujarat. The wave of Vaisṇavism, thus begun in Gujarat, went on for years that came and many people belonging to various sects accepted this faith.

The peace and prosperity, which the Province enjoyed under the Moghul rule, was largely instrumental in setting a particular standard of life. This naturally led to a very happy life full of luxuries and comforts. The fall in the moral standard slowly crept in and there were voices of protest raised against this from various quarters. The most prominent among them is the poet-saint Akho. (c. 1615-1674 A.D.). Popular works of devotion and purāṇic tales were, however, written and sung. The most important of those poets was Premānanda. (c. 1636-1734. A.D.), who was followed by Sāmālā Bhaṭṭa (c. 1700 A.D.) They were contemporaries of Puruṣottama.

The age of peace and glory of Gujarat, ended in the reign of Aurangzeb when the great Shivaji plundered Surat, and Gujarat became a scene of a hundred feuds and fights. Religious and social life was in peril and though prosperous and wealthy, the cities of Gujarat were not very quiet. Surat, ~~was~~ the head quarters of Puruṣottama, was no exception to this.

Surat enjoyed a unique place not only in Gujarat but in the whole of India. Its wealth and prosperity lay in its being on the Bank of the river Tapti. Vinayavijayaganivara, who flourished in the later part of the seventeenth and the earlier part of the eighteenth century has written a poem Indudūta, in which he has given a beautiful description of Surat. He compares the Tapti with the river in the heaven. He says:

Potaśrenīparicayamisāt tīravellad vimānā
 Majjadvrndāarakaveravadhūnāgarair nāgarībhih;
 Svādusvacchasphaṭikarucirāmbhobharair uttarangā
 Tāpī tatra śrayati tatīmī Svargagangēnukāram. (v.87.)

It had a beautiful garden full of various kinds of flowers.
 Vinayavijaya says:

Dīptā puṣpair aviraledalā maṇḍalī cāmpakānām
 Tatrodyēne tulayati phalair lakṣitā pallavaś ca;
 Nāgaśrenīm amasṛṇasṛṇim hemaghantāvalīdhām
 Citrair gucchair vividhabharanair maṇḍitam vastrakhaṇḍaiḥ.
 Udyānānām nagaram abhiteḥ santatir bhāti nānā
 Vrkṣair lakṣair vividhasumanahsaṁvitānām latānām;
 Krīḍad dāmpatyucita-kadalīmandirair bālakānām
 Gehaiḥ krīḍābhavenasarasīdīrghikavāpikābhiḥ. (v.91-2).

Surat had a strongly built fort full of all types of weapons:

Durge bhargojjvalavapur ihotkendharās candraśālā-
 Dambhāt saudhacchadir upātito mauktikacchatraśālī;

Nānāyentrapreharanadhara yuddhasajjograsāstrah

Kṣatrasyaśa śrayati suśamā dhairyaśarvoddhurasya.(V.94).

There was a mint also in Surat, which is aptly described by Vinayavijaya:

Rūpyasvarṇaprakaraghaṭanaprotthitaiḥ taṅkaśālā

Garbhodbhūtapratiravaśataiḥ tārātāraiḥ takāraiḥ;

Nātra kṣvāpi prabhavitum aḥam duṣṭadaurgatyabhūtaḥ

Pūtaḥ kṣaudre hyupaśamavidhau mantrasārastakārah.(V.98).

The prosperity and pelf of Surat was due to its being one of the prominent centres of business in India. Merchants of Surat entered into business transactions with businessmen staying in distant places in India and abroad. Ships sailed in and out of Surat to Africa, Iran, China, Japan, Arabia and Turkey. Surat had many market-places like Kanpith, Danapith, Machhalipith, etc, where various commodities brought from outside were sold. Every year some twenty to forty thousand persons came to Surat with a large number of caravans. The inhabitants of Surat were rich and their life was colourful. In spite of all this they were not very happy. They were always worried about the protection of their wealth that they accumulated with tact and toil. After Shivaji's attack they were always afraid of such onslaughts. The Subas of Surat also extracted money from them for paying their dues to the Moghul Emperors of Delhi. Even then there was freedom of religion and the Hindus were not subjected to harassment simply because they were hindus.