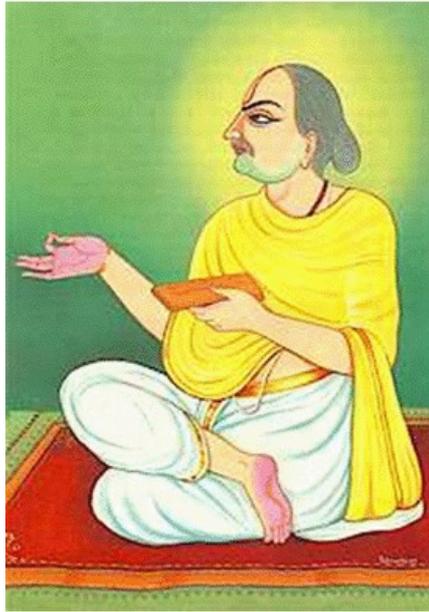




Glory of Bharath » Santh Darsan

Sri Vallabhacharya



Vallabhacharya (1479-1531) was a devotional philosopher, who founded the Pushti sect in India, following the philosophy of Shuddha advaita (Pure Non-dualism). Vallabhacharya accepted the 'Acharya' designation of Vishnuswami Sampraday (Rudra Sampraday) upon request of Bilvamangala Acharya, the last Vishnuswami Sampraday acharya before Vallabhacharya. This was after Vallabhacharya won the famous debate of Brahmadva over Shankars. Apart from being the acharya of Vishnuswami Sampradaya, Vallabhacharya also propagated the Pushtimarg upon the god Krishna's order and thus became the acharya of not only Vishnuswami Sampraday but also Pushti Sampraday.

He is the Acharya and Guru within the Vaishnava traditions as promulgated and prescribed by the Vedanta philosophy. He is associated with Vishnuswami, a prominent Acharya of Rudra Sampradaya out of the four Vaishnava Sampradayas. Within Indian Philosophy, he is known as the writer of sixteen 'stotras' (tracts) and produced several commentaries on the Bhagavata Purana, which describes the many lilas (pastimes) of the Avatar, Krishna. Vallabha Acharya occupies a unique place in Indian culture as a scholar, a philosopher and devotional (bhakti) preacher. He is widely considered as the last of the four great Vaishnava Acharyas who established the various Vaishnava schools of thought based on Vedantic philosophy, the other three (preceding him) being Ramanujacharya, Madhvacharya and Nimbarkacharya. He is especially known as a lover and a propagator of Bhagavata Dharma. He was born in Champaranya in India.

Teachings of Vallabhacharya

He traveled throughout India meeting scholars. He called himself an incarnation of the Lord Agni. He had not acknowledged any human teacher. He says that he had learnt his system direct from Lord Krishna. He preached the worship of Lord Vishnu in the form of Krishna. Philosophically his school is called Shuddhadvaita meaning pure monism. To him Bhakti was not only a means but an end also. A true devotee will live and sport for ever with Lord Krishna. According to him Bhakti is given by God. The released souls rise to Lord Krishna's heaven or Vyapi-Vaikuntha. In the heaven there is also Vrindavan where Radha, Gopis and Gopas reside. He visited Mathura, Vrindavan and many other sacred places and finally settled at Banaras.

Vallabhacharya taught that there was no distinction between Brahmin and the individual soul and the latter could get rid of bondage by Bhakti. He asked his followers to offer everything in the service of Krishna. According to Vallabha only individuals who have the grace of Krishna can be successful in the path of devotion. He advocated the worship of idols of Krishna. Later the rituals of this sect became very complicated. Many followers of Vallabha composed poems on Krishna in Hindi language and thus contributed greatly to the spread of Krishna cult.

The cult is called, 'seva' and also known as Pushtimarga. Pushtimarga, the path of divine grace is based on the "Vishudhadvaita" philosophy, initially shown by Shri Vallabhacharya. Shri Vallabha strongly suggested that Lord Shri Krishna is the ultimate God. Thus, Shri Krishna's blessings alone and only can free humans from the painful cycle of birth and death. Shri Vallabhacharya wrote many books, but many of them are not available today due to lack of proper perseverance.

Childhood

The ancestors of Vallabha acharya lived in Andhra Pradesh and belonged to a long line of Telugu Vaidiki Brahmins following the Vishnu Swami school of thought. According to devotional accounts, Krishna commanded his ancestor Yagnanarayana Bhatta that He would take birth in their family after completion of 100 Somayagnas (fire sacrifices). By the time of Yagnanarayana's descendant Lakshmana Bhatta who

- [History](#)
- [Aims](#)
- [Concept](#)
- [Parenting](#)
- [Events](#)
- [Training Programmes](#)
- [Expansion](#)
- [Development](#)
- [Syllabus](#)
- [Bal Vikas Administration](#)
- [Past Students](#)
 - [June 2010](#)
 - [September](#)
- [Home](#)

[Activities from States](#)[At the Lotus Feet](#)[Gurus Corner](#)[Children's Corner](#)[From the Annals of the World History](#)[Special Page](#)[Glory of Bharath](#)

Old Editions

[» 2011](#)[» 2010](#)[» 2009](#)[» Home](#)

migrated to the holy town of Varanasi, the family had completed 100 Somayagnas. Vallabhacharya was born to Lakshmana Bhatta in 1479 A.D. (V.S. 1535) on the 11th day of the dark half of lunar month of chaitra at Champaranya. The name of his mother was Yallamagaru.

The period surrounding Vallabhacharya's birth was a tumultuous one and most of northern and central India was being influenced by Muslim invaders. It was common for populations to migrate in order to flee from religious persecution and conversion. On one such occasion, Lakshmana Bhatta had to urgently move out of Varanasi with his pregnant wife. Due to terror and physical strain of the flight suffered by the mother, there was a premature birth of the child, two months in advance. As the child did not show signs of life, the parents placed it under a tree wrapped in a piece of cloth. It is believed that Krishna appeared in a dream before the parents of Vallabhacharya and signified that He Himself had taken birth as the child. According to popular accounts, the parents rushed to the spot and were amazed to find their baby alive and protected by a circle of divine fire. The blessed mother extended her arms into the fire unscathed; she received from the fire the divine babe, gleefully to her bosom. The child was named Vallabha (meaning "dear one" in Sanskrit).

Education

His education commenced at the age of seven with the study of four Vedas. He acquired mastery over the books expounding the six systems of Indian philosophy. He also learnt philosophical systems of Adi Sankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Nimbarka along with the Buddhist and Jain schools. He was able to recite hundred mantras, not only from beginning to end but also in reverse order. At Vyankateshwar and Lakshmana Balaji, he made a strong impression on the public as an embodiment of knowledge. He was now applauded as Bala Saraswati.

Victory at Vijayanagara

At the behest of the great Tuluva king Krishnadevaraya, a sensational debate was conducted at Vijayanagara between the Vaishnavites of Madhva and Shankarites over the philosophical question whether God is Dualistic or non-dualistic. Vallabhacharya participated in the discussion, considering it as a divine call.

Vallabhacharya, who had earned an epithet of Bala Saraswati, was given the opportunity to discuss the question. The discussion continued for 27 days in the conference hall. The day of victory for Vaishnavas was celebrated with great pomp at Vijayanagara. He was honoured with the kanakabhishekam ceremony by Krishnadevaraya. The title of 'Acharya' and 'Jagadguru' (world preceptor) was conferred on him. He was given vessels of gold weighing a hundred maunds. Vallabhacharya declined to accept them politely and distributed them among the poor brahmins and the learned only after keeping only seven gold mohurs. They were used for preparing the ornaments of their Lord Govardhananatha.

Pilgrimage of India

Vallabhacharya performed three pilgrimages of India, barefooted. He wore a simple white dhoti and a white covering to cover the upper part of his body. (known as 'Upavarna', literally "upper cloth" in Sanskrit). He gave discourses on Bhagavata. He looked very bright, brilliant and his body depicted magnificent brilliance as a celibate. He gave discourses on Bhagavata at 84 places and explained the subtle meanings of the Puranic text. Even during present day these 84 places are visited by thousands of Hindu pilgrims and are referred to as "Chaurasi Bethak". He used to stay in Vraja for four months in each year.

Establishment of Pushti Margam (literally, The Path of Grace)

It is believed that when Vallabhacharya entered Gokul, he thought about the important question of restoring people to the right path of devotion. He meditated on Krishna who appeared to him in a vision in the form of Shrinathji, deity discovered by Madhavendra Puri and disclosed the 'Brahma Sambandha' (Sanskrit for - "Relation with Brahman, the supreme Godhead") , a mantra of self dedication or consecration of self to Krishna. During that time Damodardasa was sleeping next to him. In the early morning, Vallabha Acharya related this experience to his worthiest and most beloved disciple, Damodardasa and asked him - "Damala, did you hear any voice last night"? Damodaradasa replied that "I heard something but was not able to understand the meaning of it."

Vallabhacharya then explained the meaning of the mantra and at that time he became the first Vaishnava initiated by Vallabhacharya. He wanted to preach his message of devotion to God and God's grace called Pushti - Marga. He undertook three pilgrimages of India. He performed the initiation ceremony of religious rite by conferring on them 'NamaNivedana' mantra or 'Brahma Sambandha' mantra. Thousands became his disciples, but 84 devoted servants are most famous and their life has been documented in Pushti Marg literature as the 'Story of 84 Vaishnavas'. He also met Vyas in his Himalayan cave and discussed about Krishna and his flute.

Family

Vallabhacharyaji strictly adhered to three rules :

He would not wear stitched clothes and hence always wore Dhoti and uparna (a cloth covering the torso) He always performed pilgrimages bare footed

He always resided at the outskirts of the village. His sons and their descendants are known as "Goswami Maharajas".

He was to remain a life-long celibate but the guru Vitthalanatha of Pandharpur commanded him to marry and live the life of householder. Obeying his guru, he married 'Mahakanya' and had two sons: Gopinatha and Vitthalanatha (also known as Gusainji).

Brahmasambandha - The Formal Initiation into The Path Of Grace

The absolute and exclusive rights to grant "Brahmsambandh" in the path of grace, in order to transform an Ordinary jiva (soul) into a Pushti "Jeev" lie only with the descendants of Shri Vallabhacharya, known as Goswami Balaks Vallabhkul(The word "Goswami" literally means - the protector of cows), who Vallabh Vaishnavas respectfully and lovingly refer to as: "Goswami", "Bawa" or "Jeje". They are the actual and direct descendants of Shreemad Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhu. Goswamies are responsible for the

"pushti"(literally means stonement) of all the disciples initiated by them.

Brahmsabandha is a process, where after fasting for one full day(consuming fruits and milk only) one is given the Krishna "Gadhya Mantra" in front of a Deity "Swaroop" by a Vallabhkul Goswami after which tulsi leaves (Indian Basil) are offered to the lotus feet of the Lord. The Adhikaar(right) to perform daily "seva" comes only after one is initiated into Pushtimarg by means of formally granting Brahmsambandh by a Goswami Balak. Without brahmsambandh one does not hold the right to perform seva of a Pusht (alive) Swaroop (Deity.)

Pushtimarg Seva Prakar (Devotional Worship in Pushtimarg)

Some of the important aspects of Pushtimarg Seva are:

Raag (playing and hearing traditional Haveli music)

Bhog (offering pure vegetarian food that does not contain any meat or such vegetables as onion, garlic, cabbage, carrots, and a few others)

Vastra & Shringar (decorating the deity with beautiful clothes and adorning the deity with jewellery)

All of the above three are included in the daily seva (devotional service) which all followers of Pushtimarg offer to their Thakurji (personal Krishna deity), and all of them have been traditionally prescribed by Goswami Shri Vitthalnathji almost five hundred years ago. Shri Vitthalnathji is also called Gusainji (Vallabhacharya's second son). The raag, bhog, and vastra and shringar offerings vary daily according to the season, the date, and time of day, and this is the main reason why this path is so colourful and alive.

Seva is the most important way to attain Pushti in Pushtimarg and has been prescribed by Vallabhacharya as the fundamental tenet. All principles and tenets of Shuddhadvaita Vaishnavism stem out from here.

Pushtimarg

- It is spontaneous, selfless & motiveless love for God.
- It is based on pure love for God.
- It is expressed only through service of God - "Seva".
- It is love after realising God's true nature.
- The knowledge gained is not a means of liberation.
- Liberation is considered secondary to the enjoyment of God's bliss.
- Its aim is God's happiness.
- No caste, creed, color, sex or age prevents one from attaining God's Grace.
- It does not know any boundaries, be it time, place or anything else.
- It does not require a devotee to give up a householder's life. In fact, one can serve Him better, by being a householder. This is different from other philosophies that require a life of contemplation as a monk.
- All the worldly desires are diverted towards God, they are then not required to be suppressed.
- World is not looked down upon but is treated as God's creation and thus as real as God himself.
- Shri Krishna is the Supreme God, all the other deities reside in his form. Therefore total faith is placed in Shri Krishna alone.
- In the state of liberation the entity of the devotee merges into *God's blissful form, but in Bhakti (especially Pushti bhakti) the devotee does not seek liberation but he enjoys God's bliss by participating in it as a separate divine entity.

Sri Vallabhacharya's Writings

• Commentaries and Verses (c 1479-1531)

Vallabhacharya wrote elaborate commentaries on Sanskrit scriptures, the Brahma-Sutras (Anubhasya), and Shreemad Bhagvatam (Shree Subodhini ji, Tattvarth Dip Nibandh).

Also, in order to help devotees on this path of devotion, he wrote 16 pieces in verse which we know as the Shodasha Granthas. These came about as answers to devotees. The verses define the practical theology of Pushtimarga.

The Shodasha Granthas (doctrines) serve as a lighthouse for devotees. They speak about increasing love for Shri Krishna through Seva (service) and Smarana (remembering). These doctrines are his way of encouraging and inspiring devotees on this path of grace. The central message of the Shodasha Granthas is, total surrender to the Lord. A Goswami can initiate an eager soul to this path of Shri Krishna's loving devotion and service. The verses explain the types of devotees, the way to surrender and the reward for Seva, as well as other practical instructions. The devotee is nurtured by the Lord's grace.

• Shodasha Granthas

- Shree Yamunastakam: An ode to Shree Yamuna Maharani
- Baala Bodhah: A guide for beginners on the path of devotion
- Siddhant-Muktavali: A string of pearls consisting of the principles/fundamentals of Pushtimarg
- Pusti-Pravaha-Maryadabhedah: The different characteristics of the different types of souls

(Receptivity of the Lord's grace)

- Siddhant-Rahasya: The Secret behind the Principles
- Navratna : Nine jewels of instructions (Priceless instructions for a devotee)
- Antah-Karan-Prabodhah: Consoling one's Heart (Request to one's own heart)
- Vivek-Dhairya-Aashray: Of discretion, patience and surrender
- Shree Krushna Aashray: Taking Shree Krushna's shelter
- Chatuhshloki: A Four Verses (Verser) illustrating the four principles of life; Dharma, Arth, Kaam, Moksh
- Bhakti-Vardhini: Increase of devotion
- Jal-Bhed: Difference in Waters.
- Pancha-Padyaani: Five instructive verses
- Sannyasa-Nirayah: Decision on taking Renunciation
- Nirodh-Lakshanam: Identifying characteristics of detachment
- Seva-Phalam: The reward of performing seva (worship) of the Lord

Asura Vyamoha Lila

Based on Pushti Marg literature, in about 1530 A.D., Shrinathji commanded Vallabhacharya to leave the worldly life and to come near Him. It is said that Shrinathji had previously expressed His wish on two different occasions. The third command was accepted by Vallabhacharya as the last verdict. He reached Kasi and according to Vedic traditions, formally renounced the world by taking Sanyasa and a vow of silence. He lived in a hut made of leaves on the Hanuman ghat for about a week. He spent his last days in contemplation of Krishna and suffered agonies of separation from Him.

The members of his family assembled near him for his last darshan. When asked about his advice, Vallabhacharya scribbled three and a half Sanskrit verses in the sand by way of counsel. To complete this message, it is believed that Krishna Himself manifested visually on the spot and wrote in the form of a verse and a half. This collection of verses is known as 'ShikshaSloki' in Pushti Marg literature. He entered into the waters of the Ganges on the day of Rath Yatra (A festival that is celebrated on the second or third day of the bright side of the lunar month of Ashadha). People witnessed a brilliant flame as it arose from the water and ascended to heaven and was lost in the firmament. This episode is known as AsurVyamohLila.