



Vaishnav Innerfaith Pushtimargiya Organization

pushti awakening

Quarterly E-Magazine



Inspired
HDH SHASTHPITHADISHWAR GOSWAMI 108
SHREE DWARKESHLALJI MAHARAJSHREE

Guidance
HDH GOSWAMI 108
SHREE AASHRAYKUMARJI MAHODAYA

Guidance
HDH GOSWAMI 108
SHREE SHARNAMKUMARJI MAHODAYA



MESSAGE FROM THE EDITORIAL DESK:

With the immense Grace of Shri Goverdhandharan Prabhu and Shri Kalyanray Prabhu and with the divine blessings of HDH Shashthpithadishwar Pujya Pad Goswami 108 Shri Dwarkeshlalji Maharajshri and guidance of HDH Shri Aashraykumarji Mahodayshri and Shri Sharnamkumarji Mahodayshri, the editorial team is extremely pleased to publish the first edition for 2020 of “Pushti Awakening. “

During this Covid 19 Pandemic everyone on the team has been confined to their homes but have worked diligently to write, design and publish the magazine.

This first edition of 2020 has been dedicated to our Eternal Guru Shrimad Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhuji. On the occasion of his 543rd Birth Anniversary. Articles have been written in form of guidance from our young Acharyas, Question and Answer format, personal opinions and perspectives translation of Shri Sarvottam Stotra and recipe from our Pujya Jayathi Vahuji.

We have also included many photographs from the historic wedding of our Beloved Aashraykumarji Mahodayshri to A.S. AlaukikaVahuji, in January 2020 as well as many other events that followed.

We would like to thank our writers/ contributors for providing articles as well as all the members of our editorial team for creating this fine e-magazine Publication.

We hope our readers find the magazine not only inspiring and informative, but we hope it will trigger a desire to delve deeper to better understand the beautiful teachings of our eternal guru Shrimad Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhuji to connect us to Shri Krishna.

We would really love to hear from our readers!.....

Please connect with us @ pujyashreeyadunathji@yahoo.com

-The Editorial Team



Divine Message from Pujya Jeeshri

Throughout history, humanity has faced many calamities whether natural or man-made, but we have always overcome them with unity, strength, perseverance, endurance and compassion.

Currently as we are experiencing the Covid 19 crisis, many of you have committed yourselves either through your professions as doctors, nurses, pharmacists, hospital workers, police officers, fireman, grocery store workers any many more to help others.

Many of you have been shopping for your neighbors, picking up much needed medicines and other grocery items for the elderly, preparing meals, providing essential items such as food packets, water, hygiene products, tents and beds to the most vulnerable people in your local communities.

Your generosity, dedication and unrelenting commitment to help others despite the significant risks to your own personal health during this unprecedented crisis is a true testament of your Vaishnav spirit.

As we celebrate the 543 rd Birth Anniversary of our eternal Guru, Akhandbhumandal Acharya Jagadguru Shrimad Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhuji this month, let us remember that even during this challenging time, Vaishnavs throughout the world should continue to uphold the Pushtimargiya values of empathy, kindness, humility, respect, purity, generosity, selflessness and gratitude as divine expressions of our identity and devotion to our beloved Guru!



My Blessings are always with you!

Goswami Shri Dwarkeshlalji Maharajshri



Lessons from Hinduism & Pushtimarg on Fighting Coronavirus



As Coronavirus ravages the Earth, there is still one fighting power that scientists haven't tapped into and that is the power of devotion. Although we should not ignore the science and the leaders of our nations, we can still use the ancient wisdom of Hinduism to help guide us through these dark times. The power of love and devotion has the potential to heal the whole world.

Have Faith in God

One of the key lessons of Pushtimarg is that the world and everything within it is perfect exactly the way that it is now. Everything in this world contains the spirit of the Lord and because the Lord is eternally perfect then everything in this world is also perfect. The world itself should be treated as Sri Krishna's creation and is as real as Krishna himself.

According to the beliefs of Pushtimarg, everything is under the control of Krishna. So, although things may seem bad and out of control, remember that this is all part of Krishna's plan and every person and living being contains his essence. Surrender control and have faith in the Lord to guide us out of these times of darkness and uncertainty.

By placing your full faith in Krishna, it will relieve you of the stress and pressure of this virus. As a servant/sevak of God, you must remember that he will always be there for you and you must simply continue walking down your devotional path. Krishna will protect us all.

If you practice Hinduism and are not a devotee of Krishna, then you can also apply this same logic to any deity that you feel most connected to. The ultimate goal is to just remember that there is a greater power than us and we must surrender to God and have faith that he will protect us no matter what.



Practice Seva

Practicing daily Seva will keep you centered on the path towards Krishna. According to the practices of Pushtimarg, the primary practice of Seva you should practice is to perform selfless service to Krishna through daily worship and offerings.

As written in the Bhagavadgītā as it is:

“When there is an epidemic disease, an antiseptic vaccine protects a person from the attack of such an epidemic. Similarly, food offered to Lord Visnu and then taken by us makes us sufficiently resistant to material affection, and one who is accustomed to this practice is called a devotee of the Lord. Therefore, who eats only food offered to Shri Prabhu, can counteract all reactions of past material infections, which are impediments to the progress of self-realization.”

Through devotion and offerings to Sri Krishna, it can protect us from material infections and keep us centered on the path towards liberation. Eating food or prasada offered to Sri Krishna has a profoundly purifying internal effect for your body, mind, and soul.

According to Hinduism, Seva also manifests in these times through devotional service towards others. Remember that each person in this world contains the essence of Krishna, so by helping those less fortunate it also is a form of offering to Krishna himself. In these times of lockdown, there are thousands of people without food and shelter who are in need so if you can try to offer them even some small assistance this has the power to have a ripple effect throughout this world.

It is our moral duty as human beings to help and support each other so that we can push through these dark times and come out stronger than ever before.

The Power of Kirtan

Another highly purifying and powerful form of Seva according to Pushtimarg is to practice daily Kirtan. Chanting the names of the Lord will not only purify your mind, heart, and soul, but this energy of chanting has the potential to purify others as well. The core of Pushtimarg is to develop spontaneous and selfless love for Krishna and practicing



Kirtan can develop this love within you at a higher and higher level.

Again, if you practice Hinduism and are not a devotee of Krishna, then you can chant the name of any deity that you feel most connected to. This mantra chanting is a powerful form of meditation and can create a ripple of positive energy no matter what deity's name is being chanted.

Build Spiritual Associations

As we move into isolation through the coronavirus lockdown, technology has allowed us to remain connected with others despite this. There are now many ways to increase association with other devotees to keep you centered on your spiritual path. Try joining spiritual WhatsApp groups, following the Facebook pages of other devotees, or creating a Skype/Zoom chanting group. The gift of technology has allowed us to stay connected and associated spiritually with others while still protecting our physical health.

Stay Physically Healthy with Yoga and Ayurveda

One of the greatest gifts of Hinduism is the healing power of yoga and Ayurveda. As this disease spreads around the world, daily yoga practice can keep you physically healthy to protect you from disease. To boost your immunity even further, try to take Ayurvedic remedies as well. Even the Indian government is recommending Ayurveda for treatment of coronavirus and there are limited side-effects to this traditional medicinal practice.

Summary

The power of Hinduism and spirituality to fight coronavirus cannot be ignored. As we elevate our mental and spiritual energies higher through devotion to the Lord, it not only purifies our own hearts and minds, but this purification has the potential to spread worldwide. So, remember that Krishna is the ultimate protector and put all of your love and faith in him to guide us through this darkness and back into the light.

Goswami Shri Aashraykumarji Mahodayshri



Balancing The Inner You

There are both difficult and good times which come in our life in different phases.

Our *dharma* (rules for right living) teaches us how to keep balance of our inner-self during these critical times. By saying “inner-self” I mean “inner” - our senses, soul and intention ; “self” - identity and behaviour.

In the *Manusmruti*, in chapter 6, verse 97 emphasizes the 10 characteristics of *dharma* which one should follow to maintain balance and self control in all situations that we face in our life.

As per Hinduism, *dharma* and *adharma* is not only related to action. Of course, there will be action but it is the intention behind the action which is more important than the action itself.

Dharma in Hinduism cannot be understood based on making judgements of good and bad, right and wrong. It studies only the intention behind the action in a magnified manner. Without understanding the reasoning behind the action, the action remains incomplete.

धृतिः क्षमा दमोऽस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः।
धीर्विद्या सत्यमक्रोधो दशकं धर्मलक्षणम्।।

The ten characteristics of *dharma* are: Patience, forgiveness, mastery over the mind, not stealing, purification, mastery over the senses, internalising or introspection, knowledge, truth and no anger.

1. **Dhriti** - patience (*dhairya*), being the first attribute of *dharma* holds a meaning, it is not accidentally placed at first but for a reason. The reason being, when we are trying to practice *dharma* in our daily lives we face a lot of ups and downs and difficulties and in those situations patience is what we run out of. And so, In *Pushtimarg*, Shri



Mahaprabhuji teaches us that how patience is important to attain the full result of our actions.

2. **Kshama** - forgiveness, not only in context of other people but also to forgive ourselves. The more we develop the ability the more we will be able to forgive others. This attribute will make our ego disappear and make us a kind human being.
3. **Dum** - means to be persistent in spiritual practice with patience, forgiveness and all good intentions. Our minds often play tricks on us when we are faced with difficult situations, when clarity of thought is crucial to overcome the difficulty. It is also known as having mastery over the mind.
4. **Asteyam** - Do not steal, this important feature teaches us that stealing of things, whether they are ideas or anything else with which someone is attached cannot be done. This is a quality where you want to be original and authentic.
5. **Saucham** - Purity (*pavitrata*), there are two types of purity :
(1) Internal purity आंतरिक शुद्धता , (2) Outer purity बाहिया पवित्रता

दानेन पणिर न तू कंकणेन, स्नानेन शुद्धिर न तु चंदनेन
मानेन तृप्तिर न तू भोजनेन, ज्ञानेन मुक्तिर्न तु मुंडनेन ॥

This attribute teaches that physical cleanliness is important because the more and more toxins we accumulate in our body, it becomes more difficult to get tuned with the cosmic energy which is why physical cleansing is important and needed. Internal purity and cleaning is an absolute necessity to get rid of the negative emotions in life as well as negative feelings toward others and oneself.

6. **Indriya nigrāh** - mastery over senses (इन्द्रिया निग्रह) to get victory over senses , This is the one characteristic that people easily forget. We get carried away with what we see or hear, that we forget what was the real intention and purpose behind what we are doing. In



this moment we lose being in dharma. Therefore it is important to have mastery over senses so you don't let the sense perception influence our integrity of dharma.

7. Dhi - intelligence (बुद्धि) , intelligence is the ability to apply knowledge . This attribute tells to use intelligence in right way. Introspection is when you sit with your self, no matter what is happening around you, you focus on your self , and bring awareness to your self.

8. Vidhya - take true knowledge (यतार्थ ज्ञान लेना) , true knowledge is collection of skills and information acquired through experience .

9. Satyam - Truth, there are 2 things to keep in mind :-
 (1) the cosmic truth which means you are divine and the divine is within
 (2) practicing truth which means to speak or to act with truth .

10. **Aakrodh** - no anger (क्रोध त्याग), not experiencing anger, no delusion or bewilderment of memory . When memory is bewildered, intelligence is lost, and when intelligence is lost one focuses again into the material world.

These 10 attributes of Dharma are the guidelines for becoming a person of integrity, values and character.

- Goswami Sharnamkumarji Mahodaya



SARVESHWAR NI SAMAGRI

courtsey: P. Pu. Go. A. Sau Jayati Vahuji

Khasa Puris

Ingredients:

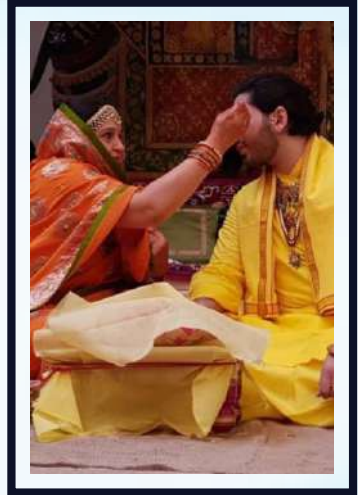
- 1 cup coarse wheat flour
- 1 cup fine wheat flour
- Ghee
- Ghee for frying
- Water



Mix coarse and fine wheat flour. Add ghee and enough water and make stiff dough. Roll out into small rounds (puri's), keeping them a slightly thick. Fry them in Ghee. Cool. Decorate the samagri beautifully and can be offered as “ANSAKHADI” to Shri Prabhu.



Divine Glimpses of the Historic “Alaukikashray” Wedding Jan 16th to 25th,2020





The Shodash Granthas The Popular Works of Shri Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhuji

The “*Shodash Granthas*” or the Sixteen Hymns are the basic gateway to understand the life, philosophy and teachings of Shri Vallabhacharyaji. Shri Vallabh has created a lot of literature or Hindu Scriptures, Hindu philosophy and Vaishnavism. His works profoundly explained and expressed Krishna bhakti and how to attain it resulting in the experience of Shri Krishna himself. A lot of his literature is also an expression of Vedic Hindu religion with all its different aspects, some of it easy to comprehend and some of it a little difficult to understand especially in today's world. In this case the “*Shodash Granthas*” or the Sixteen Hymns or stotras as we say, stand apart in this expression of Shri Vallabh's life works.

These works are in the form of hymns, which can be recited, learnt and meditated upon to give us the explicit idea of what Pushti Bhakti Marg stands for. All the Sixteen Granthas or Hymns are individual works recited and composed at different times for different disciples in answer to their queries when they asked for his guidance regarding the principles of Pushti Marg. These are answers to different questions by different people and they directly or indirectly answer a lot of our questions in today's world.

We do not quite know which one of these sixteen hymns are most prominent, but what comes to our mind immediately on the reality of “*Shodash Granthas*” is “SHRI YAMUNASHTAKAM.” This is perhaps the most sung and well known of all of Shri Vallabh's works, singularly the most prominent of all of his creations. Almost every Vaishnav knows this stotra and can recite it by heart and believes in its immense power which celebrates the glory of Shri Yamunaji. Other hymns like “*Krishnahray*”, “*Navratna Stotra*,” “*Siddhanta Rahasya*,” “*Siddhant Mukthavali* “ etc are also known by Pushti Marga Vaishnavs. These throw a light on the basics of Pushti Marga and the remaining elucidate the nuances of Hindu philosophy and the Vaishnav way of life.



But all of these, though separate compositions are connected to each other by the undercurrent of Krishna Bhakti, and each has in its base a strong love and dedication towards Shri Krishna himself. This is what makes “*Shodash Granthas*” more popular than any other works of Shri Vallabh. These stotras are exquisitely composed, easy to recite, simple to understand and practical to follow. They are insights to Shri Vallabh's way of Krishna Bhakti. Through them, it is easy to understand Shri Krishna, to love him and to dedicate one's life to him. These are works in whose foundations are Shri Vallabh's deep knowledge and understanding of Shrimad Bhagvatam. They are works based on this meticulous understanding of the Vedas, Brahmasutras, Shrimad Bhagvat Gita and most importantly the Shrimad Bhagvatam. Shri Vallabh has bestowed his immense grace upon us by collecting a gist of all the above scriptures and giving it to us in the form of the “*Shodash Granthas*” for which we will always be indebted to him.

- Neetaben Mehta



FAQ'S ON LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF SHRIMAD VALLABHACHARYA
MAHAPRABHUJI: THE FOUNDER OF PUSHTI MARG

1. What does the word “Pushti Marg” mean?

Pushti Marga is the more common term for “Pushti Bhakti Marga, and it simply means the Path of Grace. The origin of the word pushti is derived from the Sanskrit word “poshana” which means “nourishment”. Infact, in the Shreemad Bhagvatam, considered to be one of the important Hindu as well as Pushtimargiya texts, it is clearly explained in the words poshanam tad anugraham – Poshana is His grace. The sixth Canto (Skandha) of the Shreemad Bhagvatam is full of this idea, which is also known as the Pushti Leela Skandha. An example is an account of Ajamila’s liberation, where even a sinner is redeemed by His Divine Grace! Hence “Pushti” means divine nourishment or divine grace. It



indicates the exceptional spiritual nourishment that the seeker (Jiva) receives when the grace of God descends upon him. The word “bhakti” has been widely described throughout Hindu vedic literature and it simply means devotion to God. Finally the word Marga essentially means path or way.. Therefore the elaborate translation of “Pushti Bhakti Marga” is The Devotional Path of Divine Grace., more commonly called The Path of Grace.

2. How is Pushti Marga defined in Hinduism?

For Hindu scholars Pushti Marga is considered to be part of the Bhakti school of Hinduism, particularly of the Rudra lineage (Sampraday) of Vaishnavism. In Hinduism, there are 2 major schools of thought regarding how mankind achieves the final goal of life. Hindus believe that the purpose of human life is to attain liberation or eternal salvation known in Sanskrit as moksha. One school believes that one can attain moksha through knowledge, understanding the self and God (gyana) and the other school believes that this can happen only through God’s grace and devotion to the lord (bhakti).

3. Is Pushtimarga a religion or a way of life?

For Religious scholars Pushtimarga is indeed considered as a means to worship God. But for followers of Pushti Marga it is not just a religion but a way of life wherein day to day living is intricately intertwined with religious festivities and spiritual activity.



One can follow Pushti Marga without renouncing worldly life (becoming a sanyasi), by living positively in this world with the body, mind, and intellect focused on devotion and love of God.

4. How does one experience God in Pushtimarg?

In Pushti Marga the eternal bliss of God is experienced in this world and in his abode. However this realization or experience can only take place with God's grace and will, and the unconditional surrender to the Lord by the spiritual seeker through BrahmaSambhandha initiation. For the Pushti Jeev (Spiritual seeker) devotion or service to the Lord becomes the means and the end of his spiritual quest and not the attainment of Moksha (Liberation from the cycle of life and death). The practice of devotional disciplines for the Pushti Jeev is an expression of his innate inclinations and not as a condition for securing His Grace. Therefore, both God's grace and the seeker's surrender assures God realization .

5. Who established Pushti Marga?

Pushti Marga was founded by Jagadguru Shrimad Vallabhaacharya Mahaprabhuji, lovingly known by Pushti Marga Vaishnavs as Mahaprabhuji. Shrimad Vallabhaacharya Mahaprabhuji is one of the five great Vaishnav Acharyas of Hinduism particularly of the Bhakti school of Vedanta. (Vedanta is the philosophical tradition of the ancient scriptures of India called "The Vedas") The other four Acharyas include Ramanujaacharya, Nimbarkaacharya, Madhvaacharya and Chaitanya Mahaprabhuji.

6. When and where was Mahaprabhuji born?

Prior to his birth, Jagadguru Shrimad Vallabhaacharya Mahaprabhuji's parents had migrated to the holy city of Banares, but in 1479 VS, they were forced to flee the city because of a threat of Muslim invasion, to return to their home in Kakarvad, a town on the banks of the River Krishna in the state of Andhra Pradesh. It was during their return home that Jagadguru Shrimad Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhuji was born prematurely in the forest near Champaranya, a town near modern day Raipur in the state of Madhya Pradesh on the 11th day of the dark half of lunar month of Chaitra of Vikram Samavat 1479. At the time of his birth, both parents thought that he was still born. Grief stricken his mother covered him with leaves and left him in the forest under a Shami tree. But later the Lord appeared in their dream and asked them to return to the forest where they found Jagadguru Shrimad Vallabhaacharya Mahaprabhuji alive, protected by a ring of fire. The parents



were ecstatic to gaze upon their beloved son who was smiling and whose radiant face was glowing with a divine halo around him!

7. Why was Mahaprabhuji's birth an important event in Hinduism?

Jagadguru Mahaprabhuji's birth ushered in a new era in the history of Hindu religion. In India it was the time of Muslim invasion and he saved the Hindu religion from the detrimental effects of Islam. He restored hope, faith and trust in the Hindus who were living under the tyranny of Muslim rule.

8. Who were Jagadguru Shrimad Vallabhaacharya's Mahaprabhuji's parents?

His parents were from Andhra Pradesh . His father Lakshmana Bhatt belonged to a learned Tailang Brahmin family. His descendants were extremely devout Vaishnavs, and according to historical accounts, Shri Krishna himself appeared to Shri Yagnanarayana Bhatt, one of his ancestors, and proclaimed that He (Shri Krishna) would take birth after 100 Somayagnas (fire yagnas) performed by the family. Mahaprabhuji's father Shri Lakshman Bhatt completed the 100th Somayagna and subsequently Shri Mahaprabhuji was born! His mother Illamaguru was also of Telugu descent, she came from a very influential, learned and religious family as her father Devambhatta Sharma, was a priest in the royal house of Vijayanagara in Southern India.

9. Describe Jagadguru Shrimad Vallabhaacharya Mahaprabhuji's education?

Mahaprabhuji's formal education started at the age of seven in Banares (Varanasi), under the tutelage of Vishnuchitta. Mahaprabhuji showed himself to be an extraordinary prodigy.

He mastered the Vedas, the Gita, Bhagvatam and Pancharatra, as well as the philosophies of Shankaracharya, Ramanujacharya, Nimbarkacharya, Madhvacharya and Jain and Buddhist texts in 4 years. Mahaprabhuji quickly learnt to recite hundreds of mantras from beginning to end but also in reverse order. Scholars were so impressed with his immense knowledge that he was hailed as Bala Saraswati. Although his range of

Study in Sanskrit religious philosophy and texts was extremely vast, his main interest remained in the Shreemad Bhagvatam especially the divine pastimes (leelas) of Shri Krishna.

10. What did Mahaprabhuji do after his studies?

Mahaprabhuji's father passed away when he was eleven years old, which brought a lot of change in the family. Mahaprabhuji decided to take a pilgrimage of the whole of



India. He made three such major journeys lasting approximately 20 years, visiting holy places as well as small towns and villages. He made the journey on foot, and on some of his trips he was accompanied by his mother, other family members and followers spreading the knowledge of Bhakti (Devotion) and teaching the Hindu way of life as ascribed in the scriptures. This was really important because India at that time was under the influence of Islamic rule and Hinduism was under significant decline. Because Mahaprabhuji had traveled so extensively throughout India, he was also known as Akhandboomandalacharya.

11. Where did he start his first pilgrimage?

During Mahaprabhuji's first pilgrimage, there was still significant turmoil in Northern India, and the original family home was in the South which was not experiencing the kind of upheaval as the north. It made perfect sense to start his journey from Banares, southwards. Along the way he stopped at many religious places and small towns and villages until he finally arrived at Vijayanagar, the home of his maternal uncle. His maternal uncle was in a high ranking position in the state. The king at the time, Krishna Devaraarya encouraged and organized religious discourses and debates amongst the great scholars of different sects of Hinduism. During his stay in Vijayanagar, the followers of Shankaraacharya and Madhavacharya were in the midst of significant disagreement and Mahaprabhuji was drawn into the debate at the tender age of 12 years. He won the debate against the Mayavadis and established the philosophy of Shuddhadvaith Brahmavad and won accolades from other prominent scholars. The king performed the Kanakabhishek (shower with gold) and bestowed the title of Jagadguru. Mahaprabhuji stayed in Vijayanagar, known to be a city of enlightenment, until the age of 15 years where he continued to study and engage himself with other scholars and luminaries like himself. He then traveled throughout Southern India visiting all the important places of pilgrimage and worship.

12. What is "shuddhadvaitha Brahmavad"?

Shuddhadvaitha Brahmavad is the basic Vedantic philosophy as propounded by Mahaprabhuji in Pushti Marga. It is based on the four major Hindu scriptures: 1. The Vedas 2. The Brahmasutras 3. Shrimad Bhagvat Gita and 4. Shrimad Bhagvat. It is an explanation of the relationship of, Brahma (God/creator), Atma/ (Jiva or soul) And jagat (Universe). The nature of Brahma (also called Purushotham, and for Pushti Marga



Vaishnavs is Sri Krishna) is Sat- Chit – Anand (Existence/truth- consciousness-bliss). Brahma is absolute bliss (Poorna anand). Brahma has created this universe which is also truth and atma is a minute particle of Brahma, but separated from Him. It becomes separated when atma enters the universe and becomes conditioned with ego and illusion, therefore loosing its bliss element. Hence the soul is existence/truth (sat), Consciousness (chit), but not bliss (anand). Atma and jagat are God's manifestation and their relationship to God is a part of the whole. 3

13. What are the important events in Mahaprabhuji's second pilgrimage?

Mahaprabhuji started his second pilgrimage visiting Vijayanagar once again and then traveled north to Pandarpur where Vithoba or Vithalnath (Sri Krishna) along with Rukhmini is worshipped. It is here that he received Divine command to marry and live a householder's life. This divine call gave new meaning to his life and subsequently to the Pushti Marga movement. This was a unique phenomenon because till now all great vedantic acharyas of Hinduism were sanyasis(ascetics). It was in Banares that he married Mahalakshmi who hailed from a prominent Brahmin family. Later, his two sons, Sri Gopinathji and Sri Vithalnathji became great torch bearers of Pushtimarga. Between 1500- 1552 AD, while in Gokul he received the divine call to establish his religious sect (sampraday): The Path of Grace. While in contemplation at the banks of the Yamuna at Govind Ghat, Sri Krishna appeared to him in the middle of the night and told him to initiate devotees on the Path of total surrender at His Divine feet through the ceremony of Brahma Sambhanda. However, the most important event of his second pilgrimage was when Sri Krishna summoned him to Vraj from Jharkhand, because Sri Krishna in the form of Srinathji or Sri Goverdhanathji wanted to emerge from the Giriraj Hills in Vraj. This is known as the Pragatiya Din of Srinathji Prabhu in Pushtimarga. Mahaprabhuji along with the local people of Anyor climbed atop the Giriraj Hills and enshrined Srinathji in a temple. He initially entrusted Seva of Srinathji to Ramdas Chauhan and the people of Anyor, and continued his journey.

14. What were the important events of his third pilgrimage?

Mahaprabhuji's third pilgrimage took him to various places throughout India. He initiated a large number of people into Pushti Marga with the Brahma Sambhanda mantra and made them turn a new leaf in their life. This initiation meant lifting the soul from the life of sin and helping the devotee to surrender unconditionally to the Lord. His



preachings to the masses was based on the Bhagwat Purana which he considered to be the crown jewel of all scriptures. Wherever he travelled, he held Bhagvat Sapthas- the reading of the Bhagvat with interpretations for seven days. In fact In Pushtimarga there are accounts of 84 Baithaks or places that Sri Mahaprabhuji visited and performed Bhagvat Sapthas.

15. How did Shrimad Vallabhacharya Mahaprabhuji change Hinduism?

Mahaprabhuji was an important social reformer of his time. His interpretation of Hindu texts and rituals revolutionized Hinduism which led to important social changes. He considered everyone to be equal irrespective of caste, creed or sex. Where the Vedas denied certain rites and rituals to women, Mahaprabhuji considered women to be more proficient especially in the realm of devotion, because of their inherent caring and sensitive disposition. His devotees came from every class of society including, royalty, aristocrats, businessmen, ordinary people, women, Muslims as well as the untouchables. Mahaprabhuji considered everyone as equal in matters of devotion or bhakti. He believed that everyone had inherent good qualities independent of his position in society and thereby challenged the prevailing caste system and improving the status of women during his life time.

16. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF BRAHMA SAMBHANDA?

Brahma Sambhanda is a ceremony by which the spiritual seeker (Jeeva)surrenders completely to God, gets absolution of his past sins and starts on a new path of complete dependence of divine Grace.In Pushti Marga the relationship with God can only take place with His Divine Will, but to attain his blessings one must follow a disciplined way of life and love God in a spiritual way. For one to live a disciplined life and foster spiritual love in Pushtimarga, Mahaprabhuji established the Brahma Sambhanda to unite the devotee with the Lord through the surrender mantra. Mahaprabhuji had come on earth specifically to initiate this relationship between the chosen souls (Pushti souls)and God, which would ultimately lead to God Realization.The initiaion ceremony into Pushti Marga to this day is carried out in the same manner by the descendants of Shri Mahaprabhuji (Vallabhkul Acharyas).

17. WHERE AND WHEN DID MAHAPRABHUJI RECEIVE BRAHMA SAMBHAND INITIATION?

On the 11th day of bright half of the lunar month of Shravan in Samvat 1549, While



Mahaprabhuji was in deep meditation and contemplation in Gokul, at Govind Ghat on the banks of the Yamuna River, Mahaprabhuji was really worried about how would he unite the spiritual seeker who is filled with vices to the Lord who is so pure? God himself appeared to Mahaprabhuji and ordained him and asked him to initiate devotees, irrespective of their impurities, to the path of total surrender, by dedicating their wordly and spiritual possessions to him through the Brahma Sambandha Mantra also known as the Gadya Mantra. The first person that Shri Mahaprabhuji bestowed the Brahma Sambandha upon was his companion and care taker, Damodardas Harsaniji who is the first Vaishnav of Pushti Marga.

18. WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THE BRAHMA SAMBANDH MANTRA?

The Brahma Sambandha is a five syllable mantra and means the following:“ The spiritual seeker (Jeev) which has been separated from the Lord for thousands of years dedicates to Him its body, senses, life, breath, conscience, duties, material and spiritual possessions. Oh Lord Krishna, I am your servant (Daas). I am Yours.”

19. WHAT WERE SHRI MAHAPRABHUJI’S IMPORTANT LITERARY WORKS/TEACHINGS(SIDDHANTA)?

Besides establishing the religious sect of Pushti Marga and teaching his followers the principles of devotion, Mahaprabhuji wrote several original works and commentaries mostly in the Vraj and Sanskrit languages. Most of his writings and philosophical works took place after his third pilgrimage and included:

Shodas Granthas

Shri Subhodhiniji

Bhagvatartha Prakarana

Tattva Dipa Nibandha

Anu-bhashya

Jamini Sutra Bhashya

Patravallambanam

Siddhanta means teaching of philosophy of truth which leads the devotee to perfection. Shri Mahaprabhuji’s teachings were strictly focused on the attainment of Shri Krishna and were filled with inspirational, devotional and practical advice for the Pushti Marga followers.



20. WHAT ARE THE SHODASA GRANTHAS:

The Shodasa Granthas are the sixteen articles written by Shri Mahaprabhuji which are crucial to the understanding and practice of Pushti Marga.

1. The Yamunashtaka: This treatise is in praise of the sacred River Yamunathat flows through Vraj, Shri Yamunaji symbolizes the love of God through which a devotee must purify himself to be qualified for the life of Devotion. In other words the grace of Yamunaji is essential for the devotee to enter into the path of grace.

2. Balabodha: This work is particularly devoted to the novices of Pushti Marga. It refers to the four endeavors (Purusharthas) of life as outlined in the Vedas: Dharma (Duty), Artha (wealth acquired through righteous deeds), Kama (fulfilling ones carnal and materialistic desires within the confines of dharma), and Moksha (liberation from the material desires and the cycles of birth and death). It emphasizes that Moksha which is the ultimate desire of every spiritual seeker, is possible by devotion to Lord Vishnu (Shri Krishna).

3. The Siddhanta-Muktavali: These principles describes the fundamental concept of Pushti Marga. which is Divine Service – “Seva”. Divine service to the Lord takes place in three ways: through mind, body and spirit.

4. Pushti-Pravaha-Maryada: In this work, the characteristics of divine souls (Pushti) are distinguished from the wordly souls (Pravaha) and the spiritual souls (Maryada). It further explains the goal of worldly souls is worldly happiness, that of spiritual souls, liberation and that of divine souls, enjoyment of God’s bliss

5. Siddhanta Rahasya: This work explains the doctrine of Grace and the significance and necessity of the Brahma Sambhanda.

6. Navratna (Nine gems): These are nine stanzas of a verse in which Shri Mahaprabhuji communicates that the devotee should be free from all cares, worries or anxieties, since they have surrendered their life to the Lord (Shri Krishna). Their unrelenting faith in God and His mercy is all that is required to face challenges in life.

7. Antah-Karana-Prabodha (Advice to one’s own mind): Here Shri Mahaprabhuji is speaking to his own mind which subsequently means to the devotees. His message here is to regard Shri Krishna as the ultimate God and to serve Him with dedication and single-mindedness. It is the duty of the devotee to perform Seva (servitude) to God and God will never forsake his devotee under any circumstances.



8. Viveka- Dharya-ashraya (Discrimination-fortitude-Refuge): In this treatise, Mahaprabhuji explains the most important qualities of a devotee. It is a devotional guide to living in the world. Vivek implies that the devotee should submit to the will of God in all circumstances. Dharya indicates that the devotee should portray patience in times of adversity. Ashray implies that if one finds protection/refuge in God, it will strengthen his courage.

9. Krishna-Ashraya: In this work Shri Mahaprabhuji explains why in the age of Kaliyug (The Iron Age) one's faith should only lie in Shri Krishna.

10. Chatuh-sloki (A collection of four verses): This small work defines the four endeavors (purusharthas) of life for the followers of Pushti Marga. In the Balabodha, Shri Mahaprabhuji refers to the endeavors (purusharthas) from the view point of a man of the world. However here he defines these four endeavors differently especially for the Pushti Marga devotee. Accepting the condition of Gods service (seva) as his servant (daas) is Dharma (Duty), God himself as his Artha (wealth), the desire to have the vision of God (kama) and belonging to him is Moksha (liberation or salvation).

11. Bhakti-Vardhini: These eleven verses describe the way to develop devotion (bhakti). There are two types of bhakti : Nine Fold or Navadha or Sadhan Rupa , and Sadhya Rupa or Premlakshana bhakti or selfless love for God. In Navdha Bhakti God is attained with climbing the nine steps of devotion which include: Shravan, Kirtan, Smaran, Vandan, Archan, Paad Sevan, Dasya, Sakhya and lastly atma nivedan which is self surrender to the Supreme (God). In Premalakshana Bhakti or selfless love for God is Pushti bhakti and that is the end in itself. To acquire God's grace the devotee should have a steadfast and unrelenting love for God. Here Shri Mahaprabhuji describes the three developmental stages of growth towards love and devotion of Shri Krishna. These include Sneha (attraction to God), Aasakti (attachment to God) and Vyasana (detachment from the world and steadfast focus on the Lord). When the devotion culminates into Vyasana, it is a sign of reward in the form of God's grace.

12. Pancha Padya: This is a collection of five verses which describes the three types of listeners of God's praises or glory. Some may hear for selfish means, some for spiritual means and some for the pure love of God.

13. Jala-bheda (Different kinds of water). This work describes the different kinds of narrators of God's Glory and they have been compared to different types of water



such as sweet, salty, pure and turbid water. This is a reflection of the narrators mind and motives as he recites God's praises. This is considered as the psychoanalytical work of Shri Mahaprabhuji.

14. Sannyasa-Nirnaya (Decision of Renunciation): Here Shri Mahaprabhuji describes the mental condition when one considers renunciation. He also describes who should consider this path and when and how.

15. Nirodha Lakshana: (Mind-Control characteristics): Here Mind control means engaging the mind and its faculties in the service of god. This is crucial in order to experience God's love . The end result of Nirodha is to attain God-like state and enjoy God's Bliss.

16. Seva-Fal (The fruits or reward of divine service): According to Shri Mahaprabhuji, this embodies the essence of Pushti Marga. In these nine verses He describes both the rewards of service and the impediments of service as well.

21. What is the Shri Subodhiniji?:

This is a commentary written by Shri Mahaprabhuji on the Shrimad Bhagvata, of Books one, two, three, ten and initial portion of Book eleven. This is the most popular of Vallabhacharya's work because it brings out the underlying meaning of Shri Krishna's leelas in an evocative way. Shri Subhodiniji commentary is considered the most outstanding works of Shri Mahaprabhuji.

22. What was the other most significant contribution by Shri Mahaprabhuji in Pushti Marga?

Besides preaching and writing important literary works Shri Mahaprabhuji also instituted the service of Shri Nathji or Seva. Seva is an integral part of every Vaishnav devotees life. Seva, is not only a form of worship, but a performance of service to the Lord because of one's love for him. Shri Krishna himself says that He is not attained by knowledge, penance or sacrifice but simply by selfless devotion towards him. Sri Krishna bestows his grace upon such a devotee and Shri Mahaprabhuji stresses that Seva alone is instrumental in achieving God's grace. The concept of Seva is described in Shri Mahaprabhuji's work of Siddhanta Mukhtavali in the Sodhasa Granthas.

23. What are the main principles outlined in the Siddhanta Mukhthavali?

- (i) It is mandatory for every Pushti Marga Vaishnav to perform Seva.
- (ii) The Seva is to be performed to Shri Krishna only because he is Parmananda



(Permanent Bliss)

(iii) The Seva is to be performed at all times of the day.

This Seva should be performed in three ways:

- A. Tanuja (physically)
- B. Vittaja (financially)
- C. Manasi (consciously/ mentally).

The highest or best form of service is Manasi. The spiritual seeker should fix his mind on Shri Krishna freeing himself from ego (I and Mine). He should not perform Seva to fulfill his worldly desire but only because of his love for the Lord.

24. How did Shri Mahaprabhuji spend his last days?

Shri Mahaprabhuji's last days were as inspiring as his devotional absorption during his entire life. He continued to live in Adel as a householder, with his mother, wife and children, once again demonstrating that a life of an ascetic was not important in the Pushti way of life. However he did state in Sannyasa Nirnaya (Sodhasa Grantha) that there was a place for Sannyasa when one begins to feel the pangs of pain when separated from God. This was the time to give up the earthly body and become fully absorbed in God. Feeling the pain of separation from God, Shri Mahaprabhuji received initiation into Sannyasa by Madhavendra Puri of the Madhva sect under the name of Purnananda. He then moved to Banares and on Hanuman Ghat he wrote 31/2 Shiksha slokas in answer to Vitthalnathji's questions regarding his duties.. After giving his message he entered into the River Ganges and disappeared. A brilliant flame rose from the spot in the presence of many spectators and He ultimately ascended to His eternal abode.

25. What was the message Shri Mahaprabhuji left for his sons and followers before he ascended to His abode?

“If you become divorced from God in any way, through your mind, body and intellect, which really belong to time, will be devoured by Time. This is my belief. God who is Shri Krishna is not of this world, nor does he have any respect for anything pertaining to this world. Therefore we must love Shri Krishna alone. God is all in all here and in the other world. Hence, Shri Krishna, Lord of the Gopis, is alone worthy of our service with all our mind, body intellect and spirit. He alone can give you everything in this world and the next.”



THE RELEVANCE OF “APRAS” (“ASPARSH”) IN THE ERA OF COVID -19 A Physician's Perspective

Our eternal gurus Shrimad Mahaprabhuji and Shri Gusainji Mahaprabhuji introduced many concepts and practices for seva which is essential in Pushtimarg. They were based not only on spiritual beliefs but also on practical and scientific basis . One such example is the practice of “*Apras*.”

The commonly used Pushti word “*Apras*” is derived from the original “*Asparsh*,” which means Purity. *Apras* is essential practice during seva, to maintain purity of not only the body but the mind and spirit as well so that we can come closer to Shri Prabhu.

Purity of body means to perform seva with a clean body which requires bathing, washing hands and wearing clean (washed) clothes reserved for Shri Prabhu's seva. Our bodies should remain clean and pure during seva, which means to avoid any bodily contact with anyone else (physical distance) or items and/or places that are not clean.

Purity of mind is important so that we can focus positively on our seva to our beloved Shri Prabhu. We must remove all other thoughts from our mind and concentrate only on Shri Prabhu's seva. During this time it is important to remove all negative thoughts and ill feelings and surrender to His lotus feet.

Purity of Spirit means to rid ourselves of our ego and possessiveness and fill our spirit with the *bhaav* of humility.

Apras also means that one needs to be careful with their speech, behavior, thoughts and actions as every moment in seva is dedicated in the service of Shri Prabhu and every thought, word and action should be only for Shri Prabhu's comfort and joy.

500 years ago, during our eternal gurus time, many comforts of modern day were not available such as faucets for freely running water, electricity for cooking, soaps and detergents for cleaning. Infectious diseases were quite common and antibiotics or antiviral medications were not discovered yet. Our gurus established many purifying concepts and practices including bathing, frequent hand washing, proper way to collect clean water, preparing samagri, keeping silence as much as possible, eating sattvic food



and many other important principles, so that we could perform Shri Prabhu's seva in perfect form. These rules were given to us by our enlightened Gurus for our physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing in the age of Kalyug.

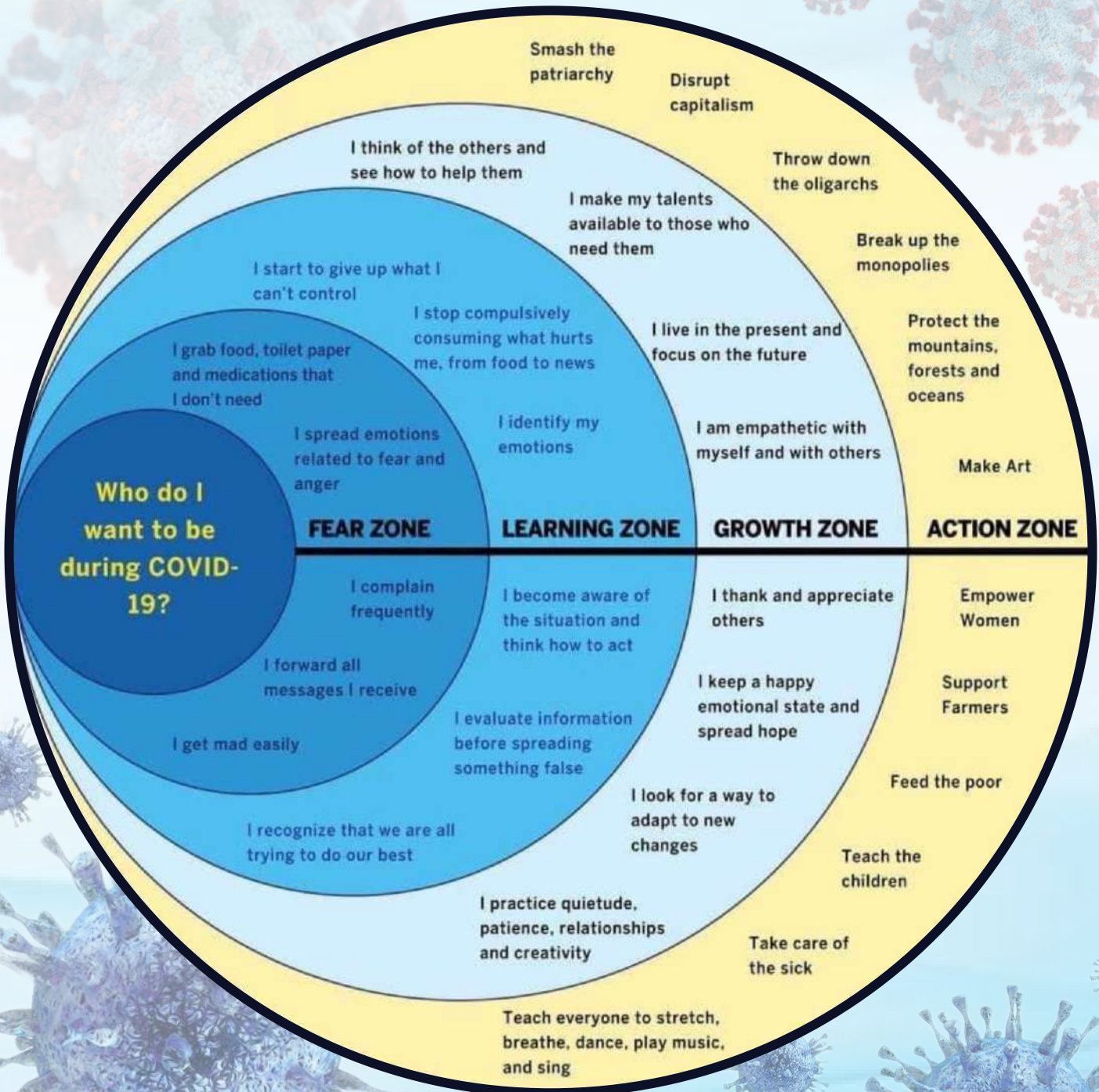
Over the years, Vaishnavs have found *Apras* to be impractical and questioned its relevance in their modern day lives. But today, when the modern world is battling Covid 19 Pandemic with the same timeless principles as outlined by our Gurus, this ancient custom of *Apras* has become so relevant not only for Seva practices but also in our daily life. Today, for our physical health we are asked to keep distance from each other (social distancing/ physical distancing), to practice frequent hand washing, to regularly clean our living spaces, to wear masks, to eat healthy food and take our medications regularly by the various scientific experts. For our emotional and spiritual well being, doctors, psychologists and religious leaders are recommending that we do deep breathing exercises, meditate, pray, read books that can uplift our souls and reconnect with our loved ones, have empathy and compassion for those who are suffering in order to strengthen our social bonds and to continue to find meaning in our lives during this challenging time for everyone.

Lastly we must also keep in mind that surrender and refuge (*samarpan and sharnagathi*) at Shri Prabhu's lotus feet are just as important as ultimately He alone knows what is best for us. We must continue to have unyielding faith in Shri Prabhu and be aware that he is with us at all times, no matter our circumstances.

- Dr Grishma Patel



“MY REACTION TO COVID 19”



SCENES FROM SHRI MAHAPRABHUJI'S UTSAV AND "MANAV SEVA" DURING COVID 19



જગદ્ગુરુ શ્રીમદ્ વલ્લભાચાર્ય મહાપ્રભુજીના 543મા પ્રાગટ્યોત્સવ નિમિત્તે વેષ્ટાવલકતો દ્વારા કલ્યાણરાયજી મંદિર અને નિજ ઘરે કાર્યક્રમો યોજાયા પૂ. ગો. ૧૦૮ દ્વારકેશલાલજી મહારાજ દ્વારા તિલક, કેશરસ્નાન, પૂજન કરવામાં આવ્યું

વગૅદરા, તા. ૧૮
જગદ્ગુરુ શ્રીમદ્ વલ્લભાચાર્ય મહાપ્રભુજીના ૫૪૩માં પ્રાગટ્યોત્સવ નિમિત્તે કલ્યાણરાયજી મંદિર માં વિવિધ કાર્યક્રમો યોજાયા હતા. પૂ. ગો. ૧૦૮ દ્વારકેશલાલજી મહારાજ દ્વારા તિલક, કેશરસ્નાન, પૂજન કરાવ્યું હતું. તેમજ વીપો દ્વારા માસ્ક, સેનિટાઈઝર, અનાજની કીટનું વિતરણ કરવામાં આવ્યું હતું. જગદ્ગુરુ શ્રીમદ્ વલ્લભાચાર્ય મહાપ્રભુજીના ૫૪૩મા પ્રાગટ્યોત્સવ નિમિત્તે મોડલી બાજવાગાંડ કલ્યાણરાયજી મંદિર ખાતે પૂ. ગો. દ્વારકેશલાલજી મહારાજ દ્વારા મહાપ્રભુજીના સુવર્ણ સ્વરૂપને તિલક, કેશરસ્નાન, માલાજી, પાંચી ઉપરણાથી પૂજન કરવામાં આવ્યું હતું. સાથે મોર્નિંગ ટી ગ્રૂપ ચેરિટીબલ ટ્રસ્ટ, કે.એમ. એસ. ગ્રૂપ, વીપો અને નરસિંહજી સેવક ગ્રૂપ દ્વારા પોલીસ, કલેક્ટર કમ્પેરી સ્ટાફ, પબ્લિક સ્ટાફને વીધુ સરખન, જરૂર કોલિંગ્સ, જરૂર છાણનું વિતરણ કરવામાં આવ્યું હતું. ઉપરાંત જરૂરિયાતમંદ પરિવારોને ૫૦૮ નંબ અનાજની કીટનું વિતરણ કરાવ્યું હતું.



વેષ્ટાવાચાર્ય પૂ. શ્રી પ્રજરાજકુમારજી મહોદયની પ્રેરણાથી સેફ્ટી કેર કિટનું વિતરણ



વડાવેચાઓને ૧૦૦૦ માસ્ક, ૫૦૦૦ સેનિટાઈઝર્સ, ૫૦૦૦ વાઈટ ગેડ પાઈડર, ૫૦૦૦ હેન્ડ ગ્લોબ્સ, ૫૦૦૦ હેર કેમ્પનું વિતરણ કરવામાં આવ્યું હતું. જોકપ્રાઇનની પરિસ્થિતિમાં ગ્રેકરસ, મેડિકલ, પેસમેડિકલ સ્ટાફ, પોલીસ સ્ટાફ સહિતનાઓનો સમાવેશ થાય છે.

'આંતરરાષ્ટ્રીય પુષ્ટિમાર્ગીય વેષ્ટાવ પરિષદ દ્વારા શ્રી વલ્લભાચાર્યજી પ્રાગટ્યોત્સવ નિમિત્તે પાંચ દિવસીય ઓનલાઈન કવીઝનું આયોજન કરાયું

વગૅદરા : આંતરરાષ્ટ્રીય પુષ્ટિમાર્ગીય વેષ્ટાવ પરિષદ ગુજરાત પ્રદેશ દ્વારા ઓનલાઈન કવીઝ સ્પર્ધાનું આયોજન પાંચ દિવસ માટે કરવામાં આવ્યું છે. આ ઓનલાઈન કવીઝ સ્પર્ધા આજે મુલવી મુકબલમાં આવી છે. આ સ્પર્ધામાં દેશ વિદેશના એક લાખ વેષ્ટાવો ભાગ લેશે. વહેલી તે પહેલાંના પંચલે એક લાખ વેષ્ટાવો ભાગ લઈ શકશે. કોઈપણ પુષ્ટિમાર્ગીય વેષ્ટાવ પોતાના મોબાઈલ, લેપટોપ, ટેબલેટ કે ટેકટોપ દ્વારા આ સ્પર્ધામાં ભાગ લઈ શકશે. આ સ્પર્ધા તા.૨૨ એપ્રિલના રોજ મધ્યરાત્રિના સમયે પૂર્ણ થશે અથવા તો એક લાખ વેષ્ટાવો ભાગ લે એટલે તે પૂર્ણ થઈ જશે. સ્પર્ધાની સુવિધા માટે પ્રશ્નો અને તેના વિકલ્પો ડિન્ટી અને ગુજરાતી એમ બે ભાષામાં રાખવામાં આવ્યા છે. આ ઓનલાઈન કવીઝની સમયમર્યાદા ૨૫ મિનિટની રાખવામાં આવી છે. સમય પૂર્ણ થશે એટલે આપોઆપ પરિણામ સ્ક્રીન ઉપર આવી જશે અને તે સ્પર્ધકની કુઈ રેન્ક છે તે પણ સ્ક્રીન ઉપર આવી જશે. પહેલા ૨૫ આવનાર સ્પર્ધકોને સન્માનપત્ર આપવામાં આવશે તથા ૮૦ ટકા પ્રાપ્ત કરનારને સર્ટિફિકેટ આપવામાં આવશે.



