



Newsletter ~ Vallabh Vidya Mandir ~



Publisher – VVM

Volume Number 2

Issue Number 4

Date: April 2006

SPECIAL EDITION

An Expression...

“The sun has its role of providing light, the clouds are decked with gorgeousness. The grass blade is worthy of the great world where it grows. Bees sip honey from flowers and hum their thanks when they leave. Be still, my heart, these great trees are prayers. The dust receives insult and in return offers her flowers. The roots below the earth claim no rewards for making the branches beautiful. By plucking her petals one cannot gather the beauty of the flowers. Let my service be the service of the leaves in its shade of humble devotion.”

Rabindranath Tagore.

The earth is sacred. Major world religions speak of her as divine. In Hinduism, she is an expression of Brahma. We feel her sacredness when we open ourselves to her beauty and magnificence of her mountains, the haunting calls of birds and animals, or the craggy bark of a tree. In earth's presence, we are soothed by her calm and peace, uplifted by her beauty and purity, and awed by her immensity, harshness, and fury. Those who

live close to the earth are as familiar with her many moods as they would be to those of a family member.

The divinity and oneness of the earth is called Brahma, God or Consciousness in religion and Energy in science. In Vedanta, indivisible consciousness pervades everything, everyone and every being.

“As the mighty wind, moving everywhere, rests always in space, even so, know you, all beings rest in Me.” (Bhagvad Gita, IX: 6)

Sacred traditions all over the world honor the spirit of service. The devotional attitude can transform our worldly life into a spiritual practice. When our actions are dedicated to His glory the actions themselves become sanctified. All work can thus be converted into a challenge and an opportunity for inner growth, thus bringing much joy and fulfillment to our lives

In past 8 months we have seen the strong dedication in our VVM family. The contribution from the teachers, parents and the students is bringing VVM to a higher level. I

would like to share an [interesting recipe](#) for our VVM students –

Sift 2 cups of Qbedience,
2 tablespoons of Discipline and
1 tablespoon of Punctuality
Set aside.
Beat 5 eggs of Truthfulness,
3 cups of Sweetness and
1 cup of Hard-Work.
Add a pinch of Work Experience.
Knead well with Qbedience,
Discipline and Punctuality.
Put in a greased pan of Learning
and
Bake in the oven of Education.
Remember to cover with a thick
layer of Love and Care.
Decorate with Prayers OF
Thankfulness to the Almighty.
Serve generously with a SMILE to
the family, the country and to the
World

Phalguni Kikani

Announcements

*VVM Annual Program –
April 22, 2006 – 3 PM*

All Students Will Take Part and Perform. Please Co-Operate with the Teachers



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Up Coming Events

- April 9th – “Women’s Health” - Dr. Kokila Parikh
- May 7th – “Understanding Our Children”, - Child Psychologist Dr. Rakesh Desai. *(Both Parents should attend)*

March is On....

Like many things in life, from time to time one needs to pause and ponder for a moment to see if the plans outlined at the start are working out and to determine what further improvements are necessary for accomplishing the goals we set for us. By the end of May 2006 we will complete our first academic year. It will be an ideal milestone for self assessment by the administrators of our educational program, by our volunteer teachers, by the parents and also by the students. Each one will have to ask of themselves if we are on the right course and whether our efforts are not only worthwhile but also fruitful. Here is what each one of us may ask ourselves in relation to our role.

Administrators:

Did the first year effort meet the criteria for success? What additions or deletions we need to make in our course offerings? How can we broaden the volunteer teacher base in terms of number, ethnicity etc.? Do we need to be more selective about whom we enroll? What can we do to improve level of discipline and mannerism?

Volunteer Teachers:

Do I make advance preparation for the classroom presentation? Do I provide copy for the school office? Can all my students recite all five prayers? Do all my students know the meaning of all classroom prayers? Can I honestly say my students are learning what I am teaching? Do I give them homework? Do I test and grade them to check on their level of proficiency? Did I get them ready for next level of learning?

Parents:

Do I take my child to school on time? Do I take interest in seeing what my child is learning? Do I make sure my child does the homework? Do I see that my child

practices what he/she learns at school? Do I encourage and support my child in the pursuit of learning? Do I encourage my child to be more disciplined and better mannered?

Students:

Am I paying attention to what my teacher is teaching? Do I practice to master what I was taught in school? Do I do my homework? Am I respectful to my teachers and friendly to other students? Can I recite and explain all five prayers I am taught at school?

These are just a few questions we all can ask of ourselves. Answers to such questions will tell us whether we are fulfilling our respective roles. This kind of honest self examination will lead to improved environment, better learning and successful Sunday School Program.

Sureshbhai Patel

Special Thanks...

- Dr. Kiran and Saroj Patel for the CPR Workshop. The workshop was a great success



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Important...

Last Day of School – May 28th

Summer School - June 4th
through July 30th (No School on
July 2nd)

[Details at the Front Desk]

Sri Mahaprabhuji

The '*pushtimarga sampradaya*' is a unique, devotional religious order of Vaishnav Hinduism that is exclusively devoted to the teachings of Srimad Vallabhacharya who was born in VS 1535 (1478 AD). In the short span of 52 years he is credited with founding the religious order *pushtimarga* - the path of grace. *Nitya lila* (eternal enjoyment with God) is the prime objective in the *pushtimarga* sect. Followers of *pushtimarga* attain God through grace. The *sampradaya* calls for a doctrine of salvation through primary devotion to Lord Krishna.

This sect of Vaishnavism has a large following and includes members from all castes, and classes. The *sampradaya* reached beyond to a multitude of others who stood lower in the hierarchy of

social life, and gave them a new status, dignity, and power for personal and social good. Equality among gender was encouraged. Within the fellowship itself, both men and women stood on terms of equality, and as the sect grew in numbers, its influence in this matter as in others spread far beyond its confines.

At a time when the Islamic rule of Mughals dominated West and North India and ritual performance was stressed by many Hindu groups, *pushtimarga* offered a revival of Hindu philosophy. Sri Vallabh Acharya gave a religion to the Hindus through which they may develop a greater faith in God as they perform worldly duties without hampering their faith.

His philosophy strayed away from asceticism and placed emphasis on devotion. At the age of thirteen, Sri Vallabh had a dream of Lord Krishna informing him that he had emerged in full form in the hills. The Lord ordered that Sri Vallabh lead the residents of Braj to ceremoniously lift him from the hills and transport him to the flatlands. Sri Vallabh was also instructed to start 'bhakti' and 'seva' (service) in

a way that would attract many followers. On the following day Sri Vallabh made the long journey from Jharkhand to Braj to initiate the process. It is said that when he approached the hill, the idol fully emerged, walked before him, and embraced him. The idol is more familiarly known as Sri Govardhan Nathji because it shows the Nath (Lord Krishna) lifting Mount Govardhan. Due to these occurrences and miracles, Sri Vallabh is considered a saint.

Sri Vallabh's son, Vitthalnath Ji, expanded the *sampradaya* and is often credited with introducing ritual practice to its devotees. The *pushtimarga* customs followed today resemble what Vitthalnath Ji had envisioned. Sri Vallabh Acharya was the philosopher and Vitthalnath Ji was the innovator who put his father's beliefs and philosophies into action. He proved to be a great organizer of the sect.

Faith and Philosophy

Sri Vallabh Acharya considered only four scriptures as *pramans* (proofs) for supporting his philosophy. They include the *Vedas*, the *Bhagvad Gita*, the *Vyas Sutras*, and the *Bhagvata Purana*.



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Based on these four *pramans*, Sri Vallabh propagated a new system of philosophy known as the *Shudhadvaita* (pure non-dualism). Sri Vallabh was very particular to keep the relationship between God and devotee as pure as possible. According to *Shudhadvaita* this world is a creation of *Parabrahman* (the supreme soul) and Krishna is as supreme as Brahman in the Upanishads.

The *Bhagvata Purana* is Sri Vallabh's authoritative scripture. His belief is a "revelation only" theology, a teaching that prefers to put up with what appear as inconsistencies and contradictions in scriptural statements rather than to judge these by reason and fit them into a logically coherent system. According to Sri Vallabh Acharya, it is the greatest poem that can be directed toward Lord Krishna. The *Purana* discusses the various stages of devotional love and of the physical love as related to the Supreme Being, and the various bases on which such love grows and develops. The *Bhagvata Purana* teaches the acquisition of spiritual devotion through offering love. The *Purana* does not discuss asceticism,

sacrifice, or fasting as a means of attaining salvation. This bhakti is the only way to gain salvation and for Sri Vallabh, bhakti is *prema* (love) and *seva* (service).

In the *pushtimarga sampradaya*, liberation can be achieved by surrendering the mind and body and seeking refuge in Sri Nathji, the form of Lord Krishna that lifts Mount Govardhan.

According to Sri Vallabh, the perfect model to emulate is that presented by Gopis. The Gopis displayed pure and genuine love for Lord Krishna. More than a divine or regulator figure, Krishna is also seen in a joyful, playful manner. Sri Vallabh urged devotees to see Krishna in the form of a child so that they could develop the loving, devotional, maternal qualities of Yashoda - Krishna's mother. It is accordingly characteristic of this sect to adore, propitiate and please the lord as one would one's child. The relationship with Lord Krishna should imitate the one shared with the Gopis and the way Lord Krishna should be treated should resemble how a mother treats her child.

Bhakti (devotion) is the most important aspect of our *faith*. There are 9 types of bhakti to the Lord:

- 1) *Shravanam*: hearing of the glory
- 2) *Keertanam*: singing of the glory
- 3) *Smaranam*: remembering the glory
- 4) *Padasevanam*: worshipping the feet
- 5) *Archanam*: worship of the Lord
- 6) *Vandanam*: paying homage
- 7) *Dasyam*: being His servant
- 8) *Sakhyam*: being friendly
- 9) *Atmanivadnam*: self surrender

Seva (service) is the most important expression of bhakti. Service can be performed by the body (*tanuja*), offered with wealth (*vittiga*), and performed by mind and heart (*manasa*). Manasa seva is the most important way of surrendering to and servicing Lord Krishna. *Seva*, through the mind, can be accomplished from every place and makes the *sampradaya* easily accessible. According to the Vaishnavs, Lord Krishna should be rather served and not so much worshipped because he is the "supreme living entity" that must be cared for, sung to, dressed, and fed as a breathing, existing human, such as a child, for example.

Celebration..

On April 23rd Mahaprabhuji's B'day will be observed in class