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Acknowledgements

Dr. Jyotindra Dave

Director, BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute

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DR. JYOTINDRA DAVE

Director, BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute

The publication of this first issue of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Journal begins an exciting new chapter for the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute at Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi. By providing a space for the expression of quality, multi-disciplinary scholarship, this journal furthers the institute's interest to encourage academic investigation on the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition and Indian thought.

Within this first issue, I would like to take some time to first introduce its various elements and then express my appreciation for all those who have participated in the publication of this inaugural issue.

This first issue is divided into four large sections. As is customary of any work that is rooted within the Indian tradition, the beginning of any venture is introduced with benedictions and blessings from the spiritually great. Their insightful words serve to inspire, guide, and render meaningful the ventures undertaken under their direction. With this in mind, the first section of this issue consists of letters from Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj, the gurus of the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition. Since the creation of this journal was first envisioned by Pramukh Swami Maharaj, we have decided to begin this issue with one of his letters. Identified as the *Siddhāntapatra*, the letter holds great significance within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana in that it serves as an authentic expository work and provides a concise, lucid introduction to the tradition's core teachings and explicates the *darśanic* position of the tradition. Thereafter, we have included a letter of blessings from Mahant Swami Maharaj, the present guru of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. His discerning, inspirational words and interest in promoting the publication of the journal continues to energize all who are involved in its production. This first section, then ends

with Sadhu Ishwarcharandas Swami's introduction to the contributions of Bhagavān Swaminarayan and the succession of *guṇātīta* gurus. As the international convener of BAPS and its activities, he offers an informative summary of the tradition's growth since its inception and its vision into the future.

The second section of this issue presents various academic works. The first article in this issue is authored by the distinguished late Mahāmahopādhyāya N. S. Rāmānuja Tātācārya. As renowned pundit on Navya-nyāya and Rāmānuja Vedānta, he is well known for his distinguished contributions in Sanskrit literature and *darśanic* studies. In his work, he presents an overview of Sadhu Bhadreshdas Swami's *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, highlighting its key *darśanic* and literary features. This work is then followed by a piece authored by the eminent Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Sadhu Bhadreshdas Swami. He is the author of the *Prasthānatrayī Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, a comprehensive commentary on the principle Upaniṣads, *Brahmasūtras*, and *Bhagavadgītā* according to the principles revealed by Bhagavān Swaminarayan, and the *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā*, a *vādagrantha* that offers an exposition, defence, and justification of the principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. He is the only Vedānta *ācārya* who has authored both a unique commentary on the *Prasthānatrayī* and a corresponding *vādagrantha*. His unparalleled contributions to Vedānta literature uniquely positions him to present a work on how Bhagavān Swaminarayan's Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana is distinct from both Advaita Vedānta and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Darśana. Thereafter, Dr. Sadhu Shrutiprakashdas Swami, the director of AARSH in Gandhinagar and a profound scholar of Sanskrit literature and manuscriptology, then presents his work on the authority of the *Vacanāmṛta*—one of the most revered texts of the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition. The final work of this section is authored by Sadhu Aksharvatsaldas Swami. As the chief editor of the *Svāminārāyaṇa Prakāśa* and an authority on classical Indian architecture, he discusses the textual tradition of the classical *mandir* architecture. His unparalleled architectural experience acquired from participating in the design and creation of the Swaminarayan Akshardham complexes in Gandhinagar, New Delhi, and Robbinsville, New Jersey affords him with a unique practical perspective to his comprehensive knowledge on classical Indian architecture.

The third section of this issue contains three honorary works. This section begins with an article that elucidates the tradition of learning within the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition. Within this framework, the article presents an overview of the foundational values and interest of the tradition's various scholarly institutions and endeavours. The proceeding two works in this section then offer insightful ruminations from larger works that their authors have produced. Dr. Sadhu Viveksagardas Swami, an experienced Sanskrit scholar and the author of over fifty texts, writes a piece on the significance of the *sant* (*sadhu*) tradition within Indian culture. This is then followed by a work from Sadhu Vivekjiandas Swami, the editor of the *Swaminarayan Bliss*, the author of a two-volume introductory work on Hinduism, and the managing editor

of numerous English publications. In his work he presents a brief overview on Vedic literature from his voluminous work on Hinduism.

The final section of this issue contains reviews by prominent authors and scholars. This first issue includes reviews on the following two Sanskrit texts authored by Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Sadhu Bhadrashdas Swami:

- The *Brahmasūtrasvāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, a Sanskrit commentary on the Bādarāyaṇa's *Brahmasūtras*, according to the teachings revealed by Bhagavān Swaminarayan; and
- The *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā*, a *vādagrantha* that offers an exposition, justification, and defence of the foundational principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana.

The respected Krishna Murti Shastri, Prof. V. S. Vishnu Potty, Dr. N. Radhakrishna Bhatt, and the revered Dr. M. M. Agrawal offer their prudent and expert reviews on the *Brahmasūtrasvāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*. Thereafter, esteemed professors Dr. A. Haridas Bhatt and Dr. C. Rajendran present their detailed evaluations of the *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā*. All of their objective and insightful observations accurately summarize the contents of their reviewed work and position these works within their appropriate contexts.

I would also like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude towards all who have contributed towards the publication of this issue. There are many people I wish to thank. First and foremost, I would like to express my appreciation and deepest devotion to Bhagavān Swaminarayan and my gurus Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj for envisioning and inspiring the execution of this publication. Without their never-ending blessings and inspiration, this journal would have been realized. I thank the executive members of BAPS, Sadhu Ishwarcharandas Swami, and Sadhu Viveksagardas Swami for giving us all the enormous honour and opportunity to serve by participating in the creation of this work. My thanks to the Advisory Editors for their insurmountable patience, prudent advice, and invaluable recommendations. Despite their commitments and extremely engaged schedules, they were always eager to assist in any way possible. Their expertise and experience have greatly helped us overcome many otherwise-crippling hurdles. We thank all those who have agreed to serve on our editorial committee and who have thereby agreed to undertake a certain amount of refereeing for the journal. I owe special thanks to our reviewers, authors, those who serve at Swaminarayan Aksharpith, and the people at the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanskrit Mahavidyalay, the Akshardham Centre for Applied Research in Social Harmony (AARSH), and the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute. Truly, only by their combined efforts has the journal been made possible. Of course, thanks to all of you, the readers and well-wishers, without whose support and interest this journal would not be a reality. Many others have also contributed toward the creation of this work. I am grateful for their insights, invaluable

advice, and most of all, their friendship. Their never-ending support has proven that the journey towards the completion of any task is never a lonely one.

In conclusion, I would like to encourage members, contributors, and readers to send us their best works, comments, and suggestions. It is an exciting time for both us and all of scholarship in its ever-expanding domain.