THE BAPS SWAMINARAYAN RESEARCH
JOURNAL
बी.ए.पी.एस. स्वामिनारायण शोधपत्रिका

Volume 1 - Issue 1

April 2022

Parabrahman Svāmināràyaṇa's Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana

Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Bhadreshdas Swami
Head, BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute

Disclaimer: Statements and opinions in the articles and reviews published within the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Journal are those of the respective authors and contributors and not of the Journal or the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute, New Delhi. Neither the Journal nor the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute makes any representation, expressed or implied, in respect of the accuracy of the material published within this journal and do not accept any legal responsibility or liability for any inaccuracies, errors, or omissions that may have been made.

https://doi.org/10.70855/bsrj/1.1-4
e-ISSN: 3048-9741
https://research.baps.org/journal

pp. 29-62

PARABRAHMAN SVĀMINĀRĀYAṆA'S AKṢARA-PURUṢOTTAMA DARŚANA

DR. BHADRESHDAS SWAMI
Mahāmahopādhyāya

ABSTRACT

The Vedānta *darśanic* tradition is distinctive in its emphasis on philosophical and theological thought. Each *darśana* is established on a set of foundational principles that serve to distinguish it from others that share its intellectual domain. Among other principles these *darśanas* place particular emphasis on their distinctive understanding of the nature and form of *brahman*, the self, the world, and the relationships between them. The names of each of these schools also exhibit this emphasis by reflecting the *darśana's* characteristic ontological enumerations or the metaphysical relationships between its accepted entities.

This work offers a study of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana within this *darśanic* framework. It presents an investigation of the following two assertions:

- The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta as it has been revealed by Bhagavān Swaminarayan (Svāmināràyaṇa) is a distinct *darśanic* doctrine.
- Swaminarayan's philosophy is appropriately identified by the title: "The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana."

The inquiry into the first assertion presents distinctive features of Śaṅkara's Advaita and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. Foundational differences in their understanding of 1) *brahmajñāna*: the nature and form of *brahman*, Parabrahman, the self, and the relationship between them; 2) *sādhanā* – spiritual endeavour; and 3) the state of liberation play a key role in identifying both as distinct *darśanic* positions. Thereafter, upon presenting the foundational principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana and contrasting them with those of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, this work concludes that the philosophical and theological

differences that serve to distinguish Rāmānuja's *darśana* from Śaṅkara's also set apart the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana from both Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita.

The second half of this work investigates the dynamics underlying the identification of Svāminārāyaṇa Vedanta as the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. It elaborates on how 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama' succinctly expresses the foundational principle of the *darśana*: to become *Akṣararūpa* and offering *upāsanā* (worshipful service) or *bhakti* (devotion) to Parabrahman with *dāsabhāva*.[1,2] This title incorporates the *darśana's* unique ontological position along with its understanding of *brahmavidyā*, spiritual endeavour (*sādhanā*), and liberation. This work concludes that as a result, Bhagavān Swaminarayan's *darśana* is appropriately identified as the "Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana."

Keywords: Comparative philosophy; darśana; Vedānta; Śaṅkara; Advaita; Rāmānuja; Viśiṣṭādvaita; Svāminārāyaṇa; Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana; Parabrahman; brahman; brahmajñāna; brahmavidyā; sādhanā; upāsanā; bhakti; soteriology

IMPETUS FOR INVESTIGATION

A BIOGRAPHICAL ACCOUNT OF BHAGAVĀN SWAMINARAYAN

The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana grounds itself in Bhagavān Sahajanand Swami's (Sahajānanda Svāmī) teachings. Sahajanand Swami was born in 1837 in a *brāhmin* family in Uttara Pradeśa, India. Upon completing his study of various sacred texts, he left his home to set out on a pilgrimage throughout India. He travelled alone and barely equipped on a journey that led him throughout the Indian subcontinent. Wherever he went, he would ask learned scholars and ascetics to reveal their understanding of the nature and form of *jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā*, Brahman, and Parabrahman. Unsatisfied with the responses he received, he travelled for a little over seven years until he arrived at a village named Loja in Gujarat. It was here that Nilkanth (Nīlakaṇṭha)[3] ended his pilgrimage. Soon after, Sahajanand Swami established a fellowship founded on his unique teachings and became worshipped as Parabrahman Puruṣottama.

Sahajanand Swami later became known as Bhagavān Swaminarayan. He instructed his followers on various philosophical teachings and inspired them to live a pious and righteous life. For the remainder of his life, he travelled from one

1. 'Dāsabhāva' refers to the sentiment of willful and unpretentious service that originates from, among other things, love, respect, adoration, humility, and gratitude.
2. (Sadhu, Bhadreshdas. *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā*. 1st ed., Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2017, p. xxxiv); (Svāmī, Nārāyaṇasvarūpadāsa. *Siddhāntapatra*. 18 July 2008, p. 6)
3. During his pilgrimage throughout India, Sahajanand Swami was identified by the name Nilkanth.

village to the next and delivered discourses on various principles of Vedānta. He revealed that there were five eternal and ontologically distinct entities: *jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā*, Akṣarabrahman, and Parabrahman. He explained that the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* were bound by *māyā*[4] since eternity and that Akṣara (Akṣarabrahman) and Puruṣottama, who is greater than even Akṣara, were both distinct and eternally beyond the influence of *māyā*. He emphasized the need to become *brahmarūpa* (attain oneness with Brahman) in order to offer supreme devotion to Parabrahman. Through such teachings he revealed the foundational philosophical and theological principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana.

Although Swaminarayan[5] is recognized as the founder of this *darśana*, his significance within it extends much further. He is identified as Parabrahman Puruṣottama, the *avatārin* (the cause) of all *avatāras* (divine manifestations). He was and continues to be worshipped as such and is identified as the object of *upāsanā* (worshipful service). In recognition of his unique ontological position within the *darśana*, there are thousands of Akṣara-Puruṣottama mandirs throughout the world in which Bhagavān Swaminarayan's divine idol (*mūrti*) is consecrated and worshipped.

Alongside his *mūrti*, the *mūrti* of Gunatitanand Swami (Guṇātītānanda Svāmī) is also consecrated in the central shrine of these mandirs. Within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, Gunatitanand Swami is identified as Akṣarabrahman, a distinct ontological entity from Parabrahman. He is also identified as Bhagavān Swaminarayan's first successor. Swaminarayan is believed to remain present, bestow liberation, and continue to allow others to experience his divine presence after his worldly departure through Gunatitanand Swami and, successively thereafter, through the *guṇātīta*[6] gurus.

BRAHMASVARŪPA SHASTRIJI MAHARAJ AND THE AKṢARA-PURUṢOTTAMA DARŚANA

Although Bhagavān Swaminarayan revealed the principles of this doctrine through his discourses, numerous letters, and personal revelations, the identification of the *darśana* as an independent Vedānta *darśana* and the use of 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama' – a designation found in the title of the *darśana*, was first employed by Brahmasvarūpa Shastriji Maharaj (Śāstrījī Mahārāja). Shastriji Maharaj was the third successor in the lineage of *guṇātīta* gurus that followed Swaminarayan. Having

4. *Māyā* is identified as an instrument or power of Parabrahman that is used as the substance of creation and the cause of ignorance. By nature, it is composed of the following three qualities: *sattvaguṇa*, *tamoguṇa*, and *rajoguṇa*.
5. Although Sahajanand Swami is formally identified as Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagavān Swaminarayan, for brevity and in an attempt to increase readability; henceforth, I will occasionally refer to him by simply 'Swaminarayan.'
6. 'Guṇātīta' refers to being above the following three qualities of *māyā*: *rajoguṇa*, *tamoguṇa*, and *satvaguṇa*.

analysed Swaminarayan's expositions in the Vacanāmṛta,[7] other sacred texts of the *saṃpradāya*,[8] and both historical and personal accounts of Swaminarayan, he synthesized 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama' to constitute the foundational philosophical and theological principles revealed in Swaminarayan's teachings. The verse, "Reverence to him—Śāstrī, who is the guru's guru[9] and who composed [the title] 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama|"[10] is presented in recognition of his foundational role. This work's investigation of Swaminarayan's *darśanic* position as an independent Vedānta *darśana* and its designation as the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana seeks to understand the significance of Shastriji Maharaj's proclamation.

The recent creation of 1) the *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*—a five-volume comprehensive commentary of the *Prasthānatrayī* according the *darśanic* principles revealed by Bhagavān Swaminarayan, and 2) the *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā*—a *vādagrantha* that offers a systematic exposition, justification, and defence of the *darśana's* foundational principles, further attest to the significance of this investigation and substantiate the discussion within a framework that is familiar to the established *darśanic* dialogue.

This investigation takes on further relevance by Śrī Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad's recent affirmation of Swaminarayan's Vedanta not only as an independent Vedanta *darśana*, but also as aptly identified by the title: "The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana." Upon studying, analysing, and discussing the *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* and the *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā*, the Śrī Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad on July 31, 2017 produced a copper-plated letter of declaration to reaffirm the *darśana's* identity.

Grounding its relevance in such historical and contemporary developments, this article serves to explore the distinctive philosophical and theological content of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana as it is expressed within 1) the discourses of Bhagavān Swaminarayan that are collected in the Vacanāmṛta, 2) the revelations of the *darśana's guṇātīta* gurus, and 3) the readings of the sacred texts of the *Prasthānatrayī*. Upon exploring Swaminarayan's revealed philosophical and theological principles within the context of an existent *darśanic* dialogue, this work also investigates the role of such principles in identifying Swaminarayan's Vedāntic *darśana* as the "Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana."

---

7. The Vacanāmṛta is a sacred text of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana that consists of a collection of Bhagavān Swaminarayan's discourses.
8. 'Saṃpradāya' refers to a religious tradition that is, among other things, characterized by a succession of gurus, a distinctive philosophical or theological doctrine, a particular tradition of ritual performance, a recognized collection of sacred texts, and a religious following committed to particular religious identity.
9. 'guru' here refers to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. Since Shastriji Maharaj was Pramukh Swami Maharaj's guru, he is also identified as the guru's guru.
10. "grathito yena śabdo'yamakṣarapuruṣottamaḥ| gurūṇāṃ guruve tasmai śāstrīṇe'stu namo namaḥ|| (Sadhu, 2017, p. 145)

FRAMEWORK

This work will approach its discussion of Svāminārāyaṇa Vedānta within the framework of investigating the following two assertions:

1. The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta as it has been revealed by Bhagavān Swaminarayan is a distinct Vedānta doctrine
2. Swaminarayan's Vedānta is appropriately identified by the title: "The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana."

The first section of this work will focus on the first of these assertions. It will begin by highlighting Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja Vedānta's characteristic understanding of:

1. *Brahmajñāna*: the nature and form of *brahman*, Parabrahman, the self, and the relationship between them;
2. *sādhanā*—spiritual endeavour; and
3. the state of liberation

Upon calling attention to key differences that have traditionally formed the basis of identifying these *darśanic* systems as independent, this section will proceed by explicating the principles of Swaminarayan's Vedānta as they pertain to the above-mentioned categories. The exposition and then comparative analysis of the principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana with those of Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta are intentioned to demonstrate that philosophical and theological differences that serve to distinguish Rāmānuja's Vedānta from Śaṅkara's also set apart the *darśanic* position revealed by Svāminārāyaṇa. As a result, I conclude that it is only appropriate to identify the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana as an independent Vedānta *darśana*.

Although a comprehensive analysis of the first of the two claims above would requisite an investigation and an exposition of all principles of not only Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, but also those of other Vedānta *darśanas*, for the economy of space I have restricted my discussions by comparing only certain foundational principles of the aforementioned two Vedānta with those of Svāminārāyaṇa. The project of considering other minor difference in addition to contrasting Swaminarayan's Vedānta from other *darśanic* systems, such as Madhva's Dvaita Vedānta and Vallabha's Śuddhādvaita, is a task that I have left for subsequent works.

This work will substantiate its exposition of each *darśana*'s position on available commentarial works and subsequent literatures. With regards to the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, expositions of its principles will be founded on Swaminarayan's discourses as they are recorded in the Vacanāmṛta, the *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, and the *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā*. Upon conducting this analysis, this work will conclude the first section in support of the declaration that Swaminarayan's Vedānta is an independent Vedāntic *darśana*.

The second half of this work will then investigate the dynamics underlying the identification of Svāminārāyaṇa Vedanta as the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. It will offer a *darśanic* basis for identifying Swaminarayan's Vedānta by the title: "The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana." Among other considerations, this section will elaborate on how this title incorporates both the *darśana's* unique ontological position along with its understanding of spiritual endeavour (*sādhanā*).

PART I

ŚAṄKARA'S BRAHMA-MĪMĀṂSĀ IN THE ADVAITA (NON-DUALIST) DOCTRINE

THE FORM OF BRAHMAN

Śaṅkara characterizes *brahman* according to the Advaita *darśana*. For him, there is only one fundamental entity: *brahman*. This *brahman* is without qualities (*nirguṇa*), not characteristically distinct (non-phenomenal) (*nirviṣeśa*), unknowable (*ajñeya*), and not subject to any means of knowledge (*aprameya*).[11] As such *brahman* does not possess the quality of being a cause (*kartṛtva*), being an upholder (*dhartṛtva*), having knowledge (*jñātṛtva*), nor the quality of being a controller (*niyantṛtva*).

Given such a description of *brahman*, how does Śaṅkara accommodate Upaniṣadic aphorisms that describe *brahman* as being for example existent (*sat*), conscious (*cit*), and happiness (*ānanda*)[12] or truth (*satya*), knowledge (*jñāna*), and endless (*ananta*)?[13] Śaṅkara moves by identifying these qualities as the non-existence (*abhāva*) of their opposing or contrary quality. He then argues that since *abhāva* or non-existence can only be a substratum (*adhikaraṇa*), it cannot be a quality (*dharma*). When such terms describe *brahman* while using coordinate predication (*samānādhikaraṇa*), they are indicative of *brahman* itself (*svarūpabhūta vastutattva*) and not a quality of *brahman*. For instance, when *sat* is identified as the non-existence of *asat* (non-existence)—the contrary of *sat*—s*at* is described as an *abhāva*. It is not identified as a quality of *brahman*, but instead *brahman* itself. Similar moves are made for other *śruti* descriptions of *brahman*.

Śaṅkara makes a different move to consolidate other seemingly contradictory descriptions of Brahman found in the *śrutis*. Aphorisms such as: "He (*brahman*), the knowledgeable one (*puruṣa*) is the observer, the listener, the one who tastes, smells, contemplates, comprehends, [and] does"[14] and "one whose desires are [made] true (fulfilled) (*satyakāma*) and whose volitions are [made] true (fulfilled) (*satyasaṅkalpa*)"[15]

11. (Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* 372) (Sivananda 220)
12. See, for example: "saccidānandaṃ brahmaI"
13. See, for example: "satyaṃ jñānamānantaṃ brahmaI" (Tai. 2.1.1) (Śāstrī 25)
14. "eṣa hi draṣṭā śrotā rasayitā ghrātā mantā boddhā kartā vijñānātmā puraṣaḥ" (Pra. 4.9) (Śāstrī 14)
15. "satyakāmaḥ satyasaṅkalpaḥI" (Chā. 8.1.5) (Śāstrī 78)

describe *brahman* as having particular qualities. Śaṅkara identifies these as referring to not the *pāramārthika* or real *brahman* but *saguṇa-brahman*. To compensate the two seemingly contrasting descriptions—a *brahman* without qualities and one with qualities, he identifies two types of *brahman*: a *pāramārthika brahman* and a *vyavāhārika* or *saguṇa brahman*. Among the two, the *pāramārthika* or true/actual *brahman* is identified as earlier: viz. among other things, without qualities (*nirguṇa*) and not characteristically distinct (non-phenomenal) (*nirviśeśa*); whereas, the *vyavāhārika* or *saguṇa brahman,* although unreal (*mithyā*), is one that (1) has qualities, (2) engages in actions, such as creating, contemplating, and desiring, and (3) is described by, among others, action-contingent qualifiers.

Śaṅkara's insistence for such an understanding lies in his assertion of the existence of only *brahman*. Often, Upaniṣadic revelations such as: "There is one, singular *brahman*,"[16] "I am he,"[17] and "This all is *brahman*"[18] are offered in support of his Advaita position. As a result of his distinct ontology, Śaṅkara's *brahman* is characterized without the following three distinctions: *svasajātīya* or being similar to others; *svavijātīya* or being dissimilar to others; and *svagata* or being of parts. Brahman's singular existence as such results in the understanding of the self (*ātman*) and the world (*jagat*) as its manifestations.

BRAHMAN AS THE ĀTMAN

Within Śaṅkara's Advaita the self (*ātman*) is understood to be ontologically identical with *brahman*. Upaniṣadic revelations such as, "This *jīvātman* (self) is *brahman*"[19] and "I am *brahman*"[20] substantiate his identification of the *jīvātman* with *brahman*. This position is expressed in the "Jījñāsādhikaraṇa" of Śaṅkara's *Brahmasūtra* commentary, where he asserts that the "*ātman* is *brahman*."[21,22] Vācaspati Miśra, the author of the *Bhāmatī*, recalls the phrase "that you are,"[23] to further validate the non-dualist identification.[24,25] In his discussion on Advaita, the phrase "the *jīva* is *brahman*, and not inferior"[26] is also often recalled in support. Within Śaṅkara's Vedānta, a distinct

16. "ekamevādvitīyaṃ brahmal" (Chā. 6.2.1) (Śāstrī 66), (Vi. 467) (Madhavananda 202)
17. "so'haml" (Īśā. 16) (Śāstrī 1)
18. "sarvaṃ khalavidaṃ brahmal" (Chā. 3.14.1) (Śāstrī 50)
19. "ayamātmā brahmal" (Mā. 1.2) (Śāstrī 20)
20. "ahaṃ brahmāsmil" (Bṛ. 1.4.10) (Śāstrī 89)
21. "ātmā ca brahmal" (BS. 1.1.1) (Śaṅkara, *Brahmasutra Bhashya* 81)
22. (Śāstrī and Śāstrī 81)
23. "tattvamasil" (Chā. 6.8.7) (Śāstrī 69)
24. (Śāstrī and Śāstrī 81)
25. Elsewhere, Vācaspati Miśra, further supports this argument by elaborating: "tadastvamā sāmānādhikaraṇyātl tasmāt tatpadārthasya śuddhabuddhatvādeḥ śabdataḥ, tvaṃpadārthasya ca jīvātmanaḥ pratyakṣataḥ prasiddheḥ, padārthajñānapūrvakatvācca vākyārthajñānasya, tvaṃpadārthāvagamaḥ tattvamasi iti vākyādupapadyate iti bhāvaḥl"
26. "jīvo brahmaiva nāparaḥl" (Br. 20) (Śaṅkara, *Brahmasutra Bhashya* 224)

emphasis is placed on identifying the *ātman* as *brahman* (*svarūpaikya*) and not simply as having qualities identical to those of *brahman* (*guṇasāmyakṛta-sādṛśya*).

In addition to identifying *brahman* with the self, the Advaita doctrine also advocates *brahman* as the greatest sovereignty (*sarvopari-sattāvat*). As such, there is no notion of an absolute (*pāramārthika*) Parabrahman that reigns superior to *brahman*.

BRAHMAN AND THE WORLD

The Advaita doctrine, offers yet another means to understand *brahman*. Along with identifying the self with *brahman*, Śaṅkara's Advaita advocates that all of creation is also identical to *brahman*. Sacred text excerpts such as: "Distinct objects do not exist"[27] and "This all is *brahman*,"[28] are often cited in support of this position. Rambachan explains this oneness, "Shankara suggests that the universe, which has come from the infinite *brahman*, is not different in essential nature from *brahman*."[29] For Śaṅkara, there is only *brahman* and everything is *brahman*.

How does Śaṅkara accommodate for the phenomenal world? The *advaitin* (an adherent of the Advaita doctrine) explains that from a non-dualist (*pāramārthika*) perspective there is nothing other than *brahman*. Rambachan elaborates, "The world is likened to a sense-illusion, which we conjure, and experience because of our ignorance."[30] Just as a piece of rope is misunderstood as a snake and dealt with as such by someone who is ignorant, the world, which is nothing but the singular entity *brahman*, is misconceived by the ignorant to be distinct from *brahman*. In his *Vivekacūḍāmaṇi,* Śaṅkara summarizes: "*Brahman* is real; the world is unreal (*mithyā*)."[31] The phenomenal world is rendered unreal (*mithyā*) and is understood to be merely a presentation of *brahman*.[32]

Despite his description of the world as *mithyā*, Śaṅkara does not offer a clear exposition of 'mithyā' or the precise nature of the relationship between *brahman* and the world. Consequently, within the Advaita tradition there is an indecisive dialogue regarding the relationship between the real (*satya*) *brahman* and the unreal (*mithyā*) world. This indeterminacy has resulted in different schools of thought identified as, among others: *pratibiṃbavāda*, *avacchedavāda*, and *ābhāsavāda*. The commentator Śrī Prakāśātmayati explains Advaita using *biṃba-pratibiṃbābhāva*. He describes the world to be a reflection or *pratibimba* of unqualified (*nirguṇa*) *brahman*. Alternatively, Vācaspati Miśra in the *Bhāmatī* offers an interpretation through *avacchedavāda*.

27. "neha nānāsti kiṃcanal" (Bṛ. 4.4.19) (Śāstrī 118), (Kaṭha. 2.1.11) (Śāstrī 8), (Vi. 467) (Madhavananda 202)
28. "sarvaṃ khalavidaṃ brahmal" (Chā. 3.14.1) (Śāstrī 50)
29. (Anantanand 72)
30. (Anantanand 67)
31. "brahma satyaṃ jagananmithyāl" (Vi. 20) (Madhavananda 8), (Br. 20) (Sankaracharya, "Brahmajñānāvalīmālā" 224)
32. (Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* 373–76)

According to him, although space (*ākāśa*) is one, its relevant association or distinction (*avacchinna*) with an object such as a pot (*ghaṭa*) renders it as the space of the pot (*ghaṭākāśa*). Similarly, the non-dualist's *brahman*, through different relationships (*vibhinna upādhi*), is realized as distinct objects. The elaborator (*vārtikakāra*) Sureśvara (Maṇḍana Miśra), explains Advaita in yet another manner. He advocates *ābhāsavāda*, a position that likens the world of the *advaitin* with the illusion of a mirage.[33] Although *advaitins* after Śaṅkara have provided thorough yet disparate contributions to the tradition by reflecting on the nature of the world and *brahman*, their expositions nonetheless remain faithful to non-dualist belief of the world as *brahman*.

PĀRAMĀRTHIKA BRAHMAN IS NOT THE CREATOR

As we saw earlier, within Śaṅkara's Vedānta the ultimate (*pāramārthika*) *brahman* is without qualities (*nirguṇa*) and not characteristically distinct (*nirviṣeśa*). As a result, one is unable to ascribe to it the qualities of *being a cause* (*kāraṇatā*), *being the sustainer* or *upholder* (*ādhāratā*), or *being the inspirer* (*prerakatā*). This presents a unique challenge to Śaṅkara, since it is accepted that there must be some creator or cause of the world. A need arises for the *advaitin* to reconcile the cause, sustainer, and inspiration of the experiential world with some entity. *Saguṇa-brahman* or a *brahman* with attributes is introduced with these intentions. The *advaitin* identifies 'īśvara' with this *saguṇa-brahman*. For the *advaitin īśvara* is the cause, sustainer, inspirer, controller (*niyaṃtā*), and destroyer (*saṃhartā*) of the world.[34] *Īśvara* is said to be excellent (*Bhagavān*) or with powers (*aiśvaryavān*). Sacred text readings that describe *brahman* as the cause, sustainer, controller, or inspirer of the world, are interpreted by *advaitins* to express qualities of this *saguṇa-brahman* or *īśvara*. Recall however, within Śaṅkara's framework *saguṇa-brahman* does not exist as the ultimate being (*pāramārthika sat*). It is affected by desolation (*trikālābādhita*) and considered to be imaginary (*kālpanika*), unreal (*mithyā*), and an illusion.

ŚAṄKARA'S UNDERSTANDING OF SĀDHANĀ (SPIRITUAL ENDEAVOUR) AND LIBERATION (MUKTI)

Śaṅkara's understanding of spiritual endeavour (*sādhanā*) and liberation (*mukti*) are closely related with his understanding of the knowledge of *brahman*. Within Śaṅkara's Vedānta bondage is understood in terms of ignorance or the absence of knowledge. He explains in his commentary of the *Brahmasūtras*, "Knowledge (*jñāna*) is shrouded by ignorance; by it (ignorance) beings are delusioned."[35] He reasons that by acquiring knowledge one becomes freed from ignorance and attains liberation. He

33. (Pulasth Soobah 136–70)
34. (Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* 366–67)
35. "ajñānenāvṛtaṃ jñānaṃ tena muhyanti jantavaḥ itil" (BS. Śaṃ. Bhā. 2.1.14) (Śāstrī and Śāstrī 462)

continues in the text, "Liberation is attained by knowledge,"[36] and then much later explains, "Knowledge results in liberation from bondage, which is caused by ignorance."[37] For Śaṅkara, knowledge or *jñāna* is understood as the means for attaining liberation. Not only is knowledge presented as a means, but it is also identified as the sole cause for liberation. He asserts elsewhere, "'Only by knowing it' (Śve. 3.8)—the *śruti* [expresses] that for liberation there are no means other than knowledge."[38]

What is the nature of this *jñāna*? Śaṅkara specifies that *brahmajñāna*—the knowledge of *brahman*—is the means of attaining liberation. Within the "Jījñāsādhikaraṇa" of his Brahmasūtra commentary, Śaṅkara expresses his understanding of the significance of *brahmajñāna*. He states, "One should desire to attain *brahmajñāna*, since it thoroughly rids one of ignorance, which is the root cause of attachment to the world."[39] Vācaspati Miśra similarly expresses this position when he states, "*Brahmajñāna* is the greatest and (perhaps) the only means to alleviate all misery and attain the one (ultimate) happiness."[40] Appayya Dīkṣita's *Parimālā* along with Amalānanda Sarasvati's *Kalpataru* also substantiate, "Therefore, *brahmajñāna* diminishes *karma* and is the cause of liberation (*mokṣa*)"[41] and "*brahmajñāna* is a means for attaining liberation (*mukti*),"[42] respectively. *Brahmajñāna* plays a significant soteriological role in Śaṅkara's Advaita or the non-dualist *darśana*.

What does such *brahmajñāna* involve? Along with the realization of *brahman* as without qualities (*nirguṇa*) and not characteristically distinct (non-phenomenal) (*nirviśeśa*), *brahmajñāna* requisites the realization of the phenomenal world as unreal and the identification of the self (*ātman*) with *brahman*. As we have already seen earlier in this work, Śaṅkara advocates, "*Brahman* is real; the world is unreal (*mithyā*)."[43] With regards to the identification of the self with *brahman*, he explains in his *Vākyavṛtti*, "Arising from the assertion 'that you are' ('tattvamasi') and others, the knowledge of the oneness of the self and Paramātman—it (that knowledge) is the means for this liberation."[44] For Śaṅkara since everything including the self is *brahman*, the knowledge of *brahman* requisites an understanding of the self as *brahman*. He explains in

36. "jñānānmokṣa ityupapadyate" (BS. Śaṃ. Bhā. 2.1.14) (Śāstrī and Śāstrī 457)
37. "avidyākṛtatvādbandhasya vidyayā mokṣa upapadyate" (BS. Śaṃ. Bhā. 3.2.29) (Śāstrī and Śāstrī 723)
38. "tameva viditvā… iti vidyayā anyaḥ panthā mokṣāya na vidyate iti śrute… jñānāt kaivalyamāpnoti" (Gī. Śaṃ. Bhā. 18.66) (Śaṅkarācāryaḥ 463)
39. "brahmāvagatirhi puruṣārthaḥ, niḥśeṣasaṃsārabījā vidyādyanarthanibarhaṇāt tasmād brahma jijñāsitavyam" (Śāstrī and Śāstrī 77–78)
40. "brahmajñānameva samastaduḥkhopaśamarūpamānandaikarasaṃ paramaṃ prayojanam" (Śāstrī and Śāstrī 46)
41. "ata eva karmaṇāṃ kṣayiṣṇutvaṃ brahmajñānasya ca mokṣahetutvam" (Śāstrī and Śāstrī 74)
42. "muktisādhanabrahmajñānam" (Śāstrī and Śāstrī 47)
43. "brahma satyaṃ jagadanmithyā" (Vi. 20) (Madhavananda 8) (Br. 20) (Sankaracharya, "Brahmajñānāvalīmālā" 224)
44. "tattvamasyādivākyotthaṃ yajjīvaparamātmanoḥ tādātmyaviṣayaṃ jñānaṃ tadidaṃ muktisādhanam" (Va. 6) (Sankaracharya, "Vākyavṛttiḥ" 26)

his commentary of the *Bhagavadgītā*, "Only the knowledge of the self is the means for liberation, since it dismisses distinction, and it (distinction) inhibits liberation."[45] By understanding the self as *brahman*, one not only is freed from understanding that there is a distinction between both, but also comes to realize the true form of the self as *brahman*.

Having bestowed such unparalleled significance to knowledge, Śaṅkara's Vedānta leaves little if any prominence to devotion (*bhakti*), *dharma*, or worshipful service (*upāsanā*). To the *advaitin*, *bhakti* and *upāsanā* of *brahman* are not considered to be the ultimate reality (*pāramārthika satya*), since at the *pāramārthika* level the *ātman* is itself *brahman*, and as a result, is not required to offer devotion (*bhakti*) or worshipful service (*upāsanā*). Nevertheless, until one attains the realization of Advaita—from a phenomenal-non-existential (*vyavāhārika*) perspective—notions such as devotion and worshipful service are accepted in practice. However, such practice is accepted with an understanding of the non-dualistic sentiments expressed in 'I am *brahman*' and the its inherent, ultimate ineffectuality. Within the liberated state there is no offering of *bhakti* or *upāsanā* since distinctions such as those between the object of devotion (*upāsya*) or devotee (*upāsaka*) are understood to be non-existent.

RĀMĀNUJA'S BRAHMA-MĪMĀṂSĀ

Rāmānuja's *darśanic* position is greatly at odds with Śaṅkara's. He places Śaṅkara as the voice of the adversary (*pratipakṣa*) when presenting his own expositions. His opposition becomes apparent when one examines the meaning he ascribes to *śruti* phrases of his text the *Vedārthasaṅgraha*[46] and in the great antithesis (*mahāpurvapakṣa*) presented at the beginning of the *Śrībhāṣya*—his commentary on the *Brahmasūtras* (BS). [47]

Like Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja's understands 'brahman' to signify only one *brahman*. In his commentary on the BS, he employs various philological methods to argue that 'brahman' refers to Puruṣottama and that other meanings ascribed are merely metaphorical. He argues that it is not possible to conceive of 'brahman' as having multiple meaning ascriptions.[48] Consequently, he uses the singular of 'brahman' in his nominal declension of 'brahmajijñāsā' in BS. 1.1.1.[49] He also identifies this 'brahman' as a referent to Puruṣottama.[50]

45. "ātmajñānasya tu kevalya niḥśreyasahetutvaṃ bhedapratyayaṃnivartakatvena kaivalyaphalāvasānatvātl" (Gī. Śaṃ. Bhā. 18.66) (Śaṅkarācāryaḥ 460)
46. (Rāmānuja, *Vedārthasaṅgrahaḥ*)
47. (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 53–352)
48. See, for example: "sarvatra bṛhattvaguṇayogena brahmaśabdaḥl bṛhattvaṃ ca svarūpeṇa guṇaiśca yatrā'navadhikātiśayaṃ so'sya mukhyo'rthaḥl sa ca sarveśvara evaḷ ato brahmaśabdastatraiva mukhyavṛttaḥl tasmādanyatra tadguṇaleśayogādaupacārikaḥl anekārthakalpanā'yogātl" (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 57)
49. "brahmaṇo jijñāsā brahmajijñāsāl" (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 56)
50. "By 'brahman' Puruṣottama is referenced." ("brahmaśabdena… Puruṣottamo'bhidhīyatel")

Rāmānuja's understanding of the nature and form of *brahman*, however, differs greatly from Śaṅkara. Rāmānuja contrasts his own understanding of *brahman* from the *advaitin* tendency to categorize it as without qualities (*nirguṇa*), as not characteristically distinct (non-phenomenal) (*nirviṣeśa*), as unknowable (*ajñeya*), and as not the subject of knowledge (*aprameya*).[51] Innovatively escaping the *advaitins*' objections, Rāmānuja presents a way to allow for the same *brahman* as being both with qualities (*saguṇa*) and without qualities (*nirguṇa*). Although like Śaṅkara, he identifies *brahman* by 'īśvara,' his belief in *īśvara* as the creator of the world (*jagatkartā*) or as *saguṇa brahman*, is vastly different.[52] As the creator of the world, he identifies *brahman* as being with qualities (*saguṇa*). Although *brahman* is *saguṇa*, he also identifies the same *brahman* as *nirguṇa,* which he, unlike Śaṅkara, interprets as *being without faults*.[53,54] Rāmānuja explains: "Its meaning is that [*brahman*] is characterized by being without any faults (*doṣa*) (*nirguṇa*) and with liberating qualities (*saguṇa*)."[55] In his works Rāmānuja places great emphasis on this thesis and invests much effort in trying to argue for its position. In his argument he takes assistance from the *Brahmasūtra* in describing *brahman* as having two natures—*ubhayaliṅgam*.[56] By interpreting 'nirguṇa' as *being without faults*, Rāmānuja allows the same *brahman* to be both *saguṇa* and *nirguṇa*.

Rāmānuja also ingeniously sidesteps the *advaita* criticism for describing the same *brahman* as being both indistinct and distinct from the self and *prakṛti*. Carefully accommodating both types of *śrutis*: 1) those that depict *brahman*, the *jīvātman*, and *prakṛti* as distinct[57] and 2) those that depict them as one,[58] Rāmānuja describes the relationship between *brahman* and the *jīvātman* or *prakṛti* as analogous to the relationship between a body (*śarīra*) and its embodier (*śarīrin*). He explains in his commentary of "Brahmasūtra 1.1.13:" "In this way, by *brahman's* being the *ātman* of all sentient and insentient, all those with sentience and the world are its *śarīra*."[59] He asserts that although the three (*tattva-traya*): *jīvātman* (the sentient), *prakṛti* (the insentient), and *brahman* are ontologically distinct, *brahman* resides in both the *jīvātman* and *prakṛti* as their *ātman*.[60] As a result, he argues, *brahman* can be described as being distinct

(Rāmānuja and Dhruva 57)

51. (Hiriyanna, *Outlines of Indian Philosophy* 372) (Shivananada 220)
52. (Rāmānujācārya, *Shri Bhashyam* 353)
53. (Rāmānujācārya, *Shri Bhashyam* 1291)
54. (Rāmānuja, *Śrībhāṣya* 1289–312)
55. "nirastanikhiladoṣatvakalyāṇaguṇākaratvalakṣaṇopetamityarthaḥ" (Rāmānujācārya, *Shri Bhashyam* 1291)
56. See, for example: (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 1289–311)
57. See, for example Śvetāśvataropaniṣad 1.6, 1.12, 6.13, 6.16, 1.9, 4.6, 4.7, 4.10, and Muṇḍakopaniṣad 3.1.1, among others.
58. See, for example Chāndogyopaniṣad 3.14.1, 6.2.9, 6.8.7; Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 1.4.10, 2.4.14, 2.5.19, and 4.4.19, among others.
59. "evaṃ ca sarvaṃ cetanācetanaṃ prati brahmaṇaḥ ātmatvena sarvaṃ sacetanaṃ jagattasya śarīraṃ bhavatil" (Rāmānujācārya, *Shri Bhashyam* 492)
60. See also, (Rāmānujācārya, *Shri Bhashyam* 1522)

from the *jīvātman* (*cit*) and *prakṛti* (*acit*), and as the *śarīrin*, *brahman* can be described as being one with them. Rāmānuja recognizes a single *brahman* (Puruṣottama) as the greatest reality (*paramasat*) and believes it to be simultaneously characteristically distinct (*saviśeśa*).

RĀMĀNUJA'S UNDERSTANDING OF SĀDHANĀ (SPIRITUAL ENDEAVOUR) AND LIBERATION (MUKTI)

Parabrahman plays a significant role within Rāmānuja's understanding of liberation and the means to attaining it. Śrīnivāsadāsa offers a succinct summary of Rāmānuja's viewpoints in his *Yatindramatadipikā*. He explains, "Having been propitiated with devotion (*bhakti*) and refuge (*prapatti*), only Īśvara (Bhagavān) gifts liberation. As a result, they both are means for [attaining] liberation."[61] Within Viśiṣṭādvaita *vedānta*, liberation is gifted by Īśvara or Paramātman rather than acquired simply engaging in spiritual endeavour. However, as Śrīnivāsadāsa is clear to express, devotion (*bhakti*) and refuge (*prapatti*) play a significant role in attaining liberation: they are identified as the means for acquiring Paramātman's *kṛpā*—favour or beneficence—which in turn is the cause of liberation. As such, *bhakti* and refuge (*śaraṇāgati* or *prapatti*) are presented as the sole means for attaining liberation.[62] In summarizing Rāmānuja's position, Appayya Dīkṣita expresses similarly in his *Ratnatrayasāra*, "Devotion (*bhakti*) and refuge (*prapatti*), which are foremost, are the means to propitiate him (Bhagavān)."[63]

Despite this emphasis on *bhakti*, *prapatti*, and Paramātman's *kṛpā*, Rāmānuja is also read to understand *brahmavidyā*—the knowledge of *brahman*—as a means for liberation. Rāmānuja reveals, "The reward of the knowledge of *karma* (*karmajñāna*), claimed by Pūrvamīmāṃsā is modest, mutable, and cannot grant liberation; whereas, *brahmajñāna* has the capacity to offer limitless and unmitigated reward, or in other words, liberation."[64] Elsewhere in the same text he reaffirms, "It been said: 'the cession of ignorance is nothing but liberation,' and that it (the cession of ignorance) is attained only by the knowledge of *brahman* (*brahmavidyā*); it is accepted."[65] With the author of the textual elaboration (*vṛtti*) of the *Brahmasūtra* in mind he also asserts the significance of the desire to attain *brahmajñāna*.[66] Raṃgarāmānuja, an advocate of Rāmānuja's position, supports the importance of *brahmajñāna* in his commentary

61. "bhaktiprapattibhyāṃ prasanna (bhaktiprapattī vyājīkṛtya) īśvara eva mokṣaṃ dadātil atastayormokṣaupāyatvaml" (Ya. 7.16) (Śrīnivāsadāsa 94)
62. (Rāmānujācāryaḥ 384–85) (Rāmānujācāryaḥ 589–91)
63. "bhaktiprapattipramukhaṃ tadvaśīkārakāraṇaml" (Ra. 23) (Brahmadarśanadāsa Sādhu 172)
64. "mīmāṃsāpūrvabhāgajñātasya karmaṇo'lpā'sthiraphalatvāduparitanabhāgā'vaseyasya brahmajñānasyā'nantā'kṣayaphalatvācca pūrvavṛttāt karmajñānādanantaramata eva hetorbrahma jñātavyamityuktaṃ bhavatil" (Rāmānuja, *Śrībhāṣya* 2)
65. "yaduktam - avidyānivṛttireva mokṣaḥ, sā ca brahmavijñānādeva bhavati iti tadabhyupagamyatel" (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 72)
66. "brahmavividiṣāl" (Rāmānuja, *Śrībhāṣya* 2)

of the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, where he states, "Liberation is not possible without *brahmajñāna*."[67] Like Śaṅkara and the *advaitins*, Rāmānuja also emphasizes the significance of *brahmajñāna* in his expositions.

What is the relationship between devotion (*bhakti*) and such liberating *brahmavidyā*? Rāmānuja explains, "Therefore, knowledge (*jñāna*), which is 1) a referent of 'dhyāna,' 'upāsanā,' and others and 2) different from the knowledge of the referent of sentences (knowledge of the meaning of sentences), is intended by Vedānta proclamations,"[68] and then later continues, "Unwavering cherished recollection (*anusmṛti*) is, in other words, referred to by 'bhakti,' since 'bhakti' is a synonym of *upāsanā*."[69] Rāmānuja not only contrasts *brahmavidyā* from the mere knowledge of the meaning of sacred texts, but also considers it as synonymous with his understanding of *anusmṛti*, *bhakti,* and *upāsanā*. He expands on the specifics of the relationship between these terms in his commentary of Gī. 11.53-4, where he states: "It is not possible to see me in my true state with mere instruction, lecture, study, listening, or recitation of the Vedas or through sacrifice, benefaction, oblation, or austerity that is without my devotion. Through singular devotion (*ananyabhakti*), it is possible to truly know [me] through the sacred texts, to truly realize [me], and to truly enter (conjoin with) [me]."[70] In this reading, Rāmānuja identifies *bhakti* as a necessary cause of, among other things, such knowledge.

RĀMĀNUJA'S MUKTI-MĪMĀṂSĀ

Within Rāmānuja's understanding of liberation, he advocates, unlike the *advaitin* position, that the liberated self continues to remain ontologically distinct from *brahman*[71] and offer devotion toward Puruṣottama. In Rāmānuja's identification of *brahman* as Puruṣottama, the greatest sovereignty (*sarvoparisattā*) and with whom nothing can be similar to or transgress, the notion of identifying oneself with *brahman* is rendered infeasible. Instead he advocates, "For teachings [that express] similarity and qualitative identification, the form of the individual self, who is qualified by *brahman*, is similar to it—[in so much as] by being rid of *deva* and other material forms, [the self acquires] purity that is comparable to *brahman.* This is established."[72]

---

67. "brahmajñānābhāve mokṣasaṃbhāvanaiva nāstil" (Kumāra 122)
68. "ato vākyārthajñānādanyadeva dhyānopāsanādiśabdavācyaṃ jñānaṃ vedāntavākyairvidhitsitaml" (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 74)
69. "evaṃrūpā dhruvānusmṛtireva bhaktiśabdenābhidhīyate; upāsanaparyāyatvādbhaktiśabdasyal" (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 81)
70. "vedaiḥ adhyāpanapravajanādhyayanaśravaṇajapaviṣayaiḥ yāgadānahomatapobhiḥ ca madbhaktirahitaiḥ kevalaiḥ yathāvad avasthitaḥ ahaṃ draṣṭuṃ na śakyaml ananyayā tu bhaktyā tattvataḥ śāstraiḥ jñātuṃ tattvataḥ sākṣātkartuṃ tattvataḥ praveṣṭuṃ ca śakyaḥl" (Rāmānuja, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā - Śrīrāmānujabhāṣya* 381)
71. (Rāmānujācārya, *Shri Bhashyam* 1604–05)
72. "sāmyasādharmyavyapadeśo brahmaprakārabhūtasyaiva pratyagātmanaḥ svarūpaṃ tatsamamiti devādiprākṛtarūpaprahaṇena brahmasamānaśuddhiṃ pratipādayatil" (Rāmānuja and Dhruva

Rāmānuja advises that *śrutis* that seemingly identify the self with *brahman* are to be read to express the self as attaining purity (*śuddhatā*) that is comparable to that of Paramātman.

Upon attaining liberation, the self is freed from all wrongdoing (*papa*), sheds its material body, and reigns as its true self (*svasvarūpa*).[73] This liberated self is believed to not have a body. In his consideration of whether the liberated self has sense faculties, Rāmānuja affirms, "The liberated self is without a body."[74] In this state the self is believed to not acquire a new form,[75] but rather expresses its inherent qualities, which include among others, *being able to have one's wishes come true* (*satyasaṅkalpatva*).

Along with being *satyasaṅkalpa*, a *mukta*—the liberated self—is understood as being uncontrolled by others. Rāmānuja explains, "The liberated self is *satyasaṅkalpa* (one whose wishes come true); as a result, [it is also] one who does not have another as its controller (*ananyādhipati*)."[76] He reasons that since having another as one's controller (*anyādhipatitva*) would imply the qualification of action as permissible and impermissible (*vidhiniṣedhayogyatva*), which in turn would be contradictory to the description of liberated self as *satyasaṅkalpa*, the position that the liberated self has *anyādhipatitva* is rejected.

Having detailed some of the characteristic and relevant expositions of Śaṅkara's Advaita Vedānta and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, the latter half of this section will present Bhagavān Swaminarayan's Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana and contrast it from Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedanta.

BHAGAVĀN SWAMINARAYAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF BRAHMAVIDYĀ

Throughout the Vacanāmṛta, Swaminarayan offers a unique exposition of *brahman*, its relationship with the self, the significance such a relationship, and liberation. From his revelations, this work will focus its investigations on his exposition of *brahmajñāna* in GM. 3 and *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya* in L. 12.

"Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā II-3," presents a succinct exposition of Swaminarayan's understanding of the nature and form of *brahman* and *brahmajñāna*. Swaminarayan reveals:

> "Now, one should understand the path of *brahmajñāna* in the following way: 'Brahman (Akṣarabrahman) is immutable (*nirvikāra*) and indivisible (*niraṃśa*); hence, it is not subject to change, and it cannot be divided.' When others identify this Brahman as all forms (*sarvarūpa*) they mean the following: 'Brahman causes,

1605)

73. (Rāmānujācārya, *Shri Bhashyam* 1598–601)
74. "muktasyāśarīratvaml" (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 1613)
75. (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 1598–99)
76. "yato muktaḥ satyasaṃkalpo'ta evānanyādhipatiścal" (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 1612)

> bears, and pervades through its *antaryāmī* power,[77] Prakṛti-Puruṣa[78] and all others.' It is this, along with the understanding that the cause (*kāraṇa*), sustainer (*ādhāra*), and pervader (*vyāpaka*) is not independent from its effect (object) (*karya*), that the sacred texts (*śāstras*) identify Brahman as all forms. However, one should not understand Brahman as having undergone change and become all mobile and immobile (*cara-acara*) forms. Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa (Parabrahman) is distinct from this Brahman and is also its controller, supporter (*ādhāra*), and inspirer (*preraka*). With this belief, along with identifying oneself (*jīvātmā*) with this Brahman, one should worship Parabrahman as a servant serves his master (with *svāmi-sevaka-bhāva*). With this understanding *brahmajñāna* becomes an unobstructed path to attaining the highest spiritual state."[79]

Within this elaboration of the nature and content of *brahmajñāna*, Swaminarayan makes the following points explicit:

1. *Brahmajñāna* is a means for attaining the highest spiritual state of release or liberation (*mukti*).
2. *Brahmajñāna* consists of understanding the nature and being of two ontologically distinct entities: Brahman (Akṣarabrahman) and Parabrahman.[80,81] It is necessary for a spiritual aspirant who strives to realize *brahmajñāna* to understand the true nature and being of both entities.
3. In addition to being a distinct metaphysical entity from Parabrahman, Brahman (Akṣarabrahman), with Parabrahman's inspiration (*preraṇā*), is also the cause (*kāraṇa*), controller (*niyaṃtā*), and omniscient pervader (*vyāpaka*) of the universe.[82]
4. Despite Brahman's (Akṣarabrahman's) abilities, Parabrahman is superior to Brahman. Brahman serves Parabrahman, Brahman's sovereignty is solely dependent on the will and grace of Parabrahman, and Brahman does not wield his power of his own accord.[83]
5. Having identified oneself with Brahman, one offers worshipful service

---

77. 'Antaryāmī power' refers to the power of controlling while pervading within something or someone.
78. 'Prakṛti' refers to *māyā* or *materiality*, whereas 'puruṣa' refers to a *mukta* (a liberated *jīvātman* or *īśvarātman* (self)), who is inspired by God (through Akṣarabrahman) to create the world. Within Swaminarayan's account of creation, the world is created by God's will when a *puruṣa* associates with *prakṛti*. (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 74–75)
79. (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 356–57)
80. Swaminarayan makes a clear distinction between Brahman and Parabrahman in his discourses. When Brahman and Parabrahman are mentioned in the same reading, one should understand 'Brahman' to refer to Akṣarabrahman.
81. Other readings in which Swaminarayan identifies Akṣarabrahman as an ontologically distinct entity from Parabrahman include: (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 8, 563, 123–24, 303)
82. (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 121, 356)
83. (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 125, 356–57, 627)

(*upāsanā*) to Parabrahman.[84] Swaminarayan elaborates on the necessity of attaining this oneness with Brahman in "Vacanāmṛta Loyā 7," where he explains, "Only one who has attained oneness with Brahman is capable of offering devotion (*bhakti*) to Puruṣottama."[85] He then later describes the necessity of attaining such state in order to acquire liberation when he states, "If one does not offer devotion (*bhakti*) to Parabrahman having attained oneness with Brahman, then s/he is said not to have attained liberation (*kalyāṇa*)."[86] Identifying oneself with Brahman is necessary for those who seek devotion (*bhakti*) and liberation (*mukti*). This identification or oneness is understood as acquiring the qualities of Brahman.[87]

6. It is not possible to become ontologically one with Parabrahman.[88]
7. *Upāsanā* should be offered to Parabrahman with the sentiments of a servant serving his master (with *svāmi-sevaka-bhāva*). In other words, Swaminarayan advocates that one remains a servant of Parabrahman even upon attaining liberation.[89]

From the above readings and subsequent expositions, it is evident that Swaminarayan's *brahmavidyā* comprises of a particular understanding of the nature of Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, the relationship between them, and their relationship with the self (*jīvātman* and *īśvarātman*). These elaborations can be categorized as the following: points 2-4 above offer metaphysical descriptions; 1,5 and 6 present descriptions of spiritual endeavour (*sādhanā*); and 7 describes the nature of liberation.

BHAGAVĀN SWAMINARAYAN'S BRAHMA-MĪMĀṂSĀ

Swaminarayan's metaphysics asserts the existence of Akṣarabrahman as an ontologically distinct entity from Parabrahman, the self (*jīvātman* or *īśvarātman*), and *māyā*. Like Parabrahman, it is identified as being sentient, eternally free from the influence of *māyā*, and possessing the following four forms: 1) the form that is the all-pervasive space (*cidākāśa*), 2) the form that is Parabrahman's divine abode, Akṣaradhāman, 3) the form of an embodied eternal servant of Parabrahman that resides within Akṣaradhāman, and 4) a human-like form that is present in the world and through whom Parabrahman remains manifest (present).[90]

Given Swaminarayan's exposition of Akṣarabrahman within GM. 3 and other discourses, there are several foundational differences that distinguish Swaminarayan's

84. (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 292, 357)
85. "brahmarūpa thayo tene ja Puruṣottamanī bhaktino adhikāra che." (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 272)
86. "brahmarūpa thaīne je Parabrahmanī bhakti na kare, to te paṇa ātyantika kalyāṇane na pāmyo kahevāya." (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 272)
87. (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 424)
88. (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 236, 241, 259, 296, 624–25, 632)
89. (Svāmināŕāyaṇa 211–12, 250, 490–91)
90. (Svāmī 3–4)

metaphysics from Śaṅkara's and Rāmānuja's. In contrast to Advaita Vedānta's understanding of a singular entity identified as *brahman* and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta's enumeration of *tattvatraya* (the three ontological categories): the sentient (*cit*), the insentient (*acit*), and *Īśvara*; Swaminarayan advocates the existence of the following five eternal ontological distinctions: *jīvātman*, *īśvarātman*, *māyā*, Akṣarabrahman, and Puruṣottama (Parabrahman).[91]

The ontological distinction between Akṣarabrahman and Puruṣottama is reflected in the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana's unique reading of the sacred texts of the *Prasthānatrayī*. With regards to 'brahman,' unlike Śaṅkara, who reads 'brahman' either as referring to the single *pāramārthika*, *nirguṇa brahman* or an unreal *vyavāhārika brahman*, and Rāmānuja who reads the same to express *saguṇa brahman*; the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana reads the term to express either Akṣarabrahman or Parabrahman—both real and ontologically distinct entities. For example, when Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja discusses *brahmajñāna* as a means for attaining liberation, they understand 'brahman' to signify one (*saviśeśa*, *saguṇa*, or *nirguṇa*) Puruṣottama. For Swaminarayan, however, 'brahmajñāna' refers to the knowledge of two ontologically distinct, real, entities: Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman (Puruṣottama). This dual reference is reflected in the MuSB's reading of 1.2.13: "That by which Akṣara (Akṣarabrahman) and Puruṣa (Parabrahman) is truly known, that is *brahmavidyā* (the knowledge of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman)."[92] Advaitins and Viśiṣṭādvaitins interpret the aphorism differently as: "That by which the imperishable (*akṣara*) *Puruṣa* (Puruṣottama) is truly known, that is said to be *brahmavidyā*."[93] While Śaṅkara and Viśiṣṭādvaitins identify 'akṣara' as an adjective of 'Puruṣa,' the *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* identifies it as a signifier of the distinct ontological entity, Akṣarabrahman.

A similar dual reference is expressed in BSB's reading of 1.1.1: "And now commences an inquiry into *brahman(s)*,"[94] where 'brahmajijñāsā' is analysed as 'brahmaṇorjijñāsā,'[95] meaning *an inquiry into two brahman*. Here, 'brahman' in the compound 'brahmajijñāsā' is also interpreted as referring to both Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman.

Swaminarayan's unique understanding of Akṣarabrahman as a distinct ontological entity from Parabrahman is also reflected in its reading of the *Bhagavadgītā* verses 15.16-7, which read:

> "There are two types of *puruṣa* in the world: *kṣara* and *akṣara*. All beings are *kṣara* and the unchanging is called *akṣara*. (15.16)
>
> The supreme *Puruṣa* (Puruṣottama) is different from others [and is therefore] called Paramātman. He is the unchanging controller of all, and upon entering all worlds,

91. See, for example, (GP. 7) (Svāminārāyaṇa 8) and (GA. 10) (Svāminārāyaṇa 563)
92. "yenākṣaraṃ puruṣaṃ veda styaṃ provāca tāṃ tattvato brahmavidyāml" (Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam 256)
93. (Raṅgarāmānuja 270–73) (Śaṅkara, *Upaniṣadbhāṣyam - Muṇḍamāṇḍūkyaitareyaṇi* 30)
94. "athāto brahmajijñāsāl" (Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, *Brahmasūtrasvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 3)
95. (Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, *Brahmasūtrasvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 4)

is their support. (15.17)"[96]

Within Rāmānuja's readings, *kṣara* is identified as the [bound] self (*jīvātman*), *akṣara* as the liberated self (*ātman*), and the different, greatest *puruṣa* as Puruṣottama.[97] Śaṅkara makes the identification differently. He identifies 'kṣara' as all mutable objects and 'akṣara' as *māyā*—the persistent seed of the world (*samsāra*).[98] Within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, however, we find a completely distinct exposition. The GSB. identifies *kṣara* as the self (both bound and liberated *jīvātman* or *īśvarātman*) and *akṣara* as Akṣarabrahman.[99] The latter identification recalls Kṛṣṇa's response to Arjuna's question from verse 8.1: "What is that *brahman*."[100] Kṛṣṇa's response in 8.3: "The great (*parama*), who is Akṣara, is [only] Brahman"[101] is used to substantiate the identification of Akṣara as *brahman*—here, read as referring to Akṣarabrahman. Since, (Parabrahman) is greater than both Akṣara and the *jīvātmans* and *īśvarātmans*, he is identified as the supreme (*uttama*) Puruṣa, or when these terms are compounded, Puruṣottama—a philologically significant designation that indicates Parabrahman's supremacy over the self and Akṣarabrahman (*brahman*).

PARABRAHMAN AND AKṢARABRAHMAN AS THE CREATORS OF THE WORLD

In addition to identifying Parabrahman as the creator of the world,[102] in GM. 3 Swaminarayan also recognizes Akṣarabrahman as the cause of the world. This identification is reflected in the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana's reading of MuSB. 1.1.7. The aphorism states, "Just as a spider spins [a web] and consumes it; just as herbs grow on earth; [and] just as hair grows on a man; this world is produced by Akṣara."[103] A little later, the same text similarly reveals, "Somya! By Akṣara various material objects come forth and [in the end] are only absorbed within it."[104] The commentary's identification of Akṣara with Akṣarabrahman and not with Parabrahman is

96. "dvāvimau puruṣau loke kṣaraścākṣara eva ca।
kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni kūṭastho'kṣara ucyate॥16॥
uttamaḥ puruṣastvanyaḥ paramātmetyudāhṛtaḥ।
yo lokatrayamāviśya bibhartyavyaya īśvaraḥ॥17॥" (Vyāsa 234)
97. (Rāmānujācāryaḥ 490–92)
98. (Śaṅkarācāryaḥ 376)
99. (Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā Svāmināràyaṇabhāṣyam* 314–16)
100. "kiṃ tad brahma" (Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, Śrīmadbhagavadgītā Svāmināràyaṇabhāṣyam 172)
101. "Akṣaraṃ Brahma paramaṃ" (Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, Śrīmadbhagavadgītā Svāmināràyaṇabhāṣyam 173)
102. See, for example, (GP. 37, 51; L. 2, 17; P. 1; GM. 10, 53; V. 2, 18) (Svāmināràyaṇa 65, 96, 254, 310, 319, 372, 460, 496, 528)
103. "yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate gṛhṇate ca yathā pṛthivyāmoṣadhayaḥ saṃbhavanti। yathā sataḥ puruṣāt keśalomāni tathā'kṣarāt saṃbhavatīha viśvam॥" (Mu. 1.1.7) (Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāmināràyaṇabhāṣyam* 239–41)
104. "akṣarād vividāḥ somya bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivā'piyanti।" (Mu. 2.1.1) (Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāmināràyaṇabhāṣyam* 258)

suggested by MuSB. 2.1.2 later assertion: "The supreme (Parabrahman) is superior to the superior Akṣara (Akṣarabrahman)." This aphorism not only asserts the supremacy of the supreme Parabrahman over Akṣara, but also in doing so is read to express an ontological distinction between the two. The commentary argues that if 'Akṣara' is to be consistently interpreted throughout the Upaniṣad, then Mu. 1.1.7 and 2.1.1 should both be read as being about the superior Akṣarabrahman and not the supreme Parabrahman.

Swaminarayan's understanding of Akṣarabrahman as also the creator of the world contrasts from both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja's position. First, Swaminarayan's understanding of a *pāramārthika* (real) *brahman* as the cause of the world is diametrically opposed by Śaṅkara. Also Swaminarayan's understanding of Akṣarabrahman as an ontological entity distinct from Parabrahman and as the cause of the world, is inconsistent with both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja's metaphysics. Unlike Swaminarayan, Rāmānuja advocates a single *brahman*—Puruṣottama—as the creator of the world. Swaminarayan, as we have seen, presents two real, ontologically distinct *brahmans*: Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. Within Swaminarayan's metaphysics, Brahman (Akṣarabrahman) is also identified, according to the eternal will (*nityecchayā*) of Parabrahman, as the creator (*jagat-kartā*) and inspirer (*jagat-preraka*) of the world.[105]

'ĪŚVARA'

Within Swaminarayan's metaphysics, 'īśvara' is often used as a designation for another ontologically distinct category. Within his ontology, an *īśvara* (*īśvarātman*) is an eternal sentient (*caitanya*) entity distinct from Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman and the *jīvātmans*. Pradhānapuruṣa, Virāṭapuruṣa, Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa, and others are identified as *īśvarātman* and understood to exist as distinct entities from one another.[106] The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana advocates the existence of an infinite number of such ontologically distinct *īśvarātman*.[107] They are of the form of knowledge (*jñānasvarūpa*), have the capacity to know (*jñātā*), and are identified as those who perform action (*karma*) and experience its consequences.[108] An *īśvarātman* is understood to have greater sovereignty (*aiśvarya*) and knowledge (*jñāna*) than the *jīvātman* and is engaged in the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the world according to Parabrahman's wishes.[109] Despite such a difference, these *īśvarātmans*, like the *jīvātmans*, strive to attain liberation.

Swaminarayan's understanding of *īśvara* is also distinct from Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja's. As we have seen earlier, Śaṅkara's Advaita identifies *īśvara* as *saguṇa*

105. (Svāminārāyaṇa 121)
106. (Svāmī 4–5)
107. (Svāmī 5), (GP. 13, GP. 72, GA. 34, GA. 37, GA. 39) (Svāminārāyaṇa 17–18, 148, 618, 626, 629–30)
108. (Svāmī 5)
109. (Svāmī 5)

brahman and as the cause, sustainer, inspirer, controller (*niyaṃtā*), and destroyer (*saṃhartā*) of the world. In making this identification, he also understands *īśvara* as imaginary (*kālpanika*), unreal (*mithyā*), and an illusion. Rāmānuja also similarly identifies *īśvara* as *brahman* and as the cause of the world; however, unlike Śaṅkara he understands *saguṇa brahman*, and hence, *īśvara* as real. Nevertheless, both Śaṅkara's and Rāmānuja's identification of *brahman* as *īśvara* is distinct from Swaminarayan's in terms of its not only ontological identity but also cosmological commitments.

BHAGAVĀN SWAMINARAYAN'S UNDERSTANDING OF SĀDHANĀ

In GM. 3 above, Swaminarayan advocates *brahmajñāna* or *brahmavidyā* as "an unobstructed path to attaining the highest spiritual state."[110] Despite the shared soteriological significance of *brahmavidyā* within all three *darśanic* systems, Swaminarayan's unique ontology results in an alternative rendering of the content of *brahmavidyā*. Unlike Śaṅkara's Advaita and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita, both who identify 'brahman' in 'brahmavidyā' as a signifier for only Parabrahman; as we have seen earlier, the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana uniquely elaborates 'brahmavidyā' as the knowledge of two ontologically distinct entities: Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman, and interprets Mu. 1.2.13 accordingly.

Analogous to his exposition of *brahmavidyā*, Swaminarayan also presents the relationship between the knowledge of Akṣarabrahman and the knowledge of Parabrahman in L. 12. Corresponding to his exposition in GM. 3, L. 12 offers a succinct exposition of the nature and significance of spiritual endeavour or *sādhanā* in terms of Swaminarayan's description of *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya—the supreme conviction [in the present form of Parabrahman]*. He defines, "One who offers *upāsanā* to Puruṣottama upon identifying oneself as Akṣara (Akṣarabrahman), in comparison to whom infinite universes along with their eight obstructions are known to be like atoms and who is the abode of Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa (God), is said to have *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya*."[111] There are several noteworthy elements in this reading.

First, Swaminarayan employs a unique understanding of 'upāsanā.' In addition to Rāmānuja's understanding of 'upāsanā' as synonymous to 'devotion,' 'love,' and 'worshipful service,' Swaminarayan characterizes the term with the conviction in the present form of Parabrahman as being, among other things, supreme (*sarvopari*), divine (*divya*), the all-doer (*kartā*), with form (*sākāra*), and the cause of all divine manifestations (*avatārin*)—a conviction that is identified as requisite or characteristic of such devotion, love, and worshipful service. Within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, such *upāsanā*, devotion, love, and worshipful service, in its incomplete or imperfect

110. (Svāmināràyaṇa 357)

111. "aṣṭāvaraṇe yukta evāṃ je koṭi koṭi brahmāṃḍa te je akṣarane viṣe aṇunī peṭhe jaṇāya che, evuṃ je Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇanuṃ dhāmarūpa akṣara te rūpe pote rahyo thako Puruṣottamanī upāsanā kare, tene uttama nirvikalpa niścayavālo kahīe." (L. 12) (Svāmināràyaṇa 292)

state (*sādhanadaśā*) is intentioned towards acquiring the *kṛpā*—favour or beneficence of Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman. Ultimately through Parabrahman's *kṛpā*, the self becomes *brahmarūpa* (attains qualitative oneness with Akṣarabrahman), attains *upāsanā* (conviction in the present form of Parabrahman) in its most complete and perfect state (*siddhadaśā*), and is gifted final and ever-lasting liberation.

Second, in L. 12's exposition of *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya* and GM. 3's elaboration of *brahmavidyā*, Swaminarayan advocates an identification with *brahman* (Akṣarabrahman) as requisite for offering *upāsanā* to Puruṣottama. He also highlights its significance in L. 7, where he explains: "Only one who is *brahmarūpa* (attained qualitative oneness with Akṣarabrahman) is worthy of offering devotion to Puruṣottama."[112] The *Bhagavadgītāsvāmināārāyaṇabhāṣya*, a comprehensive commentary on the *Bhagavadgītā* according to Swaminarayan's principles, articulates the same sentiments when it reads Gī. 18.54 as: "The pleased self who has attained oneness with Brahman neither grieves nor desires any worldly-things and sees all beings with equanimity; (s)he attains my ultimate devotion."[113] It elaborates that Parabrahman's ultimate devotion or *upāsanā* necessitates attaining oneness or identity with Brahman (Akṣarabrahman).

The identification of the self with *brahman* is not new to Vedānta. There are numerous readings from sacred texts that assert the identification and explicate its significance. For instance, Mu. 3.2.9 asserts: "Truly, (s)he who knows that superior Brahman (Akṣarabrahman), becomes like Brahman… (S)he overcomes grief, overcomes unrighteousness, becomes free from grievances of the heart (*hṛdayagranthi*)."[114,115] Although many such readings express the identity between *brahman* and the self, the nature of this identification differs from one Vedāntic *darśana* to the other. How does Swaminarayan characterize the identification?

Bhagavān Swaminarayan advocates that the identification referred to by these readings express a qualitative identification and not an ontological one. As we saw earlier in Swaminarayan's enumeration of the five eternally ontologically distinct entities in GP. 7 and GA. 10, the *jīvātmans* and *īśvarātmans* are not understood to be identical with Akṣarabrahman, even in the liberated state. In other words, the liberated self (*jīvātman* or *īśvarātman*) does not become, merge, or revert itself to Brahman (Akṣarabrahman), but instead acquires certain qualities of Akṣarabrahman. The state

112. "je brahmarūpa thayo tene ja Puruṣottamanī bhaktino adhikāra che." (Svāmināārāyaṇa 272) (L. 7)
113. "brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣatiI samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktiṃ labhate parāmII" (Gī. 18.54) (Sādhu, 2012a, pp. 360–1)
114. "sa yo ha vai tatparamaṃ Brahma veda Brahmaiva bhavati… tarati śokaṃ tarati pāpmānaṃ guhāgranthibhyo vimukto'mṛto bhavatiII" (Mu. 3.2.9) (Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāmin ārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 299)
115. For other sacred text readings that express a similar identification between the self and *brahman* see also Chā. 3.14.1, 6.2.9, 6.8.7; Bṛ.1.4.10, 2.4.14, 2.5.19, 4.4.19; Mā. 1.2; and Gī. 5.24, 6.27, 13.30, 14.26, 18.53-4.

of such qualitative identification is referred to as "Akṣarabrahmaguṇasādharmya." Upon attaining *brahmabhāva*, *brahmaikyaṃ*, or becoming *brahmarūpa*—all terms that express an identification of the self with Brahman, the self attains the qualities of Brahman—specifically, those qualities that facilitate performing supreme devotion to Parabrahman. Swaminarayan expresses this identification in terms of "like-ness" (*sādharmya*) as opposed to strict identity. For instance, in GP. 21 he advocates: "The devotee who has attained Akṣaradhāman also attains likeness (*sādharmyapaṇuṃ*) with Akṣara and continues to forever serve Bhagavān."[116] Later in GP. 40 when describing the state of *nirvikalpa samādhi* he qualifies such a devotee as "forever engrossed in only the form of Bhagavān having attained likeness (*sādharmyapaṇuṃ*) with Akṣarabrahman."[117] In GM. 31 he mentions that the qualities of Brahman are acquired by the self who associates with Akṣarabrahman. He states, "If one while continually contemplating in this way associates with Brahman, the qualities of Brahman are acquired by the self."[118] In all of these readings, Swaminarayan asserts that 'brahmabhāva' and its synonyms express the state in which one attains qualitative identification with Akṣarabrahman—one attains qualities of Akṣarabrahman that are necessary for offering devotion and having *upāsanā* of Parabrahman.

Although Swaminarayan's understanding of *brahmajñāna* and *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya* is characterized by an identification of the self with *brahman*, it differs from both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja's position. First, Swaminarayan's understanding of the identification is not like Śaṅkara's in that it is qualitatively and not ontologically motivated. Recall, Śaṅkara, unlike Swaminarayan, requires the self to realize itself as *brahman*, since for him, the self is *brahman*. Swaminarayan, on the other hand, maintains an eternal ontological distinction between the self and *brahman*.

Additionally, for Swaminarayan the *brahman* with which the self is asked to identify itself with is not the greatest metaphysical entity. According to Swaminarayan, the self is to identify itself with Akṣarabrahman and not Parabrahman (*sarvopari tattva*). In his metaphysics Brahman (Akṣarabrahman) is presented as a distinct entity from Parabrahman, who is understood be superior to Akṣarabrahman. As a result of differences in ontological commitments, Swaminarayan's understanding of attaining oneness with *brahman* is rendered impermissible by both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja.

BHAGAVĀN SWAMINARAYAN'S MUKTI-MĪMĀṂSĀ

Swaminarayan advocates both the state of liberation while being alive (*jīvanamukti*) and the state of liberation upon bodily-death (*videhamukti*). With regards to *jīvanamukti*

116. "Akṣaradhāmane pāmyo je bhakta te paṇa Akṣaranā sādharmyapaṇāne pāme che ane Bhagavānanī akhaṃḍa sevāmāṃ rahe che." (GP. 21) (Svāminārāyaṇa 33)
117. "Akṣarabrahmanā sādharmyapaṇāne pāmīne kevala Bhagavānanī mūrtine viṣe ja nimagna rahato hoya..." (GP. 40) (Svāminārāyaṇa 72)
118. "evī rīte niraṃtara manana karato sato Brahmano saṃga kare to e Brahmano guṇa e jīvane viṣe āve." (GM. 31) (Svāminārāyaṇa 424)

he reveals in GA. 2: "When [one] attains the association of such a *sadhu*,[119] despite having a body, one attains whom is to be obtain upon shedding the body. Therefore, that which is identified as the supreme location (*paramapada*)—which is identified as liberation (*mokṣa*)—it is obtained despite having a body."[120,121] According to this revelation and others, Swaminarayan advocates that it is possible for one to become *brahmarūpa*,[122] attain the same bliss and fulfilment as one would attain upon attaining Parabrahman's divine abode,[123] and obtain association with Parabrahman's form[124] while being alive.

In his description of liberation upon death (*videhamukti*), Swaminarayan describes that in this liberated state, one retains qualitative identification with Akṣarabrahman. In this state, the self (*jīvātman* or *īśvarātman*) sheds its mortal body and attains a body made from Akṣarabrahman (*brāhmī tanu*).[125] Upon attaining Akṣaradhāman, which is identified as one of Akṣarabrahman's forms and Parabrahman's eternal divine abode, the liberated self continues to offer supreme unwavering *upāsanā* to Parabrahman.[126] As such, the self within this liberated state remains ontologically distinct from both Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman.

Swaminarayan's position on liberation is distinct from both Śaṅkara's and Rāmānuja's position. Although Śaṅkara advocates that it is possible to attain *jīvan-amukti*,[127] his understanding of the state is vastly different. For Śaṅkara, "the absence of ignorance is itself liberation."[128] Upon attaining such a state, the self realizes itself as *brahman*.[129] In this state there is no attainment or acquisition of qualities, but only the realization of what one already is: viz. *brahman*. Even regarding liberation upon death, there is no passage of the self from one place to another or the attainment of an abode, since the self is *brahman*, which is itself all-pervasive.[130] Also, for Sankara the liberated self does not offer devotion to a greater being, since according to him, "I have no ruler other than myself."[131]

---

119. Within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, 'sadhu' here is interpreted to refer to the present form of Akṣarabrahman or the Akṣarabrahman guru.
120. "... jyāre āvo saṃta samāgama prāpta thayo tyāre deha mūkīne jene pāmavā hatā te to deha chatāṃ ja malyā che. māṭe jene paramapada kahīe, mokṣa kahīe tene chate dehe ja pāmyo che." (GA. 2) (Svāminārāyaṇa 547)
121. Swaminarayan also advocates the state of *jīvanamukti* in other discourses including: S. 9; GM. 28, 45; and GA. 7. (Svāminārāyaṇa 193, 421, 449–50, 558)
122. See, for example (S. 9) (Svāminārāyaṇa 193)
123. See, for example (GM. 45) (Svāminārāyaṇa 449–50) and GA. 7 (Svāminārāyaṇa 588)
124. See, for example (GA. 2) (Svāminārāyaṇa 547)
125. (Svāminārāyaṇa 206)
126. (Svāminārāyaṇa 33)
127. See, for example (Vi. 439-40) (Madhavananda 192)
128. "avidyānivṛttireva mokṣaḥl"
129. See, for example (Vi. 492-3) (Madhavananda 213)
130. (Vi. 513) p. 222
131. "nirīśvaro'haṃl" (Vi. 494) (Madhavananda 214)

Unlike both Advaita and the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, Viśiṣṭādvaita rejects the possibility of *jīvanamukti* altogether. In his commentary of BS. 1.1.4, Rāmānuja denounces, "What is this *jīvanamukti*? If [it is said] liberation is [for those] who have a body, the statement is contradictory in the same way that [the claim] 'My mother is barren' [is contradictory]."[132] Following Rāmānuja, Vedānta Deśika in his *Tattvamuktākalāpa* glosses occurrences of the term in sacred texts by stating, "The term 'jīvanamukta' is occasionally used for (as a signifier) of the state that is *similar* (yet not identical) to it (the state of liberation)."[133]

Swaminarayan's understanding of *videhamukti* is also distinct from Rāmānuja's position. Rāmānuja affirms in his commentary of BS 4.4.10, "The liberated are without a body."[134] Unlike Swaminarayan, Rāmānuja advocates that the self reigns as its true self (*svasvarūpa*)[135] but does not attain a body, let alone one made from Akṣarabrahman (*brāhmī tanu*). Also contrary to Swaminarayan's understanding, Rāmānuja would deny that the liberated attain oneness with Akṣarabrahman.

CONCLUSION

Having identified many of the foundational and characteristic features of Śaṅkara's Advaita, Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita, and having contrasted them from not only each other, but also the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, it becomes clearer why each *darśana*, and in particular Swaminarayan's Vedānta, is positioned as an independent from the other. Many of the philosophical and theological differences that serve to distinguish Rāmānuja's Vedānta from Śaṅkara's, also set apart the *darśanic* positions revealed by Swaminarayan from both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. Specifically, Swaminarayan's unique 1) ontology, 2) understanding of *brahman*, the self, and Parabrahman, and the relationships between them, 3) exposition of spiritual endeavour and its significance, 4) and position on the nature and form of liberation cause the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana to stand apart from these other *darśanic* systems. Taking into consideration these characteristic differences, it is only appropriate to advocate that Parabrahman Swaminarayan's Vedānta is distinct from both Śaṅkara's Advaita and Rāmānuja's Viśiṣṭādvaita *darśanas*.

The proceeding section will now investigate the second proclamation regarding the identification of Svāmināŕāyaṇa's Vedānta as the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. As previously mentioned, this section presents a *darśanic* analysis on the semantic significance of the title: "Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana." Among other considerations, this section will elaborate on how this title incorporates both the *darśana's* unique ontological position along with its understanding of *sādhanā*.

132. "kā ceyaṃ jīvanmuktiḥ, saśarīrasyaiva mokṣa iti cet, 'mātā me vandhye'tivadasaṃgatārthaṃ vacaḥ..." (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 408)

133. "jīvanmuktādiśabdaḥ kvacidupacaritastatsamāvasthayaival" (Ta. 2.73) (Deśika 247)

134. "muktasyāśarīratvam" (Rāmānuja and Dhruva 1613)

135. (Rāmānujācārya, *Shri Bhashyam* 1598–601)

PART II

BRAHMAVIDYĀ – THE KNOWLEDGE OF AKṢARA (AKṢARABRAHMAN) AND PURUṢOTTAMA

Bhagavān Swaminarayan's revelations on *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya* in L. 12; his unique exposition of Akṣarabrahman as an ontologically distinct entity; his clarification on the qualitative identification of the self with Akṣarabrahman as requisite for supreme devotion (otherwise identified as *paramā bhakti* or more foundationally, *upāsanā*); and the GSB.'s reading of 18.54 are all reflected in the *darśana's* distinctive understanding of *brahmavidyā*—the knowledge of two *brahmans*. Recall, in L. 12 Swaminarayan described *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya* as "[offering] *upāsanā* to **Puruṣottama** upon identifying oneself as **Akṣara** (Akṣarabrahman), in comparison to whom infinite universes along with their eight obstructions are known to be like atoms and who is the abode of Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa…"[136] The GSB's reading of verse 18.54 similarly expressed: "The pleased self who has attained oneness with Brahman neither grieves nor desires any worldly-things and sees all beings with equanimity; (s)he attains my ultimate devotion."[137] MuSB. 1.2.13's definition of *brahmavidyā*—analysed as *brahmaṇoḥ vidyā* (the knowledge of two *brahmans*: Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman)—similarly reflects Bhagavān Swaminarayan's unique philosophical position: **for the self (*ātman*) to become Akṣararūpa (Brahmarūpa) and offer superior devotion (*paramā bhakti*) or *upāsanā* to Puruṣottama.**

As we have seen throughout the first section of this work, Bhagavān Swaminarayan reveals this unique *darśanic* position throughout the Vacanāmṛta. In doing so he describes, among other things, 1) the nature, form, and salience of Akṣarabrahman, 2) its relationship with both the self and Puruṣottama; 3) the nature and significance of identification of the self with Brahman, and 4) the nature of superior devotion (*paramā bhakti*) or *upāsanā* to Puruṣottama. We also analysed his revelation in GM. 3 where he revealed many facets to his understanding of *brahmavidyā*.

From these readings and subsequent expositions, Swaminarayan's *brahmajñāna* (*brahmavidyā*) not only is identified as the knowledge of Akṣarabrahman and Puruṣottama (Parabrahman), but also comprises of a particular understanding of the nature of Puruṣottama, Akṣarabrahman, the self, and the relationships between them. From Bhagavān Swaminarayan's expositions of *brahmajñāna* in GM. 3 and *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya* in L. 12, the *Bhagavadgītāsvāmināràyaṇabhāṣya's* reading of Gī. 18.54, and the Muṇḍakopaniṣad's characterization of *brahmavidyā*: *brahmajñāna* or *brahmavidyā* is understood to express that by which **the self (*ātman*) becomes**

136. "aṣṭāvaraṇe yukta evāṃ je koṭi koṭi brahmāṃḍa te je akṣarane viṣe aṇunī peṭhe jaṇāya che, evuṃ je Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇanuṃ dhāmarūpa akṣara te rūpe pote rahyo thako Puruṣottamanī upāsanā kare…" (L. 12) (Svāmināràyaṇa 292)

137. "brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣatiǀ samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktiṃ labhate parāmǁ" (Gī. 18.54) (Sādhu, 2012a, pp. 360–1)

Akṣararūpa (Brahmarūpa) and offers superior devotion (*paramā bhakti*) or *upāsanā* to Puruṣottama.

THE SVĀMINĀRĀYAṆA MANTRA AS BRAHMAVIDYĀ

The Svāminārāyaṇa mantra is also understood as expressive of Bhagavān Swaminarayan's unique understanding of *brahmavidyā*. On Magshar vada 11, Āśāḍhādi Saṃvata 1858 (1801 CE) Sahajanand Swami introduced the Svāminārāyaṇa mantra to his devotees.[138] Although the mantra later became a designation by which his disciples referred to him, it was representative of his characteristic philosophical and theological position. This identification is summarized in the following verse: "Śrīhari Sahajanand offered within one's own counsel the Svāminārāyaṇa manta, whose essence is *brahmavidyā*."[139] The Svāminārāyaṇa mantra is representative of *brahmavidyā*—the knowledge of Akṣara and Puruṣottama.

'Svāminārāyaṇa' expresses a semantic that encapsulates the *darśana's* unique understanding of Akṣarabrahman and Puruṣottama as distinct ontological entities and their relationship with the self (*jīvātman* or *īśvarātman*). A grammatical analysis of the term sheds greater clarity.

When the term appears in the dual-number form: 'Svāminārāyaṇau,' it is analysed as an enumerative coordinative compound (*itaretara-dvandva-samāsa*)—as 'Svāmī and Nārāyaṇa.' When the term appears in its singular form: 'Svāminārāyaṇa,' it is analysed as a missing-member, equational compound (*madhyamapadalopi-karmadhāraya-samāsa*).[140] Its analysis (*vigraha*) is of the form: "Svāmī (Akṣarabrahman) along with[141] Narāyaṇa (Parabrahman)."[142] Both analyses present 'Svāmī' and 'Narāyaṇa' as signifiers to two ontologically distinct entities: Akṣarabrahman and Puruṣottama (Parabrahman), respectively. The *Akṣarapuruṣottamamahātmya* further clarifies: "The Svāminārāyaṇa mantra consists of six letters. [It] is magnificent. The primary servant

138. (Dave 388–89)

139. "Śrīhariḥ Sahajānandaḥ svayamupadideśa yaml Svāminārāṇaṃ mantraṃ garbhitaṃ brahmavidyayāll" (Sadhu 9)

140. The following auxiliary (*paribhāṣā*) is utilized in the construction of a missing-member, equational compound (*madhyamapadalopi-karmadhārayasamāsa*): "For the construction of 'śākapārthiva' ('the king, who loves vegetables') and others, further add the removal (disappearance) of the latter word"—remove the second term from 'śāka-bhojī pārthivaḥ.' ("śākapārthivādīnāṃ siddhaye uttarapadalopasyopasaṃkhyānaml") (Bhaṭṭojidīkṣita 105)

141. The peculiarity of translating 'Svāminā sahitaḥ' is also worthy of mention. In discussions on Sanskrit cases (*kāraka*), the object of the instrumental case that is accompanied with 'sahita,' 'saha,' or other such terms that express accompaniment is considered secondary (*gauṇa*) in comparison to that which it is accompanying. In English, however, this is not the case. The object that follows 'with' takes on a primary role. For instance, although 'Svāminā sahitaḥ Nārāyaṇa,' would literally translate to 'Nārāyaṇa along with Svāmī,' adjusting for the semantic differences between both languages would result in the following, more accurate translation: "Svāmī along with Nārāyaṇa."

142. "svāminā sahitaḥ nārāyaṇal" (Sadhu 8)

is to be understood by 'Svāmī.' [It] is compounded as a missing-member, equational [compound]."[143] Here, 'the primary servant' refers to Akṣarabrahman, who is the eternal servant of Puruṣottama and forever untainted by *māyā*. "'Svāmī along with Nārāyaṇa'—Svāminārāyaṇa; this is the meaning of the mantra; this is its analysis (*vigraha*)"[144] offers a similar analysis. The SS identifies, "Within the [Svāminārāyaṇa] mantra, Akṣarabrahman is referred to by the term 'Svāmī.' Puruṣottama, who is superior to it (Akṣarabrahman) is referred to by the term 'Nārāyaṇa.'"[145] Among other things, the analysis emphasizes Akṣarabrahman and Puruṣottama as ontologically distinct entities.

In addition to expressing the distinction between both entities, the Svāminārāyaṇa mantra also represents Bhagavān Swaminarayan's understanding of *brahmavidyā*. As we saw earlier MuSB. 1.2.13 defines: "That by which *akṣara* (Akṣarabrahman) and *puruṣa* (Puruṣottama) are truly known, that is said to be *brahmavidyā*."[146] In defining *brahmavidyā*, the Upaniṣad presents *brahmavidyā* as the knowledge of two entities: Akṣarabrahman and Puruṣottama—the same two referents of 'Svāmī' and 'Nārāyaṇa' that constitute 'Svāminārāyaṇa.'

The analysis of the term also identifies Swaminarayan's understanding of the relationship of the self (the *jīvātman* or *īśvarātman*) with Akṣarabrahman and Puruṣottama. Within this analysis, "the term 'Svāmī,' which is a signifier for Akṣarabrahman is used to refer to [attaining] its being; with this sentiment Parabrahman Sahajanand has given the mantra "Svāminārāyaṇa."[147] "The purport of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama *upāsanā* is incorporated within the meaning of the supreme mantra 'Svāminārāyaṇa:' having become Svāmī-rūpa, otherwise known as Akṣara-rūpa (attained qualitative identification with Akṣarabrahman), one should with the sentiments of a servant (*dāsabhāva*) perform *upāsanā* in the form of *bhakti* to Nārāyaṇa—[otherwise known as] Parabrahman or Puruṣottama-Nārāyaṇa."[148] Stated differently, 'Svāmī' found within the 'Svāminārāyaṇa' mantra refers to *the self having identified—having acquired qualitative identification—with Akṣarabrahman*. When 'Svāmī' is conjoined with 'Nārāyaṇa'—a term that refers to the object of *upāsanā*, supreme devotion, or love (*bhakti*)—they come together to express: "Having identified the self with Akṣarabrahman one ought to

143. "svāminārāyaṇo mantraḥ ṣaḍakṣaraḥ śubhāspadaḥ| svāmiśabdena vijñeyo mukhyastu paricārakaḥ|| madhyamapadalopena samasyate mahāmanuḥ|" (APM. 2.20.14-5) (Sadhu 114)

144. "svāminā sahito nārāyaṇa iti Svāminārāyaṇa iti mantrā'rthatve tadvigrahaḥ|" (Sadhu 8)

145. "Akṣaraṃ Brahma vijñeyaṃ mantre svāmīti śabdataḥ| Nārāyaṇeti śabdena tatparaḥ Puruṣottamaḥ||" (Sadhu 9)

146. "yenākṣaraṃ puruṣaṃ vada satyaṃ provāca tāṃ tattvato brahmavidyām" (Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 256–57)

147. "Akṣarabrahmavācakasvāmītipadaṃ tadbhāvā'nusandhānāya prayojya Svāminārāyaṇeti mantraṃ dadau Sahajānandaḥ Prabhuriti|" (Sadhu 8)

148. "asminnakṣarapuruṣottamopāsanātātparya eva Svāminarāyaṇamahāmantrā'rthaḥ samāviṣṭaḥ| yathā svāmirūpo nāmā'kṣararūpo bhūtvā Nārāyaṇasya Parabrahmaṇaḥ Puruṣottamanārāyaṇasya dāsabhāvena bhaktyupāsanāṃ kuryāditi|" (Sadhu 14)

offer devotion (*bhakti*) to Puruṣottama with the sentiments of a servant (*dāsabhāva*)."[149] Given M. 3's exposition of *brahmajñāna* above, 'Svāminārāyaṇa' is understood as synonymous to *brahmajñāna* or *brahmavidyā*.

'AKṢARA-PURUṢOTTAMA' AS A SYNONYM OF 'SVĀMINĀRĀYAṆA'

Within the Vacanāmṛta, Bhagavān Swaminarayan presents a unique philosophical doctrine known as the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Siddhānta. 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama' is used synonymously with 'Svāminārāyaṇa.' 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama' consists of two terms: 'Akṣara' and 'Puruṣottama.' As with 'Svāminārāyaṇa,' when the compound is presented in the dual number form ('Akṣarapuruṣottamau') it is identified as an enumerative coordinative compound (*itaretara-dvandva-samāsa*). In this form, the term is used, like 'Svāminārāyaṇau,' to collectively refer to two ontologically distinct entities: Akṣarabrahman and Puruṣottama.

However, when the compound is presented in its singular form, both terms are joined together to form a missing-member, equational compound (*madhyamapadalopi-karmadhārayasamāsa*).[150] Like the Svāminārāyaṇa mantra, the term succinctly expresses Bhagavān Swaminarayan's unique understanding of *brahmavidyā* as it is expressed in GM. 3 and MuSB. 1.2.13 and *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya* as it is elaborated in L. 12 . The attentive reader will notice the use of 'Akṣara' and 'Puruṣottama' in L. 12 is reflected in the title: "Akṣara-Puruṣottama." As with 'Svāmī' and 'Narāyaṇa,' 'Akṣara' refers to Akṣarabrahman whereas 'Puruṣottama' refers to Parabrahman. Similar to the Svāminārāyaṇa mantra, 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama' also refers to offering devotion (*bhakti*) or *upāsanā* to Puruṣottama upon identifying the self with Akṣarabrahman. As a result, along with 'Svāminārāyaṇa,' 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama' is also understood as synonymous to 'brahmavidyā.'

SVĀMINĀRĀYAṆA VEDĀNTA AS THE AKṢARA-PURUṢOTTAMA DARŚANA

Swaminarayan's Vedānta *darśana* is identified as the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. Swaminarayan revealed the principles of his distinct *darśana* in the Vacanāmṛta. Among other things, he offered a specific understanding of the nature and form of Puruṣottama (Parabrahman), Akṣarabrahman, self, and the relationship between them. He also presented a distinctive understanding of what is meant by 'identify the self with Brahman (Akṣarabrahman).' From his expositions summarized as *brahmajñāna* in GM. 3 and *uttama nirvikalpa niścaya* in L. 12, the grammatical

149. "svātmanyakṣarabrahmarūpatvaṃ sampādya Puruṣottamasya dāsabhāvena bhaktiḥ karaṇīyetil" (Sadhu 8)

150. The following auxiliary (*paribhāṣā*) is utilized in the construction of a missing-member, equational compound (*madhyamapadalopi-karmadhārayasamāsa*): "For the construction of 'śākapārthiva' ('the king, who loves vegetables') and others, further add the removal (disappearance) of the latter word"—remove the second term from 'śāka-bhojī pārthivaḥ.' ("śākapārthivādīnāṃ siddhaye uttarapadalopasyopasaṃkhyānaml") (Bhaṭṭojidīkṣita 105)

analysis of 'Svāmināràyaṇa' and 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama,' and the Muṇḍakopaniṣad revelation on *brahmavidyā*; 'brahmajñāna' ('brahmavidyā'), 'Svāmināràyaṇa', and 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama' are all understood as synonymous. They are all offered as representative of Bhagavān Swaminarayan's distinctive *darśanic* position, which is summarized as: **the self (*ātman*) becoming Akṣararūpa (Brahmarūpa) and offering superior devotion (*paramā bhakti*) or *upāsanā* to Puruṣottama**.

Identifying Bhagavān Swaminarayan's Vedānta *darśana* as the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana reflects this position. Within this title, 'Akṣara-Puruṣottama' expresses: becoming **Akṣara**rūpa and offering superior devotion (*paramā bhakti*) or *upāsanā* to **Puruṣottama**. The term also conveys the *darśana's* distinctive understanding of *brahmavidyā*—the knowledge of two ontologically distinct entities: Akṣarabrahman and Puruṣottama. By the term's ('Akṣara-Puruṣottama') inclusive and summative capacity to express distinguishing *darśanic* features of Bhagavān Swaminarayan's revealed principles and the Vedāntic nomenclature to identify a *darśana* by its characteristic ontological enumerations or metaphysical descriptions of the relationships between its accepted entities, Bhagavān Swaminarayan's *darśana* is appropriately identified as the "Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana."

INDEX OF TEXTUAL ABBREVIATIONS

Br.	Brahmajñānāvalīmālā
Bṛ.	Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad
BS.	Brahmasūtra(s)
BSB.	Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya
BS Śaṃ. Bhā.	Brahmasūtra Śaṃkarabhāṣya
Chā.	Chāndogyopaniṣad
Gī.	Śrīmadbhagavadgītā
Gī. Śaṃ. Bhā.	Bhagavadgītā Śaṃkarabhāṣya
GSB.	Śrīmadbhagavadgītā-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya
Īśā.	Īśāvāsyopaniṣad
Kaṭha.	Kaṭhopaniṣad
Mā.	Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad
Mu.	Muṇḍakopaniṣad
MuSB.	Muṇḍakopaniṣat-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya
Pra.	Praśnopaniṣad
Ra.	Ratnatrayasāra
SP.	Siddhāntapatra
Śve.	Śvetāśvataropaniṣad
Ta.	Tattvamuktākalāpa
Tai.	Taittirīyopaniṣad
Va.	Vākyavṛtti
Vi.	Vivekacūḍāmaṇi
Ya.	Yatīndramatadīpikā

ABBREVIATIONS OF CHAPTER TITLES FROM THE VACANĀMṚTA

GA.	"Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā Antya"
GM.	"Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā Madhya"
GP.	"Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā Prathama"
L.	"Vacanāmṛta Loyā"
P.	"Vacanāmṛta Pañcālā"
S.	"Vacanāmṛta Sāraṅgapura"
V.	"Vacanāmṛta Varatāla"

WORKS CITED

Anantanand, Rambachan. The Advaita Worldview. State University of New York Press, 2006.

Bhaṭṭojidīkṣita. Vaiyākaraṇasiddhāntakaumudī. Edited by Govindācārya, Caukhambā Surabhāratī Prakāśana, 2012.

Dave, Harshadrai T. Bhagavāna Śrīsvāmināràyaṇa. 4th ed., vol. 1, Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2004.

Deśika, Venkaṭanātha. Tattvamuktākalāpa with Sarvārthasiddhi. Edited by Rāma Miśra Śāstrī, Meḍikal-Hāl Mudrālaya, 1900.

Hiriyanna, M. Outlines of Indian Philosophy. First, Motilal Banarsidass Publishers, 2005.

---. Outlines of Indian Philosophy. Motilal Banarsidass, 1994.

Kumāra, S., editor. Śvetāśvataropaniṣat. First, Saṃskṛta Saṃśodhana Saṃsat, 2012.

Madhavananda, Swami. Vivekachudamani of Sri Sankaracharya. The Advaita Ashrama, 1921.

Pulasth Soobah, Roodurmun. Bhāmatī and Vivaraṇa Schools of Advaita Vedānta - A Critical Approach. Edited by Ram Kanshi, First, Motilal Banarsidas Publishers, 2002.

Rāmānuja. Śrībhāṣya. Edited by Vasudev Shastri Abhyankar Pandit, Government Central Press, 1914.

---. Śrībhāṣya. Edited by Vasudev Shastri Abhyankar Pandit, Government Central Press, 1914.

---. Śrīmadbhagavadgītā - Śrīrāmānujabhāṣya. Translated by Śrīharikṛṣṇadāsa Goyandakā, Ninth, Gītāpresa, 2064.

---. Vedārthasaṅgrahaḥ. Edited by S. Rāma Miśra, Medical Hall Printing Press, 1894.

Rāmānuja, and Ānandaśaṅkara Bāpubhāī Dhruva. Śrībhāṣyam. Edited by Gautam Patel, vol. 1–4, Saṃskṛta Sāhitya Akādamī, 2011.

Rāmānujācārya, Śrī. Shri Bhashyam. Edited by Gautama Patel, Translated by Anandashankar Bapubhai Dhruv, vol. 1, Sanskrit Sahitya Akademi, 2003.

---. Shri Bhashyam. Edited by Gautama Patel, Translated by Anandashankar Bapubhai Dhruv, vol. 3, Sanskrit Sahitya Akademi, 2003.

---. Shri Bhashyam. Edited by Gautama Patel, Translated by Anandashankar Bapubhai Dhruv, vol. 2, Sanskrit Sahitya Akademi, 2003.

---. Shri Bhashyam. Edited by Gautama Patel, Translated by Anandashankar Bapubhai Dhruv, vol. 4, Sanskrit Sahitya Akademi, 2003.

Rāmānujācāryaḥ, Shri. Śrīmadbhagavadgītā-Śrīrāmānuja-Bhāṣyam. Translated by Śrīharikṛṣṇadāsa Goyandakā, Gita Press, 2008.

Raṅgarāmānuja. Kenādyupaniṣatpuruṣasūktaśrīsūktabhāṣyam. Ubhaya Vedanta Granthamala, 1972.

Sādhu, Bhadreśadāsa. Brahmasūtrasvāmināràyaṇabhāṣyam. Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2009.

---. Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāmināràyaṇabhāṣyam. Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2009.

---. Śrīmadbhagavadgītā Svāmināràyaṇabhāṣyam. 1st ed., Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2012.

Sadhu, Bhadreshdas. Svāmināràyaṇasiddhāntasudhā. 1st ed., Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2017.

Sādhu, Brahmadarśanadāsa. Bhāratīya Darśana. First, vol. 4, Śrīyajñapuruṣadāsa-saṃskṛtavidyālaya, 1997.

Śaṅkara. Brahmasutra Bhashya. Vol. 1, Sri Vani Vilas Press, 1910.

---. Upaniṣadbhāṣyam - Muṇḍamāṇḍūkyaitareyaṇi. Vol. 5, Sri Vani Vilas Press, 1910.

Śaṅkarācāryaḥ, Shri. Śrīmadbhagavadgītā-Śāṃkarabhāṣyam. Translated by Śrīharikṛṣṇadāsa Goyandakā, Gita Press, 2000.

Sankaracharya. "Brahmajñānāvalīmālā." The Works of Sri Sankaracharya, vol. 16, Sri Vani Vilas Press, 1910, pp. 221–24.

---. "Vākyavṛttiḥ." The Works of Sri Sankaracharya, vol. 15, Sri Vani Vilas Press, 1910, pp. 25–32.

Śāstrī, Anantakṛṣṇa, and Bhārgava Śāstrī, editors. The Brahmasūtra Śaṃkara Bhāṣya. Second, Nirṇaya Sāgara Press, 1938.

Śāstrī, Jagadīśa, editor. Upaniṣatsaṅgraha. Motīlāla Banārasīdāsa, 2006.

Shivananada, Swami. All About Hinduism. Eigth, The Divine Life Society, 2007.

Sivananda, Swami. All About Hinduism. Eighth, The Divine Life Society, 2007.

Śrīkāśīvidvatpariṣat. Śrīkāśīvidvatpariṣatkṛtā ghoṣaṇā. Śrīkāśīvidvatpariṣat, 31 July 2017.

Śrīnivāsadāsa. Yatīndramatadīpikā. Translated by Ādidevānanda Svāmī, Second, Sri Ramakrishna Math, 1967.

Svāmī, Nārāyaṇasvarūpadāsa. Siddhāntapatra. 18 July 2008.

Svāmināràyaṇa, Bhagavāna. Vachanamrut. Edited by Gopalanand Swami et al., 26th ed., Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2009.

Vyāsa, Veda. Śrīmadbhagavadgītā. Gītāpress, 2066.