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The Svāminārāyaṇa Saṃpradāya's Tradition of Education

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ABSTRACT

The BAPS Swaminarayan Research Journal is published by the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute. This article presents a historical framework of the journal by considering the tradition of education within the Svāmināŕāyaṇa saṃpradāya. By analyzing Swaminarayan (Svāmināŕāyaṇa) and the *guṇātīta* gurus' interest in a wide range of scholarly learning, their efforts to promote and facilitate such learning, and their eagerness to encourage its expression, this work intends to 1) provide an approximation of the scope of subjects pertinent to the content of the journal and 2) offer an overview of the foundational values of the journal and the tradition's scholarly institutions.

Keywords: Svāmināŕāyaṇa Saṃpradāya; Svāmināŕāyaṇa; BAPS; history; education; learning; research; vocational training; literature; scholarship; creative expression; Shastriji Maharaj; Yogiji Maharaj; Pramukh Swami Maharaj

INTRODUCTION

The Swaminarayan (Svāmināŕāyaṇa) tradition has a practice of learning that originates back to the saṃpradāya's beginnings in the mid 19th century. On numerous occasions, Parabrahman Bhagavān Swaminarayan (Svāmināŕāyaṇa), the founder of the Svāmināŕāyaṇa tradition, engaged in, promoted, and facilitated scholastic study spanning a wide range of disciplines. In addition to himself partaking in scholarly pursuits, Swaminarayan encouraged his disciples to both become cognoscente in

various disciplines, discuss and share their knowledge and expertise with others, and provide means for its expression. This tradition continued even after Swaminarayan's passing, as the fellowship's poets, historians, architects, and others worked to acquire knowledge and expertise and express it in various forms.

BAPS is positioned within this tradition of scholasticism. Over the past three decades it has created and managed various institutions, including: the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute in New Delhi; the Akshardham Centre for Applied Research in Social Harmony (AARSH) in Gāndhinagara, Gujarāta; and the Yajñapuruṣa Saṃskṛta Vidyālaya and the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya in Sāraṅgapura, Gujarāta, to promote, facilitate, and express scholarly investigation. By providing forums for international scholarship, these institutions encourage interdisciplinary research, discussion, collaboration, and expression. The Journal of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute, managed and published by the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute in New Delhi, serves as yet another forum for the development, discussion, and expression of such learning.

As a part of the flagship issue of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Journal, this work seeks to ground the interests, potential scholarly engagements, and values of the journal within a particular historical framework. It will offer a historical overview of the Svāmināràyaṇa tradition's practice of learning and its expression as it has been facilitated by Swaminarayan and his succeeding *guṇātīta* gurus. By presenting such a framework within which the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha's institutes of higher learning and this journal are positioned, this work seeks to understand the foundational values and diversity of scholarship that is characteristic of these institutions and their scholarly pursuits. As is the case with many historical explorations, narrations of this sort offer an opportunity to not merely contextualize, but also serve as a guide for future developments. With these intentions in mind, this article seeks to present and examine the practice of scholarly pursuits within the Svāmināràyaṇa tradition and highlight some of its noteworthy features.

BHAGAVĀN SWAMINARAYAN'S SCHOLARLY PURSUITS

At the foundation of all endeavours, academic or otherwise, of the Svāmināràyaṇa tradition are the teachings, values, and instructions of Bhagavān Swaminarayan. As the founder of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana and his unique recognition within it as Parabrahman Puruṣottama, Swaminarayan's revelations and events from his life have served as guides or models on which the tradition has progressed and developed over the years. As a result, in order to understand the historical framework and the principles that continue to direct the institutional development of the tradition's various intellectual pursuits, it is necessary to analyse the *darśana's* understanding of Swaminarayan's own scholarly endeavours, the underlying the inspirations, motivations, and guidance he provided others, and the results of such undertakings.

The proceeding subsections will be dedicated to expounding each of these aspects of Swaminarayan's scholarly pursuits. In presenting several detailed accounts of his life, these sections will highlight some of the core values, principles, and essential features of scholarship from his life and teachings that continue to guide the tradition's numerous academic ventures.

SWAMINARAYAN'S OWN SCHOLARLY UNDERTAKINGS

Swaminarayan's admiration for and perspectives on scholarship are often reflected in his own academic undertakings. Embarked on his scholastic journey as a child, Swaminarayan began his formal education at the age of six in 1787 CE. His primary instruction was conducted by Hṛdayarāma and later his father, Hariprasāda Pāṇḍe, a renowned pundit who was well versed both in the Vedānta and Āgama traditions.[1] Biographical accounts record that in addition to studying preliminary Saṃskṛta grammar (*vyākaraṇa*) and nyāya texts, Swaminarayan's foundational study included that of the Vedic corpus and many of the *vedāṅgas* (ancillary texts of the Vedas); the commentarial and expository (*prakaraṇa*) works of the six *darśanas* (*ṣaḍdarśanas*); sections of the *Mahābhārata*; and many of the *purāṇa* texts, with an emphasis on the *Śrīmadbhagāvata*. Although much of Swaminarayan's study had been focused on classical works, his instruction is characterized by a diverse pool of literature in terms of its literary genre, discipline of study, and philosophical and theological commitments.

His study of various sacred texts and their diverse practice continued even into his adolescent years, which were mostly spent traveling more than seven thousand kilometres across India. On his travels, he visited numerous pilgrimage places, participated in various religious festivals and rituals, and observed traditions that thrived around the country. He interacted with religious practitioners, community leaders, and pundits, learning and reflecting on the nuances of their varied belief systems.[2] At certain locations, he also paused his journey to undertake rigorous study. For instance, between 1795 and 1796 CE, he spent a year studying *aṣṭāṅgayoga*[3] from an ascetic named Gopāla Yogī.[4] He also spent two months thereafter in Totādri studying the texts of the Rāmānuja tradition from Jiyara Svāmī, the head of the Rāmānuja saṃpradāya.[5] Swaminarayan's travels throughout India presented him with diverse perspectives, nuances, and forms of the Indian culture, belief systems, and religious practice.

Swaminarayan's multifarious disciplinary instruction, comprehensive experience of Indian thought and its praxis, and more impressive, spontaneous oral recollection

1. (Dave H., *Bhagavān Śrī Svāmināŕāyaṇa,* Vol. I, 75)
2. (Brahmadarśanadas 14)
3. The depth of Swaminarayan's understanding of yoga is reflected in or can be inferred from the detail with which he explicates yogic practices in GP. 73, V. 4, and A. 1.
4. (Dave H., *Bhagavān Śrī Svāmināŕāyaṇa,* Vol. I, 171-75)
5. (Dave H., *Bhagavān Śrī Svāmināŕāyaṇa,* Vol. I, 240)

of readings from sacred texts are later reflected in his discourses. These discourses were recorded in the Vacanāmṛta, a chronological anthology of his teachings. Within its entirety, he recalls ninety distinct verses or aphorisms from sacred texts, among which he recalls verses from the *Śrīmadbhāgavata* the most at thirty-nine times. He also presents readings from the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* and repeatedly references the Muṇḍakopaniṣad, Chāndogyopaniṣad, Taittirīyopaniṣad, Śvetāśvetaropaniṣad, Hiraṇyakeśīyaśākhāśruti, *Mahābhārata*, and other Saṃskṛta works.[6] In one documented discourse, he recites nineteen verses from seven different texts while engaging in a debate with his disciples.[7]

In addition to explicit recollections of verses and aphorisms, he presents implicit, accurate references to concepts, narratives (*ākhyānas*), and instructions (*upadeśa*) from a wide range of sacred texts. For instance, his revelations on the relationship between the gopīs and Kṛṣṇa,[8] Uddhava's spiritual insights,[9] and the narratives of Śukdeva[10] and Janaka[11] are reflective of expositions in the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*. His discussions on Arjuna[12] and Yudhiṣṭhira[13] correlate with descriptions in the *Mahābhārata* and the *Bhagavadgītā*, whereas elaborations on Hanumāna[14] and Sītā[15] do so with the *Rāmāyaṇa*. His recollection and discussions of principles expressed within the Sāṃkhya and Yoga *darśanas*[16] are also reflective of expositions within their respective texts. A passing glimpse at the textual references provided in the footnotes of the Vacanāmṛta indicates such implicit references to discussions or expositions found in more than fifty distinct Saṃskṛta texts.[17] The scope and frequency of such referencing is particularly striking considering that Swaminarayan relied on a form of oral pedagogy that was mostly extemporaneous. Swaminarayan's personal study of and both explicit and subtle referencing to a diverse range of texts—spanning from Vedic, *darśanic*, *purāṇic*, philosophical, theological, to even historical texts, attest to not only his own varied interests, but also are reflective of the interests of the *darśana* and its various institutions.

Along with his willingness to engage with a wide range of texts and their

6. (Ādarśajīvanadāsa, *Bhagavān Svāmināràyaṇanu Vyaktitva*, 20)
7. L. 7.
8. See, for example: GP. 42, 56, 63, 73; S. 5, 15; K. 11; L. 14; GM. 10, 17, 19, 62; GA. 2; V. 3, and 18.
9. See, for example: S. 3, 15; K. 9; L. 1, 11, 16, 17; GM. 4, 17, 18, 21, 62; and GA. 30.
10. See, for example: GP. 23, 38, 45, 68, 72; L. 4, 12, 14, 15; GM. 10, 17, 20, 21, 61, 62, 65, 66; A. 1, 4; GA. 4, 21, and 22.
11. See, for example: GP. 2, 38, 73; L. 10; GM. 14, 20; and V. 20.
12. See, for example: GP. 25, 66, 70; K. 8; L. 6, 18; P. 4, 6; GM. 9, 10, 16, 28; and V. 20.
13. See, for example: GP. 69, GM. 9, and 16.
14. See, for example: GP. 59; GM. 62; GA. 16, 39; and J. 2.
15. See, for example: GM. 19, 28; and GA. 11.
16. See, for example: GP. 17, 18, 52, 73; L. 15; P. 2; GM. 8, 10, 17, 36, 50, 63; V. 2, 4, 8, 18, 20; GA. 36, and 38.
17. See appendix 7 of the Vacanāmṛta (Svāmināràyaṇa 693–96).

associated subject matter, Swaminarayan was keen on the analysis of such works. From an early age, he demonstrated a budding interest in creating abstracts and synopses of the literary works he encountered. It is recorded that as a child he created and often reflected on entries he made in a small pocketbook called a *gutko*, in which he summarized texts and recorded verses and aphorisms he found to be noteworthy.

His aptitude for offering analysis of textual readings and *darśanic* perspectives became more apparent later when he presented his discourses. In numerous revelations he employed well-known, classical dialectic methods by presenting conflicts or contrary expositions and resolving them, often using novel exegetical renderings.[18] He also often analysed texts or *darśanic* positions by demonstrating how they substantiate one another to create a comprehensive philosophical or theological position. For instance, in P. 2, he presents an integrated reading of the Yoga and Sāṃkhya Darśanas in order to put forth a coalescent rendering of spiritual endeavour. Having positioned the Sāṃkhya Darśana as advocating the means to develop detachment from the world, Swaminarayan reveals Yoga as encouraging devotion, worshipful service (*upāsanā*), and meditation (*dhyāna*) of Parabrahman's form. One severs while the other conjoins. Swaminarayan, thereafter, presents verses from the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* and the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* to substantiate this reading.[19]

By identifying, positioning, and bridging the significance of the perspectives and contributions that each tradition or text offers, Swaminarayan often presented distinct yet integrated renderings of philosophical and theological positions. Despite such reflection, he highlighted and placed into perspective the characteristics of each system, all the while being attentive to the essence of its teaching. Swaminarayan's disposition towards the analysis of *darśanic* positions and their texts suggests his distinct rendering and pluralistic approach towards Indian thought.

Also notable and quite related to Swaminarayan's modes of analysis were his willingness and enthusiasm to engage in constructive dialogue. A celebrated incident from his childhood suggests his early interest and adeptness in engaging in debate.

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18. See, for example, Swaminarayan's revelations in GP. 45, 66; K. 7; and GM. 16.
19. "One who has attained oneness with Brahman remains joyful at heart, grieves nothing, desires nothing, harbours neutrality amongst all beings, and attains my supreme devotion (*bhakti*)." ("brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati, samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu madbhaktiṃ labhate parām.") (*Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* 18.54)
"Even while being engaged in the ātman and having overcome all base natures, the learned offer selfless devotion (*bhakti*) to Urukrama (Paramātman), who possesses such [divine] qualities." ("ātmārāmaśca munayo nirgranthā apyurukrame, kurvantyahaitukiṃ bhaktimitthaṃbhūtaguṇo hariḥ.") (*Śrīmadbhāgavata* 1.7.10)
"O King [Parikṣit]! Despite being perfectly poised in the *nirguṇa* state (the state of being uninfluenced by the qualities of *māyā*), I (Śukdeva)—having been attracted by the divine actions and incidents of Paramātman—studied the [*Śrīmadbhāgavata*] epic." ("pariniṣṭhito'pi nairguṇye uttamaślokalīlayā, gṛhītacetā rājarṣe ākhyānaṃ yadadhītavān.") (*Śrīmadbhāgavata* 2.1.9)
Note: All translations offered here are the author's own.

Four years after he commenced his studies, when he was ten, he accompanied his father to Kāśī, where his father had been invited to mediate a debate amongst pundits at the Gomaṭha Āśrama. Although Ghanshyam was merely an observer at the proceedings, he often contributed incisively to the discussions. He presented sharp rebuttals against opposing positions and substantiated his arguments from readings of authoritative texts. The pundits expressed their admiration for his astuteness and adeptness at presenting reasoned arguments.[20]

Swaminarayan's interest in reasoned discussions is later reflected in his method of exposition found in the Vacanāmṛta. In many Vacanāmṛta discourses, he employs dialogue as a means for offering spiritual revelation. He often instigates discussion by revealing *prima facie,* contradictory interpretations,[21] contentious hypotheticals,[22] or ambiguous principles whose clarification warrant exposition.[23] Frequently prompting those assembled before him,[24] he even presents counterarguments and rebuttals.[25] He also invites those present within the assembly to ask questions[26] and often encourages them to ask and respond to one another's questions.[27] Within the Vacanāmṛta, sadhus, elderly devotees,[28] women,[29] and children[30] are all recorded as asking questions and playing an active role by participating in dialogue.

Swaminarayan's discourses also included discussions in the presence of, or upon prompting by, scholars from other traditions. In GP. 46, for instance, Swaminarayan answers a question from a Vedāntī Brāhmaṇa named Māheśvara Bhaṭṭa regarding the nature of *ākāśa* during the state of *samādhi*; in GP. 39, he speaks to an unnamed Vedāntī Brāhmaṇa about the *nirvikalpa* and *savikalpa* states; and in GA. 10, he speaks to a scholar of the Gauḍiya sect about his tradition's belief regarding the nature of Vṛndāvana and the Śaivite belief about the nature of Kāśī.

Swaminarayan's willingness and enthusiasm to engage in discussions has several noteworthy aspects. First, his discussions welcome participation from all persons within the tradition regardless of their age, gender, *āśrama*, or scholarly instruction. These discussions also welcome participation from those outside of the tradition. Partially as a consequence of such diverse involvement, the dialogues themselves also span a wide range of topics, including everything from *darśanic* philosophical ruminations to personal modes of religious practice. Indeed, Swaminarayan's readiness and

20. (Dave H., *Bhagavān Śrī Svāmināràyaṇa,* Vol. I, 75-82)
21. See, for example GP. 66.
22. See, for example GP. 14.
23. See, for example GP. 13.
24. See, for example GM. 27, 66; and GA. 28.
25. See, for example GP. 44.
26. See, for example GP. 29, 35, 51, 53, 57, 78; L. 7, 17; GM. 62; GA. 4, and 5.
27. See, for example GP. 49, 5-7, 65, 70-1, 77; and S. 2.
28. See, for example GP. 1, 2, 70, 75; K. 7; V. 2, 7; and A. 5-7.
29. See, for example V. 10.
30. See, for example GP. 31; GA. 15 and 25.

disposition to engage in such multifaceted discussions serve as a model that guides learning within the tradition.

SWAMINARAYAN'S TRADITION OF INTELLECTUAL PURSUIT

In addition to his own scholarly undertakings, Swaminarayan's enthusiasm also extended towards encouraging intellectual pursuit amongst his followers. Along with his eagerness to involve followers from diverse backgrounds in discussions and debates, Swaminarayan, amidst various political, social, and cultural challenges, promoted the development of 1) disciplinary expertise in a wide range of fields, 2) infrastructure for the growth of such skills and study, and 3) opportunities for their expression.

Political, Social, and Cultural Challenges

Historians recount that present-day Gujarāta was in turmoil in the 18th and 19th centuries. The Mughal Sultanate had collapsed, while the British government had restrained the East India Company from expanding its hold over the country.[31] The Muslim, Marāṭhā, and Rājaputa leaders were thus left competing for control, leaving Gujarāta victim to frequent violence from the Gāyakavāḍa and Peśvā rulers of Vaḍodarā and Amadāvāda. As a consequence of such political instability, feudal lords in Kāṭhiyāvāḍa perpetually struggled for control over land and resources.[32]

In addition to and in part as a consequence of these political challenges, Swaminarayan also faced numerous institutional, social, and cultural hurdles. Due to political uncertainty, for instance, there was no established formal system for education. Instead, education was relegated as primarily a private affair. Furthermore, cultural barriers prevented members of lower social orders and women from receiving even the most foundational education. The little systematized education that existed was exclusively limited to upper-caste males.[33] Even the children of these privileged castes, who were fortunate enough to attend village primary schools, learned only rudimentary reading, writing, and arithmetic to serve bare vocational needs. For these fortunate, schooling began at the age of six and often came to an abrupt end at the age of fourteen. It would not be until the late 1820s that formal education systems and literacy would take root in Gujarāta.[34]

Multiple Disciplinary Expertise

Despite such unfavourable and impeding circumstances, Swaminarayan inspired his disciples to study and gain expertise in numerous disciplines. Indeed, some of

31. (Vāghelā 11)
32. See H. Wilberforce-Bell's *The History of Kathiawad from the Earliest Times* (p.121-253) for a detailed political history of Kāṭhiyāvāḍa during the 18th and 19th centuries.
33. (Vyāsa 224-229; Majumdar 60; Mallison 262; Pārekha 117-118).
34. (Vāghelā 103)

his disciples had been fortunate to have had access to academic pursuit before having joined the fellowship. Nityānanda Svāmī, for instance, had travelled to Kāśī to learn the Vedas, the Upaniṣads, the Darśana Śastras and other texts.[35] Gopālānanda Svāmī, on the other hand, had studied Saṃskṛta under his father. Thereafter, he had studied vyākaraṇa, nyāya, jyotiṣam, astronomy and the Vedas under a scholar from a neighboring village.[36] Similarly, Brahmānanda Svāmī had spent ten years in the city of Bhuja learning equestrianism, yoga, jyotiṣam, nyāya, sculpture, architecture, and the poetic sciences. He had also studied Saṃskṛta and music in Dhamadkā under a renowned pundit named Bhaṭācārya.[37] Bhagavān Swaminarayan inspired these sadhus and others to further their education so that they could become experts in their respective fields and share their knowledge with others. He sent Brahmānanda Svāmī, for example, to Surata along with Muktānanda Svāmī, Jerāma Brahmacārī, and others to study the classical Saṃskṛta grammar text known as the *Vaiyākaraṇa-siddhānta-kaumudī* and other texts under a 102-year-old scholar named Muni Bāvā.[38] He also sent Premānanda Svāmī, who was just a boy of just eleven at the time, to Ujjain to learn vocal and instrumental music. Premānanda returned twelve years later having mastered the musical sciences.[39] In this way, Swaminarayan inspired many such disciples to acquire expertise in a wide range of subjects.

Infrastructure for Growth and Study

In addition, Swaminarayan also provided the means for such study and developed an infrastructure that would sustain it. Since printing did not become widespread within India until the mid-19th century, it was difficult to gain access to works needed for textual study. Swaminarayan often scouted and accumulated copies of manuscripts wherever possible. Ādhārānanda Svāmī recalls in his work, the *Haricaritrāmṛtasāgara,* Swaminarayan instructing Nityānanda Svāmī to obtain a copy of various sacred texts that he had learned were available in Junāgaḍha.[40] Once such texts were obtained, Swaminarayan would have scribes make handwritten replicas of them so that they would be readily accessible.

As the number erudite disciples increased, Swaminarayan also established *pāṭhaśālās*, centers that facilitated focused learning. Ādhārānanda Svāmī notes that such *pāṭhaśālās* were established in the villages of Kāriyāṇī, Boṭāda, and Gaḍhaḍā. He also provides a detailed listing of the instructors at these *pāṭhaśālās* and the subjects that they taught. For instance, he observes that Paramānanda Svāmī taught the *Sārasvata-vyākaraṇa*; Bhajanānand Svāmī taught lexicography and the poetic sciences;

35. (Dave H., *Life and Philosophy of Śrī Svāmināràyaṇa*, 84)
36. (Gopālānanda 5; Īśvaracaraṇadāsa, *Satsang Reader*, 1)
37. (Ratnu 47)
38. (Ratnu 268-9; Vyāsa 226)
39. (Bhagvatpriyadās 11-12)
40. (Ādhārānanda 6840-47)

Gopālānanda Svāmī taught yoga, various *smṛti* texts, and *jyotiṣa*; and Nityānanda Svāmī taught the *Vaiyākaraṇa-siddhānta-kaumudī* and its commentaries, the *purāṇas*, and various *darśanic* texts.[41] By providing access to works, establishing centers for learning, and appointing instructors, Swaminarayan not only facilitated academic pursuit during his time but also established a lasting tradition of scholarship.

Opportunities for Expression

Among his efforts, Swaminarayan also encouraged and provided opportunities for the expression of scholarship and learning. Regarding musical expression, expertise acquired in playing musical instruments and singing was often utilized in ritual performances and through recitals of devotional songs in assemblies. The frequency of such performances can be inferred from Vacanāmṛta, where thirty-seven of the discourses describe Swaminarayan listening to sadhus reciting devotional songs (*kīrtanas*), often accompanied by classical Indian instruments, including the *ḍukaḍa*, *jhāñjha*, *mṛdaṅga*, *tāla*, *pakhāvaja*, *sitāra*, *mañjhirā,* and *sarodā*.[42]

In numerous incidents, Swaminarayan also asked his disciples to sing devotional verses accompanied by musical instruments in large public assemblies attended by dignitaries or leaders. For example, in 1816 CE, Swaminarayan requested Premānanda Svāmī to perform in Dharamapura at the queen's court. Premānanda Svāmī tied chimes to his wrists, elbows, ankles, and waist and stood on a pile of *kumkuma*. While both singing and dancing, he dipped his feet in the *kumkuma* and moved around the courtyard, drawing with his feet scenes from the *Śrīmadbhāgavata's* narrative of the churning of the ocean. In this performance, Premānanda Svāmī integrated three forms of expression—music, dance, and art.[43] Regarding Premānanda Svāmī's mastery of vocal expression, an 1863 edition of *Buddhiprakāśa*, a magazine published by the Gujarāta Vernacular Society, noted that people of varying religious backgrounds would come to hear Premānanda Svāmī sing devotional songs and often leave overwhelmed with tears.[44] Similarly adept in dance and art, Premānanda Svāmī had employed his polymathic abilities at Swaminarayan's request. Through many such performances, Swaminarayan encouraged the expression of musical and vocal talent.

Swaminarayan also provided a forum that allowed for the expression of disciples' understanding of sacred texts, *darśanic* works, and *purāṇic* and *itihāsa* literature. In his own presence, Swaminarayan encouraged his disciples to recite from sacred texts and present expositions on them. For instance, GM. 63 describes Swaminarayan listening to Bhajanānanda Svāmī recite the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*; P. 2 and 7 depict Nityānanda Svāmī reciting the "Mokṣadharma" section from the *Mahābhārata* and the first chapter

41. (Vyāsa 226)
42. (Dave R., *Svāmināŕāyaṇīya Bhakti-Saṅgīta*, 14)
43. (Dave R., *Svāmināŕāyaṇīya Bhakti-Saṅgīta*, 16-17).
44. ("Gujarātī Bhāṣānā Kaviono Itihāsa" 242-3)

of the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*; and GM. 31 describes Prāgajī Dave reading the "Kapilagītā" aloud in an assembly. In addition to such recitals, Swaminarayan encouraged his disciples to analyze, evaluate, explicate, and argue for ideas presented within these readings. Through such public dialogues, he provided a forum for the expression and evaluation of his disciples' understanding of holy texts.

The study of sacred works also became instrumental in delivering discourses. Swaminarayan often instructed his ascetic disciples to travel from one village to the next, spreading his teachings to others and encouraging moral behaviour. During their travels, these ascetics often held assemblies or counselled individuals by recalling readings or accounts from scripture. Women were also encouraged to present such discourses in special assemblies, offering them the opportunity to express their understanding of sacred texts.

As Swaminarayan's followers travelled, they also interacted with scholars from other traditions. However, since the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition was newly founded, characterized by distinct philosophical and theological principles, and respected for its moral precedent, scholars of other traditions were quick to challenge its doctrines and practice. Within the Indian scholarly tradition, such *darśanic* disagreements were commonly abated, if not resolved, through scriptural debates, known as *śāstrārthas*. Confronted with such opposition, Swaminarayan often approved of his ascetic followers to participate in such debates. Historical accounts record that such debates were formally conducted in cities including Vaḍodarā, Junāgaḍha, Amadāvāda, and Jāmanagara.[45] These public debates served as another means to express the scholarly aptitude of the tradition's sadhus and offered them the opportunity to engage in constructive scholarly dialogue.

Swaminarayan also encouraged and facilitated his devotees to create *darśanic* works. He inspired the creation of numerous historical, philosophical, theological, commentarial, poetic, and literary works in various languages, including Saṃskṛta, Gujarātī, Hindī, and Vraja. Over time, these texts became valuable because of not only their devotional, doctrinal, and theological impact, but also their literary merits and contribution towards the advancement of contemporary literary style.

Among these works, the Vacanāmṛta—a compilation of Swaminarayan's discourses transcribed by his ascetic devotees—is considered to be the most revered philosophical and theological text within the *darśana*.[46] It has been praised for its authenticity and historicity, as well as its simple, lucid, and insightful exposition.[47] It is also recognized as the first major work of prose in Gujarātī. Thirty years after its completion in 1830, the Gujarātī monthly *Buddhiprakāśa* identified it as a model

45. (Bhagvatpriyadāsa 2-6; Brahmadarśanadāsa 168; Īśvaracaraṇadāsa, *Satsang Reader* 17, 26)
46. For a detailed discussion of the Vacanāmṛta's theological content and its practical implications, see Sādhu Brahmadarśanadāsa's *Vacanāmṛta Rahasya* (Vols. I-V).
47. (Carmon 204-10)

for early nineteenth-century Gujarātī prose.[48]

In addition to textual works, Swaminarayan also inspired the creation of thousands of poetic verses that served to express the tradition's teachings, articulate devotional sentiments, and record significant historical events. This collection includes more than 2,700 verses composed by Brahmānanda Svāmī, 3,375 by Premānanda Svāmī, and others authored by poets including Niṣkulānanda Svāmī, Muktānanda Svāmī, Devānanda Svāmī, Dayānanda Svāmī, Bhumānanda Svāmī, Manjukeshānanda Svāmī and Pūrṇānanda Svāmī—totalling more than 9,000 poetic compositions.[49]

In addition to the immensity of such poetic corpus, the lyrical variety, linguistic features, and creative symbolism of each are also noteworthy. These verses were authored in several languages. Premānanda Svāmī alone wrote in more than a dozen languages, including Punjābī, Māravādī, Kacchī, Gujarātī, Marāthī, Urdu, and Vraja. In one composition, he incorporated fifteen different meters, with a change in meter in each couplet.[50] Another poet, Brahmānanda Svāmī, created verses in rare classical tunes that are unfamiliar to modern musicians.[51] One of his works, the "Adharoṣṭhaprabandha Dohā," was written without the use of labial sounds. Charged with meaning, *rasa*, and poetic expression, it can be sung in its entirety without the performer's two lips ever coming together.[52] Such lyrical, euphonious, and inventive features joined with devotional sentiment resulted in works that crossed linguistic, regional, and cultural boundaries, as they were adopted by practitioners and performers across the country. These poetic creations caught the attention of prominent literary critics and scholars including, Kiśoralāla Maśaruvālā, Kanaiyālāla Munaśī, Anantarāya Rāvala, Raghuvīra Caudharī, Harīndra Dave, and Candrakānta Śeṭha. They were foundational and instrumental for the formation of some of the most vibrant expressions of Svāmināŕāyaṇa devotion (*bhakti*) and creative poetry and continued to be the subject of not just study, but also reverential expression.[53]

The construction and administration of mandirs also served as a means for similar expression. Architecture, design, and management-related learning came into practice

48. ("Cālīsa Varṣa Upara Lakhelī Gujarātī Bhāṣāno Dākhalo", 36-7)
49. The figures presented here are based on the number of verses that have been published and are thus available today. Biographical texts, however attribute 8,000 verses to Brahmānanda Svāmī and 14,000 to Premānanda Svāmī. They also attribute 2,500 to Niṣkulānanda Svāmī. Such texts estimate the total number of verses written by Swaminarayan's contemporaries to be between 30,000 and 35,000. (Ādarśajīvanadāsa, *Sarvavatari Bhagavān Svāmināŕāyaṇa: Jīvana ane Kārya*, 141)
50. (Dave P. 81; Dave R., *Saṅgīta ane Svāmināŕāyaṇa Saṃpradāya*, 26-27)
51. (Majumdar 23)
52. (Vyas 262)
53. One of the most extensive collections of Svāmināŕāyaṇa manuscripts today lies in the Akshardham Centre for Applied Research in Social Harmony (AARSH) in Gāndhīnagara, Gujarāta.

with Swaminarayan's decision[54] to construct such edifices. Built in Amadāvāda,[55] Bhuja,[56] Varatāla,[57] Dholerā,[58] Junāgaḍha,[59] and Gaḍhaḍā,[60] these mandirs inspired the onset of a new chapter in the tradition. The creation of mandirs brought with it the development of a distinct architectural style, which would both continue and develop throughout the history of the tradition. Along with the construction of these mandirs arose the need to manage accompanying facilities and activities. Eventually, these mandirs would serve not only as places of worship but also centers of learning and cultural and religious expression.

CONCLUSION

Despite facing political, social, and cultural challenges, Swaminarayan established a flourishing tradition of learning. Inspiring study and attaining expertise in diverse disciplines, ranging from language studies to classical architecture, he not only developed a following that was skilled in such various fields of study but also set a precedent within the tradition to pursue expertise in such disciplines. Additionally, his enthusiasm for facilitating study through infrastructural or institutional development served as a model for the tradition's continued efforts in providing for such growth. By furnishing numerous means for the expression of acquired skill and learning, Swaminarayan grounded learning in practice, creative enterprise, and devotion; developed perpetual mechanisms for inspiration; and influenced advancements in the disciplines themselves. Swaminarayan's enthusiasm to inspire, facilitate, and finally express multi-disciplinary learning developed a foundation for the academic endeavours and institutions of the tradition.

INTELLECTUAL PURSUIT AFTER SWAMINARAYAN'S PASSING

Although Bhagavān Swaminarayan passed from this world in June 1830,[61] his vision for the promotion of scholarship carried down through the tradition. Leaders of the fellowship continued to encourage learning over a diverse range of fields. To facilitate such study, new *pāṭhaśālās* in Gaḍhaḍā, Amadāvāda, Varatāla, and other locations were established. Both sadhus and devotees came to study in these *pāṭhaśālās*. The renowned Gujarātī poet Dalapatarāma, for example, studied at one such *pāṭhaśālā* in Amadāvāda.

In addition to study, the tradition also continued to encourage the expression of

54. (Dave, *Bhagavān Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa*, Vol. IV, 285–86)
55. (Dave, *Bhagavān Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa*, Vol. IV, 323)
56. (Dave, *Bhagavān Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa*, Vol. IV, 405)
57. (Dave, *Bhagavān Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa*, Vol. V, 12)
58. (Dave, *Bhagavān Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa*, Vol. V, 183)
59. (Dave, *Bhagavān Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa*, Vol. V, 249)
60. (Dave, *Bhagavān Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa*, Vol. V, 272)
61. (Dave, *Bhagavān Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa*, Vol. V, 432–33)

such learning through the production of both literary and poetic works. Gunatitanand Swami (Guṇātītānanda Svāmī), the successor of Swaminarayan, encouraged Acintyānanda Brahmacārī and others to produce both translations of existing Saṃskṛta works and original texts. With Gunatitanand Swami's inspiration and blessings, Acintyānanda Brahmacārī authored the *Harisaṃbhavamahākāvya*, a biographical poem on Swaminarayan composed in the classical Saṃskṛta epic style, and the 33,000-verse *Harilīlākalpataru*.

Historical and biographical research was also conducted by many other disciples. For instance, Dalapatarāma authored the famed *Harilīlāmṛta*, a four-volume biography of Swaminarayan composed in Gujarātī in poetic form. Although he was visually impaired, he conducted interviews and thereafter composed verses orally, often needing up to four scribes to commit his compositions into textual form.

The teachings of many of Swaminarayan's prominent sadhus were also compiled during this time. Texts including *Guṇātītānanda Svāmīnī Vāto* ("The Sermons of Gunatitanand Swami"), *Gopālānanda Svāmīnī Vāto*, *Akṣarānanda Svāmīnī Vāto*, *Adbhutānanda Svāmīnī Vāto*, and others were compiled from the teachings of the respective senior sadhus.

In addition to inspiring literary creations, Gunatitanand Swami also, like Swaminarayan, facilitated study by having texts replicated. When devotees came for receiving additional religious vows, he often instructed them to scribe replicas of the many literary texts of the tradition, including the Vacanāmṛta and various poetic works.[62]

DEVELOPMENTS THROUGH SHASTRIJI MAHARAJ

Brahmasvarūpa Shastriji Maharaj (Śāstrījī Mahārāja) (1865-1951 CE), the founder of BAPS, continued Swaminarayan and Gunatitanand Swami's efforts. Like Swaminarayan, he himself engaged academic study in numerous fields, encouraged others to do the same, and inspired its expression. Initiated as Yagnapurushdas (Yajñapuruṣadāsa) in November 1882, Shastriji Maharaj went on to study a variety of classical subjects including, *nyāya*, Saṃskṛta grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), and Vedānta. His competence in Saṃskṛta earned him the ability to extemporaneously analyse otherwise difficult verses from works such as the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa* and present meaningful expositions on them.[63]

Along with Saṃskṛta learning, he also displayed great interest in the study of the tradition's history, focusing in particular on Swaminarayan's theological and philosophical revelations. Often pursuing investigations himself, he interviewed those who had themselves heard Swaminarayan's discourses and revelations to consolidate the tradition's understanding of Swaminarayan's teachings. Corroborating textual

62. (Dave H., *Akṣarabrahma Śrī Guṇātītānanda Svāmī*, Vol. II, 137)
63. (Dave H., *Brahmasvarūpa Śāstrījī Mahārāja*, Vol. I, 141-3)

exposition of Swaminarayan's revelations in the Vacanamrut and other biographical works with eyewitness accounts, he reaffirmed and designated Swaminarayan's teachings as the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. He later established the Bochasanvasi Shri Akshar-Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) in 1907 on the principles of this doctrine.

In addition to his own diverse scholarly learning, he, like Swaminarayan, was not only eager but also proficient in engaging in dialogues with scholars, sometimes even with his preceptors. In a celebrated debate with Mahīdhara Śāstrī, he received public acclaim for successfully defending and affirming his reading of a section from the *Sārasvata*, a classical Saṃskṛta grammar text.[64] He also engaged in dialogue with many erudite members of the tradition, convincing them of the authenticity of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana.

Shastriji Maharaj also encouraged and facilitated others to participate in scholarly learning. In several preserved letters he encouraged students by expressing the significance of scholarship.[65] In other instances, he took a personal interest in what they studied, offered them advice,[66] and even personally tutored many in their own studies.[67] He also financially supported their learning by making arrangements for pundits,[68] paying examination fees, and facilitating their accommodations. Yogiji Maharaj (Yogījī Mahārāja), Shastriji Maharaj's successor, recalled Shastriji Maharaj accommodating several sadhus to study in Bhādaraṇa, Khaṃbhāta, and Goṇḍala[69] – all locations where pundits were more readily available. In his efforts to further facilitate the study of sacred texts, Shastriji Maharaj later developed a *pāṭhaśālā* in Sāraṅgapura, a village in western Gujarāta.[70]

DEVELOPMENTS THROUGH YOGIJI MAHARAJ

Yogiji Maharaj's enthusiasm for encouraging higher education paralleled that of his guru, Shastriji Maharaj. Among his many contributions, he established a center for learning in Mumbai, where many ascetics received classical training in Saṃskṛta, music, foreign languages, and the fine arts. He encouraged them to develop proficiency so that they would themselves be able to teach and convey their expertise to others. In addition to acquiring expertise and learning across numerous disciplines, they also acquired formal degrees, including masters and doctorates, from accredited universities.

Yogiji Maharaj supported the expression of such learning through numerous

64. (Dave H., *Brahmasvarūpa Śāstrījī Mahārāja*, Vol. I, 152-4)
65. (Īśvaracaraṇadāsa, *Likhitana Śāstrī Yajñapuruṣadāsa*, Vol. II, 390–95, 556, 573, 576)
66. (Īśvaracaraṇadāsa, *Likhitana Śāstrī Yajñapuruṣadāsa*, Vol. II, 393–94)
67. See, for example: (Īśvaracaraṇadāsa, *Likhitana Śāstrī Yajñapuruṣadāsa*, Vol. I, 262)
68. (Khācara)
69. (Īśvaracaraṇadāsa, *Brahmasvarūpa Yogījī Mahārāja*, Vol. III, 58-9)
70. (Khācara)

activities. He continued Swaminarayan's efforts to produce a wide range of literature by inspiring the creation of many publications. By his instruction, Harṣadarāya Tribhovanadāsa Dave, an astute disciple, prolific author, and researcher, conducted a comprehensive study of the tradition's history and authored numerous biographical works. To this day, these works are regarded as authoritative sources of the tradition's history.

Additionally, Yogiji Maharaj inspired the expression of the tradition's teachings in foreign languages. Harṣadabhāi Dave produced the first English translation of the Vacanāmṛta. Other works including, *The Life and Philosophy of Lord Swaminarayan*; an English translation of the *Vedarasa*—a collection of Swaminarayan's communications to his devotees; and a text entitled *New Dimensions in Vedānta Philosophy*, further introduced the tradition's teachings to an English readership. In addition to textual creations, Yogiji Maharaj motivated many to utilize their proficiency in foreign languages by delivering expositions and discourses in these languages.

Yogiji Maharaj also encouraged numerous forms of artistic expression. For instance, he inspired the creation of a music school in Mumbai. Its students often engaged in stage performances and released recorded compilations of musical track works of devotional songs accompanied by both classical and contemporary instruments. There was also an active effort to incorporate traditional dance forms into onstage performances, ultimately resulting in not only the creation of a distinct form of cultural expression but also the evolution of staged cultural programs. The production of graphic art creations and artistic paintings added yet another element to the various forms of artistic expression that were inspired by Yogiji Maharaj.

The formal creation of periodic weekly assemblies at the fellowship's mandirs was another contribution of Yogiji Maharaj. These assemblies allowed for the regular expression of numerous skills and became venues for textual expositions, discourses, and variegated forms of the performing arts. The rise of such regular forums for creative expression placed an enormous demand for learning and expertise and often instigated its creation. Yogiji Maharaj's introduction of youth and children assemblies not only further increased the demand for such learning and expertise, but also catered learning to audiences of various age groups and inspired skill development from a young age.

DEVELOPMENTS THROUGH PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ

Following both Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj (Pramukha Svāmī Mahārāja) further inspired and facilitated learning and scholarship and provided numerous means for its expression. He took a personal interest in the formal education of many ascetics and facilitated their studies in a wide range of both classical and contemporary disciplines. This included the formal study of both western analytical methods and classical Indian disciplines, such as Saṃskṛta

grammar (*vyākaraṇa*), Saṃskṛta literature (*sāhitya*), *navyanyāya*, and various *darśanic* and Vedic studies.

Along with promoting advanced formal studies, Pramukh Swami Maharaj also inspired the creation of novel literary works and expositions. The following is a survey of some of these works:

- *The Vacanāmṛta Rahasya* (2004)—a comprehensive exposition of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana's foundational principles based on Swaminarayan's discourses as presented in the Vacanāmṛta. This text appears in five volumes and is published in the Gujarātī language. An abridged version of this text has also been published in three volumes in English.
- *The Akṣara-puruṣottama-māhātmyam* (2013)—a 19,000-verse Saṃskṛta text that describes the history, *darśanic* position, and core practices of the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition.
- *The Prasthānatrayī-svāminārāyaṇa-bhāṣyam* (2009-12)—a five-volume comprehensive Saṃskṛta commentary on the Upaniṣads, the *Brahmasūtras*, and the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā* according to the principles of Bhagavān Swaminarayan.
- *The Svāminārāyaṇa-siddhānta-sudhā* (2017)—a Saṃskṛta *vādagrantha*, which offers an exposition, justification, and defense of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana in the style of classical Indian debate.

Along with these textual creations, more than 450 works in various languages, including Gujarātī, English, Hindī, Tāmila, Marāṭhī, Saṃskṛta, and French, were also published. To facilitate such publications, a modern printing press and design studio were also developed. Such infrastructure allowed for the periodic creation and publication of the tradition's magazines, which include:

- *The Svāminārāyaṇa Prakāśa* – a monthly magazine published in Gujarātī and Hindī that presents the tradition's news events and articles on Indian culture, morality, family values, self-help, and various subjects related to the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana.
- *The Swaminarayan Bliss* – an English, bi-monthly magazine that offers articles on the life and teachings of Swaminarayan and the lineage of *guṇātīta* gurus and expositions on the principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana.
- *The Svāminārāyaṇa Bālaprakāśa* – a periodical in English and Gujarātī designed for children.
- *The Premavatī* – a bi-monthly magazine for women that is authored and edited by female volunteers and aims to promote spiritual, cultural, and educational values.

In addition to literary and periodical creation, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired the expression of learning through many other activities, as well. For example, he developed professional recording studios and motivated the study of music, the playing of traditional and contemporary instruments, singing, and the performing arts. As a

result, hundreds of audio and video productions have been created. Training in classical dance, performing arts, visual arts, various practical fields of study, and management have all been put to use in the fellowship's international festivals, many of which are conducted annually. Furthermore, studies in history, anthropology, and social sciences have culminated in the creation of permanent exhibitions in various centers throughout the world. In addition, the study of sculpting, visual arts, design, and architecture have led to the development of more than a thousand mandirs throughout the world, including the Akshardham complexes in Gāndhīnagara (Gujarāta), New Delhi, and Robbinsville, New Jersey. Through such infrastructural and organizational development, Pramukh Swami Maharaj inspired creative expression and the practical application of learning. Along with creating opportunities for such expression, he also established formal centers of learning that would continue to foster the fellowship's tradition of intellectual inquiry and expression.

Institutions for General Education and Vocational Training

Through the creation of schools, student residential facilities, education and career aid initiatives, institutes, and research centers, Pramukh Swami Maharaj established centers for formalized learning. With schools in London (UK), Bhādrā, Cāṇasada, Vidyānagara, and Selavāsa; residential schools in Vaḍodarā, Goṇḍala, Valasāḍa, Mount Ābu, Nāgapura, Rāisaṇa, and Sāraṅgapura; and all-girls, residential schools in Rāndesaṇa and Karamasada, every year thousands of students receive equal opportunity, quality, formal education from professionally trained and certified teachers. Allocating scholarships and grants to students on both need and merit bases, these schools provide a variety of residential amenities and resources needed to develop both academic and personal success.

In addition to schools, residential and education facilities in Vallaba Vidyānagara, Surata, Naḍiyāda, Ukāi, Bhāvanagara, Baroḍā, Dhule, Mahesāṇā, Bāraḍolī, and Ādipura facilitate students studying at nearby universities. These centers for learning increase education awareness through literacy campaigns and provide necessary financial support initiatives, academic mentoring, access to study-skills workshops, standardized exam preparatory courses, and summer education camps to give students direction, necessary resources, and opportunities for academic progress.

Pramukh Swami Maharaj also established centers for higher learning. These centers include the Yajñapuruṣa Saṃskṛta Vidyālaya, the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya, the Akshardham Centre for Applied Research in Social Harmony (AARSH), and the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute.

The Yajñapuruṣa Saṃskṛta Vidyālaya and the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya

The Yajñapuruṣa Saṃskṛta Vidyālaya and the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanskrit

Mahavidyalaya are both located in Sāraṅgapura, Gujarāta. Developed in 1973, the Yajñapuruṣa Saṃskṛta Vidyālaya serves predominantly as a learning center for the tradition's ascetics. The BAPS Swaminarayan Sanskrit Mahavidyalaya was developed much later in 2013 and functions as a higher-level learning center that offers formal certification and degree-based programs in affiliation with the Shree Somnath Sanskrit University. Both centers offer a comprehensive and in-depth study of a wide range of disciplines, including vernacular and foreign language study, Saṃskṛta grammar, *saṃpradāyic* history, and principles and sacred texts of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. They also explore Vedānta texts, such as the Upaniṣads and the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*; *itihāsa* works, including the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*; classical and contemporary poetry and literary works; and various *smṛti* texts. In addition to textual study, they offer extensive coursework on world religions, human relations, management, music, and homiletics.

The Akshardham Centre for Applied Research in Social Harmony (AARSH)

Established in November 1992 at Akshardham, Gāndhīnagara, the Akshardham Centre for Applied Research in Social Harmony (AARSH) has served as one of Gujarāta's premier Indological research institutes. In correlation with several accredited universities, it serves primarily as a forum for experienced academicians, researchers, and erudite practitioners of Indic studies. The research center focuses its efforts on Vedic and *darśanic* studies, Indian historical and cultural studies, the societal and practical applications of philosophical and theological investigations, cross-disciplinary and inter-faith studies, and manuscriptology.

AARSH also promotes academic dialogue by hosting numerous conferences and seminars. It has hosted a total of thirteen conferences at the international, state, and regional levels since its inception. These conferences have included the "International Seminar on the Role of the Guru" (1996), "The Status of Women in Religions" (1998), and a conference on the literary contributions of the Swaminarayan tradition, organized in association with Pātana's Uttar Gujarat Vishwavidyalaya (the Hemchandracharya North Gujarat University) (2001). The institute has also hosted the "Akhila Bhāratīya Darśana Pariṣad" (2004) and a conference on the modern relevance of the Yoga Darśana (2010). In its efforts to encourage frequent academic dialogue, AARSH also conducts a lecture series once every three months on a wide range of topics.

In addition to encouraging academic dialogue, AARSH promotes the expression of original research through numerous publications. Since its inauguration the center has published more than thirty texts, including several English works, such as *Vaidikatva in Indian Philosophy* (1996), the *Role of the Guru* (1996); Saṃskṛta works, such as the *Vyāsasūtrārthadīpa* (2006) and the five-volume *Akṣarapuruṣottama-mahātmyam* (2013); and Gujarātī works, such as *Brahmasūtramā Jīvātmānī Gatio ane Brahmanu*

Svarūpa (1998), *Aṃtyeṣṭi Saṃskāra* (2001), and *Vaidika Tathā Sāṃpradāyika Śāstronā Ādhāre Akṣarabrahmanirūpaṇa* (2010).

The BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute

Established in 2010, the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute also serves as a center for Indology, emphasizing research on Indian culture and history, philosophy, literature, and language. Its comprehensive research projects advance the expression, understanding, and appreciation of Indian culture, philosophy, religions, languages, and texts. The institute also provides a platform for interdisciplinary and interfaith scholarly engagement.

Of particular note are the numerous seminars and conferences hosted by the institute. These collaborative symposiums include the conference on "Bhakti and Prapatti in Indian Philosophy of Religion," an event organized alongside the Indian Council of Philosophical Research (2016); the "International Conference on Sahajanand Swami and the Svāmināràyaṇa tradition," organized with the Maharaja Sayajirao University, the Gujarat Historical Society, and the B. J. Institute of Learning and Research (2013);[71] and the "Interim International Conference on Realizing Global Peace," organized with the All-India Philosophy Association and the India Hellenic Society for Culture and Development (2014). The institute also hosts regular guest lectures, guided discussions, and a lecture series on a wide range of topics pertaining to Indology.

The newest contribution of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute is the Journal of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute. This journal intends to provide a platform for a discussion on the Swaminarayan tradition, philosophy, theology, history, rituals and practice, and the tradition's broader Indian *darśanic* context. It hopes to open new roads of inquiry regarding one of India's largest and fastest-growing transnational movements and its place amongst some of India's oldest and most resilient *darśanic* traditions. Such inquiry will add to the Svāmināràyaṇa tradition's already vibrant scholarly practice and provide a forum for academic dialogue and expression.

CONCLUSION

Bhagavān Swaminarayan and the *guṇātīta* gurus that followed showed great interest in encouraging the acquisition of knowledge and skills in a wide range of disciplines. According to the means available and appropriate to the tradition's position, they encouraged learning and skill development, provided infrastructural support, and inspired its expression. In light of these contributions, there are two ways to situate the relevance of their efforts in this respect to the Journal of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute and, incidentally, the intention of their exposition

71. The proceedings of this conference were published in 2016 by the Oxford University Press in the form of the book *Swaminarayan Hinduism: Tradition, Adaptation, Identity*, Ed. Raymond Williams & Yogi Trivedi.

in the present work.

The first intention is to provide an approximation of the scope of subjects pertinent to the content of the journal. Either through their own scholarship or their encouragement of others', Swaminarayan and the gurus that followed demonstrated much interest in the study of diverse disciplines. Everything from the study of classical Vedānta texts to Saṃskṛta and vernacular poetry, to music, dance, history, and even foreign languages was encouraged, suggesting the relevance of all of these undertakings. Alternatively, the associated modes of expression of such learning and the consequent literary, artistic, cultural, architectural, musical, and organizational contributions serve in themselves as pertinent subjects of investigation. Additionally, the relationships of these works with other contemporary creations; their historical or societal influences, implications, or significance; and the implicit, inter-disciplinary relationships among them also serve as relevant nodes of investigation. By highlighting these interests, creative expressions, and relationships, this work serves to identify them as relevant subjects of investigation for the journal.

The second intention of this work is to situate the Journal of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute within the historical framework of the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition. In addition to considering the disciplinary interests of the tradition, by dwelling on the values and expression of learning across its history, this work provides an approximation of the journal's own merits. The tradition's history of welcoming and even encouraging constructive dialogue, especially with those outside the tradition; its emphasis on the practical application of learning; its inspiring of an inclusive, pluralistic, and comprehensive outlook; its willingness to accommodate cross-cultural, transnational, and multi-lingual features; its readiness to integrate modern elements while preserving core cultural and traditional foundations; and its non-discriminatory attitude are just a few of the core values or features that it inherits from the precedents set by its leaders. These precedents and values are made explicit in this work's analysis of the historical framework within which the journal is positioned.

Given this framework and under the guidance and continued blessings of Mahant Swami Maharaj (Mahanta Svāmī Mahārāja), the Journal of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute seeks to continue the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition's legacy of learning. Serving as a forum that welcomes new perspectives and constructive dialogue, it hopes to encourage, support, and provide a forum for quality scholarly inquiry.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

A.	"Vacanāmṛta Amadāvāda"
GA.	"Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā Antya"
GM.	"Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā Madhya"
GP.	"Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā Prathama"
J.	"Vacanāmṛta Jetalapura"

K. "Vacanāmṛta Kāriyāṇī"
L. "Vacanāmṛta Loyā"
P. "Vacanāmṛta Pañcālā"
S. "Vacanāmṛta Sāraṅgapura"
V. "Vacanāmṛta Varatāla"

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