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THE AKṢARABRAHMAN GURU AS THE ESSENTIAL HERMENEUTICAL TOOL FOR RECEIVING SCRIPTURE

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ABSTRACT

Literary theorists have long grappled with tools and methods to restore or decode deeper meaning from texts, especially religious literature. They seek understanding and interpretation beyond grammar, semantics, context, history, and other linguistic or epistemological devices. Is it possible to apply these principles to the Vacanāmṛta, and if so, then how? As the documented words of the supremely revered deity Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa (Swaminarayan), the Vacanāmṛta serves as one of the most significant sources of revelatory knowledge for the faithful of the Svāminārāyaṇa fellowship. However, like words of nearly all sacred texts, they are fraught with the potential of being misread by imperfect, limited human minds. What tools should be employed to ensure that the full, correct, and intended meaning of the Vacanāmṛta can be unlocked?

This article explores the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition's own method of interpretation as revealed by Swaminarayan in the Vacanāmṛta. It analyzes on a passage from one exceptionally important discourse on the nature of God: "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13," where Swaminarayan alludes to himself as Puruṣottama, the supreme existential reality. When discussing the nature of God or how to develop resolute faith in God, Swaminarayan invariably reveals the Akṣarabrahman guru, referred to by 'sant', 'ekāntika bhakta', or 'satpuruṣa', as the exclusive, authoritative exegete who can correctly interpret scripture and reveal God. Swaminarayan thus appends his address in "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13" with the following caveat:

> "However, such discourses regarding the nature of God cannot be understood by oneself even from the scriptures. Even though these details may be described within the scriptures, it is only when the *satpuruṣa*

manifests on this earth, and one hears them narrated by him, that one understands them. However, they cannot be understood even from righteous texts upon employing one's intellect."[a]

This paper unpacks this passage using Swaminarayan's other teachings from the Vacanāmṛta while also drawing substantially from the commentarial corpus of the Svāminārāyaṇa Vedāntic school: the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. By discussing the relationships between revelation, scripture, reason, and ontology, this article examines the role of the Akṣarabrahman guru as the essential hermeneutical tool for accurately understanding not only the Vacanāmṛta but also all scripture.

Keywords: Hermeneutics; scripture; interpretation; pramāṇa; testimony; śabda-pramāṇa; inference; anumāna-pramāṇa; Svāminārāyaṇa-siddhānta-sudhā; Vacanāmṛta; Svāminārāyaṇa; Akṣara-Brahman; guru

a. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 2.13, 384)

INTRODUCTION

The hermeneutical process is an endeavor towards decoding text.[1] Literary theorists have long grappled with tools and methods to make sense of writing and discover or uncover what the author is really trying to say or has left unsaid so that the reader may excavate deeper meaning from the text. Their attempts seek understanding and interpretation beyond grammar, semantics, context, history, and other linguistic or epistemological devices, even if they do still employ all these in the service of this process.

The burden of hermeneutics becomes all the heftier and more charged when the subject of decoding is religious literature and the text in question is held in sacred esteem. How can or would the hermeneutical process apply to a sacred text such as the Vacanāmṛta? As the documented words of the understood supremely revered deity Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa (Swaminarayan), the Vacanāmṛta serves as one of the highest and most direct sources of revelatory knowledge for the faithful of the Svāminārāyaṇa fellowship. However, like other sacred words, they are fraught with the potential of being misread by imperfect, limited human minds. What tools should be employed to ensure that the full, correct meaning of this two-hundred-year-old theological text can be unlocked?

This article explores the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition's own method of interpretation as revealed by Swaminarayan in the Vacanāmṛta. It focuses on a passage from "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13"—an exceptionally important discourse on the nature of

1. (Bineham 300–12)

God—where Swaminarayan alludes to himself as Puruṣottama, the highest existential reality. In such key passages that discuss the nature of God or how to develop resolute faith in that God, Swaminarayan invariably reveals the Akṣarabrahman guru, referring to him by 'santa' (henceforth, 'sant') 'ekāntika bhakta', or 'satpuruṣa', as an exclusive, authoritative figure who can accurately and appropriately explicate scripture and identify God's form. For this reason, Swaminarayan appends the following caveat within his address in "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13:"

> "However, such discourses regarding the nature of God cannot be understood by oneself even from the scriptures. Even though these details may be described within the scriptures, it is only when the *satpuruṣa* manifests on this earth, and one hears them narrated by him, that one understands them. However, they cannot be understood even from righteous texts upon employing one's intellect."[2]

This paper unpacks this passage using Swaminarayan's other teachings from the Vacanāmṛta while also drawing substantially from the commentarial corpus of the Svāminārāyaṇa Vedāntic school: The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. This corpus comprises of two voluminous works by Bhadreshdas Swami: the *Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya*—a comprehensive Sanskrit commentary on the Upaniṣads, *Bhagavad-Gītā*, and *Brahmasūtras*—and the *Svāminārāyaṇa-Siddhānta-Sudhā* (henceforth, *Sudhā*)—a Sanskrit *vādagrantha* of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. Through a close reading of the above passage from "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13," this paper examines the following three key aspects regarding revelation, hermeneutics, and the interplay between both:

1) The revelation of God in scripture;
2) The role of intellect or reason in scriptural revelation;
3) The role of the Akṣarabrahman guru as an essential hermeneutical tool for accurately understanding scriptural revelation and the theological rationale underlying this identification.

THE REVELATION OF GOD IN SCRIPTURE: "EVEN THOUGH THESE DETAILS MAY BE DESCRIBED WITHIN THE SCRIPTURES..."

In the above-mentioned passage from "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13," Swaminarayan repeatedly mentions that scriptures contain revelations on the nature of God. Within consecutive sentences of this passage, he states, "Even though these details may be described within the scriptures..." and twice repeats: "Even from the scriptures..." Swaminarayan's repeated mention of scripture serves to emphasize the significance of scripture in revealing the nature of God. He makes its importance explicit in

2. "āvī Bhagavatsvarūpa saṃbaṃdhī je vārtā te to śāstramāṃthī paṇa potānī mele samajāya nahi. ane sadgraṃthomāṃ āvī vārtā to hoya paṇa jyāre satpuruṣa pragaṭa thāya che tyāre temanā mukha thakī ja vāta samajyāmāṃ āve che, paṇa potānā buddhibale karīne sadgraṃthomāṃthī paṇa samajātī nathī." (Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13, 312)

"Vacanāmṛta Sāraṅgapura 13" while describing the means to develop faith in God. He states:

> "Whosoever develops faith in God does so only through scriptures. Why? Because scriptures describe the characteristics of God as well as the characteristics of the *sant* (the Akṣarabrahman guru). So, only faith developed through scriptures remains steadfast. On the other hand, faith developed by one's own mind, without the help of scriptures, eventually dissolves… Only one who possesses faith in scriptures is able to develop unshakable faith in God, and only such a person attains liberation."[3]

Additionally, in "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 3.27" Swaminarayan identifies scripture as a foundational source of even worldly knowledge. He reveals:

> "Since childhood, one has conviction of one's own parents, caste, sub-caste, *āśrama*, gender, as well as the conviction that this is an animal, this is a man, this is water, this is fire, this is the earth, this is the wind, this is the sky, and so on. All of this is due to scriptures. Even if one has not listened to scriptures, one is convinced by principles prevalent within society, which are themselves derived from scriptures."[4]

According to Swaminarayan, all well-founded knowledge, wherever it exists, is rooted in sacred texts. As a result, scripture is understood as the foundation for both worldly and transcendental knowledge.

Swaminarayan's understanding of the significance of scripture is further revealed by his repeated mention of them within his teachings. In his discourses, he often corroborates important points by appealing to revelations found within accepted scriptures. Throughout the discourses compiled within the Vacanāmṛta, 98 distinct scriptural references are directly quoted a total of 110 times, including 45 verses or verse-portions from the *Bhāgavata-Purāṇa* and 33 verses from the *Bhagavad-Gītā*. Other scriptures directly referenced within the Vacanāmṛta include the Aitareya Upaniṣad, Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, Chāndogya Upaniṣad, Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, Subāla Upaniṣad, Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad, Taittirīya Upaniṣad, Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (Yajurveda), *Mahābhārata*, *Skanda-Purāṇa*, *Hiraṇyakeśīyaśākhāśruti*, *Carpaṭapañjarī,* and *Maṇiratnamālā*. Indirectly, Swaminarayan refers to more than fifty works of religious significance, including even remote texts, such as the *Sūryasiddhānta* and *Siddhāntaśiromaṇi*.

His regard for scripture is also further revealed by his insistence that his audience corroborate their responses to his theological questions by presenting references to scriptural testimony. For instance, when asking in "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 1.69," "What exactly is dharma?," he follows immediately by requesting the respondents to:

3. (*Vacanāmṛta* Sāraṅgapura 13, 200)
4. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 3.27, 597-598)

"Please base your reply on the scriptures."[5] Similarly, in "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 1.71" he requests: "Therefore, please base your answer on the principles of the (revealed within) scriptures."[6] In "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 1.78," when those present before him did not validate their response to one of his questions, Swaminarayan quickly responded, "From what principle in the scriptures do you claim that...? Please quote a reference from scripture."[7]

Swaminarayan's insistence to root reflection in scripture is based on his understanding of scriptural revelation as an authentic source for acquiring knowledge of Puruṣottama. He identifies Puruṣottama's sheer transcendence as the reason why other forms of knowledge fail. Since Puruṣottama is transcendental, there is no tangible reference point from which he can be described; he is simply incomparable to all things of the *māyic* world and cannot be perceived by *māyic* senses. Swaminarayan emphasizes these two points at considerable length in "Vacanāmṛta Pañcālā 4" where he begins:

> "The Vedas, *purāṇas*, *Mahābhārata*, *smṛtis,* and other scriptures proclaim that the original form of God... is not like any form that can be seen by the eyes. His sound is not like any sound that can be heard by the ears. His touch is not like any touch that can be felt by the skin. His smell is not like any smell that can be smelt by the nose. The tongue cannot perceive God. He cannot be conceived by the mind (*manas*) nor can he be contemplated by the *citta* (inner faculty that is responsible for reflection). He cannot be comprehended by the intellect (*buddhi*) nor can the *ahaṃkāra* (the inner faculty responsible for the sense of identity) fully claim, 'I am God's, and God is mine.' In this manner, God remains beyond the reach of the senses and inner faculties."
>
> "Moreover, the form of that God is such that it cannot be compared to any other object in this *brahmāṇḍa* (world or macrocosm)—including everything from Brahmā to the smallest blade of grass. His sound cannot be compared to any other sound in this *brahmāṇḍa*. The smell of God cannot be compared to any other smell in this *brahmāṇḍa*. The touch of God cannot be compared to any other touch in this *brahmāṇḍa*. The tastes related to God cannot be compared to any other taste in this *brahmāṇḍa*."[8]

Swaminarayan continues to explain the reason for this incommensurability when he states:

> "... all forms in this *brahmāṇḍa* that have evolved from Prakṛti-Puruṣa are *māyic*, whereas God is divine. Since the two are entirely different, how can they possibly be compared?"[9]

5. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 1.69, 135)
6. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 1.71, 142)
7. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 1.78, 162)
8. (*Vacanāmṛta* Pañcālā 4, 332)
9. (*Vacanāmṛta* Pañcālā 4, 332-333)

Thereafter, Swaminarayan concludes: "All scriptures claim: God is beyond the reach of the senses and the inner faculties."[10] Upaniṣadic statements extolling the imperceptibility and ineffability of the highest reality echo the same distinction. For example, the Upaniṣads reveal:

> "From where speech returns with the mind having not grasped it."[11]
>
> "It cannot be grasped by the eyes, nor even by speech, nor by other senses, nor by austerities or action."[12]
>
> "Not by speech, not by mind, nor by the eyes is it possible to reach him."[13]
>
> "There the eyes go not; the speech goes not; nor the mind."[14]

Elaborating on each of the three key tools of perception mentioned in this last verse—eyes, speech, and mind—Bhadreshdas offers a basic epistemological analysis of why perception, worldly testimony, and intellectual inference cannot serve as independent means to acquire sound knowledge of God. In summary, he explains:

- 'Eyes' is representative here of all cognitive senses, which are instrumental in directly cognizing tangible objects. For instance, the sense of sight allows the eyes to perceive physical form, the sense of hearing allows the ears to perceive sounds, and so forth—the sense of touch, taste, and smell allow the skin, tongue, and nose, respectively, to perceive the objects of the world. However, like the sense organs, the scope of the senses is firmly confined within the realm of the physical world, since the senses themselves are formed from *māyā*. They cannot possibly perceive anything that is beyond *māyā*, such as the form and virtues of the divine, transcendental, and limitless Parabrahman. Parabrahman is thus beyond the senses (*atīndriya*)—he remains imperceivable by worldly senses.
- 'Speech' represents the faculty of speech and the expressive capacity of words. While everyday patterns of speech or description may be able to elucidate the qualities of worldly objects and events, they cannot fully describe God, his form, or his qualities, since he is not of this world. Besides, Bhadreshdas adds, worldly testimony still relies on the senses of perception and the physical organs, whose limitations are identified above.
- 'Mind' refers to *the inner cognitive sense*, and here alludes to inference. Since inference also predicates upon direct perception, it too suffers from the same

10. (*Vacanāmṛta* Pañcālā 4, 333)
11. "yato vāco nivartantel aprāpya manasā sahal" (Taittirīyopaniṣat-Svāmināārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 2.4.1 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 370–71)
12. "na cakṣuṣā gṛhyate nāpi vācā nānyairdevaistapasā karmaṇā vāl" (Muṇḍakopaniṣat-Svāmināārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 3.1.8 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 288–89)
13. "naiva vācā na manasā prāptuṃ śakyo na cakṣuṣāl" (Kaṭhopaniṣat-Svāmināārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 6.12 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 164–65)
14. "na tatra cakṣurgacchati na vāg gacchati no manaḥl" (Kenopaniṣat-Svāmināārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 1.3 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 35–38)

limitations highlighted above.[15]

The *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* and the *Sudhā,* like Swaminarayan's teachings in the Vacanāmṛta, emphasize the inability of the worldly senses to realize Parabrahman. Unlike the sensory perception of worldly objects, the other-worldly nature of scripture affords it with increased precedence and authority.

The *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* and the *Sudhā* also express the significance of testimony over other means of knowledge. The commentary on the third aphorism of the *Brahmasūtras*, "śāstrayonitvāt," describes Parabrahman as "śāstraikagamya," that is, understandable by scripture (testimony or *śabda*) alone.[16] This is further elaborated upon at some length in the discussion on *śabda* in the "Pramāṇadhārā" of the *Sudhā*.[17] The *Sudhā* concludes the section titled "Akṣarapuruṣottamagocara-pramāyāṁ pratyakṣāditaḥ śabdasya prādhānyam" with the following compendious verse:

> *pratyakṣādipramāṇeṣu śabdastu pramukho bhavet*।
> *yasmādalaukikā'rtheṣu śabdā'nyaprasaro na hi*॥ 268॥
> "Of the various means of knowledge, which includes direct perception, verbal testimony is principal; apart from verbal testimony, no other means can reach (perceive) that which is beyond this world."[18]

The *Sudhā* describes testimony (*śabda*) as "paramapramāṇa," the principal epistemological means by which one can accurately know the nature of the transcendental, incommensurate, and otherwise imperceptible Parabrahman.[19] Since scripture serves as a type of testimony, both works—The *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* and the *Sudhā*, in accordance with Swaminarayan's teachings, accept the significance of scripture in theological revelation.

THE ROLE OF REASON IN SCRIPTURAL REVELATION: "HOWEVER, THEY CANNOT BE UNDERSTOOD EVEN FROM RIGHTEOUS TEXTS UPON EMPLOYING ONE'S INTELLECT "

The *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* and the *Sudhā*'s emphasis on testimony (*śabda-pramāṇa*) brings into focus a second noteworthy point of the above passage from "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13." Within this exposition, Swaminarayan states: "However, they (discourses regarding the nature of God) cannot be understood even from righteous texts (*sadgraṃthas*) upon employing one's intellect." Swaminarayan reveals the ineffectiveness of the intellect in understanding scriptural revelation. The emphasis he places on 'sadgraṃtha' serves to reinforce that even within righteous texts, which *prima facie* appear to be comprehensible, remain unintelligible when they are attempted to be understood using only one's intellect. Such works remain impenetrable even at

15. (Kenopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 1.3 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 36)
16. (*Brahmasūtra-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, v. 1.1.3, 22)
17. (*Svāmināràyaṇa-Siddhānta-Sudhā*, sec. 4.5, 166-189)
18. (*Svāmināràyaṇa-Siddhānta-Sudhā*, sec. 4.5.12, 181-183)
19. (Kaṭhopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 6.12 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 165)

grammatical, semantic, and exegetical levels, let alone at the level of fully realizing the content of their revelation.

Swaminarayan's revelation on the ineffectiveness of absolute reason is substantiated on a deeper, implicit discussion of its role in gnosis. In his extensive commentary on "Brahmasūtra 1.1.3," Bhadreshdas strongly defends the primacy of *śabda pramāṇa* (verbal testimony) and its irreducibility to inference. Among his discussions, he argues in some detail about the limits and defects of inference when employed independently of testimony to demonstrate the creatorship of Brahman. He firstly draws upon an inference used by the Nyāya Darśana to deduce such creatorship. The argument takes the form: "The world (comprising of sprouts and other objects) has an agent since it is an effect; as it is with a pot."[20] Bhadreshdas systematically dismantles each constituent of this argument and rejoins a series of counter-arguments before issuing the warning: an overzealous application of absolute inference or confidence in one's intellect can blind one from seeing the limitations and fallaciousness of argumentation, leaving one destitute of higher, more subtle truths.[21]

Elsewhere,[22] Bhadreshdas adds that adeptness in argumentation alone is inadequate simply because the divine, other-worldly, and sensorially imperceptible God can never become the subject of reason alone, just as the ears can never grasp the visual beauty of a rose and the eyes fail to apprehend the sweet song of a nightingale. Besides, he adds, all instances of inference are predicated on perception, which is founded on sensory perception, whose limitations or inadequacies have already been well established.

Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.8 substantiates that the highest theological knowledge is "atarkyam"— beyond argumentation—and thus not fully comprehensible by intellect alone. The very next verse begins: "Nor can this knowledge be grasped by argumentation…"[23] Within its commentary, Bhadreshdas further elaborates on the inefficacy of absolute reason, warning that when left to its own devices, it can be dangerous, since, after all, argumentation is a skill. A strong argument can always be thwarted by an even stronger one. As a result, there is no foreseeing which incisive piece of logic may be superseded by a yet more rational objector or countered by the same thinker at a different time or place. He asserts that such contestations and disputes are ultimately endless and indecisive, and as a result, are not the means to decide or

20. "kṣityaṅkurādikaṃ sakratṛkaṃ kāryatvāt, ghaṭavatl" (*Brahmasūtra-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, v. 1.1.3, 19-22, esp. p. 20.)

21. (*Brahmasūtra-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, v. 1.1.3, 19-22, esp. p. 20.)

22. (The following is based on *Brahmasūtra-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, v. 1.1.3, 17-24; *Brahmasūtra-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, v. 1.1.5, 29-31; *Brahmasūtra-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, v. 2.1.11, 164-166; Kaṭhopaniṣat-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 2.9 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 92–94; Kaṭhopaniṣat-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 6.12 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 164–65; Bhadreshdas, *Svāmināyaṇa-Siddhānta-Sudhā*, sec. 4.5.13, 183-186 with added personal reflection).

23. "naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā" (Kaṭhopaniṣat-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 2.9 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 92–94)

judge eternal truths (*siddhāntas*). Furthermore, reasoning is understood as a function of the intellect (*buddhi*), which the Kaṭha Upaniṣad later concedes is greatly inferior to the self (*jīvātman* and *īśvarātman*), Akṣarabrahman, and Puruṣottama.[24] It is thus a futile, if not a perilous and arrogant venture to attempt to grasp the knowledge of the supremely divine by that which is not only influenced by but also born from *māyā*.

In conclusion, Bhadreshdas rhetorically asks: By what reliable means of knowledge, other than perception and inference, can one know that which is not fully perceptible to the human senses and graspable by the human intellect? He answers that the only means for acquiring an appropriate understanding of God are revelations that are either spoken or inspired by the divine. These words are none other than verbal testimony referred to as *śabda pramāṇa*.

Amid this discussion, it is essential to note, however, that the use of intellect or reason is not entirely rejected. Rather, Swaminarayan's dismissal of reason is to be understood as the rejection of intellect *alone* as the means for gleaning theological truths from scripture. While the above discussions expressed the epistemic limitations of argumentation, they do not imply that reasoning ought to be entirely abandoned. Bhadreshdas' commentary on Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.9 reveals a crucial distinction between two types of reasoning: *sattarka* (correct reasoning) and *dustarka* (incorrect reasoning).[25] The former is informed by and undergirded by *śraddhā*, which he describes elsewhere as "utmost faith in the Brahmasvarūpa guru and his revealed *siddhānta* (doctrine) from the *śāstras*."[26] As such, *sattarka*—reasoning that functions to establish or affirm teachings revealed by the guru—strengthens one's resolve, and as a result, is advanced. Conversely, *dustarka*—reasoning that is uncommitted to the guru and his revealed *siddhānta*—is discouraged.

THE ROLE OF THE AKṢARABRAHMAN GURU IN SCRIPTURAL REVELATION: "IT IS ONLY WHEN THE SATPURUṢA MANIFESTS ON THIS EARTH..."

Despite the significance of scripture in theological revelation, the use of 'paṇa' ('even') in all three sentences of the passage from "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13:" viz. "...*even* from the scriptures," "*even* though these details may be described within the scriptures...," and "...*even* from righteous texts;" circumvents the scriptures as an outright independent source for the realization of spiritual truths. This leads us to the third and climactic part of the passage from "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13:"

> "Even though these details may be described within the scriptures, it is only when the *satpuruṣa* manifests on this earth, and one hears them narrated by him, that one understands them."

24. (Kaṭhopaniṣat-Svāmināryaṇa-Bhāṣyam 3.10-11 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināryaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 128–32)
25. (Kaṭhopaniṣat-Svāmināryaṇa-Bhāṣyam 2.9 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināryaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 93)
26. "śraddhā nāma brahmasvarūpagurutadupadiṣṭaśāstrasiddhānteṣu paramo viśvāsaḥ|" (*Brahmasūtra-Svāmināryaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, v. 12.1.11, 166)

Within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, the *satpuruṣa* is identified as the Akṣarabrahman guru—the guru, who is the form of Akṣarabrahman on earth and through whom Parabrahman continues to remain present. The significance of this position can hardly be overstated. As we explore it further, we shall attempt also to understand its theological underpinnings.

The key to understanding Swaminarayan's emphasis on the Akṣarabrahman guru as essential for revealing God through scripture lies in the ontology of his *darśanic* system. The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana advocates the existence of five distinct eternal realities: *jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā*, Akṣara (also known as Akṣarabrahman and Brahman), and Puruṣottama (also known as Parabrahman).[27] Of these five, only Akṣara and Puruṣottama are understood as being eternally uninfluenced by *māyā*. The *darśana* also asserts that upon Parabrahman Swaminarayan's departure from this world, Puruṣottama, according to his own will, continued to remain present on earth through Akṣara. Therefore, through the Akṣarabrahman guru, Puruṣottama continues to offer revelation and bestow the bliss of his divine presence. Swaminarayan reveals this position in numerous passages within the Vacanāmṛta where he describes Puruṣottama's continuous manifestation through the Akṣarabrahman guru, making it possible to personally encounter Puruṣottama through the *sant* (the Akṣarabrahman guru). For example, Swaminarayan states:

> "Since it is God who sees through his [the *sant's*] eyes... since it is God who walks through his legs... since it is God who resides in all of the senses and limbs of such a *sant*..."[28]
>
> "When one has the *darśana* of such a *sant*, one should realize, 'I have had the *darśana* of God himself.'"[29]

Swaminarayan's striking revelation affirms that even while the Akṣarabrahman guru remains forever ontologically distinct from and subordinate to Puruṣottama, he possesses a direct and absolute relationship with Puruṣottama. This closeness uniquely affords the Akṣarabrahman guru with a realization of the true nature and form of Puruṣottama, thus imparting him with the unparalleled ability to reveal Puruṣottama to others.

Swaminarayan thus instructs that one should develop faith in Puruṣottama—"the conviction (*niścaya* or *niṣṭhā*) of God," as he often terms it—only through the Akṣarabrahman guru. He bases his very definition of resolute faith on one's faith in the guru. After asking, "What is the conviction of God?" Swaminarayan continues to explain in "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 3.27:"

> "The *sant*... has a direct association with God. Therefore, one should develop

27. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 1.7, 8) (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 3.10, 559)
28. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 1.27, 46)
29. (*Vacanāmṛta* Sāraṅgapura 10, 195)

> conviction in God based on his words. In fact, to have firm faith in the words of the *sant* is itself having conviction in God."[30]

Notably, Swaminarayan omits the causal connection between the guru's words and conviction in God but expresses the relationship between them in stronger terms: faith in the guru *is* equivalent to having conviction in God.

It comes as no surprise that the Upaniṣads—treatises richly steeped in the ancient Vedic tradition of guru-disciple learning—also emphasize the need of the guru to acquire true theological knowledge. For instance, they reveal:

> "Only knowledge (*brahmavidyā*) learned from the guru (the Akṣarabrahman guru) leads to attaining the most excellent."[31]
>
> "Arise! Awake! Realize *brahmavidyā* upon attaining the excellent [guru (the Akṣarabrahman guru)]."[32]

Some of these calls to imperatively seek the guru for revelatory knowledge also include vital descriptions of the essential metaphysical credentials of such a bona fide spiritual teacher. They also explain the intentions behind Swaminarayan's revelation of the Akṣarabrahman guru as the exclusive authoritative exegete of scriptural truths.

The *Svāmināràyaṇabhāṣya's* reading of the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad holds a particularly important revelation related to acquiring scriptural knowledge. It reveals:

> "To realize that [*brahmavidyā*], imperatively go, with sacrificial wood in hand, to only that guru who is the knower of the true meaning of sacred texts, who is Brahman (Akṣarabrahman), and who is firmly established [in Parabrahman]."[33]

The guru is identified as "the very form of Brahman" (*sākṣādakṣaraṃ brahma*). He is further described as being *niṣṭha*, which reveals that he is "entirely and eternally established (*nitāntam nityam tiṣṭhati*) in Parabrahman," and *śrotriya*, which implies that he is not only well-versed in the true meaning of sacred texts but also has a direct and complete realization (*sākṣātkāra*) of them. Swaminarayan categorically affirms in "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 1.66:" "The words of the scriptures cannot be understood by anyone except an *ekāntika bhakta* (the Akṣarabrahman guru)."[34,35] The Akṣarabrahman guru not only possesses knowledge of scripture, but he also effortlessly applies the principles revealed within sacred texts in his life, allowing him to adeptly convey knowledge by his own exemplary life (*ācāra*) and teachings (*upadeśa*).

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30. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 3.27, 598)
31. "ācāryāddhaiva vidyā viditā sādhiṣṭhaṃ prāpaditi" (*Chāndogyopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, v. 4.9.3, 177-178)
32. "uttiṣṭhata jāgrata pāpya varān nibodhata" (Kaṭhopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 3.14 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 134–35)
33. "tadvijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevābhigacchetsamitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahma niṣṭhamll " (Muṇḍakopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 1.2.12 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 253–56)
34. As aforementioned, Svāmināràyaṇa refers to the Akṣarabrahman guru by various titles in the Vacanāmṛta, including 'satpuruṣa,' 'sant' and 'ekāntika bhakta,' among others.
35. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 1.66, 129)

The commentary also emphasizes the restriction imposed by the aphorism (*mantra*) by accentuating the significance of 'eva' ('only') expressed in the instruction. The commentary explains that the verse highlights that it is necessary to seek refuge of such a guru in order to gain *brahmavidyā*—there are absolutely no alternate means to acquire the highest theological knowledge. It also adds that one should seek the refuge of *only* such a guru. That is, one should not surrender to any other person who may bear some semblance to a guru by possessing ochre robes, erudition, oratory skills, institutional power, or a large following, but differ in terms of being Akṣarabrahman or having absolute realization of the revealed texts.[36] In other words, one should approach only the Akṣarabrahman guru to realize *brahmavidyā*. Since *brahmavidyā* serves as the primary subject of sacred texts, only the Akṣarabrahman guru is worthy of revealing the true content of scripture.

The *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya's* reading of the Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.8 presents a similar clarification. It reads,

> "It (liberating knowledge) is difficult to grasp when taught by the inferior, even though one may be highly contemplative. Yet there is no way to acquire it without being taught by the non-inferior (the superior teacher—the Akṣarabrahman guru), [for] it (this knowledge) is subtler than particles [and] beyond the realm of reason. Nor can this knowledge be grasped by argumentation. Yet, Dearest [Naciketas], it is well known when taught by the other (the Akṣarabrahman guru)."[37]

Within his commentary, Bhadreshdas again draws a particularly sharp contrast between the essential bona fide guru, who must be Akṣarabrahman, and the "inferior" (*avara*) teachers of *brahmavidyā*. Those who fall under this latter category, he explains, worship merely the words of scriptures rather than realize their meaning or apply their revelations within their lives. They are interested in mere debates about the Vedas, but not in understanding their true essence, and they determine meanings of words independently, without guidance from the teachings of the Akṣarabrahman guru. They have not sought refuge under a guru, are unbelievers, and have imperfect knowledge. Their intellect on the spiritual path has been afflicted by unbridled reason, they are of weak faith, and identify with the body rather than the self (*ātman*). They do not realize the Akṣara-Puruṣottama-siddhānta.[38] Bhadreshdas assembles many of these thoughts in a section of the *Sudhā* aptly titled "Śāstraśabdā'rthanirṇaye gurorāvaśyakatā."[39]

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36. (Muṇḍakopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 1.2.12 in Bhadreshdas, *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 253–56)
37. "na nareṇāvareṇa prokta eṣa suvijñeyo bahudhā cintyamānaḥ| ananyaprokte gatiratra nāstyaṇīyān hyatarkyamaṇupramāṇāt|| naiṣā tarkeṇa matirāpaneyā proktāऽnyenaiva sujñānāya preṣṭhaः" (Kaṭhopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 2.8-9 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 91-2)
38. (Kaṭhopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 2.8 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 91)
39. (*Svāmināràyaṇa-Siddhānta-Sudhā*, sec. 4.5.14, 186-188)

The need to seek tutelage under the Akṣarabrahman guru becomes all the more vital when one appreciates the numerous and vastly diverse possible interpretations of scriptural revelation and the resulting increased possibility of their misreading. The primacy of verbal testimony, which includes scriptural revelation, above all other sources of theological knowledge, further substantiates not only the need to accurately decipher sacred texts, but also, in turn, the need of such a guru. Others, even erudite scholars, who have not directly experienced God, may be prone to misinterpret or incompletely understand scriptural teachings, and therefore, would not be able to fully and accurately convey teachings contained therein.

This does not, however, suggest that experts investigating first order and second order texts cannot be innovative and creative in their research. A brief survey of the abundant collection of *darśanic* texts and their commentarial and sub-commentarial literature serves to demonstrate quite the opposite. Darśanic instructions revealed by the guru function as a guide to direct and focus contemplative endeavors and result in informed, in-depth, and productive investigations.

Within his teachings, Swaminarayan also expresses that scriptural study is not a barren, mere academic activity. When Gopālānanda Svāmī asks in "Vacanāmṛta Varatāla 11,"

> "Why do the pundits of the world, despite reading the *śāstras*, *purāṇas*, and other scriptures, fail to understand the true greatness of God and the *sant*?"

Swaminarayan explains that the fault lies in their lack of refuge under God. As a result of this deficiency, pundits, as learned as they may be, are "overpowered" by their own "inner enemies"—"lust, anger, avarice, jealousy, and other vices"—and as a result, are led out of vanity to misunderstand God and the guru. Swaminarayan continues: "So, even though they read the *śāstras* and *purāṇas*, they fail to truly realize the greatness of God and his *sant*."[40] To capitalize its benefits, scriptural study requisites a firm grounding in faith.

In addition to advocating the significance of the Akṣarabrahman guru, Swaminarayan also cautions by revealing whom not to approach when attempting to understand scriptural revelation. Within "Vacanāmṛta Loyā 11" Swaminarayan concisely states: "One should only listen[41] to sacred scriptures from the *satpuruṣa* but never from an unholy person."[42] In "Vacanāmṛta Varatāla 12," he further warns against listening to scriptures from those who lack faith. He identifies someone who "does

40. (*Vacanāmṛta* Varatāla 11, 511–12)

41. It is important to clarify that a broader meaning of the term 'listen' should be understood here. It is, of course, highly desirable to directly hear the guru's discourses and elaborations on scripture. However, if the opportunity does not exist, one should ensure while reading personally or listening to discourse from others that the exegetical import is derived from teachings of the guru. The validity of interpretations is invariably dependent upon the interpretation's basis in the teachings of the Akṣarabrahman guru.

42. (*Vacanāmṛta* Loyā 11, 280)

not possess such firm faith coupled with the knowledge of God's greatness" with one who is "impotent"—one from whom no fruits will result. Swaminarayan explains:

> "Similarly, no one attains liberation by hearing even sacred scriptures, such as the *Gītā* and the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*, from one who does not possess faith in God coupled with the knowledge of his greatness."

Swaminarayan then goes further to warn that receiving sacred texts from faithless readers is not only fruitless but also adverse to one's own faith. He states,

> "Just as death is assured to whoever drinks sweetened milk into which a snake's venom has fallen; similarly, no one can ever attain liberation by listening to the *Gītā* or the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata* from a person who does not possess faith in God coupled with the knowledge of his greatness. On the contrary, it can be detrimental."[43]

Thus, according to Swaminarayan's teachings in the Vacanāmṛta, all scriptures are only correctly interpreted and understood when read under the faithful tutelage of the Akṣarabrahman guru.

For a deeper understanding of the relationship between scripture and the guru, it is worth exploring the concluding discussion on verbal testimony (*śabda*) in the *Sudhā*'s "Pramāṇa-dhārā." Titled "Śāstrādakṣarabrahmagurorbalīyastvam,"[44] this section argues that the Akṣarabrahman guru is *more* "powerful" (authoritative) than scripture alone. Bhadreshdas cites the *purāṇic* narrative of Nārada[45] and Bādarāyaṇa[46]—the former, a venerable master of scripture and proficient in numerous disciplines; the latter, a prolific author of scripture. Advocating the need for the manifest *guruhari*, he explains that both Nārada and Bādarāyaṇa experienced despair and disheartenment, despite their proficiency in scriptural study.

Bhadreshdas also cites from Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.9 where Swaminarayan describes Yudhiṣṭhira, unlike Arjuna, as never being able to fully dispel his doubts, despite having faith in scriptures. The crucial difference between the two, Bhadreshdas stresses, is that Arjuna possessed conviction in a living guru. He explains that the mere study of scripture cannot eradicate the influence of *māyā* on the self (*ātman*) nor can it result in the realization of Akṣara and Puruṣottama and the feeling of fulfillment that follows.

Swaminarayan summarizes in "Vacanāmṛta Varatāla 11:"

> "Intense love for the *satpuruṣa* is the only means to self (*ātman*)-realization, it is also the only means for realizing the greatness of the *satpuruṣa*, and the only means for attaining direct realization of God."[47]

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43. (*Vacanāmṛta* Varatāla, 12 514–15)
44. (Svāminārāyaṇa-Siddhānta-Sudhā *Svāminārāyaṇa-Siddhānta-Sudhā*, v. 4.5.15 pp. 188-189)
45. (*Chāndogyopaniṣat-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, vv. 7.1.2-3, 298-300)
46. (*Bhāgavata-Purāṇam* 1.4.26-27 and 1.4.30.) (*Vyāsa* 21)
47. (*Vacanāmṛta* Varatāla 11, 512)

Swaminarayan advocates that only profound, loving association with the living Akṣarabrahman guru results in the realization of the self (*ātmajñāna*), conviction in the glory of the *satpuruṣa*, and God-realization—the realization of the knowledge of God revealed within scripture.

According to the commentary's exposition of the term 'śrotriya' found within Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12, the bona fide guru not only possesses a complete understanding of the meaning and intention of scriptural revelation and is adept at conveying them to others, but also practices its teachings in their own life. Swaminarayan explains in "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 1.67" that the seeker is able to imbibe the very virtues of the guru in their own life by reflecting upon the virtues of the guru. Swaminarayan asserts in "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.31" that the very means of transcending *māyā* and acquiring the virtues of Brahman is to associate with the Akṣarabrahman guru. He explains,

> "The *jīva*, however, has associated with the body, the senses, and the sense-objects. As a result of this improper association, the *jīva* has become one with the body, senses, etc. After forsaking their association, the *jīva* realizes, 'My self is Brahman, which transcends and is free from *māyā*.' If one associates with Brahman through continuous contemplation in this manner, the *jīva* acquires the virtues of Brahman..."[48]
>
> "The *jīva* is itself bound (attached) [to *māyā*] and incapable... That attachment is severed only when one continuously associates with Brahman—the inspirer (*prakāśaka*)—through contemplation as previously described."[49]

The guru is not merely a teacher or exegete of scriptural wisdom, but the living embodiment of it. Swaminarayan explains that through continuous association with the Akṣarabrahman guru, one may also become free from *māyā* and acquire the virtues of Brahman (Akṣarabrahman).

Bhadreshdas adds that the guru is of paramount importance for not just understanding scripture, but applying its principles into practice and deterring disciples from wrongdoing. He summarizes in verse:

> *"śāstraśabdo'pi no sevyo gurorāśrayaṇaṁ vinā।*
> *gurumukhācchrutaṁ śāstraṁ sadarthānstu prakāśayet॥* 271॥
>
> "The words of scripture should not be studied without the association of the guru."
>
> "When heard from the mouth of the guru, the true meanings of scripture are illuminated."
>
> *guruharibalaṁ śreṣṭhaṁ śāstravacobalādapi।*
> *śāstrāttu kevalāt kvāpi na jñānaṁ niścayaḥ sukham॥* 272॥
>
> "The power of the *guruhari* is the greatest; [it is greater] even than the power

48. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 2.31, 422)
49. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 2.31, 423)

of the words of scripture."

"Never by scripture alone can one attain knowledge, conviction [in God] or bliss."

ataḥ śāstraṁ balīyo na śākṣād brahmā'kṣarād guroḥ।
nā"satyād vārayecchāstraṁ gurustu vārayet tataḥ॥ 273॥

"Thus scripture is not more powerful than the manifest Akṣarabrahman guru. Scripture will not deter one from wrongdoing, whereas the guru does."[50]

Towards the end of these verses, Bhadreshdas adds that the Akṣarabrahman guru, unlike scripture, will deter one from wrongdoing. The sentiments of this position lie in the unique ability to develop a close relationship with the manifest Akṣarabrahman guru. Not only does the guru personally counsel against wrongdoing, but one's intimate relationship with the guru also discourages one from wrongdoing.

At the conclusion of the *Sudhā*, Bhadreshdas validates the role of developing association with the Akṣarabrahman guru, and in turn, the significance of such a guru by affirming that many devotees within the tradition have realized scriptural truths through such association. After a number of prayer-filled verses, he writes that through the association of the Akṣarabrahman guru, the doctrines expounded at length within scripture are lived and their fruits are experienced by devotees within the *darśana*. He stresses, there are many who have been and are perfectly fulfilled by their absolute conviction in Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. Despite being unburdened by the study of scripture, they possess direct association of the guru, and as a result, have attained the realization and fulfillment described within sacred texts. He explains that this association exceeds the study of innumerable superior texts. Indeed, nothing is greater than the blessed association of the Akṣarabrahman guru.

"śabdeṣu sādhitaṁ yaddhi saprapañcaṁ nirupitaṁ।
naike tadagha jīvanti gurusatsaṅgavaibhavāt ॥
santuṣṭā dṛdhaniṣṭhāto hyakṣarapuruṣottame।
satsaṅge bahavo dṛṣṭāḥ śāstrakleśavivarjitāḥ ॥
satsaṅgānnādhikaṁ kiñcid guruprasaṅgalakṣaṇāt।
etādṛggranthakotibhyaḥ satsaṅga uttamastataḥ ॥"[51]

CONCLUSION

Within the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition, the reverence expressed for the Vacanāmṛta and its significance as one of the most authentic sources of revelation is established on the understanding that it contains the direct teachings or revelations of Swaminarayan, the self-manifestation of Puruṣottama. For the Svāminārāyaṇa fellowship, this means that the Vacanāmṛta is, quite literally, *God talking about God*.[52]

50. (*Svāminārāyaṇa-Siddhānta-Sudhā*, sec. 4.5.15, 188-189)
51. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 2.13, 384)
52. (*Svāminārāyaṇa-Siddhānta-Sudhā*, sec. 4.5.5, 172-173)

Although the Vacanāmṛta contains the documented teachings of Swaminarayan, the inescapable fact remains that these teachings still come to us in the form of words, which can be potentially misread or misunderstood. The importance of arriving at their faithful or intended meaning becomes immensely important within the tradition, since they are understood as the spoken words of Puruṣottama.

Reading and interpreting the Vacanāmṛta as an authentic and authoritative source of theological knowledge is an endeavor that adheres to certain hermeneutic guidelines. Among them, the most important guideline, which is repeatedly emphasized by Swaminarayan in the Vacanāmṛta itself, is to "read" (understand) or "listen" to scripture from the Akṣarabrahman guru—according to the teachings of such a guru.

In exploring Swaminarayan's declaration from "Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 2.13":

> "However, such discourses regarding the nature of God cannot be understood by oneself even from the scriptures. Even though these details may be described within the scriptures, it is only when the *satpuruṣa* manifests on this earth, and one hears them narrated by him, that one understands them. However, they cannot be understood even from righteous texts upon employing one's intellect."[53]

—this work first highlighted the *darśana's* understanding of the significance of scriptural testimony and the primacy of verbal testimony (*śabda-pramāṇa*) above other means of knowledge.

It thereafter discussed the hermeneutic role of reason in interpreting scripture. Swaminarayan and the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana advocate that although reason alone is inadequate for realizing the nature and form of God, when it is grounded in or informed by faith, which serves to both guide and focus investigations, reasoning may be used to present insightful reflection on scriptural revelation. As a result, ratiocination is rendered fruitful, only when it is informed by faith. Although reason alone is blind, it is able to reliably explore the wider contours of theological investigation when it holds the hand of faith. Vitally, 'faith' here refers to possessing conviction in the Akṣarabrahman guru and his teachings.

This work continued by analyzing the role of the Akṣarabrahman guru in receiving scripture. Swaminarayan asserts that scriptural revelation can be fully comprehended only when it is received through the living Akṣarabrahman guru. He is the most qualified to convey scripture since only he is Brahman (Akṣarabrahman), is fully established in Parabrahman ("niṣṭham"), and possesses the most direct and absolute realization of scriptural truths ("śrotriyam").[54] The gurus of the tradition are understood as not only the knowers of truth ("jñāninaḥ") but also the direct

53. (*Vacanāmṛta* Gaḍhaḍā 2.13, 384)

54. (Muṇḍakopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam 1.2.12 in *Īśādyaṣṭopaniṣat-Svāmināràyaṇa-Bhāṣyam* 253–56)

seers ("tattvadarśinaḥ")[55] and those whose lives exemplify the teachings found within scripture. Swaminarayan reveals that associating with such a guru at the highest level—as one would with God—effortlessly reveals scriptural wisdom. The Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad famously declares:

> "All meanings declared [within sacred texts] shine forth (become evident) for the great *ātman* who offers the highest devotion to the guru, as he does to God."[56]

Thus, according to Swaminarayan's Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, the Vacanāmṛta and all other scriptures are only correctly interpreted and understood when they are read under the faithful tutelage of the Akṣarabrahman guru. Within the *darśana*, conviction in the living guru and his words are not only the essential hermeneutical tools for understanding sacred scripture but also the sole means to imbibing scriptural teachings into one's life.

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55. (*Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, v. 4.34, 110)

56. "yasya deve parā bhaktiryathā deve tathā guraul tasyaite kathitā hyarthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥll" (Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad 6.23, cited in *Svāminārāyaṇa-Siddhānta-Sudhā*, sec .4.5.14, 186-188)