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स्वामिनारायणसिद्धान्तसुधापरिशीलनम्

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स्वामिनारायणसिद्धान्तसुधापरिशीलनम्*

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विदुषा भद्रेशदासमहोदयेन महदुपायनं प्रदत्तं स्वामिनारायणसम्प्रदायस्य। जलबिन्दुः तप्तपाषाणे पतितः अदृश्यतामेति। शुक्तौ पतितः मुक्ताफलतामेति। तथा आचार्यप्रदत्तविद्यायाः फलमिदं ग्रन्थमुक्ताफलम्। नूनं स्वामिनारायणसम्प्रदायस्थाः भक्ताः अधमर्णा भवेयुः श्रीमतो भद्रेशदासस्य। आत्मानं च धन्यं मन्ये। मदधिगतन्यायविद्यः अयं साधुः साधुवादमर्हति।

ग्रन्थोऽयं स्वामिनारायणसम्प्रदायसम्बद्धान् सर्वान् तात्विकविषयान् सप्रमाणं, सविमर्शं निरूपयति। अनेन स्वामिनारायणसम्प्रदायः न केवलं मुग्धभक्तिसम्प्रदायः, अपितु द्वैताद्वैतादिदर्शनवत् वैदिकं दार्शनिकं स्थानमर्हति इति सुष्ठु साधितम्। संस्कृतभाषामवलम्ब्य औपनिषदाः विषयाः सविमर्शं निरूपिता इति नूनं मूलग्रन्थस्थाने इदम् अभिषेक्तुमर्हति।

अयं ग्रन्थः नवप्रकरणेषु विभक्तः। एकैकं च प्रकरणं नैकैः विषयैः विभक्तम्। प्राथमिक्यां "मङ्गलधारायाम्" मङ्गलाचरणपुरस्सरं सिद्धान्तसंक्षेपः उपस्थापितः।

२. द्वितीये च प्रकरणे अक्षरब्रह्मधाराख्ये अक्षरं ब्रह्म स्वरूपनिर्णयपुरस्सरं निरूपितम्। स्वोक्ते अर्थे उपनिषत्, भगवद्गीता, वचनामृतं च प्रमाणीकृतम्। अनेन स्वोक्तार्थः औपनिषदः, सम्प्रदायानुमतश्च इति दृढीकृतं भवति।

वैदिकेषु सम्प्रदायेषु लक्ष्मी-नारायणौ वा पार्वती-परमेश्वरौ वा दम्पती परमाराध्यतया अभ्युपेयेते। परन्तु, अत्र सम्प्रदाये लक्ष्म्यादिस्त्रीदेवतास्थाने अक्षरं ब्रह्म अभिषिच्यते। द्वावेतौ नित्यमुक्तौ। जगत्सृष्ट्यादिः अस्यैव अक्षरब्रह्मणः व्यापारः- "अक्षरात् सम्भवतीह विश्वम्" इति आथर्वणश्रुतिः अत्र प्रमाणम्। तदेवाक्षरं ब्रह्मधामरूपेण पुरुषोत्तमं सदा धारयति।

यदक्षरं वेदविदो वदन्ति विशन्ति यद्यतयो वीतरागाः।
यदिच्छन्तो ब्रह्मचर्यं चरन्ति तत्ते पदं सङ्ग्रहेण प्रवक्ष्ये॥
इति गीतायां श्रूयमाणम् 'अपरं ब्रह्म' इदमेव अक्षरं ब्रह्म।

* An English translation of this review is provided immediately following its original Sanskrit text.

"तत्ते पदं सङ्ग्रहेण प्रवक्ष्ये" इति काठकवाक्येऽपि श्रूयमाणं पदम् इदमेव।

मुक्तानामपि प्राप्यमिदम् अक्षरं धाम प्रलये न नश्यति, सर्गे नोपजायते। तदेतदक्षरं प्रतिजीवं दहराकाशरूपेण हृदि विराजते, यत् परः पुरुषः अधिशेते।

"दहरोऽस्मिन्नन्तराकाशः। तस्मिन् यदन्तः तदुपासितव्यम्" इति दहरश्रुतिः इममर्थं प्रतिपादयति। न केवलं हृदि, किन्तु चिदाकाशरूपेण इदं सर्वत्र व्याप्तम्। तदेवमस्य चतूरूपेण संस्थितिः -

१. व्याप्तचिदाकाशरूपम्

२. मुक्तानां पुरुषोत्तमस्य च धामरूपम्

३. तस्मिन्नेव अक्षरधाम्नि ब्रह्म दासभावेन साकारविग्रहरूपम्

४. सम्प्रदायप्रधानगुरुरूपम्। (ब्रह्मरूपशास्त्रिजीमहाराजः, योगिमहाराजः...)

अयमस्य सम्प्रदायस्य अनितरसाधारणो विशेषः - प्रधानः साधुः गुरुस्थानेऽभिषिच्यमानः सर्वोऽपि भक्तकल्याणार्थम् अवतीर्णः स्वयम् अक्षरं ब्रह्म। ग्रन्थकारः विषयेऽस्मिन् साभिमानं स्वसम्प्रदायं प्रशंसति-

"न चैवं दृश्यते क्वापीति धन्या वयम्"

"ऋतं पिबन्तौ सुकृतस्य लोके"

इति काठकमन्त्रे ऋतपानकर्तृत्वेन श्रुतः एकः जीवः, अपरं च अक्षरं ब्रह्म। तथा च नात्र छत्रिन्यायेन योजना, किन्तु मुख्यवृत्त्यैव। परन्तु अक्षरब्रह्मणः ऋतपानकर्तृत्वं ब्रह्मानन्दभोक्तृत्वमिति विशेषः। जीववत् प्राकृतफलभोक्तृत्वाभावेन च तस्यैव श्रुत्युक्तम् "अनश्नन्नन्यः" इति विशेषणमपि सुष्ठु सङ्गच्छते।

एवं च एतौ द्वावेव नित्यमुक्तौ, सर्वेऽन्ये कदाचिब्दद्धा एव। "सदा पश्यन्ति सूरयः" इति प्रमाणमनुसृत्य रामानुजसिद्धान्त इव नैतन्मते नित्यसूरिशब्दवाच्याः नित्यमुक्ता अभ्युपगता इति विशेषः।

३. तृतीयप्रकरणम् - परं ब्रह्म नारायणाख्यं निरूपयति। स्वामिपदवाच्येन अक्षरब्रह्मणा सहैव तिष्ठति इति कारणेन इदमेव (परं) ब्रह्म स्वामिनारायणपदाभिधेयम्। "अक्षरात् परतः परः," "पुरुषान्न परं किञ्चित् सा काष्ठा सा परा गतिः" इति प्रमाणैः सर्वोत्कृष्टत्वेन प्रमितम्, अत एव च पुरुषोत्तमपदवाच्यम्। तदुक्तं गीतायाम् -

"अक्षरादपि चोत्तमः। अतोऽस्मि लोके वेदे च प्रथितः पुरुषोत्तमः।" इति।

सगुणब्रह्मवादः - "साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च" इति श्रुतिः निर्गुणं ब्रह्म श्रावयति। अथापि सगुणब्रह्मवाद एव श्रुतिसम्मतः। प्राकृतगुणरहितत्वाद् अणोरणीयत्वात् सगुणमेव ब्रह्म निर्गुणमभि-धीयते। दिव्यगुणवत्त्वात् महतो महीयत्वाच्च ब्रह्म सगुणम्। एवमत्र सगुणनिर्गुणवाक्ययोः समन्वयः साधितः। अत एव निर्गुणब्रह्मपरात् मायावादात् विशिष्यतेऽयं पन्थाः।

साकारवादः - यद्यपि नारायणाख्यं ब्रह्म "अशरीरं शरीरेषु," "स शृणोत्यकर्णः" इत्यादिश्रुतिवाक्येषु निराकारं श्रूयते। सेयं श्रुतिः अस्मदादिसदृशं मायाशरीरं निराचष्टे। अत एव "य एष अन्तरादित्ये हिरण्मयः पुरुषः" इति तस्यैव अप्राकृतं रूपं छान्दोग्ये श्रूयते।

"यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि।"

इति ईशोपनिषदि च भक्तः भगवतः कल्याणतमं रूपं दिदृक्षते।

यद्यपि भगवतः आकृतिः मनोवाचामगोचरा। "तदव्यक्तमाह हि" इति सूत्रकारोऽपि तद् ब्रह्म अव्यक्तैकस्वभावमाह। अथापि भक्तानुकम्पया स्वाचिन्त्यशक्त्या तद् दृग्गोचरं भवति। तस्यैतस्य दर्शने अक्षरं ब्रह्म यद् ब्रह्मधाम तद् उपदेशादिना हाय्यमाचरति। तदुक्तम् अत्र कारिकायाम्-

"दिव्यैर्गुणैर्विशिष्टोऽयं मायागुणविवर्जितः।

अन्तर्यामी सर्वकर्त्रा गुणातीतो नियामकः।

स एव प्रकटो नित्यं प्रत्यक्षे ब्रह्मणि गुरौ ॥" (पु. ९८)

सोऽयं नारायणः प्रतिमासु अल्पमैश्वर्यं प्रकटयति। तथा मत्स्यादि-अवतारेषु अनुप्रविश्यापि

स्वविभवमाविष्करोति। अथापि अक्षरब्रह्मरूपे गुरौ सर्वतोऽधिकमैश्वर्यं प्रकटयति। अशन-वसन-सम्भाषणादिना विशिष्टसेवां स्वीकृत्य तत्र भक्तान् विशेषतोऽनुगृह्णाति।

अस्य अन्वयित्वं व्यतिरेकित्वं चेति विशिष्टं विभवद्वयमस्मिन् प्रकरणे समर्थितम्। अन्वयित्वम् अन्तर्यामित्वम्, व्यतिरेकित्वम् - अक्षरब्रह्मधाम्नि प्रकटरूपवत्त्वम्, स्वामिनारायणरूपेण अवतारश्च। तदेवं साकार-सगुणब्रह्मवादोऽयं मायावादादिभ्यो विशिष्यते।

४. चतुर्थप्रकरणे - प्रमाणस्वरूपं विचारितम्। प्रमाणानां सङ्ख्यामितौ नात्र नैर्भर्यं प्रकटितम्। ब्रह्मस्वरूपनिर्णये चेदुपयुज्यते अर्थापत्त्यादीनामपि प्रमाणत्वमङ्गीक्रियते इत्यौदार्यं प्रदर्शितम्। प्रायः तार्किकरीत्यैव व्याप्तिस्वरूपं, हेत्वाभासाश्च निरूपिताः। ख्यातिवादविमर्शावसरे चिदचित्ख्यातिः या स्वमते समर्थिता (पु. १९४) सा पुनः पर्यालोचनीया। एवमुपमानविषयेऽपि।

प्रत्यक्षे 'इन्द्रियवृत्तिः' इति पदप्रयोगेन सांख्यसिद्धान्तोऽनुसृत इति भाति। ज्ञानमात्मगुण इति नैयायिकराद्धान्तः स्वीकृतः। अलौकिकेऽर्थे शब्दस्यैव प्रधानं प्रामाण्यम्, अनुमा कामचारिणीति सिद्धान्तः सुष्ठु समर्थितः।

५. पञ्चमं मायाप्रकरणम्। मायाशब्दोऽयं मायावादं स्मारयत्यपि नात्र मायाशब्दः अघटित-घटनापटीयसीम् अद्वैतदर्शनाभिमताम् अविद्यामभिधत्ते। अपितु त्रिगुणात्मिका प्रकृतिरनेन शब्देनाभिधीयते। सेयं भावरूपाविद्येत्यपि गीयते, परन्तु नानिर्वचनीया, अपि पुनः पारमार्थिकी। यस्याः गुणसाम्ये प्रलयः, गुणवैषम्ये सृष्टिः। सेयं माया अनन्तकोटिब्रह्माण्डोपादानभूता। वासना, प्रकृतिः, परशक्तिः, अन्धकार इति अस्याः नामान्तराणि। सेयं जीवस्वरूपमाच्छाद्य जीवं बध्नाति। सांख्योक्तदिशा महत्तत्वं, त्रिविधाहङ्कारः अस्याः परिणामविशेषाः। सांख्यरीतिरेव पञ्चभूतोपादानभूतानि शब्दादितन्मात्राणि अत्रापि सिद्धान्ते आदृता। एतानि तन्मात्राभूतेन्द्रियाणि ब्रह्माण्डानेकत्वादनेकानीति विशेषः। ज्ञानकर्मभेदेन द्वेधा विभक्तानि दशेन्द्रियाणि च नैयायिकोक्तदिशा न भौतिकानि, किन्तु राजसाहङ्कारजन्यानि। "मनःषष्ठानीन्द्रियाणि" इति गीतावचनमनुसृत्य मनसोऽपि इन्द्रियत्वमाश्रितम्। "एतस्माज्जायते प्राणः मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च" इति मुण्डकश्रुत्या जन्यानि सर्वेन्द्रियाणि। तानीमानीन्द्रियाणि सूक्ष्मशरीरे तिष्ठन्ति।

कालः पृथक्पदार्थत्वेन नाङ्गीक्रियते, क्रियाद्युपाधय एव कालशब्दवाच्याः। 'नित्यः' इत्यस्य कालातीत इत्यर्थः, इति अत्र सिद्धान्ते विशेषः। क्षणलवमारभ्य द्विपरार्धावसानः कालः युगमन्वन्तरादिभेदेन भागवतपुराणमनुसृत्य सम्यगत्र निरूपितः।

अस्मिन्नेव प्रकरणे सृष्टिप्रक्रिया निरूपिता। रामानुजसिद्धान्त इव ब्रह्मणः अभिन्ननिमित्तोपादानत्वं स्वीकृतम्। परन्तु तद्दर्शने शरीर-शरीरिभावेन तत् समर्थितम्। अस्मिन् दर्शने व्याप्तस्य अक्षरब्रह्मणः कार्येऽपि व्याप्तत्वाद् उपादानत्वम् उपपादितम्। "तदैक्षत" इतीक्षणश्रुतेः कुलालवद् अक्षरब्रह्मणः निमित्तत्वमपि अस्तीति एतत्सिद्धान्तः।

सृष्टिकाले पुरुषोत्तमस्य सिसृक्षा भवति। सः अक्षरपुरुषमीक्षते, अक्षरं ब्रह्म च कञ्चन मुक्तात्मानं पश्यति। सः मूलप्रकृतिसन्निधानं प्रपद्यते। स एव प्रकृतिपुरुष इत्यभिधीयते। अनेन अनन्तकोटिब्रह्माण्डानि सृज्यन्ते। एकैकं ब्रह्माण्डम् एकैकः प्रधानपुरुषः अधितिष्ठति। [ततः वैराजपुरषः।] वैराजपुरुषस्य नाभेः ब्रह्मा, ललाटात् रुद्रः, हृदयात् विष्णुः जायन्ते। एते च प्रधानपुरुषाः, वैराजपुरुषाः, ब्रह्मविष्णुमहेश्वरादयश्च अनन्ताः। अस्यां सृष्टिकल्पनायां वचनामृतं प्रमाणत्वेन निर्दिष्टम्। इत्थं दर्शनान्तरात् विशिष्यते इयं प्रक्रिया। अत्र सृष्टिप्रकरणे वैदिकावैदिकाभिमतसृष्टिप्रक्रियायाः निपुणं विमर्शः कृतः।

६. षष्ठं जीवप्रकरणम्। स्वामिनारायणदर्शने माया, जीवः, ईश्वरः, अक्षरं, पुरुषोत्तम इति तत्वं पञ्चधा

विभक्तम्। एतत्सर्वं सत्यमिति एतेषां परस्परं भेदोऽपि सत्यः शाश्वतश्च।

एतेषु पञ्चसु मायाशब्दवाच्या प्रकृतिः सर्वजडोपादानभूता। जीवाश्च अनन्ताः, अणवः, प्रतिशरीरं भिन्नाः। ते स्वयं ज्ञानरूपा अपि तेषां गुणभूतं ज्ञानान्तरमस्ति। तदेव च घट-पटादिविषयकम्। एतेषां जीवानां शरीरत्रयम् - स्थूलं, सूक्ष्मं, कारणशरीरं चेति। तेषु स्थूलं शरीरं कर्मानुसारेण परिवर्तते। सूक्ष्मम् आलयं तिष्ठति। कारणशरीरं तु मोक्षपर्यन्तमनुवर्तते। तदयं विशेषः द्वैतदर्शनमनुकरोति। जीवन्मुक्तानां कारणशरीरं नास्ति। सूक्ष्मं स्थूलं च शरीरमनुवर्तते।

जाग्रत्-स्वप्न-सुषुप्तिः इति अवस्थात्रयं जीवस्य परायत्तम्। स्वाप्ना अर्थाः वासनामया ईशनिर्मिताः सत्या इति द्वैतदर्शनवत् अभिमतम्। "अथ रथान् रथयोगान् पथः सृजते" इति बृहदारण्यकश्रुतिः "सन्ध्ये सृष्टिराह हि" इति सूत्रं चात्र प्रमाणम्। जीवकर्मानुसारेण सुखदुःखादयः भवन्तीति नेश्वरस्य वैषम्यादि-दोषाः। अमात्यस्य राजदत्तस्वातन्त्र्यवत् जीवस्य करणकलेवरादिकं दत्वा भगवान् क्रियास्वातन्त्र्यं ददाति। तदेतत् दत्तस्वातन्त्र्यं द्वैतदर्शनसम्मतम्। रामानुजसिद्धान्ते प्रथमप्रवृत्तौ भगवान् उदास्ते इत्यभ्युपगम्यते।

जीवब्रह्मणोः तादात्म्यं सम्बन्धः, नांशांशिभावः, न वा बिम्बप्रतिबिम्बभावः। तादात्म्यं च नाभेदः, किन्तु कतिपयगुणसाम्यम् इत्ययं विशेषः स्वामिनारायणदर्शने।

७. सप्तमं ईश्वरप्रकरणम् - अयं च एतद्दर्शने विशेषः। भगवतः पुरुषोत्तमस्य आज्ञया वर्तमानाः ब्रह्मादयः, प्रधानपुरुषाः, विराट्पुरुषाः इन्द्रियान्तःकरणनियामकाः सर्वे ईश्वराः। न केवलमेतावत् राम-कृष्णाद्यवतारा अपि ईश्वरकोटावेवान्तर्भवन्ति।

८. अष्टमं साधनप्रकरणम्। "यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यः" इति श्रुत्या भगवतः नारायणस्य कृपा प्रधानं मोक्षसाधनम्। साधकः अक्षरब्रह्मभावमापन्नः नारायणे सर्वोत्तमपुरुषे अखण्डां भक्तिं लभते। ब्रह्मभावो नाम अक्षरपुरुषसाम्यम्। तदर्थं वैराग्यादिसाधनान्तराणि अपेक्षितानि।

एतन्मते यागीयहिंसाऽपि पापसाधनम्। वर्णव्यवस्था च न जनिप्रधाना, किन्तु वृत्तिप्रधाना। ब्राह्मणः अध्यापकः इति न, किन्तु यः अध्यापकः सः ब्राह्मण इति। महान् दोषः अनेन परिहृतः।

९. अन्तिमं फलप्रकरणम्। अत्र मोक्षाख्यः परमपुरुषार्थः निरूपितः। देहत्रयादुन्मुच्य अक्षरब्रह्मभावमापद्य अक्षरधाम्नि प्रत्यक्षरूपस्य परमपुरुषोत्तमस्य स्वामिनारायणस्य सेवा मोक्षः। अनिष्टनिवृत्तिः इष्टप्राप्तिरिति दलद्वयात्मकोऽयं परमपुरुषार्थः।

तदेवं नवप्रकरणेषु वैदिकसिद्धान्तसम्बन्धिनः सर्वेऽपि विषयाः सुष्ठु, सप्रमाणं निरूपिताः। परमतविमर्शः विनोद्वेगं वस्तुनिष्ठः कृतः। परं ब्रह्मैक्यवादनिरासे पुनः इदमेकवाक्यं श्रूयते - "तदिदं विविधकुतर्ककल्पितं स्वगोष्ठीनिष्ठसमयतां भजते।" (पु. ३१०)।

स्वामिनारायणसम्प्रदाये बद्धादरैः अवश्यम् अध्येया इयं कृतिः। भारतीयदार्शनिकवाङ्मयस्यापूर्वं योगदानमिदम्। ग्रन्थकारेण सरलैः वाक्यैः विषयाः निरूपिताः। प्रायः प्रत्येकं प्रकरणेषूक्ताः विषयाः स्वयं विरचितासु कारिकासु सङ्गृहीताः।

ग्रन्थं साग्रमधीत्यायं विमर्शः मया विहितः। न खगावलोकनेन न वा पूर्वाग्रहेण।

TRANSLATION

A great gift is given to the Svāminārāyaṇa Saṃpradāya by the learned and respected Bhadreshdas. A droplet fallen on a hot stone disappears; whereas when fallen in an oyster shell a pearl is gifted. Similarly, this text is the fruit of knowledge gifted by an *ācārya*; it is a pearl. Devotees within the Svāminārāyaṇa Saṃpradāya are indebted to the eminent Bhadreshdas. I also feel fortunate. He has often read topics on Nyāya with me. He is truly worthy of great acclaim.

This text (the *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā*) offers an evidence-based and a discussion-filled exposition of all philosophical topics associated with the Svāminārāyaṇa Saṃpradāya. This work demonstrates that the Svāminārāyaṇa Saṃpradāya is not just an unlearned *bhakti* tradition; however, like the Dvaita, Advaita, and the other *darśanas*, it is *darśanic* and worthy of being identified as Vedic; this is well established. Within the text, Upaniṣadic revelations are thoughtfully explained in Sanskrit. Indeed, this work is worthy of being venerated on par with the *saṃpradāya's* principle texts.

This text is divided into nine chapters. Each chapter is further divided into numerous sections. The work begins with the "Maṅgaladhārā," a section in which benedictions (*maṅgalācaraṇa*) are followed by a summary of the foundational principles of the doctrine.

2. AKṢARABRAHMA-PRAKARAṆA

The second chapter, named "Akṣarabrahmadhārā," begins with a description of Akṣara or Brahman's form (*svarūpa*). Readings from the Upaniṣads, *Brahmasūtras*, the *Bhagavadgītā*, and the Vacanāmṛta are provided to authenticate elaborations given within the chapter. These references to sacred authority establish that the description of Akṣarabrahman is well correlated with the Upaniṣads (*aupaniṣadaḥ*) and according to the principles of the tradition (*saṃpradāya*).

Within Vedic traditions, the supreme being, who is the object of devotion, and their companion is mentioned. For instance, Lakṣmī-Nārāyaṇa or Pārvatī-Parameśvara, related to one another as husband and wife, are often mentioned in sacred literature. Within the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition, Akṣarabrahman is presented in place of Lakṣmī and other female deities.[1] Both Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman are understood as eternally free from *māyā*. The creation, sustenance, and destruction of the world is identified as a function of Akṣarabrahman. The Atharvaveda *śruti*: "akṣarāt sambhavatīha viśvam" serves to validate this role. This very same Akṣara serves as Puruṣottama's divine abode—Brahmadhāman.

"yadakṣaraṃ vedavido vadanti viśanti yadyatayo vītarāgāḥ;
yadicchanto brahmacaryaṃ caranti tatte padaṃ saṅgraheṇa pravakṣye."

1. 'In place of' mentioned here is to be read in terms of lexical replacement and not as indicating ontological identification.

Accordingly, 'aparaṃ brahma' stated within the *Gītā* refers only to this Akṣarabrahman.

The proclaimed location (*pada*) within the Kaṭhopaniṣad aphorism, "tatte padaṃ saṅgraheṇa pravakṣye,"[2] also refers solely to Akṣarabrahman.

This Akṣaradhāman, which is attained by the liberated, is neither destroyed during dissolution, nor is it created during creation. Akṣarabrahman resides as the subtle space (*daharākāśa*) within the heart of each *jīvātman*; while the superior *puruṣa* (Parabrahman) lies within it.

The [Chāndogyopaniṣat] *śruti* that describes the subtle space (*dahara*): "daharo'sminnantarākāśaḥ, tasmin yadantaḥ tadupāsitavyam"[3]—advocates this meaning. In the form of *cidākāśa,* Akṣarabrahman lies not just within the heart but is all pervading. Akṣarabrahman resides as the following four forms:

- As the pervasive *cidākāśa* (*daharākāśa*);
- As Akṣaradhāman—the abode of the liberated (*muktas*) and Puruṣottama;
- Within that very Akṣaradhāman, Akṣarabrahman resides with bodily form as the eternal servant of Puruṣottama (as one who eternally possesses the sentiments of a servant (*dāsabhāva*));
- As the form of the guru of the *saṃpradāya* (e.g. as Brahmasvarūpa Shastriji Maharaj, Yogiji Maharaj, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, and presently, Mahant Swami Maharaj).

The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana uniquely advocates that the guru is Akṣarabrahman, who himself descends onto earth to liberate all. On this subject, the author proudly exalts the *saṃpradāya* with the following: "na caivaṃ dṛśyate kvāpīti dhanyā vayam."

The *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* reveals that the consumers of *ṛta* (the fruit) mentioned within the Kaṭhopaniṣad mantra: "ṛtaṃ pibantau sukṛtasya loke,"[4] refer to (1) the self and (2) Akṣarabrahman. Hence, *chatrinyāya* does not apply here; however, only the primary meaning is referenced. Akṣarabrahman is identified as a consumer of fruits and one who experiences Parabrahman's bliss; this reading is novel. Like the self (*jīva*), Akṣarabrahman, by his the absence of consumption of worldly fruits, is described by the *śrutis* as: "anaśnannanyaḥ"[5]; this qualifier is appropriately used.

In this way, these two (Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman) are eternally free from *māyā*; all others have been bound at one time or another. The commentary's

2. Kaṭhopaniṣad 2.15
3. The *śruti* on *dahara* reads as following: "Now here in this city of *Brahman* lies a subtle (*dahara*), lotus shaped dwelling; within this lies the subtle (*dahara*) space (*ākāśa*), and within this is something. That is to be searched. That is to be desired to be known." ("atha yadidamasminbrahmapure daharaṃ puṇḍarīkaṃ veśma daharo'sminnantarākāśastasminyadantastadanveṣṭavyaṃ tadvāva vijijñāsitavyamiti") (Chāndogyopaniṣad 8.1.1)
4. Kaṭhopaniṣad 3.1.1
5. Kaṭhopaniṣad 3.1.1

explanation of: "sadā paśyanti sūrayaḥ,"[6] is unlike Rāmānuja's reading. Within Rāmānuja's position, the referent of this mantra is identified as the eternally liberated *ātmans* (*nityamuktas*). In this way the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana is distinct.

3. PARABRAHMA-PRAKARAṆA

The third chapter focuses its exposition on Parabrahman Nārāyaṇa. Accompanied by Akṣarabrahman, who is identified by 'Svāmī,' Svāmināràyaṇa is identified as Parabrahman. By the testimony: "Akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ"[7] and "puruṣānna paraṃ kiñcit sā kāṣṭhā sā parā gatiḥ,"[8] Parabrahman is revealed as supreme. He (Parabrahman) is therefore known by the term 'Puruṣottama'—'the supreme among *puruṣas*.' The *Gītā* asserts,

"Akṣarādapi cottamaḥ. ato'smi loke vede ca prathitaḥ Puruṣottamaḥ."[9]

Saguṇabrahmavāda: Although *śrutis* such as: "sākṣī cetā kevalo nirguṇaśca"[10] appear to describe *nirguṇa brahman* (*brahman* as being without qualities); only *saguṇabrahmavāda* is accepted by them. *Brahman*, who is only *saguṇa*, is also understood as *nirguṇa* in the sense that it is void of worldly qualities and subtler than an atom. By possessing divine qualities and being superior than that which is itself superior, *brahman* is understood as *saguṇa*. In this way, revelations that express *brahman* as *saguṇa* and those that express him as *nirguṇa* are read as consistent with one-another. By understanding the nature of *brahman* in this manner, this *darśana* (the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana) is distinguished from the *māyāvādī* Advaita *darśana*, which advocates the existence of only *nirguṇa brahman*.

Sākāravāda: Although it may appear that *brahman*, identified as Nārāyaṇa, is described by *śrutis* such as: "aśarīraṃ śarīreṣu"[11] and "sa śṛṇotyakarṇaḥ"[12]—as without form, these *śrutis* are read to reject the position that Parabrahman has a body that is human-like—made from *māyā*. For instance, Parabrahman's unworldly form is described in the Chāndogyopaniṣad *śruti*: "ya eṣa antarāditye hiraṇmayaḥ puruṣaḥ."[13] "Yatte rūpaṃ kalyāṇatamaṃ tatte paśyāmi,"[14]a *śruti* from the Īśāvāsyopaniṣad, is also understood similarly by reading it to describe a devotee perceiving Bhagavān's most liberating form.

Although Bhagavān's form is imperceptible to the mind and indescribable by speech, the author of the aphorisms (*Brahmasūtras*) asserts by the aphorism

6. Kṛṣṇayajurvedasaṃhitā 1.3.6.2, 4.2.9.4; Ṛgvedasaṃhitā 1.22.20; and Sāmavedasaṃhitā 2.18.2.4
7. Muṇḍakopaniṣad 2.1.2
8. Kaṭhopaniṣad 3.11
9. Bhagavadgītā 15.18
10. Śvetāśvataropaniṣad 6.11
11. Kaṭhopaniṣad 2.22
12. Śvetāśvataropaniṣad 3.19
13. Chāndogyopaniṣad 1.6.6
14. Īśāvāsyopaniṣad 16

"tadavyaktamāha hi"[15] that *brahman* is with at least one quality: being unmanifest. Despite this, by compassion for devotees and by one's own contemplative powers, Paramātman's form becomes visible. Akṣarabrahman, who is Brahmadhāman, facilitates Parabrahman's *darśana* through his teachings, association, and other such means. This is expressed in the following *kārikā*:

"divyairguṇairviśiṣṭo'yaṃ māyāguṇavivarjitaḥ;
antaryāmī sarvakartrā guṇātīto niyāmakaḥ;
sa eva prakaṭo nityaṃ pratyakṣe brahmaṇi gurau."[16]

This Nārāyaṇa displays a small amount of prowess, majesty, and power (*aiśvarya*) in the different forms. Through Parabrahman's pervasion (*anupraveśa*), *matsya* and other manifestations (*avatāras*) are created. He reveals only a small amount of his powers within them. However, he expresses the highest *aiśvarya* (power or majesty) within the Akṣarabrahman guru. By eating, residing, conversing, and performing other activities, he accepts various services, and in doing so, satisfies devotees in different ways.

Parabrahman's two forms: his *anvaya* form and *vyatireka* form are uniquely described within this chapter. Parabrahman's *anvaya* form is identified as his *antaryāmī*[17] form; whereas his *vyatireka* form is identified as his form present within Akṣaradhāman and as Swaminarayan. The *darśana's sākāra-saguṇabrahma-vāda* is distinct from *māyāvāda* in this manner.

4. PRAMĀṆA-PRAKARAṆA

The fourth chapter consists of a discussion on *pramāṇa*—the means to knowledge. When enumerating the number of *pramāṇa*, there is no insistence on a particular number. Whether it is *arthāpatti* or others, if it is useful in realizing the form of *brahman*, it is accepted as a *pramāṇa*. An open-minded perspective is upheld. The form of *vyāpti* and *hetvābhāsa* offered is similar to the *tārkika* position. When discussing *khyātivāda*, *cidacitkhyāti* is uniquely described according to one's own position.[18] There is scope for further discussion on it and also on the topic of *upamāna*.

With regards to *pratyakṣa pramāṇa*, by the use of the term 'indriyavṛtti,' it appears to resemble the position of the Sāṅkhya doctrine. Knowledge (*jñāna*) is understood as a quality of the self (*ātman*); this principle appears like that of Nyāya. With regards to objects beyond this world, only testimony is accepted as the principle *pramāṇa*. The text appropriately establishes that inference is self-willed.

15. Brahmasūtras 3.2.22
16. *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā, Kārikā* 98
17. 'Antaryāmī' refers to (one who) controls having pervaded in and between. ("antarmadhyeऽnupraviśya yamayatil")
18. See, Bhadreshdas, Sadhu. *Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā*. 1st ed., Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2017, p. 194.

5. MĀYĀ-PRAKARAṆA

The fifth chapter offers an explanation of *māyā*. Although 'māyā' initially causes one to recall the notion of *māyāvāda*, here 'māyā' is not understood according to the Advaita position of ignorance (*avidyā*); instead, 'māyā' refers to *prakṛti*, which consists of the three qualities (*guṇas*). As such, it is said to be *bhāvarūpa* ignorance (i.e. it is existent and not merely the absence of something) and not indescribable (*anirvacanīya*) but real.

The state of dissolution (*pralaya*) is understood as the state in which its qualities are at equal levels. The state of creation (*sṛṣṭi*), on the other hand, refers to the state in which its qualities are at unequal levels. *Māyā* is understood as the material cause of innumerable universes (*brahmāṇḍas*). It is referred to by various names including *vāsanā*, *prakṛti*, the superior strength (*paraśakti*), and darkness (*andhakāra*). *Māyā* binds the self (*jīva*) by concealing the true form of the *jīva*.

Similar to the Sāṅkhya *darśana*, the *darśana* accepts *mahattatva* and the three types of *ahaṅkāra* as *māyā's* distinct transformations. *Śabda* and other *tanmātra*, which are created from the five elements, are also accepted by the doctrine like they are within Sāṅkhya. Since there are innumerable *brahmāṇḍas*, the senses (*indriyas*), which are produced from the *tanmātra*s, are also considered to be innumerable; this understanding is unique.

By making the distinction between knowledge (*jñāna*) and action (*karma*), the ten *indriyas* are divided into two types. They, unlike those advocated by Naiyāyika position, are not made from elements (*pañcabhūta*), but created from *rājasāhaṅkāra*. According to the *Gītā* verse, "manaḥṣaṣṭhānīndriyāṇi,"[19] the *manas* is also considered to be an *indriya*. By the Muṇḍakopaniṣad verse, "etasmājjāyate prāṇaḥ manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca,"[20] all *indriyas* are understood to be created. These *indriyas* reside in the subtle body.

Time (*kala*) is not identified as an independent entity; Instead, 'kāla' refers to a type of consequence of action. That which is described by 'nitya' is understood as being beyond the influence of *kāla*; this is a unique feature of this *darśana*. Beginning from a fraction of a moment till the end of two *parārdha*, *kāla*, designated by *yuga*, *manvantara*, and other such distinctions, is entirely described within this chapter. Its descriptions appear to correlate with those from the *Bhāgavatapurāṇa*.

Within this chapter, the process of creation is also described. Like the Rāmānuja doctrine, *brahman* is accepted as the indistinct efficient and material cause. However, within the Viśiṣṭādvaita *darśana*, this is established by the relationship between the body and embodier (*śarīra-śarīrin-bhāva*). Within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, on the other hand, by being pervasive also within creation (*karya*), the pervasive Brahman is established as the material cause. Within the exposition of the following

19. Bhagavadgītā 15.7
20. Muṇḍakopaniṣad 2.1.3

śruti on sight: "tadaikṣata,"[21,22] Brahman, like a potter, is also identified as the efficient cause of the world; this is doctrinal.

At the time of creation, Puruṣottama desires to create. He looks at Akṣarabrahman; and thereafter, Akṣarabrahman looks at a *mukta*. The *mukta* comes into the presence of *mula-prakṛti*. This [conjoined form of the *mukta* and *mula-prakṛti*] is known as *prakṛti-puruṣa*. By this union, innumerable *brahmāṇḍas* are created. A *pradhāna-puruṣa* governs each *brahmāṇḍa*. Thereafter, *vairāja-puruṣa* is created. From a *vairāja-puruṣa*'s navel, forehead, and heart, Brahmā, Rudra, and Viṣṇu, are born respectively. There are innumerable *pradhāna-puruṣa*, *vairāja-puruṣa*, Brahmā, Maheśa, and Viṣṇu. The Vacanāmṛta also carefully describes this creation narrative. Among the *darśanas,* this process is unique. Within this section's elaboration on creation, the text precisely discusses the Vedic affirmation of the described sequence of creation.

6. THE JĪVA-PRAKARAṆA

The sixth chapter elaborates on *jīvātmans*. Within the Svāminārāyaṇa *darśana*, the five entities: *māyā*, *jīva*, *īśvara*, Akṣara, and Puruṣottama, are distinguished from one another. All five entities are real and the distinction between them is also real and eternal.

Among these five, *māyā* is understood to be *prakṛti* and the material cause of all that is insentient. There are infinite number of *jīvas*; they are minuscule and different for each *śarīra*. They are themselves of the form of knowledge (*jñānarūpa*); *jñāna* is identified as their quality and also resides within them. Knowledge consists of a pot, cloth, and other such objects. These *jīvas* have the following three bodies: the material (*sthūla*), subtle (*sukṣma*), and causal (*kāraṇa*) body (*śarīra*). Among these three, the material body alters according to one's *karma*; the subtle body exists until dissolution; and the causal body (*kāraṇa-śarīra*) exists until one attains liberation. This description resembles that of the Dvaita *darśana*. In the state of *jīvanamukti* the causal body does not exist; however, the material and subtle bodies are present.

The *jīva* is subject to the following three states: the waking, dream, and deep sleep state. The objects of the dream state originate from one's *vāsanā*. They are determined by God and are real. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka *śruti*, "atha rathān rathayogān pathaḥ sṛjate"[23] and the aphorism: "sandhye sṛṣṭirāha hi"[24] substantiate this position. The Dvaita *darśana* presents a similar description. Pain, pleasure, and others are experienced according to a *jīva*'s *karma*. *Īśvara* (Paramātman) is not blameworthy for the *jīva*'s actions, nor is he guilty of discrimination or possess any faults. Just as a

21. Chāndogyopaniṣad 6.2.3
22. In this aphorism, the *Chāndogyopaniṣad-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* identifies that 'it' refers to both Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman; hence, within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, both Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman are identified as the efficient cause of creation.
23. Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad 4.3.10
24. Brahmasūtra 3.2.1

minister is given freedom to act by a king, Bhagavān gives the self freedom to act by bestowing a body that may serve as a cause for action to the *jīva*. This given freedom is also accepted by the Dvaita *darśana*. This, however, is unlike the position held by Rāmānuja's doctrine, which assets that Bhagavān remains uninvolved with regards to the first action.

The relationship between the *jīva* and *Brahman* is that of *tadātmya*, and not of *aṃśāṃśibhāva* or *bimbapratibimbabhāva*. 'Tadātmya' does not convey that both are indistinct from one another; but rather, similar to one another with regards to some qualities. [Despite being similar to one another,] Brahma remains [ontologically] distinct form the *jiva*. This is a distinguishing feature of the Svāmināràyaṇa *darśana*.

7. THE ĪŚVARA-PRAKARAṆA

The seventh chapter offers a discussion on the *īśvarātmans*. This *darśana's* understanding of *īśvaras* is unique. Brahmā and others, *pradhāna-puruṣa*, *Virāṭa-puruṣa*, and the controllers of the senses (*indriyas*) and the faculties (*antaḥkaraṇas*) are all identified as *īśvaras.* Additionally, the divine manifestations (*avatāras*) of Parabrahman are also included within the *īśvara* category. All *īśvaras* are understood to act according to the commands of Bhagavān Puruṣottama.

8. SĀDHANA-PRAKARAṆA

The eighth chapter discusses *sādhana*. By the *śruti*: "yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyaḥ,"[25] Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa's grace (*kṛpā*) is identified as the primary means (*sādhana*) for liberation. One who engages in spiritual endeavour (*sādhaka*) and who has attained qualitative oneness with Akṣarabrahman (*Akṣarabrahman-bhāva*), attains eternal devotion for Nārāyaṇa, who is supreme among all beings. 'Brahmabhāva' refers to attaining qualitative similarity with Akṣarapuruṣa (Akṣarabrahman). Attaining this state requisites performing endeavours (*sādhana*), such as detachment (*vairāgya*) and others.

Within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, violence in sacrifices (*yajñas*) (ritual killings) is understood to result in sin (*pāpa*). Additionally, social orders are not believed to be inherited; however, they are understood to be based one's disposition and personal attributes. For instance, it is not the case that a *brahmin* is a teacher; however, one who is a teacher is understood to be a *brahman*. By such an identification a great affliction has been avoided.

9. PHALA-PRAKARAṆA

The final chapter discusses the fruits of *sādhana*. Here, the greatest fruit (*paramapuruṣārtha*) or liberation is described. Liberation[26] is identified as: being

25. Kaṭhopaniṣad 2.23 and Muṇḍakopaniṣad 3.2.3
26. The Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana advocates two types of liberation: (1) *jīvanamukti*, the state of

within Akṣaradhāman and offering service to the present, supreme Puruṣottama Svāmināràyaṇa, upon becoming free from the three bodies and attaining qualitative oneness with Akṣarabrahman. This liberation is described as being characterized by the following two: 1) The expulsion of that which is undesired and 2) the attainment of that which is desired.

In this way, this work within nine chapters appropriately explains all topics related to Vedic principles and provides evidence for them. The text also objectively discusses other positions without enmity. Despite this, while discussing *brahmaikyavāda*, the following statement: "tadidaṃ vividhakutarkakalpitaṃ svagoṣṭhīniṣṭhasamayatāṃ bhajate"[27] is offered.

Within the Svāmināràyaṇa saṃpradāya this work should surely be studied with great regard. This is an unprecedented contribution to Indian *darśanic* literature. The author explicates topics in simple terms. The subjects discussed in each chapter are summarized in *kārikās* that the author created himself.

I have presented a review of this text upon studying it in its entirety. It has not been merely skimmed or observed with partiality.

liberation that is attained while living, and (2) *videhamukti*, the state of liberation that is attained upon death from this world. The description of liberation provided here refers to *videhamukti*.

27. Bhadreshdas, Sadhu. *Svāmināràyaṇasiddhāntasudhā*. 1st ed., Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2017, p. 310