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Foreword

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F OREWORD

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This special issue comprises a collection of papers originally presented at a special session on the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana during the 19th World Sanskrit Conference, held in Kathmandu, Nepal, from June 26 to 30, 2025. Inaugurated by the President of Nepal, this triennial gathering of international Sanskrit scholars provided a fitting venue to celebrate the deep connection between the Himalayan nation and Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa, who sanctified its land through his extensive travels and austerities. In recognition of this sacred connection, a dedicated session was convened on June 28, bringing together prominent scholars and institutional dignitaries. This session marked a special moment in Indian philosophy, offering an opportunity to delve deeper into the distinctive principles of Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa's own Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. The proceedings fostered meaningful dialogue among scholars from Nepal, India, the United States, Europe, and East Asia, stemming from the ideas presented in the articles included in this issue.

The opening paper, titled “संस्कृतवाङ्मये एकविंशतितमे शतके निर्मितस्य प्रस्थानत्रयीस्वामिनारायणभाष्यस्य निर्माणप्रक्रिया - एकम् अध्ययनम्,” provides a comprehensive historical analysis of the genesis of the *Prasthānatrayī-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya*. Addressing skepticism about the possibility of producing original, classical commentaries in the contemporary era, the study chronicles

the various trajectories required for such an undertaking. By documenting the text's creation, its subsequent ratification by the global community of Sanskritists, and its adherence to the *vāda* tradition, the article argues that the Sanskrit commentarial tradition remains a vibrant, living medium capable of articulating novel philosophical insights in the twenty-first century.

The second article, titled “परब्रह्मस्वामिनारायणप्रबोधिताऽक्षरपुरुषोत्तमदर्शने परमात्मप्रत्यक्षताविचारः,” explores the *darśanic* imperative of the Parabrahman's perceptibility (*pratyakṣatā*) within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. Drawing upon canonical literature and Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa's oral discourses, the study posits that ultimate liberation is contingent upon the devotee's engagement with a manifest form of Paramātman rather than one that is distant or immanent. The paper addresses the soteriological crisis posed by Svāminārāyaṇa's physical departure from the world and resolves it by drawing on the Darśana's understanding of the nature, form, and significance of the Akṣarabrahman guru. The author argues that Parabrahman remains perpetually accessible through a continuous lineage of spiritual gurus, who serve as the locus of Parabrahman's continual manifestation.

The subsequent study, titled “अक्षरपुरुषोत्तमदर्शनाऽनुसारं ब्रह्मपरब्रह्मसम्बन्धः - विशिष्टमध्ययनम्,” examines the ontological distinctness and relational dynamics between Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. Addressing the nature of these two eternal, *māyā*-transcending entities, the author relies on scriptural exegesis from the *Prasthānatrayī* and the *Vacanāmṛta* to establish a distinct *bheda* (difference) characterized by specific relational modes: the *upāsya-upāsaka* (worshipped-worshipper), *ādhāra-ādheya* (support-supported), and *śarīra-śarīrin* (body-indweller) relationships. This analysis provides a crucial clarification of the system's metaphysics, distinguishing it from other Vedāntic schools by affirming a hierarchy where Akṣarabrahman eternally serves and is pervaded by the supreme Parabrahman.

The fourth article, titled “विशिष्टाद्वैताऽक्षरपुरुषोत्तमेतिदर्शनद्वयदृष्ट्या श्रीमद्भगवद्

गीतोक्ताऽक्षरतत्त्वविमर्शः,” presents a comparative exegetical study of the term ‘akṣara’ within the *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, contrasting the hermeneutical approaches of the Viśiṣṭādvaita and Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. By systematically analyzing key verses in which the term appears, the author demonstrates that while Rāmānuja’s commentary interprets ‘akṣara’ variably, denoting either the bound *ātman* (*jīva*), the liberated self, or the Paramātman, the *Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya* identifies it as the distinct metaphysical entity, Akṣarabrahman. The paper argues that this univocal interpretation resolves textual ambiguities and aligns with the *Gītā*’s expositional framework.

The paper titled “ब्रह्मसूत्रस्वामिनारायणभाष्ये गुहाप्रविष्टाधिकरणपर्यालोचनम्” offers a comparative analysis of the “Guhāpraviṣṭādhikaraṇa” within the *Brahmasūtras-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya*. Through a detailed examination of the hermeneutics applied to the Kaṭha-Upaniṣad mantra “*ṛtaṃ pibantau*,” the study contrasts the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana’s reading with established Vedāntic commentaries, including those of the Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita schools. This research highlights the *Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya*’s distinct identification of the “two entering the cave” as the *muktātman* (the liberated *ātman*) and Akṣarabrahman. The article concludes that this approach maintains the text’s primary semantic power (*mukhyārtha*), while demonstrating its logical coherence and philosophical originality.

The final paper, titled “अक्षरपुरुषोत्तमदर्शनदृष्ट्या दहरविद्यायाः पर्यालोचनम्,” presents an exegetical analysis of the *Daharavidyā* section of the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* and its corresponding *adhikaraṇa* in the *Brahmasūtras* through the lens of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. The author contrasts this interpretation with those of the Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita schools. It demonstrates that the *Prasthānatrayī-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya* uniquely identifies the *daharākāśa* as Akṣarabrahman (the divine abode and sustainer), which contains within it Puruṣottama. By examining scriptural markers such as the qualities of being free from sin (*apahatapāpman*) and serving as the support of all worlds, the article demonstrates that identifying *daharākāśa* as the *cidākāśa* form of Akṣarabrahman offers

a coherent reading of the Upaniṣadic passages, validating the distinct metaphysical categories of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama philosophy.

Collectively, these studies offer diverse perspectives into the history, hermeneutics, soteriology, and ontology of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. With the successful completion of this issue, we extend our profound gratitude to the contributing authors for their rigorous scholarship and insights into the various features of this distinct school of Vedānta. We are also deeply indebted to the journal's editorial board for their guidance and oversight in bringing this special issue to fruition. Finally, a special note of appreciation is due to the managing and assistant editors, whose tireless dedication to the meticulous processes of review and compilation has been instrumental in ensuring the academic excellence of this volume.