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Foreword

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F OREWORD

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Indian thought has rarely drawn a hard border between the world and that which transcends it. This issue gathers five studies that, from very different vantage points, explore how the ordinary materials of human life—wealth and its management, memory and attention, stone and sacred space, poetry, and philosophical argument itself—become occasions for a spiritual life. Read together, they suggest that the boundary between the worldly and the liberative is less a partition than a porous field, across which everyday conduct is continually reconstituted as a vehicle of devotion and a means to liberation. A second thread runs beneath this first. Each study considers how a traditional form, whether *śāstrika*, architectural, poetic, or doctrinal, is renewed for the present. This renewal may take the form of a temple raised according to ancient canons, Sanskrit verses newly composed and memorized by thousands, or a *darśana* given fresh systematic articulation. Tradition appears here as a living and generative resource and as vital in the twenty-first century. The articles in this issue also move from doctrine to practice, from built form to poetics, and close with a review that returns the issue to its philosophical foundations.

Artha is among the most foundational worldly of concerns, and it is here that the issue begins. “Worldly Conduct, Liberating Practice:

Arthika Vyavahāra in the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana” argues that the conduct of one’s endeavors for *artha* and stewardship of resources (*vyavahāra*) functions within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana as a genuine occasion of devotion (*bhakti*) and a means to liberation (*mokṣa*). Through internal exegesis of the *Satsaṅgadīkṣā*, the *Vacanāmṛta*, the *Svāminārāyaṇa-siddhānta-sudhā*, and the biographies of the *guṇātīta* gurus, it shows that the tradition’s renunciation passages diagnose a danger rather than prescribe asceticism. The article then traces three relationships between financial conduct (*ārthika vyavahāra*) and spiritual life: (1) the **constitutive**, whereby conduct performed with doctrinal convictions and according to the instructions of the Akṣarabrahman guru becomes *bhaktirūpa pravṛtti*; (2) the **enabling**, whereby stability secures the conditions devotion requires; and (3) the **formative**, whereby apt conduct consolidates virtue. In doing so, the article reconstitutes *ārthika vyavahāra* as a field of spiritual practice (*sādhana*) and sets the keynote for the issue.

If the first article carries the worldly into the spiritual, the second traces the movement in reverse. “Beyond the Verse: Collective Memorization of the *Satsaṅgadīkṣā* by 15,666 Students—An Interdisciplinary Study of its Multi-level Impact” takes a practice undertaken purely as devotion (*bhakti*)—the memorization of the scripture’s 315 Sanskrit verses—and asks what it yields in the world. Reading qualitative participant testimony through established frameworks drawn from cognitive science, social psychology, and the study of social capital, the study interprets the effects of the practice across individual, familial, and societal levels. It suggests that memorization serves as a cognitive anchor associated with gains in executive function, a reduction in familial friction, and a shared infrastructure that strengthens communal bonds. The article frames this as an illustrative testimony and closes by outlining potential longitudinal and neuroimaging studies that could further validate its findings. Its contribution lies in showing how a devotional act can generate durable cognitive and social goods as its incidental fruit.

From conduct and cognition the issue turns to stone. “Reviving

Ancient Temple Architecture and its Objects in the 21st Century” examines the structural logic, symbolic grammar, and social functions of ancient Hindu temple (mandir) traditions and asks whether their principles retain relevance today. Drawing on the canonical principles of Vāstuśāstras, the article shows how temples integrated cosmic order, the cardinal directions, the *pañca-mahābhūtas* (the five principal elements), and their presiding deities into a unified spatial system, and how its *maṇḍapas* once served as living spaces of worship, learning, and cultural exchange. It surveys the development of the major temple architectural styles, including the Nāgara, Drāviḍa, and Vaisara, before turning to a focused case study of Swaminarayan Akshardham in New Delhi, a monumental twenty-first-century complex built according to these canons. The article demonstrates that ancient architectural insight can be revived in the present and can restore the temple’s historic role as a center of spiritual expression and social integration.

Worldly art receives its due in “काव्यप्रयोजनम्” (“Kāvya-prayojanam”), the issue’s sole Sanskrit-language contribution, which inquires into the purpose (*prayojana*) of poetry within Indian tradition. The article grounds itself in the *Bhagavad Gītā*’s teaching of *niṣkāma-karma* and contends that the highest end of poetic activity is freedom from attachment (*āsa-kiṣṇyatā*). It likens the poet to Prajāpati, a maker of worlds unbound by the laws of necessity. It also compares the six purposes of poetry enumerated by Ācārya Maṃmaṭa: (1) fame, (2) wealth, (3) worldly wisdom, (4) the averting of ill, (5) immediate delight, and (6) gentle instruction in the manner of a beloved, and, through the episode of the slaying of Bālī in the Vālmīki *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahāvīracarita*, argues that poetry can also effectively impart practical wisdom. The article further harmonizes Paṇḍitarāja Jagannātha’s conception of “supreme bliss” with Viśvanātha’s “attainment of the four human ends.” It concludes that poetry, like the wish-granting *kalpavṛkṣa*, offers all an accessible path toward liberation (*mokṣa*).

The issue closes as it began, with doctrine, in a review of *The*

Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā. The review presents the *Sudhā* as a *vādagrantha*: a text of systematic exposition, rigorous justification, and sustained defense, that distills and defends the philosophical positions of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. It follows the work through the text's nine *dhārās*, or streams, which survey the five eternally distinct realities of the Darśana: *jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā*, Akṣarabrahman, and Parabrahman, together with its epistemology, its account of cognitive error (*cid-ac-it-khyāti*), its cosmology, and its soteriology of becoming *brahmarūpa* and offering supreme devotion (*parābhakti*) to Parabrahman. The review gives particular attention to the text's *kārikās*, whose metrical concision and dense allusion to the *śrutis* embed the Darśana within the Vedic canon and have already been committed to memory by hundreds. It commends the *Sudhā* as an authoritative articulation of the Darśana and a living voice within the Vedāntic tradition.

An issue of this kind is the work of many hands. We extend our sincere gratitude to the contributing authors, whose scholarship gives this issue its substance and whose patience through successive revisions has been exemplary. We thank the members of the editorial board for their careful judgment and for the standards of rigor they uphold. We are especially grateful to the managing and assistant editors, whose sustained and often unseen labor in coordination, correspondence, and the meticulous preparation of the issue has brought these essays to published form. It is our hope that the studies collected here will reward the attention of scholars and practitioners alike.