



ISSN : 2350-0743

www.ijramr.com



International Journal of Recent Advances in Multidisciplinary Research

Vol. 10, Issue 08, pp.8792-8798, August, 2023

RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE SUSTAINER OF ANCIENT VEDIC PHILOSOPHICAL PRINCIPLES; PRAMUKH SWAMI: THE INSPIRER OF THE SWAMINARAYAN BHĀṢYA

*Dr. Sadhu Gyanananddas

AARSH Research Centre, Akshardham, Gandhinagar

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received 08th May, 2023
Received in revised form
20th June, 2023
Accepted 16th July, 2023
Published online 30th August, 2023

Key Words:

Swaminarayan, Vacanāmṛta, Pramukh Swami Maharaj, Prasthānatrayī Swaminarayan Bhāṣya, Swaminarayan Darśana.

*Corresponding author:

ABSTRACT

This paper aims to illuminate the contribution of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in sustaining the Vedic philosophical principles propagated by Bhagavān Swaminarayan two centuries back. However, the period of two hundred years is enough to change the phenomenon of historical, social, religious and moral aspects. Consequently, these changes can also be perceived in the various philosophical principles which stand at two different and vast time zones. To address this dichotomy, this article first provides a critical note of the historical tradition of various Vedic philosophical branches and then examines the role and contribution of Pramukh Swami Maharaj in reviving Bhagavān Swaminarayan's philosophical teachings. During his last years, Pramukh Swami inspired Mahāmahopādhyāya Bhadrashdas Swami to author the Prasthānatrayī Swaminarayan Bhāṣya, which, in Pramukh Swami's words, encapsulates all the philosophical principles given by Bhagavān Swaminarayan. Therefore, I will focus my research on how Pramukh Swami guided the writing of the Prasthānatrayī Swaminarayan Bhāṣya. Moreover, I will also evaluate its principles, whether they follow the principles of Bhagavān Swaminarayan or not. The approach of investigation used in this paper will mainly be supported by the Vacanāmṛta (the authoritative text of the Swaminarayan faith), the biographies of the Guruparamparā (the spiritual lineage of Bhagavān Swaminarayan), Pramukh Swami Maharaj's diaries and the Prasthānatrayī Swaminarayan Bhāṣya.

INTRODUCTION

All the life pages of Swaminarayan, who appeared on this earth only 241 years ago (Birth 1781) and whose incarnation ended only 192 years ago (Earthly departure 1830), have been prudently embedded in the history of India.¹ A vast ocean of sampradāya's literature identifies him as a supreme God.² However, his life and work were not limited to the boundaries of any particular sampradāya. 49 years of his life span created ripples into the huge lake of Indian history which shaped the religious and philosophical landscape of India and influenced developments far beyond the borders of India.³ Swaminarayan, an illustrious figure in the history of India, is also remembered in the modern world by scholars due to his unique and unprecedented philosophy, Swaminarayan Darśana, which is identified as a living and flourishing Darśana today. To sustain these ancient Vedic principles propagated by Swaminarayan, Pramukh Swami Maharaj (1921-2016), his fifth spiritual successor, contributed to the creation of the Swaminarayan Bhāṣya.

The Swaminarayan Bhāṣya encapsulates all the philosophical teachings of Swaminarayan based on the Prasthānatrayī, the three foundational scriptures of Hinduism; the Upaniṣad Brahmasūtra, and Bhagavadgītā.⁴

Swaminarayan: Remarkable Footprints in History: Swaminarayan's successful ministry until 1830 prefigured the future growth and spread of his movement for the next two centuries in the world. He attracted a large number of followers from many castes and religions through his teachings and came to the attention of colonial officials during the period of transition and change when British influence and control expanded in the subcontinent.⁵ Sir John Malcolm, governor of the Bombay Presidency had been on a mission through Gujarat from 1812 to 1830. Several documents in the form of letters and petitions highlight the immense bond of the relationship of mutual respect between Swaminarayan and the governor. The meeting between them on 24 February 1830 in Rajkot was the epitome of this.⁶

¹Vaghela BG, Bhagavān Swaminarayan Samkalin Lokjivan, p.1, Swaminarayan Aksharpath Ahmedabad- Feb 2011(4th Ed)

² Vac Gadh 3/38

³ Williams & Trivedi, Swaminarayan Hinduism, Introduction p. xvii, Oxford University Press- 2016

⁴Bhadreshdas Sadhu, Aksharpurushottam Darśana Introduction, p.22, Swaminarayan Aksharpath Ahmedabad- June 2018

⁵ Gyanananddas Sadhu, Vacanāmṛtani Visheshṭao, p.2-6, Swaminarayan Aksharpath Ahmedabad-July 2019

⁶ Williams & Trivedi, Swaminarayan Hinduism, Swaminarayan and British

Moreover, contemporary British civil and army officers, John Dunlop, A.K. Heron, Con. Walker, Major Gordon, Edward Jackins, Anderson, Thomas Williamson, T. N. Blain, and James Williams were highly impressed by Swaminarayan's social and religious reforms in Gujarat. They kept in touch with Swaminarayan for a long time.⁷ Apart from East India Company officials, the two highest-ranked clergymen William Hodge Mill (principal of Bishop's College, Calcutta) and Reginald Heber (Bishop of Calcutta Church) were also overwhelmed by Swaminarayan's persona and philosophy. As a result, they marked Swaminarayan's philosophical thoughts in their diaries.⁸ It is notable that, Bishop Heber personally met Swaminarayan on 26 March 1825 in Nadiad (Gujarat).⁹ In the past couple of decades, the philosophy and religious beliefs of Swaminarayan have been attracting new academic research and study in India and abroad. This paper adds a new perspective to this field.

Ancient Vedic Tradition and Swaminarayan's Contribution: On Indian soil, many spiritual leaders have contributed before Swaminarayan with their ideology in terms of searching for the ultimate truth. From ancient times, several philosophical branches or Darśana have existed. However, history notes largely three heterodox branches of Indian philosophy and six orthodox branches of Indian philosophy. This traditional philosophical development is presented here in the following tables.¹⁰

SN	Heterodox	Founder	Time
1.	Charvaka Darśana	Charvaka	1000 BC
2.	Bauddha Darśana	Gautam Buddha	500 BC
3.	Jain Darśana	Mahaveer Swami	500 BC

SN	Orthodox	founder	Time
1.	Sankhya	Kapila	4 th century AD
2.	Yoga	Patanjali	2 nd century BC
3.	Nyaya	Gautama	3 rd century BC
4.	Vaisheshika	Kanada	4 th century BC
5.	Karmamimasa	Jaimini	3 rd century BC
6.	Vedanta	Badarayana	5 th century BC

SN	Branch of Vedanta	Founder	Time
1.	Advaita	Shankaracharya	788-820
2.	Vishishtadvaita	Ramanujacharya	1017-1137
3.	Dvaita	Madhvacharya	1238-1317
4.	Dvaitadvaita	Nimbarkacharya	1200-1300
5.	Shuddhadvaita	Vallabhacharya	1479-1544
6.	Achintyabhedabheda	Chaitanya Mahaprabhu	1741-1793
7.	Swaminarayan Darśana	Swaminarayan	1781-1830

Parabrahman Swaminarayan's doctrinal philosophy is called Swaminarayan Darśana or Akṣarapurūṣottama Darśana. Through its revelation, Swaminarayan provided an unprecedented and unique contribution to Vedic knowledge. Swaminarayan's teachings and interpretations of ancient scriptures had been compiled into a text, the Vacanāmṛta. Swaminarayan himself validated the authenticity of the Vacanāmṛta.¹¹

Along with containing Swaminarayan's discourses, this text included accurate historical descriptions of the date, time and place of these discourses, Swaminarayan's attire, the names of devotees and sadhus who were engaged in the discussions, and other such details.¹² Prof. John Carmen of Harvard university acknowledges after reading the Vacanāmṛta, "In this book, every discourse is precisely dated. This is a chapter of religious history which one might say is in the full light of day as far as our knowledge of history is concerned."¹³ Following this historical book, the Vacanāmṛta, we can derive four prominent principles of Swaminarayan. Swaminarayan does not emphasize any particular means of knowledge. He accepts all means through which one attains knowledge of Parabrahman. He believes in five eternally distinct ontological entities; jīva īśvara māyā, Brahman and Parabrahman.

- 'To become *akṣararūpa* and offer *upāsanāto* Puruṣottama' is the prominent spiritual endeavour for an aspirant.
- Two types of mukti are indicated; jīvanmukti, videhamukti

The Sustainer of philosophy: Pramukh Swami: The unique philosophy of Swaminarayan has been passed through his spiritual successors, Gunatitanand Swami (1784-1867), Bhagatji Maharaj (1829-1897), Shastriji Maharaj (1865-1951), and Yogiji Maharaj (1892-1971) from one generation to another. Continuing the philosophical preaching of his gurus Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj Brahmasvarup Pramukh Swami Maharaj spread Swaminarayan's teaching throughout the world. Through his creation of the magnificent Akshardham complexes and 1000 beautiful temples around the world, he instilled this Swaminarayan Darśana in the lives of millions. However, the most important contribution to sustaining Swaminarayan's philosophy is the Swaminarayan Bhāṣya, the commentaries on three prominent ancient Indian scriptures; the Upaniṣad, Brahmasūtra, and Bhagavadgītā.

Pramukh Swami had decided that Bhadreshdas, a young disciple of his, would author the Swaminarayan Bhāṣya. He made all necessary arrangements for Bhadreshdas to profoundly study Sanskrit and other ancient philosophical scriptures. Under the guidance of Pramukh Swami, Bhadreshdas rigorously studied for 25 years. In this way, Pramukh Swami prepared his young disciple for writing the commentary on the three prominent scriptures of Hinduism in accordance with Swaminarayan's teachings. Pramukh Swami advised Bhadreshdas before writing, "Make sure you take inspiration from the principles given by Bhagavān Swaminarayan. Make sure your arguments are clear and straightforward and thus universally acceptable. You will have to engage with the ideas of other ācāryas, but you should do so respectfully. Our purpose is not to efface the work of others, but to expound our own. They are right in their own way, but that does not mean we are wrong. Stay focused, and whatever you write will be well received."¹⁴ In 2006, Bhadreshdas pleaded to Pramukh Swami, "Swami! You have the complete realization of Bhagavān. You are the Satpuruṣa. You have a spiritual experience. You understand the essence of all the scriptures.

Contacts, p. 72, Oxford University Press 2016

⁷ Vaghela BG, Bhagavān Swaminarayan Samkalin Lokjivan, p.218-46, Swaminarayan Aksharpith Ahmedabad- Feb 2011 (4th ed)

⁸ Williams & Trivedi, Swaminarayan Hinduism, Swaminarayan and British Contacts, p. 59, Oxford University Press 2016

⁹ Heber Reginald, Narrative of a Journal through the Upper Provinces of India from Calcutta to Bombay (1824-25), John Murray London-1828

¹⁰ Singhania Nitin, Indian Art and Culture, 16.1-16.10, McGraw Hill Education India Ltd. 2020 (Third Ed.)

¹¹ Vac. Loya 7

¹² Mukundcharandas Sadhu, Vachanamrut Handbook, p.49-59, Swaminarayan Aksharpith-April 2007 (3rd Ed.)

¹³ Carmen John B., New Dimensions in Vedanta, p.207, Philosophy, part 1, Swaminarayan Aksharpith Ahmedabad

¹⁴ Paramacharya Sadashivanath Swami, Hinduism Today, Scripture: Guru's Grace Empowers Philosophical Treatise, *The Himalayan Academy*, Kauai, Hawaii USA-1 April 2014

You are the only one with the right and the insight to write Bhāṣyas. I am afraid. I have no experience. What if I fail?" Pramukh Swami replied, "You feel that you are writing, but you are wrong. You will not write the Bhāṣyas; our gurus, Shastriji Maharaj and Yogiji Maharaj, will write through you."¹⁵ In this manner, in every step of authoring the Bhāṣya; whether it be finding supporting texts, interpreting the traditional terms or explaining the verses, Pramukh Swami guided the author. As a result, in between 2007-2012 all three Prasthānatrayī Bhāṣyas were accomplished. It was indeed a great contribution to the philosophical world. Essentially, Bhagavān Swaminarayan has evidently elucidated all his fundamental philosophical principles in his Vacanāmṛta. This paper comparatively analyzes the dialogue between the Vacanāmṛta and the Prasthānatrayī Bhāṣya inspired by Pramukh Swami to determine to what proportion the Bhāṣya accord the principles of Bhagavān Swaminarayan encoded in the Vacanāmṛta. Therefore, by critically analyzing Sadhu Bhadreshdas's Prasthānatrayī Bhāṣya in light of Bhagavān Swaminarayan's Vacanāmṛta, this paper intends to bring forth a valid conclusion.

Analysis on the Basis of Epistemology: Epistemology in Vedic tradition offers one of the most vigorous efforts at the construction of a substantialist, realist ontology that the world has ever seen¹⁶. It is known as the Theory of knowledge, *pramāṇa-śāstra*. The *śāstra* echoes:

*'Pramāṇamantareṇanāṛthapratipattiḥ'*¹⁷

Without the valid means, there is no knowledge of substances

The actual numbers of *pramāṇa* vary from school to school. The Cārvākas, eliminating all other *pramāṇas*, admitted only Pratyakṣa (direct perception) as the source of knowledge; the Buddhist and Vaiśeṣikas added one more, namely Anumāna (inference); the Sāṃkhya attached another viz Śabda (revelation-verbal authority); the Naiyāyika, the fourth viz, Upamāna (analogy), the Prabhākara Mīmāṃsaka's fifth one, Arthāpatti (implication), the Bhaṭṭas, the sixth one, Anupalabdhī (non-apprehension). Theory of knowledge, or epistemology, therefore precedes ontology or the theory of Reality or Being. All the teachers and commentators of Bhakti Vedānta Schools follow this time-honored method. Śaṅkarācārya accepts all six sources of knowledge. Rāmānujācārya takes three perceptions, inherence and verbal testimony.

This alteration in the number of *pramāṇais* due to *vicārasvātantryam* (freedom of thought.) Various philosophers have found their set of several *pramāṇas* or means of knowledge to perceive the highest reality, self, world, their relation, the concept of ultimate salvation and the means to reach it - *pratyakṣamanumānaṃ ca vedāścopamayāsaha*¹⁸. Bhagavān Swaminarayan emphasizes on true knowledge and its sources in the Vacanāmṛta¹⁹. Moreover, the idea of acceptance of sources of knowledge is based on the knowledge of five ontological eternal entities: Jiva, Īśvara,

Māyā, Brahman, and Parabrahman, rather than a specific number of the sources. Thereby, Swaminarayan is not bound by any particular source of knowledge. Sometimes, he refers to true empirical knowledge²⁰ for liberation. Sometimes inference²¹, testimony²², and analogy²³ are also indicated to attain liberation. Moreover, he also highlights the Sambhāvya Pramāṇa²⁴ and Aitihya Pramāṇa²⁵ in the Vacanāmṛta. Thus, in the Vacanāmṛta, he has indicated major sources of knowledge and opened the branch of any systematic path that fulfills the goal of attaining true knowledge. In addition to this *pramāṇa* discussion, he mentions that Parabrahman's grace plays a vital and inevitable role to attain true knowledge of eternal entities²⁶. The Prasthānatrayī-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam clearly mentions the significance of *pramāṇa*²⁷; however, like Bhagavān Swaminarayan, the Bhāṣyakāra is not bound with the fixed numbers of *pramāṇas*. He averred

- *brahmabrahmaparaupramāṇasātakairmāyā'dhipaukīrtitau.*
- There may be hundreds of *pramāṇas* to procure the knowledge of Brahma and Parabrahman.²⁸

So, "the *pramāṇa* which negate and obstruct to obtain knowledge of the eternal entities, should be abjured, others are welcomed, in this manner, we don't claim any particular numbers of the *pramāṇa*."²⁹ Moreover, the Bhāṣyakāra strongly asserts that without the grace of Parabrahman our mundane senses are incapable to comprehend upon the knowledge of the true form of those eternal entities. The Bhāṣyakāra elaborately substantiates this idea while commenting on the verse

- *Natatrakṣurgacchatinavāggacchati no mana...*³⁰

Here, in his commentary, he explicitly mentions three major *pramāṇas* - perception, inference and textual words; and acknowledges them as the sources to attain the supreme spiritual knowledge of Brahman and Parabrahman. However, he further states that worldly *pramāṇa* or the means of knowledge run short to procure the comprehension of eternal entities. Since worldly *pramāṇa* are potent only to obtain worldly knowledge, not that of Brahman and Parabrahman. The Bhāṣyakāra argues admirably with the appropriate references from the scriptures³¹. Parabrahman Himself grants this vision, out of His overflowing grace to jīvas and īśvaras. God, with concern for the seekers of Truth, divinizes their sensory-motor apparatuses and the mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*), which enables them to have a vision of this ontic reality (Parabrahman Himself) as revealed in the sacred scriptures. The conceptual understanding of this vision follows as a consequence of His own wish.

²⁰Vacanāmṛta L 7

²¹Vacanāmṛta L 17

²²Vacanāmṛta G II.30

²³Vacanāmṛta G I.25

²⁴Vacanāmṛta K 3

²⁵Vacanāmṛta L 7

²⁶Vacanāmṛta G I. 51, 78

²⁷Brahmasūtra-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 1.1.1, Kenopaniṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 1.3, Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 2.4.5,

²⁸Swaminarayan-Siddhānta-Sudhā 1

²⁹sati siddhāntapratyanīkatve hi taddheyamanyathātunakhaṇḍānīyamītinatannirdhāritasamkhyāsamādaraiti' - Swaminarayan-Siddhānta-Sudhā, 149

³⁰Kenopaniṣat 1.3

³¹Kenopaniṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 1.3

¹⁵Paramacharya Sadashivanath Swami, Hinduism Today, Scripture: Guru's Grace Empowers Philosophical Treatise, *The Himalayan Academy*, Kauai, Hawaii USA-1 April 2014

¹⁶Karl H. Potter, Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies, pg. 1

¹⁷Vātsyāyana-Bhāṣyam 1.1.1

¹⁸A glossary of Philosophical Terms, 56

¹⁹Vacanāmṛta L 7, K 1, S 18, G III.10).

Analysis on the Basis of the Number of Metaphysical/Ontological Entities

At several places in his Vacanāmṛta, Bhagavān Swaminarayan has evidently enunciated about five distinct eternal metaphysical entities.

- “These five entities – Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, Māyā, the īśvara and the jīvas – are eternal.”³²
- “From the Vedas, the Purāṇas, the Itihāsa, and the Smṛtis, I have formed the principle that Jīva, Māyā, Śvara, Brahman and Parameśvara are all eternal.”³³

Even in the Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam, it has been stated in various instances in a variety of ways that there are five distinct metaphysical/ontological entities. Under the Bhāṣya of Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad verse ‘hyakṣarātparataḥparaḥ’³⁴, Bhadrashdas writes:

- *jīveśvaramāyābrahmarūpamuktādisarvebhyaḥparabhūtāḥ ... akṣarāt ... parabhūtaḥ... paramātmā*³⁵

In the 15th Canto of the Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā, when Kṛṣṇa initiates a discussion on the entities, the Bhāṣyakāra indisputably extrapolates the knowledge of five entities.

- *dvāvimaupuruṣaulokekṣaraścākṣaraeva ca*
*lksaraḥsarvānibhūtānikūtaṣṭho'kṣaraucyate*³⁶
- There are two classes of beings, the fallible (*kṣara*) and the infallible (*akṣara*).

All the groups of jīva and īśvara are constituted in the *kṣara*. SādhuBhadreshdas, the Bhāṣyakāra, answers to the question that how to animate entities like the jīva and īśvara can be constituted in the *kṣara*:

- ‘*idānīmāvāpūrvamvāyadākadāpikṣaraṇasvabhāvā'citsamsarga prāptatvāt kṣara itīśabdābhilapyāni*’³⁷

Interestingly, SādhuBhadreshdas’s answer is in consonance with the doctrine of Bhagavān Swaminarayan as the later himself says in the Vacanāmṛta that infinite jīva and īśvara are pervaded by māyā and that they have infinite births and that only associating themselves with Brahman and Parabrahman, they attain liberation.³⁸ Now, there arises a question that why the Akṣara is called *kūṭastha*? All preceding ācāryahave defined *kūṭastha* as either Parabrahman or Māyā or Shakti. However, the Swaminarayan Bhāṣyakāra defines *kūṭastha* Akṣara as ‘Brahman’. This is because his interpretation is in sheer consonance with what Bhagavān Swaminarayan talks about in the Vacanāmṛta. Bhagavān Swaminarayan clearly delineates Brahman and Parabrahman from the māyā. Moreover, in addition to that he also avers that the Brahman and Parabrahman are two distinct entities and not one unlike many of his predecessors have advocated.³⁹

Also, it can be argued that in the Gītā itself, the word *kūṭastha* does not mean Parabrahman. This is because in the very next shloka, Shri Kṛṣṇa demonstrates that Parabrahman is distinct from Akṣara. He says:

- *uttamaḥpuruṣastvanyahparamātmetyudāhṛtaḥ /*
yolokatrāyamāviśyabibhartavyavyaiśvaraḥ //⁴⁰

Therefore, just as Parabrahman has been portrayed distinctly from jīva, īśvara, māya and Brahman in the Vacanāmṛta, the Swaminarayan Bhāṣyakāra, too, writes:

- *akṣarādapipūrvoktasarvavidhabaddhamuktajīveśvaramāyā*
dibhyo'pisadaiva'tyantokṛṣṭātsākṣādakṣara-
brahmaṇo'piuttamaḥutkrṣṭa //⁴¹

About this very “tattvapañcaka”, Sādhu Bhadrashdas corroborates in the third karika of the Vādagantha – The Swaminarayan-Siddhānta-Sudhā that:

- *jīvastatheśvaro māyā brahma paramabrahma ca /*
*nityāḥsatyāḥsadaivetemithobhinnāḥsvarūpataḥ*⁴²

Analysis on the Basis of Sādhana or Spiritual Endeavours

In his Vacanāmṛta, Bhagavān Swaminarayan has stated that out of all *sādhanas*, to believe that one’s own *svarūpa* is Brahmarūpa, that is Akṣararūpa, and to offer bhakti to the Parabrahman is the main sādhanā. This means, therefore, that to do the upāsana of the Parabrahman, one has to inevitably become Brahmarūpa. That is why, in Vacanāmṛta Loyā 7, Bhagavān Swaminarayan writes:

- “Only one who is Brahmarūpa has the right to offer bhakti to Puruṣottama.”⁴³

The Swaminarayan Bhāṣyakāra has explained this principle to us from the original references of the Prasthānatrayī verbatim:

- *tathā hi yobrahmarūpaḥsaevaparamātmā' ptausyādadh*
ikārūṭhaniyamate, brahmasākṣātkārā'bh āveya thāvatpa
ramātmā'nubhavā'sambhavāt //⁴⁴

The Gītā

- ‘*brahmabhūtaḥprasannātmānaśocatinākāṅkṣati /*
samaḥsarveṣubhūteṣumadbhaktiṃlabhate param’⁴⁵

Here, the Bhāṣyakāra says that the word *brahmabhūtaḥ* means the Brahmarūpa Bhakta. Furthermore, only the Brahmarūpa Bhakta acquires *madbhaktiṃ*, that is, Puruṣottama’s Bhakti. At other instances, too, the Bhāṣyakāra has shown the method of sādhanā as well as the result of becoming Brahmarūpa.

³²Vacanāmṛta G I.7

³³Vacanāmṛta G III.10

³⁴Muṇḍakopaniṣad 2.1.2

³⁵Muṇḍakopaniṣad--Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 5.2

³⁶Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 15.16

³⁷Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 15.16

³⁸Vacanāmṛta G III.10

³⁹Vacanāmṛta G II.3

⁴⁰Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 15.17

⁴¹Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 15.18

⁴²Swaminarayan-Siddhānta-Sudhā (kārikā 3)

⁴³Vacanāmṛta L. 7

⁴⁴Taittirīyopaniṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 2.1.1

⁴⁵Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 18.54

- ‘*anenaparamātmaparābhaktiḥsvātmabrahmarūpatvasampattiṃvināmumukṣubhiḥnaivā*’pādituṃśakyāitisiddhāntitam I’⁴⁶
- ‘*sabrahmayogayuktātmāsukhamakṣayamaśnute*’⁴⁷
- ‘*sukhenabrahmasaṃsparśamatyantamsukhamaśnute*’⁴⁸
- ‘*te brahma tadviduḥ*’⁴⁹

In the *bhāṣyam* of this śloka as well, the inevitability of becoming Brahmārūpa is mentioned.

The Upaniṣad

- *adhyātmayogādhiḡamenadevaṃmatvādhiroharaśasokaujahāti* I’⁵⁰

In the Bhagavad-Gītā, the word “*adhyātma*” means Akṣarabrahman⁵¹. It has been elucidated in the śloka that by ontologically being an Akṣarabrahman, the ‘*devam*’ does *manana* and *cintana*, meaning constantly ruminates about the Puruṣottama, and resultantly sublimates himself/herself from the joy and misery, that is the *laukikaviśaya* or the mundane worldly pleasures, and attains *brahmīstīhiḥ* with this very body. Similarly, in the other Upaniṣads, one finds that:

- ‘*sayo ha vaiatparamaṃ brahma vedabrahmaivabhavati*’ I’⁵²
- ‘*pratibodhavidatammatamamatrītvam hi vindate lātmanāvindatevīryamvidyayāvindate*’mṛtam⁵³
- ‘*asyāścasāsraddhamśravaṇamananādibhirbrahmasvarūpa gurorivaivaśīsyasyāpīsaralatayāsahajatayāspaṣatayāsady aḥsatyonirāśankoniruttānaḥśāśvataśca pratyakṣaparamātmavarūpagaṇasvabhāvaiśvaryādyuttam anirvikalpanīścayo bhavati*’ I’⁵⁴
- ‘*sapāpmanāvinirmuktaḥsasāmabhirunnīyatebrahmalokaṃ aetasmājjīvaghaṇātparātparampurīśayampuruṣamīkṣate*’⁵⁵
- ‘*amātraścatūrthā*’vyavahāryaḥprapañcopaśamaḥśivo’dvait aevamoṅkāraātmaivasamviśatyātmanā’*tmānaṃyavevaṃveda a ca evaṃveda* I’⁵⁶
- *brahmavidāpnoti param* I’⁵⁷
- ‘*saeśasarvebhyapāpmaḥbyaudeti ha vaisarvebhyahpāpmaḥbyoyavevaṃveda*’ I’⁵⁸
- ‘*tasyaidamsarvambhavati*’ I’⁵⁹

In this manner, one evidently finds that the Upaniṣads, too, talk at length about the essentiality of becoming Brahmārūpa and offering Bhakti or devotion to the Parabrahman.

⁴⁶Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 18.54

⁴⁷Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 5.21

⁴⁸Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 6.28

⁴⁹Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 7.29

⁵⁰Kāthopaniṣad 1.2.12

⁵¹Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 8.2

⁵²Muṇḍakopaniṣad 3.2.1

⁵³Kenopaniṣad 2/4

⁵⁴Kenopaniṣad-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 2.4

⁵⁵Praśnopaniṣad 5.5

⁵⁶Mandukyopaniṣad 4.1

⁵⁷Taittirīyopaniṣad 2.1.1

⁵⁸Chāndogyaopaniṣad 1.6.7

⁵⁹Brhadāranyakopaniṣad 1.4.10

The Brahmāsūtras: Now, let us examine how the doctrine of Bhagavān Swaminarayan is reflected in the Brahmāsūtra-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam. Just as Bhagavān Swaminarayan has talked about doing *aāpopu*, or having intimacy or oneness with the Brahman in Vacanāmṛta Jetalapura 1, the Brahmāsūtra also talks about cultivating such *aāpopu*.

- ‘*āmagrḥītyadhikaraṇam*’⁶⁰

In this *adhikaraṇa* too, there is an emphasis on becoming Brahmārūpa.

- ‘*brahmātmaikyalaḡṣaṇāyāsyāāmagrḥītere vaparamātmop āsanasādhanēśuśreṣṭhatvādityarthaḥ*’svātmabrahmarūpatv asampattiṃvināpāramātmopāsanādhiḡkāra’*sambhavāttasyā ḥśreṣṭhatvam litthamupāsakātmanyakṣarabrahmabhāvahpā ramopāsane*’*pariheyatayāprasthāpitaḥ*’ I’⁶¹

Analysis on the Basis of the State of Mukti or Liberation

In the Vacanāmṛta, Bhagavān Swaminarayan has talked about two paths that a liberated jīva treads on to the abode of God. The summary of what he writes in Vach. Gh. I-21 is as follows:

•“In a state of liberation to the bhakta continually does the upāsanā of Puruṣottama with dāsabhāva by being Brahmārūpa. When the bhakta attains brahmabhāva, he gets separated from the *bhāva* of Māyā and becomes *guṇātita*. And, when the bhakta leaves his/her body at the time of death, with God’s wish he/she attains a *brahmamayadeha* through the arcimarga.”⁶² Moreover, Swaminarayan highlights another path to travel through, where “you will be reborn as a ghost or a demon, and you will have to suffer. Of course, the fruits of whatever bhakti you may have previously offered to God will be rewarded eventually, but only after much misery.”⁶³ Here, two types of paths have been delineated:

- Arcir-Mārga
- Dhūma-Mārga

In the Bhagavad Gītā too, this has been emphasized empathetically. It says that the liberated one goes north (*uttarāyaṇa*) through the arciradimārga:

- ‘*agnirjyotirahaḡśuklaḡṣaṇmāsāuttarāyaṇam*’ *tatraprayātāgacchanti brahma brahmavidōjanāḥ*’ I’⁶⁴

While exegeting the meaning of the word ‘*tatra*’, the Bhāṣyakāra writes:

- ‘*tatraasmindvimārgepprayātābrahmavidōjanāḥbrahmavidyā āniṣṭhābrahmarūpāparamātmopāsakā brahma apunarāvṛttikaraṃbrahmākhyamlokamakṣaradhāmetiyāva dgacchantidivya*’*kṣaradhāmagatvātatsthaparamātmānaḡla bhantaitibhāvah*’ I’⁶⁵

⁶⁰Brahmāsūtra 3.3.15

⁶¹Brahmāsūtra-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 3.3.15

⁶²Vacanāmṛta G I.21

⁶³Vacanāmṛta G I.18

⁶⁴Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā 8.24

⁶⁵Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 8.24

One also finds a mention of the concept of archirmarga in the Brahmasutra.

- ‘*arcirādyadhikaraṇam*’⁶⁶
- ‘*brahmavido* hi
arcirādīnānekaviśeṣaṇaviśiṣṭenaekenaevaarcirādīnādh
vanāvrajati’⁶⁷.

The Swaminarayan Bhāṣyakāra also describes the second ‘*dhūmamārga*,’ (candramārga) in the sūtra:

- *kṛtātyayenuṣayavānd ruṣṭaśrutibhyāṃyathetamanevaṃ*
ca’⁶⁸
- *kṛtātyayekṛtān āṃkarmaṇ āṃsvargādilaulikaphalodd*
eśen ānuṣ aṅhītānā mattay ebhogenakṣaye sati
anuṣayavānbhu ktāvaṣiṣṭa k armasa
mśliṣṭaevaavarohati’⁶⁹

Within the Vacanāmṛta, devotees have a relationship with Akṣara and Puruṣottama in the *sādhanadaśā* and also after attaining mukti. Mukti is defined as becoming brahmarūpa and offering bhakti to Puruṣottama with *dāsabhāva*. Thus, the state of mukti, one, upon becoming brahmarūpa, continuously offers upāsana to Puruṣottama with *dāsabhāva*.

•“Becoming Akṣararup and serving Shri PuruṣottamaNārāyan is in itself liberation.”⁷⁰

To become Akṣararūpa or brahmarūpa is to attain *brāhmika* qualitative oneness with Brahman. By attaining brahmabhāva of acquires all of the attributes necessary for liberation. When a devotee achieves brahmabhāv, they are redeemed from māyā, become guṇātīta (rise beyond the three *māyik* attributes) and become faultless. This brahmarūpa devotee is then forever engrossed in unhindered bhakti towards Puruṣottama and experiences Bhagwan's supreme bliss.

The Vacanāmṛta acknowledges two types of mukti:

(a) Jīvanmukti and (b) Videhmukti.

Jīvanmukti: Jīvanmukti is liberation whilst living - to attain the *brāhmika* state in this very body. Ultimate liberation is achievable not only after death but can also be attained while living. Parabrahman Swaminarayan has clearly explained this principle in his teachings. The following revelations of Bhagavān Swaminarayan explicitly confirm the abovementioned principles:

“Therefore, if one practicesatsaṃga with absolute sincerity, then no-fault will remain in one’s heart, and one will become brahmarūpa in this very lifetime.”⁷¹“When one attains the company of such a saint, he who is to be attained after death is attained in this lifetime. Therefore, that which is described as *parampada* or moksha it is attained while being alive.”⁷²

⁶⁶Brahmasūtra 4.3.1

⁶⁷Brahmasūtra-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 4.3.1

⁶⁸Brahmasūtra 3.1.8

⁶⁹Brahmasūtra-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 3.1.8, pg. 272

⁷⁰Vacanāmṛta Aśālī

⁷¹Vacanāmṛta S 9

⁷²Vacanāmṛta G III.21

Videhmukti: ‘Videhmukti’ refers to liberation after death. When a devotee who has become Akṣararūpa renounces their material body, they travel along the path known as archimārga towards Akṣaradhāma, the eternal abode of Puruṣottama. By Parabrahman's wish, this mukta acquires a divine *brāhmika* form and experiences supreme bliss while being engrossed in bhakti towards Puruṣottama. Parabrahman Swaminarayan reveals, "After such an ekāntik bhakta leaves his body and is freed from all influences of māyā, he attains Akṣaradhāma via the archimārga."⁷³ In both types of mukti, a brahmarūpa devotee experiences the same divine bliss of Parabrahman. The bliss that a mukta experiences in this world is identical to the bliss experienced in Akṣaradhāma after death. As a result, there is no difference in bliss between one who has attained jīvanmukti and one who has attained videhmukti. The only difference between both types of mukti is the location of where they are experienced. In the Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam, jīvanmukti has also been substantiated by the scriptures. For instance,

- *Yadāsarvepramucy antekāmāye'syahṛdīsritāḥ* /
*athamartyo 'mṛtobhavatyatra brahma samaśnute*⁷⁴

“When all desires clinging to the heart of one fall off, then the mortal becomes immortal and here attains Brahman.” Consequently, the Bhāṣyakāra comments on a śruti about attaining the brāhmik state “*itthamihāsākṣātsrutirevajīvanmuktīṃprasthāpayati*”⁷⁵.

Moreover, he also asserts the jīvanmukti in the Gītā 5.11 and the Brahmasutratadadhikaraṇam 4.1.13–15. In this way, jīvanmukti is accepted within the Prasthānatrayī Swaminarayan Bhashyam. For videhamukti, Bhadreśādās draws upon this when commenting on Chāndogyopaniṣad 8.12.2. He explains that when the soul leaves the body and reaches the supremely glorious form of Parabrahman in the divinely luminous Akṣaradhāma, it receives a divine, Brahmanic body (brahmatanu – the body made up of Akṣarabrahman) in which it continuously experiences the divine bliss of Parabrahman and Akṣaradhāma⁷⁶. Furthermore, he elaborates: - “As a goldsmith takes a piece of gold and turns it into another, newer, more beautiful form, in the same way, this soul, having discarded this body and dispelled its ignorance, receives another, newer, more beautiful... brahman form.”⁷⁷ the Bhāṣyakāra also explains by commenting on the Gītā's verse, “*tatraprayātāgacchanti*”, “after becoming divine the aspirant goes to Akṣaradhāmathrough the divine way.”⁷⁸.

CONCLUSION

Within the history of India, numerous Darśanas originated and attained great prominence. However, over time, these Darśanas became confined to texts and became topics of only deliberation and discussion. They no longer existed as living Darśanas. However, Akṣarapuruṣottama Darśana still thrives today due to Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It is flourish by remaining intertwined within its followers’ lives.

⁷³Vacanāmṛta G I.21

⁷⁴Kāthopaniṣad 6.14

⁷⁵Kāthopaniṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 6.14

⁷⁶Chāndogyopaniṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 8.12.2, pg.386-7

⁷⁷Bṛhadāranyakopaniṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 4.4.4

⁷⁸Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 8.24

The Vacanāmṛta is a principal sacred text of the SwaminarayanSampradāya (religious tradition) delivered by Parabrahman Swaminarayan himself. After two hundred years of Swaminarayan's time, the Prasthānatrayī-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam are authored due to the inspiration of Pramukh Swami. This paper analyzed and assessed the main doctrinal interpretations provided within the Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam and the Vacanāmṛta. The current study accumulated a number of factors where both scriptures propagate the same idea. Although it includes only a few examples, the findings clearly suggest that the Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam thoroughly follows the Vacanāmṛta's principle. We can conclude by saying that Pramukh Swami has sustained the philosophical principle of Swaminarayan found in the Vacanāmṛta, in a scholastic way. The findings of this study have several important implications for those who intend to conduct research on the Swaminarayan-Darśana.

Abbreviation:

IU- Ishavashya Upanishad – IUSB- Ishavashya Upanishad Swaminarayan Bhāṣya, KeU- Kena Upanishad, KU- Katha Upanishad, MU- Muṇḍaka Upanishad, SU- Shwetashvater Upanishad,
BG- Shrimad Bhagavad Gita, Vac.- Vacanāmṛta, SSS- Swaminarayan Siddhant Sudha, SSSK- Swaminarayan Siddhant Sudhākārikā, SV-SvamīnīVāto

REFERENCES

Bhadreshdas Sadhu. *Brahmasūtra-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam*. First, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2009.
ParabrahmaSwaminarayanPrabodhita Akṣarapurūṣottama Darśana (Paricaya). First, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2018.
Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam. First, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2012.
Swaminarayan-Siddhānta-Sudhā: Parabrahma-Swaminarayan-Prabodhitam "Akṣarapurūṣottamadarśanam." First, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2017.
Upaṇiṣad-Marma. Second, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2012.
Upaṇiṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam - Īśādyāṣṭopaniṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam. First, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2009.

Upaṇiṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 2 - Brhadāranyakopaniṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam. First, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2012.
Upaṇiṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam 3 - Chāndogyopaniṣat-Swaminarayan-Bhāṣyam. First, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2012.
Brahma Darśanadas Sadhu. *Vacanāmṛta Rahasya: Part 1*. Sixth, vol. 1, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2011.
Gächter, Othmar. *Hermeneutics and Language in Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā: A Study in the Śābara Bhāṣya*. First, Motilal Banarasidass, 1983.
Mukundcharandas Sadhu. *Vachanamrut Handbook*. Third, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2007.
Paramtattvadas Swami. *An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hindu Theology*. First, Cambridge University Press, 2017.
Potter, Karl H. *Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies: Advaita Vedānta up to Saṅkara and His Pupils*. First, vol. 3, Motilal Banarasidass, 1981.
Encyclopedia of Indian Philosophies: Indian Metaphysics and Epistemology - The Tradition of Nyāya-Vaisesika up to Gauṅgesa. First, vol. 2, Motilal Banarasidass, 1977.
Raymond Brady Williams, and Yogi Trivedi, editors. "Theology and Literature." *Swaminarayan Hinduism: Tradition, Adaptation, and Identity*, First, Oxford University Press, 2016,
Shrutiprakashdas Sadhu. *AkṣarabrahmaNirūpaṇa*. First, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2009.
Akṣarapurūṣottama-Māhātmyam: Part 1. First, vol. 1, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2013.
Śrī Swaminarayansampradāyamām Avatāra-AvatārīNirūpaṇa. Second, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2010.
Śrī Swaminarayan-Siddhāntacandrikā. First, AARSH, Akshardham, 2014.
Vacanāmṛta. Twenty-Third, Swaminarayan Aksharpath, 2006.
