

## CHAPTER 3

### ANALYSIS ON THE BASIS OF METAPHYSICS

Metaphysics means beyond physics. Our Vedic seers visualized cosmic truths through intuition, and they put it in writing for the benefit of posterior generations. This is said by *Yāska*, who composed a dictionary of Vedic words. The sentences साक्षात्कृत-धर्माणः ऋषयो बभूवुः<sup>200</sup> etc. reveal this fact. Indian metaphysics is of interest to the *ācāryas* because its framework of reality includes observers in a fundamental manner. Indian philosophy consists of six orthodox systems and six heterodox systems. Every system has its own metaphysics.<sup>201</sup>

Metaphysics is related to the study of eternal ontological entities in a particular belief system.<sup>202</sup> A symposium of every Vedic thought starts with the inquiry of eternal entities. The *bhakti* traditions in India believe for individual selves to be distinct from Parabrahman.<sup>203</sup> The names of each of these schools also exhibit this emphasis by reflecting the *darśana*'s characteristics ontological enumeration or the essential metaphysical nature, characteristics, role, and relationship between its accepted entities. In this chapter, we will analyze every metaphysical entity of the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedānta.

#### The Vacanāmṛta

First, we will identify these basic entities from Svāminārāyaṇa's perspective. Svāminārāyaṇa explicitly lists the five eternal distinct ontological entities in many teachings of the *Vacanāmṛta*: "Puruṣottama Bhagavān, Akṣarabrahman, *māyā*,

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<sup>200</sup> *Yāska, Nirukta*, 2/11

<sup>201</sup> Rādhākṛṣṇana S., *Indian Philosophy*, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. London, 1940, p.25

<sup>202</sup> Brahmaḍarśanaḍāsa Sādhū, *Vacanāmṛta Rahashya, Svāminārāyaṇa Akṣarapīṭha*, Ahmedabad, 2004, p.2

<sup>203</sup> Ānandasvarupadāsa Sādhū, *Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana Eka Cintana, Svāminārāyaṇa Akṣarapīṭha*, Ahmedabad, 2004, p.74

*īśvara*, and *jīva* - these five entities are eternal.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/7) “From all the Vedas, *Purāṇas*, *Itihāsa* and *Smṛti* scriptures, I have gleaned the principle that *jīva*, *māyā*, *īśvara*, Brahman and Parameśvara are all eternal.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/10) Thus, Svāminārāyaṇa accepts this unique and fundamental belief. He declared those five entities - 1. *Jīva* 2. *Īśvara* 3. *Māyā* 4. Akṣarabrahman (also Akṣara or Brahman) 5. Parabrahman (or Puruṣottama). He states this principle in other *Vacanāmṛtas* as well: (Gadh. 1/1, Sār/5, Sār/6)

### THE SVĀMINĀRĀYAṆA BHĀṢYA

Under the *Bhāṣya* of *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* ‘ह्यक्षरात्परतः परः’<sup>204</sup>, Bhadreśadāsa writes: “जीवेश्वरमायाब्रह्मरूपमुक्तादिसर्वेभ्यः परभूताद् ... अक्षरात्.... परभूतः ... परमात्मा ।” (MUSB 2/1/2, p. 259)<sup>205</sup> In the 15<sup>th</sup> canto of *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā*, when Śrī Kṛṣṇa initiates a discussion on the entities, the Bhāṣyakāra indisputably extrapolates the knowledge of five entities. द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च । क्षरः सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते ॥ (BG 15/16)<sup>206</sup> There are two categories of beings, the *kṣara* (fallible) and the Akṣara (infallible). All the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* are constituted in the *kṣara*. Sādhu Bhadreśadāsa, the Bhāṣyakāra, answers to the question that how can animate entities like the *jīva* and *īśvara* be constituted in the *kṣara*: “इदानीं वा पूर्वं वा यदा कदापि क्षरणस्वभावाऽचित्संसर्गप्राप्तत्वात् क्षर इति शब्दाभिलष्यानि” (BGSB 15/16, p.314)<sup>207</sup>

Interestingly, Sādhu Bhadreśadāsa’s answer is in consonance with the doctrine of Svāminārāyaṇa, as Svāminārāyaṇa himself says in the *Vacanāmṛta* that infinite *jīvas* and *īśvaras* are pervaded by *māyā* and have infinite births. Only by associating themselves with Brahman and Parabrahman, they attain liberation.<sup>208</sup> Now, there arises a question that why Akṣara is called *Kūṭastha*. All preceding *ācāryas* have

<sup>204</sup> *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, 2/1/2, 112 *Upaniṣad*, 2007, S. Joṣī, Bimalī, Trivedī, Parimala Publication, Delhi.

<sup>205</sup> Sādhu Bhadreśadāsa, *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya, *Svāminārāyaṇa Akṣarapīṭha*, Ahmedabad, 2009.

<sup>206</sup> *Bhagavad-Gītā*, Gītā Press, Gorakhpura, 2014.

<sup>207</sup> 15/16, *Gītā* Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya, 2009.

<sup>208</sup> Vach. Gh. III-10, *Ibid*.

defined *kūṭastha* as either Parabrahman or *māyā* or *śakti*. However, the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyakāra defines *kūṭastha* Akṣara as ‘Brahman’. This is because his interpretation is in sheer consonance with what Svāminārāyaṇa talks about in the *Vacanāmṛta*. Svāminārāyaṇa clearly delineates that Brahman and Parabrahman transcend *māyā*. Moreover, in addition to that, he also avers that Brahman and Parabrahman are two distinct entities and not one unlike what many of his predecessors have advocated.<sup>209</sup> Also, it can be argued that in *Bhagavad Gītā* itself, the word *kūṭastha* does not mean Parabrahman. This is because, in the very next *śloka*, Śrī Kṛṣṇa demonstrates that Puruṣottama Parabrahman is distinct from Akṣara. He deciphers:

उत्तमः पुरुषस्त्वन्यः परमात्मेत्युदाहृतः ।

यो लोकत्रयमाविश्य बिभर्त्यव्यय ईश्वरः ॥ (BG 15/17)

“The supreme entity is entirely distinct and is identified as Paramātmān. He pervades three abodes remains unchangeable God. Therefore, just as Parabrahman has been portrayed distinctly from the *jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā*, and Brahman in the *Vacanāmṛta*, the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyakāra, too, writes: “अक्षराद् अपि पूर्वोक्तसर्वविधबद्धमुक्तजीवेश्वरमायादिभ्योऽपि सदैवऽत्यन्तोत्कृष्टात् साक्षादक्षर -ब्रह्मणोऽपि उत्तमः उत्कृष्टः ।” (BGSB 15/18, p. 316)<sup>210</sup>

In the same manner, he asserts in the *Brahmasūtra*: “तथापि जीवेश्वरमायातन्मुक्तादिसर्वपरतः तस्मात् केवलं परात्मन एव परत्वात् तदानन्दपुरस्कारेण तदक्षरादिसर्वसमुत्कृष्टपरमात्मसहजनन्दानन्दं निरूपयितुं स उदाहृतः।” (BSSB 1/1/14, p. 40) “It is clear that even though Akṣara is blissful and transcends *māyā*, has more bliss compare to *jīva*, *īśvara*, and *māyā*. But Brahman is still not as blissful as Parabrahman. Parabrahman is supreme to all.” Here he elaborates the ultimate bliss of Parabrahman then all lower three entities. Moreover, in the BSSB, Bhadrēśadāsa clinched this principle of “*Tattva pañcaka*” throughout the

<sup>209</sup> Vach. Gh. II-3, *ibid*.

<sup>210</sup> *Gītā* Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya, 15.18

commentary. At the very starting point (BSSB 1/1/1, p.2), in the middle (BSSB 1/4/137, p.2), and at the last page of the commentary (BSSB 4/4/4, p.432). About this very “*Tattva pañcaka*”, Sādhū Bhadrēśādāsa also corroborates in the third *kārikā* of the *Svāminārāyaṇa Siddhānta Sudhā*, the *Vādagrantha*:

जीवस्तथेश्वरो माया ब्रह्म परमब्रह्म च ।

नित्याः सत्याः सदैवेते मिथो भिन्नाः स्वरूपतः ॥ SSSK 3 ॥<sup>211</sup>

“All five of these entities- *jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā*, Brahman and Parabrahman are indeed real (*satya*) and always distinct among themselves.” To further emphasize, Svāminārāyaṇa mentions in the *Vedarasa*: “Some claim that *jīvas* and *māyā* are imaginary (*kalpita*). But O *Paramahaṃsas*! The *jīva* is real, *māyā* is real, *īśvara* is real, Brahman is real, and Parabrahman real.” (VR/177) Hence, this chapter discusses these eternal five ontological entities according to Svāminārāyaṇa and the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya’s perspective. Now we will analyze each entity in detail.

## 1. JĪVA

The Bhāṣyakāra presents an appropriate definition of the *jīva*:

जीवयति स्वदेहं यो जीवति च स्वयं यतः।

तस्माद्धि चेतनाऽऽत्माऽयं जीव इति प्रकीर्तितः॥ SSSK 314 ॥

“Because this sentient *ātman* itself lives and enables the body to live, it is called the *jīva*.” In response to the question, who is the most ignorant among all ignorant persons? Svāminārāyaṇa explains that the *jīva* resides in the body, and with the help of it, the *jīva* perceives forms as beautiful and ugly, perceives childhood, youth, and old age, and perceives varieties of names and forms around; but does not perceive itself. Such a person (*jīva*) is the most ignorant among all ignorant. Similarly, he enjoys a great variety of forms through eyes, tastes through the tongue, smells through the nose, and so on; but does not turn inward to enjoy the happiness of his own self, nor does he make an attempt to know one’s own essential nature. He,

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<sup>211</sup> *Svāminārāyaṇa Siddhānta Sudhā Kārikā -3, Svāminārāyaṇa Akṣarapīṭha*, Ahmedabad, 2017

therefore, is the most ignorant among all ignorant persons. Now, since it is a *prima facie* duty of man to know the nature of self (*jivātman*) (Know Thyself), let us turn to analyze the concept of self in Svāminārāyaṇa Vedānta. *Jivā* or soul is the finite individual self. It is a spiritual substance. It is extremely subtle and imperceptible, and hence, regarded as atomic in size. It resides in the body of an organism. It is the very principle of life and its activities. The self is an eternal, indivisible, single, partless entity.

The self is not subject to production and destruction. It was never created, nor can it ever be destroyed, and hence, at the annihilation of the body, the self is not annihilated. Consciousness is the very essence of the self (*jivātman*), while knowledge (cognition) is its essential inseparable quality. The self, under its attributive knowledge, pervades the whole body. Therefore, the self is the real knower, enjoyer, and doer of everything.

However, in the state of worldly existence, the self's knowledge and bliss are in a state of contraction or obscurity. The self (*jivātman*) is beginningless bound by the fetters of *avidya-karma* (ignorance-actions). The gross (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*), and causal (Limp) are the three bodies; while the waking (*jāgrata*), dreaming (*svapna*), and sleeping (*susupti*) are the three states of the *jīva*. The *Upaniṣads* proclaim that *ātman* that is bereft of sin, is to be searched for and is to be realized. In Svāminārāyaṇa's opinion, that knowledge is the true knowledge, which is the knowledge of the field and the field-knower. Through the eyes of knowledge, one ought to know the distinction between the field and field-knower.

### **1.1 Three Bodies and Three States of the *Jīva***

The *jīva* has three types of bodies: *sthūla deha*, *sūkṣma deha*, and *kāraṇa deha*. Within these three states of varying awareness, it experiences the fruits of its

*karmas*.<sup>212</sup> Bhadreśadāsa demonstrates these three bodies and states while commenting on the *mantra*: “अयमात्मा ब्रह्म” he deciphers: “अयं शरीरस्थो हि आत्मा स्थूलसूक्ष्मकारणेतदेतन्त्रयभावाभिघातैः जाग्रत्स्वप्नसुषुप्तीत्यवस्थात्रयभावाभिघातैश्च अभिभूय स्यादेव ।” (MaUSB 1/2, p.313). “The *ātman* which resides in the body is affected by its three bodies: *sthūla deha*, *sūkṣma deha*, and *kāraṇa deha*, and also with three states of it: *jāgrata avasthā*, *svapna avasthā*, and *suṣupti avasthā*.”

The GSB also sheds light while perceiving the sorrowful mind and restless features of Arjuna: “स्थूलसूक्ष्मकारणेतदेतन्त्रयभावान् पार्थस्य ददर्श भगवान्” (GSB 2/1, p.18), Moreover the BSSB highlights the “three states of the *ātman*” in the *Sandhyādhikaraṇa*: “स्वप्नसुषुप्त्याद्यात्मावस्थाः” (BSSB *Sandhyādhikaraṇa* 3/2/1, p.284) Here is the simple analysis of these three bodies and states of the *jīva*.

स्थूलमेकं तथा सूक्ष्मं तृतीयं कारणं मतम्।

तस्य त्रीणि शरीराणि यद्वन्धात् संसृतिं गतः ॥ SSSK 322 ॥

“The physical (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*) and causal (*kāraṇa*) are recognized as the *jīva*’s three bodies. The bonds of these bodies cause the self to be reborn after death.” The three states are as follows:

जागरणं तथा स्वप्नः सुषुप्तिश्चेति बुध्यते।

बद्धानां न तु मुक्तानां तेषां ब्रह्मणि संस्थितेः॥ SSSK 329 ॥

Waking (*jāgrata*), dream (*svapna*), and deep sleep (*suṣupti*) are the *jīva*’s three states. These states apply to bound souls. However, they do not apply to released souls, as such souls have attained oneness with Akṣarabrahman.

1. The waking state (*jāgrata avasthā*)- In this state, the body, all senses, and the internal mind are all attentive and remain in action all the time. (MaUSB 2/1, p.314; Sār. 6).

<sup>212</sup> Vac. Gadh. 1/56, Sār. 6

2. The dream state (*svapna avasthā*)- Only the mind is active and alert, whereas the body and all senses are latent. (MaUSB 2/2, p.315; Sār. 6).
3. The deep sleep state (*susupti avasthā*)- Even the mind becomes inactive; it is characterized by complete sleep. (MaUSB 2/3, p.316; Sār. 6).

We can see the influence of *māyā* on each state correspondingly. (MaUSB 2/1-3, pp.314-316; Sār. 6).

Only when an aspirant gets rid of these three bodies and states, he becomes *brahmarūpa* and go to the abode of Parabrahman. Bhadreśadāsa elucidates in the *Gītā Bhāṣya* while commenting on the verse ‘*Brahmabhūtaḥ prasannātmā...*’ “देहावस्थात्रयसमतिक्रमणलभ्यां ब्रह्मरूपतां प्राप्तः।” (BGSB 18/54, p.360) “By transgressing the three bodies, states, and *guṇas*, one attains the *Brāhmika* state.” The *Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad* calls it the “चतुर्थम्” (MaU 2/5) the fourth state.<sup>213</sup> It should be noted, that physical (*sthūla*), subtle (*sūkṣma*) and causal (*kāraṇa*) bodies are made of *māyā*.

## 1.2 Different from the Body

Svāminārāyaṇa unpacks the eternal truth in the *Vacanāmṛta* that the *jīva* and the body are absolutely different. It is the psycho-physical body that has name and form, and is the product of matter (*māyā*), but not the self. The self is not an appearance of one universal *ātman*, due to *avidya* (nescience); nor is the body an appearance or unreality from any standpoint. The body is subject to birth, growth, change, decay, disease, and death, while the self is the identical unchanging imperishable principle behind and beyond it. The body is real, but it is inferior to the soul, and totally dependent on it. The body is ephemeral and perishable. A man in worldly existence is embodied by a psycho-physical perimeter. No property of body can be attributed to self, nor any property of self be ever attributed to the body. During his life in *samsāra*, his knowledge and bliss are in a state of

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<sup>213</sup> तूर्याऽवस्था स्थितिर्ब्राह्मी मुक्तिरूपा प्रकीर्तिता। जीवतोऽपि भवेल्लभ्या जाग्रदादित्रयात् परा ॥331॥

obscuration. The consciousness or knowledge and bliss are the essential inseparable attributes of the soul (*ātman*).

The very existence and activity of the body are purely for the sake of the soul (self). The body is an instrument for the realization of the soul's end. As the psycho-physical body is controlled and governed by the soul from within, so is the individual soul ruled and governed by the Supreme Soul Parabrahman from within. The soul is like the king (the ruler) within, who rules and governs the whole body together with senses, *antaḥkaraṇa*, etc. A soul is dependent on God, who alone is absolutely independent. In other words, the souls are the body of God, while God is the owner (*śarīrī*) of that body. God is the Inner Self (the witness of the self (*jivātman*)).<sup>214</sup>

The CUSB echoes in the same way while commenting on the *mantra*:

मघवन्मर्त्यं वा इदं शरीरमात्तं मृत्युना,  
तदस्यामृतस्याशरीरस्यात्मनोऽधिष्ठानम् ॥

“एवं नश्वरस्य जडस्य देहस्य चेतनदात्मतोत्यन्तविलक्षणत्वेऽपि यस्य नैव निवृत्तो देहाभावस्तस्य लौकिकद्वन्द्वान्तः पातित्वम्” (CUSB 8/12/1, p. 384) “Here, Prajāpati preaches Indra that this body is perishable. Its death is inevitable. It is just a temporary place of residence for the *ātman*. The *ātman* is eternal despite the fact that it resided in the body. It is indestructible. Therefore, as long as you believe yourself to be the body you will have feelings of mundane misery and happiness. Once the belief that you are the body subsides and you truly realize the *ātman*, then mundane misery and happiness will no longer affect you.” The BGSB also explores it in this way: “नित्यनिर्विकारत्वदेहविलक्षणत्वादिगुणविशिष्टतया” (BGSB 2/25, p.32) “The *jīva* is eternally immutable and distinct from the qualities of the body.” “एवमिहः षड्विकारा जडानुलम्बाः चेतनात्मनि प्रतिषिद्धा” (BGSB 2/20, p.30) “In this way, six inert mutable qualities are prohibited in the sentient *ātman*.” Therefore, the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya and the

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<sup>214</sup> Vac. Sār. 1, p.203



*Vacanāmṛta*, both scriptures assert that the body is completely distinct from the *jīva*.

### 1.3 Ātman-Body Relation

*Ātman* is not merely consciousness, but the support and substratum of knowledge or consciousness. It is the metaphysical ego (i.e. I-sense). It is not just knowledge or cognition, but the locus of knowledge it is. The knowledge or cognition is its attribute (*dharma*). This meaning is explicitly brought out in BS (2/3/29).

We discussed that the *jīva* is different from the body, mind, and all senses. Now we highlight the relationship of both. Svāminārāyaṇa presents this relationship in the *Vacanāmṛta*. “The *jīva* is the king of the kingdom in the form of this body”? (Gadh. 2/12). The body is dependent on the *ātman*.

However, according to the *Garuda Puraṇa*, the seat of the *jivātman* keeps shifting as per changes in the conditions, as follows. During the waking condition, *jivātman* resides in/operates through eyes, during dreaming condition *jivātman* resides in/operates through the throat, during the deep sleep condition, the *jivātman* resides in/operates through the heart; and in the highest-fourth state of realization, the *jivātman* resides in/operates through the head (the Central Nervous System - *Sahasra-cakra of brahmarandhra*).

The BGSB expresses: “Human body is called the ‘क्षेत्रम्’ or field. One who knows the field or ‘क्षेत्रज्ञः’ is called the *ātman*. (BGSB 13/1, p.276) The three bodies could also be labeled as mere instruments. Just as the soil cannot do without a potter. But we should keep it in mind that even without the help of soil a potter can not make any pot. Similarly, with the help of the body *ātman* can work. The Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyakāra explores the relationship between them:

देहस्थो देहभिन्नोऽयं देहेन्द्रियप्रकाशकः।

देहादेस्तं विना नैव स्वकार्येषु प्रवर्तनम् ॥ SSSK 341॥

“The *jīva* is distinct from the body, despite dwelling in it. It illuminates the body and senses. Neither the body nor the senses can engage in their respective tasks in its absence.”

#### 1.4 The Nature and Form of the *Jīva*?

Svāminārāyaṇa explains the nature of the *jīva* in detail. His succinct exposition serves as an important platform to understand further details. Svāminārāyaṇa explores: “The *jīva* is uncuttable, impermeable, immortal, formed of consciousness, and the size of an atom? (*aṇu*)...It pervades the entire body from head to toe yet is distinct from it. Such is the nature of the *jīva*.” (Vac. Jet. 2)

Along with this, the *jīva* is eternal, imperishable, immutable, and individual. (Vac. Gadh. 3/39, 3/4). Svāminārāyaṇa also recapitulates the fine feature of the *jīva* where he mentions the *anādi* form of the *jīva*, tracking its existence back to beyond the re-organization of each universe after the state of termination. Using another analogy, he elucidates in the Vac. Gadh 3/10 that the *jīvas* remain in maya after *pralaya*. In differentiating the *jīva* from its three *māyic* bodies and its three states born of the three *māyic* characteristics, Svāminārāyaṇa wishes to accentuate the *jīva*, in its pure form, without *māyic* faults. As a matter of fact, a significant and striking attribute of the *jīva* is that it is always *śuddha* (pure). For example - “In fact, not a single one of these vicious natures lies within the *jīva*.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/12)

As accurate as this is, though, the *jīva*’s ignorance or contrary knowledge about its true nature is equally real and the cause of eternal pain. Thus, despite being significantly pure in nature, this *māyā* (as the form of ignorance) propels the *jīva* through the relentless cycle of births and deaths, necessitating it to be enlightened and liberated. Again, juxtaposing the self with that which it is not. He explains: “After acquiring knowledge of the *ātman* and the perfect knowledge of Parabrahman’s nature, one should contemplate, ‘I am the *ātman*, characterized by

eternal existence (*sat*), consciousness (*cit*) and bliss (*ānanda*), whereas the body and the *brahmāṇḍa* are *māyic* and perishable. How can they compare to me?” (Vac. Gadh. 1/73)<sup>215</sup>

Svāminārāyaṇa usually says that the *jīva* is the ‘knower’, and related to the body. The world is knowable. The Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya also confirms it. Bhadreśadāsa comments on the second chapter of the *Gītā* by just touching the basic verses: “अभ्यासनयेन आत्मस्वरूपं दृढयति” (BGSB 2/20) “The *Gītā* invariably consolidates the nature and form of the *ātman*.” He further explains that *ātman* remains forever. It has no birth and death. It is endless, unprecedented yet older than the oldest, and ageless. The *ātman* is not eliminated when the *deha* perishes. (*Gītā* 2/20). In the same way, KUSB explores: “त्रिविधशरीरस्थोप्ययं नित्यत्वन्निर्विकारत्वाद् अति सुक्ष्मत्वाच्च न शरीरनाशेपि नश्यति इति भावः” (KUSB 2/18, p.115)

“The *ātman*, which resides within the three bodies, never perishes even though the body dies. It is because of its eternal immutability and the supreme subtleness.” If the *jīva* is unborn and undying, why does the Veda say, “The Creator Created *jīvas*”? (Yajur Veda 8/2/2) The answer is: the *jīvas* were lying dormant in the subtle seed-like state in the *māyā* before creation. They were resting in the body of Parabrahman. So, birth means becoming embodied, and death means getting disembodied. Thus, origination means getting associated with the gross form of the psycho-physical body, and destruction means getting dissociated from the same psycho-physical body. Consequently,

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<sup>215</sup> Svāminārāyaṇa also iterates the *jīva* as being *sat*, '*cit*' and '*ananda*' by using these terms and their synonyms) separately in several other sermons: • *satya*' and '*sattārūpa*': Vac. Gadh. 1.7, Gadh. 1.14, Gadh. 1.16, Gadh.1.47, Loyā.17, Gadh. 2.57, Gadh. 2.66, Gadh. 3.3, Gadh. 3.22, Gadh. 3.33, Gadh. 3.39 '*caityana*' and '*caitanyarūpa*': Vac. Gadh. 1.23, Sār.i, Sār.4, Sār.10, Sār.12, Loyā.7, Loyā.18, Pan.3, Gadh. 2.2, Gadh. 2.17, Gadh. 2.20, Gadh. 2.22, Gadh. 2.55, Gadh. 2.60, Gadh. 2.66, Var.4, Gadh. 3.2, Gadh. 3.3, Gadh. 3.19, Gadh. 3.22, Gadh. 3.27, Jet.2, Jet.3. '*ānandarūpa*' and '*sukharūpa*': Vac. Sār.1, Sār.12, Kār.3, Loyā.10

there is development or *vikāsa* and contraction or *saṅkoca* of knowledge in the two states respectively.

Thus, the *jīva* is a sentient entity. Bhadreśadāsa discloses it in the PUSB:

“एष हि द्रष्टा स्प्रष्टा श्रोता घ्राता रसयिता मन्ता बोद्धा चक्षुरादिज्ञानेन्द्रियमनआद्यन्तः

करणजन्यदर्शनमननादिकर्ता विज्ञानात्मा पुरुषः” (PUSB 4/9, p.211)

“The *ātman* itself becomes the viewer of the scenes, listens to the discussions of others’, smells the fragrances, enjoys the tastes, contemplates, knows and does a variety of other actions which are executed by external senses or inner senses.” The BSSB also speaks of *jīva*’s *jñānatṛtva* and *kartṛtva*:

“जीवात्मेश्वरात्मा च ज्ञः ज्ञातापि, न ज्ञानमात्रम् ... इत्थमात्मनो ज्ञातृत्वे सिद्धे” (BSSB 2/3/19, p.233) “

The *jīva* is not only full of knowledge but also the knower. Thus, the *jīva* is proved as a knower.” *Ātman* is not merely *sat* (IU 15) and consciousness (TUSB 2/5/1), but the support and substratum of knowledge or consciousness (BGSB 13/1). It is the metaphysical ego (I sense or *ahaṁtā*). It is not just knowledge or cognition, but it is the locus of knowledge. Knowledge or cognition is its attribute (*dharma*). This meaning is elaborately brought out in BSSB 2/3/29-32. It is noteworthy that, without the acceptance of the knowing *jīva* as *jñātā*, the knower as the permanent identical self, the problem of memory and recognition cannot be expounded. Amid the changing experiences, the experiencer is the same.

### 1.5 Multiplicity and Atomicity

The self’s individuality is mentioned here. It is noteworthy that all *jīvas* are ontologically the same, but they are not one entity. The *Vacanāmṛta* declares its multiplicity: “In addition, when all of those *brahmānds* are destroyed, all other *jīvas* lie dormant within *māyā*, whereas the devotees of Parabrahman attain the abode of Parabrahman.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/12) Svāminārāyaṇa also refers to this fact in many *Vacanāmṛtas* (Vac. Var.6, Gadh. 3/10, and Gadh. 3/39). In the same way, the multiplicity of *jīvas* and *īśvaras* is described by the Bhāṣyakāra as well. In his

commentary of KU, he elucidates: “नित्यो नित्यानां चेतनश्च चेतनानाम् इति बहुवचनेन बहुत्वख्यापनाज्जीवेश्वराणां परस्परं च स्वरूपभेदः प्रस्थापितः” (KUSB 5/13, p.155).

At many places, the scriptures use plural nouns and pronouns:

“He (Akṣarabrahman) is the one eternal self among many eternal selves”..(SU 6/13)

“That from which these beings are born...” (TU 3/1/1)

“From that, all these beings are born ...” (PU 1/14)

“... Whereas all beings are *kṣara*.” (BG 15/16)

## 1.6 Atomic size

Schools of Vedanta have traditionally advocated and defended one of three sizes for the individual soul. The *jīva* has its locus specifically in the heart. The psycho-physical body, as such is inert and insentient, but it appears conscious or sentient because *jīva* as the conscious-sentient dam by its attributive-consciousness pervades the whole body from top to bottom, and thus on account of the sentience of the *jīva*, the sentiency of the body is felt, and also it appears indistinct from the body. The *jivātman* is extremely subtle and finer, of atomic size, yes it is extremely subtle like an atom, and is of the nature of consciousness; bliss. And so do the *Śrutis* say: "The extremely subtle like an atom the self is, and ought to be known by thought. A hundredth part of the point of a hair is subdivided into a hundredfold, and one part of that later is the size of an ātman. It is as sharp and subtle pointed, as the point of an arrow. The seat of the *jīva* is our heart, the heart composed of fivefold material elements. The *Upaniṣads* are also following the same tradition. For example, the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* states: “Know by thought this atomic *ātman* being immeasurably small in size, in which the vital breath enters fivefold.” (MU 3/1/9). Bhadreśadāsa also consolidates this doctrine and argues एषोणुरात्मेत्यात्मनोऽणुत्वस्य साक्षात्श्रवणाद् आत्मनो विभुत्वं वा मध्यमपरिमाणत्वं वदन्तः श्रुतिमतप्रतिभटा इति विज्ञायते ॥ (MUSB 3/1/9, p.290) “As the *Śruti* clearly states the *aṇuparimāṇa* (like an atom) of the *jīva*, so those who insist that *jīva* is

either *vibhuparimāṇa* (all-pervading) or *madhyamparimāṇa* (as the size of the particular body) are going right conflicting from the path of the Vedic *Śrutis*.”

The *Śvetāśvetara Upaniṣad* analogizes: “It is as fine as the tip of a goad.” (SU 5/8) The exceedingly subtle self (*ātman*) inhabits in the heart of the our body (PU 3/6, BU 4/3/7, Vac. Kār.12, Gadh. 2/34, Gadh. 3/4, Loyā. 15). Bhadreśadāsa also cites these facts from BS 2/3/22, where he argues that the all-pervasive *atman* term is stated in CU 3/14/2, 3 and BU 4/4/25 refers to Parabrahman, not the individual soul. Therefore, we conclude by saying that the individual self (*jīva* or *ātman*) is of atomic size.

## 1.7 Dependency

We discussed that the *jīva* is a knower, agent, and enjoyer of all bodily actions. Even though it acts like a king and rules the body, Svāminārāyaṇa ardently states: “Parabrahman is the very life and vital force of all *jīvas*. Without him, those *jīvas* are incapable of doing anything or enjoying anything.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/37). Bhadreśadāsa mentions this fact and highlights it in his commentary of KeU 1/2, which narrates Parabrahman as: “The ear of the ear, the mind of the mind, the tongue of the tongue, the vital breath of the vital breath, the eye of the eye.” And he concludes, “तत्तत्क्रियासामर्थ्यप्रदाता अक्षराधिपतिः वेदादिशास्त्रेषु प्रसिद्धः” (KeUSB 1/2, p.34) “The Vedas and other scriptures echo that Parabrahman, who is the lord of Akshardhām, gives power to each self to perform its action.” Bhadreśadāsa explores further: “The ears can only hear because it is Parabrahman who has empowered them with the capacity of hearing. The mind can only think and perceive because Parabrahman has infused it with the power of thinking and perception. The body is enlivened not by the breath alone, but by Parabrahman who breathes life into that vital breath.” Bhadreśadāsa explores that Parabrahman gives the power to all our inner and outer faculties so they can engage in their appointed works. The body and all its entities become mere *jīva*’s instruments. Moreover, even the *jīva* cannot change its state without the wish

and power (*jñānaśakti*, *icchāśakti*, and *kriyāśakti*) of Parabrahman (Svāminārāyaṇa has also mentioned it in Vac. Gadh. 1/65).” As mentioned in the SSS:

इच्छाशक्तिः पराल्लब्धा ज्ञानशक्तिस्तथैव च।

क्रियाशक्तिः पराल्लब्धा जीवेन कृपया प्रभोः ॥ SSSK 334॥

“By Parabrahman’s grace, the *jīva* acquires the ability to desire, know and act. In this way the *jīva* is so powerful in knowing, doing, and enjoying the objects yet it cannot do it independently. By the eternal permission of Parabrahman, it can function properly. (AUSB 3/1, BSSB 2/3/19-32, 2/3/33-40)

### 1.8 Is the *Jīva* a Component (*Aṃśa*) of Parabrahman?

Svāminārāyaṇa states: “Therefore, *jīvas* residing in *māyā*; are also eternal, and they are not components of Parabrahman” (Vac. Gadh. 3/10, p.600) then what about the *Gītā*’s revelation: “ममैवांशो जीवलोके जीवभूतः सनातनो” (*Gītā* 15/7). Svāminārāyaṇa explains in the *Vacanāmṛta* that *jīvas* who are called *aṃśas* of Parabrahman resist and collect their five *indriyas* and mind from the consumption of the senses and keep them suppressed. (Gadh. 2/8). This is the matter of debate discussion in the BS 2/3/43 and 2/3/63 (*Aṃśadhikāraṇa*), where Bhadreśadāsa argues that Parabrahman becomes in parts is the principle that contradicts *śāstrika* doctrines that show Parabrahman to be *akhaṇḍa*, *niraṃśa*, and *niravayava*. As a matter of fact, these texts reveal that the *jīvas* as being the *aṃśa* of Parabrahman means those *jīvas* are devotees of Parabrahman. They are called *aṃśas* to mention the virtue of *jīvas* attained from Parabrahman. This is indeed followed by the Bhāṣyakāra while commenting on the verse 15/7 of the *Gītā*. In this manner, the *jīva* is totally dependent on Parabrahman but by Parabrahman’s wish, the *jīva* possesses few rights to do its activities allowed by Him. in the conclusion we can say that the *jīva* is not entirely subordinate nor a captivated das. It has the freedom to make, unmake and remake its *karmas*, which are also provided by the immense grace of Parabrahman.

## 2. ĪŚVARA

The Bhāṣyakāra states:

ऐश्वर्यादीश्वरः प्रोक्तो जीवाद्भिन्नः स्वरूपतः ।

ज्ञानं ज्ञाता च नित्यश्च मायाबद्धोस्त्यनादितः ॥ SSSK 347 ॥

“The *īśvarātman* is different from the *jīvātmān*. It is known as *īśvara* due to its significant powers. It embodies wisdom and is the knower. It is eternal and has always been bound by *māyā*.” The word ‘*īśvara*’ as such signifies a separate ontological principle, a class of beings higher than *jīvas*, but unquestionably subservient to Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman.<sup>216</sup> One basic fact of Svāminārāyaṇa School is that we should keep it our mind that by the term ‘*īśvara*’ one should not be misguided with Parabrahman or Paramātman. It is a distinct eternal entity. The *īśvara* has the characteristics that match with the *jīva*, yet it possesses more power and valor than the *jīva*. Therefore whatever has been written about the *jīva*, to some extent it also stands for *īśvara*.

*Īśvara* is a distinct reality. It refers to the whole class of cosmic selves who are engaged in the evolution and care (administration) of the universes. *Īśvaras* are a separate class of reality, which stands higher than *jīvas* (individual selves), but is subservient to *māyā*, Akṣarabrahman, and Parabrahman. *Īśvaras* too are absolutely dependent on Parabrahman. They too are ruled, controlled, and supported by Parabrahman. Thus *īśvaras* are the gods of lower-order headed by the Supreme Godhead Parabrahma-Puruṣottama.

The need to postulate a distinct category of *īśvara* in Svāminārāyaṇa Vedānta is well-explicated. *Īśvara* as each world’s creator, sustainer, and destroyer. They are too beginningless-eternal. *Īśvaras* (cosmic selves) have their atomic size as well, though of course they are endowed with *aiśvarya* (power-opulence) as a

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<sup>216</sup> SSSK 348



property-specific to them. In addition, their *jnāna-śakti* is much expanded to cover the knowledge of the whole world to which they are attached.

The *īśvara* has the quality of *sat, cid, ānanda* (existence-consciousness-bliss) manifest in a much higher degree (quantum) than the *jīvas*. The power, strength, capacity, life-span, and knowledge of *īśvara* are comparatively far more wide and excellent than the *jīvas*. (*avidyā-karma*) that limit and bind the *jīvas*. They are bound (conditioned) by the adjuncts of *māyā*. The Inner Self and the Witness in all *īśvaras* is Parabrahman as the *Antaryami Ātman*. He is their supporter, controller, and the source of power and strength in them.

## 2.1 Common Characteristics of *Jīvas* and *Īśvaras*

Svāminārāyaṇa has described both the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* often together. “That Virāṭa Puruṣa is just like this *jīva*, and his actions are also similar to that of the *jīva*.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/31, p.459). Moreover, in Vac. Gadh 1/45, Svāminārāyaṇa explains how Parabrahman is the controller of all *jīvas* and *īśvaras*. He also mentions the fruits of *karmas* of all *jīvas* and *īśvaras* that are granted according to their *karmas*. The Bhāṣyakāra also highlights the same fact: “तत्सर्गनिबन्धनसंसरणस्वभावाप्तबद्धजीवेश्वरसमूहमिश्रितं...जगत् परेण ब्रह्मणा अक्षरब्रह्मणा च वास्यम्” (IUSB 1, p.6) “Brahman and Parabrahman pervade the world which is full of *jīvas* and *īśvaras* who are bound by *māyic* qualities such as the following the circle of life and death.” Moreover, he clears the category of devas: “जीवेश्वरकोटिगता देवाः” (IUSB 4, p.12) “Devas fall in the *īśvara* category.” In addition, Parabrahman creates abodes; therefore, they can have a relish of the fruits of their *karmas*.”

Like the *jīva*, the *īśvaras* also have three bodies which are the fragments of the creation of the world. “उत्पत्तिरिह तत्तज्जीवेश्वरचेतनानुष्ठितकर्मानुसृततत्तत्फलोपभोगानुकूल-तत्तल्लोकपालादिसर्जनम्” (BSSB 1/1/2, p.13) “Here creation means the production of the various *lokas*

(abodes) and commodities for enjoyment within those abodes. These all are created according to *jīvas* and *īśvaras*’ *karmas*.” The *īśvaras* are ontologically metaphysically distinct from all four entities accepted in the Svāminārāyaṇa Vedānta. Although *īśvara* as an eternal entity, is greater than *jīvas* but is still in the clutch of *māyā* and most inferior to Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman.<sup>217</sup> They are also eternal entities. “न प्रलये जीवेश्वरात्मनो नश्यन्ति न वा सर्गे नूतना उत्पद्यन्ते इति सिद्धम्” (BSSB 2/3/18, p.232). “Even after the dissolution of each *brahmāṇḍa*, they exist in a dormant state within *māyā* until called again to activity in the next round of cyclic creation.” As mentioned: “जनिमृतिप्रवाहे संसरन्ति ते जना बद्धा जीवेश्वराः” (IUSB 3, p.11) “*Jīvas* and *īśvaras* are eternally bound by *māyā* and are trapped in the circle of life and death.”

By the power of Parabrahman, they can indulge in various enjoyment and wish to do several activities,<sup>218</sup> even while being wholly dependent on him (and Akṣarabrahman). “जीवेश्वरकर्तृत्वं न स्वातन्त्र्येण अपि तु परात् सहजानन्दपरमात्मनः तन्नित्येच्छया अक्षरब्रह्मणश्चैव संभवति ।” (BSSB 2/3/41, p.244) “*Jīvas* and *īśvaras* are capable of doing action only by the grace of Parabrahman and Aksahrbrhman.” Moreover, like *jīvas*, *īśvaras* are also countless बद्धजीवेश्वरसमूहमिश्रितं...जगत् (IUSB 1, p.6) in number and atomic in individual size. “अणुपरिमाण एव न तु विभुः” (BSSB 2/3/20, p.233).

## 2.2 Distinction

After a brief explanation of the similarities to *jīvas*, we now concentrate on the distinct characteristics of the form, function, and nature of *īśvaras*. Svāminārāyaṇa states: “The five *bhūtas* resting in the body of *īśvaras* are known as *mahabhūtas* and those *bhūtas* sustain the bodies of all *jīvas*. On the other hand, the five *bhūtas* in the body of the *jīvas* are minor and are incompetent in sustaining others. Also, the *jīvas* possesses limited knowledge compared to the *īśvaras*, who are all-knowing.

<sup>217</sup> SSSK 348

<sup>218</sup> BSSB 2/3/19, p.233, BSSB 2/3/33, p.240

One should learn such a method of interpretation so that the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* are not understood to be equal to each other.”(Vac. Pan. 2, p.356). Thus, they both are ontologically different entities.

### Īśvara’s form

(*Vacanāmṛta* Sār. 6, AUSB 1/1/2 and the SSSK 350-51)

Body	State	Name	Examples
Virāṭa	Utpatti	Vairāja	Brahmā
Sūtrātmā	Sthiti	Hiraṇyagarbha	Viṣṇu
<i>Avyākṛta</i>	<i>Pralay</i>	<i>Īśvara</i>	Śiva etc.

Three bodies and three states are the same in *jīvas*, *īśvaras* according to their power. As a result, they too, have to do spiritual endeavors for emancipation. They also need to attain *Brahmavidyā* for final liberation. Now, Svāminārāyaṇa explains the lifespan of the *īśvaras*: “The lifespan of that Virāṭa Puruṣa (*īśvara*) is two *parārdhas* (i.e.,  $2 \times 10^7$  human years). The creation, sustenance, and dissolution of this world are his three states, just as waking, dream, and deep sleep are the three states of the *jīva*. *virāṭa*, *sutrātman* and *avyākṛta* are the three bodies of that Virāṭa Puruṣa.”(Vac. Gadh. 1/12). Bhadreśādāsa also follows this principle: “द्विपरार्धकालसीमितं तदायुः” (AUSB 1/1/2, p.419). *Īśvaras* as we said, are different and superior to *jīvas*. *Īśvaras* and *jīvas* are both under the authority of Parabrahman.

### 2.3 Īśvaras’ Bondage

Here the being of the Vairāja Puruṣa (also known Virāṭa Puruṣa) as a *īśvara*, who is bound by *māyā* but lives longer lifespan. His life entails two *parārdhas* ( $2 \times 10^{17}$  human years). Since *īśvaras* are suffered from ignorance, Svāminārāyaṇa mentions explicitly in Vac. Gadh. 2/31 that Virāṭa Puruṣa has bondage of *māyic* cycle. Therefore they require *brahmavidyā*. But can they attain it? Bhadreśādāsa answers:

yes. “जीवकोटिगतानामीश्वरकोटिगतानां चोभयविधदेवानाम् अपि ब्रह्मविद्यायामधिकारोस्ति” (BSSB 1/3/26, p.112) “They are eligible for *Brahmavidyā* just as the *jīva*.” Afterward, they attain the ultimate liberation via *arciradi* marg. The Bhāṣyakāra deciphers: “उत्तरायणं... जीवेश्वराणां कृते मोक्षमार्गतयाधारभूतम्” (PUSB 1/10, p.182). “The northern way (celestial way to the abode of Parabrahman) is the substratum for the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* providing the way to liberation.” So, in conclusion, we got the point that *īśvaras* are subject to bondage and liberation like the *jīvas*.

## 2.4 How *īśvaras* Work:

We discussed that *īśvaras* have their particular role and function in the universe assigned by Parabrahman.<sup>219</sup> Bhadreśadāsa also comments to AU 1/1/2. The Bhāṣyakāra explains: “लोकपालान् सृजानि” (AUSB 1/1/2, p.491) “Parabrahman gives bodies to *īśvaras* as a role of the creation.” At the commencement of this creation, He (Parabrahman) saw (contemplated), “These worlds (have been created by me). Now, let me create the guardians (*īśvaras*) of the worlds.”

Here, we can present *īśvaras* collectively as all those sentient beings involved in the creative and governing processes of a *brahmānda* (e.g. Prādhān Puruṣa, Virāṭa Puruṣa, Anirūddha, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, etc.) encompassing the Hindū triad (Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Śiva), those divinities who energize various forces of nature (Sūrya, Candra, Varuṇa, etc.) and all *avatāras*, albeit with the special re-entering of Parabrahman (Matsya, Varāha, Nṛsiṃha, Rāma, Kṛṣṇa, etc.)

The Bhāṣyakāra also narrates it in detail in the BSSB: “इदानीं प्रसङ्गात् प्रपञ्चक्रम उपस्थाप्यते...तस्माच्च वैराजपुरुषाद् ब्रह्मा विष्णुर्महेशचेति मिथोभिन्नचेतनास्त्रयो देवाः समुत्पद्यन्ते... ततः समग्रस्थावरजङ्गमिका सृष्टिः समुद्पद्यते” (BSSB 2/3/16, p.229) “By the will of Parabrahman, the entire universe is created. To briefly elaborate, points to a set *īśvaras* in as the lords of countless

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<sup>219</sup> Vac. Gadh. 1/41

millions of *brahmāndas* which are full of sentient and non-sentient entities. There he explicitly mentions ‘Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Maheśa.’ Svāminārāyaṇa is denoting that from the converging of *māyā* (known in the creative process as *Mūla-Prakṛti*) and a liberated soul (given the designation ‘*Mūla-Puruṣa*’), and who together go on to create each individual *brahmānda*. This set of beings includes Virāṭa Puruṣa, who is the inner self of the universe. (Vac. Gadh. 2/10, and Gadh. 2/31). Its subtle body, like the subtle body of a *jīva*, consists of all internal cognitive senses.

## 2.5 The Relation Between *Īśvaras* and Parabrahman

In the Indian philosophical system, Parabrahman is accepted as the creator and governor of the world would seem to fit precisely with *īśvara*. By their name, too, etymologically meaning ‘lord’ or ‘powerful, one can be forgiven for mistaking ‘*īśvara*’ to denote Parabrahman, a personal deity. *Īśvaras* are mere village chiefs in front of Parabrahman as a world-emperor. This is most vividly presented in the Vac... “Brahmā, Viṣṇu, and Śiva pray to that Parabrahman, “*Mahārāja!* Please have mercy upon us” (Vac. Pan. 4, p.369). It expresses Parabrahman’s outright supremacy over even Brahma, Viṣṇu and Maheśa (Śiva).<sup>220</sup>

The *Śruti* declares this fact: “तमीश्वराणां परमं महेश्वरम्” (SU 6/7) “Parabrahman is the *Īśvara* (Lord) of all *īśvaras* (lords).” Svāminārāyaṇa proclaims: “This manifest form of Parabrahman Bhagavān before your eyes is ... the Lord of all lords (*īśvarnā paṇ īśvara*).” (Vac. Gadh. 3/38, p.664) The Bhāṣyakāra confirms: “ब्रह्मपरब्रह्मणोः जीवेश्वरप्रशासकत्वाज्जीवेश्वराणाम् इच्छाक्रियाज्ञानशक्तयः तदधीना इति वस्तुस्थितिः । एवं सत्यपि यथा कश्चित् सम्राट्मात्यो वा कस्मैचित् स्वप्रशास्य जनपदाधिकारिणे कांश्चनाधिकारान् प्रदाय तद्विनियोगे कार्यविशेषे अनुमितिमपि प्रयच्छति ‘त्वयैतत् त्वदिच्छया विनियोज्यम्’ इत्यादि ।” (BSSB 2/3/42, p.246)

The controller, inspirer, and mobilizer of the *īśvara* known as Virāṭa Puruṣa is Puruṣottama. (Vac. Gadh. 2.31, BSSB 2/4/14-15 p.261-262, KeUSB 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>

<sup>220</sup> SSS M-2, p.294

*Khaṇḍa*, p.49-56). Svāminārāyaṇa further explains this prominent fact that this doctrine is the most important and efficient to understand *avatāra-avatārin* principle, a significant and outstanding feature of the Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana. As we will learn in the last portion of this chapter about the greatness of Parabrahman, where He is mentioned as the *avatārin*, the cause of all *avatāras*, on the other hand, these *avatāras* themselves are metaphysically *īśvara* and thus ontologically different from Parabrahman. It is only by Parabrahman's *aṇu-praveśa* (kind of 're-entering'). As a result, the *īśvaras* become able to function properly and finish the task which has been given by Parabrahman.<sup>221</sup>

Bhadreśadāsa also averred: “कार्यविशेषनिमित्तसामयिकविभिन्नचेतनान्तरानुप्रवेशरूपेण यथा रामकृष्णादिविभूतयः” (BSSB 1/2/30, p.83) “Parabrahman reentered *īśvaras* like Rama, Kṛṣṇa, etc. and empowered them in order to fulfill some special tasks for a certain period.” It is noteworthy to mention here that apart from their functioning in general, *īśvaras* also cannot experience anything independently without the grace of Parabrahman.<sup>222</sup>

All being of the universe attain their name and form by Parabrahman's inspiration. In Vac. Kār.1, Svāminārāyaṇa asserts that when the *īśvaras* (and *jīvas*) were inert at the state of deep sleep at the time of final dissolution without assuming a name and form then Parabrahman inspired them to assume them. Consequently, they come into action. The Bhāṣyakāra states: “परमात्मसंकल्पाधीनतया जीवेश्वरात्मावृत्तवासनाजन्यदेहयोग एव यथोक्तबन्धे तद्विपर्यये वा कारणम् |” (BSSB 3/2/6, p.287). “In all ways and in every state, then, the *īśvaras* are absolutely dependent on Parabrahman's wish for their bondage, freedom, functioning, and experiences, and for their very existence.”

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<sup>221</sup> Vac. Gadh. 2/31, Pan.7

<sup>222</sup> Vac. Gadh. 2/21

The Bhāṣyakāra concludes: “मुक्तजीवेश्वरमायादिभ्योपि सदैव अत्यन्तोत्कृष्ट-अक्षरब्रह्मणोपि पुरुषोत्तमस्य उत्तमत्वोक्त्या तन्निखदिकपरमशक्तिसामर्थ्यविभवः सूच्यते” (GSB 15/18, p.316) Parabrahman is superior to Akṣara which is superior to the *jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā* and *mukta*. That reflects the unlimited controlling power and sovereignty of Parabrahman. We can conclude the *īśvara* topic with SP: “An *īśvara* is an eternal *cetanā* (sentient) entity distinct from Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, and *jīvas*. Despite being extremely powerless when compared to Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman; these *īśvaras* bear greater power and knowledge than *jīvas*. Through his wish, Paramātmā inspires them to perform tasks of creation, etc., of the *brahmāṇḍa*. Like the *jīvas*, these *īśvaras* are countless in number, infinitesimal (extremely small), indivisible, and possess other such qualities. They are *jñānasvarūpa*,” *jñātā* (those who know), and eternally bound by *māyā*. They perform righteous and unrighteous *karmas* (actions) and experience the fruits of those actions. Pradhāna Puruṣa, Virāṭa Puruṣa, the deities of their senses (*Indriyas*) and the inner faculties (*Antaḥkaraṇa*), Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Maheśa, and others are all beings of the *īśvara* category, and these *īśvaras* are ontologically and inherently distinct from one another.”

### 3. MĀYĀ

In the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School of philosophy, out of the five eternal entities, the only non-sentient entity is *māyā*. The *Svāminārāyaṇa* Bhāṣyakāra deciphers the very nature of *māyā*:

माया त्रिगुणयुक्ता स्याद् ब्रह्मपरात्मशासिता ।

परिणामवती नित्या विस्मयकारिणी जडा ॥ SSSK 279 ॥

“*Māyā* which is characterized by the three *guṇas* is governed by Akṣara and Puruṣottama. It is ever-changing, eternal, non-sentient, and astounding.” *Svāminārāyaṇa* also deciphered the nature of *māyā* in the *Vacanāmṛta*. “*Prakṛti* or *māyā* is characterized by the three *guṇas*, and by both insentience and sentiency. It is eternal, indistinct, the field of all beings and all elements including *mahattattva*, and also the divine power of Parabrahman.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/12, p. 40). Known

vividly as *māyā*, *mahā-māyā*, *mūla-māyā*, *prakṛti*, and *mūla-prakṛti*, it is the cause of the universal material source of the universe. The form nature and function of *māyā* as matter and ignorance that all is encompassed within this topic.

Thus, the third metaphysical principle in the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedānta is *māyā prakṛti*. *Prakṛti* is real (*vastavika*). It is unconscious (*acid*), and also insentient, inert (*jada*). It is pervasive (*vibhu*) and enveloping. Except for Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman released souls, and *paramadhāma*, it pervades everywhere and envelopes everyone. In its original state it is unmanifest (*avyakta*) and unmodified (*nirviśesa*). It is the power or the accessory of Parabrahman. It is an instrument useful for the purpose of creation. It exists in the body (*śarīra*) of the Lord as its part and parcel. It is pervaded by God. It operates only at the will of God. It is totally controlled and supported by God. It has its sway only over the bound souls (*baddha - jīvas*) laboring under the spell of *avidyā-karma*. It also has a sway over the cosmic-selves laboring under the cosmic fetters of *avyakrtadeha*. It is the primordial matter, extremely subtle but most powerful to manifest in its myriad forms. It, therefore, is described as the most mysterious and wonderful (*vismāyākaraka*), for its penetration, effect, cog, mire, and wiles and tricks are extremely difficult to decipher. It is impossible to get rid of the fetters of *māyā* by self-efforts. It envelopes the souls and causes false identification. It conceals the true nature of atman from the sight of the self, and it comes in the way of comprehending the true nature of Brahman and Parabrahman. In short, it is the cause of bondage both to *jīvas* and *īśvaras*.

In the *Vacanāmṛta*, *māyā* is defined as, “*Trigunatma tamah Krsnagaktirdehatadidayoh; jīvasya cahamamataheturmāyā avagamyatam.*”<sup>223</sup> *Māyā-prakṛti* is the primordial matter having three *guṇas* (*sattva- rajas-tamas*) as

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<sup>223</sup> Vac. Gadh.1/12



its properties. It is of the nature of darkness-nescience. It is the power, the accessory of the Lord Parabrahman. It is the cause of false identification and attachment with one's body and its relations. The three *guṇas*, namely, *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are the properties of *māyā-prakṛti*. As we discussed, *prakṛti* is endowed with three *guṇas*. It is insentient-inert but is at times described as *cidatmika* because of the sentient souls (*jīvas*) and cosmic-selves (*īśvara*) rest in its bosom. It is eternal, ever existent. It is *nirviśesa*, for in its original state it is bereft of manifestations of particulars such as earth, water, etc.

### 3.1 *Māyā* is Real

In the Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana, *māyā* and other four ontological eternal entities are real. This fact also reflects the rich tradition of Vedic debate and discussion entailed in the Indian philosophical system. It is noteworthy to recount the debate here in part. Svāminārāyaṇa starts his discourse with pointedly addressing the *Advaitīn* regarding the central doctrine of strict monism. He says to him: “You proclaim that in reality, only Brahman exists. Moreover, you say with the exception of that Brahman, *jīvas*, *īśvaras*, *māyā*, the world, Vedas, the *śāstras*, and the *purāṇas* are all illusory. I can neither understand this concept of yours nor can I accept it.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/39, p.99) The *Advaitīn* presented his defense using vivid arguments, but each time, the *Vacanāmṛta* notes that Svāminārāyaṇa raised doubts to the *Advaitīn*'s response leaving the query unresolved. Then Svāminārāyaṇa commenced to resolve the query himself. “The words of those who have procured the *savikalpa* state noted in the Vedas, the *śāstra*, the *Purāṇas*, etc. mention all of those entities as being *satya* (real). However, the words of those who have attained the *nirvikalpa* state describe all of those entities as being *asatya* (non-real). In reality, however, they are not *asatya* (non-real). They are only described as being *asatya* (non-real) because they cannot be seen due to the influence of the *nirvikalpa* state.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/39, p.100)

In this manner, for all alterations, change, and transience, the universe is real. But sometimes the scriptures state it ‘*asatya*’. What does that mean? How can it be interpreted? The discernment of ‘*satya*’ and ‘*asatya*’ is analyzed in the *Vacanāmṛta*. It defines, “All forms that are the result of the entities evolved from *māyā* are *asatya*. Why? Because all those forms will be ruined in time. Conversely, the form of Parabrahman in Akṣaradhāma and the form of the *muktas* - the (liberated) attendants of Parabrahman - are all *satya*.” (Gadh. 3/38, p.664). The Bhāṣyakāra also affirms: “यदिदं किञ्च जडचेतनात्मकजगत् प्रत्यक्षतो शब्दतो परिज्ञायते तत् सर्वमपि सत्यमिति वास्तवं पारमार्थिकमेव न तु मिथ्या” (TUSB 2/6/3, p.380) “The world (*māyā*), which consists of sentient and non-sentient entities and is known to us through the perception or verbal testimony, is not illusory; it is real therefore cannot be dismissed.” Moreover, Bhadrēśadāsa clarifies: “जगज्जन्मादिकर्तृत्वस्य ब्रह्मलक्षणत्वेन उपस्थापनात् तस्य पारमार्थिकत्वस्वाभाविकत्वादिसिद्धेः नैतच्छ्रुतिरजतवदध्यस्तं न वा जपाकुसुमन्यायेनौपाधिकमिति” (BSSB 1/1/2, p.16). “When Parabrahman creates this world through *māyā*, that is also real. It is not superimposing a false appearance upon the reality or mixing up the real and the unreal as we see a snake instead of a rope. Moreover, it is not as the particular appearance which generates due to the other factor like *japākusuma*.”

Yet, being composed of *māyā*, it can (without a firm refuge in Parabrahman) befuddle the *jīva* away from Parabrahman. Nonetheless, the creation of *māyā* is useful in another way. The world, the creation of *māyā* has set a platform where the *jīva* can perform spiritual endeavors and transcend *māyā* and reach Parabrahman.

### 3.2 Three *Guṇas* of *Māyā*

Svāminārāyaṇa states that *māyā* consists of three *guṇas*: “*Māyā* has three essential qualities, or *guṇas*, known as *sattva* (literal goodness), *rajas* (passion) and *tamas* (darkness).” (Vac. Loyā.10, p.319). Similarly, Bhadrēśdāsa pronounces: “एषा सर्वैरनुभूयमाना गुणमयी सत्त्वरजस्तमाख्यत्रिगुणात्मिका...माया” (GSB 7/14, p.163). “*Māyā*’s these three *Guṇas*; *sāttvika*, *rājasika*, and *tāmasika*, are experienced by all.” Thus, *māyā* is real

(*sat*). *Māyā* is possessed of three *guṇas*, and hence, is a concrete, qualified and real entity. It is the power or accessory of *Puruṣottama*. It repeatedly performs the same function (of evolving and enveloping the worlds) as willed by God. *Svāminārāyaṇa* makes a distinction between two *prakṛtis*, the higher and the lower. The higher *prakṛti* is called *Mūlaprakṛti* or *Mahāmāyā*; while the lower *prakṛti* is called *pradhāna* or *māyā*. Both possess these three *guṇas*. These three *guṇas of māyā* are the root cause of the bondage of *jīvas* and *īśvaras*. Even *sāttvika guṇa* binds *jīvas* and *īśvaras* and brings the cycle of birth and death.

Most hazardously, *tamoguṇa* is a cause of delusion, anger, greed, quarrelsomeness, fear, violence, illusion, dejection, connivance, etc. Significantly, however, no one *guṇa* works separately; there is always a group of *guṇas*, although *guṇa* can have a more pervasiveness over the other two *guṇas*. Beyond these *māyic* qualities, there is a liberated state which is called *nirguṇa* (without the *guṇas*) or *guṇātita* state.<sup>224</sup>

### 3.3 Insentiency and Sentiency

*Māyā* is fundamentally and eternally material. It is insentient (*jaḍa*), meaning it is without consciousness. It is not sentient (*cetanā*) like *Parabrahman*, *Akṣarabrahman*, *īśvaras*, and *jīvas* and entirely different from them. moreover, countless sentient beings (*jīvas and īśvaras*) lie dormant within *māyā*, therefore the term *jadacidātmikā*<sup>225</sup> is used for *māyā*. The *Bhāṣyakāra* echoes this fact in other words: “जीवेश्वरात्मानुलितानि...प्रलयावस्थायामपि प्रलीनभावगतानि” (BSSB 2/1/36, p.186) “*Jīvas* and *īśvaras* and their *karmas* are preserved in *māyā* even after final dissolution.”

All elements, physical and psychical evolve from *māyā-prakṛti*. They all are concrete and qualified. *Māyā-prakṛti* as such is an unconscious inert principle, nevertheless because of the entry of *antaryāmi-śakti* in it through the medium of a

<sup>224</sup> BGSB 14/26

<sup>225</sup> Vac. Gadh.1/12

highly conscious principle called Mahāpuruṣa, it as if becomes conscious and functions like a sentient.

### 3.4 Eternal and Indistinct

Like Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, *īśvaras*, and *jīvas*, *māyā* is eternal - without beginning and without end. It was never created, nor will it ever be destroyed.<sup>226</sup> One may overcome it to secure liberation, but it can never be eliminated. The SB also reveals: “प्रकृतिं त्रिगुणात्मिकां जडभूतां मायां ...त्वम् अनादी... विद्धि जानीहि” (BGSB 13/19, p.285). “Know the non-sentient *prakṛti* to be beginningless and endless; and also know that all expansions and *guṇas* arise from the *prakṛti*.” But unlike the other four entities, *māyā* is not unchangeable. As we saw in the opening chapter of this part, *māyā* is set apart from those sentient entities, which are immutably eternal (*kūṭastha nitya*), by having mutable eternality (*pariṇāmi nityatā*). Though never being eliminated, it nonetheless undertakes various transformations during the process of creation and sustenance. Upon final or ultimate dissolution, however, *māyā* is not destroyed; it simply disperses into a minutely compact or indistinctly subtle form within one part of Akṣarabrahman’s light.

“It is this aspect of *māyā*’s mutability that grants its products - the material body, objects, and all the features that encompass the world to be changing and perishable, revealing how beings can be born and can die and how things are said to be created and destroyed. Therefore, all things that evolved from *mūla-māyā*, including the elements of *mahattattva*, etc., are in fact, generated and dissolved in each cycle of creation. During the phase of absolute rest after final dissolution, *māyā* is said to be non-distinct (*nirviśeṣa*)”<sup>227</sup>, because all its creations with name and form have been merged within it. It, too, merges into a subtle, unmanifest (*avyakta*) form within Akṣarabrahman. On the other hand, when called into action for the process of

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<sup>226</sup> Vac. Gadh.1/7, 3/10

<sup>227</sup> Vac. Gadh.1/12

creation, *māyā* becomes especially gross and manifest through its countless creations, each with a distinctive name and form inspired by Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman.

### 3.5 Material Bedrock of All Beings and Things

*Māyā* as the matter is not inevitably opposed to spiritual spirit. Indeed, it can be positively and complementary useful, outstandingly in understanding Parabrahman's purpose of the creation of the universe. We shall also shed some light on this topic further. In Vac. Gadh. 3/10, Svāminārāyaṇa charges this analogy cited earlier, which affirms *māyā* as the field or material substratum of all beings and things. Bhadreśadāsa cites: “देवमनुष्यमृगपक्ष्यादिशरीरतयोपदिष्टं क्षेत्रम्” (BGSB 13/19, p.285) “*Māyā* serves as a substratum for the bodies of devas, humans, animals, birds, etc.” In order to explain the creative process, this idea is also very significant. The *jīvas* and *īśvaras*, as we saw, at the time of dissolution remain dormant like untermated seeds in the agriculture field. After that, *māyā*'s association with *Puruṣa*, at the time of creation, the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* sprout forth from *māyā* with names and forms.

### 3.6 Power of Parabrahman

As we elucidated that *māyā* is an insentient entity. While *māyā* is the basic raw material of the universe. Parabrahman creates the world using *māyā* as a raw material. *Māyā* is described as the power of Parabrahman or the means by which He creates. For Parabrahman, *māyā* is a tool or means for his creative ends. This should not, however, be confused as implying *māyā* to be an inherent quality or consort of Parabrahman; his nature in no way entertains *māyā* nor is he affiliated to it in person. Svāminārāyaṇa explains elaborately in Vac. Gadh. 1/13, where he describes that *Kāla* (time) and *māyā* are Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman's powers.

The Bhāṣyakāra also states: “परमात्माधीना तच्छक्तिरूपा प्रपञ्चोपादानतया दैवी देवाधिदेवेन परमात्मनाधिष्ठित्वाद् दैवी माया” (BGSB 7/14, p.163) “*Māyā* is indeed Parabrahman’s power consisting of three *guṇas* or moods of mind is called *Daivī* as well.” As Svāminārāyaṇa frequently uses, ‘Parabrahman’s *māyā*’<sup>228</sup> to clear the fact.

### 3.7 Ignorance

*Māyā* is also the embodiment of ignorance. It prevents us from the true knowledge of the eternal entities. Svāminārāyaṇa asserts: “*Māyā* is anything that impedes a devotee of Parabrahman while meditating on Parabrahman’s form.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/1, p.30) Svāminārāyaṇa undergoes this idea similarly in the last published preachings.

“*Māyā* is nothing but the sense of I-ness towards the body and my-ness towards the bodily relations.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/39, p.665) In Vac. Gadh. 2/36, he is yet more firm and unequivocal in expressing that *māyā* obstructs the seeker in the form of worldly affection.

As the Bhāṣyakāra expresses: “प्रकृतेः मूलमायायाः गुणसम्मूढाः गुणैः सत्त्वरजस्तमोभिः सम्मूढा असुखकण्डेषु सुखबुद्धिमाप्नुवाना विपर्ययस्तविज्ञानाः गुणकर्मसु स्वकर्तृत्वममत्वादिधिया सज्जन्ते समासक्ता भवन्ति” (BGSB 3/29, p.83) “The *jīvas* and *īśvaras* are infatuated by the three *guṇas* of *māyā*; as a result, they indulge in the worldly pleasures which are the cause of misery.” Thus, to get liberation and remove the cycle of birth, death, and rebirth along with self-realization and Parabrahman-realization, then, *māyā* must be transcended.<sup>229</sup>

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<sup>228</sup> Vac. Gadh. 1/34, Pan.3, Gadh. 2/65

<sup>229</sup> SSSK 291

### 3.8 Māyā and the Creation of the Universes

Svāminārāyaṇa has given a large description of the process of creation in various discourses.<sup>230</sup> In the *Prasthānatrayī* Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya Bhadrēśadāsa meticulously narrates the whole process of creation: “परमात्मा अकामयत समष्टिव्यष्टिरूपजगत् सृष्ट्यर्थं संकल्पयाञ्चकार। तत्संकल्पप्रकारमाह बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति देवमनुष्यदिरूपेण बहु स्याम्। जगदुत्पादयितुं प्रकृतिपुरुषद्वारा प्रधानपुरुषादिरूपेण भवेयमिति संकल्पितवान्” (TUSB 2/6/3, p.378) “Parabrahman resolved, may I be many, may I grow forth through the creation of Prakṛti-Puruṣa, Pradhāna-Puruṣa, devas, humans, etc.” now we explain the creation in detail according to BSSB (2/3/16, p.229) and BGSB (9/10, pp.207-208).

The Bhāṣyakāra also puts forward this point: “तस्माच्चैकस्मात् प्रधानपुरुषयुगलादेकं ब्रह्माण्डमुद्पद्यते” (BGSB 9/10, p. 208). “From each pair of Pradhāna-Puruṣa is produced a *brahmānda* (what we have loosely been calling ‘world’).” Focusing now on a single *brahmānda*, he further explains that the *brahmānda* which itself comprises fourteen *lokas* (realms). Since there are *ananta* Pradhāna-Puruṣas, and *brahmāndas* are produced. In the process first Parabrahman inspires Akṣarabrahman. Then a series of creations emerge from Pradhāna-Puruṣa. As a result, the body of the world is produced. We have to keep it in mind that this *brahmānda* in the form of *īśvara*, Vairāja Puruṣa is a sentient entity.

When we look at the entire creation a natural question emerges that who is the efficient cause and the material cause of this creation? The answer is Parabrahman. By re-entering and empowering each new element of the order is created, He takes the process further. The Bhāṣyakāra provides a statement from the BS commentary: “तस्माच्च वैरजपुरुषाद् ब्रह्मा विष्णुर् महेशचेति मिथो भिन्नचेतनास्त्रयो देवा समुद्पद्यते ।” (BSSB 2/3/16, p.229). “From Vairāja Puruṣa originates Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa, each with own *īśvara*-

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<sup>230</sup> Vac. Gadh. 1/12, Gadh. 1/13, Gadh. 1/41 and also Vac. Gadh. 1/51, Gadh. 2/31

selves, and then from Brahmā (enabled by Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman) extends the rest of the creation for *jīvas*.

This starts with Marici, the first son of Brahmā, and others like him who supervise the procreation and protection of life, and hence are called *Prajāpatis* (literally, ‘lords of the people’). Then, Kaśyapa and others emerge who are like him and also inherit the role of *Prajāpatis*. Finally, from them are formed Indra and other *devatās* (divinities), *daityas* (demons), humans, animals, vegetation, and all other moveable and immovable life-forms.<sup>231</sup> Exclusively, each *brahmānda* is said to encompass fourteen realms or *lokas*. Of these, the eighth from the bottom, called Mr̥tyuloka, relates to the earth, where humans inhabit. Above Mr̥tyuloka, the higher realms (jointly called ‘svarga’) are inhabited by *devatās*, seers and higher beings, while the lower regions (called ‘pātāla’ as a group) are inhabited by *daityas*, nocturnal creatures, and lower beings. Individually, fourteen-realm *brahmānda* is stated to have *aṣṭa āvaraṇa*, or ‘eight sheaths’. These material components refer to, in ascending order, *pr̥thvī*, *jala*, *teja*, *vāyu*, *ākāśa*, *ahaṃkāra*, *mahattattva* and *prakṛti* (i.e., both Pradhāna-Prakṛti and Mūla-Prakṛti).

The definition and description of *prakṛti* aforesaid largely refer to Mūlaprakṛti alone. It is the Mūlaprakṛti (Mahāmāyā) that is beginningless, eternal, unborn, uncreated, and unmodified (*nirviseṣa*). The three *guṇas*, namely *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas* are its properties. The state of equilibrium of three *guṇas* (*samyavastha*) is known as Mūlaprakṛti. It is the Mūlaprakṛti that is described as *nirviseṣa*, because it stands for the state of equilibrium of three *guṇas* during which it remains unmodified into its evolutes such as *pr̥thvī*, *jala*, etc.

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<sup>231</sup> To understand the creation thoroughly we can look at the chart given in the appendix.



The Mahāmāyā i.e. Mūlaprakṛti is the power and instrument wielded by God Parabrahman. The Sruti says: “*Māyām tu prakṛtim viddhi mayinam tu mahesvaram.*” (SU 4/10) Mūlaprakṛti is *māyā*; and the Lord of *māyā* (i.e. Māyin) is Parabrahman. In other words, the Lord (supreme), the supporter (*ādhara*), the controller (*niyantā*) or (*preraka*) and the Immanent Self (of Mūlaprakṛti) is Parabrahman (the Lord of lords). Prior to all creations, an infinite number of *pradhānas* (lower *prakṛtis*) and their lords (*puruṣas/īśvaras*) lay dormant in seed-like forms in the womb of Mūlaprakṛti.

Since they all lie in a subtle unmanifest form in the womb of Mūlaprakṛti, it is described as the Original/First Unmanifest (*Mūla-avyakta/Prathamaavyakta*) and as the subtlest (*sūkṣmarūpa*). As it is an unconscious-unintelligent principle, it is bereft of knowledge and self-luminosity. It, therefore, is called ‘*jada*’ i.e. inert. However, when it is united with its lord Mūlapuruṣa, because of his permeation and presidency (*adhisthana*) over it, Mūlaprakṛti too as if becomes sentient (like a human body by being pervaded by the soul from within), and hence, at times described as ‘*caitanyarupa*’. Mūlaprakṛti, by its very nature, in itself unconscious-inert, appears to be sentient on account of entry and pervasion of Mūlapuruṣa in it, and hence becomes *caitanyarupa*. The conscious (*cidrupa*) souls (*jīvas*) and cosmic selves (*īśvaras*) rest dormant in the bosom of Mūlaprakṛti during the period of final dissolution (*atyantikapralaya*). Therefore, Mūlaprakṛti, which in itself is inert, but has *cetana-varga* (*jīvas* and *īśvaras*) resting in it, - is called ‘*Jada-cidatmika*’.

It is called ‘*parartha*’ because it evolves for the (purpose) benefit of *jīvas* and *īśvara*. It does not evolve for self-enjoyment but evolves for the sake of *jīvas* and *īśvaras*. The Sruti says: “It (Mūlaprakṛti) procreates innumerable offsprings (*pradhāna* / lower *prakṛtis*) of its kind.” (CU 6/2/1) In other words, from the Mūlaprakṛti originate an infinite number of lower *prakṛtis* called *pradhāna* as its offsprings (*prajā*). It also is regarded as the resting field (*kṣetra*) of all the *jīvas* and

*īśvara* together with all evolutes of *pradhāna*. This point is explained thus: The *māyā-prakṛti* is like the soil on the earth. The *jīvas* resting dormant in it are like the seeds lying buried in the soil. *Puruṣa* i.e. *īśvara* is like a cloud pregnant with water. Just as by the shower of the rain from the clouds the water comes in contact of seeds lying in the soil and they sprout, so do the *jīvas* lying dormant in *māyā*, *prakṛti*, at the will of Parabrahman.

### 3.8.1 The Real Creator and Cause

We can realize after evaluation over the creation of the universe that it's Parabrahman's wish that inspires the creation. Parabrahman is both the material and efficient cause of his creation. *Māyā* or *prakṛti* functions as His instrument or power. This can only be realized from scriptural revelation. Therefore Svāminārāyaṇa concludes as an example of each: "It is through Parabrahman that everything mobile and immobile is created." (Vac. Gadh. 2/10, p. 406) "It is Parabrahman who is the creator, sustainer, and dissolver of the world." (Vac. Loyā.17, p.343). Bhadrēśadāsa explains and explores this fundamental fact in his commentaries: "अहं संकल्पमात्रेण तत्तज्जीवेश्वराणां तत्तदात्मानुष्ठितप्राचीनकर्मानुसारं तत्कर्मफलोपभोगाय कल्पादौ सर्गकाले तानि विसृजामि" (BGSB 9/7, p.206). "Through my wish, I the Parabrahman myself create the *bhogas* (enjoyments) for *jīvas* and *īśvaras* according to their *karmas* at the commencement of the creation." while commenting on the *sūtra*: '*Janmādyasya yataḥ*' (BS 1/1/2), the Bhāṣyakāra summarises that the entire creation of this world is by Brahman and Parabrahman only.

The Bhāṣyakāra is quick to accentuate with impeccable arguments and references of the *Prasthānatrayī* that only Parabrahman can be the complete cause of everything, not anyone or anything else. Additionally, in the *Racanānupattyadhikaraṇam* he countered all the possibilities of *māyā*, *prakṛti*, or

*pradhāna* as an ultimate creator: “केवलं प्रधानं जगत्कारणं न ।” (BSSB 2/1/1, p.189). “*Prakṛti* is not the ultimate cause of the creation.”

This is the prominent difference between the *Sāṃkhya* School and the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School of philosophy. The term “*prakṛti*” will be recognized by those familiar with the *Sāṃkhya* School, and indeed the conceptualization of *māyā* in *Svāminārāyaṇa* system of belief is similar, except that whereas *prakṛti* in the *Sāṃkhya* system is considered wholly independent of initiating creation, in *Svāminārāyaṇa* system, *māyā* is dependent on and controlled by Parabrahman. Thus, Bhadrēśadāsa disproven the *Sāṃkhya* position: “निर्बीजसाङ्ख्यतन्त्रमसमञ्जसम्” (BSSB 2/2/10, p.195) hence the *Sāṃkhya* system is unsatisfactory in consideration of the creation.

### 3.8.2 Purpose of the Creation

After the valid source of scriptural references and sharp arguments, it is now confirmed that the efficient and material cause of the entire universe is Parabrahman. Thus, the creation, development, and dissolution of the world is only due to Him.

*Svāminārāyaṇa* then enunciates the definite purpose of the world and how it is of benefit to others by firstly citing in the *Vacanāmṛta*- “Therefore, Parabrahman created this universe for the sake of the *jīvas*’ liberation Parabrahman sustains it for the sake of the *jīvas*’ liberation. In fact, Parabrahman also causes its dissolution for the sake of the *jīvas*’ liberation.” (Vac. Kār.1, p.251)

He also corroborated his perspective with the *purāṇa*, translating it thus: “Parabrahman created the intellect, senses, mind and vital breaths of all people

enable the *jīvas* to enjoy the sense-objects, to take birth, to transmigrate to other realms, and to attain liberation.”<sup>232</sup> The Bhāṣyakāra also makes the same statement:

सुष्टुयुद्धवक्रमो ज्ञेयः सहजानन्दवाक्यतः।

नैकजीवेश्वराणां हि मोक्षाय सृष्टिसर्जनम्॥ SSSK 286 ॥

“The order of the creation should be known from Svāminārāyaṇa himself. Parabrahman created this universe for the sake of the *jīvas*’ and *īśvaras*’ liberation.” Svāminārāyaṇa explains that an intellect, senses, etc. are given by Parabrahman at the time of creation. At the time of dissolution, everything absorbed in *māyā* and *māyā* also rests in the one portion of Parabrahman.<sup>233</sup>

The Bhāṣyakāra reveals the purpose of the creation in the *Prayojanatvaddhikāraṇam*: “परमदयालुः सकलजीवेश्वरोद्दिधीर्षुः परमात्मा सहजानन्दोपि सर्वेषामपवर्गाय केवलया लीलया सहजमेव परिश्रमं विनैव प्रसन्नात्मा सन् जगद्रचने प्रवर्तते।” (BSSB 2/1/34, p.184) “Out of his immense grace, Parabrahman created this universe for the liberation of all. In that process, he does not experience any type of burden but a great pleasure.” What the Bhāṣyakāra indicates is that this world is not created by mere chance by Parabrahman.

### 3.8.3 Sustenance

After creation, Parabrahman’s other great responsibility is for the sustenance<sup>234</sup> of the world. We examined the omni-agency of Parabrahman, relationship with the material and immaterial world. The Bhāṣyakāra also states it while commenting on the *sūtra*: *Janmādyasya yataḥ*- “जन्म आदिर्यस्य तज्जन्मादि, उत्पत्तिस्थितिप्रलयमिति... स्थितिश्च तयोस्तन्तरालकालीनप्रपञ्चवस्था” (BSSB 1/1/2, p. 12-13) “Brahman and Parabrahman are the creator, sustainer, and destroyer of the universe. Sustain means the state that falls

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<sup>232</sup> BP-10/87/2

<sup>233</sup> Vac. Pan. 1

<sup>234</sup> Vac. Gadh. 1/13, 2/39

between the creation and final dissolution of the universe.” The TUSB also highlights the same fact.<sup>235</sup>

### 3.8.4 Dissolution

Though *māyā* is ultimately perishable, the entire creation starts to immediately degenerate.<sup>236</sup> The scriptures call it dissolution, or *pralaya*. This is not the end or death of *māyā*, since it is an eternal entity. The Bhāṣyakāra affirms: “येन कारणभूतेन जातानि समुत्पन्नानि भूतानि जीवन्ति सम्यक् प्राणधारणादिना स्थितिं पोषणं च लभन्ते। यत् कारणभूतमेव प्रति प्रलयकाले प्रयन्ति लीयमानानि सन्ति अभि संविशन्ति अभितः स्थूलावस्थां परित्यज्य सूक्ष्मावस्थया संविशन्ति।” (TUSB 3/1/1, p.396). “That from which these beings are born, that by which, when born, these beings live, that into which they enter upon departing, that you should know, that is Brahman, by whose control they all change the state.”

In Vac. Kār. 1 Svāminārāyaṇa explains that Parabrahman has an elegant purpose in creating and dissolving the universe: “Parabrahman also causes its dissolution for the sake of the *jīvas*’ liberation ... to allow the *jīvas* – tired as a result of undergoing many births and deaths - to rest.” (Vac. Kār.1, p.251)

There are four types of *pralayas*, (end). They are 1. *Nitya Pralaya* (constant dissolution) 2. *Nimitta Pralaya* (stimulated dissolution) 3. *Prakṛta Pralaya* (general dissolution) 4. *Ātmaṇṭika Pralaya* (final or ultimate dissolution). Svāminārāyaṇa illustrates all four in detail in Vac. Gadh. 1/12, Amd.2 and the *Bhūgol-Khagol* letter, with the last also incorporating an account of the huge cosmic timescale and domain of a *brahmānda*. The Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyakāra also gives comprehensive information about the *pralayas*.

चतुर्धा प्रलयः प्रोक्तो नित्यो नैमित्तिकस्तथा।

प्राकृतिकस्तृतीयः स्यात् तुर्य आत्यन्तिको लयः॥ SSSK 302 ॥

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<sup>235</sup> TUSB 3/1/1, p.396

<sup>236</sup> Vac. Gadh. 1/13, 2/39

Based on these facts, we can arrive at the following succinct description of each level of *pralaya*.

***Nitya Pralaya*** - Svāminārāyaṇa asserts: “The day-to-day death of the bodies of individual humans, devas, demons, and others is called *Nitya Pralaya*.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/12, p.44).

***Nimitta Pralaya***- If *Nitya Pralaya* is associated with *jīvas*, *Nimitta Pralaya* is associated with *īśvaras*. Svāminārāyaṇa illustrates *Nimitta Pralaya* as Brahma’s deep sleep, “The body of the *īśvara* called Virāṭa (Puruṣa) has a lifespan of two *parārdhas* ( $2 \times 10^{17}$  human years). Fourteen *manvantaras* (c. 306,720,000 human years) lapse during one of Virāṭa Puruṣa’s days. His night is of the same duration as the day. The Lower ten realms of the *brahmānda* remain in existence during his day, and after his night falls, they are dissolved. This is called *Nimitta Pralaya*.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/12, p. 43). The bottom ten of a *brahmānda*’s fourteen realms are disintegrated at the end of *Nimitta Pralaya*, i.e., up to and including Svargaloka.

***Prakṛta Pralaya***- Svāminārāyaṇa expounds: “When the two *parārdhas* ( $2 \times 10^7$  human years) of Virāṭa Puruṣa have elapsed, the body of Virāṭa is vanished along with Satyaloka and the other realms. At that time, Pradhāna-Prakṛti, Puruṣa, and the twenty-four elements including *mahattattva* are enthralled back into Mahā-Māyā. This is called *Prakṛta Pralaya*.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/12, pp. 43-44).

***Ātmaṇṭika Pralaya*** -This third level leads us to the final and universal level of ‘end’, which can be of two types: actual and subjective. This final dissolution occurs when Parabrahman decides. “*Ātmaṇṭika Pralaya* occurs when countless millions of *brahmāndas* are destroyed. At the time, even Prakṛti-Puruṣa - the cause of Pradhāna-Puruṣas - draws countless *brahmāndas* within itself, and is then eclipsed by the light of Akṣara-Puruṣa (who in turn is absorbed into Akṣarabrahman). This

fourth type of dissolution is called *Ātyaṃtika Pralaya*.” (Vac. *Bhūgol-Khagol*, p. 677).

***Jñāna Pralaya*** -The second type of pralaya is *Jñāna Pralaya* which is subjective dissolution. It is an elevated individual state of understanding induced by philosophical knowledge (*jñāna*) where the spiritual aspirant does not perceive these-worldly things anymore even in his very life. Only pure consciousness remains in his sight as if a complete dissolution would have happened for him. Svāminārāyaṇa expounds: “In *Ātyaṃtika Pralaya*, which is *Jñāna Pralaya*, everything up to and including *prakṛti* is eclipsed by the light of Brahman.” (Vac. Amd. 2, p.574) Explaining upon this state of enlightenment, Svāminārāyaṇa firstly expounds in Vac. Gadh. 1/24 that *jñāna* transcends Prakṛti-Puruṣa. He then goes further: “When this *jñāna* attains an elevated spiritual state, Prakṛti-Puruṣa and the entities evolved from them do not come into view. This is known as *jñāna pralaya*.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/24, p.66) Guṇātitanand Svāmī links: “What is *jñāna pralaya*? It is to eradicate every single work of *prakṛti* from one’s heart and become *Brahmarūpa*. Then nothing else remains to be done; this was the very principle of Svāminārāyaṇa.”<sup>237</sup>

Thus, *māyā* has been the cause of our births and deaths since time immemorial. However, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman are forever entirely untainted by, beyond, and the *śariri* of this *māyā*. *Jīvas* (finite selves), *īśvaras* (cosmic selves), Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman differ from *māyā-prakṛti* because they are sentient and with conscious, while the later is inert unconscious; former being self- illumined, while later being illumined by principle other than itself; former being the agent (the doer) while later being action (or principle to be acted upon); former being the witnesses, while later being witnessed.

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<sup>237</sup> SV5/195

*Māyā-prakṛti* of Svāminārāyaṇa Vedanta differs from the *Sāṅkhya prakṛti*. The *prakṛti* of *Sāṅkhya* is an independent principle; while that of Svāminārāyaṇa's *māyā* is totally dependent on Parabrahman and is supported and controlled by Him. The *prakṛti* of *Sāṅkhya* is a triad of three *guṇas*. These *guṇas* are its constituents. As against this, the *prakṛti* of Svāminārāyaṇa is a principle (reality) possessing three *guṇas* as its, properties or qualities. The *prakṛti* of *Sāṅkhya* unites by itself the *puruṣa* and evolves the world. But, in case of Svāminārāyaṇa, the union and disunion of *prakṛti* with *puruṣa* affected by the will of God for the purpose of evolution and dissolution of the universe the *prakṛti* of *Sāṅkhya* is an independent category distinct from *puruṣa*. It has no power in itself to fructify the karmas of *jīvas*. Though co-eval with Parabrahman as a dependent entity/element in the body (*śarīra*) of Parabrahman (Who is its *śarīrī*), it is only by His will that it subsists as His accessory (*śakti*) and is able to function in the evolutionary process.

*Māyā-prakṛti* of Svāminārāyaṇa Vedanta is totally different from the *māyā-avidya* of the Śaṅkara's *Advaita*. In *Advaita* of Śaṅkara, *māyā-avidya* is an indefinable-indescribable category that is neither real, nor unreal, nor both. As against this, in Svāminārāyaṇa Vedanta, *māyā-prakṛti* is a reality distinct from other reals (namely *jīva*, *īśvara*, Brahman and Parabrahman), but totally dependent on and supported, immanence and controlled by Parabrahman. It is the power or an accessory of Parabrahman. Since *māyā-prakṛti* is real, the world according to Svāminārāyaṇa is real. The world is real, a real place for retribution and moral deserts. The world is not an appearance, nor illusion, nor unreality from any standpoint. Real the world is though perishable it is. The world is real but not eternal.

#### 4. AKṢARABRAHMAN

As we noted that in the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedanta School, its five eternal entities (or realities) are its important and unique contribution to the philosophical world; Parabrahman, Brahman, *māyā*, *īśvara*, and *jīva*. This section highlights the second-



highest entity Akṣarabrahman's nature and form and its ontological distinctness and significance. Akṣarabrahman is also known as Akṣara and Brahman. Moreover, through this section, we will get the answer that why Akṣarabrahman is so significant in the Vedanta studies. The Bhāṣyakāra reveals:

वेदवेदान्तशास्त्रेषु प्रच्छन्नं गूढमक्षरम्।

प्रथममुज्जुघोषात्र स्वमिनारायणो भुवि॥ SSSK 13 ॥

“The entity of Akṣarabrahman was esoteric- almost as if concealed – within the Vedas and *Upaniṣads*. It was revealed to the world for the first time by Svāminārāyaṇa.” The entity of Akṣarabrahman uniquely stands amid all eastern and western philosophy. As we get into the profound discussion, firstly, we should keep this point in our mind that it is not Parabrahman.

As we mentioned, next to Parabrahman, in the order of being an ontological reality is Akṣarabrahman. Parabrahman-Puruṣottama is higher than Akṣarabrahman; and Akṣarabrahman is higher than *māyā-prakṛti*, *īśvara*, and *jīvas*. Akṣarabrahman is frequently addressed merely as ‘Akṣara’ or ‘Brahman’ in the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition.

Just as Parabrahman, the highest reality, is one, unique and matchless, so is Akṣarabrahman one, unique and matchless by his distinctive characteristics and glory, in comparison to other mats subservient to him. Of course, both Akṣara (Brahman) and Puruṣottama (Parabrahman) are distinct realities, of which the former is eternally dependent on Parabrahman while later is ever the only independent; nevertheless, Akṣarabrahman shares eternal togetherness with Puruṣottama on account of his highest love, devotion, and servitude unto Him. Besides Parabrahman, he alone is eternally free from the trace of three *guṇas* of *māyā-prakṛti* and was never in bondage, and hence free eternally. Thus, Akṣarabrahman is one and unique. It is a class by itself. It is a one-membered class, totally self-same. Akṣarabrahman is always referred to as uniquely one and only one.

The *Śruti* declares that the knowledge of Akṣarabrahman is the *paravidyā*. “*Para yaya tad Akṣaram adhigamyate*” “and the higher than that (all other arts and sciences is the knowledge) by which the imperishable Akṣarabrahman is apprehended. Similarly, the importance of Akṣarabrahman is implied, according to Svāminārāyaṇa in the opening verse of the *Bhāgavatam* thus: “*Dhamna svena sada nirasta kuhakam satyam param dhimalhi.*” (BP 1/1/1) “God is the Supreme Truth/Reality, who through His abode, the Akṣarabrahman (i.e., by making a seeker similar to Akṣarabrahman/*dhāma*) has dispelled the darkness (ignorance) born of *māyā* enveloping them. More or less on the same line, the *Śruti* also asserts that – “*Pranavo dhanuh saro hyhatma brahma tallaksyamucyate. Apramattena veddhavyam garavattanmayo bhavet.*” (MU 2/2/4) Pranava (AUM/ mystic syllable) is the bow. The *ātman* is the arrow and Brahman is the target. It is to be hit, i.e., meditated upon by a man who is undistracted, and then as the arrow becomes one with the target, he will get lost in the (Para)Brahman. Here, the word ‘Brahman’ as target refers to Parabrahman resting in an abode called Akṣarabrahman, Thus, it refers to both, because it speaks of becoming one with Akṣarabrahman (becoming like Akṣara) and getting lost lovingly in Parabrahman.

Brahman and Parabrahman, for the attainment of *brahmavidyā* both, are necessary. Akṣarabrahman is the most powerful medium to be eligible in the service of Puruṣottama. One who becomes like Akṣarabrahman alone can find a place at the feet of Parabrahman. In this way, both Brahman and Parabrahman are essential as the goal of *brahmavidyā*. Akṣarabrahman is unchanging (*nirvikara*) and indivisible (i.e., partless = *niramśa*), Akṣarabrahman is the substratum of everything including Mūlapuruṣa, Mūlaprakṛti, and the products thereof, and he is immanent in them by his power of permeation. Therefore, very often, Akṣarabrahman is described as everything (*sarvarūpa*). Akṣara is smaller than the smallest, and (but for Puruṣottama) is immanent in everything. Save Puruṣottama, Akṣara is bigger than the biggest. These two

respectively are the *nirguṇa* and the *saguṇa* aspects of the same Akṣarabrahman.

Svāminārāyaṇa narrates elaborately that, Akṣarabrahman is steady (*acala*), stable (*kūṭastha*), unwaning (*avyaya*), steadfast (*dhruva*), and unmanifest (*avyakta*). Akṣarabrahman indwells in the hearts of all sentient selves (*jīvas* and *īśvara*) as the micro-abode wherein Puruṣottama (Parabrahman) resides as the witness and the Inner Self of all, and hence, he too, at times, is described as witness and *antaryāmīn*.

Akṣarabrahman is of the nature of the truth-existence-consciousness, unlimited, infinite, all-pervading, partless, imperishable, and eternal. It is the abode, the divine residence of Parabrahman. In its formful-personal aspect, he is eternally in the service of God, and in its formful-personal aspect, it is the abode of God. Akṣarabrahman is pure, eternally accomplished, unchanging-stable, illuminator of *māyā*, etc., and the support of all the abodes and universes, therefore, this Akṣarabrahman ought to be known. The scriptures also endorse the view that the same Akṣarabrahman has four forms, with which it expresses variously. Akṣarabrahman is spoken of as one full of consciousness, of the nature of knowledge. Eternal in character, of the nature of bliss and has the capacity to present (itself) in different forms.

#### **4.1 Akṣarabrahman is not Parabrahman**

Akṣarabrahman is a different entity from Parabrahman. We investigate a major clue to the answer in the *Vacanāmṛta* where Svāminārāyaṇa states: “Puruṣottama Parabrahman is greater even than Akṣara who is greater than all else.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/64, p.154). Svāminārāyaṇa explains further that Parabrahman Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa is different from Akṣarabrahman and is also the cause, support, and

inspirer of him.<sup>238</sup> Parabrahman is, therefore, still superior to Brahman, and the ultimate cause of all, including Akṣarabrahman. Svāminārāyaṇa emphasizes this fact invariably in the *Vacanāmṛta*. We will take a glance at a few of these in the section on Parabrahman as Akṣarātīta. As a recapitulation, here is one such declaration: “This manifest form of Puruṣottama Parabrahman Bhagavān before your eyes is the controller of all, including Akṣara. He is the lord of all *īśvaras* and the cause of all causes. He reigns supreme.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/38, p.664). The Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyakāra confirms this view through the *Prasthānatrayī*.

In his analysis he indicates that Akṣarabrahman in other ways also, (Akṣarabrahman) is within and without the beings; and also is mobile and immobile. All-pervading all-supporting form of Akṣarabrahman which is within and without universes and beings therein. Akṣarabrahman is eternally the chief among the devout attendants of Lord Puruṣottama; he is the ideal devotee nearest and dearest to Him; he is eternally best personal page and devotee of God, has the enchanting personality with the most attractive-symmetrical limbs, face, etc. In short, he is a formful-personal servant with supreme devotion. He enjoys God’s predilection, love, bliss, favored of God’s sovereign powers to the highest degree; for he embodies nothing but God and God alone fully in his person, from eternity.

Akṣarabrahman is *vibhu* or infinitive like Nārāyaṇa (Parabrahman). Ontologically and functionally Akṣarabrahman is different from Parabrahman and subordinate to Him; nevertheless, psychologically and lovingly (devotionally) he is one with Him. Though one and only one Without a second, Akṣarabrahman serves Lord. The relationship of Akṣarabrahman to Parabrahman is the eternal relationship of the supreme devotee and the Supreme Godhead. Akṣara is the eternal ‘*sevaka*’ (attendant), ‘*uttama bhakta*’ (supreme devotee).

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<sup>238</sup> Vac. Gadh. 2/3

Akṣara is dependent on Puruṣottama, but not the sense in which the *jīvas*, the *īśvaras*, and the *māyā-prakṛti* are. On careful study and examination, we find that they are dependent both on Akṣara and Puruṣottama. Only Akṣara and Puruṣottama are beyond and bereft of *māyā-prakṛti* from eternity. God is the only redeemer and Akṣara is an eternally free mediator and necessary model to be modeled, for the *jīvas* and *īśvara* aspiring to attain freedom. On the contrary, Mūlaprakṛti which is the accessory of God, rests dormant in its contracted (unmanifest) state in the infinitesimal small portion of Akṣara during the state of total dissolution. And Akṣara, being transcendent to Mūlaprakṛti, is always untouched and untainted by it. So, the question of bondage does not arise in case of Akṣara; while *jīvas* and *īśvaras* are beginning hardly bound by the fetters of *māyā*. Akṣara is distinct from and superior to the liberated souls (*akṣararnuktas* including Mūlapuruṣa) and Mūlaprakṛti. They are like tiny sparks before Akṣara. Akṣara has no desire to be fulfilled and has no will of his own. The will of God (his Master's) is his will. His will is never different from God's will.

Since Akṣarabrahman is eternally in communion with Parabrahman by the relationship of supreme love and oneness. Akṣarabrahman is the chief (eternal) among the eternal *jīvas* and *īśvaras* and *māyā-prakṛti*, the conscious among conscious being. When perfect affiliation and oneness (union) with that manifest transcendental form of God occurs through the medium of Akṣara-Guru, the devotee acquires brahmanhood and thus attains the place in His abode. The attainment of Brahmaloka (Akṣaradhāma), is the attainment of the highest (Parabrahman), for both are called *paramapada*. Of course, Parabrahman, as the transcendental Absolute certainly can yield brahmanhood to *jīva* even without the intercession (mediation) of Akṣara-Guru.

#### 4.1.1 The *Upaniṣad*

The *Upaniṣads* variously, and hence, express Brahman as - (i) *Dhṛtmān* i.e. the permanent abode of God, (ii) *Sarvottama Sevaka-bhakta* i.e. the best devotee-attendant of God coeval with Him from eternity, (iii) the Akṣara-Guru i.e. the Parama

Ekantika Satpuruṣa working as the medium of God's continuous (ceaseless) manifestation on earth, Akṣarabrahman as the Guru (in perpetuating succession) embodies God fully in his person and God too keeps His manifestation perennial through the person of Akṣara-Gurus in succession. Thus as '*Pragata Brahmasvarūpa*' (the Akṣara-Gurus) is the inheritor and transmitter of tradition set forth by God Himself, and he works as the fulfiller of His mission and discharger of the duty of purifying the souls and linking them with God to attain final emancipation. (iv) *Sarvadhāra* - *Cidākāśa* i.e., infinite, all-pervading, all-supporting consciousness – space. Thus, out of five ways of expressing or serving God (Parabrahman), Akṣara Brahman's form may be broadly divided into two main categories. The first three (aforesaid) forms refer to- (i) Formful-personal (*sakṛti / murtam*) form of Akṣarabrahman, while (ii) the last - maybe clubbed under a single category of Formless- impersonal (*nirakṛti* or *amurtam*) form of Akṣarabrahman.

The *Śruti* reveals एतद्वै सत्यकाम परं चापरं च ब्रह्म यदोङ्कारः । तस्माद्विद्वानेतेनैवायतनेनैकतरमन्वेति ॥ PU 5/2 ॥  
 “That which is the sound of *Aum*, O *Satyakāma*, is verily the higher and lower Brahman.” The term ‘higher’ and ‘lower’ varifies the distinction between Parabrahman and (Akṣara)Brahman, certainly when the fruits meditating on ‘*Aum*’ is described as procuring ‘either’ (*ekataram*) of them.” In this way, the *Upaniṣads* invariably claim about two Brahman: lower and higher. First, we will ponder upon the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* meticulously. The *mantra* is: अक्षरात् परतः परः (MU 2/1/2)  
 “Parabrahman is greater even than Akṣara, the greatest.” Bhadreśadāsa comments:  
 “तथा च तादृशजीवेश्वरमायाऽक्षरमुक्तादिसर्वपरभूताद् अक्षरात्पूर्वं परविद्याऽधिगम्यतयोक्तादक्षराख्यदिव्यतत्त्वादपि हि अवश्यमेव परः परभूतः, तादृशमहिमविशिष्टब्रह्मणोऽपि नियामकस्तत्त्वामी तत्प्रेरकस्तदाधारस्तच्छरीरी चेत्यादिरर्थः। सः पुरुषः परमात्माऽस्तीति योज्यम्। इत्थं ब्रह्मणोऽपि परत्वात्परब्रह्मेति परमात्मनोऽन्वयैव संज्ञा। अक्षरब्रह्मणश्च तत्परभूतपरमात्मानं विहायैव, तदतिरिक्तेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यो यत्परत्वं तदपि। परमात्मेच्छायत्तमिति सिद्धम्।” (MUSB 2/1/2, p. 260)

To understand this passage from the *Bhāṣya*, we first provide the background of this *Upaniṣad*. The MU 1/1/5 describes the higher knowledge in the form of Akṣarabrahman. The instantly following verse describes ‘Akṣara’ as “Invisible, inadmissible, without lineage and without caste, without eyes or ears, and without hands or feet; eternal, pervading, omnipresent and exceedingly subtle.”

In the conclusion: “That which is immutable, the wise perceive as the source of all beings.” (MU 1/1/6) The other remaining verses in this first part of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* continue to illustrate that ‘Akṣara’. The MU again assert the power of creation of Akṣara, “This is the truth: As from a blazing fire, sparks of like form issue forth by the thousands, similarly, O dear (Śaunaka), beings of various forms issue forth from Akṣara and coming back to it only.” (MU 2/1/1)

Instantly thereafter, “अक्षरात् परतः परः” (MU 2/1/2) explains that, “Than the superior Akṣara Parabrahman is superior.” This seemingly simple phrase, Bhadreśadāsa argues, holds the key to solving a correct, consistent reading of the entire *Muṇḍaka* and perhaps other texts too.

Describing ‘Akṣara’ that also is an adjective that qualifies Puruṣa and means ‘high’. and that ‘*parataḥ*’, an indeclinable adjective also meaning ‘high’. The word ‘Akṣara’ has been taken from the verb ‘*ksin*’ meaning ‘to wane’ or ‘to perish’. The negating ‘a’ prefix thus indicates “Akṣara ‘imperishable’”. But even so, the term can equally serve as an adjective and a proper noun, just as ‘green’, for example, English can refer to the actual color green, the quality describing something of brown color and Mr. Green, respectively. Which of these applies to ‘Akṣara’ in the phrase above? The MU declares Brahman as a different entity. This appears to be a straight translation of the phrase in MU 2/1/2.

#### 4.1.2 The *Brahmasūtra*

Interestingly, the *Adṛśyatvādhikaraṇa* (BS 1/2/21–24) asserts, “‘यत्तदद्रेश्यमग्राह्यम्’ (MU 1/1/6) इति वेदान्तवाक्यस्य परमात्मभिन्ने अक्षरब्रह्मणि एव दिव्यतत्त्वे समन्वयं साधयामास त्रिसूत्र्या इति सर्वं समञ्जसम्।” (BSSB 1/2/24, p.79) “That which is invisible and inadmissible, etc., are the qualities of Akṣarabrahman which is divine and distinct from Parabrahman. We have synchronized with the starting point *trisūtraya*.” It takes its cue from the opening of MU 1/1/6. Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman are concluded here as imperishable, invisible, omniscient, and the cause of the universe, yet Akṣarabrahman is different from Parabrahman.

Bhadreśadāsa remarks on those who do not know about the entity of Akṣarabrahman and hence have a weakened knowledge of the actual words of the sacred texts. “सकलप्रपञ्चपरभूताद् अक्षरशब्दवाच्याद् ब्रह्मणोपि परः पुरुषशब्दवाच्यः पुरुषोत्तमस्ततो भिन्न एवेति हि तत्रत्यः सिद्धान्तः।” (BSSB 1/1/1, p.6) “Parabrahman referred here with the word ‘*puruṣa*’ is distinct from Brahman who is mentioned with the word ‘*akṣara*’. It is the foremost principle scripted in the MU 2/1/2.” When we ponder upon the subject matter of the *Brahmasūtra*, and look at a semantically consistent interpretation, throughout the *Upaniṣad* mantras, which possibly reveal only the principles of the *Svāminārāyaṇa* tradition, because they believe that Akṣarabrahman is distinct from Parabrahman and subordinate to him. Sequentially, for the *Svāminārāyaṇa* tradition, the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* and other *Upaniṣads*<sup>239</sup> help canonically valid this distinction between Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. Along with this, the उभयव्यपदेशाधिकरणम् (BS 3/2/26-29, pp. 302-304) and पराधिकरणम् (BS 3/2/30-35, pp.304-310) elaborate the ontological distinction of these two entities.

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<sup>239</sup> KU 3/11, 6/8; TU 2/1/1, PU 5/2 etc.



### 4.1.3 The *Bhagavad-Gītā*

The *Bhagavad-Gītā* also reflects the distinction of the above-mentioned two entities. There are two factors that I was allured to investigate the eighth chapter of the BG for our subject matter of Akṣarabrahman as a distinct entity from Parabrahman; first, the *Bhagavad-Gītā* has *Brahmavidyā* as its running theme; and second, the eighth chapter is focused on Akṣarabrahman, hence titled ‘*Akṣarabrahmayoga*’. The chapter starts with Arjuna’s questions is: “किं तद् ब्रह्म?” (BG 8/1) “What is ‘Brahman’?” The reply begins with a brief solution in BG 8/3.

The answer was: “अक्षरं ब्रह्म परमम्” In this verse, with ‘*parama*’ means ‘greatest’. This adjective of Brahman appears everywhere in the text. Similarly, Parabrahman is mentioned as the greater than the greatest Akṣarabrahman. This authenticates Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman as two distinct entities and that the former is superior to the latter. In this context, Bhadrēśadāsa firstly explains in BG 8/3 that “The entire *Gītā* is instilled with (the *siddhānta* of) Brahman and Parabrahman.” After analyzing the ‘*Akṣarabrahmayoga*’ we discuss now ‘*Puruṣottamayoga*’. It reveals:

द्वाविमौ पुरुषौ लोके क्षरश्चाक्षर एव च।

क्षरः सर्वाणि भूतानि कूटस्थोऽक्षर उच्यते॥ BG15/16 ॥

This means there are two types of persons (*Puruṣa*) in this world - ‘*kṣara*’ and Akṣara’. All beings are *kṣara* (literally, perishable) whereas ‘Akṣara’ is said to be immutable (*kūṭastha*; immovable, as if braced on or like an anvil) the *uttama Puruṣa* (highest person) is different (from the above two). This highest person is described in the next verse. He - is Parabrahman, also known as Parabrahman supports the entire universe. He the greatest; greater than both ‘*kṣara*’ and ‘Akṣara’ again, we find sermons in the *Vacanāmṛta* that closely agree with the metaphysical description and juxtaposition from the BG verses above. For example: “And what is *Puruṣottama* like? He transcends both *kṣara* and Akṣara.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/31,

p.647). Bhadreśadāsa argues simply that Puruṣottama is “अक्षराद् अपि पूर्वोक्तसर्वविधबद्धमुक्तजीवेश्वरमायादिभ्योऽपि सदैवऽत्यन्तोत्कृष्टात् साक्षादक्षर- ब्रह्मणोऽपि उत्तमः उत्कृष्टः” (BGSB 15/18, p.316) “Parabrahman transcendent *jīva*, *māyā*, *īśvara*, and Brahman due to his highest supremacy among all others.” Parabrahman is always accompanied by Akṣarabrahman, and when He descends on earth, Akṣarabrahman: the supreme servitor too is together with Him. In short, wherever Svāminārāyaṇa is there, whether we speak of Him as a resident in highest abode, or as *Antaryāmīn* in the heart of all as their Inner Self, or as the incarnate God on earth or in the form of Icon; He is together with Akṣarabrahman and hence, legitimately the ‘Svāminārāyaṇa’ mantra implies ‘Akṣara with Puruṣottama’.

Puruṣottama Parabrahman does not exist without (away and apart from) Akṣarabrahman: the best devotee-attendant; and Akṣarabrahman cannot be conceived away and apart from Parabrahman-Puruṣottama. The two icons (*murtis*) of Akṣara and Puruṣottama seen in the central shrines of Akṣara-Puruṣottama Svāminārāyaṇa temples are likely to give an impression of a belief in ‘combined worship’ of both. But Svāminārāyaṇa Vedānta does not advocate the concept of dual or composite worship, because the supreme object of worship is Puruṣottama alone both here and hereafter. As such the maximum that one can attain is the similarity (*sādharmya*) with Akṣara, but one can never become perfectly equal or identical to Puruṣottama because of the attributes and excellence of God’s transcendence exclusively rests with Him alone eternally.

One who serves the supreme devotee with honor and devotion equal to God attains his spiritual goal quicker by the grace of God. Just as one pleases a child and having pleased his father; in the like manner you please the choicest devotee of God, and the Puruṣottama is pleased all the more. With this understanding in view, Akṣara and Puruṣottama are devoutly tended and propitiated together, because Puruṣottama has promised to cut asunder the ties of bondage much faster,

which otherwise would take several births to get rid of. This is the reason why, Puruṣottama, the only object of worship is honored and adored along with His best and closest companion-devotee, who is the ideal like whom every seeker of God likes to become.

## 4.2 The Nature of Brahman

### 4.2.1 The Creator, Sustainer, and Destroyer of the Universe

As we discussed that Akṣarabrahman is the cause of the world, he is not only a material cause but also an efficient cause like Parabrahman. Such all power of Akṣarabrahman is due to the will of Parabrahman. “Akṣarabrahman is the cause and support of all, including Prakṛti-Puruṣa, etc. and pervades everything by its *antaryāmīn* powers ... Parabrahman Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa is distinct from that of Brahman and also the cause, support, and inspirer of Brahman.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/3, p.391)

*Svāminārāyaṇa* school of Vedānta interprets the first aphorism of the *Brahmasūtras*, where ‘Brahman’ in ‘अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा’ (BS 1/1/1) “अक्षरब्रह्मपरब्रह्मेति दिव्योभयतत्त्वयोर्जिज्ञास्यमानत्वेन विवक्षितत्वात्” (BSSB 1/1/1, p.4) “*Brahmajijñāsā*” notes both Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman as the subject of knowing.” The second aphorism of the *Brahmasūtras*, ‘जन्माद्यस्य यतः’ “*Janmādyasya yataḥ*” (BS. 1/1/2), “अक्षरपुरुषोत्तमाभ्यामस्य प्रपञ्चस्योत्पत्तिस्थितिप्रलयाः प्रभवन्ति” (BSSB 1/1/2, p.13) “The entire universe is created, sustained, and destroyed by Akṣara and Puruṣottam.” The origination, sustenance, and dissolution of this universe are due to ‘Brahman’. Here the term ‘Brahman’ denotes both Brahman and Parabrahman. Akṣarabrahman thus creates, sustains, and destroys the world immutably, blamelessly, and effortlessly. Therefore, it is known as the cause in the *Upaniṣads*.

Moreover, in some cases, Bhadreśadāsa explains, “All this (the visible world) is verily Brahman, from which it comes forth, in which it is dissolved, and by which it lives (*taj-jalān*). This is how, tranquil, one should offer *upāsanā* to it.” (CU 3/14/1) “In the beginning, there was only this Brahman ... From that, all that was created.” (BU 1/4/10) “O dear (Śvetaketu), all these beings have ‘*Sat*’ as their source, ‘*Sat*’ as their support, and ‘*Sat*’ as their resting place.” (CUSB 6/8/4)

In the BU, Gārgī first asks permission from the scholars and Yājñavalkya in the assembly and put the serious questions: “O Yājñavalkya, what is that which is on top of the sky and beneath the earth, and between both the sky and earth and that which is called the past, present and the future? Upon what is all this woven back and forth?” (BU 3/8/3) In answer to her question, Yājñavalkya firstly replies that it is ‘*ākāśa*’. Again further, Gārgī asks: “Upon what is ‘*ākāśa*’ woven back and forth? (BU 3/8/7). It is then that Yājñavalkya affirms: “That, O Gārgī, is in fact what the knowers of Brahman proclaim as Akṣara.” (BU 3/8/8) Brahman or Akṣara is thus the substratum upon which all of remains stable.

Thus, Akṣarabrahman is described as the most powerful administrator after Parabrahman in the *Upaniṣads*. The verse reads: “Within the governance of this Akṣarabrahman, O Gārgī, do the upheld sun and moon verily stand. Within the governance of this Akṣara, O Gārgī, do the upheld ether and earth verily stand. Within the governance of this Akṣara, O Gārgī, do the upheld moments, hours, days and nights, half-months, months, seasons, and years verily stand. Within the governance of this Akṣara, O Gārgī, do the rivers flow - some to the east from the white (snowy) mountains, others to the west in their own directions. Within the governance of this Akṣara, O Gārgī, do recipient men praise donors, deities (praise) the patron, and forefathers (praise) the ancestral offering.” (BU 3/8/9)

Bhadreśadāsa illuminates that these are just a few symbolic features of the entire universe; it should thereby be understood that Akṣarabrahman supports and governs all beings and things of the universe. It should be emphasized again that here and wherever else the governance and causality of Akṣarabrahman are mentioned, Bhadreśadāsa strongly writes that Akṣarabrahman's such power is due to the 'eternal wish of Parabrahman'.

#### 4.2.1 *Satyam, Jñānam, Anantam*

The *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*'s *Anandavallī* describes the characteristics of Akṣarabrahman. It reads: “सत्यं ज्ञानमनन्तं ब्रह्म” (TU 2/1/1) “Reality, knowledge, and infinitives are the basic form and qualities of Brahman.” These are the three important definers of Brahman as Bhadreśadāsa explains:<sup>240</sup>

When we analyze this phenomenon, the outcoming of this examination explicitly suggests the nature of Brahman and its distinction from Parabrahman. Here we will mull over the salient features of Brahman as understood within the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School of Vedānta. Akṣarabrahman is the second-highest entity that pervades all except Parabrahman, transcendent to *jīva*, *īśvaras*, and *māyā*.<sup>241</sup> Like Parabrahman Akṣarabrahman is also immutable and beyond *māyā*.<sup>242</sup> Akṣarabrahman is a mediator to connect *jīvas* and *īśvaras* to Parabrahman and is capable of granting liberation to them.<sup>243</sup>

#### 4.3 Forms of Akṣarabrahman

Akṣarabrahman is one entity, described as 'one without second'. Though it serves or works in four different ways. We highlight these four forms here:

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<sup>240</sup> TUSB 2/1/1, p.362

<sup>241</sup> MU 2/1/2, KU 3/11

<sup>242</sup> BG 15/16

<sup>243</sup> KU 3/2

1. As *Cidākāśa*. The all-pervading conscious space: supporting countless millions of *brahmāndas*.
2. As Akṣaradhāma. The abode of Parabrahman: the divine, luminous Akṣaradhāma, a place. Parabrahman, *sevaka* Akṣarabrahman, and *akṣara-muktas* live there forever.
3. *Sevaka* Akṣarabrahman. Human-like divine form in Akṣaradhāma: the ideal and staunch devotee of Parabrahman.
4. *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru on earth. Parabrahman manifests in him as a human, the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* get liberation through his association.

These all four forms are mentioned explicitly in one *mantra* of the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*: “आविः संनिहितं गुहाचरं नाम महत्पदमत्रैतत् समर्पितम् । एजत्प्राणन्निमिषच्च यदेतज्जानथ सदसद्वरेण्यं परं विज्ञानाद्यद्वरिष्ठं प्रजानाम् ॥” (MU 2/1/1) Bhadrēśadāsa explains this *mantra* in his commentary: “आविः आविर्भूतम् अभिव्यक्तस्वरूपमितियावत् (साकृतिकाक्षरधाम, धामस्थासेवकरूपेण, प्रकटगुरुरूपेण), संनिहितं सर्वपदार्थसंबद्धम्। चिदाकाशरूपेण सर्वव्याप्तत्वात्... महत्पदं गन्तव्यस्थान्भूतमक्षराधिपतेः नित्यनिवासभूतदिव्यदेश-विशेषात्मकमक्षरधामाख्यं पदम् ... अत्रैतत् समर्पितं दिव्याक्षरधामाख्यपदे एतद् एतदेवाक्षरं ब्रह्म स्वरूपान्तरेण समर्पितं पुरुषोत्तमसेवायां समर्पितं... एजत् चलद् नैकजीवेश्वरोद् दिधीर्षया तत्तद् ब्रह्माण्डेषु मनुष्याकृतिनाऽवतीर्य गुरुरूपेण भक्तहिताय विचरदित्यर्थः।” (MUSB 2/1/2, p. 268)

Let us understand it word by word: “*Āviḥ*, meaning ‘manifest, is Akṣarabrahman as the abode, *sevaka*, and Guru, all of which have definite form; whereas ‘*sannihitam*’, or ‘concomitant’, is Akṣarabrahman all-pervading form, i.e., *cidākāśa*. *Mahatpadam* means that Akṣarabrahman is a specific paramount place. Not only that but ‘*atra*’ in that Akṣaradhāma ‘*etat*’ that very Akṣarabrahman is ‘*samarpitam*’ devoted to the service of Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa.” The verse concludes with the instruction: “Know that Akṣara, which is both gross and subtle, the most desirable, the because of its extraordinary knowledge, and what people most desire.” (MU

2/2/1) These four are then individually referred to in the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad* verse, as shown in the table below.

Akṣarabrahman Form	Term/Phrase	Meaning
<i>Cidākāśa</i>	<i>guhācaram</i>	dwelling within the cave (of the heart)
Abode	<i>mahat padam</i>	great place
<i>Sevaka</i> in Abode	<i>atraitat samarpitam</i>	dedicated here (in the great place)
Guru	<i>ejat prāṇan nimīṣat</i>	moving, breathing, blinking

Now to understand each of these four forms of Akṣarabrahman in more detail, we proceed further.

**One Without Second:** Svāminārāyaṇa explains, that “Parabrahman is like this, and these are the rewards of engaging in the worship of Parabrahman and listening to religious discourses. Akṣara is like this, and the bliss associated with him is like this.” (Vac. Loyā. 17, p.343) In the *Vedarasa*<sup>244</sup> and *Svāmīnī Vāto*<sup>245</sup>, too, the same singular personal pronoun in Gujarati (*evo*) is used when discussing Akṣarabrahman. The *Bhagavad-Gītā* also mentions this singularity in 15/16, this is also noted in for example, where ‘*kūṭasthah*’ used to define Akṣara is in the singular case whereas ‘all (other) beings’ (*sarvāṇi bhūtāni*) is in the plural.

#### 4.3.1 Akṣarabrahman as *Cidākāśa*

As we know, Svāminārāyaṇa explains in the *Vacanāmṛta* that Akṣara, when of the four forms of Akṣarabrahman, the only one without a fixed shape is *Cidākāśa*. “Formless (*nirākāra*) and pure consciousness (*Caitanya*), is known as *Cidākāśa*.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/21, p. 62) Akṣarabrahman, in this manner, is also known in its *anvaya*

<sup>244</sup> VR 213-4

<sup>245</sup> SV 5.177

(immanent) form described in Vac. Gadh. 1/7 and the *nirguṇa* (subtle) form described in Vac. Gadh. 2/42. In both these senses, *Cidākāśa* is described as being all-pervading.

As the all-pervading, all-supporting consciousness-space, Akṣarabrahman is greater than all, including Mūlapuruṣa and Mūlaprakṛti and the evolutes thereof. It is involved in everything as an extremely subtle finer principle which is both the support (foundational ground) of all and the space immanent in everything. This all-pervading ground of all the subservient elements is the ‘*Cidākāśa*’ aspect of Akṣarabrahman. *Cidākāśa* also is the eternal expression of Akṣarabrahman. As the immanent support and substratum of an innumerable number of universes, Akṣarabrahman is called as *sarvādhāra*. This form of Akṣarabrahman pervades everywhere and permeates in everything, and is immanent within and without the universes. Thus, Akṣarabrahman is not only transcendental ground or cause i.e., uninvolved source and support of an infinite number of brahmāndas consisting of animate and inanimate beings therein; but also immanent all-pervading principle within and without everything.

Akṣara as *Cidākāśa* is immanent in everything. In every atom and also in subatomic particles, it is immanent. Akṣara as *Cidākāśa* is imperishable, unwaning, unchanging, eternal infinitely all-pervading ground and support of everything. It is not subject to production and destruction (evolution and involution/dissolution) like ordinary ether which is a product of *tamoguṇa* aspect of *prakṛti*. *Cidākāśa* is illuminating. It is beyond evolutionary and involucional changes. Every material particle, every psycho-physical body, and every universe and its presiding *īśvara* - up to Mūlaprakṛti and Mūlapuruṣa, has it is being sustained in and by all-pervading, all-supporting foundational *Cidākāśa*. It is immanent within and without an infinite number of universes (cosmic-shells = *brahmāndas*). The association and dissociation (union and disunion) of *pradhāna* (lower *prakṛti*) and *puruṣa*, and also of Mūlaprakṛti and Mūlapuruṣa and



accordingly their expansion and contraction for evolutionary purpose takes place in this all-pervading medium called *Cidākāśa*. Since each *brahmānda* (cosmic-shell) is ensheathed and enveloped by eight layers of *pṛthivi*, *jala*, *teja*, *vayu*, *akasa*, *ahankara*, *mahattattva*, and *prakṛti*; Akṣarabrahman is the supporter of and the immanent principle in the earth, water, fire, air, ether, mind, ego, intellect, *prakṛti*, *puruṣa*, etc. Thus, in short, Akṣarabrahman, by its power of being the all-pervading all-supporting substratum of an infinite number of universes (*brahmāndas*), supports and sustains them. Being infinitely vast, homogeneous, all-pervading *Cidākāśa*, it is not subject to expansion and contraction, because it is ever stable and steadfast. The life and existence of all universes and the beings therein are sustained by this *Cidākāśa* (consciousness-space) which is an immanent ground of all. This aspect or expression of Akṣarabrahman is formless and impersonal; nevertheless, it is concrete, qualified and determinate.

As seen above, Akṣara as *Cidākāśa* is all-pervading and immanent in *māyā-prakṛti* and the products thereof. But despite its immanence in *māyā-prakṛti*, it is totally divine, untouched and untainted by it, for it is eternally transcendent to *māyā-prakṛti* and its three *guṇas*. The transcendental aspect of Akṣarabrahman is formful, personal, qualitative, and determinate; while the immanent aspect of the same (though qualitative) is formless, impersonal, all-pervading all-supporting, illuminating consciousness-space. Glorifying the illimitable vastness of Akṣara as *Cidākāśa*, smaller than the small; that on which all the worlds together with their inhabitants are grounded is this imperishable Akṣarabrahman. In the bosom of that Akṣarabrahman, are seen an infinite number of the assemblage of worlds (*brahmāndas*).

Svāminārāyaṇa makes a distinction between the ever uncreated eternal *Cidākāśa* (consciousness-space) which is unmodified and unchanging and the element evolved from the *tamoguṇa* aspect of *prakṛti* which is modifiable and is subject to contraction and expansion. *Cidākāśa* is one of the forms or expressions of

Akṣarabrahman; while ordinary *ākāśa* is a product of *prakṛti*. Thus, space evolved from the *tamas* aspect of *prakṛti* is the physical space that is subject to change and limitations of space and time; while *Cidākāśa* is beyond it in every respect.

The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, too, elucidates: “This immortal Brahman is verily in front. Brahman is behind. Brahman is to the right and to the left. It is below and above. This Brahman verily pervades the whole world.” (MU 2/2/11) Bhadreśadāsa includes to his commentary: “इत्थम् इदं सर्वमपि प्रपञ्चविस्तारकं विश्वं जगद् ब्रह्मैव ब्रह्माक्षरात्मकमेव” (MUSB 2/2/11, p.280) “In this manner, the entire manifested world is pervaded by Brahman.” The BGSB also states: “तद् अक्षरं ब्रह्म दूरस्थं चान्तिके च व्यापकत्वात्” (BGSB 13/15, p.283) “It is far as well as near since it is all-pervading.” The BSSB says in the *Daharādhikaraṇa*: “तच्चैतदसर्वं चिदकाशाख्ये ब्रह्मणि सुसमन्वेति” (BSSB 1/3/14, p.102) “These all characteristics suit to *cidākāśa* Akṣarabrahman.” The same fact is revealed by the Bhāṣyakāra in the *Daharādhikaraṇa* of BSSB<sup>246</sup>.

In the *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, the same discussion is found regarding Akṣarabrahman in 2/2/2. It states: “That which is subtler than the subtle and within which the realms and their inhabitants stay, that is this Akṣarabrahman.” In the same way, the *Katha Upaniṣad* describes that “all realms are supported by it (which is called Brahman)” (KU 5/8), while the *Bhagavad-Gītā* simply calls Akṣarabrahman as the supporter of all beings (*bhūtabhartr*) (BG 13/16) and the supporter of all (*sarvabhartr*) (BG 13/14). In addition to this, Yājñavalkya’s answer to Gārgī in BU 3/8, “It is this Akṣara upon which the whole world is woven back and forth and within the governance of this Akṣara that all is upheld in its proper place, working as it should.”

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<sup>246</sup> BSSB 1/3/14, p.101-102

A similar declaration can be found in the *Chāndogya Upaniṣad*: “As far as this (material) space extends, so extends the (*dahara*, literally subtle) space within the heart. Within it, rests both the sky and the earth, both fire and air, both the sun and the moon, lightning and the stars. Whatever of this (world) is here and whatever is not - it all rests within this (spiritual space).” (CU 8/1/3) It has emerged as a topic of discussion for the *Daharādhikaraṇa* in BS 1/3/14-23, similarly, in Vac. Gadh.1/46, Svāminārāyaṇa points to at the end of his clarification by denoting to the knowledge of *cidākāśa* as ‘*daharavidyā*’. Notably, Akṣarabrahman is not the material space (*bhautika ākāśa*).

#### 4.3.2 Akṣarabrahman as Parabrahman’s Abode

Akṣarabrahman as the abode (*dhāman*) is variously described oft-repeatedly in scriptures. Let us take a few references into account to substantiate the standpoint. Puruṣottama resides eternally in the Akṣaradhāma. In the land of purest light of the stuff of consciousness-bliss, the Divine Person of Puruṣottama reigns supreme. On the divine throne, He is seated in Akṣaradhāma. In the center of the effulgent light of Akṣaradhāma, on the divine throne, the super-divine personality of Puruṣottama is reigning (seated) eternally.

Svāminārāyaṇa describes the glory of the divine abode thus as: Imagine, as if the whole earth together with all its objects and individuals was made of clean mirroring glass, and all-stars and heavenly bodies shone like the most effulgent Sun, and all of them together would brighten and reflect and illumine the whole gamut; what a beautiful, dazzling and exceedingly bright and glittering the sight it would be! The divine abode of God shines effulgently in the like manner. It is bright and effulgent as if like the lights of billions and trillions of Suns and Moons put together. Its light is indescribable and incomparably matchless, for it is cool, tranquil, pleasantly bearable (enjoyably), and infinitely bright and luminous. This abode of God is eternal, (*nitya*) non-material (*a-prākṛta*), of the nature of existence -

consciousness - bliss, illimitable, and partless (*akhandā*). The *ekāntika-bhakta* (devotee) of God attains it at the end of his body.

Akṣara as an abode is real concrete and qualified. On account of its infinite glory, greatness, and all-pervading vastness, it remains beyond the comprehension of *jīvas*, yogis, gods, and goddesses of the level of *īśvara*. Allegorically speaking, in each pore of the body of Akṣaradhāma billions and trillions of universes (*brahmāndas*) dwell like tiny atoms. The universes (*brahmāndas*) do not become atomic, but they appear as such on account of the infinite glory and greatness of Akṣara. Of course, each *brahmānda* (cosmic shell) is sheathed by eightfold enveloping layers of *prakṛti*, but it appears extremely small and insignificant before the unfathomable greatness of Akṣara. This Akṣarabrahman as the *dhāman* (abode) is formful-personal, but this form is infinitely vast and ultra-macroscopic, and beyond the comprehension of human intellect in terms of size and dimension.

Just as in the royal hall with the decorative pillars of the palace of the regal authority, the king sits on the throne; so is Puruṣottama seated on the divine throne, attended by innumerable released souls, in his abode. It is in this highest abode called Akṣaradhāma, that the innumerable released souls who have acquired similitude with Akṣarabrahman, are seated around the divine throne of Lord Parabrahman-Nārāyaṇa, and are lost in ceaselessly gazing at His most beatific bliss-radiating figure. The divine forms (bodies) of the brahmanized released souls (*Akṣara-muktas*) are truly divine and unimaginably effulgent. The stuff of their body is of the nature of effulgent consciousness-bliss alone; the same as that of the Akṣarabrahman.

Svāminārāyaṇa enunciates in Vac. Gadh. 2/42 about the term, *saguṇa* (vast) and *sākāra* (having a definite shape) form of Akṣarabrahman. It is called Akṣaradhāma, Brahmanahola, Brahmaloḥa, and Brahmapura the abode Parabrahman. It is their place of ultimate rest, the final destination, the supreme goal. Svāminārāyaṇa

unequivocally asserts in discourses: “Akṣarabrahman is the abode wherein Parabrahman resides.” (Vac. Pan. 1, p. 352)

In the *Katha Upaniṣad* phrase: “That place which all the Vedas extol ...” (KU 2/15), The Bhāṣyakāra elucidates: “‘पदं ‘तद्विष्णोः परमं पदं’ (कठ. ३/९) इत्युत्तरवाक्येन ऐकार्थ्याद् दिव्यदेशविशेषात्मकं परमात्मनिलयनरूपं च स्थानम्” (KUSB 2/15, p.102) “That is ‘the great abode of Parabrahman’ (KU 3/9); due to this upcoming *mantra*, the word *padam* reflects the divine place where Parabrahman resides forever.” To understand in detail about the *padam*? he explains in BGSB: “तद् यथोक्तमहिमयुतमक्षरं पदं पद्यते गम्यते ब्रह्मरूपैः प्रत्यक्षपरमात्मोपासकैः स्वदेहपातोत्तरमर्चिरादिपथेन प्राप्यते इति पदम्। गन्तव्यस्थानभूतं परमात्मनित्यनिवासरूपं देशविशेषात्मकमक्षरधाम- ब्रह्मलोकादिशब्दव्यपदिष्टं पदम्” (BGSB 8/11, pp.484-485) “The specific paramount place which only the enlightened devotees attain after death through the divine path. Here the *padam* word indicates the divine abode of Parabrahman, Akṣaradhāma.” The BSSB also confirms: “एवं ब्रह्माक्षरगुणयोगवैशिष्ट्यादेवास्य ब्राह्मेण विग्रहेण साक्षाद् मूर्तिमदक्षरब्रह्मणा सह ब्रह्मदेशे परब्रह्मपरमानन्दोपभोगः संगच्छते” (BSSB 4/4/5, p.420) “Only the liberated, who have acquired qualitative oneness with Akṣarabrahman, attain Akṣaradhāma and there they enjoy the bliss of Parabrahman with Akṣarabrahman.”

Bhadreśadāsa provides a list of references from the Vedas, *Upaniṣad*, and *Bhagavad-Gītā* mentioning Akṣarabrahman as the resident of Parabrahman as well as numerous aspects of its nature. We now have the opportunity to go through these features. Definitely, the most significant aspect of Akṣaradhāma is that at its center sits the human-shaped, transcendental, distinct form of Parabrahman in all his divine and splendid grandeur. “Nevertheless, he himself is still always present in his Akṣaradhāma.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/64, p.517) A perfect description of this eternally resident form of Parabrahman was provided by Guṇātitanand Svāmī.

He states: “That is Puruṣottama Parabrahman, the supreme Śrī Sahajānanda Svāmī (Svāminārāyaṇa) who forever resides in his Akṣaradhāma being served by countless liberated *muktas* and divine powers, where he is blissful in and of himself but out of sheer compassion, accepts the service of Akṣara and all others.” (SV 7/27) Svāminārāyaṇa also illustrates the captivating form of Parabrahman in Akṣaradhāma, providing a special reference to the abode’s extreme effulgent. “There is an all-transcendent mass of divine light which cannot be evaluated from above, below, or in any of the four directions; that is to say, it is endless. Amid this mass of light lies a large, ornate throne upon which presides the divine form of Śrī Nārāyaṇa Puruṣottama Parabrahman Bhagavān. Countless millions of liberated souls are seated around that throne and enjoy the *darśana* of Parabrahman.” (Vac. Loyā. 14, p.331)

The same narration of the radiant abode of Parabrahman can be found in MU 2/2/10, KU 5/15, SU 6/14, BG 15/6, and CU 3/11/1–3. They assert that even the sun and moon cannot touch Brahman’s luminous glory. For example, “There shines not the sun. There shines not the moon or stars, nor does shine this lightning. How, then, can this fire (shine there)? By it alone being luminous is all else reflected. By its light is all this world illumined.” (KU 5/15, MU 2/2/10, SU 6/14). Svāminārāyaṇa provides a reason in the Vac. for why Akṣaradhāma is unique and transcends other realms. He analyzes: “With the exception of Parabrahman’s Akṣaradhāma, the form of Parabrahman in that Akṣaradhāma and his (liberated) devotees in that Akṣaradhāma, all realms, the devas inhabiting those realms, and the opulence of the devas - everything – is perishable.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/24, p. 448)

Similarly, in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*’s *Anandavallī*, and in the BU 4/3/33, where Yājñavalkya describes to King Janaka the happiness of various realms in ascending order, each a hundredfold greater than the previous, climaxing ultimately with the

supreme bliss of Brahmaloaka. Moreover, by quoting the *Mokṣadharmā*<sup>247</sup> Svāminārāyaṇa shows that others realms are so inferior in front of Parabrahman's abode as far as the ultimate bliss is concerned.<sup>248</sup> It is explicitly mentioned that by the bliss of abode of God all other creatures survive.<sup>249</sup>

This abode-form of Akṣarabrahman is in fact formful-personal; Akṣarabrahman is beyond the comprehension of anyone by his senses and intellect, and hence is at times described as 'amurta' (formless/impersonal) in its narrow/deviate sense. The Akṣarabrahman's ultra-macroscopic vast form is greatly emphasized in the *Vacanāmṛta* by Svāminārāyaṇa. It is a form infinitely vaster than the *Viśvarūpa* (cosmic-universal) form of Virat described in the scriptures. The *Bhāgavatam* in its 3/11/39-41 elaborates the same fact thus: That Akṣarabrahman, the cause of all causes, in which all such infinite number of universes ensheathed by eight enveloping layers look like tiny atoms, and that is the transcendental abode of the Supreme Person: Puruṣottama, the eternal residence in an embodied form.

The attainment of this Akṣaradhāma, i.e., the attainment of the place in the service of Puruṣottama in Akṣaradhāma is also called the attainment of the 'paramapada' (the highest goal), because every seeker has the goal that – I too want to find a place in the community of *akṣararūpa mukta*, to eternally serve Puruṣottama in Akṣaradhāma. Akṣara is the eternal abode of God and ultimately the abode of all released souls. Therefore; the attainment of Akṣaradhāma means the attainment of Puruṣottama: highest goal (*paramapada*), i.e., the final release. Also, in the hearts of *jīvas* and *īśvaras*, Akṣara is there as the micro-abode (*daharakaṣa*), wherein Puruṣottama resides as the *antaryāmīn* Inner Self and Inner Controller with His microform personality.

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<sup>247</sup> *Mahābhārata*, *Śānti Parva* 191/6

<sup>248</sup> Vac. Sār. 1

<sup>249</sup> BU 4/3/32

Akṣaradhāma is the Supreme Abode. (*paramadhāma*) of Puruṣottama. It transcends an infinite number of worlds born of *prakṛti*, each of which is ensheathed by fourteen material regions (*lokas*), and is enveloped by eightfold covering layers (*āvaraṇa*) and above them encircled by the dark belt of *māyā*. Puruṣottama eternally resides there in His original form. He is always present there, also when he descends on earth in a manifest form perceptible to human eyes. The abode is never empty without His actual presence there.

The limit of the glory, of Akṣarabrahman, is not measurable. His greatness is so vast that human logic and imagination cannot explore it fully. When this is the case concerning Akṣarabrahman, what should one, ever say of his transcendental Puruṣottama, Who is beyond the ken of even the released souls (*muktas*) and the uniquely superior Akṣarabrahman? On the contrary, when Parabrahman Himself cannot know the limits of His own excellence and glory, how, can any mortal ever comprehend! When His greatness does not have the limit, how can it be ever known, because just as the totally non-existent thing like sky-flower can never be known, in the like manner the limit of His infinite glory which does not exist, cannot be known.

The abode of God is variously described in the scriptures by the epithets such as Brahmadhāma, Brahmapura, Paramapada, Paramadhāma, Amṛtaloka, Akṣaradhāma, etc. It is the Paramadhāma and Akṣaradhāma, for it survives as eternal abode also after the final dissolution (*ātyantika-pralaya*) of all universes. It is called *paramapada*, because having reached there, there is no return into the *māyic* world (*samsara*) of bondage and suffering (BG - 8/21). It, therefore, is rightly called Amṛtaloka. It is beyond the veil of *māyā*, of the brightness like a blazing sun. It is beginningless, endless, eternal, imperishable, non-material, divine, of the stuff of ‘existence-consciousness-bliss’ and infinitely illuminating. In short, it is of recallable splendor and grandeur and is self-



luminous and bright, and is of wonderful blessed nature beyond finite imagination.

The scriptures sing the glory of such a self-effulgent and all-illuminating abode. In that abode of Brahman, the sun doesn't shine, nor do the moon and the collectivity of stars. Neither the lightning nor does the fire can ever illumine it, because, by the effulgent light of this Brahmadhāma, the sun, the moon, etc. and the worlds shine. Neither the Sun nor the Moon nor even fire can illumine that highest self-effulgent abode of God, attaining which one never returns to this world of mortality.

Explicitly, Svāminārāyaṇa is not talking here about *Cidākāśa*. It was the narration of Akṣarabrahman as the abode. In this manner, by its size, finality, bliss, timelessness, exclusivity, purity, imperishability, luminance, and other qualities, we have endeavored to comprehend Akṣaradhāma.

#### **4.3.3 Akṣarabrahman as *Sevaka* in Akṣaradhāma**

In its personal aspect, Akṣara has a form and personality which resembles that of Parabrahman. It is *puruṣākṛti* (form similar to that of Puruṣottama). Thus, Akṣarabrahman has divine form and personality made up of the stuff called existence consciousness-bliss, and it is endowed with two hands (*dvibhuja*) and two feet (*dvicaraṇa*), in the human frame. However, the *māyic* distinction of male or female does not apply to him, for he is beyond the three guṇas of *māyā-prakṛti*. He is endowed with inconceivable innumerable auspicious qualities and powers; and only Parabrahman (Puruṣottama) transcends him infinitely, as his Lord. The formful Akṣarabrahman is in the human form and is engaged eternally in the service of the highest Lord; whereas that one which is formless exists as the *dhāman* (abode) of the Lord and is partless.

The personal form of Akṣara is the supreme wisdom and supreme devotion personified! He is the supreme ideal of devotion-in-servitude. He is the supreme ideal of devotion-par-excellence. He therefore is adored as the *śreṣṭha-upāsaka*. Akṣarabrahman has *divya-vigraha* (divine body) of the nature of *sat-cid-ānanda*. He too is eternally young like a teen-aged boy, *puruṣākr̥ti* (in the human frame like God-Himself). The *Ekāntika-Dharma* is fully consummated, from eternity, in the person of Akṣarabrahman.

Akṣara is the chief servile devotee and the chief attendant. He is divine, very enchanting personality endowed with hands, feet, face etc., he is *puruṣākr̥ti* (formful like Puruṣottama). Akṣarabrahman ministers to Him with the most intense love, best service, and supreme devotion. For all *jīvas* pursuing the path of devotion, whether bound or liberated, Akṣarabrahman sets the standard to learn how God is to be served with selfless intense love, devotion, and dedication. Akṣarabrahman is the model of the right relationship with God to the *jīvas* seeking salvation.

Akṣarabrahman is engaged in the eternal service of Puruṣottama as the foremost among His servitors. Akṣarabrahman symbolizes the best expression of perfect self-effacement through the loving service of Puruṣottama. Akṣarabrahman, in his personal aspect, is the devotee nearest and dearest to Puruṣottama. Akṣara is the constant companion, choicest devotee and the best attendant of the Nārāyaṇa ever-to be-there with Him. He is endowed with the qualities of consciousness, bliss, truth, infiniteness, etc. in their purest form. Therefore, in the other words, the personal form of Akṣarabrahman is, thus, an eternally existing ideal for the aspirants.

Svāminārāyaṇa now specifically mentions Akṣarabrahman as *sevaka* in Akṣaradhāma, which have a definite form as noted in Vac. Gadh. 1/21: “In its other

form, that Akṣara remains in the service of Parabrahman Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/21, p.62). This form of Brahman always remains in the abode of Parabrahman and indulges in the service of Him. He is an ideal devotee.

The Bhāṣyakāra then clarifies: “Who knows (that Brahman) dwelling in the cavity (of the heart) and in the highest abode, he enjoys all pleasures with the omniscient (*Vipaścit*) Brahman.” (TU 2/1/I) Bhadreśādāsa delves into this phrase in his commentary: “स ब्रह्मसाक्षात्कारी तेनैव दिव्याक्षरधामस्थेन परमात्मपरमसेवकात्मेन विपश्चिता ...ब्रह्मणा दिव्यकरचरणादियुतपुरुषाकारब्रह्मणाक्षरेण सह कामान् कामयन्त इति कामाः परमात्मपरमसुखादिरूपभोगान् अश्रुते भुङ्क्तेनुभवति।” (TUSB 2/1/1, p.363) “The *muktas* who have attained liberation experience the supreme bliss of Parabrahman just as the *sevakrūpa* Akṣarabrahman who has a perfect human form does in Akṣaradhāma.” The BSSB explores the fact: “एवं ब्रह्माक्षरगुणयोगवैशिष्ट्यादेवास्य ब्राह्मेण विग्रहेण साक्षाद् मूर्तिमदक्षरब्रह्मणा सह ब्रह्मदेशे परब्रह्मपरमानन्दोपभोगः संगच्छते” (BSSB 4/4/5, p.420) “Only the liberated, who have acquired qualitative oneness with Akṣarabrahman, attain Akṣaradhāma and there he enjoys the bliss of Parabrahman with Akṣarabrahman who is in a human form there.”

#### 4.3.4 Akṣarabrahman as *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru

In the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School of Vedānta, we had already brought about that a fundamental and unique doctrine. In that Parabrahman is the cause of all *avatāras*. He himself manifests on earth in human form forever to grant liberation to every being. How does this become possible? If Svāminārāyaṇa was only present on earth from 1781 to 1830, how does Parabrahman remain present on earth after leaving his mortal body? Especially, the word *pratyakṣa* (Parabrahman manifest before your eyes) is the answer. *Pratyakṣa* is used by Svāminārāyaṇa invariably, what does this mean? Let us discuss the matter and analyze it in detail in order to answer this question within this section. After a keen investigation into the *Vacanāmṛta*, it becomes evident that Svāminārāyaṇa explained those words ‘Parabrahman manifest

before the eyes’ to remain forever on earth. He explains the profoundly important matter in the *Vacanāmṛta*, “When Parabrahman manifests for the purpose of granting liberation to the *jīvas*, he is always accompanied by his Akṣaradhāma.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/71, pp.173-174)

Akṣarabrahman is the medium through whom God Puruṣottama (after departing from the earth) keeps His manifestation and presence continuous on earth in the form of Akṣara-Guru to redeem the seekers of salvation. Therefore, Akṣarabrahman, who descended on earth along with Lord Puruṣottama, continues to function as the Guru: the appropriate medium for God to work through and remain present (manifest), after His formal departure from this earth. In Guru-paramparā, at each stage, Akṣarabrahman through his alter-form remains perennially present.

Akṣara as the Guru (Parama Ekantika Satpuruṣa) is the purifier and molder of the metal of the *jīva*, and hence, he is conceived as a compassionate mother, as a disciplinarian father, as a tough taskmaster, as a true friend of the soul, as an enlightened philosopher, as an unfailing guide, the Bonafide Spiritual Master who embodies fully the very God whom he serves devoutly. One who seeks refuge at the feet of Akṣara-Guru, and obediently affiliates himself with the Akṣara-Guru becomes *brahmarūpa* a freed soul resembling Akṣarabrahman. The Sruti says: “*brahmavid brahmaiva bhavati.*” (Mund. Up. -3/2/9) “The true knower (realizer) of Akṣarabrahman becomes (similar of) Brahman” and the Sruti further says that, “One who becomes like Akṣarabrahman attains Parabrahman” (TU 2/1/1).

As seen earlier, Akṣara stands closest to God; Puruṣottama and Akṣara are distinct realities, but Akṣara enjoys ‘Supreme Spiritual Union’ and oneness with God. God too does not leave Akṣara and stay alone (solitary); though of course He is capable

of doing so by virtue of His supreme transcendental power. On the contrary, He, as if acts like one enslaved by the loving ties of Akṣara.

Akṣarabrahman is eternally lost intending His God, and God remains lost totally in the person of Akṣara. The divine love and relationship between the two is such that no one leaves the other. The words ‘consort’ or ‘other half’ do not convey the correct and complete relationship, because God always manifests simultaneously fully in the person of Akṣara alone. Both Akṣara and Puruṣottama are *divya-murtis* (divine personalities). The almost equal powers, rights, and privileges that Akṣara enjoys and owes from Puruṣottama are like that of the royal Queen enjoying and owning equal royal authority from His Excellency, The King. Both Akṣara and Puruṣottama are eternally free, devoid of three *guṇas* and are not directly involved in the process of creation. Neither any phase/ aspect/ expression of God nor that of Akṣara unites with *prakṛti* to set the creative process on.

Nonetheless, Parabrahman is the Supreme Godhead and the Parama Guru while Akṣarabrahman is the first Guru in succession and the Guru-paramparā continues through Akṣarabrahman in whom God fully manifests with all His glory, glamour, and grace. Akṣara embodies in him God and God alone fully, works strictly in consonance with the will of God and also presents himself as the ideal devotee teaching the lessons of right devotion and worship through his words and deeds.

Accordingly, the followers of this faith hold the conviction that the present Guru Mahanta Svāmi Maharaja is the currently manifest form of Akṣarabrahman, through whom Puruṣottama manifests on earth and works and redeems the seekers of salvation, Therefore, the Ācārya (the Guru) is the first and the final means for mokṣa, because he and the God are not away and apart. Since the Akṣara-Guru finds the greatest delight and devotion in serving his Lord, he

attunes and affiliates all seekers who approach him, to Puruṣottama, Who is the Supreme Value and the Summum Bonum of all spiritual endeavors. Puruṣottama shapes and secures the *brāhmic* state of Akṣarahood to the seekers, but does it through Akṣara-Guru, who is the appropriate medium and mediator between *jīvas* and Himself, after His departure from this world. So, it is the Lord alone who is the ultimate redeemer and the Supreme Goal and the Supreme Object of worship, here and hereafter.

Svāminārāyaṇa is primarily present in the person of the Guru, also in the images and sacred scriptures. The Guru is spoken of as ‘the sacred texts personified’ because he lives in harmony with all the precepts of the scriptures given by Svāminārāyaṇa. Without such a Guru, it is said, there can be no *satsaṃga*. It is only through association with Akṣara who has come on earth in a personal form that one can get rid of one’s vices, baser instincts, and the clutches of *māyā*, and thereby gain release.

Describing the glory of *paramabhakta* (Akṣara-Guru), Svāminārāyaṇa explains that wherever the best devotee (Akṣarabrahman) goes, the Lord follows him, accompanies him. As the devotee cannot live without Him, so does He cannot live without His best devotee. He does not remain away from the heart of that devotee even for a fraction of a second. Do not mistake him for a mere mortal, though he appears like an ordinary man or a saint. He is worthy of honor and adoration and reverence like God Himself. He (the Akṣara-Guru) is an all-inspirer and all-illuminator. He is the support and substratum of all the universes. Akṣara has sway over Puruṣottama by his ideal subservience and highest devotion par excellence. Akṣara is the intercessor between the bound souls and the almost inaccessible Lord. To seek grace and favor of God, Akṣara the Guru is the only appropriate medium, who is the embodiment of supreme wisdom, highest devotion, motherly love, and affection and concern for creatures.

We, the finite, bound, erring souls are assured of His mercy, final pardon, perfection, highest bliss, and the service of His divine feet through Akṣarabrahman, our first refuge to reach the final goal.

Thus, Parabrahman is always accompanied by Akṣarabrahman and never remains alone on earth; It is this Akṣarabrahman - in another form, the abode of Parabrahman that is the *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru on earth. Just as in his eternally distinct form, Parabrahman is fully manifest in his abode called Akṣaradhāma; similarly, on earth, he chooses to dwell in his human abode the same Akṣarabrahman who has assumed the form of the Guru.

This form of the Guru is mentioned in the Vac. As ‘*Sant*’, ‘*Satpuruṣa*’, ‘*Sādhu*’, ‘*Bhakta*’, etc. for example: “When one has the *darśana* of such a *Sant*, one should realize, ‘I have had the *darśana* of Parabrahman himself.”(Vac. Sar. 10, p.226) Svāminārāyaṇa thus, reiterates that Parabrahman is present in and operate through the Guru. In the same way, the *Upaniṣad* reveal the Guru’s metaphysical authorizations as well as the absolute need for such a Guru in order to transcend *māyā* and realize the highest, *Brāhmi* state of enlightenment. The *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad*, For example, explains that for *brahmavidyā* one has to go to such Brahman Guru.

“To realize that (higher knowledge of Akṣara (also known as Brahman) Puruṣa (also known as Parabrahman), i.e., *Brahmavidyā*), imperatively render, with sacrificial wood in hand, to only that Guru who has a realization of revealed texts (*Śrotriya*), who is Brahman(*Brahma*) and who is ever steadfast (*Niṣṭha*) (in Parabrahman). (MU 1/2/12) Bhadrēśadāsa comments on this *mantra*: “ब्रह्म साक्षादक्षरं ब्रह्म, निष्ठं नितान्तं नित्यं तिष्ठतीति निष्ठः। कुत्रेत्याक्षेपात् परमात्मनीति लभ्यतेऽतः सदा परमात्मनिष्ठस्तमित्यर्थः। अनेन नित्यं परमात्मनिष्ठः साक्षादक्षरब्रह्मैव ब्रह्मविद्यायाः विज्ञापयिता गुरुर्भवितुमर्हति नान्य इति सिद्धान्तितम्। गुरुं स्वरूपतोऽक्षरब्रह्माख्यतत्त्वाऽत्यन्ताऽभिन्नं नित्यमखण्डिततया सम्यक् सर्वाङ्गे साक्षात् सहजं सहजानन्दपरब्रह्मधारकमत एव तदनवरतप्राक्त्यानुभावकं ‘सम्प्रदायो हि गुरुक्रमः’...

साक्षाद्ब्रह्मस्वरूपसत्पुरुषमित्यर्थः।” (MUSB 1/2/12, p.254) “Brahman is Akṣarabrahman, ‘*niṣṭham*’ means always having the conviction of Parabrahman. ‘*Niṣṭham*’ normally considered as a single compounded term, Bhadreśadāsa provides the crucial distinction here that the Guru is one not just ‘established in Brahman’ *Brahmaṇi niṣṭhā* but the very form of Brahman (*Brahmasvarūpa eva*). Hence, the correct qualifier for the Guru is ‘*Brahmasvarūpa*’, the form of Brahman (Akṣarabrahman) *Satpuruṣa* and he leads the *Sampradāya* tradition.”

The BGSB also confirms: “तत्त्वदर्शिनाः भगवन्नित्यदर्शनाः सकलशब्दबोध्यपरमतत्त्वपरमात्मसाक्षात्कारवन्तश्च साक्षात्ब्रह्मस्वरूपगुरवः ते तुभ्यं ज्ञानं ब्रह्मविद्याम् उपदेक्ष्यन्ति” (BGSB 4/34, p.110). “The *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru who has the firm conviction and revelation of Parabrahman can preach *brahmavidyā*.” The BSSB also mentions by referring to the KU 3/2 *mantra* and comments: “अक्षरब्रह्म सेतुः इति तत्प्राप्तिमाध्यमभूतं गुरुरूपं च तत्” (BSSB 1/4/1) “The bridge in the form of Akṣarabrahman is the same Guru who is the means to liberation.” In this way, the *Upaniṣads* repeatedly described the Akṣarabrahman Guru as a ‘*setu*’, or bridge elucidating his role to connect an aspirant to Parabrahman. “The bridge for those who offer sacrifices is Akṣarabrahman, the highest.” (KU 3/2), “This is the bridge to the immortal.” (MU 2/2/5); now, the self (of all) is the bridge... (CU 8/4/1), “The best bridge to immortality ...” (SU 6/19)

As a matter of fact, the supreme glory of God (Parabrahman) is infinite and unfathomable; and hence, never fully comprehensible. However, Akṣara among all dependent conscious beings knows and sings the glory of God to the highest possible extent, and hence, he is popularly designated as the giver of liberation(mokṣa). Being the best *jñānī*, he is glorified by God Himself as His very self (Atman). Jñānī alone is Brahmasvarūpa i.e., Akṣarabrahman, for there exists nothing in his consciousness except God. Therefore, such a *jñānī* (i.e., Akṣarabrahman) is the dearest to God and God has him as the dearest one. Therefore, Akṣarabrahman as the



best *jñānī* alone can unveil the transcendental majesty and supreme glory of Parabrahman in the best possible manner to the greatest possible extent. Through him alone, the best glimpse of God's transcendental glory is revealed to the devotees and seekers of God, who are striving to realize Him. Of course, God, out of grace may reveal Himself directly independently to a spiritual aspirant. We can conclude by saying that Parabrahman is completely present and in the *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru. The statements containing the words *pratyakṣa* or 'Parabrahman manifest before the eyes' now refer exclusively and forthrightly to the *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru. Although the Guru is an essential entity to attain liberation, yet he is not Parabrahman himself. We will discuss that part in the next chapter of *sādhana*.

## 5. PARABRAHMAN

The Bhāṣyakāra defines:

परमात्मा परं ब्रह्म सर्वेश्वरेश्वरो हरिः।

नारायणश्च सर्वज्ञः कृपालुः पुरुषोत्तमः॥ SSSK 168 ॥

Parabrahman Paramātmān Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa Śrī Hari is the lord of all lords and the compassionate all-knower. Parabrahman, the sovereign of Akṣara, is eternal, supreme, always divine, faultless, ever with a form, above *māyā*, one and unparalleled and a *cetana* sentient entity. Now we will explore these qualities of Parabrahman in detail.

### 5.1 One Without Second

This emphasis can be found in the *Vacanāmṛta* on both the peerlessness and uniqueness of Parabrahman or Parabrahman. Quoting this same phrase Svāminārāyaṇa expounds: "Only Parabrahman is like Parabrahman; no one can become like him. The Vedic verse '*ekam evādvitīyam Brahma*' also explains that Parabrahman alone is like Parabrahman. This is the principle of all of the scriptures." (Vac. Loyā. 13, pp. 328-329) Enriching the uniformity of the *Vacanāmṛta*, in the last documented discourse of the *Vacanāmṛta*, where

Svāminārāyaṇa again echoes the singularity of Parabrahman, we also find his argument for a monotheistic system. “Only Parabrahman is like Parabrahman. Many have attained qualities similar to his by worshipping Him, yet they certainly do not become like Parabrahman... Thus, the governor of all activities and the lord of all is one Parabrahman. Not only that, but it also seems that no one can ever challenge Him. Therefore, Parabrahman is definitely one, and no one can become like Him.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/39, p.669)

In this manner, the unequivocal supremacy and uniqueness of Parabrahman is never questioned or undermined. Ontologically, Parabrahman is one, matchless and unsurpassable. He is supreme. The Bhāṣyakāra comments on the *Upaniṣadika* statements, such as CU 6/2/1, which announce Parabrahman as being ‘*eka*’ (one) and *advitīya* (without second): “नहि परमातत्त्वानेकत्वसंभवः, तत्त्वतः एकस्यैव तस्य अनन्तालौकिकाश्चर्यमय-कार्यकरणसामर्थ्यात्” (CUSB 6/2/1, p.254) “It is not possible that there would be more than one Paramātmān. Infinite miraculous deeds happen through only one ontologically supreme entity Parabrahman.”

In conclusion, we can submit that in all senses of the term, Parabrahman is unique. He is one and a kind, quite literally in a class of his own, *sui generis*. But that in and of itself does not make him supreme, for this description also applies to Akṣarabrahman. Rather, it is by virtue of his infinite greatness the other entity can even approximate him.

## **5.2 Sarvoparī: Parabrahman as Supreme**

### **5.2.1 Lord and Ātman of All Beings**

A frequent keynote found in the *Vacanāmṛta* conveying Parabrahman’s infinite supremacy is a description of Him as the ‘Lord of all lords’ and the ‘king of all kings’ reigning over the entire universe. Svāminārāyaṇa states: “Moreover, all of

the Brahmas, Viṣṇus, and Maheśas of all of the *brahmāndas* pray to Parabrahman, ‘*Mahārāja!* Please have compassion on us and visit our *brahmānda*’ - just as the chief of a village requests the world emperor.” (Vac. Pan. 4, p.369) A list of conclusions appears from this description. Firstly, Svāminārāyaṇa adds an important element to the understanding of Parabrahman as ‘world emperor’ - as not just lording over a vast dominion of land and wealth but having subjects over whom he reigns. He is not merely a landlord but indeed the sovereign emperor.<sup>250</sup> The perfect relationship between Parabrahman and the world remains that just as the soul is to its body, so is Parabrahman to the world. And, vice versa, just as the physical body is to its soul, so is the world to Parabrahman; Svāminārāyaṇa often drew upon this relationship to explain that Parabrahman is the ‘omni-soul’ (*sarvātman*) or super *ātman* (Paramātmā) of the entire world while narrating the nature of Parabrahman, That very Parabrahman is the *ātman* of countless *brahmāndas*.<sup>251</sup> He is the self (*ātman*) of all.<sup>252</sup> Applying the body-self analogy, Svāminārāyaṇa firstly explains that Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagavān is the *ātman* of all *ātman*s.

Moreover, when describing all the material elements of the infinite universe and then adding *īśvaras*, *māyā*, the *muktas* (liberated *ātman*s of Akṣaradhāma) and even Akṣarabrahman, Svāminārāyaṇa counts: “All of these constitute the body of Parabrahman.” (Vac. Gad. 1/64, p. 153) Svāminārāyaṇa acknowledges this to an individual level, mentioning demonstration of what an accurate comprehension of this doctrine would be like just as the *ātman* resides in the body, Parabrahman resides within the *ātman*. The *ātman* is the ‘*śarīra*’ (body), and Parabrahman is the ‘*śarīrin*’ (embodied self of selves). But how exactly is Parabrahman the *ātman* of all these beings and things? Well, Svāminārāyaṇa himself explains that all finite

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<sup>250</sup> (Vac. Gad. 2/66) (Vac. Gad. 3/37) (Vac. Gad. 3/39)

<sup>251</sup> Vac. Gad. 2/17

<sup>252</sup> Vac. Loyā.7

sentient beings (*ātman*, i.e., *jīvas* and *īśvaras*) and Akṣara constitute the body of Puruṣottama Bhagavān in that they are pervaded, dependent and powerless.<sup>253</sup>

The Bhāṣyakāra confirms: “दिव्यमनोहराकृतिः परमात्मसहजानन्दः स्वान्तर्यमनशक्त्या सर्वं नियमयन् तत्तत्स्थानेष्ववतिष्ठते” (BSSB 1/2/14, p.70) “Parabrahman Sahajānanda who has a divine luminous form remains in every sentient and non-sentient being by his controlling power.” Bhadreśādāsa discusses in the BSSB while quoting the subject sentence from the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* of the *Yajur Veda*, famously known as the *Antaryāmī Brāhmaṇa*. “The omni-soul, entering within, is the controller of all beings.” (BU 3/7/1) It ends with passages from (BU 3/7/7) (of the *Mādhyandina* recension), The Bhāṣyakāra explains: “सहजानन्दपरमात्मनः सर्वव्यापकत्वतन्निनयन्तृत्वतच्छरीरित्वादिकं श्रूयते” (BSSB 1/2/18, p.73)

“All-pervading, all controller, embodied self, etc., are qualities of Sahajānanda Parabrahman echoed in the scriptures.” Parabrahman Puruṣottama Sahajānanda then, as the *ātman*, becomes the incredibly life-source of the entire world or creation, the cause for its existence and the ontic ground (*ādhāra*) upon which it can work. Just as a physical body expires and once separated from its soul, so, too, the world of spiritual and material realities cannot continue to exist even transitorily without Parabrahman. “At the stage of living, the body is thoroughly incapable of doing anything without the will, knowledge, and strength of the inner self. As the *Kena Upaniṣad* and *Aitareya Upaniṣad*, both confirm: Parabrahman is the Self (*ātman*) of the self (*jīva*) - the ear of the ear, the eye of the eyes, the mind of the mind” (KeU 1/2) - by which it can see, hear, smell, speak and taste (AU 3/1). Consequently, all beings are totally dependent on Parabrahman to enliven, enrich them, and bring them to action.

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<sup>253</sup> Vac. Gadh. 1/64

Svāminārāyaṇa describes Parabrahman as ‘*ādhāra*’ (support) of the other entities emphasizing the utter dependence on Parabrahman in a way that, the essential being undergirding all beings, the final reality underlying all things. When we understand Parabrahman as the *ātman* with ‘Parabrahman as the support’ that means they are integral to one another. The Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyakāra explains: “Just as Parabrahman is the *ātman* of ‘*kṣara*’ (i.e. *māyā* and all finite beings<sup>254</sup>), he is also the *ātman* of Akṣarabrahman ... With his own powers, Parabrahman supports both *kṣara* and Akṣara.” Together, these excerpts provide a clearer picture of the relationship between Parabrahman and the other entities.”<sup>255</sup>

Svāminārāyaṇa explains this significant difference in Vac. Loyā.13: “If Parabrahman (Parabrahman Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa) wishes, he can eclipse all of the liberated souls of Akṣaradhāma by his own divine light and prevail alone. Also, if he wishes, he can accept the devotion of the liberated souls and reside with them. He can eclipse even Akṣara, in the form of the Akṣaradhāma in which he dwells and presides alone independently. If he chooses, he is capable of supporting the countless liberated souls by his own lordship, without even needing Akṣaradhāma... Through his own lordship, Parabrahman reigns as supreme.” (Vac. Loyā.13, p.327) In this way, Puruṣottama is greater even than Akṣara, who is greater than all else.<sup>256</sup> This seems to be a direct translation of the phrase in MU 2/1/2: While a fuller conversation of this *Upaniṣadika* passage “*Akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ*,” Bhadrēśadāsa comments to highlight the difference between Parabrahman and other entities: “In this way, Akṣara is greater than all the *jīvas*, *īśvaras*, *māyā*, and *akṣaramukta* (liberated *ātmans* in Akṣaradhāma) ... And with Paramātmā being greater (*para*) even than such a great Brahman by virtue of being his controller, master, inspirer,

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<sup>254</sup> on this discussion in the *Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya*, see BGSB 13/31–32, p. 290; KUSB 5/11, p.154; and the *Ubhayalingādhikarāṇa* in BSSB 3/2/11–25, pp. 291–302.

<sup>255</sup> BGSB 15/16–18, pp.314–316

<sup>256</sup> Vac. Gadh. 1/64

support, *ātman*, etc. ... it is fitting that Paramātman is also called ‘Parabrahman’ (literally, ‘greater-Brahman’).”<sup>257</sup>

To add to this, Bhadreśadāsa elucidates why the adjective ‘great (*mahāntama*)’ found in verse 2/22 of the *Katha Upaniṣad* is appropriate in qualifying Parabrahman. He authors: “Parabrahman is great, indeed the best (*utkr̥ṣṭa*), because he is greater even than Akṣarabrahman, who is greater than *prakṛti* (i.e., *māyā*) and its effects, all *jīvas* and *īśvaras*, countless emanations such as Matysa, Kaccha, etc., and countless *akṣara-muktas* who are *Brahmarūpa*.”<sup>258</sup> Bhadreśadāsa asserts at several occasions in his commentaries of the Vedānta canon, for example, in commenting on the famous *Upaniṣadika* text “All this is verily Brahman” (CU 3/14/1), he explains: “It is because Paramātman is the controller and soul of everything that statements placing him in identical predication (*sāmānādhikaranya*) with other things can be reconciled. Similarly, when explaining another *locus classicus* from the *Upaniṣad*,<sup>259</sup> On “*Tat tvam asi*” (CU 6/8/7), Bhadreśadāsa writes: “Both the terms ‘*tat*’ (that) and ‘*tvam*’ (you) ... are placed in identical predication because ‘*tat*’ pervades, controls, and is the very *ātman* of the entire sentient-insentient world, including ‘*tvam*’.”<sup>260</sup> Parabrahman thus pervades, empowers, undergirds, and governs - indeed, he enlivens - the entire world or universe, all the while remaining totally unaffected by and distinct from any of the inadequacies of the entities he ensouls. This body-self relationship again upholds the forthright supremacy of Parabrahman in relation to all these other entities. Ontologically, Parabrahman is the highest, most transcendental entity. As the term ‘*sarvoparī*’ (literally above all), no other being or thing can ever surpass him in any way whatsoever. The *Upaniṣad* proclaims: “There is nothing greater than Param Puruṣa (i.e., Puruṣottama or Parabrahman).”<sup>261</sup> In this way, *Upaniṣads* use ‘*param*’ or

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<sup>257</sup> MUSB 2/1/2, p.260

<sup>258</sup> KUSB 2/22, p.118

<sup>259</sup> CU 3/14/1, p.133

<sup>260</sup> CU 6/8/7, p.278

<sup>261</sup> KU 3/11, SU 3/9, PU 6/7

*Puruṣa* (supreme or best). Apart from this other terms found in the *Upaniṣad* and *Bhagavad-Gītā* that describe Parabrahman's pre-eminent position include 'uttama' (highest or best), 'utkr̥ṣṭa' (best), 'śreṣṭha' (best) and 'kāstā' (ultimate).<sup>262 263</sup>

### 5.2.2 Source of All *Avatāras*

Guṇātitanand Svāmī, Svāminārāyaṇa's most prominent pupil, successor and the preacher of the *Svāmīni Vāto*, explains this ontological distinction more unambiguously with the help of various analogies. He was once asked in an assembly: "How should one understand the distinction between the *avatāras* and the *avatārin*?" Someone answered: "Like that of an actor and his character." Guṇātitanand Svāmī remarked: "No, that is not how the *avatārin* is distinct from his *avatāras*. Rather one should understand the distinction as like that between a king and his minister, an archer and his arrow, the moon, and the stars." (SV 6/33) The direction of Guṇātitanand Svāmī's examples seems to be of two ways; "firstly, that the two sets of analogies are different from each other, i.e., the archer, king, and moon are different from the arrow, minister, and the stars; and secondly that the former is more powerful than the latter. Significantly, he rejects the analogy of the actor and his character, which would imply that it is Parabrahman himself who personally transforms into the *avatāras* or takes on their role." As far as the supremacy of Parabrahman is concerned, we have to take into account that beyond being superior among all *māyic* objects and minor beings, would be in seeing how he stands in relation to other deities or *avatars*. The answer to this question lies in the relationship between Parabrahman and the *avatāras*? Svāminārāyaṇa explains this in Vac. Gadh. 2/9, a central discourse for understanding the supremacy of Parabrahman. Svāminārāyaṇa states precisely the belief that a devotee should have after stressing the need for an accurate understanding of Parabrahman's nature: "One should also strongly maintain the strength of conviction in Parabrahman's

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<sup>262</sup> BGSB 7/7, 160

<sup>263</sup> BGSB 8/22 194

form, i.e. ‘I have attained the very form of Parabrahman who reigns supreme, who forever possesses a divine form, and who is the *avatārin*, the cause of all the *avatāras*.’ (Vac. Gadh. 2/9, p. 403)

Convincingly, He recaps this point with strong emphasis a little later in the discourse, this time enhancing a stern note of alerting too. “One should realize the manifest Parabrahman that one has attained to forever possess a divine form and to be the *avatārin*, the cause of all the *avatāras*. If, however, one does not realize this and instead realizes Parabrahman to be formless or like the other *avatāras*, then that is regarded as committing blasphemy against Parabrahman.”<sup>264</sup> Undoubtedly, this statement reflects that Parabrahman is not the same as the other *avatāras*. Rather, He is their cause. The term Svāminārāyaṇa uses for Parabrahman in this context is ‘*avatārin*’, meaning ‘lord or master of the *avatāras*’.

As we have expounded upon *īśvara* and the process of creation in the last topics on *īśvara* and *māyā*, respectively. Thereby, it becomes clear that *avatāras* are ontologically distinct from Parabrahman. In further discussion, Svāminārāyaṇa reveals in Vac. Gadh. 2/31 about Virāṭa Puruṣa (sometimes called Vairāja Puruṣa), the very self and executive administrator of each created *brahmānda*: “It is said in the scriptures that the *avatāras* emanate by way of that Virāṭa Puruṣa.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/31, p.460) In the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedanta, it is evident and the essence of the scriptures that only when Parabrahman (referred to in that discourse as Vāsudeva Nārāyaṇa and Vāsudeva Bhagavān) ‘enters into Virāṭa Puruṣa can *avatāras* be possible. It is when Vāsudeva Nārāyaṇa resides in Virāṭa Puruṣa ... that there are said to be *avatāras*.’<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>264</sup> Vac. Gadh. 2/9, p.403

<sup>265</sup> Vac. Gadh. 2/31, p.459, Vac. Gadh. 2/10



On the other hand : “When that Vāsudeva Bhagavān withdraws himself and separates from Virāṭa Puruṣa, then it is not possible for an *avatāra* to originate through Virāṭa Puruṣa alone ... In fact, when Vāsudeva the over-soul had not yet entered him, that Virāṭa Puruṣa was not even capable of carrying out any of his own activities.”<sup>266</sup> And yet, Svāminārāyaṇa adds, because of this special entering by Parabrahman: “Thus, all those *avatāras* are Vāsudeva Bhagavāna’s only.”<sup>267</sup>

To make more transparent this *avatar-avatārīn* relationship, the Bhāṣyakāra comments on the BG’s *Vibhūti yoga*: “लोकमहेश्वरं लोकानां जीवानामीश्वराणां मुक्तानां च महेश्वरं महाप्रशासकम्। अक्षरब्रह्मणोऽपि लोकपदवाच्यजीवेश्वरमुक्तानां शासकतयेश्वरत्वात्, परमात्मनस्ततोऽपि महत्त्वान्महेति विशेषणम्। अथवा लोकशब्दस्य निवासस्थानविशेषार्थत्वे सर्वेषां लोकानां पुराणेतिहासादिप्रसिद्धतत्तदेवताविभवादिधाम्नां महेश्वरमित्यर्थः। तत्तद्धामाधिष्ठातृणां तदीश्वरत्वेऽपि भगवतस्तेषामपीश्वरत्वेन सर्वलोकमहेश्वरः स एवेति महेति विशेषणम्। तथा च श्रूयते ‘तमीश्वराणां परमं महेश्वरं तं देवतानां परमं च दैवतम्। पतिं पतीनां परमं परस्ताद् विदाम देवं भुवनेशमीड्यम्’ (श्वे.६/७) (इति महेश्वरशब्देन परमात्मभिन्नचेतनविशेषमीश्वरतत्त्वं प्रसिद्धयति)” (BGSB 10/3, p.223) “Parabrahman is the Lord of all *jīvas*, *īśvaras* and all liberated *ātmans*. Even Akṣarabrahman, who is greater than *jīvas*, *īśvaras*, and controller of all *them* as well. Thus, Parabrahman is even greater to Akṣarabrahman. If the word ‘*loka*’ reflects the realm, then Parabrahman is the master of all abodes, which are famous in the *Puranas*, and He is the greatest of all devas and Akṣaradhāma as well. He is the ultimate controller of all the masters of the different realms. As the SU echos that Paranbrahman is the deity of all deities and master of all masters, lord of the entire universe. In this manner, the word *Maheśvara* clearly indicates a different entity (*avatāra*) which is not Parabrahman (*avatārīn*).”

Succinctly, we can say that Parabrahman is the master of all master, lord of all lords, and venerable for every being. After explaining the *Vibhūti*<sup>268</sup> is different from one

<sup>266</sup> Vac. Gadh. 2/31, p.461

<sup>267</sup> Vac. Gadh. 2/31, p.461

<sup>268</sup> BGSB 10/19, p.230

who says this is my *Vibhūti*, Bhadreśādāsa makes a clear distinction from *īśvara* Ram and Kṛṣṇa to Parabrahman. He states: “अनेन सर्वकारणत्वं परमात्मनः अवगम्यते” (BGSB 10/31, p.234) “Thus, Parabrahman’s supremacy is known.” “सर्वनियामकसर्वातारकारणस्य परमात्मनः संकल्पविशेषेण स्वनियाम्य ईश्वरचेतनान्तरे वसुदेवतनयात्मन्यनुप्रवेशविशेषात्” (BGSB 10/37, p. 236) “Parabrahman, who is all controller and cause of all *avatars* reenters in the son of Vasudeva (Kṛṣṇa, *īśvara*) through his resolve.” Within the discussions of Parabrahman as one and without the second, the supreme lord, the soul of the entire world, the cause of the *avatāras* and, as greater even than Akṣarabrahman have been primarily concerned with his supremacy in relation to others, which have been described by us.

### 5.3 *Kartā*: Parabrahman as Omni-agent

We shall first have to unpack what the *Svāminārāyaṇa* school of philosophy means by the term ‘all-doer’ and its other related terms. It will be detailed in the following points:

#### 5.3.1 Parabrahman is the All-Doer and All-Cause

The Vedānta claims that Parabrahman is the all-doer; what does that actually mean? To answer this question first, we will understand what Parabrahman’s power is and what type of functions He does. The analysis of the *Vacanāmṛta* and the *Prasthānatrayī Bhāṣya* reveals that the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedānta includes a number of aspects in the agency of Parabrahman. As ‘*kartā*’, Parabrahman creates, sustains, and dissolves, controls, supports, empowers, inspires, dispenses, and permits *karmic* fruits. *Svāminārāyaṇa* uncovers it in numerous discourses that Parabrahman is responsible for the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe. For instance: “Beyond that Akṣara is Akṣarātīta Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagavān, who is the all-doer – responsible for the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of everything.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/51, p.125) “That greatness of Parabrahman should be understood as follows: (Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagavān) is responsible for

creating, sustaining and dissolving countless millions of *brahmāndas*.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/78, p.199)

However, “Parabrahman does not himself directly engage in the process of creation, sustenance, and dissolution. As we saw more in the topic on *māyā* and the evolution of the physical world (*jagata*), it is by Parabrahman’s mere will (*sankalpa*) that the entire creative Process (*utpatti-sarga*) is originated. Unquestionably, it is also completely true to say that without Parabrahman’s will, there would be no creation, substance or dissolution, and thus, it is precise to depict Parabrahman as, eventually, the creator, sustainer, and dissolver.”<sup>269</sup> In addition to this, *māyā* is the actual material from which the physical universe is composed, and it is also one of the five eternal entities of the *Svāminārāyaṇa* metaphysical system. Significantly, it is noteworthy to observe that when discussing Parabrahman’s doer-ship, *Svāminārāyaṇa* also stresses Parabrahman as being the ‘*kāraṇa*’ - i.e., the cause of all things, including creation - often together with him being the ‘*kartā*’. For example: “What is that Parabrahman like? Well, he is indeed the cause of all causes (*sarva kāraṇā paṇ kāraṇa*).” (Vac. Gadh. 3/31, p.647)<sup>270</sup> “Parabrahman Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa is the all-doer, the all-cause, the all-controller.” (Vac. Loyā.13, p.327)<sup>271</sup>

The Bhāṣyakāra reveals this truth from the *Prasthānatrayī*: “ममात्मा संकल्पमात्रेण भूतभावनः सर्वाणि भूतानि भावयति स्थापयति धारयति नियमयति चेति ममैश्वरं योगं पश्येति पूर्वोक्तान्वयः।” (BGSB 9/5, p.205) “By only my will, everything is created, sustained and dissolved, supported, controlled, inspired, empowered, permitted, and dispensed karmic fruits. Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna: Thus, see this my magical power.” The TUSB explains: “एवं प्रपञ्चोत्पत्तिहेतुत्वं तत्स्थितिहेतुत्वं तत्प्रलयहेतुत्वं चेति त्रयं समुदितं प्रत्येकं वा भवति ब्रह्मणो लक्षणम्” (TUSB 3/1/1, p.396). “Here, Bhāṣyakāra

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<sup>269</sup> SU 1/1-3

<sup>270</sup> See also Vac. Loyā.2

<sup>271</sup> See also Vac. Gadh. 1/51

uses the word Brahman for Parabrahman. (तद् ब्रह्म परब्रह्म) thus, Parabrahman is the cause of the creation, sustainment, and dissolution of this universe. Sometimes in the Vedic scriptures, these three attributes are mentioned together and sometimes one of them reflects as an attribute of Parabrahman as per the contexts.” In the *Īkṣaternādhikaraṇam* of BSSB, the Bhāṣyakāra comments on the *Sadvidyā* which is the subject sentence of the discussion: “ब्रह्मपरब्रह्मेत्युभयस्य सच्छब्दवाच्यस्य सकलप्रपञ्चत्पत्तिस्थितिप्रलयाधारत्वं निरूपयाञ्चकार” (BSSB 1/1/12, p. 36) “The *Śruti* narrates that Brahman and Parabrahman are the cause of the creation, sustainment, and dissolution of the universe.”

### 5.3.2 Efficient Cause and Material Cause

In the Indian philosophical system, the cause and effect factor is discussed at length. There are two types of causes for every creative outcome: the efficient cause (*nimitta kāraṇa*), which refers to the agent who affects to the creation, and the material cause (*upādānakāraṇa*), which refers to the very material from which the object is created. Let us explore this, in the creating of an earthen pot, the potter is the efficient cause while the clay is its material cause. Of these two types of causes, maker, and material, which cause is Parabrahman? As per the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedānta? The answer is both; Parabrahman is the *Abhinnaanimittopādānakāraṇa*, the combined (non-distinct) efficient and material cause. For example, Parabrahman as the efficient cause of the universe, “That Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagwān is the all-doer - responsible for the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of everything - and is also the cause of all.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/5I, p.125) at the same time, He is the material cause.

Svāminārāyaṇa further adds: “A cause always pervades its effect, and simultaneously, also remained distinct from it. Thus, if one looks from the perspective of Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagavān the cause of all – then nothing else appears to exist except Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagavān.” The causality

referred to here by Svāminārāyaṇa is of both types, thus bringing together descriptions of Parabrahman as both the efficient and material cause the Bhāṣyakāra comments: “इत्थमेतदुपनिषदुपक्रान्तसच्छब्दाच्चस्य ‘तदैक्षत बहु स्यां प्रजायेयेति’ (छा. ६/२/३) इति दिव्याक्ष्याकरणकलेवरात्मकसाकृतिकतयैव जगदभिन्ननिमित्तोपादानताया...श्रुतत्वाच्च” (BSSB 1/1/12, p.34) “Thus, *Upaniṣad* narrates the Parabrahman as ‘sat’, who himself wished that, ‘may I be many, may I grow forth.’ That indicates Parabrahman, who possesses all divine *indriyas* and is with definite form, as the material and efficient cause of the universe.”

The UB also confirms: “एकस्यैव तस्य (परमात्मनः) जगत् प्रति निमित्तोपादानोभयविधकारणत्वात्” (AUSB 1/1/1, p.417) “Only Parabrahman is the efficient and material cause of the universe.” When we say this, then there may be some doubts and questions about how this is possible for Parabrahman and, even if it is, how it may affect his precise nature.<sup>272</sup> Parabrahman is a sentient entity and an intelligent creator of the universe, the efficient cause, seems reasonable enough. But how can Parabrahman be the material cause of the universe? As we know that *māyā* is the primitive matter from which the universe is made. So does Parabrahman as said in the *Upaniṣad* and Vac. “take the form of *māyā* and literally become the physical world’ with its innumerable objects of innumerable names and forms? Indeed, for we have already discovered Parabrahman has a distinct, definite, and transcendental form in his abode, which he never abandons. So then does that Parabrahman somewhat become the visible world, still remaining in part in his transcendental form? But that would make him incomplete, divisible, effectively mutable, whereas the *śāstras*, including the *Vacanāmṛta*, proclaim Parabrahman to be whole, without parts (*niramśa*), indivisible (*akhaṇḍa*) and immutable (*avikārin*).<sup>273</sup>

<sup>272</sup> BSSB. 2/1/27-28, pp.177-178

<sup>273</sup> SU 6/11; Vac. Pan.2

These objections are presented in the commentary of BS 2/1/7. The objectors' challenge can be recapped thus: If you insist on Parabrahman being the material cause of the world, then you will have to accept him as either having parts or being without a distinct transcendental form. This noticeable philosophical tight spot is settled by Bhadreśadāsa by firstly taking recourse in *śāstrika* revelation.<sup>274</sup> Convincingly, at the very beginning, when discussing sources and tools of *Svāminārāyaṇa* School of philosophy is described, revelation according to the teachings of the Guru is the only authoritative way by which to accurately determine the nature of Parabrahman.

Bhadreśadāsa thus explains that that which is beyond our senses and mind cannot have any other means of confirmation except scripture. The basic reasoning is: the *Śrutis* reveal Parabrahman as being the material cause as well as being whole, immutable, indivisible, etc., then there is no point to argue? We have to summon two key doctrines to substantiate this point and to help explain how Parabrahman can indeed be the joint cause of the universe. Firstly, since Parabrahman is the inner self of the universe, he permeates, empowers, and controls his entire body. However, this permeating is by his *antaryāmi-śakti*, or exceptional *yogic* powers, “allowing him to, hence, be immanently present within all while still being distinctly transcendental. For the task of creation, specifically, Parabrahman especially ‘re-enters’ *māyā* and the various elements, overpowering their own identity and reigning supreme within them. It is in this sense that Parabrahman is said to take the form of *māyā*.” *Svāminārāyaṇa* explains this in *Vac. Gadh.* 1/41. After establishing that ‘Puruṣottama Bhagavān creates and enters the various types of life-forms as their cause and as their indwelling controller (*antaryāmīn*), He adds, as if responding the above objection: “There is only one Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagavān, and it is He who enters all and resides in them as the indwelling

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<sup>274</sup> *Ananyatvādhikaraṇa* in BS 2/1/14, See BSSB 2/1/14-21, pp. 168–73/45 CUSB 6/2/1-3, pp. 252–8/40 and in BU 1/4/10 for Akṣarabrahman.

controller. But, He does not himself become the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* by assuming many forms.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/41, p.104)

The second doctrine involves the view of causality established by Svāminārāyaṇa, in Vac. Loyā. 2, Svāminārāyaṇa clears these points in this way: “Parabrahman, who is the cause of all, appears like a human being, yet by his powers, he is able to create countless millions of *brahmāndas* from his body (i.e., *māyā*) and is able to absorb them back into himself.” (Vac. Loyā. 2, p. 285)

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* explains the famous *Sadvidyā* in the preaching of Uddalaka to his son Śvetaketu also refers to this idea. “Dear son, in the beginning, there was verily only this Being, one, without second” (CU 6/2/2) - refers to Parabrahman as being the material cause, the primordial Being from which all springs forth. The following verse at once says: “That (Being) thought (literally, ‘saw’), ‘Let me be many’, ‘Let me propagate” (CU 6/2/3), points to an intelligent being, establishing that primordial Being as also the efficient cause who wills, inspires and thereby initiates each new cycle of creation.<sup>275</sup> The same twofold representation of Parabrahman is made in TU 2/6/3–2/7/1 and AU 1/1/1/40 Both passages contain similar words to the *Sadvidyā* instruction above, with the latter being especially useful because it uses the term ‘*ātmān*’ instead of *sat*, i.e., “In the beginning, there was only this one self (*ātmān*) ... He thought (‘saw’), ‘let me create the worlds’. He thus created the worlds.” (AU 1/1/1) After the opening aphorism instructs that an inquiry into Brahman should be conducted, The second *Brahmasūtra* meticulously debates the causality of the world. *Janmādyasya yataḥ* (BS 1/1/2), “That Brahman is that from which (occurs) the origination, etc. of this (world).”

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<sup>275</sup> CUSB 6/2/3

As Bhadreśadāsa explains: In this debate, when the objectors argue that Brahman could plausibly refer to such beings as a *Brahmin*, or Brahma the *īśvara*, or a *jīva* or liberated soul, or even the Vedas, Bhadreśadāsa is quick to emphasize that it is impossible for any of them to be both the efficient and material cause of the world, because only Parabrahman can go into, control and empower the whole world as its self. Thus, only Parabrahman can be the complete cause of everything, not anyone or anything else.

Though, considering Parabrahman to be both the efficient cause and material cause of the universe advances a serious and potentially stubborn dispute against the perfect nature of Parabrahman. Even the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedanta can not disbelieve that a causal substance (the material cause) is not dissimilar from its effect, just as a pot is similar to the clay from which it was produced and a piece of cloth from its threads. This raises some questions like; since the world is composed of things that are inert, mutable, in flux, sorrow-filled, ordinary, sullied by the impurities of *māyā* and always constituted of the three *māyic* qualities (*sattva*guṇa, *rajo*guṇa, and *tamo*guṇa), how can it be that Parabrahman is its material cause? The objectors are efficiently saying: if you claim on Parabrahman being the material cause of the universe, you will have to admit that He is no longer conscious, immutable, unchanging, divine, and replete with bliss, pure and forever transcending *māyā*. In reply, the *Brahmasūtras* assert: “But it can be seen.” (BS 2/1/6)

The answer, as Bhadreśadāsa enunciates, “there are examples - both around us and mentioned in texts - that disconfirm the position that the effect is necessarily the same nature as its cause. For instance, hairs grow from a person, and in the *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, ‘from space came air; from the air, fire’, etc.” (TU 2/1/1) Space is without any of the tactile qualities found in air, nor does air have the form or appearance of fire? Therefore, there is unwarranted in Parabrahman being the



material cause and still being different in nature from the universe and unblemished by all its inadequacies. This is feasible by virtue of him being the indweller, controller, support, and self of everything, including of *māyā* from which the universe is composed. In Vac. Var. 7 Svāminārāyaṇa asserts this by further elucidating upon the concept of Parabrahman as *anvaya* and *vyatireka* - that Parabrahman can be immanent within and non-different from *māyā* as its self and yet be completely distinct from it in his Akṣaradhāma.

He explains: “The principle of *anvaya-vyatireka* is not that Parabrahman has become half immanent within *māyā* and remains half distinct in his abode. Rather, Parabrahman’s form is such that he is immanent within *māyā* and yet, at the same time, he is distinct. Parabrahman is not afraid, ‘What if I enter *māyā* and thereby become impure?’ Instead, when Parabrahman associates with *māyā*, even *māyā* becomes like Akṣaradhāma (his abode); and if he associates with the 24 (*māyic*) elements (of creation), then they also become *Brahmarūpa* (i.e. like Brahman).” (Vac. Var. 7, pp.546-547) Therefore, there is no question of Parabrahman becoming flawed. He can safely be the material cause of the world as well as its efficient cause without imperiling his decency.

### 5.3.3 All-doer Still Non-doer

The most fundamental principle of the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedānta is that “Only Parabrahman is the all-doer.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/21, p.440) Parabrahman is totally ‘unaffected’ or ‘unspoiled’ (*nirlepa*) by these actions. His perfect nature is in no way tainted. This being Parabrahman can justifiably be regarded as the pure all-doer of all that is. More specifically, in Vac. Gadh. 1/62, Svāminārāyaṇa affirms that a person with the perfect conviction of the nature of Parabrahman comprehends: “Parabrahman is not like time, not like *karma*, not like nature, not like *māyā*, and not like Puruṣa. He realizes Parabrahman to be distinct from

everything, as the controller of them all and the cause of them all.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/62, p.145)

Bhadreśadāsa also highlights: “मां परमात्मानं कर्माणि तदनुष्ठितानि शुभाशुभात्मकानि सर्वविधानि कर्माणि न लिम्पन्ति बन्धनं विधातुं न प्रभवन्ति यतो हि नाहं कर्मवश्योपि तु कर्माणि मे वशवर्तीनि” (BGSB 4/14, p.99) “Every type of good and bad *karmas* do not bind Me. I am not controlled by them; instead, I control them.”<sup>276</sup> Moreover, the crucial discussion takes place in the *Vilakṣaṇādhikaraṇa* of BS, in which an objection is made that if Parabrahman is a material cause and He resides in everything as their *antaryāmī* then how can he possibly prevent himself being untouched? Bhadreśadāsa answers: “तथा च यथा लौकिकोपादानोपादेयेषु अपि मुकुटकुण्डलादयो लयं गच्छन्तः स्वोपादानं सुवर्णं स्वधर्मैर्न दुषयन्ति तदास्य दिव्यालौकिकस्य ब्रह्मणः परब्रह्मणो वा सर्वथालिप्तस्य जगदुपानस्य तदुपदेयधर्मलेप गन्धोपि कथमाशङ्कयेत” (BSSB 2/1/9, p.163) “Even as materials like ornaments are not able to affect their cause the gold, then how possibly the effect in the form of *māyic* creations can influence their ultimate cause Brahman and Parabrahman which are eternally detached from their effect.” All these scriptural statements echo Parabrahman as the controller and omni-doer, supporter, sovereign lord, and sole independent doer of everything. He is indeed the independent doer of everything.<sup>277</sup>

#### 5.4 *Sākāra*: Parabrahman as Having Form

Since his childhood, Svāminārāyaṇa had been very fond of this *sākāra* principle. Almost all his documented descriptions repeatedly and decidedly reveal the actual form of Parabrahman. He enforces that Parabrahman is *sākāra* (with form), that He has an eternally divine human form. Each of these four terms is important for Him: Parabrahman has a form, but while it is human in shape, that form is not constituted of any *māyic* material; it is divine and deprived of any of the impurities,

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<sup>276</sup> BG 4/9, 4/13,

<sup>277</sup> BSSB 1/1/2, pp. 12–17, BSSB 2/1/6, pp. 161–162.

imperfections, and limitations of *māyā*. This is a fundamental principle. It is true at any time and tense. When He is forever present in his transcendental abode or pervaded throughout the world, and even when he chooses to manifest on earth. Now we are highlighting numerous aspects of Parabrahman's form and how potential charges against this belief have been addressed.

#### 5.4.1 Eternal Form

In the various *Vedantic* system, Parabrahman is accepted as *sākāra*, but only when he comes to the earth, otherwise he is not *sākāra*, but Svāminārāyaṇa does not accept this principle; instead, he explains in over twenty discourses that Parabrahman is '*sākāra*' forever. For example: "Parabrahman, who is Puruṣottama, forever presides with a divine form in his Akṣaradhāma." (Vac. Gadh. 1/71, p.172)<sup>278</sup> "Therefore, Parabrahman indeed forever possesses a form... and is forever present in his Akṣaradhāma." (Vac. Gadh. 3/35, p.658) Here, significantly, Svāminārāyaṇa states that Parabrahman is *sākāra* in Akṣaradhāma, as well, which is the divine abode of Parabrahman wherein he infinitely resides and entails the term *sadā* (forever and eternally).

Svāminārāyaṇa clarifies: "Even at the time of *Ātyaṃtika-pralaya* (final dissolution, i.e., before the beginning of a new cycle of creation), Parabrahman and His (liberated) devotees remain in Akṣaradhāma with a definite and divine form enjoying divine bliss." (Vac. Pan.7, p.380). The ancient scriptures of India also assert the definite form of Parabrahman. The CU states: "तस्य यथा कप्यासं पुण्डरीकमेवमक्षिणी तस्योदिति नाम" (CU 1/6/7) "Whose eyes are like a blue lotus, his name is *ut*, for he has risen (*udita*) above all evil." The Bhāṣyakāra comments on this *mantra*: "शोभातिशययुतपुण्डरीकनयनः परमात्मेत्यर्थः । एवमत्र, अन्तरादित्ये हिरण्यमयो हिरण्यश्मश्रुर्हिरण्यकेशः आप्रणखात् सर्व एव सुवर्णः तस्य कप्यासं पुण्डरीकमेवमक्षिणी इत्यादिपदैः परमात्मनः सदा साकृतित्वं प्रतिपादितम्" (CUSB 1/6/7, p.39)

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<sup>278</sup> Vac. Var.12, Vac. Gadh. 3/32

“Parabrahman’s eyes are like beautiful blue lotus’. That golden, luminous and handsome person, who is seen pervading the sun, with the golden (luminous) beard and golden (luminous) hair, he is glowing altogether to the very tips of his nails. In this way, Parabrahman’s definite form is asserted.”

The BS also elucidates that Parabrahman is not only *sākāra* after the creation but he is also *sākāra* before the creation of the cosmos. In the *Īkṣaternādhikaraṇam* of the BS, an assiduous topic was discussed. In that treatise, on the basis of the ‘*sat kāraṇavāda*’ (CU) the question was raised that who is the final cause of the world? The opponent, mainly the *Sāṃkhya* School, argues that it is *pradhāna* or *prakṛti* who is the cause of the world. But the *siddhānti* responds that the *Śruti* ‘*tadaikṣata*’ confirms that the cause must have eyes etc. Thus *prakṛti* cannot be the cause because it is inert. Then the *Bhāṣyakāra* concludes: “जगत्कारणस्य दिव्यनेत्रादिकरणकलेवरात्मकं साकृतित्वं प्रस्थापयति” (BSSB 1/1/5, p.31). “Therefore, the *Śruti* here, in the form of subject matter, confirms that Parabrahman the cause of the universe has a definite form with divine eyes and other limbs.”

#### 5.4.2 Parabrahman in Human-Like Form

Convincingly, it is not enough to know that Parabrahman has a definite and divine form.<sup>279</sup> It is necessary to know what that eternal form is like, for even objects such as pots and pans and creatures such as cows and horses have ‘a form’. So, what does Parabrahman look like? This enticingly simple yet bold question is at the heart of many spiritual discussions and disputes. Svāminārāyaṇa is unambiguous in his description: Parabrahman is in human-like shape (*manuṣyākāra* form). Svāminārāyaṇa points out a fully normal human form by mentioning that Parabrahman possesses two-arms (*dvibhuja*). He declares in Vac. Gadh. 3/38: “The form of Parabrahman in Akṣaradhāma and the form of the *muktas*- the attendants

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<sup>279</sup> Vac. Pan.7

of Parabrahman - are all real, divine, and extremely luminous. Also, the form of that Parabrahman and those *muktas* is two-armed like that of a human.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/38, p.664)<sup>280</sup>

He collects more detail about that form that before the bliss of the form of that Parabrahman, the sensorial pleasures of this realm and the higher realms pale into insignificance. Such is the form of Parabrahman and that form always has two arms.<sup>281</sup> As if in answer to our very own question above, Svāminārāyaṇa points out anticipating a follow-up question about other extraordinary forms of Parabrahman, he quickly clarifies that but by Parabrahman’s own wish, He may appear to have four arms, or sometimes to have eight arms, or He may even be seen as having a thousand arms.<sup>282</sup> Moreover, in Vac. Gadh. 2/13, Svāminārāyaṇa discloses the most vivid sketch of all the aspects regarding the human form of Parabrahman. “The form is dark, but due to the intensity of the light, it appears to be rather fair, not dark. The form has two arms and two legs, not four, eight or a thousand arms, and its appearance is very captivating. The form is extremely serene. It appears like a human in shape and is youthful. Sometimes that form in the divine light is seen standing, sometimes sitting, at other times, it is seen walking around.” (Vac.Ga. 2/13, pp. 418-419)

In this way, this human-shaped form is eternal; Parabrahman looks like a human when he manifests on earth, just as he does in Akṣaradhāma, even at the time of final dissolution.<sup>283</sup> The ancient Indian texts also describe the extremely luminous

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<sup>280</sup> Vac. Var.2

<sup>281</sup> Vac. Loyā 18

<sup>282</sup> Vac. Loyā.18, In addition, Svāminārāyaṇa mentions in several other sermons the "holy feet" {*caranāvinda*}, or simply '*carana*' of God (Vac. Gadh. 1/71, Gadh. 1/74, Loyā.13, Loyā.17, Gadh. 3/4, Gadh. 3/7, Gadh. 3/9, Gadh. 3/11, Gadh. 3/13), often as being worshipped in Akṣaradhāma by countless millions of liberated souls' (Vac. Gadh. 3/31; also Vac. Gadh. 2/25, Gadh. 3/39). Svāminārāyaṇa also cites descriptions from the *Upaniṣads* that describe Parabrahman as 'seeing', and thereby argues that God has eyes and indeed all sense organs (Vac. Gadh. 1/45, Pan.7). Together, these statements create a strong, clear image of Parabrahman as having a fully formed human shape, with two arms, feet, eyes and other sense organs, etc.

<sup>283</sup> Vac. Gadh. 1/37

form of Parabrahman present within the extremely luminous divine light of his abode.<sup>284</sup> In the BSSB, the Bhāṣyakāra carries a longer aforementioned discussion<sup>285</sup> of the subject matter of CU *mantra* 1/6/7 and concludes with the exact translation of Vac. Gadh. 2/13 and 1/37: “इत्थमिह परमात्मैव साकृतिकत्वेन निरूपितः। साकृतिकोऽपि न येन केनचिदप्याकारेणाऽपि तु दिव्यकरचरणादिकरणयुतपुरुषाकार एवेति ‘पुरुषः’ इत्यनेन सिद्धान्तितम्। स च पुनर्द्विभुजचरण एव। चतुर्भुजादित्वं तु द्विभुजचरणस्य सत एव तस्य निमित्तविशेषनिबन्धनं स्वैश्वर्ययोगजनितं न सर्वकालिकम्। स च सदा किशोरमूर्तिर्धनश्यामोऽपि दिव्यतेजोऽतिशयाद्भिरण्मयत्वेन वर्णितः। स चेदृग्विधोऽयं स्वदिव्याऽक्षरधाग्नि दिव्यसिंहासनरूढः सन्नेव तद्रूपमजहदेव स्वसङ्कल्पमात्रतः कृपया मानुषादिरूपेणाऽऽविर्भवतीतीहामुष्यसर्वत्रसाकृतिकः। प्रलयाऽवस्थायामपि कालाऽस्पृष्टोऽयं नैककोट्यक्षरमुक्तैरीक्ष्यमाणो विराजत इति दर्शनेन दृश्याकारसिद्धिः।”<sup>286</sup> (BSSB 1/1/21, p. 46)

“In this way, Parabrahman is defined as having a definite form. This form or shape is not other shaped like but that form always has two arms. The form is dark, but due to the intensity of the light, it appears to be rather fair, not dark. The form has two arms and two legs, not four, eight or a thousand arms, and its appearance is very captivating. The form is extremely serene. It appears like a human in shape and is youthful. Even at the time of the final dissolution, unaffected from the *kaal*, He remains surrounded by the countless liberated souls, who are indulged in the constant darshan of Parabrahman in divine Akṣaradhāma, from where Parabrahman takes birth on the earth by His own wish.”

The CUSB also confirms that human-shaped Parabrahman: “तदपि दिव्यद्विकरद्विचरणादियुतपुरुषाकारमेवेति पुरुष इत्यनेनोक्तमतो न निराकारः स कदापि कुत्रापि ज्ञेयम्” (CUSB 1/6/7, p.39) “That form of Parabrahman has two hands, two legs, and a perfect divine human form. In this manner, he would never be considered as formless either in this

<sup>284</sup> AU 1/1, BU 1/2/5, CU 6/2/3, BSSB1/1/5

<sup>285</sup> *Antasdharmādhikaraṇa*; see BS-SB 1/1/21, pp. 45-6. See also MuU-SB 3/1/3, pp. 283-284 and SB 2/3/6, pp. 116-119 where *Purusa* denotes Parabrahman, and also IU-SB 16, p. 24 for elaboration of ‘*rūpam*’.

<sup>286</sup> उक्तं च सृष्टिप्रकरणे ‘आत्मैवदमग्र आसीत् पुरुषविधः’ (बृ. १/४/१) इत्यादि। इत्थं साकृतिकत्विनश्चये निराकारत्वोक्तयोऽस्य स्वेतरसमस्तवैलक्षण्यप्रतिपादनतात्पर्यकत्वेन प्राकृताऽऽकारनिषेधमात्रं ब्रुवन्तीति विज्ञेयम्। यच्चोक्तं ‘तस्य यथा कथ्यासम्’ (छा. १/६/७) इति जघन्योपमानश्रुतिरिति तदस्य वक्तुमेव जघन्यधीत्वमिति किं खण्डनेन। एतन्मन्त्रार्थश्च तद्वाच्यादवगन्तव्यः। तथा चाऽत्र ‘आदित्यवर्णं तमसः परस्ताद’ (तै. ना. १/८), ‘यदा पश्यः पश्यते रुक्मवर्णम्’ (मु. ३/१/३) इत्याद्यास्तत्साकृतिकत्वपराः श्रुतयो योज्याः। एवं ‘एषोऽन्तरादित्ये हिरण्यमयः पुरुषः’ (छा. १/६/६) इति परमात्मैवेति सिद्धम्॥ १/१/२१॥

world or in his abode.” As far as the shape or form of Parabrahman is concerned, we have to discuss two more aspects which are very important to understand the nature of Parabrahman. They are *saguṇa* and *nīrguṇa* forms. Svāminārāyaṇa describes this in Vac. Kār. 8 as Parabrahman’s ‘original form’ (*mūla svarūp*) and these two forms. In this discourse, he first expounds Parabrahman’s *nīrguṇa* form as being ‘subtler than that which is subtle’, because he indwells and ensouls all of the material elements and spiritual beings, including Akṣarabrahman. He then portrays Parabrahman’s *saguṇa* aspect as being tremendously vast. He states: “Before the vastness of Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagavān, countless millions of *brahmāndas*, which are encircled by the eight barriers (i.e., earth, water, etc.), appear extremely minute, like mere atoms. Those *brahmāndas* do not become smaller, but before the vastness of Parabrahman, they appear small. In this way, the extreme vastness of the form of Parabrahman is the *saguṇa* aspect of Parabrahman.” (Vac. Kār. 8, p.267)

Here, we can anticipate a natural question that, then, in his *nīrguṇa* form, Parabrahman is subtler than the extremely subtle, and in His *saguṇa* form, He is vaster than the extremely vast. What, then, is the original form of Parabrahman - who assumes both of these forms – like? Svāminārāyaṇa resumes: “The answer to that is that the manifest form of Parabrahman visible in a human form is the eternal and original form of Parabrahman. His *nīrguṇa* and *saguṇa* aspects are the special, divine powers of that form.” The *Upaniṣads* also explain Parabrahman as: “Smaller than the smallest, larger than the largest.” (SU 3/20, KU 2/20), The Bhāṣyakāra asserts this fact:

सगुणं निर्गुणं चेति परं ब्रह्म निरूपितम् ।

सगुणं तु गुणौघत्वान्महत्त्वात् सर्वतस्तथा ॥ SSSK 209 ॥

निर्गुणमपि तज्ज्ञेयं शून्यत्वान्मायिकैर्गुणैः।

सूक्ष्माऽतिसूक्ष्मतायाश्च यज्ज्ञानाम्मुच्यतेऽशुभात् ॥ SSSK 210 ॥

“In His *nīrguṇa* form, Parabrahman is subtler than the extremely subtle, and in his *saguṇa* form, He is vaster than the extremely vast. In another meaning, when Parabrahman is called *saguṇa* means He is with all divine qualities. On the other hand, He is called *nīrguṇa* that reflects that He is beyond all the *māyic* qualities.”

### 5.4.3 Parabrahman Possesses a Human Form yet Divine

When we assert that Parabrahman possesses a human form but here the doubt may arise that do all the imperfections and inadequacies of human form affect Him? As should be apparent from the statements cited above, a term that repeatedly features when the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedanta talks about the eternally human-shaped form of Parabrahman is divine (*divya*). This is to dispel the doubt that Parabrahman has a human form, then it will necessarily be flawed, sullied, and limited by all the limitations, impurities, and imperfections of humans. The *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedanta, in its descriptions effectively saying by adding divine that Parabrahman’s form is certainly human in shape but it is by no means human in nature (anthropophilic) or substance (anthrosubstantic). Subsequently, while ordinarily human bodies are composed of *māyā*, Parabrahman’s form is not affected by all the *māyic* imperfections, impurities, and limitations of human.<sup>287</sup>

*Svāminārāyaṇa* makes it a point to emphasize that Parabrahman’s form is totally unlike any other form. He explains this at considerable length, “the Vedas, the *Purāṇas*, the *Mahābhārata*, the *Smṛtis*, and other scriptures proclaim that the original form of Parabrahman, which is eternal, without beginning and divine, resides in his Akṣaradhāma.” Again he asserts, “His form 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. Nor is Parabrahman like anything that can

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<sup>287</sup> Vac. Gadh. 3/37, Vac. Gadh. 1/66



be described by the tongue.” In this manner then Svāminārāyaṇa concludes, “the form of that Parabrahman is such that it cannot be compared to the form of anyone in this *brahmānda*. Why? Because all of the forms in this *brahmānda* that have evolved from Prakṛti-Puruṣa are *māyic*, whereas Parabrahman is divine, not *māyic*. So, since the two are totally different, how can they possibly be compared.”<sup>288</sup>

Subsequently, we can submit that Parabrahman’s body is not formed, as human or even *devic* bodies are, as a consequence of *karmas* accumulated over numerous lives by way of their association with *māyā* and ignorance. Parabrahman, rather, is absolutely and eternally unaffected by *māyā*, controlling it and transcending it instead. His form is thus never even slightly sullied by *māyā*. Svāminārāyaṇa states: “In no way does even a hint of *māyā* taint the form of Parabrahman.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/4, p.393)<sup>289</sup> Before we start our analysis on this topic, how does Parabrahman remain unaffected even having a human-shaped form? First, we provide the background of the discussion: the objection is about when Parabrahman is the cause of all *māyic* worldly creation then when He assumes a human form or he becomes the material cause then Parabrahman must be *māyic* in nature.

The Bhāṣyakāra answers: “तत्र लौकिक लिङ्गदोषावकाशो न प्रभवति” (BSSB 2/1/28, p.179) “Not a trace of fault affect Parabrahman.” Again, the debate proceeds ahead. He claims: Parabrahman is “साकृतित्वेपि दिव्यकरचरणादिमत्त्वलक्षणसाकृतित्वेन तत्रापि मानुषाकृतित्वेनैवेति संकलितोर्थः” (BSSB 2/1/31, p.181). “Not only with any other form but a divine-human form.” This argument is used to refute one of the objections in BS 2/1/32, which draws from CU 6/2/1 and the same verse we saw earlier when discussing Parabrahman as the combined efficient and material cause.

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<sup>288</sup> Vac. Panch. 4

<sup>289</sup> Vac. Loyā. 13, Vac. Kār. 7, Vac. Pan. 7

Uddālaka explains to his son Śvetaketu: “Oh dear son, in the beginning, there was verily only this being (*sat*).” Citing this, the objectors ask how “it can be possible for Parabrahman to have eyes, ears, hands, feet, life-breath, mind, etc., when there was absolutely nothing apart from being to make them from.” Bhadreśadāsa effectively retorts: “Indeed! They are not made from anything but are being itself. After analyzing this principle, we come to the point that how Parabrahman’s eyes, ears, and other ‘sense organs’ (as we would call them) are not like the organs of a human. Parabrahman does not need any senses or organs or mental faculty to know. He knows everything directly and independently.” This is because He is infinitely full of knowledge, and His mind, senses, and organs are all divine, celestial, and unlimited.<sup>290</sup> Resuming further, “this non-material composition of Parabrahman also supports and expounds why He is not ascribed to a particular gender. As we saw in more detail in the chapter on *jīva*, Svāminārāyaṇa describes even the finite self as ‘neither male nor female’. ‘It is’, like Parabrahman, ‘characterized by pure existence and consciousness’.”<sup>291</sup> We find another clue about the non-genderedness of Parabrahman’s form from the new, divine body that the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* receive during the state of post-mortem liberation when dwelling in the transcendental abode with Parabrahman. This transcendental body is like Parabrahman’s two-armed human-shaped form<sup>292</sup> but adds elsewhere that it is: “Different from the two genders of the world. It is neither female in shape nor male in shape. It has a wholly *Brāhmika* body, which is neither feminine nor masculine.” (SV 7/2) Nevertheless, to explain and understand the form of Parabrahman, we are applying some sort of name or identity to Parabrahman; the limitations of human language and imagination force us to use nouns, pronouns, and imagery inevitably have gender connotations.

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<sup>290</sup> KeUSB 1/6, p.40

<sup>291</sup> Vac. Gadh. 3/22

<sup>292</sup> Vac. Gadh. 3/38; Loyā.18

Parabrahman remains as one form at all times during the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe but does not undergo any changes as *māyic* objects do. He always maintains a divine form.<sup>293</sup> This is because time devours everything except Parabrahman; that is to say, time's powers are incapable of affecting Parabrahman's form.<sup>294</sup> When we say that Parabrahman is unaffected by and any company or surroundings He has, then, is He like space? There should be an inquiry that how Parabrahman could have any form, let alone one that is human in shape, and not be limited to being within a specific ten-dimensional boundary. But as we learn earlier, Svāminārāyaṇa persists that Parabrahman is already unbound by space; there is no place where one can say Parabrahman is not. He is all-pervading, even while having a definite form, because of divine, *yogic* powers. The fact being made to any proponents of any formless Parabrahman is this: Svāminārāyaṇa stated in Vac. Kār.8, "If you wish to call Parabrahman formless simply to avoid him limited by space, well, Parabrahman for us is already unbound by space. He is everywhere at all times. So, there is no question of avoiding any undesirable but inescapable limitations. Besides, it is not possible to 'measure' Him by any physical measurements simply because he transcends all physicality and eludes all measurements." Thus, Parabrahman is subtler than the extremely subtle, and ...vaster than the extremely vast.

The *Upaniṣad* similarly declares that Parabrahman is: "Smaller than a grain of rice, a barleycorn, a mustard seed, a grain of millet or a kernel of a grain of millet." And yet equally, He is "larger than the earth, larger than the intermediate region, larger than the sky, larger than these worlds." (CU 3/14/3) In this way, Parabrahman is "Smaller than the smallest, larger than the largest." (SU 3/20, KU 2/20) What the *Upaniṣads* and Svāminārāyaṇa are trying to say, in effect is that such physical measurements or boundaries do not apply to Parabrahman. He is beyond all

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<sup>293</sup> Vac. Gadh. 2/24

<sup>294</sup> Vac. Gadh. 3/37

limitations of space, even as He remains in His original form.<sup>295</sup> According to the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Vedānta, then, Parabrahman has an eternal human form that is wholly unique, pure, and divine. After learning Parabrahman’s divine-human form in His transcendental abode, now we analyze Parabrahman’s manifest human form on earth.

### **5.5 *Pragaṭa*: Parabrahman as Manifest**

Till this point, we have dealt with here three aspects of Parabrahman – Parabrahman as *sarvoparī*, *kartā*, and *sākāra*. Now we will investigate Parabrahman as *pragaṭa*. All the features of Parabrahman analyzed so far, Svāminārāyaṇa lays special emphasis on the significance of Parabrahman being manifest (*pragaṭa*) and realizing him as such. The English word incarnate or incarnation does not convey the correct sense, because it narrowly refers to the material body (or rebirth, or birth in a physical body). Therefore, the word ‘manifest’ or ‘manifestation of Parabrahman’ is perhaps found to convey the perfect understanding. Therefore, from Svāminārāyaṇa’s standpoint, it may be said that the two words ‘incarnation’ (*avatāra*) and ‘manifestation’ (*prākāṭya*) have different connotations. The former is used in a very lax and liberal sense as a generic term, while the latter is used in a restricted sense as a specific term implying ‘Parabrahman’s willing self-presentation’. Thus, the term ‘manifest’ is applied to ‘coming of or revealing of’ Parabrahman on earth while simultaneously being present in His highest abode. So, when Parabrahman descends on earth, He is not absent in His permanent residence Akṣaradhāma, but He assumes another equally beautiful-glorious-divine form. He rather manifests Himself in one more additional form to participate in the life of loving devotees.<sup>296</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Vac. Kār. 8

<sup>296</sup> Vac. Kar. 5

So, it is not descent from a higher plane to a lower plane with a physical body; rather, it is a spiritual descent into the celestial, human, or subhuman plane with all His transcendental glory and divinity intact accompanying Him. It is a descent out of love, mercy, and a desire to become accessible to all. Also, as Parabrahman manifests on earth, He possesses six unique opulence or supernatural attributes of transcendence, namely, perfect power, perfect beauty, perfect knowledge, perfect fame, perfect renunciation, and perfect wealth.<sup>297</sup> Thus, when *sarvavatāri* Parabrahman (supreme godhead) Himself descends on the earth, He does so while simultaneously remaining present in His highest abode (Brahmadhāma/Akṣaradhāma)<sup>298</sup>, for He can assume as many forms as are necessary. He, out of His infinite ever-flowing grace for mankind, descends on earth, becomes one like us and unveils and reveals His transcendental glory and divinity.<sup>299</sup> He, as such, is beyond the comprehension of finite beings, senses, mind, ego, and intellect. But, despite this, He wills to present Himself in the mortal coil and becomes accessible. This He can simultaneously do assuming as many forms in as many universes (worlds/earth).<sup>300</sup>

When He Himself descends on the earth assuming a human form, His physical body appears to be finite and imperfect and corporeal like human beings; but He is neither limited nor affected (influenced) by the properties of *māyā* (matter). Therefore, the visibly-manifest form of Parabrahman is as divine as the form of Parabrahman, in His highest abode Brahmadhāma. In other words, the visibly-manifest form of Parabrahman on the earth is totally identical with the eternally present divine form of Parabrahman in the highest abode.<sup>301</sup> Whenever the supreme Parabrahman Himself descends on the earth, He brings along with Him in His retinue Akṣarabrahman: the ideal supreme devotee and other released *ātmāns* as His

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<sup>297</sup> Vishnu Puran 6/5/79

<sup>298</sup> Vac. Loya 18

<sup>299</sup> Vac. Gadh 1/71

<sup>300</sup> Vac. Gadh 1/78

<sup>301</sup> Vac. Gadh 1/24

attendants.<sup>302</sup> As in the *Gītā*, we find greater evidence. The BG introduces: यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य ग्लानिर्भवति भारत । अभ्युत्थानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजाम्यहम् ॥ BG 4/7 ॥ “Whenever there is a major decline of in the form of *Dharma* (*Svarūpaniṣṭhā* the firm conviction of Parabrahman) and the rise of *Adharma*, O Arjuna, then I incarnate myself.”

The Bhāṣyakāra comments: “स्वेच्छया अन्यजीवेश्वरात्मनोनुप्रविश्य कदाचित् साक्षादेव संभवामीति भावः” (BGSB 4/7, p.95) “Parabrahman by his independent will, sometimes He Himself manifests or sometimes he manifests through the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* by reentering them.” This statement leads us into the discussion where the question is why Parabrahman manifests? What is the purpose and purport of his manifestation? Bhadrēśadāsa provides solutions to this question and explicitly clears the way. He expounds that to grant liberation to infinitive *jīvas* and *īśvaras* is the primary purpose (BSSB 2/1/34, p.184) of Parabrahman. Along with this, he fulfills the wishes of His beloved devotees and establishes the *dharma* on earth (BGSB 4/8, p.96). Based on this evidence and the *sāmpradāyika* tradition as alive today, Dr. Raymond Williams writes: in the *Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya*, its founder, “Svāminārāyaṇa is thought to be the single, complete manifestation of the Supreme Person (Parabrahman-Puruṣottama), and such, is superior in power and efficacy to all other manifestations of God.”<sup>303</sup>

### 5.5.1 The Uniqueness of the Manifestation

The analysis we have conducted so far of an almighty, supreme, all-pervasive, all-knowing, creator Parabrahman, is a reflection of the great *Hindu* tradition. Perhaps what dramatically sets apart the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School standing of Parabrahman from other systems is its emphasis that that supremely transcendental Parabrahman can be, and in fact is, wholly present and personable among us, in human form, here and now. Certainly, that Parabrahman descends upon the earth in human (or any

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<sup>302</sup> Vac. Gadh 1/71

<sup>303</sup> Williams Raymond, Gods of Flesh/Gods of stone, (1985) p.145, USA

other freely chosen) form at a particular time is a concept that is familiar to *Hindū* tradition, especially of the *Vaiṣṇava* kind. There are, however, two primary differences in this corresponding doctrine in the *Svāminārāyaṇa* tradition. Firstly, Parabrahman as *pragaṭa* is the descent of the *avatārin* himself, not an *avatāra*. Svāminārāyaṇa enunciates, for example: “One should realize the manifest Parabrahman that one has met to forever possess a divine form and to be the *avatārin*, the cause of all *avatāras*.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/9, p.403) In various *Vaiṣṇava* schools, these numerous *avatāras* have differing significance.<sup>304</sup>

Moreover, after first manifesting and carrying out his desired plan on earth, Parabrahman lasts to remain fully present even after returning to his abode upon completing a typical human lifespan. He does this by living on through Akṣarabrahman, whom, as we saw in the Akṣarabrahman section, He perpetually brings with him in human form and who takes the role of the *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru. This sets in motion the Guru *Paramparā*, an unbroken succession of enlightened Gurus through whom Parabrahman carries on his liberation work. So even while the Guru is metaphysically Akṣarabrahman in entity and thus ontologically distinct from Parabrahman, he serves as the complete and perfect medium for Parabrahman’s love, bliss, blessings, and granting in final liberation.<sup>305</sup> The elucidation of this topic also requires addressing some significant questions and challenges in order to comprehend it more fully. The manifestation of Parabrahman is forever on earth through Akṣarabrahman. In this manner, this topic is essential regarding ultimate liberation. Therefore, we will discuss it in the next chapter. In the *Svāminārāyaṇa* tradition, to associate with the manifest form of Parabrahman and becoming *brahmarūpa* is the main spiritual endeavor of all spiritual endeavors on earth.

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<sup>304</sup>VRS-2, pp.320-352

<sup>305</sup>BSSB 1/1/32, p.57

## 6. Conclusion

Parabrahman Svāminārāyaṇa revealed the existence of the five eternally distinct ontological entities; 1. *jīva* 2. *īśvara* 3. *māyā* 4. Akṣarabrahman (also Akṣara or Brahman) 5. Parabrahman (or Puruṣottama). Through the revelation of the above essential principle and the identification of these five distinct entities, Svāminārāyaṇa gifted the world with a novel Vedic *darśana*.<sup>306</sup> Within the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya these five eternal entities are discussed in detail. The *Bhāṣyas* and *Svāminārāyaṇa Siddhānta Sudhā* contain the *śāstrīya* form of the documented teachings of Svāminārāyaṇa. We analyzed in this chapter that this teaching of *tattvapanchak* is elaborated upon in great detail by Bhadreśadāsa, the *Prasthānatrayī* Bhāṣyakāra. So, in light of *Prasthānatrayī* Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya, this chapter explored to illuminate the phenomenon of the high substratum of the philosophical tenet; means the five eternal entities: 1. *jīva* 2. *īśvara* 3. *māyā* 4. Akṣarabrahman (also Akṣara or Brahman) 5. Parabrahman (or Puruṣottama), found in the *Prasthānatrayī*. As a result of this study of this chapter, the inflection point is marked that the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyas follow the teachings of the *Vacanāmṛta*.

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<sup>306</sup>Bhadreśadāsa Sādhu, *Parabrahman Svāminārāyaṇa's Akshara-Purushottam-Darśana, Svāminārāyaṇa Akṣarapīṭha*, Ahmedabad, 2018, p.3