

CHAPTER - 5

ANALYSIS ON THE BASIS OF SOTERIOLOGY

Soteriology is the study of the salvation⁶³⁰ of humanity. In Indian philosophy, soteriology can be defined as attaining *mokṣa* (Sanskrit: मोक्ष:- मोक्ष् घञ्, *mokṣa* “liberation”) or *mukti* (Sanskrit: मुक्ति:- मुच् क्तिन् “release”), which is defined as the liberation from *māyā* (*saṃsāra*, the cycle of death and rebirth).⁶³¹ “The principle of liberation is one of the distinguishing features of Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism. It is variously referred to as *mukti*, *mokṣa*, *kaivalya* and *nirvāṇa* in the scriptures. *Mukti* means freedom from bondage. *Mokṣa* means the destruction of delusion. *Kaivalya* means aloneness arising from the destruction of all bonds, and *nirvāṇa* means entering into a stateless state of immutability and non-becoming.”⁶³²

In Indian philosophy, Vedic tradition, culture, and heritage, *mokṣa* is concerned with the individual’s blissful, spiritual and moral life. Indian philosophy explains the way by which the continuous experience of sorrows and suffering can be entirely overcome. “Indian philosophers have applied a realistic and practical approach to solve the problems of life and reality. All the Indian schools of Philosophy, (except the Cārvākas and the Buddha) accept the self or *ātman* as eternal, pure, and free. Due to ignorance, the self identifies itself with the body and undergoes various sufferings in which the cycle of death and birth is the topmost suffering. Due to the knowledge of Parabrahman, the self becomes liberated.”⁶³³

⁶³⁰ Definition of salvation: Oxford, "The saving of the self; the deliverance from sin and its consequences", 1989

⁶³¹ Āpte Vāmana Śivarāma, *Samskṛta-Hindī Śabdakośa*, Shri Prakashan, Encyclopedia Britannica, Delhi, p.880

⁶³² Olivelle, Patrick, *The Āśrama System: The History and Hermeneutics of a Religious Institution*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, p.162

⁶³³ E. Deutsch, *The self in Advaita Vedanta*, in Roy Perrett, Ed., *Indian philosophy: metaphysics*, Vol -3, pp.343–360

1. The Threefold Pains

Worldly life is full of sorrows and sufferings. We daily pray to Parabrahman to prevent us from these three kinds of pains in our rites and rituals. “आध्यात्मिक-आधिभौतिक-आधिदैविक-त्रिविधताप-उपशमन-अर्थम्”⁶³⁴ Generally, we suffer from these threefold miseries: (1) *ādhyātmika* (intrinsic), (2) *ādhibhautika* (extrinsic), and (3) *ādhidaivika* (superhuman). The first *ādhyātmika* is mental agitation caused by emotions and passions. The second type of pain i.e. *ādhibhautika* is caused by beasts, men, birds, alligators, reptiles, deer, etc. *ādhibhautika* pain is triggered by fourfold living beings, viz., *jarāyuja* (viviparous), *aṇḍaja* (oviparous), *svedaaja* (born of sweat) and *udbhija* (born of soil). The third type of pain is produced by supernatural agencies, like demons, ghosts, and planets. It is also caused by the elements of storm, rain, heat, cold, thunderbolt, etc. There are, in fact, many pleasures of life. Nevertheless, many more are the pains and sufferings of life and all living beings are subject to them. The pleasures are momentary, but the pains are permanent. Though it is possible for any individual being to avoid all pains, yet it is not possible for them to avoid decay and death. The *Gītā* insists in order to eradicate the threefold miseries of a spiritual seeker and bringing happiness in life.

प्रसादे सर्वदुःखानां हानिरस्योपजायते ।

प्रसन्नचेतसो ह्याशु बुद्धिः पर्यवतिष्ठते ॥ BG 2/65॥

“The effects of having won the grace or serenity (*prasādam*) of the *brahmasvarūp* Guru, Kṛṣṇā says that all kinds of sorrows viz. *ādhyātmika*, *ādhidaivika*, and *ādhibhautika*, are annihilated in the seeker when he gets *prasādam*. Further, the seeker with a *prasanna citta* i.e. purified *antaḥ-kāraṇa* gets firmly established and retains steady *buddhi* in all circumstances, just like space. The basic idea for happiness that the *buddhi* becomes immutable by (being established in) the form of *ātman*.” All the schools of the Indian Vedāntic system have also agreed that there are sorrows and sufferings in human life. That is why they put much emphasis on

⁶³⁴ Śrutiprakāśadāsa Sādhu, *Śrī Mahāpūjā, Svāminārāyaṇa Akṣarapīṭha*, Ahmedabd, May 2011, p.5

developing a configure or constructing a procedure by which human beings can completely overcome suffering and sorrows. According to them, the sufferings and sorrows of men are due to ignorance or *avidyā* regarding the self. Ignorance is the leading cause of all sufferings and sorrows. It is accepted by all the schools that man can conquer ignorance and attain total freedom. Total freedom is asserted in Indian philosophy as *mokṣa* or liberation.⁶³⁵ As Rādhākṛṣṇana says, “Spiritual experience is the foundation of India's rich cultural history.”⁶³⁶ This statement indicates that philosophy and studies of spiritual texts should result in a blissful experience.

In its broad meaning, Indian philosophy discovers, “liberation means freedom from all ties, desires, holds, limitations, and death. Although we may think that we are free and live in a free world, physically and mentally, we are subject to many limitations and tied relationships, which do not let us live our lives freely or experience the freedom of liberated souls.” Freedom from worldly misery is the most important thing in emancipation. “Many imperceptible chains hold us in the colossal jail of the world. Everyone who lives here is a prisoner of their own thoughts and actions. Our fears, anxieties, feelings, emotions, thoughts, cares, concerns, desires, relationships, goals, and natural limitations hold us back. They come in the way of our ability and our happiness to live freely and blissfully. They keep us restricted to our little worlds.” Therefore, dharmic bondage is not really bondage but the means to liberation. “To achieve liberation, we have to break through the walls that separate us from the ultimate bliss. We have to conquer everything that holds us back or holds us in chains. How can there be freedom if we are conditioned to live like slaves to our own fears and desires? To be free from the bonds of the earth, we have to learn to live freely, both mentally and physically.”⁶³⁷

⁶³⁵ Brahmaḍarśanaḍāsa Sādhū, *Bhāratīya Darśanonī Rūparekhā-1, Svāminārāyaṇa Akṣarapīṭha*, Ahmedabad, 2007,

⁶³⁶ Indian Philosophy-1, p.41

⁶³⁷ Indian Philosophy-1, p.237

In this short discussion, I want to focus on some analysis of the philosophical explanation of the concept of *mokṣa* from an ethical and practical point of view.

2. The General Conception of *Mokṣa*

The state of *mokṣa* is not a particular thing that can be seen with our own eyes. Usually, people think that it is a state which is attained after death. Again, no one can describe the state which is attainable after death. The question always remains that what happens when one attains *mokṣa* or liberation. Certain possibilities exist for each individual *ātman*, upon attaining liberation.

1. The seeker experience oneness with the ultimate reality.
2. The person realizes his own self and Parabrahman while living in this world.
3. The individual secures a place in heaven to enjoy the pleasures of heavenly life. If they indulged in righteous actions and acquired merit during its existence upon earth.
4. The self goes to hell to suffer significantly as a part of its purification and penitentiary correction if it deviated from the path of righteousness and indulged in sinful actions.
5. The self goes neither to heaven nor to hell. Instead, it remains in an intermediary state of limbo in the middle atmospheric region as a ghost or a spirit because of some peculiar circumstances.
6. The self attains eternal liberation if it has managed through spiritual practice and past life actions to rid itself of all *kāma* and impurities. It enters the highest abode of Brahman and remains there for eternity in the presence of Parabrahman, the Universal Supreme Being.

Of these, which is considered temporary liberation and which is permanent? What is the connection between the individual's *kārma* and liberation? Having exhausted the merit or demerit of their previous *kārmās* in these worlds, do the individual *ātman* return to earth to take another birth as mortal beings and continue their existence? If those who achieve liberation never return to earth, then what happens

to them when they achieve liberation? How do they exist and in what state? What will be the relation between the individual self and Parabrahman? This is all indeed our research in this chapter.

3. The Ultimate Goal

The scriptures echo: “धर्मार्थकाममोक्षाख्यं पुरुषार्थचतुष्टयम्”⁶³⁸ “The four goals or aims of human life which is known as *puruṣārtha* in Indian philosophy are as follows: *dharma*, *artha*, *kāma*, and *mokṣa* (liberation).” *Mokṣa* is one of the four goals or aims of human life. In the field of Indian culture and heritage, *dharma* is explained and placed first because it is considered superior to *artha* and *kāma*. *Dharma*, *artha*, and *kāma* are too much linked with man’s social life but *mokṣa* is concerned with individuals’ spiritual or moral life. Moreover, it is the ultimate goal.⁶³⁹ With reference to the *Bhagavad-Gītā* it can be said that those who have desires for *artha* and *kāma* may follow the *karmakāṇḍa* without remembering Parabrahman to obtain their desired object, whereas those who are totally free from such desires and aim at *mokṣa*, they may follow *jñāna* and remember Parabrahman. The BG expresses the first group:

कामात्मानः स्वर्गपरा जन्मकर्मफलप्रदाम् ।

क्रियाविशेषबहुलां भोगैश्वर्यगतिं प्रति ॥⁶⁴⁰(BG 2/43)

“They are dominated by material cravings and consider going to heaven as the highest goal of life. They indulge in specific rituals for the sake of material prosperity and enjoyment. Rebirth is the result of their action.” Those who are full of material longings perform various specific rituals for the attainment of pleasure and power and think to go to heaven as the highest goal of life. The rebirth is the fruit of such rituals. On the other hand, with the knowledge of Brahman, a person

⁶³⁸ *Skandapurāṇa*/ 4 *kāśīkhaṇḍa* /71/15

⁶³⁹ Gavin Flood, The meaning and context of the *Puruṣārtha*, in Julius Lipner (Editor) - The Fruits of Our Desiring, 1996, pp 16–21

⁶⁴⁰ BG 2/43

despite having committed extreme sins attains liberation. The BG explicitly mentions:

अपि चेदसि पापेभ्यः सर्वेभ्यः पापकृत्तमः ।

सर्वं ज्ञानप्लवेनैव वृजिनं सन्तरिष्यसि ॥⁶⁴¹ (BG 4/36)

“Even if one is the most sinful of all sinners, yet one shall easily cross over the river of sin with the help of the raft of the knowledge of Parabrahman.” The lives of personal beings proceed within this global framework from birth to adulthood, old age, death, and rebirth in a never-ending round of *sāṃsārika* existences. During the cosmic night, they subsist in a kind of limbo or oblivion. The concept of *dharma* also refers to the timeless and absolute reality beyond the manifested one; it helps to attain the final goal of religious and philosophical quest equated with the ultimate truth. “This truth is eternal, outside time, and independent of the changeable phases of the phenomenal reality manifested within time. The manifestation of the eternal truth or law within the universe dominated by time does not make the world everlasting in the sense of a lineal duration, but provides for its cyclic nature, its recurring rise and fall.”⁶⁴²

4. Mukti Mimāṃsā in the Svāminārāyaṇa School

The ultimate aim of human life is to transcend *māyā* and attain *mukti*- freedom from the cycle of births and deaths. By leading a spiritually pure life based on the path revealed by Svāminārāyaṇa, such *mukti* or *mokṣa* is attained. Within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama *Darśana*, devotees have a relationship with Akṣara and Puruṣottama in the *sādhana-dāśā* and also after attaining *mukti*. *Mukti* is defined as becoming *akṣararūpa* and offering *bhakti* to Puruṣottama with *dāsabhāva*. Thus, even in the state of *mukti*, one, upon becoming *brahmarūpa*, continuously offers *upāsanā* to Puruṣottama with *dāsabhāva*. To become *akṣararūpa* or *brahmarūpa* is to attain *brahmabhāva* or qualitative oneness with Brahman. By attaining *brahmabhāva*, one

⁶⁴¹ BG 4/36

⁶⁴² Alban Widgery, *The Principles of Hindū Ethics*, International Journal of Ethics, 1930, pp. 239–240

acquires all of the attributes necessary for liberation. When a devotee achieves *brahmabhāva*, they are redeemed from *māyā*, become *gunātita* (rise beyond the three *māyic* attributes), and become faultless. This *brahmarūpa* devotee is then forever engrossed in unhindered *bhakti* towards Puruṣottama and experiences Parabrahman's supreme bliss. Svāminārāyaṇa acknowledges in the *Vacanāmṛta*: "After abandoning their association, the *jīva* realizes, 'My self is Brahman, which is transcendental and uncontrolled by *māyā*.' If one associates with Brahman through incessant contemplation in this manner, the *jīva* acquires the virtues of that Brahman." (Vac. Gadh. 2/31, p.460)

Svāminārāyaṇa goes further: "Only when one incessantly acquaintances with one's inspirer, Brahman, through contemplation - as previously described - is that attachment broken." Thus, he clearly mentions the unique procedure of *mukti* in the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School. *Mukti Mimāṃsā* refers to deep reflection on or inquiry into liberation. This usually involves deep reflection on the forms of bondage and liberation and the means to liberation. The concept of liberation presupposes someone's state of bondage and anticipates the possibility of his or her release into a state of freedom. From the *Svāminārāyaṇa* philosophical perspective, bondage marks the term *saṃsāra* or *māyā* and understood as a beginningless process of life of beings who are born, die, and are continually reborn. This process is governed by the eternal law of Parabrahman.

Of the five eternal *tattvas* (Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, *īśvara*, *jīva*, and *māyā*) accepted by Svāminārāyaṇa, Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman are always beyond *māyā*. They have been, are and forever will be beyond any type of bondage. *Māyā* is not able to influence or bind them. In fact, even the attachment that the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* have to *māyā*, perish due to their association with them (Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman). Since *māyā* is *jaḍa* and the binding factor, the question of its bondage or liberation does not arise; consequently, the remaining two entities, *jīvas*

and *īśvaras* are subject to bound by *māyā*. There may be hardly any questions that arise regarding the *jīva*'s bondage. However, *īśvara*'s bondage is a unique feature of the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School: *Svāminārāyaṇa* elucidates that it is when Virāt-Puruṣa worships Vāsudeva Bhagavān, who is *nirguṇa*, that he forsakes *māyā* and becomes *brahmarūpa* and attains liberation. *Svāminārāyaṇa* explains: “This is because his father, Puruṣa is mighty and cares for him properly. So, because Virāt-Puruṣa is attached to *māyā*, he is again produced from *māyā* at the end of dissolution. Moreover, just as the *jīva* is bound and powerless, in the same way, its father is also bound and powerless. How, then, can the father help his son?”

Let us understand it thoroughly. We have studied in the previous chapters that Virāt-Puruṣa is in the *īśvara* category. *Svāminārāyaṇa*, after applying the analogy for *jīva* and *īśvara* as son and father, argues that they both are in the clutch of *māyā* and they have to tread the path of spiritual endeavor in order to get liberation. Bhadrēśadāsa also confirms the fact:

जीवानामीश्वराणां च ह्यनादिबन्धनं दृढम्॥

जनिमृतिप्रवाहान्तःपातित्वमादिशून्यकम् ॥ SSSK 431॥

“*Jīvas* and *īśvaras* are in the firm bondage of *māyā* since time immemorial; this causes them to involve in the beginning less cycle of birth and death.” The IUSB states the bondage of these two entities; while explaining the verse “ये के चात्महनो जनाः” Bhadrēśadāsa expresses: “जायन्ते जनिमृतिप्रवाहे संसरन्ति ते जना बद्धा जीवेश्वराः।” (IUSB 3, p.11) “*Jīvas* and *īśvaras* are bound by *māyā*; therefore, are subject to fall in the cycle of death and birth.” In terms of their fundamental nature, these two *tattvas* are pure, knowledgeable, liberated, and characterized by eternal existence, consciousness, and bliss. Yet despite this, they are having been bound to ignorance in the form of *māyā* since time eternal. As long as they have this captivity, they do not experience the purity of their form and remain a part of the creation, sustenance and destruction of the world. This is their very attachment. The bondage of both these *tattvas* in this manner is a reality. Albeit this attachment in the form of ignorance is real, it is

unable to bring about any defects in their essentially pure form. When both of these *tattvas* become liberated from this bondage, they experience their pure *brāhmic* form, as well as the form of Parabrahman residing within them. Ultimately, there is a permanent end to their various forms of suffering and misery; they attain *mukti* (liberation) from the cycles of birth and death and a permanent place in the presence of Parabrahman in his Akṣaradhāma, amongst the *Akṣara-muktas*.

The Bhāṣyakāra elaborates this fact while commenting on the KeU verse “अमृता भवन्ति” (KeU 1/2). Here, the *Upaniṣad* commences the subject of Parabrahman’s all doership, and *mukti* is also asserted as the result of knowing Parabrahman as the all doer. Bhadrēśadāsa provokes: “ब्रह्मरूपेण स्वात्मना सर्वत्र साक्षात्परमानदानुभवरूपां मोक्षस्थितिमनुभवति” (KeUSB 1/2, p.35) “By acquiring this *brāhmīsthiti* (*brahmabhāva*) one attains liberation and experiences Parabrahman’s bliss directly.”

The SSS defines *mukti* as:

मुक्तिर्हि स्वात्मब्रह्मैक्य-पूर्वकं दासभावतः।

भजनोपासनं प्रीत्या स्वामिनारायणप्रभोः॥ SSSK 427॥

“*Mukti* is identifying one’s *ātman* with Akṣarabrahman and humbly and lovingly worshipping Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa.” Bhadrēśadāsa gives the definition of *mukti* in which he includes every aspect of the Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana as far as *mukti* or *śreya* is concerned. He defines: “भायागन्धविवर्जितत्वाद् दिव्यवस्तुप्रापकत्वाच्च निर्दोषो दिव्यश्चात्मनो ह्यात्यन्तिकदुःखनिवृत्तिपूर्वकं परमात्मसहजानन्दपरमसुखं प्रदत्वेन अत्यन्तहितकरत्वात् प्रशस्तः साक्षाद्ब्रह्मस्वरूपगुरुहरिप्रसंगमात्रजन्यो ह्यक्षरपुरुषोत्तमसिद्धान्तलक्षणो ब्रह्मविद्याध्यात्मविद्यापरविद्यादिसमार्थशब्दैः श्रुतिस्मृत्यादिसुप्रतिष्ठितः संदर्शितश्च परमनिःश्रेयसपथः एव श्रेयः।” (KUSB 2/1, p.85) “*Mukti* or liberation or *śreya* can be attained only by the association of the *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru. This state is faultless and divine. In that *śreya*, the ultimate sorrow (cycle of death and birth) is uprooted, Parabrahman’s bliss is granted and no trace of *māyā* remains there. Moreover, it is the very essence of Akṣara Puruṣottama principle, which is

well established in the *śrutis* and *smṛtis* by the name as *brahmavidyā*, *adhyātmavidyā*, and *parāvidyā*, etc.”

The BSSB also elaborates: “एवं जगतो निर्वेदं प्राप्य ब्रह्मस्वरूपगुरुमाश्रित्य तत्प्रसङ्गेन स्वात्मानं मायामलहीनं परिशुद्धं कृत्वा तमेव स्वात्मानं पुनस्तदक्षरब्रह्मभावेन संस्कृत्य गुरारेव प्रत्यक्षनारायनस्वरूपभावनयाक्षराधिपतिसहजानन्द-परमोपासनेन तत्परमानन्ददिव्यानुभूति लक्षणं मोक्षं संपादयेत इति” (BSSB 1/1/4, p.28) Here, the Bhāṣyakāra explains the method and state of liberation a seeker achieves through the Akṣarabrahman Guru. “After attaining detachment towards the worldly affairs, one associates with the *brahmasvarūpa* Guru by seeking his firm refuge, acquires pure *ātma*-realization. Thereafter he adds *brahmabhāva* in that *ātma*-realization. In this way, he further indulges in *upāsanā* of the manifest form of Parabrahman; as a result, he procures liberation in which he experiences the bliss of Parabrahman.” The BG shows the way to eradicate the internal desire which emerges due to *māyā*.

विषया विनिवर्तन्ते निराहारस्य देहिनः ।

रसवर्जं रसोऽप्यस्य परं दृष्ट्वा निवर्तते ॥⁶⁴³

“The pleasurable objects stay away if one abstains from sense enjoyment, but the thirst for sense enjoyment remains in subtle form. The thirst also disappears from the one who has known the Supreme Parabrahman.”

Bhadreśadāsa explains the very sense of this verse: “अक्षरपुरुषोत्तमसाक्षात्कारस्य ब्रह्मविद्यात्मकस्य ब्रह्मस्थितिरूपत्वाल्लब्धाक्षरब्रह्मगुणसाधर्म्यस्य पुरुषोत्तमपरब्रह्मोपासकस्य ध्रुवापुनरावृत्तिशीला मायामोहनिवृत्तिरभिजायता” (BSSB 2/59, p.61) “One who has attained qualitative oneness with Akṣarabrahman, has acquired *brahmavidyā* and has attained the realization of Akṣara Puruṣottama, for such a devotee *māyā* and infatuation are removed permanently.” Having understood the bondage and liberation of the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* in its simplest form, we shall now primarily focus on the attachment and liberation of the *jīva*.

⁶⁴³ BG 2/59

4.1 The Nature of Bondage

The *Vacanāmṛta* teaches us that by its essential nature and form, the *jīva* is pure (Vac. Sār.1, Loyā. 10), and without any defects (Vac. Gadh. 1/64, Loyā. 10) from the influence of *māyā* (Vac. Sār. 9, Gadh. 2/57), beyond the three *guṇas* (Vac. Sār. 9), and *brahmarūpa* (Vac. Gadh. 1/77, Loyā. 10, Gadh. 2/8). Yet, the *jīva* is innately bound to its causal body in the form of ignorance and *māyā*. Svāminārāyaṇa explains: “The *kāraṇa* (causal) body is the *māyā* of the *jīva*. That same *kāraṇa* body develops into the *sthūla* and *sūkṣma* bodies. Therefore, all three - the *sthūla*, *sūkṣma* and *kāraṇa* bodies - can be said to be the *māyā* of the *jīva*. In the same manner, *virāt*, *śutrātman* and *avyakta* can be said to be the *māyā* of *īśvaras*.” (Vac. Kār. 12, p.275)

Svāminārāyaṇa further explains that these three bodies of *jīva* and *īśvaras* cause the tight bondage. “This *māyā* of the *jīva*, i.e., the *kāraṇa* body, is enclosed so strongly to the *jīva* that they cannot be split by any means whatsoever.” (Vac. Kār. 12, P.275) In fact, the fundamental reason for the *jīva* to be bound in this manner is its *kāraṇa*-causal--body. Since the *kāraṇa* body is real, the bondage of the *jīva* is also real. In the Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana,

बन्धः सत्यस्तथा मुक्तिः सर्वजीवेश्वराऽऽत्मनाम्।

अनाद्यज्ञानतो बद्धाः साधनान्मुक्तिमाप्नुयुः ॥⁶⁴⁴

“The bondage and liberation of *jīvas* and *īśvaras* are real. They are bound by eternal ignorance and will be liberated through the spiritual endeavor.” In reality, the elemental form and nature of the *jīva* is totally detached and distinct from the *sthūla*, *sūkṣma* and *kāraṇa* (gross, subtle, and causal). Despite this, due to ignorance, the *jīva* believes that the deficiencies, traits, and natures of these three bodies are a part of its essential original form. This ignorance is due to not having the knowledge of its own pure form, which is characterized by eternal existence, consciousness and

⁶⁴⁴ SSSK 426

bliss (Gadh. 1/20). Due to this lack of knowledge of its pure form, the *jīva* identifies itself with the nature of the *kāraṇa* body and other bodies to which it becomes firmly attached and believes this to be its real form instead (Gadh. 1/44, Gadh. 2/2). Believing oneself to be the body and attachment towards one's body is itself the root cause of all defects (Loyā. 6). This is the prominent reason for one's pain and misery in this life and thereafter. The BU provokes this matter:

अनन्दा नाम ते लोका अन्धेन तमसाऽऽवृताः

तान्स्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्त्य् विद्वासोऽबुधो जनाः ॥ BU 4/4/11 ॥

“There are indeed those unblessed worlds, covered with blind darkness. Those who are ignorant and not enlightened go after death to those worlds.” Bhadrēśadāsa explains it while commenting on this verse: “ब्रह्मविद्याविरहिता ये जनास्ते सर्वेऽपि अनन्दा नाम तदाख्या आनन्दघनविधुराः अन्धेन तमसावृताः गाढमायान्धकाराविष्टाः ते ये दुःखैकलक्षणाः लोकास्तान् प्रेत्य मृत्वा अभि गच्छति अभितो मुहुर्मुहुर् गच्छति” (BUSB 4/4/11, p.276) “Those who have not attained *brahmavidyā* will invariably go to the realms which are sorrowful and covered with the blind and dense darkness of *māyā*.”

Here the Bhāṣyakāra explicitly mentions that *māyā* is the cause of bondage for an aspirant. In other words, this *māyā* binds the aspirant due to his attachment to his body. Bhadrēśadāsa tactfully adds it in the IUSB while explaining ‘आत्महनो जनाः’ firstly, he launches the *pūrvapakṣa*’s question that if the *ātman* is immortal then how can it be destroyed? Bhadrēśadāsa argues that because of the perpetual attachment of the three bodies an aspirant flop to realize his true self *atman*, with Brahman and Parabrahman. Due to this deficiency, he falls in the cycle of deaths and births. Consequently, it becomes a fundamental characteristic of bondage.

Bhadrēśadāsa further explains it by quoting the *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad* verse: ‘हिरण्मयेन पात्रेण सत्यस्यापिहितं मुखम्’ (IU 15) “Due to the golden vessel, the *sat* is hidden.” He elucidates that just as gold attracts and increases desire, so does *māyā*. That is why, here, *māyā*

has been called a golden vessel. The word *satya* implies *ātman*, Akṣarabrahman, and Parabrahman as they are the forms of truth. Therefore, true knowledge is hidden due to ignorance in the form of *māyā*. (IUSB 15, pp.22-23)

This ignorance, Svāminārāyaṇa identifies “is of the form of *māyā*. with the *ātman*’s causal body makes the connection even more clear. The *jīva* also holds the causal body, which is the embodiment of eternal ignorance.⁶⁴⁵ Connecting this ignorance back to *māyā*, defines *māyā* as nothing but the sense of I-ness towards the body and my-ness towards anything related to the body.”⁶⁴⁶(Vac. Kār.12)

To begin with, any actions performed while in a state of ignorance (i.e. self-identification with the bodies) accrue *kārmās* which are then stored in the causal body. These *kārmās* that the *jīva* has performed with such attachment during past lives have become integrated with the *jīva*. Just as fire enters iron and turns it into a fire-like entity, similarly these *kārmās* fully ripen, they cling to the *ātman*, as if becoming a part of it. The Bhāṣyakāra explains: “अनादित एव संचिततां प्राप्य जीवेश्वरात्मनुलिप्तानि कारणाव्याकृताख्यानाद्यविद्याशरीररूपाणि कर्माणि प्रलीनभावगतानि विद्यन्त एव तदनुगुणतया सृष्टिमुद्भाययति परमात्मा” (BSSB 2/1/36, p.186) “The storage of the *kārmās* in which the causal bodies of *jīvas* and *īśvaras* in the form of *avidyā* or *māyā* remain latent since time immemorial. Parabrahman creates the universe according to their *kārmās*.” Svāminārāyaṇa explains: “This *māyā* of the *jīva*, i.e. the causal body, is attached so firmly to the *jīva* that they cannot be separated by any means whatsoever... just as the shell of a tamarind seed is extremely firmly attached to the seed.” (Vac. Kār. 12, p.275) Those grown and matured *karmās* become the cause of the cycle of birth and death.

Therefore, desires {*vāsanā*}, born of ignorance, become the root cause of more and more lives in the perpetual transmigratory cycle. Due to *vāsanā* being born out of

⁶⁴⁵ Vac. Gadh. 2/66

⁶⁴⁶ Vac. Gadh. 3/39

ignorance, the *jīva* roams in the cycle of 8.4 million life forms and experiences pain and pang. As long as the *māyā* that binds the *jīva* is not uprooted, the *jīva* has to take birth and die uncountable times. At the time of creation, the *jīvas* arise from within *māyā* (Gadh. 3/10), and at the time of dissolution, the *jīvas* are absorbed back into *māyā* along with their *kāraṇa* body (Gadh. 1/12).

Albeit, *māyā*/ignorance/the causal body still conceals the *ātman*, obstructing and objecting to a full realization of its conscious, pure, blissful self and of the limitlessly blissful Parabrahman who resides therein and all around. Instead, that ignorance holds the *ātman* captive to the body's never-ending needs and the voracious desires of the mind, entrapping it ever more into a transmigratory existence with all its limitations and sufferings of birth, decay, disease, disappointment, and death. As far as the bondage of *jīva* is concerned, the three *guṇas* of *māyā* also cause bondage for the *jīvas* and *īśvaras*. The BG mentions:

सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति गुणाः प्रकृतिसम्भवाः ।

निबध्नन्ति महाबाहो देहे देहिनमव्ययम् ॥⁶⁴⁷

“*Sattva* or goodness, *rajas* or activity, and *tamas* or inertia; these three *guṇas* (states, moods) of *māyā* bind the eternal self to the body.”

The Bhāṣyakāra elucidates: “सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति त्रयो गुणाः देहे त्रिगुणमयप्रकृतिकार्याब्धेस्मिन् शरीरेवस्थितं देहिनं देहात् स्वरूपतो विलक्षणमप्यनाद्यज्ञानाद् देहाध्यासवन्तमात्मानं निबध्नन्ति संसारबन्धनमापादयन्ति। देवमनुष्यादितत्तच्छरीरयोगमापादयन्ति इति भावः।” (BGSB 14/5, p.295) “Although this *māyic* body which is composed of three *guṇas*; *sattva*, *rajas* and *tama*, is distinct from the *ātman* yet, due to the constant association with the body, it becomes bound and subject to attain the various births as *deva*, human, etc.” The BG goes further and illustrates the matter one by one.⁶⁴⁸ In this manner, we discussed the nature of the bondage of

⁶⁴⁷ BG 14/5

⁶⁴⁸ “Of these, *Sattva*, being calm, is enlightening and ethical. It binds human beings (or *Jivātmā*) by attachment to happiness and knowledge. (BG 14/6) *Rajas* is characterized by intense selfish activity and is born of desire and

jīva, which is essential to understand the nature of liberation. This is what the Vedānta texts promise liberation from, and what aspirers of liberation (*mumukṣu*) earnestly endeavor towards.

4.2 The Nature of Liberation

Through the association of Parabrahman or the *Akṣarabrahman*- Guru the *Satpuruṣa* – who is the manifest form of Parabrahman on earth, the *jīva* overcomes the ignorance in the form of the *kāraṇa* body, to which it has been strongly attached since eternity. It also overcomes the resulting influences of *kārmās*, *vāsanā*, *svabhāva* and *prakṛti* (the forms of *māyā*), and thus the *jīva* is liberated. In this state, the *jīva* is able to experience its true form as being pure, knowledgeable liberated and characterized by eternal existence, consciousness and bliss. Svāminārāyaṇa illustrates: “The exclusive cause behind the *jīva* attaining liberation, transcending *māyā* and becoming *brahmarūpa* is its engagement in the *jnāna*, meditation, devotional songs, spiritual discourses, etc., of the manifest form of Bhagavān, who is Parabrahman. It is due to these that the *jīva* transgresses *māyā*, attains an extremely elevated state, and also attains Parabrahman’s Akṣaradhāma.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/32, p.463) In this way, the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School explicitly propounds that for ultimate liberation one must become *brahmarūpa*. Svāminārāyaṇa states: “*Jīva* or *īśvara* becomes *brahmarūpa* and attains liberation.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/31, p.460)

The *jīva* also experiences its original form as being unchanging, beyond the three *guṇas* and *māyā*, as the form of knowledge, the form of bliss and as extremely lustrous. Knowledge, devotion, bliss, and such innumerable qualities - which were concealed by the barrier of ignorance - become manifest and are experienced (Vac.

attachment. It binds the *Jīva* by attachment to the fruits of work. (BG 14/7) *Tamas*, born of inertia, confuses *jīva*. It binds by ignorance, laziness, and excessive sleep.” (BG 14/8)

Sār. 18). It attains the *gunātita* state, transcending the three *guṇas*, three bodies and the emotions of the three bodies. Thus, through attachment to the manifest form of Brahman (*Gunātita Satpuruṣa*), the *jīva* becomes *brahmarūpa* and ultimately attains the realization of Parabrahman within its *atman*. In this way, through the removal of the causes of miseries, i.e. ignorance, bodily attachment, *vāsanā*, *svabhāva*, etc., the *jīvātman* is freed from all sufferings. Not only do all forms of suffering - mental, physical, and those of worldly dealings - end, but the *jīva* also attains release from the cycle of births and deaths. Further, by becoming *brahmarūpa* and attaining *brahmabhāva*, it also eternally receives the infinite and divine bliss of Parabrahman.

The important point highlighted by Svāminārāyaṇa about the form of liberation in the Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana is that it does not merely involve overcoming the three *guṇas*, bodies and states, and thus becoming free from all miseries; it also involves becoming *brahmarūpa*, realizing Paramātman and experiencing Paramātman's eternal bliss. In short, ultimate liberation is not only being eternally free from misery but also eternally enjoying ultimate bliss. More convincingly, The *Svāminārāyaṇa* School of philosophy defines *mukti* as a state of immortality, where death and rebirth are eliminated, because their very cause, *māyā* or ignorance, is no more. Svāminārāyaṇa enlightens: “Just like a grain of rice that has had its outer chaff separated does not grow, one who ... is freed from eternal ignorance in the form of *māyā* becomes free of birth and death.” (Vac. Sār. 11, p.227)

The approach used by the *Vacanāmṛta* is similar to that used in the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya. Bhadreśadāsa proclaims: “अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन परिशुद्धात्मानमधिकृत्य प्रवर्तितो यः साक्षादब्रह्मस्वरूपगुरोयोगस्तत्प्रसङ्ग इतियावत्। तेन प्राप्तः परिशुद्धे स्वात्मन्यक्षरब्रह्मभावानुभवात्मको योऽधिको गमः शुद्धात्मविज्ञानादप्याधिक्येन प्राप्तं यद् ब्रह्मसाक्षात्कारात्मकं ज्ञानमितियावत् तेनेत्यर्थः । साक्षाद्ब्रह्मस्वरूपगरुप्रसङ्गेन स्वयमपि तत्साधर्म्यलक्षणं ब्रह्मरूपत्वं सम्पाद्येति तु पिण्डितार्थः। ततः किं करणीयमित्याह मत्वा ध्यात्वा ब्रह्मरूपेण स्वात्मना तं

परमात्मानमुपास्येत्यर्थः। ब्रह्मरूपत्वस्य परब्रह्मोपासनाऽधिकारहेतुत्वाद् अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन मत्वेत्युक्तम्।(KUSB 2/12, pp. 96-97)

“The firm association with the *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru is called *adhyātmayoga*, through which one acquires the empirical experience of *Akṣarabrahmabhāva* in his pure *atman*, this is *adhigama*. This *brahmabhāva* or *Akṣarabrahmabhāva* is additional to, *ātmabhava* which is identified as brahman-revelation. It means that to attain the redemptive virtues from the association of Akṣarabrahman and become *brahmarūpa*. Thereafter one should indulge in the *upāsanā* of Parabrahman. Only a *brahmarūpa* devotee is eligible to offer *upāsanā* to Parabrahman. That is why the *mantra* puts *adhyatmadhigamen* before *devam matva* (offering *upāsanā* to Parabrahman).”⁶⁴⁹

He adds further: “एवं विशिष्टोपासनमनुष्ठाय किं लभ्यत इति तत्फलमाह धीरः धीमत्त्वात् परमात्मरममाणत्वाच्च धैर्यसम्पन्नः पूर्वोक्तो ब्रह्मरूपो भक्तः हर्षशोकौ जहाति लौकिकविषयलाभाऽलाभादिद्वन्द्वसंजातानन्दोद्वेगादिलक्षणद्वन्द्वमुक्तो भवति” (KUSB 2/12, pp.96-97) “After offering such phenomenal *upāsanā*, what is attained? The answer is- the *brahmarūpa* devotee, becomes free of the dualities of worldly happiness and misery such as profit and loss, etc.”

The BG also confirms this fact:

गुणानेतानतीत्य त्रीन्देही देहसमुद्भवान् ।

जन्ममृत्युजरादुःखैर्विमुक्तोऽमृतमश्नुते ॥⁶⁵⁰

“When one rises above the three *guṇas* that originate due to *māyā*; one is freed from birth, old age, disease, and death; and attains *mukti*.” Bhadrēśadāsa comments: “देही मुमुक्षुः देहसमुद्भवान् क्षेत्राऽऽकारप्रकृतिपरिणामभूतशरीरसम्भवान् एतान् प्रोक्तान् त्रीन् सत्त्वरजस्तमआख्यानं गुणान् अतीत्य नित्यगुणातीतब्रह्मस्वरूपगुरुसमाश्रयणादिभिरतिक्रम्य गुणातीतभावं प्राप्य ब्रह्मभूतः सन् जन्ममृत्युजरादुःखैः

⁶⁴⁹ इत्थमिहाऽध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वेति पदत्रयेण देहत्रयादिविमुक्तशुद्धात्मस्वरूपविज्ञानं तादृशे परिशुद्धात्मनि च ब्रह्मरूपत्वाऽऽपादनं तदर्थं चाऽक्षरब्रह्मस्वरूपगुरोः साक्षाद्योगस्ततश्च पुरुषोत्तमपरब्रह्मोपासनमिति निर्णयचतुष्टयमुपदिष्टम्। (KU 2/12, pp.96-97). हर्षशोकाविति तूपलक्षणं सर्वविधमायिकदोषाणामतः सर्वमायिकदोषान् परित्यज्य त्रिगुणातीतः स इहैव ब्राह्मी स्थितिमनुभवतीति भावः

⁶⁵⁰ BG 14/20

त्रिगुणनिबन्धनैर्जन्ममृत्युजरादिसांसारिकक्लेशैः विमुक्तः सन् अमृतं मोक्षम् अश्नुते लभते॥” (BGSB 14/20, p.300) “An aspirant, by the company of the eternal *Gunātita* Guru, abjures the three *guṇas*; *sattva*, *rajas*, and *tamas*. These *guṇas* have emerged from the *māyic* body, which is the effect of *māyā*. In this manner, the aspirant infringes these three *guṇas*, becomes free from all bondage of deaths and births, and attains liberation.”

The BSSB also draws a conclusion by saying: “परमात्मप्राकट्यानुभावकं... ब्रह्म च प्रत्यक्ष ब्रह्मस्वरूपगुरुरूपसत्या साक्षात्कृत्य मुमुक्षुरप्यनावृत्तिलक्षणमपवर्गं भजत इति” (BSSB 4/4/22, p.432) “Through the firm refuge of the *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru, who is the manifest form of Parabrahman on earth, a seeker attains permanent liberation.”⁶⁵¹ Therefore, it is clear that to attain *mokṣa* or Paramātmān, offering *upāsanā* to Him is indispensable. Thus, one who desires *mokṣa* must know Paramātmān. To become eligible to offer this *upāsanā*, one has to become *brahmarūpa* and therefore must know Akṣarabrahman. And to attain this state of being *brahmarūpa*, one has to know the *ātman*.⁶⁵²

Obviously, as we learned in the topics on *jīva* and *īśvara*, the *ātman* is by its very nature immortal and pure. However, liberation in the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School is more than just a return to an original state of being for the *ātman*. It is a new, higher spiritual state - indeed, the highest, perfect spiritual state - that is enriched by the direct realization of Parabrahman. It is not just a release from the pain and limitations of transmigration but an eternal, overwhelming experience of the

⁶⁵¹ स्वात्मब्रह्मैक्येन यदुपासनबलाद् उपासकोऽपि 'एष एते तरति नैनं कृताकृते तपतः' - बृ.४/४/२२, 'एष नित्यो महिमा ब्राह्मणस्य न वर्धते कर्मणा नो कनीयान् तस्यैव स्यात् पदवित्तं विदित्वा न लिप्यते कर्मणा पापकेनेति' (बृ.४/४/२३), 'सर्वं पाप्मानं तरति' (बृ.४/४/२३), 'ये तद् विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति' (बृ.४/४/१४), "तं न कश्चन पाप्मा तरति" (छा.८/६/३), 'उदेति ह वै सर्वेभ्यः पाप्मभ्यो य एवं वेद' (छा.१/६/७), 'सर्वान्येनं वामान्यभिसंयन्ति य एवं वेद' - छा.४/१५/२, 'सर्वाणि वामानि नयति' - छा.४/१५/३, 'सर्वेषु लोकेषु भाति' (छा.४/१५/४, 'बुद्धियुक्तो जहातीह उभे सुकृतदुष्कृते' (गी.२/५०), 'इति मां योऽभिजानाति कर्मभिर्न स बध्यते' (गी.४/१४)

⁶⁵² This is explicitly and repeatedly corroborated by such important adjectives as '*amṛta*' {literally, 'immortal'} found to describe the liberated self in the *Upaniṣads* (IU 11, 14; KeU 1/2, 2/4, 2/5; KU 1/28, 6/2, 6/9, 6/14, 6/15; PU 1/10, 3/11, 3/12; MU 3/2/9; TU 1/10/1; AU 3/4; CU 1/4/4, 1/4/5; BU 1/3/28, 2/4/2, 2/4/3, 4/4/7, 4/4/14, 4/4/17, 4/5/4, 5/14/8) and the *Bhagavad-Gītā* (13/12, 14/20). We also learned in the chapter on Akṣarabrahman that Akṣaradhāma, the abode of Parabrahman where liberated self eternally rest in communion with him, is a place from where there is no return to a transmigratory existence (Vac. Sār.14; CU 4/15/6, BU 6/2/15, BG 8/21, 15/6, BS 4/4/22).

limitless and unending bliss of Parabrahman. “It entails not merely the dispelling of ignorance but the positive receiving of Akṣarabrahman’s qualities. In other words, this is the pre-eminent *brāhmic* state, what Svāminārāyaṇa calls the state of being *brahmarūpa* or *akṣararūpa*, and described in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* as '*brāhmi sthiti*' (2/72) or being '*brahmabhūtaḥ*'” (BG 18/54). In this state, the liberated *ātma* becomes like Brahman'; that is, it receives many of the necessary qualities for the ultimate liberation of Akṣarabrahman. As Svāminārāyaṇa explains in: “When the *jīva* attains a likeness to that Brahman ..., then that *jīva* can also be said to be *brahmarūpa*.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/20, p.439)

Convincingly, for example, by the identical descriptions found in CU 8/1/5 and then in CU 8/7/1, which relate, according to Bhadrēśadāsa, to Akṣarabrahman and the liberated *ātma*, respectively. The verses describe both as being without evil, free from old age and death, sorrow, hunger and thirst (physical or worldly cravings) and having all desires and wishes fulfilled.⁶⁵³

Bhadrēśadāsa provides a detailed justification of the referents of both these verses. He elaborates them with their different context—one for Akṣarabrahman in CU 8/1/5 and the liberated *ātma* in CU 8/7/1. In the latter, Bhadrēśadāsa enunciates that the first six qualities - being without evil and free of old age, death, sorrow, hunger thirst - are the liberated self's innate qualities, whereas the last two - having all desires and wish fulfilled - are received by association with Akṣarabrahman. He also emphasizes that this latter, not just a description of the liberated *ātma* but an instruction to spiritually liken and join on with the living *Akṣarabrahman* Guru as a way to that liberated state.⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵³ य आत्मापहतपाप्मा विजरो विमृत्युर्विशोको विजिघत्सोऽपिपासः सत्यकामः सत्यसंकल्पः सोऽन्वेष्टव्यः स विजिज्ञासितव्यः स सर्वान्श्च लोकानाप्नोति सर्वान्श्च कामान्यस्तमात्मानमनुविद्य विजानातीति ह प्रजापतिरुवाच ॥ (CU 8/7/1)

⁶⁵⁴ CUSB 8/7/1, pp.367–368

The need to become *brahmarūpa* and transcend ignorance is the main teaching and preachings of Svāminārāyaṇa and Guṇatitanand Svāmī. “This is not only for personal spiritual fulfillment and safety, they explain, but also to be able to devote oneself to Parabrahman fully. The only one who is *brahmarūpa* is worthy of offering devotion to Puruṣottama.” (Vac. Loya.7, p.303)

Closely after this statement, Svāminārāyaṇa cites a similar declaration found in. “He who becomes *brahmarūpa* (*brahmabhūtaḥ*) ... attains my supreme devotion.” (BG 18/54) Svāminārāyaṇa unpacks this *brāhmic* state, which is procured through the oneness with Akṣarabrahman, as one of personal holiness, ethical perfection, absolute fulfillment, freedom from *māyā* (*kāma* and base instincts), and singular devotion to and total indulging in Parabrahman. The best way to elaborate upon these aspects is to understand them in the two contexts that the state can be experienced - after death, in Akṣaradhāma, and while alive, on earth. Thus, Svāminārāyaṇa has accepted two types of liberation: *jīvanamukti* and *videhamukti*. Before we proceed to elaborate on these two types of liberation, at this point, an important distinction needs to be drawn between a *brahmarūpa* self ('being like Brahman') and Brahman itself.

5. Does *Jīva* Become Akṣarabrahman Through This Oneness?

When we talk about oneness with Akṣarabrahman⁶⁵⁵, that doesn't mean that *jīva* or *īśvara* become Brahman and leave their pre identity as *jīva* or *īśvaras*. Instead, the distinction between *jīvas* and *īśvaras* and Akṣarabrahman eternally remains. So, in the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition, *jīvas* and *īśvaras* always remain ontologically distinct from Akṣarabrahman even after attaining oneness with him. Here, we will analyze this topic vastly and provide some debates on the matter.

⁶⁵⁵ Vac. Gadh. 2/3, MU 3/2/9

The MU starts the debate: “स यो ह वै तत् परमं ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति नास्याब्रह्मवित्कुले भवति । तरति शोकं तरति पाप्मानं गुहाग्रन्थिभ्यो विमुक्तोऽमृतो भवति” ॥ MU 3/2/9 ॥ “One who realizes that Akṣarabrahman becomes *brahmarūpa*. No one in their family is left ignorant of Brahman. They overcome grief and sin, and while becoming free of the shackles of the heart, they become immortal.” Here the subject of discussion is-“ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति” is literally interpreted that one who knows Brahman becomes Brahman. But the SB explains: “इयमपि परब्रह्मोपासनौपयिकब्रह्मगुणसाम्यनिबन्धना सामानाधिकरण्योक्तिः न तु स्वरूपाभेदाभिप्रायिका” (MUSB 3/2/9, p.299)

“Here, *sāmānādhikaranyā* does not imply that both the self (*atman*) and Brahma are revealed as one ontological entity but to imbibe those virtues of Brahman which are inevitable for *upāsanā* towards Parabrahman.” Now we start the discussion with some background. A devotee who realizes, among others, the form, characteristics, virtues and abilities of the divine Akṣarabrahman by having a strong association with the *Brahmasvarūpa* Guru and imbibing his teachings, assuredly becomes *brahmarūpa*.

The entity Akṣarabrahman is described within the *Mundaka Upaniṣad* beginning with, “*parā yayā tadakṣaramadhigamyate*.”⁶⁵⁶ It is described as superior according to “*hyakṣarāt parataḥ*,”⁶⁵⁷ since it eternally possesses superior form, virtues, abilities, etc. than that of the *jīvas*, *īśvaras*, *māyā*, and *akṣaramukta*. It is identified as Brahman because it is immense or vast in size and identified as such by *mantras* such as: “*tadetadakṣarbrahma*.”⁶⁵⁸ The grammatical congruence (*sāmānādhikaranyā*)⁶⁵⁹ seen here between the devotee and Brahman expresses that the devotee attains qualities similar to those of Brahman that are necessary for

⁶⁵⁶ MU 1/1/5

⁶⁵⁷ MU 2/1/2

⁶⁵⁸ MU 2/2/2

⁶⁵⁹ ‘*Sāmānādhikaranyā*’ refers to the implied unity between the subject and predicate nominative. This is also known as the unity of substratum, coordinate predication, or syntactic similarity.

practicing *upāsanā* towards Parabrahman. Here, *sāmānādhikaranya* does not imply that both the self (*ātman*) and Brahman are revealed as one ontological entity.

5.1 An Objection

Some argue that the assertion: "One who knows Brahman becomes Brahman" advocates that the self becomes one in the form with Brahman—the self becomes ontologically one with Brahman. They reaffirm that the revelation cannot be interpreted figuratively since doing so would contradict the use of the term '*eva*'. The self (*ātman*) indeed becomes one in form with Akṣarabrahman—the self becomes ontologically one with Brahman. Furthermore, they reason that there are *Śrutis*, such as "*aham brahmāsmi*,"⁶⁶⁰ "*ayamātmā brahma*,"⁶⁶¹ and "*brahma sampadyate tadā*,"⁶⁶² that support this identification. They claim that since the grammatical congruence between the terms within these revelations and the subject and predicate nominative are defined to be equal, there is no ontological distinction between the self (*ātman*) and Brahman. They present examples of sentences such as (1) "this pot is a water-pot" and (2) "this boy is a *Brāhmaṇa*" to demonstrate that these sentences express that (1) the pot is no different in form (*svarūp*) to the water-pot and that (2) the boy is not ontologically distinct from the referent of *Brāhmaṇa*. They claim that the above revelations from sacred texts and the current *mantra* should be interpreted in the same manner.

Moreover, they maintain that revelations such as "*brahmabhūtaḥ*,"⁶⁶³ "*brahmabhūtaḥ*,"⁶⁶⁴ "*brahmabhūyāya*,"⁶⁶⁵ and the notion of *brahmabhāva* (the experience of being Brahman) also suggest that the self (*ātman*) is ontologically one with Akṣarabrahman. They substantiate that the term '*bhāva*' is etymologically

⁶⁶⁰ BU 1/4/10

⁶⁶¹ MāU 1/2

⁶⁶² BG 13/30

⁶⁶³ BG 6/27

⁶⁶⁴ BG 5/24, 18/54

⁶⁶⁵ BG 14/26, 18/53

derived from the verbal root *'bhū*, which means to become—an indication that the identification is ontological. Thus, they maintain that the revelation presented in the current *mantra* to be like the phrase, "*mrdbhūto ghatah*,"⁶⁶⁶ which describes a pot forgoing its form (shape) to once again become clay. They continue by pointing out that the term '*rūpa*' is also often used to express ontological oneness. For example, the statement: "*Ghatarūpam dravyam*,"⁶⁶⁷ expresses that substance and the pot are ontologically one. They argue that the same type of identification should be expressed when the self (*ātman*) is described as *brahmarūpa*. Similarly, the phrase: *ghaṭātmakam dravyam*' also implies that substance and the pot are one. Thus, '*brahmātmānā*' and other similar constructions also imply identity of form (*svarūp*). Furthermore, the term '*aikyam*' (oneness) in terms such as '*brahmanaikyam*' also establish ontological oneness between the self (*ātman*) and Akṣarabrahman, just as it exists between a pot and the water-pot. Thus, they reason, "*brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati*" advocates oneness in form (*svarūp*) between the self (*atman*) and Akṣarabrahman.

5.2 The Response

The ontological identification argued for is founded on various fallacious arguments. The relationship expressed within the present *mantra* is not one of ontological identity (having the same form (*svarūp*)), but rather of qualitative similarity (possessing similar qualities). Note: Within the commentarial tradition, it is common for the commentator to first present the views that object the principle advocated by the commentator. This presentation is identified as the *pūrvapakṣa*. Thereafter, the commentator systematically responds to each objection to establish one's own position, which is identified as the *siddhānta pakṣa*. The commentator of this work follows the commentarial tradition by first presenting the *pūrvapakṣa* and then countering each of the arguments posed. The commentator begins his response

⁶⁶⁶ 'A pot that has become a clay.'

⁶⁶⁷ 'substance in the form (*svarūpa*) of a pot.'

by first summarizing the various uses of grammatical congruence and the term ‘one’. Thereafter, he explains how these usages apply to the statements in question.

The commentary explains: It is common for words like '*eka*' ('one') to be used to express possessing similar qualities. Consider the statement, “The *brāhmanas* in the royal family became one.” The ‘oneness’ of the *brāhmanas* expressed cannot indicate an oneness of their form (*svarūp*). Instead, it implies the oneness of opinion--they all possess the same view, and hence, are one. ‘One’ may also refer to being in the same place. Consider *ekibhavanti*⁶⁶⁸, a term used to express, for example, that (1) the cows gather in the cow-shed in the evening, (2) the birds gather on a branch or (3) that devotees gather in the mandir.

‘One’ may also be used to express the abandonment of a grudge or ill-will. For instance, consider the expression: “These two countries have become one.” ‘One’ may also express intense friendship between two parties. For example, within the *Rāmāyaṇa*, Hanumāna states to Sitā: "*rāmasugrīvayoraikyam*"⁶⁶⁹ to express the unity between Rāma and Sugrīva. ‘One’ may refer to being of the same class or kind. For instance, “These books are one (the same),” “These pots are one (the same),” and “These rice are one (the same)” —all of these expressions use ‘one’ to express categorical similarity. From these examples, it is evident that ‘being one’ is not solely used to express ontological identity but may imply various semantics. What is the intended meaning of the oneness expressed between the self (*jīvātman* and *īśvarātman*) and Akṣarabrahman?

⁶⁶⁸ To become one, however, as mentioned here, it is commonly also used to express: to gather, to unite, or to collect together.

⁶⁶⁹ *Rāmāyaṇa Sundarakanda*, 35/53

5.3 Qualitative Similarity

The oneness expressed in the *mantra* is in reference to the self-acquiring qualities that are similar to those of Akṣarabrahman. Through the grace of the manifest *Akṣarabrahmansvarūp* Guru and his association, the self attains certain qualities like those of Akṣarabrahman. Furthermore, due to the association with Akṣarabrahman, the spiritual aspirant comes to reflect and understand things in a way that is similar to Akṣarabrahman. For example, the *ātman* who has attained such oneness with Akṣarabrahman comes to possess conviction in Paramātmā like Akṣarabrahman. Just as Akṣarabrahman, they have a conviction such that: “I am undefiled,” “I am not the body, and above the three qualities (*guṇas*) of *māyā*.” This oneness also expresses being within the same location. As revealed in *mantras* such as: “*So'snute sarvan kāmān saha brahmanā vipaschita*”⁶⁷⁰ the liberated *ātman* is within the same location as the servant form of Akṣarabrahman; they both reside within Parabrahman's divine abode, Akṣaradhāma.

5.4 Possessing *Brahmabhāva*

Furthermore, being engulfed in *māyā* and believing oneself to be the body both hinder *brahmabhāva* (the experience of attaining Brahman). When these two are removed, the *ātman* enriches with *brahmabhāva*-becomes like Akṣarabrahman. This is what is implied by the phrase, “*brahma sampadyate tadā*.”⁶⁷¹

5.5 Intense Adoration

When oneness between the *ātman* and the manifest *Akṣarabrahmasvarūp* Guru is interpreted as it was in the example of Hanumāna and Sugrīva presented earlier, it expresses the self as possessing intense association with Akṣarabrahman. As a result, realization attained through constant recollection or strong attachment may be articulated as having oneness with Akṣarabrahman. Thus, the sole intent of

⁶⁷⁰ TU 2/1/1

⁶⁷¹ BG 13/30

revealing *aikyam* (oneness) between the *ātman* and Akṣarabrahman is to express qualitative similarity acquired by the self, not to express ontological identity.

5.6 Summary

The above discussion on the various semantic ascriptions of ‘oneness’ may be summarized as:⁶⁷² Due to similarity in thought, type, qualities, location, time, spiritual state and other features, as well as by friendship and inseparability, things, though distinct, are yet identified as one. In the same manner, although *jīvas* and *īśvaras* are distinct entities, by possessing qualities that are similar to those of Brahman, they are identified as being one with Brahman.

5.7 The True Intention of *Sāmānādhikaranya*

It was argued earlier that the *sāmānādhikaranya* (grammatical congruence) in *mantras* such as “*aham brahmāsmi*”⁶⁷³ and “*ayamātmā brahma*”⁶⁷⁴ demonstrates ontological identity as it does in: “*ghato ’yam kalaśaḥ*.” This, however, is not the case. *Samanādhikāraṇa* is also used to express two different things as having similar attributes. The word ‘*sādharmya*’ (‘similarity’) refers to having similar characteristics, and is defined as being ontologically different yet possessing many characteristics that are the same. This practice of using *sāmānādhikaranya* to express qualitative similarity is common. For instance, it is expressed within: “*simho māṇavakah*” (“the lion child”). In this example, both terms (‘*simhah*’ and ‘*māṇavakah*’) are in the nominative case; however, the phrase does not assert that the child is a lion in form (*svarūp*). Instead, it states that the child is lion-like-it possesses some characteristics of a lion.

⁶⁷² The commentator summarizes the above points in two couplets, which are translated here in prose.

⁶⁷³ BU 1/4/10

⁶⁷⁴ MaU 1/2

Those statements such as 1: *ayamātmā brahma* and “*aham brahmāsmi*” should be read similarly. When the self (*atman*) is revealed as being similar to Akṣarabrahman, it means that although the self is ontologically distinct, possesses many characteristics, such as being above the three qualities (*guṇas*) of *māyā*, being pure and others which are useful for the *upāsanā* of Paramātmā, that are like those of Akṣarabrahman. For this reason, the use of *sāmānādhikaranya* here refers to possessing qualities or virtues that are similar to those of Akṣarabrahman. The same interpretation should be understood for all such revelations in which *sāmānādhikaranya* is employed.

5.8 The Semantics of ‘Being Brahman’

It was also argued that '*brahmabhāva*' in revelations such as “*brahmabhūtam*,”⁶⁷⁵ “*brahmabhūtaḥ*,”⁶⁷⁶ and “*brahmabhūyāya*,”⁶⁷⁷ also expresses ontological identity between the self and Brahman. This is also inappropriate. The use of the verbal root '*bhū*' (meaning, to be) does not necessarily indicate ontological identity. '*Bhū*' is used even when there is an ontological distinction between two objects. See, for example: “*Gurau devabhāvam kurute*”⁶⁷⁸ and “*pitari devabhāvam karoti*.”⁶⁷⁹ Although one's Guru and father are not deities (*devas*), because they possess virtues similar to those of deities, they are identified as such. Terms such as “*brahmabhūtaḥ*” should also be read in this manner- to express Brahman's particular virtues. Moreover, it is observed that the qualities of the meditator follow those of that which is meditated upon. Thus, one who contemplates upon Akṣarabrahman attains *brahmabhāva*. In such circumstances, there is no complication of them becoming one entity.

⁶⁷⁵ BG 6/27

⁶⁷⁶ BG 5/24, 18/54

⁶⁷⁷ BG 14/26, 18/53

⁶⁷⁸ ‘believe one’s Guru to be a deity.’

⁶⁷⁹ ‘believe one’s father to be a deity.’

5.9 The Semantics of *Atmarūpa*

Similarly, terms such as '*atmarūpa*' only imply intense association. For example, when interpreting the expression "Durvāsa is anger personified," it is apparent that anger and Durvāsa are ontologically distinct entities. The expression is used not to express ontological identity, but instead to emphasize an intense association between the two-viz. anger entirely overcomes Durvāsa. The expression of oneness is understood figuratively. Also, statements such as "*ghaṭātmikā dr̥ṣṭiḥ*,"⁶⁸⁰ are interpreted to express that the pot is the focus of what is being seen. It does not mean that one's vision itself has become the pot. No one experiences the viewer viewing the pot as becoming the pot. Terms such as '*brahmātmanā*' and '*brahmarūpa*' should be understood in a similar way. By possessing an intense association with the manifest Akṣarabrahmasvarūp Guru and engaging in intense contemplation of him, the self attains oneness and continually sees and experiences Brahman. It is in this sense the self is identified as being *brahmarūpa*. The term '*rūpa*' is also used similarly. See, for example: "When a *jīva* attains similarity with Brahman through *samādhi*, that *jīva* is identified as *brahmarūpa*."

Within the *Gītā*, '*kāmātmanah*' does not express that the *jīvātman* itself becomes lust; however, it implies that self-possesses a lustful nature. It is explained as: "*kāmātmanah kāmasvabhāvāḥ*"⁶⁸¹ the same type of semantic ascription should be employed when deciphering: *brahmātmā*, or '*akṣarātmā*' and others. Alternatively, when the compound is analyzed as a possessive exocentric adjective compound,⁶⁸² it refers to one whose form is similar to that of Brahman. Therefore, one who has attained virtues that are similar to those of Brahman-one who has, among other things, overcome the three bodies and become free of the hindrances and grief of *māyā*- may be identified as *brahmarūpa* or Brahman.

⁶⁸⁰ Vision that has taken the form of the pot.

⁶⁸¹ BG 2/43

⁶⁸² *Bauvrihi* of the possessive case.

5.10 The Various Semantics of ‘Eva’

It was argued earlier that ‘eva’ in “*brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati*” implies that each *ātman* and Akṣarabrahman are ontologically identical. This is also not the case. The term ‘eva’ is also used to express similarity. This semantic ascription of ‘eva’ is revealed in the *Nighaṇṭu*, where it states: “*sāmye caiva kvacicchabdah.*”⁶⁸³ The *Śrutis* also use ‘eva’ to express similarity; see, for example: “*Vaiṣṇava vāmanamālabheta, spardhamāno viṣnureva bhūtvemān lokānabhijayati.*”⁶⁸⁴ Here, ‘*Viṣṇu eva*’ is read as: ‘*Viṣṇu iva*’ (similar to Viṣṇu). Such usage is also seen in other instances. For example, Vardhamāna's *Ganatantramahodadhi* uses ‘eva’ in: “*śrīsta eva me'stu,*”⁶⁸⁵ to express similarity.

Moreover, when deciphering “*brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati,*” it is possible to rearrange its words.⁶⁸⁶ When ‘eva’ is sequenced to qualify the act of becoming, the *mantra* is read to express that one only becomes like Brahman--one does not become like anything else. Alternatively, when ‘eva’ is read in association with the knowing, the *mantra* is read to express: one who surely knows Brahman becomes Brahman. This reading stresses the need to realize Brahman in order to attain *brahmabhāva*. However, when ‘eva’ is associated with 'Brahman', the *mantra* is read to clarify that one does not become Parabrahman.

Also, ‘eva’ in “*brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati*” may be understood to express that when a person of any caste, even one that is considered low, worships a *Brāhmaṇa* with devotion, they also become a *Brāhmaṇa*. This means that the worshipper of the *Brāhmaṇa* gains the qualities of a *Brāhmaṇa*. They do not, however, become ontologically one with the worshipped *Brāhmaṇa*. Similarly, the *ātman*, upon performing great spiritual endeavors in the form of *brahmavidyā*, becomes similar

⁶⁸³ “And the term ‘eva’ is sometimes used to express similarity.”

⁶⁸⁴ “When the competitor becomes Viṣṇu, he defeats the world.” (Tai.Sam. 2/1/3/16)

⁵⁴ “May your wealth become mine.”

⁶⁸⁶ Grammatical conjugations of terms in *Samskṛta* sentences are indicators on *Samskṛta* terms may be sequenced at.

to Brahman in qualities, but does not forgo its own form (*svarūp*) and does not attain the form (*svarūp*) of Brahman. It is not the case that “*ghate jñāte tadjñātā ’pi bhavati ghatah*” (The knower of a pot himself becomes a pot). Only the delusional would believe such a thing.

5.11 The Essence

The heart of the *Śruti*: “*brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati*,” reveals that one truly attains *brahmabhāva* when one realizes the form, nature, and virtues of the manifest *Akṣarabrahmasvarūp satpuruṣa*. Such realization occurs by associating with the Guru, contemplating his virtues and other qualities, and attempting to imbibe his qualities. Attaining such *brahmabhāva* is necessary for acquiring unhindered conviction in Parabrahman. The discussion presented here explains that “*brahmaiva san brahmapyeti*”⁶⁸⁷ does not advocate the self (*ātman*) and Brahman as ontologically one. Although both entities are ontologically distinct, the self (*ātman*) is concealed by Brahman in the way that the constellations are concealed by sunlight-the self (*ātman*) is engulfed by the greatness of Akṣarabrahman.

5.12 ‘Brahmarpanam’

Revelations such as “*brahmārpaṇam*”⁶⁸⁸ express Akṣarabrahman’s pervasiveness and do not denounce the other entities. Other terms such as ‘*brahmabhūta*’, ‘*brahmarūpa*’? ‘*brahmabhāva*’ and “*aham brahmāsmi*”, like *sāmānādhikaranyā*, express attaining the qualities of Brahman that are useful for attaining liberation.

5.13 Summary

The discussions above can be summarized as follows. *Sāmānādhikaranyā* is used to express having similar qualities. The same semantic is expressed when one's father is identified as a deity using the *Samskṛta* verb 'to be'. Although the father is

⁶⁸⁷ SU 3/3

⁶⁸⁸ BG 4/24

ontologically distinct from a deity, he is described as being a deity, because he shares certain qualities with a deity. ‘*Eva*’ expresses qualitative similarity both in sentences commonly used and in the Vedic revelations. When reading: ‘*brahmaiva bhavati*’, ‘*eva*’ should be interpreted in this manner. All scriptural revelations that imply oneness should be interpreted as expressing qualitative oneness and not ontological identity. If they are not read as such, then the five eternally distinct entities expressed in all sacred texts and expounded by Paramātmā himself,⁶⁸⁹ will be contradicted.

The *Upaniṣad mantra* concludes by describing various other benefits of realizing Brahman. It states that when one realizes Brahman, no one in their family lineage remains ignorant of Akṣarabrahman. Thus, everyone born into their family indeed comes to realize Brahman. Furthermore, the *brahmarūpa* devotee, in this very life, overcomes grief caused by the three types of misery.⁶⁹⁰ They overcome sin, which is the root of grief. Moreover, by becoming free of the *guhāgranthi*- innate, mundane, firmly rooted instincts such as attachment and spite, which have since eternity resided in the heart like shackles- they become *amṛta*. Upon becoming a *brahmarūpa* they, become an *akṣaramukta*, free from the cycle of births and deaths while being ever engrossed in the divine bliss of Paramātmā Sahajānanda.⁶⁹¹ In this way, Svāminārāyaṇa strongly rejects, that being *brahmarūpa* is not a substantial union but a qualitative similarity with Akṣarabrahman. The self remains metaphysically *jīva* or *īśvara*, albeit in a highly exalted spiritual state.

6. Jīvanamukti

As we mentioned earlier, in the Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana, there are two types of *mukti*. The SSS discloses it in this way:

⁶⁸⁹ Vac. Gadh. 1/7, Vac. Gadh. 3/10

⁶⁹⁰ In Indian philosophy miseries are generally categorized into three types: *adhyatimika*-those that are mental, *adhibhautika*- those that are physical and *adhidevika*- those that are caused by natural or supernatural forces.

⁶⁹¹ Sadhu Paramvivekdasa, The MUSB, With Exposition and Original Devanagari Text, New Bhartiya Book Corporation, New Delhi, 2020, pp.187- 204.

सा पुनर्द्विविधा प्रोक्ता ब्रह्मस्थितिमतां ध्रुवा।

एका जीवत एव स्याद् अन्या च मरणादनु ॥SSSK 428॥

“This everlasting *mukti* for those who have attained oneness with Akṣarabrahman is said to be of two types: one that occurs while living and the other after death.” Out of these two *muktis*, we will first analyze *jīvanamukti*. *Jīvanamukti* is liberation while still having a body. One who has attained *jīvanamukti* experiences total absence of misery, becomes *brahmarūpa*, and experiences the presence and bliss of Paramātmā whilst alive. In the *Vacanāmṛta*, Svāminārāyaṇa has spoken of attaining the *brāhmic* state, or the highest state of enlightenment whilst still possessing a physical body.

“Thus, if one follows *satsaṅga* with perfect sincerity, then no deficiency will remain in one’s heart, and one will become *brahmarūpa* in this very lifetime.” (Vac. Sār. 9, p.224). In another discourse: “When the aspirant has kept his mind at the holy feet of Parabrahman in this way, he does not have to die to attain the abode of Parabrahman - he has attained it while still alive.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/7, p.594) In the *Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam*, *jīvanmukti* has also been substantiated. For instance,

यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः ।

अथ मर्त्योऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्नुते ॥⁶⁹²

“When all desires clinging to the heart of one fall off, then the mortal becomes immortal and here attains Brahman.” Consequently, the Bhāṣyakāra comments on a *Śruti* about attaining the *brāhmic* state: “इत्थमिह साक्षात् श्रुतिरेव जीवनमुक्तिं प्रस्थापयति”⁶⁹³ “In this manner, here the *Śruti* itself establishes *jīvanamukti* as a vouched principle.” The IU acknowledges:

यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति ।

सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥ IU 6॥

⁶⁹² KU 6/14

⁶⁹³ KUSB 6/14

“He who sees all beings in Parabrahman and Parabrahman in all beings does not suffer from any repulsion by that experience.”

यस्मिन्सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाभूद्विजानतः ।

तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥ IU 7॥

“He who has known that all beings are seen within Parabrahman, and he who has seen the Parabrahman everywhere, even though he understands Parabrahman to be one and forever pure, what sorrow and what delusion can overwhelm him?” Such a universal vision that is described in these verses, which is the ultimate product of our spiritual endeavor, comes only when one sees everything filled with Brahman and Parabrahman. Likes and dislikes arise because of the attachment of the mind with the objects of the world and because of the feelings of I-ness and my-ness. But he who achieves ‘*Ishavashya*’ perception becomes *jīvanmukta* and is no more troubled by the adversity of likes and dislikes. For him, everything belongs to Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman, as a result, what delusion can overwhelm him. Moreover, such a *jīvanmukta* never harms any living being and is never be harmed by anyone.

Moreover, the *Gītā* mainly spares its fifth chapter for *jīvanamukti* and *videhamukti*. The Bhāṣyakāra states at the beginning of the chapter: “इदानीं स्वात्मब्रह्मरूपत्वसंपत्तिपूर्वकं परं ब्रह्म सक्षात्कुर्वतो योगिनो जीवन्मुक्तिदशां च विदेहमुक्तिदशां च प्रधानतः समुपदेक्ष्यन्ति पञ्चमे।”(BGSB Intro. 5/1, p.116) Now, the fifth chapter, predominantly describes the *yogi*’s state of *jīvanamukti* and *videhamukti*. For example,

शक्नोतीहैव यः सोढुं प्राक्शरीरविमोक्षणात् ।

कामक्रोधोद्वेगं स युक्तः स सुखी नरः ॥BG 5/23॥

“One who is able to withstand the impulse of lust and anger before death is a *yogi* and a happy person.” Bhadrēśadāsa comments: “यः जनः शरीरविमोक्षणाद् देहपातात् प्राक् पूर्वं इहैव अस्मिन् देहे जीवन्नेव कामक्रोधोद्वेगं... कामक्रोधजनितं वेगं सोढुं प्रसहितुं शक्नोति समर्थो भवति स युक्तः स सुखी नरः।” (BGSB 5/23, pp.127-128) “A person who can endure the force of lust, anger etc.,

while living on earth before he dies is called a *yogi* and happy person forever.” In this way, *jīvanamukti* is a state where the *ātman* experiences full bliss of Parabrahman even whilst living in this mortal world. In this state, the obstacle of *māyā*, such as lust, anger, avarice etc., are completely uprooted.

The BS also confirms it: ऐहिकमप्यप्रस्तुतप्रतिबन्धे तद्दर्शनात्॥ BS 3/4/50॥ When the hindrances of *mukti* are subsided while living on earth, one attains *jīvanamukti*. The Bhāṣyakāra comments: “स्वात्मब्रह्मरूपत्वसम्पत्तिसंस्कृतप्रत्यक्षपरब्रह्मोपासनशीलस्य भक्तस्य अप्रस्तुतप्रतिबन्धे अप्रस्तुतेऽनुपस्थिते प्रतिबन्धे बाधके परमनिःश्रेयसाऽनुभूतिबाधके प्रणष्टे सति कामक्रोधाऽभिमानादि-प्रकृतिपराभवदेशकालादिवैपरीत्यादिलक्षणप्रतिबन्धविरहे सति ऐहिकमपि ब्रह्मरूपात्मना प्रत्यक्षपरब्रह्मसहजानन्द-तत्परमानन्दाद्यनुभूतिलक्षणपरममुक्तिरूपं फलमुत्पद्यते। एवमनेन जीवन्मुक्तिः प्रतिपादिता॥ (BSSB 3/4/50, pp.382-383)

“When a devotee attains *brahmabhāva* and offers *upāsanā* to Parabrahman, all of his hindrances such as lust, anger, ego etc. are uprooted. As a result, this *brahmarūpa* devotee experiences the ultimate bliss of Parabrahman. In this way, *jīvanamukti* is asserted.” Here Bhadrēśadāsa explicitly acknowledges *jīvanamukti* by the actual words of the scriptures. Even though some scholars who are not believing in *jīvanamukti*, according to Bhadrēśadāsa, should revise their material.⁶⁹⁴ One of the more significant findings to emerge from this study is that *jīvanamukti* is a verified principle of the scriptures.⁶⁹⁵

According to the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School, Parabrahman is always present on earth in a perceptibly accessible form. He either assumes the regal-role of a monarch (exhibiting thirty-nine redemptive virtues, as per *Śrīmad Bhāgawata*-1/16/26-28) or saintly role (exhibiting thirty redemptive virtues, as per *Śrīmad Bhāgawata* -

⁶⁹⁴ एवं सूत्रकारेणैव श्रुतिभिर्जीवन्मुक्तेः प्रसाधनाद् ये जीवन्मुक्तिरिस्कारपरिबद्धधियस्तैः श्रुतिशब्दाभिधानशक्तिविज्ञानविधुरैः कृत्स्नो वेदान्तार्थो न विदितः।

⁶⁹⁵ तत्र प्रमाणमाह तद्दर्शनाद् इति। दृश्यते हि ‘यदा सर्वे प्रमुच्यन्ते कामा येऽस्य हृदि श्रिताः । अथ मोऽमृतो भवत्यत्र ब्रह्म समश्रुते’(बृ.४/४/७, कठ.६/१४), ‘यस्तु सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मन्येवानुपश्यति। सर्वभूतेषु चात्मानं ततो न विजुगुप्सते ॥ यस्मिन् सर्वाणि भूतान्यात्मैवाऽभूद् विजानतः । तत्र को मोहः कः शोक एकत्वमनुपश्यतः ॥ (ई.६,७), ‘यदा पञ्चावतिष्ठन्ते ज्ञानानि मनसा सह। बुद्धिश्च न विचेष्टते तामाहुः परमां गतिम्॥(कठ.६/१०), ‘एतद् यो वेद निहितं गुहायां सोऽविद्याग्रन्थिं विक्रितीह सोम्य’(मु.२/१/१०), ‘पर्याप्तकामस्य कृतात्मनस्त्वहैव सर्वे प्रविलीयन्ति कामाः’(मु.३/२/२), ‘इहैव तैर्जितः सर्गो येषां साम्ये स्थितं मनः। निर्दोषं हि समं ब्रह्म तस्माद् ब्रह्मणि ते स्थिताः॥’(गी.५/१९), ‘न प्रहृष्येत् प्रियं प्राप्य नोद्विजेत् प्राप्य चाऽप्रियम्। स्थिरबुद्धिरसंमूढो ब्रह्मविद् ब्रह्मणि स्थितः ॥’(गी.५/२०), ‘शक्नोतीहैव यः सोढुं प्राक् शरीरविमोक्षणात्। कामक्रोधोद्वेगं वेगं स युक्तः स सुखी नरः॥’(गी.५/२३), ‘यतेन्द्रियमनोबुद्धिमुनिर्मोक्षपरायणः। विगतेच्छाभयक्रोधो यः सदा मुक्त एव सः॥’(गी.५/२८), ‘सर्वभूतस्थितं यो मां भजत्येकत्वमास्थितः। सर्वथा वर्तमानोऽपि स योगी मयि वर्तते ॥(गी.६/३१) इति भूयोभूयो जीवत एव यथोक्तभक्तस्य मुक्तिफलाऽनुभवः शास्त्रोपदिष्टः।

11/11/23-33). Therefore, Parabrahman is always existent on earth to redeem the seekers of salvation.⁶⁹⁶ As an ascetic role, Parabrahman, through *Ekāntik Satpuruṣa* (*Akṣara-Guru*) uplifts the *ātman* to the level of *jīvanmukta*, and as a consequence, he then does not see the Guru as a Guru or a sadhu but sees Him as Parabrahman; wholly divine. What is narrated of as accomplishable after death, he has accomplished because of the endowment of divine vision by the manifest-incarnate Parabrahman.⁶⁹⁷ Both in his heart and outside before him (in the *Akṣara-Guru*), he sees nothing else but the same transcendental lord. This now becomes his ceaseless state. Therefore, *jīvanamukti* is a realistic state of experience, and not a conjecture, nor proximate-imminent attainment (*āsanna-mukti*).⁶⁹⁸ The released self becomes capable of seeing everything, for it now has become infinitely omniscient.⁶⁹⁹ The devotee, who has reached the state of *jīvanamukti*, if he so desires, does certainly see the nature of *jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā* and Akṣarabrahman distinctly with their differentia, by the grace of Parabrahman.⁷⁰⁰ The fruit thus accumulated is as a consequence of his constant Parabrahman-consciousness (Parabrahman-remembrance).

Moreover, as the *darśana* (vision) of Parabrahman in the most effulgent blissful light of the highest abode is intuitively experienced by a *yogi*, in *samādhi*, who through the practice of eightfold disciplines of *yoga* has succeeded in traversing through all the six plexuses (*cakras*) in the body and has settled one-pointedly in the thousand-petalled lotus of *Brahmarandhra*. The same is intuitively visualized by the *jīvanamuktas*, by the blessing of Parabrahman, for they too are dwelling in the same highest level of *nirvikalpa samādhi*.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁶ Vac. Var. 10

⁶⁹⁷ SV 1/1

⁶⁹⁸ IUSB 1, p.8

⁶⁹⁹ IUSB 7, p.16

⁷⁰⁰ Vac. Loyā. 15

⁷⁰¹ Vac. Gadh. 1/25, 40, Loyā. 12, 14; Gadh. 2/3,13,14,20

The scriptures like the *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (3/33/23-29) also enlighten the doctrine of *jīvanamukti* in its unique way. When, on the words of the great sage Kapila, his mother Devahuti realized her *ātman* as distinct from and transcendent to *prakṛti* and its products (body-mind complex), and fixed her mind on Parabrahman, she became firmly established in a state of *samādhi*: the communion with Parabrahman, all her *kleshas* (afflictions) were destroyed and she attained *kaivalya* (liberation) or *mokṣa* in an embodied state. Explaining this state of *jīvanmukta daśā*, the 29th verse says: “Her mind being fully merged in Lord Vāsudeva, she did not perceive her own body, which was completely given up to austerity and *yoga*, and was being maintained by providence, even when her hair got loose and her clothes fell off from her body.”

A spiritual seeker affiliated and committed to the perceptibly present (manifest) form of Parabrahman (*pratyakṣa-paramātmavarupa*) be it in the form of incarnate Parabrahman Himself or through the *Parama-Ekāntika-Satpuruṣa* (i.e. *Akṣara-Guru*)- alone can attain perfect self-realization and Parabrahman-realization, and the consequent blessing of Parabrahman's abode-vision (*pramatman's dhāma-darśana*) in an embodied state during worldly existence. When in the heart (*antaḥkaraṇa*), the aforesaid form of Parabrahman is meditated upon ceaselessly, the devotee attains the ultimate spiritual realization of the supreme divine form of Parabrahman, even without undergoing time-consuming strenuous practice of the eightfold path of *yogic* discipline. The highest state of *nirvikalpa samādhi* and Parabrahman-realization in the form of constant communion with Him is attained during worldly existence in an embodied state. Therefore, the ultimate attainment is not delayed, shrouded in mystery and dubious indecision. The state of *jīvanamukti* is attained as a fact of life. The devotee sees Parabrahman (perceptibly present manifest before him) as infinitely effulgent and divine.

He closes down seeing the individual objects of the peripheral world, and instead, he perceives Parabrahman alone in everything and everywhere.⁷⁰² He feels now divinely fully accomplished and self-fulfilled. He, consequently, becomes one with Parabrahman spiritually and psychologically despite being distinct from Him as His devout servant. This is the ultimate state of final dissolution (*ātyaṃtika-pralaya*) also known as *jñāna-pralaya* in which everything except Parabrahman (up to the level of *mūla-prakṛti* and *mūla-puruṣa*) gets out of the field of perception. Wherever he sees, he sees Parabrahman (the inner self of everything), failing to perceive an object as object. He becomes free from all the entangling adjuncts (*upādhis*) of *māyā* (*prakṛti*), and never gets bogged in *māyā* once again. He, by the grace of Parabrahman, becomes free like Parabrahman Himself i.e. He is not too governed and forced by the influences of *kāla* (time), *māyā* (nescience) and *kārma* (the pressures of the past actions). His constant perseverance on the path of knowledge (*jñāna-yagna*) and path of loving affiliation of body-mind in Parabrahman (*yoga-yagna*) finds its highest consummation in the form of highest Parabrahman-realization and constant Parabrahman-perception (*Paramātmān-darśana*) in one's very self.⁷⁰³

When an aspirant's *vṛtti* becomes completely immersed in the personality of current manifest form of (perceptible-*pratyakṣa*) Bhagavān, it is a final stage of *nirvikalpa samādhi* for it involves the detention of all the modifications (*citta-vṛtti-nirodha*) in the *svarūp* of Parabrahman. It is also described as a state of *yoganidra* enjoyed by the *yogis*, for it is filled with bliss and tranquility peculiar to it. Now nothing can disturb and distract him from constant contemplation of Parabrahman. When the *ātman* is associated with Akṣarabrahman, subsequently, becomes *brahmarūpa*, total servitude and utter humility come forth, and constant awareness of the ceaseless presence of Puruṣottama (Parabrahman) is envisioned in one's

⁷⁰² Vac. Kār. 7

⁷⁰³ Vac. Gadh. 2/8,13

ātman. The ego gets eliminated and false-body-awareness gets totally exterminated. Therefore, self-realization (*ātma-sākṣātkāra*) culminates in Parabrahman-realization (*Parāmatmasākṣātkāra*).

6.1 Experience of *Jīvanamukti*

Jīvanamukti is a state of the bliss of the highest communion with Parabrahman, here on earth in an embodied condition. It is a persistent spiritual experience in an embodied state, identical to the final experience to be had in a disembodied state after the death of the physical body. Wherever *jīvanamukt* casts his eyes he sees Parabrahman alone in everything. He, as the brahmanized (*brahmarūpa*) devotee, worships Puruṣottama with utter servitude and total self-effacement. Therefore, a true *jnāni* is a realized one who is *brahmarūpa* (brahmanized). He knows the transcendental glory of Parabrahman veritably. He has no desire to be fulfilled, nor has he any thought except that of Parabrahman in his mind. He is lost in total Parabrahman-consciousness. Svāminārāyaṇa highlights *jīvanmukta* state: “Wherever he glances among all the mobile and immobile forms - he sees the form of Parabrahman as if it is before his eyes, the same form that forever remains in Akṣaradhāma even after the dissolution of the body, the *brahmānda* and *Prakritipurusha*. Other than that form, he does not perceive even an atom. These are the characteristics of one who has attained Parabrahman-realization.”(Vac. Kār. 7, p.265) To figure out the experience process deeply we look at this principle from another perspective. This is about the ultimate dissolution of the world. In that time, the entire creation of *māyā* is vanished. De facto, this whole process is beyond our experience, but only a *jīvanmukta* can experience this state in his very life on earth.

After the dissolution of the universes (in *ātyantika-pralaya*), the incarnate Parabrahman manifests before the seeker alone is seen as existing. And again, at the time of creating everything afresh, the same incarnate manifest Parabrahman

alone through the instrumentality of *mūla-puruṣa* and *mūla-prakṛti* creates a countless number of universes. Such resolute right knowledge (*niścaya*) with the knowledge of Parabrahman's transcendental glory spawns deepest detachment and disinterest (*vairāgya*) in the heart. *Jñāna-pralaya* of such a lofty quality is called *ātyaṃtika pralaya*.⁷⁰⁴ According to the Svāminārāyaṇa Vedānta, *ātyaṃtika-pralaya* is a kind of total dissolution or regression in which there is a reversion of all the evolutes-each going back to its unmanifest state and returning into its earlier (preceding) emergent, till the whole process reaches to its primary source, i.e. the great unmanifest called *mūla-prakṛti* (or *mahā-māyā*) from which all developments had commenced stage-wise.

Svāminārāyaṇa explicitly explains the nature of *jñāna-pralaya* in its step by step that when one focuses his attention on earth, all the objects of the world with their names and forms are not cognized, instead only the earth remains in view. The earth has evolved from a small portion (*aṃśa*) of water. So, when the standpoint shifts to higher stage of water: the element subtler than the earth, the *jñāni* cognizes nothing else but water. And the water has emerged from a subtler portion of fire; therefore, he cognizes fire as the basis of all. And the fire has evolved from a subtler portion of air; and hence, air alone is cognized as the basis of all. And the air has evolved from a subtler portion of space; therefore, the space alone is cognized as all-encompassing entity.

The space has evolved from a subtler portion of *tāmasaahamkāra*, and all three forms of *ahamkāra* (*tāmasa*, *rājasa* ad *sāttvika*) together with sensory-motor organs, mind and their presiding deities have emerged from a subtler portion of *mahat-tattva*, and consequently, *Mahattattva* alone appears as all-encompassing entity. But, *mahat-tattva* also has evolved from a subtle portion of *pradhāna*-

⁷⁰⁴ Vac. Gadh. 1/24

prakṛti, and hence, it appears that *prakṛti* alone, exists. *Pradhāna-prakṛti* too gets submerged and eclipsed into *puruṣa*'s very subtle portion at the time of dissolution (*pralaya*); and from it alone, it sprouts forth like an emergent. So, when one sees from the standpoint of *puruṣa*, even *prakṛti* does not seem to exist and all that exists is *puruṣa* alone. And there are such infinite number of *Puruṣas* who emerge out from a small portion of *mahā māyā* (i.e. *mūla-prakṛti*), and hence, viewed from the standpoint of *mahā māyā*, it alone exists as the source of all. But this *mahā māyā* (*mūla-prakṛti*) also rests submerged and eclipsed in a small portion of *mahā puruṣa* (i.e. *mūla-puruṣa*). So, viewed from the level of *Mahāpuruṣa*, he alone exists and not even the *mahāmāyā*. *Mahāmāyā*, thus appears valueless-insignificant entity. Now, this *mahāpuruṣa* (a freed self) also has come (arisen) forth from a small portion (place) of the Akṣara (Brahman): the abode of Parabrahman. So, taking into account the all-pervading, all immanent Akṣara, it looks as if, and Akṣarabrahman alone exists. But when the knowledge-vision (*jnāna-dṛṣṭi*) reaches its apex, one finds the supreme truth that the only Supreme Reality transcendent to Akṣarabrahman, namely *Puruṣottama* (Parabrahman) alone exists. He alone is the source and support of all. He is the cause of all causes, and hence, is immanent in all effects to the remotest extent.

He is the cause of all creation-sustenance-destruction. He is the enselving inner self of all. Alongside having His original transcendental divine form ever-present in His abode. When the *jnāni* reaches this level of resolute knowledge (*niscayatmakajnāna*), nothing except Parabrahman remains shining in his vision. He sees Parabrahman everywhere in everything. And that transcendental Parabrahman is the same as one present before me in His manifest incarnate form (*pratyakṣa-parāmatma svarūp*). When this conviction dawns upon the knower, all sensory-motor apparatus and the mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*) get instantaneously divinized by the grace of Parabrahman, and he becomes the knower of Parabrahman in the true sense

of the term. Thus, Parabrahman is knowable, and He is known; but Parabrahman's knowledge comes through Parabrahman alone, by His grace!⁷⁰⁵

The BG discloses:

योगयुक्तो विशुद्धात्मा विजितात्मा जितेन्द्रियः ।

सर्वभूतात्मभूतात्मा कुर्वन्नपि न लिप्यते ॥⁷⁰⁶

“A *Karma-yogi* whose mind is pure, whose mind and senses are under control, and who sees one and the same self in all beings, is not bound by *kārma* though engaged in work.” Bhadrēśadāsa explains the experience of a *jīvanmukta* by commenting on this verse: “ब्रह्मभूतो ब्रह्मगुणसाधर्म्यमाप्त आत्मा यस्य स ब्रह्मरूपः सन्नित्यर्थः...सर्वथा कर्मणि प्रवर्तमानोपि मुक्त एवावतिष्ठत इति भावः।”(BGSB 5/7, p.119) “One who has become brahmarūpa encompasses the virtues of Brahman; he is never bound by any *karma* in which he indulges.” In this way, the BG invests so many *ślokas* in elucidating the experience of a *jīvanmukta*.⁷⁰⁷ The *jīvanmukta* does all work as an offering to Parabrahman- abandoning attachment to results-remains untouched by *kārmic* reaction or sin, just as a lotus leaf never gets wet by water. Moreover, he neither rejoices on obtaining what is pleasant nor grieves on obtaining the unpleasant. He possesses a steady mind and is a knower of Brahman; such a person abides in Brahman.

In a similar way, the BSSB also throws light to highlights the state of *jīvanmukta*:

“ब्रह्मवेदनस्याऽन्यदप्यानुषङ्गिकं फलमाह नाऽस्याऽब्रह्मवित् कुले भवतीति। अस्य ब्रह्मसाक्षात्कारवतो ह्युपासकस्य कुले कोऽपि तत्पुत्रपौत्रादिः अब्रह्मविद् अक्षरब्रह्मज्ञानशून्यो न भवति। तत्कुलजोऽवश्यं ब्रह्मवेतैव सम्पद्यत इति भावः। अन्यान्यपि फलान्याह स ब्रह्मरूपो भक्तः शोकं त्रिविधतापजन्यशोकं तरति जीवन्नेवातिक्रामतीत्यर्थः । पाप्मानं शोकमूलभूतं च पाप्मानमपि तरति। तथा च गुहाग्रन्थिभ्यो हृदयगुहायां वर्तमानेभ्यो ग्रन्थिवद् दुर्मोचनीयेभ्योऽनादितः सुरूढमूलेभ्यो रागद्वेषाद्यात्मकप्राकृतस्वभावग्रन्थिभ्य इत्यर्थः।

⁷⁰⁵ Vac. Gadh. 1/51

⁷⁰⁶ BG 5/7

⁷⁰⁷ ब्रह्मण्याधाय कर्माणि सङ्गं त्यक्त्वा करोति यः ।

लिप्यते न स पापेन पद्मपत्रमिवाम्भसा ॥ ५-१०॥

न प्रहृष्येत्त्रियं प्राप्य नोद्विजेत्प्राप्य चाप्रियम् ।

स्थिरबुद्धिरसम्मूढो ब्रह्मविद् ब्रह्मणि स्थितः ॥ ५-२०॥

विमुक्तः रहितः सन् अमृतो भवति, ब्रह्मरूपेण स्वात्मना परमात्मसहजानन्ददिव्यानन्दमग्नो जन्ममरणरहितोऽक्षरमुक्तो भवतीत्यर्थः॥ (MUSB 3/2/9, p.304) “The *Upaniṣad mantra* concludes by describing various other benefits of realizing Brahman. It states that when one realizes Brahman, no one in their family lineage remains ignorant of Akṣarabrahman. Thus, everyone born into their family surely comes to realize Brahman.

Furthermore, the *brahmarūpa* devotee, in this very life, overcomes grief caused by the three types of misery. They overcome sin, which is the root of grief. Moreover, by becoming free of the ‘*guhagranthi*’, the innate, mundane, firmly rooted instincts such as attachment and spite, they become *amṛta*. Upon becoming a *brahmarūpa*, they become free from the cycle of births and deaths, and enjoy the divine bliss of Paramātmā Sahajānanda.”

Here, the question emerges, ‘How does the effulgent divine body come forth (or emerge) to a seeker attaining *mokṣa*?’ The truth is enunciated in the *Vacanāmṛta*.⁷⁰⁸ It can be put in simple words that just as in a finer tin-mold in a human shape, you keep on pouring water inside and allow it to freeze to ice-state yielding shape of ice-statue in human-shape. And in the process, the outer cover of the finer tin-mold gets totally rusted-corroded and wears out and sheds. Or, just as forecasting a vax-icon in a clay-mold of icon-shape, you keep on filling it with liquid (molten/boiled) vax, which when cools and becomes a vax-icon, the mold is broken off and the icon is carried away by its owner. In the same manner, an aspirant clothed in the mold of *prārabdha-kārma*-born *māyic*-body, when comes in contact of the *Parama-Ekāntik-Satpuruṣa* (*Brahmasvarūp Santa*), and as he keeps on learning from him the right knowledge concerning the transcendental-glorious-divine nature of Parabrahman manifest before him (*pratyakṣa-Bhagavān*), the unyielding knowledge (*niścaya*) of Parabrahman gradually keeps on settling in his self, and

⁷⁰⁸ Vac. Gadh. 1/51, Sar. 12 & 17, Kar. 1 & 7, Loya 7 and Var. 11.

along with that his sensory-motor organs, *prāṇa*, mind (*antaḥkaraṇa*) etc. keep turning divine. His Parabrahman-consciousness becomes profound and permanent. Besides, in addition, in the company of *Brahma-svarūp Satpuruṣa* (*Akṣara-Guru*), as his *brāhmi-sthiti* (acquisition of brahmanhood) keeps burgeoning and forming and the component virtues (*dharma-jñāna-vairāgya-bhakti*) of *ekāntik-dharma* keeps flourishing and flowering; the divine effulgent body of the nature of consciousness-bliss keeps on advancing and increasing.

In this manner, when the whole process reaches its zenith (completion) and when both *niścaya* (resolute knowledge) and *Brāhmi-ekāntiki-stithi* (spiritual conversion into brahman-form) reaches the state of excellence, he becomes a *jīvanmukta*; and in his personal divine-effulgent body already takes a shape to its perfection. Now, the *jīvanmukta* simply waits for wish of Parabrahman to break-off this *māyic*-body-mold and carry him to the ultimate abode, to serve Him for eternity. At the termination of the physical body, leaving the *prārabdha*-born body, he departs to the abode of Parabrahman with a divine-effulgent body thus acquired. Of course, till the death of the physical body, such a *jīvanmukta* lives with his divine body in his perishable physical body, as if like a sword sheathed in a scabbard. He, like a snake, who has acquired new skin and the old one has been already loosened and detached but waiting to crack down and open up, so that it can slough it and leaving it behind, and can go away. In the same manner, *jīvanmukta* who has become free from the bonds of *avidyā-kāma-vāsanā* and body attachments, and has a new divine-effulgent body already formed inside (as if like a full-term grown baby in the womb), has no more *prārabdha* to suffer, but yet waits in it for His Lord's will and call; and hence, a *jīvanmukta* cannot be viewed on par with other aspirants who are otherwise looking alike.⁷⁰⁹

⁷⁰⁹ Gopālānanda Sādhū, *Gopālānanda Svāminī Vāto*, 1/303, Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa Gurukula Rājakoṭa, 1984, p.141

Now a question may arise that does the *jīvanmukta* continue to offer devotion and *upāsanā* even after attaining this liberated state? The BSSB replies: “ये हि सम्यगुपासनानुष्ठानेन जीवन्मुक्तिदशां प्राप्तास्तेष्वनायासेन परमानन्दमनुभवन्तस्तदुपासनं नित्यमनुतिष्ठन्ति एव” (BSSB 2/1/12, p.389) “After offering the highest level of *upāsanā* to Parabrahman, one attains the state of *jīvanamukti*. However, he indulges in the same *upāsanā* towards Parabrahman continuously after attaining the state of *jīvanamukti* while experiencing the bliss of Parabrahman.”

A *jīvanmukta* feels delivered from the misery and limitations of bodily existence. The physical body does not restrict or obstruct him in anyway. He reaches a state of divine ecstasy in which the bliss of Parabrahman keeps welling up from within. He reaches the state of total fulfillment and contentedness. He feels fully accomplished, enjoying the highest bliss of Parabrahman, which is otherwise sought after the perish of the physical body. He is in the body, but not in the sway of it, and he is turned inward, but enjoying the presence of Paramātmā in his *ātman*.

6.2 Is *Jīvanamukti* Possible While living?

This question was put before Prajāpati by Indra in the CU. Prajāpati explains:

मघवन्मर्त्यं वा इदं शरीरमात्तं मृत्युना
तदस्यामृतस्याशरीरस्यात्मनोऽधिष्ठानमात्तो वै
सशरीरः प्रियाप्रियाभ्यां न वै सशरीरस्य सतः
प्रियाप्रिययोरपहतिरस्त्यशरीरं वाव सन्तं न
प्रियाप्रिये स्पृशतः ॥CU 8/12/1॥

“Maghavan, this body is mortal and always held by death. It is the *ātman*, the self, which is immortal and without body. When in the body (by thinking this body is I and I am this body) the self is held by pleasure and pain. So long as he is in the body, he cannot get free from pleasure and pain. But when he is free of the body (when he knows himself different from the body), then neither pleasure nor pain touches him'.

After this systematic argumentation, the findings of the *Śruti* literatures reveal and consolidate the state of *jīvanamukti*. Based on this *Śruti* the Bhāṣyakāra writes: “न पुनः सशरीरस्य जीवतो मुक्तिर्निराक्रियते...इत्याद्यक्षरपुरुषोत्तमस्वरूपविज्ञानवत आत्मनो जीवन्मुक्तस्थितिरुक्तोपपद्यते” (SSS, Phaladhārā, p.379) “Thus, the state of *jīvanamukti* cannot be refuted whatsoever. This state is experienced by those who have realized Akṣara and Puruṣottama.” Svāminārāyaṇa states in Vac. Gadh. 2/28: If a person has the association of the *bhakta* of Parabrahman and Parabrahman is pleased upon him, then even though he is in *mṛtyu loka* [i.e. on earth), he is still in the abode of Parabrahman. As striking as these statements from Svāminārāyaṇa may seem, this emphasis on enlightenment ‘here’ can also be found in the *Upaniṣads*. The last *mantra* of MU 2/1/10, for example, begins:

पुरुष एवेदं विश्वं कर्म तपो ब्रह्म परामृतम् ।

एतद्यो वेद निहितं गुहायां सोऽविद्याग्रन्थिं विकिरतीह सोम्य ॥ (MU 2/1/10)

“Parabrahman is the *ātman* of all; the world, sacrifice, penance, great Akṣarabrahman etc. he who knows this hidden in the cave (of the heart), he, O friend, scatters the knot of ignorance here on earth.” The *Upaniṣads* invariably talk about the *jīvanmukta* and reveal that one can live on earth as immortal while living in this mortal body. For example: All his desires are destroyed here. (MU 3/2/2) Both KU 6/14 and BU 4/4/7 identically talk of the enlightened person who has overcome all desires for *māyic* pleasures. Then, that mortal becomes immortal and experiences Brahman here. On commenting on all four of these phrases.

Bhadreśadāsa explains: “स परमात्मोपासक अविद्याग्रन्थिं सुदृढमपि स्वात्मवेष्टितमायामित्यर्थः। इह अस्मिन्नेव लोके, जीवन्नेवेति तात्पर्यम् विकिरति निरस्यतीत्यर्थः... इति जीवन्मुक्तिः प्रस्थापिता॥” (MUSB 2/1/10, pp.266-267) “The seeker who is offering *upāsanā* to Paramātmā, eradicates *māyā*. The word ‘here’ ‘*atra*’ or ‘*iha*’ to mean in this very body, on this same realm, while alive. In this way, *jīvanamukti* is propounded.⁷¹⁰ The *Bhagavad-Gītā*, too, has such mentions

⁷¹⁰ MUSB 2/1/10, pp. 266-267; MUSB 3/2/2, pp. 292-293; KUSB 6/14, p.166; BUSB 4/4/7, p.273

of here related to the enlightened *brāhmikastate* {*brāhmi stithi*}. For example: “Even here, *māyic* existence is overcome by those whose minds are established in equality. Brahman is equal and guile-less. Therefore, they are established in Brahman.” (BG 5/19) This enlightened state continues to be described further on in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*'s fifth chapter, where a person without any desires and in complete control of his senses and mind is revealed as a ‘*mukta*’ (28) and ‘*brahmabhūtaḥ*’, i.e. ‘*brahmarūpa*’ (24), having indeed attained ‘*brahmanirvāṇa*’ (24, 25 and 26) or the *brāhmic* state (20) here, before the body is shed (23). Similarly, other characteristics can be found in the *Bhagavad-Gītā* of the person with an equipoised mind (*sthitaprajña*) (BG 2), the ‘*yogin*’ (BG 6), the ‘*jñāni*’ (BG 7), the beloved devotee (*priya bhakta*) (BG 12) and the person who has transcended the influence of all *māyic* qualities (*gunātita*) (BG 14) - all descriptions, according to Bhadrēśadāsa, of the *brāhmi stithi* or *brahmarūpa jīvan-mukta*.

Svāminārāyaṇa similarly describes this state of living enlightenment as one characterized by complete desirelessness for worldly pleasures (Vac. Gadh. 1/56, Gadh. 1/60, Gadh. 2/4), equanimity amid all dualities (Vac. Loyā.16, Loyā.10, Gadh. 2/1, Gadh. 2/4) and independence from the body, senses, faculties and all other *māyic* or *karmic* influences (Vac. Gadh. 1/62, Sār. 11, Loyā.10, Amd.2). Most importantly, it is a state of complete self- and Parabrahman-realization, wherein the *jīvanmukta* direct experiences Parabrahman in all his resplendent glory (Vac. Gadh. 1/20, Gadh. 1/23, Sār.16), both within their own self (Vac. Sār.10, Sār.12, Gadh. 2/8, Gadh. 2/62) and wherever they turn (Vac. Gadh. 1/26, Kār.7), as if Parabrahman or his abode is not even an atom away (Vac. Sār.10). The *mukta*'s senses and mind are now totally engrossed in Parabrahman (Vac. Gadh. 1/51, Kār.1). Nothing else remains noticeable (Vac. Gadh. 1/24, Gadh. 1/26); they experience Parabrahman in everyone and in everything (Vac. Kār.7).

On the basis of the above-mentioned discussion, we can provide some characteristics of a *jīvanmukta* as under:

1. His⁷¹¹ mind and all the ten sensory-motor organs remain totally Parabrahman-oriented.⁷¹²
2. He realizes his essential nature as Brahman (similar to Akṣara-brahman), and in it, he ceaselessly perceives the presence of Puruṣottama. He thus dwells in constant Parabrahman-consciousness.⁷¹³
3. All his *vṛttis* are controlled and arrested and become *ātman*-oriented. His *vāsanā* (the *liṅga-deha*), the cause of transmigratory cycles, get totally annihilated consequently, by the light of right knowledge, he realizes his essential nature as Brahman (Akṣara); and in it, he constantly visualizes the presence of Supreme Nārāyaṇa (Parabrahman).⁷¹⁴
4. He dwells in the ceaseless steadfast experience of being a pure *ātman* indwelt by Paramātmā.⁷¹⁵
5. The consummation of right knowledge in his case results in *jñāna-pralaya* i.e. the cognitive-experience of dissolution of everything born of *mūlaprakṛti*. Consequently, *māyā-prakṛti* does not hit back upon him to create any bondage again.⁷¹⁶
6. He, then remains engrossed in the servile devotion to Parabrahman. He does not need any more birth to return to the earth. Even then, he remains *dharma*-abiding as a more responsible devotee. However, by the will of Parabrahman, if at all he takes birth, he is not born in sin, nor by the influence of *māyā*, *kāla*, *kārma* etc. Freely does he visit the earth, like eternally free Parabrahman.⁷¹⁷

⁷¹¹ The word he, here reflects both genders (He and she, his and her). According to *Svāminārāyaṇa* philosophy, everyone can become *jīvanmukta*.

⁷¹² Vac. Gadh. 1/51

⁷¹³ Vac. Gadh. 1/20

⁷¹⁴ Vac. Gadh. 2/66

⁷¹⁵ Vac. Loyā. 10

⁷¹⁶ Vac. Abd. 2

⁷¹⁷ Vac. Abd. 2

7. On account of (*jñāna-pralaya*) cognitively realized dissolution of everything, he now sees the same beautiful-effulgent-divine transcendental form of Parabrahman eternally dwelling in the highest abode, in everything and everywhere. So, for him now, there is no point in the space devoid of the divine presence of his Parabrahman.⁷¹⁸

In this manner, the *jīvanamukti* is a prominent principle of the Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana. It is indeed a real state.⁷¹⁹

6.3 Why Does the *Jīvanmukta* Live on Earth?

A valid question at this stage would be: Why does a *jīvan-mukta* live on at all. Should he or she not die straight away and transcend into blissful fellowship with Parabrahman in his abode? Once the *kāraṇa* body of an aspirant is destroyed, one becomes a *jīvanmukta* (one who has attained *jīvanamukti*) and no form of *māyā*, I-ness or my-ness remains. Consequently, all love and hate, desires, *svabhāvas*, and attachment towards the body are also destroyed. At the same time, through offering devotion, service, and *upāsana* to Parabrahman and serving the manifest *Satpuruṣa*, the *sañcita kārmas* from previous lives are also destroyed. Now devoid of any I-ness, my-ness, and prejudices, such a *jīvanmukta* does not under any circumstances perform any improper *kārmas* which are against Parabrahman's wishes.

Svāminārāyaṇa advocates: "One should understand that as being Parabrahman's wish. In reality, such a person has nothing left to accomplish; he is fulfilled and has reached the culmination of all spiritual endeavors." (Vac. Gadh. 2/13, p.421) On Parabrahman's command, the *jīvanmukta* performs pious *kārmas* for the purpose of pleasing Parabrahman only; those *kriyaman kārmas* are a form of *bhakti* and not a form of attachment. (Vac. Gadh. 2/11) "एवामुपसनाबलात् सकलपुण्यपापनाशेषि कारणशरीरप्रक्षयेपि स्थूलस्य

⁷¹⁸ Vac. Kār. 7

⁷¹⁹ See also IUSB 6-7, pp. 15-17, CUSB 8/3/3, pp. 352-353 and CUSB 8/12/1, - BGSB 18/54, p.361.

देहस्य असंश्लेषस्तु पाते एतच्छरीरपात एव। जीवन्मुक्तो हि नष्टकारणशरीरोपि परमात्मेच्छामात्रहेतुना धृतशरीरः सन्नभिवर्तते। तस्यायं कायविश्लेषः शरीरपात एव”(BSSB 4/1/14, p.391) “Due to Parabrahma’s *upāsanā* one can eradicate all his desires. In this state, the causal body is uprooted, even though the physical body still remains. It departs only after death. In this way, a *jīvanmukta* remains alive even after his causal body is uprooted which is the prominent cause for the cycle of births and deaths. He lives his life as the wish of Parabrahman till his death.” प्रारब्धं खल्वस्या देहस्थितेर्निमित्तम्। तदवधेः शरीरपातावधेस्तत्स्थितेः। इदमत्राऽवधेयम्। देहनिमित्तं प्रारब्धमपि न हि कर्मविधया यावदायुषं शरीरधारणप्रयोजकमपि तु परमात्मेच्छाऽऽनुगुण्येनैवेति विशेषः । अत एव लिङ्गशरीरनाशोऽपि परमात्मकृपैकनिबन्धनो भगवद्भक्तस्य जीवत्काले, तदेहान्तकाले वा, तदुत्क्रमणे मार्गे वा यदा कदाऽपि परब्रह्मेच्छाऽनुसारमेव प्रवर्तते इति तदधिगमाधिकरणम्। (BSSB 4/1/15, p.391) “As far as one’s life is concerned, it is due to his *prārabdha kārma*. It decides the duration of one’s lifespan. It should be noted that for *jīvanmukta* devotee, *prārabdha kārma* doesn’t decide his or her life span but Parabrahman himself decides it. By Parabrahman’s wish and grace the *jīvanmukta* lives, dies and goes to the abode of Parabrahman via divine celestial path even after causal body is eradicated.”

Although a *jīvanmukta* has to experience the consequences of his *prārabdha kārma*, yet through Parabrahman’s grace it is endured with smiling face by the *jīvanmukta*. He does not get disturbed or miserable in any way due to experiencing the pain of his *prārabdha kārmas*. Even if his *prārabdha* leads to misery or suffering, he understands it to be only due to the will of his beloved Parabrahman. Svāminārāyaṇa clears the point: “If one has completely understood the essence of this discourse, then regardless of whether one is reborn in a base or elevated life form due to one’s *prārabdha kārmas*, still, like Vrutrāsura, one will not forget this *jñāna*. Also, when Bharataji was reborn as a deer, he retained *jñāna* from his previous life. Such is the profound greatness of this *jñāna*.”(Vac. Gadh. 2/13, p.421)

Thus, he or she continues to experience the state of being *jīvanmukta* until their *prārabdha kārmas* are exhausted. So, the answer to the question of why the *jīvanmukta* lives on earth, we conclude by saying that even while freed of all *māyic* influence and therefore not accruing any new *kārmas*, a *jīvanmukta* still has a residual stock of past *kārmas* (called *prārabdha*), which have been activated and need to be depleted. These are responsible for the current gross and subtle body. As soon as they are exhausted, no further reason remains for the body to exist, and the self can then discard it and transcend to Akṣaradhāma. While alive, though, it must be stressed, the body carries no influence over the liberated self within. Svāminārāyaṇa explains with various analogies that the self rattles distinctly separate from within the body, like a sword in its scabbard or a seed within a dried mango; the body merely the old slough on molting snake to be shortly shed (VR 149; BU 4/4/7).

7. Videhamukti

Bhadreśadāsa defines:

देहपातोत्तरं लभ्या विदेहमुक्तिरुच्यते।

अक्षरधाम्नि भोग्येयं मूर्तिमद् ब्रह्मणा सह ॥ SSSK 437 ॥

“The liberation attained after shedding the mortal body is *Videhamukti*. The released self experiences the bliss of such liberation in Akṣaradhāma along with the human form of Akṣarabrahman.” *Videhamukti* is to attain the highest state of enlightenment after leaving the mortal body. Once all the *prārabdha kārmas* of a *jīvanmukta* have been experienced, his or her association with the *sthūla* and *sūkṣma* bodies also ends, and he or she then goes to Parabrahman’s Akṣaradhāma.⁷²⁰

To attain Akṣaradhāma and experience the bliss of Parabrahman is the ultimate goal of a devotee. As Guṇatitanand Svāmī says: “Our sole wish should be that we want to go to Akṣaradhāma.” (SV 1/301) “We must have the firm conviction that we

⁷²⁰ Vac. Gadh.1/1, 1/21

want to go to Akṣaradhāma and serve Parabrahman forever with the company of the *akṣaramuktas*.” (SV 7/21)

This is the essence of our scriptures. The scriptures described it as the ultimate *puruṣārtha*, the goal of every self. Indeed, this is the fruit of spirituality as well. A considerable amount of literature has been published on this *parama puruṣārtha*, ultimate goal or the ultimate liberation. These studies, however, present the complex findings which make the topic more critical, but within the Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana, the first and simplest way to understand liberation is the findings which are firstly experienced by the preachers.⁷²¹ As a state of supreme, unending bliss and perfect, ceaseless devotion to Parabrahman, this is the ultimate goal and consummation of all spiritual understanding and praxis towards which Svāminārāyaṇa inspires his devotees. For example, in Vac. Gadh. 1/21, he urges: All members of our fellowship should develop the following singular conviction: “We also wish to join the ranks of the *akṣararūpa muktas* and go to Akṣaradhāma to forever remain in the service of Parabrahman. We have no desire for the temporary and vain worldly pleasures; nor do we wish to be tempted by them in any way.” Whoever “accepts my refuge and abides by the *niyama*, then in his last moments, I will grant him My *Darśana* and take him to Parabrahman’s Akṣaradhāma.” (Vac. Jet. 5)

Svāminārāyaṇa calls this my principle (*Siddhānta*) when asked by a follower of the *Dvaita* School to explain his philosophical system in brief. After concisely expounding the five eternal realities, Svāminārāyaṇa says in conclusion: When a *jīva* seeks the refuge of Parabrahman, it overcomes Parabrahman's *māyā*, becomes *brahmarūpa* ..., attains the abode of Parabrahman, and becomes his attendant. This is my principle. (Vac. Gadh. 3/10)

⁷²¹ Vac. Gadh.2/13, 3/39

This place in Akṣaradhāma, Svāminārāyaṇa clarifies, is the state of liberation achieved after death, upon leaving the material body behind reason, it is called *videhamukti* (incorporeal liberation). He states for the example: “After such an enlightened devotee (*ekāntik bhakta*) leaves his body becomes free of all influences of *māyā*, he attains Akṣaradhāma.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/21) Bhadreśādāsa elucidates this point while commenting on the verses of the KU 2/15, 16, 17 in which he discusses the word ‘*padam*’ that implies for Akṣaradhāma. After providing vivid references of the *Prasthānatrayī*, he proves that it is Parabrahman’s abode where the liberated self goes after leaving its physical body. In his conclusion, he clarifies: “तथा हि ब्रह्मस्वरूपसत्पुरुषप्रसङ्गेन, तस्मिन्नात्मबुद्ध्यादिना च ब्रह्मात्मैक्यं प्राप्य, तादृशेन ब्रह्मरूपेणात्मना परं परमात्मानं तत्त्वत उपास्य, लौकिकदेहपातोत्तरं दिव्याक्षरधाम्न्यपि मनुष्याकारां दिव्यां ब्राह्मीं तनुं परमेश्वरेच्छया प्राप्य, तद्धामस्थेन मनुष्याकारेणैव मूर्तिमताऽक्षरब्रह्मणा सह तद्ब्रह्मैव परमात्मसहजानन्ददर्शनानन्दात्मकेन सर्वोत्कृष्टदिव्यभोगवैभवेन महीयत इति सम्पूर्णभावः।” (KUSB 2/17, p.112)

“By the company of the *brahmasvarūpa Satpuruṣa*, a seeker attains oneness with him and becomes a *brahmarūpa*. The *brahmarūpa* devotee continuously offers *upāsanā* to Parabrahman till his death. After his death, he enters the abode of Parabrahman and gets the divine *Brāhmic* body by the wish and grace of Him. The liberated self now experiences the ultimate bliss of Parabrahman with the company of Akṣarabrahman itself while residing in the abode.” The BSSB also confirms this fact: ब्रह्मरूपस्य परोपासकस्य विदेहमुक्तौ ब्राह्मवपुर्लक्षणं नवतरं दिव्यरूपमभिनिष्पद्यते इति। (BSSB 4/4/1, p.416) “One who is *brahmarūpa* and offers *upāsanā* to Parabrahman attains new divine *Brāhmika* body in the *videhamukti* state.” And, of course, the BG also echoes this principle by a number of verses. For example:

ओमित्येकाक्षरं ब्रह्म व्याहरन्मामनुस्मरन् ।

यः प्रयाति त्यजन्देहं स याति परमां गतिम् ॥BG 8/13॥

“While constant remembrance on Akṣarabrahman which is defined as AUM, the sacred sound of Brahman, and offers *upāsanā* to me, attains the supreme goal.”

Bhadreśadāsa provides the definition of the supreme goal: स परमां गतिं सर्वसमुत्कृष्टगन्तव्यस्थानभूतमक्षरधाम याति प्राप्नोति इति। (BGSB 8/13, p.186) “Here ‘*paramam gati*’ refers to the abode of Parabrahman, Akṣaradhāma, which is superior to all abodes and the best destination for all liberated selves.”

7.1 *Arcirādi Mārga*: The Way to the Abode of Parabrahman

गतिर्हि त्रिविधा प्रोक्ता ह्युत्तमा मध्यमाऽधमा।

तत्रोत्तमाऽर्चिरादिः स्याद् देवयानेति कीर्तिता ॥SSSK 447॥

“There are three ways through which a self travels after death. The best way that leads to Akṣaradhāma is *Devayana* or *arcirādi mārga*, the second is *Pitrūyan* or *Dhummarg*, where go the persons who have done many charity works. And the third-worst is *Samyanmarg*. Those who have committed sinful acts go to Yamaloka through *samyani mārga*.” *Devayana* or *arcirādi mārga* is the authentic way through it the liberated self goes to the abode of Parabrahman. There is, however, one *nāḍī*, other than the hundred mentioned that lead to the path of lower realms and the Yamaloka, which starting from the navel (*Mūladhārā*) goes past the heart and ends up on the top of the crown when one leaves this physical body. “This is a special *nāḍī* reserved only for a *brahmarūpa* (who attains *mokṣa* at the end of the current life itself) or a *bhakta* whose causal body is burnt (who attains *mokṣa* at the end of the life) he reaches a nil balance in his *kārma* account, which may be at the end of the current life or many lives). Parabrahman illuminates this *nāḍī* at the point where it goes past the heart and the departing self-sensing the flickering radiance leaves the heart and escapes through an aperture like bursting through a push-door into this *nāḍī*.”⁷²² This *nāḍī* is called the ‘*mūrdhanya nāḍī*’, ‘*suṣumṇā nāḍī*’, ‘*brahma nāḍī*’ or ‘*Brahmarandhra*’ since it opens at the top of the skull of the person leading him to Brahman itself through the shining path or the *Arcirādi mārga*. *Arcirādi mārga* is also known as ‘*Devayana*’ or ‘*Brahmapatha*.’ The self starts its journey with the

⁷²² CUSB 5/10/1-2, CU 8/6/5, BU 5/10/1, BG 8/24

help of the Akṣarapuruṣottama this has been described in our scriptures. Through the *Arcirādi* golden path, the *brahmarūpa ekāntik-bhakta* reaches the supreme abode called Akṣaradhāma, where Parabrahman eternally resides.

Svāminārāyaṇa narrates: “After such an *ekāntik bhakta* leaves his body and becomes free of all influences of *māyā*, he attains Akṣaradhāma via the *Archimārg*.” (Vac. Gadh. 1/21, p.61) Moreover, there is no return from it for those who attain it. Niṣkulānanda Svāmī states: “A devotee, who on release, attains the abode of Parabrahman, never has his derailment from the abode into the world of *kārma*-bondage.”⁷²³ The *Gītā* and the *Bhaktacintāmaṇi* reiterate that: “Reaching which they (*muktas*) do not return anymore, is my abode.”⁷²⁴

The BU describes:

ते य एवमेतद्विदुर्ये चामी अरण्ये श्रद्धां सत्यमुपासते
तेऽर्चिरभिसम्भवन्त्यर्चिषोऽहोऽह आपूर्यमाणपक्षं
आपूर्यमाणपक्षाद्यान्षण्मासानुदङ्डादित्य एति मासेभ्यो देवलोकं
देवलोकादादित्यमादित्याद्वैद्युतं तान्वैद्युतान्पुरुषो मानस एत्य
ब्रह्मलोकान् गमयति ते तेषु ब्रह्मलोकेषु पराः परावतो वसन्ति ।
तेषां न पुनरावृत्तिः । (CUSB 5/10/20)

“Those who thus know this *ātman*. (even *Grhasthas*), and those who in the forest worship Akṣarapuruṣottama, go to light (*arka*), from light today, from day to the increasing half, from the increasing half to the six months when the sun goes to the north, from those six months to the world of the *devas* (*devaloka*), from the world of the *Devas* to the sun, from the sun to the place of lightning. When they have thus reached the place of lightning a spirit comes near them and leads them to the worlds of the (conditioned) Brahman, Akṣaradhāma. In these worlds of Brahman, they dwell exalted for ages. There is no returning for them.”

⁷²³ ‘જે ધામને પામીને પ્રાણી પાછું પડવાનું નાથી રે’, ચોશહપદી, નિષ્કુળાનંદ સ્વામી

⁷²⁴ BG 15/6

The same kind of verse with some changes is found in the CU. Where Bhadrēśadāsa explains: “यथोक्तोपासनारूढा भक्ताः स्वात्मसु साक्षादक्षरब्रह्मरूपत्वं संपाद्यार्चिरादिना दिव्यमार्गेण विदेहमुक्त्यवसरे लभन्ते परब्रह्मसहजानन्दनिवासभूतं ब्रह्मधाम इत्याह ते अर्चिषमभिसंभवन्ति इत्यादि” (CUSB 5/10/2, p.221) “The *jīvas*, who are enriched with *Akṣarabrahmabhāva* and offer *upāsanā* to Parabrahman will embark upon the journey via divine *Arcirādi* path to Parabrahman’s Akṣaradhāma at the time of *videhamukti*.”

At the end of the physical body of the devotee, Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman, as the main *ativāhika*, come to receive him to His highest abode.⁷²⁵ This is a boon, an assurance given by Parabrahman Himself (Svāminārāyaṇa) to his devotees. Accordingly, moreover, Parabrahman has appointed some *devas* as, *ativāhika*, appear before the departing self, and give their companies and offers various *bhogas* in their midway *lokas*. But the *mukta* is disinterested towards them. He wants to go to the highest abode of Parabrahman, Akṣaradhāma. Then Parabrahman, by his wish, invests him with a divine effulgent *brāhmic* body composed of the stuff called consciousness-bliss (time and place is dependent on His wish). Every released self is carried to the highest abode (Akṣaradhāma) through the *arcirādi* path. It is the golden path of light stretching from the crown of the head to the highest abode. The *muktas* are taken straight (non-stop) to the highest abode in the service of the Lord; however, some of them who had willed (prior to release) to see the ascending stages of *Arcirādi* path are escorted through the gradual holts and receptions enroute on each of the celestial regions, right from Archis to *Brahmaloka*, between the earth and the highest abode (Akṣaradhāma), if Parabrahman, so wills to fulfill his wish.⁷²⁶ Thus, through this *Archimārg*, a liberated self attains Parabrahman.

⁷²⁵ भक्तानां ब्रह्मरूपाणामक्षरपुरुषोत्तमौ । देहपातोत्तरं स्यातां प्रमुखावातिवाहिकौ ॥ SSSK 449 ॥

⁷²⁶ *Arcirādhikaran*, BSSB 4/3/1- 4/3/15, pp.407-415

7.2 Is Oneness With Parabrahman Possible?

This question is one of the most widely asked and discussed in the vivid groups of philosophies and has been extensively answered in the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School. Although the *akṣaramuktas* attain Parabrahman in Akṣaradhāma and attain qualities similar to those of Akṣarabrahman, they do not become the Akṣarabrahman *tattva* itself.⁷²⁷ Similarly, all the *akṣaramuktas* have a form like that of Parabrahman, yet none of them become the Parabrahman *tattva*.⁷²⁸ Then the narration in the scriptures indicates that a devotee attains qualities similar to Parabrahman; this simply means that the *mukta* becomes divine and independent like Parabrahman. As a result, *māyā* is incapable of defeating and binding the *mukta*.⁷²⁹ This is a unique characteristic of this doctrine of liberation in Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana.

Nityānanda Svāmī also asks this question in the *Vacanāmṛta*: “As long as a *mukta* is associated with the *guṇas*, he is affected by places, times, etc. It is accepted, however, that Parabrahman is not influenced by places, times, etc. – even while He remains within the *guṇas*. But when all of the *muktas* are free from the association of the *guṇas*, and having become *nirguṇa*, dwell in Akṣaradhāma along with Parabrahman – who dwells there in the same manner – then all of the *muktas* are *nirguṇa* and composed of *caitanya*. Also, as explained by ‘*mama sādharmaṇyam-āgatāhā*’, they have attained qualities similar to those of Parabrahman.⁷³⁰ How, then, should we understand the distinction between the *muktas* and Parabrahman?” Svāminārāyaṇa provides an appropriate answer: “A king and his servant are both the same in that both are humans, yet the authority, power, beauty, and charm of the king are by far superior. His servant, regardless of how great he may be, cannot achieve what the king can achieve. In the same way, Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa is the all-doer, the cause of all, the controller of all; He

⁷²⁷ We already discussed this factor in the topic- Does *jīva* become Brahman through this oneness?

⁷²⁸ Vac. Kār. 8, Loyā 4, Gadh.3/37, Sār. 11, Kār. 1, Gadh.3/37

⁷²⁹ This principle was also elucidated in the third chapter.

⁷³⁰ It should be understood similar to Akṣarabrahman.

is extremely attractive, extremely radiant, and extremely powerful; also, He possesses the *kartum*, *akartum* and *anyathākartum* powers. If He wishes, He can eclipse all of the *muktas* of Akṣaradhāma by His own divine light and prevail alone.” In this way, Svāminārāyaṇa maintains the vital ontological distinction between liberated selves and Parabrahman in various discourses.⁷³¹ The SB also reveals the same truth. The verse reads:

तदा विद्वान् पुण्यपापे विधूय

निरञ्जनः परमं साम्यमुपैति ॥ MU 3/1/3॥

“One who knows Parabrahman transcended even Akṣara removes all his miseries and attains the similarity of Him.”⁷³² Bhadrēśadāsa comments: “साम्यमुपैतीत्युक्तिः बद्धावस्थायां मोक्षावस्थायां वा सर्वदा परमात्मनो जीवेश्वरात्मतः तत्त्वभेदं विज्ञातुमेवा” (MUSB 3/1/3, p.284) “The verse ‘*samyam upaiti*’ explains itself that there must be a difference between Parabrahman and *jīva-īśvara* either in the bondage state or in the liberated state.” The purpose and purport of writing this statement is clear that the word ‘similar’ itself brings two different entities. As Bhadrēśadāsa acknowledges: “स्वरूपाभेदे साम्यं नोपपद्येत साम्यस्य भेद निबन्धनत्वात्” “Similarity never occurs which is already one entity; therefore, the term itself brings two different entities.” In the above descriptions on the *mukti-mimāṃsā* (in-depth reflections on liberation) in Svāminārāyaṇa Darśana, it is important to draw attention to the clear fact that in Akṣaradhāma, the *akṣaramuktas* maintain a distinct, individual existence. Unlike light, which merges in light, or water, which merges with water, the *akṣaramuktas* do not merge into either Akṣarabrahman or Parabrahman; they do not lose their own individuality.⁷³³ However, sometimes the *Śruti* describes

यथा नद्यः स्यन्दमानाः समुद्रेऽस्तं गच्छन्ति नामरूपे विहाय ।

तथा विद्वान् नामरूपाद्विमुक्तः परात्परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम् ॥ MU 3/2/8॥

⁷³¹ Vac. Sār.11, Kār. 1, Loyā.13, Gadh. 2/38 and Gadh. 3/3

⁷³² अत इदं परमं साम्यं खलु ब्रह्माक्षर साधर्म्यान्नान्तरिच्यते (MUSB 3/1/3, p.284)

⁷³³ Vac. Gadh. 2/38, Gadh. 3/33

“As the flowing rivers disappear in the sea, losing their name and their form; thus a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the divine Parabrahman, who is greater than the great Akṣarabrahman.” After hearing such an analogy one can imagine that the liberated self must merge into Parabrahman, but Bhadrēśadāsa strongly refutes this position.

The Bhāṣyakāra elaborately discusses this topic and provides many arguments and states, “A person who knows that a liberated self merges into the form of Parabrahman, it is his delusion. “केचन भ्रान्तिमवतिष्ठते...अत्र नामरूपप्रहाणमात्रे तात्पर्यं न तु तत्त्वस्वरूपप्रहाणे अपीति ज्ञेयम्”(MUSB 3/2/8, p.298) in reality the liberated self renounces the worldly or *māyic* name and form, not he waives its eternal form.” Through being profoundly and lovingly attached to the divine form of Parabrahman or Puruṣottama, the *akṣaramuktas* remain immersed within his *murti*. Despite having their own independent existence, they have no awareness of it and are totally engrossed in the bliss of Parabrahman's *darśana*.⁷³⁴

The devotee finds the highest fulfillment in the unitive taste of oneness with Parabrahman, without losing its separateness and his relationship with Parabrahman as His devout servant. Thus, Svāminārāyaṇa takes care of logical and intellectual need for unity, emotional and psychological need for enjoying unalloyed bliss and moral and spiritual need for mystic union despite separate existence. Hence, both in the pre and post emancipated states, Parabrahman and *jīvātman* are distinct but not divorceable; they are one and inseparable psychologically, but distinct and separate actually.

As Dr. S. Rādhākṛṣṇana points out, “The *Taittirīya* UP, makes out that the liberated self feels his oneness with Parabrahman, but it is not absorbed in the Absolute. It is

⁷³⁴ MuU 3/1/3, BG 4.10 and BG 14/2. See also BS-SB 2/2/18 p.326; BS-SB 4/2/15, p. 402; BS-SB 4/4/4, p. 419; BS-SB 4/4/17, pp. 427-428; MuU-SB 3/2/7-8 p.297-298; MuU-SB 3/1/3, p.284; BG-SB 4/10, pp. 97-98; BG-SB 14/2, pp.292-293.

the unity of spirit but not of substance.”⁷³⁵ The same truth, in line with the *Śruti*, Svāminārāyaṇa alleges. He holds that the *mukta* lovingly gets absorbed in the absolute (i.e. Puruṣottama-Nārāyaṇa), the fountainhead of unalloyed bliss. How can a released self attain *sārūpya* i.e. similarity of form, if Parabrahman does not have any form? The scriptures proclaim in unambiguous terms that released selves attain similarly (*sāmya*), with Parabrahman having form and complexion of golden hue.

The *Śruti* proclaims: i.e., he who attains me, attains similarity with me. He attains characteristics resembling me. If a liberated self attains (similarity) with Parabrahman, how can he ever serve Him? It may be pointed out that the Akṣarabrahman who is eternally free, who has form resembling Parabrahman, who has most of the characteristics similar to Parabrahman, serves Him in the best manner from eternity with servile-devotion. In the like manner, every freed self acquires form similar to Parabrahman and has most characteristics resembling Parabrahman. Nevertheless, they emulate or model Akṣarabrahman in serving Parabrahman devoutly and deriving the joy of servile-devotion. Thus, liberated selves acquire the characteristics similar to Akṣarabrahman, who is eternally free and the best among the devotees.⁷³⁶

7.3 The Body of a *Mukta* in Akṣaradhāma

However, upon death, having shed its material body, the self does not forever remain formless in Akṣaradhāma. Svāminārāyaṇa explains in Vac. Gadh. 3/7 that like Parabrahman, who possesses a definite form there, the liberated devotees in his service also possess a form. What is this form of the liberated self in Akṣaradhāma?

This is the question posed to Svāminārāyaṇa in Vac. Gadh. 2/66. He replies: “When the *jīva*’s ignorance is dispelled, its association with the three *māyic* bodies is

⁷³⁵ Rādhākṛṣṇana S.S., Eastern Religions And Western Thought. oxford University Press, London, 1940, p.132,

⁷³⁶ BGSB 14/2

broken. Thereafter, the *jīva* remains as pure consciousness and existence. Then, by Parabrahman's will, the *jīva* receives a body composed of sentiency (*caitanya prakṛti*), which is distinct from the eight inert elements (*jada prakṛti*) of Parabrahman, i.e. earth, water, etc. With that body, then, it resides in Parabrahman's Akṣaradhāma.” In answer to a similar question in Vac. Gadh. 1/1- “What type of body does a devotee of Parabrahman attain when he leaves his physical body, which is composed of the five material elements and goes to the abode of Parabrahman?” Svāminārāyaṇa replies that such a devotee receives, ‘by the will of Parabrahman’, a *brāhmic* body, what he calls here a ‘*brahmanāyā tanu*’. Bhadreśadāsa corroborates:

प्राप्य नवां तनुं ब्राह्मीं परात्माऽऽकारसंनिभाम्।

नित्यद्विभुजपादादिदिव्यकरणसंयुताम् ॥ SSSK 438 ॥

“In *videhamukti*, the released self resides in Akṣaradhāma, having attained a new body that is made of *brahmatattva*. This new body looks just like that of Paramātmā, meaning that it eternally possesses two arms, feet other divine instruments of action.” The BS brings forth a critical argument regarding whether the *mukta* attains a new divine body in the abode of Parabrahman or not? The Bhāṣyakāra gives a fine solution by applying *sūtra*’s own words:

सम्पद्याविर्भावः स्वेन शब्दात् ॥BC 4/4/1॥

“Through the words of the CU, it is proved that there is an emergence of a divine body to the *jīva* in the abode of Parabrahman.” The Bhāṣyakāra comments: “ब्रह्मरूपस्य परोपाकस्य विदेहमुक्तौ ब्राह्म वपुर्लक्षणं नवतरं दिव्यरूपमभिनिष्पद्यते” (BSSB 4/4/1, p.416) “One who is *brahmarūpa* and offers *upāsanā* to Parabrahman attains new divine *brāhmika* body in the *videhamukti* state.” In this way, a seeker attains this *brāhmic* body. Now we will analyze the form of this body. Well, there is no possibility, nor any need for any other kind of body-form other than similar to Parabrahman in the state of liberation. Every *mukta* is given the body composed of divine material of the substance of consciousness-bliss and this body is exactly analogous to teen-aged form (*sadā-kiśora-murti-rūpa*) of Parabrahman because this is the original form of

Parabrahman and the *Śruti* says '*Svena rupeṇa' abhiniṣpadyate*⁷³⁷ and '*mama bhavamāgatā*'.⁷³⁸ So, whatever original (*mūla*) form (*rūpa*) of Parabrahman is there, the similar equally divine, glorious form every *mukta* gets through His grace. Parabrahman Himself comes to receive the liberated self to His abode, and en-route Akṣaradhāma. He invests the freed self with a divine-effulgent body of *brahma tattva* (the stuff of consciousness-bliss).

This he, (a *mukta*) gets from Parabrahman on the perish of the subtle physical body only after acquiring brahmanhood. Of course, in the highest abode of Parabrahman (*parama dhāma*/ Akṣaradhāma) there is no scope for any other form (or any other type of body), because it alone exists eternally also after final destruction (*mahāpralaya* /*ātyantikapralaya*); and in *mahāpralaya* (final dissolution) all other names and forms except that of Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, and *muktas* are doomed through destruction.⁷³⁹ This makes one more thing clear logically and spiritually that only divine form-personality (Brahman-Parabrahman) alone is beyond the limitations of space and time (*prakṛti*-names and forms); and as the *muktas* are dowered with Parabrahman-like divine body-form, they exist imperishably.

Although the *muktas* are similar to Parabrahman in possession of body-form and characteristics, there is an important difference. The unique differentia of Parabrahman is- He is the inner ruler of all, He is the controller, creator-sustainer-destroyer of an infinite number of universes, He alone is exclusively independent, and supreme controller and supporter of all. His perfection, divinity, glory, and power are infinite, unconditional, independent, and *causa Sui*. This is not the case with *muktas*, because theirs is everything conditional, dependent and derived from

⁷³⁷ CU 8/12/2

⁷³⁸ BG 4/10

⁷³⁹ MU 3/2/8

Parabrahman. This retains the master-servant, worshipped-worshipper relationship intact between Parabrahman and *muktas*. This further implies that the shine, luster, and effulgence of Parabrahman are exceedingly superior and marvelous to that of the *muktas*.⁷⁴⁰ Consequently, the transcendence and the supreme majesty of Parabrahman remains unmatched and unexcelled.

Bhadreśadāsa expresses this view in the BS by quoting the *sūtra*: अतः एव च अनन्याधिपतिः⁷⁴¹ It reads that there is the only controller of *mukta* is Parabrahman. Thus *muktas* become free from *kāla*, *kārma*, and *māyā* but remain independent to Parabrahman forever. The oft-emphasized illustration says that a worm is converted into a honey-bee by a bee, which implies that the *ksetrajña jīvātman* remains the same while the body of the honey-bee is acquired. On the same analogy, the atomic *ātman* remains the same while discarding the *kārma*-born material body; it acquires a new divine body composed of *parā-prakṛti*, i.e. effulgent *aprakṛta*-substance of the nature of consciousness-bliss.

It cannot be held that in the state of *mokṣa jīvātman* undergoes transformation and gets into the shape of a divine body, because when the *jīvātman* did not undergo any change or transformation in the state of bondage, how can it ever undergo change and become body shaped with parts and limbs in the state of liberation? Therefore, on this issue, Svāminārāyaṇa says: “After leaving this physical body, when *ātman* goes to the abode of Parabrahman on achieving *mokṣa*, it acquires a new body of the nature of brahman (consciousness-light) by the will and grace of Parabrahman.”⁷⁴² At the loss of the physical body, an emancipated *jīvātman* with the body composed of effulgent-consciousness attains the service of Parabrahman in His abode. Moreover, the words '*caitanya-ni-murti*'⁷⁴³ is interpreted in the

⁷⁴⁰ Vac. Gadh. 2/13; 3/31, 38

⁷⁴¹ BS 4/4/9, with Parabrahman Aksharbrahman is also controller of *muktas*. Here is the context of Parabrahman.

⁷⁴² Vac. Gadh. 1/1

⁷⁴³ Vac. Gadh. 1/37

commentary as the body of the nature of Brahman. It is the extremely effulgent being-consciousness bliss (*sat-cit-ānanda tattva/dravyam*). It is called ‘*sat-cit-ānanda*’ also because the word ‘*sat*’ here means eternal-indestructible (*nitya*) ‘*cit*’ means of the nature of effulgence (*jyotirupa*) and *ananda* because the body is pleasantly agreeable.

As explicated in the *Vacanāmṛta* that when the *jīva*, becomes *brahmrupe* and departs from this worldly body, by the will and resolve of Parabrahman, it acquires Brahman-like celestial divine body through the *parā prakṛti*. On this issue, *Vacanāmṛta* explicitly says that when the *jīva* gets rid of its attachment with threefold (gross, subtle, causal) bodies, and the *ātman* exists as conscious principle per se, it is invested with a body composed of Brahman distinct from the material *prakṛti* of 24 elements. Through the immense grace of Parabrahman, the *jīva* acquires this *brahmic* body and enjoys the bliss of Parabrahman.⁷⁴⁴ Bhadreśadāsa also confirms while commenting on the BG. The verse reads:

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।

जीवभूतां महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥ BG 7/5॥

“My other higher entity is the *Para Prakṛti*, which is different from the insentient *prakṛti* and by which this entire universe is sustained, O Arjuna.” The Bhāṣyakāra provides the explicit reason that “एवं विदेहमुक्तावक्षरब्रह्माख्यपरप्रकृतेरेव मुक्तानां दिव्यब्राह्मदेहस्य निर्माणत्वात्” (BGSB 7/5, p.158) “*Aparaprakṛiti* here implies Akṣarabrahman because, in *videhmukti*, only Akṣarabrahman can compose the *brāhmic* body for *muktas*.” Here, the meaning of ‘*parā prakṛti*’ is explained as ‘*akṣarabrahmātmaka-parāprakṛti*’ and the meaning of the word ‘*deha*’ is given as ‘*brahmanmāyā tanuḥ*’, and the meaning of ‘*samyujyate*’ is brought forward as ‘*tadabhisamayukto bhavati*’. This explication in the commentary makes one more point clear: the *jivātman* (with ‘I-sense’ of *ahamārtha*) and the body (*brahmanmāyā tanu*), it possesses, are two different things,

⁷⁴⁴ Vac. Gadh. 2/66

so the body-self distinction of a different kind still prevails. So, the possessor-possessed relation remains between the two.

Caitanya prakṛti is not *jīva rūpa prakṛti* but it is *parā prakṛti* known as *aksarabrahmātka prakṛti* out of which the bodies of *muktas* are composed. Vach. Sar.14 says: “Casting the physical body on earth, when *jīvātman* becomes free from it. Parabrahman dowers him a new body called ‘*Bhāgavati-taṇu*’ with which the *mukta-jīva* resides in the abode of Parabrahman. This once again spells out the ‘body-self’ relation which persists at the level of *parama pāda*. When the *mukta-jīva* acquires a divine body of the nature of light-consciousness, he then becomes capable to distinguish between himself, other *muktas*, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman.”

Thus, each *mukta* is a knower and enjoyer with uncontaminated pure ‘I-sense’, by his own divine body. The forms- personalities of Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, and the released selves (*muktas* i.e. *pārśadas*) are true (real), divine, and extremely effulgent. All of them have a body form like that of ‘*Puruṣa*’ (Parabrahman Himself) endowed with two hands.⁷⁴⁵ The Bhāṣyakāra elaborates: “एवमेवेष सम्प्रसादो देहात्मविवेकी प्रागुक्तापहतपाप्मत्वादिगुणविशिष्टो ब्रह्मरूपः परब्रह्मोपासको मुक्तात्मा अस्माच्छरीरात् प्रारब्धलब्धान्श्वराद् देहात् समुत्थाय निष्क्रम्याऽचिरादिदिव्यमार्गेण परं ज्योतिः दिव्यप्रभासमानाऽक्षरधामस्थितपरमदिव्यतेजस्विनं परमात्मानम् उपसम्पद्य प्राप्य स्वेन रूपेणाऽभिनिष्पद्यते स्वेन ब्राह्मण दिव्यविग्रहरूपेण निष्पन्नो भवति। ब्राह्मतनुयुक्तः सन् सदैव परमात्मपरमदिव्यसुखं दिव्याऽक्षरधामन्यनुभवतीत्यर्थः।” (CUSB 8/12/2, pp.386-387)

“A *brahmarūpa* devotee with the divine qualities who can discern between the body and the *ātman* offers *upāsana* to Parabrahman. After leaving his physical mortal body, he trends on the divine *Arcirādi* path and attains Parabrahman in His abode. At this moment, this liberated self enriches with the divine *brāhmika* body and continuously experiences the bliss of Parabrahman.” A *mukta* worships and serves

⁷⁴⁵ Vac. Gadh. 3/38

Parabrahman clothed in a divine body that has non-material, senses, mind, vital breath etc. It is the body composed of the substance of the nature of effulgent consciousness-bliss. BS 4/4/10, (*abhāvam bādarirōh hyevam*) raises a doubt whether released selves acquire the vivid pleasures in the abode or not? But the Bhāṣyakāra strongly refutes this position, that there is any possibility of such pleasure items. In other words, the *mukta* becomes devoid of *kārma* born *prakṛta* material body (*aśariri*); and acquires *kārma* free non-material (*aprākṣta*) body (*śarīra*). This is the view of *Bādarāyaṇa* in BS. 4/4/12. This divine body is eternal, (*sarge'pi nopajāyante pralaye vyathanti ca*), devoid of production and destruction even at every periodical creation and dissolution.⁷⁴⁶

There is one more way in which the problem of *mukta*'s *divya-śarīra* is viewed. When the *jivātman* departs from its mortal-physical body, rises above, it receives a new divine body from Parabrahman. Thus, Parabrahman gives him a new divine body which is of the nature-&-stuff of lustrous-consciousness. Here, the words 'gets' and 'gives' are not used in the conventional sense of getting or giving a visible-tangible material object from one hand into another. Here, the words 'gets' or 'gives' is used to imply that a divine body comes forth (*āvirbhavati*) from the personality of Parabrahman by His will. That is why, it is termed to suggest-'just as the Guru gives knowledge (*jñāna*) to a *śiṣya* (i.e. unveils truth). Similarly, the *bhāgavati tanu* is given. The Antaryāmī Paramātmā (may also), by His extraordinary divine power, can make *bhāgavati tanu* become manifest (*avirbhāva*) from inside for the *mukta-jīva*. It is called '*bhāgavati tanu*', because the body resembles the form (*vigraha*) of Brahman, and also because it is dowered (or endowed) by Parabrahman out of His sweet will graciously. (*Bhagavat eva bhāgavati murti, Bhagavān-murtisamāna-murti, bhagavadeccchaya-prāpta-tatsam-murti.*) In this way, for a *jivātman* who now has become pure-consciousness, a

⁷⁴⁶ BSSB 4/4/10-4/4/12, pp.422-424

permanent-unchanging (*dhruva/ kutastha*) divine body (*divya-deha*) is formulated (made manifest) by the will of Parabrahman.

The body of the nature of Puruṣottama manifests for *jivātman*, having a form similar to Parabrahman, and it is everlasting and identical; and yet the knower and enjoyer of Lord and His bliss, it is a perfectly symmetrical beautiful body endowed with all abilities fully consummated. It is the body in which as if the knower, the known, and the knowledge are fused together like a single entity! The *premākārṣaṇa* (Love-Attraction) of the Puruṣottama is supreme, infinite, and indescribable. In such a most lustrous *satcidānandamāyā murti* of Parabrahman, the *jivātman* is attracted and lost totally in Him out of highest love and devotion for Him. As a response to his psychological (merger) union with Paramātman, from Him out of overflowing grace and will, the *jivātman* receives (has a manifestation of) the Parabrahman-like divine lustrous body. He makes him acquire it. As a mother confers a similar form to a baby, so does Parabrahman bestow on him a divine form (body) similar to His own.

It is a '*guṇa-dravyam-caitanya-ākṛti*' i.e. a body of nature and effulgent consciousness. This 'lustrous-consciousness' out of which the body is made, pervades perfectly within the confines of the body-shape wholly and does not flow out or exceed it, nor does it leave any point or portion of body unpervaded within it. Here, an illustration given as a pointer (and not for literal application) is - just as water turns into the shape of an ice-cube, and thus acquires the features-properties of ice. Similarly, all the characteristics and features of Parabrahman's personality are acquired by the released self (with the exception of the qualities and powers of His supreme exclusive transcendence, as stated in *Svetā Up.* 6/16). In short, the *mukta* acquires a perfect-permanent body resembling Parabrahman Himself.

When the supreme Puruṣottama makes a divine body manifest (for a liberated *jivātman*) out of Brahman, does it indicate any change (*vikārah*) and loss or diminution (*kṣayah/hrāsah*) in His personality? The answer is no. Parabrahman's form-personality is of the nature of consciousness-bliss, which is eternal and unique. Uniform, unchanging, undiminishing, infinite, and perfect. So, despite the attainment of perfection from Him by innumerable released selves, His perfection remains unique, infinite, and undiminished. The devotee endowed with *upāsanā*, self-knowledge, Parabrahman-knowledge, the strength of Parabrahman's divine nature and the state of likeness with Akṣarabrahman is blessed by a divine Parabrahman-like body (*Bhāgavati-taṇu*) at the loss of his physical body and reaches the highest abode called *Brahmadhāma* (*parama dhāma*).

Bhadreśadāsa draws upon this when commenting on the *Upaniṣads*. He explains that when the self leaves the body and reaches the supremely glorious form of Parabrahman in the divinely luminous Akṣaradhāma, it receives a divine, *Brāhmika* body { *divyabrāhmavighraha*; *brāhmatanu* } in which it continuously experiences the divine bliss of Parabrahman. This is analogously and even more explicitly stated in BU 4/4/4:⁷⁴⁷

तद्यथा पेशस्करी पेशसो मात्रामपादायान्यन्नवतरं कल्याणतरं

रूपं तनुत एवमेवायमात्मेदं शरीरं निहत्याविद्यां

गमयित्वाऽन्यन्नवतरं कल्याणतरं रूपं कुरुते पित्र्यं वा

गान्धर्वं वा दैवं वा प्राजापत्यं वा ब्राह्मं वाऽन्येषां वा भूतानाम् ॥ (BU 4/4/4)

“As a goldsmith takes a piece of gold and turns it into another, newer, more beautiful form, in the same way, this self, having discarded this body and dispelled its ignorance, receives another, newer, more beautiful ... *brāhmi* form.”

⁷⁴⁷ See BU-SB 4.4.4, pp.268-269 for a fuller explanation of this verse, where it relates the *brahmarūpa mukta* receiving a *brāhmasarira* for enjoying Parabrahman in Akṣaradhāma, whereas other, less elevated selves will receive other types of bodies as they enjoy the pleasures of lesser abodes. Despite these similarities, the liberated selves remain ontologically distinct from Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman.

Elaborating upon this new form in Vac. Gadh. 3/38, Svāminārāyaṇa speaks of it alongside Parabrahman's form in the following way: “The form of Parabrahman in Akṣaradhāma and the form of the *muktas* - the attendants 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 being, and it is characterized by eternal existence, consciousness, and bliss.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/38) Going even further in likening the *muktas* form with Parabrahman’s human-shaped form, Svāminārāyaṇa calls theirs a ‘Parabrahmanly body’, or ‘*bhāgavati tanu*’ (Vac. Sār.14). The climax of this similarity is found in Vac. Kār.1, where Svāminārāyaṇa states that the liberated selves, due to their knowledge of Parabrahman, assume a form like Parabrahman's form. That is, he explains, ‘they become divine’.

Being divine and composed solely of consciousness means that the liberated selves are without any of the distinctions of name and form possible only with *māyic* materiality. In other words, the forms in Akṣaradhāma of Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, and all liberated selves are virtually identical, with the *muktas* themselves being visually indistinguishable from one another (even while retaining their ontological individuality). Another reason for this is that the forms of the *muktas* are genderless, just as the selves themselves are (Vac. Gadh. 3/22). In a sermon recorded in SV 7/2, Svāminārāyaṇa explains: “The form of a *mukta* is different from the two genders of the world. It is neither female in shape nor male in shape. It has a wholly *brāhmic* body, which is neither feminine nor masculine.”

This also helps explain that, even while having a human-shaped form - complete with senses, inner faculties, etc. - the fact that it is divine, *Brāhmika*, and composed entirely of consciousness, the liberated selves are devoid of any human functions

and urges. Having transcended *māyā*, they are beyond hunger, thirst, fatigue, etc., and free of all forms of mundane passions.⁷⁴⁸

7.4 *Upasya-Upasaka* Relationship

The liberated self (*mukta*) attains similarity with Parabrahman (and Akṣarabrahman) in terms of His nature and qualities. Although the *mukta* attains the figure or form like that of Parabrahman, yet as far as the divine qualities are concerned, he attains them like that of Akṣarabrahman. Whatever he possesses, the brahman-qualities cover all stuff.⁷⁴⁹ After acquiring such type of greatness, the *mukta* seems capable like Parabrahman even though he is distinct from Parabrahman. If there is no oneness between *mukta* and Parabrahman, then, the question may arise, what kind of relationship occurs between Parabrahman and the *muktas*? The *Vacanāmṛta* also elaborates on this question. “After all, that devotee of Parabrahman then becomes independent, just like Parabrahman. He also becomes free from the shackles of *kāla*, *kārma*, and *māyā* - just like Parabrahman. Therefore, what difference remains so that the master-servant relationship is maintained? This is my question.”(Vac. Gadh. 2/67, pp.525-526) Svāminārāyaṇa provides here a unique answer that solves this widely discussed question amongst the various philosophers.

He replies: “When that devotee leaves his body and goes to the abode of Parabrahman, he attains charm and powers based on the extent to which he has realized the majesty of Parabrahman. Despite this, that devotee still feels Parabrahman’s majesty in the form of His powers, charm, etc., to be much greater. He then realizes, ‘Parabrahman has granted me just as many divine powers and as much charm as I had realized in Him. Yet, Parabrahman’s divine powers and charm appear to be totally limitless. Like me, countless others have also attained qualities

⁷⁴⁸ “अभावं बादरिराह ह्येवम्” BSSB 4/4/10, pp.422-423

⁷⁴⁹ BGSB 4/10, p.97

similar to that of Parabrahman, yet, no one is capable of becoming like Parabrahman.” (Vac. Gadh. 2/67, p.526)

This devotional relationship between Parabrahman and the liberated selves is thus referred to as the ‘*Svāmi-sevaka sambandha* (master-servant relationship) by *Svāminārāyaṇa*.⁷⁵⁰ In this way, Svāminārāyaṇa acknowledges that the servant-master relationship always remains whether in the abode or on earth. The SSS bolsters:

निमग्नाः सहजानन्दे प्रगाढाऽऽनन्दसेविताः।

कुर्वाणा ब्रह्मभावाऽऽद्यां तद्भक्तिं दासभावतः॥ SSSK 440 ॥

“Immersed in Parabrahman, they enjoy profound bliss. They offer devotion to Him with humility and *brahmabhāva*.” Though a *mukta* becomes pure and sinless, he becomes free from faults, vices, and blemishes forever. He becomes free forever from the *saṃsāra*-the cycles of birth and death. His *dharmabhutajnāna* (attributive-consciousness) becomes fully expanded, all-pervading, and unobstructed. He becomes omniscient. Whatever he wills, happens. He comes to possess the power of realizing his wish unconditionally, immediately. He acquires the power to freely move about everywhere at his will and can present himself in any form, in any world or abode, without resorting to any means. He becomes the self-ruler and is not ruled by anyone except Parabrahman. Even when he goes to any other *brahmānda*, he does it by assuming an additional form, with the original form kept intact in the service of Parabrahman in the highest abode.

The *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis* also mention the abilities of a *mukta*:

“यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वो भवति”(PU 4/10)

स सर्वज्ञ सर्वमेवाविवेश”(PU 4/11)

⁷⁵⁰ Vac. Kār.10 and Loyā. 1 (Vac. Gadh. 1/21, Loyā.13, Gadh. 3/37).

“ते सर्वगं सर्वतः प्राप्य धीराः युक्तात्मानः सर्वमेवाविशन्ति” (MU 3/2/5)

“स सर्वविद्भजति मां सर्वभावेन भारत” (BG 15/19)

These texts highlight *mukta*'s capacity to become an all-knower and his power to go everywhere, wherever he wishes. Moreover,

यं यमन्तमभिकामो भवति यं कामं कामयते सोऽस्य

संकल्पादेव समुत्तिष्ठति तेन सम्पन्नो महीयते ॥ (CU 8/2/10)

Whatever object the *mukta* is attached to, whatever object he desires, by his mere will, it comes to him, and having obtained it, he is happy. However, his will is always in consonance with the will of his Lord, he becomes free forever in all respects; nevertheless, he never uses his freedom without the will of Parabrahman. Now he is under the sway and command of his Parabrahman alone. He voluntarily refrains himself from using his freedom because, for him, the enjoyment of the nectarine bliss of the Supreme Lord is the greatest value than anything else. He knows that- “my Master (Parabrahman) is infinitely transcendent to me, and all my freedom, powers, excellence and divinity are due to Him.’ This awareness retains the relationship of ‘servant-master’, ‘*bhakta-Bhagavān*’, he, therefore, remembers that: I am the servitor of my Lord.”

The BSSB states: “यथोक्तमुक्तैश्वर्यप्रदर्शनं परमात्मकृपालब्धतत्सामर्थ्यसूचनमात्राभिप्रायेण। वस्तुतस्तु तदानीं तस्य ब्रह्मरूपेण स्वात्मना परमात्मपरमानन्दपरमदिव्यानुभूतिनिमग्नत्वात् तदितरसंकल्पानवकाशात् तादृशसामर्थ्यलाभेपि न स स्वातन्त्र्येण तद् विनियुक्ते। न वा तथाविधं किमपि कामयते इति” (BSSB 4/4/8, p.422) “Whatever has described the infinitive power which a *mukta* attains, should be known as the capacity of him. However, the *mukta* is *brahmarūpa*, and after attaining Akṣaradhāma he is deeply engrossed in the divine bliss of Parabrahman, there is nothing else in which he wishes to indulge in. Moreover, his all potency depends on Parabrahman; he does not use it freely nor does he wish anything after attaining Parabrahman, because now he is fulfilled in every aspect.”⁷⁵¹

⁷⁵¹ CUSB 8/2/10, p.350

The term ‘*nitya-mukta*’ in its strict sense means eternally free, and it applies only to Brahman (Akṣara) and Parabrahman (Puruṣottama), for they alone are eternally unbound and beyond the three *guṇas* of *māyā-prakṛti*. This further implies that the term ‘*mukta*’ applies to those *jīvas/īśvaras* who were once bound, and have achieved emancipation through proper efforts. Both Brahman and Parabrahman are from eternity beyond *māyā-prakṛti* and its three *guṇas*. Thus, they are ever pure, unbound, and free. Both are eternally free, omniscient, immanent, and supporters of a multitude of universes (*brahmāndas*).⁷⁵²

Akṣarabrahman differs from liberated selves because his knowledge of Parabrahman is eternally expanded without any obscuration whatsoever. His knowledge of Parabrahman was never in a contracted state. It has always been in an expanded state and shall be so forever.⁷⁵³ Parabrahman, Akṣara-brahman, and *muktas* (released souls) have resemblance in terms of similarity of forms (*samāna-vigraha*), the resemblance in terms of being transcendent to *māyā-prakṛti*, the resemblance in terms of autonomy or ability to freely move about (incarnate) in any world, the resemblance in terms of being untouched and unbound by the limitations of the worldly existence.⁷⁵⁴

As far as the difference is concerned, between *mukta* and Akṣara-Puruṣottama, in *dyubhvaadhikāraṇa* (BS 1/3/7) and (CU 7/24/1), the joy and happiness arising in the experience of the Supreme Infinite are described as an experience of supreme bliss par excellence. In the '*Ānādamāyādhikāraṇa*' (BS 1/1/13-20), we find the strong and categorical pronouncement of the identity and difference in terms of *ānanda* between *jīva* and Parabrahman. The study of *Vacanāmṛta* sār.17, kār.10, Gadh. 2/31, Loyā. 15, Gadh. 3/38 helps in bringing out the distinction between

⁷⁵² Vac. *Raḥashya* 2, p.15

⁷⁵³ Vac. *Raḥashya* 3, p.67-68

⁷⁵⁴ BSSB 4/4/19, p.429

Parabrahman and *muktas* together with the transcendence of Akṣara-Puruṣottama. A *mukta jīva* has acquired perfection by the grace of infinitely perfect Lord. The Lord is such an ocean of infinite perfection that even when an infinite number of *jīvas* acquire perfection through Him, His perfection does not diminish even by the least. Therefore, even if all *mukta-jīvas* are put together, they cannot exhaust the transcendence of Parabrahman even by an infinitesimal portion.

True, *mukta-jīvas* acquire similarity (*sādharmya/sāmya*) with Akṣara-Puruṣottama and consequently acquire nature, qualities, majesty, and freedom like him. However, they never acquire Parabrahman's qualities of transcendence as described in the *Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6/16. The supreme powers of *sarvāntaryāmitva*, *sarvasākṣitva*, *sarvaniyāmakatva*, *sarva dhāraakatva*, *sarva-vyāpakatva*, *sarvatantra-svatantratva*, (esp., and *anyathākartum-Śakti*) exclusively rest with Akṣara-Puruṣottama. They are the foundational qualities of Akṣara-Puruṣottama's transcendence.

It should be noted that even Akṣarabrahman is a permanent *upasaka* or servant of Parabrahman.⁷⁵⁵ So do the *mukta-jīvas*, despite being similar in appearance to Parabrahman, they are the servant devotees, while Parabrahman (Puruṣottama) is their master and the supreme object of devotion. All *mukta-jīvas*, though resemble in terms of nature, form, and qualities with Parabrahman; they differ from Him immeasurably in terms of shine, luster, powers and glory. This is the basis of 'sevakasvāmi', 'dāsa-dāsyā', 'upasaka-upāsyā' relationship.

The liberated selves (*mukta-jīvas*) resemble one another in terms of their equality of status, qualities, and majesty. They differ from Akṣarabrahman, who is the supreme devotee and supports an infinite number of universes from eternity. The

⁷⁵⁵ Vac. Loyā. 13

distinction between the *muktas* and the Lord is significantly very great because *muktas* are many; while their Lord is one; and they are His worshippers while He is the worshipped. Allegorically speaking, the shine, luster, and glory of all *muktas* taken together can hardly match an infinitesimal portion of a body-hair of Akṣarapuruṣottama; even though *muktas* do not maintain *upasaka-upasyabhāva* with Akṣarabrahman, instead they maintain this relationship with Parabrahman only.⁷⁵⁶

That is why the Bhāṣyakāra states: “अतो मुक्तावपि सेव्यसेवकभावो नोच्छिद्यते इति रहस्यं विज्ञापयितुकाम इह सूत्रकारः” (BSSB 3/3/25, p.331) “Thus, even in the state of *mukti*, the relation of *sevyā sevaka* never subsides, this is all explained by the author of the *Brahmasūtra*.” In this way, despite the *mukti avasthā*, the master-servant relationship never subsides between Parabrahman and *mukta*. It means the *mukta* remains *upasaka* and Parabrahman *upasaka* forever. This is the secret of the scriptures.

7.5 The Role of *Muktas* in Akṣaradhāma

Here a question arises: So, then, after being as the servant, *das* or *upāsaka* what do they actually do in Akṣaradhāma?

Svāminārāyaṇa makes clear that because the *muktas* are absolutely perfect and fulfilled. They have no reason to strive for anything, nor anything further to strive for. They are now and forever in the direct fellowship of Parabrahman, who, Svāminārāyaṇa adds, “is always present there (in Akṣaradhāma) to bestow supreme bliss upon those *muktas*.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/38) The liberated selves thus have no need or desire for anything else. They remain fully engrossed in Parabrahman alone, continuously experiencing his supremely blissful self. Because his bliss is so inexhaustibly rich and everlastingly gratifying, there is never an instance of the

⁷⁵⁶ Vac. Gadh. 1/64

muktas being bored or satiated, and so they are continuously engaged in as Svāminārāyaṇa describes it, “the *darśana*’ of Parabrahman.” (Vac. Loyā. 14).

‘*Darśana*’, can be taken here to mean literally seeing Parabrahman (for the *muktas* do have divine, *Brāhmika* senses and faculties, just like Parabrahman), and also, more deeply, as having the vision or realization of Parabrahman, i.e. experiencing him and thus enjoying his presence. Indeed, when elaborating upon the following phrase in PU 5/5,

“स एतस्माज्जीवघनात् परात्परं पुरिशयं पुरुषमीक्षते” (PU 5/5)

“That *mukta* sees Puruṣottama, supreme among all living beings, dwelling in that abode.” Bhadreśadāsa chooses to render the verb ‘*iksate*’ “साक्षात्करोति” (literally, to see) as ‘*sākṣātkaroti*’, i.e. to directly realize. He further mentions: “यथा दण्डविशिष्टं पुरुषमीक्षत इत्युक्ते दण्डोपीक्षणकर्म भवति तथैवेह जीवघनपरभूताक्षरब्रह्मपरत्वविशिष्टपुरुषमीक्षता” (PUSB 5/5, p.219)

“As one sees a person with a stick, that means the stick also becomes the object of the sentence like the persons. Similarly, a liberated self, when it looks at Parabrahman with Akṣarabrahman, Akṣarabrahman is also included as the object of the sentence.” While such seeing or realization is sometimes framed as ‘service’ (*Sevā*) or the *mukta* described as an ‘attendant’ (*sevaka*, *daśā* or, *pārśadas*), this is only because of the abiding sense of loving and reverential servitude the liberated selves feel towards Parabrahman, their lord.⁷⁵⁷

Innumerable freed selves are seated around Lord Puruṣottama, seated on a divine throne in the center of the abode. They all are lost in always gazing devotionally at the beauteous form and figure of Lord Puruṣottama (*sadā pasyanti surayah*).⁷⁵⁸ In Parabrahman’s abode, all the *muktas* are busy beholding the divine personality of Parabrahman and thus are enjoying the ultimate bliss flowing from Him. All *muktas*

⁷⁵⁷ Vac. Gadh. 1/21, Gadh. 1/63, Gadh. 1/64, Amd.6

⁷⁵⁸ Vac. Gadh. 2/13

are *brahmarūpa* (brahmanized) and are engaged in tending Parabrahman devoutly as His servitors.⁷⁵⁹ A freed self has an integrated and all-inclusive perceptual cognition of Parabrahman in the form of ceaseless vision with all His glory and attributes. A freed self's mind and senses - all get fully satiated even in simply looking at His divine personality. It is a unified vision in which, along with eyes, other senses also derive equally fulfilling joy.

The *Taittirīya* and *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣads* say that Parabrahman is of the nature of joy or bliss (*ānanda*).⁷⁶⁰ The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* says that the experience of the infinite alone is joy.⁷⁶¹ This is realized in the state of liberation because the freed self actually experiences it. It is not a passive state of satiation once for all, but a dynamic and ever eager state to have more and more of it. As Akṣaradhāma (the supreme Abode of Parabrahman) is beyond the limitations of three-dimensional space and time, the wonder is that there is no front or back or side, nor far nor near in it. In other words, the Lord Puruṣottama, seated in the center, on the divine-royal-throne (*divya simhāsana*), is seen and experienced by each of the innumerable released selves as the closest in front of him. Each one is directly in frontal face-to-face contact with the full personality of Parabrahman, whether they be present on the sides or back of the Lord from our three-dimensional parameters of *prakṛtika* world.⁷⁶²

According to SSS⁷⁶³, the *muktas* (freed selves), in the divine abode (Brahmapura/Akṣaradhāma), have the only desire to enjoy the '*sukha*' or the bliss of Lord Puruṣottama alone and from Him alone. Besides this, they do not have any thought in their mind. On the other hand, the Lord Puruṣottama also, out of His overflowing grace, love, and compassion, simultaneously and ceaselessly, keeps

⁷⁵⁹ Vac. Gadh. 2/31

⁷⁶⁰ TUSB 2/8

⁷⁶¹ CUSB 7/23/1

⁷⁶² Vac. Loyā. 14

⁷⁶³ SSSK 440

gifting the happiness-bliss in equal measure to all of them. Moreover, the SSS explores:

8. Some Clarity Regarding *Mukti*

8.1 Two Kinds of *Mukti*

In the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School, *mukti* is defined as becoming *akṣararūpa* and offering *bhakti* to Puruṣottama with *dasbhava*, either on the earth or in Akṣaradhāma. This *mukti* is real in both ways.⁷⁶⁴ In the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School, two kinds of *mukti* are accepted.⁷⁶⁵

1. *Jīvanmukti*
2. *Videhamukti*

8.2 Is *Jīvanamukti* The First Step for *Videhamukti*?

It is important to clarify here that if a devotee, due to some deficiency during his life, does not experience the state of *jīvanamukti*, in his final moments, his deficiencies can still be removed by the grace of Parabrahman and the *Gunātita Satpuruṣa*. Thus, that devotee is able to attain *videhamukti* and go to Akṣaradhāma.⁷⁶⁶

8.3 The Place Where the *Brāhmika* Body is Attained

A *mukta* who goes to Akṣaradhāma attains a *Brāhmic* form (body) (Vac. Gadh.1/1), has a divine form (Vac. Gadh.1/12), and becomes a *caitanya murti* (Vac. Gadh.1/37, 71). Now the question arises that where and how one achieves the *Brāhmic* body? The answer to this question is- only through the wish of Parabrahman (Sār. 14). The Bhāṣyakāra states: “तत्तनुसंपत्तिश्च परमात्मेच्छामात्राधीनेति तेनैव व्यवस्थाप्यते” (BSSB 4/4/13, link,

⁷⁶⁴ IUSB 8

⁷⁶⁵ BSSB 3/4/51

⁷⁶⁶ Vac. Sār. 11

p.424) “To enrich the *jīva* with the *Brāhmic* body depends on the wish of Parabrahman, only He decides where and how it should be given to the *jīva*.”

8.4 The Service in Akṣaradhāma

The *muktas* who have reached Akṣaradhāma and attained qualities similar to those of Akṣara, forever remain in the service of Parabrahman (Vac. Gadh.1/21). However, in Akṣaradhāma, there is no other service to be performed; the *darśana* of Parabrahman is itself the service. Hence, *muktas* continually enjoy the bliss of the *darśana* of Parabrahman (Vac. Loyā 14, Gadh. 2/13). The BSSB reveals:

“नास्ति तत्र किमपि प्राकृतलोकवदुपभोग्यम्” (BSSB 4/4/10, p.423)

“In Akṣaradhāma, there are no worldly objects for enjoyment.” Then what they actually do in the name of service? The Bhāṣyakāra answers:

ब्राह्मतनुयुक्तः सन् सदैव परमात्मपरमदिव्यसुखं दिव्याऽक्षरधाम्न्यनुभवतीत्यर्थः।” (CUSB 8/12/2, p.387)

“This liberated self, enriched with the divine *Brāhmic* body, continuously experiences the bliss of Parabrahman.”

8.5 Number of *Muktas* and Their Arrangement

In Akṣaradhāma, like Parabrahman, the *Akṣara-muktas* reside with a divine body and divine adornments. As far as the number of *muktas* is concerned, it is infinite. Svāminārāyaṇa expresses: “Countless have become *muktas* , and countless more will become so.”(Vac. Gadh. 1/18, p.56) Moreover, “It is surrounded on all four sides by groups of *muktas*, who are seated facing Him, and who are engrossed in looking at that form of Parabrahman with a fixed gaze. The best way to elaborate upon these aspects is to understand them in the two contexts that the state can be experienced - after death, in Akṣaradhāma, and while alive, on earth.”(Vac. Gadh. 2/13, p.419) Bhadreśadāsa also confirms- सर्वे मुक्ताः समाऽऽकारा⁷⁶⁷ here the plural form of the word indicates that the *muktas* are infinitive in number. Along with it, we should

⁷⁶⁷ SSSK 439

keep it in our mind that the *jīvas* and *īśvaras* maintain their individuality from Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman.⁷⁶⁸ They do not renounce their actual root form.⁷⁶⁹

8.6 Nothing to Achieve More Than That of *Mukti*

Svāminārāyaṇa reveals this *brāhmic state* as one of ethical perfection, personal holiness, freedom from *māyā* (*kāma* and base instincts), absolute fulfillment, and singular devotion to and total engrossment in Parabrahman. They also experience the divine bliss of Parabrahman, yet a master-disciple relationship (Vac. Loyā. 13, Gadh.2/67) is continuously maintained between Parabrahman and the *akṣara-muktas*, as is the relationship of the worshipped and the worshipper (Vac. Gadh.3/37). The Bhāṣyakāra backs the fact while commenting on the *videhamukti* verse of the *Īśopaniṣad* where the liberated self presents itself in front of Parabrahman in Akṣaradhāma.

“तस्य न किञ्चिदपि ज्ञातव्यमवशिष्यते”(IUSB 8, p.18)

“The *mukta* has left nothing to know after attaining Parabrahman.” They indulge in the bliss of Parabrahman as told ‘*Sah brahmanā vipaschita*’⁷⁷⁰ i.e. in the company of omniscient Parabrahman (Parabrahman), the *mukta* gets all his desires (*Kārmās*) fulfilled because the *mukta* has now attained similarity in form and other characteristics. The power, excellence, attributes, divine form, etc., which Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman possess - the same things the liberated selves also acquire in Akṣaradhāma by the grace of Parabrahman. The liberated selves enjoy the same bliss now which Akṣarabrahman enjoys eternally in the company of Parabrahman.

⁷⁶⁸ मुक्तावपि तु मुक्तानां भेदोऽस्त्येव स्वरूपतः। मिथश्चाऽक्षरतश्चैव पुरुषोत्तमतस्तथा ॥ ४४१॥

⁷⁶⁹ Vacanamruta. *Rahashya* 3/67

⁷⁷⁰ TU 2/1/1

8.7 Equality

सर्वे मुक्ताः समाऽऽकारा न्यूनाऽधिकत्ववर्जिताः।

स्त्रीपुरुषत्वशून्याश्च क्षुधादिरहितास्तथा ॥SSSK 439 ॥

“All of these released selves possess the same form in Akṣaradhāma. There is no difference in their relative significance. They are above gender difference and beyond hunger and thirst.” Thus, in the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School, it is thoroughly accepted that there is no respective difference as far as the *jīva*’s form is concerned. All the *muktas* have identical beatific and beautiful ‘*sat-cit-ānanda*’ form -figure-personality, have similar possession and excellence and have the *sukha* or the enjoyment of the same Lord, and the enjoyment of the same measure of happiness and bliss. Thus, in the abode, there is no ‘*ānanda-tāratamya*,’ i.e. the gradations in the enjoyment of divine bliss among *muktas*, according to *Svāminārāyaṇa*.

8.8 No Nitya Mukta

In the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School of philosophy, the concept of *nitya mukta* is strongly refuted. Bhadrēśadāsa explores:

अतो न नित्यमुक्तत्वं नाऽनादिर्ब्रह्मरूपता।

कस्याऽपि लब्धमोक्षस्य जीवस्य वेश्वरस्य वा॥SSSK 432॥

“There is no eternal *brahmabhāva* and permanent *mukta bhāva* either for the *jīva* or *īśvara*.” There are only two eternal entities who are permanent *muktas*, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. No one else.

8.9 No Return from Akṣaradhāma

If the power and glory of the released self depend upon the supreme Parabrahman, it being independent or impotent, there is the possibility of the return of the self into *saṃsāra*. Here, the *Sūtrakāra* explains that the self is not subjected to return in anyway. The *Bhāṣyakāra* explains: “एवं भूतस्य मुक्तस्य तादृशापवर्गदशाया अनावृत्तिः नैव प्रत्यावर्तनमिति शब्दात् श्रुतिस्मृतिशब्दादेव लिङ्गादेवागम्यते”(BSSB 4/4/22, p.431) “Through the *Śrutis* and *Smṛtis*,

it is known that there is no return for those released selves who have attained Akṣaradhāma.”⁷⁷¹ So there is no return from the abode of Parabrahman, and no rebirth as well after attaining Akṣaradhāma.⁷⁷²

8.10 Power of Attorney

The released self attains so much power from Parabrahman except in the matter of cosmic activities. The cosmic activity consists of control over the difference of the essential natures, existence, and activity of all sentient and non-sentient things. BSSB itself defines:

जगद्व्यापारवर्जं प्रकरणादसंनिहितत्वाच्च॥ BS 4/4/17॥

जगद्व्यापारवर्जं जगत्सम्बन्धी यो व्यापारस्तदुत्पत्तिस्थितिनियमनाऽवसानादिरूपस्तद्वर्जमेवाऽक्षराधिपत्यनुग्रहलब्धमुक्तैश्वर्यं भवितुमर्हम्। सकलजगदुत्पत्तिनियमनादिव्यापारस्तु स्वातन्त्र्येण परब्रह्मणस्तन्मित्येच्छयाऽक्षरब्रह्मणश्चेत्युभयोरेव। (BSSB 4/4/17 p.428) Although the *mukta* has power and some qualities of ‘*apahtpapmadi*’ as mentioned in the scriptures, only Parabrahman and by his wish Akṣarabrahman are mentioned in the scriptures as the cosmic cause, sustentation, and destruction. The released selves are not at all mentioned, and hence, cosmic activity does not belong to the liberated self. Thus Brahman and Parabrahman are independently responsible for the activities regarding the cosmos.

8.11 No Deficiency in Akṣaradhāma

The seekers of salvation, during their worldly existence in the embodied state, maybe men or women, high born or low born, blind or lame, deaf or dumb, old or young, handsome or ugly, leper or leucodermic; but when they become *ekāntik* and acquire brahmanhood, they attain emancipation and as *muktas* in the abode of Parabrahman, they all attain identical divine form-figure devoid of any earthly (human) defect-deformity in them.⁷⁷³ The *vikārah* or deficiencies in the form of six-

⁷⁷¹ यामवाप्य पुनर्नैव मायाबन्धनसम्भवः ।

जीवतो दिव्यदेशे वा स्थितस्य चेतनाऽऽत्मनः ॥ SSSK - ४३४॥

⁷⁷² BG 15/6, 8/21, CU 8/15/1

⁷⁷³ Vac. Loya 18

fold human infirmities (*oromia*) such as distress (*ṣoka*), delusion (*moha*), old age (*jarā*), death (*mṛtyu*), hunger (*kṣudhā*) and thirst (*pipāsā*) no more exist in the state of liberation (*mokṣa*). There is no sleep and fatigue, aging and disease, or any other ephemeral defect in the state of *mokṣa*.⁷⁷⁴ All *muktas* are attuned to Parabrahman. The *muktas* are lost in Parabrahman. All are in a state of divine ecstasy or euphoria, enjoying the bliss of Parabrahman forever.⁷⁷⁵

There is no aging, no disease, no death, no return into *saṃsāra* (the cycles of birth and death), no disappointment, no frustration, no consequent pain-suffering, nor any defect or deficiency in the state of *mokṣa*. Every *mukta* is attuned and absorbed in enjoying the nectarine-mellow of unalloyed bliss of Parabrahman's beautiful personality. Every *mukta* cherishes joy, bliss, and transparent devotion to Parabrahman in equal measure with all others. There is no envy, strife, or competition in the state of *mokṣa*.

8.12 The Concept of *Dāsatva*

The goal of the devotee is not to become sugar itself but to taste it. His goal is not to become Parabrahman Himself, but to enjoy the bliss of His company and communion. So there is no ‘*Svarūpa ekya*’ or any other relation between Parabrahman and the *mukta* than the *svāmī -sevaka* or *upasya-upasaka* relation. “अतो मुक्तावपि सेव्यसेवकभावो नोच्छिद्यते इति रहस्यं विज्ञापयितुकाम इह सूत्रकारः.”(BSSB 3/3/25, p.331) “Thus, even in the state of *mukti*, the relation of *sevyā sevaka* never subsides. This is all about explained by the author of the *Brahmasūtra*.”

⁷⁷⁴ BSSB 4/4/19, pp.429-430

⁷⁷⁵ BSSB 4/4/20, p.430

8.13 Persistence of Atomic Nature of *Jīva*

Śrutis and *Smṛtis* clearly proclaim that the *jivātman* is extremely subtle and is atomic in size.⁷⁷⁶ Also, in the state of liberation, the *jivātman* retains its subtle atomic nature. This atomic nature of *jīva* does not change, nor does it transform into a new bodily shape.⁷⁷⁷ In the state of emancipation (*mukti*), *jīva*'s atomic nature continues, but its knowledge/consciousness (*dharmabhutajnāna*) becomes fully expanded and all-pervading, and thus acquires omniscience. It is this *aṇutva* (atomic nature), that remains as the distinguishing characteristic in the state of liberation; and consequently, the excellence and effulgence of Parabrahman continue to remain far more superior to the *mukta-jīvas* (released selves).⁷⁷⁸

8.14 Attainment of Akṣaradhāma and Other Realms

The BG explains the vast difference between both:

आब्रह्मभुवनाल्लोकाः पुनरावर्तिनोऽर्जुन ।

मामुपेत्य तु कौन्तेय पुनर्जन्म न विद्यते ॥BG 8/16॥

“The dwellers of all the worlds, below the world of *Brahmā*, are subject to the miseries of repeated birth and death. But, after attaining Me, O Arjuna, one does not take birth again.” Thus, in the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School, only *brahmarūpa* devotees can attain the ultimate liberation. Otherwise, through only conducting charities or the *sāttvika kārmas*, one can attain Swarga Loka (heaven). After enjoying heavenly sense pleasures, they return to this mortal world upon the end of their good *kārma* (or *punya*). In this manner, Bhadreśadāsa explains, the performers of Vedic rituals take repeated birth and death without being *brahmarūpa*.⁷⁷⁹ Moreover, the Worshippers of the *devas* go to the *devas*, the worshippers of the ancestors go to the ancestors, and the worshippers of the ghosts go to the ghosts,

⁷⁷⁶ MU 3/1/9

⁷⁷⁷ Vac. Kar. 1, Gadh. 2/66

⁷⁷⁸ BSSB 2/3/23, CUSB 3/14/2-3, BUSB 4/3/7

⁷⁷⁹ BGSB 9/21, p.214, MUSB 1/2/10, p.252

but my devotees, who offer *upāsanā* to Parabrahman come to me and are not born again.⁷⁸⁰ And those who have committed only sins in their lives will be subjected to infernal realms.⁷⁸¹

9. Conclusion

The history of human existence is a history of endless efforts to eradicate sorrow and attain happiness. But due to our *kārma*-bondage misery remains forever. Then what should we do to uproot this bondage and acquire the ultimate bliss? Perhaps this was the only search and research of the great thinkers. Death alone is not the full-stop to our sufferings. There is an infinitive stream of lives; it would mean a tragic blow to the sense of human adventure, freedom, and effort. We cannot be satisfied with less than immortality. More than that, immortality must be accompanied by joy. This state indeed is liberation or *moksha*. In this way, the fifth chapter of this thesis discusses liberation, the ultimate fruit of spiritual endeavor. In the *Svāminārāyaṇa* School, liberation is defined as a state in which one is *brahmarūpa* and offers *bhakti* to Paramātmān. The *Vacanāmṛta* and the *Svāminārāyaṇa* Bhāṣyas further explain two types of liberation, or *mukti* - *jīvanmukti* and *videhamukti*. *Jīvanmukti* is spiritual perfection that is reached while one is still living. The state a released self experiences after death is known as *videhamukti*.

This chapter provides an efficient analysis of *jīvanamukti* and *videhamukti* at length, describing the process by which one becomes a *videhamukta* and the benefits that the *videhamukta* enjoys. Specifically, after the death of the physical body, There, the self receives a new body, attains divine virtues like those of Brahman and Paramātmā, and enjoys eternal bliss. Upon *videhamukti*, the self does not return to

⁷⁸⁰ BGSB 9/25, p.216

⁷⁸¹ BSSB 3/1/12, link, p.275

saṃsāra. All of them (*muktas*) enjoy the same enjoyment (i.e. the same *darśana*) and the same bliss of Parabrahman.