ABSTRACT

Parabrahman Puruṣottama Svāminārāyaṇa offered novel contributions to the Vedanta philosophical tradition by presenting the principles of the *Akṣarapuruṣottama Siddhānta* (doctrine) and establishing the *Akṣarapuruṣottama Darśana*, and an independent *Vedāntika* school of thought. Although Svāminārāyaṇa's teachings were based on the Vedic principles yet, Svāminārāyaṇa did not commission the writings of *Bhāṣya* or commentary on the *Prasthānatrayī* (*Upaniṣads*, the *Bhagavatgītā*, and the *Brahmasūtras*) in his time. Nevertheless, in his time, his teachings had been compiled by five senior *sādhus*. This compilation is known as the *Vacanāmṛta*.[1] Two centuries later, commentaries (henceforth *Bhāṣya*) in the Svāminārāyaṇa School were written and unequivocally acclaimed. The author of the *Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya* Sādhu Bhadreśadāsa claims that this *Bhāṣya*, on the *Prasthānatrayī*, represents the eternal Vedic ideology proclaimed by Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa. Essentially, Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa has evidently elucidated all his fundamental philosophical principles in his *Vacanāmṛta*. The *Vacanāmṛta* is the most authentic scripture of the *Svāminārāyaṇa* faith. It is a historical monument that is compiled in front of Svāminārāyaṇa's eyes.

When we talk about the principles, which were given by Svāminārāyaṇa two hundred years ago, are authored today into the scholastic way on the base of *Prasthānatrayī*, it provokes many issues regarding the authenticity of the teaching of Svāminārāyaṇa and the principles shaped by the Bhāṣyakāra according to the *Prasthānatrayī*. Since the period of two hundred years is enough to change the phenomenon of social, religious, and moral aspects of any particular region. Consequently, these changes can also be perceived in the various other writings which are stood at two different and vast time zone.

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[1] We will provide a profound introduction of the *Vacanāmṛta* and the *Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya* after a few pages.

This thesis comparatively analyzes the principles between the *Vacanāmṛta* and the *Prasthānatrayī-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya* of Sādhu Bhadreśadāsa to determine to what proportion the *Bhāṣya* accords with the principles of Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa encoded in the *Vacanāmṛta*. Therefore, by critically analyzing Sādhu Bhadreśadāsa's commentaries in light of Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa's *Vacanāmṛta*, this thesis intends to bring forth a valid conclusion.

Now, these days the *Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya* is the most growing faith across the world. Hundreds of thousands of numbers of devotees are following the principles of the *Sampradāya*. A vast literature has been written and enormous research has been conducted on *Svāminārāyaṇaism* in India and abroad. However, much of the research up to now has been descriptive in nature. Moreover, this work is limited to providing some explanations on some particular topic of the work. In addition to this, this literature is unable to present the entire picture of *Svāminārāyaṇa* faith on accordance with the *darśanika* factors which are based on the *Prasthānatrayī Śāstras*. It was a big gap in that field of research, so there was an urgent need to address this demand and be fulfilled.

I am very fortunate because, for the first time in the history of *Svāminārāyaṇa* faith, I received the opportunity to fulfill the gap. When the *Prasthānatrayī Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya* was published during 2007-2012, an imperious requirement arose to match the original Svāminārāyaṇa's teachings (the *Vacanāmṛta*) with the novel *Bhāṣyas*. Finally, I was chosen to match both scriptures in an analytical way. This thesis is indeed investigating whether the novel Bhāṣyakāra is following the Svāminārāyaṇa's teaching or not. We will examine this by dividing the work into four parameters: 1. On the Basis of Epistemology 2. On the Basis of Metaphysics 3. On the Basis of Spiritual Practice and 4. On the Basis of Liberation.

System of Writing:

Italics: This research work is based on two major scriptures: the *Prasthānatrayī* and the *Vacanāmṛta*. The first part covers some of the world's oldest Sanskrit texts such as the *Upaniṣad*, *Gītā*, and *Brahmasūtra*. The second part is considered the oldest Gujarati prose. However, they all possess a different language than my thesis language; thus the sheer number of their occurrence will raise the difficulty for the readers. Therefore, I have chosen to italicize Sanskrit and Gujarati words or titles of key sources.

Translation: Unless otherwise stated, all translations from Sanskrit and Gujarati works are my own. For the *Vacanāmṛta*, I used the Gujarati edition, published in Dec 2003 with detailed footnotes and appendices (700 pages).[2] Within the body of this work, after citing the original Sanskrit lines, I have put the translation in the inverted comma first, then explanation and argumentation follow. Sometimes, if necessary, I have provided a detailed explanation of the particular Sanskrit or Gujarati words which have the special meaning in the *sampradāya* to understand, such as *apopu* (Gujarati) or *ātmaghātī* (Sanskrit). Again at the end of the thesis in the appendix, a list of Gujarati and Sanskrit words with their English translation is furnished.

Transliteration: To read, pronunciation, and understand the Sanskrit and Gujarati words perfectly, I have used the standard scheme established by the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Translation for *Devanāgarī* script (IAST). To indicate plurality, however, I have taken the conjugate base nouns in both Sanskrit and Gujarati according to English grammar rules. For instance, the plural or *vṛkṣa* is written as *vṛkṣas* (meaning trees). Also, when necessary, I have applied English suffixes to

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[2] The reason to take this version of the *Vacanāmṛta* is the familiarity of the pages and paragraphs since I had memorized the entire *Vacanāmṛta* of 700 pages in 2005.

Samskṛta and Gujarati words to form modifiers such as *māyic*, *śāstrika*, *sāmpradāyika*, *brahmika*, etc. Their lexical forms follow English conventions rather than those of Sanskrit or Gujarati. For instance, Vedic, yogic, and *Upaniṣadic*, rather than *Vedika*, *Yaugikā*, and *Aupaniṣadika*, as they would be otherwise. I have generally not ventured much beyond adjectives, though this rule could easily be extended to adverbs and form useful terms such as yogically, *sāmpradāyikally,* and others.

Capitalization: I have made some special capitalization to emphasize words like: The Guru: Here, The Guru is used to indicate the Brahamasvarūpa Akṣarabrahma Guru, by whom God manifest on earth. The Bhāṣyakara: this term is used for only *Prasthānatrayī Svāminārāyaṇa* Bhāṣyakara Sādhu Bhadreśadāsa.

Abbreviations: Frequently used titles of key scriptures as the *Upaniṣad*, *Gītā*, *Brahmasūtra*, *Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya,* the *Vacanāmṛta*, and other major sections have been abbreviated as below when used in citations and sometimes within the text.

AU	*Aitareya Upaniṣad*
AUSB	*Aitareya Upaniṣad Svāminārāyaṇa- Bhāṣya*
	(This style is used for all of the *Upaniṣad Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya*, ex. MUSB for *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad Svāminārāyaṇa- Bhāṣya* and so on)
BG	*Bhagavad-Gītā*
BGSB	*Bhagavad-Gītā Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya*
BP	*Bhāgavata-Purāṇa*
BS	*Brahmasūtras*
BSSB	*Brahmasūtra Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya*
BU	*Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad*
CU	*Chāndogya Upaniṣad*

IU	*Īśa Upaniṣad*
KU	*Katha Upaniṣad*
KeU	*Kena Upaniṣad*
MāU	*Māndūkya Upaniṣad*
MU	*Mundaka Upaniṣad*
PU	*Praśna Upaniṣad*
SB	*Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya*
SU	*Svetāśvatara Upaniṣad*
SV	*Svāmīnī Vāto*
TU	*Taittiriya Upaniṣad*
Vac. Amd.	*Vacanāmṛta Amdāvād*
Vac. Gadh.1	*Vacanāmṛta Gadhadā* I
Vac. Gadh.2	*Vacanāmṛta Gadhadā* II
Vac. Gadh.3	*Vacanāmṛta Gadhadā* III
Vac. Jet.	*Vacanāmṛta Jetalapura*
Vac. Kār.	*Vacanāmṛta Kāriyānī*
Vac. Loyā	*Vacanamrut Loyā*
Vac. Pan.	*Vacanāmṛta Pancālā*
Vac. Sār.	*Vacanāmṛta Sārangpur*
Vac. Var.	*Vacanāmṛta Vartāl*
VR	*Vedarasa*
Vac. Rah.	*Vacanāmṛta Rahasya*
SSSK	*Svāminārāyaṇa Siddhāntsudhā Kārikā*
SS	*Sāmkhya Sūtra*
YS	*Yoga Sūtra*
NS	*Nyāya Sūtra*
JS	*Jaiminī Sūtra*
VS	*Vaiśeṣika Sūtra*
SK	*Sāmkhyakārikā*

Referencing: For sources such as the *Vacanāmṛta, Svāminī Vāto*, the *Upaniṣads, Brahmasūtras, Gītā, Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, other *Darśana Sūtras*, I have adhered to the Indian tradition of noting their section, chapter and verse or aphorism. I have provided references to applicable primary sources using the following method: placing an abbreviated title of the text followed by its pertinent chapter, sub-chapter, and verse number. I have done this to accommodate those familiar with the traditional method of referencing and more practically, to aid the reader to quickly find the quoted text in an alternative, available published version of the text. However, when the exact quotation is written from the *Vacanāmṛta,* the *Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya, Prasthānatrayī* texts and *Svāminārāyaṇa Siddhāntasudhā* I intentionally marked the page number with their respective section number, chapter number, and verse number right after the quotation on the main page. This helps to understand the philosophical flow of the thesis rather than to put all references in the footnote. This becomes very useful in a case where a single verse of the *Bhāṣya* is enunciated in length and it covers many pages. I have mentioned all the publishing information of the book or the scriptures whom I have used to cite the references directly or indirectly, including author, book's name, page number, publisher, publishing year, version etc., except those few old books which miss this information partly.

Methods of Analysis: The potential audience of this work is expected to be varied in terms of their familiarity with the *Upaniṣads*, *Gītā*, *Brahmasūtra*, and the *Vacanāmṛta*. Moreover, the languages of the related texts should be considered as a key factor to understand the substratum of the thesis. Addressing such diversity requires not only a balance between a thorough elucidation of readings and concepts and the economy of language but also a continual awareness and the need for an exposition of the subtle interpretive forces underlying the act of translation. Additionally, and quite related, is keeping in mind the audience's different

perspectives about the meaning, intent, and philosophy of the *Prasthānatrayī* that are influenced by different renderings of the texts and its subsequent works.

Because the *Prasthānatrayī* is considered to be an authoritative philosophical and sacred theological text, many modern and traditional commentators have sought its authority to substantiate their respective schools of thought. Finally, the *Akṣarapuruṣottama Darśana*, being a novel *darśana*, the lack of its accessible robust philosophical literature on it was also a challenge. Indian thought is typical. When engaging with it, one often experiences an unfamiliarity with its language, texts, topics of discussion, concepts, and sometimes even its ends. Rādhākṛṣṇana and Moore explain this convergence when they say, "The basic texts of Indian philosophy treat not only one phase of experience and reality but of the full content of the philosophic sphere. Metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, religion, psychology, facts, and value are not cut off one from the other but are treated in their natural unity as aspects of one life and experience or of a single comprehensive reality."[3]

Rādhākṛṣṇana says further that the Indian traditional way is the best way to find the answer to the Indian philosophical questions. Differences in categorization, methodology, types of problems, and emphasis require the understanding of Indian thought using its own terms and judged by its own methods. In this manner, in terms of methodology, I am treading on our ancient traditional Indian path.

I wish to mention that this thesis highlights the Svāminārāyaṇa School only. Although it is a novel *darśana*, and new readers and outsiders find it difficult to understand, therefore in my introductory chapter, I have explained the *Svāminārāyaṇa* history, tradition, faith, customs, norms, system, doctrines, and the *guruparamparā*. Though it has become a little lengthy, yet it was most significant

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[3] Rādhākṛṣṇana and Moore, a source book of Indian philosophy xxix, Princeton university Press, April, 1967

to understand such deep traditional thoughts. Here, I mention the basic points of the thesis study guide:

1. The entire thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is an introductory chapter. Then I divide the work into four parameters: 1. On the Basis of Epistemology 2. On the Basis of Metaphysics 3. On the Basis of Spiritual Practice and 4. On the Basis of Liberation. The last chapter is the conclusion of the entire thesis.

2. Topics and subtopics are formed according to the basic philosophical factors of *Svāminārāyaṇa* tradition.

3. Each and every topic or subtopic is explained in length to the extent of its complexity. I have used sometime philology and hermeneutics also in need to explain some particular words.

4. Then I bring the torch of the Svāminārāyaṇa's *Vacanāmṛta*. After providing the direct quotation of the *Vacanāmṛta*, I explain the context of it.

5. Then *Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya* follows on that particular topic. In this, I highlight the fundamental essence of the *Bhāṣya*.

6. Then analysis starts of both these scriptures.

7. After discussion and argumentation, we reach a definite conclusion. In short, this research is analytical as far as the research type is concerned. It includes four factors for analysis; epistemology, metaphysics, spiritual practice, and soteriology. The scope of the research reaches the two prominent scriptures of the Svāminārāyaṇa Saṃpradāya; the *Vacanāmṛta* and the *Prasthānatrayī* Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya. The research method compares both scriptures based on some specific principles with the help of the ancient Indian Vedic process.

A vast literature of the *Svāminārāyaṇa Saṃpradāya* has been reviewed for the research which includes all the *Prasthānatrayī Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyas*, *Vacanāmṛta, Vacanāmṛtarahasya* five volumes, biographies of Svāminārāyaṇa and Gurus, and many more books written on the *Vacanāmṛta*. In the beginning, the null

hypothesis was set that the principles described in both scriptures have no relation. The work is not about :

1. This work is not a systematic commentary of the *Prasthānatrayī*.

2. This work is not just a compilation that accumulates all the references of the *Prasthānatrayī* on a particular topic or subtopic.

3. This text also does not embrace the methods of a persuasive essay in that it does not attempt to convince the reader to accept any particular interpretation.

4. This work is not an exercise of comparative philosophical study with other schools of Indian philosophies.

5. The work does not claim for a particular interpretation as being correct and others as being flawed, even after applying the perfect methods.

6. The research work is not just a translation of the Gujarati text and *Prasthānatrayī* text.

7. The work ignores the western methods of interpretation of Indian text.