

APPENDIX

Philosophical Document: (A translation of the philosophical letter encompassing the principles of Swaminarayan Vedānta written by Pramukha Svamī Mahārāja)

The five entities - *jīva*, *īśvara*, *māyā*, Brahman and Parabrahman - are eternal, existent and forever ontologically distinct.

Parabrahman

Parabrahman Purusottamanārāyaṇa, who is the sovereign of Akṣara, is eternal, supreme, always divine, ever with a form, faultless, above māyā, one and unparalleled, and a *cetana* (sentient) entity. Within his divine Akṣaradhāman, he is seated on a divine throne in his eternally divine, lustrous, and teenage human form, complete with two arms and all other features. He (Parabrahman) is worshipped with *dāsabhāva* (wilful servitude) by the *mūrtimān* (personal) form of Akṣarabrahman and infinite *muktas* (released *jīvātmans* and *īśvarātmans*). These *muktas* have attained a *brāhmitanu* and have attained likeness with Akṣarabrahman. Parabrahman is eternally and innately replete with infinite liberating virtues and devoid of the qualities of *māyā*. He is without deficiency, forever possesses all powers, is all-knowing, and the all-doer. He is the material and efficient cause of all creation. He, while residing in his divine Akṣaradhāman in his *vyatireka* (particular) form, pervades and is the support of infinite *brahmāṇḍas* (universes) in his *anvaya* (all-pervasive) form as their *antaryāmin*. He is always infinitely more powerful than *jīvas*, *īśvaras*, *māyā*, Akṣara *muktas*, and Akṣarabrahman and is their independent controller, inspirer, and *śarīrin* (embodier). By his own wish, he is the giver of the fruits of the actions of all the *jīvas* and *īśvaras*, and is the inspirer of their ability to will, to know, and to do.

Parabrahman Puruṣottamanārāyaṇa, who is imperceptible by *māyic* (worldly) *indriyas* (senses) and *antahkaraṇa* (inner faculties), while remaining in

Akṣaradhāman, by his own divine wish and out of compassion, for the ultimate liberation of infinite *jīvas* and *īśvaras*, and to fulfill the wishes of his devotees, manifests with all his divine virtues, powers, etc., in perceptible human form in each brahmānda and becomes visible to all. That manifest form of Parabrahman Paramātmā is Sahajānanda Svāmī Mahārāja - Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa Bhagavān. Only he is the absolute focus of worship for us all. He always remains entirely manifest in his *anvaya* form through the Akṣarabrahman Guru to forever continue the *upāsana* (worshipful service) of his manifest form even after his disappearance (leaving of his human body).

He (Parabrahman) is the cause of all *avatāras*; he is the *avatārin* and the sovereign of them all. An *avatāra* occurs when He (Parabrahman) pervades a *jīva* or *īśvara* with the wish to fulfill a task. The *cetanas* (beings) of each of these *avatāras* are ontologically and inherently distinct from one another. Like these *avatāras*, the *cetanas* (*ātmans*) of the Caturvyūha, which includes Vasudeva; the twenty-four *avatāras* which include Keśava; and other beings are also ontologically and inherently distinct from one another.

Akṣarabrahman

Akṣarabrahman is distinct from Parabrahman, and like Parabrahman, it is eternal, one, beyond the three guṇas (qualities), a *cetana* (sentient) entity, and forever divine. Replete with infinite liberating virtues and devoid of all *māyic* qualities, it is eternally without faults. This Akṣarabrahman's form, qualities, powers, etc., are dependent only on Parabrahman. By Parabrahman's eternal wish, it is the cause, support, pervader, controller, and *sarīrin* of all creation, which is *jadacidātmaka*?. Although Akṣarabrahman is metaphysically one entity, it serves in different ways through four forms. In its *cidākāśa* form, Akṣarabrahman pervades within and outside infinite *brahmāṇdas* and upholds them.

As an abode (Akṣaradhāman), Akṣarabrahman is the divine abode of 1) Parabrahman; 2) the *mūrtimān* form of Akṣarabrahman, who is in his (Parabrahman's) service; and 3) infinite Akṣara *muktas* (released *jīvātmans* and *īśvarātmans*). There is only one such Akṣaradhāman. It is eternal and forever beyond the three guṇas. Only *muktas*, who have attained qualitative similarity to Akṣarabrahman, are able to enter it. In that same Akṣaradhāman, Akṣarabrahman's form as the personal attendant has, like Parabrahman, a divine human form complete with two arms and all other features. As the ideal for Akṣara *muktas*, he forever remains engrossed in Parabrahman's service.

That very Akṣarabrahman manifests in human form, in each *brahmānda* along with Parabrahman, as the Guru, who is the complete and uninterrupted vessel of Parabrahman. Akṣara can make bound *jīvas* and *īśvaras* of the world *brahmarūpa*, have them attain *uttama nirvikalpa niscaya* (the greatest unwavering conviction) of Parabrahman, attain ultimate liberation, and forever experience the manifest presence. Paramātmā through his (Akṣara's) divine association. He protects the traditions of the *sampradāya* and causes all to experience supreme bliss. Guṇātītānanda Svāmi, Bhagataji Mahārāja, Shastriji Maharaja and Yogiji Maharaja have appeared in this succession of *guṇātīta* Akṣarabrahman Gurus. This succession will continue uninterruptedly. At any given time, the path of ultimate liberation remains open through only one Guru.

Māyā

Māyā is composed of the three *gunas*, eternally changing, *jada*, a material cause of the creation of infinite *brahmāndas*, and Paramātmā's diverse, mysterious power. As the cause of ego and attachment of *jīvas* and of *īśvaras*, this very *māyā* has been the cause of their births and deaths since eternity. Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman are forever entirely untainted by, beyond, and the *śarīrin* of this *māyā*.

Īśvara

An Īśvara is an eternal *cetana* (sentient) entity distinct from Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, and *jīvas*. Despite being extremely powerless when compared to Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman, these *īśvaras* bear greater power and knowledge than *jīvas*. Through his wish, Paramātmā inspires them to perform tasks of creation, etc., of the *brahmāndas*. Like the *jīvas*, these *īśvaras* are countless in number, infinitesimal (extremely small), indivisible, and possess other such qualities. They are *jñānasvarūpa*,” *jñātā* (those who know), and eternally bound by *māyā*. They perform righteous and unrighteous *karmas* (actions) and experience the fruits of those actions. Pradhāna Purusa, Virāt Purusa, the deities of their senses (*indriyas*) and the inner faculties (*antahkarana*), Brahmā, Viṣṇu, Mahēśa, and others are all beings of the *īśvara* category, and these *īśvaras* are ontologically and inherently distinct from one another.

Jīva

The *jīva* is an eternal, *cetana* (sentient) entity ontologically distinct from Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman, and *īśvaras*. These *jīvas* are countless, infinitesimal (extremely small), indivisible, and possess other such qualities. They are *jñānasvarūpa*, *jñātā* (those who know), and eternally bound by *māyā*. They perform righteous and unrighteous *karmas* (actions) and experience the fruits of those actions.

Spiritual Endeavour and Its Benefits

To attain ultimate liberation, *mumuksus* (spiritual aspirants) should have firm love for Parabrahman Puruṣottama Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa and the present Akṣarabrahman Guru, through whom Parabrahman is fully and continuously manifest, by having ‘*nirdosa buddhi*’ in them, a feeling of the highest divinity in them, and upon meeting them, a conviction in having met the present form of

Parabrahman. They should greatly please them by firmly associating with them through thought, word, and deed.

Aspirant *jīvas* and *īśvaras* who endeavor in this way, through Parabrahman's grace, having attained *ekāntika dharma* and having become *brahmarūpa*, that is, having attained similarity' to Akṣarabrahman, acquire the highest devotion to Parabrahman. All their miseries and faults are forever destroyed, and they experience the supreme bliss of Paramātmā while alive. By Paramātmā's wish, such a *brahmarūpa* devotee, upon leaving the body, attains Paramātmā's Akṣaradhāman through the Arcimārga. There, having attained a *brāhmic*-body, the devotee forever enjoys divine bliss while offering, with *dāsabhāva*, service in the form of performing darśana of Parabrahman, the Lord of Akṣaradhāman.

The Meaning behind Akṣarapuruṣottama Upāsanā

Akṣarapuruṣottama *upāsanā* is not the *upāsanā* of two entities – Akṣara and Puruṣottama; but it refers to offering *upāsanā* to Puruṣottama having become *Akṣararūpa* - in other words, to offer *upāsanā* to Parabrahman having become *brahmarūpa*. When Parabrahman, who travels (manifests) in human form, returns to his abode, he absorbs the powers of the Brahmasvarūpa Guru and himself travels (remains manifest on earth) through him. Therefore, an aspirant who associates with the manifest Guru is, in fact, offering *upāsanā* only to one Paramātmān. The meaning of the Svāminārāyaṇa *mahāmantra* is incorporated in this meaning of Akṣara-Puruṣottama *upāsanā*: That is, to become *svāmirūpa* - *Akṣararūpa*, and offer devotion - *upāsanā* with *dāsabhāva* to Nārāyaṇa - Parabrahman Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa.

Conclusion

In this way, these philosophical principles are Vedic, eternal, revealed by Śrījī Mahārāja (Svāminārāyaṇa), and propagated by the lineage of guṇātīta gurus. Jaya

Svāminārāyana from Sāstrī Nārāyaṇasvarūpadāsa. Guru Purnimā, Samvata 2064 (18 July 2008), Bocāsana