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**“Analytical Study of The Prasthānatrayī Svāminarāyaṇa
Bhāṣyam in Light of Svāminarāyaṇ’s Vacanāmṛta”**

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ANALYTICAL STUDY OF THE PRASTHĀNATRAYĪ SVĀMINĀRĀYAṆ BHĀṢYAS IN LIGHT OF SVĀMINĀRĀYAṆA'S VACANĀMṚTA

I. Introduction

In the Indian Vedantic tradition, the Prasthānatrayī holds significant prominence. Great teachers from Adi Śaṅkarācārya's era to contemporary times have established and authenticated their doctrines on the basis of Prasthānatrayī. In the Prasthānatrayī, the three canons are included; the Upaniṣads, the Bhagavadgītā, and the Brahmasūtras. Although Svāminārāyaṇa did not commission the writings of Bhāṣyam or commentary on the Prasthānatrayī in his time. Two centuries later, commentaries (henceforth Bhāṣyam) based on his philosophical principles were written and unequivocally acclaimed. With HDH Pramukha Svāmī Mahārāja's inspiration and blessings, Sādhu Bhadreśadāsa authored the Bhāṣhyas on the Prasthānatrayī. This is indeed a great work in the field of Indian philosophical system in our time.

Sādhu Bhadreśadāsa claims that this Bhāṣyam, 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 Swaminarayan's eyes.

This thesis comparatively analyzes the principles between the Vacanāmṛta and the Prasthānatrayī-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam of Sādhu Bhadreśadāsa to determine to what proportion the Bhāṣyam 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.

The Problems and Solution

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 bhashykar 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.

In addition to this, the Vacanāmṛta is in the Gujarati language which differs from our modern Gujarati. The Vacanāmṛta is nothing but the spiritual discourses delivered by Svāminārāyaṇa in front of the assembly. Although, Svāminārāyaṇa reflects his unique philosophy in the form of the Vacanāmṛta, yet his teachings were very simple and practical and applicable in nature which is a significantly different attitude as compare to the Bhāṣyam tradition. On the other hand, in the Bhāṣyam tradition, the Sanskrit language is a vital life. In the modern world, only a few people know this high profile language. Moreover, you can not find a person today who is living his spiritual life by reading the Bhāṣyam. So due to the two different time zone, different languages different backgrounds and different natures of these two scriptures, it was a challenging task to conduct research on the topic.

As a solution, I am very fortunate that I came across a live guruparmapara. Today Svāminārāyaṇa's sixth spiritual successor and guru HDH Mahant Svāmī Mahārāja is present here. The teachings of Svāminārāyaṇa, the mystery of the ancient texts, depth

of spiritual principles, and a practical day to day spiritual life, which was understood directly from him.

The second benefit for me was the availability of the Bhāṣyakāra. In the entire world, the only Vedānta Bhāṣyakāra Bhadrēśadāsa is living on earth today. In this way, we discussed the thesis topics and got guidance from him. He taught the Bhāṣyas us in a regular class. Since we are living in the same monastery so almost every day, I grabbed the opportunity to understand various subjects of the Bhāṣyas.

Hence, with the help of this above-mentioned solution, in this thesis, I have conducted an analysis of the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam in light of Svāminārāyaṇa's Vacanāmṛta.

An example

In numerous readings, the Vacanāmṛta describes Puruṣottama as a distinct ontological entity that is beyond Akṣara. Svāminārāyaṇa explains, “At the time of creation Puruṣottama Bhagavān who is **akṣarātīta** glances towards Akṣara.” (Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 1/41). Here, Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa clearly states that Puruṣottama Bhagavān is beyond Akṣara. A similar elaboration is provided in the Muṇḍakopaniṣat-Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam's exposition of “Akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ.” (Muṇḍakopaniṣad 2/1/2)

The commentary upholds the above-mentioned teaching of Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa by elaborating on the distinct meanings expressed by the two instances of the word ‘para’ that appear within this mantra. When both instances are understood in the manner proposed, the mantra is read to express: “Puruṣottama is superior than the superior Akṣara.” The commentary clarifies that the mantra reveals Akṣara is superior in that it is greater than the jīvas, īśvaras, and māyā; and as a result, is identified as para; whereas Puruṣottama is identified as ‘parātparaḥ’ - superior than the superior Akṣara. The resemblance of the commentary's exposition

of the mantra with that of Svāminārāyaṇa revelation in the Vacanāmṛta (Vacanāmṛta Gaḍhaḍā 1/41) expresses not only that the commentary adheres to the teachings of the Vacanāmṛta, but also that the teachings of the Vacanāmṛta afford a particular interpretation of the Muṇḍakopaniṣad.

Significance of the Study

As described earlier, the Vacanāmṛta is considered to be principal sacred text of the Svāminārāyaṇa saṃpradāya and the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. The Prasthānatrayī-Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam offers a comprehensive exposition of the various texts of the Prasthānatrayī according to the principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. By evaluating the principles expressed within both texts, this work serves as a bridge that defines the relationship between the Vacanāmṛta and the SvāminārāyaṇaBhāṣyam. In addition, by presenting this relationship, this work also indirectly examines how Upaniṣadic revelations are reflected within Svāminārāyaṇa's teachings. As such, this project serves as a means through which scholars, students, and aspirants may understand not only the role, significance, and relationship between the Vacanāmṛta and the SvāminārāyaṇaBhāṣyam, but also how their expositions contribute to the larger darśanic dialogue.

The focus of the research

The research work conducts its analysis by focusing on the evaluation of the SvāminārāyaṇaBhāṣyam's expositions as they are presented within the Vacanāmṛta in context of the following three categories: the darśana's pramāṇa-mīmāṃsā (epistemology), tattva-mīmāṃsā (metaphysics), and mukti-mīmāṃsā (soteriology). Specifically, investigations within these categories will involve comparing the Vacanāmṛta's revelation and the SvāminārāyaṇaBhāṣyam's interpretation and exposition of, among others. In addition to this, the scope of my thesis is too broad, more specifically, it includes all the Prasthānatrayī-SvāminārāyaṇaBhāṣyam, so due

to a practical problem I did not include all the references on a particular topic; nevertheless, I have not left any topic or subtopic in the thesis without direct or indirect references from both scriptures the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam and the Vacanāmṛta. Most importantly, to take a principle and analyze it from both of the scriptures and the viewpoints of the respective authors were demanding hundreds of pages; therefore I prominently focused on it.

Chapter - I

Introduction

This chapter figures out some basic introduction of principles that provide a strong foundation to understand the Vedic Indian tradition on which the building of this thesis is located. The six ancient darshans; Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Mīmāṃsā, and Vedānta are briefly introduced here. Moreover, the six prominent Vaidika darśanas; Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvait, Dvaitādvaita, Śuddhādvaita, and Acintyabhedābheda; are narrated here, which play a vital role to differentiate the Svāminārāyaṇa darśana from those darśanas.

The introduction of the Prasthānatrayī- shastras (Upanishad, Gītā, Brahmasūtra) and the Bhāṣya tradition enrich this chapter. As far as Svāminārāyaṇa tradition is concerned we have briefly provided the life and work of Svāminārāyaṇa and its live guruparaṃparā. More importantly, the two scriptures the Vacanāmṛta and the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyas which play a major role in the thesis are deeply introduced in the chapter. The entire introductory chapter is structured in such a manner that even an outsider can understand the basic principles of the thesis.

Chapter – 2

Analysis on the Basis of Pramāṇamīmāṃsā (Epistemology)

This chapter focuses on the Indian Pramāṇa tradition, which is concerned with the means and criteria of valid empirical knowledge and correct cognition. Although all

the famous and traditionally accepted pramāṇas in the Indian philosophical systems are analyzed here on the basis of the Vacanāmṛta and the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyas, such as perception, inference, verbal testimony, analogy, etc. yet this chapter aims to decipher some unique stars in the sky of epistemology.

In this manner, As far as the number of pramanas is concerned, the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition harbors totally different attitudes. For example, The Prasthānatrayī Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam clearly mentions the significance of Pramāṇa (BSSB-1/1/1, 1/1/3; KeUSB-1/3; BUSB-2/4/5), however, like Svāminārāyaṇa, the Bhāṣyakāra is not bound with the fixed numbers of Pramāṇa. He averred- “ब्रह्मब्रह्मपरौ प्रमाणशतकैर्मयाऽधिपौ कीर्तितौ” (SSS- Maṅgalam -1).

Along with this, the pramnyam of pramāṇa also depends on Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman along with the guru, they are indeed determinant and cause of all Pramāṇa and Pramā (knowledge), they are the cause of intellect that obtains knowledge and provide the knowledge to a seeker and are knowable. Their grace is indispensable to attain true knowledge. The discussion between logic, Shastra, and the Guru also provides a special feature to this chapter. At the end of this chapter, khyativada of the Svāminārāyaṇa school is presented as well.

Chapter – 3

Analysis on the Basis of Tatvamīmāṃsā (Metaphysics)

In this chapter, the Metaphysics of Svāminārāyaṇa school is analyzed based on the Vacanāmṛta and the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyas. Metaphysics is related to the study of the eternal ontological entity or entities in a particular belief system.¹ Svāminārāyaṇa reveals straightforwardly, “From all the Vedas, Purāṇas, Itihāsa and Smṛti scriptures, I have gleaned the principle that jīva, māyā, Īśvara, Brahman and

¹ Brahmadarshandas Sadhu, Vachanmrta Rahashya, Pg. 2, Svāminārāyaṇa Aksharpith, 4th Edition Aug. 2004.

Parameśvara are all eternal.” (Vac. Gadh. 3/10). Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam confirms, “जीवेश्वरमायाब्रह्मरूपमुक्तादिसर्वेभ्यः परभूताद् ... अक्षरात्.... परभूतः ...परमात्मा ।”²

In the history of world philosophy, this is indeed the matchless principle of Svāminārāyaṇa school. It has been analyzed as a key factor in this chapter and provided elucidation on each entity with its nature, form, and function. Moreover, the chapter defines a clear distinction and relation among these ontological entities. The creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the cosmos are discussed and Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahma elaborated as its cause with critical argumentations. In addition to this, the narration of Akṣarabrahman as transcending maya is the most naval contribution to this chapter.

Chapter – 4

Analysis on the Basis of SādhanaMīmāṃsā (Spiritual endeavors)

This chapter deals with the spiritual endeavor or Sādhana a seeker has to perform in order to attain the ultimate reality. Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa and his Gunātīta Sādhus have lived and taught a unique and practical path of spiritual sādhanā that leads to the realization of Ātman, Brahman, and Paramātmā. We made this sādhana as our subject matter and analyzed it through the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam in light of the Vacanāmṛta.

The primary tool described here is a distinction and significance of self-effort and God’s grace. The chapter explicitly corroborated it. Then we moved to enunciate the most fundamental factor of the Svāminārāyaṇa sādhanā, Brahmabhava, which includes almost every spiritual sādhanā. To become brahmarūpa and offer upāsana to Parabrahman is the prominent sādhanā of the

² 5/2, *Mundaka Upanishad Svāminārāyaṇa Bhashya*, Sadhu Bhadresdas (December 2009, Svāminārāyaṇa Aksharpith, Ahmedabad)

tradition. Further, we have described the ekāntika dharma and its components (Dharm, Jñāna, Vairāgya, Bhakti). Refuge (āśraya), dīkṣā, niyama, general sādhanā, and atonement were the proficient points for the discussion in this chapter.

Our sādhanā chapter provides a detailed description of the importance of the Brahmasvarūpa Guru by which all aspirants can succeed in their spiritual quest and experience the ultimate bliss of God.

Chapter – 5

Analysis on the Basis of Mukti Mīmāṃsā (Soteriology)

Soteriology is the study of the divine accomplishment of the salvation³ of humanity; In Indian philosophy, soteriology can be defined as attaining Mokṣa. this chapter explains the fruit, the ultimate goal of the spiritual endeavors performed by a seeker. Within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, Here we have provided a lengthy description that devotees have a relationship with Akshar and Puruṣottama in the Sādhanadaśā and also after attaining mukti. Mukti defined as becoming akṣararūpa and offering bhakti to Puruṣottama with dāsabhāva. Thus, even in the state of mukti, one, upon becoming brahmarūpa, continuously offers upāsana to Puruṣottama with dāsabhāva.

Considering it in the background the chapter discusses the nature of bondage and liberation. In the liberation jīvanmukti and videhamukti has been elucidated. Moreover, by the oneness with Brahman one does not becomes Brahman or Parabrahman after becoming a jīvanmukta or videhmukta. This topic is corroborated with a large series of arguments. The way to the abode (Arcirādi Mārga), The state of mukti in the abode, brāhmī tanu (body of a mukta), the relation between God and

³ Definition of salvation in Christianity: Oxford, 2nd Ed. 1989: "The saving of the soul; the deliverance from sin and its consequences"

a mukta are discussed at length in this chapter. This chapter provides an efficient analysis of those prominent principles regarding soteriology described in the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam and the Vacanāmṛta.

Chapter – 6

Conclusion

The Vacanāmṛta is a principal sacred text of the Svāminārāyaṇa Saṃpradāya (religious tradition) delivered by Parabrahman Svāminārāyaṇa himself. After two hundred years of Svāminārāyaṇa's time, the Prasthānatrayī-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam are authored by Sādhu Bhadrēśadās.

This thesis analyzed and assessed the main doctrinal interpretations provided within the Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam and the Vacanāmṛta. The current study accumulated the number of factors where both scriptures propagate the same idea. After analyzing a number of examples, the findings clearly suggest that the Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyam thoroughly follows the Vacanāmṛta's principles. We can conclude by saying that Sādhu Bhadrēśadāsa has put the philosophical principle of Svāminārāyaṇa found in the Vacanāmṛta, in a scholastic way. The findings of this study have a number of important implications for them who intend to conduct research on the Svāminārāyaṇa-Darśana.