

Ch.11 Basic Philosophical Differences between Śrī Śwāminārāyaṇism and Śrī Vaisṇavism

Śrī Śwāminārāyaṇism

1. It postulates five ontological, metaphysical realities namely Jīva, Īśvara, Māyā, Akṣarabrahman, Parabrahman. (HVSS : 7, 233, SSJV 1/57/27-37, 4/21-54)
2. Except Parabrahman or Paramātmā, Jīva, Īśvara and Akṣarabrahman also are all in the group of *cetana tattva*. (Ref. as above)
3. Paramātmā, Puruṣhottama, Śrī Śwāminārāyaṇa is always having divine beautiful human body with two hands *dvibhuja*. Though he has dark complexion, because of effulgence he looks very fair. He is served by innumerable released souls namely Akṣaramuktas and the chief among them is Akṣarabrahman. All of them have similar divine body. (HVSS : 21, 146, Setumālā 59/5, 69/49.)
4. Śrī Śwāminārāyaṇa is the Supreme God. He is the source of all incarnations, always having human form, All-Doer and always present in the world either Himself personally or through his God-realised saint who is Akṣarabrahman in human form. (HVSS : 21, 142, 261)

Śrī Vaisṇavism

1. It postulates three ontological, metaphysical realities namely Cit (Jīva), Acit (Māyā or Prakṛti), Īśvara. (Śrī Bhāṣya II.1.9, Tattavatrāyam)
2. Except Parabrahman-Paramātmā, among the Cetana Tattvas there are three types of Jīvas. (Baddha, Mukta, Nitya) (Śrī Vaikuṇṭha Gadya, Yatīndramatadīpikā)
3. Paramātmā, Puruṣhottama, Nārāyaṇa has four hands, *Caturbhuja* and having *śankha* 'conch' *cakra* 'disc', *gadā* 'mace' and *padma* 'lotus' in his four hands. He is served by Śrī (Lakṣmī), Bhūdevī, Nīlādevī, Viṣvaksena, Śeṣa, Garuḍa etc. (Śrī Vaikuṇṭha Gadya, Śrī Sūkta)
4. Vāsudeva himself is Nārāyaṇa and Viṣṇu. (Nyāyasiddhānta, Īśvara Pariccheda)

5. We can say that it accepts only four forms or *vyūhas* namely God as 'Para' in Akṣaradhāma, as 'Antaryāmī' in every one's soul, as 'Arcā' in consecrated images (mūrtis) and Himself as having human form on earth. (HVSS : 40, 78, 127, 225)
Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha are different from and inferior to Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa, Śrī Śwāminārāyaṇa. (HVSS : 40, 78, 120, 127, 225)
6. Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa all are Īśvaras in their respective *brahmāṇḍas* but they are under Māyā. All of them are below Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman. (HVSS : 130)
7. True devotees of Śrī Śwāminārāyaṇa always feel unalloyed bliss on meeting the Divine in human form, either the God himself or His realised saint on earth. Those who feel themselves incomplete without actual perception of God in Goloka or Vaikuṇṭha or Akṣaradhāma, are ignorant. It is advised not to listen to them. (HVSS : 9)
8. The residence of God is Akṣaradhāma (HVSS : 12, 63, 64, 127, 163, 175)
9. There is hardly any description of huge palaces, gardens, fountains and means of enjoyment, in Akṣaradhāma
10. There is no indication of gender in Akṣaradhāma. All, including Parabrahman, Akṣarabrahman and Akṣaramuktas have similar divine human bodies with two hands.
5. Vāsudeva himself is Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. (Sātvata Saṁhitā)
6. Among Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa, Viṣṇu is the highest form. (Vedārthasaṅgraha, pp.28-29, Catuḥśloki - 1, Stotraratna - 11)
7. True devotees feel themselves incomplete and are unsatisfied till they have the vision of God Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa in Vaikuṇṭha. (Stotraratna-31, Śrī Vaikuṇṭha Gadya)
8. The residence of God namely Śrī Nārāyaṇa or Viṣṇu is Vaikuṇṭha. (Śrī Vaikuṇṭha Gadya)
9. There are beautiful palaces, gardens, fountains etc. in Vaikuṇṭha. (Śrī Vaikuṇṭha Gadya)
10. There are gender differences among the released souls and Nityamuktas in Vaikuṇṭha. (Śrī Praśnasaṁhitā : 23.186, Upendrasaṁhitā)

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| <p>11. The bodies of all released souls in Akṣaradhāma are Brāhmi and Nirguṇa. (HVSS : 37,64,92,126,146)</p> <p>12. In Akṣaradhāma only Akṣarabrahman is eternally realised entity. All others are Sañjātamuktas i.e. they were bound and then reached salvation and Akṣaradhāma.</p> <p>13. Akṣaradhāma is Trigunātīta Brahmadhāma (as per ref. no.11).</p> <p>14. Akṣaradhāma is infinite (as per ref. no. 11).</p> <p>15. Akṣaradhāma is Kālātīta. Kāla or time has no access to Akṣaradhāma (as per ref. no. 11).</p> <p>16. No Mukta in Akṣaradhāma has <i>kāraṇa śarīra</i> and therefore they are free from <i>śad ūrmi</i>, i.e. <i>Jarā</i>, <i>Mṛtyu</i>, <i>Bubhukṣā</i>, <i>Tṛṣṇā</i>, <i>Śoka</i> and <i>Moha</i> (HVSS : 163, 199).</p> <p>17. Akṣarabrahman is the second most prominent among the five ontological realities of Śrī Swāminārāyanism. This Reality is next only to Parabrahman.
There is almost uniform understanding about the importance of Akṣarabrahman Reality in Swāminārāyana philosophy.</p> | <p>11. The bodies of all muktas in Vaikuṇṭha have four hands and are made up of <i>śuddha-sattva</i>. (Lakṣmītantra : 17/5-6, Śrīpraśna-saṁhitā : 46 & 28, Bṛhadbrahma-saṁhitā : 1/7/54, 3/1/45, 3/2/76)</p> <p>12. In Vaikuṇṭha there are permanently liberated souls called <i>Nitya</i> as well as those who were <i>Baddha</i> and then became released or <i>Mukta</i>.</p> <p>13. Vaikuṇṭha-dhāma is <i>śuddha-sattva maya</i>.</p> <p>14. There is a definite area of the Dhāma. (Śrī Kṛṣṇasaṁhitā : 23/161-212)</p> <p>15. Time or Kāla has access in the Dhāma. (Bhāgavata : 8/5/5)</p> <p>16. In the Vaikuṇṭha-dhāma because of <i>karana-śarīra</i> the Muktas have anger, ego etc. (Bhāgavata : 3/15)</p> <p>17. In Vaikuṇṭha, Śrī or Lakṣmī, the consort of Nārāyaṇa, is the most prominent and important Bhakta. But about her ontological nature there are great differences among different schools or branches of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism.
Of course, there is uniform understanding about her very high importance.</p> |
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A. Akṣarabrahman is not Jīva or Īśvara, it is above Jīva, Īśvara and Māyā. It has four forms.

A1. Akṣarabrahman as Akṣaradhāma is brilliant, borderless, bliss-giving, dwelling place of Parabrahman and His devotees namely Akṣaramuktas. (HVSS : 12, 21, 122, 127)

A2. Akṣarabrahman is having divine human body similar to that of Parabrahman in Akṣaradhāma ⁹ serving Him. He is an ideal devotee among all. (Ref. as above)

A3. Akṣarabrahman is Cidākāśa and Daharākāśa. (HVSS : 46, 146)

A4. Akṣarabrahman is always present on the earth with divine human body as the Parama Ekāntika Satpuruṣa capable of giving freedom i.e., Mokṣapradātā.

18. Akṣarabrahman is Brahmarūpa yet he is always a servant of Parabrahman both in this world and in the next i.e. Akṣaradhāma. Thus, though Akṣarabrahman is very important as 'Guruhari' and the guide of all devotees, yet there is *Upāsanā* of only One i.e. Parabrahman, Puruṣottama, Nārāyaṇa identified with Śrī Swāminārāyaṇa. This particular belief is the belief of all the devotees of all different dioceses, subdivisions and branches of Śrī Swāminārāyanism. (HVSS : 117)

A. According to some Śrī Vaiṣṇava schools, Lakṣmī is of the nature of Jīva.

A1. Though Lakṣmī is of the nature of Jīva, she is all pervading.

A2. According to others Lakṣmī who is all pervading is neither like Jīva nor like Paramātmā or God.

A3. Lakṣmī is not capable of giving final freedom or creating the world like Paramātmā.

A4. Lakṣmī has all the qualities of Narayana or Paramātmā .

18. Śrī or Lakṣmī is the wife or the queen of Lord Nārāyaṇa. She helps the souls in their efforts to get grace of God who is strict, with the help, Śrī ^{of} or Lakṣmī a Mukta can reach God easily.

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| <p>19. Between Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman there is the relation of master and servant, God and devotee. (HVSS : 21)</p> <p>20. The presiding God of Akṣaradhāma is only Śrī Swāminārāyaṇa. Akṣarabrahman is always dependent on him and does what the Lord wishes. (HVSS : 64, 117)</p> <p>21. Akṣarabrahman is the Ādyaguru or the First Pontiff and Śrī Swāminārāyaṇa is the God of every Mukta including that of the Adyaguru, Akṣarabrahman.</p> <p>22. There are definite statements that Parabrahman is and will always remain present on the earth to give salvation to the devotees through his God-realised saint or by Himself. (HVSS : 27, 71, 219)</p> <p>23. Prakṛti which is Aṣṭāvaraṇātmakā has two forms (a) Mūla Prakṛti or higher Prakṛti (b) Nimna Prakṛti. The Mūla Prakṛti or higher one is the material cause of infinite numbers of Brahmāṇḍas. There is a definite concept of Ananta Brahmāṇḍas in Śrī Swāminārāyaṇism. The Nimna or lower Prakṛti is the material cause of individual Brahmāṇḍa. (HVSS : 12, 50, SSJV IV.68. 11 & 25)</p> | <p>19. Between Śrī and Nārāyaṇa there is a relation of husband-wife. They are called Divya-dampatī.</p> <p>20. Both Śrī and Nārāyaṇa are called Divya-dampatī. Both of them are <i>paramahita</i>.</p> <p>21. Both Śrī and Nārāyaṇa are inseparably united and cannot be differentiated just as radiance cannot be separated from the sun.</p> <p>22. There is no clear statement that Parabrahman, Paramātmā, Nārāyaṇa will always remain present on the earth by Himself or through Lakṣmī or any realised sage or <i>ṛṣi</i>.</p> <p>23. There are no clear references to the two forms of Prakṛti such as (a) Mūla Prakṛti or higher Prakṛti (b) Nimna Prakṛti or Lower Prakṛti.</p> |
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| <p>24. There is clear and detailed explanation of the Prakṛti, Puruṣa and their roles in the creation of infinite numbers of worlds. (HVSS : 12)</p> | <p>24. There is the reference to only one Prakṛti and one Puruṣa. In the cosmology of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism, during the time of Śrī Rāmānujācārya there was no clear reference to many Brahmāṇḍas, therefore, he does not describe them in Śrī Bhāṣya : I.1.2. Afterwards Vedāntadeśika and others mentioned them but there is no perfect mention of creation of many Brahmāṇḍas.</p> |
| <p>25. Jīvanmukti is an accepted and important concept in Śrī Śwāminārāyaṇism. A devotee can be free from all the bondages while he is still alive on this earth. When causal body or <i>kāraṇa-śarīra</i> is removed he becomes really free. <i>Death is not a necessary condition for ultimate freedom.</i></p> | <p>25. The concept of Jīvanamukti is not there in Śrī Vaiṣṇavism. (Śrī Bhāṣya : I.1.4)</p> |
| <p>26. The purpose of creation is to give freedom to Jīvas who are bound souls.</p> | <p>26. The creation is the sport of Lord. (Śrī Bhāṣya : 2/1/33)</p> |
| <p>27. In creation, sustenance and destruction of all Brahmāṇḍas, ontological reality of Īśvara is auxiliary element i.e. Īśvara helps God in creation. There is hierarchy right from Pradhānapuruṣa for <i>samaṣṭi</i>-creation up to Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Maheśa for creation, sustenance and destruction of individual Brahmāṇḍas.</p> | <p>27. In the creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe Viṣṇu or Nārāyaṇa himself works through Brahmā. (Nyāyasiddhāñjana and Yatīndramatadīpikā)</p> |
| <p>28. There are only two categories of Jīva (1) Bound (2) Free.</p> | <p>28. There are three categories of Jīva (1) bound, (2) free and (3) permanently free. (Nyāyasiddhāñjana, Jīva-parichheda)</p> |

29. When the bounded individual selves or Jivas - during life take refuge in God-realised Guruhari and start living as per his advice, their *Prārabdha* and *Sanchita karma* start getting dissolved. All their actions and entire lives then are focussed on God. They give up all expectations except receiving grace of Guruhari and God. They are totally detached from worldly objects of pleasure thus their *Pāpas* and *Puṇyas* get destroyed. Some of them become *Jīvanamuktas*. (HVSS : 37, 61, 172, 195)
30. At the time of death, the God himself with or without Akṣarabrahman or Akṣaramuktas comes in divine vehicle to receive his devotee who gives up his worldly body. He gives him a *brāhmī* 'divine' body and himself escorts him to Akṣaradhāma. (HVSS : 1, SHLKT VII 21, 12)
31. For final liberation or *Mukti* maximum importance is given to the scripture *Vāsudevamāhātmyam*.
32. Among the *sādhana*s, Bhagavat-Bala-Āśraya, Upāsanā, Ekāntika and Dharma and Ekāntikī Bhakti are the most important.
33. Among the Śāstras, Sāṃkhya, Yoga, Vedānta and Pāñcarātra are the authoritative works.
34. It is Akṣarabrahma-Parabrahma-Darśana.
29. As long as there is body attached to soul, an individual cannot expect to be really *Mukta* or free.
30. At the time of giving up mortal body, a devotee is received by God's escort called *ātivāhika* who takes him to Vaikuṇṭha. Before entering Vaikuṇṭha there will be a ceremonial bath in Virajā river in which devotee's subtle body will get dissolved. There will be the touch of divine hand. He will get the body with four arms. Caṇḍa and Pracāṇḍa will welcome him, goddess Lakṣmī will help him and then only Paramātmā Nārāyaṇa will look at him with love and put him in his lap.
31. For liberation Viṣṇupurāṇa is given importance among the purāṇas. S.B. of Ramanuja, songs of Ālṅvāras
32. Among the *sādhana*s, Bhaktiyoga, *Kainkarya* and *Prapatti* are the most important.
33. Among the Śāstras, the most important are works of Ālṅvāras, Vedānta, Pāñcarātra and Vaikhānasa Āgamas.
34. It is Viśiṣṭādvaita Darśana.

THE BASIC DIFFERENCES THEOLOGICAL

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The mantras of Śrī Śwāminārāyaṇaism are<ul style="list-style-type: none">- श्रीकृष्ण त्वं गर्तिमम।- ब्रह्माहं कृष्ण दासोस्मि।- ॐ नमोऽवतारिणे स्वामिनारायणाय।2. The name of the Sampradāya is Śrī Swāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya.3. After the ritualistic Ārati the prayer is
रामकृष्ण गोविंद जय जय गोविंद।
रामकृष्ण गोविंद जय जय गोविंद।
निर्विकल्प-उत्तम-अति-निश्चय तव घनश्याम।4. Vaiṣṇavī-sādhū-dīkṣā can be given immediately after Brahmacharya Āśrama. There is a strong tradition of asceticism in Śrī Swāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya.5. There is ceremony or <i>vidhi</i> (acceptance as a follower) for house holder without <i>Tapta-Mudrā</i>, consisting of only taking a vow with water in right hand.6. Every follower is expected to put Ūrdhvapundra Tilaka with red circle in the middle and two string <i>tulasi</i>-beads or sandalwood necklace as an acceptance of <i>śaraṇāgati</i>.7. The temples of Śrī Swāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya are built in <i>Nāgara</i> style. There are fixed rules for performing Ārati which is performed five times in large temples and twice in small temples. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The mantras of Sri Vaishnavism are<ul style="list-style-type: none">- ॐ नमो नारायणाय।- ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय।- श्रीमन्नारायणचरणौ शरणं प्रपद्ये।2. The name of the Sampradāya is Śrī Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya.3. After the ritualistic Ārati the prayers are in praise of Śrī Lakṣmīnārāyaṇa in Sankrit and of Āḷwar saints in Tamil.4. <i>Tyāgāśrama</i> or <i>Sanyasta</i> can be given generally only after Gr̥hasthāśrama.5. There is ceremony or <i>vidhi</i> (acceptance as a follower) for house holder with <i>Tapta-Mudrā</i> consisting of branding with hot metal symbol on the body.6. Every follower is expected to put Ūrdhvapundra Tilaka with red line in the middle as an acceptance of <i>śaraṇāgati</i>.7. The temples of Śrī Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya are built in the Dravid style with tall towers called Gopuram. Āratīs are generally performed with <i>Karpura</i> whenever devotee desires to have darśana during the scheduled time. |
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8. Festivals, vedic sacrifices (without any killing) and other celebrations take place as per the tradition of Śrī Vallabha Sampradāya.
9. In the temples there are only two types of images or *mūrtis*. The main images ^{are fixed} and the images for festival ^{are} ~~are fixed and~~ moving *mūrtis*.
10. At the time of consecration only invocation prayer called *Āvāhana Mantra* is performed and not the *Visarjana Mantra* or the prayer to the Lord to leave.
11. For the ascetics who live in the temple complex there is a separate area, separate entrance and separate exit gates.
12. There are three types of *dīkṣā* for ascetics as per Satsaṅgi-Jīvanam : (1) as Pārṣada, (2) as Brahmācārī, (3) as Sādhu. In the *dīkṣā* ceremony
 ▢ सर्वतोभद्रचक्राञ्जलमण्डल are unimportant.
13. For second and third category of ascetics all contacts with wealth and women are prohibited. They are supposed to observe following five cardinal rules.
 1. *Niṣkāma* - Vow of celibacy.
 2. *Nirlobha* - Vow of non greed or non attachment to worldly objects.
 3. *Niḥsvāda* - Vow of detachment from pleasures of taste.
 4. *Niḥsneha* - Vow of detachment from kith and kin and other blood relations.
 5. *Nirmāna* - Vow of humility or detachment from ego.

8. Festivals, vedic sacrifices (now performed without any killing) and other celebrations take place as per the tradition of Śrī Vaiṣṇava Sampradāya.
9. In the temples there are many types of images or *mūrtis* like the main images, the images for festivals, *bali mūrti*, *karma mūrti*, *abhiṣeka mūrti*, *Śayana mūrti* etc.
10. For *Utsava Mūrtis* or the images for special celebrations and other *mūrtis* there is a daily invocation prayer called *Āvāhana Mantra* is performed and also *Visarjana Mantra* or the prayer to the Lord to leave.
11. For the ascetics who live in the temple complex there are generally no separate area, entrance or exit gates.
12. There is only one type of *dīkṣā* for ascetics. In the *dīkṣā* ceremony
 ▢ सर्वतोभद्रचक्राञ्जलमण्डल are very important.
13. For the ascetics or saints of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism there is no prohibition to talk to women or to have some money for travel or other essential activities. They are not asked to take the five essential vows in the manner that ascetics of Śrī Śwāminārāyaṇa Sampradāya have to take.

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| <p>14. There are special books for Pārṣadas, Brahmācārīs and Sādhus called <i>Niṣkāma-śuddhi</i> and <i>Dharmāmṛtam</i> for ascetics and <i>Śikṣāpatrī</i> for all the followers.</p> <p>15. For every devotee, daily system of worship or <i>nitya pūjā paddhati</i> is compulsory. This is in addition to the worship in the temple or in the house temple. The <i>pūjā</i> is portable which a devotee can carry with him wherever he goes.</p> <p>16. In Śwāminārāyaṇa temples there are <i>mūrtis</i> of Vaiṣṇava Gods like Lakṣmī and Nārāyaṇa, Rāma and Sītā, Nara and Nārāyaṇa, Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. But there are also <i>mūrtis</i> of Pārvatī and Mahādeva as well as Śrī Hanūmān and Śrī Gaṇapati.</p> <p>17. Killing of any bird or animal is strictly prohibited in any religious ceremony including sacrifices in principle as well as in practice.</p> <p>18. The Śūdras are permitted to study <i>Brahmavidyā</i>, to be the teacher and reach the highest position.</p> | <p>14. We are not aware if there are special books of conduct for the ascetics, naturally there will not be separate books for the newly initiated ascetics (Pārṣadas) as there are no special divisions in Śrī Vaiṣṇavism.</p> <p>15. There is no compulsory <i>nitya pūjā paddhati</i> or daily system of worship for every devotee. There is no additional worship individually. There is no portable <i>pūjā</i>.</p> <p>16. In Śrī Vaiṣṇava temples there are no <i>mūrtis</i> of Pārvatī, Mahādeva or any other God of Saivism including that of Śrī Gaṇapati.</p> <p>17. Killing of any bird or animal is strictly prohibited in religious ceremony but according to the explanation of Śrī Rāmānujācārya in Śrī Bhāṣya, killing in Vedic sacrifice is allowed.</p> <p>18. According to the explanation of Śrī Rāmānujācārya in Śrī Bhāṣya the Śūdras are not permitted to study <i>Brahmavidyā</i>.</p> |
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