

**A Critical Analysis of Consistency
in the Prasthānatrayī's Vedāntic Principles
in Light of the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam**

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Chapter Outline

The thesis I present, titled “A Critical Analysis of Consistency in the Prasthānatrayī’s Vedāntic Principles in Light of the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam,” is a comprehensive exploration that spans seven chapters, including the introduction and conclusion. The unique titles of these chapters, derived from mantras in the Upaniṣads, a verse from the Gītā, or a sūtra from the Brahmasūtras, not only reflect the content but also underscore the thesis’s fidelity to the original Prasthānatrayī, which serves as the primary source for this project.

The titles of my thesis, along with a short abstract of each chapter, are as follows:

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The Introduction chapter explains the thesis and its position in the broader circle of Vedānta. Then, it dives deeper into each aspect of the title, which also, in turn, is the methodology—textual study. The primary and secondary sources for this thesis are the Prasthānatrayī – the collective trio of the Upaniṣads, Gītā, and Brahmasūtras, and the Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣyam – the novel commentary authored by Mahāmahopādhyāya Bhadrashdas Swami, which is a significant interpretation of the Prasthānatrayī. I also discuss the background of where the Vedāntic principle of Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana comes from. In this discussion, I present an introduction to Parabrahman Bhagavān Swaminarayan and his forever-lasting legacy of Guṇātīta Gurus that are the manifest form of Akṣarabrahman beholding Parabrahman absolutely and consistently. The final part is an introduction to the author of the Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyakāra and the opinions of scholars on the commentaries and the *vādagrantha* he has penned.

Chapter 2 – “*tadetad akṣaram brahman*” – Akṣarabrahman

The second chapter is about a reality ignored in the scholarly world despite knowledge of its existence. Akṣarabrahman is mentioned, discussed, and praised as the support, basis, creator, protector, and soul of all, only lower to Parabrahman, the absolute ultimate reality. The Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā also appraises the beauty of Akṣarabrahman as one of the most critical exploration topics. Also, as interpreted by the Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣyakāra, the first and establishing sūtra of the Brahmasūtras is about the exploration of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. This entity is discussed in each step, confirming the consistency of the Prasthānatrayī. The four forms—Akṣaradhāman, *Sevaka*, Cidākāśa, and Brahmasvarūpa

Guru—are studied in the mantras of the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad and the *ślokas* of the Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā. The Brahmasūtras, too, dedicate various *adhikaraṇas* to it.

Chapter 3 – “*parataḥ paraḥ*” – Parabrahman

The third chapter is about the entity that presides even over Akṣarabrahman, i.e., Parabrahman. Parabrahman is the only one, as most schools of thought would agree. Parabrahman’s relationship with jīvas and īśvaras, māyā and Akṣarabrahman are of central importance in this chapter. The other forms of Parabrahman, his not being without a form, and his roles as the supreme reality and the master of all, including Akṣarabrahman, are discussed in the latter part of this chapter. Parabrahman possesses divine virtues and is devoid of all characteristics born of māyā.

Chapter 4 – “*jagatyām jagat*” – Māyā

The fourth chapter is about the māyā – the Creation. I start this investigation with the ideas of māyā that Parabrahman Bhagavān Swaminarayan presents in his Vacanāmṛta. I also explore all the cosmic creations of māyā as part of a primary and vivid introduction to these entities. Finally, I discuss the roles of Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman in the Creation being the *abhinna-nimitta-upādāna-kāraṇa* – the inseparable efficient and material cause of all creations. At the same time, māyā is also said to be the material that everything is made up of. All of this and many other debates are clarified when the Brahmasūtras come together with the Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā and Upaniṣads, thus establishing their consistency.

Chapter 5 – “*kṣaraḥ sarvāṇi bhūtāni*” – Jīvas and Īśvaras

The fifth chapter is about us – jīvas and īśvaras. Jīvas are the individual souls in all mobile or immobile creation, and īśvaras are the empowered beings that, at Parabrahman’s eternal will, engage in the tasks of the Creation – in all or a single *brahmāṇḍa* (roughly translated as a universe). The most vital feature of an ātman is reflected in its relationship with the body (in this case, a human body), Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman, and its eternal bondage with māyā. Although bright and spotless as fundamental nature, it is enveloped by māyā from eternity. Jīvas and īśvaras staunch association with Akṣarabrahman makes them like Akṣarabrahman, and thus, the chance to offer ultimate *bhakti* to Parabrahman. This chapter is an entire of graceful Gītā verses and Brahmasūtras as they establish a platform for consistency in the Upaniṣads.

Chapter 6 – “*anāvṛttiḥ śabdādanāvṛttiḥ śabdād*” – Sādhanā and Mukti

The sixth chapter is about the final liberation and the spiritual endeavor to get a place in Parabrahman's Akṣaradhāman. First, for the sake of exploring *sādhana*, I study the *brahmabhāva* (a state of being like Akṣarabrahman) from the Bhagavad Gītā and association with Akṣarabrahman Guru (*ātmagr̥hīti*) as the most efficient medium to reach *brahmabhāva* from the Brahmasūtras. Then, establishing consistency with Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 3.2.9, I continue studying mukti – the final liberation and its two types – *jīvanmukti* and *videhamukti*. Finally, the process (*gati*) of mukti, Arcirmārga, the bliss of Akṣaradhāman, and a mukta's glory are discussed in establishing coherence in the aphorisms of Brahmasūtras, verses of the Śrīmad-Bhagavad-Gītā, and the mantras of the Upaniṣads.

Chapter 7 – Conclusion

The thesis concludes with a chapter that summarizes the key points discussed in the previous chapters and provides a clear roadmap for future researchers, guiding them toward potential areas for further exploration.

In addition, I was conscious of the complexity of my task while considering the people viewing my work. As a result, I have decided to keep it straightforward by providing translation only if necessary, as doing so tends to warp the concept that a scholar may have based on the subject matter most relevant to their area of study. This project is supposed to communicate the thesis and the proofs to a demographic that speaks English and has an intermediate to advanced level of understanding in Vedānta and Sanskrit.

Interestingly, I open my chapters with the relevant passages from the philosophical document letter penned by HH Pramukh Swami Maharaj declaring and expounding on the belief system and principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. Authored on July 28th, 2008, this document is a base for all my chapters. Therefore, I suggested allowing my audience to get the gist of the chapter in just a page or two. The first section of any chapter is titled Siddhāntasamāmnāya, the same as the Svāminārāyaṇa-Siddhāntā-Sudhā 1.6.4, pp. 10-14. The Sanskrit version is of the Sudhā itself, as this is at the center of exploration laid in the chapter. Moreover, I presented a photocopy of the original document and typed Gujarati, along with the Sanskrit translation, as appendices at the end of the thesis.

In addition, to fulfill the project's requirements, I have often provided a bulleted list of references that demonstrate consistency. Because it would be unfair to present a one-line translation without considering the context and intricacies that the reference brings to the

discussion, this list only contains a transliteration of the words rather than a translation of the divine utterances themselves.

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