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**New Perspectives on the
Brahmasūtra—An English
Translation of the Brahmasūtra-
Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya’s Exposition
of “Athāto Brahmajijñāsā”**

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New Perspectives on the Brahmasūtra—An English Translation of the Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya's Exposition of “Athāto Brahmajijñāsā”

Abstract

Within the darśanic world, the Brahmasūtra is a seminal text that provides key insights into Upaniṣadic revelation. The recent creation of Mahāmahopādhyāya Bhadresh Swami's Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya, a comprehensive Sanskrit commentary on the Brahmasūtra, presents unique readings of the text according to the teachings of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana as revealed by Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa. The commentary's recent reception encourages further inquiry into its distinctive insights on Vedānta thought and the principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. This article presents an English translation of the Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya's exposition on the first aphorism: “athāto brahmajijñāsā,” in an effort to make the commentary's expositions more accessible. In doing so, it highlights distinctive principles of the darśana, including its unique understanding of the nature and form of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. To further contextualize the commentary, this article also presents an introduction to the darśanic commentarial tradition, focusing on the role, features, and significance of the Brahmasūtra commentaries and the Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya.

Keywords

Vedānta, Darśana, Prasthānatrayī, Brahmasūtra(s), Sanskrit Commentary, Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya, Svāminārāyaṇa, Akṣara-Puruṣottama, Brahman, Akṣarabrahman, Bhadresh Swami

Framework

Within the darśanic world, the *Brahmasūtra*¹ is a seminal text that provides key insights into Upaniṣadic revelation. The recent creation of Mahāmahopādhyāya Bhadrash Swami's *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, a comprehensive Sanskrit commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, presents unique readings of the text according to the teachings of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana as revealed by Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa. The commentary's recent reception encourages further inquiry into its distinctive insights on Vedānta thought and the principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. This article presents an English translation of the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*'s exposition on the first aphorism: "athāto brahmajijñāsā," in an effort to make the commentary's expositions more accessible.

Before delving into the commentary's exposition, this article contextualizes the *Brahmasūtra* and the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* within its darśanic framework. It begins with a brief introduction to various schools of thought and the significance of the *Prasthānatrayī*—a collective designation for the Upaniṣads, the *Śrīmad-Bhagavadgītā*, and the *Brahmasūtra*—within the broader Vedānta Darśana. Focusing on the *Brahmasūtra* commentarial tradition, this work presents an elaboration of the *Brahmasūtra*'s unique role in establishing Vedānta identities, the need for a commentary to comprehend *Brahmasūtra* discussions, the challenges of creating a commentary, and the organization and structural dependencies of the text. Thereafter, (1) the larger *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, which encompasses the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, (2) the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, and (3) Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa, the founder of the *darśana*, are introduced to further contextualize the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*. Finally, the significance of the first aphorism of the *Brahmasūtra* is discussed to highlight its role in defining (1) prerequisites to engaging with the text, (2) the primary topic of discussion of the text, and (3) the referent of 'brahman.' The *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*'s characteristic reading of the first aphorism creates an interest and urgency to investigate the original reading of not just the remainder of the *Brahmasūtra* text but also the *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*'s readings of the other *Prasthānatrayī* texts.

Dārśanic Schools of Thought

Indian darśanic thought and reflection form a foundation upon which many integral and revered rituals, customs, and values are established and continue to be developed. Its constant inquiry into the most profound and fundamental questions continues to enlighten humankind. Who are we, why do we exist, and what is the nature of the world? Is there a divine being, and if so, what is it like? How can we overcome misery and experience everlasting bliss? These are a few questions that have prompted, inspired, and guided darśanic deliberation throughout its existence. In search of meaningful answers to these and many other questions, great teachers (*ācāryas*) and thinkers provided original perspectives and interpretations of sacred works. Over time this reflection organized itself into identities known as *darśanas*—systematized schools of thought that each possesses not only unique perspectives and answers to these fundamental

¹ The term 'Brahmasūtra' may be used to refer to either the text as a whole or an aphorism (*sūtra*) within the text. The sacred text may also be alternatively referred to as "Brahmasūtras"—an English pluralization of 'Brahmasūtra'—as it consists of a collection of individual aphorisms (the *Brahmasūtras*).

questions but also a rich collection of original and diverse literature, elaborate practices and ritual performances, and traditions of learning and expression.²

These *darśanas* are often broadly divided into two large groups: the *āstika* and *nāstika darśanas*. This division is ordinarily defined by their acceptance of the authority of the Vedas, where the *āstika darśanas* accept Vedic authority and the *nāstika darśanas* do not.³ The *āstika darśanas* consist of the Sāṅkhya, Yoga, Nyāya, Vaiśeṣika, Pūrva-Mīmāṃsā (Mīmāṃsā), and the Uttara-Mīmāṃsā or Vedānta Darśanas.⁴ Among them, the Vedānta Darśana further consists of many sub-*darśanas* customarily enumerated as Śaṅkarācārya's Advaita Darśana, Rāmānujācārya's Viśiṣṭādvaita Darśana, Madhvācārya's Dvaita Darśana, Nimbārkaācārya's Dvaitādvaita Darśana, Vallabhācārya's Śuddhādvaita Darśana, and Caitanya Mahāprabhu's Acintyabhedābheda Darśana.⁵ Each possesses a distinct identity founded on its unique epistemology (*pramāṇa-mīmāṃsā*), metaphysics (*tattva-mīmāṃsā*), and soteriology (*mukti-mīmāṃsā*). A *darśana*'s core principles within these foundational categories define its identities and provide a systematic, comprehensive, and identifiably distinct understanding of the self, the Divine, the world, and their relationships. These *darśanas*, in turn, typically consist of *saṃpradāyas*—traditions that (1) are led by a lineage of spiritual leaders identified as gurus, (2) possess distinct renderings of a tradition's darśanic principles, and (3) have a unique praxis and ritual practice.⁶

Prasthānatrayī

All the established Vedānta (Uttara-Mīmāṃsā) *darśanas* and their respective *saṃpradāyas* accept the authority of the Vedas and the teachings of core sacred texts collectively identified as the *Prasthānatrayī*—the three pillars—or the three foundations of Vedānta.⁷ 'Prasthānatrayī' is a common designation given to the Upaniṣads, the *Śrīmad-Bhagavadgītā*, and the *Brahmasūtra*. As these three sacred texts form the metaphorical pillars on top of which the teachings of the Vedānta schools are established,⁸ a brief overview of their role, significance, and relationships with one another is required.

Among them, the Upaniṣads are identified as the *śruti prasthāna*⁹—the *śruti* pillar. Within the *Prasthānatrayī*, Upaniṣadic revelation is typically revered as foremost and foundational.¹⁰ As the Upaniṣads are sections of the Vedas themselves, they are accepted within Vedānta as *śrutis* and possess the authority that accompanies them. Although there are a number of Upaniṣads, many Vedānta *darśanas* focus their expositions and commentarial literature on a specific subset.

² (Sadhu 37–38)

³ For further elaboration on some of the distinct readings of the divisions between the *āstika* and *nāstika* see (Radhakrishnan 20).

⁴ (Grimes 541)

⁵ (Sadhu 50–51)

⁶ (Wood; Flood 239)

⁷ (Hiriyanna 336; Knott, chap.3; King 53)

⁸ (Sadhu 50–51)

⁹ 'Śruti,' meaning that which is heard, typically refers to collections of revealed text that are understood to have a purely divine origin and include texts such as the Vedas and the Upaniṣads. In support, BSB. 3.2.23 offers the following description of 'śruti': "[that which is] immediate is a *śruti* ('pratyakṣaṃ śrutiḥ')." (S. Bhadrashdas, *Brahmasūtrasvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 300)

¹⁰ (Uskokov 11)

The most notable among them are the *daśopaniṣad*—the ten principal Upaniṣads—enumerated in the following verse:¹¹

ईश-केन-कठ-प्रश्न-मुण्ड-माण्डूक्य-तित्तिरिः।
ऐतरेयं च छान्दोग्यं बृहदारण्यकं दश॥
īśa-kena-kāṭha-prāśna-muṇḍa-māṇḍūkya-tittiriḥ /
aitareyaṃ ca chāndogyaṃ bṛhadāraṇyakam daśa //

These ten principal Upaniṣads include the Īśāvāsyopaniṣad, Kenopaniṣad, Kāthopaniṣad, Prāśnopaniṣad, Muṇḍakopaniṣad, Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad, Taittirīyopaniṣad, Aitareyopaniṣad, Chāndoggyopaniṣad and the Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad. Some darśanic traditions also add the Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad and others to this list.¹² Within these Upaniṣads, *brahmavidyā*¹³ is understood as the primary subject of exposition.¹⁴

The second *prasthāna* is the *Śrīmad-Bhagavadgītā* (henceforth, *Gītā*). Consisting of seven hundred verses and positioned within the “Bhīṣmaparva” of the *Mahābhārata*,¹⁵ the *Gītā* serves as a seminal text accepted and revered among most adherents of the Sanātana Dharma. The well-known verse:

सर्वोपनिषदो गावो दोग्धा गोपालनन्दनः।
पार्थो वत्सः सुधीर्भोक्ता दुग्धं गीतामृतं महद्॥
sarvopaniṣado gāvo dogdhā gopālanandanaḥ /
pārtho vatsaḥ sudhīrbhoktā dugdham gītā'mṛtaṃ mahad //

expresses the significance of the *Gītā* through imagery.^{16,17} It depicts the Upaniṣads as a sacred cow, the immortalizing nectar-like *Gītā* as its milk, Kṛṣṇa as the milkmaid, and Pārtha (Arjuna) as its calf. Among other identifications, the verse portrays the *Gītā* as milk—culturally signified as the quintessence of the cow and that which nourishes those who consume it. The allegory draws parallels between the Upaniṣads and the teachings of the *Gītā* and a cow and its milk to emphasize that the text conveys the essence of Upaniṣadic revelation.

¹¹ (Mishra 192–93)

¹² See, for example (Mishra 193)

¹³ ‘Brahmavidyā’ refers to *the knowledge of brahman*. The term ‘brahman’ in ‘brahmavidyā,’ however, is interpreted differently by each *darśana*, and as a result, a single common referent is not agreed upon. (For further elaboration, see (Ram-Prasad xviii)) However, as this article later focuses on presenting an English reading of the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, the *Muṇḍakopaniṣad-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* (a commentary included with the *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* and authored by the same commentator, Mahāmahopādhyāya Bhadrashdas Swami) offers the following definition of *brahmavidyā*: “That by which *akṣara* (Akṣarabrahman) and *puruṣa* (Puruṣottama or Parabrahman) are truly known, that is said to be *brahmavidyā*.” (“yenākṣaram puruṣam vada satyam provāca tām tattvato brahmavidyām”) (S. Bhadrashdas, *Īśāyaṣṭopaniṣatsvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 256–7) (Mu. 1/2/13)

¹⁴ (Ward 78; Chaudhuri 47)

¹⁵ (Ram-Prasad xiii–xiv)

¹⁶ (Mishra 192)

¹⁷ The verse mentioned here occurs within a collection of nine verses collectively known as the *Gītā-Dhyāna*. Although the poem is widely circulated in India, differing accounts are given of its origins. (Ranganathananda, sec. “Gītā Dhyāna Śloka”)

The *Gītā* is understood not only as the essence of the Upaniṣads but also metaphorically as a Upaniṣad itself. This role is reinforced in the concluding line of its chapters,¹⁸ which begins with the following familiar overture:

“In this way, within the Upaniṣad[-like] *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā*, in the dialogue between Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna (*Śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde*) [that is] *brahmavidyā* (*brahmavidyāyām*) [and] a sacred text on *yoga* (*yogaśāstre*)...”¹⁹

In addition to identifying the *Gītā* as “Upaniṣad-like,” this concluding line (*samāptisūcakapaṅkti*) also expresses *brahmavidyā*—the same subject of the Upaniṣads—as its central theme. Nevertheless, as it is not a *śruti* text but its teachings are congruous with Vedic revelation, the *Gītā* is acknowledged as a *smṛti*²⁰ work and hence identified as the *smṛti prasthāna* of Vedānta thought.²¹

The final *prasthāna* is Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa’s *Brahmasūtra(s)*, also called the *Vedāntasūtra(s)*.²² It is a collection of aphorisms that seek to provide cohesive interpretations, justifications, and expositions of selected revelations found within the *śruti* and *smṛti* texts.²³ Parts of the text also contain aphorisms that provide rebuttals to the opposing positions held by the other *darśanas*. The text’s function to offer reasoned discussions on various topics of Vedānta, scriptural exegesis, hermeneutics, and philosophy drives its identification as a sacred text of reason or as the *tarka/nyāya prasthāna*.²⁴

The *śruti prasthāna*, *smṛti prasthāna*, and *tarka prasthāna* of Vedānta collectively form one of the most important scriptural authorities upon which Vedānta darśanic principles and identities are founded.

The Vedānta Commentarial Tradition

As the *Prasthānatrayī* form the seminal texts of Vedānta, each Vedānta *darśana* has produced a rich collection of secondary literature on these three texts. Among them, the commentarial literature and particularly the *bhāṣya* texts provide close readings and interpretations of the *Prasthānatrayī*’s mantras, verses, and *sūtras*.²⁵ What follows is a summary of some of the relevant

¹⁸ The concluding line, also identified as the “*samāpti-sūcaka-vākya*,” does not strictly occur within the verses of the *Gītā* but was later appended work as the text was circulated independently of the *Mahābhārata*.

¹⁹ “iti Śrīmadbhagavadgītāsūpaniṣatsu brahmavidyāyām yogaśāstre Śrīkṛṣṇārjunasaṃvāde...” (Vyāsa 38)

²⁰ ‘*Smṛti*,’ meaning *that which is remembered*, refers to sacred texts that are revered despite not being categorized as a *śruti*-text. BSB 3.2.23 continues after describing ‘*śruti*’ to present the following description of ‘*smṛti*’: “[that which] follows is a *smṛti*.” (“*tadanugā smṛtiḥ*”) (S. Bhadrashdas, *Brahmasūtrasvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 300) Texts that follow or rather support the *śrutis* are considered *smṛti* texts.

²¹ (Uskokov II)

²² (Knott, chap.3; Chatterjee and Datta 397)

²³ (Chatterjee and Datta 397–99)

²⁴ (Uskokov II)

²⁵ The sentential elements of the Upaniṣads are identified as mantras, the *Gītā*’s as verses or *ślokas*, and the *Brahmasūtra* as aphorisms or *sūtras*.

features of the Vedānta commentarial tradition and an overview of its effects on forming darśanic identities.

Patañjali expresses a succinct criterion of commentarial works when he states,

सूत्रार्थो वर्ण्यते यत्र वाक्यैः सूत्रानुकारिभिः।
स्वपदानि च वर्ण्यन्ते भाष्यं भाष्यविदो विदुः॥²⁶
sūtrārtho varṇyate yatra vākyaīḥ sūtrānukāribhiḥ /
svapadāni ca varṇyante bhāṣyaṃ bhāṣyavido viduḥ //

“The knowers of a *bhāṣya* identify a *bhāṣya* as that which expounds on the meaning of a *sūtra* by statements that complement the *sūtras* and elaborates on its used terms.”

By explicating semantic nuances, referential substantiations, hermeneutical insights, and reasoning for any given reading, along with synoptic and transitional elements, *bhāṣya* expositions are often thorough, reasoned, and systematic. They provide a lucid and natural reading (*anvaya*) of the base text by giving synonyms of its terms and expressing the precise sense in which they are used. Some provide elaborations on the textual, philosophical, historical, and literary implications or explain the significance of its proposed semantics. *Bhāṣyas* also offer hermeneutical insights and express otherwise unnoticed exegetical structures that guide the flow of the base text. They make the primary text more accessible and play an essential role in its preservation and proliferation. Their consideration of alternative viewpoints substantiated or refuted using a spectrum of analytical tools make them a venue for not only dialogue with other *darśanas* but also interdisciplinary reflections. Some commentaries also consider available alternative renderings of the base text and, as a result, take on the form of rudimentary critical editions. By focusing their elaborations on only specific topics or points of interest, they emphasize the topics or discussions the author and perhaps even the *darśana* from which they originate finds significant. These focal points guide subsequent reflections and inspire the creation of a wide range of secondary literature. Their last and perhaps most noteworthy role is their function in reinforcing the unique principles of a *darśana* on the authority of the *Prasthānatrayī* and establishing their *darśana*’s identity.²⁷

As darśanic thought solidified into different schools by creating a lineage of commentaries, consequent works of literature, community or practitioner-dependent affirmations, and other contributing causes, unique identities became founded on a set of core principles rooted in and expressed through key commentarial differences. The Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, Dvaitādvaita, Śuddhādvaita, Acintyabhedābheda, and most recently, the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana—all comprehensive systems of thought—serve as prime examples of such identity formations.²⁸ Each of these schools possesses a distinct commentarial reflection on a shared set of revelations and, over time, obtained an identity as an independent Vedānta *darśana*. The role of *bhāṣya* texts in establishing these identities is anything but trivial.²⁹ It is no wonder that

²⁶ (त्रिपाठी 2)

²⁷ For further elaboration on the role, functions, and features of Sanskrit commentarial literature, see (Tubb and Boose)

²⁸ See, for example (Tatacharya; M. S. Bhadreshdas)

²⁹ See, for example, (Chatterjee and Datta 397) and the role of Rāmānuja’s *Śrībhāṣya*, a commentary on the *Brahmasūtra*, in the establishment of Viśiṣṭādvaita as a “full-fledged philosophical school.” (Colas 248).

darśanic practitioners and those who engage in its study have great reverence for *bhāṣya* literature and its subsequent works.

A Brahmasūtra Commentary

Having surveyed the broad features and significance of Vedānta commentarial literature, we will now narrow our focus to the *Brahmasūtra* commentary. This section will demonstrate the brevity of the *Brahmasūtra* aphorisms, the need for a commentary to comprehend its discussions, and the organization and structural dependencies of the text to give a greater perspective on the challenges and complexities of commentarial creation.

The *Brahmasūtra* and its associated commentaries play a unique role among the *Prasthānatrayī*. As mentioned earlier, the base text of the *Brahmasūtra* seeks to present cohesive interpretations, justifications, and expositions of selected revelations found within the *śruti* and *smṛti* texts, paying particular attention to Upaniṣadic revelation. When viewed from a macro level, the *Brahmasūtra* is a text involved in discussions deciphering Upaniṣadic revelation. In this regard, it itself serves a commentarial function.

Many of its *adhikaraṇas* (subsections) are engaged with a topic rooted in a specific set of revelations. For example, according to *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, the “*Īkṣatyadhikaraṇam*” is occupied with a discussion on the cause of the world (*jagatkāraṇatva*). The commentary’s positioning of the discussion originates from the term ‘*īkṣateḥ*’ found within the first *sūtra* of the *adhikaraṇa*: “*īkṣaternā*’śabdāṁ” (Bra. Sū. 1.1.5), which it correlates with the Chāndogyopaniṣad revelation: “*sadeva somyedamagra āsīt*”³⁰ (Chā. 6.2.1), “*tadaikṣata bahu syāṁ prajāyeyeti*” (Chā. 6.2.3), and others.³¹ The inquiry begins by asking what the referent of ‘*sat*’ is; does it refer to a sentient or insentient being? It then refutes opposing positions that advocate creation as caused by *kāla*, *karma*, *svabhāva*,³² and others. The *adhikaraṇa* puts forth several arguments supporting a particular reading and refutes alternatives as it proceeds through the following aphorisms (*sūtras*):

³⁰ Within this article, the references to specific *śrutis* and *smṛtis* have purposefully not been translated and have been left in their transliterated state. This is done as an alternative to providing a simple translation, which would confuse the reader as the translation would be highly dependent on very nuanced readings detailed in the commentary of the text. This is, however, expected as any *Brahmasūtra* commentary is deeply entrenched in its *darśana*’s complex reading of relevant *śruti* and *smṛti* texts. This also explains why established translations of these readings would not assimilate with the interpretive framework of the *Brahmasūtra* commentary’s discussions.

As an example, consider the Chāndogyopaniṣad mantra 6.2.1 mentioned here: “*sadeva somyedamagra āsīt*.” There is no simple translation of ‘*sadeva āsīt*’ as the *Chāndogyopaniṣad-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* presents an extensive elaboration (nearly two pages of commentarial text) on the sense in which ‘*sat*’ refers to Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman—two ontologically distinct entities that play unique causal roles in creation. A glossed translation would leave a reader who is unfamiliar with this elaboration confused. To remedy this issue, the reader is encouraged to visit the original commentary to comprehend the specific darśanic context and sense in which the *śrutis* and *smṛtis* are referenced.

³¹ (S. Bhadreshdas, *Brahmasūtrasvāminārāyaṇabhāṣyam* 29–37)

³² Here, ‘*kāla*’ refers to *time*, expressing the position that creation is governed by fate or natural, physical, and psychic forces. ‘*Karma*’ refers to *the forces produced by a person’s past actions that have not yet borne their consequences and which influence a person’s future lives*. ‘*Svabhāva*’ refers to *the essential nature of things* and is used to mention the position that creation is directed by the essential nature(s) of that which exists.

Sūtra	Reference	English
“ikṣatēnāśabdam ”	(Bra. Sū. I.I.5)	“By seeing, [it] is not revealed.”
“gauṇāścennātmaśabdād ”	(Bra. Sū. I.I.6)	“If secondary is proposed, [it] is not, by ‘ātman.’”
“tanniṣṭhasya mokṣopadeśāt ”	(Bra. Sū. I.I.7)	“Having established in it, by the teaching of liberation.”
“heyatvā’vacanāccal ”	(Bra. Sū. I.I.8)	“Not stated [as] worthy of being disposed of.”
“pratijñāvirodhāt ”	(Bra. Sū. I.I.9)	“By opposition to the declaration.”
“svāpyayāt ”	(Bra. Sū. I.I.10)	“By the self being absorbed.”
“gatisāmānyāt ”	(Bra. Sū. I.I.11)	“By coherence with the flow.”
“śrutatvācca ”	(Bra. Sū. I.I.12)	“And by the śrutis.”

The *adhikaraṇa* concludes with the aphorism “śrutatvācca” (Bra. Sū. I.I.12), affirming that ‘sat’ here refers to the ontologically distinct entities Akṣara (Akṣarabrahman) and Puruṣottama (Parabrahman).

Notice that although the *sūtras* are terse and incomprehensible on their own (i.e., without a commentary), they (the *sūtras*) investigate by exploring possible interpretations, refuting incompatible ones, and advancing a specific exegesis or position. In doing so, they undertake not just an interpretive task but also one of justification—both ventures resembling functions of many commentaries.

However, the *sūtras*’ interpretive task is conducted in a manner that is different in many ways from a typical *bhāṣya* text. For instance, unlike familiar *bhāṣya* works,³³ the sections of the *Brahmasūtra* do not proceed linearly through a base text (or even any given Upaniṣad). Instead, they offer expositions of particular readings or topics of contention and present views and justifications on why a particular reading or position is favored over others. Additionally, the *Brahmasūtra* is also a collection of *sūtras* or aphorisms and is extremely terse by nature. This is also unlike *bhāṣya* works, whose role is quite the opposite: to provide an exposition of a relatively concise base text and unravel the implications of its offered reading.³⁴

Despite these and other differences, the *Brahmasūtra*’s intent to provide decisive expositions and justify readings of Upaniṣadic revelations and *smṛti* texts renders it a type of commentary. Given this, a *bhāṣya*, or commentary of the *Brahmasūtra*, would then, in turn, be somewhat of a commentary on a commentary. This presents a difficulty for the *Brahmasūtra* *bhāṣyakāra* (commentator). They must have a running base reading of the Upaniṣadic revelations whose interpretation and consistency are evaluated within the *Brahmasūtra*. The layered exposition of a *Brahmasūtra* commentary requires its author to have a working understanding of not only the *Brahmasūtra* but also *darśana*-specific Upaniṣadic revelation and *smṛti* readings. This is especially the case if the commentary is foundational in presenting the principles and distinct readings of an independent darśanic school. Without these foundational readings or clarifications, the author of a *Brahmasūtra* commentary would lack the necessary context.

³³ Ganeri observes that a commentary ordinarily proceeds in the order or “sequence” of the base text it expands upon. (Ganeri 7)

³⁴ Ganeri observes, “A compilation of *sūtras* maximizes compactness and completeness, at the expense of clarity; [whereas, a] *bhāṣya* (commentary) is complete and clear, but not compact.” (Ganeri 6)

This requisite also presents a difficulty for the reader of any given *Brahmasūtra* commentary. As the *Brahmasūtra* commentator offers a justification for any given interpretation, they inevitably cite *smṛti* and *śruti* revelations. The readings of these statements presume an interpretation specific to the commentator. For this reason, a reader of a *Brahmasūtra* commentary requires some familiarity with the readings of Upaniṣadic revelation and *smṛti* works of the commentator. From the perspective of a *darśana*, if the commentator of the *Brahmasūtra* commentary is different from the commentator of the Upaniṣadic and *smṛti* texts or perhaps there is a significant time difference between the creation of the *Brahmasūtra* commentary and the commentaries of its referenced Upaniṣadic and *smṛti* readings, then an additional layer of interpretive complication arises for the reader, who must decipher a multi-layered text and make additional speculations.

The structural form of the *Brahmasūtra* is also noteworthy as it introduces yet another complication for the commentator. The *Brahmasūtra* text is divided into large chapters known as *adhyāyas*, each of which is further divided into quarters or *pādas*. These quarters are

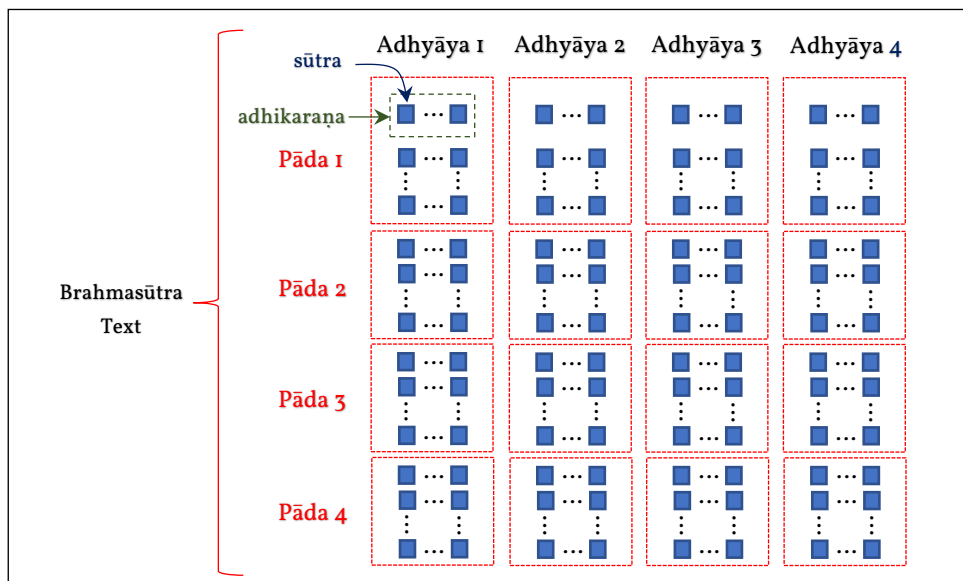


Figure 01: The Structure of the *Brahmasūtra* Text

additionally sectioned into *adhikaraṇas* (subsections), which contain *sūtras* (aphorisms). Given this structure, the *sūtra(s)* that constitute an *adhikaraṇa* generally play the following six roles: (1) they define the *viśaya* or subject, (2) they express a *saṁśaya* or doubt, (3) they present the *pūrvapakṣa* or opposing view(s), (4) they offer an *uttarapakṣa* or a responding view, (5) they express the *siddhānta* or conclusion, or lastly (6) they describe consistency or interrelations (*saṅgatis*) with the other parts or sections of the work.³⁵ It should be clarified that an *adhikaraṇa* may not possess individual *sūtras* that play all these roles or may contain many *sūtras* that each play a similar role, albeit in a distinct sense or context.

Elaborations of *saṅgati* seek to show coherence and a logical flow to the discussions surfaced by the text. They also serve an interpretative function by ensuring that the offered interpretations maintain congruency not only with the text's central theme but also among the various chapters, sections, and subsections. Regarding the *Brahmasūtra*, this *saṅgati* typically

³⁵ (Radhakrishnan 24; Uskokov 9–10; Ganeri 2; Jhalakikar 828)

occurs in four primary forms, distinguished by the range of their context. (1) Coherence within the entirety of the scripture is called the *śāstra-saṅgati*, (2) coherence within a chapter or *adhyāya* is identified as the *adhyāya-saṅgati*, (3) coherence within a quarter or *pāda* is called the *pāda-saṅgati*, and (4) coherence within a subsection or *adhikaraṇa* is called an *adhikaraṇa-saṅgati*.³⁶

Śāstra-saṅgati serves to ensure that any proposed reading of the text does not deviate from the central theme or subject of the text. In the case of the *Brahmasūtra*, this overarching subject is *brahman(s)*. Second, each *adhyāya* is also presumed to present a discussion on a specific topic; *pādas* found within any particular *adhyāya* must, therefore, also be interpreted coherently with the *adhyāya*'s identified topic. Similar hierarchical types of coherence are also expected to be maintained within an interpretation of *adhikaraṇas* and, subsequently, *sūtras* to ensure what is known as *IO2ada-saṅgati* and *adhikaraṇa-saṅgati*, respectively.

In addition to these types of *saṅgatis*, there are presumed relationships among the *adhikaraṇas*. One *adhikaraṇa* often leads to another through some association of ideas. The *saṅgati* which binds one *adhikaraṇa* with another is ordinarily of the following six types: (1) *ākṣepa-saṅgati* or the presentation of an objection, (2) *dr̥ṣṭānta-saṅgati* or the depiction of an illustration, (3) *prati-dr̥ṣṭānta-saṅgati* or the repudiation through the proposal of a counter-illustration, (4) *prasaṅga-saṅgati* or the consideration of an incidental illustration, (5) *utpatti-saṅgati* or the presentation of an introduction, and (6) *apavāda-saṅgati* or the submission of an exception.³⁷ These relationships among the various parts of the text ensure a cohesive reading of the base text.³⁸ For an interpreter, these various *saṅgatis* introduce layered and increasingly demanding requisites to proposed readings.

Adding to this complexity is the fluid nature of the divisions that make up the various components of the text. As mentioned earlier, the text is divided into four large chapters known as *adhyāyas*, while each *adhyāya* is further divided into four quarters or *pādas*. These quarters are additionally sectioned into *adhikaraṇas*, which contain *sūtras*. In addition to a commentator's

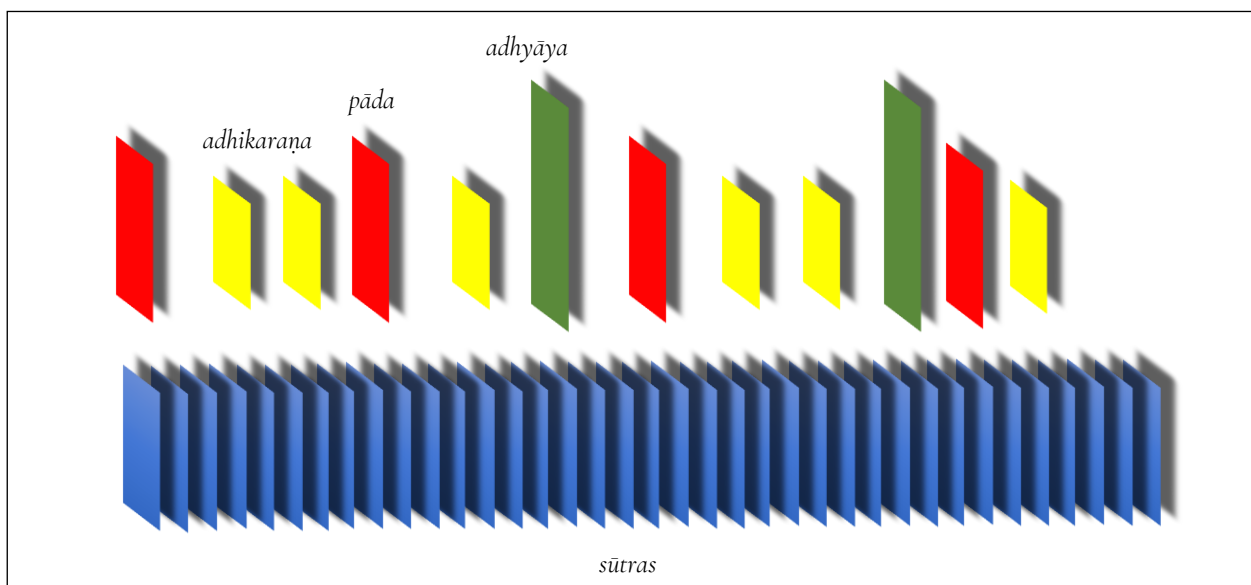


Figure 02: Organizing the Parts of the *Brahmasūtra* Text

³⁶ (Agrawal 183)

³⁷ (Agrawal 183)

³⁸ Commentarial works on other texts, for example the *Nyāyasūtras*, present different *saṅgatis* that is characteristic of the text under inquiry. See, for example (Ganeri 10)

typical role of providing an exposition of each *sūtra* and the various *saṅgatis* that arise, they are also tasked to specify what *sūtras* comprise any particular *adhikaraṇa*, which *adhikaraṇas* form a *pāda*, and even what terms constitute any given *sūtra*. For greater clarity, consider the following figure:

Imagine the *sūtras*—represented as **blue** cards on the bottom of the above figure—to be lined up sequentially³⁹ and that the commentator is given a collection of colored cards, where:

1. **yellow** cards denote divisions that define which *sūtras* make up any given *adhikaraṇa*;
2. **red** cards denote divisions that define which *adhikaraṇas* constitute any given *pāda*; and
3. **green** cards denote divisions that define which *pādas* are included in any given *adhyāya*.

The commentator is tasked with inserting the yellow, red, and green cards within the sequence of blue cards. Not only that, but the commentator may also split or merge the blue cards (those that represent individual *sūtras*) to form additional *sūtras*⁴⁰ or merge them into a single *sūtra*.⁴¹ One can imagine the balancing act a commentator must perform to provide an original, congruent, congenial, and convincing commentary.

However, it is essential to remember that this representation is an oversimplification and intended to provide only a rudimentary understanding of the complexities burdening the commentator. Although the number of distinct possibilities is extensive, the organizational complexity is limited because of factors like the different types of *saṅgatis* mentioned earlier and traditions on how the various divisions occur. For example, the number of *adhyāyas* within the text and *pādas* within an *adhyāya* is fixed: there are four *adhyāyas*, each with four *pādas*. The commentator is also not “tasked” *per se* with providing the organizational structure mentioned but is historically known to propose some alterations to a for-the-most-part presumed organization backed by compelling and original lines of reasoning. The above “possibilities” are generalizations that result from precedence established by organizational differences found among the *Brahmasūtra*’s many commentaries.

Despite these constraints, a survey of these commentaries demonstrates that there is (1) no consensus on the exact organization of the *sūtras*, with perhaps the exception of the number of *adhyāyas* and *pādas*, (2) no common naming of the various *adhikaraṇas*, and (3) no universally agreed-upon number of *adhikaraṇas* or *sūtras* that constitute the text.⁴² Consequently, the *Brahmasūtra*’s structural form is distinctive to its interpretation. This presents an interesting hermeneutic where textual organization plays a significant semantic role and is dependent upon the act of interpretation itself.

Given these complications, it becomes evident that a well-authored original *Brahmasūtra* commentary is a magnum opus. It expresses its author’s competency and proficiency in the Upaniṣads and *smṛti* texts, inter-darśanic dialogue, inventiveness, organization, and reasoned exposition. The text also serves as a completed puzzle that interlocks a *darśana*’s philosophical principles, its reading of the *Prasthānatrayī*, and its unique identity into a cohesive, mutually supportive unit.

³⁹ For simplicity assume this sequence is presumed.

⁴⁰ According to the terminology used among classical Pāṇinian grammatical studies, this division is identified as *yogavibhāga*. For further exploration, see (Abhyankar 295)

⁴¹ (Radhakrishnan 24)

⁴² See, for example (Uskokov 9–10; Vireswarananda and Adidevananda xxviii)

By presenting an English translation of its exposition of the first *Brahmasūtra*, this article pays tribute to one such *Brahmasūtra* commentary: the recently authored and acclaimed *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*. However, before delving into the translation, it is first necessary to contextualize the commentary within its darśanic framework. With this end in mind, the following few sections introduce (1) the *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, which encompasses the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, (2) the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, the Vedānta Darśana in which the commentary is positioned, and (3) Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa, the founder of this *darśana*.

The Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya

Authored by Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Bhadreshdas Swami, the *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* was inspired by His Holiness Pramukh Swami Maharaj, the fifth spiritual successor of Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa and the spiritual leader of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. It is a collection of the following five volumes: the *Īśādyāṣṭopaniṣat-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, *Chāndogyaopaniṣad-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, *Brhadāranyakopaniṣad-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, *Śrīmadbhagavadgītā-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, and the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*. These works collectively constitute a comprehensive Sanskrit commentary of the *Prasthānatrayī*—the principal ten Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavadgītā*, and the *Brahmasūtra*—according to the principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana revealed by Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa.⁴³

As a recent addition to the Vedānta commentarial tradition, the *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya* plays a significant role in establishing the identity of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana as an independent Vedānta *darśana* that is distinct from Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, Dvaitādvaita, Śuddhādvaita, Acintyabhedābheda, and other *darśanas*.⁴⁴ The commentary's role in substantiating the tradition's unique darśanic position continues to be recognized at several international conferences, among both traditional and contemporary scholarly circles, and by long-established reputable scholarly organizations.⁴⁵

Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa

Before introducing the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, a brief introduction to Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa is warranted. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, Parabrahman Sahajānanda Svāmī, also identified as Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa, founded the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana. He was born on April 3, 1781,⁴⁶ in Chapaiyā,⁴⁷ a small village near Ayodhyā, Uttara Pradeśa and named Ghanaśyāma Pāṇḍe. Soon after his parents passed, Ghanaśyāma, at eleven years old, left his home on a pilgrimage across India.⁴⁸ During his approximately seven-year journey, he visited many pilgrimage sites and *āśramas*.⁴⁹ He often asked those he met to explain the nature and form (*svarūpa*) of the *jīvātman*, *īśvarātman*, *māyā*, *Brahman*, and *Parabrahman*—the five ontologically distinct entities he would later advocate in

⁴³ (Paramtattvadas 38)

⁴⁴ (Paramtattvadas 38–40)

⁴⁵ See, for example (Akshar Purushottam Darshan Shastrarth in Tirupati; Highlights: World Sanskrit Conference, Vancouver; 'Swaminarayansiddhantasudha' Acclamation by the Śrī Kāśī Vidvat Pariṣad; "News & Events")

⁴⁶ (Dave 22)

⁴⁷ (Dave 21)

⁴⁸ (Dave 96–97)

⁴⁹ (Dave 112, 119, 119, 121, 121, 130, 149, 158, 181, 230, 233, 233, 235, 240, 243)

his teachings.⁵⁰ Eventually, he settled in Loja, Gujarat⁵¹ and was named Sahajānanda.⁵² He became revered as Pūrṇa Puruṣottama Bhagavān (Parabrahman)⁵³ and gave the mantra ‘Svāminārāyaṇa’ to his disciples.⁵⁴ Sahajānanda Svāmī later became well-known by this name.

Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇa then, for the rest of his life, traveled throughout the region, delivering discourses and meeting with devotees. He often discoursed on the knowledge of Akṣarabrahman⁵⁵ and Parabrahman (*brahmajñāna*) and other principles of Vedānta. He also repeatedly revealed the significance of singular devotion (*ekāntika-bhakti*), which he described as becoming one with Akṣarabrahman and offering singular devotion to Puruṣottama. Through his discourses, he elaborated on the principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama doctrine and laid the foundation for the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana.

Within the *darśana*, he continues to be worshiped as Parabrahman Puruṣottama by his disciples. Today, throughout the world, there are thousands of Akṣara-Puruṣottama mandirs in which Svāminārāyaṇa’s sacred image (*mūrti*) and the *mūrti* of Akṣarabrahman Guṇātītānanda Svāmī are consecrated and worshipped. The *darśana* has a rich collection of sacred texts, a comprehensive Sanskrit commentary on the *Prasthānatrayī* based on Svāminārāyaṇa’s teachings, and literary compositions in both Sanskrit and vernacular languages.

The Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya

In recognition of the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*’s novel expositions on the Upaniṣads, this article presents an English translation of the first aphorism of the text: “athāto brahmajijñāsā.” An immediate question that arises is: “Why the first aphorism?” This section answers this question by examining the aphorism’s foundational role in defining (1) the prerequisites for engaging with the text, (2) the text’s primary topic of discussion, and (3) the referent of ‘brahman’—perhaps one of the most critical components for establishing a *darśana*’s identity and understanding its reading of not only the *Brahmasūtra* but also the other sacred texts of the *Prasthānatrayī*.

The first aphorism of the *Brahmasūtra* has special significance within Vedānta discussions for several reasons. The first is founded on the traditional darśanic interest in the reading of

⁵⁰ (Dave 317)

⁵¹ (Dave 321)

⁵² (Dave 349)

⁵³ (Dave 376–77)

⁵⁴ (Dave 387–88)

⁵⁵ Within the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana, Akṣarabrahman is understood as a distinct ontological entity from Parabrahman. The *darśana* advocates that, like Parabrahman, there is only one Akṣarabrahman, who is eternally beyond the influence of *māyā*. Akṣarabrahman’s form (*svarūpa*), qualities, and supremacy are dependent on and secondary only to those of Parabrahman. By Parabrahman’s eternal wish, Akṣarabrahman is the cause, support, controller, and pervader (*śarīrin*) of all inanimate creation, *jīvātman*, and *īśvarātman*. Although there is only one Akṣarabrahman, he exists as the following four forms: (1) the all-pervasive space (*cidākāśa*), (2) Parabrahman’s divine abode, Akṣaradhāman, (3) an embodied eternal servant of Parabrahman within Akṣaradhāman, and (4) in human form in the world as the guru, through whom Parabrahman remains manifest (present). The *darśana* identifies these Akṣarabrahman gurus: Guṇātītānanda Swami, Bhagatajī Mahārāja, Śāstrijī Mahārāja, Yogijī Mahārāja, Pramukha Svāmī Mahārāja, and presently, Mahanta Svāmī Mahārāja, as this fourth form of Akṣarabrahman on earth. (Sādhū 1–4)

‘atha.’ The term itself has several possible semantics as expressed in the *Amarakośa* verse “maṅgalānantarārambhapraśnakārtsnyeṣvatho atha” (3.4.9)⁵⁶ and the *Avyakośa* verse: “atha maṅgalānantarārambhapraśnakārtsnyādhikārapratijñā-samuccayavitarkavikalpeṣu” (17).⁵⁷ These entries state that ‘atha’ can be used to express auspiciousness (*maṅgala*), immediate succession (*ānantarya*), commencement (*ārambha*), inquiry (*praśna*), totality (*kārtsnya*), a topic declaration (*adhikāra*), a vow (*pratijñā*), conjunction (*samuccaya*), an objection (*vitarka*), an alternative (*vikalpa*), and others. Commentators on the *Brahmasūtra*, since Śaṅkarācārya’s *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya*, have provided many ways to understand this initial term. For example, Rāmānuja, in his *Śrībhāṣya*, advocates the term to mean *then* or *thereafter* in the sense of *ānantarya* (immediate succession), signifying that an inquiry of *brahman* proceeds “immediately after acquiring knowledge of [ritualistic] works.”⁵⁸ Śaṅkara also ascribes *ānantarya* (immediate succession) as its meaning but in the sense of after the acquisition of requisite virtues, but not those specified in satisfaction of *dharma*jijñāsā⁵⁹ (the knowledge of Pūrvamīmāṃsā). Vallabha, on the other hand, advocates ‘atha’ in the sense of announcing commencement (*adhikāra*)⁶⁰ and does not establish requisites for inquiry.⁶¹ The positioning of ‘atha’ before the invocation of ‘brahmajijñāsā’ (‘an inquiry into *brahman*’) invites commentators to specify its function and any requisites to such an inquiry. This interest in the exposition of ‘atha’ and the subsequent discussion that ensues obligates commentaries to not only analyze one interpretation over another according to the commentator’s darśanic viewpoints but also provide clarity on the prerequisites for conducting an inquiry into *brahman*.

The second point of interest in this first aphorism lies in its specification of the primary topic of discussion. This exposition obliges the commentator to reconcile various discussions appearing throughout the text by expressing their relevance to the principal topic of the text: *brahman*. In doing so, these discussions not only form the basis of *śāstra-saṅgati* discussed earlier but also, at a darśanic level, establish the framework for understanding the relationships between *brahman* and the subjects of the various discussions presented throughout the text.

The third noteworthy role is the commentary’s exposition of the referent of ‘*brahman*.’ Perhaps this is the most pressing not only because of its immediacy with the text’s central topic but also because of its proximity to any given *darśana*’s foundational principle(s) and identity. Each Vedānta *darśana* is established on unique principles that distinguish it from other *darśanas*. The *darśanas* place great importance on their distinct understanding of *brahman* and its relationship with other entities, so much so that the nomenclature used to identify a *darśana*, for example, as Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, Dvaita, and others, typically reflects these relationships.⁶² Given the centrality of *brahman* within the darśanic world, many commentaries on the *Brahmasūtra* present their characteristic understanding of *brahman* and its identity, form, and nature early in the text.

Within the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*, all three of these elements are discussed in its elaboration of the first aphorism. Its interpretation of ‘atha’ in the sense of *ānantarya*

⁵⁶ (Miśra 403)

⁵⁷ (Srivatsankacharya 9–11)

⁵⁸ (Rāmānuja, *The Śrībhāṣya* 5; Rāmānuja, *Śrībhāṣya* 2)

⁵⁹ (*Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* 5–6; Apte 5–6)

⁶⁰ (Vallabha 34–36)

⁶¹ (Adams 38–39)

⁶² (M. S. Bhadreshdas 29)

(immediate succession) establishes prerequisites for participating in an inquiry into *brahman*. Later, its unique analysis of ‘brahmajijñāsā’ as “brahmaṇorjijñāsā”—an inquiry of two *brahmans*—introduces two primary subjects of the text: Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman. The commentary proceeds by engaging in a brief exegesis of Upaniṣadic revelations to validate its unique reading of the aphorism. Thereafter, the identification of two ontologically distinct *brahmans*, Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman, instigates an investigation and discussion of their unique ontological identities and natures—the third traditionally noteworthy exposition of the *Brahmasūtra*’s first aphorism.

These novel readings of the first aphorism create an interest and urgency to investigate the original reading not just of the remainder of the *Brahmasūtra* text but also of the *Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*’s readings of the other sacred texts of the *Prasthānatrayī*. This study also invites the discovery of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana’s unique principles expressed, explained, and substantiated within its works.⁶³ Participating in this discovery would also introduce new perspectives to the darśanic dialogue and perhaps suggest a re-evaluation of established readings of the seminal works of Vedānta. The English translation of the *Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya*’s exposition of the first aphorism presented in this short work seeks to aid this discovery by making the initial part of the text more accessible to a broader audience. Although much elaboration and discussion can be conducted on the commentary’s exposition of the first aphorism, I have restrained doing so to focus on the translation itself. Perhaps, subsequent works may elaborate on the nuances of the exposition and provide reflections on the darśanic implications of its reading. With these intentions, the remainder of this article provides:

An English Translation of the Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya’s Exposition of the First Brahmasūtra

The Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya begins by

अथ ब्रह्मसूत्रभाष्यं लिख्यते।

atha brahmasūtrabhāṣyaṃ likhyate.

The *Brahmasūtrabhāṣya* is thus being written...

अक्षरपुरुषोत्तमाख्यं सकलप्रपञ्चाऽभिन्ननिमित्तोपादानभूतं सदा साकृतिकं सदा
दिव्याऽलौकिकाऽक्षरधामाख्यदेशविशेषस्थमूर्तिमदक्षरब्रह्मतद्भावापन्ननैककोट्यक्षरमुक्तसमूहं
पूजितदिव्यचरणयुगलं सदा सर्वान्तर्यमनशक्त्या सर्वत्रव्यापकं
सर्वविभवाऽऽराध्यमानदिव्यस्वरूपं सर्वविभवकारणमक्षरब्रह्माधिपं परमात्मानं तथा च तस्यैव
नित्येच्छया सकलजगन्निमित्तोपादानकारणभूतं सर्वव्यापकं सदा तत्परमदिव्यनिवासभूतं तत्रैव
पुनस्तत्परमसेवारतं सम्प्रदायपरम्परारक्षकगुरुगुरूपेण सदैव तत्प्राकट्यानुभावकं
प्रत्यक्षनारायणस्वरूपमिव सेवनीयं परममोक्षप्रदं

⁶³ Further elaborations of some of the distinctive principles of the Akṣara-Puruṣottama Darśana can be found within the following works: (S. Bhadreshdas, *Parabrahma Swaminarayan Prabodhit Akshar-Purushottam Darshan Parichay*; M. S. Bhadreshdas).

सत्यज्ञानाऽनन्तत्वाद्यगणितकल्याणगुणोपेतमक्षरं ब्रह्म च स्वानुप्रविष्टतयाऽनुसन्दधानो
भगवान् पाराशर्यस्तद्विव्यप्रेरणापरिप्लावितान्तःकरणः संस्तत्प्रेरितसिद्धान्तैरेवाऽज्ञान्
बोधयितुं, सन्दिग्धान् निष्ठापयितुं, निष्ठितांश्च दृढयितुमभिकाङ्क्षमाणो
वेदान्ततत्त्वरहस्यात्मकाऽक्षरब्रह्मपरब्रह्मविषयब्रह्मविद्याविचारलक्षणं शास्त्रं
सूत्ररूपेणाऽवतारयामास। तस्येदमाद्यमधिकरणमथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासेति।

akṣarapuruṣottamākhyam sakalaprapaṇcā'bhinnanimittopādānabhūtam sadā sākr̥tikam
sadā

divyā'laukikā'kṣaradhāmākhyadeśaviśeṣasthamūrtimadakṣarabrahmatadbhāvāpannanaikak
oṭyakṣaramuktasamūhasampūjitadivyacaraṇayugalam sadā sarvāntaryamanaśaktyā
sarvatrayāpakam sarvavibhavā'rādhyamānadivyaśvarūpam
sarvavibhavaḥkaraṇamakṣarabrahmādhīpam paramātmānam tathā ca tasyaiva nityecchayā
sakalajagannimittopādānakāraṇabhūtam sarvavyāpakam sadā tatparamadivyanivāsabhūtam
tatraiva punastatparamasevāratham sampradāyaparamparārakṣakagururūpeṇa sadaiva
tatprākāṭyānubhāvakam pratyakṣanārāyaṇaśvarūpamiva sevānīyam paramamokṣapradam
satyajñānā'nantatvādyagaṇitakalyāṇaguṇopetamakṣaram brahma ca
svānupraviṣṭatayā'nusandadhāno bhagavān
pārāśaryastaddivyaḥpreraṇāpariplāvitāntaḥkaraṇaḥ samstatpreritasiddhāntairevā'jñān
bodhayitum, sandigdhān niṣṭhāpayitum, niṣṭhitāmsca dṛḍhayitumabhikāṅkṣamāṇo
vedāntatattvarahasyātmakā'kṣarabrahmaparabrahmaviśayabrahmavidyāvicāralakṣaṇam
śāstram sūtrarūpeṇā'vatārayāmāsa. tasyedamādyamadhikaraṇamathāto brahmajijñāseti.

Lord Pārāśarya (Maharṣi Veda Vyāsa) considered himself to be enveloped by:

1. **Paramātman**—he (1) who is identified as Akṣara-Puruṣottama, (2) who is the unseparated instrumental and material cause of all creation; (3) who is eternally with form; (4) whose two divine feet are worshiped by (a) Akṣarabrahman—he who resides within the divine and transcendental, particular abode Akṣaradhāman—and (b) infinite liberated *ātman*s, who have attained Akṣarabrahman's likeness; (5) who through his omnipresent power is eternally all-pervading; (6) who possesses a divine form that is worthy of being worshiped by all deities, who are his manifestations (*vibhūti*s); (7) who is the cause of all things magnificent; and (8) who is the master of Akṣara—
2. along with **Akṣarabrahman**—(1) who by Paramātman's continual desire is the instrumental and material cause of all creation; (2) who is all-pervasive; (3) who is Paramātman's divine abode Akṣaradhāman; (4) who within that Akṣaradhāman is engrossed in the supreme service of Paramātman; (5) who is (a) the guru, (b) the protector of the *sampradāya* and the guru *paramparā*, and (c) through whom the presence of Paramātman is always experienced; (6) who is worthy of being served as the manifest form of Nārāyaṇa (*Nārāyaṇaśvarūpa*); (7) who is the bestower of supreme liberation; and (8) who is endowed with innumerable liberating virtues, such as truthfulness, sagacity, and imperishability.

His consciousness was influenced by the divine inspiration of Brahman⁶⁴ (Akṣarabrahman) and Parabrahman. He authored a sacred text of aphorisms on *brahmavidyā*, the quintessence of Vedānta truth and that which has Brahman and Parabrahman as its subjects. He did so to bestow knowledge to those who are unaware of the doctrine inspired by Brahman and

⁶⁴ 'Brahman' is capitalized since it is used as a proper noun that refers to the single entity Akṣarabrahman.

Parabrahman, to make those who are doubtful resolute, and to reaffirm the conviction of the faithful. This begins the first section (*adhikaraṇa*): “For this reason, one should now inquire about Brahman!”

अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा॥१/१/१॥

athāto brahmajijñāsā॥I/I/I॥

For this reason, one should now inquire about Brahman!

अथ इहातःशब्दशिरस्कोऽथशब्दो ह्यानन्तर्यार्थो विवक्षितः। ननु ‘ओङ्कारश्चाऽथशब्दश्च द्वावेतौ ब्रह्मणः पुरा। कण्ठं भित्त्वा विनिर्यातौ तस्मान्माङ्गलिकावुभौ॥’ इति स्मृत्युक्तेस्तस्य मङ्गलार्थनिष्ठत्वमेवोचितं, येन लोकसंक्लृप्तशिष्टाचारोऽपि नोच्छिद्येत निर्मङ्गलत्वनिबन्धनाऽशास्त्रीयताऽपत्तिश्च निवार्येतेति चेन्न, सर्वस्याप्यस्य सूत्रराशेर्वेदान्तरहःप्रबोधकतया स्वतो मङ्गलरूपत्वादेव न तत्र मङ्गलान्तरापेक्षा। अथवा न ह्युद्भूतशब्दलक्षणमेव मङ्गलं भवतीति नियमो दृष्टचरः, मूकत्वाऽऽक्रान्तादौ व्यभिचारात्, स्मरणमात्रलक्षणस्याऽपि तस्य सम्भवाच्च। वस्तुतस्तु शब्दलक्षणमपि तत् स्वेष्टस्मरणमेव बोधयतीति मुनिर्बादरायणव्यासोऽपि ग्रन्थानुकूलप्रज्ञासंजीवकमक्षरं ब्रह्म तदधीशं परं ब्रह्म च संस्मृत्यैव तदनुग्रहेण चैतान् दिव्यसूत्रदीपान् प्रज्वालयामासेति न किञ्चिदमङ्गलमिति। ननु भवतु वाऽर्थत आनन्तर्यार्थस्यैवोच्चारणमात्रेण पुनर्मङ्गलार्थत्वमिति चेद्, न नोऽवहीनं किमपि, आनन्तर्यन्त्वपरिहार्यमेव। न च पुनरधिकाराद्यर्थत्वमस्य कथं परिहीयत इति वाच्यम्, अप्रसक्तत्वात्।

atha ihātaḥśabdaśirasko'thaśabdo hyānantaryārtho vivakṣitaḥ. nanu 'oṅkāraścā'thaśabdaśca dvāvetau brahmaṇaḥ purā. kaṇṭhaṁ bhittvā viniryātau tasmānmaṅgalikāvubhau' iti smṛtyuktestasya maṅgalārthanīṣṭhatvamevocitaṁ, yena lokasaṁklṛptaśiṣṭācāro'pi nocchidyeta nirmaṅgalatvanibandhanā'sāstriyatā"pattiśca nivāryeteti cenna, sarvasyāpyasya sūtrarāśervedāntarahaḥprabodhakatayā svato maṅgalarūpatvādeva na tatra maṅgalāntarāpekṣā. athavā na hyudbhūtaśabdalakṣaṇameva maṅgalaṁ bhavatīti niyamo dṛṣṭacarah, mūkatvā"krāntātau vyabhicārāt, smaraṇamātralakṣaṇasyā'pi tasya sambhavācca. vastutastu śabdalakṣaṇamapi tat sveṣṭasmarāṇameva bodhayatīti munirbādarāyaṇavyāso'pi granthānukūlaprajñāsāṁjīvakamakṣaram brahma tadadhīśaṁ paraṁ brahma ca saṁsmṛtyaiva tadanugraheṇa caitān divyasūtradīpān prajvālayāmāseti na kiñcidamaṅgalamiti. nanu bhavatu vā'rthata ānantaryārthasyaivoccāraṇamātreṇa punarmaṅgalārthatvamamiti ced, na no'vahīnaṁ kimapi, ānantaryantvaparihāryameva. na ca punaradhikārādyarthatvamasya kathaṁ parihīyata iti vācyam, aprasaktatvāt.

अथ—Here, ‘atha,’ which appears before ‘ataḥ’ means *now* in the sense of succession (*ānantarya*).

Here an objection is raised:

“‘Aum’ and ‘atha,’ these two terms are the first to have been enunciated by *brahman*; hence, they are both indicative of auspiciousness.” By this *smṛti*, it is only appropriate to understand ‘atha’ as an indicator of auspiciousness. By its recitation, one would avoid both a breach of worldly etiquette and scriptural ineloquence caused by the absence of partaking in an auspicious introduction.

This is not the case, since the entire collection of aphorisms reveals the essence of Vedānta (the Upaniṣads), which are in themselves a source of auspiciousness. For this reason, there is no need for another *maṅgalācaraṇa*.⁶⁵ Also, the principle that enunciation is necessary to participate in a *maṅgalācaraṇa* is not obligatory since it is not seen to apply to those who are mute or disabled. Such persons may engage in auspicious rites by merely recalling them. In actuality, a verbal invocation is itself a progenitor for recollecting one's preferred deity. Here, by remembering Akṣarabrahman and his master Parabrahman—they who give life to the wisdom needed to understand the text—and through their blessings, the sage Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa ignites the divine lamp-like *sūtras*. Thus, there is nothing inauspicious here.

Also, there is nothing erroneous in someone interpreting 'atha' in terms of succession (*ānantarya*) from a semantic perspective and again as an expression of auspiciousness from an enunciation perspective. Despite this, however, its meaning in terms of succession (*ānantarya*) should not be abandoned. Do not object: "Then why should its other well-known meanings, such as that which indicates *adhikāra* and others, be foregone," since these meanings are unsuitable here.

इत्थमानन्तर्यार्थत्वलाभे यदनन्तरं ब्रह्मविद्याविचारोपपत्तिसम्भवस्तत्पूर्ववृत्तित्वं तस्य वक्तव्यम्। किं तदिति चेदुच्यते। पूर्वमीमांसाऽवसितः स्वनुष्ठितः सदाचारकर्मकाण्डादिरूपो धर्मो वेदान्तशास्त्रार्थाऽऽपातप्रत्ययरूपं ज्ञानं, परमपुरुषार्थप्रत्यनीकेषु प्रियत्वविरहलक्षणो निर्वेदः, परमदिव्यभावनरसितप्रत्यक्षपरमात्मैकान्तिकभक्त्यभिवाञ्छा साक्षादक्षरब्रह्मस्वरूपगुरुदृढतमप्रसङ्गोपदेशादिलभ्याऽनाद्यज्ञाननिवर्तनपुरस्कृतस्वात्मब्रह्मरूपत्वसम्पत्त्यलङ्कृतप्रत्यक्षपरमात्मपरमोपासनजन्यसहजानन्दपरमानन्ददिव्यानुभूतिलक्षणपरमनिःश्रेयसाभिकाङ्क्षा तत्परमप्रसादलोभो बाह्यान्तःकरणसंयमनलक्षणं तपः 'तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाऽभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्म निष्ठम्' (मु. १/२/१२), 'यस्य देवे परा भक्तिर्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ। तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः॥' (श्वे. ६/२३), 'तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया। उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्व-दर्शिनः॥' (गी. ४/३४) इति शास्त्रादेशतो नित्यं परमात्मानं साक्षात्कुर्वाणस्य वेदवेदान्तादिसकलशास्त्रविद्यापारदृश्वनस्तदर्थोपदेशनिपुणस्याऽशेषकल्याणगुणमण्डितस्य परममोक्षपदवीप्रापकस्य स्वतो ब्रह्मस्वरूपस्य गुरोर्यथाविधि परमात्मभावतः समाश्रयणं तस्य तदुपदिष्टवेदान्तादिशास्त्राणां वचनेषु चाऽऽस्तिक्यादिरूपः परमो विश्वास इत्यादि।

itthamānantaryārthatvalābhe yadanantaram
brahmavidyāvicāropapattisambhavastatpūrvavṛttitvaṃ tasya vaktavyam. kiṃ taditi
ceducyate. pūrvamīmāṃsā'vasitaḥ svanuṣṭhitaḥ sadācārakarmakāṇḍādirūpo dharmo
vedāntaśāstrārthā"pātapratyayarūpaṃ jñānaṃ, paramapuruṣārthapratyanīkeṣu
priyatvavirahalakṣaṇo nirvedaḥ,
paramadivyaabhāvanarasitapratyakṣaparamātmāikāntikabhaktyabhivāñchā
sākṣādakṣarabrahmasvarūpagurudṛḍhatamaprasaṅgopadeśādilabhyā'nādyajñānanivartanap
uraskṛtasvātmabrahmarūpatvasampattyalaṅkṛtapratyakṣaparamātmāparamopāsanajanyasa
hajānandaparamānandadivyañubhūtilakṣaṇaparamaniḥśreyasābhikāṅkṣā
tatparamaprasādalobho bāhyāntaḥkaraṇasaṃnyamanalakṣaṇaṃ tapaḥ 'tadvijñānārthaṃ sa

⁶⁵ An auspicious act or an act that bestows auspiciousness.

gurumevā'bhigacchet samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahma niṣṭham' (Mu. 1/2/12), 'yasya deve parā bhaktiryathā deve tathā gurau tasyaite kathitā hyarthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ' (Śve. 6/23), 'tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā upadekṣyanti te jñānaṃ jñāninastattva-darśinaḥ' (Gī. 4/34) iti śāstrādeśato nityaṃ paramātmānaṃ sākṣātkurvāṇasya vedavedāntādisakalaśāstravidyāpārādṛśvanastadarthopadeśanipuṇasya'śeṣakalyāṇaguṇamaṇḍitasya paramamokṣapada viprāpakasya svato brahmasvarūpasya guroryathāvidhi paramātmabhāvataḥ samāśrayaṇaṃ tasya tadupadiṣṭavedāntādisāstrāṇāṃ vacaneṣu cā'stikyādirūpaḥ paramo viśvāsa ityādi.

By understanding 'atha' as referring to immediate succession (*ānantarya*), it becomes necessary to elaborate on what precedes the upcoming reflection on *brahmavidyā*. What are the prerequisites for reflecting on *brahmavidyā*? They are stated to be: (1) *dharma* that is obtained through Pūrvamīmāṃsā, self-practiced, and characterized by well-established righteous living and ritual practice; (2) a rudimentary understanding of the meanings of the Vedānta sacred texts; (3) *vairāgya* in the form of detachment from that which opposes attaining the supreme end; (4) a yearning to obtain singular devotion, which is ordained with supreme *divyabhāva*,⁶⁶ towards the present Paramātmāna; (5) a desire for liberation that is characterized by the divine experience of the supreme bliss of Sahajānanda, upon (a) offering supreme worshipful service to the present Paramātmāna, (b) becoming free from the eternal ignorance, (c) attaining oneness with Brahman, and (d) attaining the present Akṣarabrahman guru's unwavering association, teachings, etc.; (6) a longing to receive Paramātmāna's supreme favor; (7) moderation-filled self-restraint over both the inner and outer senses/faculties; (8) refuge under the eternally realized *Brahmasvarūpa*⁶⁷ guru—who according to "tadvijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevā'bhigacchet samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahma niṣṭham" (Mu. 1.2.12), "yasya deve parā bhaktiryathā deve tathā gurau tasyaite kathitā hyarthāḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ" (Śve. 6.23), "tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā upadekṣyanti te jñānaṃ jñāninastattva-darśinaḥ" (Gī. 4.34) and other scriptural revelations, (a) eternally realizes Paramātmāna, (b) sees beyond the knowledge of the Veda-Vedānta scriptures and is proficient in conveying their meaning, (c) is adorned by all liberating virtues, and (d) is the bestower of the state of final liberation—as if he were Paramātmāna; (9) absolute pious faith in Vedānta and other sacred texts revealed in his (the guru's) teachings; and others—these are all prerequisites for engaging in reflections on *brahmavidyā*.

अतो हेत्वर्थोऽयमतःशब्दः। ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा ब्रह्मणोर्जिज्ञासेति कर्मषष्ठ्या विग्रहो
विशेषाभिधानात् प्रतिपदविधाननिषेधनिवारणाच्च।
अथ ब्रह्मपदार्थनिर्णयः। ब्रह्मशब्देनेह सकलवेदान्तोदितब्रह्मविद्यातत्त्व-निरूपण-निपुणेन
भगवता व्यासेनाऽक्षरब्रह्मपरब्रह्मेतिदिव्योभयतत्त्वयोर्जिज्ञास्यमानत्वेन विवक्षितत्वात्, तथैव
श्रुत्यवबोधितत्वाच्च ब्रह्मणोरिति द्विवचनान्तो विग्रहः। पदार्थभेदेऽपि पदसारूप्याच्चैकशेषः
शाब्दिकसमयसिद्धो यथा पार्थपार्थसारथ्युभयविवक्षया कृष्णाविति भारते
(म.भा.आ.प. २२१/३३) दाशरथिवासुदेवाऽग्रजोभयविवक्षया वदन्ति लोके रामयोरिति

⁶⁶ Here, 'divyabhāva' refers to realizing the form (*svarūpa*), intentions, actions, and qualities of the present form of Paramātmāna as divine and without flaws or worldly desires.

⁶⁷ 'Brahmasvarūpa' refers to the form of Akṣarabrahman itself.

तथेहापि। ब्रह्म च ब्रह्म चेति ब्रह्मणी तयोरिति लौकिको विग्रहः। तत्राऽद्यं शक्त्याऽक्षरतत्त्वं द्वितीयञ्च पुरुषोत्तमतत्त्वं ब्रवीतीति भवति तदुभयलाभः। तथा ह्येतयोरेव नित्यं स्वरूपस्वभावगुणतश्च सकलजीवेश्वरमायातन्मुक्तेभ्यो बृहत्त्वाद् बृंहणत्वाच्च मुख्यवृत्त्यैव ब्रह्मशब्दव्यपदेशः।

ato hetvartho'yamataḥśabdaḥ. brahmajijñāsā brahmaṇorjijñāseti karmaṣaṣṭhyā vighraho viśeṣābhidhānāt pratipadavidhānaniṣedhanivāraṇācca.

atha brahmapadārthanirṇayaḥ. brahmaśabdeneha sakalavedāntoditabrahmavidyātattva-nirūpaṇa-nipuṇena bhagavatā

vyāsenā'kṣarabrahmaparabrahmetidivyo bhayatattvayorjijñāsyamānatvena vivakṣitatvāt, tathaiva śrutyavabodhitatvācca brahmaṇoriti dvivacanānto vighrahaḥ. padārthabhede'pi padasārūpyaccaikaśeṣaḥ śābdikasamayāsiddho yathā pārthapārthasārathyubhayavivakṣayā kṛṣṇāviti bhārata (Ma. Ādi. 221/33) dāśarathivāsudevā'grajobhayavivakṣayā vadanti loke rāmāyoriti tathehāpi. brahma ca brahma ceti brahmaṇi tayoriti laukiko vighrahaḥ. tatrā'dyaṃ śaktyā'kṣaratattvaṃ dvitīyaṃ puruṣottamatattvaṃ bravīti bhavati tadubhayalābhaḥ. tathā hyetayoreva nityaṃ svarūpasvabhāvagūṇataśca sakalajīveśvaramāyātānmuktebhyo bṛhattvād bṛhmaṇatvācca mukhyavṛttyaiva brahmaśabdavyapadeśaḥ.

अतः—Here, 'ataḥ' is used to express cause.

An Analysis of 'Brahmajijñāsā'

'Brahmajijñāsā' is analyzed as "brahmaṇorjijñāsā"—an inquiry into two Brahman. It is analyzed in this manner as *karmaṣaṣṭhi*.⁶⁸ Here, by a special exemption, the rule "pratipadavidhānā ṣaṣṭhī na samasyate," which restricts the needed compound formation, is redressed.

The Meaning of 'Brahman'

The meaning of 'brahman' will now be determined. Here, Bhagavān Vyāsa, who was proficient in all Vedānta expositions of *brahmavidyā*, wished to refer to Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman, the two divine beings who should be realized, by 'brahman.' The *śrutis* convey the same, and as a result, here the dual-in-number analysis—'brahmaṇoḥ jijñāsā'—is presented. Even though the referents are ontologically distinct, since their lexical terms are homogeneous, the grammatical rule requiring only one instance is maintained, just as in the *Mahābhārata* (Ma. Ādi. 221.33), where 'kṛṣṇau' is used to refer to both Pārtha (Arjuna) and Pārthasārathī (Śrīkṛṣṇa) and 'rāmāyoḥ' is commonly used to refer to Rāma, the son of Daśaratha, and Balarāma, the elder brother of Śrīkṛṣṇa. Similarly, a dual-in-number expression is implemented here. 'Brahma ca brahma ceti brahmaṇi, tayor' ('Brahman and Brahman—two Brahman, their') is a non-technical analysis of the term. Here, the first instance of 'Brahman' denotes Akṣarabrahman, whereas the second denotes Puruṣottama. In doing so, there is the benefit of referring to both. Since both entities' form, nature, and virtues are eternally far superior to those of all the *jīvas*,

⁶⁸ 'Karmaṣaṣṭhi' refers to a compound where its first term (here, 'brahman') is (1) the accusative object of the latter term ('jijñāsā') but (2) expressed in the genitive case within the compound's analysis: 'brahmaṇoḥ jijñāsā'

īśvaras, *māyā*, and *muktas*⁶⁹ and because of their distinguishing features, they (Akṣara and Puruṣottama) are referred to by 'brahman.'

श्रुतिप्रसिद्धश्चैतयोर्ब्रह्मशब्देन साक्षाद् व्यपदेशः। यथा हि षट्प्रश्न्यां सत्यकाम-
जिज्ञासाप्रत्युत्तरावसरे 'एतद् वै सत्यकाम परं चापरं ब्रह्म यदोङ्कारः' (प्र.५/२)
इत्योङ्कारवाचितया पुरुषोत्तमतत्त्वमक्षरतत्त्वं चोपदिष्टं पिप्पलादेन महर्षिणा। तत्र परं
चाऽपरं चेति विशेषणद्वयेन परस्परं तत्त्वद्वयस्वरूपभेदसिद्धेर्ब्रह्मशब्दस्योभयाऽभिधायिता
प्रतिपद्यते। न चैवं वेदान्तवाक्येषु ब्रह्मशब्दश्रुतौ तत्र तत्र सर्वत्राप्युभयमेव
ब्रह्मशब्दाभिधेयतयोपतिष्ठेदिति वाच्यं, सैन्धवपदस्य लवणाऽश्वोभयार्थाऽभिधायित्वेऽपि
प्रकरणादिवशादर्थनिर्णीतिवदिहाप्युपक्रमोपसंहारादिवाक्यार्थनिर्णयलिङ्गैस्तत्र
तत्रैकतरस्योभयस्य वेति निर्णयात्। यथा ब्रह्मशब्देन क्वचिद् 'यतो वा इमानि भूतानि जायन्ते।
येन जातानि जीवन्ति। यत्प्रयन्त्यभिसंविशन्ति। तद्विजिज्ञासस्व। तद् ब्रह्मेति' (तै.३/१/१)
इत्यादौ परमात्माऽभिहितोऽवगम्यते। क्वचिच्च 'ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम्' (तै.२/१/१),
'एतद्ध्येवाऽक्षरं ब्रह्म एतद्ध्येवाऽक्षरं परम्' (कठ.२/१६), 'ब्रह्मैवेदममृतं पुरस्ताद् ब्रह्म पश्चाद्
ब्रह्म दक्षिणतश्चोत्तरेण। अधश्चोर्ध्वं च प्रसृतं ब्रह्मैवेदं विश्वमिदं वरिष्ठम्' (मु.२/२/११)
इत्यादावक्षरं, क्वचिदपि 'सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म' (छा.३/१४/१), 'ब्रह्मणे नमः' (बृ.६/५/४)
इत्यादावुभाविति।

śrutiprasiddhaścaitayorbrahmaśabdena sāksāḍ vyapadeśaḥ. yathā hi ṣaṭpraśnyām
satyakāma-jijñāsāpratyuttarāvasare 'etad vai satyakāma paraṁ cāparaṁ brahma
yadounkāraḥ' (Pra. 5/2) ityōṅkāravācitayā puruṣottamatattvamakṣaratattvaṁ copadiṣṭaṁ
pippalādena maharṣiṇā. tatra paraṁ cā'paraṁ ceti viśeṣaṇadvayena parasparaṁ
tattattvadvayasvarūpabhedasiddherbrahmaśabdasyobhayā'bhidhāyitā pratipadyate. na
caivaṁ vedāntavāk्येषu brahmaśabdaśrutau tatra tatra sarvatrāpyubhayameva
brahmaśabdābhidheyatayopatiṣṭhediti vācyaṁ, saindhavapadasya
lavaṇā'śvobhayārthā'bhidhāyitve'pi
prakaraṇādivaśādarthanirṇitivadihāpyupakramopasaṁhārādivāk्यārthanirṇayaliṅgaistatra
tatraikatarasyobhayasya veti nirṇayāt. yathā brahmaśabdena kvacid 'yato vā imāni bhūtāni
jāyante| yena jātāni jīvanti| yatprayantyabhisamviśanti| tadvijijñāsasva| tad brahmeti' (Tai.
3/1/1) ityāḍau paramātmā'bhihito'vagamyate. kvacicca 'brahma vidāpnoti param' (Tai. 2/1/1),
'etaddhyevā'kṣaraṁ brahma etaddhyevā'kṣaraṁ param' (Kaṭha. 2/16),
'brahmaivedamamṛtaṁ purastād brahma paścād brahma dakṣiṇataścottareṇa|
adhaścordhvaṁ ca prasṛtaṁ brahmaivedaṁ viśvamiḍaṁ variṣṭhaṁ' (Mu. 2/2/11)
ityādāvākṣaraṁ, kvacidapi 'sarvaṁ khalvidaṁ brahma' (Chā. 3/14/1), 'brahmaṇe namaḥ' (Bṛ.
6/5/4) ityādāvubhāviti.

It is commonly witnessed within the *śrutis* that they are both mentioned by 'brahman.' For example, within the *Praśnopaniṣad*, Mahārṣi Pippalāda, while responding to Satyakāma's inquiry, expounds on Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman expressed by 'aum' by revealing: "etad vai Satyakāma paraṁ cāparaṁ brahma yadounkāraḥ!" (Pra. 5.2) Here, since using two qualifiers,

⁶⁹ 'Mukta' refers to a liberated jīva or īśvara ātman.

'para' and 'apara,' demonstrates that the qualificands are ontologically distinct, 'brahman' is a signifier for both.

Should 'brahman' occurring within Vedānta revelations be taken to express both everywhere? No. For example, even though 'saindhava' may express two meanings: *a horse* or *salt*, the referent of any given occurrence is determined by considering the beginning and conclusion of a section and other means for determining the meaning of sentences. The same should also be understood here.

For example, in certain instances, like in: "yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante | yena jātāni jīvanti | yatprayantya bhisamviśanti | tad vijijñāśasva | tad brahmeti" (Tai. 3.1.1), 'brahman' refers to Paramātmā. Similarly, in other instances, like "brahmavidāpnoti param" (Tai. 2.1.1), "etaddhyevā'kṣaram brahma etaddhyevā'kṣaram param" (Kaṭha. 2.16), and "brahmaivedamamṛtampurastād brahma paścād brahma dakṣiṇataścottareṇa | adhaścordhvaṃ ca prasṛtaṃ brahmaivedaṃ viśvamidaṃ variṣṭhaṃ" (Mu. 2.2.11), 'brahman' refers to Akṣarabrahman. However, in other places, such as: "sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma" (Chā. 3.14.1) and "brahmaṇe namaḥ" (Br. 6.5.4), 'brahman' is used to refer to both.

ननु ब्रह्मविद्याविचाराऽऽरम्भणसूत्रेऽस्मिन्नेकः परमात्मैवाऽस्तु वेदनीयतया जिज्ञास्यः, किमिह तत्त्वद्वयग्रहाऽऽग्रहेणेति चेन्नाऽयमस्माकमाग्रहोऽपि तु भगवत्याः श्रुतेरेव। श्रुत्युपजीव्यत्वाच्चास्य शास्त्रस्य सकलवेदवेदान्तशब्दावलीरहस्यार्थदर्शिनो भगवतः सूत्रकारस्यापीति। का सा श्रुतिरिति चेद् 'येनाऽक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम्' (मु.१/२/१३) इति। इत्थं हि तत्रत्यो भवति प्रस्तावः। चतुर्मुखादिप्रामाणिकोपदेष्टृपरम्पराप्रस्थापनमुखेन सर्वविद्याप्रतिष्ठात्वपुरस्कारेण समादृता ब्रह्मविद्या तत्रोपक्रान्ता 'ब्रह्मा देवानां प्रथमः सम्बभूव विश्वस्य कर्ता भुवनस्य गोप्ता। स ब्रह्मविद्यां सर्वविद्या-प्रतिष्ठामथर्वाय ज्येष्ठपुत्राय प्राह॥' (मु.१/१/१) इत्यादि। तत्परम्परायामङ्गिरोनामाऽऽचार्याय तच्छिष्यत्वेनोपसन्नो जिज्ञासुः शौनको मुनिः पप्रच्छ 'कस्मिन्नु भगवो विज्ञाते सर्वमिदं विज्ञातं भवतीति' (मु.१/१/३) तदवसरे विद्यानिरूपणनिपुणो ह्यङ्गिराः प्राक्तनब्रह्मविद्यामुपदेशमनुसृत्य प्रथमतः 'परा चैवाऽपरा च' (मु.१/१/४) इति विद्याद्वयं प्रदर्शयामास। तत्र याऽऽद्या सैव ब्रह्मविद्येति प्रथिता। ततश्चोद्देशक्रमं परित्यज्य प्रथममपरां निरूप्य ततो विस्तरशो ब्रह्मविद्यानिरूपणाय प्रतिजज्ञौ 'अथ परा' (मु.१/१/५) इति। तदारम्भे च प्रथमतोऽक्षरतत्त्वाऽधिगममेव पुरश्चकार 'यया तदक्षरमधिगम्यते' (मु.१/१/५) इति। किं तदक्षरमिति विज्ञापनाऽऽशया पुनः 'यत्तदद्वैतमग्राह्यमगोत्रमवर्णमचक्षुःश्रोत्रं तदपाणिपादम्। नित्यं विभुं सर्वगतं सुसूक्ष्मं तदव्ययं यद्भूतयोनिं परिपश्यन्ति धीराः' (मु.१/१/६) इति तदक्षरतत्त्वस्वरूपगुणवैभवादि प्रदर्शयामास। ततश्च तस्यैवाऽक्षरतत्त्वस्य दृष्टान्तत्रयपुरःसरं जगत्कारणत्वादिकमप्युपदिदेश 'यथोर्णनाभिः सृजते गृह्णते च यथा पृथिव्यामोषधयः सम्भवन्ति यथा सतः पुरुषात्केशलोमानि तथाऽक्षरात् सम्भवतीह विश्वम्' (मु.१/१/७) इत्यादि।

nanu brahmavidyāvicārā"rambhaṇasūtre'sminnekaḥ paramātmāivā'stu vedanīyatayā jijñāsyah, kimiha tattvadvayagrahā"grahēti cennā'yamas mākamāgraho'pi tu bhagavatyāḥ śrutereva. śrutyupajīvyatvāccāsyā śāstrasya sakalavedavedāntaśabdāvalirahasyārthadarśino bhagavataḥ sūtrakārasyāpīti. kā sā śrutirīti ced 'yena'kṣaram puruṣam veda satyaṃ provāca

tām tattvato brahmavidyām' (Mu. 1/2/13) iti. itthaṃ hi tatratyo bhavati prastāvaḥ. caturmukhādiprāmāṇikopadeṣṭrparamparāprasthāpanamukhena sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhātvapuraskāreṇa samādr̥tā brahmavidyā tatropakrāntā 'brahmā devānām prathamah sambabhūva viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptā sa brahmavidyām sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhām matharvāya jyeṣṭhaputrāya prāha||' (Mu. 1/1/1) ityādi. tatparamparāyāmaṅgironāmā" cāryāya tacchīṣyatvenopasanno jijñāsuḥ śaunako munīḥ papraccha 'kasminnu bhagavo vijñāte sarvamidam vijñātaṃ bhavatīti' (Mu. 1/1/3) tadavasare vidyānirūpaṇanipuṇo hyaṅgirāḥ prāktanabrahmavidāmupadeśamanusṛtya prathamataḥ 'parā caivā' parā ca' (Mu. 1/1/4) iti vidyādvayam pradarśayāmāsa. tatra yā"dyā saiva brahmavidyeti prathitā. tataścoddeśakramam parityajya prathamamaparām nirūpya tato vistaraśo brahmavidyānirūpaṇāya pratijajñau 'atha parā' (Mu. 1/1/5) iti. tadārambhe ca prathamato'kṣaratattvā'dhigamameva puraścakāra 'yayā tadakṣaramadhigamyate' (Mu. 1/1/5) iti. kiṃ tadakṣaramiti vijñāpanā"śayā punaḥ 'yattadadreśyamagrāhyamagotramavarṇamacakṣuḥśrotram tadapāṇipādām nityam vibhum sarvagatam susūkṣmam tadavyayam yadbhūtayoniṃ paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ' (Mu. 1/1/6) iti tadakṣaratattvasvarūpaṇaivaibhavādi pradarśayāmāsa. tataśca tasyaivā'kṣaratattvasya dr̥ṣṭāntatrayapurāḥsaram jagatkāraṇatvādikamapyupadideśa 'yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate gr̥hṇate ca yathā pṛthivyāmoṣadhayaḥ sambhavanti yathā sataḥ puruṣātkeśalomāni tathā'kṣarāt sambhavatīha viśvam' (Mu. 1/1/7) ityādi.

The following doubt occurs:

In this aphorism, which commences a reflection on *brahmavidyā*, if it is sufficient to believe that there is an inquiry of only Paramātman, then why is there an insistence on accepting two entities?

In response, it is said: We are not insisting on anything; however, the venerable mother-like *śruti* is insisting. This sacred *Brahmasūtra* text is a product of the *śrutis*. For this reason, it is also the position upheld by Bhagavān Vyāsa, the *sūtras'* author and the revealer of the essence of the Vedas and Vedānta words.

"Which *śruti*?"

The *śruti* is: "yenā'kṣaram puruṣam veda satyam provāca tām tattvato brahmavidyām" (Mu. 1.2.13) There, the following reading is offered: Establishing the legacy of the teaching conveyed by authoritative figures like the four-faced Brahmā and others and revering *brahmavidyā* as "sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhā," it (the Muṇḍakopaniṣad) commences by stating: "brahmā devānām prathamah sambabhūva viśvasya kartā bhuvanasya goptā sa brahmavidyām sarvavidyāpratiṣṭhām matharvāya jyeṣṭhaputrāya prāha||" (Mu. 1.1.1) The inquisitive disciple Śaunaka Muni approaches the teacher Aṅgiras, who is of that lineage,⁷⁰ and asks: "kasminnu bhagavo vijñāte sarvamidam vijñātaṃ bhavatīti?" (Mu. 1.1.3) On this occasion, following the teachings of those in the past who knew of *brahman*, Aṅgiras, who was proficient in elaborating upon wisdom, commences by stating, "parā caivā' parā ca." (Mu. 1.1.4) He reveals that there are two types of knowledge. Among them, only the first is identified as *brahmavidyā*. Thereafter, disregarding the sequence in which he introduced the types of knowledge, he begins by elaborating on the lesser knowledge first. He then pledges to reveal *brahmavidyā* in great detail

⁷⁰ 'That lineage' refers to the previously mentioned lineage of authoritative figures who passed on *brahmavidyā* from one generation to the next.

by announcing, “atha parā” (Mu. 1.1.5). At the beginning of its exposition, he first introduces the knowledge of the entity Akṣara when he states, “yayā tadakṣaramadhigamyate” (Mu. 1.1.5) While explaining what this Akṣara is, he states, “yattadadreśyamagrāhyamagotramavarṇam-acakṣuḥśrotram tadapāṇipādam| nityam vibhum sarvagatam susūkṣmam tadavyayam yadbhūtayoniṃ paripaśyanti dhīrāḥ||” (Mu. 1.1.6) In this manner, the form, qualities, and glory of Akṣara is revealed. Then, the same entity Akṣara is also described as the cause of the world in the following three analogies: “yathorṇanābhiḥ sṛjate grhṇate ca yathā pṛthivyāmoṣadhayaḥ sambhavanti yathā sataḥ puruṣātkeśalomāni tathā’kṣarāt sambhavatiha viśvam|” (Mu. 1.1.7)

तदेवाऽक्षरतत्त्वं पुनर्ब्रह्मशब्दाभिधेयमपि भवतीति प्रतिपादयितुं ‘तपसा चीयते ब्रह्म’ (मु.१/१/८), ‘यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद्यस्य ज्ञानमयं तपः। तस्मादेतद् ब्रह्म नाम रूपमन्नं च जायते’ (मु.१/१/९) इति जगत्कारणत्वपुरःसरं ब्रह्मशब्देनोपस्थापयामास। एवं प्रथममुण्डकाद्यखण्डे ब्रह्मविद्याघटकमेकमक्षरब्रह्मतत्त्वं विनिरूप्य ततो द्वितीयखण्डे ‘तपःश्रद्धे ये ह्युपवसन्त्यरण्ये शान्ता विद्वांसो भैक्ष्यचर्यां चरन्तः। सूर्यद्वारेण ते विरजाः प्रयान्ति यत्राऽमृतः स पुरुषो ह्यव्ययात्मा’ (मु.१/२/११) इत्यादिना पूर्वखण्डप्रतिपादिताऽक्षरतत्त्वभिन्न एव पुरुषशब्दोपस्थापितः पुरुषोत्तमपरमात्माऽपि विनिरूपितः। एवमक्षरं पुरुषोत्तमं चोभयमपि समुपदिश्य तदुभयविज्ञानत एव ब्रह्मविद्याकात्स्न्योपपत्तेस्तत्प्राप्त्युपायं प्राह ‘परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणो निर्वेदमायान्नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन। तद्विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत्समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्म निष्ठम्’ (मु.१/२/१२) इति। ततश्च स्वयं भगवती श्रुतिमातैव तदुभयवेदनत एकतरस्याप्यपरित्यागेन तदुभयतत्त्ववेदनस्यैव ब्रह्मविद्यात्वमुज्जुघोष ‘तस्मै स विद्वान् उपसन्नाय सम्यक् प्रशान्तचित्ताय शमान्विताय। येनाक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम्’ (मु.१/२/१३) इति।

tadevā’kṣaratattvaṃ punarbrahmaśabdābhidheyamapi bhavatīti pratipādayitum ‘tapasā cīyate brahma’ (Mu. 1/1/8), ‘yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvavidyasya jñānamayaṃ tapaḥ| tasmādetad brahma nāma rūpamannaṃ ca jāyate’ (Mu. 1/1/9) iti jagatkāraṇatvapuraḥsaram brahmaśabdenopasthāpayāmāsa. evaṃ prathamamuṇḍakādyaḥkhāṇḍe brahmavidyāghaṭakamekamakṣarabrahmatattvaṃ vinirūpya tato dvitīyakhaṇḍe ‘tapaḥśraddhe ye hyupavasantyarāṇye śāntā vidvāṃso bhaikṣyacāryāṃ carantaḥ| sūryadvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti yatrā’mṛtaḥ sa puruṣo hyavyayātmā’ (Mu. 1/2/11) ityādinā pūrvakhaṇḍapratipāditā’kṣaratattvabhinnā eva puruṣaśabdopasthāpitaḥ puruṣottamaparamātmā’pi vinirūpitaḥ. evamakṣaram puruṣottamaṃ cobhayamapi samupadiśya tadubhayavijñānata eva brahmavidyākārtsnyopapattestatprāptyupāyaṃ prāha ‘parikṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena| tadvijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevābhigacchetsamitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahma niṣṭham’ (Mu. 1/2/12) iti. tataśca svayaṃ bhagavati śrutimātaiva tadubhayavedanata ekatarasyāpyaparitāyāgena tadubhayatattvavedanasyaiva brahmavidyātmamujjughōṣa ‘tasmai sa vidvān upasannāya samyak praśāntacittāya śamānvitāya| yenākṣaram puruṣam veda satyaṃ provāca tāṃ tattvato brahmavidyām’ (Mu. 1/2/13) iti.

‘Brahman’ is also used to refer to that same Akṣara as evidenced in the following: “tapasā cīyate brahma” (Mu. 1.1.8) and “yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvavidyasya jñānamayaṃ tapaḥ| tasmādetad

brahma nāma rūpamannaṃ ca jāyate” (Mu. 1.1.9) The entity Akṣara, the cause of the world, is mentioned here by ‘Brahman.’ In this way, Akṣarabrahman, whose knowledge forms a component of *brahmavidyā*, is described within the first chapter’s (*muṇḍaka*’s) first section (*khaṇḍa*). Thereafter, in the second section, “tapaḥśraddhe ye hyupavasantyarāṇye śāntā vidvāṃso bhaikṣyacaryāṃ carantaḥ| sūryadvāreṇa te virajāḥ prayānti yatrā’mṛtaḥ sa puruṣo hyavyayātmā” (Mu. 1.2.11) and others describe Puruṣottama Paramātmā using ‘puruṣa’ and identify him as distinct from the Akṣara described in the previous section. In this manner, both entities, Akṣara and Puruṣottama, are elaborated. *Brahmavidyā* is entirely acquired only upon realizing them both. For this reason, the sacred text expresses the means for attaining this *brahmajñāna* (*brahmavidyā*) by the following: “parikṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena| tadvijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevābhigacchetsamitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahma niṣṭham” (Mu. 1.2.12) Then, in the following mantra, the mother-like *śruti* herself proclaims that *brahmavidyā* is acquired only by realizing both (Akṣara and Puruṣottama), without forfeiting knowledge of either of them: “tasmai sa vidvān upasannāya samyak praśāntacittāya śamānvitāya| yenākṣaram puruṣam veda satyaṃ provāca tām tattvato brahmavidyām” (Mu. 1.2.13)

न चेहाक्षरमिति पुरुषविशेषणं कथं न स्यादिति वाच्यं, नैव स्याद्, ‘दिव्यो ह्यमूर्तः पुरुषः स बाह्याभ्यन्तरो ह्यजः। अप्राणो ह्यमनाः शुभ्रो ह्यक्षरात्परतः परः’ (मु. २/१/२)
इत्याद्युत्तरग्रन्थविरोधात्। सकलप्रपञ्चपरभूताद् अक्षरशब्दवाच्याद् ब्रह्मणोऽपि परः
पुरुषशब्दवाच्यः पुरुषोत्तमस्ततो भिन्न एवेति हि तत्रत्यः सिद्धान्तः।
इत्थमक्षरपुरुषोत्तमसिद्धान्तमेव ब्रह्मविद्यारूपेण प्रस्थाप्य तद्विद्यासाकल्याय तद्व्यमपि
दिव्यतत्त्वमवशिष्टमुण्डकद्वय उक्तार्थदाढ्याय सोत्साहमुपदिदेश।

na cehā’kṣaramiti puruṣaviśeṣaṇaṃ kathaṃ na syāditi vācyaṃ, naiva syād, ‘divyo hyamūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ sa bāhyābhyantaro hyajaḥ| aprāṇo hyamanāḥ śubhro hyakṣarātparataḥ paraḥ’ (Mu. 2/1/2) ityādyuttaragranthavirodhāt. sakalaprapañcaparabhūtād akṣaraśabdavācyaḥ brahmaṇo’pi paraḥ puruṣaśabdavācyaḥ puruṣottamastato bhinna eveti hi tatratyaḥ siddhāntaḥ. itthamakṣarapuruṣottamasiddhāntameva brahmavidyārūpeṇa prasthāpya tadvidyāsākalyāya taddvayamapi divyatattvamavaśiṣṭamuṇḍakadvaya uktārthadārḍhyāya sotsāhamupadideśa.

The question, “Why is ‘akṣara’ not a qualifier of ‘puruṣa?’” is raised.

If this is accepted, then there will be an inconsistency with a subsequent section of the text since “divyo hyamūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ sa bāhyābhyantaro hyajaḥ| aprāṇo hyamanāḥ śubhro hyakṣarātparataḥ paraḥ” (Mu. 2.1.2) is revealed later. For this reason, it is doctrinal that Brahman, the cause of all creation and here expressed by ‘akṣara,’ is distinct from Puruṣottama, referred to by ‘puruṣa.’ In this way, having established the Akṣara-Puruṣottama doctrine as *brahmavidyā*, the remaining two chapters (*muṇḍakas*) continue with great enthusiasm to present teachings on the two divine entities to reaffirm the mentioned meaning ascriptions and provide a more comprehensive understanding of that knowledge (*vidyā*).

The Glory of Akṣara

तत्र 'यथा सुदीप्तात् पावकाद् विस्फुलिङ्गाः सहस्रशः प्रभवन्ते सरूपाः। तथाऽक्षराद् विविधाः सोम्य भावाः प्रजायन्ते तत्र चैवापियन्ति॥' (मु. २/१/१), 'आविः सन्निहितं गुहाचरं नाम महत्पदमत्रैतत् समर्पितम्। एजत्प्राणन्निमिषञ्च तदेतज्ज्ञानथ सदसद्वरेण्यं परं विज्ञानाद् यद् वरिष्ठं प्रजानाम्॥ १॥ यदर्चिमद् यदणुभ्योऽणु च यस्मिँल्लोका निहिता लोकिनश्च। तदेतदक्षरं ब्रह्म स प्राणस्तदुवाङ्मनः। तदेतत्सत्यं तदमृतं तद् वेद्धव्यं सोम्य विद्धि॥ २॥ धनुर्गृहीत्वौपनिषदं महास्त्रं शरं ह्युपासानिशितं सन्दधीत। आयम्य तद्भावगतेन चेतसा लक्ष्यं तदेवाक्षरं सोम्य विद्धि॥ ३॥ प्रणवो धनुः शरो ह्यात्मा ब्रह्म तल्लक्ष्यमुच्यते। अप्रमत्तेन वेद्धव्यं शरवत्तन्मयो भवेत्॥ ४॥ यस्मिन् द्यौः पृथिवी चान्तरिक्षमोतं मनः सह प्राणैश्च सर्वैः। तमेवैकं जानथाऽऽत्मानमन्या वाचो विमुञ्चथामृतस्यैष सेतुः॥ ५॥ अरा इव रथनाभौ संहता यत्र नाड्यः स एषोऽन्तश्चरते बहुधा जायमानः। ॐ इत्येवं ध्यायथाऽऽत्मानं स्वस्ति वः पाराय तमसः परस्तात्॥ ६॥ यः सर्वज्ञः सर्वविद्यस्यैष महिमा भुवि। दिव्ये ब्रह्मपुरे ह्येष व्योमन्यात्मा प्रतिष्ठितः। मनोमयः प्राणशरीरनेता प्रतिष्ठितोऽन्ने हृदयं सन्निधाय। तद्विज्ञानेन परिपश्यन्ति धीरा आनन्दरूपममृतं यद् विभाति॥ ७॥' (मु. २/२/१-७), 'हिरण्यमये परे कोशे विरजं ब्रह्म निष्कलम्। तच्छुभ्रं ज्योतिषां ज्योतिस्तद्यदात्मविदो विदुः॥ ९॥ न तत्र सूर्यो भाति न चन्द्रतारकं नेमा विद्युतो भान्ति कुतोऽयमग्निः। तमेव भान्तमनुभाति सर्वं तस्य भासा सर्वमिदं विभाति ॥ १०॥' (मु. २/२/९-१०), 'बृहच्च तद्विव्यमचिन्त्यरूपं सूक्ष्माच्च तत् सूक्ष्मतरं विभाति। दूरात्सुदूरे तदिहान्तिके च पश्यत्स्विहैव निहितं गुहायाम्' (मु. ३/१/७) इत्यादौ ब्रह्माक्षरोद्धोषः।

tatra 'yathā sudīptāt pāvakād visphuliṅgāḥ sahasraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ। tathā'kṣarād vividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivāpiyanti॥' (Mu. 2/1/1), 'āvīḥ sannihitaṁ guhācaram nāma mahatpadamatraitat samarpitam। ejatprāṇannimiṣacca tadetajjānatha sadasadvareṇyam param vijñānād yad variṣṭhaṁ prajānām॥1॥ yadarcimad yadaṇubhyo'ṇu ca yasmiṁllokā nihitā lokinaśca। tadetadakṣaram brahma sa prāṇastaduvāṇmanaḥ। tadetatsatyam tadamṛtam tad veddhavyam somya viddhi॥2॥ dhanurgr̥hītvaupaniṣadam mahāstraṁ śaram hyupāsāniśitaṁ sandadhīta। āyamyā tadbhāvagatena cetasā lakṣyam tadevākṣaram somya viddhi॥3॥ praṇavo dhanuḥ śaro hyātmā brahma tallakṣyamucyate। apramattena veddhavyam śaravattanmayo bhavet॥4॥ yasmin dyauḥ pṛthivī cāntarikṣamotaṁ manaḥ saha prāṇaiśca sarvaiḥ। tamevaikaṁ jānathā"tmānamanyā vāco vimuñcathāmṛtasyaiśa setuḥ॥5॥ arā iva rathanābhau saṁhatā yatra nāḍyaḥ sa eṣo'ntaścarate bahudhā jāyamānaḥ। aum ityevam dhyāyathā"tmānam svasti vaḥ pārāya tamaśaḥ parastāt॥6॥ yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvavidyasyaiśa mahimā bhuvi। divye brahmapure hyeṣa vyomnyātmā pratiṣṭhitaḥ। manomayaḥ prāṇaśarīranetā pratiṣṭhito'nne hṛdayam sannidhāya। tadvijñānena paripaśyanti dhīrā ānandarūpamamṛtam yad vibhāti॥7॥' (Mu. 2/2/1-7), 'hiraṇmaye pare koṣe virajaṁ brahma niṣkalam। tacchubhram jyotiṣāṁ jyotistadyadātmavidō viduḥ॥9॥ na tatra sūryo bhāti na candratārakaṁ nemā vidyuto bhānti kuto'yamagniḥ। tameva bhāntamanubhāti sarvaṁ tasya bhāsa sarvamidaṁ vibhāti॥10॥' (Mu. 2/2/9-10), 'br̥hacca taddivyamacintyarūpaṁ sūkṣmācca tat sūkṣmataram vibhāti।

dūrātsudūre tādihāntike ca paśyatsvīhaiva nihitaṃ guhāyām' (Mu. 3/1/7) ityādaḥ brahmākṣarodghoṣaḥ.

There (within the following sections of the text) the greatness of Akṣara Brahman (Akṣarabrahman) is sung as follows: "yathā sudīptāt pāvakād visphuliṅgāḥ sahasraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ! tathā'kṣarād vividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivāpiyanti" (Mu. 2.1.1), "āviḥ sannihitaṃ guhācaraṃ nāma mahatpadamatraitat samarpitam! ejaṭprāṇannimiṣacca tadetajjānatha sadasadvareṇyaṃ paraṃ vijñānād yad variṣṭhaṃ prajānām ||1|| yadarcimad yadaṇubhyo'ṇu ca yasminllokā nihitā lokinaśca! tadetadakṣaraṃ brahma sa prāṇastaduvāṇmanaḥ! tadetatsatyam tadamṛtaṃ tad veddhavyam somya viddhi ||2|| dhanurgrhītvapāṇiṣadaṃ mahāstraṃ śaraṃ hyupāsāniśitaṃ sandadhīta! āyamyā tadbhāvagatena cetasā lakṣyaṃ tadevākṣaraṃ somya viddhi ||3|| prāṇavo dhanuḥ śaro hyātmā brahma tallakṣyamucyate! apramattena veddhavyam śaravattanmayo bhavet ||4|| yasmin dyauḥ pṛthivī cāntarikṣamotaṃ manaḥ saha prāṇaiśca sarvaiḥ! tamevaikaṃ jānathā'tmānamanyā vāco vimuñcathāmṛtasyaiśa setuḥ ||5|| arā iva rathanābhau saṃhatā yatra nāḍyaḥ sa eṣo'ntaścarate bahudhā jāyamānaḥ! aum ityevaṃ dhyāyathā'tmānam svasti vaḥ pārāya tamasā parastāt ||6|| yaḥ sarvajñaḥ sarvavidyasyaiśa mahimā bhuvī! divye brahmapure hyeṣa vyomnyātmā pratiṣṭhitaḥ! manomayaḥ prāṇasārīranetā pratiṣṭhito'ne hṛdayaṃ sannidhāya! tadvijñānena paripaśyanti dhīrā ānandarūpamamṛtaṃ yad vibhāti ||7||" (Mu. 2.2.1-7), "hiraṇmaye pare kośe virajaṃ brahma niṣkalam! tacchubhram jyotiṣāṃ jyotistadyadātmavidō viduḥ ||9|| na tatra sūryo bhāti na candratārakaṃ nemā vidyuto bhāti kuto'yamagniḥ! tameva bhāntamanubhāti sarvaṃ tasya bhāsā sarvamidaṃ vibhāti ||10||" (Mu. 2.2.9-10), and "bṛhacca taddivyamacintyarūpaṃ sūkṣmācca tat sūkṣmataraṃ vibhāti! dūrātsudūre tādihāntike ca paśyatsvīhaiva nihitaṃ guhāyām." (Mu. 3.1.7) In this way, the glory of Akṣara Brahman is proclaimed.

The Glory of Puruṣottama

‘दिव्यो ह्यमूर्तः पुरुषः स बाह्याभ्यन्तरो ह्यजः। अप्राणो ह्यमनाः शुभ्रो ह्यक्षरात्परतः परः॥२॥ एतस्माज्जायते प्राणो मनः सर्वेन्द्रियाणि च। खं वायुर्ज्योतिरापः पृथिवी विश्वस्य धारिणी॥३॥’ (मु. २/१/२, ३), ‘भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः। क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे’ (मु. २/२/८), ‘यदा पश्यः पश्यते रुक्मवर्णं कर्तारमीशं पुरुषं ब्रह्मयोनिम्। तदा विद्वान् पुण्यपापे विधूय निरञ्जनः परमं साम्यमुपैति’ (मु. ३/१/३), ‘नायमात्मा प्रवचनेन लभ्यो न मेधया न बहुना श्रुतेन। यमेवैष वृणुते तेन लभ्यस्तस्यैष आत्मा विवृणुते तनूं स्वाम्’ (मु. ३/२/३) इत्यादौ पुरुषोत्तमोद्घोषः।

‘divyo hyamūrtaḥ puruṣaḥ sa bāhyābhyantaro hyajaḥ! aprāṇo hyamanāḥ śubhro hyakṣarātparataḥ paraḥ ||2|| etasmājjāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca! khaṃ vāyurjyotirāpaḥ pṛthivī viśvasya dhārīṇī ||3||’ (Mu. 2/1/2,3), ‘bhidyate hṛdayagrānthischidyante sarvasaṃśayaḥ! kṣīyante cāsya karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare’ (Mu. 2/2/8), ‘yadā paśyaḥ paśyate rukmavarṇaṃ kartāramīśaṃ puruṣaṃ brahmayonim! tadā vidvān puṇyapāpe vidhūya nirañjanaḥ paramaṃ sāmyamupaiti’ (Mu. 3/1/3), ‘nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā śruteṇa! yamevaiśa vṛṇute tena labhyastasyaiśa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṃ svām’ (Mu. 3/2/3) ityādaḥ puruṣottamodghoṣaḥ.

The following mantras then proclaim the glory of Paramātman: “divyo hyamūrtah puruṣaḥ sa bāhyābhyantaro hyajaḥ| aprāṇo hyamanāḥ śubhro hyakṣarātparataḥ paraḥ ||2|| etasmājjāyate prāṇo manaḥ sarvendriyāṇi ca| khaṁ vāyurjyotirāpaḥ pṛthivī viśvasya dhārīṇī ||3||” (Mu. 2.1.2,3), “bhidyate hr̥dayagranthiśchidyante sarvasaṁśayāḥ| kṣiyante cāsyā karmāṇi tasmin dr̥ṣṭe parāvare” (Mu. 2.2.8), “yadā paśyaḥ paśyate rukmavarṇaṁ kartāramiśaṁ puruṣaṁ brahmayonim| tadā vidvān puṇyapāpe vidhūya nirañjanaḥ paramaṁ sāmīyamupaiti” (Mu. 3.1.3), and “nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā śrutenā| yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyastasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūṁ svām.” (Mu. 3.2.3)

The Fruits of Realizing Akṣara-Puruṣottama

‘एतद् यो वेद निहितं गुहायां सोऽविद्याग्रन्थिं विकिरतीह सोम्य’ (मु. २/१/१०), ‘भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः। क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे’ (मु. २/२/८), ‘तदा विद्वान् पुण्यपापे विधूय निरञ्जनः परमं साम्यमुपैति’ (मु. ३/१/३), ‘स वेदैतत् परमं ब्रह्मधाम यत्र विश्वं निहितं भाति शुभ्रम्। उपासते पुरुषं ये ह्यकामास्ते शुक्रमेतदतिवर्तन्ति धीराः’ (मु. ३/२/१), ‘वेदान्तविज्ञानसुनिश्चितार्थाः सन्न्यासयोगाद् यतयः शुद्धसत्त्वाः। ते ब्रह्मलोकेषु परान्तकाले परामृताः परिमुच्यन्ति सर्वे’ (मु. ३/२/६), ‘तथा विद्वान् नामरूपाद् विमुक्तः परात्परं पुरुषमुपैति दिव्यम्’ (मु. ३/२/८), ‘तरति शोकं तरति पाप्मानं गुहाग्रन्थिभ्यो विमुक्तोऽमृतो भवति’ (मु. ३/२/९), इत्यादौ च तद्विज्ञानफलोद्घोष इति। अतोऽत्र तत्त्वद्वयाङ्गीकार एव श्रुतियुक्तिसम्मतः सूत्रकाराभिप्रेतश्चेति श्रुत्यक्षरद्रोहतः सूत्राक्षरद्रोहो ब्रह्माक्षरद्रोहश्च नावहनीय इत्यलम्।

‘etad yo veda nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ so’vidyāgranthiṁ vikiratiha somya’ (Mu. 2/1/10), ‘bhidyate hr̥dayagranthiśchidyante sarvasaṁśayāḥ| kṣiyante cāsyā karmāṇi tasmin dr̥ṣṭe parāvare’ (Mu. 2/2/8), ‘tadā vidvān puṇyapāpe vidhūya nirañjanaḥ paramaṁ sāmīyamupaiti’ (Mu. 3/1/3), ‘sa vedaitat paramaṁ brahmadhāma yatra viśvaṁ nihitaṁ bhāti śubhram| upāsate puruṣaṁ ye hyakāmāste śukrametadatativartanti dhīrāḥ’ (Mu. 3/2/1), ‘vedāntavijñānasuniścitarthāḥ sannyāsayogād yatayaḥ śuddhasattvāḥ| te brahmalokeṣu parāntakāle parāmṛtāḥ parimucyanti sarve’ (Mu. 3/2/6), ‘tathā vidvān nāmarūpād vimuktaḥ parātparam puruṣamupaiti divyam’ (Mu. 3/2/8), ‘tarati śokaṁ tarati pāpmānaṁ guhāgranthibhyo vimukto’mr̥to bhavati’ (Mu. 3/2/9), ityādaḥ ca tadvijñānaphalodghoṣa iti. ato’tra tattvadvayāṅgikāra eva śruti-yuktisammataḥ sūtrakārābhipretaśceti śrutyakṣaradrohataḥ sūtrākṣaradroho brahmākṣaradrohaśca nāvahaniya ityalam.

“etad yo veda nihitaṁ guhāyāṁ so’vidyāgranthiṁ vikiratiha somya” (Mu. 2.1.10), “bhidyate hr̥dayagranthiśchidyante sarvasaṁśayāḥ| kṣiyante cāsyā karmāṇi tasmin dr̥ṣṭe parāvare” (Mu. 2.2.8), “tadā vidvān puṇyapāpe vidhūya nirañjanaḥ paramaṁ sāmīyamupaiti” (Mu. 3.1.3), “sa vedaitat paramaṁ brahmadhāma yatra viśvaṁ nihitaṁ bhāti śubhram| upāsate puruṣaṁ ye hyakāmāste śukrametadatativartanti dhīrāḥ” (Mu. 3.2.1), “vedāntavijñāna-suniścitarthāḥ sannyāsayogād yatayaḥ śuddhasattvāḥ| te brahmalokeṣu parāntakāle parāmṛtāḥ parimucyanti sarve” (Mu. 3.2.6), “tathā vidvān nāmarūpād vimuktaḥ parātparam puruṣamupaiti divyam” (Mu. 3.2.8), “tarati śokaṁ tarati pāpmānaṁ guhāgranthibhyo vimukto’mr̥to bhavati,” (Mu. 3.2.9) and other *śrūtis* reveal the fruits of realizing the two entities (Akṣara and Puruṣottama). Thus, only the affirmation of both entities is supported by the *śrūtis*

and intentioned by the author of the aphorisms. One should not welcome offending either the aphorisms' written word or the Akṣara Brahman entity by dishonoring the meaning of the *śrutis*.

The Form of Knowledge

ज्ञातुमिच्छा जिज्ञासा। ब्रह्मशब्देन यथोक्तदिव्यतत्त्वद्वयाऽभिधानाद्
जिज्ञासापदस्येष्यमाणाऽक्षरपुरुषोत्तमज्ञानेच्छेत्यर्थः।
स्वविषयप्राधान्यप्रकृतित्वाच्चेच्छायास्तद्विषयभूताऽक्षरपुरुषोत्तमाख्यदिव्यतत्त्वद्वयज्ञानप्रवृत्तेरि
ह विधानम्। ज्ञानं चेह ध्यानोपासनादिरूपम्।

jñātumicchā jijñāsā. brahmaśabdena yathoktadivyatattvadvayā'bhidhānād
jijñāsāpadasyeṣyamāṇā'kṣarapuruṣottamajñānecchetyarthaḥ.
svaviṣayaprādhānyaprakṛtitvāccecchāyāstadviṣayabhūtā'kṣarapuruṣottamākhyadivyatattva
dvayajñānapravṛtteriha vidhānam. jñānaṃ ceha dhyānopāsanādirūpam.

'Jijñāsā' means *the desire to know*. Since 'brahman' refers to the two divine entities previously mentioned (Akṣara and Puruṣottama), 'jijñāsā' refers to the desire for the knowledge of Akṣara and Puruṣottama. The nature of desire is such that its object (the object of desire) is primary. For this reason, it ('jijñāsā') serves as a signifier for the action for knowledge, which forms the object of desire. Here, knowledge refers to the knowledge of the two divine entities Akṣara and Puruṣottama. In the present context, 'knowledge' is used in the sense of meditation (*dhyāna*) or worshipful service (*upāsana*).

Why Desire the Knowledge of Akṣara-Puruṣottama?

तथा हि पूर्वकाण्डप्रतिपादितकर्मविधिस्वरूपलक्षणादिकमधिगम्याऽपि 'न ह्यध्रुवैः प्राप्यते'
(कठ. २/१०), 'तद्यथेह कर्मचितो लोकः क्षीयत एवमेवाऽमुत्र पुण्यचितो लोकः क्षीयते'
(छा. ८/१/६), 'प्लवा ह्येते अदृढा यज्ञरूपाः' (मु. १/२/७), 'परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणो
निर्वेदमायान्नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन' (मु. १/२/१२) इत्यादौ केवलशुष्ककर्मणाम्
अल्पाऽस्थिरफलकत्वं, 'यो वा एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यविदित्वाऽस्मिँल्लोके जुहोति यजते तपस्तप्यते
बहूनि वर्षसहस्राण्यन्तवदेवाऽस्य तद्धवति यो वा एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यविदित्वाऽस्माल्लोकात् प्रैति स
कृपणः' (बृ. ३/८/१०), 'तद्य इहाऽऽत्मानमननुविद्य ब्रजन्त्येतांश्च सत्यान् कामांस्तेषां सर्वेषु
लोकेष्वकामचारो भवति' (छा. ८/१/६), 'असन्नेव स भवति असद् ब्रह्मेति वेद चेत्। अस्ति
ब्रह्मेति चेद्वेद सन्तमेनं ततो विदुः' (तै. २/६/१) इति तथा च 'असुर्या नाम ते लोका अन्धेन
तमसावृताः। तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्ति ये के चात्महनो जनाः॥' (ई. ३), 'अनन्दा नाम ते लोका
अन्धेन तमसाऽऽवृताः। तांस्ते प्रेत्याभिगच्छन्त्यविद्वांसोऽबुधो जनाः' (बृ. ४/४/११),
'यस्त्वविज्ञानवान् भवत्यमनस्कः सदाऽशुचिः। न स तत्पदमाप्नोति संसारं चाधिगच्छति'
(कठ. ३/७), 'न चेदवेदिर्महती विनष्टिः' (बृ. ४/४/१४), 'न चेदिहावेदीन्महती विनष्टिः' (के. २/५)
इत्यादौ च ब्रह्मविद्यावैधुर्यस्याऽनिष्टफलजनकत्वं...

tathā hi pūrvakāṇḍapratipāditakarmavidhisvarūpalakṣaṇādikamadhigamyā'pi 'na
hyadhruvaiḥ prāpyate' (Kaṭha. 2/10), 'tadyatheha karmacito lokāḥ kṣīyata evamevā'mutra
puṇyacito lokāḥ kṣīyate' (Chā. 8/1/6), 'plavā hyete adṛḍhā yajñarūpāḥ' (Mu. 1/2/7), 'parīkṣya

lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena' (Mu. 1/2/12) ityādaḥ kevalaśuṣkakarmaṇām alpā'sthiraphalakatvaṃ, 'yo vā etadakṣaram gārgyaviditvā'smilloke juhōti yajate tapastapyate bahūni varṣasahasrāṇyantavadevā'sya tadbhavati yo vā etadakṣaram gārgyaviditvā'smālokāt praiti sa kṛpaṇaḥ' (Br. 3/8/10), 'tadya ihā'tmānamanauvidya vrajantyetāṃsca satyān kāmāṃsteṣāṃ sarveṣu lokeṣvakāmacāro bhavati' (Chā. 8/1/6), 'asanneva sa bhavati asad brahmeti veda cetā asti brahmeti cedveda santamenam tato viduḥ' (Tai. 2/6/1) iti tathā ca 'asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ tamste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ' (Ī. 3), 'anandā nāma te lokā andhena tamasā'vṛtāḥ tamste pretyābhigacchantyavidvāṃso'budho janāḥ' (Br. 4/4/11), 'yastvavijñānavān bhavatyamanaskaḥ sadā'suciḥ na sa tatpadamāpnoti saṃsāram cādhigacchati' (Kaṭha. 3/7), 'na cedavedirmahatī vinaṣṭiḥ' (Br. 4/4/14), 'na cedihāvedīnmahatī vinaṣṭiḥ' (Ke. 2/5) ityādaḥ ca brahmavidyāvaidhuryasya'niṣṭaphalajanakatvaṃ...

Even upon knowing the method, nature, and characteristics of the ritual performances expressed in the previous chapter (*kāṇḍa*) [one does not experience contentment,] since frivolousness and fleeting fruits of barren actions are revealed. [For example, it is expressed:] “na hyadhruvaiḥ prāpyate” (Kaṭha. 2.10), “tadyatheha karmacito lokaḥ kṣīyata evamevā'mutra puṇyacito lokaḥ kṣīyate” (Chā. 8.1.6), “plavā hyete adṛḍhā yajñarūpāḥ” (Mu. 1.2.7), and “parikṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena” (Mu. 1.2.12). The following mantras reveal that those who are without *brahmavidyā* acquire undesired results: “yo vā etadakṣaram gārgyaviditvā'smilloke juhōti yajate tapastapyate bahūni varṣasahasrāṇyantavadevā'sya tadbhavati yo vā etadakṣaram gārgyaviditvā'smālokāt praiti sa kṛpaṇaḥ” (Br. 3.8.10), “tadya ihā'tmānamanauvidya vrajantyetāṃsca satyān kāmāṃsteṣāṃ sarveṣu lokeṣvakāmacāro bhavati” (Chā. 8.1.6), and “asanneva sa bhavati asad brahmeti veda cetā asti brahmeti cedveda santamenam tato viduḥ” (Tai. 2.6.1) Also, “asuryā nāma te lokā andhena tamasāvṛtāḥ tamste pretyābhigacchanti ye ke cātmahano janāḥ” (Ī. 3), “anandā nāma te lokā andhena tamasā'vṛtāḥ tamste pretyābhigacchantyavidvāṃso'budho janāḥ” (Br. 4.4.11), “yastvavijñānavān bhavatyamanaskaḥ sadā'suciḥ na sa tatpadamāpnoti saṃsāram cādhigacchati” (Kaṭha. 3.7), “na cedavedirmahatī vinaṣṭiḥ” (Br. 4.4.14), and “na cedihāvedīnmahatī vinaṣṭiḥ” (Ke. 2.5)

पुनश्च 'य एतद् विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्ति' (कठ.६/२), 'तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम्' (कठ.५/१३), 'न पश्यो मृत्युं पश्यति' (छा.७/२६/२), 'तं वेद्यं पुरुषं वेद यथा मा वो मृत्युः परिव्यथा इति' (प्र.६/६), 'ये तद् विदुरमृतास्ते भवन्त्यथेतरे दुःखमेवापियन्ति' (बृ.४/४/१४), 'अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा धीरो हर्षशोकौ जहाति' (कठ.२/१२), 'प्रतिबोधविदितं मतममृतत्वं हि विन्दते' (के.२/४), 'भूतेषु भूतेषु विचिन्त्य धीराः प्रेत्याऽऽस्माल्लोकादमृता भवन्ति' (के.२/५), 'यस्तु विज्ञानवान् भवति समनस्कः सदा शुचिः। स तु तत्पदमाप्नोति यस्माद् भूयो न जायते' (कठ.३/८) इत्यादिभिस्तथा च 'ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम्' (तै.२/१/१), 'ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति नाऽस्याऽब्रह्मवित् कुले भवति। तरति शोकं तरति पाप्मानं गुहाग्रन्थिभ्यो विमुक्तोऽमृतो भवति' (मु.३/२/९), 'स य एतदेवं विद्वानक्षरं प्रणौत्येतदेवाक्षरममृतमभयं प्रविशति तत्प्रविश्य यदमृता देवास्तदमृतो भवति' (छा.१/४/५),

‘ब्रह्मसंस्थोऽमृतत्वमेति’ (छा. २/२३/१), ‘एतद्ध्येवाऽक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत्॥ एतदालम्बनं श्रेष्ठमेतदालम्बनं परम्। एतदालम्बनं ज्ञात्वा ब्रह्मलोके महीयते’ (कठ. २/१६, १७) इत्यादिभिश्च परब्रह्मणोऽक्षरब्रह्मणश्च विज्ञानस्याऽनन्तदिव्यस्थिरफलकत्वमापाततोऽवधार्य तत एव हेतोस्तद्विशेषबुभुत्सया ‘तद् विज्ञानार्थं स गुरुमेवाभिगच्छेत् समित्पाणिः श्रोत्रियं ब्रह्म निष्ठम्’ (मु. १/२/१२), ‘तद्विद्धि प्रणिपातेन परिप्रश्नेन सेवया। उपदेक्ष्यन्ति ते ज्ञानं ज्ञानिनस्तत्त्वदर्शिनः’ (गी. ४/३४) इति शास्त्रादेशमनुसृत्य सम्प्रदायपरम्पराऽभिरक्षकयथोक्तलक्षणसाक्षाद्ब्रह्मस्वरूपगुरुमुपसत्य ‘यस्य देवे परा भक्तिर्यथा देवे तथा गुरौ। तस्यैते कथिता ह्यर्थाः प्रकाशन्ते महात्मनः॥’ (श्वे. ६/२३) इति वेदान्तानुशासनाच्च तस्यैव पुनः प्रत्यक्षनारायणस्वरूपभावेन दृढतमदिव्यभावनरसितप्रसङ्गं विधाय...

punaśca ‘ya etad viduramṛtāste bhavanti’ (Kaṭha. 6/2), ‘tamātmasthaṃ ye’nupaśyanti dhīrāsteṣāṃ śāntiḥ śāśvatī netareṣāṃ’ (Kaṭha. 5/13), ‘na paśyo mṛtyuṃ paśyati’ (Chā. 7/26/2), ‘taṃ vedyam puruṣaṃ veda yathā mā vo mṛtyuḥ parivyathā iti’ (Pra. 6/6), ‘ye tad viduramṛtāste bhavantyathetare duḥkhamevāpiyanti’ (Br. 4/4/14), ‘adhyātmayogādhighamena devaṃ matvā dhīro harṣaśokau jahāti’ (Kaṭha. 2/12), ‘pratibodhaviditaṃ matamamṛtatvaṃ hi vindate’ (Ke. 2/4), ‘bhūteṣu bhūteṣu vicintya dhīrāḥ pretyā’smālokaḍamṛtā bhavanti’ (Ke. 2/5), ‘yastu vijñānavān bhavati samanaskaḥ sadā śuciḥ। sa tu tatpadamāpnoti yasmād bhūyo na jāyate’ (Kaṭha. 3/8) ityādibhistathā ca ‘brahmavidāpnoti param’ (Tai. 2/1/1), ‘brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati nā’syā’brahmavit kule bhavati। tarati śokaṃ tarati pāpmānaṃ guhāgranthibhyo vimukto’mṛto bhavati’ (Mu. 3/2/9), ‘sa ya etadevaṃ vidvānakṣaraṃ prañautyetadevākṣaramamṛtamabhayaṃ praviśati tatpraviśya yadamṛtā devāstadamṛto bhavati’ (Chā. 1/4/5), ‘brahmasaṃstho’mṛtatvameti’ (Chā. 2/23/1), ‘etaddhyevā’kṣaraṃ jñātvā yo yadicchati tasya tat॥ etadālambanaṃ śreṣṭhametadālambanaṃ param। etadālambanaṃ jñātvā brahmaloke mahīyate’ (Kaṭha. 2/16, 17) ityādibhiḥca parabrahmaṇo’kṣarabrahmaṇaśca vijñānasyā’nantadivyaṣthiraphalakatvamāpātato’vadhārya tata eva hetostadviśeṣabubhutsayā ‘tad vijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevābhigacchet samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahma niṣṭhaṃ’ (Mu. 1/2/12), ‘tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā। upadekṣyanti te jñānaṃ jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ’ (Gī. 4/34) iti śāstrādeśamanusṛtya sampradāyaparamparā’bhirakṣakayathoktalakṣaṇasākṣādbrahmasvarūpagurumupasatya ‘yasya deve parā bhaktiryaṥtathā deve tathā gurau। tasyaite kathitā hyarthaḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ॥’ (Śve. 6/23) iti vedāntānuśāsanācca tasyaiva punaḥ pratyakṣanārāyaṇasvarūpabhāvena dṛḍhatamadivyaabhāvanarasitaprasaṅgaṃ vidhāya...

Upon realizing Parabrahman and Akṣarabrahman, infinite, divine, and unwavering fruits are attained. Regarding this it is proclaimed: “ya etad viduramṛtāste bhavanti” (Kaṭha. 6.2), “tamātmasthaṃ ye’nupaśyanti dhīrāsteṣāṃ śāntiḥ śāśvatī netareṣāṃ” (Kaṭha. 5.13), “na paśyo mṛtyuṃ paśyati” (Chā. 7.26.2), “taṃ vedyam puruṣaṃ veda yathā mā vo mṛtyuḥ parivyathā iti” (Pra. 6.6), “ye tad viduramṛtāste bhavantyathetare duḥkhamevāpiyanti” (Br. 4.4.14), “adhyātmayogādhighamena devaṃ matvā dhīro harṣaśokau jahāti” (Kaṭha. 2.12), “pratibodhaviditaṃ matamamṛtatvaṃ hi vindate” (Ke. 2.4), “bhūteṣu bhūteṣu vicintya dhīrāḥ pretyā’smālokaḍamṛtā bhavanti” (Ke. 2.5), “yastu vijñānavān bhavati samanaskaḥ sadā śuciḥ। sa tu tatpadamāpnoti yasmād bhūyo na jāyate” (Kaṭha. 3.8), and also: “brahmavidāpnoti param” (Tai. 2.1.1), “brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati nā’syā’brahmavit kule bhavati। tarati śokaṃ tarati

pāpmānaṃ guhāgranthibhyo vimukto'mṛto bhavati" (Mu. 3.2.9), "sa ya etadevaṃ vidvānakṣaraṃ praṇautyetadevākṣaramamṛtamabhayaṃ praviśati tatpraviśya yadamṛtā devāstadamṛto bhavati" (Chā. 1.4.5), "brahmasamsthō'mṛtatvameti" (Chā. 2.23.1), and "etaddhyevā'kṣaraṃ jñātvā yo yadicchati tasya tat|| etadālambanaṃ śreṣṭhametadālambanaṃ param| etadālambanaṃ jñātvā brahmaloke mahīyate|" (Kaṭha. 2.16-17) In this way, [barren ritual practice bears unsecure fruits. Without *brahmavidyā*, undesired outcomes are attained. However, the knowledge of Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman results in infinite, divine, and unwavering fruits]. Generally speaking, for this reason, with a desire to realize [Brahman and Parabrahman] "tad vijñānārthaṃ sa gurumevābhigacchet samitpāṇiḥ śrotriyaṃ brahma niṣṭhaṃ" (Mu. 1.2.12) and "tadviddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā| upadekṣyanti te jñānaṃ jñāninastattvadarśinaḥ||" (Gī. 4.34) According to these instructions given by the scriptures, one should approach the present *Brahmasvarūpa* guru—the protector of the *sampradāya*'s lineage and the one who possesses the afore-mentioned virtues. Having approached the guru, "yasya deve parā bhaktiryathā deve tathā gurau| tasyaite kathitā hyarthaḥ prakāśante mahātmanaḥ||" (Śve. 6.23). According to this Vedānta teaching, one should imbibe the sentiments of the present Narāyaṇa within the guru⁷¹ and keep their association with firm *divyabhāva*.⁷²

Summary

श्रुतिस्मृत्युपपादितसदाचारादिलक्षणधर्मवान् पूर्वमीमांसाधिगतकर्मस्वरूपो निर्वेदी यथोक्तगुरुनिष्ठः परमश्रद्धावान् ब्रह्मपरब्रह्मोभयावबोधिब्रह्मविद्याभिलाषी स्वात्माऽक्षरब्रह्मभावपूर्वकपरमात्मसहजानन्दपरमानन्दाऽनुभूतिहेतुकतत्परमोपासनलक्षणपरमनिःश्रेयसाऽभिकाङ्क्षी मुमुक्षुर्ब्रह्मविद्याविचारलक्षणे शास्त्रेऽस्मिन् प्रवर्ततेत्यस्याऽऽरम्भ इति सूत्रार्थनिष्कर्षः।

śrutismṛtyupapāditasādācārādilakṣaṇadharmavān pūrvamīmāṃsādhigatakarmasvarūpo nirvedī yathoktaguruniṣṭhaḥ paramaśraddhāvān brahmaparabrahmobhayaāvabodhibrahmavidyābhilāṣī svātmā'kṣarabrahmabhāvapūrvakaparamātmāsahajānandaparamānandā'nubhūtihetukatatp aramopāsanalakṣaṇaparamaniḥśreyasā'bhikāṅkṣī mumukṣurbrahmavidyāvicāralakṣaṇe śāstre'smin pravartetetyasyā" rambha iti sūtrārthanīṣkarṣaḥ.

A spiritual aspirant, (1) who is endowed with *dharma* that is characterized by righteousness and other virtues propounded by the *śrutis* and *smṛtis*, (2) who knows the rites expressed in Pūrvamīmāṃsā, (3) who does not possess worldly desires, (3) who has conviction in the previously mentioned guru, (4) who possesses great faith, (5) who is desirous for *brahmavidyā*, which constitutes the knowledge of both Brahman and Parabrahman, (6) and who, upon instilling the sense of Akṣarabrahman within the *ātman*, aspires for liberation in the form of the supreme worship of Paramātman—the bestower of Paramātman Sahajānanda's highest bliss—should be engrossed in this sacred text on *brahmavidyā*. This is how this scripture begins. This is the essence of the aphorism.

⁷¹ One should realize the guru to be the manifest form of the present Narāyaṇa (Parabrahman).

⁷² Here, 'divyabhāva' refers to *realizing the form (svarūpa), intentions, actions, and qualities of the Brahmasvarūpa guru as divine and without flaws or worldly desires.*

एवं ब्रह्मशब्देनेहोभयोरिज्ज्ञास्यतयोपस्थापनात्
तत्तत्त्वद्वयाऽन्यतरोभयावबोधिवेदान्तशब्दान् मीमांसितुं प्रवर्तत इदं शास्त्रम्। न चैवं सति
जीवेश्वरादिस्वरूपाणाममीमांसनीयतया निरूपणबाह्यत्वमापद्येतेति वाच्यम्,
अधिकारिविधया तन्निरूपणस्याऽपि सम्भवात्। इत्थं फलादिरपि प्रयोजनविधया,
तदुपायसाधनादिकं च प्रयोजनानुकूलसामग्रीविधया च भवत्यस्य शास्त्रस्य विषय इति न
तेषामपि निरूपणबाह्यत्वं, न च तद्वोचरसूत्रसमूहस्याऽप्रसक्तप्रतिपादनदोषो वा।

evam brahmaśabdenehobhayorijjñāsyatayopasthāpanāt
tattattvadvayā'nyatarobhayāvabodhivedāntaśabdān mīmāṃsitum pravartata idaṃ śāstram.
na caivaṃ sati jīveśvarādisvarūpāṇāmāmīmāṃsanīyatayā nirūpaṇabāhyatvamāpadyeteti
vācyaṃ, adhikāriavidhayā tannirūpaṇasyā'pi sambhavāt. itthaṃ phalādirapi
prayojanavidhayā, tadupāyasāadhanādikaṃ ca prayojanānukūlasāmagrividhayā ca
bhavatyasya śāstrasya viśaya iti na teṣāmapi nirūpaṇabāhyatvaṃ, na ca
tadgocarasūtrasamūhasyā'prasaktapratipādanadoṣo vā.

In this way, using 'brahman' here introduces both (Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman) as worthy of inquiry. For this reason, this sacred text is occupied with reflecting on the Vedānta revelations that express the knowledge of either one, the other, or both of these entities.

The following objection is considered: "If that is the case, then the reflections that do not focus on the nature of the *jīva*, *īśvara*, and others will be excluded from the expositions."

In response, it is said that the elaborations on the *jīva* and *īśvara* become relevant because [they] are discussions of suitability (*adhikāra*). Additionally, an elaboration on the fruits (*phala*) as a form of purpose (*prayojana*) and its required spiritual endeavor (*sādhana*) as a form of that which is instrumental in leading to attaining the purpose become relevant as subjects of this sacred text. For this reason, they cannot be omitted, and the aphorisms that discuss them cannot be criticized as irrelevant.

The Four Connections (Anubandha-catuṣṭayam)

एवमत्रैतच्छास्त्रप्रवृत्त्यनुकूलाऽनुबन्धचतुष्टयमपि समवगम्यते। जिज्ञासाशब्द
एवाऽऽकाङ्क्षाबलाजिज्ञासुं जिज्ञास्यं जिज्ञासाप्रयोजनादि समुपस्थापयति। तथा हि
यथोक्तलक्षणो मुमुक्षुर्जिज्ञासुरिहाधिक्रियते। ब्रह्मशब्दसमभिव्याहृतेश्च भवति
साऽक्षरब्रह्मपरब्रह्मविषयिणी। तत्प्रतिपादनपरत्वाच्चास्य शास्त्रस्य
प्रतिपाद्यप्रतिपादकभावलक्षणो हि सम्बन्धः। प्रयोजनं हि ब्रह्मविद्यालभ्यस्य 'अनावृत्तिः
शब्दादनावृत्तिः शब्दाद्' (ब्र.सू.४/४/२२) इत्याद्युक्ताऽपुनरावृत्तिलक्षणस्य
सकलप्राकृतभाववर्जितपरिशुद्धस्वात्मनिष्ठाऽक्षरब्रह्मगुणसाधर्म्यस्कृतपरमात्मसहजानन्दपरमा
नन्ददिव्यानुभूतिस्वरूपपरमनिःश्रेयसस्याऽऽपादनं, तदनुबन्धितया च
तन्निरूपकवेदान्तवाक्यभूमिकसन्देहाऽपसारणं, सामान्यतो ज्ञातस्य प्रमाणयुक्त्यादिना
विशेषतोऽवधारणं, तथाऽवधृतस्य वा पुनः पुनः प्रवृत्तिलक्षणेनाऽभ्यासेन दार्ढ्यमित्यादि।

evamatraitacchāstrapravṛtṭyanukūlā'nubandhacatuṣṭayamapi samavagamyate. jijñāsāśabda
evā''kāṅkṣābalājijñāsum jijñāsyam jijñāsāprayojanādi samupasthāpayati. tathā hi
yathoktalakṣaṇo mumukṣurjijñāsurihādhikriyate. brahmaśabdasaṃabhivyāhṛteṣca bhavati
sā'kṣarabrahmaparabrahmaviśayiṇī. tatpratipādanaparatvāccāsyā śāstrasya
pratipādyapratipādakabhāvalakṣaṇo hi sambandhaḥ. prayojanaṃ hi brahmavidyālabhyasya

‘anāvṛttiḥ śabdādanāvṛttiḥ śabdād’ (Bra. Sū. 4/4/22) ityādyuktā’punarāvṛttīlakṣaṇasya sakalaprākṛtabhāvavarjitapariśuddhasvātmaniṣṭhā’kṣarabrahmaguṇasādharmyaskṛtaparam ātmasahajānandaparamānandadivyanubhūtiśvarūpaparamaniḥśreyasasyā’pādanam, tadanubandhitayā ca tannirūpakavedāntavākyaabhūmikasandehā’pasāraṇam, sāmānyato jñātasya pramāṇayuktyādinā viśeṣato’vadhāraṇam, tathā’vadhṛtasya vā punaḥ punaḥ pravṛttīlakṣaṇenā’bhyāsenā dārḍhyamityādi.

In the following manner, the principle of four connections (*anubandha-catuṣṭaya*) here characterizes this sacred text’s structure. By indicating a desire, ‘jijñāsā’ itself securely-establishes, among others, the one who is inquisitive (*jijñāsu*), the object of inquiry (*jijñāsyā*), and the purpose of inquiry. As such, the aspirant—the inquisitor, who is characterized by the aforementioned qualities—here is identified as the one who is suitable (*adhikāri*). By using ‘brahman,’ Akṣarabrahman and Parabrahman become the subject of inquiry. By offering exposition on them, this sacred text upholds the relationship between that which is propounded (*pratipādyā*) and that which propounds (*pratipādaka*). The purpose (*prayojana*) is supreme liberation—that which is obtained by *brahmavidyā* and, as expressed in: “anāvṛttiḥ śabdādanāvṛttiḥ śabdād” (Bra. Sū. 4.4.22), that from which there is no return. This liberation is [characterized as] having the divine experience of Paramātmā Sahajānanda’s supreme bliss, upon one’s pure *ātman* becoming free from all worldliness and attaining qualitative oneness with Akṣarabrahman. Other objectives (*prayojana*) that are associated with this supreme purpose (final liberation) are also implicitly understood to be objectives (*prayojana*). These include, for example, (1) the resolutions of doubts concerning Vedānta revelations, (2) generally speaking about the knowledge acquired, the special discrimination afforded by, among others, the means of knowledge (*pramāṇa*) and various methods, and (3) firm resolve in acquired knowledge through its repeated study.

ननु परमप्रामाण्यपदवीप्रतिष्ठितेषु वेदान्तवाक्येषु सन्देहाऽसम्भवाद्
निरर्थकस्तन्निवारकतयैतच्छास्त्रसमारम्भ इति चेन्न, तत्सम्भवप्रसिद्धेः। कथम्। इत्थम्। ‘अक्षय्यं
ह वै चातुर्मास्ययाजिनः सुकृतं भवति’, ‘अपाम सोमममृता अभूम्’ (अ.शि.३) इति
कर्मफलनित्यताबोधकैः, ‘तद्यथेह कर्मचितो लोकः क्षीयत एवमेवाऽमुत्र पुण्यचितो लोकः
क्षीयते’ (छा.८/१/६), ‘परीक्ष्य लोकान् कर्मचितान् ब्राह्मणो निर्वेदमायान्नास्त्यकृतः कृतेन’
(मु.१/२/१२) इति तदनित्यताबोधकैश्च मिथःप्रत्यनीकप्रकारकैर्वाक्यैर्जायते सन्देहः। अपि च
प्रत्यगात्मपरमात्मनोर्भेदो वाऽभेदो वेति सम्भवति सन्देह उभयथाऽपि श्रवणात्।
एकतरपक्षग्राहे तदन्यबोधकश्रुतिवैयर्थ्यप्रसङ्गाच्च तत्समाधये निर्णायकं किञ्चिदपेक्ष्यते।
क्वचिच्च सृष्टिकारणप्रबोधकवाक्येषु ‘सदेव सोम्येदमग्र आसीद्’ (छा.६/२/१), ‘असद्वा इदमग्र
आसीद्’ (तै.२/७/१) इति परस्परविरुद्धसत्त्वाऽसत्त्वबोधकशब्ददर्शनाद्धि जायते संशयः।
सगुणत्वं निर्गुणत्वं चेत्युभयं साकृतित्वं निराकृतित्वं वेत्युभयं श्रुत्वा भवति
कस्यचिदापातप्रत्ययस्य संशयः। एवमेव ‘अयमात्मा ब्रह्म’ (मा.१/२), ‘अहं ब्रह्मास्मि’
(बृ.१/४/१०), ‘सर्वं खल्विदं ब्रह्म’ (छा.३/१४/१), ‘नेह नानास्ति किञ्चन’ (बृ.४/४/१९) इत्यादौ
जीवेश्वराऽक्षरब्रह्मजगदादिनिरूपकवाक्येषु स्यात् कस्यचित् सन्देहः। तानेतादृशानन्यानपि
सन्देहान् निवारयितुमावश्यकमिदं शास्त्रमिति समारम्भणीयमेव। न चैवं तर्हि संशयाऽऽपन्ना
एव जिज्ञासव इहाऽधिक्रियेरन्निति वाच्यं, सति सम्भवे तन्निवारणस्य प्रयोजनत्वाऽङ्गीकारात्।

न तावन्मात्रं प्रयोजनम्। सन्देहनिवृत्तिवन्निवृत्तसन्देहस्य स्थूणानिखनननीत्या दाढ्यदिरपि प्रयोजनोदरीकरणात् तैरपि शास्त्रसमारम्भसम्भवात्।

nanu paramaprāmāṇyapadavīpratiṣṭhiteṣu vedāntavākyaṣu sandehā'sambhavād nirarthakastannivāraṇakatayaitacchāstrasamārambha iti cenna, tatsambhavaprasiddheḥ. katham. ittham. 'akṣayyaṃ ha vai cātur māsyayājinaḥ sukṛtaṃ bhavati', 'apāma somamamṛtā abhūma' (A. Śi. 3) iti karmaphalanityatābodhakaiḥ, 'tadyatheha karmacito lokaḥ kṣīyata evamevā'mutra puṇyacito lokaḥ kṣīyate' (Chā. 8/1/6), 'parikṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena' (Mu. 1/2/12) iti tadanityatābodhakaiśca mithaḥpratyānīkaprakārairvākyairjāyate sandehaḥ. api ca pratyagātmaparamātmanorbhedo vā'bhedo veti sambhavati sandeha ubhayathā'pi śravaṇāt. ekatarapakṣagrāhe tadanyabodhakaśrutivaiyyarthya prasaṅgācca tatsamādhaye nirṇāyakaṃ kiñcidapekṣyate. kvacicca sṛṣṭikāraṇa prabodhakavākyaṣu 'sadeva somyedamagra āsīd' (Chā. 6/2/1), 'asadvā idamagra āsīd' (Tai. 2/7/1) iti parasparaviruddhasattvā'sattvabodhakaśabdadarśanāddhi jāyate saṃśayaḥ. saguṇatvaṃ nirguṇatvaṃ cetyubhayaṃ sākṛtitvaṃ nirākṛtitvaṃ vetyubhayaṃ śrutvā bhavati kasyacidāpātpratyayasya saṃśayaḥ. evameva 'ayamātmā brahma' (Mā. 1/2), 'ahaṃ brahmāsmi' (Br. 1/4/10), 'sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma' (Chā. 3/14/1), 'neha nānāsti kiñcana' (Br. 4/4/19) ityādau jīveśvarā'kṣarabrahmajagadādinirūpakavākyaṣu syāt kasyacit sandehaḥ. tānetādṛśānanyānapi sandehān nivārayitumāvaśyakamidaṃ śāstramiti samārambhaṇīyameva. na caivaṃ tarhi saṃśayā"pannā eva jijñāsava ihā'dhikriyeranniti vācyaṃ, sati sambhave tannivāraṇasya prayojanatvā'ṅgikārāt. na tāvanmātraṃ prayojanam. sandehanivṛttivannivṛttasandehasya sthūṇānikhananānityā dārdhyāderapi prayojanadarīkaraṇāt tairapi śāstrasamārambhasambhavāt.

The following doubt is raised: "Since there is no possibility of doubt in the revelations of Vedānta, which are reputed as supremely authoritative, the purpose of this sacred text—to remove such doubts—is futile."

This is not the case. Its possibility is well-known.

"How?"

In this way: the mantras "akṣayyaṃ ha vai cātur māsyayājinaḥ sukṛtaṃ bhavati" and "apāma somamamṛtā abhūma" (A. Śi. 3) express the permanence of the fruits of action; whereas, "tadyatheha karmacito lokaḥ kṣīyata evamevā'mutra puṇyacito lokaḥ kṣīyate" (Chā. 8.1.6) and "parikṣya lokān karmacitān brāhmaṇo nirvedamāyānnāstyakṛtaḥ kṛtena" (Mu. 1.2.12) express its transience. Such mutually conflicting revelations result in uncertainty. Is there a distinction or identity between the individual *ātman* (the self) and Paramātman? Such doubt arises from listening to revelations expressed by both sides. Since accepting any one side renders the *śruti* revelation of the opposing position as vain, a resolution is expected. In the following revelations that describe the cause of all creation: "sadeva somyedamagra āsīd" (Chā. 6.2.1) and "asadvā idamagra āsīd" (Tai. 2.7.1), there arises a doubt because of the statements' use of terms that express mutually contradicting assertions of *sattva* and *asattva*.⁷³ Upon hearing

⁷³ In general terms, 'sattva' and 'asattva' are literally understood as *being* and *non-being*, respectively. However, the precise sense in which these meanings are defined (e.g. the type of being and its relationship (*sambandha*) with the subject) and the subject of the qualifier vary not only among the *darśanas* but also from one instance to the next.

revelations on both *saguṇatva* and *nirguṇatva*⁷⁴ and both *sākṛtitva* and *nirākṛtitva*,⁷⁵ those with only a superficial understanding would come to doubt the Vedas. Similarly, the following revelations: “*āyamātmā brahma*” (Mā. 1.2), “*ahaṃ brahmāsmi*” (Br. 1.4.10), “*sarvaṃ khalvidaṃ brahma*” (Chā. 3.14.1), “*neha nānāsti kiñcana*” (Br. 4.4.19), and others, which describe *jīva*, *īśvara*, Akṣarabrahman, the world (*jagat*), and others, would cause doubt for some. One should indeed study this scripture to remove these and other uncertainties. It is not that only those who possess doubt are the *jijñāsu* or *adhikārī*. Yes, this sacred text's objective is to resolve doubt when it arises, but this is not its only purpose. Just as a stake, when placed into the ground, is shaken [and then hammered] to make it more firmly implanted, in a similar way, this sacred text's objective is also, among others, to reaffirm conviction for those who have resolved their doubts. It is with these intentions that the sacred text commences.

Brahmajijñāsā – Fulfillment of the Teaching

ननु ‘तद्वा एतदक्षरं गार्ग्यदृष्टं द्रष्टृश्रुतं श्रोत्रमतं मन्त्रविज्ञातं विज्ञातृ’ (बृ. ३/८/११), ‘परा यया तदक्षरमधिगम्यते। यत्तदद्रेश्यमग्राह्यम्’ (मु. १/१/५, ६) इति, तथा च ‘यतो वाचो निर्वर्तते। अप्राप्य मनसा सह’ (तै. २/४/१, तै. २/९/१), ‘न तत्र चक्षुर्गच्छति न वाग् गच्छति नो मनः’ (के. १/३) इत्यादावक्षरब्रह्मणः परब्रह्मणश्च वाङ्मनआद्यविषयत्वश्रवणाद् व्यर्थ एव तद्विशेषविज्ञानप्रयोजनकोऽयं शास्त्रारम्भश्रम इति चेद्, अनधिगतश्रुत्यर्थस्याऽयं व्यर्थ आक्षेपश्रमः। यतोऽनाप्तब्रह्मस्वरूपसमाश्रयणस्याऽत एवाऽनाप्ताऽक्षरब्रह्मसाधर्म्यस्य परमात्मसहजानन्दपरमोपासनहीनस्य लौकिकविषयैषिणो जीवेश्वरसमुदायस्यैव तत्प्राकृतचक्षुर्मानसादीन्द्रियाऽविषयतायास्तत्रोपदेशाद्। अन्यथा ‘ब्रह्मविदाप्नोति परम्’ (तै. २/१/१), ‘य एतदक्षरं गार्गि विदित्वाऽस्माल्लोकात्प्रैति स ब्राह्मणः’ (बृ. ३/८/१०), ‘एतद्ध्येवाऽक्षरं ज्ञात्वा यो यदिच्छति तस्य तत्’ (कठ. २/१६), ‘अक्षरं वेदयते यस्तु’ (प्र. ४/१०, ११), ‘तदेतदक्षरं ब्रह्म, तदेतत् सत्यं तदमृतं तद् वेद्व्यं सोम्य विद्धि’ (मु. २/२/२), ‘ब्रह्म वेद ब्रह्मैव भवति’ (मु. ३/२/९) इत्यादीनामक्षरब्रह्मज्ञानविषयताप्रबोधिनीनां, ‘तं वेद्यं पुरुषं वेद’ (प्र. ६/६), ‘य एतदेवं विद्वान्’ (छा. १/९/२), ‘दृश्यते त्वग्रया बुद्ध्या सूक्ष्मया सूक्ष्मदर्शिभिः’ (कठ. ३/१२), ‘तमात्मस्थं येऽनुपश्यन्ति धीरास्तेषां शान्तिः शाश्वती नेतरेषाम्’ (कठ. ५/१३), ‘अध्यात्मयोगाधिगमेन देवं मत्वा’ (कठ. २/१२), ‘तं पश्यति निष्कलं ध्यायमानः’ (मु. ३/१/८), ‘यत्ते रूपं कल्याणतमं तत्ते पश्यामि’ (ई. १६), ‘भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः। क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मिन् दृष्टे परावरे’ (मु. २/२/८), ‘आत्मा वा अरे द्रष्टव्यः श्रोतव्यो मन्तव्यो निदिध्यासितव्यः’ (बृ. २/४/५, बृ. ४/५/६) इत्यादीनामक्षराधिपतेर्ज्ञानविषयतावाचिनीनां च भगवतीश्रुतीनाम् उपदेशवैयर्थ्यं तद्विरोधो

⁷⁴ In general terms, ‘*saguṇatva*’ and ‘*nirguṇatva*’ are literally understood as *possessing qualities* and *not possessing qualities*. However, the precise sense in which these meanings are defined (e.g. the types of qualities and their relationships (*sambandha*) with the subject) and the subject of the qualifier vary not only among the *darśanas* but also from one instance to the next.

⁷⁵ In general terms, ‘*sākṛtitva*’ and ‘*nirākṛtitva*’ are literally understood as *with form* and *without form*. However, the precise sense in which these meanings are defined (e.g. the type of form and its relationship (*sambandha*) with the subject) and the subject of the qualifier vary not only among the *darśanas* but also from one instance to the next.

वा स्यात्। हन्त! 'येनाऽक्षरं पुरुषं वेद सत्यं प्रोवाच तां तत्त्वतो ब्रह्मविद्याम्' (मु. १/२/१३)
 इत्युक्तब्रह्मविद्यावर्त्मविध्वंसनेनाऽजागलस्तनायितः 'अथातो ब्रह्मजिज्ञासा' (ब्र.सू. १/१/१)
 इत्याद्युपक्रान्तसूत्रराशिरपि नैराश्यमापद्येतेति समुचित
 एवाऽक्षरपुरुषोत्तमेतितत्त्वद्वयान्वितब्रह्मविद्याविचारारम्भ इति जिज्ञासाधिकरणम्॥ १/१/१॥

nanu 'tadvā etadakṣaram gārgyadr̥ṣṭam draṣṭraśrutam śrotramataṁ mantravijñātam vijñātr'
 (Br. 3/8/11), 'parā yayā tadakṣaramadhigamyate | yattadadreśyamagrāhyam' (Mu. 1/1/5, 6) iti,
 tathā ca 'yato vāco nivartante | aprāpya manasā saha' (Tai. 2/4/1, Tai. 2/9/1), 'na tatra
 cakṣurgacchati na vāg gacchati no manaḥ' (Ke. 1/3) ityādāvākṣarabrahmaṇaḥ
 parabrahmaṇasā vānmanaādyaviśayatvaśravaṇād vyartha eva
 tadviśeṣavijñānaprayojanako'yaṁ śāstrārāmbhaśrama iti ced, anadhigataśrutiyarthasyā'yaṁ
 vyartha ākṣepaśramaḥ. yato'nāptabrahmasvarūpasamāśrayaṇasyā'ta
 evā'nāptā'kṣarabrahmasādharmyasya paramātmahajānandaparamopāsanahīnasya
 laukikaviśayaiṣiṇo jīveśvarasamudāyasyaiva
 tatprākṛtacakṣurmānasādīndriyā'viśayatāyāstropadeśād. anyathā 'brahmavidāpnoti
 param' (Tai. 2/1/1), 'ya etadakṣaram gārgi viditvā'smālokatpraiti sa brāhmaṇaḥ' (Br. 3/8/10),
 'etaddhyevā'kṣaram jñātvā yo yadicchati tasya tat' (Kaṭha. 2/16), 'akṣaram vedayate yastu'
 (Pra. 4/10, 11), 'tadetadakṣaram brahma, tadetat satyaṁ tadamṛtaṁ tad veddhavyaṁ somya
 viddhi' (Mu. 2/2/2), 'brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati' (Mu. 3/2/9)
 ityādīnāmākṣarabrahmajñānaviśayatāprabodhinīnām, 'taṁ vedyam puruṣam veda' (Pra.
 6/6), 'ya etadevaṁ vidvān' (Chā. 1/9/2), 'dr̥śyate tvagrayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā
 sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ' (Kaṭha. 3/12), 'tamātmasthaṁ ye'nupaśyanti dhīrāsteṣāṁ śāntiḥ śāśvati
 netareṣāṁ' (Kaṭha. 5/13), 'adhyātmayogādhighamena devaṁ matvā' (Kaṭha. 2/12), 'taṁ paśyati
 niṣkalaṁ dhyāyamānaḥ' (Mu. 3/1/8), 'yatte rūpaṁ kalyāṇatamaṁ tatte paśyāmi' (Ī. 16),
 'bhidyate hṛdayagranthiśchidyante sarvasaṁśayāḥ | kṣīyante cāśya karmāṇi tasmin dr̥ṣṭe
 parāvare' (Mu. 2/2/8), 'ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ' (Br.
 2/4/5, Br. 4/5/6) ityādīnāmākṣarādhipaterjñānaviśayatāvācinīnām ca bhagavatīśrutinām
 upadeśavaiyyarthyaṁ tadvirodho vā syāt. hanta! 'yenā'kṣaram puruṣam veda satyaṁ
 provāca tāṁ tattvato brahmavidyām' (Mu. 1/2/13)
 ityuktabrahmavidyāvartmavidhvamsanena'jāgalastanāyitaḥ 'athāto brahmajijñāsā' (Bra. Sū.
 1/1/1) ityādyupakrāntasūtrarāśirapi nairāśyamāpadyeteti samucita
 evā'kṣarapuruṣottametitattvadvyānvitabrahmavidyāvicārāmbha iti jijñāsādhikaraṇam
 ||1/1/1||

Here, the following objection is presented:

"tadvā etadakṣaram gārgyadr̥ṣṭam draṣṭraśrutam śrotramataṁ mantravijñātam vijñātr"
 (Br. 3.8.11), "parā yayā tadakṣaramadhigamyate | yattadadreśyamagrāhyam" (Mu. 1.1.5,6), "yato
 vāco nivartante | aprāpya manasā saha" (Tai. 2.4.1, Tai. 2.9.1), "na tatra cakṣurgacchati na vāg
 gacchati no manaḥ" (Ke. 1.3), and other revelations imply that Akṣarabrahman and
 Parabrahman cannot be the subject of speech, the mind, and others. As a result, it appears that
 this scripture, composed to acquire special knowledge of Brahman and Parabrahman, is futile.

It is responded: On the contrary, this effort put forth by one (the objector) who does not
 understand the meaning of the *śrutis* is futile. In actuality, these revelations are for those *jīvas*
 and *iśvaras* (1) who have not attained qualitative oneness with Akṣarabrahman because they

have not sought refuge under the *Brahmasvarūpa* guru, (2) who are devoid of the supreme worshipful service (*upāsana*) towards Paramātmā Sahajānanda, or (3) who are desirous of worldly objects. Their worldly focused eyes, mind, and other faculties cannot comprehend Brahman and Parabrahman. Otherwise, the revelations offered by the venerable *śrutis*: “brahmavidāpnoti param” (Tai. 2.1.1), “ya etadakṣaram gārgi veditvā’smālokatpraiti sa brāhmaṇaḥ” (Br. 3.8.10), “etaddhyevā’kṣaram jñātvā yo yadicchatī tasya tat” (Kaṭha. 2.16), “akṣaram vedayate yastu” (Pra. 4.10, 11), “tadetadakṣaram brahma, tadetat satyaṁ tadamṛtaṁ tad veddhavyaṁ somya viddhi” (Mu. 2.2.2), and “brahma veda brahmaiva bhavati” (Mu. 3.2.9), which reveal Akṣarabrahman as the subject of knowledge, and the *śrutis*: “taṁ vedyāṁ puruṣaṁ veda” (Pra. 6.6), “ya etadevaṁ vidvān” (Chā. 1.9.2), “dṛśyate tvagrayā buddhyā sūkṣmayā sūkṣmadarśibhiḥ” (Kaṭha. 3.12), “tamātmasthaṁ ye’nupaśyanti dhīrāsteṣāṁ śāntiḥ śāśvatī netareṣāṁ” (Kaṭha. 5.13), “adhyātmayogādhighamena devaṁ matvā” (Kaṭha. 2.12), “taṁ paśyati niṣkalaṁ dhyāyamānaḥ” (Mu. 3.1.8), “yatte rūpaṁ kalyāṇatamaṁ tatte paśyāmi” (Ī. 16), “bhidyate hṛdayagranthiśchidyante sarvasaṁśayāḥ kṣīyante cāśya karmāṇi tasmin dṛṣṭe parāvare” (Mu. 2.2.8), and “ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo mantavyo nididhyāsitavyaḥ” (Br. 2.4.5, Br. 4.5.6), which reveal the Lord of Akṣara (Puruṣottama) as the subject of knowledge, would be futile or rendered contradictory. Oh my! By destroying the path towards *brahmavidyā* expressed by “yenā’kṣaram puruṣaṁ veda satyaṁ provāca tāṁ tattvato brahmavidyāṁ” (Mu. 1.2.13), “athāto brahmajijñāsā” (Bra. Sū. 1.1.1), and other aphorisms will become like the unlactating glands on the neck of sheep⁷⁶—fruitless. For this reason, a reflection on *brahmavidyā*, which consists of the knowledge of both Akṣara and Puruṣottama, should be commenced. This concludes the “Jijñāsādhikaraṇa.”

⁷⁶ A wattle is a fleshy caruncle hanging from various parts of the head or neck in several groups of birds and mammals. They are identified as organs of sexual dimorphism and have no direct function in reproduction. Their similarity in appearance to mammary glands is used here to highlight their ineffectiveness at producing milk.

Abbreviations

A. Śi.	Atharvaśiropanaṣad
Bra. Sū.	Brahmasūtra
Br.	Bṛhadāraṇyakopaniṣad
BSB.	Brahmasūtra-Svāminārāyaṇa-Bhāṣya
Chā.	Chāndogyaopaniṣad
Gī.	Śrīmadbhagavadgītā
Ī.	Īśāvāsyopaniṣad
Kaṭha.	Kaṭhopaniṣad
Ke.	Kenopaniṣad
Ma. Ādi.	Mahābhārata – “Ādiparvan”
Mā.	Māṇḍūkyopaniṣad
Mu.	Muṇḍakopaniṣad
Pra.	Praśnopaniṣad
Tai.	Taittirīyopaniṣad
Śve.	Śvetāśvetaropaniṣad

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