Scholastic Publics: Sanskrit Textual Practices in Gujarat, 1800-Present

by

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Department for the Study of Religion
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Abstract

This dissertation addresses the complex negotiations of “tradition” in colonial and postcolonial modernity through a study of the Swaminarayan sampradāy, a rapidly growing transnational community founded in Gujarat at the turn of the nineteenth century. It argues that the community produced Sanskrit texts partly to engage its “scholastic publics”—imaginative and interpretive sites of debate and contestation—to consolidate, strengthen, legitimize, and even divide the sampradāy over its 200-year history. In doing so, members of the sampradāy maintain a concerted privileging of classical Sanskrit knowledge systems, long after the purported demise of these systems.

Chapter 1 outlines the Swaminarayan sampradāy’s perceived interlocutors through an analysis of a nineteenth-century text chronicling the sampradāy’s public debates. These debates provide the sampradāy with a template for a scripturally-based rationale for its code of conduct, its system of Vedānta, and its very notion of sampradāy. Chapter 2 extends the historical discussion into the early twentieth century, when the sampradāy makes use of a burgeoning print culture to vocally criticize powerful opponents, democratize the scholastic through Gujarati translations and monthly magazines, and legitimate apocryphal texts. The
Swaminarayan scholastic commitment remains to *sampradāy*: safeguarding the community at large, nourishing the community from within, and mitigating nascent sectarianism.

The second half of the dissertation addresses the questions of scholasticism and *sampradāy* through a connected lens: Vedānta commentaries. It traces the hermeneutical and exegetical patterns that characterize three separate moments of commentarial production in the *sampradāy*. These patterns demonstrate a shifting commitment to the more established school of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta over two centuries in the articulation of Swaminarayan Vedānta. In the wake of the sectarian division of the *sampradāy*, these very technical Vedāntic debates are used to authorize one particular Swaminarayan interpretation as *the* Swaminarayan interpretation, within a Vedānta scholastic public.
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Note on Transliteration and Translation

Most Sanskrit words used in this dissertation have been transliterated according to the International Alphabet of Sanskrit Transliteration (IAST). Gujarati words have been transliterated according to a modified version of IAST, including a loss of phonemic vowel length, especially at the end of a word (for example, “Sahajānand” instead of “Sahajānanda”). Nasalized vowels, which occur in Gujarati but not in Sanskrit, are represented with the following diacritic: ˜ (for example, “temā”). If a Sanskrit word has been adapted into Gujarati, and the source material I am dealing with is originally in Gujarati, I have opted to use the Gujarati transliteration (for example, “sampradāy” instead of “sampradāya”). Names of town and people have been given without diacritics, wherever these have been Anglicized in standard convention (for example, “Swaminarayan” instead of “Svāminārāyan,” and “Baroda” instead of “Baroḍā”). Compound words in the titles of texts are often split up so as to render them more readable (for example, *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Ratna* instead of *Brahmasūtrabhāṣyaratna*).

All translations of Sanskrit, Gujarati, and Hindi are my own, unless otherwise indicated. A transliteration of the translated text is always provided in the footnotes.
Introduction

Śrījī Svāmī says, “Oh virtuous sant! I like when someone studies the higher knowledge. Therefore, especially study this knowledge daily, and with love. A sampradāy is continuously nourished by its scholars. A group [panth] where sādhus are not learned becomes reproachable.

- Śrī Hari Līlāmṛt 1.14.35

Scholastic Publics: Modernity and Sampradāy

The Swaminarayan sampradāy—the religious community that developed around the worship of Sahajānand Svāmī (1781-1830) in Gujarat around the turn of the nineteenth century—has attracted the attention of those interested in modern Hindu religiosity since the early nineteenth century. European missionaries, Orientalists, anti-colonial nationalists, as well as contemporary scholars of religion have found ample grounds to address the varied issues of the sampradāy’s historical formation, devotional praxis, temple architecture, and social makeup. Whether focused historically on the nineteenth century, or ethnographically on current-day practices, studies have used the sampradāy as a unique inroad to assess the interplay between “tradition” and modernity.

One such discussion of this interplay that has become a dominant assessment of the sampradāy is offered by Bhai Manilal Parekh, a Gujarati Christian who authored books on

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1 śrījī svāmī kahe susant amne vidyā bhone te game/māye sneh samet nitya bhanjo vidyā višeše tame// puṣṭī santata sampradāy taṇi to vidvānhi thāv ye che/jo vidvān na hoy sādhyan to te panth nindāy che. Ācārāśrī Vihārlalji Mahārāj, Śrīharililāmṛt Bhāg 1, 2nd Ed. (Kuṇḍal: Śrī Svāmīnārāyaṇa Mandir, 2011) p. 92.

2 Sahajānand Svāmī is referred to by many names both within the sampradāy and in sources external to it, including: Śrījī Maharāj, Śrīharī, Ghaṇḍyām, Nīlkanṭh Varnī, and (Bhagavān) Swaminarayan. For the sake of simplicity and to avoid confusion, I use Sahajānand Svāmī throughout this dissertation to refer to the historical person, and Swaminarayan as an adjective (as in Swaminarayan texts, Swaminarayan sampradāy, etc.).

3 The modern state of Gujarat came into being in 1961, with the division of Bombay State along chiefly linguistic lines into Gujarat and Maharashтра. Prior to this, the region was made up of various Princely States as well as areas under the control of the Bombay Presidency. In using the terms “Gujarat” and “Gujarati,” I refer to a broader understanding of the region as comprised of Gujarat, Kutch, and Kathiawar that pre-figures the modern state boundaries. See Samira Sheikh, Forging a Region: Sultans, Traders and Pilgrims in Gujarati 1200-1500 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Achyut Yagnik and Suchitra Sheth, The Shaping of Modern Gujarat: Plurality, Hindutva and Beyond (Delhi: Penguin Books India, 2005).
Jesus, Gandhi, and the Brahmo Samaj. In 1936, he wrote *Sri Swami Narayana (A Gospel of Bhagwat-dharma or God in Redemptive Action)*. In his prefatory remarks, Parekh describes a “New India” with “the rise of men like Rajarshi Ram Mohan Roy, Brahmashri Keshub Chunder Sen, Paramhansa Ram Krishna, Swami Dayananda Saraswati,” but ultimately concludes that “the most remarkable among the modern Teachers in India, however, is Swami Narayana.”

While characterizing Sahajānand Svāmī as distinctly “modern,” Parekh notes a difference between Sahajānand Svāmī and his contemporary, Rammohan Roy. The latter worked within the context of Bengal “in the full blaze of the light from the West” and amid a “stable and enlightened administration.” According to Parekh, “in sharp contrast to this,” Sahajānand Svāmī “lived and worked in what may be called the last days of Medieval India,” because of the lack of a significant British presence in Gujarat until the early nineteenth century, when the Anglo-Maratha Wars concluded. Parekh approvingly cites Mahadev Govind Ranade—a nineteenth-century reformer and founding member of the Indian National Congress—in describing Sahajānand Svāmī as “the last of the Hindu reformers.” Parekh clarifies that Ranade meant to classify Sahajānand Svāmī as a reformer “of the old type,” differing from the likes of Rammohan Roy in his distinct lack of sustained engagement with the West. Parekh, writing a century after the death of Sahajānand Svāmī, positions him in a crossroads between the modern and medieval.

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5 Ibid., xi.
6 Ibid.
7 Ibid., xii.
Parekh is neither the first nor the last to make such a claim about Sahajānand Svāmī’s positioning, rooted in a discussion of reform. His classification is taken up by the French scholar Françoise Mallison in 1974, who suggests that Sahajānand Svāmī is not often seen as a proponent of “Neo-Hinduism,” but is rather grouped with the “great saints of traditional Hinduism like Vallabha and Caitanya.” However, Mallison goes on to complicate this distinction, suggesting that certain features of Sahajānand Svāmī’s teaching do bear traces of what Paul Hacker has termed “neo-Hinduism.” This foregoing discussion is rendered succinctly in English a decade later by Raymond B. Williams, who says that Sahajānand Svāmī “has been identified correctly as the last of the medieval saints and the first of the neo-Hindu reformers.”

It is only recently that this pervasive periodization has begun to be rightly criticized. Brian Hatcher has subjected Williams’s assessment to a thorough genealogical analysis, situating the dichotomy between “medieval saint” and “modern reformer” in a larger trajectory of colonial and postcolonial understandings of modernity and reform. He suggests that the very dichotomy is rooted in a “Janus-faced” late-colonial paradigm that “acknowledged the fact of medieval religious reform in the very act of denying its viability.” Sahajānand Svāmī’s efforts at social reform drew the attention of a number of colonial-era administrators and missionaries, whose pronouncements of the relative modernity of these efforts have contributed to the liminal placement of Sahajānand Svāmī.

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and the Swaminarayan sampradāy.\textsuperscript{12} Hatcher concludes that Williams’s 1984 assessment is in itself a reflection of a transitional period in historiography; it requires reassessment through the insights of postcolonial theory. Further, Shruti Patel has recently argued that an undue focus on the notion of reform has occluded an understanding of the complexities of the Swaminarayan sampradāy’s institutionalization.\textsuperscript{13} A more nuanced account, she argues, must pay greater attention to local sources from within the tradition rather than an outsize focus on colonial records alone. This theoretical and methodological call strongly informs my project on the Swaminarayan sampradāy as a modern religious tradition.

This dissertation contributes to a broader project of uncovering complex negotiations of “tradition” in colonial and postcolonial modernity by focusing on an understudied aspect of Swaminarayan religiosity: scholasticism. By scholasticism, I refer to two interrelated concepts: 1) \textit{vidvattā}, or learning, erudition, the pursuit of knowledge; and 2) \textit{śāstrīyatā}, or a concern with the proper interpretation of and alignment with \textit{śāstra} (scripture). The epigraph of this introduction, a passage from the nineteenth-century Gujarati sacred biography of Sahajānand Svāmī called the \textit{Śrī Hari Līlāmṛt}, reveals the salience of scholastic endeavors within the sampradāy. Here, Sahajānand Svāmī exhorts his monastic followers, sādhus, to study dutifully for two reasons. Firstly, study is pleasing to him, and so it becomes a site for the sādhus to render their bhakti, or devotion. The second reason has to do with the very notion of sampradāy, or community. According to Sahajānand Svāmī, scholars (\textit{vidvān}) sustain the sampradāy. Conversely, a community in which its sādhus are not educated is


derided, and is merely a small group, or *panth*. For the sake of the Swaminarayan *sampradāy*, Sahajānand Svāmī wanted his followers to study, and to produce texts.

Based on this pronouncement, the Swaminarayan *sampradāy* can be meaningfully characterized as a “textual community.” In her study of eighteenth-century Lankan monastic communities, Anne Blackburn draws upon the work of European medievalist Brian Stock to define a textual community as a “collective” of individuals “who understand the world and their appropriate place within it in terms significantly influenced by their encounter with a shared set of written texts…and who grant special social status to literate interpreters of authoritative written texts.” Not everyone in the *sampradāy* composed texts, but Sahajānand Svāmī inculcated a class of literate interpreters whose work was pivotal to the self-understanding of the non-literate members of the *sampradāy*.

However, the textual practices of the Swaminarayan *sampradāy*, and especially the production and dissemination of Sanskrit texts, point to a broader social formation that I call “scholastic publics.” Texts, and especially Sanskrit texts, are important not just for circulation within the *sampradāy*, but within these broader scholastic publics. Publics serve as critical imaginative and interpretive sites of debate and contestation. They are not constitutive of *sampradāy*, but members of the Swaminarayan *sampradāy* used these publics at various points over its 200-year history to strengthen, consolidate, legitimize, and even divide the *sampradāy*. In doing so, members of the *sampradāy* maintain a concerted privileging of classical Sanskrit knowledge systems, refracted through the lens of colonial and postcolonial modernity.

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14 “*Panth*” and “*sampradāy*” are often used interchangeably in the sense of a religious community. Here, there seems to be a subtle distinction conveying a difference in scope and longevity.

In this introductory chapter, I will lay out my theoretical framework by defining my use of the terms “publics” and “tradition,” indebted as they are to recent scholarship in South Asian religions and in postcolonial theory. I will then introduce the Swaminarayan sampradāy, its emphasis on scholastic endeavors, and its commitment to the classical school of Vedānta. Finally, I will provide an outline of the dissertation, including a discussion of my methodology and the broader argument of the work.

Theoretical Framework

In describing the Swaminarayan sampradāy’s “scholastic publics,” I am referring to a particular social formation inscribed by the concepts of vidvattā (erudition) and śāstrīyatā (scriptural conformity). My conception of this social formation draws upon the significant theorizations of publics, public culture, and the public sphere in the wake of Jürgen Habermas’s seminal work. 16 Though Habermas is writing about a sphere of rational debate emerging in eighteenth-century Europe, particularly as occasioned by newspaper and other print materials, his conceptualization has been revisited by a host of scholars working in the South Asian context. 17 These studies highlight formations of the public that de-center the European model, and examine their uniquely South Asian inflections. For example, Francesca Orsini stresses the importance of a Hindi literary sphere, with the literary often reflecting the commitments of the political-public sphere. 18

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17 See, for example, the special issue edited by Brannon D. Ingram, J. Barton Scott, and SherAli Tareen—“Imagining the Public in Modern South Asia,” South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies 38, no. 3 (2015). This marked the 25th anniversary of another special issue edited by Sandra Freitag—“Aspects of ‘the Public’ in Colonial South Asia,” South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies 14, no. 1 (1991).
18 Francesca Orsini, The Hindi Public Sphere, 1920-1940 (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2002), 8.
Others have traced the precursors to a Habermasian public sphere in South Asia. C.A. Bayly, for instance, describes an “ecumene” comprising a north Indian culture of debate predating newspapers and associational bodies. What distinguished this ecumene from other collectivities was a broader concern beyond those of “tribes, castes or religious sects.” Crucially, Bayly suggests it is out of this foundational ecumene that the nationalist public sphere developed, with the introduction of print. This project of tracing precolonial formations of the public sphere has recently been taken on by two other scholars. First, Elaine Fisher has described the formation of sectarian publics in early modern south India, with the development of a “public theology”: Śaiva intellectuals gathered in public spaces to debate religious issues of social importance, “unconstrained by the walls of a monastery, the vows of asceticism, the hierarchies of lineage (paramparā), or the boundaries of any single religious institution.” By calling these publics “sectarian,” Fisher argues for the emergence of multiple, distinct spheres operating in a “pluralistic religious landscape.” Especially significant is Fisher’s suggestion that debate need not be avowedly secular in order to constitute a public sphere.

Christian Novetzke posits an even earlier “nascent” formation of the public sphere in thirteenth century Maharashtra, where remarkably egalitarian notions of gender and caste—albeit not totally removed from the operations of hierarchy and power—were articulated in Marathi. Here, and in earlier examinations of a “bhakti public,” Novetzke makes a critical

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20 Ibid., 187.
theoretical distinction between the “public sphere” and a “public.” Novetzke defines a public as “an open, social audience, one that attends to...a capacious and circulating discourse within a given region, language, or other social context...of mutual intelligibility and access.” By contrast, a public sphere is “a common social space of discourse...that has the potential to engage everyone and anyone,” where “discursive power is mediated between elites and the general ‘public,’” the entry into which requires a subordination of individual concerns. The distinction is one of scope: the public sphere is broader, with more wide ranging, “democratic” concerns; a public can be far more narrowly defined. However, both are social and dialogical in character. Significantly, they both rely on an individual, imaginative process. Novetzke explains that “people must believe they are part of a public, and this gives it both its strength and its ephemeral quality.”

My characterizations of “scholastic publics” builds upon these considerations. A scholastic public is more than just a given audience for a text, or the empirical community in which a text is meant to circulate. It is a social formation that is dialogic and constituted through debate. This debate is centered on the interpretation of śāstra—scriptural texts including the Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, Brahma Sūtras, dharma śāstras, and purāṇas. Further, there is a significant imaginative process at play: the debate partners are often aspirational, and they need not necessarily respond. Moreover, there is not a singular public, but rather multiple publics, variously conceived. Both Fisher and Novetzke articulate this point, which departs from conceptions of the public in South Asia. Members of the

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24 Novetzke, Quotidian Revolution, 28.
25 Ibid., 32-33.
Swaminarayan *sampradāya* see themselves engaging a variety of scholastic publics: external, broad, and Sanskritic; internal to the community; and Vedāntic. I examine each of these in this dissertation in turn.

Central to my investigation of scholasticism in the Swaminarayan *sampradāya* is the use of Sanskrit by a predominantly Gujarati religious community. As such, debates on the “life” and “death” of Sanskrit animate this discussion. Few have contributed more to a *longue durée* understanding of Sanskrit than Sheldon Pollock. Pollock has famously proclaimed that Sanskrit ceases to exist as a legitimate medium of power, creativity, and production with the onset of colonialism. Several voices have problematized this claim, including some that miss the mark, based on *ad hominem* criticisms and a misreading of his argument. By contrast, Parimal Patil offers a more sustained counterpoint to Pollock’s periodization through the counterexample of the Sanskrit system of *Nyāya-Vaiśeṣika*, which flourished in this time period. Similarly, Michael Dodson’s work on the Benares Sanskrit College sheds light on the production of Sanskrit texts that, while furthering Orientalist projects, demonstrate significant creativity.

There are also those studies that engage with Pollock’s thesis about the transformation of Sanskrit knowledge systems. For example, Sudipto Kaviraj uses Pollock’s periodization to describes various periods of “newness,” with colonial modernity

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representing a radical, epistemic rupture.\textsuperscript{33} Kaviraj, though, ultimately seems to agree with Pollock’s assessment about the “death” of Sanskrit. Brian Hatcher provides a robust rejoinder to the metaphorics in Pollock’s statement, and to Kaviraj’s articulation of radical rupture.\textsuperscript{34} He contends that these moments of newness are not quite so new, and not quite so radical. Instead of the death of Sanskrit, we should be focused on the life of Sanskrit during and beyond the colonial period. This is precisely what this dissertation seeks to do.

The foregoing discussion of publics and Sanskrit leads back to the initial considerations I raised about the “modernity” of Sahajānand Svāmī and his sampradāy. My work contributes to a body of scholarship that challenges notions of modernity rooted in models of radical rupture. Such an understanding furthers the postcolonial project of “provincializing Europe” articulated by Dipesh Chakrabarty and others who argue that Europe serves as a “hyperreal” specter which serves to delimit modernity as “the rule of institutions that delivered us from the thrall of all that was unreasonable and irrational.”\textsuperscript{35} The very classification of people and ideas as modern, premodern, or nonmodern, for Chakrabarty, is always “a gesture of the powerful.” To deem something modern is to imbue it with moral valences, and to place it at the apex of a stagist, teleological scale in a way that consigns all else to an “imaginary waiting room of history.”\textsuperscript{36} In this vein, Michael Dodson

\textsuperscript{33} Sudipto Kaviraj, “The Sudden Death of Sanskrit Knowledge,” \textit{Journal of Indian Philosophy} 33, no. 1 (2005), 119-142.
and Brian Hatcher have challenged the depictions of colonial-era *pāṇḍīts* as “traditional” scholars who are nonmodern agents inhabiting modernity.  

The issue of continuity and rupture is often read into the categories of “tradition” and “modernity,” respectively. Emblematic of this configuration is Paul Hacker’s distinction between “traditional Hinduism” and “neo-Hinduism.” Hacker understands neo-Hinduism as an intellectual formation that is primarily or predominantly Western, assimilationist, political, and nationalist; by contrast, traditionalists maintain a living continuity with the past. However, Hacker’s conceptual divides have rightly been called into question. For example, in her study of nineteenth century Banaras, Vasudha Dalmia maintains a divide, but argues that it is between “traditionalists” and “reformists.” The former stress the “constancy of tradition” while the latter posit a “breach with some original, more pristine past.” Though there are other important distinctions—for example, the traditionalists accept the authority of the *īthāsa* and *purāṇas*—Dalmia notes that both of these groups “not only constantly reinterpret and modify inherited practice, they are fiercely nationalist as well.” Dalmia thus urges us to allow “traditionalists” like Bharatendu Harischandra a degree of nationalistic creativity.

Brian Hatcher problematizes these distinctions even further in his discussion of a “modern shastric imaginary.” Following Charles Taylor, Hatcher conceives of the “shastric imaginary” as a “shared space of practice and imagination” with attendant “material  

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40 Ibid., 7.
practices, technologies, and institutions.” For Hatcher, this imaginary is constituted by a deep and sustained project of using śāstra, or scriptural texts in their adjudication of everyday life. Significantly, Hatcher describes this imaginary as a “form of Indian modernity that emerged prior to, and outside of, the imperatives of nationalism.” This imaginary subsequently sees its demise with the rise of a nationalist imaginary which politicizes śāstra “as a kind of banner under which to rally Hindus in defense of their religion and national culture.” For Hatcher, both of these imaginaries are decidedly modern: though they are both deploying śāstra, they do so to navigate the colonial experience.

This dissertation asks us to listen to the voices speaking within modernity that consciously eschew notions of rupture, voices that privilege continuity with the past, and voices that are conspicuously silent on issues of colonial and nationalistic concerns. These voices, however, cannot be termed “nonmodern,” or simply as a “traditionalist” foil to modern voices. When members of the Swaminarayan sampradāy engage with various scholastic publics, they demonstrate an innovation, expansion, and reconfiguration of “tradition” in ways that complicate facile binaries.

**The Swaminarayan Sampradāy: Śāstrīyatā and Vidvattā**

Having articulated the conceptual parameters of this dissertation, I will provide a brief introduction to the Swaminarayan sampradāy, as well as its scholastic fashioning. At the turn of the nineteenth century, Sahajānand Svāmī took over leadership of a small hermitage (āśrama) in western Gujarat; by the time of his death thirty years later, his

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42 Ibid., 51.
43 Ibid., 49.
Swaminarayan sampradāya had attracted a large following composed of monks and laypeople from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds all across Gujarat. To sketch a brief history of the early stages of the sampradāya, as culled from various hagiographical and historical accounts, Sahajānand Svāmī was born in North India in 1781, but becoming a wandering bāla-brahmacārin or “child celibate,” he traveled through India and arrived in Gujarat in the āśrama of an ascetic leader named Rāmānand Svāmī. A short two years later in 1801, Rāmānand Svāmī conferred leadership of the āśrama upon the young and charismatic Sahajānand Svāmī, who, over the next thirty years, spread his teachings throughout the regions of Gujarat, Kathiawar, and Kutch. By the end of this period, he was revered as divine by most of his followers, who worshipped him as purṇa puruṣottama, the “complete manifestation of the highest being,” Bhagavān Swaminarayan. Though the community grew steadily over the thirty-year period of Sahajānand Svāmī’s teaching, much of the institutionalization of the community took place during the last ten years of his life, which saw the construction of six temples, the establishment of offices of administration, and the production of a variety of texts.44

In terms of this textual production, Sahajānand Svāmī encouraged the authoring of poems, songs, and sacred biography in different languages. Particularly important are two texts that have taken on scriptural status among Sahajānand Svāmī’s followers. The first is the Vacanāmrta, or “Nectar of Speech,”—a collection of 273 Gujarati didactic talks given by Sahajānand Svāmī between 1819 and 1829 and transcribed in Gujarati by four of his followers. The second is a text called the Śikṣāpatrī, or “Small Book of Teachings”—a

collection of 212 Sanskrit śloka-s attributed to Swaminarayan himself and completed in 1826.

Though both texts explicitly claim to be the “essence of all scriptures” that preceded them, they also demarcate which scriptural texts are important within the tradition. Both the Vacanāmṛt and the Śikṣāpatrī list eight authoritative texts: (1) the Vedas, and by extension, the Upaniṣads; (2) the Bhagavad Gītā; (3) the Brahma Sūtras; (4) the Bhāgavata Purāṇa; (5) the Vāsudeva Māhātmya from the Skanda Purāṇa; (6) the Viṣṇusahasranāma; (7) the Vidura Nīti; (8) the Yājñavalkya Smṛti. The last of these texts is singled out as the source of the Swaminarayan sampradāya’s code of dharma. Most of the others are important Vaiṣṇava texts. The first three form the canon for an influential system of theology called Vedānta. With this delineation of texts, Sahajānand Svāmī is making explicit the śāstrīyatā of his sampradāya: it is in accordance with varnāśrama dharma, it is Vaiṣṇava, and it is thoroughly suffused with Vedānta.

With respect to all three of these śāstrīya points, the texts of the Swaminarayan sampradāya, including the Vacanāmṛt, demonstrate a tension between aligning with pre-existent norms and furthering more innovative readings. In the first case of varnāśrama dharma, caste-based practices are described most clearly in the Śikṣāpatrī, which has separate sections dealing with dharma for kings and Brahmans, householders and monks, etc. However, there is also at times a subordination of caste identity to a broader sāmpradāyik or community identity, rooted in an ontological understanding of the self as the ātman.46

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46 See, for example, Sadhu Mangalmiñhidhas, “Sahajanand Swami’s Approach to Caste,” in Swaminarayan Hinduism: Tradition, Adaptation, Identity, eds. Raymond Brady Williams and Yogi Trivedi (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 115-128. See also section 2.2 of this dissertation.
Secondly, though the sampradāya is identified as Vaiṣṇava, the exact locus of devotion is described in different ways. At times, Sahajānand Svāmī presents himself as a devotee of Kṛṣṇa. For example, the very first verse of the Śikṣāpatrī is a benedictory verse ending with śrīkṛṣṇa hrdi cintaye – “I think of the glorious Kṛṣṇa in my heart”.47 Later in the text, Sahajānand Svāmī echoes verse 18.54 of the Bhagavad Gītā when he states: “believing oneself to have the form of brahman, separate from the three bodies, one should always engage in the bhakti of Kṛṣṇa.”48 Even in the Vacanāṁṛt, Sahajānand Svāmī again espouses worship of Kṛṣṇa, including one of the very first teachings indicating that Kṛṣṇa should be the object of meditation.49 However, at other junctures in the Vacanāṁṛt, Sahajānand Svāmī identifies himself as the true object of bhakti. For example, after describing the form of God in the “divine light” of his abode, Sahajānand Svāmī states: “you should know that the form amid that divine light is this [Sahajānand Svāmī] visible before you.”50 At another stage, he states:

\[ \text{puruṣottam bhagavān, who is greater than everything, manifests on this planet out of compassion for the liberation of jīvas, and is presently visible to everyone. He is your chosen deity (iṣṭadev) and accepts your service. And there is no difference whatsoever between the form of this manifest puruṣottam bhagavān and the one residing in his abode (aक्षर्द्धम).} \]

The Vacanāṁṛt is a text consisting of sermons delivered to various audiences. The discrepancy can be understood in terms of a nascent sampradāy hedging these audiences.

The references to Kṛṣṇa point to an appeal to the broader Kṛṣṇa-centered bhakti ascendant in

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47 Śikṣāpatrī v.1, p. 7. 
48 niñātmānam brahmārūpam dehatraya vilakṣaṇam vibhāvyā tena kartavyā bhaktīḥ kṛṣṇasya sarvadā—Śikṣāpatrī v. 116, p. 50. 
49 Vacanāṁṛt Gadhaḍā I.5, p. 6. 
50 je teje vise mūrti che te ja ā pratyaks mahārāj che, em jāṅjo—Vacanāṁṛt Gadhaḍā II.13, p. 387. 
51 ane eva sarvopari jeyuṣottam bhagavān te jayā ke karāre jīvān kalyānne arthe ā prthvīne vise prakaṭ thayā thakā sarva ājñā nayan-gocār varte che ne tāmārā iṣṭadev che ne tāmārē sevānē aṅgikār kare che. ake eva jeyuṣottam bhagavān tenā svarūmpā na aṅghānāne vise rahyā jeyuṣottam tenā svarūmpā kātī paṇ bhed nathī—Vacanāṁṛt Gadhaḍā III.38, p. 627.
Gujarat. But even at the earliest stages of the sampradāy, Sahajānand Svāmī was identified as parabrahman in place of Kṛṣṇa or Viṣṇu.

Similar tensions can be observed in terms of characterizations of Vedānta: at times Sahajānand Svāmī aligns his system of Vedānta with the Tamil figure Rāmānuja (1013-1137), and at times points to an independent system. In the Śikṣāpatrī, after enumerating the eight authoritative scriptural texts, Sahajānand Svāmī makes the following declaration: “the commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras and the Bhagavad Gītā by Rāmānuja should be understood as my spiritual (ādhyātmika) text.” He also says that Rāmānuja’s school of Vedānta, Viśiṣṭādvaita—non-dualism of the qualified brahman—is his mata, or position. Moreover, in the Vacanāmṛt, Sahajānand Svāmī explicitly states the guru paramparā, or lineage of teachers of the sampradāy: his guru is Rāmānuand Svāmī, as mentioned earlier, who in turn was initiated by Rāmānuja himself in a dream in Śrīraṅgam. It is these considerations that led David Pocock to assert that Sahajānand Svāmī “is not to be regarded as a great āchārya in the traditional sense, in that he did not propound a distinctive philosophy of his own.”

In one of the earliest scholarly studies of the Swaminarayan sampradāy in 1923, the Gujarati author Kishorelal Mashruwala acknowledges this same point, but suggests a revision. He states, “I have heard some say that there is no depth to the Swaminarayan

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53 śārīkakāñām bhagavadgītāyāś cāvagamyatām rāmānujācāryakṛtaṁ bhāsyam ādhyātmikaṁ mama—Śikṣāpatrī v. 100, p. 43.
54 Śikṣāpatrī v. 121, p. 51.
55 Vacanāmṛt Vartāl 18, p. 527; for a fuller discussion of the implications of this guru paramparā, see section 1.2.4 of this dissertation.
...sampradāya...and that it has no independent position or principle of its own.”

He proceeds to outline a robust system, which he describes as differing in significant ways from Rāmānuja’s system. Mashruwala’s analysis is based on a close study of the Vacanāmrta, in which Sahajānand Svāmī makes it clear that he understands his system to be unique. In the same Vacanāmrta cited earlier where Sahajānand Svāmī lists the eight authoritative texts, he states, “of all the ācāryas that have lived, Vyāsji is the greatest.”

Traditionally, authorship of both the Bhagavad Gītā and the Brahma Sūtras is attributed to Vyāsa. Sahajānand Svāmī immediately proceeds to list several Vedānta ācāryas whom he considers lesser than Vyāsa, including Śaṅkara, Madhva, Nimbārka, Vallabha, Viṣṇusvāmī, and even Rāmānuja. He concludes by stating, “I am the ācārya, guru, and instructor of all of you.”

The extent to which Sahajānand Svāmī’s system differs from Rāmānuja’s will be addressed throughout this dissertation, but especially in Chapters 3 and 4. However, once again we observe an ambiguity between drawing upon a pre-established convention and articulating an independent perspective.

The Swaminarayan sampradāya saw rapid growth in its early years. It also received considerable patronage from local rulers, including Kāthi chiefs, various Maharajas in Kathiawar, the Gaekwads of Baroda, and the British in Ahmedabad, who granted land for Sahajānand Svāmī to construct his first temple. However, despite this patronage, and because of both its growth and its innovative teachings, the Swaminarayan sampradāya was

57 mē evo ēkṣep mukāyelo sāmbhalyo che ke svāminārāyaṇ dharmamā uṇḍu rahasya nathī...paṇ teṇo koi svatantra mat-siddhānt nathī—Kishorelal Ghanshyamlal Mashruwala, Sahajānand Svāmī athavā Svāminārāyaṇ Sampradāya. (Amdavad: Navjivan Prakāśan Mandir, 1923), 128.

58 Vacanāmrta Vartāl 18, p. 528.

59 tamāro sarveno ācārya ne guru ne upadeśṭā evo je hū—Ibid., 530.

met with considerable opposition. This has been documented amply in colonial sources—particularly those drawing upon interviews with members of the *sampradāy*—as well as in the literature produced within the tradition.  

It is against this backdrop of the narrative of external opposition that the *sampradāy*’s scholastic endeavors must be situated.

Early accounts of the tradition—both external and internal—address the fact that the scholastic credentials of the *sampradāy* were consistently challenged. Three accounts of these challenges will illustrate the case. First, there is Mashruwala’s description of how Sahajānand Svāmī’s *sādhus* were viewed by other *śāstrīs* or *paṇḍits*.  

One of his *sādhus*, an elderly but uneducated *sādhu* named Āṭmānand Svāmī, was unable to satisfactorily respond to certain questions posed to him pertaining to Vedānta. Upon hearing that these *śāstrīs* ridiculed Āṭmānand Svāmī, and by extension, all of the *sādhus* of the *sampradāy*, Sahajānand Svāmī insisted that his *sādhus* be educated. He even sent two senior *sādhus*, Muktānand Svāmī and Brahmnand Svāmī, to the town of Surat in southern Gujarat to learn Sanskrit.

Mashruwala notes, “at that time, the entry of the *sampradāy* into the scholastic class [vidvad-

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61 See, for example, the following observation: “the distinguishing tenets between his system and that of other Hindoos, are so inoffensive as they might at least have escaped violent opposition; this does not however seem to have been the case; all the orders of religious mendicants in particular used to take ample advantage of the peaceful professions of his disciples by beating them sometimes unmercifully; and they boast that no instance ever occurred of this violence being resisted”—“Indian Sect: Memorandum respecting a Sect lately introduced by a Person calling himself Swamee Naraen,”* Asiatic Journal and Monthly Register* 15 (1823), 349. Though this is an anonymous article, its source material has been identified as the diary of William Hodge Mill, the Principal of Bishop’s College in Calcutta. See Paramtattvadas and Williams, “Swaminarayan and British Contacts.”

There is also the following description based on a previous article appearing in a periodical publication called *Dñānodaya*: “Notwithstanding the vigorous opposition they met with in some places, they continued zealously to propagate and practice their religion. ‘Some of this followers,’ said the priest quoted above, ‘were denied admission to the towns; some were buried alive; some *sādhus* even were put to death.’ In Surat an attempt was made some twenty-five years ago to procure their expulsion from their several castes”—J.A.S. Burgess, “Nárāyan Svámi,”* Indian Antiquary* 1 (1872), 335.

varga] could only happen through Sanskrit, and so it was necessary for sāmpradāyik literature to be composed in this language.  

Next, there is an account of a public scholastic debate, or śāstrārtha, in a Sanskrit sacred biography of Sahajānand Svāmī called the Śrī Hari Dig Vijaya. In this debate, a leader of a well-established religious order in Gujarat, the Puṣtimārga founded by Vallabha, asks the disciples of Sahajānand Svāmī why they consider him to be an ācārya and guru, or authoritative teacher. The opponent argues that the characteristics of an ācārya are threefold: he would create new texts, win over scholars, and make a commentary on the Brahma Sūtras. Since Sahajānand Svāmī has no commentary on the Brahma Sūtras, the opponent contends that he is a false ācārya. The Swaminarayan respondent proceeds to challenge these characteristics, arguing that they are not rooted in scripture. He suggests that the true characteristics of an ācārya and guru should be found in Upaniṣadic sources. Paraphrasing Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.13, he describes a true guru as one who teaches the ultimate knowledge (parā vidyā) of the ontological entities of akṣara and parabrahman to those who are tranquil and have sought his refuge.

This same trope is repeated again in this same sacred biography, but this time, at the court of Maharaja Sayajirao Gaekwad of Baroda. Here, a host of opponents raises this same concern: in order to attain the title of ācārya, one must compose a commentary on the Brahma Sūtras, compose other erudite texts, conduct a digvijaya or a scholastic conquest, and must not accept the texts of other ācāryas. The text again rejects these claims on the

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63 sampradāyino praveś vidvadvargmā samkṣṛt dvāra ja te vakhatmā thai śakto, eṭe sāmpradāyik sāhitya e bhāśāṁā lakhvā āvaśyak haiti—Ibid, 56.
64 This text was composed between 1830 and 1850; see Chapter 1 for a more thorough discussion.
65 ŚHDV 28.15, p. 310.
66 ŚHDV 28.15, p. 311.
67 ŚHDV 45.146-148, p. 477.
basis that they are not scripturally prescribed characteristics of an ācārya. It counters that these could be the qualities of a mere pandita, while an ācārya is one who sees all those beings drowning in the ocean of transmigration and attempts to help them across.68 It also provides counterexamples of figures who have composed commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras and yet have no extant sampradāyas.69 The Śrī Hari Dig Vijaya posits this alternate definition of what makes an ācārya as the superior one.

The repeated presentation of these characteristics of a true ācārya and a true sampradāya belie an underlying concern and deep anxiety felt on the part of the author. Though the text explicitly rejects the need of an ācārya to complete a scholastic conquest of the quarters (digvijaya), the entire text itself is an account of Sahajānand Svāmī’s scholastic conquests. The text’s author, Nityānand Svāmī, is thus implicitly accepting the opponents’ characteristics; though relegating them to a lesser importance, he is nonetheless arguing that Sahajānand Svāmī and his sampradāy are still in the process of attaining these qualifications. The perceived necessity of Vedānta commentaries is attested in other contexts, as well. For example, the Gauḍiya community produced a Brahma Sūtra commentary in the eighteenth century, after this was made a requirement for patronage by Raja Jaisingh II.70 Writing with respect to the Rāmānandi sampradāy, Purushottam Agrawal argues that a commentary was adapted and attributed to the fourteenth-century Rāmānanda in the twentieth century because “without a bhasya [commentary] nobody can be considered an Acharya in his own right.”71

The Swaminarayan sampradāy also engaged itself in the endeavor of producing

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68 ŚHDV 45.191-192, p. 481.
69 ŚHDV 45.195-196, p. 481.
commentaries to encode Sahajānand Svāmī’s system of Vedānta. I argue that this was not for issues of patronage as with the Gauḍīya community, nor for “neo-Vedāntic” ends, but to substantiate the scholastic rigor of Sahajānand Svāmī’s system and his sampradāya. What I aim to demonstrate through this dissertation is precisely how members of the sampradāya, from its earliest stages and continuing into the present day, debated their “others” through Sanskrit texts and within various scholastic publics, in a project of authorization that they themselves deemed to be critical to the sustenance of the sampradāya.

Chapter Outline

This dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part considers the historical context of the Swaminarayan scholastic endeavor, and the second is engaged in a close textual analysis of Swaminarayan commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras. In Chapter 1, I delineate both the real and imagined scholastic communities the Swaminarayan sampradāya saw as their interlocutors. This analysis is based on a study of the nineteenth-century Śrī Hari Dig Vijaya, a sacred biography of Sahajānand Svāmī chronicling the śāstrārthas, or public debates, of the Swaminarayan sampradāya. The text allows for us to reconstruct the various challenges met by the sampradāya, alongside a robust articulation of its responses. I focus on four main debates, in which members of the sampradāya combat the criticisms of: 1) “heterodox” groups, including left-handed Śākta groups, Jains, Buddhists, and the materialist Cārvākas; 2) Advaita Vedāntins; 3) the Puṣṭimārga; and 4) other Vaiṣṇavas at large. These debates allow the sampradāya to provide a scripturally-based rationale for its code of conduct, its system of Vedānta, and the very notion of sampradāya.
In Chapter 2, I extend the historical discussion into the twentieth century, when the sampradāy makes use of a burgeoning print culture to cultivate and engage scholastic publics. Based on archival research, I argue here that print technology presents a significant innovation that allows for: 1) a more vocal criticism of powerful figures who challenge the sampradāy; 2) the democratization of scholasticism through Gujarati translations and Gujarati monthly magazines; and 3) the printing and authorizing of apocryphal texts. All of these developments arise against the backdrop of a newly-configured scholastic public in north India that emerged through the debates between the Arya Samaj and various Sanātana Dharma sabhās. However, I argue that rather than using this public to further nationalist articulations of “Hinduism” and “orthodoxy,” the Swaminarayan commitment remains to sampradāy: be it safeguarding the community at large, scholastically nourishing the community itself, or in mitigating nascent sectarianism within the community.

The second half of the dissertation addresses the questions of scholasticism and sampradāy through a second, connected lens: Vedānta commentaries. As the aforementioned sections of the ŚHDV show, the lack of Brahma Sūtra commentary was a point of contention, even though Sahajānand Svāmī had described a system of Vedānta in the Vacanāmrta. I identify three moments of commentarial production. The first is in the early nineteenth century, when members of the Swaminarayan sampradāy adapt and modify a lesser-known classical commentary, proclaiming it to be an original creation attributed to an influential devotee of Sahajānand Svāmī named Muktānand Svāmī. The second is in the early twentieth century, when this subterfuge is identified, and a rival commentary is created, published, and also attributed to Muktānand Svāmī. The third is in the twenty-first century, when Sadhu
Bhadreshdas, a member of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha—a group that split off in 1907 based on doctrinal disputes—authored a brand new commentary.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I trace the hermeneutical and exegetical patterns that characterize these three separate commentarial moments. Chapter 3 first grounds this discussion in an intellectual history of classical Vedānta, addressing issues of the genre of commentary and textual reuse. It then examines the core of the Swaminarayan commentaries’ exegesis of *Brahma Sūtra* verse 1.1.1, known as the *jijñāśādhikāraṇa*. Chapter 4 continues the textual analysis through the remainder of the first four verses of the *Brahma Sūtra*, collectively known as the *catuḥśūtrī*. These are arguably the most important verses of the text, and their exegesis by classical commentators often provides a near-comprehensive outline of a particular system of Vedānta.

In both of these chapters, I demonstrate the fraught and competing linkages to earlier schools of Vedanta—particularly, Rāmānuja’s Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. The earliest commentary maintains a nominal connection to Rāmānuja while still putting forward the unique features of Sahajānand Svāmī’s system. The second commentary omits these features, and puts forward a thoroughly Viśiṣṭādvaita system. The third commentary elides all explicit connection to Rāmānuja, arguing that Sahajānand Svāmī’s system is an independent system of Vedānta completely. My analysis argues that these very technical Vedāntic debates are once again authorizing the Swaminarayan *sampradāy* through recourse to a Vedānta scholastic public. Once again, the focus is not on using Vedānta as a tool to articulate a nationalist position or to synthesize Sanskritic and western traditions. Rather, the focus is on *sampradāy*: the first commentary is an initial authorization of the innovative theological features of a nascent *sampradāy*, while the latter two are authorizations of one specific sect.
within the *sampradāy* over and against other sects. In all cases, commentary allows for the *sampradāy* to continue the dialogic project described in the first two chapters: to debate and challenge various “others” in a highly specific formation of a scholastic public.

The four chapters of this dissertation trace the Swaminarayan *sampradāy*’s scholastic concerns through disparate source material. I examine sacred biography, small tracts and pamphlets, magazines, and commentarial texts produced over the span of 200 years. The dissertation seeks to read a social history out of the incredibly technical debates encoded in these various texts. This is a history of the formation, consolidation, and division of a religious community in colonial and postcolonial modernity, and the centrality of Sanskrit textual practices within these differential processes. A final, concluding chapter will tie these concerns together, and reflect on the future of Sanskrit in an increasingly transnational religious community.
Chapter 1: Envisioning and Engaging a Scholastic Public

May that Sahajānanda, with divine form – who explained his Uddhava Sampradāya, which was spread wide by the best of gurus, using authoritative proofs against the various false accusations wilfully created against his sampradāya by those in the assembly who were overcome by jealousy and hatred, who were of evil intellect, and who did not know the true intention of the scriptures – conquer all.

- Śrī Hari Dīg Vijaya 44

1.1. Introduction

1.1.1. Śāstrārtha: Public Debate

In the early nineteenth century, as the Swaminarayan sampradāya consolidated its community, it was met by a variety of voices of critique and challenge. This chapter examines representations of these challenges in Sanskrit literature composed sometime between 1830 and 1850, during the formative years of the sampradāya. These representations help us understand how educated ascetic scholars within the tradition envisioned the scholastic public within which the sampradāya sought to authorize its theology, practices, and its very identity as a sampradāya.

The chapter is focused on a Sanskrit text called the Śrī Hari Dīg Vijaya (henceforth ŚHDV), a sacred biography of Sahajānand Svāmi composed by one of his foremost disciples, Nityānand Svāmī in the early nineteenth century. It examines the text’s description of śāstrārthas, or public scholastic debates, with various interlocutors. Through this text, Nityānand Svāmī catalogues the various ways in which the new sampradāya was challenged: for its steadfast prohibitions against the consumption of meat, liquor, and adultery; for its unique interpretations of Vedāntic texts; and for its identification of the historical personage

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of Sahajānand Svāmī as *parabrahman*, or God incarnate. The text provides a methodical presentation of the responses to these various challenges.

The *Vacanāmrṭ* also describes several interactions in which Sahajānand Svāmī Svāmī either debates or responds to queries from learned Brahmins of various community affiliations. Since this text consists of transcribed oral teachings alongside information about the date, time, location, and audience, it most closely approximates a historical record for the early years of the *sampradāyā*. Two of these interactions are noteworthy for their similarity.² In both cases, there is a Brahmin present in the assembly: one is an Advaita Vedāntin, and the other is identified as a Vaiṣṇava Brahmin from the “Mādhvī Sampradāyā.”³ In each case, Sahajānand Svāmī poses a question to the Brahmin, and then insists that they support their response through reference to either the Vedas (and by extension, the Upaniṣads) or a text authored by Vyāsa (i.e., the *Mahābhārata*, *Bhagavad Gītā*, or one of the *purāṇas*). When the interlocutor is unable to answer, Sahajānand Svāmī provides his own answer, and his opponent concedes defeat.

The public debates depicted in the ŚHDV mirror the exchanges described in the *Vacanāmrṭ*, particularly in being replete with scriptural citations. However, there are some important differences that render the ŚHDV worthy of further inquiry. Firstly, while the exchanges presented in the *Vacanāmrṭ* are brief, and without an extended polemical engagement, the śāstrārthas depicted in the ŚHDV are dramatic yet sustained treatments—features represented in the epigraph to this chapter. Secondly, while the *Vacanāmrṭ* is a collection of oral teachings in Gujarati recorded between 1819 and 1829, and circulated soon thereafter, the ŚHDV is a Sanskrit sacred biography. The choice to render these scholastic

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³ This is likely referring to a Dvaita Vedāntin, a proponent of the school of Vedānta founded by Madhva.
polemics in Sanskrit when the majority of the tradition’s literature and internal reading public were Gujarati is deliberate, and I suggest that it was intended for two strata of scholastic audience: internal and external. Not only is it aimed at demonstrating the erudition of the sampradāy, but also to provide a template for the Swaminarayan response to all variety of perceived and actual scholastic interlocutors. The text thus provides a unique insight into the tradition’s vision of a scholastic public and its scholastic Others, and a detailed response to the challenges raised by these Others.

In this chapter, I will first explain my methodological approach to the text and its contents through a discussion of its genre. I suggest that it is most fruitful to bracket concerns about the historicity of the debates by treating the text as a doxography. In doing so, we can glean important information about the concerns of the sampradāy. In the sections that follow, I analyze four scholastic debates presented in the ŚHDV: (1) in Junagadh, with heterodox groups; (2) in Banaras, with Advaitins; (3) in Jāmnagar, with a Puṣṭimārga Gosvāmī; and (4) in Baroda, with a large group of paṇḍits. In each of these debates, I first examine the historical significance of the location of the debate alongside a consideration of the opponent. I then analyze the substantive particularities of each debate. I argue that for the Swaminarayan sampradāy, it was important to demonstrate mastery over various groups for different reasons. Vaiṣṇavas are defended over and against Śaivas, Śāktas, and “atheists.” Vaiṣṇava-affiliated schools of Vedānta are defended over and against Advaita Vedānta. At the same time, there are also opponents within the broader Vaiṣṇava community, against whom the Swaminarayan sampradāy itself has to be defended. This Sanskrit text is an important documentation of the historical concerns of a developing sampradāy, and Nityānand Svāmī provides justification for the sampradāy against all these interlocutors—be
they imagined or actual—for the benefit of members of the sampradāy and those external to it.

1.1.2. Sacred Biography, Digvijaya, and Doxography

The ŚHDV sits at the crossroads of various literary genres: it is at once a sacred biography and a digvijaya (literally, “a conquest of the quarters”), but is best understood also as doxography. In the early years of the sampradāy, Sahajānand Svāmī’s disciples composed numerous sacred biographies in Sanskrit, Gujarati, and Brajbhāṣā. One of the most well-known is the Satsaṅgīvāna, a text modeled after the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, with more than 16,000 verses divided over 18 chapters. Its composition was certainly initiated during the lifetime of Sahajānand Svāmī, and its author is said to have had presented it to him for review sometime after 1828.4 Though Sahajānand Svāmī was very pleased with the narration of his life presented in the Satsaṅgīvāna, it is said that he wanted a text more explicitly focused on the śāstrārthas, or public debates, and discussions he had had with various paṇḍits and opponents.5 He specifically charged Nityānand Svāmī with this task, who wove various śāstrārthas and disputations into 49 chapters and 3,609 verses of the ŚHDV. Though the text explicitly indicates that it was completed before Sahajānand Svāmī’s death in 1830, other sources indicate that it may not have been completed until 1850.6

Though it is classified in the tradition as a sacred biography (līlā-caritra granth), it builds on the model of digvijaya, or “conquest of the quarters,” which has a long trajectory in

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4 For more on the authorship and dating of the text, particularly as gleaned from the Satsaṅgīvāna itself, see Jaydev A. Jani and Peter Schreiner, “Authorship and Authority in the Sanskrit Literary Tradition of the Swaminarayana Movement: Śikṣāpatrī and Satsaṅgīvānam,” Asiatische Studien–Études Asiaticques 70, no. 2 (2016), 467-487.
5 Śāstrī Krṣṇasvarūpādās, “Prastāvanā,” ŚHDV, p. 5.
6 Ācārya Vihārīlājī Mahārāj, Ācāryoday, 1889, Gandhinagar AARSH Archives MS 1316, v. 18.49, fol. 55.
Sanskrit literature. The concept of the “conquest of the quarters” was initially connected to the ritual authorization of the divine kingship of a cakravartin—or a “wheel turning” universal emperor. Starting in the fourteenth century, this trope was adopted by authors writing about founders of important schools of Vedānta. In lieu of military conquest of opponents, these presented philosophical and theological conquest of adversaries. One of the most well-known is the Śaṅkaradigvijaya, centered on the key proponent of Advaita Vedānta, Śaṅkara. This text dates to between 1650-1800, but it draws upon earlier hagiographies—many of them called vijayas—composed starting around the fourteenth century, around the time of the consolidation of the four pīthas or monastic institutions of Advaita Vedānta. Sheridan has convincingly argued that these digvijaya texts about Śaṅkara were in fact a response to the Sumadhvavijaya, a text written about the founder of Dvaita Vedānta, Madhva (1238-1317), within a decade of his death. The Sumadhvavijaya (lit., “the victory of the great Madhva”) presents an account of Madhva’s travails across the length and breadth of India, in which Śaṅkara and his school of Advaita Vedānta are regularly demonized. The Śaṅkaradigvijaya can be seen a direct rejoinder to this, following the model of the Sumadhvavijaya, but reversing the problematic. A third noteworthy text is the Vallabhadigvijaya, written about the founder of the school of Śuddhādvaita Vedānta, Vallabha (1479-1531). Though traditionally dated to 1601, it was likely authored much

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7 For a detailed study of this trope in imperial Sanskrit literature, see Ronald B. Inden, Imagining India. (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000 [1990]), Chapter 6.
later.¹² It presents the entire life story of Vallabha, focusing on the three pilgrimages he is said to have taken throughout India.

There is a third genre pertinent for our current discussion: doxography. In his survey of South Asian doxography and its secondary scholarship, Nicholson draws upon Qvarnstrom’s threefold typology of doxography: the first two involve a back and forth between an opponent (pūrva-pakṣa) and a protagonist (uttara-pakṣa), while the third is a relatively straightforward presentation of views.¹³ Nicholson argues that only the third category is a true doxography. He suggests that even though all South Asian doxographies are written by people with vested philosophical interests, the doxographer in a strict sense is committed to a relative neutrality in the systematic presentation of opposing views, while the polemicist is engaged in criticism.¹⁴ For Nicholson, polemical texts include the refutations of opposing positions in the second chapter of Brahma Sūtra commentaries (samanvaya) and treatises such as Śrīharṣa’s Khaṇḍanakhaṇḍakakkhādyā and Vedānta Deśika’s Śatadūṣanī, while doxography is limited to texts like Mādhava’s¹⁵ Sarvadarśanasāṅgraḥa. Doxography, for Nicholson, is interesting more because of the classificatory schema employed by the author rather than a determination of the validity and cogency of the argumentation.

However, Nicholson’s exclusion of polemical texts from the realm of doxography is too limiting. Recently, Michael Allen has shown that allegorical plays such as Kṛṣṇamiśra’s

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¹⁴ Ibid.

Prabodhacandrodaya and Vedānta Deśika’s Samkalpasuryodaya also employ classificatory schema that are revelatory of the socio-political contexts of the text’s authorship. I would extend this consideration to digvijaya texts, especially the ŠHDV, because of their classificatory schema and especially because of the robust polemical argumentation contained therein. In doing so, I am not primarily concerned with the empirical veracity of these debates as historical events. While some of the accounts of scholastic debates presented in the ŠHDV are corroborated in other Sanskrit and Gujarati sacred biographies in the Swaminarayan tradition, others are either presented differently in these other sources or absent altogether. Rather, the ŠHDV, as a text written by one of the most learned sādhus in the sampradāy, provides important insight into how the tradition viewed its scholastic “others” in a broader scholastic public, and how it sought to respond to these groups.

Further, in his discussion of the differences between an Advaita allegorical play and the Viṣiṣṭādvaita response to it, Allen observes that the classificatory schema employed in the doxographical sections is due in large part to the audience of the text. The Advaita play, the Prabodhacandrodaya, was written for a courtly audience, serving as a royal justification for Vedānta as a whole; the Viṣiṣṭādvaita play, on the other hand, written two to three hundred years after the first text, was written “for an audience of co-religionists.” As a consequence, Allen notes:

[The Advaita text] is concerned with the wider Brahminical community in the Candella kingdom, or at least with allying Vedānta with this community for strategic reasons, and this makes sense given the royal audience of the play. [The Viṣiṣṭādvaita

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17 For example, Dave states that the debate with the heterodox groups takes place in Jāmnagar rather than Junagadh. Further, the Banaras debate does not appear in any other of the earliest strata of sacred biography. These will be considered in turn in the following sections.
As such, we must consider the implications of the audience Nityānand Svāmī had in mind when composing the ŚHDV.

Written in Sanskrit, the ŚHDV was certainly aimed at an external audience. However, it was also aimed at an internal scholastic audience. In a sermon delivered in 1824, Sahajānand Svāmī explained that a sampradāya flourishes through texts narrating the life-events of the īṣṭadev, or chosen deity, of the sampradāya, in both Sanskrit and vernacular languages. These sacred biographies are what inspire the members of a sampradāya: for example, followers of Rāma will be fostered by the Rāmāyaṇa, while followers of Kṛṣṇa will be fostered by the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, but “the Vedas will not inspire those who worship” Rāma or Kṛṣṇa. As such, the ŚHDV would have provided members of the sampradāy with the confidence that the nascent religious community had defenses against the criticisms of others. Further, it is no surprise that the primary means of conquest (vijaya) in the text is the public debate—śāstrārtha. Even with the case of the Puṣṭimārga, it is Vallabha’s victory at the śāstrārtha at the court of Kṛṣṇadevarāya in Vijayanagara that is seen as a watershed moment for members of that community. As Barz remarks, “by this victory…[Vallabha] acquired the fame and scholarly recognition that assured him a place among the greatest scholars and religious thinkers of India.” Through the four debates discussed below, Nityānand Svāmī is demonstrating to his community how Sahajānand Svāmī’s new Swaminarayan sampradāy deserved similar recognition. These four debates provide one

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19 Ibid., 287.
20 Vacaṇāmṛt Gaḍhaḍā II.48, pp. 465-469.
21 Ibid.
picture of how the *sampradāya* saw itself in comparison to its “others,” whether actual or imagined. In my analysis of each of the four debates, I provide a close textual analysis of the contents of the debate, highlighting the historical and scholastic concerns they raise.

1.2. **Debating the “Other”**

1.2.1 *Meat, Liquor, and Sex in Junagadh*

The first debate under consideration takes place in the town of Junagadh, in Kathiawar. After describing the importance of the opponents and the setting of this debate, I will analyze the method through which Sahajānand Svāmī refutes their claim that scriptural texts enjoin the consumption of meat and liquor, and promote licentious sexual relations. I will then assess the curious choice of the inclusion of opponents whose communities would not have been extant in nineteenth-century Junagadh. Throughout the discussion, Nityānand Svāmī’s erudition is on full display for the readers of the *ŚHDV*, be they internal to the *sampradāya* or external.

In this debate, Sahajānand Svāmī is taking on several heterodox systems: Śaiva and Śākta tāntrikas, along with three sets of nāstikas, or atheists: Cārvākas (materialists), Jains, and Buddhists. These are all non-Vaiṣṇava adversaries, who also challenge the ultimate authority of the Vedas. That Nityānand Svāmi chooses these groups is unsurprising, as they are frequently criticized by Sahajānand Svāmī in the *Vacanāmṛt*. In a discourse delivered in the village of Gaḍhaḍā in 1820, Sahajānand Svāmī delineates four types of people whose company is to be avoided (*kusaṅgi*) by all his followers: (1) Kuṇḍā-panthīs,\(^{23}\) whose

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\(^{23}\) Descriptions of Kuṇḍā-panthīs are not widespread. The *Rajputana Gazetteer* indicates that these were people “who eat in common out of a vessel called a kunda, by way of symbolizing their indifference to caste rules.” See J. Digges La Touche, *Rajputana Gazetteer*, vol. 2 (Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1879), 203.
company would lead one to falter from religious vows; (2) Śakti-panthīs, who encourage the consumption of meat and liquor; (3) śuṣka-vedāntīs, or Advaita Vedāntins, who are detrimental to devotional practices; and (4) nāstikas, or Jains, who unduly emphasize karma over God. With the exception of the Vedāntins, who are dealt with in more detail in other sections, all of these other groups are summarily treated by Nityānand Svāmī in this debate. As I will demonstrate, though, the more important opponents to defeat in scholastic disputation are the left-handed Śāktas. Though Vaiṣṇava religious groups had been ascendant for several centuries in Gujarat, Śākta groups still received significant royal patronage at the turn of the nineteenth century, rendering their defeat in śāstrārtha particularly necessary.

Also noteworthy is that the town of Junagadh provides a storied backdrop for this debate. The town’s name, literally meaning “old fort,” derives from a fortress and citadel built during the Maurya period, which also contains significant Buddhist caves. The town borders the sacred Girnār, or Raivata mountain, which is the site of the inscription of Ashoka’s edicts. By the medieval period, the town and its surrounding areas were ruled by a Rajput Chudasama tribe, who eventually paid tribute to the expanding Gujarat Sultanate under Mahmud Begada. This was the backdrop for the famous Gujarati bhakti poet Narasinha Mehta, who spent most of his life in Junagadh in the fifteenth century. In

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24 Vacanāṃṛt Gaḍhadā I.48, p. 91.
25 This grouping of nāstiks and Advaita Vedāntins is repeated in Vacanāṃṛt Gaḍhadā II.18, p. 398, where Sahajānand Svāmī refers to both of these groups as the worst of kusaṅg, i.e., evil company.
28 Smith et al. have argued that the Girnar inscription is an outlier, as most other inscriptions are found in areas that had higher population densities. Since this inscription is accompanied by other inscriptions from 150 CE and 450 CE, they suggest that the original inscription may have been engraved by another ruler, or to set the stage for the 150 CE inscription. See Monica L. Smith et al., “Finding History: The Locational Geography of Ashokan Inscriptions in the Indian Subcontinent,” Antiquity 90, no. 350 (2016): 383-387.
describing the religious context of Narasinha’s life, Neelima Shukla-Bhatt notes that there were large groups worshipping Śiva, the goddess, and Viṣṇu: Junagadh had become an important center for the anti-Brahminical Śaiva Nātha yogis; Girnar had a temple to the Goddess Ambika on its peaks; and the town was also very close to Dwarka, a site deeply associated with Kṛṣṇa worship. Girnar continued to be an important sacred space for Jains, particularly because of its Neminath temples. According to the 1901 census, 50-70 years after the composition of the ŚHDV, the town of Junagadh had 17,248 Hindus, 15,911 Muslims, and 1,029 Jains, while the figures for the larger state of Junagadh were 301,773 Hindus, 85,684 Muslims, and 7,842 Jains. Politically, after being a tributary of the Gujarat Sultanate, and then the Mughals, a man named Sher Khān Bābi set up independent rule in Junagadh, taking on the title of nawab for himself and his family. Though the nawabs saw their fair share of skirmishes with neighboring clans in the ensuing decades, by the time of the debate depicted by Nityānand Svāmī, Nawab Bahādur Khān still maintained a largely independent rule, albeit paying tributes to both the British and the Gaekwads of Baroda.

These religious and political considerations made Junagadh an optimum location for Nityānand Svāmī to take on heterodox opponents in the entirety of the 25th ullāsa (chapter).

The depiction of this debate as presented by Nityānand Svāmī is as follows: when Sahajānand Svāmī arrives in Junagadh, he is greeted by his followers, including Jhīnābhāī, a prominent darbār or chieftain of a nearby town called Pancāḷā. The text refers to him as Hemantsinh, and describes how Sahajānand Svāmī takes up residence in Hemantsinh’s

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31 Ibid.
32 Imperial Gazetteer of India, vol. 14, 237-238.
33 Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Kathiawar, 474.
34 Ibid., 486.
compound in Junagadh.35 The text also indicates that Sahajānand Svāmī has many audiences with the King of Junagadh, Bahādur Khān.36 He conducts a pilgrimage of sacred sites, especially to Mount Gīrnar. There is a large public gathering, at which Sahajānand Svāmī talks to all those assembled about the importance of conducting pilgrimage at sacred sites. It is at this point that he is challenged by his adversaries, in two volleys.

The first set of challenges comes from those who worship Śīva and the goddess, but through heterodox “left-handed” practices. Several early scholars of the Swaminarayan tradition have argued that these groups represented the largest opposition to the nascent Swaminarayan tradition, particularly since they were supported by Rajput princes. According to Pocock, these princes saw Sahajānand Svāmī “as a heretic because he formally denounced in set terms the shaktipuja surrounding the worship of Shiva, a cult which the Rajputs themselves, as Shivaites, endorsed.”37 Mallison goes further to suggest that because of Sahajānand Svāmī’s emphasis on nonviolent sacrifices, he invoked the ire of the Brahmins under the employ of Rajput princes, who in turn persecuted Sahajānand Svāmī’sśādhus and devotees.38 Williams agrees with Mallison’s assessment that the adversarial relationship with the Śāktas was even more pronounced than with the followers of Vallabha’s Puṣṭimārga.39 Because of this hostile relationship rooted in key doctrinal differences, these vāma-mārgis, or “left-handed” practitioners, have a prominent voice in this debate.

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35 hemantasimhābhidhabhaktavarghe, SHDV 25.6, p. 265. This compound was gifted to Sahajānand Svāmī, and subsequently becomes the site of one of six temples built by Sahajānand Svāmī in his lifetime.

36 Though this king remains nameless in the Sanskrit, the Gujarati translation published in 1934 renders Bahādur Khān as Bahādūrsinh; SHDV, 265.


The animus felt towards these groups is on ample display in the twelve verses Nityānand Svāmī uses to describe the Śaiva and Śākta challengers. These interlocutors still have flesh in their teeth from eating meat, and so their faces are smelly.⁴⁰ Their bodies are spotted by *kumkum* from embracing women, possibly their own mothers and sisters.⁴¹ Further, they had pledged to slaughter black goats and rutting oxen for their various *devatās* in exchange for victory in debate against Sahajānand Svāmī.⁴²

These *vāma-mārgīs* challenge Sahajānand Svāmī on the grounds that he is making ordinarily happy people extremely unhappy by denying them the ostensibly scripturally enjoined joys of women, meat, and liquor. Sahajānand Svāmī answers their challenges by showing them that their understandings of these scriptural references are incorrect. He tells them that the Vedas are the only epistemically valid source of knowledge (*pramāna*), since they are authorless (*apauruṣeya*); further, all of the *smṛtis* are made by sages in accordance with the Vedas. The left-handed positions, however, are grounded in texts external to the Vedas (*veda-bāhya-matāḥ*). After this general introduction, he responds to their individual criticisms. We will examine the arguments and their responses sequentially.

With respect to women, the *vāma-mārgīs* argue that the scriptures are replete with examples of even the gods enjoying women, including Viṣṇu, Śiva, Brahmā, and Indra.⁴³ They mock the rules of eightfold celibacy for Swaminarayan sādhus: “your sādhus, upon seeing women from far away, flee as if they’ve seen a tiger, and do not speak to them at all.”⁴⁴ This is a problem, they claim, because sādhus are supposed to see all souls equally,

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⁴⁰ *dantalagnamahāṃsāṃsaleśā durgandhitānanāḥ*; *ŚHDV* 25.20, p. 266.
⁴¹ *mātrsvasrādisango ‘pi nīrbhayā nirapatrapāḥ*; *ŚHDV* 25.23, p. 266.
⁴² *ŚHDV* 25.30, p. 267.
⁴³ *ŚHDV* 25.37-42, pp. 268-269.
⁴⁴ *tvādīyāḥ sādhavo ye te dṛṣṭvā nārīr vidūrataḥ/ vyāghrīr iva pradravanti na bhāṣante ca tāḥ kvacit, ŚHDV* 25.44, p. 269.
regardless of sex. They subsequently raise several logical issues: why do these sādhus spend time in their mothers’ womb, breastfeed, sleep in the same bed as their mothers as children, etc.? Further, when women take so much care to raise these children, why do sādhus abandon them? On an ontological level, when there is no distinction between men and women in the abode of God, why are these being introduced in the world?

Hearing these criticisms, Sahajānand Svāmī responds methodically. First, he states that the scriptures are replete with prohibitions of extramarital sex for householders, and provides specific references. He says, “there is a statement in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, beginning with the words ‘yas tv iha’ and ending in the word ‘karṣanti,’ which censure [sex] with another’s wife.”45 This is referring to Bhāgavata Purāṇa verses 5.26.20-21, which describe the various punishments for men and women who have indiscriminate sexual intercourse. He then cites verses from the Mahābhārata46 and the Skanda Purāṇa47 that describe similar punishments.48 After providing these scriptural citations from the smṛtis, he argues that the vāma-mārgīs have misunderstood the examples of the gods’ relationships with women. The first two examples given by the vāma-mārgīs, Viṣṇu and Śiva, did not associate with Lakṣmī and Pārvatī out of lust or desire (na kāmāt), but rather out of being overcome by their consorts’ devotion (lakṣmyā gauryā bhakti-vaśāt).49 As for the other gods: Brahmā’s infatuation was not his own fault, but rather because he was struck by Kāma’s arrow, and he subsequently atoned for this; and Indra’s dalliances are reviled in the Purāṇas.

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45 tatra śrīmadbāgavate pāradāryavinindakam/ yas tv ihetyādikarṣantītyantam gadyātmakaṁ vacaḥ; ŚHDV 25.82, p. 274.  
47 The Gujarati translator of the ŚHDV indicates that ŚHDV 25.86 is from the Skanda Purāṇa, but the verse cannot be located.  
49 ŚHDV 25.93, pp. 275-276.
(purāṇeṣu teṣaṁ tat-karma ninditam), and nowhere are they praised (na tu tat-karma-ślāghā kutrāpi).\textsuperscript{50}

Having addressed the relationship between men and women, as well as gods and women, Nityānand Svāmī’s depiction of the debate sees Sahajānand Svāmī turning to the issue of sādhus and women. He starts off this response once again by stating that there are thousands of scriptural prohibitions of contact between sādhus and women (atra vākyāni bhavanty eva sahasraśaṁ).\textsuperscript{51} He first cites, without an explicit reference to it, Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11.17.33, indicating that renouncers should not look at, touch, speak to, or make fun of women. This list of prohibitions is then expounded by citing an unattributed definition of celibacy (brahmacarya) as eightfold avoidance of contact with women.\textsuperscript{52} He wraps up the scriptural citations with a few more verses from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11.8, again without explicit reference to them. These state that a mendicant should not even touch a doll in the shape of a woman, and that a foolish person is attracted to an ornamented woman the way a moth is to a flame.\textsuperscript{53} As for the practical considerations of sādhus interacting with women when they were children, the response is that children’s actions are as blame-free as those of animals.\textsuperscript{54} Finally, the ontological non-distinction between men and women in the scriptures is meant to be understood on the level of the individual self. On a societal level, Sahajānand

\textsuperscript{50} ŚHDV 25.94-96, p. 276
\textsuperscript{51} ŚHDV 25.99, p. 276.
\textsuperscript{53} ŚHDV 25.104 is BP 11.8.13, and ŚHDV 25.105 is BP 11.8.8 – see Śrīmadbhāgavatamahāpurāṇam – Mālamātram (Gorakhpur: Gita Press, 2001), 684.
\textsuperscript{54} ŚHDV 25.113, p. 278.
Svāmī states that while sādhus should respect men and women equally, they should still avoid eightfold contact with women.  

The next set of vāma-mārgī criticisms is related to food and drink. They maintain that food and drink are the best instruments (sādhana) for attaining liberation. They cite an aphorism describing food as brahman and taste (rasa) as Viṣṇu, suggesting that “there is no reflection on what [food] is to be eaten and what is not to be eaten in the minds of the virtuous.” Food, because it is brahman, cannot defile a person. Further, since the body, which is difficult to attain, is the primary instrument of practicing one’s dharma, it should always be well-nourished. This is primarily intended to call into question the emphasis on strict vegetarianism in the Swaminarayan sampradāy. They further contend that the easiest way to attain the knowledge of brahman (brahma-jñāna) is through the consumption of alcohol, and as there is no liberation without this knowledge of brahman, it surely must be enjoined. In his way, the vāma-mārgīs argue that any restriction on the consumption of food or drink is detrimental to one’s spiritual progress.

Nityānand Svāmī uses eleven verses to describe Sahajānand Svāmī’s refutation of these criticisms, using a similar pattern of engagement as with the first set of arguments. First, he indicates that the smṛtis are filled with prescriptions and injunctions regarding diet,
and that commentaries on these texts such as the *Mitākṣarā* even contain instructions for atonement when such foods are consumed. He then refutes the vāma-mārgī interpretation of “annam brahma,” arguing that these sayings are meant for the purification of foods (annasuddhi-vidhāyaka), rather than advocating the consumption of all types of foods. Contrary to the vāma-mārgī position that all food should be eaten for nourishing the body, Sahajānand Svāmī says, “the eating of meat for the sake of the body’s nourishment greatly leads to one’s downfall. The nourishing of one’s life through the life of another leads to hell.” He further cites verbatim verse 5.55 from the *Manu Smṛti*, which provide a certain etymology of the word māmsa, or meat: māmsa bhakṣayitā ‘mūtra yasya māṃsam ihādmy aham/ etan māṃsasasyā māṃsatvam pravadanti maniṣaṇah// - “The wise declare the ‘meatness’ of meat as follows: ‘the one whose flesh I eat here, in another life he will eat me.’” He similarly states that the ārūḍhā Āryaḥ svapraṇāt parapraṇāh poṣaṇāḥ nīrapradāh – ŚHDV 25.121, p. 279.

In this way, Sahajānand Svāmī is described as using scriptural references to counter the claim that meat and liquor are useful instruments for religious practice and for liberation. Having

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60 The Yājñavalkya *Smṛti* and its *Mitākṣarā* commentary are singled out by Sahajānand Svāmī as key texts for understanding dharma in the Śikṣāpatrī – see Śikṣāpatrī v.97.

61 ŚHDV 25.117, pp. 278-279.

62 ŚHDV 25.118, p. 279.

63 māṃsāsanam dehapuṣṭāyai mahad eva hi pātakam/ svapraṇāsya parapraṇāh poṣaṇaḥ nīrapradāh – ŚHDV 25.121, p. 279.

64 ŚHDV 25.122; Ganganath Jha, *Manu-Smṛti with the Manubhāṣya of Medhātithi*, vol 1 (Delhi: Parimal Publications, 1992), 444; emphasis added.

65 brahmadiṣṭāḥ surūpāṇād iti yat procyate vacah/ upahāśāspadam tadhi kevalam mūrkhavacanam// madya-pānena vaicitīyān nīlapūṭādīvibhramam/ dehavismaraṇam yūyaṁ vettha vai brahmadarśanam// ŚHDV 25.125-126, pp. 279-280.
heard these arguments, all of the vāma-mārgīśas are described as being stunned into silence, and afflicted by inner pain.\textsuperscript{66}

Once this takes place, he is attacked by the next group: those who are considered atheists, including the Cārvākas, the Buddhists, and Jains. According to Kapstein, “one of the standard gestures in doxographic treatments of Indian philosophy is to speak of [these] ‘three heterodox systems.’”\textsuperscript{67} The inclusion of these groups is slightly peculiar in that of the three, only the Jains had a significant presence in Junagadh at the time. As mentioned earlier, Girnar was an important place of pilgrimages for Jains, and there was a considerable population of Jains in the town of Junagadh. Gujarat, and particularly the region of Kathiawar, was an important locus for Buddhism historically, as attested to by various sthupas, including at Junagadh; however, in post-Maitraka Gujarat, after a period of pronounced literary activity in the 8\textsuperscript{th} century, there is very little evidence of Buddhist activity.\textsuperscript{68} The Cārvakas, alternatively called hedonists, skeptics, and materialists, perhaps made up an influential philosophical tradition between the sixth and ninth centuries, but only fragments of texts beyond this time remain from throughout the Indian subcontinent, let alone Gujarat specifically.\textsuperscript{69}

The inclusion of Cārvākas and Buddhists is not just puzzling for the ŚHDV, but for all the plays and doxographies that include these systems after they had diminished. In commenting on late medieval doxographies, Nicholson suggests that even though Cārvāka and Buddhists communities were not extant, and Jain communities lacked real political power, these groups could have “functioned as placeholders for Islam,” which had emerged

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\item \textsuperscript{66} ŚHDV 25.131-132, p. 280.
\item \textsuperscript{67} Kapstein, “Interpreting Indian Philosophy,” 5.
\item \textsuperscript{68} M.S. Moray, History of Buddhism in Gujarat (Ahmedabad: Saraswati Pustak Bhandar, 1985), ii-iii.
\item \textsuperscript{69} Kapstein, “Interpreting Indian Philosophy,” 4 and fn 9.
\end{itemize}
as a powerful “other” in Sultanate and Mughal north India.\textsuperscript{70} This is not as persuasive for the case of Gujarat, where though small in number, Jains were powerful merchants alongside Vaiṣṇavas.\textsuperscript{71} While it is noteworthy that there is no engagement with a Muslim voice in this debate even though Muslims far outnumber Jains in Junagadh, this could perhaps be explained by the fact that the Muslim Nawab is described as being in attendance for the debate.

A more likely explanation is proffered by Kapstein, reflecting on the depictions of Cārvākas in the \textit{Sarvadarśanasāṅgraha}. He demonstrates that though these are “literary constructions,” they are kept “alive” because they nonetheless represent important viewpoints with which to engage.\textsuperscript{72} In addition to these substantive suggestions, there is also the fact that these doxographies—whether in the form of an explicit doxography, allegorical play, or sacred biography—are drawing upon the registers of classical doxography. Even Nicholson argues that in the medieval period, these “pūrvakṣins had been etched into the collective śāstric memory.”\textsuperscript{73} Kapstein, describing the efficacy of the mere idea of the Cārvākas, indicates that the \textit{Sarvadarśanasāṅgraha}’s representation of the Cārvākas is based almost entirely on the satirical characterization of this group found in the eleventh century Advaita allegorical play, the \textit{Prabodhacandrodaya}, discussed earlier.\textsuperscript{74} This, in turn, sees its antecedents in a ninth century play by Jayanta Bhaṭṭa called the \textit{Āgamaḍambara}.\textsuperscript{75} The

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\item \textsuperscript{70} Nicholson, \textit{Unifying Hinduism}, 190-191.
\item \textsuperscript{71} Samira Sheikh demonstrates that many Jains converted to Vallabhite Vaiṣṇavism in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but there was a shared Jain-Vaiṣṇava mercantile ethos, and remaining Jains were nonetheless influential in cities across Gujarat. See Samira Sheikh, “Jibhabhu’s Rights to Ghee: Land Control and vernacular capitalism in Gujarat, circa 1803-10,” \textit{Modern Asian Studies} 51, no. 2 (2017), 350-374.
\item \textsuperscript{72} Kapstein, “Interpreting Indian Philosophy,” 13.
\item \textsuperscript{73} Nicholson, \textit{Unifying Hinduism}, 191.
\item \textsuperscript{74} Kapstein, “Interpreting Indian Philosophy,” 6.
\end{itemize}
Āgamaḍambara consists of four acts, three of which serially provide stereotypical caricatures of Cārvākas, Buddhists, and Jains. The Prabhodacandrodaya takes these three groups, and adds a fourth—the tāntric Śaiva kapālikas—and unites them under the banner of the villain, Mahāmoha, or Grand Delusion.

Nityānand Svāmī’s portrayal of the heterodox opponents at the debate in Junagadh mirrors closely this grouping of the Prabodhacandrodaya (henceforth PC), except that tāntric Śākta groups are also included with the Śaivas. Even more noteworthy, though, is that Nityānand Svāmī’s depictions of the Cārvākas, Buddhists, and Jains are very closely modeled on the PC. In each case, there is a brief discussion of philosophy, followed by an exhortation to enjoy carnal pleasures. Nityānand Svāmī describes the Cārvāka as stating that nowhere is a dead person seen or heard to reappear after death; hence, death itself is liberation. Therefore, and particularly because there is no need for discriminating between actions that should and should not be taken, one should have no qualms about enjoying women however one desires. The Cārvāka position in the PC is a little more fleshed out, and ultimately, it exhorts all sorts of enjoyments, not just with respect to women; however, the general thrust is similar.

The descriptions of the Buddhists and Jains in the two texts is so similar as to warrant closer comparison. Nityānand Svāmī describes the Jains as pāpā digambarāḥ—wicked members of the naked sky-clad sect of Jainism. The Jain character in the PC is also a digambara. Further, Nityānand Svāmī states, “they were bereft of the purity of bathing...bald, with the appearance of a ghost, clinging to the system of the arhats.” This is

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77 ŚHDV 25.140, p. 281.
78 snānaśaucavihinās te...mundāḥ piśācasandarśā arhanmatam upāśritāḥ; ŚHDV 25.141, p. 281.
comparable to the PC, which describes the digambara as “slimy and oozing with filth…he’s got no hair and he’s not wearing any clothing at all…I think, friend, he’s what’s called a ‘ghost.’”⁷⁹ In the more serious discussion, drawing upon the Jain conception of a material mass that clings to the soul [pudgala-piṇḍa], the digambara characters in both the ŚHDV and the PC use more or less the same terminology to claim that this defiled material mass cannot be cleaned by bathing, but that the soul itself is forever spotless.⁸⁰ Shifting gears, the digambara character in both texts suggests that the faithful Jain householder should serve an ascetic by offering sweets, and should willingly offer one’s wife to an ascetic who desires her.⁸¹ Next, the Buddhist character appears for a few verses in the ŚHDV, again, mirroring closely the description in the PC. Again, they proclaim the same system, using nearly identical terminology. The Buddhist in the ŚHDV says:

All of these entities are momentary and without a self (ātman), the one stream of consciousness shines forth, characterized by momentary knowledge.

sarve hi kṣaṇīkā bhāvā nirātmānaś ca sānty amī/
dhīsantatiḥ sphuraty ekā kṣaṇikajñānalakṣāṇā//⁸²

This is a condensation of the speech by the Buddhist in the PC, who says:

Visibly evaporating in an instant, and devoid of substantial self, entities appear as external where they are so projected. The stream of consciousness is vibrant, free from objects and attachments, when as now one lets go of all latent dispositions.

sākṣāt kṣaṇākṣayina eva nirātmakāś ca yatārūpitā bahir iva pratibhānti bhāvāḥ/ saivādhunā vigalitākhilavāsanatvād dhīsantatiḥ sphurati nirviṣayoparāgā.⁸³

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⁸⁰ malināḥ pudgalaḥ piṇḍo na tac chuddhir jalādibhiḥḥ…ātmā tu dāpavat tatra nirmalo vartate sadā, ŚHDV 25.142-143, p. 281; compare this to the Sanskrit rendering of the Prakrit in the PC: malamayapudgalapiṇḍe sakalajalair api kīḍrī śuddhiḥ? ātmā vimalasvabhāva; PC 3.27–see Kapstein, The Rise of Wisdom Moon, 285.
⁸¹ yathākālam sa mīśānaḥ posyah panaśca sadrasaḥ. ichchābango na kartavyaḥ svadāreccchumahātmānam; ŚHDV 25.143-144, p. 281; compare this to the Sanskrit rendering of the Prakrit in the PC: dūre caranapranāmāh kṛtasatkāraḥ ca bhajanam mṛṣṭam/ ṛṣyāmalaṃ na kāryam ṛṣṭaṃ dārāṃ ramamāṇāṃ.
⁸² ŚHDV 25.146, p. 282, emphasis added.
And in keeping with the characterizations thus far, the Buddhists in both texts follow up this philosophical statement by claiming that a householder’s wife should be offered without jealousy to monks. In this way, there is a slight treatment of doctrine, but an overarching emphasis on wanton pleasure in all three groups.

In Nityānand Svāmī’s rendering, Sahajānand Svāmī responds to all three groups in the same way: rather than engaging with the merits of their individual arguments, he tells all three groups that they have been deliberately led astray, referencing stories from various smṛti texts about the genesis of their respective path. He tells the Cārvākas that there is a story in the Harivamsa—an ancillary component of the Mahābhārata—about the creation of their doctrinal text. Chapter 21 of the Harivamsa tells the story of the powerful King Raji, whose 500 sons had usurped the abode of Indra. When Indra approaches the learned Brhaspati for help, the latter creates a text whose heretical tenets lead to the downfall of the Raji clan. Traditional accounts of the Cārvāka system indicate that there was a root text called the Brhaspatisūtra, which, though no longer extant, has been cited or reconstructed over the centuries. Next, turning to the Jains, Sahajānand Svāmī refers to the story of the founding of the Jain religion as described in Bhāgavata Purāṇa 5.6. This refers to a certain king of the Koṇka, Veṇka, and Kuṭa regions named Arhat, who decided to imitate the avatāra of Viṣṇu named Rṣabha. His followers believed him to be a god, and left behind the

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84 ŚHDV 25.148, p. 282; The Rise of Wisdom Moon, 111.
86 Saindon indicates that that variations of the tale of Raji also appear in the Bhāgavata, Brahma, Viṣṇu, Agni, Matsya, Padma, and Vāyu Purāṇas. However, the description of of a specific text being created is found in most, but not all, editions of the Harivamsa, and most of the other Purānic references simply indicate that Brhaspati performed rites leading to the downfall of the clan—see Marcelle Saindon, “Le Buddha Comme ‘Avatāra’ de Viṣṇu et le Mythe de Raji,” Indo Iranian Journal 47, no. 1 (2004), 36-40.
87 Kapstein, “Interpreting Indian Philosophy,” 5.
88 ŚHDV 25.168-171, p. 248; BP 5.69-12, p. 266.
Vedic path. And finally, there is the well-known story of the Buddha as an *avatāra* of Viṣṇu meant for the delusion (*vyāmoha*) of evil people. In making his case, Sahajānand Svāmī cites verbatim two verses of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* discussing the Buddha as such. Relating these stories, Sahajānand Svāmī rests his case. It’s possible that there is no refutation of the individual arguments because their conclusions—that humans should enjoy all material pleasures—were already refuted earlier on in the debate.

The running theme of this debate, and many other discussions of heterodox systems, is the definition of a *nāstika*—a non-believer. Doxographies have provided many alternate characteristics of a non-believer: those who do not believe in a higher place (*paraloka*), those who do not believe in a soul, or those who reject the authority of the Vedas. For Sahajānand Svāmī, the *vāma-mārgīs*, Cārvākas, Buddhists, and Jains are all *nāstikas*. His final argumentation is as follows:

all of you *nāstikas* are uselessly blabbering, and you shamelessly make arguments contrary to the *śrutis* and *smṛtis*. If you really desire to argue, all of you may come together and defeat me with recourse to the *śrutis* or *smṛtis*. If not, go away from here!

Ultimately, a *nāstika* is someone who does not affirm the *śruti* and *smṛti*. The debate at Junagadh is replete with references from the Purāṇas that demonstrate the falsity of the heterodox positions. It is important to note, however, that while the Cārvākas, Jains, and Buddhists are dispensed with altogether in 50 verses, the *vāma-mārgī* debate is over twice

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90 *ŚHDV* 25.179, p. 285 is *BP* 2.7.37, p. 103; *ŚHDV* 25.180, p. 285 is *BP* 1.3.24, p. 52.
this long, receiving a far more robust interrogation. For Nityānand Svāmī, the biggest heterodox challenge that needed addressing was from the Śāktas.

1.2.2. Defeating the “Māyāvāda” in Kāśī

The next debate under consideration is chronologically the first debate to take place, in the city of Kāśī (Banaras, Vārāṇasi). Spanning three chapters, Ullāsas 8-10, this debate is lengthier than all the others. It takes place long before Sahajānand Svāmī arrived in Gujarat and became the īṣṭadeva of a sampradāya. Rather, it occurs when he was a young Brahmin boy of ten named Ghanśyām in the late eighteenth century, who had recently finished his study of śāstras, including the Vedas, Upaniṣads, Bhagavad Gītā, and various purāṇas with his father. In Kāśī, Ghanśyām debates with Advaitins, and successfully convinces them of the merits of the Viśiṣṭādvaita, or qualified non-dual, school of Vedānta.

Kāśī, by the late eighteenth century, was unparalleled as a center for scholasticism. It plays a very significant role in the life story of Vedānta ācāryas. It is most prominent for Vallabha, whose parents flee Kāśī because of political unrest just before his birth, but then return shortly thereafter so that Vallabha spends his formative years there.95 Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja are both said to have spent considerable time in the city, and Madhva is described as having engaged in a śāstrārtha at Kāśī specifically against Advaitins.96 Minkowski suggests that although the history of early Advaita Vedānta is centered in South India, by the early modern period, because of the influx of Brahmin families from the South, Advaita becomes almost an “establishment position in the city,” and the most influential samnyāsins

95 Barz, The Bhakti Sect of Vallabhacarya, 23-25.
96 Sheridan, “Dueling Sacred Biographies,” 134.
are also Advaitins.97 Vallabha also had an important, decisive debate against the Advaitins, but this is said to have been held at the court of Kṛṣṇadevarāya at Vijayanagara. As Hawley explains, a debate win at Vijayanagara would have been far more important than at Banaras, as it would have been India’s “greatest city.”98 By the late 1700s, though, defeating the Advaitins in Kāśi would have been decisive and authoritative because of the dominance of Advaita Vedānta in the city.

Ghanṣyām spent his formative years 130 miles northwest of Kāśi in present-day Uttar Pradesh, and did most of his scriptural study in the town of Ayodhyā. As the ŚHDV narrates, his father wished to do a pilgrimage to the sacred city of Kāśi. They arrive at the city and immediately visit two of the most sacred sites in the town, the famous Maṇikarmikā Ghāṭ, and the temple of Kāśi Viśvanātha. Throughout the years, these two sites saw much patronage by the Marāṭhās: the former would have been recently renovated, and the latter would have been recently constructed under the aegis of Rāni Ahalyabāī Holkar following its conversion to a mosque at a previous location by Aurangzeb in the seventeenth century.99 The ŚHDV goes on to say that hearing that Ghanṣyām and his father have arrived in Kāśi, paṇḍits who had never before been defeated (ajeyāḥ paraiḥ) arrived to see them, and engage in discussion.100 It is noteworthy that this is the only one of the debates under consideration in the ŚHDV that does not take place in a royal court. Minkowski notes that scholars in early modern Banaras were unique in not having a strong local ruler to appeal for patronage.101 Rather, as O’Hanlon

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98 Hawley, “The Four Sampradāys,” 47.
100 ŚHDV 8.24, p. 72.
describes, gatherings of scholars (pāṇḍitasabhā) typically took place in the muktimaṇḍapa, a large hall located within the Viśvanāth temple. Though this space did not carry over into the newly reconstructed temple in the late eighteenth century, it was still a general pāṇḍitasabhā in which Ghanśyām debates the Advaitins.

The ensuing debate is a learned debate that pits the system of Advaita Vedānta against Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. All 263 verses of Ullāsa 9 are focused on the characteristics of brahman, while 112 verses of Ullāsa 10 treat the characteristics of jīva, the individual soul, and its relation to brahman. The entire debate starts with an Advaitin delivering a variation on a well-known summarization of the Advaita system: “I’ll state in half a śloka what is said by thousands of books: brahman is true, the world is false, and the jīva is only brahman itself.” Ghanśyam proceeds to raise several doubts about this Advaita characterization of metaphysics. The discussion is centered on the correct interpretation of scores of references from the Upaniṣads and the Bhagavad Gītā. The author of the ŚHDV, Nityānand Svāmī, demonstrates that he is very well versed in the polemics between Advaita Vedānta and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta: at various junctures, he raises topics that seem to derive directly from a polemical text written by the fourteenth-century Viśiṣṭādvaitin Vedānta Deśika, the Śatadūṣṭa, or “100 Flaws” of the Advaita system. Chapters 3 and 4 of this dissertation fully tease out the extent to which Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta maps onto

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103 ardhāślokena vakyāṃ yad uktam granthakotibhiḥ ...brahma satya jagan mithyā jīvo brahmaiva kevalam; ŚHDV 9.4. See the variation of this in Vivekacūḍāmaṇī 20: brahma satya jagan mithyeta evamṛūpo viṁścyayah, Swami Madhavananda, Vivekachudamani of Sri Sankaracarya (Mayavati: Advaita Ashrama, 1921), 8.

104 See for example the discussion of bādhitānuvṛtti at ŚHDV 9.107-112 and the Bādhitānuvṛttibhaṅgavāda at dūṣanī 5; or see the discussion of sadasadvilakṣaṇatā at ŚHDV 9.129-133 and the Sattvāsattvāvivekavāda at Śatadūṣṭa 60.
Swaminarayan Vedānta, with a broader discussion of the intricacies of these metaphysical debates. It will suffice at this stage to point out that Nityānand Svāmī’s discussion of Ghanśyām’s debate is scholastic, technical, and provides a thorough presentation of scriptural references. Moreover, it promotes a system of Vedānta that more readily allows for the practice of Vaiṣṇava bhakti.

1.2.3. Defeating the Puṣṭimārga in Navanagar

In the next two debates, the opponents are no longer radical outsiders. Rather, they are members of other Gujarati Vaiṣṇava communities. In both debates, the very authority of Sahajānand Svāmī is called into question. The first of these two debates takes place 85 miles north of Junagadh to the town of Navanagar (present-day Jamnagar), another important city-state in Kathiawar. In this town, the opponent is an unnamed Gosvāmī of the Puṣṭimārga sampradāy, arguably the dominant Vaiṣṇava sampradāya in Gujarat. Through an analysis of this debate, I demonstrate that the ŚHDV presents an early criticism of the moral laxity of Puṣṭimārga leadership, which would subsequently gain the ire of prominent reformers like Karsandas Mulji105 and Dayanand Saraswati.106

The town of Navanagar was founded in 1540 by a Jādejā Rājpūt family,107 and during Sahajānand Svāmī’s time, was still a thriving port town in the Gulf of Kutch. In 1812, the British East India Company and the Gaekwad army marched on the town, with the help of

106 It is important to note that Dayanand Saraswati also criticizes Sahajānand Svāmī and the Swaminarayan sampradāya along similar lines, singling out certain miraculous elements of Sahajānand Svāmī’s life and preaching as fraudulent. This was articulated both in his main text, *Satyarth Prakash* as well as in the Śikṣāpatrī Dvānt Nivāran – Śvāminārāyan Mat Khāṇḍan, both published in 1875. See, Durga Prasad, ed., *An English Translation of the Satyarth Prakash of Maharshi Swami Dayanand Saraswati* (Lahore: Virjanand Press, 1908), 372-375.
the Nawab of Junagadh, after which time the rulers of Navanagar, referred to by the title of Jām Sāheb, paid tribute to each of these three. The population of the town in 1872 was 34,744, and a reasonably similar population can be extrapolated for the time period of the debate.

It is important to note that this particular debate is not accounted for in other sacred biographies of the Swaminarayan tradition. One sacred biography composed more recently in the 1970s makes reference to a debate at the court of the Jām Sāheb of Navanagar, but it is against a Tāntrik Śaiva group, the Kaulas. However, Navanagar would have presented a desirable locus for this debate because of the political significance of the court of the Jām Sāheb, as well as its importance as a center for the Puṣṭimārga. Navanagar had a baithak—one of 84 “monument-shrines” commemorating the location of an important event during the travels of Vallabha. Further, it was one of four thanuks in Kathiawar, or residences of Puṣṭimārgī gosvāmī. Though Junagadh was arguably a more important town for the Puṣṭimārga—it too had a more significant baithak and was also a thanuk—Nityānand Svāmī opted to set this debate here, perhaps to diversify debate locales and political patronage for the sampradāy.

109 Ibid., 579.
111 The contours of this debate appear to be a condensed version of what was discussed earlier in Section 1.2.1– see Harshadray Tribhuvandas Dave, Bhagavān Śrī Svāminārāyaṇ - Bhāg 2, 4th Edition. (Amdavad: Swaminarayan Aksharpeeth, 2003), 336-339.
112 Depending on the exact date of this debate, the Jām Sāheb would have been either Jām Jasāji (d. 1814), Jām Satāji (d. 1820), or less likely, Jām Ranmalji—see Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency, Kathiawar, 577-578.
113 Barz, The Bhakti Sect of Vallabhacarya, 27.
114 George Le Grand Jacob, Report Upon the General Condition of the Province of Katteewar in 1842 (Bombay: Times’ Press, 1845), 31.
The debate takes up the entire contents of Ullāsa 28 of the ŚHDV, which starts with Sahajānand Svāmī seated in the garden of the king of Navanagar. The king and the townspeople are singing the praises of Sahajānand Svāmī’s sampradāy. Upon hearing this, some other people “blazed with jealousy inside” because they could not bear Sahajānand Svāmī’s sādhus speaking out about avoiding adultery and stealing.\(^{115}\) Nityānand Svāmī goes on to say, “particularly, there was one called ‘Gosvāmī,’ born in the family of Vallabha, who could not stand hearing about the wide fame of that [Sahajānand Svāmī], and burning up, he desired to defeat him by any means necessary.”\(^{116}\) He arrives at the king’s garden, and rather than addressing Sahajānand Svāmī, he addresses his sādhus—specifically, Gopālānand Svāmī, Muktānand Svāmī, and Nityānand Svāmī himself. The Gosvāmī makes two main arguments: first, that Sahajānand Svāmī lacks the characteristics of an ācārya, and secondly, that he lacks the characteristics of God.\(^{117}\) He contends that an ācārya cannot just take on that title of his own accord, but must be granted the title by learned people based on a set criteria. In order to be an ācārya, a person must author texts, win over scholars in debate, and produce a commentary on the Brahma Sūtras.\(^{118}\) With respect to the second point, a God must be beautiful and demonstrate all sorts of miracles to the world, such as giving a mute person the ability to speak or curing a diseased person. Further, like Kṛṣṇa, he would outwardly act according to the strictures of dharma for the sake of protecting the world (loka-saṅgraha), despite being entirely free to act as he wishes. The implication is that only

\(^{115}\) anye praṇajvaluś cetasi matsarena...tatsādhuṣaṅkirttitapāraḍāryacauryādyhayatvavacāṃsi; ŚHDV 28.6-7, p. 308.

\(^{116}\) viṣeṣato vallabhavanśajanmā gosvāmināmā tad udāraṅkirttim śrotum na caivaśaṇa āpataṭapo yathākiṇcit tam iyeṣa jetum; ŚHDV 28.8, pp. 308-309.

\(^{117}\) ŚHDV 28.14-18, pp. 310-311.

\(^{118}\) sūtrabhāṣyam sa kuryaḥ ca viduṣaś cākhilān jayet/ graṇthāḥ ca nūtanān kuryād etad ācāryalakṣaṇam. ŚHDV 28.15, p. 310.
Vallabha, and by extension, others in his lineage merit being called ācārya, and only Kṛṣṇa merits being called God. Sahajānand Svāmī is neither of these things.

Sahajānand Svāmī’s sādhus respond by arguing that the characteristics of an ācārya and God mentioned by the Gosvāmī are nowhere to be found in the scriptures, and are able to provide copious scriptural references demonstrating alternate characteristics. For about 40 verses, the sādhus talk about a true ācārya with references from the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad, Liṅga Purāṇa, Skanda Purāṇa, Vāyu Purāṇa, and the Pāñcarātra. The general argument is that the Gosvāmī’s ācārya is simply an educated person, while a true ācārya is one inspires their followers in “one-pointed dharma” (sadaikantika-dharma), comprised of knowledge (jñāna), devotion (bhakti), good conduct (svadharma), and dispassion (vairagya). They go on to demonstrate how Sahajānand Svāmī has built a sampradāya consisting of sādhus and laymen and laywomen who seek the aforementioned ekāntika dharma. They next turn to the true characteristics of God for about twenty verses. Here, they say that all sorts of yogis and devas are capable of performing miracles, but only Sahajānand Svāmī is able to grant ultimate liberation by destroying ignorance. All other qualities and powers pertaining to God, the sādhus argue, should be understood according to the Bhagavad Gītā, the Purāṇas, and the Pāñcarātra texts. They maintain the Sahajānand Svāmī has all of these scripturally-sanctioned qualities, and so he is a true ācārya and should be worshipped as God.

Following this, the sādhus have their own questions for the Gosvāmī. The first of these is scholarly and rather pedantic, so as to demonstrate their intelligence and level of study. They bring up an inconsistency found in a treatise written by Vallabha’s son Viṭṭhala, the Vidvanmaṇḍana. The treatise is an extensive laying out of the Śuddhādvaita doctrine, and

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119 ŚHDV 28.29-30, p. 311.
120 ŚHDV 28.63-67, p. 316.
in the midst of an extensive discussion of the nature of līlā, or God’s divine play, Viṭṭhala cites extensively from a text called the Brhadvāman Purāṇa. As part of this text, Kṛṣṇa states that his manifestation on earth occurs during the sārasvata kalpa. Sahajānand Svāmī’s sādhus argue that this is not a kalpa that is universally accepted; indeed, it is not mentioned once in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, which is one of the most authoritative texts for the Puṣṭimarga. The sādhus also state that the very verses cited from this Brhadvāman Purāṇa are not authoritative. Though this seems like a minor quibble to take up, and not unlike finding an error in a modern-day footnote, the Swaminarayan sādhus, in Nityānand Svāmī’s depiction, are flexing their scholastic muscles by indicating they have read the Puṣṭimarga texts so closely as to find this level of error.

They next take up an issue with the Gosvāmī that serves as veiled censure of the Puṣṭimarga leaders’ personal ethics. The Swaminarayan sādhus bring up the fact that the Gosvāmī has been known to tell his followers that it is a grave sin for disciples to leave their guru, and that such an offense to a guru would result in hell. Hawley explains that such exhortations against “anyāśraya,” or becoming a follower of someone outside of the family of Vallabha (Vallabh kul) are found throughout the tradition’s vārtā literature. In this case, presumably, the Gosvāmī is saying this to dissuade members of the Puṣṭimarga who would be enticed to join the new Swaminarayan sampradāya. The Swaminarayan sādhus respond:

Those gurus who have won over their senses, are pure, and are sādhus pointedly devoted to Kṛṣṇa should never be abandoned...Those who are not so are gurus in name only. The guru who merely dresses as a Vaishnava externally, but has a sinful

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123 ŚHDV 28.90; Rocher states that while there is a secondary portion to the Vāmana Purāṇa referred to as the Brhadvāman Purāṇa, it is no longer extant, though there are references to its subject matter dealing with Kṛṣṇa the cowherd—see Ludo Rocher, The Purāṇas (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 239-241.
125 Hawley, “The Four Sampradāyas,” 58.
mind, performs evil acts, is impure, and seeks the company of his female disciples, should by all means be abandoned. He who stands as a guru should be constantly aware that going to the wives of one’s disciple greatly leads to one’s downfall.\textsuperscript{126}

Though the \textit{sādhus} never explicitly tell the Gosvāmī that he is an ethically suspect guru, the implication is clear: he is the one who is a guru in “name only,” and he is indirectly being accused of misconduct with female devotees. The logical conclusion is that those Puṣṭimārga devotees who are seeking out Sahajānand Svāmī are doing the right thing.

Following this, the \textit{sādhus} engage in a debate about the merits of the system of Śuddhādvaita. They raise issues with: the view that brahman itself transmutes into the manifest world (\textit{svarūpa-parināma-vāda}); that the individual self (\textit{jīva}) is a part (\textit{aṃśa}) of the whole (\textit{aṃśī}) that is brahman; and that upon liberation, the \textit{jīva} becomes one with brahman.\textsuperscript{127} The Gosvāmī is stunned into silence, and is unable to respond to the \textit{sādhus’} demands for answers rooted in the śrutis, \textit{smṛtis}, and logic. He merely flees the king’s garden in shame, bent over crooked (\textit{nīcīna-vakro}). All of the city-dwellers who had previously considered him their leader laugh at him, and, along with the king, accept that Sahajānand Svāmī had the true characteristics of an \textit{acārya} and God. Thus ends Nityānand Svāmī’s description of the debate at Navanagar.

Nineteenth-century British sources have made much about the antagonism between the Puṣṭimārga and the Swaminarayan sampradāy, arguing that much of Sahajānand Svāmī’s teaching and reform was based on the excesses of Puṣṭimārgī \textit{acāryas}.\textsuperscript{128} Concurring with

\textsuperscript{126} jitendriyāṣca śucayā kṛṣṇaikāntikasādhavah idṛśā guravo ye syur na te tyājyāh kadācana...tadanye ye tu guravah kevalam nāmadhārakāh. bahir vaiṣṇava-veṣo yah papadhīr duṣkriyo ‘śuchī bhavec chisyaṅganāsaṃgī sa tyājyāh sarvathā guruḥ. tadevaṃ śisyabhārāsu gacchatām ati pātakam bhavatity anusandhayam tiṣṭhadbhir gaurave pade; \textit{ŚHDV} 28.100-103, pp. 319-320.

\textsuperscript{127} \textit{ŚHDV} 28.108-128; pp. 231-324.

\textsuperscript{128} Briggs states that Sahajānand Svāmī “commenced his crusade against the Walab Kul, better known as Gosijī Maharāj. He boldly denounced the irregularities they had introduced into their forms of worship.” See H.G. Briggs, \textit{The Cities of Gujarashtra: Their Topography and History Illustrated} (Bombay: Times Press, 1849), 237.
Mallison’s analysis, many scholars have suggested that this antagonism is overemphasized in light of the subsequent controversy surrounding the notorious Maharaja Libel Case in 1862.  

Shruti Patel’s recent analysis of Sahajānand Svāmī’s “reform” campaigns presents a full review of the historiography of the purported rivalry between the two traditions, arguing that Swaminarayan sources indicate no sustained criticism of the Puṣṭimārga or its ācāryas. Drawing upon the debate in Navanagar as presented in the ŚHDV, Patel concludes that the debate “reveals a desire to project the Svāminārāyaṇ community as self-assured, capable, and with merit as a new sampradāy” rather than presenting “moral critique.” Though Nityānand Svāmī’s depiction of the unnamed Gosvāmī is not nearly as strident as that of the heterodox groups described above, I argue that this debate does demonstrate a clear critique of the Puṣṭimārga, as well as the Śuddhādvaita school of Vedānta which animates it, all in the service of establishing the śāstriyatā, or the scholastic rigor, of the Swaminarayan tradition. The vāma-mārgī groups certainly were more of problem than the Puṣṭimārga, but the latter nonetheless had to be shown to be inferior in a hierarchical ordering of the scholastic public.

1.2.4. Ācārya, Avatāra, and Sampradāya in Baroda

In the last of the debates presented in the ŚHDV, the text describes how householder members of the sampradāy from Baroda visit Sahajānand Svāmī in 1825 and ask him to send a learned scholar-ascetic to Baroda because there were many paṇḍits there who were challenging the sampradāy’s worship of a living God. While in all three previous debates, the opponents were affiliated with particular sects or schools, the paṇḍits here are generalized,

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131 Ibid., 52.
though they appear to all be Vaiṣṇava interlocutors. The debate provides an opportunity for the sampradāya to defend its very identity as a sampradāya, particularly over and against the pervasive four-fold, or catuḥ-sampradāya model.

This debate takes place in Baroda, the seat of the Gaekwads. The Gaekwads were a Maratha clan that first made territorial advances into Gujarat in the early eighteenth century. They had rivalries with other clans in the Maratha confederacy, including the Peshwas in other parts of Gujarat. In 1802, they signed a treaty with the British East India Company, which granted them relative autonomy, but demanded fealty to the British. At the time of the debate, the throne was held by Maharaja Sayaji Rao II.

By this point, the Swaminarayan sampradāya was flourishing, and Sahajānand Svāmī was openly revered as God incarnate. This debate represented an opportunity for the Swaminarayan sampradāya to defend these beliefs in a scholastic context. The entire debate, which spans five chapters, occurs in two parts. First, one of Sahajānand Svāmī’s foremost sādhus, Muktānand Svāmī is sent to Baroda, and he forcefully defends the sampradāya’s belief that Sahajānand Svāmī is an avatāra. Sayajirao is impressed by Muktānand Svāmī’s erudition, and invites Sahajānand Svāmī himself to his court. Here, Sahajānand Svāmī is further challenged by the paṇḍits, and defends the status of his community as a true sampradāya. We will examine these arguments in detail, as they are revelatory of the scholastic concerns of the community.

The first set of questions all pertain to the belief in the Swaminarayan sampradāya that Sahajānand Svāmī is God incarnate. As such, they mirror some of the concerns raised in

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133 ŚHDV 42-46, pp. 428-487.
the debate with the Puṣṭimārga Gosvāmī in Navanagar, but the questioning is different. The 
pāṇḍīts attempt to use a technicality found in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa to demonstrate the  
fallacy of such a view. The Bhāgavata Purāṇa, they argue, is clear that there is no possibility  
of an avatāra in the present Kali Yuga because avatāras are described as triyuga; occurring  
only in Satya, Tretā, and Dwāpara.\textsuperscript{134} They taunt Muktānand Svāmī, claiming, “we know all  
the śāstras and teach them, and the principles of all the scriptures are at our fingertips!”\textsuperscript{135}  
Muktānand Svāmī responds by citing the Bhāgavata Purāṇa right back at them. He quotes  
two verses describing the start of Kali Yuga, indicating that the text considers Kṛṣṇa to have  
been born at the transition to Kali, keeping the adverse effects of it at bay so long as he was  
avlive.\textsuperscript{136} When pressed on the triyuga issue, Muktānand Svāmī refers the pāṇḍīts to  
Śrīdhara’s commentary on the word triyuga as it appears at BP 3.16.22. Here, an alternative  
definition is given for triyuga as a contraction for triṇī yugalāṇi, or three pairs, referring to  
the six auspicious qualities of the lord, beginning with aiśvarya.\textsuperscript{137} In addition to this erudite  
response, Muktānand Svāmī cites Bhagavad Gītā 4.7-8, where Kṛṣṇa tells Arjuna that he  
manifests era after era (yuge yuge) in order to establish dharma. Muktānand Svāmī, as  
described in the ŚHDV, is the one who actually has the scriptures at his fingertips.

The next line of questioning from the pāṇḍīts has to do with the actual number of  
avatāras; they point Muktānand Svāmī explicitly to BP 1.3, which lists 22 avatāras.\textsuperscript{138}  
Muktānand Svāmī replies that they actually have not read that section properly, because it

\textsuperscript{134} ŚHDV 42.26, p. 431. For description of triyuga in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, see BP 3.16.22, 7.9.38, and 8.5.27.
\textsuperscript{135} vayaṁ hi sarvaśāstraṇāḥ śāstrāṇy adhyāpayāme/ sidhāntāḥ sarvaśāstrāṇāṁ ramante hi nakheṣu nahi,  
ŚHDV 42.28, p. 431.
\textsuperscript{136} ŚHDV 42.36-37, p. 432; see BP 12.2.30-31.
\textsuperscript{137} yadvā triṇī yugalāṇi yugalāṇi triyugāḥ sadgūṇā bhagāsabda-vācyāḥ saṁtyasyeti triyugāḥ; Śrīmadbhāgavatam  
Anekavyākhyāśamalaṅkṛtam Trīṣyaḥ Skandhaḥ, 655.
\textsuperscript{138} ŚHDV 42.79-80, p. 437.
states that the *avatāras* are innumerable (*avatārā hy asaṅkhyaṁ hareḥ*). When further asked about the need for another *avatāra* after Kṛṣṇa’s manifestation, Muktānand Svāmī explains that they both manifested to establish *dharma*, but in different ways:

One, desiring to save good people, killed the demons walking externally; but the other killed his followers’ internal enemies that are difficult to defeat. [One killed] demons like Kaṁsa afflicting people living on earth; [the other killed those demons] like lust afflicting all jīvas in the entire universe.

Upon hearing all of this argumentation rooted predominantly in the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, the *paṇḍits* all accept their defeat. News of Muktānand Svāmī’s victory spreads throughout the town, and when the king hears of it, he becomes desirous of seeing Muktānand Svāmī’s *guru*, Sahajānand Svāmī. He invites Sahajānand Svāmī to Baroda from the town of Vartal, and receives him with due honor.

The second part of the debate commences in a large assembly held in the presence of the king. This time, it is Sahajānand Svāmī who is challenged, and he is questioned directly by the king on behalf of the town’s *paṇḍits*. Nityānand Svāmī explains that the *paṇḍits* “were regularly saying that his *sampradāya* lacked authoritative basis,” and accordingly, the entire line of questioning is focused on the *bona fides* of the Swaminarayan *sampradāya*. Representing the voice of the *paṇḍits*, the king argues that there are four initiators of *sampradāya* (*sampradāya-pravartakāḥ ācāryāḥ santi catvāraḥ*), and demands an

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139 *ŚHDV* 42.81-82, p. 437; see *BP* 1.3.26.
140 *dāityān bahiṣcarān eko hatavān sadarikṣiṣuḥ/ anyas tvābhyāntarān satrūn nijānāṁ hanti durjayān. kāṃsādayo ’surajanā bhūmistrham adhukhadāḥ kāmādayastu sakalānādasthajīveśadukhadāḥ; *ŚHDV* 42.142-143, p. 450.
141 The *Satsaṅgīvāna* contains a sustained narration of this one *śastraṁ* with some key differences: The text clarifies that these challenges are not engendering any doubts in the hearts of members of the *sampradāya*, but that members wanted to respond to the criticisms (*SSJ* 4.27.71). The text clearly indicates that the *śastraṁ* was not initiated because members within the community were affected by the *paṇḍits*’ challenges; rather, it was the prestige of the *sampradāya* in the eyes of the *paṇḍits* that needed to be defended. Further, Sahajānand Svāmī does not engage in any debate himself in the *SSJ*: it is the *Śrīharidigvijaya* that is far more concerned with demonstrating Sahajānand Svāmī’s personal mastery of these *śastraṁs*.
142 The king’s name, Sayajirao, is rendered in Sanskrit as Siṃhajīta.
143 *tatsampradāyādikam apramāṇam muhur vadantaḥ*; *ŚHDV* 44.4, p. 454.
authorizing reference for Sahajānand Svāmī’s fifth sampradāy. The king here is raising the issue of the catuḥsampradāya, or four sampradāyas, whose genealogy has recently received much scholarly attention. It is famously referred to in Nābhādās’s Bhaktamāl, written in seventeenth-century Galtā, wherein there is an ordering of a North Indian Vaiṣṇava world, and importantly, a connection of this with “a south whose religious and cultural moorings were believed to be deeper and more secure.” Hawley describes a three-tiered structuring of these four sampradāyas: a primordial level (Śrī, Rudra, Sanakādi, Brahmā), a classical/southern level (Rāmānuja, Viṣṇusvāmī, Nimbārka, Madhva), and a more recent/northern level (Rāmānand, Vallabha, Keśav Bhaṭṭ/Hit Harivaṃś, Caitanya). This classification sought to create a genealogy for four early modern Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas by connecting them with more established, southern traditions, rooted even further in the mythic past. Hawley carefully examines how the idea of the catuḥsampradāya was invoked by various groups before and after Nābhādās’s exposition, including the Rāmānandīs, the Gauḍīyas, the Dādupanthīs, and the Puṣṭimārga. Additionally, Horstmann has demonstrated the sway this model held on debates about Vaiṣṇava orthodoxy and reforms instituted at the court of Rājā Jaisingh II in the eighteenth century. At the time of the composition of the ŚHDV, the model was still ingrained in the śāstric consciousness.

In Nityānand Svāmī’s rendering, Sahajānand Svāmī responds to this challenge in two ways: first by questioning its very basis, but then by providing a fuller genealogy of his
sampradāy. In the first line of response, he states that he has studied all of the purāṇas, the itihāsas, and other smṛti texts, but has never seen a description of only four sampradāyas.

When the pāṇḍits respond that this description can be found in the Padma Purāṇa, Sahajānand Svāmī denies that this is the case. Interestingly, Hawley points to two Gauḍīya texts written in support of the catuḥsampradāya model that mention this citation in the Padma Purāṇa; the citation, however, is untraceable. Sahajānand Svāmī maintains that there are many initiators of sampradāya, even before the time frame indicated by the catuḥsampradāya model.

The next line of response is to narrate a genealogy of the Swaminarayan sampradāy that has basis in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. In the early years of the sampradāy, it was also known as the Uddhava sampradāy, and Sahajānand Svāmī draws the pāṇḍits’ attention to the third book of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. He cites two verses here in which Kṛṣṇa, before leaving earth, deputes Uddhava to spread his knowledge in the world, since Uddhava is not inferior to Kṛṣṇa by even an iota. Following this reference, the direct connection is made to the Swaminarayan sampradāy, through the personage of Sahajānand Svāmī’s deceased guru Rāmānand Svāmī (not to be confused with the traditionally ascribed founder of the Rāmānandī order). Uddhava had reincarnated in eighteenth century north India as a man named Rām Śarmā, who then travelled south to Tamil country, eventually arriving in Śrīraṅgam. Here, Rāmānuja appeared to him, initiated him as an ascetic named Rāmānand, and instructed him to start a sampradāy, which he did in Gujarāt. Before passing away, he

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149 Hawley, “The Four Sampradāyas,” 45.
150 The first use of this term in the Vacanāmṛt occurs in December 1824; see Gaḍhaḍā II.64, p. 481.
151 noddhavo ‘nv api manyūno yad guṇair nārditaḥ prabhuh ato madvayunām lokam grāhayaṁ iha tiṣṭhatu; ŚHDV 44.33-34, p. 457; see BP 3.4.30-31, p. 119.
152 ŚHDV 44.35-49, pp. 458-459.
153 This story is narrated at many places, including by Sahajānand Svāmī himself in 1826. See Vacanāmṛt Vartāl 18, pp. 526-531.
handed over control of this *sampradāyu* to Sahajānand Svāmī, whom he had just initiated as an ascetic. Hence, the *sampradāyu* is rendered authentic through recourse to the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

This genealogy is noteworthy for a number of reasons. Firstly, it touches upon all three tiers of *sampradāya* structure from the *catuḥsampradāya* model: 1) at the primordial level, the *sampradāya* is connected to Uddhava, and by extension Krṣṇa himself; 2) at the classical/southern level, there is a linkage with Rāmānuja; 3) at the contemporary/northern level, the connection is established through Rāmānand Svāmī to Sahajānand Svāmī. Though the ŚHDV is contesting the validity of the *catuḥsampradāya* model, it is seemingly offering an alternative that would fit right into it. Secondly, though Mallison has suggested that Rāmānanda was an ascetic in the Rāmānandi order, there is no strong evidence to corroborate this. 154 Certainly, in the three-tiered model, the Rāmānandīs and the Uddhava/Swaminarayan *sampradāya* both draw a connection to Rāmānuja at the classical level. But at the primordial level, the latter connects to Śrī while the former connects through Krṣṇa. And most importantly, the contemporary lineage is completely different. 155

Another interesting point of contrast is with the Puṣṭimārga adoption of the *catuḥsampradāya* model. Though articulated in several texts, it is most prominent in a text called the *Sampradāyapradīpa*, which is perhaps the oldest textual reference to the model. 156

In this text, after the debate at Vijayanagara cited above, a Mādhva ācārya named Vyāsarñtha offers Vallabha the seat of that *sampradāyu*. However, that night, the last of the

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156 For a discussion on the dating of the text and the historical implications thereof, see Hawley, *A Storm of Songs*, 205-217.
ācāryas in the line of Viṣṇu Svāmī—about whom little is known, though the text indicates he was initiated by Kṛṣṇa—appears to Vallabha in a dream and offers him the seat of that sampradāy instead. The parallels with the Uddhava/Swaminarayan sampradāy are clear, especially with the connection back to Kṛṣṇa and the initiation through a dream.

The debate continues for another chapter over some further issues about sampradāya, including the definition of an ācārya raised in the introductory section of this chapter. Ultimately, the paṇḍits are won over. Through the two parts of this debate, the ŠHDV provides grounding, mostly through appeal to the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, that Sahajānand Svāmī’s sampradāy is legitimate, that he is worthy of being called an ācārya, and even more so, that he is worthy of being called bhagavān – God himself. The ŠHDV concludes this section by stating that all of the Vaiṣṇava paṇḍits accept that Sahajānand Svāmī is paramātman, the highest self. The text indicates that even the king becomes a follower. Though this may have been an exaggeration, the Gaekwad patronage of the Swaminarayan sampradāy, including felicitating Sahajānand Svāmī through a parade in Baroda, is attested amply in the literature of the tradition.

1.3. Conquering the Quarters: Conclusion

With debates in Banaras, Kathiawar, and Baroda, the conquest of the quarters is complete. Several aspects of the ŠHDV’s depiction warrant emphasis. Firstly, to repeat, the main question animating this discussion has not been whether or not the ŠHDV presents a historical record of debate and conflict with various “others.” Though some events, such as

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157 Ibid., 208-209.
Muktānand Svāmī’s debate in Baroda in 1826 are amply attested, others are not. Further, the detailed discussion of the nuances of the debates—specific arguments, specific citations, etc.—are certainly authorial reconstructions. What is far more important is that the text allows us to examine how the scholarly elite in the Swaminarayan sampradāy envisioned themselves vis-à-vis their intellectual others. Taking the ŚHDV as a doxography in the form of a sacred biography, Halbfass’s comments are certainly borne out:

[doxographies] provide a symptomatic testimony of a contextuality that is essential to Indian thought, a deeply rooted tendency to articulate one’s own position by referring to, and trying to dispose of, other points of view, as well as by integrating one’s own views into the entire framework of the tradition.¹⁵⁹

The text allows for Nityānand Svāmī to bring up all of the issues that could have been troubling the newfound community in rigorous and sustained debate. With the exception of the debate with the Cārvākas, Buddhists, and Jains—which was a stock description of their position that nonetheless proved how well-read the author was—there is an attempt to seriously engage the opponents’ criticism: its strict code of conduct prohibiting meat, liquor, and adultery; its system of Vedānta; the belief that Sahajānand Svāmī was God; and its very status as a sampradāy.

Secondly, the text also allows us to determine the three systems that were most troublesome for the sampradāy in a scholastic sense: the Śāktas (who were represented only as left-handed, and grouped with left-handed Śaivas and the stock representation of Cārvākas, Buddhists, and Jains), the Puṣṭimārga (as a strong sectarian rival), and Advaita Vedānta (as the chief rival in a Vedānta landscape). That these three groups persisted as chief adversaries is corroborated by a play, entitled Gīrvānabodha, written by a lay follower

named Dīnānāth Bhaṭṭ shortly after the ŚHDV. In the final act of this play, there is a scholarly assembly (vidvatsabhā) in which an educated lay member of the sampradāy debates three main opponents: the Advaitin, whose character is simply referred to as “vedānti,” the Puṣṭimārga, referred to as “Vaiṣṇava,” and the vāma-mārga.160 The ŚHDV is much more thorough and expansive in its refutation of these three schools, but it is against these groups that the Swaminarayan sampradāy was attempting to situate itself in a scholastic public.

Further, it believes that all sectarian differences can be adjudicated through proper public disputation rooted in śāstra. In her reading of scholastic debate in the sacred biographies of Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and Madhva, Granoff argues that these texts are in fact quite skeptical in their estimation of the efficacy of debate; rather, the debate is always authorized by a supernatural event.161 Though the ŚHDV does not shy away from incorporating supernatural and miraculous elements into the life story, there is largely no such suspicion about scholarly disputation. The scriptural and logical arguments are sufficient, though in most cases, there is corroboration of this in the form of the opponents recognizing the divinity of Sahajānand Svāmī, and becoming his followers.

There are some small exceptions. Firstly, the Puṣṭimārga Gosvāmī is not converted; instead, he flees in shame, while his erstwhile followers switch their allegiance to Sahajānand Svāmī. Secondly, the heterodox opponents at Junagadh are not won over so easily.162 They are at first enraged by Sahajānand Svāmī’s debate victory, and attempt to bring him bodily harm by all sorts of supernatural means. They invoke tāntrika mantras, and call upon various

162 ŚHDV 25.186-197, pp. 286-287.
demons and demigods to their aid to kill Sahajānand Svāmī. However, when these beings are summoned, they attack their invokers rather than Sahajānand Svāmī; the latter must intervene in their succor. Only then do they accept the divinity of Sahajānand Svāmī. This exception aside, the ŚHDV is a text that believes in the potency of scriptural reasoning, and is convinced about the authoritativeness of the Swaminarayan position. Moreover, these discussions of heterodox practices, monasticism, and sampradāy prefigure the very public disputations regarding these issues later on in the nineteenenth by figures like Dayanand Saraswati and the Arya Samaj and more orthodox associational bodies.

Further, the text can be seen as part and parcel of an attempt at making a splash on the scholastic scene. It bears repeating that although the bulk of literary output in the Swaminarayan sampradāy was in Gujarati, there was a concerted effort to get sādhus trained in Sanskrit so that they could produce Sanskrit content. Nityānand Svāmī, as one of the most educated of Sahajānand Svāmī’s sādhus, was a prime choice for producing this text so scholastic in outlook. In the estimation of an author from within the community writing over a century after the text was composed, it achieved its effect:

> Just as how among all birds, the call of a peacock is pleasant to the ears and causes one’s heart to fill up with pure love, in the same way, in the Haridīgvijāy, Nityānand Svāmī’s melodious call wins over every mind. Just as how among all animals, a lion’s roar renders people terrified, similarly, Nityānand Svāmī’s thunderous roar in the Haridīgvijāy renders śāstris, pāṇḍits, and educated people speechless with wonderment.¹⁶³

But the ŚHDV was also joined by scores of other texts in Sanskrit. This included: a rendering of the Vacanāṁṛt into Sanskrit as a text called the Śrīharivākyasudhāsindhu; sacred

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¹⁶³ pakṣiṁom ān morno taṅkārav karṇāpriya lāge chhe ane ṛdayne śuddha premthi bhari de che tem haridīgvijayāṁ nityānand svāmīno taṅkārav sau koṁā citto hari le che. prāṇiṁom ānṁ śīṁ śarjanā mānasne sāscarya bhaybhīt banāve che tem haridīgvijay āṁgrthāṁ nityānanad svāmīṁ meghmaṇ dever ṛgarjānā śāstrī- pāṇḍīto ane jñānī pruṣunā añtimre āścaryathvī avāk banāvī de che. See Ramescandra Paṇḍyā, Vaḍāl Darśan (Anand: Pallikā Printers, 1981), 304.
biographies, such as the aforementioned *Satsaṅgījīvana*; texts styled as *dharma-śāstras*, including the *Śiksāpatrī* and its various lengthy commentaries; various *mahātmya* texts on sacred Swaminarayan spaces; and various *stotra* texts.¹⁶⁴

There was also considerable production of commentarial texts. This included commentaries on bhakti texts like the *Śāndilya Sūtras* and various books of the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*. Most importantly for our discussion, this also included commentaries on the texts of the Vedānta canon: several Upaniṣads, the *Bhagavad Gītā*, and the *Brahma Sūtras*. In these texts, there are various articulations of a system of Swaminarayan Vedānta. Though this will be explored fully in the subsequent three chapters, I will conclude with one final story from the *ŚHDV*. In the debate with the *paṇḍits* at Baroda, as part of their critique of Sahajānand Svāmī as an *ācārya*, they take exception to the fact that he has purportedly appropriated Rāmānuja’s system of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. And certainly, in the debate with the Advaitins in Kāṣī, the position that Sahajānand Svāmī vociferously argues for is Viśiṣṭādvaita.

Sahajānand Svāmī’s response to the *paṇḍits* is to say:

Previously established positions are useful in establishing one’s own position, not harmful...We consider the commentary made by our previous *ācārya* [Rāmānuja] for the safeguarding of Vedānta...to be authoritative...but to a certain extent, there is some newness in our position.¹⁶⁵

In the subsequent chapters, we will explore fully the extent to which there was newness in the Swaminarayan position, and the means by which this was defended, subverted, and negotiated in a scholastic public.

¹⁶⁴ For a comprehensive overview of Sanskrit literature produced during the early years of the Swaminarayan *sampradāya*, see Sadhu Adarshjivandas, “Śvāmināraṇya Śampradāyaṃ Sanskṛt Śāhitya – Ek Adhyayan,” PhD diss., (Sardar Patel University, 2009).
¹⁶⁵ *puṛvasiddhāntasamśiddha-sadarthaśya parigrah/ svīyasiddhāntasamśiddhou sādhako na tu bādhakah//... puṛvācāryakṛtam bhāsyam trayantapariraksakam/ paramātmanik śarīrē śrutiḥ sāksāt pravarttayat// pramāṇam paripaśyāmah paramātmanvinirṇaye/ kvacid amśo viśeṣaśca tan mate no navāṇata – ŚHDV 45.205; 45.210-211, pp. 483-484.
Chapter 2: Scholasticism in the Age of Print

2.1. Introduction

In the early nineteenth century, ascetic members of the Swaminarayan sampradāya envisioned an ordered scholastic public in which they sought to participate. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, early sacred biographies in the sampradāya allow us to piece together the tradition’s understanding of its scholastic “others,” and its scripturally-mediated responses to the challenges posed by these “others.” This chapter examines how the Swaminarayan sampradāya’s engagement with scholastic publics continued in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The chapter takes as its historical archive various materials printed in the sampradāya during this time period. I argue that advances in print culture significantly altered the Swaminarayan sampradāya’s engagements with its scholastic publics, variously conceived. New genres of print in the form of small tracts and pamphlets, along with monthly magazines, allowed for the members of the sampradāya to more forcefully challenge authority. These challenges were adjudicated in both a broad external public in Gujarat, as well as an internally-cultivated public within the sampradāya itself. Additionally, the sampradāya also took advantage of print technologies to negotiate sectarian divide by recourse to a Vedāntic public. They did this through the publication of a pre-existing genre of text—commentarial texts—albeit with significantly new paratextual features. In the case of all three of these scholastic publics, the quantitative shift occasioned by print reinvigorated the sampradāya’s scholastic engagements, allowing for it to grapple with new historical developments, both in the context of late-colonial Gujarat as well as within the now-100-year-old religious community.
After broadly examining my approach to print culture in the remainder of this introduction, I will examine three separate deployments of the sampradāy’s scholasticism in print: 1) debates about vaidikatva, or “Vedic-ness” published in the first decade of the twentieth century; 2) monthly magazines published by lay members of the community in the 1920s-1930s; and 3) commentarial texts published in the 1930s-1950s. Each of these deployments entail different yet overlapping thematics. In the first case, lay and monastic Brahmins within the sampradāy used the register of śāstrārtha to publicize their “wins” over those who challenged them. Here, the sampradāy made use of a transregional scholastic public newly configured by the interplay between the Arya Samaj and sanatāna dharma sabhās. In the second case, educated lay members of the sampradāy sought to make scholastic concerns intelligible to a community-internal public, in hopes of sustaining the sampradāy. In the third, dueling commentaries were published in order to further the interests of competing sects within the sampradāy. Thus, in all three cases, a defense of the 100 year-old sampradāy was the primary objective.

Print culture and book history in colonial and postcolonial India have received increased scholarly attention over the past two decades, with groundbreaking monographs devoted to the study of printed material from several regions and languages.¹ These works point to the differential processes of print culture depending on region and extent of colonialism. Further, they recognize that while an emphasis on the technology and

materiality of print is necessary, the attendant consideration of the cultural, institutional, and social aspects of publishing are even more salient. While print technology was available in the Indian subcontinent just a few decades after Gutenberg, its use was limited to missionaries publishing in Tamil. It wasn’t until the early nineteenth century that there was a socialization of print, leading to its subsequent adoption by Indians and the development of a distinct publishing industry.

The ramifications of this development of print culture were manifold, specifically with respect to the standardization of regional languages and the development of regional and national identities. Still, our theorists of print culture warn us against overstating the impact of print. For example, scholars like Sheldon Pollock caution against placing too much emphasis on nineteenth-century print at the risk of neglecting a thriving manuscript culture that co-existed with print for some time. As Stuart Blackburn argues, we are better off thinking of print as a significant “innovation” rather than revolution.

Further, in her questioning of the “revolutionary” nature of print in nineteenth-century India, Stark posits a “quantitative rather than qualitative or generic shift.” It was often the pre-existing genre of text that was first published: folklore, religious poetry, etc. In reflecting on colonial Bengal, Ghosh notes that:

print did not work to reform and ‘civilize’ all of its new communities of readers. Far from displacing earlier literary conventions and tastes, and grafting onto them the sensibilities of an educated middle class, print actually helped in their survival and expansion.

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3 Stuart Blackburn, Print, Folklore, and Nationalism, 9.
4 Stark, Empire of Books, 19.
5 Ghosh, Power in Print, 151.
This chapter is interested in the “survival and expansion” of scholastic materials printed by members of the Swaminarayan sampradāy in the early twentieth century. All of these materials speak to the innovative character of print. Scholastic materials are presented in new forms: tracts, pamphlets, and periodicals. Previous forms, such as commentaries, are published bearing important paratextual features, including editorial introductions. Significantly, print allows for a quantitative expansion of the readership of these scholastic materials. Print culture in the early twentieth century thus presented a novel apparatus for the Swaminarayan sampradāy to expand its scholastic engagement.

2.2. Debating Vaidikatva

In 1921, the inaugural year of a monthly magazine called Śrī Svāmīnārāyan published by and circulated amongst lay members of the Swaminarayan sampradāy, a śāstrī by the name of Nārāyaṇaśaṅkar Devśaṅkar authored a series of articles entitled “Swaminarayan dharma and its Ācāryas.” Over the course of two months, the article series depicted a history, for the readers of the magazine, of a set of śāstrārthas, or public disputation. The very first of these recounted Muktānand Svāmī’s victory in Baroda as well as Sayajirao Gaekwad II’s subsequent invitation and honoring of Sahajānand Svāmī, as discussed in the previous chapter. The second one was again in Baroda at the court of Sayajirao III, and the third at a meeting of the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala in Banaras. This section analyzes these latter two disputation, examining the shifting registers of disputation over the course of the nineteenth century and beyond. I suggest that while these latter disputation represent a

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continuity of sorts with the disputations robustly described by Nityānand Svāmī in the Śrī Hari Dig Vijaya—and are explicitly connected as such in the articles written in 1921—they also must be contextualized with respect to public disputations between the Arya Samaj and various Sanātana Dharma groups in late-colonial north India.

Dayanand Saraswati, though born in Gujarat, became more popular in north India in the late nineteenth century because of his exhortations to return Hindu tradition to its “Vedic” roots, shorn of centuries’ worth of accretions in the shape of image worship, purānic lore, and sectarianism. He outlined these criticisms in a book, Satyārth Prakāś (“The Beacon of Truth”) in 1875, but contemporary British sources and early chroniclers of the associational body he founded, the Arya Samaj, documented his frequent use of śāstrārtha to spread his message. Lala Lajpat Rai, the founder of the Lahore branch of the Arya Samaj, described a seminal śāstrārtha in Banaras in his book Arya Samaj, published in 1915. His description of this 1869 debate is primarily based on an account from The Christian Intelligencer, a missionary journal. The debate was between Saraswati and as many as 300 paṇḍits, led by the court paṇdit of the Raja of Banares. The group of paṇḍits claim victory in the debate, based in part on Saraswati’s inability to cite Vedic sources from memory. As Lajpat Rai describes, however, leading newspapers in both English and Hindi continued to discuss the debate for months, and Saraswati published tracts outlining a more sustained response to the paṇḍits after the fact. Hardiman argues that his teachings were not immediately popular in Gujarat in part because of his criticism of the Puṣṭimārga and the Swaminarayan sampradāy,

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9 Ibid., 50.
but proponents of the Arya Samaj were later invited to Gujarat in the early twentieth century at the behest of the reform-minded Sayajirao Gaekwad III of Baroda.\(^{10}\)

The Banaras śāstrārtha and its aftermath are emblematic of the very public way in which vaidikatva was debated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Much as the court pañdits in Banaras did in 1869, voices of “orthodox” concern arose to counter the criticisms of Dayanand Saraswati, as well as those of colonial missionaries. A host of “sanātana dharma sabhās” developed—associational bodies dedicated to the defense of the “eternal” Hindu tradition. Further, these public debates were publicized and elaborated in tracts, pamphlets, and periodicals. John Zavos—drawing upon the work of C.A. Bayly and Vasudha Dalmia—makes the crucial point that this “orthodoxy” was a category being constructed in this time period in markedly different ways under late colonialism.\(^{11}\) He argues that sanātana dharma emerged as an orthodoxy functioning in largely symbolic ways rather than representing a literal orthodox constitution of core doctrine. Contrary to precolonial articulations of orthodoxy rooted in regional inflections of sampradāya, sanātana dharma groups appealed to the nebulous, symbolic power of orthodoxy to speak for Hinduism as a whole. In doing so, these groups took on a decidedly modern organizational structure, replete with constitutions, secretaries, etc. Zavos argues that sanātana dharma groups are best understood not simply as a reaction to the Arya Samaj, but as enacting creativity: “in the name of orthodoxy and tradition, [sanātana dharma groups] are accommodating and articulating wide-reaching changes.”\(^{12}\) Though Malavika Kasturi has

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\(^{12}\) Ibid., 111.
complicated Zavos’s thesis by demonstrating the spread of Śaiva sāmpradāyik lineages in twentieth-century sanatāna dharma sabhās, this reconfiguration was still transregional in scope.

It is within this context that Swaminarayan śāstrāstras, and their subsequent publication, are situated. I contend that the Swaminarayan śāstrāstras are in a liminal space of sorts in terms of the two stages of conceptions of orthodoxy described by Zavos. I argue that although they are making use of a newly configured scholastic public as occasioned by modern associational bodies, and they use modern print technologies to publicize these endeavors, members of the Swaminarayan sampradāya are not doing so in an attempt to speak for Hinduism as a whole in a trans-sectarian manner. Rather, their concerns are much more insular: they seek to defend their sampradāya locally against powerful figures who deem their sampradāya to be non-Vedic.

Thus, the two instances of śāstrārtha I examine follow in the tradition of the early-nineteenth century ones in their defense of sampradāya, with some crucial differences. Firstly, these were śāstrāstras conducted on behalf of members of the Swaminarayan sampradāya, with no direct Swaminarayan participant. Secondly, in both cases, the disputation affected lay Brahmin members of the Swaminarayan sampradāya, but by extension, the sampradāya as a whole. Scholarship on the Swaminarayan sampradāya, based in turn on colonial records, demonstrates that the sampradāya drew membership from a range of class and caste.

Hardiman notes that many from the lower peasant classes, especially Patidars, joined the sampradāya: “previously looked down upon by Brahmanical Hindus and the prestigious sects

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[like the Puṣṭimārga], the mass of the Patidar peasantry thus found welcome and acceptance within the Swaminarayan fold.\textsuperscript{14} Others have noted that subcastes beyond just the Patidars, included Kathis, Kolis, Rajputs, etc., were a significant makeup of the Swaminarayan demographic.\textsuperscript{15} Sadhu Mangalnidhidas, surveying British accounts and the sampradāy’s hagiographical literature, argues for a “strategic accommodation” in caste practices in the Swaminarayan tradition, whereby caste identity was not totally removed, but membership within a satsaṅg fellowship was emphasized across caste divisions, rooted in an understanding of the ontological self as devoid of societal differentiations.\textsuperscript{16} This resulted in an encouragement, especially amongst monastic Brahmins, to eschew caste-based commensality restrictions. As I will demonstrate, it is in part because of these considerations of caste that more conservative Brahmins—lay and ascetic—challenged the Swaminarayan sampradāy’s Brahmins. Though the sampradāy was hardly a Brahmin-centered community, the challenges to the sampradāy’s vaidkatva affected all members of the sampradāy.

The \textit{Gazetteer of the Bombay Presidency}, in a special volume on Hindus in Gujarat, reports that the 1891 census accounted for 568,868 Brahmins in Gujarat, including the Princely States in Kutch and Kathiawar, representing about 5.75\% of the total population.\textsuperscript{17} Further, there were some 79 subdivisions of Brahmins (jñāti).\textsuperscript{18} David Pocock has argued that because these various Brahmin castes did not have any links of association with

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\item[18] Ibid., 2.
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particular, more numerous non-Brahmin castes, they wielded little real power. Consequently, he suggests, “It would, then, have been very difficult, if not totally impossible, for the Brahmins of Gujarat in the nineteenth century to join together and oppose the teachings of Swāmi Narāyan, even if they had wished so to do.”19 As the following debates demonstrate, Brahmins were in fact able to create an outsize opposition to the Swaminarayan sampradāy, one that required an appeal to a scholastic public for its resolution, and the subsequent publicization of these appeals in print.

2.2.1. Prelude: Trouble in Surat

According to the account presented in the Śrī Svāminārāyan monthly magazine in Gujarati, a group of Bhārgava Brahmins from Surat in southern Gujarat were experiencing tensions within their subcaste on account of being members of the Swaminarayan sampradāy. The Bhārgavas were a sizeable subcaste, numbering close to 2,000 in the 1891 census, found mostly in southern Gujarat around Surat and Bharuch.20 Though they were technically residents of British-controlled lands in the Bombay Presidency, the Swaminarayan Bhārgava Brahmins appealed to the scholastic (śāstrīya) authority of the Gaekwad court in October of 1884.21 Twelve of these Brahmins sent a letter to an official in the royal devghar (religious quarters) named Rājārām Śāstrī describing their problems. They requested a śāstrārth be held in order to determine whether following the Swaminarayan

21 This Gregorian date provided in the Śrī Svāminārāyan magazine article appears to be the author’s calculation of the Vikram Samvat date provided in an original Gaekwad document, based on a version of the calendar in which the new year begins in the month of Kārtīk. If the original document used a different version of the calendar, it is possible that these events transpired in October of 1883.
sampradāy and wearing the religious markings associated with it were prohibited in scriptural texts.

This request was reportedly granted just a few days later. Fifteen śāstrīs gathered in the royal devghar to discuss the issue at hand, and issued a resolution (ṭhārāv). The Śrī Svāminārāyan magazine article presents a full Gujarati translation of the original Marathi text. The chief group of śāstrīs (śāstrī pramukh maṇḍalī) decided that, “to worship according to the principles of Swaminarayan is not contrary to scripture, and to bear markers such as the ārdh vapundra [a tilaka, or “u”-shaped mark] is also in accordance with scripture.” The resolution is said to have subsequently been circulated amongst other śāstrīs who were unable to attend the original meeting. As a consequence, six other śāstrīs appended their signatures nine days later, adding that the Swaminarayan system (paddhati) along with the practice of wearing a two-stranded necklace of tulasī beads was sanctioned by scripture. Crucially, this resolution ultimately concludes that, “the details above clearly demonstrate that the charge of the sampradāy’s being avaidika is totally false.”

Several features of this account are noteworthy. Firstly, there is no representative from the Swaminarayan sampradāy to argue their case. Rather, it is left entirely in the hands of the assembled śāstrīs. Secondly, the account provided is light on details about the nature of the śāstrārtha. The original letter does not indicate which particular practices are deemed questionable, and there is no initial justification offered by the Swaminarayan Bhārgava Brahmins. The only specifics provided are with respect to the external markers that are

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22 svaminarayannā mat pramāne upāsanā karvī śāstra viruddh nathi urdh vapundra kādi cinha dhāraṇ karvā pan śāstra sammat chej; Devśaṅkar, “Śvāminārāyan Dharma,” Śrī Svāminārāyan, Caitra V.S. 1977 [April/May 1921], 24.
23 uparnī hakikatparthī khullā jaṃāse ke e sampradāy avaidik hovāno je ākṣep mukvāmā āve che te ākṣep taddan khoṭo che; Ibid.
ultimately deemed acceptable: the forehead marking and the tulasī necklace (kaṇṭhī), both of which are mentioned by Sahajānand Svāmī in the Śiksāpatrī verse 44. Further, there is no discussion about the specific scriptures the śāstrīs appealed to in order to reach their conclusion, mere days after the receiving the initial letter. It is only the second resolution that brings up the Vedas in its conclusion that the sampradāy is not avaidika. It is unlikely that the account provided in 1921 in the Śrī Svāminārāyan magazine is an abridgment of the original documents from 1884, since the author provides full details of the formal features of the documents, including salutations, signatories, and details of what portions have been translated.

This śāstrārtha thus appears rather light on substance, but heavy on the trappings of formality and scholasticism. In the late nineteenth century, it was a tool for aggrieved members of the sampradāy to justify their practices. In the early twentieth century, the narrative was deployed in a project of reasserting the scholastic bona fides of the sampradāy as a whole, tying this story with the earlier story of Muktānand Svāmī’s victory in the same court, and the subsequent story of another “victory” at Banaras. I turn to the specifics of this second victory in the following section.

2.2.2. A Quarrelsome Foe: The Śaṅkarācārya of Dwarka

In 1907, Brahmin members of the Swaminarayan sampradāy once again faced opposition, but the stakes were higher this time around. Here, I will examine the contours of this second dispute, paying close attention to how members of the Swaminarayan sampradāy were particularly savvy in using new genres of print to amplify the debate. The opponent was a samnyāsi by the named of Mādhavatīrtha, who held a powerful position as the Śaṅkarācārya of the Śāradā Pīṭha in the pilgrimage town of Dwarka in western Kathiawar.
The Śāradā Pīṭha has long been recognized as one of four principal monastic institutions (maṭhas) traditionally associated with Ādī Śaṅkara, the chief proponent of the influential school of Advaita Vedānta. Matthew Clark has corroborated earlier scholarship demonstrating that there is no actual link of these four institutions—the others located at Śrīnerī in the south, Purī in the east, and Badaṛī in the north—with Śaṅkara. Rather, this link was constructed centuries after the fact as part of a project of elevating an Advaita (non-dual) form of Śaivism in the Vijayanagara kingdom.\(^{24}\) This saw its culmination in the efforts surrounding the institutionalization of the monastic order of Daśanāmī saṃnyāsīs (ascetics) in the seventeenth century.\(^{25}\) The Daśanāmīs continue to be an internally-variegated group of ascetics, and the Śaṅkarācāryas are part of the staff-bearing or daṇḍī order, who “have a reputation for observing convention and conservatism…and often maintain deep caste prejudices.”\(^{26}\) Though there was a brief dispute in which a maṭha in Karnataka claimed to be the authoritative western pīṭha, a meeting of paṇḍits in 1886 concluded that Dwarka was the legitimate seat.\(^ {27}\) At the turn of the twentieth century, Mādhavatīrtha, as the head of this pīṭha, held considerable power in this area.

Mādhavatīrtha appears to have been a particularly quarrelsome figure during his fifteen-year tenure as Śaṅkarācārya, which ended with his death in 1916. A few years after his appointment he filed a case against a rival figure named Madhusudan Parvat, who claimed to be a Śaṅkarācārya of another maṭha located in the town of Dholka, 30 miles south of Ahmedabad.\(^ {28}\) Madhusudhan Parbat did not claim this title by means of the Śāradā Pīṭha in

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\(^{24}\) Matthew Clark, *The Daśanāmī-Samnyāsīs: The Integration of Ascetic Lineages into an Order* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), see Chapter 6.

\(^{25}\) Ibid., see Chapter 4.

\(^{26}\) Ibid., 40-41.

\(^{27}\) Ibid., 139.

\(^{28}\) Ibid.; see also Bader, *Conquest of the Four Quarters*, 299-301.
Dwarka, but rather claimed that his *maṭha* was an offshoot of the Jyotir Maṭha in Badarī. However, Mādhavārīthā claimed in the lawsuit that he had “throughout the part of India where Gujerati [sic] is spoken, the exclusive privilege of preaching as a Shankaracharya.”

The case was ultimately decided in favor of Mādhavārīthā after an appeal to the Bombay High Court in 1908. Mādhavārīthā also feuded with Sayajirao Gaekwad III, who controlled Dwarka as a part of his holdings in western Kathiawar. At some point during his tenure, Mādhavārīthā shifted his residence from Dwarka to Dakor, located in the Kheḍā (Kaira) district in between Ahmedabad and Baroda. Hardiman explains that this was because Mādhavārīthā was a “man of rigid orthodoxy,” who “refused to accept various laws for social reform passed by Sayajirao Gaekwad.”

Here, in Kheḍā district, members of the Swaminarayan community found themselves in Mādhavārīthā’s crosshairs, particularly because of their renegotiation of caste relations. The tension was acknowledged in the Gazetteer of the Baroda State: “the head of the Shaiva sect, the Shankaracharya of Dwarka similarly shows hostility to the Swaminarayan and other Vaishnava leaders, and the brawls between them sometimes result in legal processes.”

It is unclear what legal proceedings the Gazetteer is pointing to, but there was a clear dispute between Mādhavārīthā and Brahmins and śāstrīs in the Swaminarayan *sampradāy* in which the former accused the latter of being *avaidika*.

Though the early-twentieth-century documents do not reveal the basis by which Mādhavārīthā began calling the *sampradāy* *avaidika*, a text published in 1977 suggests that

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29 Madhusudan Parvat vs. Shree Madhav Teerth, 1 Ind Cas 331 (Bombay High Court 1908). https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1811792/.


Mādhavatīrtha took exception to the fact that there were two classes of *tyāgīs* (renouncers) in the Swaminarayan *sampradāya*: *brahmacārīs*, made up of Brahmins, and *sādhus*, comprised of all sorts of castes.\(^{32}\) Because all of these *sādhus* ate together devoid of caste considerations, they were in violation of *varnāśrama dharma*. Consequently, Mādhavatīrtha is said to have released public letters forbidding 11-fold contact with Swaminarayan Brahmins. The ripples of this were felt amongst Brahmins, *brahmacārīs*, and the broader Swaminarayan *sampradāya*, all of whom responded in print.

Bearing traces of the earlier dispute about *vaidikatva* in which Swaminarayan Brahmins turned to *śāstrīs* in the Gaekwad court, another group of *śāstrīs* and *paṇḍits* was appealed: the recently formed Bharat Dharma Mahamandala (BDM). The BDM passed several resolutions affirming that the Swaminarayan *sampradāya* was *vaidika* in November of 1907. In the remainder of this section, I will examine how this debate spilled forth onto the pages of public letters and pamphlets, occasioned by the advent of print technologies in Gujarat.

The first extant document is a two-page pamphlet entitled “Refutation of Mādhavatīrtha’s Serpentine Letter” dating to August 1907.\(^{33}\) Written by a man named Kṛṣṇānanda Brahmacārī\(^ {34}\) who was likely a Brahmin ascetic in the Swaminarayan *sampradāya*, the pamphlet is a scathing rejoinder to Mādhavatīrtha’s criticisms of the Swaminarayan *sampradāya* in a letter (*patrikā*) that was circulated a month earlier. Kṛṣṇānanda explicitly defines his audience for the letter: people “who love only truth, are

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\(^{34}\) The first signatory on the 1884 letter to the Gaekwad court is a Kṛṣṇānand Mādhavānand, and it is possible that this is the same figure.
unbiased, are leaders among Vaiṣṇavas and Śmārtas, and are well-learned.” Kṛṣṇānanda is thus envisioning a broad, educated scholastic public within which to air the sampradāy’s grievances, corroborated by the fact that his letter is composed in Sanskrit. His stated objective is to inform these people about the actions of Mādhavatīrtha, who is “fond of all sorts of quarrel” (sarvathākalahapriya). Kṛṣṇānanda claims:

many letters have been sent by our followers in order to fix a time for śāstrārtha with them, with the desire to propound our religious organization as eternal and well-adorned by the śrutis, etc.; nevertheless, those people...having entered the forest of great debate with fear...have refused to accept a time for śāstrārtha...They resort to fear like a deer in front of a lion, and having abandoned the methods of teaching dharma, they think that causing strife within jñātis is the best teaching.

Hyperbole aside, Kṛṣṇānanda is suggesting here that Mādhavatīrtha refuses to meet in person for a public disputation, but persists in calling the Swaminarayan sampradāy “avaidika,” in both oral and written form.

The remainder of the letter is part invective and part refutation of Mādhavatīrtha’s arguments. The first of Mādhavatīrtha’s charges that Kṛṣṇānanda addresses mirrors the trope found in the Śrī Hari Dig Vijaya discussed in the previous chapter: it seems that Mādhavatīrtha had also claimed that being an ācārya requires authorship of commentaries on the Vedānta prasthāna-traya, and this was missing from Sahajānand Śvāmī’s oeuvre. Kṛṣṇānanda argues that this attribute is “merely boasting of one’s prowess” (ahpuruṣikā-mātram), and there are no authoritative references about this found anywhere. Having

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35 satyaikapriyā nispaksapātino vaiṣṇavasmārtārgresarā sujñajanāḥ; Ibid., 1.
36 asmadamuvāyibhis...svakīyadharmasamstham sanātaniṁ śrutyādisupariśkṛtāṁ eva pratipādayisaya sampreṣītā hi taḥ sākam śāstrārthaprasaṅgāṁ vidhātum prabhutāḥ prasiddhiprakāṣa tathāpi...mahāvādāranyanāṁ sabhayaṁ sampraviśya...śāstrārthaprasaṅgāṁ nāṅgikurvanto...kṣṇhiravebhyaś camūraṇa iva...dharmaṇapadeśaparpāṭiṁ saṁutsṛjya parasparajñātikalahotpādanam eva paramasadupadeśam abhiṣānanto...; Ibid.
37 Ibid., 2.
dispensed with this line of reasoning summarily, Kṛṣṇānanda spends considerable space addressing the crux of the issue: the “strife within jñātis” referred to above.

According to Kṛṣṇānanda’s pamphlet, Mādhavācchā’s original letter gave four reasons as to why the Swaminārāyan sampradāya could be seen to be contrary to the teachings of the Vedas. It is not possible to reconstruct Mādhavācchā’s exact arguments, and thus the validity of Kṛṣṇānanda’s responses is not totally intelligible. Nonetheless, he responds to each of the four allegations in turn. In the process, he contends that the mode of worship in the Swaminarayan sampradāya is indeed expounded in the Vedas (vedapratipādya), that the founder of the sampradāya knew the purport of the Vedas (vedārthādyabhijña), and that the sampradāya has always acted in accordance with varṇāśrama dharma (varṇāśramaniṣṭhapravartita). Kṛṣṇānanda concludes that “because [the sampradāya’s] mode of dress and ornamentation, including the forehead markings are described in texts such as the smṛtis, purāṇas, and tantras, there is no avaidikatva.”

Circulation figures for the pamphlet are unknown, but Kṛṣṇānanda clearly hoped to decisively refute Mādhavācchā in a scholastic public.

2.2.3. Appealing to Kāśī

A few months after this, members of the Swaminarayan sampradāya took the issue of vaidikatva up with a group called the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala (BDM). Moreover, immediately after the BDM resolved in favor of the Swaminarayan sampradāya, members of the community from Bombay published a small tract detailing the events called “The Resolution Regarding the Vaidikatva of the Śrī Swaminarayan Sampradāya Arrived at by the

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38 veṣābhūṣāpaṇḍrādīnāṁ smṛtipurāṇatantrādigranthesu pratipādītavād avaidikatvāṁ nāsti; Ibid.
Great Pañḍits of Kāśī.” The tract is mostly in Gujarati, suggesting that it was appealing to a broader base of the scholastic public than Kṛṣṇānanda’s Sanskrit pamphlet. In describing the lead up to the resolution, the tract repeats Kṛṣṇānanda’s claims. It states that Mādhavafīrtha had caused great agitation by saying that the sampradāy of certain Brahmīns is avaidika, and that on behalf of the entire community, brahmacārīs and śāstrīs “have repeatedly invited him to prove the things he has said, done, and written.” It further indicates that Mādhavafīrtha initially agreed to meet, but then did not respond to requests for deciding a time and venue. Frustrated by the situation, members of the sampradāy sent copies of the Śīkṣapatrī—the sampradāy’s code of conduct attributed to Sahajānand Svāmī—to the Bombay branch of the BDM. It was subsequently forwarded to the broader BDM membership in Banaras, which met in November 1907 to make its resolution.

The BDM was an association of educated men initially formed in 1889 by Din Dayalu Sharma in Haridwar, and was envisioned in theory as a trans-sectarian religious body aimed at religious reform and the protection of varnasrama dharma. Further, it was seen as a broader collective to coordinate the efforts of various sanatana dharma sabhās. It attracted the patronage of Hindu kings and rulers, and eventually shifted its meeting site to Banaras. At its core, it was an associational body rooted in debate: the BDM sent out religious questionnaires to pañḍits and śāstrīs in order to arrive at a consensus regarding issues flagged by rival groups like the Arya Samaj as wide ranging as varnāśrama dharma to science and rationality. Further, the BDM solicited written questions regarding Hindu

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40 Ibid., 3
scriptural texts—including the Vedas and *purānas*—to be discussed and answered by the group. Though reform-minded, it still reflected a project of supporting a symbolic orthodoxy, largely in opposition to the Arya Samaj.

In her study of the BDM, Malavika Kasturi describes a rift that split the group in 1902, after which a Śaiva Daśanāṁī ascetic by the name of Swami Gyanananda came to lead the organization and Din Dayalu Sharma left to form another group. Kasturi argues that Swami Gyanananda’s control of the BDM was part and parcel of the Daśanāṁīs broadening their reach, and represented a shift from lay leadership to one rooted in ascetic lineages, and the re-centering of Brahminical orthodoxy. Kasturi notes that “ascetic orders drew upon a pre-British world comprising sampradayik communities” in which “it was common for teachers from ascetic lineages to influence princely rulers as teachers, guides and political players.” In the colonial period, these groups drew upon the same power structures, but pursued different projects.

It is in this context of a changing demographic of the BDM that the Swaminarayan *sampradāy* submitted its question about its *vaidikatva*. In doing so, it was drawing upon the network of associational bodies emerging in the wake of Arya Samaj-*sanātana dharma* debates, but also drawing upon the prestige of Banaras. That the BDM would side with the *sampradāy* was not a foregone conclusion. It would stand to reason that based on sectarian affiliation, Swami Gyanānanda would support Mādhavāṅrtha, a fellow Daśanāṁī Śaiva. Further, the representatives of the BDM in Bombay who took the Swaminarayan case to

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46 Ibid., 4-5.
Banaras were said to have attained these posts because of Mādhavatīrtha. Nonetheless, over various meetings in November 1907, the BDM passed a total of six resolutions in support of the Swaminarayan sampradāy. Swami Gyānānanda’s signature is conspicuously absent. The published tract included a translation of five of six resolutions passed by the BDM. The first three of these are variations on the same theme, with differing signatories: they all assert that the Śikṣāpatrī written by Sahajānand Svāmī is vaidika, and are dated to November 6, 1907.

Two days after this, there was a fourth resolution signed by seven signatories which arrived at a slightly different conclusion: though most of the teachings in the Śikṣāpatrī were vaidika, there were two contrary to the scriptures: the prohibitions on ritual animal slaughter and the partaking of this meat.

There is one final resolution included in the tract, dated to November 25, 1907. The introduction to the tract lays out the reasons why this final one was necessary. It states that although 150 members of the BDM were present at the initial meeting, there were certain figures who still had sympathies with Mādhavatīrtha. There was a second meeting held in which this contingent maintained that the Swaminarayan sampradāy was a vaidyaka. But a prominent śāstrī named Sudhākar Dvivedī—whose name is the first to appear in the list of signatories in the initial resolution—reportedly spoke in favor of the sampradāy, and the contingent allied with Mādhavatīrtha was not successful. Nonetheless, a man named Gosai Rāmcaranpuri published a false report, printing the names of many of the attendees of the second meeting and alleging that they had signed onto the initial resolution mistakenly. The

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47 *Nirṇay*, 4.
48 Ibid., 9-10; see Śikṣāpatrī v. 12, v. 15.
49 *Nirṇay*, 4.
tract explains that in order to clarify the confusion, a third meeting was held, with double the attendees of the first, conclusively resolving that the Śikṣāpatrī and the Swaminarayan sampradāy were in accordance with the śrūtis and smṛtis. This internal dissension is perhaps indicative of the aforementioned fissures in the BDM. The sectarian concerns of the Daśanāmī leadership were overridden by the Śikṣāpatrī’s promotion of a system consistent with the BDM’s views on varnāśrama dharma.

There are two further noteworthy elements of the tract. Firstly, it includes a letter at the very end written by a figure from Banaras named Gosvāmī Puruṣottamānand Gīrī. It is dated two days after the final meeting, and corroborates the aforementioned account of the meeting. It is devoid of any polemics or derogatory remarks about Mādhavatīrtha, and is simply a record of the meeting with a list of many of the esteemed figures in presence. It is presented in Hindi, but typeset in Gujarati characters. 

Secondly, the tract is quite clear about why it is being published:

We’ve created this small book describing the resolution arrived at regarding the purity and excellence of our sampradāy by great śāstrīs so that the reverend Mādhavatīrtha ceases this baseless nuisance, thereby halting the increase of his infamy by his own hands.

It was not enough that the BDM resolved in favor of the sampradāy, but rather, the entire story, the resolution, and external corroboration of this had to be published and disseminated.

One other text reveals that the aforementioned publications were not immediately as effective as hoped. In February 1908, roughly two and a half months after the BDM resolutions, an open letter to Mādhavatīrtha was published by Brahmins residing in Umreṭh,

51 Ibid. 11-12.
52 ḍhāme amārā sampradāyāni śuddhi ane śreṣṭhatva svākānārā mhoṭā mhoṭā mahāmahopādyāyo ne śāstrōne hāthe thayel nirṇayā a laghu pustak prasidh karī ke tēthi paṇ śrīyut mādhavātīrth have nahaknū tofān macāvātī aṭkā potāñe hāthej potānī aparatiṣṭhā vadāhāre na kare; Ibid., 3.
located a mere five miles from Mādhavatīrtha’s new center at Dākor. Again, many of themes from the previous publications are present: Mādhavatīrtha’s pronouncements resulting in the ostracizing of Swaminarayan Brahmins and his stated desire of debating Swaminarayans but dropping out at the last minute. Though they make no reference to the BDM resolutions in this letter, the Brahmins do lay down the gauntlet:

We are making it well known that we are ready to do a śāstrārtha…If it’s true as you say that you are prepared to put down a deposit of Rs. 5,000, we are prepared to put down a deposit of Rs. 5,000 for a venue. If you really have the desire, as you say, to discuss your points and your actions honestly in front of an adjudicator, then within five days, give us the names of two or three intermediaries, and then we’ll name our intermediaries within another five days. Between them, they’ll name one adjudicator. Our intermediaries will select a date for the sabhā between 45-60 days from the day we receive your reply.53

By providing a surfeit of details and logistical considerations, the Brahmins are attempting to show that they are serious about confronting Mādhavatīrtha head on. This is the final document discussing the matter from this time period, with the exception of the account provided in the Śrī Svāminārāyan monthly magazine.

This entire dispute bears similarities to the earlier dispute in Baroda: there was a concern about external identifying markers (tilakas), the contention started amongst Brahmins, and an external body of śāstras was appealed. However, there are some notable differences. The deliberations in Banaras seem to have been far more substantive, spanning the course of several weeks, and based on a careful study of Swaminarayan documents. More importantly, the latter dispute shows an increasing employment of print technologies to engage a scholastic public. All three of these documents published within months of each other between 1907-1908 are indicative of the ways in which the Swaminarayan sampradāya

made use of this new technology for the purpose of defending their *sampradāy* and their place within this public.

### 2.3. Cultivating an Internal Scholastic Public

The discussion of the Swaminarayan *sampradāy*’s use of print culture has thus far been centered on small tracts used to publicize a scholastic dispute with an external group. In this section, I examine the attempts to develop a scholastic public *within* the *sampradāy* through the publication of monthly magazines meant for a lay readership. This is based on a study of twenty years’ worth of issues of the *Śrī Svāminārāyan* magazine edited and published between 1920 and 1940 by a lay follower named Madhavlāl Dalsukrām Koṭhārī from Ahmedabad. As previously discussed in this chapter, lay membership in the *sampradāy* cut across divisions of caste and class. The educated readership of the *sampradāy* would not have been disproportionately Brahminical; in fact, Koṭhārī himself was an educated merchant. Within the pages of these issues, Koṭhārī published articles written by himself and others on news related to the *sampradāy*, texts and devotional songs of the *sampradāy*, and editorial opinions.

With respect to an internal scholastic public, two main patterns emerge: 1) there is an attempt to educate lay members of the *sampradāy* about issues related to Vedānta; and 2) there is a push to develop a discerning lay fellowship willing to criticize and reform the *sampradāy* in matters of scholastic laxity. As such, the concerns raised by this magazine provide a window into the concerns of an elite and educated class of lay followers, and thus afford a necessary foil to the institutional efforts discussed in the subsequent section. It also demonstrates the perspective of a lay member seeking to transcend the growing sectarianism in the 100 year-old *sampradāy*, one who is uniquely unafraid to criticize those who hold
power within the community. It demonstrates the perceived power of such an educated, internal public to sustain the \textit{sampradāy}.

The \textit{Śrī Svāminārāyaṇ} magazine was neither the first nor the last of its kind within the \textit{sampradāy}. Koṭhārī himself provides a history of such magazines that preceded his: there was the \textit{Satsang Prakaś} put out by a lay devotee from eastern Kathiawar starting in 1890; the \textit{Satsang} published in south Kathiawar starting in 1906; the \textit{Śvāminārāyaṇ} started in 1910; the \textit{Satsang Vijay} in western Kathiawar, etc.\textsuperscript{54} Interestingly, Koṭhārī provides all this information by way of appeal. All of these other magazines had folded, and in the fourth year of his publication, he sought the support of other members of the \textit{sampradāy} in terms of increased subscriptions. Koṭhārī wanted to shape a lay scholastic public through his print endeavor, but he needed the cooperation of his peers in order to do so. His enterprise seems to have been more successful than his predecessors’, and several other magazines started up subsequently. A close study of Koṭhārī’s magazine provides a rare glimpse into a moment of great change for the Swaminarayan \textit{sampradāy} in the early twentieth century, 100 years after its inception.

\subsection*{2.3.1. Translating Vedānta}

Starting from the very first issues of his magazine, Koṭhārī’s magazine included articles by lay and ascetic members of the community on material related to Vedānta. As a whole, these articles mirror the diversity of opinion about the connection between Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta and Swaminarayan Vedānta to be explored in the subsequent chapters. Some portray the two as one and the same, while the remainder make it a point to demonstrate the differences between the two. In either case, both seek to translate an

\footnote{\textsuperscript{54} Mādhavlāl Dalsukrām Koṭhārī, “\textit{Sampradāynā Agāunā Māsikonī Daśā},” \textit{Śrī Svāminārāyaṇ}, Śrāvan V.S. 1979 [August/September 1923], 9-10.}
otherwise Sanskrit tradition in a language and idiom accessible to lay followers literate in Gujarati.

The articles that maintain the absolute relationship between Viśiṣṭādvaita and Swaminarayan Vedānta seek to describe the general principles of the system, and to explain the differences between this system and other schools of Vedānta. An ascetic śāstrī by the name of Hariprasādās authored a series of articles called “Viśiṣṭādvait Siddhānt,” or “The Doctrine of Viśiṣṭādvaita” between 1921 and 1922.55 There was a companion series appearing during the same time frame called “Advait Khaṇḍan” or “The Refutation of Advaita.”56 These appeared in short installments of two to four pages, in relatively simple language, with concise explanations of technical vocabulary. Another set of articles provide a side-by-side, point-by-point comparison of competing systems. One lists thirty-three differences between Advaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita, broadly covering conceptualizations of brahman, knowledge, individual souls, māyā, and liberation.57 Another lists nine differences between Vallabha’s school of Śuddhādvaita and Viśiṣṭādvaita in an article called, “What does Our Viśiṣṭādvaita Position Mean?”58 Combined, these articles provided a distilled overview of key Vedāntic talking points.

The magazine also published direct translations into Gujarati of Sanskrit texts dealing with Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. For example, there was a translation of the Sanskrit introduction to a commentary on the Upaniṣads according to Viśiṣṭādvaita published in 1923, which included a lengthy discussion of the salient themes of Viśiṣṭādvaita over and against

55 See, for example, Śrī Svāminārāyaṇ, Vaiśākh V.S. 1977 [May/June 1921], 13-15; Śrī Svāminārāyaṇ, Āśād 1977 [July/August 1921], 17-19; Śrī Svāminārāyaṇ, Jeṭh 1978 [May/June 1922], 18-22.
58 “Apaṇo Viśiṣṭādvaita mat eṭle śu?” Śrī Svāminārāyaṇ, Vaiśākh V.S. 1984 [April/May 1928], 8.
Advaita. There was also the serial translation starting in 1940 of the fifteenth-century Viśiṣṭādvaita treatise Yatindramatadīpikā. Kothārī explains his rationale for this inclusion by first pointing out that there was no extant translation of this work in Gujarāṭī. More importantly, though, he claims that since it would take an ordinary person a lifetime to understand Rāmānuja’s texts, the Yatindramatadīpikā is the “essence of all of these texts,” and “presents a condensed version of Rāmānuja’s position.” These editorial choices demonstrate an effort by Kothārī to consistently yet gradually educate a lay Swaminarayan public about Vedānta beyond just the nominal understanding they would have without access to Sanskrit materials.

In another article, answering the titular question, “What does Sampradāy Mean?” Kothārī explains that a sampradāy is a succession of gurus (guru-paramparā). Following the trope explored in the previous chapter, Kothārī traces this lineage back from Sahajānand Svāmī to Rāmānand Svāmī to Rāmānuja. The article goes on to say that Sahajānand Svāmī has accepted the conceptualization of the individual self (ātmā) and God (paramātmā) in accordance with Viśiṣṭādvaita. Because of this, Kothārī argues:

Accepting Rāmānuja’s school, accepting the spiritual texts he has written such as the Śrībhāṣya, and accepting Rāmānuja in the lineage of gurus should not cause anyone alarm; all of these matters must have been duly considered by the initiator of the sampradāy. There is no reason to object or doubt in this respect.

This explanation belies a certain anxiety that persisted from the earliest period of the sampradāy about not having a standalone system of Vedānta. Kothārī is quick to refute these

60 “Yatindramatadīpikā,” Śrī Svāminārāyan, Caitra V.S. 1996 [April/May 1940], 1.
61 “Sampradāy Eṭle Śū?” Śrī Svāminārāyan, Fāgan V.S. 1996 [March/April 1940], 5.
62 Rāmānujno mat svihārvāthi ke temne racit śrībhāṣyādi adhyātma granthono svihārvāthī rāmānujne guruparamparamā svihārvāthi kaśi ghabarāman lāvvanī jarur nathi. e bhadho vicar sampradāynā adiṣṭhātā- pravartak śrījī karvo ja haše...temā akṣep ke ṣaṅkā karvānū āpāne kāraṅ nathi; Ibid.
perspectives, as Nityānand Svāmī did nearly a century before him. For Koṭhārī, appealing to Viśiṣṭādvaita did not diminish the scholastic credibility of the tradition one bit, and he strove to convey this to other lay members as well.

However, these efforts did not stop him from publishing well-written and well-argued articles discussing a slightly different perspective. For example, he published an article by Raṇchodlāl Puruṣottam Dave called “An Independent Dharma,” which highlights some of the ways that Sahajānand Svāmī’s system differs from Rāmānuja’s Viśiṣṭādvaita.63 He also published a series of articles that would later form a standalone book on the Swaminarayan sampradāya by Gujarati author Kishorelal Mashruwala. This included two articles that insisted that Rāmānuja’s sampradāya and the Swaminarayan sampradāya were not the same because of differences in metaphysics (tattvajñān).64 The thrust of these discussions centers on the enumeration of ontological entities, and both authors insist that while Rāmānuja’s system accounts for three, Sahajānand Svāmī’s accounts for five. Though these matters will be treated at length in subsequent sections, it is important to reiterate that in the process of educating a lay public about Swaminarayan Vedānta, Koṭhārī represented two different perspectives regarding the connection to Viśiṣṭādvaita.

2.3.2. Criticizing the Leadership: Books, Schools, and Sects

Koṭhārī also used his magazine to generate a sense of awareness among other lay devotees about scholastic concerns affecting the sampradāya. This took the form of articles and editorials criticizing the leadership of the sampradāya—be they ācāryas, sādhus, or other

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śāstrīs. These leaders were criticized for a number of reasons, but two related issues are relevant to our discussion: 1) a disinclination to promote scholasticism, and 2) growing sectarianism within the sampradāy. Koṭhārī’s criticisms were not always well received, and he acknowledged this fact within his editorials. At the end of 1928, Koṭhārī wrote “A Notice,” in which he states:

In this monthly magazine, whatever I write from time to time is nothing but the true situation I feel in my heart, based on my experience and my extreme affection for the sampradāy. Therefore, no one should feel as though I’m wilfully and personally criticizing them, nor that I am writing out of bias against them.  

This note is cordial yet firm. He is acknowledging that people feel singled out by his criticism, but is unwilling to back down. The next time he addresses the situation, his tone becomes more antagonistic. In a five-page article entitled “The Advice to Remain in the Dark Persists!” he defends himself against an anonymous pamphlet critical of his magazine. First, assuming his critic is a sādhu, he rails, “a sādhu donning saffron garb and having learned a few words can author and publish however many threatening pamphlets he wants, but conversely, this will only hurt his reputation.” After addressing a series of the anonymous author’s criticisms, he concludes: “the author says that I should become a true follower of the ācārya [head of one of two Swaminarayan dioceses]. Fine! But I say this era won’t last. Give up these discussions about blind faith.” Koṭhārī refused to mince words when it came to issues of bettering the sampradāy, even if it meant criticizing figures of authority.

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67 aṇe bhagavā veśhārī koi be aḵṣar bhaṅgālā sāḍhu pāse hāṁṁā jeva game teṭṭā bhhāṭtā bhāṣāṁā lākhalā copāṇīyā bahār pādvaṁā āve parantu tethī to utttī māṁhāṁi che, emphasis added. Ibid., 3
68 chevaṭ kahē che ke ācāryanā sācā amūyāṁ bano: barābar che! aṁe em kahē chīe ke e jamāṅo have nahīṁ chāle. aṇḍhaśraddhāṁi vāto muki do; Ibid., 5.
One of the recurring concerns Koṭhārī sought to generate an awareness about had to do with the printing of Swaminarayan texts. He published an article in 1922 by Īśvardās Icchārām Maśruvāḷā entitled, “Discussing our Sampradāy’s Literature.”

Maśruvāḷā first explains the powerful force this literature had on Gujarati society, but then laments that so much of the sampradāy’s literature remains unpublished. Most of the blame goes to the leaders of the sampradāy:

As though believing that publishing texts or having them published would cause them harm, they don’t publish the collection of texts they have, nor do they give the texts to those who wish to publish them. It unfortunately must be said that the real reason behind this is the ignorance of the ācāryas’ aides.

Koṭhārī repeats this refrain a year later, expressing his frustration that scores of books remained locked up in dusty cupboards and libraries of the main temples, inaccessible to a lay public. The dissemination of these texts was seen as critical in promoting a lay scholastic reading public, and Koṭhārī hoped that others would recognize this.

A related target of Koṭhārī’s criticism was the state of Sanskrit Pāthaśālās (schools). Koṭhārī frequently refers to Sahajānand Svāmī’s exhortation in the Śikṣāpatrī that his ācāryas (successors) “should establish pāthaśālās headed by learned Brahmans and promote the spread of the knowledge of truth” (sadvidyā).

Though there were attempts to do this at various stages in the early years of the sampradāy, a formal Sanskrit pāthaśālā was established in Vartal, the center of the southern diocese, in 1909. A similar institution was

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70 jāne ke grantho prakaṭaṁ thatā koi prakāṛṇi potāne hāni thavāno sambhav hoy tem te loko samgrahit pustako prakaṭa kartā nathī ke prakaṭ kavā ācchārane āptā nathī āttā satya ākaṁ sampradāyāṁ ācāryonā saṁākāronū aṁjān che em soksah kaheva ghaṭe che; Ibid., 29.
72 Sansthāpya vipraṁ vidvāṁsam pāthaśālāṁ vidhāṇpya ca pravartanīyā sadvidyā bhuvī; ŚIKṢĀPATRĪ v. 132.
established in the northern diocese at Ahmedabad as well, and it was decided in 1929 that further funds be set aside for this *pāṭhaśālā* as part of an agreement for the internal planning of the diocese.\textsuperscript{74} Institutionally, the *sampradāy* planned for the creation and maintenance of schools for traditional Sanskrit education and scholarship.

However, Koṇṭhārī’s frequent charge in the pages of his magazine is that these institutions are *pāṭhaśālās* in name only. With respect to the Vartal Pāṭhaśālā, it is reported as early as 1922 that:

> neither are the *tyāgīs* taking advantage of it, nor are the administrators making arrangements so that others can take advantage of it. And we hear whispers of people talking as though this big organization with so many *mandirs* and *tyāgīs* can’t afford one or two educated *śāstrīs*.\textsuperscript{75}

The situation was not better in Ahmedabad. In 1923, Koṇṭhārī published a letter to the editor about an advertisement in the *Pāṛṣī Sansār* newspaper announcing the opening of a new *pāṭhaśālā* in Karachi under the auspices of the northern diocese. Rather than taking this as a positive development, the author questions why there would be the need to open a second *pāṭhaśālā* in this diocese when the one at Ahmedabad was languishing, with “an average of seventy-five percent of *sādhus* and *brahmaçārīs* remaining illiterate and not receiving Sanskrit training.”\textsuperscript{76} Koṇṭhārī frequently reports on the various meetings and decisions of the *pāṭhaśālā* committees, and urges the *ācāryas* to pay more attention to their proper functioning. He also chastises the leadership for delays in filling vacant positions, and advocates for the hiring of additional *śāstrīs*. In fact, Koṇṭhārī’s exhortations about the

\textsuperscript{74} “Amdāvāḍḍēśnā Mandiro Māṭe Thayelī Yojanā,” *Śrī Svāminārāyaṇ*, Pauś V.S. 1985 [November 1929], 3.

\textsuperscript{75} Nathī tēno lābh tyāgī varg leto ke nathī anya koṭīhi lai śakāy tevī vyavastāh vyavasthāpako kartā. Ane āṭlā badhā mandiro ane tyāgōvāḷī sansthāmā ek be vidvān śāstrōno karch jāne kahi nibhī šake tevo bhārī pada hov tem te pāṭhaśālāne pan bandh karvāṇī māhi māhi guspus vāto cālī kvacit kvacit janāy che; Maśruvāḷā, “Sampradāyānā Sāhityā,” 30.

pāṭhaśālas drew ire from the anonymous sādhu who published the pamphlet against him referenced above. In Koṭhārī’s rebuttal, he states:

They don’t even like our advice regarding the pāṭhaśālas. They say, ‘the knowledge (vidyā) of Sanskrit is currently in a poor state (durdaśā) and there are no interested students.’ This is the first I’ve heard of the poor state of this vidyā. Western scholars of Sanskrit praise this vidyā, and they fund this study by the millions.77

Koṭhārī was unafraid to criticize the lack of resources devoted to these pāṭhaśālas, and hoped to generate awareness among his readership of this fact.

Koṭhārī connects the two issues of text publishing and pāṭhaśālas in a 1940 editorial called, “A Consideration for the Entire Fellowship.”78 He begins by describing the importance of books written a scholastic style that are intimately connected with matters of scripture (śāstriyā paddhatinā grantho). Koṭhārī suggests it is these scholastic texts that result in the nourishing (puṣṭi) of a sampradāy. In doing so, he is building upon and modifying Sahajānand Svāmī’s own explanation in the Vacanāṃṛt that texts concerning the life-story of one’s deity (iṣṭadeva) are responsible for this nourishment.79 Koṭhārī refers to the various śāstriya texts Sahajānand Svāmī patronized, extrapolating that these are the very texts that describe the attributes of God and true sādhus. He once again makes a plea to “the leaders and decision-makers of the sampradāy” that they work towards making this scholastic literature available.80 He then connects this directly to the operations of the pāṭhaśālas: it is the job of these institutions to develop and train people to compose, edit, and publish these texts. He concludes with the suggestion that “the curriculum of both pāṭhaśālas

77 pāṭhaśālānā saṃbandhnī amārī salaḥ paṇ tene rucī nathī. te kahe che ke “sanskrit vidyāni durdaśā beṭhī che ane vidyārthīhī maḷī nathi,” vidyāni durdaśā bese te to āje sāmbhālayī. sanskṛtnā pāścātya deśnā vidvāno kevā vakhāṅkare che ane te māje ā deśmā paṇ karoḍonā fund thāy che; Koṭhārī, “Andhāre Rahevāno,” 5.
79 Vacanāṃṛt Gaḍadhā II.58, pp. 468-469.
80 sampradāyānā agresaro tathā adhikārio; Koṭhārī, “Ākhā Satsaṅgī Covat,” 7.
[in Vartal and Ahmedabad] needs to be rethought anew. It should not be forgotten that it is through these efforts that the sampradāy will advance. Educated people in both dioceses should take on this task. Koṭhārī’s recommendations thus demonstrate a consistent emphasis on the scholastic endeavor for sustaining lay members of the sampradāy.

In the same 1940 editorial, Koṭhārī points out the connection between scholasticism and sectarianism in the sampradāy. He argues that the lack of scholastic training within the sampradāy is leading to the proliferation of a body of literature written by charismatic individuals. He warns that these texts and people could cause great harm to the community: “people must understand the principles of the scriptures and become firm in these principles to earn the grace of God, but should not become mixed up in the adoration of just any ordinary individual.” This “adoration” of certain individuals (vyaktipūjā) led to the formation of several splinter groups within the sampradāy, and in a 1938 article, Koṭhārī lists off a total of ten such groups of varying influence. Koṭhārī used his magazine as a forum to criticize these groups and the texts they produced.

In describing one of these texts, Koṭhārī warns that at first glance, anyone would think that the text is an authoritative work of the Swaminarayan sampradāy written with great care. However, it falls short on two counts: 1) it is not in accordance with the Śikṣāpatrī and Vacanāṁṛt, and 2) it has not been published with explicit permission of one of the ācāryas. To curb the spread of these texts, the administrative offices of the two original

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81 banne pāthaśālāono abhyāskram navesarthā thavānī jarur che...te vade sampradāyānā puṣṭī thāy e lakṣya bhulvā jevā nathi. banne deśonā vidvānoe ā kārā avaśya hath dharvā ghaṭe che; Ibid., 8.
82 manusye śastronā tattvo samjīne prabhuprasannatā māte tatvaniṣṭha thavānī jarur che, ane game tevī vyaktipūjāma bhaṭṭi javānī nathi; Ibid., 7.
83 Some of the groups mentioned are no longer extant. Others are listed as discrete groups but were likely part of the same community, including the groups ascribed to Guṇāṭānand Svāmī, “Prāgo Bhaktarāj,” and Śāstrījī Yajñapuruṣdāsji. Śrī Svāminārāyan, Poś V.S. 1995 [December 1938/January 1939], 3.
84 Ibid.
dioceses of the *sampradāy* instituted a policy of authenticating publication: texts had to be published with the express permission of the ācārya, and this permission had to be printed alongside other publication information. In 1940, Koṭhārī published a public notice from the chief administrator of the Vartal diocese echoing his earlier concerns about problematic texts: “these counterfeit texts, which are in opposition to the authoritative old treatises of the *sampradāy*, in which there is no surety of publication in accordance with the permission of the ācārya, are not approved in the *sampradāy*.”

In addition to categorically rejecting texts that did not adhere to this criteria, Koṭhārī also published several articles targeting specific works produced by specific splinter groups that appeared in his aforementioned list. This includes two groups relevant to the discussion in the subsequent section and subsequent chapters: 1) the group forming around the teaching of an influential lay follower near Ahmedabad named Abjī Bāpā, and 2) the group founded by Śāstrī Yagnapurusād near Vartal.

In summary, though Koṭhārī’s monthly magazine for lay members of the Swaminarayan *sampradāy* achieved a range of effects, a very noticeable one is the development of an intra-community public for the discussion and promotion of scholasticism. Being limited to an educated literate class within the *sampradāy*, this public was certainly not uniformly inclusive. However, it made an effort at translating complex scholastic concepts to a broader audience. Also, this public was implicated in challenging traditional hierarchical power structures through its trenchant critiques of ācāryas, sādhus,

85 to āvā banāvaṭī ane sampradāyūnā pramāṇik prācīṇ prabandhoti viruddh lakhānvālā je je vārtāo vagerēna pustako hoy ane jemā dhā. dhū. ācārya maharājāsvānī ājātā melvīne chāpēvānā āvyānī khārī khātrī na hoy te pustako amārā sampradāyūnā mānya nathī; “Vaḍālnā Koṭhārīnī Patrikā,” Śrī Svāminārāyan, Vaiśākha-Jeth V.S. 1996 [May/June 1940], 6.

86 For examples of articles critical of these texts, see “Loyānā 4,” Śrī Svāminārāyan, Mārgśīrṣ 1992 [November/December 1935], 3-4; and Krṣṇajīvandās, “‘Svāminārāyaṇ Prakāś’ Vedhu Avalokan,” Śrī Svāminārāyaṇ, Mārgśīrṣ 1995 [November/December 1938], 5-7.
and other influential leaders of the sampradāya in matters of scholasticism. These complex negotiations would not have been possible without the advent of this new genre of the monthly magazine and its readership.

2.4. Publishing Commentaries

This section examines the ways in which Koṭhārī’s overlapping concerns about scholasticism—educating the community about Swaminarayan Vedānta, the publication of scholastic texts, the maintenance of pāṭhāśālās, and the formation of distinct sects within the sampradāya—were addressed at an institutional level through the publication of Vedānta commentaries. This is not to say that these institutional efforts were a response to Koṭhārī’s criticisms; however, the efforts do substantiate that Koṭhārī had tapped into some real concerns about scholasticism in the second century of the sampradāya’s existence. After first examining the market for Vedāntic commentarial texts in the first half of the twentieth century, I will provide an overview of the various texts published in the sampradāya and the players involved in their publication. I argue that the burgeoning print market, which included a market for scholastic texts, allowed for sects within the community to contest each other’s authority by recourse to a Vedāntic scholastic public. As such, the Swaminarayan sampradāya provides an example of this phenomenon that is reminiscent of the centrality of print in the negotiation of sectarian divide in the Rāmānandi sampradāya in the early twentieth century.

Though the Rāmānandi sampradāya has been reconstituted at various stages in its history, and particularly following a conference of samnyāsins at Galtā in the eighteenth
century, William Pinch has demonstrated the critical role print culture played in amplifying a sectarian conflict in the early twentieth century. The conflict was between one group that sought to highlight a direct connection between the historical Rāmānand and Rāmānuja, privileging the role of “sophisticated pandits,” and those who sought to efface the link, privileging “radical” poetry. Pinch argues that printed texts and their increased circulation meant that competing, local exegeses could no longer coexist, threatening the unity of sampradāy. Purushottam Agrawal complicates the binary between paṇḍit and poet slightly through his study of the the efforts of a Rāmānandi leader named Bhagwadacharya in elevating the Sanskrit texts attributed to Rāmānand, all in the service of negating the need for a connection to Rāmānuja. Part of these efforts, Agrawal argues, was the production of a commentary attributed to Rāmānand, first introduced in 1920, but not published until 1932. Bhagwadacharya later admitted that this text was adapted from an earlier commentary and attributed to Rāmānand, though his opponents in the “Ramanujī” faction decried the text even when it was first published. During this same time period, in the wake of schism within the Swaminarayan sampradāy, there was an increase in commentarial publication that entailed the creation of rival texts attributed to the same historical person.

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89 Ibid., 55.
2.4.1. The Market for Print in Bombay

It is nearly impossible to get a fully comprehensive idea of what was printed in colonial and postcolonial South Asia. Ulrike Stark, in her meticulous study of the north Indian Naval Kishore Press house, observed that since archives of publishers and booksellers are either inaccessible or non-extant, we must rely on British colonial records. Pursuant to the Copyright and Registration Act of 1867, the various presidencies in British India were charged with keeping quarterly catalogues of all materials published. In theory, publishers were to remit one copy of each printed text to the India Office Library in London, and another to the Bombay University Library in the case of the Bombay Presidency at the Crown’s expense. Though the catalogue is not exhaustive, it presents a tremendous archive that many scholars of print have relied upon to develop an image of print culture and print markets in various regions of India.91

Print in India here represents a quantitative shift: texts that ordinarily circulated in small numbers as manuscripts began to proliferate in print. However, this change was gradual. Before the quarterly catalogues commenced, colonial officials compiled a full catalogue of native publications in the Bombay Presidency until 1864. In commenting on the Sanskrit portion of the catalogue, the superintendent of Sanskrit Studies in Poona College, F. Keilhorn, laments:

the students of Sanskrit who may reasonably expect to find in the 175 numbers of Sanskrit works contained in this catalogue, a fair representation of Sanskrit literature, will, on a careful inspection, be disappointed. Most of the books here enumerated, if books they may be called, have no other claims to general interest.92

91 For a partial overview of scholarship based on these catalogues, see Orsini, Hindi Public Sphere, 69.
He goes on to predict that there would be no real proliferation of printed Sanskrit material due to a combination of a lack of readership and the fact that the Sanskrit literate elite would always prefer their inherited manuscripts.

In examining the quarterly catalogues of printed books in the Bombay Presidency over the first half of the twentieth century, it becomes clear that Keilhorn’s dire prediction did not hold true.93 I will demonstrate how this is the case with specific reference to Sanskrit commentaries written on Vedāntic texts. The initial catalogue indicates that of the 175 Sanskrit books printed before 1864, not a single one was a commentary. In contrast, from 1900-1950, there are almost 100 such commentaries printed. To give some further information about these texts: 21 of these commentaries are on the Bhagavad Gītā, 24 on various Upaniṣads, but the majority, 54, are on the Brahma Sūtras. Where the affiliation of these texts is discernible, there are 2 Dvaita Vedānta texts, 8 Viśīṣṭādvaita texts, but the majority are Advaita and Vallabha’s Śuddhadvaita—roughly 20 of each. These commentaries were printed through 27 different presses, with 15 texts printed in Ahmedabad, 25 in Poona, but the majority, 53, printed in Bombay. Furthermore, one particular printing house emerges as a powerhouse of Sanskrit publishing in the Bombay Presidency: Nirnaya Sagar Press, which was set up in 1869.94 From these numbers, it is evident that there was a robust market for commentarial texts in early twentieth-century western India.

We must concede that this type of analysis does not tell us much about the actual circulation or reception of these texts. However, many of the Nirnaya Sagar Press texts were published in quantities of 2000, and so we can infer a significant readership. It is within this

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94 Stark, Empire of Books, 412-413.
context of growing Sanskrit commentaries that we can understand the venture of publishing commentaries on the part of educated members of the Swaminarayan sampradāy.

2.4.2. Twentieth-Century Commentarial Publishing in the Swaminarayan Sampradāy

Before examining the printing of commentaries in the twentieth century, it is necessary to examine the cast of characters involved in the production and dissemination of these texts. In the early stages of the Swaminarayan sampradāy, there were several sādhus who had the ability to compose Sanskrit scholastic texts. They either received this training before becoming or after becoming sādhus. However, there are two main sādhus who are associated with Vedānta commentaries: Muktānand Svāmī (1758-1830) and Gopālānand Svāmī (1781-1852), who were two of the four compilers of the Vācanāṁṛt. Muktānand Svāmī was a senior disciple of Rāmānand Svāmī, whose āśrama Sahajānand Svāmī joined upon arriving in Gujarat. Though he was over twenty years senior to Sahajānand Svāmī, Muktānand Svāmī accepted the young Sahajānand Svāmī as his guru. Muktānand Svāmī was so skilled at writing—with a mastery of Gujarati, Braj, and later in life, Sanskrit—that when Sahajānand Svāmī explained the importance of textual production for the development of a sampradāy, he followed this up with an explicit command specifically to Muktānand Svāmī to compose these texts. Muktānand Svāmī was also the figure who won the śāstrārtha in Baroda as discussed in the previous chapter. Gopālānand Svāmī had studied Sanskrit and received training in classical Vedānta as a young boy. Later, he became one of Sahajānand Svāmī’s leading ascetic disciples. Before passing away, Sahajānand Svāmī charged Gopālānand Svāmī with looking after the temples of Vartal and Ahmedabad, and all of the

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95 Vachanāmrut, Gaḍadhā II.58, p. 469.
96 Sadhu Adarshjivandas, Svāminārāyaṇa Sampradāyān śaṁskṛta Sāhitya: Ek Adhyayan, PhD diss., (Sardar Patel University, 2009), 50.
ascetics in the sampradāy. All Vedānta commentarial literature in Sanskrit written in the early stages of the Swaminarayan sampradāy is attributed to these two prominent figures.

In addition to the authoring of commentaries, the commentarial enterprise in the Swaminarayan sampradāy also consisted of the translation of Sanskrit commentaries into Gujarati, and the subsequent editing and publishing of commentaries and their translations. Though this publishing was initially done under the aegis of wealthy members of the sampradāy, in the early twentieth century, there was a concerted effort to publish Vedānta commentaries on the part of the Sanskrit Prāṭhaṇḍā of the Vartal gādi, or southern diocese of the sampradāy. This traditional school for Sanskrit education had been established in 1909. For roughly the first 30 years of its existence, the office of the pradhānapaṇḍita, or principal paṇḍita, of this pāṭhaśālā was held by a figure named Embār Kṛṣṇamācārya, a Śrīvaiṣṇava from Śrīraṅgam in Tamil Nadu. An article appearing in the Śrī Svāminārāyan magazine entitled, “Farewell to the Learned Śāstrī of Vartal,” carried a Gujarati translation of the Sanskrit felicitation given to him upon his retirement on January 19, 1939. It states that Kṛṣṇamācārya prepared a whole class of Swaminarayan sādhu-scholars, and “undertook many activities in the sampradāy [to propagate] Vedānta in both Sanskrit and vernacular languages in full accordance with the Rāmānuja sampradāy.” During his tenure, Kṛṣṇamācārya edited a host of Swaminarayan texts published through the Vartal diocese, but also numerous other texts published in Baroda through the Baroda Oriental Institute and the Baroda Central Library. In early 1940, the post was given to Prativādi Bhayaṅkaram

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97 sādhu varṇā pāḷā suṇē lejyo re, gopaḷ svāmīnī āgnāmā rahejo re; Niṣkuḷānand Svāmī, Bhaktacintāmaṇi, 650. See also, Sadhu Ishwarcharandas Satsang Vāncannālā Bhāg Trījo, 7th Edition (Amdavad: Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2009), 7.

98 “Vaḍṭālā Vidvān Śāstrījīni Vidāygīrī,” Śrī Svāminārāyan, Māgh V.S. 1995 [January/February 1939], 2-4

99 rāmānuj-sampradāyanā saṃket pramāne saṃskṛt-vedānt ane bhāṣā-vedānt e bānē ni svasampradāyāṃ pravṛtti karnā; Ibid., 3.
AṆṇaṅgarācārya (1891-1983), a prominent scholar and ācārya originally from Kāṇeḻipuram who predominantly spent his life producing Viśiṣṭādvaita texts.¹⁰⁰ AṆṇaṅgarācārya was well-traveled and composed scores of texts in Sanskrit, Tamil, Telugu, and Hindi. This included edited anthologies of Viśiṣṭādvaita and Śrīvaiṣṇava works, his own commentaries, independent treatises, and periodical journals.¹⁰¹ His prominence in the Viśiṣṭādvaita school and the Śrīvaiṣṇava tradition is well-attested.¹⁰² The employment of these figures on the part of the Vartal Pāṭhaśāla represented a commitment to Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta.

This survey of the key figures associated with Vedānta commentarial text production in the Swaminarayan tradition must be paired with a study of the texts associated with them. The Swaminarayan commentarial corpus includes multiple commentaries on the three canonical sacred texts of Vedānta: the Brahma Sūtras, the Upaniṣads, and the Bhagavad Gītā. Each of these will be examined in turn. With respect to the Brahma Sūtra, the first extant commentary is the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Ratna (BSBR), attributed to Muktānand Svāmī. Handwritten manuscripts date to 1830, the year he passed away. This text was first edited and published alongside a Gujarati translation in 1936. Another commentary entitled Vyāsa Sūtrārtha Dīpa (VSD) is attributed to Gopālānand Svāmī; extant manuscripts date this text to 1850, and this text was first published in 2006. There is considerable intertextuality between these two texts. The concluding verses of the BSBR refer to two people who helped Muktānand Svāmī complete the commentary: the “extremely clever” Gopālānand Svāmī, and

¹⁰¹ Ibid.
another sādhu named Mādhavdās. 103 Gopālānand Svāmī, in the concluding verses of the VSD, indicates that he, in turn, was aided by the same Mādhavdās, who was his disciple. 104 Even more importantly, Gopālānand Svāmī occasionally cites the BSBR in his text by name and author, referring his readers to the previous text. 105

These, however, are not the only commentaries on the Brahma Śūtra attributed to Muktānand Svāmī and Gopālānand Svāmī. There is a text called the Brahma Mīmāṃsā (BM) attributed to Muktānand Svāmī, and a subcommentary on this text called the Pradīpa attributed to Gopālānand Svāmī, both of which were published together in one volume in 1952 by the Vartal Pāthaśāla. 106 These commentaries were preceded by lengthy Sanskrit prefaces by both Kṛṣṇamācārya and Aṇṇaṅgarācārya. The two sets of commentaries bear no resemblance to one another, and as I will demonstrate, each set of texts is unique in terms of content. Crucially, the two commentaries attributed to Gopālānand Svāmi bear the same exact final verse indicating that the text was completed in the town of Vartal on “Madhva Navamī” (the ninth day of the bright half of Magha/Mahā) in 1850. 107 Though there is precedence for the same commentator to author multiple commentaries on the same base text, in this case, it is evident that the same authors are not responsible for both sets of texts.

The case of commentaries on the Upaniṣads is similar to the Brahma Śūtra commentaries. This time, however, early commentaries are only attributed to Gopālānand Svāmī. In 1921, 108 the Vartal Pāthaśāla published commentaries on ten principal Upaniṣads,
and then reprinted them in 1932 under the title *Īśādidaśopaniṣad Bhāṣyam*. It was the first Vedānta commentary they had published, and it included a lengthy Sanskrit preface written by Kṛṣṇamācārya. There is another entirely different Upaniṣad commentary, also attributed to Gopālānand Svāmī, which was published in 1988 by another Swaminarayan group based out of the temple in Junagadh. This text, the *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad Bhāṣya*, presents a commentary only on one of the Upaniṣads, the *Īśāvāsyopaniṣad*. Undated handwritten manuscripts of this second text are available. Again, the two texts are not likely to have been written by the same author.

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<th>MS Date</th>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<td>Muktānand Svāmī</td>
<td>1936</td>
<td>1830</td>
<td>Girjashanker Mehta</td>
<td>(Manininar Gadi Sanstan)</td>
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<td>Gopālānand Svāmī</td>
<td>2006</td>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Sadhu Shrutiparakashdas</td>
<td>BAPS</td>
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<td><em>Brahma Mimāmsā</em> (BM)</td>
<td>Muktānand Svāmī</td>
<td>1952</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>P.B. Aṇḍāṅgarācārya</td>
<td>Vartal Sanskrit Pāṭhaśālā</td>
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<tr>
<td><em>Pradīpa</em> (P)</td>
<td>Gopālānand Svāmī</td>
<td>1952</td>
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<td>P.B. Aṇḍāṅgarācārya</td>
<td>Vartal Sanskrit Pāṭhaśālā</td>
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Table 1: Early Swaminarayan *Brahma Sūtra* Commentaries

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<td><em>Īśāvāsyopaniṣad Bhāṣya</em> (IB)</td>
<td>Gopālānand Svāmī</td>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Śāstrī Puruṣottamvallabhāsī</td>
<td>Junagadh</td>
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Table 2: Early Swaminarayan Upaniṣad Commentaries

Last but not least are the commentaries on the *Bhagavad Gītā*. Here, there is only one text attributed to Gopālānand Svāmī, the *Bhagavadbhāvadīpikā*. This text exists in

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under the title *Upaniṣadbhāṣyam*. It is likely that this is the same text as the 1932 version since a translation of the editor’s introduction by Embār Kṛṣṇamācārya appeared in the *Śrī Śvāminārāyan* monthly magazine in 1923. See footnote 59 above.


handwritten manuscripts, and was first published as *Bhagavad Gītā Saṭīka* in 1889 by a direct disciple of Goplanand Swami named Sādhu Mādhavās.\(^{111}\) This text was published only as a Gujarati translation of both the *Bhagavad Gītā* and the commentary, which exist in handwritten manuscripts dating to 1862. The Sanskrit version of the commentary was published by the Vartal Pāṭhasālā in 1941 as *Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā Bhāsyam*.\(^{112}\) This text included a subcommentary in Sanskrit written by Gopālānand Svāmī’s contemporary, Śukanand Svāmī, entitled *Gītā Gūḍārthadīpikā*. One other Sanskrit commentary was authored by Ācārya Vihārīlāljī Mahārāj, who served as the third administrative head of the Vartal gādī. A print edition of this text, the *Anvayārthadīpikā*, dates to 1969.\(^{113}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Print Date</th>
<th>Editor</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Śrīmad Bhagavad Gītā Bhāsyā</em></td>
<td>Gopālānand Svāmī</td>
<td>1941 (1889)</td>
<td>Sādhu Krṣṇasvarupdās</td>
<td>Vartal Sanskrit Pāṭhasālā</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Anvayārthadīpikā</em></td>
<td>Ācārya Vihārīlāljī Mahārāj</td>
<td>1969</td>
<td>Prāṇlāl Bhāśāṅkar</td>
<td>Hariprakāś Śāstrī</td>
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Table 3: Early Swaminarayan *Bhagavad Gītā* Commentaries

2.4.3. Apocrypha & Sectarianism

The foregoing survey is fairly comprehensive in terms of Sanskrit Vedānta commentaries in the Swaminarayan *sampradāy* until the early 1950s, not including other translations, re-printings, and re-publication of the same text by different groups within the *sampradāy*. This survey reveals one of the key issues emerging in an era of print culture: multiple texts attributed to the same author. Issues of attribution are certainly not new in the age of print, nor are they unique to the Swaminarayan *sampradāy*. Mashruwala, writing in 1923, laments:

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There is a weakness in the Hindu dharma that has continued on from its roots, which is to author texts under another’s name. All of purāṇas climb onto Vyās’s name; the responsibility for the Yogavāśīṣṭha is cast upon Vālmīki. Similarly, even in this [Swaminarayan] sampradāy, one person writes a text and, in casting it upon someone else’s name, demonstrates no fear in destroying the truth. That this practice has continued through to this day is very unfortunate.\(^{114}\)

The practice of attributing a text to a more authoritative figure is evidently a time-honored tradition that Mashruwala argues continued within the Swaminarayan sampradāy into the early twentieth century. As in the Rāmānandi case, print allowed for the introduction and amplified proliferation of these apocryphal texts, occasioned by a newfound market for them.

In order to understand why multiple commentaries were published within years of one another, we must reflect back on the growing sectarianism within the sampradāy. As Koṭhārī observed in 1940, there were a host of dynamic personalities who commanded sizeable followings. As Williams notes, some of these figures directly challenged the authority of the ācāryas of the two established dioceses at Ahmedabad and Vartal.\(^{115}\) One was Shastri Yagnapurushdas, who splintered off of the Vartal diocese in 1905. He went on to establish the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (now better known as BAPS), and built five large temples near Vartal and in Kathiawad by the time he passed away in 1951. Another was a group that officially split off of the Ahmedabad diocese in the early 1940s, though momentum had been building for years if not decades prior. They were centered just outside of Ahmedabad in Maninagar, and their group came to be called the Swaminarayan Gadi Sansthan.\(^{116}\) Both of these groups trace a line of spiritual succession

\(^{114}\) hindu dharmāṁ ek nirbāṭā múḻthī cáāt ja āvī che, te e ke bijāāne nāme grantho racvānī. badhāye purāṇo vyāśne nāme cade che; ‘yogavāśīṣṭha’ nī javābdārī vālmīki upar nakhāi che. tem ā sampradāyāmā paṅ koike granth lākhī bijā koine nāme cadāvī devatā thatā satyanā bhaṅgni dhāśī ja nathī rākhī. āvī āj sudhī călyū āve che e bahu khedkārāk che; Kishorelal Mashruwala, Sahajānand Svāmī athavā Svāminārāyan Sampradāy (Ahmedabad: Navjīvan Prakāśan Mandir, 1923), 155.

\(^{115}\) Williams, Introduction to Swaminarayan Hinduism, 52-55.

mostly through sādhus, and occasionally householders, in direct opposition to the hereditary lineage of ācāryas.

Though it is difficult to fully ascertain which texts are indeed apocryphal, I suggest that it is highly likely that the commentaries published by the Vartal Pāṭhaśālā were new texts, possibly even composed by their Viśiṣṭādvaita editors. Girijashankar Mehta—who was the editor of the first published Brahma Sūtra commentary, the BSBR—explains that the manuscript he used for the publication of the text in 1936 was given to him by an ascetic named Iśvarcarandās, who in turn received it from Nirgundas, who was a direct disciple of Muktānand Svāmī. Significantly, that Iśvarcarandās was an important figure in the early formation of the Maninagar-based Swaminarayan Gadi Sansthan, which officially became a separate sect of the sampradāy in 1942. Mehta is also explicit about one thing: if there are any other commentaries published in the future attributed to Muktānand Svāmī, these should be considered spurious texts.  

This proleptic warning anticipated a rival commentary published by the Vartal Pāṭhaśālā in 1952. In response, the BSBR was re-published by the Maningar Swaminarayan Gadi Sansthan in 1958.

Further, there is textual evidence that indicates the Vartal Pāṭhaśāla authors were, in fact, responsible for authoring parts of the commentaries they published. In his preface to Gopālānand Svāmī’s Upaniṣad commentaries, Kṛṣṇamācārya indicates that Gopālānand Svāmī wished to do a vivaraṇa, or an exposition of all ten of the principal Upaniṣads; though he started, he was unable to finish because he did not have time. Kṛṣṇamācārya states: “Having accumulated the Upaniṣadic statements described by Gopālānand Svāmī in my

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heart, [then] having seen the intent of [these descriptions], this [present] exposition of that intent is begun without obstacle." He goes to insist that the root, of this exposition is Viśiṣṭādvaita. Kṛṣṇamācārya argues that although he has taken on the task of completing what Gopālānand Svāmī could not, authorship still belongs to Gopālānand Svāmī. Further, in a section about newsworthy items in the sampradāya, Koṭhārī in 1921 writes: “commentaries on the Upaniṣads including the Kātha, etc., are being composed by Śrī Kṛṣṇa Ācārya [sic] through Vartal mandir, and these will be published soon.”

As can be expected of Tamil pāṇḍits trained within the Viśiṣṭādvaita tradition, the commentaries they wrote and/or published were in accordance with Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. The further question remains of why they were asked to serve as pradhānapāṇḍitas of the Vartal Pāṭhasālā in the first place. Though this reflected a process of looking to the south for validity as outlined in the previous chapter, I suggest that it also had to do directly with the Śiksāpatrī. This text also outlines a hereditary succession through ācāryas, the sons of Sahajanand Svāmī’s nephews, tasked with administering the two dioceses of the Swaminarayan sampradāya from which the splinter-groups broke off. Also in this text, as mentioned in the Introduction, Sahajanand Swami states, “matam viśiṣṭādvaitam me,” or, “my chosen position is that of Viśiṣṭādvaita.” Apart from this nominal alignment with Viśiṣṭādvaita, in describing his system of metaphysics, Sahajanand Swami explicitly adopts a tripartite configuration entities used by Rāmānuja; namely, jīva, the individual souls which

119 athaca tatra bhavatā śrīgopālānandavāsāminā tatra tatra yadvākyataṁ upaniṣadadāṁ vākyaṁ tatsarvam ṣrīrī saṅkalpya tena tadāśayam ālaṅkṣyā vīrodhena tad āśayasya samārāhyate vīvaraṇam idāṁ. śrutiśirasāṁ hārdāṁ viśiṣṭādvaita evety etad evā ‘śya vīvaraṇasya pūrvvācāryaparīśīlītaṁ mūlaṁ. śrīśvāmināṁ saṅkalpaṁukā evā ‘yaṁ nibandaḥ iti ‘svāmīvīracītaṁ bhāṣyam’ ity eva padam arhati; Embār Kṛṣṇamācārya, “Prastāvanā,” in Iśādāsāsopnīsadbhāṣyam (Bombay: Nirmay Sagar Press, 1932), 18.
120 Vadtāl mandir tāraṭhī kath-vagere upaniṣado upar śāstrī śrī kṛṣṇa ācārya pāse bhāṣya račāvāvāmā āvēyā che ane tene chapāvāvāmā āve cche; Śrī Svāminārāyaṇam, Caitra V.S. 1977 [March/April 1921], 31.
121 Śiksāpatrī v. 121.
are *cid* (sentient); *māyā*, the world, which is *acid* (insentient); and *īśvara*, God.\(^{122}\) It is possible, then, that when the texts produced by the Vartal Pāṭhaśāla are explicitly aligning with Rāmānuja and Viśiṣṭādvaita, they are attempting to assert authority over rival factions within the *sampradāy* by claiming faithful adherence to the Śikṣāpatrī. Thus, much of this work can be understood in the light of the development of new sects within the *sampradāy*. These sectarian differences were enacted on various levels, but their particular appearance through rival commentarial texts was facilitated by print culture.

To wrap up this section on Vedānta commentaries in print, we will briefly examine the content of the published commentaries. Though a fuller examination of theology and metaphysics that are contained within the actual commentarial exegesis will be reserved for subsequent chapters, it is useful at this juncture to focus on the often-overlooked ancillary portions of commentaries. These include the Sanskrit benedictory verses that commentators have been using for centuries to start their commentaries. As Minkowski notes, because of the biographical information often encoded within these verses, their study “presents the possibility of recovering the meaning of an intellectual’s action in writing a learned text in Sanskrit.”\(^{123}\) Even more significant, though, is a paratextual practice made possible only by the advent of print: namely, the inclusion of Sanskrit prose prefaces written by the editors of the commentaries. I argue that even a brief examination of benedictory verses and the prose prefaces of the two *Brahmasūtra* commentaries attributed to Muktānand Svāmī and published within sixteen years of one another reflects the sharp sectarian rivalries that

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\(^{122}\) Śikṣāpatrī vv. 106-108.

developed within the century-old Swaminarayan sampradāy described above, and how these are negotiated in a scholastic Vedanta public.

The benedictory verses of these commentaries follow a similar pattern of paying obeisance to Sahajānand Svāmī, and then describing the impetus for authoring the commentary. In the case of the BSBR, the rationale is expressed as follows:

Salutation to Vyāsa, the author of the Brahma Sūtra, who exerted much effort to destroy the [apparent] contradictions in the scriptures. This Brahma Sūtra has been previously commented on by many ācāryas, but these are difficult to understand, and the one I have written is clear.\textsuperscript{124}

In contrast, the description of the authoring of the BM is this:

the commentary called Śrībhāṣya written by Rāmānuja is difficult to understand by those slow-minded people who are desiring to know a part [of it]. Therefore, this commentary has been written, which is simple in words and meaning, and by which even those who are slow-minded will easily grasp the sūtras.\textsuperscript{125}

There is a kernel of similarity here: both commentators claim that they are writing a commentary that will be easy to understand since earlier commentaries are so difficult to understand. However, the author of the BSBR vaguely refers to previous commentators, but is focused on the the text of the Brahma Sūtra alone. The author of the BM, however, explicitly refers to Rāmānuja and his Śrībhāṣya. The BM is thus presented explicitly as a simplification of this Viśiṣṭādvaita text, while the BSBR avoids any mention of Rāmānuja.

In his Sanskrit prose preface to the BSBR, Mehta does sketch out the commentator’s views vis-à-vis Rāmānuja’s school of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. He explains that the commentator fully explains the Swaminarayan system, but at the same time is careful to

\textsuperscript{124} namo vyāśaya kṛṣṇāya brahmaśūtravidhāyine/yena śruti vidhāsya vināśāya śramaḥ kṛtaḥ// vyāsasūtram idaṁ pūrvācārayair vyākhyaśtam apya aha/ durbodhaṃ tasya vyākhyānam mayā spaṣṭam viracyatā//; BSBR, vv.6-7, pp.1-2.

\textsuperscript{125} śrīrāmānujenā munānā racitam hi bhāṣyam/śrībhāṣyam iti...jiñāsūnām durgamo ‘yam anśo mandadhiyām nanu/ato viaracyate vyākhyā saralā padato ‘arthaḥ sutraṇi sugrahāṇi syuḥ yavā mandadhiyām api; BM, vv.12-16, pp. 2-3
ensure there is no opposition to Vyāsa’s original sūtras. In doing so, Mehta says, the commentator does follow Viṣistādvaita. He goes on to explain that there is already a Viṣistādvaita commentary composed by Rāmānuja, and the Swaminarayan sampradāy has largely accepted this. But, Mehta emphasizes, “the Viṣistādvaita-mata accepted by Swaminarayan is unique from the Viṣistādvaita-mata accepted by Rāmānuja in certain ways.”126 What is being alluded to here is chiefly Sahajānand Svāmī’s system of five entities differing from Rāmānuja’s system of three entities.

In his preface, P.B. Aṇṇaṅgarācārya, expands on the benedictory verses. He writes, “this commentary was written for those who are unable to study the Śrībhāṣya, and [it] is easy to understand and is eager to explain the principles and metaphysics in accordance with the Śrībhāṣya alone.”127 Further, Aṇṇaṅgarācārya explicitly posits that the “tattvapañcakam,” or five-fold entities explained in the Swaminarayan sampraday can actually be subsumed within the “tattvatrayam,” or tripartite entities found in Rāmānuja’s system.128 Aṇṇaṅgarācārya was not the first to argue such a position in a text published under the aegis of the Vartal Pāṭhasālā. Over thirty years prior to the publication of the Brahma Mīmāṃsā, and fifteen years prior to the publication of the Bhāṣya Ratna, the Pāṭhasālā prepared a commentary for publication on the Upaniṣads, attributed to Gopālānand Svāmī. The prefatory remarks, written by Embār Kṛṣṇamācārya, state that the Viṣistādvaita commentary on the Upaniṣads written by Raṅgarāmānuja is not easy to understand, and so Gopālānand

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126 tathāpi śrīmatśvāmināriṇāyaṇaśvākṛtaṃ viṣistādvaitamataṃ śrīrāmānujaśvākṛtaḥ viṣistādvaitamataḥ kiṃcid viśisyaite; Girijāśaṅkar Mayāśaṅkar Mehta, “Kiṃcit Prāṣṭāvikam,” in Brahmasūtrabhāṣyaratnam (Baladevadāsa Pārīkh and HīrībhāīČāvaḍā, 1936), 5.
128 Ibid., 37.
Svāmī wrote one in a simpler style. Kṛṣṇamācārya goes on to say: “in the construing of certain sentences, there are differences from the earlier commentary in the meaning of certain words; however, Viśiṣṭādvaīta is not transgressed in the least.”\textsuperscript{129} Once again, the total identity between Swaminarayan and Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta is maintained.

It is clear that these commentaries were important sites of contestation for members of the Swaminarayan \textit{sampradāy}. Comparing Mehta’s preface in the \textit{BSBR} to Aṇḍaṅgarācārya’s preface in the \textit{BM} is reminiscent of the tension present in how the various articles of the \textit{Śrī Svāminārāyan} magazine translated Vedānta for a lay audience. Mehtā is explicit about a certain uniqueness, while Aṇḍaṅgarācārya goes to great lengths to diminish it. The clearly divergent directions these sections take prefigure the hermeneutical moves made within the commentaries themselves.

\textbf{2.5. Conclusion}

By the early twentieth century, an established print culture in Gujarat ushered in significant innovations to the production and circulation of scholastic literature, and members of the Swaminarayan \textit{sampradāy} took full advantage of these innovations in advancing their scholastic project. Pre-existing commentarial genres saw increased production, and these texts were published with new paratextual elements that augmented their contents. New genres, including pamphlets, small tracts, periodic magazines, and journals amplified scholastic concerns and extended their reach. These genres also allowed for their producers to challenge those who were more powerful, be they outside the \textit{sampradāy} or inside. In the early twentieth century, the Swaminarayan \textit{sampradāy} thus continued its participation in a

\textsuperscript{129} yadyapy asti nāma kvacit kvacid vākyayojanāyāṁ sabdārtheṣu ca bhedaḥ pūrvavyākhyānataḥ. athāpi viśiṣṭādvaitam tu na leśato ’apy atilangbrate; Kṛṣṇamācārya, “Prastāvanā,” 11.
scholastic public, with the aim of buttressing the gains it had made in the nineteenth century, but also to negotiate sectarian divide within the *sampradāy*.

The overlapping scholastic concerns of education, text production, dissemination through print has continued within the *sampradāy* to the present day. Though there has not been an unbroken continuation of the *pāṭhasālās* at Vartal and Ahmedabad, scholastic activities still continue. In the early 2000s, the Ahmedabad *pāṭhasālā* was shifted to the nearby town of Jetalpur, where it has seen an increased investment of resources. There are also several *gurukuls*, which Williams loosely translates as “educational trusts,” bearing nominal affiliation with Vartal.\(^\text{130}\) The first of these was established by a *sādhu* who split off from Vartal in 1947, and now there are several such *gurukuls* located across Gujarat. While the focus is on general primary, secondary, and post-secondary education, there is nonetheless considerable attention to Sanskrit, with an explicit Sanskrit *pāṭhasālā* affiliated with the Rashtriya Sanskrit Sansthan in Delhi.\(^\text{131}\) Another major gurukul was established in Gandhinagar by a *sādhu* named Hariprakash Shastri, who split off from Vartal in 1975.\(^\text{132}\) In BAPS, there was a Sanskrit *pāṭhasālā* established in Mumbai in 1961, which, after shifting to the village of Sarangpur in Kathiawar in 1973, eventually came to be called the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanskrit Mahavidyalay.\(^\text{133}\)

*Sādhus* and other scholars associated with these various institutions have been responsible for the production of much Sanskrit and Gujarati literature over the past several decades. In recent years, Sadhu Poornavallabhadas of the Shree Swaminarayan Gurukulam in

\(^{130}\) Williams, *Introduction to Swaminarayan Hinduism*, 51.
\(^{132}\) Williams, *Introduction to Swaminarayan Hinduism*, 52.
Kandari edited and published a new edition of Muktānand Svāmī’s BSBR. A BAPS sādhu-scholar named Sadhu Bhadreshdas composed an independent set of commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras, Upaniṣads, and the Bhagavad Gītā, published by BAPS between 2008-2012. These commentaries diverge considerably in content from the previous sets of Swaminarayan commentaries discussed earlier in this chapter at key junctures. The next two chapters present a sustained textual analysis of these three sets of Swaminarayan commentaries, tracing an intellectual history of the exposition of Vedantic thought within the Swaminarayan sampradāya over the past 200 years.

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Chapter 3: Vedānta in Swaminarayan Commentaries

*Of those who have become ācāryas in the past, each has a different inclination [ruci]. Among those, Śaṅkar Svāmī [i.e. Śaṅkara] is known to have emphasized the knowledge of non-dualism. Similarly, Rāmānuj’s principle was this: “jīva, māyā, and Puruṣottam are all three eternal...” Furthermore, Vallabhācārya’s extreme conviction solely in bhakti is known. And all of these ācāryas have on occasion written about other matters in their texts, but by whatever means possible they ultimately arrive upon their own inclination. Thus, one can fully understand their opinions based on their own statements in their texts. In this way, having listened to my teachings, what do you all know to be my inclination?*

- Sahajānand Svāmī, *Vacanāṃrt* Loyā 14 [December 31, 1820]

3.1. Introduction

The first half of this dissertation considered the historical context of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, during which time members of the Swaminarayan *sampradāy* made use of Sanskrit texts to carve out space for themselves within a scholastic public, variously conceived. Doxographical accounts within these early texts give an indication of how members of the *sampradāy* envisioned and ordered this public. These accounts also provide a template for engaging in scripturally-mediated debate, responding to the challenges presented by the nascent community’s various “others.” In the early twentieth century, lay and ascetic members of the *sampradāy* made use of innovations in print technology to further their scholastic engagement. New forms of print allowed them to challenge figures of authority both external and internal to the community, and to make scholastic concerns more legible to an educated Gujarati public. Print also aided the negotiation of sectarian divide within the *sampradāy*.

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1 pūrve ācārya thai gayā che tene prthak prthak ruci che. temā śaṅkar svāmīne advait jñānānī pradhān janāy che. tathā rāmānujo em mat che je, “jiv, māyā ane puruṣottam e trane nitya che”...tathā vallabhācāryane keval bhakti upar niśthā bahu janāy che. ane e sarve ācārya potānā granthomā prasange karīne biji vārtāo lakhī che, pan game tevī rite karīne ante potānī ruchi upar jāy. em temā granthone vise temā vacan che tene karīne temno abhiprāy yathārth jānyāmā āve che. tem amārī vārtā sāṃbhāśīne tamne sarvane amāri kevī ruci janāy che? -- *Vacanāṃrt* Loyā 14, p. 301.
Within this broader treatment of the scholastic public, I have at various junctures discussed the development and articulation of a Swaminarayan system of Vedānta, both in Gujarati and Sanskrit sources, and through the production of classically-styled commentaries. The remainder of this dissertation is focused on these commentaries, and how they constitute the Swaminarayan sampradāy’s envisioning of and engagement with a Vedānta public.

Classical Vedānta, as it emerged in the latter part of the first millennium onwards, developed as a set of schools that privilege a canon of texts known as the prasthāna-traya, or “three departures”: the Upaniṣads, the esoteric teachings forming the fourth part of the Vedic corpus; the Brahma Sūtras, a series of aphorisms seeking to systematize the content of the Upaniṣads by reflecting on the metaphysical concept of brahman; and the Bhagavad Gītā, Kṛṣṇa’s wartime counsel to Arjuna at the start of the Mahābhārata war. Scholarship on modern systems of Vedānta in the colonial period and onwards, however, has placed a disproportionate emphasis on systems of “Neo-Vedānta” propagated by figures such as Rāmmohan Roy and Swami Vivekananda, or even anti-colonials such as Gandhi and Bal Gangadhar Tilak. These studies are indeed instructive of how intellectuals in the modern period strove to infuse Vedānta with western concepts, or how they used Vedāntic principles to advocate nationalist agendas. However, these studies have often served to preclude an adequate study of theistic systems of Vedānta in the modern era that self-consciously draw upon classical registers alone, in the service of the narrower, sectarian aims.

Classically-styled commentaries have been central to the Swaminarayan sampradāy’s scholastic endeavors for close to 200 years, and I will present a more detailed analysis of this commentarial practice in the two remaining chapters. Through this analysis, I will sketch an

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intellectual history that is illuminated by the social and institutional concerns highlighted in the previous chapters. In this present chapter, I will first provide a general background to the genre of textual commentary, and its importance to the formation of discrete schools of Vedānta. I will foreground issues of intertextuality inherent in commentarial traditions, and especially the practice of textual “reuse.” Here, I examine the shifting ways in which texts were reused by premodern, early modern, and in the Swaminarayan case, modern Vedāntins. I argue that this contextualization helps us to understand the production of multiple Swaminarayan Vedānta commentaries on the Brahma Sūtra, especially the very first Swaminarayan commentary composed sometime around 1830, the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Ratna (BSBR). Though this is treated as an independent Swaminarayan commentary by practitioners and scholars of the Swaminarayan sampradāy, I will show that this text is in effect a plagiarism of a lesser-known premodern commentary. The textual reuse in this case is markedly different from even early modern commentaries, and represents an attempt by a nascent community to swiftly and efficiently announce its arrival as a system of Vedānta.

I then turn to a more thorough analysis of Swaminarayan Vedānta, which, as expressed in Sahajānand Svāmī’s question to his disciples in the epigraph to this chapter, he clearly sees as distinct from other systems. This important account of the formation of a system of Vedānta reveals the tension between drawing upon established schools of Vedānta and the articulation of an independent system. I will first trace this tension within the works of Sahajānand Svāmī, and then provide a diachronic study of one section of Swaminarayan commentaries on the Brahma Sūtras: the jñānāsādhikaraṇa. The exegesis of this section of the Brahma Sūtras sets the tone for these commentaries through its thorough discussions of metaphysics and soteriology. Through examining the jñānāsādhikaraṇa in the Brahma Sūtra
Bhāṣya Ratna (BSBR), the Brahma Mīmāṃsā (BM), and the Brahma Sūtra Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya (BSSB), I will demonstrate the shifting role of Rāmānuja’s system of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta in the exposition of Swaminarayan Vedānta over 180 years of traditional commentarial production. The broad patterns of engagement with Rāmānuja’s system of Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta are as follows: 1) the relatively early BSBR largely follows Rāmānuja, while managing to partially insert unique features of Sahajānanda Svāmī’s system; 2) the mid-twentieth-century BM puts forward a condensed rendering of Rāmānuja alone; 3) the early-twenty-first-century BSSB represents a dramatic departure from Rāmānuja. I suggest that the shifting allegiances are due in large part to the schisms developing in the Swaminarayan sampradāy at the turn of the twentieth century discussed at the end of the last chapter. The exegesis of Vedāntic texts allows for rival groups within the sampradāy to adjudicate their differential interpretation of Sahajānanda Svāmī’s doctrine through recourse to a classically-imagined Vedānta scholastic public.

3.2. Vedānta: Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed…

3.2.1. Vedānta and Commentarial Traditions

Though commentary is a near ubiquitous genre in Sanskrit textual history, it has received relatively little sustained consideration amongst scholars of religion, history, and language in South Asia. In describing classical commentarial practice, Parimal Patil and Lawrence McCrea observe that “scholars have tended not to view the broader commentarial tradition as a locus of real innovation” since “philosophers often go to great lengths to portray themselves as unoriginal, presenting new ideas and arguments as if they were merely
drawing out the implications of the foundational texts of their tradition.”¹ Despite this, Patil and McCrea describe a certain dynamic tension between “traditionalism and innovation” by which commentators can introduce much creativity while still respecting the bounds set forth by the tradition in which they are located. Similarly, Elisa Freschi notes that although scholars desirous of studying monographs are stymied upon simply finding “commentaries and commentaries on commentaries instead, or at most half-commentaries,” the skill of the Indian commentator lies in how s/he “builds texts through quotations and departing from quotations...[and] his/her apt arrangement of them.”² That is to say, the ingenuity of commentators is precisely in the way they position their texts in relation to previous texts. It is the task of the scholar to identify what is new in the text.

Those scholars who have studied commentaries have mined these texts to different ends. In her analysis of philosophical commentary, Karin Preisendanz outlines several of these: “preservation of otherwise lost historical information, historical authenticity and reliability, interpretational innovation,” etc.³ In her own consideration of “interpretational innovation,” she draws a key distinction between commentaries that are “lively” and “creative” and those which are “unproductive.” Though all commentary is concerned with exegesis, in the latter category of text, this exegesis is merely “incidental” or “expository”: it provides simple explication or gloss of the root text.⁴ The former category has, by contrast, a specific agenda in defense of a particular position. As such, Preisendanz argues that:

innovation proceeded in the guise of elucidation—understood as interpretation in the broadest sense—and of defense, within an intellectual community which would

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² Elisa Freschi, “The Reuse of Texts in Indian Philosophy—An Introduction,” Journal of Indian Philosophy 43, no. 2 (2015), 100.
³ Karin Preisendanz, “Text, Commentary, Annotation: Some Reflections on the Philosophical Genre,” Journal of Indian Philosophy 36, nos. 5/6 (2008), 599.
⁴ Ibid., 609-611.
probably not have sanctioned immediate modification of the teachings of basic works within one’s own respective tradition.  

Through this elucidation and defense, commentators take recourse in the authority of the root text to cloak the newness of their positions. In this discussion, Preisendanz draws upon Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan’s conception of “conservative liberalism”—a mindset and strategy of proffering change while significantly diminishing one’s own authorial originality.  

T.S Rukmani throws these issues into relief when she explores the adhikāra, or the authority and “freedom” the commentator has in putting forward their perspective. In her discussion of commentaries in sāṃkhya-yoga, Rukmani begins by acknowledging that all commentators deem themselves uniquely capable and situated to explicate the “true intention” of the author of the root text. Though she concludes that the question of “boundaries” that a commentator “can or cannot cross remains to be answered,” her convincing treatment of the case of sāṃkhya-yoga commentaries demonstrates that while there may be no universal answer to the question, scholars must nonetheless determine these very boundaries to judge when the “newness” of a commentary no longer renders it as a recognizable exponent of the tradition in which it claims to be embedded.  

These issues are immediately relevant for our consideration of Vedānta commentaries. As Francis Clooney observes, Vedānta is an explicitly commentarial tradition that seeks to “read revealed texts faithfully and then to ‘read’ reality out of the texts.” One of the most influential of Vedānta commentators is Śaṅkara (fl. eighth century), who sets the

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5 Ibid., 606.  
6 Ibid., 607-608.  
precedent of authoring a separate commentary on each of the aforementioned prasthāna-traya texts in the exposition of his school of Advaita, or non-dual Vedānta. In doing so, he claims to be faithfully and fully interpreting the base text. However, early on in the history of Vedānta, there emerge discrete schools of thought with drastically different interpretations of these texts. In classifying these schools, “theistic” Vedānta is often the designation given to those systems committed to scriptural exegesis that support and are supported by complex devotional traditions. This is typically in contrast to Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta, a system of non-dualism that, some theistic Vedāntins argue, does not sufficiently allow space for devotional praxis. In theistic systems, an intellectual connection between metaphysics and soteriology that is at once deeply embedded in devotional praxis is paramount. Theistic Vedānta, as connected with Vaiṣṇava traditions, sees its expression in the early second millennium with Rāmānuja (eleventh century), Madhva (thirteenth century), and Nimbārka (thirteenth century) and continues into the early modern period with Vallabha (sixteenth century) and Caitanya (sixteenth century).

Furthermore, after the establishment of these various schools, subsequent thinkers and exegetes produced treatises and subcommentaries on the foundational commentaries of their respective schools. These subsequent works maintain faithful allegiance to the foundational

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9 Śaṅkara was not the first vedāntic commentator, and his work is indebted to predecessors whose work is no longer extant. See Hajime Nakamura, A History of Early Vedānta Philosophy (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass Press, 1983).
10 See for example, History of Science, Philosophy and Culture in Indian Civilization: Theistic Vedānta, ed. R. Balasubramanian (Delhi: Centre for Studies in Civilizations, 2008 [2003]), which includes 25 essays on Vaiṣṇava and Śaiva vedānta.
11 There are several figures and systems which try to reconcile bhakti and Vedānta. See for example Sanjukta Gupta, Advaita Vedānta and Vaiṣṇavism: The Philosophy of Madhusūdana Sarasvāti. (London: Routledge, 2006).
12 This list is certainly not exhaustive, but reflects a traditional grouping of Vaiṣṇava vedānta traditions. See Svāmī Tapasyānanda, Bhakti Schools of Vedānta: Lives and Philosophies of Rāmānuja, Nimbārka, Madhva, Vallabha, and Caitanya (Chennai: Sri Ramakrishna Math Printing Press, 1990).
texts. For example, Vācaspati Miśrā (ninth century), an Advaitin commentator on Śaṅkara’s *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya*, envisions subcommentaries as standing in relation to Śaṅkara’s original work much like water falling from a mountaintop into the Ganga. As Clooney extrapolates,

the [sub]commentaries are, as it were, above the [Śaṅkara-]Bhāṣya, and lie stagnant except when purified through a descent into that purifying source. If one can compose a commentary so carefully as to return the reader constantly to Śaṅkara down into his Bhāṣya, then one has written pure, purifying Advaita.  

Further, McCrea argues that in studies of Indian philosophy that seek to analyze discrete “schools” or “systems” of thought, there is “an overwhelming and persistent bias toward the study of the earliest works of the tradition,” with the assumption that this earliest stratum of text lays out the fundamental principles of the system, while later texts represent summaries and distillations. However, despite the avowed allegiance to foundational texts referred to above, schools of Vedānta were hardly static. In fact, Vācaspati Miśra’s *Bhāmatī* subcommentary on Śaṅkara’s *bhāṣya* is thought to have initiated its own subschool within Advaita. Again, it is the task of the intellectual historian to adjudicate newness and innovation in the works of those who are claiming allegiance within a tradition. The question to be asked is whether authors are merely restating an earlier position, developing this position, or furthering their own. This has important implications for determining a classificatory structure: does a particular author represent a sub-school, or are they forming their own independent school of Vedānta? Further, what are the broader social and historical dimensions playing into such a classification?

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13 Clooney, *Theology After Vedānta*, 20
14 Lawrence McCrea, “Playing with the System: Fragmentation and Individualization in Late Pre-Colonial Mīmāṃsā,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 36.3 (2008), 576.
In the nineteenth century, when Sahajānand Svāmī founded the Swaminarayan sampradāy, what was the classification of the system of Vedānta he taught? As we have seen repeatedly, though Sahajānand Svāmī indicated his system of Vedānta was different from Rāmānuja’s, he still likens the system to Viśiṣṭādvaita. The case is further complicated because Sahajānand Svāmī did not author any commentaries directly, and the subsequent commentaries produced within the tradition walk different lines between demonstrating a certain intertextual commitment to the Vedānta commentaries that preceded them, and conveying the unique features of Sahajānand Svāmī’s system. A study of Swaminarayan Vedānta must, therefore, include an analysis of his own teachings as well as a study of the commentarial tradition.

At this juncture, it may be asked, if Vedānta is a commentarial system, and Sahajānand Svāmī did not directly author any commentaries, can a system of Vedānta be properly attributed to him? A cursory examination of vedāntic schools shows that this is not out of the ordinary. Firstly, not all who come after Śaṅkara compose three separate Vedānta commentaries. For example, Śaṅkara’s first main adversary, Rāmānuja, composed his Śrībhāṣya commentary on the Brahma Sūtras and a commentary on the Bhagavad Gītā in setting forth Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. While he did compose an erudite treatise on the Upaniṣads called the Vedārthasamgraha, Viśiṣṭādvaita does not see a commentary on the Īśāvāsopniṣad until the fourteenth-century Vedānta Deśika, nor a full set of commentaries on the principal Upaniṣads until the seventeenth-century Raṅgarāmānuja.15 Similarly, though

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Vallabha, who founded the Śuddhādvaita (pure non-dual) school, initiated a commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*, it had to be completed by his son.\(^\text{16}\)

Further, Caitanya’s Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* with its corresponding Acintyabhedābheda school of Vedānta provides an important parallel to the Swaminarayan case. Much like Sahajānand Svāmī, though Caitanya did not author any commentarial texts, he is regarded as the arbiter of the tradition’s school of Vedānta. His sacred biographies reveal that when Advaita Vedānta intellectuals challenge Caitanya, the latter is ultimately victorious. Nonetheless, there is a concern within the tradition that Vedānta be more robustly engaged to support Caitanya’s practice of ecstatic devotion to Kṛṣṇa, both for members of the tradition and for a broader public image.\(^\text{17}\) Consequently, his disciple Jīva Gosvāmī comments on the first four *sūtras* of the *Brahma Sūtra*, and the eighteenth-century Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana composes a full commentary.\(^\text{18}\) Part of the reason for the delay in authoring commentaries was Caitanya’s teaching that the *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, whose authorship is also traditionally attributed to Vyāsa, is a natural commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras*. However, in the eighteenth century, identity politics in the court of Jaisingh II of Jaipur demanded the production of a full-fledged *Brahma Sūtra* commentary to substantiate the position of the Gauḍīyas as a *sampradāya* deserving of the king’s favor.\(^\text{19}\) Similarly, in the Swaminarayan tradition, though discussions transcribed in the *Vacanāmṛt* provide a natural commentary of sorts on Vedānta topics, Sahajānand Svāmī’s followers felt the need to take on the endeavor


\[\text{18} \] Ibid., 27.

of authoring independent commentaries on the Vedānta prasthāna-traya canon at different stages in the history of the Swaminarayan sampradāy for discrete reasons.

3.2.2. “Textual Reuse”

In analyzing the development of discrete schools of Vedānta, it becomes necessary to explore a recurring trend: a distinct intertextuality, or the reuse of texts. In recent years, there have been several volumes focused on the issue of textual reuse in Indian texts, expanding upon previous philological and text-critical work done in European contexts. In her introduction to a multi-issue series in the Journal of Indian Philosophy on textual reuse, Elisa Freschi articulates the historical, linguistic, and historiographical benefits to the study of reuse, and suggests two main ways of classifying reuse. The first is in terms of literality: whether the reused material is a quotation, reference, or “interlanguage,” i.e., “ideas which are broadly common at a certain time and cannot be traced down to a certain author.” The second has to do with the attribution of the reuse, i.e., whether it is acknowledged as a reuse or “silently embedded.”

Vedāntic textual reuse runs the gamut of these classifications. There are instances of drawing upon the ideas of a pre-existing school to outright verbatim reuse. Furthermore, there are examples of this intertextuality being both attributed and unattributed. The patterns reveal that over and again, and for differing social and intellectual reasons, vedāntic authors were compelled to build upon a foundation already laid out. We will examine four such

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21 Elisa Freschi, “The Reuse of Texts in Indian Philosophy—An Introduction,” 88.
instances which will subsequently illuminate the intertextuality and textual reuse present in the Swaminarayan commentarial tradition: Śaṅkara’s use of unattributed text; Śrīkāṇṭha’s (13th century?) use of Viśiṣṭādvaita in his Śivaviśiṣṭādvaita (or Viśiṣṭāśivādvaita) commentary; Appayya Dīkṣita’s (sixteenth century) subsequent use of Śrīkāṇṭha in his Śivādvaita commentary; and Jīva Gosvāmī (sixteenth century) and the Gauḍīya tradition’s use of Madhva.

Though Śaṅkara is one of the most influential Vedānta commentators, he was far from the first. In examining Śaṅkara’s incorporation of previous vedāntic texts, Ivan Adrijanić first acknowledges the work of several Indologists in uncovering the layers of reuse, including Daniel Ingalls, Paul Hacker, and Gerhard Oberhammer. Adrijanić then identifies three ways of identifying this reuse. The first of these is straightforward: Śaṅkara conspicuously identifies a quotation and/or paraphrase. The second two categories require some conceptual and inferential work: (1) sections of text in which Śaṅkara presents two seemingly conflicting interpretations of the same sūtra, and (2) sections in which Śaṅkara presents a position that contradicts the Advaita position. Adrijanić argues that in both of these cases, one can extrapolate that the conflicting position came from a previous source, often no longer extant. Adrijanić concludes that Śaṅkara would have included “this older material that is alien to his doctrine” because “it was a ‘must’ for the young Śaṅkara to embed traditional, well-respected source(s) into his text in order to root his Advaita doctrine firmly in the Vedāntic tradition, while at the same time introducing his monistic and

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illusionistic ideas.” This is a pattern that recurs in the intellectual history of Vedānta schools.

The next important case to examine is the reuse of Rāmānuja’s Vaiṣṇava Viśiṣṭādvaita source material by a Śaiva figure named Śrīkaṇṭha. Though there are no conclusive dates for Śrīkaṇṭha, T.R. Chintamani suggests that the thirteenth century is probable, and McCrea suggests anywhere between the twelfth and fourteenth centuries. In his study of Śrīkaṇṭha’s commentary on the Brahma Sūtra, which is known both as the Brahma Sūtra Śrīkaṇṭha Bhāṣya and the Brahma Mīmāṃsā, Chintamani notes that there are two passages that bear striking similarity to the Rāmānuja’s Śrībhāṣya, and at least eight that bear similarity to Rāmānuja’s Vedāntasāra. Beyond these textual similarities, Jonathan Duquette observes that Śrīkaṇṭha explicitly aligns himself with Viśiṣṭādvaita over other positions like bhedavāda, atyantabhedavāda, and bhedābhedavāda, and even calls his own system “Viśiṣṭāsivādvaita”—the nondual school of the qualified Śiva. As McCrea notes, however, Śrīkaṇṭha “has, philosophically, very little to add to Rāmānuja, and seems to be interested mainly in offering a Śaiva alternative to the Vaiṣṇava Viśiṣṭādvaita system.” In positing a system of Vedānta theologically oriented towards Śiva, Śrīkaṇṭha decided against re-inventing the wheel, and instead drew heavily from Rāmānuja. McCrea further concludes that Śrīkaṇṭha was ultimately unsuccessful: his Vedānta cannot be considered its own

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23 Ibid., 129.
25 Lawrence McCrea, “Appayyaḍīksita’s Invention of Śrīkaṇṭha’s Vedānta,” Journal of Indian Philosophy 44 (2014), 82.
26 Ibid., 71-75.
28 McCrea, “Appayyaḍīksita’s Invention,” 83.
“tradition” or “school” since no one engaged with it, and so it “appears to have fallen into instant and near-total obscurity.”

That Śrīkaṇṭha’s work is still extant today, both McCrea and Duquette argue, is due to the subsequent reuse of his text by the sixteenth century Appayya Dīkṣita. This reuse is unique to the two preceding examples in that Appayya Dīkṣita does not simply incorporate preceding textual material into his own text, but rather, he writes a subcommentary called the Śivārkamaṇḍīpikā on the Śrīkaṇṭha’s commentary. However, this is no ordinary subcommentary that remains more or less faithful to the root commentary. McCrea suggests that the very title of the text is a deliberate articulation of its project:

The arkaṇi or “sun-stone” is a mythical gem which is said to burst into flame when touched by the rays of the sun. The “arkaṇi-dīpikā” is that which causes the sun-stone to burst into flame—that is to say, the sun. Hence, the metaphor embodied in Appayya’s title casts his own commentary in the role of the sun and Śrīkaṇṭha’s text as the sun-stone, which lies inert waiting to be graced by Appayya’s attention, and sheds light only sympathetically, in response to the immeasurably greater light cast by the [sub]commentary itself.

Appayya Dīkṣita’s project was not one of Viśiṣṭādvaita, but rather, of Śivādvaita, or the school of the nondual Śiva; one far more aligned with Śaṅkara than Rāmānuja.

That being said, Duquette suggests that Appayya’s positionality vis a vis Śrīkaṇṭha, Rāmānuja, and Śaṅkara is best understood through tracing a broad genealogy of all of his Śivādvaita Vedānta texts. Duquette traces this genealogy as follows: in an early doxographical text outlining four systems of Vedānta, Appayya seeks to place Śrīkaṇṭha’s Vedānta on the same playing field as Viśiṣṭādvaita, Advaita, and Dvaita positions. At the same time, there is a hierarchical structuring: Dvaita receives least priority; Rāmānuja’s and

29 Ibid., 82-83.
30 Ibid., 84-85.
Śrīkaṇṭha’s works are on a similar level because they allow for one to attain Viṣṇu and Śiva, respectively; but “only Śaṅkara’s teachings are held to lead one to self-realization.”32 In a subsequent stage, which includes the Śivārkamaṇḍīpikā, Rāmānuja becomes the “primary target” for Appayya, albeit not explicitly so. Śrīkaṇṭha’s system is now posited as superior to Rāmānuja’s, even though the former is heavily indebted to the latter. Appayya accomplishes this by criticizing Rāmānuja’s interpretations of key sūtras. In the final strata of text, including the Śivādvaitanirṇaya, Appayya suggests that Śrīkaṇṭha’s position is superior to Rāmānuja’s precisely because a nirguṇa position can be extracted from the former but not the latter.33 More importantly, Appayya argues that even though “Śrīkaṇṭha’s Vedānta is never superior to Śaṅkara’s…[it is] hermeneutically more consistent than Rāmānuja’s…[and] more orthodox in aligning with what is believed to be the most correct interpretation of the Brahmasūtras”34—i.e., Śaṅkara’s.

With respect to the Śivārkamaṇḍīpikā, both Duquette and McCrea argue that Appayya’s reworking of Śrīkaṇṭha’s text renders the original nearly unrecognizable. McCrea characterizes Appayya’s subcommentary as “primarily digressions” rather than the extrapolation and further exegesis of Śrīkaṇṭha’s thoughts. McCrea further explains that “Śrīkaṇṭha’s somewhat laconic Bhāṣya is very accommodating in this respect, as it does not present the kind of detailed semantic of hermeneutic arguments that would hamper the commentator’s ability to fit his own views into his reading of the text.”35 Both Duquette and McCrea also point to the political context in which Appayya is operating. Namely, he was patronized by the Śaiva Cinna Bomma Nāyaka. Though Appayya takes on Madhva’s Dvaita

32 Ibid., 9.
33 Ibid., 17.
34 Ibid.
school as primary opponents in other situations, Duquette suggests that Appayya’s focus on Rāmānuja is representative of the rising fortunes of the Śrīvaśīṇava community inflected by the Viśiṣṭādvaita school. Hence, Appayya’s elevation of Śivādvaita reflected the “need to respond to the already well-established school of interpretation of Rāmānuja with a fully consistent and “orthodox” Śaiva-based interpretation of Vedānta.”

Elaine Fisher has recently argued that Appayya’s use of Śrīkaṇṭha did not represent the first attempt to put forward a position of Śivādvaita, and traces the development of this school in the Vīraśaiva tradition. Nonetheless, in part because there was no significant tradition of commentaries or textual engagement around Śrīkaṇṭha, Appayya still saw in this commentary an ideal text to reuse in order to advance his project.

The final example to explore is that of the early articulation of Vedānta in the Gauḍīya tradition by a figure who was a contemporary of Appayya Dīkṣita, Jīva Gosvāmī. Appayya Dīkṣita was stridently critical of the Madhva, particularly due to the latter’s use of supporting quotations from purported scriptural texts which could not be properly sourced, even in the sixteenth century. Madhva used these quotations in support of particularly idiosyncratic positions. Kiyokazu Okita explains that although Jīva Gosvāmī was explicit about the theological differences between the Gauḍīya tradition and the Mādhva school, Jīva is nonetheless very accepting of Madhva’s likely apocryphal citations despite never seeing them himself. Okita concludes that “for Jīva, who was establishing a new tradition of

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism, referring to the older tradition of Madhva was part of a strategy for presenting his theology in a respectable manner.”

We have seen in the preceding four examples certain commonalities of textual reuse that will help better explain the Vedānta commentarial enterprise in the Swaminarayan tradition. Whether it was Śaṅkara, Śrīkanṭha, Appayya, or Jīva, there was a perceived need to align with a pre-existing tradition in the process of articulating a free-standing position. The commentaries that were developed by these figures included significant textual reuse, be it unacknowledged (Śaṅkara), semi-acknowledged (Śrīkanṭha), or fully acknowledged (Appaya and Jīva). Though one would imagine such significant reuse as impeding creativity and forestalling the elucidation of novel positions, the authors were able to set their positions apart in subtle ways that require careful unpacking. So, too, is the case with Swaminarayan commentaries that claim varying degrees of allegiance to Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, and incorporate differing degrees of reuse of pre-existing Vedāntic texts. Early Swaminarayan commentaries especially saw a need to closely align themselves with Viśiṣṭādvaita, though they used different tactics to do so.

3.2.3. Periodizing Commentaries: On Plagiarism

Thus far, I have suggested that examples from roughly the ninth century to the sixteenth century can be useful in understanding nineteenth- and twentieth-century commentarial production. However, commentarial production did not occur in an ahistorical vacuum. Each of our authors would have had a unique perspective regarding their enterprise, and each instance must be properly historicized. Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja’s views on textual

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39 Ibid., 272.
reuse and quotations would not have been the same as Appayya Dīkṣita and Jīva Gosvāmī’s. Highlighting some of the changes in attitudes towards reuse between premodern and early modern Vedāntins brings into relief further changes taking place in the nineteenth century in Swaminarayan Vedānta, when a commentary bearing unprecedented textual reuse was passed off as an independent Swaminarayan commentary.

Though I have stressed repeatedly that commentators sought to downplay their novel ideas, this is not to suggest that there is no privileging of “newness” in commentarial praxis. Preisendanz, for example, points out that post-classical figures were uniquely aware of their historicity on account of a significant temporal distance from the texts on which they were commenting. These authors subsequently “return to [these texts] in a text-critical manner that cannot be observed in the classical and medieval period, and with a historicist approach to earlier commentaries and their interpretations.”40 Such figures have been called “new intellectuals” by Sheldon Pollock.41 McCrea locates Appayya squarely in this time period, suggesting that “his concern with proliferating doxographical categories” and “his deep and finely grained historical consciousness” made him emblematic of these “new intellectuals.”42 This historical consciousness allowed for Appayya and Jīva to locate their work with reference to their predecessors in uniquely explicit ways.

Further, this historical consciousness would have influenced the way they viewed textual reuse. In remarking on modern notions of copyright and plagiarism, Freschi locates intention as key, so that an author can only be considered a “thief” if s/he is aware of the theft:

40 Preisendanz, “Text, Commentary, Annotation,” 615.
42 McCrea, “Appayya Dīkṣita’s Invention,” 93.
Ancient and Medieval authors used their predecessors’ works as if they were their own. Previous texts and sentences were raw, reusable, materials like the old pillars used in order to build a new church. No one felt a precise interruption within the living tradition starting with the sūtras and going on until one’s own lifetime. Hence, these authors may be accused of a lack of appreciation of the historical depth, not of plagiarism.\(^{43}\)

“New intellectuals” post-sixteenth century, by contrast, did have this sense of depth. Thus, while Śrīkaṇṭha saw no issue in reusing material from Rāmānuja’s texts as discussed above, he was taken to task for this by adherents of Vallabha’s Śuddhādvaita school as early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, who literally called him a “thief” (cora).\(^{44}\) Appayya’s criticism of Madhva referenced above also has to do with intellectual dishonesty. Appayya finds Madhva’s use of untraceable citations, and the authorization of these through his claim of being an incarnation of the god Vāyu, to be preposterous, and a transgression of “the limit of those who accept scriptural authority.”\(^{45}\) Appayya believed Madhva was performing an intellectual theft of sorts in this situation, and saw it his duty to call Madhva to task. Though Appayya demonstrates his awareness of historical depth here, elsewhere, he seems to bend the rules. Both Elaine Fisher\(^{46}\) and Duquette\(^{47}\) point out that Appayya’s Śivārcanacandrīkā lifts large sections of an earlier text called the Kriyāsāra. Fisher goes so far as to suggest that Appayya’s whole philosophical and theological project of Śivādvaita is indebted to the Kriyāsāra’s philosophical discussions of Śaktiviśiṣṭādvaita. Śrīkaṇṭha’s commentary merely allowed him greater flexibility to further these thoughts and claim them as his own.

\(^{45}\) Okita, “Quotation, Quarrel, and Controvery,” 265-266.
These considerations of historicism and plagiarism are even more important in our consideration of Swaminarayan commentaries. All of these texts are composed in the nineteenth century and beyond, well after the era of the “new intellectuals.” As discussed in the preceding chapter, though there are two Brahma Sūtra commentaries that are attributed to Muktānand Svāmī (d. 1830), one or both of these texts were likely authored by someone else. More importantly, the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Ratna (henceforth BSBR), the earliest-written Swaminarayan commentary on the Brahma Sūtra, is in fact a plagiarism of Śrīkaṇṭha’s commentary (henceforth, ŠKB), stripped away of Appayya’s Śivādvaita reworking.

There is consistent and sustained “reuse” of the ŠKB throughout the BSBR, but I will provide one full example of the extent of this reuse: the benedictory verses that I examined briefly in the previous chapter. In what follows, I will first provide a transliteration and translation of the verse from the ŠKB, followed by the corresponding verse in the BSBR. In presenting the transliteration of the BSBR verse, I have highlighted the direct re-use of a word from the ŠKB in red, and a paraphrase in green. The verses are presented in the original order of the ŠKB.

*aum namo ‘haṁpadārthāya lokānām siddhihetave/
saccidānandarūpāya śīvāya paramātmane// ŠKB 1
Aum. Salutation to Śiva, who is the ahām-padārtha,⁴⁸ who is the cause of the prosperity of all the worlds; whose form is truth, consciousness, and bliss; who is the highest self.

dharmātmajam ahām vande muktānandaḥ sadā harim/
divyam guṇātītagākāraṁ saccidānadamṛtiḥ// BSBR 1
I, Muktānanda, forever bow to Hari, who was born of Dharma,⁴⁹ who is divine, whose form transcends the three guṇas, who is endowed with the properties of truth, consciousness, and bliss.

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⁴⁸ This is a technical term that variously translated and explicated in the Śivādvaita school. Its direct valences are not necessary for our present discussion beyond the fact that it is not used by the BSBR.

⁴⁹ This is a reference to Sahajānand Svāmī’s father, traditionally referred to in the Swaminarayan sampradāya as Dharmadev.
nijaśaktibhittinirmitanikhilajagajjālacitraniṣkurumabh
sa jayati śiva parātmā nikhilāgamasārasarasvam// ŚKB 2
That Śiva is victorious, who is the higher self, who is the entire essence of all of the scriptures, by whom the multitude of paintings of this entire web-like world is created on the wall that is his own prowess.

nikhilanijaśaktidharo yo yac chaktyaiva sakalaviśvavinodah
sa jayati harivṛṣasūnār nikhilāgamasārasarasvam// BSBR 4
That Hari, son of bulls, is victorious, who is the entire essence of all of the scriptures, who bears all of his own prowess, who delights the entire world through that prowess.

bhavatu sa bhavatāṁ siddhyai paramātmā sarvamaṅgalopeṭah/
cidacinmayah prapaṇcaḥ seṣo 'seṣo 'pi yasyaiṣah// ŚKB 3
For the sake of your prosperity, let that highest self be endowed with all auspiciousness; that one of whom even this entire multitude consisting of the sentient and insentient is a subsidiary.

bhavatu susiddhyai hi satāṁ harikṛṣṇah sarvamaṅgalopeṭah/
iśo 'seṣah prapaṇcaś cidacinmayas tu yasyaiṣah// BSBR 5
For the sake of the utmost prosperity of all good people, let that Harikṛṣṇa be endowed with all auspiciousness, of whom even this entire multitude consisting of the sentient and insentient is partaking.

namah śvetābhidhānāya nānāgamavidhāyine/
kaivalyakalpaturave kalyāṇagurave namah// ŚKB 4
Salutations to the [teacher] named Śveta, the creator of many scriptures. Salutations to the auspicious teacher, who is the wish-fulfilling tree of liberation.

namo vyāsāya kṛṣṇāya brahmaśūtravidhāyine
yena śrutivirodhasya vināśāya śramaḥ kṛtaḥ// BSBR 6
Salutations to Vyāsa, Kṛṣṇa [Dvaipayana], the creator of the Brahma Sūtras, by whom much effort was undertaken for the destruction of contradictions in the śrutis.

vyāsāsūtram idam netraṁ viduṣāṁ brahmadarsane/
pūrvacāryaṁ kaluṣṭam śrīkaṇṭhena prasādyate// ŚKB 5
This Vyāsa Sūtra [i.e., Brahma Sūtra] is the eyes for the wise to see brahman. It has been defiled by previous teachers, and purified by Śrīkaṇṭha.

vyāsāsūtram idam pūrvacāryair vyākhātam apy atha/
durbodhaṁ tasya vyākhyānam mayā spaṣṭaṁ viracyate// BSBR 7

50 Another of Sahajānand Svāmī’s names.
Though this *Vyāsa Sūtra* [i.e., *Brahma Sūtra*] has been commented upon by previous teachers, their commentaries are difficult to understand, but now [one] has been clearly written by me.

śrīmatāṁ vyāsasūtrāṇāṁ śrīkanthīyāḥ prakāśate/
madhuro bhāyasyandarbhō mahārtho nātivistarah// ŚKB 6
This Śrīkanthīya [i.e., Śrīkanṭhabhāṣya] on the blessed *Vyāsa Sūtras* shines forth; this commentary is sweet, and has deep meaning without being too long.

śrīmatāṁ vyāsasūtrāṇāṁ muktānandaḥ karomy aham/
sukhabodhaṁ bhāṣyaratnaṁ vyāśābhīpṛyabodhakam// BSBR 2
I, Muktānanda, write this *Bhāṣyaratna*—which is easy to understand and which speaks to the intentions of *Vyāsa*—on the blessed *Vyāsa Sūtras*.

sarvavedāntasūraṣya saurabhāsvādamodināṁ/
āryāṇāṁ śivanisṭhānāṁ bhāṣyam etan mahāniḍihī// ŚKB 7
This commentary is a great treasure for those noble people who are steadfast in Śiva, and who delight in enjoying the fragrance of the essence of the entire Vedānta.

sarvavedāṇtaśapatmasugandhāsvādamodināṁ/
sādhūnāṁ hariṇiṣṭhānāṁ bhāṣyam etan mahāniḍihī// BSBR 8
This commentary is a great treasure for those good people who are steadfast in Hari, and who delight in the taste and fragrance of the true lotus that is the entire Vedānta.

dhāṃnyaśare nikhilamuktagaṇāvṛto yo vedaiḥ stuto ‘ṣṭhanijabhūtinisevitaśca/
so ’yam narākrīḍīdharo hariṣṭhānāṁ nirvighnatāṁ vitanuṭāṁ mama satprayāse//BSBR 3
May that one named Harikṛṣṇa, bearing a human body—who is accompanied by all of the liberated beings in Aḵṣarādhāma, is praised by the Vedas, and is served by his eight powers—ensure that my good effort be obstacle free.

These eight benedictory verses of the *BSBR* are indicative of the various ways in which the text reuses the ŠKB. Some phrases and sections are copied directly: in fact, phrases from all seven of the ŠKB verses make their way into the *BSBR*. Other sections are paraphrased. For example, in *BSBR* 5 and 7, the word order is changed. In *BSBR* 1 and 4, synonyms are used that result in no change in meaning: “vande” for “namah,” and “sakalaviśva” for “nikhilajagat.” The *BSBR* also plays with the order of verses, moving up
ŚKB 6 to BSBR 2. These are examples of the BSBR remaining relatively consistent with the original text.

There are, more importantly, significant changes made in the BSBR verses. Some of these variations retain the structure of the ŚKB verse, but substitute Swaminarayan-specific content in place of Śaiva content. References to Śiva are replaced with Hari or Harikṛṣṇa, and references to Śrīkanṭha are replaced with Muktānanda. Particularly interesting is BSBR 6/ŚKB 4, where both verses offer salutations and praise to a specific person. Śrīkanṭha uses the verse to acknowledge his teacher, Śvetācārya. This presents a challenge for the BSBR, since this obscure personage has no place within the Swaminarayan tradition. The BSBR chooses to adapt the verse to praise Vyāsa, the traditional author of the Brahma Sūtra. This allows for the BSBR to then continue seamlessly into Śrīkanṭha’s next topic: praise of the Brahma Sūtra itself. There is one other significant change: BSBR 3 is a new addition, drawing upon some of the more unique aspects of Swaminarayan theology. Firstly, with the term narākṛtidhara, or “bearer of a human form,” the text refers to the understanding of Sahajānand Svāmī being a human and historical manifestation of parabrahman in the nineteenth century. Secondly, it refers to parabrahman’s abode, known as aksara or aksaradhāma. The importance of the verse is explicitly indicated by setting the verse in a meter that departs from the standard anuṣṭubh of the other verses. The BSBR benediction is thus rendered a uniquely Swaminarayan text.

All of these patterns observed in the benedictory verses can be seen throughout the text. Where the BSBR deems it unnecessary to reinvent the wheel, it merely copies directly from the ŚKB, paraphrases a few words, or changes around word or sentence order. At other

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51 For a more sustained visual representation of these various patterns, see the full transliteration of ŚKB and BSBR 1.1.3 and 1.1.4 in the Appendix.
stages, the BSBR finds the original text to be more pliable. Any references to Śiva are replaced with references to Swaminarayan, and epithets and adjectives are drawn from stock terms in Swaminarayan literature. Quotations of Śaiva scriptures are replaced most often with quotations from the Bhāgavata Purāṇa—a text that is important to the Swaminarayan tradition, but that does not figure as prominently in Rāmānuja’s Śrībhāṣya, which favors the Viṣṇu Purāṇa.²² The text also departs from Śrīkanṭha’s interpretation of select sections, providing a more uniquely Swaminarayan explanation. Though these departures will be examined at length in the ensuing discussion, one example is useful at this stage.

In Brahma Sūtra 3.1.25, there is a discussion of the purity of ritual violence. Śrīkanṭha, making moves very similar to Rāmānuja, sets up the discussion as follows: there is the pūrva pakṣa, or prima facie view suggesting that ritual slaughter is impure (aśuddha) because it is violent (hiṃsāmiśra).²³ The siddhānta, or response, is that scriptural texts, including the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, indicate that ritual slaughter is not actually violent. The two citations provided by Śrīkanṭha are the same as those provided by Rāmānuja at the tail end of his comments on this sūtra. This presents a problem for the BSBR, since the prohibition against ritual animal slaughter was one of the earliest of Sahajānand Svāmi’s teachings, and for which he drew the ire of Śākta-affiliated royalty.²⁴ The BSBR makes a necessary course correction by taking Śrīkanṭha’s siddhānta as the pūrva pakṣa. Though it reuses Śrīkanṭha’s words, it frames these as the position to be contradicted. The text goes on to provide its own siddhānta, citing scriptural texts including the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad and the Mahābhārata that uphold the inherent violence of ritual animal slaughter.

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²³ ŚKB 3.1.25, vol. 2 p. 32; ŚrīB 3.1.25.
²⁴ See Chapter 1, section 1.2.1.
In fact, the *BSBR* proclaims: “it is certain that the person fixated on eating meat out of a greed for taste, who is habituated to violence and indifferent to upholding the code of nonviolence, though erroneously thinking he is pure, is impure.” The text must make some additional hermeneutical moves in order to fit in with the base sūtra, but the objection to ritual slaughter is maintained.

The *BSBR*’s reuse of the ŚKB is unique from the premodern and early modern examples of reuse referred to earlier in this chapter. The *BSBR* does not reproduce the ŚKB verbatim, but adapts it to the purposes of the nascent Swaminarayan sampradāy. Recalling Freschi’s discussion, the question that remains is whether or not the author of the *BSBR* expected the audience of the text to be familiar with either Śrīkanṭha or Appayya. That is to say, the question is whether or not this can be considered an intellectual “theft.” If familiarity was expected, then the larger adaptations can be explained away: it was the author of the text following a time-honored tradition of making it his own. More curious, though, are the smaller adaptations: the simple paraphrases, the changes in sentence structure. These changes make it seem as though the author’s intentions were more duplicitous. It suggests that author the text was anticipating that his audience would not be familiar with the source material, and tried to distance the text in small ways to even further disguise the subterfuge.

Though the authors likely had aspirations that the *BSBR* would be read broadly, in the immediate Gujarati scholastic public, readers would have been far more familiar with Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, and the more local Vallabha tradition. The South Indian Śaivas would have been more distantly known. Additionally, no *BSBR* handwritten manuscript makes any reference to Śrīkanṭha or Appayya Dīkṣita. Further, when the text is edited and

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55 rasalolupatayā māṃsabhaksanāsaktasya hīṃsāśīlasayāhīṃsdharmāpanānāsaktasya puruṣasya śuddhavat ābhāsamānam apy aśuddham iti niścayār; *BSBR* 3.1.25, p. 165
published in 1936 and 1958 by the Maninagar Swaminarayan Gadi Sansthan, and again in 2016 by ascetic-scholars of the Vartal diocese, no such connection is made. The latter text, which was published through the Academy of Sanskrit Research in Melukote, bears introductory messages from the figures associated with Karanataka Sanskrit University, Somnath Sanskrit University, and the University of Madras; all of these figures laud the work as a Swaminarayan text, with no connection to Śrīkāṇṭha. At least on the surface, it seems that the BSBR succeeding in convincing its immediate readers that it was an original text, unconnected with the ŠKB.

The author of the *Brahma Mīmāṃsā* (henceforth BM), the second Swaminarayan commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* attributed to Muktānand Svāmī, on the other hand, was familiar with both Śrīkāṇṭha and Appayya. As discussed in Chapter 2, this text was likely composed by a Viśiṣṭādvaitin figure named Aṇṇaṅgarācārya, and it does not even acknowledge the existence of the BSBR, though the latter text was published just sixteen years prior to the former. However, it does seem to subtly critique the BSBR in its attempt to supplant it as the Swaminarayan commentary of record. In fact, the very title of the second text could be seen as a play on this, since an alternate title for Śrīkāṇṭha’s commentary is *Brahma Mīmāṃsā*. The author of the Swaminarayan BM is a prime example of a commentator who inhabits a historicist framework. He is aware of other commentaries that come before, and incorporates material from them in different ways. In keeping with the style of classical commentaries, he will often introduce another position with the word “pare.” In other situations, though, he will cite another author by name, or even quote from their written work. For example, in one section of his exegesis on *Brahma Sūtra* 1.1.1, he engages in a

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discussion wherein he cites by name Śabara, Śaṅkara, Vācaspatī Miśrā’s Bhāmatī, Upavarṣa, and Bodhāyana. In two other sections of 1.1.1, as will be discussed in the following chapter, the BM discusses Śrikanṭha’s positions specifically. In one of these sections, he mentions Śrikanṭha and Appayya both by name, and quotes directly from their commentaries. In doing so, the author of the BM is showing his mastery of all of the previous commentaries, but his detailed exposition and engagement with Śrikanṭha can perhaps be read as serving notice to the BSBR. The BM could be saying that even though it is not explicitly acknowledging the BSBR, it knows what the author of the BSBR has done. The main purpose of the BM is, after all, to re-align Swaminarayan Vedānta with Rāmānuja.

There is one other Swaminarayan commentary on the Brahma Sūtra that must be addressed. This was composed by Sadhu Bhadreshdas (b. 1967; henceforth Bhadresh Swami). Bhadresh Swami is an ordained monk (sādhu) of the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, which splintered off from the “southern diocese” of the Swaminarayan sampradāya at the turn of the twentieth century. Just as the BM before it, it does not explicitly acknowledge any other Swaminarayan commentaries that precede it. In keeping with the classical style, the commentary does engage with other Vedānta thinkers, including Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. As I will demonstrate in subsequent sections, Bhadresh Swami textually reuses Rāmānuja and other Swaminarayan commentaries where it is unnecessary to reinvent the wheel. This reuse is not at the level of direct reproduction of text or even paraphrase, but at the level of ideas. However, this commentary is also one that unabashedly departs from other commentaries. Bhadresh Swami does not feel the need to claim the commentary as related to Rāmānuja’s text. In fact, the commentary is entitled Brahma Sūtra Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya—the Swaminarayan commentary on the Brahma Sūtra.
This initial discussion of commentarial practice, textual reuse, and historical consciousness sets the stage for the close analysis of the *catuḥsūtrī* to be undertaken in the remainder of this dissertation. All three of these commentaries claim themselves to be *the* Swaminarayan commentary. However, each must be analyzed in light of pre-existing Vedānta commentaries upon which they draw: how closely do they uphold or deviate from Rāmānuja’s and Śrīkaṇṭha’s commentaries? Further, how closely do they align with Sahajānand Svāmī’s own teachings? In the remainder of this chapter, I examine the the main portion of the Swaminarayan commentaries’ exegesis of *Brahma Sūtra* 1.1.1.

### 3.3. Vedānta in Swaminarayan Sources

#### 3.3.1. *The Śikṣāpatrī, Vacanāṁrt, and Bhāṣyas*

Though Sahajānand Svāmī never authored any Vedānta commentarial texts, his system of Vedānta is articulated variously in two key texts: (1) the *Śikṣāpatrī*, comprised of 212 Sanskrit prescriptive verses composed by Sahajānand Svāmī in 1826; and (2) the *Vacanāṁrt*, a transcription of some of his oral teachings delivered between 1819 and 1829. An analysis of the portions of these two texts comprising an exposition of metaphysics reveals what seems, at first, to be a contradictory system, which is further reflected in the Swaminarayan commentarial tradition.

In three separate sections of the *Śikṣāpatrī*, Sahajānand Svāmī describes a system of Vedānta heavily indebted to Rāmānuja’s school. Most explicitly, Sahajānand Svāmī states that Viśiṣṭādvaita is his chosen position (*mata*), and that Rāmānuja’s *Śrībhāṣya* commentary on the *Brahma Sūtras* is his “spiritual text” (*adhyātma grantha*).57 More substantially,
Sahajānand Svāmī, in outlining a rough system of metaphysics, defines knowledge (jñāna) as the proper understanding of three entities: jīva, the sentient individual soul; māyā, or insentient matter; and īśvara, or God—also referred to as parabrahman, the highest brahman. These are the same three entities elucidated by Rāmānuja and other thinkers in Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, though they are referred to as cid (sentient), acid (insentient), and īśvara.

Despite this affiliation with Viśiṣṭādvaita in the Śiksāpatrī, Sahajānand Svāmī’s discussions of Vedānta in the Vachanāmṛt are more wide-ranging. At certain times, he shows a preference for Rāmānuja, especially as opposed to Śaṅkara’s school of Advaita Vedānta. However, at many other junctures, Sahajānand Svāmī indicates that his system is different. As quoted in the epigraph to this chapter, in referring to the various ācāryas of Vedānta, Sahajānand Svāmī explains that each of these ācāryas, including Rāmānuja, has his own “inclination” (rucī), and then indicates that his own inclination is different from all of these.

On many occasions, Sahajānand Svāmi describes not three, but five metaphysical entities: jīva, īśvara, māyā, akṣarabrahman, and parabrahman. Jīva and māyā are roughly coterminous with the entities described in the Śiksāpatrī: sentient souls and insentient matter. Though the Śiksāpatrī describes īśvara as God and parabrahman, the Vachanāmṛt articulates these differently: parabrahman is given its own separate designation as the ultimate God, while īśvara is a class of gods such as Brahmā who are subservient to parabrahman and are tasked with various cosmic responsibilities. This latter category of metaphysical entity is not

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58 Ibid. vv. 104-107, pp. 45-46.
59 Vachanāmṛt GII.18, pp. 405-407.
60 Vachanāmṛt Loyā 14, pp. 301-302.
61 For a comprehensive description of these metaphysical entities, see Swami Paramtattvadas, An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hindu Theology (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).
referred to in the Śikṣāpatrī at all. The second such entity not referred to in the Śikṣāpatrī is akṣarabrahman, the most distinctive feature of metaphysics in Swaminarayan Vedānta. It is described repeatedly in the Vacanāmṛt as, among other things, simultaneously the abode of parabrahman, as parabrahman’s most faithful devotee, and as the all-pervading cidākāśa, forming the substratum of the cosmos.62 This five-fold description of metaphysical entities in the Vacanāmṛt, while subsuming the three-fold description of entities in the Śikṣāpatrī, nonetheless stands at odds with it.

One of the sermons from the Vacanāmṛt, delivered in the town of Vartal in 1826 just a few days prior to the completion of the Śikṣāpatrī, merits extended consideration. On this occasion, Sahajānand Svāmī lists eight texts he considers to be authoritative—a list that also appears in the Śikṣāpatrī.63 Three of these texts include the prasthāna-traya canon of Vedānta. Sahajānand Svāmī then goes on to comment on Vyāsa, to whom authorship of the Brahma Sūtras and the Bhagavad Gītā is traditionally ascribed. Sahajānand Svāmī states, “of all the ācāryas that have lived, Vyāsji is the greatest.”64 He immediately proceeds to list several Vedānta ācāryas whom he considers lesser than Vyāsa, including Śaṅkara, Madhva, Nimbārka, Vallabha, Viṣṇusvāmī, and even Rāmānuja. All of these ācāryas authored Vedānta commentaries on Vyāsa’s works, and this discussion suggests that Sahajānand Svāmī did not find any of these to be satisfactory—despite the fact that only a few days later, the completed Śikṣāpatrī would indicate an adoption of Rāmānuja’s commentaries on Vyāsa’s texts. Even more confounding is that in the same Vachanāmṛt under consideration,

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63 Vacanāmṛt Vartāl 18, pp. 526-531. A description of eight śāstras also occurs at Loyā 8, p. 280 and Gaḍhadā II.35, p. 435. See also Śikṣāpatrī, vv. 93-96, pp. 41-42.
64 Vacanāmṛt Vartāl 18, p. 527.
Sahajānand Svāmī explicitly traces his spiritual lineage (guru paramparā) back to Rāmānuja: his own guru named Rāmānand Svāmī received initiation in a dream through Rāmānuja himself. Once again there is a tension observed in terms of the role of Rāmānuja, his system of Vedānta, and his sampradāya in Sahajānand Svāmī’s words.

To reconcile this apparent contradiction, it is necessary to assess the genre of both of these texts. The Śikṣāpatrī is a relatively short text that is fashioned as a dharmaśāstra: it forms a basic code of conduct for members of the sampradāya. At times, it is decidedly ecumenical: Sahajānand Svāmī exhorts his followers to view Śiva and Viṣṇu as equals,65 to engage in pañcāyatana worship,66 and to celebrate festivals as prescribed in the Puṣṭimārga tradition.67 Sahajānand Svāmī seems to be situating his praxis amidst recognizable, established registers, perhaps as a means to appeal to a wider base. Towards the end of the text, though, Sahajānand Svāmī indicates that for a fuller description of dharma, his disciples should refer to other texts of the sampradāya,68 which includes the Vacanāmṛt.

The Vacanāmṛt is a far more expansive text, with each of 274 sermons divided according to location and date of delivery. The historical context of the sermons indicates that the disparity between the two systems of metaphysics is not a matter of chronology, with one system representing an organic development of the other. Chronologically speaking, the enumeration of five metaphysical entities first appears in the seventh recorded sermon, delivered in 1819;69 it also appears in one of the last sermons, delivered after the composition of the Śikṣāpatrī in 1826,70 the completion of which is attested to within the Vacanāmṛt.
itself. The discrepancy is better understood if the Śikṣāpatrī is considered to be a sadasya grantha, or a text for broad public consumption.\textsuperscript{71} The envisioned readership for the Śikṣāpatrī was much broader than the immediate audience of listeners for the oral sermons in the Vacanāmrty.\textsuperscript{72} In this light, the articulation of Vedānta in the Śikṣāpatrī, with its explicit alignment with Rāmānuja and his three-fold metaphysics, can be seen as a means of using an established tradition for the purpose of establishing a budding sampradāya. The reliance on more recognized schools of Vedānta for the establishment of newer schools is also attested to in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sampradāya, which similarly used Madhva’s Vedānta as a buttress in its ultimate articulation of acintyabhedābheda.\textsuperscript{73}

This heuristic is also useful in analyzing the system of Vedānta encoded more meticulously and systematically in commentarial form. Though a detailed presentation of commentarial practice, especially in print, was presented in the previous chapter, a brief review is in order. Two of Sahājānand Svāmī’s foremost disciples are associated with early Vedānta commentarial production in the Swaminarayan sampradāya: Muktānand Svāmī and Goplālānand Svāmī. Both of these senior monks (sādhus) served as compilers of the oral teachings that make up the Vacanāmrty. Early Swaminarayan commentaries on the Upaniṣads and Bhagavad Gītā are attributed to Goplālānand Svāmī alone, but both of these sadgurus are

\textsuperscript{71} There is some debate regarding the Śikṣāpatrī in its current form as well as its authorship. H.T. Dave argues that there was a previous Śikṣapati with fewer verses. Some of these verses were different from the current Śikṣāpatrī. Though a further text-critical analysis is warranted, for the purposes of this current discussion, I treat the 1826 text as a historical document reflecting the public needs of a growing sampradāya. See Harshadray Tibhuvandas Dave, Bhagavān Śrī Svāminārāyaṇ Vistṛty Jīvan ane Kārya Bhāg 5, 4\textsuperscript{th} Edition (Ahmedabad: Swaminarayan Aksharpith, 2003), 456-600. See also Avni Chag, “Manuscript as Relic: The Svāminārāyaṇa Śikṣāpatrī Manuscript in the Oxford Bodleian Library” in The Bodleian Library Record (forthcoming).

\textsuperscript{72} The distinction between sadasya (public) and rahasya (secret; for the initiated) texts is important for sampradāyas. Though I have categorized the Śikṣāpatrī as decidedly a sadasya text, the Vacanāmrty is more ambiguous. Depending on the audience present during the delivery of the sermons, certain teachings are more sadasya than rahasya.

\textsuperscript{73} Okita, Hindu Theology in Early Modern South Asia, especially Chapters 1 and 2.
said to have authored separate commentaries on the *Brahma Sūtras*. The next set of independent Swaminarayan Vedānta commentaries is the twenty-first-century work of Bhadresh Swami, representing the BAPS Swaminarayan tradition.

To review further, there are multiple texts attributed to Muktānānd Svāmī and Gopālānand Svāmī. With respect to the commentaries on the *Brahma Sūtras*, there are two sets of texts attributed to each of these figures, with each set evidencing considerable intertextuality. One of these sets of commentaries is comprised of the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Ratnam (BSBR)* attributed to Muktānānd Svāmī and the *Vyāsa Sūtrārtha Dīpa (VSD)* attributed to Gopālānand Svāmī. The next set of texts is the *Brahma Mīmāṃsā (BM)*, also attributed to Muktānānd Svāmī, and its subcommentary called the *Pradīpa* attributed to Gopālānand Svāmī. Ultimately it is difficult to determine which texts, if any, were authentically authored by the historical Muktānānd Svāmī and Gopālānand Svāmī, though there is much to be gained from analyzing the content of these thematically linked sets of texts. Each set is demonstrative of separate impetuses within the *sampradāya* related to the articulation of Vedānta that mirror the tensions observed in the works of Sahajānand Svāmī.

In synchronically examining the works of Sahajānand Svāmī, we observed a vacillation between the articulation of a five-fold system of metaphysics that best aligned with Vyāsa’s works and other scriptural sources, and an affiliation with Rāmānuja’s three-fold system along with his Vedānta commentaries. This played out in various ways in the commentarial tradition that follows. The nineteenth-century commentaries—the *BSBR* and the *VSD*—maintain a distinction of sorts between Sahajānand Svāmī’s Vedānta and Rāmānuja’s. The early-twentieth-century commentaries—the *BM* and *Pradīpa* published by the Vartal Sanskrit Pāṭhasālā—collapse the two. Finally, Bhadresh Swami’s more recent
commentaries emphasize a radical departure between the two systems. In what follows, I will demonstrate how this is so through a study of how these three sets of commentaries explicate *Brahma Sūtra* 1.1.1, the *jīnāsādhikaraṇa*.

3.3.2. The Jīnāsādhikaraṇa

The *Brahma Sūtras* are a collection of over 500 terse aphorisms divided into four chapters (*adhyāyas*), each of which is further subdivided into four sections (*pādas*). As with other *sūtra* texts in Indic traditions, the *Brahma Sūtras* invite elaboration and extrapolation via exegesis. One of the first hermeneutical tasks of the commentator is to gather the *sūtras* further into units of discussion and dialectic called *adhikaraṇas*. Though *adhikaraṇas* are traditionally said to have five components, there is no exact agreement about what these five are. As Clooney describes, the *adhikaraṇa*:

> responds to the initial, exegetically framed question by distinguishing and exploring its full set of ramifications. It elaborates the initial doubt which is to be explored in all its logical and rhetorical possibilities, and follows through on the set of positions, counter-positions, distinctions, refinements and conclusions.

As such, the *adhikaraṇa* forms a self-contained unit of interrogation. *Adhikaraṇas* can be comprised of multiple *sūtras*, at the discretion of the commentator, but important *sūtras* can form entire *adhikaraṇas* in and of themselves.

The *jīnāsā-adhikaraṇa* is one such *adhikaraṇa*. It consists of the first overall *sūtra*:

*athāto brahmajīnāsā*: “now, therefore, the investigation of *brahman*.” It sets the stage for the

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74 Francis Clooney, in his study of Advaita commentaries, lists the following: (1) *viṣaya*, the topic; (2) *saṃdeha*, the doubt that is raised by a consideration of the topic; (3) *pūrṇapakṣa*, the “adversarial position”; (4) *uttarapakṣa*, the “consequent position” derived from addressing and refuting the adversarial position; and (5) *siddhānta*, the reconciliation of the initial doubt. See *Theology After Vedānta*, 47. The *BSBR* and the *BM* also provide their own lists. The *BSBR* collapses (4) and (5) in Clooney’s list into *siddhānta-nīrṇaya*, or “determination of position,” and adds *saṃgati*, or the connection between *adhikaraṇas* (Muktānanda Svāmī 1936, p. 2). The *BM* includes (1), (3), and (4) from Clooney’s list, adds *saṃgati*, and lastly adds *prayojana*, or objective (Muktānanda Svāmī 1952, p. 19).

75 Clooney, *Theology after Vedānta*, 47.
The *Brahma Sūtras* as a whole, indicating that the entire purport of the Upaniṣads is the investigation of *brahman*. Further, it holds a place of special significance for the commentators, who use the *adhirakaraṇa* to set up the discussion of the commentary as a whole. The “now” (*atha*) and “therefore” (*atas*) elements are typically used to connect the present investigation of *brahman* to something which precedes it. For many Vedāntins, including Rāmānuja, this is a preceding investigation of *dharma*. This investigation, based on Jaimini’s *Mīmāṃsā Sūtras*, forms the basis of the (pūrva) Mīmāṃsā school of reflection on Vedic ritual action. Vedānta is often referred to as *uttara* Mīmāṃsā, or the latter Mīmāṃsā.

The commentators in this section typically indicate that the investigation into *brahman* happens only after the investigation into ritual action, which takes on an important preparatory role. However, the commentators also note that the investigation into *brahman* occurs because of the prior inquiry into ritual action, since one realizes that the fruits of ritual action are impermanent and relatively insignificant while the fruits of *brahmajīñāsā* are eternal and infinitely substantial. Having established this, the commentators describe *brahmajīñāsā*, encoding into their exegesis a system of metaphysics and a discussion of soteriology. We will examine this section of the *jīnāsā-adhirakaraṇa* in detail.

In order to properly chart out the Swaminarayan commentaries somewhere on the terrain between Sahajānand Svāmī’s Vedānta and Rāmānuja’s, we must examine their respective comments on the *jīnāsā-adhirakaraṇa*. Rāmānuja’s extensive discussions will be presented alongside the Swaminarayan commentaries, but we will first look at Sahajānand Svāmī’s words. Though we have already discussed Sahajānand Svāmī’s system of Vedānta as presented in the *Vacanāmrt*, there is one particular sermon we will examine in detail before turning to the other commentaries. This section is not a direct commentary on the
brahmajijnāsa—the investigation of brahman. However, since it serves to clarify Sahajānand Svāmī’s position on brahmagnān—the knowledge of brahman, I present it at length:

Now, with respect to the path of the knowledge of brahman [brahmagnān], this should be understood: brahman is unchanging [nirvikār] and indivisible [niramīś]...And when that brahman is said to possess all forms [sarvarūpa], this is how that should be understood: that brahman is the cause [kāraṇ] and the support [ādhār] of everything, including prakṛti-puruṣa. It pervades everything through its powers of inner-controllership [antaryāmī śakti]. Thus, that which is the cause and the support and the pervader cannot be distinct from its effect. With this understanding, the scriptures [śāstra] say that brahman is possessing all forms [sarvarūpa], but it should not be understood that brahman itself goes through change and assumes the form of all jīvas, mobile and immobile. Parabrahman, who is Puruṣottama Nārāyaṇa, is distinct from that brahman, is the cause of that brahman, and is its supporter and inspirer. Having understood this, and having developed oneness between one’s own self (jīvātmā) and that brahman, one should worship (upāsanā karvī) parabrahman as servants worship their master. When one develops such an understanding, then brahmagnān becomes the path to attain the highest place [param pada].

Sahajānand Svāmī begins this section as if glossing, in colloquial Gujarati, āthāto brahmajijnāsa. The Gujarati word “have,” or “now,” nominally recalls the Sanskrit attha. The Gujarati brahmagnān, or “knowledge of brahman” can be read as a gloss for brahmajijnāsa. The remainder of the section is a description of what that brahman is. Here, Sahajānand Svāmī notes the brahman is not distinct (prthak) from the universe, and yet that brahman itself does not become the universe. In this way, the jīva, or individual self, is presented as distinct from brahman. Furthermore, brahman itself is presented as distinct from parabrahman. The description of two brahmans—aksarabrahman and parabrahman—as

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76 have je brahmagnānno mārg che temā to em samajvā je, je brahm che to to nirvikār che ne niraṁś che... apan e brahme je sarvarūpe kahe che tenā to em che je, e brahm je te prakṛtipuruṣādik sarvenā kāraṇ che ne ādhār che ne sarvane vīṣe antaryāmī śaktie karine vyāpake che, maṭe je kāraṇ ne ādhār ne vyāpake hoy te kārya thakī prthak hoy nahi; em samjāne laine e brahmne śāstra je te sarvarūpe kahe che, pan e brahm ja vikār pāṁine carcācar jīvāpe thai gayā em na samajvā. apan e brahm thaki parabrahm je puruṣottam nārāyaṇe te nokhā che ne e brahmā paṇ kāraṇ che ne ādhār che ne prerak che, em samjīne potānā jīvātmāne e brahm samgāthe ekta karine parabrahmi svāmi-sevakāve upāsanā karvī. evī rīte samjye tyāre brahmajijnān che te paṇ param padne pāṁyāno nirvighna mārg che; Vacanāṁrt Gadhaḍā II.3, p. 362-363.

77 As it is not an explicit commentary on the Brahma Sūtras, the connection with something that precedes it is not drawn out.
part of the five-fold metaphysics is critical. Furthermore, a distinct soteriology is laid out: the jīva must first become one with brahman, and then worship parabrahman in his abode, which represents ultimate liberation.

3.3.3. Metaphysics: Brahmajīñāsā

Though metaphysics is a subject that recurs in the jīñāśādhiṣṭhāna, the most productive site for analysis is each commentary’s gloss of the word brahmajīñāsā, where the commentators expand on what is meant by the word “brahman.” Rāmānuja, in describing brahmajīñāsā, grammatically explains what type of compound word it is, indicating that the relationship between the two words is genitive in the objective sense (karmāṇi ṣaṣṭhī).78

Hence, the vigraha or analysis of the compound brahmajīñāsā would be brahmanah jīñāsā: the investigation of brahman, where “brahman” serves as the object of the investigation. In further describing what this brahman is like, Rāmānuja explains: that it is:

Through the word brahman, the highest person [puruṣottama] is denoted, who by nature is devoid of all flaws and possesses a host of countless auspicious qualities, whose excellence in limitless. Everywhere, the word brahman is associated with the quality of greatness [bhṛhattva]. But the main sense of the word is where excellence has no limit—through both form and qualities. And that one alone is the lord of all [sarveśvara].79

For Rāmānuja, there is one brahman, who is greater than all else, and is identified with the highest Lord. Sahajānand Svāmī’s description of brahman as [aṅkara]brahman and parabrahman stands in stark contrast to this.

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79 brahmaśabdena ca svabhāvato nirastanikhiladoṣo ‘navadhiṣṭiṣaṣṭantakhyeyakalyānagunānānāh puruṣottomo ‘bhidihiyate. sarvatra bhṛhattvagunāyogena hi brahmaśabdah. bhṛhattvaṃ ca svarūpeṇa guṇaśca yatrānavadhiṣṭiṣaṣṭaṃ so ‘sya mukhyo OCKETp; sa ca sarveśvara eva; Ibid.
The commentaries published by the Vartal Pāṭhaśālā, including the BM, follow Rāmānuja directly. The analysis of the compound follows Rāmānuja, and the description of brahman also follows Rāmānuja: “brahman is qualified by the quality of greatness [brhattva], both by nature and form; and it is the lord of all [sarveśvara].” Recalling that the BM was edited—and perhaps authored—by the Śrīvaiṣṇava paṇḍit Anṇaṅgarācārya, and that the Vartal Pāṭhaśālā had a commitment to describing Swaminarayan Vedānta as Viśiṣṭādvaita, this adherence to Rāmānuja is expected.

In the earlier set of Swaminarayan commentaries, the BSBR and the VSD, we find both similarities and departures. Both commentaries provide the exact grammatical analysis of the compound brahmajījñāsā as does Rāmānuja. This is again to be expected: the VSD draws directly upon the BSBR; the BSBR is based on Śrīkaṇṭha; and Śrīkaṇṭha diverges from Rāmānuja only as necessary. Śrīkaṇṭha is rather terse at this juncture, simply echoing Rāmānuja in saying that brahmajījñāsa is the jījñāsa of brahman, and that it is an genitive objective compound. The BSBR, by contrast, provides a lengthy interpolation. In the very grammatical analysis of brahmajījñāsa, the text offers a gloss of brahman: it is that “parabrahman which is known by many names such as the highest self, Vāsudeva, Nārāyaṇamuni.” Following this, the text presents a scriptural ambiguity: “in the Śrīmad Bhāgavata, by the word brahman, [both] the higher brahman [parabrahman] that is called the highest self [paramātmā] is referred, as is its abode aksarabrahman that is called

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80 brahma svabhāvataḥ svarūptaḥ ca niratiṣaya-brhattva-guṇa-viśiṣṭam. sa ca sarveśvarah. BM, 10
81 Gopālānand Svāmī, VSD, 2; Muktānand Svāmī, BSBR, 5.
82 brahmaṇaḥ jījñāsā brahmajījñāseti karamaṇi śaṣṭhiḥ; ŚKB, pp. 84-85.
83 brahmaṇah paramātmāvaśudevanārāyaṇamunipurabhṛtyanekābhidhhasya parabrahmaṇo jījñāsā, jñātum iccheta karmeṇi śaṣṭhiḥ; BSBR, 5.
In support of the former rendering, it cites Bhagavata Purāṇa 1.2.11 and 2.7.47; in support of the latter, it cites 3.11.42. Immediately after, though, the text continues: “between the two senses of the word ‘brahman,’ here [in the Brahma Śūtras], the sense of “parabrahman” is to be grasped.” Though the text ultimately deems it necessary to follow Śrīkanṭha and Rāmānuja, it seems that the author was desirous of at least alerting the readers that there were two brahmans in Sahajānand Svāmī’s metaphysics.

The Brahma Śūtra commentary written by Bhadresh Swami follows Sahajānand Svāmī’s discussion directly. Bhadresh Swami explains: “with the word brahman, the revered Vyāsa—who was adept at explaining the entities of brahmavidyā described by the entire Vedānta—has described the divine pair of entities of akṣarabrahman and parabrahman as those which are being desired to know.” To support this gloss, Bhadresh Swami provides a different analysis of the compound brahmajijñāsā: he says that while it is karmani ṣaṣṭhī, “the vigraha is in the dual [genitive] case, ‘brahmanoh.’” He further explains that brahman can take this dual form as an ekašeṣa dvandva compound in and of itself—that is, a copulative compound (dvandva) of the elliptical dual variety (ekašeṣa). A coordinative compound is one in which two or more words are joined together in an “and” sense; the residual variety is where only the final constitutive member remains, and the number is

84 śrīmadbhāgavatavākyeṣu brahmaśabdene paramātm-samjñaḥ parabrahma tatsthānabhūtam brahmaṇapārāhityam akṣarabrahma ca uktam, brahmaśabdavācyos tayor madhye brahmaśabdo ’tra parabrahmavācako grāhyah; BSBR, 5.
85 BP 1.2.11: brahmaṇi paramāmety bhagavān iti śabdhyate; BP 3.11.42: tād vai padām bhagavataḥ paramasya pumṣo brahmaṇi yad vidūḥ; BP 3.11.42: tād āhur akṣaram brahma sarvakāraṇakāraṇam, viṣṇor dhūma paraṃ sāksātapuruṣasya mahātmānaḥ.
86 brahmaśabdeneha sakalavedāntidotabrahmavidyātattvanirāpaniṇipuṇena bhagavatā vyāṣenāksarabrahmaparabrahmetīdvīvyahatattvayor jīnāṣayamānaṃtena vivakṣitavāt; BSSB, p. 4.
87 brahmaṇaḥ iti dvīvacanānto vigrahaḥ; BSSB, p. 4.
88 For the English terminology used, see Robert P. Goldman and Sally J. Sutherland Goldman, Devāṇipraevēśikā: An Introduction to the Sanskrit Language, 3rd ed (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), 243-244.

There is some disagreement as to whether or not the ekašeṣa is a true compound.
applied accordingly: in this case, the dual. This is a unique rendering of this compound not seen in any prior commentary.\textsuperscript{89}

Bhadresh Swami suggests that both of these entities are \textit{brahman} by definition: “they are both eternally and by way of form, nature, and qualities, greater (\textit{brahmat}) than jīva, īśvara, māyā, and all those liberated from māyā.”\textsuperscript{90} Further, Bhadresh Swami explains that this reading is corroborated in scripture. He first gives the example of the \textit{Praśna Upaniṣad}, which makes reference to “\textit{aum}” as both the higher and lower \textit{brahman} (\textit{param cāparam ca brahma}). He then goes on to say that whenever \textit{brahman} is referred to in scripture, it is not the case that both \textit{aksarabrahman} and \textit{parabrahman} are being referred. Sometimes, as in \textit{Taittirīya Upaniṣad 3.1.1}, \textit{parabrahman} alone will be mentioned. Other times, as in \textit{Taittirīya Upaniṣad 2.1.1, Kaṭha Upaniṣad 2.16, and Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.2.11}, only \textit{aksarabrahman} is being referred to. Finally, sometimes both are referenced, as in \textit{Chāndogya 3.14.1} and \textit{Bṛhadāranyaka 6.5.4}. Though this seems to be a very similar move to what the \textit{BSBR} did in highlighting multiple valences of the word \textit{brahman}, Bhadresh Swami is far more interested in providing a robust defense for accepting both \textit{aksarabrahman} and \textit{parabrahman} as the referents of the entire \textit{Brahma Śūtra}, not just \textit{parabrahman}.

3.3.4. Soteriology: Prayojana

Vedānta is not simply concerned with metaphysics; it also deeply links this metaphysics to a soteriological goal: a \textit{prayojana}. For theistic Vedānta, this is an explicitly devotional \textit{prayojana}. Each of our commentators is interested in the goal to be attained

\textsuperscript{89} For a succinct summary of Bhadresh Swami’s hermeneutical moves in this section, see Swami Paramtattvadas, \textit{Introduction to Swaminarayan Hindu Theology}, pp. 174-177.

\textsuperscript{90} \textit{tathā hy etayor eva nityaṃ svarūpasvabhāvavagūṇataśca sakalajīveśvaramāyātanmuketbhyaḥ bhavati; BSSB}, p. 4.
through inquiring into brahman. After providing the gloss of the individual words of the sūtra, Rāmānuja engages in polemics primarily with the Advaita Vedānta school of Śaṅkara. There is the “small objection” (laghu-pūrvapakṣa) and “small conclusion” (laghu-siddhānta) embedded within the discussion of the word atha, and the “great objection” (mahā-pūrvapakṣa) and “great conclusion” (mahā-siddhānta) embedded within the discussion of the word atas. Here, Rāmānuja’s main goal is to infuse brahmajīnāsā with a devotional spirit that is lacking in Śaṅkara’s emphasis on knowledge. Once all of the polemics are said and done, Rāmānuja states the following:

actions in the form of worshipping the highest person without a desire for results, through the generation of knowledge (jñāna) that is made up of worship (upāsanāmaka), bring about an infinite and stable result, whose form is the experience of brahman as it truly is (brahmayātmyānubhava). 91

Earlier, he had equated knowledge (jñāna) with meditation (dhyāna) and worship (upāsanā). 92 Ultimately, in the jijñāsādhikaraṇa, this is liberation for Rāmānuja; it is the fruit that is infinite and stable (ananta-sthira), encompassing a direct experience of brahman. In Sahajānanda Svāmī’s words, liberation is similar, though conceived differently. To recapitulate, it is when the individual soul attains oneness with aksarabrahman and subsequently worships parabrahman in his abode.

Once again, the BM follows Rāmānuja. Though it is not extensive in its comments as the Śrībhāṣya, its exposition is a condensed and rearranged presentation of the main points of the Śrībhāṣya. Within the scope of BS 1.1.1, the BM discusses prayojana immediately after having glossed the words atha, atas, and brahmajīnāsā. At this juncture, the commentator takes a step back to consider the adhikaraṇa and the Brahma Sūtra as a whole by reflecting

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91 anabhisaṃhitapralapaparamapuṣṭrādhanavesāṇāṃ karmanāḥ upāsanāmakaįnānotpattidvāreṇa brahmayātmyānubhavarupānantasādhraphalatvaṇ; Annangaracharya, ŚBRG, 102.
92 dhyānopāsanādabdavācyan jñānaḥ; Ibid., 52.
on its *anubandha catusṭaya*, i.e. its “fourfold connections”: its *viṣaya*, or subject; its *prayojana*, or aim; its *adhikārin*, or the text’s audience; and its *sambandha*, or its relationship with other matters. It states: “the fruit of this [investigation into *brahman*] is the determination of *parabrahman* whose domain is the goal of Vedānta; and through this determination, the scripture’s aim is that fruit which is infinite and enduring.”93 There is no reference to a specific abode of God or mode of worship therein, only the fruit that is infinite and enduring.

By contrast, the *BSBR* repeatedly invokes Sahajānanda Svāmī’s specific description of liberation at various points in its commentary on *BS* 1.1.1. Once again, it uses the opening provided by Śrīkaṇṭha’s discussions of a Śaiva-specific topics to insert the Swaminarayan concepts. For example, when discussing the aim (*prayojana*) of *brahmajñāsā*, the *BSBR* states:

the aim is liberation [*mukti*]—which has as its form the service [*sevā*] of that [*parabrahman*] obtained by his worshippers, who have attained oneness with *aṅkṣara* in the abode of God known as *brahmapura*—on the part of the one entitled to it through the surfeit of grace of that *parabrahman* who: is ascertained through hearing (*śravaṇa*) and reflecting (*manana*), etc.; is attained through bhakti coupled with dharma, knowledge (*jñāna*), and dispassion (*virati*); has extreme compassion; is the king of teachers; is habituated to favoring all those who have taken refuge; has a body that is divine and extraordinary; is the Puruṣottama named Nārāyaṇa.94

Though this text provides glosses for some of the terms found in the corresponding section of the *ŚKB*,95 it does add some unique features. This includes a description of *ekāntika bhakti*,

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93 *phalam ca asya vedāntatātparyagocaraparabrahmanirṇayaḥ, tannirṇayadvārā ca anantasthirapralayojakatā asya śāstrasya, BM, 10.*
94 śravanāmananādirnityasā dharmajñānairvartīyubhaktīlābhasya paramadayaśnider gururājendrasya saranāgatasakalajñānugrahaśilasya divyāprākṛtavigrasasyā nārāyanābhidhapanuṣottamasya parabrahmaṇo ’nugrahādikhyena utkṣaya adhikāriṇo...harinivāsabhūte brahmapure aṅkarāmabhāve prāptena tadupāśaśayvṛndena prāptā tateṣvarūpā bhaktīḥ prayojanaṁ cāsti; *BSBR*, p. 7.
95 The text from the *ŚKB* reads as follows: *sravanāmananādiścitasā bhaktijñānāviveśābhimukhasya paramakārurmikasya, mahādeśikasya sarvāṇugrāhkasya sīvasyas parabrahmanah prasādātiśayenāṣṭhibhikāriṇāḥ...tatsamānagunāsaṁ ā kaivalyalakṣaṁīḥ prayojanaṁ ca bhavati; *ŚKB*, pp. 91-96.
or the one-pointed bhakti embellished by dharma, jñāna, and dispassion (vairagya). More importantly, the description of liberation follows the depiction in Vacanāmṛt Gaḍhaḍā II.3 almost directly: the liberated soul attains oneness with aksara[brahman] and worships parabrahman in his abode. This is repeated at the very end of the adhikaraṇa, when the BSBR states: “In this first adhikaraṇa, it is described that the prayojana is liberation that has as its form the service of parabrahman, whose lotus feet are served by infinite liberated souls, who resides in that brahmapūra which is described in the śruts and smṛtis.” Notably, here the text does not use the specific term aksaradhāma to name the abode, but the more generic brahmapura, so that it can cite the following scriptural references: Munḍaka Upaniṣad 2.2.7, Chāndogya Upaniṣad 8.1.5, and Bhāgavata Purāṇa 2.9.14 and 10.28.17. These are quite different from the Śaiva texts cited by Śrīkaṇṭha at this same stage that describe the means by which one should worship in order to bring about that “liberation characterized by the destruction of the fetters.” In both cases, the BSBR adapts Śrīkaṇṭha’s text considerably to describe Swaminarayan-specific soteriology.

Bhadresh Swami also outlines the Swaminarayan-specific form of liberation as the goal of brahmaajñānā, but takes it one step farther than the BSBR by explicitly naming Sahajānand Svāmī as the cause of liberatory bliss. This comes in a similar discussion of the anubandha-catuṣṭaya as in the BM. Here, Bhadresh Swami states:

The goal (prayojana) is...the bringing about of ultimate liberation, whose form is the experience of divinity and ultimate bliss of paramātmā Sahajānand on the part of

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96 Among other places in the Vacanāmṛt, this is described in Gaḍhaḍā I.19.
97 śrutisṃṛtyukte brahmapure sthitasyānantakaotimuktasevitacaranaṇakamalaṣya parabrahmaṇaḥ sevārūpā muktiḥ prayojanaṁ ca bhavaity asmiṣṇa udādhihikaraṇe nirūpitam; BSBR, p. 8.
98 These references are as follows—MU 2.2.7: sarvaśāITTLE text was not provided in the original source.
99 The full text is as follows: śruta anusāreṇa tadupāsanaṁyā śyādhisthīnaḥ pāśavicchedalakṣaṇā muktiḥ prayojanaṁ cāstītī prathamādhihikaraṇe ‘tra pratipāditam; ŚKB, p. 98.
those who have cast aside all mundane ways, are purified, are firm in themselves, and are adorned with being the same as *akṣarabrahman*.100

Though the *BSBR* did use a secondary name for Sahajānand Svāmī, namely Narāyaṇamuni, by and large, it uses more generic Vaiṣṇava terminology. Bhadresh Swami does not shy away from explicitly drawing out the connection.

In this brief survey of metaphysics and soteriology encoded in the *jijñāsādikarana*, we have seen the various ways in which Swaminarayan commentaries draw upon Sahajānand Svāmī’s teachings and the teachings of premodern Vedāntins. The *Brahma Mīmāṃsa* is completely faithful to Rāmānuja’s text. In both its descriptions of brahman and the goal of brahmajijñāsā, this text articulates a Viśiṣṭādvaita perspective, effacing any of Sahajānand Svāmī’s unique features. The *Brahma Sūtra Bhāsyā Ratna*, despite using Śrīkanṭha’s text as a model, departs in significant ways to highlight Sahajānand Svāmī’s unique features where possible. However, it still falls back to Rāmānuja’s and Śrīkanṭha’s positions. Bhadresh Swami, finally, meticulously upholds the unique features of Sahajānand Svāmī’s system, both in terms of hermeneutically accounting for his five entities, and in describing Swaminarayan conceptions of liberation.

3.4. Conclusion

Though Sahajānand Svāmī never authored a commentary on Vedānta canonical texts, his sacred biographies, writings, and teachings indicate a deep engagement with the Vedānta system. He left the task of writing commentaries to his disciples, who commenced a robust commentarial tradition comprised of the authoring, translating, editing, and publishing of

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100 prayojanaṃ...sakalapārakṣabhāvavariṣṭāpariṣuddhāsvāmanīṣṭa
these texts for the edification of members of the sampradāya as well as to seek authorization within a wider Vedānta scholastic public. Even a brief study of the content of these commentaries demonstrates that interpretive practice is always already intertextual: it is aware of and in conversation with already existing texts, and reuses these texts in different ways, and to different ends.

Swaminarayan commentators, much like Sahajānand Svāmī before them, had to make constant reference to the dominant schools of Vedānta, and the result was not always neat or indicative of straightforward patterns of engagement. Based on the Śiṣṭāpatrī and certain sections of the Vacanāmṛt alone, it would seem as though Swaminarayan Vedānta was self-consciously styling itself as a development within the Viśiṣṭādvaita school, as a legitimizing tool. Other sections suggest that this use of Viśiṣṭādvaita was not always necessary. Similarly, certain Swaminarayan Vedānta commentaries indicate an affinity for Viśiṣṭādvaita interpretations of canonical texts, while others are altogether unique interpretations. This brief analysis of Swaminarayan commentaries seems to suggest that the earlier commentaries written by Sahajānand Svāmī’s immediate disciples showed a greater dependence on Rāmānuja’s system, while Bhadresh Swami’s commentaries much less so.

To read a social history out of textual discrepancies, we can surmise that there was a perceived tension regarding the role of the well-established Viśiṣṭādvaita tradition in authorizing a space in a broad Vedānta public. In the early nineteenth century, the BSBR used Śrīkaṇṭha’s earlier commentary, and adapted it in a way that reflected the apparent ambiguities in early articulations of Swaminarayan Vedānta. The text highlights novelties of

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the Swaminarayan system, but ultimately couches these in a Viśiṣṭādvaita idiom. At this stage in the history of the sampradāy, it was necessary to produce a commentary quickly. As can be gleaned from other texts composed around the same time,102 the lack of a Vedānta commentary was seen as a pressing scholastic problem. Śrīkaṇṭha’s text provided a pliable model for the Swaminarayan commentator, much as it did for Appayya Dīkṣita three centuries prior. The commentator was thus able to conform to all of the references in the formative years of the sampradāy to Rāmānuja, while quietly interpolating unique interpretations of aksarabrahman.

In the early-to-mid twentieth century, in the face of growing sectarianism in the sampradāy in the form of the Maninagar Swaminarayan Gadi Sansthan and the Bochasanwasi Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Santha (BAPS), the Vartal Sanskrit Pāṭhasālā took on a position of more rigorously aligning its diocese with Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta. It hired Tamil pandits to produce texts and to educate a generation of Swaminarayan ascetics. I suggest that this endeavor was an attempt to safeguard the original dioceses of the Swaminarayan sampradāy against the competing sects, through doubling down on an affiliation with Viśiṣṭādvaita. The Brahma Mīmāṃsā is a product of these impulses. The author of the BM seems to have recognized the earlier commentary’s plagiarism of Śrīkaṇṭha, and sought to present a more original work, one that is only recognizable as Swaminarayan in the maṅgala verses.

The concerns of Bhadresh Swami and BAPS in the twenty-first century are far different. At a time when the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha is seen as the fastest-growing and most prominent sect within the Swaminarayan sampradāy, the links to Rāmānuja for the

102 See Introduction, and sections 1.2.3-4 of this dissertation.
purposes of gaining scholastic legitimacy are no longer important. Bhadresh Swami thus
reads Vedāntic texts through the lens of the *Vacānāmṛt*, continuing a project started by the
*BSBR*. This exegesis of Vedāntic texts further supports the BAPS position in a doctrinal
divide in the Swaminarayan *sampradāya*: the identification of *akṣarabrahman* with a line of
gurus accepted by BAPS, but rejected by other Swaminarayan groups. In writing the *Brahma
Sūtra Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya*, Bhadresh Swami is arguing, within a Sanskritic Vedānta
public, that Sahajānand Svāmī’s Vedānta is a legitimate reading of Vedāntic texts to external
interlocutors, and that the BAPS understanding of Sahajānand Svāmī’s doctrine is its most
faithful interpretation to other Swaminarayan interlocutors.
Chapter 4: Variable Exegesis—The *Catuḥsūtrī* in Swaminarayan Commentaries

4.1. Introduction

The first four verses of the *Brahma Sūtra*, often referred to as the *catuḥsūtrī*, are thought of as the most important verses of the entire text. Exegetes of the *Brahma Sūtra* use these four *sūtras* to lay out a near-comprehensive outline of their system, which is then fully fleshed out in the remaining sections. The discussions entail complex articulations of metaphysics and epistemology, as we saw briefly in the previous chapter’s analysis of the exegesis of one single word from the first *sūtra*: *brahmajijñāsā*.

In this chapter, I continue the type of analysis started in the previous chapter to more fully account for the patterns of hermeneutics present in three Swaminarayan commentaries: the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Ratna* (*BSBR*; composed in the early nineteenth century); the *Brahma Mīmāṃsā* (*BM*; first published—and likely composed—in the mid twentieth century); and the *Brahma Sūtra Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya* (*BSSB*; composed in the twenty-first century). As previously explained, the *BSBR* represents the tradition’s first attempt to encode its system in Vedaṇtic exegesis, and is largely a copy of Śrīkaṇṭha’s thirteenth-century commentary. The *BM* represents a period when one group of the Swaminarayan *sampradāya*, centered in the town of Vartal, committed itself wholeheartedly to Rāmānuja’s Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedaṇta, likely to counter rival sects within the *sampradāya*. The *BSSB* is the work of one of these rival groups, the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha (henceforth, BAPS). Its author, Bhadresh Swami, seeks to foreground BAPS’s understanding of Sahajānand Svāmī’s early, unique articulations of his own system, casting aside explicit links to previous schools of Vedaṇta.
This chapter presents a thorough engagement of the main interpretive moves made by these three texts in their exegesis of the catuḥṣūtrī. The first verse, athāto brahmajijñāsā, “now, therefore, the investigation of brahman,” describes why the Brahma Sūtra exists as a text. It lays out the precursors to a study of brahman, what the study entails, as well as the fruits of the study. Though I began examining this exegesis in the previous chapter, I will demonstrate how the three Swaminarayan commentaries present divergent notions of the precursors to the study. The BSBR again adapts Śrīkaṇṭha’s model to articulate some of the unique features of Sahajānand Svāmī’s system. Significantly, the text maintains Śrīkaṇṭha’s acceptance of one of Śaṅkara’s positions. The BM rigorously defends Rāmānuja’s reading of this section, and extensively criticizes Śrīkaṇṭha, and by extension, the BSBR. Bhadresh Swami skirts the polemics altogether, and highlights a Swaminarayan-specific understanding of what precedes the inquiry into brahman.

The second sūtra reads, janmādy asya yataḥ, “that from which there is the creation, etc., of all of this.” Here, the Brahma Sūtra moves forward the inquiry into brahman by examining one of its key characteristics: that it is the cause of the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the manifest universe. The question for the BSBR and the BM is the very nature of this characteristic, and its relation to brahman. Once again, the BSBR, adapting Śrīkaṇṭha, posits a typology unsupported by Rāmānuja, and the BM criticizes this position in defense of Rāmānuja’s position. Bhadresh Swami’s commentary maintains Rāmānuja’s typology, but his focus is altogether different: it is in demonstrating that both aksarabrahman and parabrahman create, sustain, and dissolve the universe. Significantly, both the BSBR and Bhadresh Swami also use this exegetical space as an opportunity to reinforce Sahajānand
Svāmī’s five-fold metaphysics and his unique articulation of the cosmogonic process, all as discussed in various sections of the *Vacanāmṛt*.

The third and fourth *adhikaraṇas*, again one *sūtra* each, discuss the role of scripture in the investigation into *brahman*. The third *sūtra*—śāsrayonitvāt, “because it is engendered by scripture,” puts forward an epistemology that connects back to the second *sūtra*: we know that *brahman* is the cause of the creation, etc., of the universe only through scriptural testimony. The fourth *sūtra* of the *catuḥsūtri*—tat tu samanvayāt, “and that because of concordance”—argues that the overall purport of the scriptural texts is the knowledge of *brahman*. In these *adhikaraṇas*, the Swaminarayan commentaries continue the threads of discussion from the previous sections. These discussions, however, are not as radical as in the previous *adhikaraṇas*. As I will demonstrate, much less is at stake, as the positions are not hotly debated. The interpretive flourishes in these sections demonstrate the erudition and scholastic rigor of these texts, but do not represent significant departures from previous Vedāntic inquiry.

In all four of these *adhikaraṇas*, the patterns of engagement are similar, on account of the disparate aims of each of the three Swaminarayan texts. However, the hermeneutical moves the commentators make in each of the four *adhikaraṇas* vary. By analyzing these interpretive strategies in turn, we gain a more robust account of the intellectual history of Swaminarayan Vedānta. Ultimately, I argue that even though Sahajānand Svāmī’s system has been called Viśiṣṭādvaita at various stages in the history of the *sampradāya*, the only commentary to faithfully encode this is the *BM*. The other two texts demonstrate a considerably unique system of Vedānta. I will briefly trace out the issues that animate the texts’ variable exegeses.
The *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Ratna* represents the sampradāya’s first foray into Brahma Sūtra commentarial production. Likely composed sometime between 1830-1850, and attributed to an authoritative figure in the sampradāya, the text demonstrates a tension between articulating what it understands to be Sahajānand Svāmī’s unique contributions to Vedāntic thought and couching these innovations in a pre-established Vedānta idiom. I suggest that this text is best read as a nascent sampradāya’s desire to swiftly make its debut within a Vedānta scholastic public, likely understood to encompass its immediate milieu in western India. The main Vedāntic interlocutors were Advaitins and Śuddhādvaitins, and Viśiṣṭādvaita presented an established, rigorous school with which to ally. This alliance was struck by reusing and adapting a text that was unlikely to have been read extensively in nineteenth-century Gujarat: Śrikanṭha’s *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya*. This text articulates broad Viśiṣṭādvaita perspectives, but also harmonizes some of Rāmānuja’s and Śaṅkara’s disparate readings—which is perhaps why it was such an attractive text for Appayya Dīkṣita to transform into an Advaita text in the sixteenth century. This Śaiva text was thus easily adaptable: any reference to Śiva provided a perfect opportunity to switch focus to Sahajānand Svāmī, and to introduce his novel teachings. The text does this amply. However, in matters of more technical exegesis, the *BSBR* uncritically adopts Śrikanṭha’s readings, even when they do not make perfect sense within the Swaminarayan system. Nonetheless, faithful adherents of the tradition could rest easy with the knowledge that their tradition was represented in commentarial form.

The *Brahma Mīmāṃsā*, likely authored in the twentieth century by a Viśiṣṭādvaitī pāṇḍit, represents a course correction. If one were to strip away the paratextual features of the text and its benedictory verses, it would not be recognizable as a Swaminarayan text. The
text was published by the Vartal branch of the Swaminarayan sampradāy. In the wake of significant schism within the community, this branch pursued a project of realignment with Viśiṣṭādvaita. This is perhaps because references to Viśiṣṭādvaita in Swaminarayan texts are often tied to a chain of succession maintained by the Vartal branch, but challenged by the others. It is also likely an attempt to challenge the scholastic rigor of these breakaway groups. The BSBR, for example, was published by the Maninagar Swaminarayan Gadi Sansthan. I argue that the BM is a text that does not explicitly refer to the BSBR, and seeks not only to supplant it, but to discredit it. The BM is attributed to the same authoritative figure that the BSBR is attributed to, but more significantly, it appears to recognize the BSBR’s forgery. The fact that so much of the exegetical space of its catuḥśūtrī discussion is devoted to refuting Appayya Dīkṣita’s views is not simply a demonstration of the text’s erudition. It is a veiled response to the BSBR. The Brahma Mīmāṃsa posits itself as a more sound commentary. While this may hold true on scholastic grounds, it does not hold true to the majority of Sahajānand Svāmī’s teachings in the Vacanāmṛt.

In the twenty-first century, Bhadresh Swami’s Brahma Sūtra Svāminārāyaṇa Bhāṣya offers its own course correction. Writing from within the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha, Bhadresh Swami seeks to shed the yoke of Viśiṣṭādvaita completely. The text no longer bears the concerns of a nascent nineteenth-century sampradāy desirous of authorizing itself in a scholastic public for legitimacy. While the BSBR also attempted to encode Sahajānand Svāmī’s Vedānta, it did so haphazardly, and did not foreground these innovations. By contrast, Bhadresh Swami centers Sahajānand Svāmī’s analysis of brahman as both akṣarabrahman and parabrahman. This, too, provides an authorization, but of a different sort. It is a defense of BAPS’s theological identification of akṣarabrahman in the historical
personage of a lineage of gurus. The text, self-styled as classical, posits itself as timeless, and thus stops short at this historical identification. However, in inscribing Sahajānand Svāmī’s discussions of Vedānta from the Vacanāmrt in commentarial form, it provides the necessary theological backing for others within BAPS to make the historical connections explicit. Much like the BM, Bhadresh Swami’s text authorizes its understanding of Sahajānand Svāmī’s Vedānta for a Sanskrit audience external to the sampradāy, but also for rival groups within the sampradāy.

4.2. The Qualifications for, and Purport of, Brahmajījñāsā: 1.1.1.

In the previous chapter, we examined in detail how various Swaminarayan exegetes sought to define “brahmajījñāsā”—the investigation of, or literally the “desire to know,” brahman. Exegetes use the remaining components of the sūtra, atha and atas, “now” and “therefore,” to deliberate on what precedes the present inquiry into brahman, and what qualifies a person to engage in such an inquiry. They also use classificatory terms to foreground certain features of the adhikarana and the overall text. I will examine the treatment of both of these components in the three Swaminarayan commentaries in turn.

To better understand the variations in the Swaminarayan commentaries’ discussions about the antecedent of brahmajījñāsā, we first need to examine Rāmānuja’s problematizations in the Śrībhāṣya of Śaṅkara’s position. This has to do, in large part, with the relationship between the traditions of Vedānta and Mīmāṃsā.\(^1\) Both systems are inherently exegetical systems dealing with the Vedas. However, Mīmāṃsā, referred to at

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times as *Pūrva Mīmāṃsā*—literally, the “prior reflection”—is focused on the ritual components of the earlier strata of the Vedic canon. Meanwhile, Vedānta, also known as *Uttara Mīmāṃsā*—literally, the “later reflection”—is focused on the latter strata, the Upaniṣads. Rāmānuja is committed to upholding a unity between these two systems of *mīmāṃsā*, arguing for their *ekaśāstrya*—their being one scriptural text. Šaṅkara, on the other hand, distances Vedānta from the ritual component. It is important to note that both Vedāntins privilege the inquiry into *brahman* over ritual, considering that the fruits of the former are permanent, while the fruits of the latter are temporary. But while Rāmānuja maintains that one must inquire into the ritual portion in order to arrive at this conclusion about the disparity in fruits, Šaṅkara denies this is the case.

For Šaṅkara, the word *atha*, “now,” does indeed imply that the inquiry into *brahman* is subsequent to something else, but he defines this as what is known as the *sādhana-catuṣṭaya*, or the four-fold instruments: 1) discrimination between things that are eternal and transient; 2) aversion to the enjoyment of the fruits of one’s actions, both in this present world and elsewhere; 3) the collection of virtues such as tranquility and restraint; and 4) a

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2 Many scholars have debated the *ekaśāstrya* of these systems. Most pointedly, Bronkhorst has argued that before the development of Vedānta as a discrete philosophical and theological system, the *Mīmāṃsā Sūtra* and the *Brahma Sūtra* were never conceived of as one text, while Aklujkar has argued in favor of *ekaśāstrya*. For a back and forth debate, see: Johannes Bronkhorst, “Vedāta as Mīmāṃsā,” in *Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta: Interaction and Continuity*, ed. Johannes Bronkhorst (Delhi: Motilal Banrsidass, 2007), 1-91; Ashok Aklujkar, “Unity of the Mīmāṃsās: How historiography hides history,” in *Vacaspativaibhavam: A volume in felicitation of Professor Vachaspati Upadhyaya*, ed. Radha Vallabh Tripathi (Delhi: D.K. Printworld, 2011), 821-900; Johannes Bronkhorst, “Mīmāṃsāṣṭra and Brahmasūtra,” *Journal of Indian Philosophy* 42 (2014), 463-469.

3 Šaṅkara says *abhuyadayaphalam dharmaṇānam...nihśreyasaphalam tu brahmajñānam:* “the knowledge of dharma [ritual action] has as its fruit something that arises [and diminishes]...but the knowledge of *brahman* has as its fruit liberation”—Śrī Śaṅkarabhagavatpādcārya, *Brahmasūtra Bhashya*, vol. 1, *Chatuṣṣūtri*, ed. Subrahmanya Sastrigal et al (Srīrangam: Śrī Vani Vilas Press, 1914), 144-146. Rāmānuja says, *karmayo ’lpāṭhiraphalatvād...brahmajñānasyānāntāksayaphalatvāc ca:* “because the fruit of action is small and unstable…and because the fruit of the knowledge of *brahman* is infinite and imperishable”—P.B. Annangaracharya, ed., Śrī Bhagavad Rāmānuja Granthamālā (Kāṅcipuram: Granthamālā Office, 1956), 49.

4 This is often referred to as *sāmādiśātakasampatti*, the six-fold collection of virtues. To *śama* (tranquility) and *dama* (restraint) are added *uparati* (abstention from sensual enjoyment), *titikṣā* (patience), *śraddhā* (conviction), and *samādhiḥ* (intention). See Anantanand Rambachan, *The Advaita Worldview: God, World, and Humanity* (Albany: State University of New York Press), 23-25.
desire for liberation. Regardless of whether or not people engage in the inquiry into dharma or ritual action enjoined in Pūrva Mīmāṃsā, if they have these four qualities, they are authorized to inquire into brahman. Rāmānuja devotes an entire section of his exegesis on 1.1.1 to describing and refuting Saṅkara’s position, which is referred to as the laghu pūrva pakṣa, or “smaller objection,” and laghu siddhānta, or “smaller response,” respectively. Rāmānuja’s argues that this sādhana-catuṣṭaya is impossible without the pūrva mīmāṃsā: “without determining the specifics regarding the results, the means, the obligations, and the qualifications [for performing ritual], it is difficult to ascertain the true nature of action, their results—whether stable or not, and the eternality [of the self], etc.” That is to say, only through the rigorous analysis of ritual action will one be able to make any determination about what is eternal; this is the very first of Saṅkara’s four antecedents to learning about brahman. For Rāmānuja, the sādhana-catuṣṭaya is in no way a requirement for brahmavicāra, or reflecting on brahman.

The BSBR, following Śrīkaṇṭha’s commentary, uses its exposition on atha to corroborate Rāmānuja’s views on the ekaśāstrya, or unity, between Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. It goes through a series of objections regarding this ekaśāstrya, including one which questions whether there is a fixed order between the two reflections—dharma [ritual action] and brahman. The BSBR, in following Śrīkaṇṭha, argues that there is definitely a fixity: when one starts to study the Vedas along with its auxiliaries (aṅgas), one first hears of Vedic utterances enjoining the material worship (sthūlārdhana) of parabrahman through sacrifices like the jyotiṣṭoma; then one hears of those Vedic utterances enjoining the subtle

5 nityāṁityavastuvivekāḥ, ihāmāṁrāthhabhogavirāgah, šaṃmadādisādhanasampat, mumukṣutvaṁ ca; Saṅkarabhaṅgapatādācārya, Brahmasutra Bhāshya, 149-154.
6 phalakaranetikartavyatādhikārikaviśesaniścayād rte karmasvarūpataphalatatsthiratvāsthiratvatmanityatādīnāṇi duravabodhatvāt, Annangaracarya, ŚBRG, 54.
worship (sūkṣmārādhana) of parabrahman through Upaniṣadic teachings like the
daharavidyā.⁷ Recognizing that there is an apparent contradiction between these two Vedic utterances, one is motivated to inquire further into brahman. The BSBR concludes this lengthy dialectic with the following position:

therefore, this text of the Upaniṣads, along with the smṛtis that support it, should be studied, which makes known parabrahman…who has as its body all that is sentient and insentient, and who is superior to all through being nondifferent in form, nature, and prowess from jīvas, īśvaras, prakṛti-puruṣa,⁸ time, and aksarabrahman.⁹

Notably, the BSBR here upholds the basic sentence structure provided by Śrīkaṇṭha, but substitutes Śrīkaṇṭha’s description of parabrahman as Śiva with a description much more in line with the Swaminarayan sampradāy, and especially the Vacanāṁrt. Specifically, it accounts for all five of Sahajānand Svāmī’s metaphysical entities: jīva, īśvara, māyā (referred to in the passage as prakṛti, joined with a liberated jīva¹⁰ during the creative process), aksarabrahman, and parabrahman. The BSBR does maintain one curious vestige of Śrīkaṇṭha’s text,¹¹ that parabrahman is advitiya or non-different from all other entities, which contradicts the Swaminarayan position that all five entities are eternally coeval.

However, it still argues that parabrahman is superior to all the other entities. Despite this digression, the overall thrust of the section is to substantiate that dharmavicāra—reflecting on dharma—must precede brahmacīrca—reflecting on brahman, in line with Rāmānuja’s explanations in the Śrībhāṣya.

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⁷ BSBR, 4.
⁸ This refers to the role of māyā in the process of the creation of the universe. See Gaḍhaḍā I.41, pp. 93-96.
⁹ atah samastacetanaćetanaśarīrakasya jīveśvarapuruṣasakālakāksarabrahmabhyaḥ...sarvotkṛṣṭasya... parabrahmano vijñānajanaṃ svopabṛmhakasyādisahitaṃ upaniṣaccāstraṃ mīmāṃsanīyam; BSBR, 5.
¹⁰ See Section 4.3 of this chapter.
¹¹ Śrīkaṇṭha’s text reads: tatah sakalacacittrapapiścarakāraparamaśaktiviśūdayīdyayaśvabhavaḥ... parabrahmanah pratipadakam upaniṣaccāstaram vicāraṇiṇyam; Śrīkaṇṭhacārya, Brahmasūrabhaṣyam, ed. Vrajavallabha Dviveda (Vaṅgaṇasī: Jaṅgamavādīmaṭha, 1986), 96-101.
However, in the very next section expanding upon the word *atas*, or “therefore,” the *BSBR* follows Śrīkaṇṭha in arguing for a unique position, one that merges Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara. In explaining that not only is a study of the ritual portion an antecedent to *brahmavicāra*, but that it is the very cause of *brahmavicāra*, the *BSBR* paraphrases Śrīkaṇṭha to say:

Dharma [i.e. ritual action] is reflected upon by a person who has studied the Vedas along with the *smṛti* texts that support them, then because of that, that one—who attains a purity of inner-faculties through engaging in that [ritual action], who swiftly attains the qualities like discrimination, etc., and through that attains the devotion of Hari—reflects even upon *parabrahman*, who is the cause of liberation whose form is limitless excellence and bliss.\(^{12}\)

This adds an intermediary step to the order described previously: one studies the Vedas and engages in ritual action; this purifies one’s inner faculties; this in turn grants one the qualities of discrimination, etc.; this prompts one to worship *parabrahman*; and finally, this encourages one to reflect upon *parabrahman*—that is, engage in *brahmavicāra*. The *BSBR* is thus interpolating Śaṅkara’s *sādhana-catusṭaya* into Rāmānuja’s process. While Rāmānuja argued that the *sādhana-catusṭaya* was dependent upon *dharmanicāra*, and so could not substitute for it, he did not claim that the *sādhana-catusṭaya* was a necessary antecedent for *brahmavicāra*. Śrīkaṇṭha appears to be synthesizing Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja, and although Śaṅkara’s Vedānta receives particular censure in the *Vacanāṁrt*,\(^{13}\) the *BSBR* uncritically includes this innovative reading in the process of adapting Śrīkaṇṭha’s text.

This variant reading receives a lengthy criticism in the *BM*.\(^{14}\) To repeat, this text was likely composed by a Viśiṣṭādvaitin *paṇḍita* named P.B. Aṇḍaṅgaracārya in the 1940s, part of

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\(^{12}\) *yato bhāni asvopabrhmakasmṛtyādiyutavedena punsā dharmo māṃsītaḥ *tas tadanuṣṭhāna- *samprāptaḥkaraṇaśuddhino śīgasamprāptavivekādigna-vidyamāṇa-vyapraśṭaharibhakti-sampannena *parabrahmāpi niravadhipātiśayāndarānaparīṣṭhayasyaśakaram māṃśaṃsalīyaṃ iti; *BSBR*, 5.

\(^{13}\) See *Vacanāṁrt* Gaḍhaḍā I.48, II.18, II.19, III.28, and III.36.

\(^{14}\) *BM*, 11-13.
a project of the Vartal branch of the Swaminarayan *sampradāy* to realign Swaminarayan Vedānta with Viśiṣṭādvaita. As such, the text eloquently and succinctly summarizes Rāmānuja’s position. The *BM* joins all the other commentators in saying that the sense of the word *atha*, or “now,” is “immediate succession” after an antecedent, and suggests that this is corroborated by the very force of the word *brahmajijñāsā*. Further, this sense of the word *atha* is solidified (*draḍhayati*) by the word *atas*, or “therefore,” which establishes a cause for the antecedent to *brahmajijñāsā*. The text clarifies the process as follows:

The reflection of *karma* (*karmavicāra*) is the cause of dispassion; from dispassion arises the desire to know about an infinite, stable fruit; from that, there is this reflection on the Upaniṣads. Therefore, it is established that the one is dispassionate because of reflecting on *karma* is authorized [into the reflection on *brahman*].

Following this, the *BM* has a particularly lengthy debate with an opponent who questions the *ekaśāstrya* of Mīmāṃsā and Vedānta. Next, the text has an even lengthier rebuttal of Śaṅkara’s position on the *sādhana-catuṣṭaya* that exceeds Rāmānuja’s own criticism of it in the Śrībhāṣya, taking on each of the four *sādhanas* in turn. This rebuttal seems aware of developments within Viśiṣṭādvaita post-Rāmānuja, and is likely drawing from Vedānta Deśika’s treatment of Śaṅkara’s position in the *sādhana-catuṣṭaya-pūrva-vṛtta-bhaṅga-vāda*, or “Argument Refuting the Antecedence of the *Sādhana-Catuṣṭaya*” in his polemical text, *Śatadūṣanī*, or “100 Flaws” of Advaita Vedānta. The overall position of the refutation builds on Rāmānuja’s point that ritual action is necessary in order to discriminate between what is eternal and not, suggesting that this is the case for most of the *sādhanas*.

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15 nirvede hi karmavicāro hetuḥ. nirvedācānantasthirapralajijñāsāḥ; tayā cāyaṃ aupaniṣadavicārah; tatkarmavicārān nirvinno ‘dhiṛārīti siddham; *BM*, 4.  
16 *BM*, 6-9.  
17 *BM*, 9-10.
Even though the *BM* has taken on Śaṅkara so squarely, perhaps rendering a critique of Śrīkaṇṭha synthesis of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja unnecessary, the text still provides a sustained response to Śrīkaṇṭha. Directly quoting first Śrīkaṇṭha and then his subcommentator Appayya Dīkṣita, the *BM* is not willing to accede that the *sādhana-catuṣṭaya* becomes an antecedent to *brahmavicāra* even if it follows a prior reflection into ritual action. The text argues that the entire logical process set up by Śrīkaṇṭha is faulty. It first reviews this process: *dharma-vicāra* leads to the performance of *dharma*, or ritual action; this leads to the praise of *brahman*; this leads the purification of one’s heart; this brings about discrimination between things that are eternal and not; this engenders dispassion; this creates virtues like tranquility; this brings about a desire for liberation; and finally, this stimulates the desire to know *brahman*. The *BM* contends that the critical flaw is in the causal linkage drawn between the performance of ritual action, the purification of one’s heart, and the generation of discrimination. The text suggests that this discrimination is, in fact, rooted in the study of the fruits of action (*karmaphalaparīkṣā*), which can only occur through hearing scriptural texts like the *Mūndaka Upaniṣad*. Though the inquiry into ritual action is of critical importance, it is not because of the causal chain suggested by Śrīkaṇṭha. The *BM* concludes by saying that in this *sūtra*, there is no necessity for the purification of one’s heart, and by extension, the *sādhana-catuṣṭaya* in the teaching of a specific kind of person authorized into the study of *brahman*.\(^\text{18}\) The *sādhana-catuṣṭaya* is wholly superfluous.

Turning to Bhadresh Swami’s commentary, we find an elaboration of the antecedent to *brahmajijñāsā* that builds upon previous discussions, but with a novel configuration. In his

\(^{18}\) na cádhikāriviśeśavabodhane 'pi cittaśuddhyāpeksā; *BM*, 12.
gloss of *atha*, or “now,” as “immediate succession,” Bhadresh Swami describes several components that make up this antecedent in one florid sentence that I will quote in full:

[1] dharma, in the form of pious actions in accordance with the ritual portion, that is well-practiced upon completion of *pūrva-mīmāṃsā*; [2] knowledge (*jñāna*), in the form of a preliminary conception of the meaning of the Upaniṣads; [3] dispassion (*nirvedaḥ*), characterized by the absence of affection for anything contrary to the highest goal; [4] a desire for the one-pointed bhakti of the manifest *paramātman*; [5] a desire for ultimate liberation, characterized by the divine experience of the ultimate bliss that is Sahajānanda, engendered by the greatest worship of the manifest *paramātman*, adorned by the wealth (*sampatti*) of making oneself one with brahman (*brahmarūpa*), accompanied by the casting away of beginningless ignorance, that is in turn caused by the most firm attachment to the manifest aksarabrahman guru; [6] austerity (*tapas*) characterized by the control of inner and outer faculties; [7] taking refuge in the guru who: has always already fully realized *paramātman*, is fully versed in the wisdom of śāstras including the Vedas and Upaniṣads, is an expert in teaching about their purport, is adorned by all auspicious qualities, can grant the ultimate station of liberation, and is by nature brahmasvarūpa; and [8] the highest faith, in the form of belief in the words of scriptural teachings explained by [that guru].

Several aspects of this elaborate delineation of the antecedent to *brahmajijñāsā* merit elaboration. The first four components of the list draw upon Sahajānand Svāmī’s articulation of ekāntika, or “one-pointed” bhakti, discussed at several junctures in the *Vacanāmrt*. This ekāntika bhakti is four-fold, consisting of dharma, knowledge (*jñāna*), dispassion (*vairāgya*), and bhakti. Bhadresh Swami adapts these terms here to fit the Vedāntic context, and subsumes all of Rāmānuja’s discussion of the ritual antecedents of *brahmajijñāsā* into the very first point. Secondly, Bhadresh Swami’s list recalls the *sādhanacatuṣṭaya*. It includes

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19 *pūrvamīmāṃsāsāstāḥ svanuṣṭhitāḥ sadācārakarmakāṇḍādīrūpo dharmo vedāntaśāstrārthāpātā-pratyayārūpam jñānam, paramapūrṇaśāstra-pratyayānikeśu priyavatvirahakalaṇaḥ nirvedaḥ; paramadhyayābhāvanarastirātpratyayākṣaparamātmākāntikabhaktayabhīvānāḥ sāksādakṣara-abrahmasvarāpa-gurudṛdhatamprasānopaśādilābhāyānājñānani-vartanaparākṛtavātmabrahmarūpasampattya-alanukṛt-pratyayākṣaparamātmā-pāpiṇāja-bhavyasahajānanda-paramāmittadīvāhāntikalaṇa-paramanihārasyābhikānıkṣā tattvamaprasādalābhā bāhyāntaka-rānasamāya-ṃnakālaṃ tapah...nityam paramātmānam sākaśtturvānasya vedavedāntīdisakalasāstrāvidyāpārādhanas tadarthopadesani punasyaśakalyāṇaṃ manmanītyaṁ śvato brahmasvarūpasya guruḥ yathāviddhi paramātmabhāvataḥ samāśrayanāṃ tasya tadupadiṣṭavedāntīdisāstrānāṃ vacaneṣu cāṣṭikādīrūpaḥ paramo viśvāsyo ityādi; BSSB, 3-4.

20 See, for example, *Vacanāmṛt* Gadhādā I.19.
dispassion [1] and a desire for liberation [5], and approximates the virtues like tranquility, etc. [6]. The last two points are entirely unique, and draw upon Sahajānand Svāmī’s teachings in the *Vacanāmrī* that have particular importance in the BAPS Swaminarayan Sanstha. These two points highlight the significance of the *brahmasvarūpa* guru, who is ontologically understood as a manifestation of *akṣarabrahman*. Taking refuge in this guru, and having faith in his teachings, is seen as a necessary precursor to inquiring into *brahman*. Bhadresh Swami is thus incorporating aspects of Śaṅkara’s and Rāmānuja’s positions, but is not concerned with the nuances of their debate. He adapts the positions to articulate a uniquely Swaminarayan view.

In one other section, Bhadresh Swami outlines the entire process of *brahmajijñāsā*, amply citing from the Upaniṣads in support of each step.  

First, having understood the nature of action as described in the ritual portion (*karmakāṇḍa*), one concludes that mere “dry” action (*kevalaśuṣṭa-karma*) bears insignificant, unstable fruits. From other Upaniṣadic sources, like *Bṛhadāranyaka Upaniṣad* 3.8.10, one learns that the person bereft of *brahmavidyā* earns undesirable fruits. Then, one gains a provisional understanding that the knowledge of *akṣarabrahman* and *parabrahman* brings about infinite, divine, stable fruits. For this very reason, out of a curiosity to know even more, and in accordance with *Munḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12, one must approach the *brahmasvarūpa* guru, who is a preserver of the lineage of the *sampradāya* (*sampradāya-paramparā-abhirakṣaka*).

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21 *BSSB*, 8-10.
22 “Without knowing this imperishable, Gārgī, even if a man were to make offerings, to offer sacrifices, and to perform austerities in this world for many thousands of years, all that would come to naught.”—Patrick Olivelle, trans., *The Early Upaniṣads: Annotated Text and Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 91.
23 “To understand it he must go, firewood in hand, to a teacher well versed in the Vedas, and focused on *brahman.*”—Ibid., 441.
The sequence continues further. Following Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad 6.23, one must associate with the aforementioned guru with the firm belief that he is the manifest form of God (pratyakṣa-nārāyaṇasvāpa-bhāvena). Here, Bhadresh Swami uses sleṣa, or double meaning, to allude to the very personage of that guru for BAPS Swaminarayans: at the time of composition, the guru of BAPS was named Shastri Narayanswarupdas, otherwise known as Pramukh Swami Maharaj. It is only then that “one who is desirous of liberation should begin this text characterized by the reflection on the knowledge of brahman.” This, Bhadresh Swami explains, is the essence of the sūtra (sūtrārthāniṣkarṣah). In both discussions of the antecedent to brahmavicāra, Bhadresh Swami thus forcefully positions this role of the brahmasvāpa guru in the sequential path that leads to a curiosity about brahman, and supports this position with recourse to Upaniṣadic citations.

Though Bhadresh Swami positions the role of the brahmasvāpa guru explicitly and repeatedly, the BSBR also raises the issue, albeit not as centrally. The BSBR, in following Śrīkaṇṭha, devotes a whole section to reflecting on the five characteristics of an adhikaraṇa: its topic (viṣaya), the key doubts in this regard (samśaya), the prima facie position (pūrva pakṣa), the author’s position (siddhānta), and the connection with other adhikaranas (saṅgati). Again, in following Śrīkaṇṭha, the BSBR states that the topic of the entire adhikaraṇa is the Upaniṣadic utterance of Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 1.2.12, which it cites in full: “when he perceives the worlds as built with rites, a Brahmin should acquire a sense of disgust—‘what’s made can’t make what is unmade!’ To understand it, he must go, firewood

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24 “Only in a man who has the deepest love for God, and who shows the same love toward his teacher as toward God, do these points declared by the Noble One shine forth.”—Ibid., 433.
25 mumukṣur brahmavidyāvicāralakṣaṇe śāstre ‘śmin pravarteta; BSSB, 10.
in hand, to a teacher well versed in the Vedas, and focused on brahman.”

This verse summarizes the entire discussion of what should precede brahmajijñāsā: disgust brought about by understanding the transitory results of ritual action. As such, it is cited by Rāmānuja in the Śrībhāṣya, though it is not singled out as the viṣaya of the adhikaraṇa.

The BSBR takes this one step further by identifying two other scriptural verses as the viṣaya:

Bhagavad Gītā 4.34 and Bhāgavata Purāṇa 11.3.21. Though neither of these verses speak directly to the disgust of ritual action, they both emphasize the second part of the Munḍaka Upaniṣad verse: approaching a guru.

Further, in stating the siddhānta position, the BSBR resolves the doubt as to whether a study of brahman can be enjoined in the first place. Responding to the prima facie view that it cannot, the BSBR maintains: “in this case, we say that having attained a guru who is a knower of the true form (svarūpa) of the sentient, insentient, and parabrahman as taught in scripture, and who is an ekāntika bhakta of Hari, this [Brahma Sūtra] text should by all means be commenced.” Notably, at the same juncture in Śrīkanṭha’s commentary, he does not repeat the point about the guru, and simply states that the text should be commenced.

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26 parīkṣya lokān karamcitān brāhmaṇo nirvedamāyān nasty akṛtaḥ kṛtena/ tadvijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet samtāpiṇāḥ śrotṛiyam brahmanīṣṭham—Olivelle, trans., The Early Upaniṣads, 440-441.
27 Annangaracarya, ŚBRG, 50.
28 BG 4.34 reads tad viddhi pranipātena paripraśnena sevayā/ upadeṣyantī te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattvadarśīnaḥ; BP 11.3.21 reads tasmād gurum prapadyeta jijñāsuḥ śreyā uttamam/ sābde pare ca niṣṇātāṁ brahmany upaśanāśrayam; BSBR, 6.
29 As described above, ekāntika bhakti consists of virtues to be developed by all practitioners in the Swaminarayan sampradāy. However, at certain points in the Vacanāṁrt, Sahajānand Svāmī singles out the privileged and unique status of one who has already become an ekāntika bhakta. In these discussions, the ekāntika bhakta is referred to in the singular, and approximates a guru-like status through his association with God. See, for example, Vacanāṁrt Gadhāda I.19, pp. 28-30.
30 ity evaṁ prāpte vacmaḥ—sacchāstraaprotvācetanācetanaparabrahmasvarūpāpābhiḥ jñānaṁ haryekāntikabhaktam gurum prāpya sarvathā samārambhāniyāṁ śāstram; BSBR, 6.
31 ity evaṁ prāpte brāmaḥ—sarvathā samārambhāniyāṁ śāstram; Śrīkaṇṭhācārya, Brahmasūtrabhāṣyam, 126-127.
The *BSBR*’s emendations of Śrīkanṭha thus emphasize the importance of the *guru* for the study of *brahman* in the Swaminarayan *sampradāy*.

A few points regarding this identification of the *viṣaya* and the foregrounding of the guru in the *BSBR* warrant further reflection. Firstly, the entire discussion bears similarities with Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s eighteenth-century Gauḍīya commentary, which also offers a meditation on the five components of an *adhiparāṇa*. Although Okita suggests that Baladeva has no Vedāntic precursor to such a discussion, Śrīkanṭha clearly discussed these points centuries before.\(^{32}\) Further, Okita argues that Baladeva’s unique reading of 1.1.1 is his depiction of the association with “‘a knower of truth’ (*tattvavitprasaṅga*)” as an antecedent to an inquiry into *brahman*.\(^{33}\) Baladeva selects different Upaniṣadic citations as the *viṣaya* to the *adhiparāṇa* that do not discuss the “knower of truth,” but he does cite *Bhagavad Gītā* 4.34 in support of his reading—a text that becomes one of the *viṣaya vākyas* for the *BSBR*. Though Okita argues that his primary influence was the sixteenth-century Jīva Gosvāmī, it is possible that Baladeva drew upon Śrīkanṭha in his exegesis of 1.1.1, especially given the structure of his response and his centering of the “knower of truth.” It is also possible that the *BSBR* drew upon both Śrīkanṭha and Baladeva as models for foregrounding the role of the guru in the path to the knowledge of *brahman*. It is certain that the *BSBR* did seek to encode this important point for the Swaminarayan *sampradāy* in its exposition of this *sūtra*.

Further, in the concluding lines of its commentary on 1.1.1, the *BM* summarizes Śrīkanṭha’s discussion of the five components of the *adhiparāṇa*. The *BM* recapitulates the points that Śrīkanṭha makes about each of the five components, including his identification of *Munḍaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12 as the *viṣaya-vākya*. After doing so, the *BM* concludes: “with

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33 Ibid., 155.
respect to this position, we have no real dispute.”\(^{34}\) This lengthy exposition of Śrīkaṇṭha is curious, especially since the BM raises no objections. Further, though the footnote of the text indicates that the position being described is Śrīkaṇṭha’s, the citation is not direct, and the position is simply referred to in the text as “elsewhere.” Lastly, in laying out the siddhānta position in the summary of the five aspects of the adhikaraṇa, the BM makes reference to “approaching a guru” (gurūpasadana). This is a point that Śrīkaṇṭha does not raise at this point in his discussion, but the BSBR does. It seems even more likely that the BM’s references to Śrīkaṇṭha are coded references to the BSBR.

To summarize, there are a few broad patterns that emerge from how the three Swaminarayan commentaries discuss the process by which one arrives at a study of brahman. Firstly, the BSBR expands upon Śrīkaṇṭha’s model to introduce some of the unique features of Sahajānand Svāmī’s Vedānta, including a five-fold metaphysics and the important role of a guru. However, the text uncritically follows Śrīkaṇṭha in privileging Śaṅkara’s sādhana-catusṭaya as a necessary step between a reflection on ritual action and Vedānta, seemingly contradicting Rāmānuja. The BM emerges as a text that wants to defend the Viśiṣṭādvaita position, and so it argues that the only antecedent for brahmavicāra is karmavicāra. However, the text is also keen to indicate it is aware of the BSBR, and that it is lifting large sections of Śrīkaṇṭha. It does so by directly engaging with Śrīkaṇṭha’s position, allowing these positions to slide past when they do not stand in the way of Viśiṣṭādvaita, but vociferously refuting them when they do. Meanwhile, Bhadresh Swami positions his bhāsyā as above these polemics. He does not cite Rāmānuja or Śaṅkara, let alone the BSBR or the BM. He instead uses his exegesis to thoroughly encode a Swaminarayan-specific system,

\(^{34}\) *tad asminpakṣe nāsmākam atīva vivādaḥ; BM, 20-21.*
adapting previous discussions of the sādhana-catuṣṭaya and the role of the guru in the process.

4.2. Creating, Sustaining, and Dissolving the Universe: 1.1.2

After having laid out the process by which one arrives at an inquiry into brahman, and maintaining that such an inquiry is necessary, the Brahma Sūtra turns its attention to the defining characteristics of brahman. The sūtra here says, janmādy asya yataḥ: “from which [brahman], there is the creation, etc., of this [whole universe].” There are kernels of similarities in how most Vedāntic exegetes, from Śaṅkara onwards, explicate this sūtra. For example, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja, and all of the Swaminarayan commentators indicate that janmādi, or “the creation, etc.,” refers to the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the cosmos. Further, apart from Śaṅkara, all of the commentators are explicit that brahman is both the efficient (nimitta) and material (upādāna) cause of creation. That is, brahman is both responsible for bringing about creation, but is also the substratum from which creation occurs. Further, they all take this sūtra to be referring to Taittirīya Upaniṣad 3.1.1: “that from which these beings are born; on which, once born, they live; and into which they pass upon death—seek to perceive that! That is brahman!”

Beyond this, and other simple concerns, the commentaries diverge. In the Swaminarayan commentaries’ exegesis of this adhikaraṇa, similar patterns emerge as in the previous adhikaraṇa. Again, the BSBR adapts Śrīkaṇṭha’s model to introduce Sahajānand Svāmī’s system, and in the process, adopts a position contrary to Rāmānuja. And once again, the BM criticizes this position. The BM also expands upon Rāmānuja’s discussion. Finally,

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35 yato vā imāni bhūtāni jāyante, yena jātāni jīvante, yat prayanty abhisamviśanti, tad vijijñāsasva, tad brahmeti; Olivelle, trans., The Early Upaniṣads, 309-309.
Bhadresh Swami does not reinvent Rāmānuja’s wheel, but is more concerned with demonstrating that brahman in 1.1.2 refers to aksarabraham and parabraham.

First, however, I will briefly demonstrate what Sahajānand Svāmī has to say about the topic of the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe in the Vacanāmrī in order to better ground the ensuing discussion. Most prominently, there is the same passage I cited in Chapter 3, Vacanāmrī Gaḍhaḍā II.3:

brahman is unchanging [nirvikār] and indivisible [nirāṃś]… that brahman is the cause [kāraṇ] and the support [ādīr] of everything, including prakṛti-puruṣa… Thus, that which is the cause and the support and the pervader cannot be distinct from its effect…But it should not be understood that brahman itself goes through change and assumes the form of all jīvas, mobile and immobile. Parabrahman, who is Purusottama Nārāyaṇa, is distinct from that brahman, is the cause of that brahman, and is its supporter and inspirer.36

Sahajānand Svāmī here describes brahman as the creator and sustainer of this entire universe, and yet maintains a distinction of sorts. Further, he posits parabraham as superior to brahman. In referring to the entity of prakṛti-puruṣa, Sahajānand Svāmī is signaling a complex system of cyclical creation of the universe elaborated piecemeal in other places in the Vacanāmrī. For example, at Vacanāmrī Gaḍhaḍā I.41, Sahajānand Svāmī says, “at the time of creation, puruṣottama, who is greater than aksara, looks towards aksara.”37 Broadly speaking, parabraham inspires aksarabraham to start the creative process, at which point aksarabraham, in whom māyā or prakṛti—the insentient matter of the universe—has

36 je brahm che to to nirvikār che ne niraṃś che…e brahm je te prakṛtipuruṣādik sarvenā kāraṇ che ne ādīr che…maṇe je kāraṇ che ādīr che ne vyāpak hoy te kārya thaki prthak hoy nahi…paṇ e brahm ja vikār pāmīne caracar jīvṛūpe thai gayā em na samajvā. Ane e brahm thaki parabraham je puruṣottam nārāyan te nokhā che ne e brahmā paṇ kāraṇ che ne ādīr che ne prerak che, em samjāne potānā jīvātmāne e brahm samgāthe ekā karne parabrahmā śvāmī-sevakhāve upāsanā karvā. evi rīte samjā teyāre brahmajñān che te paṇ param padne pāmīyāno nirvighna mārg che; Vacanāmrī Gaḍhaḍā II.3, p. 362-363.
37 aksaraṭīt evā je puruṣottam bhagavān te srṣti samaye viṣe aksar sāmi drṣṭi kare che; Vacanāmrī Gaḍhaḍā I.41, p. 74.
remained in a dormant, inert state, continues onwards with creation.\(^{38}\) Importantly, in this system, *parabrahman, aṣarabrahman, māyā,* and *jīva,* and the unmentioned *īśvara* are all coeval.

At another juncture, *Vacanāṁrt* Gaḍhaḍā I.64, Sahajānand Svāmī describes his interpretation of the concept of *ṣarīra-ṣarīrhāva,* or the relationship between the body and its indweller, most famously described by Rāmānuja. Sahajānand Svāmī explains that *parabrahman* is the indweller or soul of a body made up of two entities: the ātmā—to be understood here as sentient beings such as jīvas and īśvaras—and aksara. He further explains that just as any individual soul is different from its physical body, similarly, *parabrahman* is different from both the ātmā and aksara. Furthermore, *parabrahman* is greater than both the ātmā and aksara. And while aksara is superior to all else, *parabrahman* is superior even to aksara.\(^{39}\) A last point that Sahajānand Svāmī makes in this same *Vacanāṁrt* is that *parabrahman* always has a form (*sākār*): the person who believes that *parabrahman* “always has a divine form” will gain the qualities of *parabrahman*; but the person who worships and meditates on a formless (*nirākār*) brahman will not gain these qualities.\(^{40}\)

The *BSBR* makes use of Śrīkanṭha’s model to convey these various features of Sahajānand Svāmī’s system. The very first place the text does this is by expanding upon the gloss of *yatas,* or “from which.” Śrīkanṭha very simply explains that the referent of the pronoun is brahman. The *BSBR* adds a description of brahman being greater than all else (*utkṛṣṭa*). In doing so, the text cites explanatory scriptural texts that seem to recreate


\(^{39}\) *par thakī par evā je aṣar te thakī paṇ par che; Vacanāṁrt* Gaḍhaḍā I.64, 125.

\(^{40}\) Ibid.
Sahajānand Svāmī’s discussion in Vacanāmrta Gaḍhaḍā I.64. First, he cites Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.1.2, which describes a person “higher than akṣara, which is higher than all” (akṣarāt parataḥ paraḥ). Next, he cites Brhadāranyka Upaniṣad 1.4.1: “in the beginning this world was just a single body (ātmā) shaped like a man.” Finally, he cites Bhagavad Gīṭa 15.18: “because I surpass the destructible (i.e., individual ātmanaḥ), and I am also greater than akṣara.” The first citation is the verse that Sahajānand Svāmī translates into Gujarati in the Vacanāmrta, and the second alludes to the body as ātmā. The third provides the concluding line from the Vacanāmrta: that parabrahman is greater than both of these things. The particular constellation of scriptural citation thus encodes Sahajānand Svāmī’s teaching in the commentary.

The other place that the BSBR accomplishes this task is in the second half of the exegesis of this sūtra. Śrīkaṇṭha uses this opportunity to expand upon the characteristics of brahman beyond its being the creator, sustainer, and dissolver of the world. He comments upon six qualities of brahman, and then describes eight names of Śiva. The BSBR accepts the six qualities—and these are not the same six qualities from the Viṣṇu Purāṇa commonly accepted by Vaiṣṇava Vedāntins—but modifies the latter discussion to discuss a few of the “thousand” names of Sahajānand Svāmī. Though this description of names allows the BSBR to convey some points unique to the Swaminarayan sampradāy, it is the text’s emendations of two of the six qualities that convey more significant facets of the Swaminarayan system.

One of the six qualities described by Śrīkaṇṭha and the BSBR is parabrahman’s nitya-traptatvam—that it is eternally content and satisfied. It is characterized by bliss, ānanda, but

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41 BSBR, 8.
42 ātmavedam agra āsīt puruṣavidhah; Olivelle, transl, Early Upaniṣads, 44-45.
43 yasmāt ksāram aśīt āham akṣarād api cottomāḥ
44 i.e., jñāna, bala, aśvarya, śakti, vīrya, tejas.
does not need external sense-organs to enjoy this bliss. To corroborate this, Śrīkaṇṭha cites *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 1.6.2: “the brahman whose body is space, whose self is truth, whose pleasure ground is the lifebreath, and whose joy is the mind.”\(^{45}\) In lieu of this discussion of a possibly metaphorical conceptualization of the body of brahman, the *BSBR* uses this juncture to engage in a lengthy discussion that ultimately supports *parabrahman* as always having a form. The *BSBR* recognizes that there are seemingly contradictory scriptural passages. *Śvetāśvatra Upaniṣad* 6.19 suggests that parabrahman does not have a form: “without parts, inactive, tranquil, unblemished, spotless”;\(^{46}\) *Taittirīya Upaniṣad* 2.1.1 suggests that it does have a form: “now, he has the appearance of a man.”\(^{47}\) After deliberating on this, the *BSBR* concludes:

the one who has a human form, with limbs that are divine, extraordinary, and eternal, is referred to as *parabrahman*. Thus, because of this, even the collection of descriptors such as “without hands and feet,” of that *brahman* with a human form described by the śrūtis, actually are enjoined in making known a divine body, with extraordinary hands, feet, and limbs.\(^{48}\)

The text explains that the śrūtis explaining *parabrahman* as lacking limbs, etc., merely point out that *parabrahman* does not have the ordinary limbs that humans and other beings have.

*Parabrahman* does, however, have divine limbs, and has had throughout beginningless time.

Through this discussion, the *BSBR* once again affirms Sahajānand Svāmī’s teachings in *Vacanāmṛt* Gadhaḍa I.64, this time about *parabrahman* eternally having a human-like form.

The *BSBR* uses the discussion of another one of Śrīkaṇṭha’s six qualities of *parabrahman* to confirm the process of creation Sahajānand Svāmī describes in the

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\(^{45}\) ākāśasarvāraṁ brahma satyātma prāṇārāmaṁ manuṣānam anāttāmaṁ satīsamrādham amṛtām; Olivelle, trans., *Early Upaniṣads*, 294-295.

\(^{46}\) niṣkalam niśkriyāmaṁ śaṁmaṁ narakavyayam niśrānjanam; Ibid., 432-433.

\(^{47}\) sa vā esā puruṣāvidha eva; Ibid., 300-301.

\(^{48}\) divyāprākṛtādṛṣṭādvaya Vivayatapuruṣākāraṁ taṁ parabrahmasamjñaṁ evam anavā śrutvaidasya puruṣākārabrahmano ‘pañipādaśāśeṣaṇavṛṇaṁ tv aprākṛtakarapādaśāṅgāyaśaṅgavādigraha-bodhanaparam; *BSBR*, 10.
Vacanāmṛt. This time, the discussion is about parabrahman’s anantaśaktivam—it’s having infinite prowess. Here, Śrīkaṇṭha cites a Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad quote about there being only one Rudra, and another Śaivite text describing Śiva’s innumerable powers. The BSBR, by contrast, quotes a different, more generalized verse from the Śvetāsvatara: “one hears about his highest and truly diverse power, which is part of his very nature and is the working of his knowledge and strength.” More importantly, the BSBR quotes three verses from the Vaiṣṇava Khanda of the Skanda Purāṇa, referred to as the Vāsudeva Māhātmya. This text is important in the Swaminarayan tradition, and Sahajānand Svāmī includes it in his list of eight authoritative Sanskrit texts in both the Śikṣāpatrī and the Vacanāmṛt. The first of these verses, Vāsudeva Māhātmya 24.5, states: “when Vāsudeva [i.e., parabrahman], having taken up the power of time (kālaśakti), looked at her [i.e. prakṛti] through aksara with a desire to create, at that very moment she was provoked.” Though a discussion of the particular mode of creation described by Sahajānand Svāmī seems perfectly fitting for a sūtra specifically discussing parabrahman’s creatorship of the world, the BSBR does not foreground this discussion. Instead, it is found subsumed under the discussion of the sixth quality of parabrahman. Nonetheless, the author of the BSBR is demonstrating considerable creative reuse of Śrīkaṇṭha’s text. Any Śaivite discussion in Śrīkaṇṭha is occasion for the insertion of a Swaminarayan-inflected reading.

That being said, the BSBR again upholds Śrīkaṇṭha’s idiosyncratic interpretations of key sections of the sūtra that are unsupported by Rāmānuja’s exegesis. The bulk of

49 Śrīkaṇṭhācārya, Brahmaśūtrabhāṣya, 175-176.
50 parāsya śākriti vividhaiva śrūvate svābhāvikā jñānabalakriyā ca; Olivelle, transl, 430-431.
51 For a discussion of the authenticity of the various māhātmya texts associated with the Skanda Purāṇa, see Ludo Rocher, The Purāṇas (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1986), 229-231.
52 tāṁ kālaśaktim ādāya vāsudevo ‘kṣarātmanā sisṛkṣayaikṣata yadā sā cukṣobha tadaiva hi; BSBR, 11.
Rāmānuja’s Śrībhāṣya exegesis of 1.1.2 is spent on answering prima facie objections about the nature of “characteristics,” explicating what it really means to say that brahman is characterized as the creator of the world. Śrīkaṇṭha and the BSBR, by contrast, treat this point rather summarily. Rāmānuja engages in an extended debate over whether parabrahman’s creatorship of the world constitutes a defining characteristic (lakṣaṇa), or a contingent characteristic (upalakṣaṇa). Chakravarthi Ram-Prasad succinctly summarizes the difference between these two through the example of a house with a crow on the roof: “the identification of the house is not dependent on [the crow]. It is contingently true that the house can be identified as that upon which a crow is sitting; but that characteristic is not constitutive of the identity of the house.” If the crow were to fly away, the house would still remain a house. Rāmānuja first says that the creatorship, etc., of the world can be a contingent characteristic, but ultimately maintains that it is also a defining characteristic. The BSBR, in closely paraphrasing Śrīkaṇṭha, says the following:

> when there is a prima facie view that one cannot by any means say that the creatorship, etc., of the world is a defining characteristic (lakṣaṇa) of brahman, we say: even if there is no connection of brahman with creatorship—which is in turn, connected to the world—still, creatorship is ascribed as an external characteristic.

The prima facie view, which is fully developed prior to this statement, rests on a contention that there is no connection (saṁyoga) between the characteristic (creatorship) and the characterized (brahman). In response, neither Śrīkaṇṭha nor the BSBR posit that these are lakṣaṇas, or even upalakṣaṇas. Instead, they suggest a third category: taṭastha lakṣaṇa, external characteristics. They do not expand upon the meaning of this term in any real way,

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54 atah sarvātāpi brahmaṇā jagaddhetutvādilakṣaṇam vaktum aṣākyam ity evam adau pūrvapaksarūpakalahe jāte sati vacmah—yadyapi janmāder jagat sambandhitvena brahmaṇy asaṁyogogas tathāpi taṭasthatvena lakṣaṇatvam sambadhyate; BSBR, 9.
nor do they fully explain how it addresses the objections raised in the *prima facie* view. The statement stands on its own, followed by the lengthy discussion of attributes and names described above.

The *BM* provides a full refutation of this view in its defense of Rāmānuja’s position that the creatorship, etc., of the world constitute defining characteristics of *brahman*.\(^{55}\) The issue for the *BM* is that even though Śaṅkara does not use 1.1.2 to develop a position of *taṭastha lakṣaṇa*, this is a position articulated in later Advaita Vedānta; that Śrīkaṇṭha and the *BSBR* support this usage, is a problem. The *BM* first rebuts the Advaita position, and then takes on the Śrīkaṇṭha/BSBR position. In the Advaita *pūrva pakṣa* position set up by the *BM*, the creatorship of the world is imaginary, but superimposed upon *brahman*. However, this creatorship is still said to characterize *brahman*, even though there is no direct connection between the two, because: “an external characteristic (*taṭastha lakṣaṇa*) is one thing that characterizes another despite there being no direct connection.”\(^{56}\) The classic example given to illustrate the point is how one can point to tree branches in order to make known the moon visible behind it. Though there is no direct connection between the branches and the moon, one can still meaningfully use the descriptor, “the moon in the branches” in order to learn something about the moon. The *BM* criticizes this position by first saying that this descriptor allows one to learn only about the location of the moon, but not the moon itself. Further, the text questions the very lack of connection between the branches and the moon, positing that there *is* a connection: they are in the same line of vision. After discussing some further objections and counter-objections, the *BM* reaches this conclusion: “a defining characteristic is a unique property, whose purpose would be exclusion [of dissimilar properties] (vyāvṛtti)

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\(^{56}\) *asamabhaddham api lakṣyaṃ lakṣayaṭī ti taṭasthalakṣaṇam ucyate; BM*, 25.
or established practice (vyāvahāra).” This is the true definition of a lakṣaṇa, and it leaves no space for the taṭastha variety.

Once the Advaita position is dealt with, the BM turns its gaze on Śrikaṭṭha, and by extension, the BSBR. The BM quotes directly Śrikaṭṭha’s laconic explanation of taṭastha lakṣaṇa, and then quotes Appayya Dīkṣita’s subcommentary, which makes reference to the “moon in the branches” example. Then, the BM tells Śrikaṭṭha and Appayya that their acceptance of taṭastha lakṣaṇa is puzzling:

The recourse to taṭastha lakṣanas makes sense for those who describe brahman as nirviśeṣa (without qualities or distinction)—the divinity of which has been extremely downgraded—since they see no connection between the brahman they wish to describe and the creatorship, etc., of the world. But surely it is a good thing for those who approach a saviśeṣa brahman (i.e., with qualities) to say that the creatorship, etc., of the world is a defining characteristic of brahman, because there is a relationship between property and substrate (dharmadharmibhāva). The BM is pointing out that the insistence on no connection between brahman and any defining characteristics is unnecessary for those who do not ascribe to a wholly undifferentiated (nirviśeṣa) brahman. For those like Śrikaṭṭha who accept a saviśeṣa brahman, there is no issue with brahman having a direct connection with its properties. In fact, it is the most economical explanation. In framing the issue this way, the BM follows the same pattern as in the previous adhikaraṇa: it first establishes the flaws of the Advaita position, and then positions Śrikaṭṭha as unnecessarily supporting this flawed position. By criticizing Śrikaṭṭha, the BM is criticizing the other commentary claiming to be the authoritative Swaminarayan commentary, the BSBR.

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57 asādhāranadhamas tu lakṣaṇam, yasya vyāvṛttir vyavahāro va pravojanam bhavet; BM, 26.
58 atipatitapāramśāvyariṣvēsabrahmaṇavāḍinām tu jagatāraṇatvasya lilakṣayīśeste brahmany asambdhena tatasthalakṣaṇatvāśrayanam yuktam. suvacaḥ namāya saviśeṣam brahmābhyyapagacchataḥ jagajjanmādikāraṇatvam dharmadharmibhāveṇa brahmaṇo lakṣaṇam iti.
There is one other noteworthy feature of the BM’s exegesis of 1.1.2: its expansion of Rāmānuja’s discussion. While the bulk of the discussion, and particularly the main debates between the pūrvapakṣa and uttarapakṣa, comprises a well-written, logical recapitulation of Rāmānuja’s discussion in the Śrībhāṣya, the BM uses the earlier part of its exegesis to further nuance the exegesis. For example, most commentators maintain that the viṣaya vākya, or topical statement, of the adhikaraṇa is the quotation from the Taittirīya Upaniṣad, “that from which these beings are born” (yato vā īmāni bhuṭāṇi jayante), because it underscores brahman’s being the cause of the creation, etc., of the world—its kāraṇatva. The BM suggests that this quotation alone does not fully convey creatorship: since yatas is a pronoun, it must be referring to something else that is well known.\(^{59}\) It requires a second quotation, a prāpaka vākya, or corroborating statement, which the BM identifies as two verses from Chāndogya Upaniṣad 6.2: “In the beginning, son, this world was simply what is existent—one only, without a second” and “it thought to itself: ‘let me become many.”\(^{60}\) From these statements, the BM contends, it is made clear that brahman is both the efficient and material cause of the universe. Bearing these two statements in mind, the original viṣaya vākya receives its full weight, and is made the focal point of the adhikaraṇa.

The BM also provides a unique addition in its introduction to the adhikaraṇa.\(^{61}\) It sets up the connection between the first two adhikaraṇas in the same way as other texts: the first adhikaraṇa establishes that brahman is to be known, and the second adhikaraṇa elaborates on the definitive characteristics (lakṣaṇa) of this brahman. Here, the BM offers a reflection on the very purpose of defining characteristics, namely, exclusion (vyāvṛtti). The BM

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\(^{59}\) BM, 24.

\(^{60}\) sad eva somyedam agra āśīd ekam evādvitiyam, v.6.2.1; tad aiṣṭata bahu syāṁ praśāyeṣti, v. 6.2.3; Olivelle, trans., Early Upaniṣads, 246-247.

\(^{61}\) BM, 22-23.
explains that the semantic operation of the word brahman is to designate limitless greatness (niratīsayabrhattva), but since there are varied scriptural statements attesting to many entities being great, these other entities must be excluded from brahman. Therefore, to ensure that lesser entities like Indra, Agni, and Rudra are not mistaken for brahman, the adhikarana states that the defining characteristic of brahman is its creatorship, etc., of the world. Taken in full, the BM uses its introductory section to fully explain the purpose of the adhikarana, the middle sections to corroborate Rāmānuja’s views, and end sections to refute the taṭastha lakṣaṇa position put forward by Advaitins, Śrīkaṇṭha, and the BSBR.

Turning to Bhadresh Swami’s exegesis of 1.1.2, we find that he circumvents the entire discussion of taṭastha lakṣaṇa, as it is of no real concern to him. Bhadresh Swami’s exegetical objective is to demonstrate that the creatorship of the world extends to both parabrahman and akṣarabrahman. As such, he upholds Rāmānuja’s point that the creatorship, etc., of the world can be both a definitive characteristic (viśeṣaṇa, synonymous with lakṣaṇa) and a contingent characteristic (upalakṣaṇa), but does not belabor the issue. Bhadresh Swami begins his unique interpretation of this sūtra through a gloss of the word yatas, a pronoun meaning “from which.” Here, Bhadresh Swami follows other commentators in explaining that the word conveys the sense of a “cause,” and refers to both the efficient and material causes. However, in grammatically analyzing the pronoun, he says it refers to “yābhyaṃ,” or, “from which two,” using the dual case instead of the singular “yasmāt.” He further glosses this word as follows:

from which two, i.e., akṣara and puruṣottama—who pervade all jīvas, īśvaras, māyā, and those liberated from that [māyā]; who control all of them; who has inconceivable

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62 BSSB, 14.
otherworldly prowess; who possess a host of divine, innumerable, auspicious qualities.\(^{63}\)

In describing akṣarabrahman and parabrahman as the creators, sustainers, and destroyers of the world, Bhadresh Swami is highlighting their essential difference from the three other metaphysical categories: jīva, īśvara, and māyā.

Bhadresh Swami further substantiates his reading of this sūtra by expanding its viṣaya vākya. Like other exegetes, he does identify Taittirīya Upaniṣad 3.1.1 as one of the viṣaya vākyas, since it describes parabrahman’s role in the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the world. He also identifies Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad 2.1.1, as it describes parabrahman’s role in the process: “here is the truth: as from a well-stoked fire sparks fly by the thousands, all looking just like it, so from the imperishable [akṣara] issue diverse things, and into it, my friend, they return.”\(^{64}\) He also identifies two verses from the Chāndogya Upaniṣad that speak to both akṣarabrahman and parabrahman’s role in process. Though Bhadresh Swami does not identify the differential role that each play in the creative process, he remains committed to scripturally corroborating that the sūtra is not referring to just parabrahman.

Immediately following this, Bhadresh Swami defends his expansion of brahman as two entities, and precludes any expansion beyond this. He first lists all the different ways in which the word “brahma” is used in the Upaniṣads: to refer to the Vedas, speech, the Brahmin caste, the creator god Brahmā, the embodied soul as the ātman, as liberated souls, as akṣara, as paramātman, and as the entire multitudinous world.\(^{65}\) He then argues that this

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\(^{63}\) yāḥḥyāṃ sakalajīvēśvaramāyātiṣvamuktavyāpakābhīyaṃ tanniṃyāmakābhīyaṃ acintyālaukikaṣakhibhyāṃ divvāganiṅakalyāṇaṅganaṅganaśālibhyaṃ aksarapurusottamābhīyaṃ; BSSB, 13.

\(^{64}\) tad etat satyam. yathā suditāt pāvakād visphulingāh sakasraśaḥ prabhavante sarūpāḥ/ tathāksarād vividhāḥ somya bhāvāḥ prajāyante tatra caivāpiyanti; Olivelle, trans., Early Upaniṣads, 442-443.

\(^{65}\) BSSB, 13-14.
The *sūtra* is only referring to *akṣarabrahman* and *parabrahman*, “because of the impossibility of anyone else being the creator of the world, and because of the possibility of only these two.”\(^{66}\) He then serially examines each of the Upaniṣadic options previously raised, justifying their exclusion in line with Sahajānand Svāmī’s teachings in the *Vacanāmrт*. For example, neither Brahmins nor Brahmā can be creators, because as *jīvas* and *Īśvaras*, respectively, they are enmeshed in *māyā*, from which creation is generated. With respect to liberated souls, Bhadresh Swami describes, “even though certain *muktas*, in certain creative cycles, have causal power through being *prakṛti-puruṣas* because of the desire of *paramātman*, this causal power is not seen in every past and future creative cycle.”\(^{67}\) Here, Bhadresh Swami is referring to a latter stage in the creative cycle as described by Sahajānand Svāmī: after *parabrahman* looks towards *akṣarabrahman*, *akṣarabrahman* inspires one liberated soul and *prakṛti* to join together to continue the creative process. A liberated soul thus can be said to have limited causal power in creation, but, crucially, not for *every* creation. The conclusion is that being the efficient and material cause of the creation, sustenance, and dissolution of the universe is a defining characteristic only of *akṣarabrahman* and *parabrahman*.

In summary, the three Swaminarayan commentaries extend the hermeneutical strategies from the *jjīnāsādhirakāraṇa* into the *janmādhirakāraṇa*. Since Śrīkanṭha offers an entirely unique exegesis of this section, the *BSBR* has the opportunity to develop the extensive Śaivite-inflected theological discussion into a Swaminarayan-centric one. It describes, at scattered points, Sahajānand Svāmī’s metaphysical enumeration, as well as his creative process. However, it also maintains Śrīkanṭha’s idiosyncratic discussion of

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\(^{66}\) etac chāstroktajagatāraṇatvādes tv anyatṛasambhavāt tayoreva sambhavāc ca, *BSSB*, 14.

\(^{67}\) kasaycit kasyāṅcana sṛṣṭau paramātmasāṅkalpavaśāt prakṛtipuruṣarūpeṇa kāraṇatve ‘pi bhūtabhaviṣyasakalasṛṣṭau kāraṇatvānavadhāranāt; *BSSB*, 14.
parabrahman’s creatorship being an external characteristic. As this is a position more amenable to the Advaita position rather than the Viśiṣṭādvaita position, the BM devotes considerable space to refuting it, instead arguing that the characteristic is either defining (laksana) or contingent (upalaksana). Finally, Bhadresh Swami, though addressing briefly the question of what type of characteristic janmādi represents, spends most of the exegetical space arguing that this characteristic applies to aksarabrahman and parabrahman both.

4.3. The Scriptural Basis for Brahman: 1.1.3 & 1.1.4

After positing that brahman is to be reflected upon for the sake of liberation, and after reflecting on its characteristics, the next two adhikaraṇas turn the focus to scripture. Brahma Sūtra 1.1.3 reads śāstrayonitvāt, “because it is engendered by (or, alternatively, engenders) scripture,” while 1.1.4 reads tat tu samavyāt, “and that because of concordance.” In some cases, sūtra 1.1.3 is used to argue an epistemological claim: that brahman can only be known and proven through scriptural testimony, and not merely by other means of knowledge such as inferential reasoning. Sūtra 1.1.4 maintains that even though the Upaniṣads are diverse, their main purport is in teaching about brahman.

Though we observed remarkably divergent interpretations of the first two adhikaraṇas in the three Swaminarayan commentaries, with significant implications about metaphysical and soteriological claims, the differences in exegesis of the second two adhikaraṇas are less drastic. Once again, the BSBR develops Śrīkaṇṭha’s model, and puts forward interpretations that are not found in Rāmānuja. However, these interpretations do not necessarily contradict the Viśiṣṭādvaita position, and so the BM does not go out of its way to criticize the text like it did in the previous two adhikaraṇas. The BM continues to demonstrate itself as a text of scholastic rigor, continuing to at times distill and at times
elaborate on Rāmānuja’s readings. Finally, Bhadresh Swami is committed to demonstrating that even in these two *adhikaraṇas*, *brahman* refers to both *aṅkarābrahman* and *parabrahman*. In the process, he engages in a very technical exposition of logic (*nyāya*), far beyond the scope of what the other commentaries provide.

In its exegesis of 1.1.3, the *BSBR* adopts Śrikanṭha’s position without adding much Swaminarayan-specific content. Once again, though, it retains Śrikanṭha’s unique harmonization of Rāmānuja’s and Śaṅkara’s perspectives. Rāmānuja understands the compound, *śāstrayoni*, literally “scripture-source,” to be a *bahuvrīhi* compound.\(^{68}\) By this analysis, the compound means, “that which has scripture as its source.” As such, it is an adjectival compound referring to *brahman*: *brahman* is that whose source is scripture. This, as previously mentioned, is connected with an epistemological understanding that the only valid means of knowledge about *brahman* is scriptural attestation. Śaṅkara, on the other hand, reads the compound as a *tatpurusa*: that which is the source of scripture.\(^{69}\) It is also adjectival, but suggests that *brahman* is the source of scripture, rather than the other way around. It is important to note that Śaṅkara also accepts the epistemic validity of only scripture in teaching about *brahman*, but he incorporates this discussion into his exegesis of 1.1.2. Both Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja extrapolate on why scripture is the only valid means of knowledge about *brahman*, largely countering the logical proof for the existence of God through inference. However, Rāmānuja does this in 1.1.3, while Śaṅkara does this in 1.1.2, so that he can use the rest of his exegetical space to discuss how scripture can only be derived from *brahman*.

\(^{68}\) Anṇaṅgarācārya, *ŚRG M.*, 107.
\(^{69}\) Śaṅkarabhagavatpādācārya, *Brahmasutra Bhashya*, 205-206.
Śrīkaṭha, in his exegesis of 1.1.3, first sets up a reading of the sūtra in line with Rāmānuja. He fully develops this position, providing the same type of dialectical exchange between the prima facie view and the respondent. The crux is the same as in Rāmānuja: there is a logician who argues that one can understand brahman through inferential reasoning. Connecting back to sūtra 1.1.2, he argues that if the world is taken as an effect, then one can reason that it has an intelligent creator. After going through several iterations of who this creator could be, the pūrva pakṣa states that it must be brahman. The response to this is not to deny that brahman is an intelligent creator of the effected universe, but rather that the inferential reasoning is in itself flawed. Brahman’s creatorship of the world can thus only be determined through scripture. Śrīkaṭha’s exegesis here offers no novel interpretation beyond Rāmānuja. The BSBR, in turn, offers no novel adaptation of Śrīkaṭha.

However, Śrīkaṭha and the BSBR both follow this by introducing an alternate reading. The BSBR text reads as follows: “when there appear two meanings indicative of this sūtra—as with poetry with double entendre—because there is no flaw of ambiguity, in this one sūtra alone, again, there is the start of another adhikaraṇa.” The text goes on to provide Śaṅkara’s reading, complete with a viśaya vākya and the full dialectical exchange required of an adhikaraṇa. The main objection is that if brahman is demonstrated to be the creator of the Vedas, it would contradict the Vedas’ own statements about its eternality. The response contends that there is no contradiction between the Vedas’ eternality and authorlessness (apauruṣeyatva) and brahman’s creatorship of them (kāraṇatva). This position is supported with recourse to Upaniṣadic and purānic statements, with the conclusion that:

Nārāyana—who by his own nature has an extraordinary human-like form, possesses a host of innumerable qualities like being self-sufficient and eternally omniscient—

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70 sūtrasya sūcanātmakasyārthaḍwavāhyāđhīhāne śleṣakāvyavad vākyabhedādidośabhāvād ekasmin api sūtre punar adhikaraṇāntara prastāvah; BSBR, 16.
again becomes the creator of the Vedas, which were merged within him before creation.\(^{71}\)

In this discussion, there is only one notable departure the BSBR makes from Śrīkaṇṭha’s text. The latter discusses *parameśvara*, “the highest ṯśvara,” as the creator, and only provides one descriptor: “omniscient.”\(^ {72}\) The former changes *parameśvara* to Nārāyaṇa, as it has done on several occasions, and then emphasizes again that this Nārāyaṇa always has a form. This minor change notwithstanding, the BSBR retains the idiosyncratic reading harmonizing Rāmānuja and Śaṅkara provided by Śrīkaṇṭha.

Unlike in the previous two *adhikaraṇas*, the BM takes no issue with this novel reading in Śrīkaṇṭha/the BSBR. Instead, it is focused on recreating Rāmānuja’s discussion as fully and legibly as possible. There is one noteworthy feature of this exegesis which departs from the Swaminarayan position articulated by the BSBR: the BM puts forward an understanding of a bodiless (*aśaṛīra*) *brahman*. This discussion emerges amid the refutation of inferential reasoning discussed above, where the *pūrva pakṣin* maintains that an effect must have an intelligent creator with agency. The siddhānta refutation is that the type of agency under discussion must be attributed to something embodied. Further, the BM states:

“And the lord is without a body. And if he does have a body, is it eternal or not? The eternity of something with parts is not found. If it is not permanent, it would have to be destructible, and its own creation would have to be stated.”\(^ {73}\) The thrust of the argument is to demonstrate the fallacies of the logician’s inferential reasoning, but in doing so, the BM

\(^{71}\) *śṛṣṭaḥ prāk svātmanī vilīnānāṃ vedānāṃ...punaḥ kartā bhavati svataḥ siddhānādisarvajñatvādyāsamkhya-guna-ganavānāprākṛtyapuruṣākṛtinārāyaṇah*; BSBR, 16.

\(^{72}\) The relevant text in Śrīkaṇṭha reads: *śṛṣṭaḥ prāk svātmanī vilīnānāṃ vedānāṃ...punaḥ kartā bhavati sarvajñah parameśvarah*; Śrīkaṇṭhaṭā, Brahmasūtrabhāṣyam, 217-219.

\(^{73}\) *aśaṛīraś ca sēvārah. yadi saśaṛīraḥ, tasya tat sārīraḥ nityam utāntityam. sāvayavasya tasya nityatvam anupapannam. anityatve vināśasyāpya avaśyambhāvah. utpādakaḥ ca tasya vyaktyavam, BM, 32.*
describes a bodiless *brahman* that runs contrary to Sahajānand Svāmī’s teachings in the *Vacanāmṛt*—teachings that the *BSBR* signals subtly in this very *adhikaraṇa*, and more forcefully in the previous *adhikaraṇa*. The discussion of *aṣṭāra* follows directly from the *Śrībhāṣya*, and the *BM* once again demonstrates that it will side with Rāmānuja over Sahajānand Svāmī, all while suggesting it is a Swaminarayan text.

Bhadresh Swami’s discussion at 1.1.3, like the other commentaries, is interested in demonstrating the logical fallacies of the view that inferential reasoning is a valid means of knowing *brahman*. In the process, he advances some of the same features of the Swaminarayan system as in the previous *adhikaraṇas*. Bhadresh Swami first states that the knowledge of *aṇaṣṭara-brahman* is only attained through scripture, and cites a total of nineteen Upaniṣadic verses and two verses from the *Bhagavad Gītā* in defense of that. The *pūrva pakṣin* concedes the point, but then argues that *parabrahman* can indeed be determined through inference. Bhadresh Swami then begins a lengthy refutation of this view that is far more technical than its predecessors. A full engagement with this refutation presupposes considerable knowledge of *navya nyāya*—the system of logic as it developed in the second millennium—and its precise, methodical categories of analysis. The discussion displays Bhāresh Swami’s significant training and erudition.

There is one other aspect of Bhadresh Swami’s position in which his commentary sets itself apart from the previous ones. In discussing the primacy of scriptural testimony in learning about *brahman*, Bhadresh Swami again centers the role of the *brahmasvarūpa guru* in mediating and teaching this scripture, based on the same scriptural texts cited in his

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74 *BSBR*, 18-19.
75 See *BSSB*, 20-24.
discussion of *Brahma Sūtra* 1.1.1—*Mūndaka Upaniṣad* 1.2.12 and *Bhagavad Gītā* 4.34. He states:

scriptural utterances such as these, teaching that the guru—who has directly perceived the essence of all of the scriptures, who is a hearer, who is brahmasvarūpa, who is fixed in paramātman—is the teacher of true wisdom and is the most trustworthy, enjoins the service scripture through approaching him alone, because of his being the manifest God.76

Bhadresh Swami here argues that if one wants to learn about brahman, which in turn is only revealed through scripture, one should not simply approach these texts on one’s own. One needs to approach a guru who is uniquely qualified to mediate scripture. An objection is raised that this defeats the very purpose of the sūtra; the exegete recently finished establishing that it is only scripture that makes brahman known. Bhadresh Swami’s response is that the interpolation of the role of the guru does not diminish scripture’s potential in the least: the guru’s teaching merely represents a translation of scripture that brings out the texts’ very essence. In this way, Bhadresh Swami nuances his interpretation of the sūtra in a unique way.

At this stage, we will turn to sūtra 1.1.4, where most exegetes aim to demonstrate that the scriptural texts under discussion in the previous adhikaraṇa are centrally engaged in making brahman known. The commentators have far less to say about this adhikaraṇa than any of the previous three. Rāmānuja’s main exegetical maneuver is to refute the position of the ritualist Mīmāṃsakas, who hold that all scriptural utterances must enjoin ritual action. Rāmānuja’s position recalls first adhikaraṇa by restating that ritual action yields temporary fruits, and the true purport of scripture is to make brahman known, since this yields the

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76 ityādi vākyajātaṁ sākṣākṛtaṁ kalaśāstratattvasya śrotriyaṁ sākṣāt brahmasvarūpaṁ paramātmanāṁśasya guroh sadarhoṭaṁ sīvītavāṁ paramāptavāṁ ca prakhyāpayat pratyakṣa- paramātmanāḥ vataṁ tatsamupasadānaṁ śāstrasevanaṁ niyāmayai; *BSSB*, 23.
permanent fruit of liberation. The Swaminarayan commentaries do not refute this point. However, each commentary has small rhetorical innovations that are worth examining briefly.

In the BM, there is a notable addition to text’s recapitulation of Rāmānuja’s view. This is a lengthy refutation of an objection posed by a Śuddhādvaṁ tin pūrva pakṣin, who maintains that tat tu samanvayāt does not at all discuss the purport of the scriptures, but instead, is focused on describing brahman as the material cause of the world. 77 It is important to note that the BM has no real issue in identifying brahman as the material cause of the world, and in fact, argues the same in 1.1.2. However, the contention is that it is improper to introduce this discussion in this adhikaraṇa, as it breaks the flow intended by the Brahma Sūtra. As part of its dismantling of the Śuddhādvaitin view, the BM cites from Vallabha’s Anubhāṣya commentary, as well as a subcommentary called the Bhāṣyaprakāśa by one of Vallabha’s descendants, Puruṣottama Carana. As part of this discussion, the BM also takes issue with Vallabha’s organization of sūtras into adhikaraṇas, since he takes sūtras 1.1.2 and 1.1.3 together. This hermeneutical move allows Vallabha to argue that sūtra 1.1.4 is about brahman being a material cause. The BM’s discussion seems pedantic, but it is a display of the author’s mastery over the texts of other traditions and their positions.

The BSBR and Bhadresh Swami both use a series of hermeneutical tools to demonstrate that brahman is the purport of all the scriptures. These tools are referred to as the six tātparya liṅgas, or “markers of meaning”: 1) introduction (upakrama) and conclusion (upasamḥāra); 2) repetition (abhyāsa); 3) newness (apūrvatā); 4) fruit (phala); 5) praise (arthavāda); 6) reasoning (upapatti). 78 Through identifying all of these aspects of a particular

77 BM, 37.
78 BSBR, 19; BSSB, 25-26.
discussion, one can determine its ultimate purport. The use of these tātparya liṅgas is prevalent in Vedāntic texts: Śaṅkara uses them in his commentary on the Chāndogya Upaniṣad, and Rāmānuja uses them in the Vedārthasaṅgraha.79 Okita suggests that the first to use these in a Brahma Sūtra commentary was Madhva, and notes that Baladeva Vidyābhūṣāṇa also uses these in his eighteenth century Brahma Sūtra commentary.80 The BSBR’s use of these markers, though, is an adaptation of Śrikaṇṭha’s own usage.81 In their exploration of these six markers, Śrikaṇṭha, the BSBR, and Bhadresh Swami all point to different scriptural citations in order to point out that the purport of the scripture is brahman. These internal variations do not reveal any substantive differences in argumentation, but their very use represents a departure from Rāmānuja in this already terse section.

In summary, sūtras 1.1.3 and 1.1.4 serve a critical purpose within the catuḥsūtrī, but they are not as fertile grounds for tracing a genealogy of Swaminarayan Vedānta as the first two sūtras. They largely carry on the trends previously set up, but with recourse to varied hermeneutical tools. The BSBR continues to incorporate idiosyncratic readings because of its adoption of Śrikaṇṭha, the BM continues to develop a position fully in line with Rāmānuja’s text, and Bhadresh Swami continues to argue that brahman refers to both aksarabrahman and parabrahman. The latter two texts especially demonstrate their authors’ erudition. Beyond this, the various exegeses of these two adhikaraṇas bear more commonalities than differences: they all posit the centrality of scripture to learning about brahman.

79 Paramtattvadas, An Introduction to Swaminarayan Hindu Theology, 159-160, fn. 3.
80 Okita, Hindu Theology in Early Modern South Asia, 175.
81 Chintamani uses Śrikaṇṭha’s use of tātparya liṅgas to locate Śrikaṇṭha in the thirteenth century-- T.R. Chintamani, “The Date of Śrikaṇṭha and his Brahmamīmāṃsa,” Journal of Oriental Research Madras 1 (1927), 68.
4.4. Conclusion

The first four verses of the *Brahma Sūtra* proffer a contained system onto which Vedāntic exegetes graft a sustained explanation of their perspective. This *catuḥsūtrī* locates the centrality of *brahman* to Vedāntic exegesis: *brahman* is what is to be known in order to attain liberation; *brahman* is the cause of the creation of the universe; *brahman* is known only through scripture, and all scriptures make known *brahman*. Within this framework, Vedāntins participate in dialectical discussion. At times, these exegetes agree with one another; at others, they engage in spirited debate. At stake is the very theological basis of their system: the correct interpretation of the Upaniṣads, of *brahman*, and of liberation itself.

Two hundred years of traditional Vedāntic discourse in the Swaminarayan *sampradāya* thus tell a unique tale of the perceived importance of engagement with a Vedānta public. Such intellectual commitment to classical vedānta in the modern period provides a necessary counter-narrative to accounts of Neo-vedānta utilized for nationalist and universalist ends. Swaminarayan commentaries seek to continue in the tradition of Vedāntic debate, and stake out the theological claims of the *sampradāya*. They all grapple with the various articulations of Vedānta in non-commentarial texts—most significantly, the *Vacanāmṛt*. They are also socially-mediated documents, fulfilling various needs and pursuing the disparate agendas of their authors, editors, and publishers. As such, they walk various interpretive lines of locating Swaminarayan Vedānta on a continuum between Rāmānuja and Sahajānand Svāmī. Though Sahajānand Svāmī himself referred to his system as Viśiṣṭādvaita, as the last two chapters have demonstrated, this claim cannot be taken at face value.
Conclusion

This dissertation has charted the Swaminarayan sampradāy’s creation of Sanskrit texts—and some Gujarati texts—to engage various scholastic publics over the course of 200 years. Over these 200 years, the region of Gujarat, and the Indian subcontinent as a whole, has seen dramatic historical and technological changes. The Swaminarayan sampradāy, too, has undergone significant change. It has grown and divided, and divided again. It has spread outside of Gujarat and into other parts of India, Africa, Europe, North America, Oceania, Southeast Asia, and the Middle East. In the process, though Gujarati remains the central language, Swaminarayan texts and concepts have been translated into different languages. Throughout all of this, Sanskrit still remains alive and prominent.

In engaging its scholastic publics, members of the sampradāy have had disparate, yet related ends in mind. In the earliest stages of the formation of the community, the scholastic public provided a locus for the defense of novel conceptions of conduct, monkhood, theology, and community. Using the model of śāstrārtha, or debate, the Śrī Hari Dig Vijaya provided a rigorous, scripturally mediated template for the community to respond to its various others. Simultaneously, the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Ratna allowed for the community to announce its entry into a Vedānta public. Śrīkanṭha’s commentary provided a relatively easy model to adapt in order to articulate a novel system of Vedānta, while not straying too far from the connections to Viṣistādvaita that were nominally yet explicitly made in other texts. At these early stages, Gujarat remained a region where European colonial expansion was just beginning. Though Sahajānand Svāmī and his successors courted relationships with British officials, the engagement remained rather superficial. Śāstrārtha—whether in digvijaya form or in commentary—was thus drawing upon classical registers.
In the early twentieth century, the sampradāy found itself within the context of even greater historical change. Though the socialization of print technologies in South Asia took place in various locations in the nineteenth century, members of the Swaminarayan sampradāy began to use these technologies far more regularly in the early twentieth century. They published and circulated new genres of print—pamphlets, small tracts, monthly magazines—and older genres, like commentaries, in unprecedented quantities. More significantly, this was an era of fierce anti-colonial nationalism, which occasioned new scholastic contexts and frameworks. The Arya Samaj and Sanātana Dharma sabhās were busy debating orthodoxy, and articulating notions of a pan-Indic “Hinduism.” The Swaminarayan sampradāy certainly participated within these contexts, but not for the purposes of establishing a universal orthodoxy. Rather, it was still focused on the sampradāy itself. This focus first manifested itself in the creation and circulation of texts to publicize its conflict with Mādhavafīrtha, the Śaṅkarācārya of Dwarka who stridently opposed the sampradāy. The texts made it known that the Bharat Dharma Mahamandala, a sanātana dharma associational body had deemed them vaidika.

Moreover, the early twentieth century saw rapid change within the Swaminarayan sampradāy, with the formation of discrete sects. Sahajānand Svāmī had established two distinct dioceses before he passed away. Even in the late nineteenth century, Monier-Williams observed that neither of the two leaders of these dioceses “is willing to yield the precedence to the other. Jealousies are already springing up between them. Probably, in process of time, a schism will take place.”¹ However, the groups that formed in the early twentieth century represented a larger shift, based in doctrinal difference. The Bochasanwasi

¹ Monier Monier-Williams, Religious Thought and Life in India, Part 1, Vedism, Brāhmanism, and Hindūism (London: John Murray, 1883), 151.
Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) and the Maninagar Swaminarayan Gadi Sansthan argued that their interpretation of Sahajānand Svāmī’s teachings, especially the *Vacanāmṛt*, were truer to Sahajānand Svāmī’s intent. Each of these groups used a new market for printed Vedānta commentaries to advance a particular Swaminarayan *Brahma Sūtra* commentary that suited their agenda. Maninagar published the *Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Ratna*, and this prompted one of the original dioceses, Vartal, to create and publish the *Brahma Mīmāṃsā*. BAPS authored and published its own commentary, the *Brahma Sūtra Svāminārayaṇa Bhāṣya*, only recently. These three commentaries are consciously classically styled, and depart conspicuously from “neo-Vedāntic” commentaries authored in the same time period.

These rival commentaries, as I have argued, were important sites of contestation. The inherently dialogical nature of Vedānta commentary was deployed not to directly debate other Swaminarayan groups, but to authorize one particular Swaminarayan reading as the Swaminarayan reading, within a Vedānta scholastic public. While the earlier commentaries maintain a connection to Viśiṣṭādvaita Vedānta, Bhadresh Swami’s recent commentaries argue that the Swaminarayan system is completely independent. Moreover, in the twenty-first century, Bhadresh Swami’s commentaries are engaging a new formation of the scholastic public, one that is inflected by the modern Indian academy. Bhadresh Swami holds a PhD in Sanskrit from Karnataka University, as well as a D Litt—Doctor of Letters, an honorary degree—from Kavikulaguru Kalidas Sanskrit University in Nagpur, India. Within this scholastic context, N.S. Ramanuja Tatacharya, a scholar of Nyāya and Vedānta associated with the Rashtriya Sanskrit Vidyapeeth, provided the following assessment of Bhadresh Swami’s commentaries: “it is clearly discernible that in every *adhyāya* and every
pāda [of Bhadresh Swami’s commentary] of the Brahma Sūtras, the meaning of sūtras is demonstrated—with ample proof and reasoning—as unique from the interpretations furthered by Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja.” Ramanuja Tatacharya’s assessment is representative of an authorization of Bhadresh Swami’s commentary in this newly-configured scholastic public.

The various scholastic publics described in this dissertation suggests that publics are ever-changing. Further, the fact that these publics are consistently engaged by various Swaminarayan agents demonstrates the continuing salience of sāstrīyatā in the Swaminarayan sampradāy. This consistent, yet shifting emphasis on sāstrīyatā demands us to reconsider all too simple binaries between the “traditional” and the “modern.” Swaminarayan scholasticism reflects a conscious and conspicuous disregard of the political, even though political dimensions permeate the engaged scholastic publics. Nonetheless, the Swaminarayan sampradāy’s scholastic endeavors should not be considered artificial, atavistic, antiquarian endeavors. Their engagement of sāstra is evidence of the very complexity of modern religion in South Asia.

As a coda to this foregoing discussion, it is useful to question the extent to which scholasticism and scholastic texts factor into the consciousness of the everyday, lay members of the Swaminarayan sampradāy. In other words, how central is this scholastic endeavor within the tradition? A few considerations will make the stakes a little clearer. Firstly, in 1923, the Gujarati author Kishorelal Mashruwala reflected on the Swaminarayan sampradāy’s entry into a “scholastic class” (vidvat varg) through the production of Sanskrit

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2 evam pratyadhyāyam pratipādam ca brahmasūtreṣu śaṅkararāmānujādiprāktanācāryapratipāditārthebhayoḥ bhinnatāyā sūtraśabdārthāḥ sapramāṇam sayuktikām ca pradarśītā iti sphuṭam avalokayitum sakyam—N. S. Ramanuja Tatacharya, “Prasthānatrayī Svāminārāyanabhaṣyaṃ Saṅkṣiptaparicayāḥ” (n.p., 2015).
texts. Immediately following this, he makes the following observation: “Sahajānand Svāmī did not have the least bit of interest in only scholasticism (paṇḍitāi). He respected good conduct (cārita) far more than just scholasticism (vidvattā).”³ Mashruwala then relates an exchange between Sahajānand Svāmī and a very educated lay devotee named Dīnānāth Bhaṭṭ. Bhaṭṭ, upon being asked how many ślokas from various scriptural texts he had committed to memory, responded that he had memorized 18,000. He was unable, however, to respond to Sahajānand Svāmī’s second question: how many of these verses did he consider useful for the sake of mokṣa, or liberation? This recalls Sahajānand Svāmī’s description of scholasticism as a devotional endeavor articulated in the epigraph of the introduction.

Secondly, in a sermon delivered in 1824, Sahajānand Svāmī explained that a sampradāy flourishes through texts narrating the life-events of the īṣṭadev, or chosen deity, of the sampradāy, in both Sanskrit and vernacular languages.⁴ These sacred biographies are what inspire the members of the sampradāy: for example, followers of Rāma will be fostered by the Rāmāyana, while followers of Kṛṣṇa will be fostered by the Bhāgavata Purāṇa, but “the Vedas will not inspire those who worship” Rāma or Kṛṣṇa. He then exhorted the followers of his own sampradāy to write such texts about their īṣṭadev, Sahajānand Svāmī himself. At first glance, there seems to be a privileging of sacred biography over śāstra for the internal Swaminarayan community.⁵ The majority of texts under consideration in this dissertation would fit in the latter category, including the Śrī Hari Dig Vijaya, whose śāstriya contents belie its stated genre of sacred biography.

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³ keval paṇḍitāi maṭe sahajānand Svāmīne jarāye moh na hato. vidvattā ke cārita maṭe ja emne višeś ādar hato.—Kishorelal Ghanshyamlal Mashruwala, Sahajānand Svāmī athavā Svāminārāyan Sampradāy. (Amdavad: Navjivan Prakāshan Mandir, 1923), 57, emphasis added.
⁴ Vācanāṁrt Gadhāḍā II.48, pp. 465-469.
Though these two textual assessments suggest that the role of scholasticism must be situated alongside more explicitly devotional considerations, an adequate estimation of the scholasticism within the Swaminarayan sampradāy requires significant ethnographic study. Writing about his fieldwork amongst the Patidars in rural Gujarat in the 1950s and 1960s, David Pocock states: “as may well be imagined, the refinements of theology do not enter into the day-to-day beliefs and practices of the majority of the sect.” Recent, and more sustained ethnographic work presents a different picture, one in which theological concerns factor very centrally into the everyday lives of Swaminarayan devotees. Still, the exact reception of scholastic texts within the community remains underexplored.

By way of conclusion, I will reflect briefly on the role of the newly authored commentaries by Bhadresh Swami within the BAPS Swaminarayan community. In doing so, I will point out certain similarities with what we observed with the articulation of scholastic concerns in the 1920s within the pages of the Śrī Svāminārāyan monthly magazine. The vast majority of the BAPS community is unable to read Bhadresh Swami’s Sanskrit commentaries. There has been a concerted effort to translate the commentaries into Gujarati, and perhaps more significantly, to translate the content from its scholastic context to more accessible forms. Nonetheless, the very existence of these Sanskrit texts is significant for the BAPS faithful: they represent an acknowledgement that Sahajānand Svāmī’s teachings and the interpretation of these teachings through BAPS gurus is consistent with classical texts.

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In 2017, Bhadresh Swami authored another text – the *Swāminārāyaṇa Siddhānta Sudhā* – or, *The Nectar that is the Swaminarayan Principle*.\(^8\) This is a standalone treatise that delineates, again in a classical-Sanskrit style, the system of BAPS Swaminarayan theology. Upon publication of this text, Bhadresh Swami received a warm welcome by the Kashi Vidvat Parishad, an association of *paṇḍits* and scholars based in the city of Varanasi, formerly known as Banaras and Kashi. The Kashi Vidvat Parishad felicitated Bhadresh Swami for composing both the Vedānta commentaries as well as the treatise.

More significant is the manner in which news of this event was communicated to members of the BAPS community. Firstly, it was made a prominent entry on the international website of BAPS. A write-up of the event was presented in both Gujarati and English, along with about 20 photos and an edited twelve-minute video. The write-up described the texts Bhadresh Swami had composed, and it also described the Kashi Vidvat Parishad for the many members of the community who would have previously been unaware of it. It also translated the detailed proclamation issued by the Parishad:

"On this historical occasion, Mahāmahopādhyāya Pandit Shivji Upadhyay announced the following declaration: ‘‘The Prasthānatrayi-Svāminārāyaṇabhāṣya and the Svāminārāyaṇasiddhāntasudhā are sacred texts on Parabrahman Svāminārāyaṇa’s revealed Aksarapurūṣottama Darśana…Acclaimed by all scholars, respected Mahāmahopādhyāya Sadhu Bhadreshdas is an ācārya and a contemporary commentator in the lineage of commentators on the Prasthānatrayī. Within philosophy, just as Śrī Śaṅkara’s Vedānta is identified as the Advaita Darśana, Śrī Rāmānuja’s Vedānta is identified as the Viśiṣṭādvaita Darśana, Śrī Madhva’s Vedānta is identified as the Dvaita Darśana, Śrī Vallabha’s Vedānta is identified as the Viśuddhādvaita Darśana, and others are respectively known; it is in every way appropriate to identify Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa’s Vedānta by the title: Aksarapurūṣottama Darśana. Therefore, we all collectively endorse that this Aksarapurūṣottama Siddhānta that has been revealed by Parabrahman Svāminārāyaṇa is distinct from Advaita, Viśiṣṭādvaita, and all other doctrines and is a Vedic siddhānta.’’\(^9\)

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Without ever reading the Sanskrit commentaries, the lay BAPS devotee who reads this website entry is told that 1) Bhadresh Swami’s commentary is unique; 2) that it encodes a unique system of Vedānta; and 3) it has been authorized by a scholastic public.

In the summer of 2017, the current guru and spiritual leader of BAPS, Mahant Swami Maharaj, traveled to North America, the UK, and Europe. Once in Robbinsville, New Jersey, and once in London, U.K., the theme of the nightly assembly was centered on Bhadresh Swami’s recent Sanskrit compositions and the Kashi Vidvat Parishad’s proclamation. Bhadresh Swami was present at both of these occasions, explaining briefly in Gujarati the contents of the text. Subsequently, the proclamation was read aloud, and Bhadresh Swami received blessings from Mahant Swami Maharaj in front of the entire assembly.\(^{10}\)

There are multiple levels of signification and corroboration present. The BAPS interpretation of Sahajānand Svāmī’s system of Vedānta is corroborated through Sanskrit texts. These Sanskrit texts are authenticated by a group of Sanskrit paṇḍits located in the seat of Sanskrit scholasticism, Kashi. This fact is communicated in English and Gujarati on the BAPS website, and more importantly, in assemblies across the world. Members of the Swaminarayan sampradāya are thus using new media to publicize the scholasticism of the community, much as they did with new print media in the early twentieth century. What both these cases make evident is that there is a sustained effort to educate the broader membership of the sampradāya about the authorizations of the sampradāya within its scholastic publics. Scholasticism remains important, even for the non-scholastic Swaminarayan devotee.

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Appendix

This appendix presents a transliteration of the Sanskrit text from both Śrīkaṇṭha’s commentary on the Brahma Sūtras, 1 and the Brahma Sūtra Bhāṣya Ratna. 2 I have included the full transliteration of the exegesis of Brahma Sūtra 1.1.3 and 1.1.4. Line by line, Śrīkaṇṭha’s text appears first, followed by the BSBR. This appendix is meant to provide a visual catalogue of the ways in which the BSBR adapts Śrīkaṇṭha’s text in the following ways: if the BSBR text appears in red, it is a new addition. If the BSBR text appears in orange, it is a paraphrase of Śrīkaṇṭha’s text. If the BSBR text appears in blue, it has switched word order. If a line appears only once, the BSBR has not changed anything. If Śrīkaṇṭha’s text appears in green, that means it has been totally excised by the BSBR.

1.1.3

lakṣaṇapramāṇādhiṅā hi vastusiddhiḥ. jagatkāraṇaṃ brahma kiṃ pramāṇakaṃ ity ata āha: śāstrasonitvāt.

yataḥ śāstraṃ yoniḥ pramāṇam, ata eva jagajjanmāḍilakṣaṇam brahma bhavatīti sēṣaḥ
yataḥ yasya śāstraṃ yoniḥ pramāṇam lakṣaṇam iti yāvat, ata eva śāstragamyajagajjanmāḍilakṣaṇam brahma bhavatīti sēṣaḥ.

atra jagatkaṇeṇa brahma śāstraikagamyam uta pramāṇāntareṇāpi gamyam iti sandeḥaḥ.

jagad idaṃ sāvayavaṃ kāryam eva.

tac ca vaicitryagarbhhitatvena svocitakartṛkam iti kalpanīyaḥ sarvajñatvādīmān.
tac ca vaicitryagarbhhitatvena svocitakartṛkam asūtī kaścit sarvajñatvādīmān kartā kalpanīyaḥ.

nāsau śāstraikagamyā iti nāsmin śāstrasya prāmāṇyam, śāstrasya pramāṇantarāprāptaviṣayatvād iti pūrvaḥ pakṣaḥ,
nāsau śāstraikagamyā iti nāsmin kartari vedādiśāstrasya prāmāṇyam. śātrapramāṇair apy aprāptaviṣayatvād iti pūrvaḥ pakṣaḥ

siddhāntas tu – jagatkaṇeṇa brahma vedāntāśāstraikagamyam, “nāvedaṁ manute taṃ brhaṃtaḥ” (U 20) ityādiṣu vedāntāśāstram antareṇa brahmaṇo bodhāsambhavaśravanāt. siddhāntas tu jagatkaṇeṇa brahma vedāntāśāstraikagamyam; nāvedaṁ manute taṃ brhaṃtaḥ ityādiṣu vedāntāśāstram antareṇa brahmaṇo bodhāsambhavaśravanāt.

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1 Śrīkaṇṭhācārya, Brahmaśūrabhāṣyam, ed. Vrajavallabha Dviveda (Vārāṇasī: Jaṅgamavādīmaṭṭha, 1986).
2 Muktānand Svāmī, Brahmaśūrabhāṣyaratnam (Ahmedabad: Baladevāsā Parīkh and Hirjībhāī Čāvaḍā, 1936).
yad uktam sadavyavatvat karyatvasiddhau prapañcasya kartā samucitaḥ kalpya eka iti, tad asat. vicitracanasya gopuraprasādādār bahukartrkatvadarśanāt.

purvapakṣe yad uktam sadavyavatvat karyatvasiddhau prapañcasya kartā samucitaḥ kalpya eka iti, tad asat. vicitracanasya gopuraprasādādār bahukartrkatvadarśanāt.

tathā ca nānumānaikakarkṛṭkatvasiddhiḥ, vyāptībalena tasya karmapāravaśyādiprasaṅgaśca. tathā ca nānumānaikakarkṛṭkatvasiddhiḥ; bahukartriṣādhyasya rathagopurāder api mukhyas tv eka eva kartāśiti yuktibalena tatādhyau satyām api tasya puruṣaṃtaṇaravyāpāravaśyādiprasaṅgaśca.

hetoḥ paksadharmanābhalād anumānena jagato vilaksiṇaikakarkṛṭkatvasiddhāv api nimittopādānāsaktiyuktaiakarkṛṭkatvasidhār nāsti. kiṃca anumānena jagato vilaksiṇaikakarkṛṭkatvasiddhāv api nimittopādānāsaktiyuktaiakarkṛṭkatvasidhār nāsti.

tato vedāntasāstraikagamyāṃ tatpramaṇaḥ brahmeta siddham. tato vedāntasāstraikagamyāṃ tatpramaṇaḥ brahmeta siddham.

anena sūtrena pūrvādhihikaraṇapratipāditajagatkaraṇatvasiddhyupayogī sarvajñatvam brahmaṇaḥ śāstrāṇāṃ vedānāṃ yonitvāt karaṇatvāt sidhyātity api pratipādyata iti kecid āhuḥ anena sūtrena pūrvādhihikaraṇapratipāditajagatkaraṇatvaupayogī sarvajñatvam brahmaṇaḥ. śāstrāṇāṃ yonitvād vedānāṃ karaṇatvāt sidhyātity api atrārthāntaraṃ pratipādyata iti kecid āhuḥ.

sūtrasya sūcanātmakayārthadhvayābhidhāne śleṣakāvyavad vākyabhedādidoṣabhāvāt punar adhikaraṇāntaraapraṣṭāvāḥ. sūtrasya sūcanātmakayārthadhvayābhidhāne śleṣakāvyavad vākyabhedādidoṣabhāvād ekasminn api sūtre punar adhikaraṇāntaraapraṣṭāvāḥ.

“asya mahato bhūtasya niḥśvasitam etad yad ṛgavedo yajurvedaḥ samavedaḥ” (BU 2.4.10) ityādīḥ śṛṣṭye ‘syā viṣayāḥ. aṭṛasya mahato bhūtasya niḥśvasitam etad yad ṛgavedo yajurvedaḥ samavedaḥ ityādīḥ śṛṣṭye ‘syā viṣayāḥ.

brahmaṇo vedakartṛtvam yuktam na veti sandeḥaḥ.

na yuktam iti pūrvapakṣaḥ, “vācā virūpanityayā” (RV 8.75.6) ityāder vāco nityatvapratipādikāyāḥ śrutre virodhāḥ, vedānāṃ brahmaκāryatve puruṣeyatvād aprāṃnyaaprasaṅgaḥ ca.

na yuktam iti pūrvapakṣaḥ, “vācā virūpanityayā” ityādikāyā vāṃṇityapratipādanaparāyāḥ śrutre virodhāḥ, vedānāṃ puruṣākṛṭibrahmākāryatve sati puruṣākṛteḥ kālaviṃśiptaprapṛtiṣayantvāt puruṣeyatvena aprāṃnyaaprasaṅgaḥ ca.

tasmād brahmaṇo vedakartṛṭi katham?
iti prāpte brūmaḥ: yuktam eva brahmaṇo vedakartṛtvam, “asya mahato bhūtasya niḥśvasitam etad yad āgava dyāurvedaḥ samavedaḥ” (BU 2.4.10) ityādiśtruter niḥśvasitavad vedarāśer aprayatnena brahmaṇaḥ prādurbhāvagamāt,

“aṣṭādaśāṇām etāṁśa vidyaṇāṁ bhinnavartanām/ ādikartā kaviḥ sākṣeṣ cāḥulapāṇīr iti śrutīḥ/” iti parameṣvarasya sakalavidyākarṭtvapratipādanāc ca.

tathā “nyatra puruṣeṣu sarvāṅgāṁ vidyaṇāṁ prthakprthag mārgaṇāṁ mukhyakartā kavirājāṁ sākṣeṃ nāraṇāṇamunīḥ pratipāditaḥ. evam tasya sakalavidyākarṭtvapratipādanāc ca.

srṣṭeḥ prāk svātmani vilīnāṇāṁ vedāṇāṁ pūrvapūrvavargāṇāṁ pūrvvyanurūparacanayā puṇaḥ kartā bhavati sarvaṇaḥ parameṣvarāḥ.

srṣṭeḥ prāk svātmani vilīnāṇāṁ vedāṇāṁ pūrvapūrvavargāṇāṁ nāraṇāṇaḥ pūrvvyanurūparacanayā puṇaḥ kartā bhavati svatāḥ siddhāṇādisarvaṇaṭvādyasāṁkhyaguṇaṇaṇapraṇāṇapratipārti-ṣākṣaṇaḥ.

ata eva vedāṇāṁ aparūṣeṇyataṃ śWARakāryatavaṃ ca.

ata eva vedāṇāṁ aparūṣeṇyataṃ nāraṇāṇakāryatavaṃ cāsti.

yesām rāgadveṣādāyas teṣāṁ vacaṇaṃ pramaṇaṁ apramāṇaṁ api bhavati.

yesām ajñābhāvajaṇakaḥ rāgadveṣādāyas teṣāṁ vacaṇaṃ apramāṇaṁ,

niranetalasamastadōkaṇaḥśaya nirupaplaṇavaniṁalamajñāṇaprtyakṣaṇubhūyamāṇatraikāla-vastuviḷāsasya svatāḥpramāṇasya parameṣvarasya paramāptasyavāptasamastakāmasya īśvarasya brahmaṇo vacaṇaṁ tu pramaṇaṁ eva bhavati.

niranetalasamastadōkaṇaḥśaya nirupaplaṇavaniṁalamajñāṇaprtyakṣaṇubhūyamāṇatraikāla-vastuviḷāsasya svatāḥpramāṇasya parameṣvarasya paramāptasyavāptasamastakāmasya nāraṇāṇasya parabhāmaṇo vacaṇaṁ tu pramaṇaṁ eva bhavati.

[Mahānāraṇāṇa Upaniṣad 10.8, Mahānāraṇāṇa Upaniṣad 10.3], iti hi parameṣvarasya sarvavidhyāpravartakataṃ śubhāṃśṛṣṭhetuṭvam ca śrūyate. atāḥ sarvaṇaṭvabhāṣākāṇāṁ vedāṇāṁ parameṣvarakartṛkatayā parameṣvarasya sarvaṇaṭa niściyate, ajñātasya vaktum āsakyatvāt.

atāḥ sarvaṇaṭvabhāṣākāṇāṁ vedāṇāṁ nāraṇāṇakaṭkatayā nāraṇāṇasya sarvaṇaṭa niściyate, tāṁ vināva ajñātāṁ vastu vaktum āsakyatvāt.

yadāpi sarvaṇaṭasya parameṣvarasya sarvaṇaṭvamṣaṁyogena sarvaṇaṭvamṣaṁ siddhyati, tathāpi sakalavastavabhāṣākāṇāṁ vedāṇāṁ praṇēṛtā viśeṣaṁ siddhyati

yadāpi sarvaṇaṭasya nāraṇāṇasya sarvaṇaṭvamṣaṁyogena sarvaṇaṭvamṣaṁ siddhyati, tathāpi sakalavastavabhāṣākāṇāṁ vedāṇām yā tasya praṇēṛtā saivādhikyaṁ darśayati

yathā dipaḥ svaprabhāsaṃyukteṣv api rūpādiṣu rūpam eva prakāṣayati na rasādi, tathā na parameṣvarāḥ; kintu svaśaṅkṣaṁyuktaṁ sakalam api prakāṣayatīti.

yathā dipaḥ svaprabhāsaṃyukteṣv api rūpādiṣu rūpam eva prakāṣayati na rasādi, evam anye vedapraṇēṛō pi; tathā na nāraṇāṇaḥ; kintu svaśakṣārűpāntaryāmiṣaktisamśyuktaṁ sakalam api prakāṣayatīti.
nanu paramesvarasya sarvaññatvaṃ nāma vedoktasakalapadārthābhijñatvaṃ. tarhi maharṣiṇām api vedārthadīnāṃ sarvaññatvaṃ siddham. kim atra vaisamyam iti cen na, nanu nārāyaṇasya sarvaññatvaṃ nāma vedoktasakalapadārthābhijñatvaṃ. tarhi brahmādinnāṃ api vedārthadīnāṃ sarvaññatvaṃ siddham kim atra vaisamyam iti cen na,

tatkurtā śvarasyādhikāmaṃ jñānam asti, vyākaraṇāder adhiḱārthavidāṃ hi pāṇiniprabhṛtāṃ tatprāṇetṛtvaṃ dhṛṣṭaye. paramamenthāyādhas tatkarturn nārāyaṇasyādhiṃ jñāna-balasvātamtryādikam asti. vedādeḥ samyagarthavidāṃ hi vidhiprabhṛtāṃ tatprāṇetṛtvaṃ dhṛṣṭaye natvadhikam.

vedāśca sarvārthāvabhāsaka ‘pi na sarvaṃ mukhyaḥ prakāśayati, kintu kimapi laksanayā kimapi sāmnyena kimapi viśeṣena.
nanu sarvāvabhāsakataya vedaṅnāraṇayoḥ sāmyam iti cen na, vedaś sarvārthāvabhāsaka ‘pi na sarvaṃ mukhyaḥ prakāśayati, kintu kimapi laksanayā kimapi sāmnyena kimapi viśeṣena.

paramesvarāḥ sarvasākṣi sarvaṃ pratyakṣayatuḥ vedeśvarayor etāvad vaisamyam iṣyate. nāraṇānastu sarvasākṣi sarvaṃ pratyakṣayatīti nīgamanaṃ āraṇaḥ apy etāvad vaisamyam iṣyate.

nanu paramesvarasyaiva vedakartṛtvam iti na niyamaḥ. “śaḍḍhotā vai bhūtvā prajāpatir idaṃ sarvaṃ āṣrujata rco yājuṃṣi sāmānī” ityādīśravāṇād hiranyagarbhādhiḥ api tatkartṛtvāvagamād iti cen na, hiranyagarbhotpatteḥ prāg api vedaṅṇam sadbhāvāt.
nanu nāraṇāsyāvyaiva vedakartṛtvam na niyamaḥ. “śaḍḍhotā vai bhūtvā prajāpatir idaṃ sarvaṃ āṣrujata” (Tai. Brā 3-6) “ṛco yājuṃṣi sāmānī” (BU 3.2.5, Tai Brā 12.46, Pr U 2.6) ityādīśravāṇād hiranyagarbhādhiḥ api tatkartṛtvāvagamād iti cen na, hiranyagarbhotpatteḥ prāg api vedaṅṇam sadbhāvāt.

śrūyaḥ hi, “yo brahmāmaṃ vidadhāti pūrvaṃ yo vai vedāṃśca praḥiṇoti tasmā” iti. śrūyaḥ hi, “yo brahmāmaṃ vidadhāti pūrvaṃ yo vai vedāṃśca praḥiṇoti tasmā” (Śv. U, 6.18) iti. smaryate ca, “jāmaḍyasya yato ‘nvāyāditarataścārtēṣvabhiṃjāḥ svarāḥ tena brahma hṛḍāya ya ādikayaye muhyanti yatsūrayāḥ” (BP 1.1.1.) iti, “mārganti yat te mukhapadmanādiścandhāḥ suparṇair ṛṣaya viviktaḥ” (BP 3.5.40) iti, “vedāntakṛtṛ vedavid eva cāhāṃ” (BG 15.15) iti.

yaḥ sarvādevānāmādhyāya hiranyagarbhāsyāḥ api kartā tasmā sarvān vedān upadiśati sa eva sarvādhikho vedakartā paramadeśikaḥ.

yaḥ sarvādevānāmādhyāya hiranyagarbhāsyāḥ api kartā tasmā sarvān vedān upadiśati sa eva sarvādhiko vedakartā paramagurunāraṇaḥ.

tathā hi śrutā ‘bhivyajyate “[Mahānaṃraṇa Upaniṣad 10.3]” iti, maharṣivedakartā yaḥ sarvaññatvādīnaḥ viśvasmāccidacitrapaṇādhikho rudraḥ parabrahmarbhūtaḥ sarvesāṃ devānāṃ indrāṇāṃ prathamamātmānāṃ hiranyagarbham brahmānaṃ svasaṅkalpena prakṛtṛ upādēnātmanto jāyaṃnaṃ śṛṣṭikāle sarvaññānopāyasaṅkalavedopadesārūpayāḥ ‘paśyat, sa paramadesāko naḥ asmānāpi sakalaṃsamāraṇamābhānarthaniṣvirītihetubhiḥtayā
paramāṁṛtalakṣmīsamāveśaparānandaprāptikkāriṇyā āta eva paramamaṅgalarūpayā
vedāntasārāsāmarasyasiddhayā smṛtyā bodhakalayā svaviśayayā śaṁyojayaatviti tātparyam.

tataḥ sakalavedakarṭtvam īśvarasya siddham. vā co nityatvaśrutir īśvareṇa pūrvasattānuvṛttyā vihitatvād vedānām aviruddhā. tato vedānām īśvarapraṇātavat nityatvaṁ cāviruddham āva. ittham sakalavedakarṭtvam mukhādyavayavatōnārāyaṇasyaiva siddham. vā co nityatvaśrutir nārāyaṇena vedānām pūrvasadbhāvānuvṛttyā kṛṭatvād aviruddhā. ato vedānām hariḥpraṇātavat nityatvaṁ cāviruddham āva.

1.1.4

prathamāḥdhikaraṇe jijñāsyatayā pratīpaḍitasya parabrahmaṅhaḥ śivasya pariṇāne
lakṣaṇāpeksāyāṁ dvītiyaḥdhikaraṇena lakṣaṇaṁ jagajjanaṁdrūparābhihitam.
prathamāḍhikaraṇe jijñāsyatayā pratīpaḍitasya parabrahmaṅo nārāyaṇasya pariṇāne
lakṣaṇāpeksāyāṁ dvītiyaḥdhikaraṇena lakṣaṇaṁ jagajjanaṁdrūparābhihitam.

tasmin kiṃ pramaṇam ityākāṅkṣāyāṁ tṛtīyaḥdhikaraṇena vedāntaśāstrasya tadviṣaye
pramāṇanaṁ tanmūlavaṁ ca nirūpitaṁ.
kiṃ pramaṇam ityākāṅkṣāyāṁ tṛtīyaḥdhikaraṇena vedāntaśāstrasya tadviṣaye pramāṇanaṁ
tanmūlavaṁ ca nirūpitaṁ.

yena yad avyabhicāreṇa siddhayati taddhi tasya pramaṇam ucyate.
yena yadvāstu avyabhicāreṇa siddhayati taddhi tasya pramaṇam ucyate.

vedāntavākyāṇāṁ kathāṁ vā brahmaḥsādhakatvam ity ākāṅkṣāyāṁ caturthāḥdhikaraṇam
avatāryate.
vedāntavākyāṇāṁ kathāṁ vā brahmaḥsādhakatvam ity ākāṅkṣāyāṁ caturthāḥdhikaraṇam
prādurbhāvayati.

tat tu samanvayāt

tat chadbena prakṛtaṁ brahma parāṁśyate.
tat chadbena prāṣāṅgiṁ brahmānukṛṣyate.

tuṣabdha sarvāṇi vedāntavākyāni samāḥriyante.
tuṣabdha samastāni svopabṛḥhakasmṛtyādhisahitopaniṣatparyāyakavēdāntavacanāni
samuccīyante.
samanvayaśabdena tātparyena saṁbandhā ucyate.
samanvayaśabdena vācyas tātparyena saṁbandhā abhīdhīyate.
The connection, to be said by the word “samanvya” is said through the global import.

tad brahma vedāntavākyāni tātparyalīṅgasambhandhād bodhayantīti sūtrārthaḥ.
svopabṛḥhakasmṛtyādhisahitavedāntavākyāni yathārthaprāmāṇyaśambhandhād tad brahma
lakṣyaṁtīti sūtrārthaḥ.
asya sarvāni vedāntavākyāni viṣayāḥ.
svopabṛhmaṃkasmṛtyādīvākyasahitāni brahmaṃsambhandhabodhakāṇi samastavedāntavacanāny asya viṣayāḥ.

vedāntavākyānāṁ brahmabodhakatvam yuktam na vetti saṃśayaḥ.
teśāṁ vākyānāṁ brahmabodhakatvam yuktam na vetti saṃśayaḥ.

na yuktam iti pūrvah pakṣah.
sarvatra sambhandhagrahaṇasāpekṣaṃ śabdasyārthabodhakatvam. śabdārthayoh sambhandhajñānaṁ antareṇa hi puruṣasya śabdārthapratyayo na bhavati.
tathāhi sarvatra sambhandhagrahaṇasāpekṣaṃ śabdasyārthabodhakatvam; śabdārthayoh sambhandhajñānaṁ antareṇa hi puruṣasya śabdārthapratyayo na bhavati.
sambhandhajñānaṁ ca vṛddhavyavahārasāpekṣaṃ. vyavahāraśca kāryaikagocaraḥ.

tatha hi “gām ānaya,” “gām badhāna” iti vṛddhavyākṣyāsravaṇasamanantaraṁ pravartamānaṁ prayojayavrddham avagamyā pārśvastho vyutpitsur evam avadhārayati sarvathā ‘yaṁ kāryāvagatisamanantarām eva pravartate.
tatha hi “gām ānaya,” “gām badhāna” iti bahuḥvākṣyāsravaṇaṇantarāṃ gāvānayanādau karmanī pravartamānaṁ prayojayam puruṣam avagamyā pārśvasthas tajjijāsūr jana evam avadhārayati; tadvāvadhāṛṣṭam dārśayati, sarvathā ‘yaṁ prayojya janaḥ kāryajñānānantarām eva gāvānayādau karamanī pravartate.

sā ca kāryāvagatir etasmād eva vākyāt samutpannā.
sā ca vṛddhavyavahārāj jñātā kāryāvagatir etasmād eva prayojakavākyāt samutpannā.

anyathā katham asyaitadvākṣyāsravaṇasamanantarāṁ pravṛttirīti. punar gavānayanabhandhanadarśanāt kāryaviśeṣaṁ niścinoṭi.
anyathā katham asya prayojyajanasyaiva prayojakavākyamātrāsravaṇasamanantarāṁ tasminkarmaṇī pravṛttir iti jñātvā prayojakavākyāsravaṇāntaraṁ prayojyakṛt-gavānayanabhandhanadarśanāt kāryaviśeṣaṁ niścinoṭī pārśvasthaḥ.

tad evaṁ kāryārthaḥ vṛddhavya bhavāni siddhe brahmaṇi śabdasyā prāmāṇyaṁ.
evaṁ kṛtāś ca kāryārtha jñānād eva tatra vyutpattisambhavāni na siddhe brahmaṇi śabdasyā prāmāṇyaṁ.

kiṁca kāryaviśeṣatvāj jagataḥ kartṛviśeṣasya brahmaṇo ‘numāṇād api siddheḥ katham asminn aprāptaviśayāṇāṁ vedāntavākyāṇāṁ prāmāṇyaṁ.
kiṁca kāryaviśeṣasya jagataḥ kartṛviśeṣasya brahmaṇaścānumāṇād apy anyonyasiddhis tathā sati katham asmin prāpta-viśayāṇāṁ vedāntavākyāṇāṁ prāmāṇyaṁ.
athavā vidhiparāñy eva vedāntavākyāni na brahmaṇaparāṇi. ubhayaparāntvē vākyabhedaḥ syāt.
ato vedāntavākyānām na brahmabodhakatvam yuktam iti pūrva pakṣaḥ. yuktam iti
diddhāntaḥ.
athavā brahmajñānavidhiparāñy eva vedāntavākyāni na brahmaśvarūpapratiṣṭhāṇaparāṇi; ubhayaparāntvē vākyabhedaḥ syāt vedāntavākyānām na brahmaśadhakatvam iti mahākalahe
prāpte brahmabodhakatvam yuktam iti diddhāntaḥ.
vedāntavākyānām tātparyalīṅgasamanvayena brahmabodhanasamarthattvāt.vedāntavākyānām tātparyalīṅgasamanvayena brahmabodhasādhanasamarthattvāt.

yad uktaṁ “kāyārthitvād vyutpattar na siddhe brahmaṇi prāmāṇyam” iti, tad asat, “putras te
jātah” ityādiṣu diddhārthasya api vākyeṣu sambandhagrahaṇadarśanāt.
yad uktaṁ “kṛtakāyārthaḥ śatya eva vyutpattisambhavān na siddhe brahmaṇi śabdasya
prāmāṇyam” iti, tad asat, “putras te jātah” iti vākyasya siddhe ‘pi vastuti prāmāṇyadarśanāt.

vṛddhavyavahāre ‘pi vyutpitsuh svasya pravṛttiḥetubhūtiyāḥ kāryāvagateḥ
padārthajñānānapūrvakatvāvagamāt pravojjayavrddhasya prayojakavākyāṃ padārthajñānām
upādayātīti niścinoṭi.
vṛddhavyavahāre ‘pi vyutpattiḥ labdhumicchuh svapravṛttiḥetubhūtiyāḥ kāryāvagateḥ
siddhapadārthajñānānapūrvakatvāvagamāt pravojjayavrddhasya prayojakavākyāṃ
padārthajñānām upādayātīti niścinoṭi.

tataḥ diddhārthasya api śabdasyābhidhānaniścayaḥ.
tataḥ diddhārthasya api śabdena abhidhānaniścayaḥ.

athavā kim iha vṛddhavyavahārenā, vyutpatteḥ prakārāntareṇāpi diddhvatvāt.

tathā hi bālā mātrācchibhiḥ śīṣupasaṁprabhrīṁ arthān aṅgulyādīnā nirdīśya tattacchabdāṁs teṣu
teṣv artheṣu prayuḥjānair bahuṣaḥ sīkṣitās teṣu teṣv artheṣu vyutpadyante.
kāvyanāṭaṅkānabhijñāḥ puruṣās tadbhijñānapuruṣasamāpam etya padacchchedaṁ kṛtvā ‘syā
śabdasyāyam artha iti sarvaśabdānāṁ artham avagaccanti.

ataḥ diddhārthe ‘pi vyutpattisambhavāt tatra śabdasya prāmāṇyam asti; tato
dedāntavākyānāṁ brahmaṇi prāmāṇyam.

yad uktaṁ jagataḥ kāryaviśeṣatvāt kartṛviśeṣasya brahmaṇo ‘numānaḥ api siddhiḥ iti, tan na
smabhavati,
pūrva pakṣe yan uktaṁ jagataḥ kāryaviśeṣasya kartṛviśeṣasya brahmaṇaścānumānaḥ apy
anyonyasiddhir iti, tan na smabhavati.

vicitraracanasya rathaprasādāder anekakartṛtvadarsanād
vicitraracanasya rathagopuraprāsādāder anekakartṛtvadarsanād.
anumānenāsyag jagata ekakartṛkatvasādhanāyogāt, vyāptibalāt karmavaśyatvādīnāṃ kartari prāpteṣcā pṛtvam uktatvāt.

anumānenāpy ekakartṛkatvasādhanāyogasya asya jagato hetvantarabalād ekasminnapi kartari siddhe tasya puruṣāntaravīpāravaśyatvadiprāpeḥ pṛtvam uktatvāt.

ato nānumānagamyaḥ brahma bhavati.
ato nānumānagamyaḥ brahma.

kiṃcā, śrutyaṅuganyād anumānāmapi brahmaṇi pramāṇam bhavatu nāma.

yatra vākyānām tātparyaṃ tatra hi teṣāṃ prāmāṇyaṃ na pratyakṣādīnāṃśa sarvatra. vedānta-vākyānām brahmaṇi tātparyaniṁryākānī kāṇi liṅgāṇīti cet upakramādīṇī. yatra yeṣāṃ vākyānāṃ tātparyaṃ tatra hi teṣāṃ prāmāṇyam, na svatātparyaṃ vinā sarvatra sarvesāṃ vedāntavākyānāṃ prāmāṇyam astī. brahmaṇi tātparyaniṁryākānī kāṇi liṅgāṇīti cet upakramādīṇī liṅgāṇī.

tathā paṭhānte – “upakramopasaṁhārav abhyāsō ‘pūrvatā phalam/ arthavādopapattī ca liṅgāṃ tātparyaniṁraye.”

vṛddhās tathā paṭhānte – “upakramopasaṁhārav abhyāsō ‘pūrvatā phalam/ arthavādopapattī ca liṅgāṃ tātparyaniṁraye.”

tad ihopakramādibhir liṅgair vedāntavākyānāṃ brahmaṇi tātparyaṃ niścītaye.

ya upakramādibhis tātparyaniṁrayasya tadeva vedāntavākyānāṃ śravaṇam ity ucyate. ya upakramādibhis tātparyaniṁrayasya tadeva svopabrhmakasmṛtyadisahītānāṃ vedāntavacanānāṃ śravaṇam ity nigadyate.

tathā hi ucyate

tathābhīyuktavacanam

“ajanānaprabhavaṃ duḥkhaṃ jñānaṃ tasya nivartakam/ sarvavedāntavākyānāṃ śravaṇaṃ tatpravartakam// śravaṇaṃ nāma vākyānāṃ vedikānāṃ parātmā/ upakramādībhīrs liṅgāih śīve tātparyaniṁrayaḥ.”

“ajanānaprabhavaṃ duḥkhaṃ jñānaṃ tasya vināśakam/ sarvavedāntavākyānāṃ śravaṇaṃ jñānadaṃ bhavet// śravaṇaṃ nāma vacasāṃ vaidikānāṃ harau pare/ prāmbhpṛabhṛticinhibāḥ kṛṣṇe tātparyaniṁrayaḥ.”

iti upakramopasaṁhārav ekaṁ liṅgāṃ vedāntaśabādānāṃ brahmaṇī śīve tātparyaniṁraye.

iti upakramopasaṁhāravu vedāntavākyānāṃ tātparyaniṁraye brahmanāmake nārāyaṇe ekaṁ cinham.

tatā tātparyaṃ nāma tatsvarūpāpāśaṁnāviṣayataṃ. upakramopasaṁhāravu: tatā tātparyaṃ nāma yatārtaḥsvarūpāpāśyātvaṁ iti. upakramopasaṁhāravu

“yāḥ sarvajñāḥ sarvavidyāsyā jñānamayaṃ tapaḥ” (MU 1.1.10) ity upakramaḥ, “tad etat satyaṃ” ity upasaṁhāraḥ.
“sad eva saumyedamagra āśīd” (CU 6.2.1) ity upakramaḥ; “tattvamasi” (CU 6.16.3) tasya sadrūpasya parabrahmaṇa upāśakabhūtas tvam asīty upasaṃhāraḥ.

[Mahānā 9.3] ity upakramaḥ, MN 10.9 ity upasamhāraḥ.

“satpūndarikanayaṇaṁ meghābhaṁ vaidyutāmbaram dvibhujaṁ jñānam udrādhyam” ity upakramaḥ; “cintayaṁ cetasa kṛṣṇam muko bhavati samśrteḥ” ity upasamhāraḥ (Gopala Tapani Upanisad 1-2)

“atha puruṣo ha vai nārāyaṇo ‘kāmayata prajāḥ śrīja’ ity upakramaḥ; “nārāyaṇe pralīyante nārāyaṇe pralīyante” (Nārā U 1) ity upasamhāraḥ.

evam anyatṛāpi dṛṣṭavyam. “tattvamasi” (CU 6.9.7), “sarve vai rudrāḥ” (MN 13.2), “ambikāpataya umāpataye” (MN 13.4), A Śīr 21 ityabhyāsāḥ itham anyatṛāpiśaṅgyam. atha “nityo deva eko nārāyaṇa brahmā ca nārāyaṇa” ity ārābhyāva “nārāyaṇe ‘antarbahlīca nārāyaṇa nārāyaṇa evedaṁ sarvam yadbhūtam ca yac ca bhāvyam” (Nārā U 3) atha “nityo niśkalaṅko nirākhyaḥ nivikalpo niraṅkanaḥ ṣuddho deva eko nārāyaṇa na dvītīyo ‘sti kaścit; ya evam veda” (Nārā U 2) ityanto abhyāsaḥ ca.

apūrvatā vedetarapramāṇāprāptatā. phalaṁ brahmaṇānā. arthavādo jagatsṛṣṭisthitipradhvamsādayaḥ. upapattir virodhābhāvah sārvajñatādisampattirvā. apūrvatā vedetarapramāṇāprāptavam ca phalaṁ brahmaṇānām cārthavādo jagatsṛṣṭisthitipradhvamsādayaḥ copapattir virodhābhāvah sārvajñatādisampattirvā.

etair liṅgair brahmaṇi tātparyam avagantavyaṁ vedāntavākyānām.

na kevalaṁ brahmaparā vedaṁtāḥ kintu “ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ” (BU 2.4.5) ityādiśu taṣijñānavidhiparā api jñāyante.

ye vedāntās te na kevalabrahmaparā kintu “ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ” (BU 2.4.5) ityādiśu taṣijñānavidhiparā api jñāyante.

ubhayaparative vākyabhedaprasaṅga iti yaduktaṁ tanna, rūpapratyāyakena caṅsūṣā yathā dravyasyāpi siddhiḥ tathā vidhiparair api vedāntair brahmasiddhir iti nobhayaparavīroḍhaḥ.

śābdam hi brahmaṇānām tadbrahmaprāciśabadād eva prāptaṁ, tadvidhinā kim prayojanam iti ced prāptav api manarādiśu iva vidher aviroḍhaḥ.

śābdam hi brahmaṇānām tadbrahmaprāciśabadād eva prāptaṁ, tadvidhinā kim prayojanam iti ced jñāna-prāptav api manarādiśu iva vidher aviroḍhaḥ.

yathā dravyadevatiṣṭhayaḥ kāṣakasyeśu mantreṣv adhīyamāṇє śrījaḥ ‘pi punar anuṣṭhānakāle “mantraṁ anusmṛtvam” iti pravogavidhir jñānāntaram anuṣṭhāpayati, tathātṛṣṭi.

tathāḥ yathā dravyadevatādiṣṭhayaḥ kāṣakasyeśu mantreṣv adhīyamāṇє śrījaḥ ‘pi punar anuṣṭhānakāle mantraṁ anusmṛtvam padārtham pravogavidhiḥ tajjñānāntaram anuṣṭhāpayati, tathātṛṣṭi.
na ciotpattiviniyogādhihārajavidhīnām abhāvāt prayogavidhyasambhava iti śaṅkānyam.
nanu brahmājñāna mokṣopakāraṃ ca prati vidhyatvaḥ ka nātad bhavati. 

na nānubheda eva siddhāya saṁbhavaḥ iti na śaṅkānyam.
ihotpattiviniyogādihāraṇāṃ vidher abhāvāt prayogavidhyasambhava iti na śaṅkānyam.

upattividher adhyāhāreṇa siddhau prakaraṇavaśāc chamādika viniyojan “ātmānām paśyet”
ihotpattiviniyogādhihāraṇāṃ vidher abhāvāt prayogavidhyasambhava iti na śaṅkānyam.

jñānotpattivedher adhyāhāreṇa siddhau prakaraṇavaśāt śaṁādiṣeṣaḥ ca niyojan “ātmānāṃ
paśyates” iti viniyogavidhir upapadyate.

ītāvahādāvagatamokṣakāmo ‘dhihāraḥ kalpanīyo bhavati.

ītāvahādāvagatamokṣakāma rūpo ‘dhihāraḥ kalpanīyo bhavati.

ato mokṣakāmaḥ śaṁādiyuko brahmajñānaṃ sampādayed iti prayogavidhilābhāḥ.

ato mokṣakāmavān adhikārī śaṁādiyuko brahmajñānaṃ sampādayed iti prayogavidhilābhāḥ.

nanu brahmajñānasya vidheyatvam anupannam, “ātmā vā are draṣṭavyāḥ” (BU 2.4.5) ityādau
nitye brahmāni nirvikāre viśuddhe cātmaṇi na karmākāraṇaḥ kau yuṣyate, yena
vidhīsambhavaḥ, upatiprāptivikārasamaṅgaṇeḥ ātraśambhāvāḥ...ato vedaṁāṇaḥ na
brahmajñāna vidhiparātvaṃ iti cenn, ātmāni karmanvaiprayuktoṇtpattyādyabhāve ‘pi
kartiṣṭhamokṣaphalāya vidhy upapatteḥ. pṛpate kathāṃ vidhir iti cet, pṛptiḥ pākṣikī nityā vā.
ubhayathāpi niyāmavidhiḥ sambhavati.

nanu tathā satī vedaṁāṇaḥ vidhiparātvaṃ brahmapratveṃ anupapannam. yad uktām
“rūpapratīyākam caṅsaḥā dravyasiddhīvad vidhiparair api vedaṁabrahmasiddhiḥ” iti, tad
ayuktam, caṅsaḥ hi samprayoge satī nirapekṣam eva pratīvastu pramāpaṃ. na tathā śabdaḥ,
kintu yatra tātparayam tatra pramāṇam. tasmād vedaṁāṇaḥ brahmapramāpaṅkavatvaḥ
brahmajñā navidhāyakatvaṃ ca na sambhavati.

ītī cenn, “saṁidhaḥ yajati (Tai Sam 2.6.1.2) ityādīnām vākyānām
paṇcaprayojavidhāyakatvaṃ tadanuṣṭhānākramavidhāyakatvaṃ cety ubhayaparatvadarsanād
vedāntavākyānām api brahmapramāpākatvaṃ brahmajñānaṃ mokṣapārakam prati
vidhāyakatvaṃ ca yukta eva.

nanu brahmaṇi vedāvāyad eva jñāte tajjñānavidhir aprayojaḥ; tatprayojanaṣya
pūrvajñānād eva sambhavād iti cenn, vākyena paroṣaṭavena jñāte brahmaṇi tathaśātārāyaya
jñānavidhir upapatteḥ.

nanu brahmaṇi “yato vā imān” (TU 1.1) iti vākyād eva jñāte tajjñānavidhir aprayojaḥ; tatprayojanaṣya
pūrvajñānād eva sambhavād iti cenn, vākyāt paroṣaṭavena jñāte brahmaṇi
tathaśātārāyaya jñānavidhir upapatteḥ.

katham bheda iti cet, yac chadbajanyam na tatsākṣātārāhetuḥ, kintu upāsanārūpam jñānām
eva.

katham ubhayor bheda iti cet, tatraḥ yac chadbajanyam na tatsākṣātārāhetuḥ, kintu
upāsanānukulajātāṃ jñānām eva brahmasākṣātārājanam.
tathā ca śṛuyate – “dhyātvā munir gacchati bhūtayoniṃ samastasākṣiṃ tamasāḥ parastāt” (Kai U 7); “jnānānirmathanāda eva pāśaṃ dahtai paṇḍitaḥ” (Kai U 11) ityādīṣu;
tathā hi śṛuyate – “dhyātvā munir gacchati bhūtayoniṃ” (Kai U 7) iti, “tam eva vidvān amṛta iha bhavati” (Tai Ār Pu 3.13.17) iti, “ved āham etam puruṣaṃ mahāntam ādityavārnāṃ tamasāḥ parastāt/tameva vidhitvātmṛtyum eti nānyaḥ panthā vidyate ‘yānāya” (Śv 3.8);
“dhyānānirmarthaṃdeva pāśaṃ dahtai paṇḍitaḥ” (Śv U 1.14) ityādīṣu

“jñātvā devaṃ muchyate sarvapāsaiḥ” (Śv U 4.16), “īśaṃ taṃ jñātvā amṛta bhavantii” (Śv U 3.7), ityādiṣu ca.
kaḥ paramo devaḥ, kuto mṛtyur bibheti, kasya vijñānānākhilaṃ vijñātaṃ bhavati “tad uho vāca brāhmaṇaḥ kṛṣṇo vai paramaṃ daivataṃ, govidnān mṛtyur bibheti, gopijanavallabhajānena tajjānanaṃ bhavatīti (Go Pū Tā U 1-1); “jñātvā devaṃ muchyate sarvapāpaiḥ” (Śv U 4.16) ityādiṣu.

atat eva bhavati “tad eva bhavati” (BU 4.2.23), “sambur ākāśamādhye dhyeyah,” “tajjalāniti śānta upāṣiḥ”, “iti prācīṇayogyopāsya” (Tai U 1.6.2) ityādiṣu ca
atat eva bhavati “tad eva bhavati” (BU 4.2.23), “sambur ākāśamādhye dhyeyah,” “tajjalāniti śānta upāṣiḥ”, “iti prācīṇayogyopāsya” (Tai U 1.6.2) ityādiṣu ca

anyathā satyatvādiśiṣṭa Brahmaṇaḥ saha kathāṃ sakalakāmāvāptiḥ phalaṃ tādṛṣṭa brahmaśaktiṣṭharaṇaṃ ca siddhyati.
anyathā satpūndarīkaṇayānaṃ avadiviśesanaḥ viśiṣṭena paraḥ brahmaṇaḥ sākṣaṃ kathāṃ samastakēmopalabdhiḥ phalaṃ? tādṛṣṭa brahma kim

tasmāt – “satyaṃ jñānam anantaḥ brahma” (Tai U 2.1), “ānanda brahma” (Tai U 3.6), Maha 12.1, iti satyajñānānantarūpaṃ svātmārāmam upaśantasaṅkalaropavakalakṣaṃ sakalahaṅgalātmakaṃ paramasaṅkalyāvībhūtatayāḥ śabalarūpatvena kṛṣṇapiṅgalaṃ virūpāṣaṃ trilocanaṃ brahma upakramādītaḥparyālingair nirūpyate.
tatṛāha – “satpūndarīkaṇayānaṃ…cintyāṃś cetasa kṛṣṇaṃ mukto bhavati sanśṛteḥ” (Go Pū Tā U 1.2), iti, itthen kṛṣṇaśabdaśaṃcyaṃ nārāyaṇaṃunisaṃjñānaṃ paraḥ brahma upakramādītaḥparyālingair nirūpyate.
“yo veda nihitaṃ guhāyām” (Tāi U 2.1), “iti prācīnayogyopāsva” (Tāi U 1.6.2) iti jñānāvinābhūtaṃ tadupāsanaṃ ca vidhiyate.

“sarvān kāmān” (TU 2.5) ityādiṣu sakalakāmāvāptir brahmaṇā sahopāsakānām avagamaye.

ato niṣkāmanijadharmpeto niṣaddhakāmyakarmarahaṇit
yathāśrutismṛtirodakarmānuśṭhānasampannacittasauddhiḥ
śaṃdianugṛhitapramaśivahuktibhāvita eva mumuksuḥ śrutisārebhyaḥ śivābhideyaṃ
dvam brahma viditvā tadupāśīti jñānopāsanaḥvidhir upapannaḥ.

cintanāvakṣair brahma śruti-viśvāyaḥ-kṛṣṇābhideyaṃ nārāyaṇarūpaṃ paraṃ brahma viditvā
dacintayan mumto bhavatī jñānopāsanaḥ vidhir sampannāḥ.

atra śivopapadagrahāṇaṃ virūpaṃsya brahmaṇāḥ paramaviśuddhiṃ saṁgalaḥ janaṇatvān
mumuksuṇāṃ upāsanaeikaviṣayatvadyotanārtham. tathā ‘tharvaśīkhāyām “śiva eko
dhyeyah…” iti śrīyate śivaśabdavācyasya vastuna eva dheyatvam iti. anyathā kathaṃ
csāmśānaviśṛṅṭiḥ. nirastasamastadoṣakalaṃkniśayatvam saṅgaḥdharatvam hi śivatvam.
yadvijñānān mokśarūpaṃ phalaṃ ucyate. “yadā carnavadākāśaṃ…” (ŚvU 6.20) iti. “śiva
eko dhyeyah…” (A.Śikho. 3) iti śivavyatikṛtaṣya mumuksuṇāṃ dheyaytvaṃ
ciṣṭem khyate.

ataḥ śivaḥ eva paraṃ brahma moṣkaṃair dhātavyo jñātavyaśceti.
ataḥ nārāyaṇaśadavācyo kṛṣṇāhaṃ paraṃ brahmaśvā samśṛtimokṣakāṅkṣibhiḥ
ciṣṭaiṃ yāṃ jñātavyaṃ ceti.

atas tātparyalīṅgasamanvayena brahmaparā vedāntās tadupāsanaḥapariś cety avirodhāḥ.
evam tātparyalīṅgasananvayena brahmaparā vedāntās tadupāsanaḥvidhiparāś cety avirodhāḥ.