

E DITOR'S FOREWORD

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It is with great joy and enthusiasm that we present this first issue of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Journal. We find great satisfaction in being able to participate and bear witness to new beginnings at the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute at Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi. By publishing this journal, it is an even greater satisfaction to be able to fulfil the wishes and receive the blessings of our gurus Pramukh Swami Maharaj and Mahant Swami Maharaj. Their vision and continued support in its creation gives us great pleasure and embellishes our efforts with meaning and purpose.

The publication of this first issue of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Journal provides us with the opportunity to say a little about our history, vision for the journal, and how we plan to pursue it.

On July 4, 2010 during the inauguration of the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute in New Delhi, Pramukh Swami Maharaj expressed his wish to publish a periodic academic journal. He envisioned that it would provide intellectuals studying the teachings of the *sampradāya* and Indian thought with the opportunity to present their research to a broad scholastic audience. He also added that it would serve as a forum that encourages intellectual and scholarly investigations in a wide range of topics and facilitate quality yet appreciative interdisciplinary, interfaith, and inter-cultural dialogue. Mahant Swami Maharaj, the present guru of BAPS, fulfilled Pramukh Swami Maharaj's wishes by inspiring the publication of this journal.

By Mahant Swami Maharaj's blessings, the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Journal positions its values, goals, and directives within the intellectual pursuits of its research institutes. Published from the BAPS Swaminarayan Research Institute at

Swaminarayan Akshardham, New Delhi, this journal is a collective venture of all scholarly institutes, endeavours, and interests of BAPS in both in India and abroad.

The journal intends to publish the most insightful, profound, practical, and ground-breaking scholarship concerning a wide variety of discipline-specific learning. In addition to scholarship on the tradition's own teachings, texts, and history, the journal's focus of investigation will include everything from music to poetry, creative writing, visual arts, architecture, agriculture, performing arts, philosophy, Sanskrit, Indian vernacular languages, sacred texts, philology, linguistics, Indian *darśanas*, management, history (including, Indian, art, and cultural history), medicine, computer technology, print and electronic publishing, foreign languages, cinematography, and even culinary studies as they pertain to the Svāminārāyaṇa tradition and Indian thought.

We would love to see future issues of the journal contain, alongside focused developments to articles in previous issues, innovative research that contributes to significant disciplinary trends. Alongside promoting the development of ideas within highly specific paradigms, we encourage attempts to map connections and divisions between different disciplines and *darśanic* traditions. Keeping in sight the values and interests of the tradition's scholarly institutions, we would like to publish works that cross discipline-specific boundaries, present practical applications and implications of original research, and bridge contemporary and traditional interests. We understand that to achieve such goals often requires the synthesis of both familiar and unconventional analytical tools. By supporting such integration we aspire to not only preserve the scholarly interests of the tradition, but also to enrich and broaden it. We also envision the journal to have a wide readership that includes not just scholars of religion, but also of history, philosophy, sociology, and all those within academia who are interested in the diverse fields of the study that we hope to cover.

In addition to having such aspirations, we are aware of certain challenges that we will be facing both in the immediate and distant future. Many of these challenges are common to all newly introduced periodic publications. Developing an effective readership and an active contributor pool; maintaining innovative, accommodative, and dynamic systems to manage submissions, the editorial process, and memberships; establishing efficient publication and distribution networks; all the while maintaining and improving on the quality of both the content and its publication—these are only a few of that familiar obstacles faced by any new academic publication. In addition to these challenges, we also anticipate those that are specific to the journal that we seek to publish.

As an academic journal that, among other things, seeks to serve as a forum for both western and traditional learning, submissions are expected to appear in languages and academic systems native and familiar to their contributors. Including works in languages such as, English, Sanskrit, and Hindi; negotiating referencing standards,

translations and transliteration methodologies, analytical and presentation schemes; and other seemingly incommensurable systemic features, all the while maintaining a quality and accessible production, present a unique challenge to develop the journal we have in mind. Despite these difficulties, we feel that through the introduction of certain measures we may be able to exceed our expectations.

Many of the above-mentioned hurdles may be mitigated through the application of an integrated peer-review system. Such a system would encourage authors, editors, and reviewers to not only collectively engage in constructive discussions, but also find the opportunity to learn from each other's experiences and expertise. We believe that maintaining a demanding reviewing process is not only consistent with our commitment towards publishing quality material, but also a means to highlight the most important works. In addition, we feel that such an integrated and mutually beneficial system will encourage vibrant new perspectives and provide new learning opportunities for scholars around the world.

The periodic publication of special issues that offer an in-depth discussion regarding specific topics of interest will also help surmount many of the above-mentioned difficulties. These special issues will not only encourage works to collectively offer a comprehensive analysis of the topic at hand, but also provide the opportunity to investigate cross-disciplinary, interfaith, and inter-cultural nuances. We anticipate that they will also encourage a series of interrelated works that reaffirm, build-upon, or test ideas presented in other works within the same issue. Such analytical rigour will no doubt encourage robust investigations and greatly improve upon the scholarship of the journal.

Furthermore, by encouraging, whenever possible, the publication of translations along with original works and establishing non-intrusive, universal, and accommodating systems of presentation, methodology, and referencing, many of the language and technical proficiency-oriented difficulties may be mitigated. The implementation of an efficient and robust, web-based journal management service that supervises and facilitates, among other things, memberships, submissions, the editorial and revision process, mail servers, and feedback systems will assist overcoming many of the logistical difficulties that are typical of such new ventures. Although it would be unrealistic to expect the immediate implementation of all our plans, we hope that readers and potential contributors alike will not only recognize and appreciate the significant effort we intend to put into the production of such a quality production, but also have the patience to see our plans come to fruition. As we tread on this new path, we imagine the upcoming few years to be very exciting for us, our contributors, and our faithful readers.

I would like to end by extending my gratitude to all those involved in the publication of this journal. I must mention my deep sense of appreciation for the advisory editors:

- Dr. Sadhu Shrutiprakashdas, the director of AARSH in Gandhinagar and a profound scholar of Sanskrit literature and manuscriptology;
- Acharya Shrivatsa Goswami, a member of an eminent family of spiritual leaders and scholars at Sri Radharamana Mandir, Vrindavan and the Director of the Sri Caitanya Prema Samsthana, an institute of Vaisnava culture and studies at Vrindavan
- Dr. Vijay P. Bhatker (Mumbai), the chancellor of Nalanda University and a renowned Indian computer scientist, IT leader, and educationalist;
- Dr. S. R. Bhatt, the President of Indian Philosophical Congress, New Delhi; and
- Prof. M. M. Agrawal (New Delhi), professor emeritus of Sanskrit at Delhi University.

Their expertise and experience has proven to be an invaluable gift. Their support has continued to help us overcome many unexpected hurdles and inspire confidence in all of those involved. I would also like to thank the editors, contributors, and advisors of this journal. It has been a privilege and inspiring to work with all of them and witness their never-ending dedication. Gratitude is the fairest blossom that springs forth from the heart.