Preface

From the first utterances of *Sruti* to an era of global flux humanity has uncovered aspects of its existence which require to be looked afresh.

The course of history uncovers unknown horizons. When the world is shrinking and scientific and technological innovations become obsolete by the time, they see light of the day, when information revolution has crossed the barriers of human existence, when attempts are being made to understand the nature and process of coming cyber society, when computer state is on anvil, when technology not only transforms culture but creates one of its own, when entertainment is growing to become the largest industry, when cultural barriers are proving to be more fragile than even a rope of sand, when human predicament is at its zenith, when environmental hazards raises the very question of survival of humanity, when the finitude of 'modernity' beginning its search for limitlessness and ending in limiting itself further, when there are questions regarding purpose of life, when the human mind is asking number of questions, whose answers are yet to be found, it is imperative that humanity needs a rethinking on the ways of its existence, on the ways of its thinking.

The thought process, which leads to the various processes in society manifests itself through linguistic categories which in turn builds the conception of the world. The categories of conversation in the age of information revolution are attaining "global character" independent of the context in which they emerge. It is in this context that the categories of cognition and cognitive methods evolved in the discourse of western social science tradition no more remain the only valid "modes of understanding".

At the heart of the problem of the study of *sampradaya* is the problem of categories of cognition and cognitive methods. *Sampradaya* is an unique institution
of humanity as its continuity remains intact even after the test of several millenia. As all other institutions of humanity are either transformed, swayed or swallowed by the wave of "modernity", the *guruparampara* (guru tradition) in *sampradayas* is alive in all its youth. *Sruti* is a living reality among many of the *sampradayas*, since the first utterances of *Rg-sanhita*.

The categories of cognition and cognitive methods in the inter *sampradaya* discourses have their own historicity and modes of examination and verification. It is in this context that the categories of cognition and cognitive methods of the western social science tradition were found to be misplaced. The categories of cognition and cognitive methods emerging through inter-*sampradaya* discourses are rooted in the historicity of their *darsanas*. The *darsanas* deploy categories with precise and technical connotations, which need to be understood in their context. These categories have a vibrant relationship with the *sampradayas* of the contemporary times. The categories emerging from the "*anvekshana* " of *sampradayas* are either the same or are explained through the categories of *darsanic* discourse. All this makes the western social science tradition out of place in context of our study of *sampradaya* through *sadhus* in contemporary times.

We were left with only five options, first to mould our "data" to suit the western social science tradition, second to provide an exegetic interpretation of our study, third to provide a sociological interpretation, fourth to quit sociology and declare it as unfit and ill-equipped to deal with our area of study or finally to attempt and evolve an understanding with the help of categories and the cognitive methods derived from the area of our study with relation to the historicity of the intellectual tradition. We opted for the last option.

The social derivation of the sources of the categories of "professional understanding" deployed in the western social sciences, when put under the scrutiny of the cognitive methods derived from the context of various studies done by it will
demonstrates its inefficacy in dealing with the subject. It is here that *anviksha* (study based on anvekshana i.e. to search, to know, through observing and seeing) with its tools of *pariksha* (examination and verification) gains its relevance. *Anviksha* emerges through the categories of cognition and cognitive methods of the context. It does not consider any *pramana* (category for the source and proof of cognition) universally applicable to all contexts. In *anviksha* the categories of cognition and cognitive methods are subject to *pariksha*. *Pariksha* in different contexts provides its own sources and proof of cognition in relation to the context giving rise to its own *parampara*. The various *paramparas* existing in the *loka* form the subject of study for the *anusana* (discipline) of *loka anviksha*. This *prasthana* (study which makes departure from existing knowledge on the particular subject) is the study of the *parampara* of *sampradaya* through *sadhus* in contemporary times.

*Any anviksha* requires *jjnasa* (pursuit of know) and *mumuksha* (pursuit to absolute perfection). They instil the quality of relentless perseverance to uncover reality to know as it exists. At times *jjnasa* and *mumaksha* need *sambala* (support) to sustain the pursuit. The *sanskaras* imparted by the *santas* through their *sannikarsha* and grace is the only reason, for what so ever has come out as meaningful in this *prasthana*, the vestiges of miscomprehension wherever they remain are the fault of mine. My heartily *vandana* to the *santas* who provided me the vision to see, whom I met during the various stages of our study.

During the course of this study, at times the very idea of pursuing this study seemed futile. For *jjnasu* and *mumukshu*, it is essential to lead the life of *sadhana*, to realise that where even *pramanas* do not reach. The *pramanya* of *pramanaś* is always under question on which any means of comprehension are based. Inspite of this, this work is seeing the light of the day, due to the people who were deeply
interested in getting this work finished. With Ishwara’s grace their wish is fulfilled.

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Pushkar Misra