PART - ONE

INTRODUCTION
Aim of the present work

Men have asked certain questions in all ages. They are asking them even today. These questions demand answers. Unless the answers are obtained, man is not at peace with himself. Philosophy deals with these questions. It tries to answer them.

The greatest question of man is, who am I? This is the question of questions. What is this "I"? Man is very anxious to know it. Many philosophers have tried to answer this question. Svāminārāyaṇa has also answered the question. It is Svāminārāyaṇa's answer to this question that constitutes the subject of this work. We have made a search of Svāminārāyaṇa's answer and have attempted to reconstruct the same. Vacanāṁṛta and Śikṣāpatra are the field of my search. "The Philosophy of
Sri Svaminarayana" by Dr. J. A. Yajnik, a work of high erudition and penetrating insight, has illumined my path at every step.

The present work aims at a fairly complete and comprehensive critical exposition of Svāminārāyaṇa's philosophy of self. To the best of my ability I have tried to lay bare the nature of self as conceived by Svāminārāyaṇa. In my search I have found that although Svāminārāyaṇa has remained open to the ideas of other Philosophical systems and thought-patterns, he has made very striking and valuable contributions of his own in many respects. In some respects he is unique. It is this that entitled him to a place of honour in Indian philosophy. His concept of five reals is unique and original. Though influenced by Madhva, his concepts of Svaṭantra and Paratantara have many things of their own. Like Śaṅkara and Bradley, and such other Philosophers, Svāminārāyaṇa is not interested in the distinction between "appearance" and "reality". He is interested in the distinction between independent Reality and dependent realities. Above all he is interested in reconciling the truths of Monism and Pluralism. As
Dr. J.A. Yajnik has very clearly pointed out, Svāminārāyaṇa has achieved the reconciliation in a remarkable manner.  

2. **Life of Svāminārāyana**

Svāmi Sahajānanda, who later became known as Svāminārāyana was born in 1781. At an early age of eleven, he left his home and went to Himalayas. He wondered all over India in quest of spiritual knowledge and visited almost all the places of religious importance. In the year 1800 he came to Loja, a village in Saurashtra, and accepted Svāmi Rāmānanda as his Guru (religious teacher). Although Rāmānanda had a number of senior disciples, he selected Svāminārāyana and appointed him as the head (acārya) of his organisation called Satsanga. Immediately after his appointment he started his spiritual work and propagated his philosophical and ethical principles. He exhibited extra-ordinary qualities of leadership and turned the small fellowship of Svāmi Rāmānanda into a great Sampradāya with huge temples over-crowded with devotees, vast literature and well-established traditions. It should be noted that even
during his life time he was worshipped as God (Puruṣottama) by thousands of his followers. It is remarkable to see that the bulk of his followers came from the lower strata of society. Even so called untouchables and Muslims, especially khojas, were among his followers.¹

As pointed out by Dr. K.M. Munshi, he made a way for non-Brahmins to become religious teachers.²

Svāminārāyaṇa was a mystic. As Dr. J.A. Yajnik has pointed out, he "was neither a metaphysician, nor a methodologist, nor a moral philosopher. He was primarily a great prophet who conceived a philosophy of religion in the light of his own intuitive experience and founded a religious community on the basis of the fundamental principles of this philosophy"³.

After a serious illness of a few weeks Svāminārāyaṇa left his mortal frame. It was in 1830. He was 49.

As James Burgess has pointed out, "At the death of Nārāyen (Svāminārāyaṇ) there were about 5,00,000 heads of families holding his tenets and about 500 Sadhu ascetics"⁴. Appraising life and work of Svāminārāyaṇa Bhai Manilal Parekh says, "In him
Hinduism approximates to the perfect form of Religion
as in few others, and his life, work and the movement
he led have few parallels in the entire range of history".5
Pointing out a parallel Bhai Manilal says that "it is
the life and work of Jesus Christ that offer a most
striking resemblance to those of Svāminārāyaṇa"6.

3. **Vacanāṁrta**

Vacanāṁrta is a book of discourses, arranged
date-wise, delivered by Svāminārāyaṇa in different
assemblies of saints and devotees assembled at different
places.

These discourses are in the form of dialogues.
But they are not debates. They are spiritual dialogues
between the teacher and disciples. They have a didactic
purpose. The disciples have free faith in the authority
and the ability of the teacher to solve their problems
and answer their questions. They approach the teacher
with a question and receive a satisfactory answer,
sometimes the disciples seek solution of the problems
and puzzles disturbing them. Sometimes Svāminārāyaṇa
himself would raise a question and invite answer from the audience. In most cases the answers that come from the assembly are found inadequate. Svāminārāyaṇa would either correct them or add to them or replace them. Sometimes he would pick up an interesting feature from some scripture and would attempt to elaborate and analyse it.

Vacanāmṛta is scriptural text. It can be said to be the Gospel of Svāminārāyaṇīya Sect. It can also be described as Svāminārāyaṇīya Veda. Bhai Manilal has called it "The Book of Books". It contains the essence of Svāminārāyaṇīya doctrine. It embodies the religious and spiritual teaching of Svāminārāyaṇa. The book has a flavour of authority arising from the highly personal experience of the Master. It reveals the truth of Svāminārāyaṇīya system of Philosophy.

The book is in Gujarati language. The language of the discourses is simple and easy. But they are not easy to understand. Even the intellectuals will find the book difficult. The reason of it is this that in the discourses Svāminārāyaṇa has inter alia discussed
the important questions of epistemology, ontology, religion and ethics. The discussions of these questions are bound to be difficult for the lay intellectual who has no previous acquaintance with philosophical doctrines and principles. It is very surprising to find the highly technical problems and the fundamental questions of epistemology, ontology, ethics and religion expressed and discussed in simple and easy Gujarati language. This makes it a classic in Gujarati literature. It is really a great book. "It can very well take its place among the religious classics of the world."² Giving a characteristic description of Vacanāmrta Dr. J.A. Yajnik has written, "Insipite of the scattered character of the discussions in Vacanāmrta, the clarity and consistency of Śrī Śvāminārāyaṇa's vision pervades the whole collection. This, however, cannot be revealed unless a careful analysis is made. Thus painstaking and profound study of Vacanāmrta is absolutely necessary for the clear understanding of epistemological, metaphysical, religious and ethical principles of Śrī Śvāminārāyaṇa."³
4. **Sūkṣma-patri**

**Sūkṣma-patri** is in Sanskrit. It is written by Svāminārāyaṇa himself for his followers scattered throughout the different parts of the country. It contains 212 verses. It is a Code of Moral Conduct. It embodies Moral Rules prescribed by Svāminārāyaṇa. Bhai Manilal calls it "an Epistle of Precepts". He also describes it as a kind of Law Book.¹ Although strewn with metaphysical flashes, **Sūkṣma-Patri** is primarily a book of ethics. Dr. B.C. Desai calls it "document of ethics"². It lays down duties and virtues pertaining to Gṛhasthā-ārama and Tyāgā-ārama. It contains regulations of the life of householders as well as ascetics. As observed by Dr. B.G. Desai, "In **Sūkṣma-patri** Svāminārāyaṇa specifies in a summary manner the duties of one and all. A detailed list of duties is given."³ Analysing the structure of **Sūkṣma-patri**, Dr. B.G. Desai has pointed out that, "the first twelve ślokas are by way of general introduction. From the 11th to the 122 nd ślokas, he (Svāminārāyaṇa) describes the Sādhāraṇa dharma of men, and gives there directions on numerous points such as
Ahimsā, Conduct, Diet & Drinks, Friendship, Suicide,
Religious Toleration, Relationship between men and women,
Health & Hygiene, Respect, Habit-formation, Etiquette,
Work and Aptitude, Dress, Religious marks and
symbols, Worship, Treatment to others, Pilgrimage,
Varṇāśrama, Penance, Scriptures, Dharma, The twice-
born etc. "It is in this part that we have his
views on god, self and world. From the 123rd to the
202nd ślokas Viśeṣa dharmas of Acārya, of Vahuje, or
Male Grhasthīs, of Female Grhasthīs, of Rulers, of widows
of Brahmacāris and Sādhus. In its true spirit Śiksāpatri
is an instrument of Command. The whole book is written
in the form of a directive. Although the book is very
small, it points out a way in which Śvāmīnārāyaṇa's
philosophical principles can be made practically applicable
to the problems and facts of life. It evinces Śvāmīnārā-
ayaṇa's reformative interest in organising a moral
community. It presents Śvāmīnārāyaṇa as a great reformist.

5. State of Philosophical Studies on Śvāmīnārāyaṇism

It would be worthwhile to cast a glance at the state
of philosophical systems on Svāminārāyanism. Dr. Macnicol, R.G. Bhandarkar, John Mckenzie, Dr. R.D. Ranade and Monier Williams were renowned scholars of Indian religious systems. It is very regrettable that the valuable contribution made to Philosophical systems of India by Svāminārāyaṇa escaped their notice. Dr. Macnicol, R.G. Bhandarkar and John Mckenzie have not written a single sentence about the life and philosophy of Svāminārāyaṇa in their scholarly works. Monier Williams, Dr. R.D. Ranade and some others have merely said that he was a great social reformer. They have not taken any note of his philosophy.

Bhai Manilal Parekh has written a book named "Shri Svāminārāyaṇa" (1936). The book is well written. But it is largely concerned with the life and work of Svāminārāyaṇa. It is not a philosophical work. Nor does it claim to be so.

There is a book entitled "Life and Philosophy of Shree Svāminārāyaṇa" (1967) by Shri H.T. Dave. Although this book claims to be an exposition of Svāminārāyaṇa's philosophy, it is, in fact, no more than a biographical
narration of Svāminārāyaṇa in an ecclesiastical setting. It gives no idea of the Svāminārāyaṇiya system of philosophy. It only gives some information about the life and teaching of Svāminārāyaṇa to non-technical lay readers.

Very recently (1981) on the occasion of the bicentenary commemoration of Svāminārāyaṇa a Bicentenary Commemoration Volume under the title "New Dimensions in Vedānta Philosophy" has been published in two parts. This volume claims to bring out the latent truths and clarifications about Vedāntic teachings of Svāminārāyaṇa and to provide new dimensions to Vedānta philosophy. The Volume consists of articles by various authors some of whom are known for their philosophical studies. But most of the authors are not acquainted with Svāminārāyaṇa's philosophy in all its technicalities. Naturally one cannot expect such a Volume to provide a coherent and consistent exposition of Svāminārāyaṇa's philosophy. The Volume does no more than to provide some social, ethical and religious aspects of his teaching.

In the existing literature on Svāminārāyaṇism Dr. J. A. Yajnik's book "The Philosophy of Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa"
dominates the field. The book is of an exceptional character. It was a thesis on which the author was awarded Ph. D. degree. This is the only book wherein we find a consistent and clear-cut exposition of Śvāminārāyaṇiya system of philosophy. As noted above, the celebrated scholars of India have failed to produce a system of Śvāminārāyaṇiya philosophy. As pointed out by Dalsukh Malvania, "The Credit goes to Dr. Yajnik for reconstructing for the first time a comprehensive philosophical system and of the teaching of Śvāminārāyaṇa who was more interested in religion and morality than in Logic and Metaphysics." Shri Malvania has rightly observed that "Śvāminārāyaṇa's philosophical ideas which constitute the basis of his moral and religious teachings were never explained in the past in the manner Dr. Yajnik has explained them in this book. He has not only critically expounded the philosophical system of Śvāminārāyaṇa but also attempted a comparison between Śvāminārāyaṇism and the different schools of Indian and Western philosophy". One cannot but feel that in this work Dr. Yajnik has very ably brought out the basic principles of Śvāminārāyaṇism and has systematically dealt with epistemolo-
gical, metaphysical, psychological, ethical and religious questions of Svāminārāyaṇa's philosophy. To my knowledge there is no work in any language wherein basic principles of Svāminārāyaṇa's philosophy have been so clearly and consistently explained. Till the advent of Dr. Yajnik's book, there was nothing that could give us the entire system of Svāminārāyaṇa's philosophy.

But, in Dr. Yajnik's work the problem of self has received a general treatment which is received by all other philosophical problems dealt with therein. When the work is of a comprehensive nature, like Dr. Yajnik's book, no single problem can be expected to receive special attention. Naturally, therefore, the problem of self could not have been dealt with in detail and in all its perspectives. Many aspects are just touched and left to be worked upon in future. Some aspects dealt with therein need fuller consideration and further elucidation. There are certain areas in Svāminārāyaṇa's philosophy of self which have remained completely unexplored and certain points absolutely untouched.

It is under this condition of philosophical literature on Svāminārāyaṇism that I was inspired to take up the
problem of self for my studies. It is a matter of common knowledge that the problem of self always occupies a central position in all philosophical systems. Therefore, with a keen desire to attempt to do what was left out and what remained to be done, I undertook the study of the nature of self in Svāminārāyānīsma. To the best of my ability I have attempted to go in all possible details and thereby tried to work out "A Comprehensive Philosophy of Self" from the standpoint of Svāminārāyanism. It is hardly necessary to add that as far as our knowledge goes, there is no work in any language dealing with Svāminārāyanist philosophy of self in all its details. Hence the justification of my humble attempt.

5. Method Employed:

A word may be said about the method employed in this work. Four words would indicate the method: search, interpretation, reconstruction, logical, arrangement. The interpretations made and the positions arrived at are supported by evidence from Vacanāmrta and Śikṣāpatrī. My approach to Svāminārāyana's philosophy is critical. By "Critical" I do not mean "Controversial". Instead of
falling into polemics, I have tried to harmonise contradictory situations. In every system of thought some contradictions are bound to appear. I have attempted to reconcile the contradictions, of course very few, and to derive a synthetic truth from them in the true spirit of Svāminarāyaṇa's philosophy. Besides being "synthetically critical" in the sense explained above I have also tried to be "analytically critical" in the sense that I have tried to take meticulous care to see that Svāminarāyaṇa is not misrepresented on any point in this work.
1. **Aim of the Present Work**


2. **Life of Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa**

1. Dr. J.A. Yajnik, *The Philosophy of Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa* (1972) P. 4


6. Ibid xiii

3. **Vacanāmrta**


2. Ibid, P. 260
3. Dr. J. A. Yajnik, The Philosophy of Śrī Svāmi-nārāyaṇa P. 9

4. Śikṣāpatrī
   1. Bhai Manilal Parekh, Śrī SwāmiNārāyaṇa
      P. 282.
   2. Dr. B. G. Desai, Ethics of Śikṣāpatrī (1970)
      P. 1.
   3. Ibid, P. 4
   4. Ibid, P. 3
   5. Ibid, P. 3

5. State of Philosophical Studies on Svāminārāyaṇism
   2. Dalsukh Malvanie, Foreword to Dr. Yajnik’s book, The Philosophy of Śrī Svāminārāyaṇa,
      P. 1.
   3. Ibid. P. 1.