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Authorship and Authority in the Sanskrit Literary Tradition of the Swaminarayana Movement: Śikṣāpatrī and Satsaṅgijīvanam

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Abstract: This paper presents what the Satsaṅgijīvanam, a text by Śatānanda-Muni about the life and teachings of Sahajānanda, the founder of the Swaminarayana Movement, in two different passages reports about the authorship of the Śikṣāpatrī. It would appear that Swaminarayana (the name by which the founder came to be known) wrote the Śikṣāpatrī well before Śatānanda produced the version included in the Satsaṅgijīvanam. What the Satsaṅgijīvanam tells us about the authorship and the process of transmission of the Satsaṅgijīvanam itself complicates the evaluation of the Satsaṅgijīvanam as a historical document. Yet, the fact that the text shows that Swaminarayana may *not* be the author of the currently known Śikṣāpatrī invites reflection about the function of texts in the traditional self-perception and in the history of the Swaminarayana Movement.

Keywords: Swaminarayana movement, Hinduism, Śikṣāpatrī, Satsaṅgijīvanam, authorship of translations

1 Introduction

The term authorship as used in the title refers to the writing or more generally to the process of production and attribution of texts. The problem and concept of authorship can, however, be complicated in case of multiple authorship or of authorized revision (translation included) and is thereby linked to the concept of authority as an instance before and around the actual text and its wording. If a politician employs ghost writers to formulate his speeches, he or she is not the author of the text, but the politician authorizes it. Or if the Koran was dictated to Mohammed by a heavenly voice, then the prophet may not be considered the author. If Purāṇas are attributed to Vyāsa we do not have an author but only the

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authority linked to a name and to a textual tradition. And if later poets use "Kabir" as a name-seal in their verses they appropriate and identify with an author and his literary technique and message.

The concept of "authority" is among the tools to describe and classify and compare the role of texts in religious traditions. In this paper we shall examine what two texts from the Sanskrit literary tradition of the Swaminarayana Movement, the Śiksāpatrī and the Satsaṅgijīvanam, tell us about their authorship. Our approach is *philological* and it is *text-immanent*; its textual analysis is only concerned with the Satsangijīvanam and the Śiksāpatrī. Thus, we shall not expand on theoretical discussions on concepts like authorship, authority, textuality, canonization, etc. Our method and perspective obviously may also differ from an emic perspective.¹

The Swaminarayana Movement derives its name from the name of its founder (1781–1830) who was born as Ghanaśyāma in a Brahmin family in Chapiya near Ayodhya and left home at the age of 11 (after the parents' death). He wandered through India known by the name Nīlakantha until he was initiated by one Swami Rāmānanda (1739-1802) to become Swami Sahajānanda. Swami Rāmānanda shortly afterwards (in 1801) made the young swami his successor. To his followers Swami Sahajānanda is Swaminarayana, an embodiment of Krsna, the personal absolute. His movement spread in Gujarat and was organized in two dioceses (Vadtal and Ahmedabad) under the guidance of two ācāryas (the founder's nephews, their function being hereditary among their descendants). A new branch, the B.A.P.S. (Bocāsaṇavāsī Akṣara Puruṣottama Saṃsthā), originated in 1907 (by separation from Vadtal) and has become the internationally perhaps most

¹ This contribution aims at presenting the textual basis for the theoretical problems of a specific case of interlocked multiple authorship of a holy text. Its scope is that of a case study; it is neither an analysis of the Śikṣāpatrī nor a comprehensive analysis of the Satsaṅgijīvanam. The paper also does not include any comparative approach even though certain parallels and differences in other religions or traditions clearly invite or even demand comparison. These limitations explain the deliberate limitation of the bibliography. The evidence of the Satsangijīvanam may have raised theoretical reflections in the exegesis of the texts and may have been dealt with in the commentarial literature of the Movement's branches, but such reflections and exegesis do also not fall within the scope of the paper. In order to contextualize this paper a study of the role of texts in general in the Swaminarayana Movement, including the study of the selection of quasi-canonical authoritative texts and of the frequency of references to and quotations from these texts, further a study of the importance of public or private recitation of texts, and of the function of textualized (originally oral) instructions by the founder in religious practice would all be required and presupposed. The question whether and how the Swaminarayana Movement could be considered "a religion of the book" addresses the wider horizon of the title question.

1 29 m

visible representative of the Swaminarayana Sampradāya.2 The movement is committed to religious reform (especially of Kaula practices current at the time of Swaminarayana), but at the same time propagates the conservation of traditional values and practices. It is a movement with particular, perhaps unique and characteristic traits in its theological and philosophical thinking.

Śikṣāpatrī and Satsaṅgijīvanam are two important texts in the Sanskrit literary tradition of the Swaminarayana Movement. The Śikṣāpatrī, attributed to Swaminarayana himself, summarizes the rules of conduct for his followers and has been considered as a catechism and Holy Scripture in the Swaminarayana Movement. It is a Sanskrit text in 212 verses. In the second verse the author identifies himself: "I, Sahajānandasvāmī, write this 'letter of instructions' while staying in Vrttālaya (i. e., Vadtal) to all my followers living in different regions (or countries)." In the conclusion the followers are admonished to live in conformance to these instructions and to read this text daily; those who are illiterate should listen to its recitation or at least venerate it (probably as a 'book' or manuscript) in the conviction that "my word is a form of mine" (madrūpam iti madvānī mānyeyam, v. 209).³

To judge from the availability of printed editions and commentaries, this text generally seems to be considered as an independent work.4 This aspect of the reception history is likely to have been established by Satananda who not only incorporated the Śikṣāpatrī in the Satsaṅgijīvanam, but wrote an extensive Sanskrit commentary on the Śiksāpatrī. In spite of the fact that the other primary scriptural source besides the Śikṣāpatrī attributed to Swaminarayana, the Vacanāmṛta (a collection of speeches given by Swaminarayana to his followers and collected

² For background information about the history of the movement and its teachings see Williams 1984.

³ The verses can roughly be grouped according to subject matter:

^{1–10} Origin and intention of the text;

^{11–122} Rules of conduct applicable to everybody;

¹²³⁻¹³⁴ Dharma of the ācāryas and their wives;

¹³⁵⁻¹⁵⁶ Householders;

¹⁵⁷⁻¹⁵⁸ Kings;

^{159–174} Conduct of women (married women, widows);

^{175–187} Instructions concerning celibates:

^{188–196} Instructions concerning sādhus;

^{197–202} Dharma common to celibates and sādhus;

²⁰³⁻²¹² Conclusion.

⁴ The English as well as the Gujarati translations which the authors happened to see - and we admittedly made no effort to establish a publication history or a bibliography of editions - include the Sanskrit verses.

and edited by monks close to him), is in Gujarati, Swaminarayana is generally supposed to be the author of these Sanskrit verses. The impression of the Śiksāpatrī as an independent text written by Swaminarayana, however, is questioned by what the Satsangijīvanam itself tells about its origin. Thus, only when, in the course of our research on the literary Sanskrit tradition of the Swaminarayana Movement,⁵ we came across the Śikṣāpatrī as a chapter in the Satsangijīvanam, the problem of authorship had to be considered or reconsidered.⁶

The reputation and importance of the Śikṣāpatrī as a Holy Scripture is not extended to the Satsangijīvanam (abbreviated SSJ). The latter is a large text in five parts (comprising 319 chapters and 16,493 verses) narrating Swaminarayana's biography and presenting his teachings.⁷ It was commissioned by the founder

⁵ See above, Acknowledgements.

⁶ That the discovery of the Śikṣāpatrī in the Satsaṅgijīvanam came as a surprise only reflects the authors' ignorance; very likely any insider interested in and informed about the history of the Movement could have told us; but in fact, nobody did.

⁷ The size of the text makes it difficult to summarize its outline and content. The first part (prakaraṇa) introduces the dialogue setting and Śatānanda as author; it speaks about Swaminarayana's parents and about the miseries caused by the predominance of adharma as cause for Swaminarayana's manifestation. Chapters 1,11-16 relate the parents' meeting with Rāmānanda, Swaminarayana's teacher, 17-22 narrate their pilgrimage to Vṛndāvana and Swaminarayana's birth. 1,23-36 concern his childhood and training; 1,37-42 narrate the parents' death and the child's departure from home. 1,43-50 summarize his wanderings and victories over demons and other adversaries until the arrival in Loj. 1,51-60 concern the meeting with the followers of Swami Rāmānanda and the initiation by the Swami until the latters death. The second part (52 chapters) narrates about Swaminarayana's travels through Gujarat and about his winning followers and the support of different "kings" through his instructions. Part 3 consists largely of descriptions of celebrations: 3,4-22 food-festival; 3,23-45 Prabodhinī-festival; 3,46-64 Swing-festival in Vṛttālaya. Part 4 summarizes Swaminarayana's instruction and regulations concerning the recitation of Purāṇas (4,1-9), the celebration of the Janmāṣṭamī-festival in Sārangapura (4,10-12), the visit to Kāryāyana and Nāgaṭanka (4,13-19), the celebration of the Swing-festival in Pañcāla and the return to Durgapura (4,20-23); chapter 4,24 relates about Swaminarayana's intentions concerning the organization of the movement and his succession, viz., through construction of temples (4,25-33, glorifying Vrttālaya in particular), appointment of ācāryas (narrated in 4,40), and the writing of the Śikṣāpatrī, narrated in 4,44. There is a report about a theological discussion about the meaning of triyuga (4,34-38) and there are detailed instructions about different kinds of initiation (4,46-54); the next sections regulate the celebration of festivals (4,55-61) and the conduct of monks (4,62-67); part 4 ends with an exposition on cosmology, largely along Sāṃkhya lines (4,68-73). Part 5 begins with an extensive section with instructions about dharma (5,1-29, 30-37 concerning women, 38-54 concerning stages of life with 5,41–48 on expiation); 5,56–65 is an exposition on yoga. 5,67 describes the power of the images installed by Swaminarayana, chapter 68 narrates about his demise, 69 instructs about the Harijayantī-vow, i.e., the observation of Swaminarayana's birthday. The work concludes with a list of its contents (5,70).

and written during his life-time by Swami Śatānanda. It also contains details about the writing of the Śikṣāpatrī and its incorporation in the Satsaṅgijīvanam which invite reflection about the applicability of the concept of authorship with regard to the Sanskrit text of the Śiksāpatrī.

The problem to be studied in the following as a historical question can be summarized very concisely: The Śiksāpatrī is attributed to Swaminarayana as its author. The author of the Satsangijīvanam is Śatānanda-Muni. At the same time, however, the authoritative version of the Śikṣāpatrī is contained in the Satsangijīvanam and could thus also be considered to have been authored by Śatānanda.

We restrict ourselves to the presentation of three passages from the Satsangijīvanam on the origin of Satsangijīvanam and of the Śikṣāpatrī. The first deals with the authorship and characteristics of the Satsangijīvanam itself; the second and third are the two episodes in the Satsangijīvanam which report about the origin of the Śikṣāpatrī. The passages address problems concerning claims of authorship, including the possibility of joint authorship, delegated authorship and (marginally) the problem of how translation from one language to another affects authorship. This will lead, in the conclusion, to questions and prospects for further research, both historical and conceptual.8

2 The Satsangijīvanam on the Satsangijīvanam

Most of what the Satsangijivanam tells us about its authorship and process of transmission is contained in its first three chapters. They mention many details about the text of which they form the beginning.

Verses 17–22 of the first chapter⁹ identify the Satsangijīvanam as a work by Śatānanda. As the essence of all Vedas, it propounds the dharma of absolute devotion (aikāntikadharma), and boasts the ability to cause liberation from the

⁸ The authors do not lay claim to the commitment and perspective with which insiders of the movement might approach these questions. One would have to take into account that the different branches of the movement might view the historical information contained in the Satsangijīvanam with conflicting loyalties. We are not aware of initiatives based on an "ecumenical" interest in the text of the Satsangijīvanam among the branches of the movement.

⁹ I.e. Satsangijīvanam 1,1.17-22. Full references to the text consist of three parts, representing part, chapter and verse(s). The Sanskrit original of summarized or translated passages is given in the footnotes. The digitalization of the Satsangijīvanam in Sanskrit and an English summary of its contents were produced by the project referred to in footnote 5 and the Acknowledgements.

bonds of existence. It is like a boat and describes the life of the Son of Dharma, i. e., Swaminarayana. Only the good derive from it merit and freedom from evil. The last two verses praise the work as an ornament of its poet.¹⁰

Since Satānanda is mentioned as the author, it may be assumed that it is he who is speaking. However, the first chapter then presents a dialogue situation which presupposes the existence of the finished work, since the dialogue belongs to the text recited in that dialogue by a Suvrata to a king; a Satsangijīvanam is inserted into a Satsangijīvanam. 11 The request by the king and Suvrata's recitation are part of the history of what happened with the completed Satsangijīvanam (cf. 1,3.49–50). The work was heard rather than read. If one accepts Satānanda as its author, it must be Satananda who invented the recitation of his work by Suvrata, perhaps as part of making his work conform to puranic conventions. At the time of writing the frame story, the recitation of the finished work would be a future event. Hence, in a perspective of literary analysis, it is clearly an invented event or fiction.

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10 śrīmacchatānandakṛte 'tra ramye
    samdarbhasāre 'khilavedasāraḥ |
    suspastam aikāntikadharma uktah |
    syād yena sadyo bhavapāśamukţiḥ || 1,1.17 |
    sākṣād dharau sakalalokagurau rasāyā |
    antarhite nanu mumukşujanaikabandhau
    nistāraņāya laghu saṃsṛtisāgarasya |
    naukedam eva bhuvi mānavadehabhājām | 1,1.18 |
    līlāraso hi sakalo 'mṛtadivyamūrteḥ |
    svecchānarākṛtidhṛto bhuvi dharmasūnoḥ |
    satsanginām paramajīvanam asty ato 'sau |
    samyan nirūpita iheti sa pīyatām taih | 1,1.19 |
    etat punyam alampavitram amalam saddharmaśāstram param
    dharmajñānavirāgabhakti nibhṛtaṃ sevyaṃ satāṃ nityadā |
    pāpaughapraśamam nṛṇām kalimalaprakṣālanam sarvathā |
    jādyadhvāntanivāraṇaṃ sukṛtibhiḥ saṃprāpyate netaraiḥ | 1,1.20 |
    sakaladharmavinirnayam añjasā |
    sakalaśāstramatabhramavāraṇam |
    sakalavāñchitapūranam uttamam
    sakalalokamanah śrutirañjanam | 1,1.21 |
    vividhasamśayaśalyasamuddharam |
    śravaṇamātrata eva kubuddhihṛt |
    madanakopamukhāribhayāpaham |
    jayati śāstram idam kavibhūṣaṇam | 1,1.22 |
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11 The dialogue setting never gets completely forgotten since "Suvrata said" is frequently inserted and the narration time and again includes vocatives addressed to the listening king.

The other possibility is that Satānanda is not the author of the frame story. The later redactor would be a second author and may perhaps have been Suvrata or somebody in the service of the king, possibly Satānanda at a later time in his life, i.e., after the recitation. The second author would have added this frame story to an earlier version of the Satsangijīvanam. 12 If outline and content of the Satsangijīvanam suggest an editorial addition in the case of the frame story, one cannot be certain about which words, lines or chapters stem from Satānanda, and which from the secondary author or authors. Secondary authorship could also have occurred several times; such is difficult to discover and to identify unless there are manuscripts from different hands.

Thus, from the point of view of authorship the interpretation of what the text says becomes complex, since the narrative is not presented by the author; rather it is embedded in a dialogue between a king and Suvrata, one of Satānanda's disciples who tells us that he heard the work several times. If Suvrata is a historical personality and if the recitation is also historical, we arrive at having a Satsangijīvanam within a Satsangijīvanam. Of which one is Satānanda the author?

According to Suvrata, only the passages recited to the king are by Śatānanda, while the frame story would have to be added by somebody else who cannot have been Suvrata. If, on the other hand, Satananda is the author also of the frame story, he would have included a future¹³ (if Suvrata's recitation did actually take place) or a fictitious and invented event; but as a reader and historian one is then confronted with the question of how to distinguish historical fact from narrative embellishment, fantasy or fiction.

To continue the summary, chapter 2 tells about Satānanda's qualifications and sources. The non-identified narrator reports the kings questions and his inquiry about Śatānanda-Muni and introduces Suvrata's report. Śatānanda stems from Mithilā. He knows the Vedas, Śāstras, Purāņas and Pañcarātra and he regularly reads the Bhāgavatapurāna. He learns from this text that Nara-Nārāyaṇa resides in India and therefore goes on a pilgrimage to Badarikā where he worships Nara-Nārāyaṇa. He recites the 10th skandha of the Bhāgavatapurāṇa for six months. Eventually he is granted the Lord's vision. Satānanda prostrates and praises the Lord with a hymn.

¹² These are the kind of processes to be expected in a Purāṇa.

¹³ For a text which follows the conventions of a literary genre that does not want or need to be 'historical' (e.g. a Purāṇa, hagiography, etc.) the text-critical method cannot do justice neither to the author's intentions nor to the expectations of the audience.

The words of this hymn form the beginning of chapter 3. Satananda is here talking about himself in third person. Nara-Nārāyana tells Śatānanda (1,3.15–19) about his birth in Uttara-Kosala and that he presently lives in West-Pañcāla; he prophesies that Satānanda will create a book about his deeds. 14 The book referred to of course is the Satsangijīvanam. Authorship of the Satsangijīvanam is attributed to a divine boon.

The episode continues by narrating (1,3.34–41) that a little later Satānanda achieves meditative trance even without practice of Yoga and has a vision of the Lord of Badarī; he is shown the Lord's heavenly abodes (Aksara-Dhāman, Goloka, Vaikuntha, Śvetadvīpa) and he sees how his parents manifested themselves and he beholds the men and women who are his devotees. Satananda receives omniscience about past, present and future. Next (1,3.44-46) Hari grants a boon and orders Satānanda to go with him to Durgapattanam where he will have a temple built for Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa; there Satānanda will create a work (śāstra) about his experiences. The next verses (1,3.47–48) relate that Satānanda acted accordingly and produced the Dharmaśāstra Satsangijīvanam in the temple of Śrīgopīnātha. The chapter ends (1,3.51) with an appeal to listen to the work.¹⁵

ity uktavantam bhagavāms tam uvāca mahāmatim brahmaṃs tvayā vyavasitaṃ saṃyag etan mumukṣuṇā || 1,3.15 | kiṃtv ahaṃ sāṃprataṃ bhūmau kosaleṣūttareṣv iha jāto 'smi dharmato bhaktau harināmnā hi viśrutaḥ | 1,3.16 | varte paścimapañcāladeśe durgapure 'dhunā so 'haṃ tvām antike svasya rakṣiṣyāmi na saṃśayaḥ || 1,3.17 | madīyaguņagānecchā vartate tava hṛdy ataḥ | tasya me tvam caritrāṇām granthakartā bhavişyasi | 1,3.18 | so 'ham pūrnam karişyāmi tvadvānchitam atas tvayā | so 'nveṣya prāpya ity uktvā bhagavān sa tiro dadhe || 1,3.19 |

Note on the places mentioned in v. 17: Paścimapañcāla is the Ahmedabad Region; Durgapura (also called Durgapattana) is Gaḍhaḍā.

kālenālpena ca hareḥ kṛpayā tasya saddhiyaḥ | samādhisiddhir aṣṭāṅgayogābhyāsaṃ vinābhavat || 1,3.34 | dhyāyams tam hrdi so 'drākṣīd prāgdṛṣṭam badarīśvaram | kṣaṇānte 'ntarhitaḥ so 'tha yathā saudāmanī divi || 1,3.35 | jyotirmaye 'kşare dhāmni sthitam tam kṛṣṇam aikṣata | samagraiśvaryasampannam sapārṣadaparigraham | 1,3.36 | golokam atha vaikuṇṭhaṃ śvetadvīpādi dhāma yat | tadaikṣayat sahaiśvaryam haris tasmā alaukikam || 1,3.37 | yathā svayam cāvir āsid dharmo bhaktis tatharşayah | teṣāṃ rupaṃ yathā pūrvam atratyaṃ cāpy abūbudhat || 1,3.38 | svasya bhaktāś ca ye bhūmau puruṣā yoṣitas tathā | api teṣām ubhe rūpe tasmai harir ajijñapat | 1,3.39 |

The actual writing at this point is a future event which is related in part 5 of the Satsaṅgijīvanam (5,49–50). As early as here it is said that after Swaminarayana's disappearance from this world Śatānanda recited it several times in front of Suvrata and others.

By writing about the events in Swaminarayana's life, Śatānanda acts as a chronicler and historian. For one part of the reported events he was an eye witness. But what were his sources for events which happened before Śatānanda joined and followed Swaminarayana? The narrator seems to anticipate the historian's dilemma. If Śatānanda is to write about events of the past which he has not experienced he needs to have access to the missing information. By being granted omniscience Śatānanda receives knowledge also about the past, that is to say, access to the historical information that he will need to write the book.

The text does not mention, when exactly in Śatānanda's life Swaminarayana's prophesy – during the visit and vision at Badarīka – had happened. Part 2 of the

janmakarmādi teṣām ca svasyaiśvaryam ca sarvaśaḥ | bhūtaṃ bhavad bhaviṣyaṃ yat taj jñānaṃ pradadau prabhuḥ | 1,3.40 | tato 'bhūt so 'pi sarvajñaḥ śatānando mahāmatiḥ | yathāvat tat sarvam avain maitreyam svam ṛṣim tathā || 1,3.41 | so 'tha prītamanā varņī tadīyaguņavarņanaiḥ | svīyam jñānam tathā vidyāh saphalīkartum āha tam | 1,3.42 | tvadyaśogumphanenaiva prabandhair vividhaih prabho | svajnānam saphalīkartum utkāyājñām tu dehi me || 1,3.43 | iti nişkapaţam tena yācito harir āha tam | manoratho 'yam saphalo bhavişyati tava dvija | 1,3.44 | āyāhi tvam mayā sākam durgapattanam uttamam | tatrāham kārayişyāmi rādhākṛṣṇasya mandiram || 1,3.45 | tatrātipāvane kṣetre vasams tvam sthiramānasah śāstram viracayer varnin yathātmānubhayam mama | 1,3.46 | ity anujñāta īśena hṛṣṭaḥ sa kṛtavāṃs tathā | sākam bhagavatā durgapuram etya āvasac ciram | 1,3.47 | satsangijīvanam nāma dharmaśāstram idam hi sah | harilīlāmayam cakre śrīgopīnāthamandire | 1,3.48 | śodhayitvātha tadbhaktān harer matpramukhān vidaḥ | katicit pāṭhayām āsa viprān antarhite harau | 1,3.49 | iti te kathitam bhūpa janmakarmādi me guroḥ | satsangijīvanam atho sacchāstram vacmi tatkrtam || 1,3.50 | sakaladharmabhṛtaṃ harilīlayā | samupabṛṃhitam etad ihādbhutam | rasavidām bhuvi mānasarañjanam | kalimalopaśamam śrnu sādaram || 1,3.51 |

Satsangijīvanam however mentions that the first meeting of Śatānanda¹⁶ with Swaminarayana in Darbhavatī took place in 1814 A.D. This means that all the events prior to this date are known to Satānanda by hearsay. Satānanda became Swaminarayana's disciple 14 years before the composition of the Satsangijīvanam in 1828. With Swaminarayana's boon in mind he could have consciously and systematically collected information during these 14 years.

Satānanda is mentioned again as the author of the Satsaṅgijīvanam in part 3.17 At the beginning (ch. 3,2) it deals with arrangements for serving Swaminarayana. The list includes the services of Śatānanda-Muni as editor (śodhayām āsa) of eight sacred texts composed by Śrī-Hari18 and as the author of the Satsangijīvanam (see 3,2.29-30; 3,2.51b). The Satsangijīvanam is distinguished from the class of these eight works by not being attributed to Swaminarayana. The eight works are not identified by title; Satānanda again refers to himself in third person and the Sanskrit verb used to express Swaminarayana's literary activity is a causative form: "The knowledgeable Śatānanda carefully redacted the eight true Śāstras which Hari had caused to be written (lekhitāni) earlier." (3,2.29)¹⁹

3 The episode of Swaminarayana writing the Śikṣāpatrī

The writing of the Satsangijīvanam is mentioned again in part 4, in anticipation of the actual event. This part of the Satsangijīvanam forestalls Swaminarayana's demise in a chapter on his secret resolve (4,24). The text narrates about Swaminarayana's thoughts and intentions; and what on the literary level appears as the technique of the omniscient narrator, implies for the historian that Swaminarayana must at some point have told Satananda about these intentions. The following is a summary of the contents of chapter 4,24:

¹⁶ He is referred to as "Suvrata's master"; this reminds the readers or the audience that they are listening to Suvrata's recital of the Satsangijīvanam, not to Śatānanda himself.

¹⁷ For a survey of the contents of the Satsangijīvanam, see above, footnote 7. Altogether Satānanda is mentioned by name 30 times.

^{18 (}Śrī-)Hari is how the Satsaṅgijīvanam generally refers to Swaminarayana.

harinā lekhitāny asta sacchāstrāni tadagratah śatānando mahābuddhiḥ śodhayām āsa cāñjasā | 3,2.29 | ya idam vidadhe prītyā harilīlopabmhitam | satsaṅgijīvanaṃ ramyaṃ jīvātuṃ harisevinām || 3,2.30 |

Śrī-Hari recollects the motive of his incarnation: In the Kali-period adharma and vices had increased and dharma had deteriorated. Gods and sages were afflicted and the earth was unable to bear the burden of sinners. After having taken human birth due to the curse of Durvāsas, he destroyed evils and established dharma and devotion. Monks, gods and ascetics were delighted. The people of the four castes worshipped him, but they end up without any support after his disappearance. He wishes to support his followers in three ways (4,24.1–8): (1) Construction of the temples for installing his images, (2) appointment of a religious teacher (guru) from Dharma's family to increase devotion (cf. SSJ 4,40 f.); (3) composition of a book by Satānanda dealing with his life and works, i. e. the Satsangijīvanam. The purport of the Satsangijīvanam is said to serve as the source-text containing the principles of all authoritative texts. After that (so Swaminarayana's thoughts continue) he will return to his abode (dhāman) (4,24.10-14).20 Then Śrī-Hari causes the scribes to copy (lekhayām āsa) authoritative texts.²¹

From the point of view of narrative technique this is an anticipating reference. Writing the Satsangijivanam falls under the measures taken to ensure the thriving of the movement after Swaminarayana's death. Since part 4 narrates about the construction of temples (first resolve) and the appointment of Ācāryas (ch. 4,40, realization of the second resolve) it seems plausible to read SSJ 4,43-44 as an account of the realization of the third resolve. These chapters relate the writing of the Śikṣāpatrī, not of the Satsaṅgijīvanam.

To continue the summary, the account about the writing of Śikṣāpatrī is embedded in reports about listening to recitations of the Bhāgavatapurāṇa. On the next day Śrī-Hari thinks about writing down a document (patrikā) to instruct dharma to his devotees of all regions so that after his departure they can practice

²⁰ kārayitvā mandirāņi tatra svapratimā aham | sthāpayeya tatas tāś ca sevişyante hi mānavāḥ | 4,24.10 | svadharme vartamānānām puṃsām tatsevanād iha siddhim eşyati sarveşām puruşārthacatuştayam | 4,24.11 | bhaktimārgasya puşţyartham mantradīkṣā apy apekṣyate | ato dharmānvaye śuddhe gurutām sthāpayeya ca | 4,24.12 | dharmajñānaviraktīnām bhakteś cāvagamāya tu | grantham kartā śatānando maccaritropabrmhitam | 4,24.13 | siddhāntaṃ sarvaśāstrāṇāṃ tena jñāsyanti macchritāḥ | evam eva tataḥ kṛtvā yāyām dhāma svakam bhuvaḥ | 4,24.14 | suvrata uvāca: sa evam gūḍhasamkalpo nivasams tatra pattane lekhayām āsa sarvāṇi sacchāstrāṇi sulekhakaiḥ | 4,24.15 | I.e. texts like the Bhāgavatapurāṇa etc. (according to Śukānanda).

it just according to his intention (4,43.18-21). He tells his attendant²² to bring a paper, ink-pot and pen (lekhinī) and writes the Śikṣāpatrī, the essence of all authoritative texts (v. 22–24).²³

What follows as chapter 4,44 is the Sanskrit text of the Śiksāpatrī comprising 212 verses. Swaminarayana mentions himself by name (Sahajānanda) and writes in first person (*likhāmi*). He characterizes the text as a summary of the prescriptions of the dharma which all of his followers should obey; he is contemplating Śrī-Krsna with Rādhā and Lakṣmī in Vadatāla and writes the Śikṣāpatrī for all his followers who live in different regions. He blesses his two (adopted) sons, celibates like Mukundānanda etc., householders like Mayarāma etc., married women, widows, and monks like Muktānanda etc., because they protect devotedly their dharma according to the authoritative texts. The Śikṣāpatrī brings benefit to all beings. Those who observe the good conduct of the authoritative texts will get happiness, but the evil-minded people who fail to observe it will get misery. His disciples should follow it carefully (v. 1–10).²⁴

22 The commentator Śukānanda says that this was Śukānanda, i.e. himself, which is a verification of Satānanda's report by an independent witness.

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aparāhņe tatah svāmī vijanastho hitam nrnām
    cintayan patrikām tebhyo likhitum niścikāya sah | 4,43.18 |
    sakaleşv api deśeşu dharmaśikṣārthapatrikām
    likhāmi tena madbhaktā vartişyante tathaiva hi || 4,43.19 |
    mamāśayo yādrśo 'sti tādrśam cāpi te 'khilāh |
    tayaivāvagamişyanti bhavişyanty apy asaṃśayāḥ | 4,43.20 |
    antarhite mayi bhuvo madīyānām ca sarvaśaḥ |
    sphutamadvākyarūpā sā bhavitry ālambanam bhuvi | 4,43.21 |
    evam vicārya dharmātmā kākudam khaţikām ca saḥ |
    ānayām āsa bhṛtyena lekhinīm ca suśobhanām | 4,43.22 |
    sacchāstrāṇāṃ sa sarveṣāṃ sāram ākṛṣya saddhiyā |
    lilekha patrikām svāmī saddharmam sthāpayan bhuvi | 4,43.23 |
    ūrau dakșe paţţakam kākudasya |
    kṛtvā dhṛtvā vāmadoṣṇā natāsyah |
    dakșe pāṇau lekhinīm kuñcitāgre |
    bibhrat patrīm so 'likhad bhūmipettham | 4,43.24 |
24 vāme yasya sthitā rādhā śrīś ca yasyāsti vakṣasi |
    vṛndāvanavihāraṃ taṃ śrīkṛṣṇaṃ hṛdi cintaye | 4,44.1 |
    likhāmi sahajānandasvāmī sarvān nijāśritān
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nānādeśasthitān śikṣāpatrīm vṛttālayasthitaḥ | 4,44.2 | bhrātro rāmapratāpecchārāmayor dharmajanmanoh | yāv ayodhyāprasādākhyaraghuvīrābhidhau sutau | 4,44.3 | mukundānandamukhyāś ca naisthikā brahmacāriņah gṛhasthāś ca mayārāmabhaṭṭādyā ye madāśrayāḥ || 4,44.4 | sadhavā vidhavā yoṣā yāś ca macchiṣyatāṃ gatāḥ | muktānandādayo ye syuḥ sādhavaś cākhilā api | 4,44.5 |

He repeats this characterization of the Śikṣāpatrī at its end (4,44.203–204): he has written down in short the essence of all authoritative texts; his followers may see details from those texts. His followers should behave according to the Śikṣāpatrī, otherwise they will be considered as expelled. They should read or listen to it daily (v. 205–210). Eventually, the writing is unambiguously dated (v. 211): The Śikṣāpatrī is written on the 5th day called Vasantapañcamī of bright Māgha in VS 1882, i. e. 1825 A.D. The chapter ends with a benedictory stanza praying to Śrī-Kṛṣṇa to bestow blessings.²⁵

At the beginning of the next chapter, Śatānanda's text supplies further details about the spread of this quoted text (4,45.1–4):²⁶ After writing down

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svadharmarakşikā me taiḥ sarvair vācyāḥ sadāśiṣaḥ |
    śrīmannārāyaṇasmṛtyā sahitāḥ śāstrasaṃmatāḥ | 4,44.6 |
    ekāgreņaiva manasā patrīlekhaḥ sahetukaḥ |
    avadhāryo 'yam akhilaiḥ sarvajīvahitāvahaḥ | 4,44.7 |
    ye pālayanti manujāh sacchāstrapratipāditān |
    sadācārān sadā te 'tra paratra ca mahāsukhāḥ || 4,44.8 |
    tān ullaṅghya vartante ye tu svairaṃ kubuddhayaḥ |
    ta ihāmutra ca mahal labhante kaṣṭam eva hi || 4,44.9 |
    ato bhavadbhir macchişyaih sāvadhānatayākhilaih |
    prītyaitām anusrtyaiva vartitavyam nirantaram | 4,44.10 |
25
    iti saṃkṣepato dharmāḥ sarveṣāṃ likhitā mayā |
    sāmpradāyikagranthebhyo jñeya eṣāṃ tu vistaraḥ | 4,44.203 |
    sacchāstrāṇāṃ samuddhṛtya sarveṣāṃ sāram ātmanā |
    patrīyam likhitā nrīnām abhīstaphaladāyinī | 4,44.204 |
     imām eva tato nityam anusṛtya mamāśritaiḥ |
    yatātmabhir vartitavyam na tu svairam kadācana | 4,44.205 |
     vartişyante ya ittham hi puruşā yoşitas tathā |
     te dharmādicaturvargasiddhim prāpsyanti niścitam || 4,44.206 |
     nettham ya ācarişyanti te tv asmatsampradāyatah |
     bahirbhūtā iti jñeyam strīpumsaih sāmpradāyikaih | 4,44.207 |
     śikṣāpatryāḥ pratidinam pāṭho 'syā madupāśritaiḥ |
     kartavyo 'nakṣarajñais tu śravaṇaṃ kāryam ādarāt || 4,44.208 |
     vaktrabhāve tu pujaiva kāryāsyāḥ prativāsaram |
     madrūpam iti madvāņī mānyeyam paramādarāt | 4,44.209 |
     yuktāya sampadā daivyā dātavyeyam tu patrikā |
     āsuryā saṃpadāḍhyāya puṃse deyā na karhicit || 4,44.210 |
     vikramārkaśakasyābde netrāṣṭavasubhūmite |
     vasantādyadine śikṣāpatrīyam likhitā mayā | 4,44.211 |
     nijāśritānāṃ sakalārtihantā |
     sadharmabhakter avanam vidhātā |
     dātā sukhānām manasepsitānām
     tanotu kṛṣṇo 'khilamangalam nah | 4,44.212 |
     suvrata uvāca: likhitvā patrikām ittham tasyāś ca pratimāṣṭakam
     sādhubhiḥ kārayitvāsau praiṣayat kakubho 'ṣṭa saḥ | 4,45.1 |
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the Śikṣāpatrī and telling the monks to write eight copies of it, Śrī-Hari sends the copies to the devotees in eight directions. Recognizing him as Krsna the devotees make their own copy and behave accordingly. After sending the copies, Śrī-Hari, surrounded by some of his devotees, goes to Ahmedabad (śrīnagara).

There is no doubt that Swaminarayana is depicted as the author of the Sikṣāpatrī; he is writing the original manuscript with his own hand. It is neither mentioned in which language he wrote nor which literary form he chose (prose or verses).

4 Satānanda as author of the Sikṣāpatrī

To recapitulate: If interpreted as historical evidence, the episode reported in SSJ 4,24 and 4,43-44 (summarized in the previous section) about authorship and origin of Śikṣāpatrī is straightforward: In the Satsaṅgijīvanam as a work authored by Śatānanda, the Śikṣāpatrī is inserted²⁷ as a quoted text; its author is not Śatānanda, but Swaminarayana (i. e., Sahajānanda).

But the origin of Satsangijīvanam and of the Śikṣāpatrī it contains is told again at the end of part 5.28 Chapter 56 introduces, for the first time, Śatānanda as somebody who poses questions to Swaminarayana and motivates instruction about a specific topic. The Satsangijīvanam here becomes autobiographical. The subject matter inquired about is yoga. Satananda refers to the fact that he is among those people who experienced samadhi spontaneously, i.e., without yogic training, but induced by Swaminarayana. This is the only statement by Satānanda about himself in first person. Probably the event refers to the meeting in Badarīka (5,56.1–7).²⁹

tatra tatra ca tām prāpya bhaktāh prāpur mudam parām kṛtvā tatpratimām sarve pṛthak pṛthag adhārayan | 4,45.2 | taduktarītyā sarve ca svādhikārānusāratah avartanta ca tam bhejur jānantah kṛṣṇam eva te | 4,45.3 | patrikām preşayitvātha bhaktaih katipayair vṛtah | hariḥ śrīnagaraṃ bhūyo jagāmānandayan nijān | 4,45.4 |

- 27 On 4,44.1 the commentary Bhāvaprabodhinī notes that Śikṣāpatrī is here "joined" (saṃyojyate) as chapter 44 of the Satsaṅgijīvanam by Śatānanda-Muni. The terminology suggests the independent existence of Sikṣāpatrī but also the identity of the text written by Swaminarayana with the wording included in the Satsangijīvanam.
- 28 Part 5 deals mainly with the dharma of various groups of society, interspersed with chapters on the installation of images in temples (see above, footnote 7).
- suvrata uvāca: kṛṣṇetarapadārtheṣu rucihīnasya sarvathā | dharmādipracchake 'thāsīt puṃsi prītir harer nṛpa | 5,56.1 |

Nine chapters further (5,66), i. e., after citing what Swaminarayana had to say about yoga, Śatānanda reminds Swaminarayana of the boon which he had received at Badarīka: As Śrī-Hari had promised³⁰ he should allow him to compose a work on Śrī-Hari's life and deeds. Swaminarayana answers by bestowing the knowledge of past, present and future and he permits Śatānanda to write a work which will be a support for his followers after his disappearance.³¹ Śatānanda should stay in Gopīnātha's temple and render first the Śikṣāpatrī in verses of Anuṣṭubh meter. Śatānanda-Muni is pleased and Śrī-Hari retires to his residence. The concluding verse of the chapter tells that Śatānanda-Muni, considering Śrī-Hari's command as an auspicious time, starts rendering the Śikṣāpatrī in verses (5,66.25–35).³²

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pādasamvāhanam kurvann ekadāsīt tadantike | 5,56.2 |
    tam uvāca svayam svāmī mune kiñcana te yadi |
    prastavyam syāt tadaitarhi prccha vaksye taduttaram | 5,56.3 |
    evam uktah sa tu prīto bhṛśam munir udāradhīḥ
    prāñjalis tam namaskṛtya papracchettham narādhipa | 5,56.4 |
    śatānanda uvāca: sāṅgaṃ yogam ahaṃ svāmin boddhum icchāmi tattvataḥ |
    tvatta eva hi sarvajñāt sevanīyāc ca yogibhih | 5,56.5 |
    mayā tu tvatprasādena yoginām api durlabhāḥ |
    samādhisiddhiḥ prāptāsti vinā sādhanasampadam | 5,56.6 |
    tathāpi lakṣaṇādīni yogaśāstrānusārataḥ |
    vivitsāmy angiyogasya tadangānām ca sarvaśah | 5,56.7
30 See SSJ 1,3, and above, Section 2.
31 This refers to the second of the secret intentions from 4,24.
    śatānanda uvāca: prasanno vadi me svāmims tarhi tvam krpayādya hi
    manoratham ciratnam me sampūrayitum arhasi | 5,66.25 |
    tvaccaritragrantham aham cikīrṣāmi jagadguro |
    tad ājñām dehi me pūrvam bhavatāsti pratiśrutam | 5,66.26 |
    saphalas tena bhavitā vidyābhyāsaśramo mama |
    ity abhīṣṭaṃ hi me dehi bhaktābhīṣṭaprado 'si hi || 5,66.27 |
    ity arthitaḥ sa muninā premabhaktena dhīmatā |
    prasannah prāha tam yogin kuru grantham svavānchitam | 5,66.28 |
    yathāśrutam yathādṛṣṭam caritram mama vamaya |
    jñānaṃ traikālikaṃ buddhau bhavaty eva tavānagha || 5,66.29 |
    manaḥsthān apy abhiprāyān sarveṣām vetsyasi dhruvam |
    na te tv aviditam kiñcid bhavitātipriyo 'si me || 5,66.30 |
    antarhite mayi bhuvo macchritānām nṛṇām mune |
    tvatkṛto grantha evātra bhaviṣyaty āśrayo mahān || 5,66.31 |
    śikṣāpatrīm mallikhitām grathānādau tvam añjasā |
    padyair ānustubhair eva mahāgrantham tatah kuru | 5,66.32 |
    vijane hi sthirā buddhiḥ syād ataḥ kṛṣṇamandire |
    vāsocitāsti kuţy ekā tatraiva nivaser mune | 5,66.33 |
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śatānando munis tasya sevāyām niratah sadā |

As historical information about the authorship of the text of the Śikṣāpatrī (which forms ch. 4,44 of the Satsangijīvanam), this passage is indeed crucial for the argument of this paper. The relevant verses in translation read:

28cd. Graciously he said to him: "Yogin, make the book which you desire to make.

- 29. Describe my life and actions (caritram) as you have heard about it and seen it. In your mind (buddhi) exists the knowledge about past, present and future, o sinless one.
- 30. You shall certainly know also the intentions that are in the mind of everybody; nothing will remain unknown to you. You are extremely dear to me.
- 31. Once I have disappeared from this world, the book made by you shall be a great support for people who have taken refuge to me, o sage.
- 32. At first you shall straightaway string together (compose) the Śikṣāpatrī ("letter of instruction") that was written by myself, exclusively in anustubh verses; then you shall make the large book.
- 33. The mind is stable only in a lonely place; therefore a single room in the Kṛṣṇa-temple is adequate as residence; you should reside there only, o sage."
- 34. (Suvrata said:) Thus addressed by Hari, the sage became even more pleased. He bowed before him and went to his own residence, o king.
- 35. The sage acknowledged that Hari's command was an auspicious occasion (muhūrta), took residence in a lovely room in the Kṛṣṇa-temple and then attentively composed the letter of instruction.

This means that in 1828 Satānanda had not started writing the Satsangijīvanam. Chapter 5,67 is very specific in narrating that he began the work with what is now chapter 44 of the 4th part: Suvrata relates that from the 13th day called "Dhanatrayodaśī" till the 2nd day called "Yamadvitīyā" Śatānanda-Muni renders the Śikṣāpatrī in 212 verses; then he writes a commentary on it; after completing it on the 5th day of bright Mārgaśīrṣa (sahas) he submits it to Śrī-Hari in the assembly. Śrī-Hari is satisfied, appreciates him and bestows blessings by putting his hands on his head. On Śrī-Hari's command Nityānanda-Muni reads the Śikṣāpatrī³⁵ in the assembly (5,67.1-8).³⁶

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suvrata uvāca: evam uktaḥ sa hariṇā muniḥ prītataro 'bhavat |
taṃ praṇamya nijāvāsam upeyāya narādhipa | 5,66.34 |
ajñā harer eva śubham muhūrtam |
vidan sa kṛṣṇālayaramyakuṭyām |
kṛtvā svavāsam ca tadaiva śikṣā-
patrīm munir granthitum udyato 'bhūt | 5,66.35 |
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³³ Of dark Āśvina VS 1885 (1828 AD) (Śukānanda).

³⁴ Of bright Kārttika.

³⁵ Its Sanskrit version in verses.

³⁶ suvrata uvāca: trayodaśī dhanādyāsīt tadānīm nṛpasattama śikṣāpatrīm samārebhe sa tasyām granthitum munih | 5,67.1 |

Śrī-Nārāyaṇa-Muni says that the followers, after the daily obligations, should sit in Svastika posture and recite it slowly understanding its meaning in the morning or at night (5,67.9–12).³⁷ The devotees accept his words. Śrī-Hari allows Śatānanda-Muni to compose the great work. After acquiring omniscience from Śrī-Hari he composes a chapter and reads it in the presence of Śrī-Hari and monks like Śukānanda etc. Śrī-Hari is satisfied (5,67.13–19).³⁸

The text continues by relating further recitations of the Bhāgavatapurāṇa and about miracles attributed to the temple images. Thus one and a half years

pūrņā yamadvitīyāyām sā kṛtā tena saddhiyā | ślokāḥ śatadvayaṃ tasyā āsaṃś ca dvādaśottaram | 5,67.2 | tataḥ sa bhagavatprītyai tasyāş ṭīkāṃ ca śobhanām | arebhe tām sahomāse pañcamyām ca samāpayat || 5,67.3 | tasyām eva tithau rājann aparāhņe samārpayat | haraye munibhih sākam upaviṣṭāya saṃsadi || 5,67.4 | saţīkām patrikām svīyām dṛṣṭvā tām samtutoṣa saḥ | praśamsām bahudhā cakre śatānandasya samsadi | 5,67.5 | yāvān madīyo 'bhiprāya āsīt tāvān aśeṣataḥ | atrānīto 'sty aneneti munīn bhaktāṃś ca so 'vadat | 5,67.6 | prītyā dadau svakaņţhasthām śatānandāya sa srajam | karadvayam cātimudā dadhau tacchirasi prabhuḥ | 5,67.7 | tatas tām vācayām āsa nityānandena samsadi | harir bhaktāś ca munayaḥ śrutvā tām jahṛṣur nṛpa | 5,67.8 | tataḥ prāha hariḥ sarvān bhaktān śṛṇutākhilāḥ | ye syur madīyās tair eṣā pāṭhyā śravyāthavānvaham | 5,67.9 | prāg eva bhojanān nityam śucibhih svastikāsanam | samāsthitair iyam pāṭhyā tato bhojyam anāpadi || 5,67.10 | divānukūlyābhāve tu niśi nityavidhim nijam kṛtvaikatra niṣadyaiva paṭhanīyeyam ādarāt || 5,67.11 | yathaitadarthasphuraṇaṃ hṛdi svasya bhavet tathā | śanaiḥ sphuṭākṣaraṃ pāṭhyā nityam eva madāśritaiḥ | 5,67.12 | iti śrutvā harer vākyam sarve bhaktajanās tadā | evam eva karişyāmo vayam ity ūcur ānatāḥ ||5,67.13| tato hariḥ śatānandaṃ prāha svābhīṣṭam uttamam | kuru grantham mahābuddhe samartho 'si hi tatkṛtau ||5,67.14| kṛṣṇaprasādalabdhaiva buddhis te 'stīti bhāti naḥ | anyathā madabhiprāyam evam vaktum kṣameta kaḥ ||5,67.15| sa ity ukto bhagavatā tam pranamya nijāśramam | ayayau durlabham devaih samprāptas tadanugraham ||5,67.16| hariprasādasamprāptasārvajñayah so 'tha yogirāt | campāṣaṣṭhyāṃ samārebhe idaṃ satsaṅgijīvanam ||5,67.17| ekaikam ca prakaranam kṛtvā sampūrnam īśvaram | tam eva śrāvayām āsa nijāvāsasthitam muniḥ ||5,67.18| sa śuśrāvādarāt sākam nityam svāntikavāsibhih śukānandādimunibhis tena tuṣṭo 'bhavad bhṛśam ||5,67.19|

pass (5,67.19–40). This reads like an indication of how long it took him to write the Satsangijīvanam.

The beginning of the next chapter (SSJ 5,68) tells that all of these events and details are linked with the impending departure of Swaminarayana. Suvrata's report reviews Swaminarayana's achievements. The circumstances justify his departure. To summarize:

At the end of the night of the 9th day of bright Jyestha Śrī-Hari ponders again about the completion of all deeds in human form: non-righteous teachers and kings are refuted; greed etc. are eradicated from people's hearts through the authoritative texts and through his own power; truth, non-stealing etc. have been established on earth; devotion accompanied by dharma, knowledge and detachment is propagated; Dharma, Mūrti, Uddhava and other sages are freed from Durvāsas' curse; knowledge of Brahman, Yogic techniques, sacrifices without violence, faith in gods, Brahmins and holy places are strengthened; doctrines of Kaulas and non-believers are refuted; images of Nara-Nārāyana etc. are installed in temples; ranks of the religious masters and initiation ceremony are established; Śiksāpatrī is composed; dharmas of men, women and monks etc., yoga with eight steps and regulations for vows and festivals are imparted; Śatānanda-Muni's work for the benefit of mankind comes close to completion (samāptaprāyaḥ). He should now bestow peace on the affectionate devotees and return to his abode (5,68.1–19).³⁹

³⁹ suvrata uvāca: navamyām atha śuklāyām jyeṣṭhasya sa niśātyaye | vicāram akarod bhūya ātmanātmani bhūpate | 5,68.1 | mayā dhṛto 'vatāro 'yaṃ yadarthaṃ tad aśeṣataḥ | kāryam kṛtam bhūtale 'tra na kiñcid avaśeṣitam | 5,68.2 | adhārmikā gurvasurā dharmasādhudruho nṛpāḥ | pratāpena mayā svasya parāstāḥ sakalā api || 5,68.3 | adharmavamsyā lobhersyākāmakrodhādayo 'pi ca | sacchāstrasvapratāpābhyām utkhātā hṛdayān nṛṇām | 5,68.4 | satyāsteyabrahmacaryadayādyā dharmavaṃśajāḥ | sthāpitā hṛdaye nṛṇāṃ mayā samyag dharātale || 5,68.5 | svadharmajñānavairāgyayuktā bhaktiś ca sarvataḥ | pravartitā pratigṛhaṃ nṛṇāṃ niḥśreyasāya ca | 5,68.6 | dharmo mūrtiś coddhavaś ca durvāsaḥśāpato mayā | mocitāś carṣayaḥ prāyo mucyamānās tathetare | 5,68.7 | brahmavidyāś ca sakalā nānāyogakalās tathā | pravartitāḥ pratijanam ahiṃsāś ca makhā bhuvi | 5,68.8 | devabrāhmaņatīrthānām nigamānām satām tathā | pravartitā mānyatā ca sacchāstrāṇāṃ ca sarvathā | 5,68.9 | asacchāstrasya kaulāder nāstikānām matasya ca | vidhāya khandanam dharmah sthāpito 'tra sanātanah | 5,68.10 | vidhāpya mandirāņy atra svāśritānāṃ sukhāya ca

A few points from this account deserve further attention: Swaminarayana's words to Satānanda which formulate the task of writing the Satsangijīvanam and of beginning with the Śikṣāpatrī (5,66.28–33) use the verb grath for the literary activity demanded. This generally means "to compose, to string together". The apposition "in anustubh verses" could be a syntactical characterization of the Śikṣāpatrī as written by Swaminarayana or of how Śatānanda should compose the text. There is no explicit mention of "translation", but it cannot be excluded that Swaminarayana's text was not only not in anustubh verses but also not in Sanskrit. When the narrator (Suvrata) relates that Satānanda executes the demand, he uses the same verb (grath).

We are also told that he worked on the Śiksāpatrī for five days; if Śatānanda only had to copy 212 verses, this emphasis on the brevity of the period would be incomprehensible. If he reformulated a prose Sanskrit text the contradiction would be less patent; if he actually transcreated the Sanskrit verses from a Gujarati (or Hindi) original, the emphasis would make sense.

The Śikṣāpatrī as discussed in SSJ 4,44 ends with a date: It was written in 1825 in Vrttālaya. There is no mention here of an intervention by Śatānanda as either redactor or translator. The redaction of Śikṣāpatrī is also dated: 1828 (SSJ 5,67.1); the Śikṣāpatrī thus existed for three years before Śatānanda translated or transcreated it into Sanskrit verses. At that time the Satsangijīvanam was "nearing completion".40

sthāpitā mūrtayaḥ svasya naranārāyaṇādayaḥ || 5,68.11 | bhaktimārgapravṛttyartham dharmavamśyadvijeṣu ca acāryatā sthāpitātha dīkṣārītiḥ pravartitā | 5,68.12 | sadācārapravṛttyarthaṃ svāśriteşu pravartitā | sarvasacchāstrasāro hi śikṣāpatrī mayā bhuvi || 5,68.13 | varninām naisthikānām ca grhinām yoşitām mayā sādhūnām itareṣāṃ ca dharmāḥ samyan nirūpitāḥ || 5,68.14 | vratotsavānām sarveṣām vidhiś cokto mayākhilaḥ | vidhir astāngayogasya sakalo 'pi nirūpitaḥ | 5,68.15 | kalau janişyamāṇāṃ śatānandena dehinām | uddhṛtyai kārito granthaḥ samāptaprāya eva saḥ || 5,68.16 | evam yat sveba kartavyam tat sarvam hi kṛtam mayā | ataḥ paraṃ svadhāmaiva gantavyam adhunā bhuvaḥ | 5,68.17 | kimtv adyaiva tirobhūte mayi sarve madāśritāh mayy evātisnehabhājo dehān hāsyanti tat kṣaṇam | 5,68.18 | ato madviraham sodhum akşamānām hi sarvathā | teşām śāntim vidhāyaiva yāyām dhāma nijam param | 5,68.19 |

40 It could not have been finished since it includes the events around Swaminarayana's demise, to occur later than the narrated event.

5 Conclusion, questions and prospects

To summarize the evidence collected from the Satsangijivanam: There are two accounts about the origin of Śikṣāpatrī. In the first one Swaminarayana is described as writing the text; in the second one Satānanda is told to transform this text into Sanskrit verses. Thus, if the specificity of the version inserted in the Satsangijīvanam is said to consist in being in Sanskrit and in anusthubh verses, the original is likely to be different in both regards and may have been written in Gujarati and in prose. It would follow that the Śikṣāpatrī which followers of Swaminarayana recite is a text written by Satānanda who did so upon the authority of Swaminarayana. This observation concerns the literary form of the text, not its contents; and even if the literary form is not authored by Swaminarayana, he explicitly approved of it. Pursuing the differentiation of authorship and authority in the reception history of the Śikṣāpatrī in the Swaminarayana Movement, i.e., in commentaries and exegetical literature, might be revealing about the importance of textual traditions and their functions.

The questions raised on account of the origin of the Śikṣāpatrī in the Satsangijīvanam about the authorship of the received text of the Śiksāpatrī concern the historical value of all information in the Satsangijīvanam. Episodes with mythological character (involving demons, etc.) may lead to the question as to whether and where to draw a line between history and mythology or legend? And, more importantly, how to draw it. A comparison with other biographical sources and accounts would impose itself. There are independent witnesses of some events (Bishop Heber's report, the architectural witnesses of the temples he had built, other texts, etc.).

The Satsangijīvanam reports that eight copies of the original Śikṣāpatrī were distributed. Where are these eight copies? There is obviously the possibility (or even probability) that the original might still exist. The eight copies (see SSJ 45,45.1–3) were perhaps not all copied directly from the original; they might represent a small stemma. The search for these manuscripts (and, if successful, their preservation) is a research task which outsiders cannot achieve. The account in the Satsangijīvanam justifies an appeal to the authorities of all the branches and dioceses of the Swaminarayana-Movement to undertake this task. To compare them with the Śikṣāpatrī as contained in the Satsaṅgijīvanam would be of great text historical interest.

There is no defined process of canonization institutionalized in the movement. The authorization of Śatānanda by Swaminarayana cannot be repeated and lives on in the consensus of the community of followers. Changes are not a priori excluded unless authorization and authorship are confused or wrongly identified with canonization of texts.

The evidence of the Satsangijīvanam provokes such questions. Answering them is a task for further historical research.

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