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

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and the process of transmission of the Satsaṅgijīvanam itself complicates the evaluation of the Satsaṅgijīvanam as a historical document.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 Śikṣāpatrī 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam and the Śikṣāpatrī. 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 Nīlakaṇṭha 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 Kṛṣṇa, the personal absolute. His movement spread in Gujarat and was organized in two dioceses (Vaḍtal 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 Vaḍtal) and has become the internationally perhaps most

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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 Satsaṅgijīvanam 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.

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 Vṛttālaya (i. e., Vaḍtal) 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 madvāṇī 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 Śatānanda who not only incorporated the Śikṣāpatrī in the Satsaṅgijīvanam, but wrote an extensive Sanskrit commentary on the Śikṣāpatrī. 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

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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 Śikṣāpatrī as an independent text written by Swaminarayana, however, is questioned by what the Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam, 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam (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

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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 Sāraṅgapura (4,10–12), the visit to Kāryāyaṇa and Nāgaṭaṅka (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 Vṛttālaya 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 Śikṣāpatrī.

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

We restrict ourselves to the presentation of three passages from the Satsaṅgijīvanam on the origin of Satsaṅgijīvanam and of the Śikṣāpatrī. The first deals with the authorship and characteristics of the Satsaṅgijīvanam itself; the second and third are the two episodes in the Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam on the Satsaṅgijīvanam

Most of what the Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 chapter[9] identify the Satsaṅgijīvanam 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

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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 Satsaṅgijīvanam with conflicting loyalties. We are not aware of initiatives based on an "ecumenical" interest in the text of the Satsaṅgijīvanam among the branches of the movement.
9 I.e. Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 Śatānanda 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam is inserted into a Satsaṅgijīvanam.[11] The request by the king and Suvrata's recitation are part of the history of what happened with the completed Satsaṅgijīvanam (cf. 1,3.49–50). The work was heard rather than read. If one accepts Śatānanda as its author, it must be Śatānanda who invented the recitation of his work by Suvrata, perhaps as part of making his work conform to purāṇic 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 |*
    saṃdarbhasāre 'khilavedasāraḥ |
    suspaṣṭam aikāntikadharma uktaḥ |
    syād yena sadyo bhavapāśamuktiḥ || 1,1.17 |
    sākṣād dharau sakalalokagurau rasāyā |
    antarhite nanu mumukṣujanaikabandhau |
    nistāraṇāya laghu saṃsṛtisāgarasya |
    naukedam eva bhuvi mānavadehabhājām || 1,1.18 |
    līlāraso hi sakalo 'mṛtadivyamūrteḥ |
    svecchānarākṛtidhṛto bhuvi dharmasūnoḥ |
    satsaṅgināṃ paramajīvanam asty ato 'sau |
    samyaṅ nirūpita iheti sa pīyatāṃ taiḥ || 1,1.19 |
    etat puṇyam alaṃpavitram amalaṃ saddharmaśāstraṃ param |
    dharmajñānavirāgabhakti nibhṛtaṃ sevyaṃ satāṃ nityadā |
    pāpaughapraśamaṃ nṛṇāṃ kalimalaprakṣālanaṃ sarvathā |
    jāḍyadhvāntanivāraṇaṃ sukṛtibhiḥ saṃprāpyate netaraiḥ || 1,1.20 |
    sakaladharmavinirṇayam añjasā |
    sakalaśāstramatabhramavāraṇam |
    sakalavāñchitapūraṇam uttamaṃ |
    sakalalokamanaḥ śrutirañjanam || 1,1.21 |
    vividhasaṃśayaśalyasamuddharaṃ |
    śravaṇamātrata eva kubuddhihṛt |
    madanakopamukhāribhayāpaham |
    jayati śāstram idaṃ kavibhūṣaṇam || 1,1.22 |

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 Śatānanda 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 Śatānanda 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam.[12] If outline and content of the Satsaṅgijīvanam suggest an editorial addition in the case of the frame story, one cannot be certain about which words, lines or chapters stem from Śatānanda, 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 Śatānanda'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 Satsaṅgijīvanam within a Satsaṅgijīvanam. Of which one is Śatānanda 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, Śatānanda is the author also of the frame story, he would have included a future[13] (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 Śatānanda'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, Purāṇas and Pañcarātra and he regularly reads the Bhāgavatapurāṇa. 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. Śatānanda prostrates and praises the Lord with a hymn.

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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. Śatānanda is here talking about himself in third person. Nara-Nārāyaṇa tells Śatānanda (1,3.15–19) about his birth in Uttara-Kosala and that he presently lives in West-Pañcāla; he prophesies that Śatānanda will create a book about his deeds.[14] The book referred to of course is the Satsaṅgijīvanam. Authorship of the Satsaṅgijīvanam is attributed to a divine boon.

The episode continues by narrating (1,3.34–41) that a little later Śatānanda 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 (Akṣara-Dhāman, Goloka, Vaikuṇṭha, Śvetadvīpa) and he sees how his parents manifested themselves and he beholds the men and women who are his devotees. Śatānanda receives omniscience about past, present and future. Next (1,3.44–46) Hari grants a boon and orders Śatānanda to go with him to Durgapattanam where he will have a temple built for Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa; there Śatānanda will create a work (śāstra) about his experiences. The next verses (1,3.47–48) relate that Śatānanda acted accordingly and produced the Dharmaśāstra Satsaṅgijīvanam in the temple of Śrīgopīnātha. The chapter ends (1,3.51) with an appeal to listen to the work.[15]

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14 *ity uktavantaṃ bhagavāṃs tam uvāca mahāmatim |*
    brahmaṃs tvayā vyavasitaṃ samyag etan mumukṣuṇā ‖ 1,3.15 |
    kiṃtv ahaṃ sāmprataṃ bhūmau kosaleṣūttareṣv iha |
    jāto 'smi dharmato bhaktau harināmnā hi viśrutaḥ ‖ 1,3.16 |
    varte paścimapañcāladeśe durgapure 'dhunā
    so 'ham tvām antike svasya rakṣiṣyāmi na saṃśayaḥ ‖ 1,3.17 |
    madīyaguṇagānecchā vartate tava hṛdy ataḥ |
    tasya me tvaṃ caritrāṇāṃ granthakartā bhaviṣyasi ‖ 1,3.18 |
    so 'ham pūrṇaṃ kariṣyāmi tvadvāñchitam 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.

15 *kālenālpena ca hareḥ kṛpayā tasya saddhiyaḥ |*
    samādhisiddhir aṣṭāṅgayogābhyāsaṃ vinābhavat ‖ 1,3.34 |
    dhyāyaṃs taṃ hṛdi so 'drākṣīd prāgdṛṣṭaṃ badarīśvaram |
    kṣaṇānte 'ntarhitaḥ so 'tha yathā saudāmanī divi ‖ 1,3.35 |
    jyotirmaye 'kṣare dhāmni sthitaṃ taṃ kṛṣṇam aikṣata |
    samagraiśvaryasampannaṃ sapārṣadaparigraham ‖ 1,3.36 |
    golokam atha vaikuṇṭhaṃ śvetadvīpādi dhāma yat |
    tadaikṣayat sahaiśvaryaṃ haris tasmā alaukikam ‖ 1,3.37 |
    yathā svayaṃ cāvir āsid dharmo bhaktis tatharṣayaḥ |
    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

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janmakarmādi teṣāṃ ca svasyaiśvaryaṃ ca sarvaśaḥ |
bhūtaṃ bhavad bhaviṣyaṃ yat taj jñānaṃ pradadau prabhuḥ || 1,3.40 |
tato 'bhūt so 'pi sarvajñaḥ śatānando mahāmatiḥ |
yathāvat tat sarvam avain maitreyaṃ svam ṛṣiṃ tathā || 1,3.41 |
so 'tha prītamanā varṇī tadīyaguṇavarṇanaiḥ |
svīyaṃ jñānaṃ tathā vidyāḥ saphalīkartum āha tam || 1,3.42 |
tvadyaśogumphanenaiva prabandhair vividhaiḥ prabho |
svajñānaṃ saphalīkartum utkāyājñāṃ tu dehi me || 1,3.43 |
iti niṣkapaṭaṃ tena yācito harir āha tam |
manoratho 'yaṃ saphalo bhaviṣyati tava dvija || 1,3.44 |
āyāhi tvaṃ mayā sākaṃ durgapattanam uttamam |
tatrāhaṃ kārayiṣyāmi rādhākṛṣṇasya mandiram || 1,3.45 |
tatrātipāvane kṣetre vasaṃs tvaṃ sthiramānasaḥ |
śāstraṃ viracayer varṇin yathātmānubhavaṃ mama || 1,3.46 |
ity anujñāta īśena hṛṣṭaḥ sa kṛtavāṃs tathā |
sākaṃ bhagavatā durgapuram etya āvasac ciram || 1,3.47 |
satsaṅgijīvanaṃ nāma dharmaśāstram idaṃ hi saḥ |
harilīlāmayaṃ cakre śrīgopīnāthamandire || 1,3.48 |
śodhayitvātha tadbhaktān harer matpramukhān vidaḥ |
katicit pāṭhayām āsa viprān antarhite harau || 1,3.49 |
iti te kathitaṃ bhūpa janmakarmādi me guroḥ |
satsaṅgijīvanam atho sacchāstraṃ vacmi tatkṛtam || 1,3.50 |
sakaladharmabhṛtaṃ harilīlayā |
samupabṛṃhitam etad ihādbhutam |
rasavidāṃ bhuvi mānasarañjanam |
kalimalopaśamaṃ śṛṇu sādaram || 1,3.51 |

Satsaṅgijīvanam however mentions that the first meeting of Śatānanda[16] with Swaminarayana in Darbhavatī took place in 1814 A.D. This means that all the events prior to this date are known to Śatānanda by hearsay. Śatānanda became Swaminarayana's disciple 14 years before the composition of the Satsaṅgijīvanam in 1828. With Swaminarayana's boon in mind he could have consciously and systematically collected information during these 14 years.

Śatānanda 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-Hari[18] *and* as the author of the Satsaṅgijīvanam (see 3,2.29–30; 3,2.51b). The Satsaṅgijīvanam is distinguished from the class of these eight works by not being attributed to Swaminarayana. The eight works are not identified by title; Śatānanda 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam is mentioned again in part 4, in anticipation of the actual event. This part of the Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 Śatānanda about these intentions. The following is a summary of the contents of chapter 4,24:

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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 Satsaṅgijīvanam, not to Śatānanda himself.

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

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

19   *hariṇā lekhitāny aṣṭa sacchāstrāṇi tadagrataḥ |*
   śatānando mahābuddhiḥ śodhayām āsa cāñjasā || 3,2.29 |
   ya idaṃ vidadhe prītyā harilīlopabṛṃhitam |
   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 Śatānanda dealing with his life and works, i. e. the Satsaṅgijīvanam. The purport of the Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam 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

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20 kārayitvā mandirāṇi tatra svapratimā aham |
      sthāpayeya tatas tāś ca seviṣyante hi mānavāḥ || 4,24.10 |
      svadharme vartamānānāṃ puṃsāṃ tatsevanād iha |
      siddhim eṣyati sarveṣāṃ puruṣārthacatuṣṭayam || 4,24.11 |
      bhaktimārgasya puṣṭyarthaṃ mantradīkṣā apy apekṣyate |
      ato dharmānvaye śuddhe gurutāṃ sthāpayeya ca || 4,24.12 |
      dharmajñānaviraktīnāṃ bhakteś cāvagamāya tu |
      granthaṃ kartā śatānando maccaritropabṛṃhitam || 4,24.13 |
      siddhāntaṃ sarvaśāstrāṇāṃ tena jñāsyanti macchritāḥ |
      evam eva tataḥ kṛtvā yāyāṃ dhāma svakaṃ bhuvaḥ || 4,24.14 |

21 suvrata uvāca: sa evaṃ gūḍhasaṃkalpo nivasaṃs 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 attendant[22] 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 Śikṣāpatrī 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-Kṛṣṇa with Rādhā and Lakṣmī in Vaḍatāla 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 Mayārāma 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]

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

23 *aparāhṇe tataḥ svāmī vijanastho hitaṃ nṛṇām* |
   cintayan patrikāṃ tebhyo likhituṃ niścikāya saḥ || 4,43.18 |
   sakaleṣv api deśeṣu dharmaśikṣārthapatrikām |
   likhāmi tena madbhaktā vartiṣyante tathaiva hi || 4,43.19 |
   mamāśayo yādṛśo 'sti tādṛśaṃ cāpi te 'khilāḥ |
   tayaivāvagamiṣyanti bhaviṣyanty apy asaṃśayāḥ || 4,43.20 |
   antarhite mayi bhuvo madīyānāṃ ca sarvaśaḥ |
   sphuṭamadvākyarūpā sā bhavitry ālambanaṃ bhuvi || 4,43.21 |
   evaṃ vicārya dharmātmā kākudaṃ khaṭikāṃ ca saḥ |
   ānayām āsa bhṛtyena lekhinīṃ ca suśobhanam || 4,43.22 |
   sacchāstrāṇāṃ sa sarveṣāṃ sāram ākṛṣya saddhiyā |
   lilekha patrikāṃ svāmī saddharmaṃ sthāpayan bhuvi || 4,43.23 |
   ūrau dakṣe paṭṭakaṃ kākudasya |
   kṛtvā dhṛtvā vāmadoṣṇā natāsyaḥ |
   dakṣe pāṇau lekhinīṃ kuñcitāgre |
   bibhrat patrīṃ 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 |
   nānādeśasthitān śikṣāpatrīṃ vṛttālayasthitaḥ || 4,44.2 |
   bhrātro rāmapratāpecchārāmayor dharmajanmanoḥ |
   yāv ayodhyāprasādākhyaraghuvīrābhidhau sutau || 4,44.3 |
   mukundānandamukhyāś ca naiṣṭhikā brahmacāriṇaḥ |
   gṛhasthāś ca mayārāmabhaṭṭādyā ye madāśrayaḥ || 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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svadharmarakṣikā me taiḥ sarvair vācyāḥ sadāśiṣaḥ |
śrīmannārāyaṇasmṛtyā sahitāḥ śāstrasaṃmatāḥ || 4,44.6 |
ekāgreṇaiva manasā patrīlekhaḥ sahetukaḥ |
avadhāryo 'yam akhilaiḥ sarvajīvahitāvahaḥ || 4,44.7 |
ye pālayanti manujāḥ 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 macchiṣyaiḥ sāvadhānatayākhilaiḥ |
prītyaitām anusṛtyaiva vartitavyaṃ nirantaram || 4,44.10 |

25   *iti saṃkṣepato dharmāḥ sarveṣāṃ likhitā mayā |*
sāmpradāyikagranthebhyo jñeya eṣāṃ tu vistaraḥ || 4,44.203 |
sacchāstrāṇāṃ samuddhṛtya sarveṣāṃ sāram ātmanā |
patrīyaṃ likhitā nṝṇām abhīṣṭaphaladāyinī || 4,44.204 |
imām eva tato nityam anusṛtya mamāśritaiḥ |
yatātmabhir vartitavyaṃ na tu svairaṃ kadācana || 4,44.205 |
vartiṣyante ya itthaṃ hi puruṣā yoṣitas tathā |
te dharmādicaturvargasiddhiṃ prāpsyanti niścitam || 4,44.206 |
netthaṃ ya ācariṣyanti te tv asmatsampradāyataḥ |
bahirbhūtā iti jñeyaṃ strīpuṃsaiḥ sāmpradāyikaiḥ || 4,44.207 |
śikṣāpatryāḥ pratidinaṃ pāṭho 'syā madupāśritaiḥ |
kartavyo 'nakṣarajñais tu śravaṇaṃ kāryam ādarāt || 4,44.208 |
vaktrabhāve tu pujaiva kāryāsyāḥ prativāsaram |
madrūpam iti madvāṇī mānyeyaṃ paramādarāt || 4,44.209 |
yuktāya sampadā daivyā dātavyeyaṃ tu patrikā |
āsuryā sampadāḍhyāya puṃse deyā na karhicit || 4,44.210 |
vikramārkaśakasyābde netrāṣṭavasubhūmite |
vasantādyadine śikṣāpatrīyaṃ likhitā mayā || 4,44.211 |
nijāśritānāṃ sakalārtihantā |
sadharmabhakter avanaṃ vidhātā |
dātā sukhānāṃ manasepsitānāṃ |
tanotu kṛṣṇo 'khilamaṅgalaṃ naḥ || 4,44.212 |

26   *suvrata uvāca: likhitvā patrikām itthaṃ 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 Kṛṣṇa 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 Śikṣāpatrī; 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 Śatānanda as author of the Śikṣāpatrī

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 inserted[27] as a quoted text; its author is not Śatānanda, but Swaminarayana (i. e., Sahajānanda).

But the origin of Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam here becomes autobiographical. The subject matter inquired about is yoga. Śatānanda refers to the fact that he is among those people who experienced samādhi spontaneously, i. e., without yogic training, but induced by Swaminarayana. This is the only statement by Śatānanda about himself in first person. Probably the event refers to the meeting in Badarīka (5,56.1–7).[29]

> tatra tatra ca tāṃ prāpya bhaktāḥ prāpur mudaṃ parām |
> kṛtvā tatpratimāṃ sarve pṛthak pṛthag adhārayan || 4,45.2 |
> taduktarītyā sarve ca svādhikārānusārataḥ |
> avartanta ca taṃ bhejur jānantaḥ kṛṣṇam eva te || 4,45.3 |
> patrikāṃ preṣayitvātha bhaktaiḥ katipayair vṛtaḥ |
> 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 Śikṣāpatrī but also the identity of the text written by Swaminarayana with the wording included in the Satsaṅgijīvanam.

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).

29 *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 promised[30] 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]

śatānando munis tasya sevāyāṃ nirataḥ sadā |
pādasaṃvāhanaṃ kurvann ekadāsīt tadantike || 5,56.2 |
tam uvāca svayaṃ svāmī mune kiñcana te yadi |
praṣṭavyaṃ syāt tadaitarhi pṛccha vakṣye taduttaram || 5,56.3 |
evam uktaḥ sa tu prīto bhṛśaṃ munir udāradhīḥ |
prāñjalis taṃ namaskṛtya papracchetthaṃ narādhipa || 5,56.4 |
śatānanda uvāca: sāṅgaṃ yogam ahaṃ svāmin boddhum icchāmi tattvataḥ |
tvatta eva hi sarvajñāt sevanīyāc ca yogibhiḥ || 5,56.5 |
mayā tu tvatprasādena yogināṃ api durlabhāḥ |
samādhisiddhiḥ prāptāsti vinā sādhanasampadam || 5,56.6 |
tathāpi lakṣaṇādīni yogaśāstrānusārataḥ |
vivitsāmy aṅgiyogasya tadaṅgānāṃ ca sarvaśaḥ || 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.

32 śatānanda uvāca: prasanno yadi me svāmiṃs tarhi tvaṃ kṛpayādya hi |
manorathaṃ ciratnaṃ me sampūrayitum arhasi || 5,66.25 |
tvaccaritragranthaṃ ahaṃ cikīrṣāmi jagadguro |
tad ājñāṃ dehi me pūrvaṃ 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 |
prasannaḥ prāha taṃ yogin kuru granthaṃ svavāñchitam || 5,66.28 |
yathāśrutaṃ yathādṛṣṭaṃ caritraṃ mama vaṃaya |
jñānaṃ traikālikaṃ buddhau bhavaty eva tavānagha || 5,66.29 |
manaḥsthān apy abhiprāyān sarveṣāṃ vetsyasi dhruvam |
na te tv aviditaṃ kiñcid bhavitātipriyo 'si me || 5,66.30 |
antarhite mayi bhuvo macchritānāṃ nṛṇāṃ mune |
tvatkṛto grantha evātra bhaviṣyaty āśrayo mahān || 5,66.31 |
śikṣāpatrīṃ mallikhitāṃ grathānādau tvam añjasā |
padyair ānuṣṭubhair eva mahāgranthaṃ tataḥ kuru || 5,66.32 |
vijane hi sthirā buddhiḥ syād ataḥ kṛṣṇamandire |
vāsocitāsti kuṭy ekā tatraiva nivaser mune || 5,66.33 |

As historical information about the authorship of the text of the Śikṣāpatrī (which forms ch. 4,44 of the Satsaṅgijīvanam), 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 *anuṣṭubh* 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 Śatānanda had not started writing the Satsaṅgijīvanam. 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"[33] till the 2nd day called "Yamadvitīyā"[34] 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 Śikṣāpatrī[35] 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 śubhaṃ muhūrtam |
vidan sa kṛṣṇālayaramyakuṭyām |
kṛtvā svavāsaṃ ca tadaiva śikṣā- |
patrīṃ munir granthitum udyato 'bhūt || 5,66.35 |

33 Of dark Āśvina VS 1885 (1828 AD) (Śukānanda).
34 Of bright Kārttika.
35 Its Sanskrit version in verses.
36 *suvrata uvāca: trayodaśī dhanādyāsīt tadānīṃ nṛpasattama |*
śikṣāpatrīṃ samārebhe sa tasyāṃ granthituṃ muniḥ || 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

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pūrṇā yamadvitīyāyāṃ sā kṛtā tena saddhiyā |
ślokāḥ śatadvayaṃ tasyā āsaṃś ca dvādaśottaram || 5,67.2 |
tataḥ sa bhagavatprītyai tasyāṣ ṭīkāṃ ca śobhanām |
arebhe tāṃ sahomāse pañcamyāṃ ca samāpayat || 5,67.3 |
tasyām eva tithau rājann aparāhṇe samārpayat |
haraye munibhiḥ sākam upaviṣṭāya saṃsadi || 5,67.4 |
saṭīkāṃ patrikāṃ svīyāṃ dṛṣṭvā tāṃ saṃtutoṣa saḥ |
praśaṃsāṃ bahudhā cakre śatānandasya saṃsadi || 5,67.5 |
yāvān madīyo 'bhiprāya āsīt tāvān aśeṣataḥ |
atrānīto 'sty aneneti munīn bhaktāṃś ca so 'vadat || 5,67.6 |
prītyā dadau svakaṇṭhasthāṃ śatānandāya sa srajam |
karadvayaṃ cātimudā dadhau tacchirasi prabhuḥ || 5,67.7 |
tatas tāṃ vācayām āsa nityānandena saṃsadi |
harir bhaktāś ca munayaḥ śrutvā tāṃ jahṛṣur nṛpa || 5,67.8 |

37 *tataḥ prāha hariḥ sarvān bhaktān śṛṇutākhilāḥ |*
ye syur madīyās tair eṣā pāṭhyā śravyāthavānvaham || 5,67.9 |
prāg eva bhojanān nityaṃ śucibhiḥ svastikāsanam |
samāsthitair iyaṃ pāṭhyā tato bhojyam anāpadi || 5,67.10 |
divānukūlyābhāve tu niśi nityavidhiṃ nijam |
kṛtvaikatra niṣadyaiva paṭhanīyeyam ādarāt || 5,67.11 |
yathaitadarthasphuraṇaṃ hṛdi svasya bhavet tathā |
śanaiḥ sphuṭākṣaraṃ pāṭhyā nityam eva madāśritaiḥ || 5,67.12 |

38 *iti śrutvā harer vākyaṃ sarve bhaktajanās tadā |*
evam eva kariṣyāmo vayam ity ūcur ānatāḥ ||5,67.13|
tato hariḥ śatānandaṃ prāha svābhīṣṭam uttamam |
kuru granthaṃ mahābuddhe samartho 'si hi tatkṛtau ||5,67.14|
kṛṣṇaprasādalabdhaiva buddhis te 'stīti bhāti naḥ |
anyathā madabhiprāyam evaṃ vaktuṃ kṣameta kaḥ ||5,67.15|
sa ity ukto bhagavatā taṃ praṇamya nijāśramam |
ayayau durlabhaṃ devaiḥ saṃprāptas tadanugraham ||5,67.16|
hariprasādasaṃprāptasārvajñayaḥ so 'tha yogirāṭ |
campāṣaṣṭhyāṃ samārebhe idaṃ satsaṅgijīvanam ||5,67.17|
ekaikaṃ ca prakaraṇaṃ kṛtvā sampūrṇam īśvaram |
tam eva śrāvayām āsa nijāvāsasthitaṃ muniḥ ||5,67.18|
sa śuśrāvādarāt sākaṃ nityaṃ svāntikavāsibhiḥ |
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 Satsaṅgijīvanam.

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 Jyeṣṭha 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-Nārāyaṇa etc. are installed in temples; ranks of the religious masters and initiation ceremony are established; Śikṣāpatrī 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]

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39 *suvrata uvāca: navamyām atha śuklāyāṃ jyeṣṭhasya sa niśātyaye |*
    vicāram akarod bhūya ātmanātmani bhūpate || 5,68.1 |
    mayā dhṛto 'vatāro 'yaṃ yadarthaṃ tad aśeṣataḥ |
    kāryaṃ kṛtaṃ bhūtale 'tra na kiñcid avaśeṣitam || 5,68.2 |
    adhārmikā gurvasurā dharmasādhudruho nṛpāḥ |
    pratāpena mayā svasya parāstāḥ sakalā api || 5,68.3 |
    adharmavaṃśyā lobherṣyākāmakrodhādayo 'pi ca |
    sacchāstrasvapratāpābhyām utkhātā hṛdayān nṛṇām || 5,68.4 |
    satyāsteyabrahmacaryadayādyā dharmavaṃśajāḥ |
    sthāpitā hṛdaye nṝṇāṃ 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 |
    devabrāhmaṇatīrthānāṃ nigamānāṃ satāṃ tathā |
    pravartitā mānyatā ca sacchāstrāṇāṃ ca sarvathā || 5,68.9 |
    asacchāstrasya kaulāder nāstikānāṃ matasya ca |
    vidhāya khaṇḍanaṃ dharmaḥ sthāpito 'tra sanātanaḥ || 5,68.10 |
    vidhāpya mandirāṇy atra svāśritānāṃ sukhāya ca |

A few points from this account deserve further attention: Swaminarayana's words to Śatānanda which formulate the task of writing the Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 anuṣṭubh 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 anuṣṭubh verses but also *not* in Sanskrit. When the narrator (Suvrata) relates that Śatānanda executes the demand, he uses the same verb (*grath*).

We are also told that he worked on the Śikṣāpatrī 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 Vṛttālaya. 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam was "nearing completion".[40]

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sthāpitā mūrtayaḥ svasya naranārāyaṇādayaḥ || 5,68.11 |
bhaktimārgapravṛttyarthaṃ dharmavaṃśyadvijeṣu ca |
acāryatā sthāpitātha dīkṣārītiḥ pravartitā || 5,68.12 |
sadācārapravṛttyarthaṃ svāśriteṣu pravartitā |
sarvasacchāstrasāro hi śikṣāpatrī mayā bhuvi || 5,68.13 |
varṇinām naiṣṭhikānāṃ ca gṛhiṇāṃ yoṣitām mayā |
sādhūnām itareṣāṃ ca dharmāḥ samyaṅ nirūpitāḥ || 5,68.14 |
vratotsavānāṃ sarveṣāṃ vidhiś cokto mayākhilaḥ |
vidhir aṣṭāṅgayogasya sakalo 'pi nirūpitaḥ || 5,68.15 |
kalau janiṣyamāṇāṃ śatānandena dehinām |
uddhṛtyai kārito granthaḥ samāptaprāya eva saḥ || 5,68.16 |
evaṃ yat sveba kartavyaṃ tat sarvaṃ hi kṛtaṃ mayā |
ataḥ param svadhāmaiva gantavyam adhunā bhuvaḥ || 5,68.17 |
kiṃtv adyaiva tirobhūte mayi sarve madāśritāḥ |
mayy evātisnehabhājo dehān hāsyanti tat kṣaṇam || 5,68.18 |
ato madviraham soḍhum akṣamāṇāṃ hi sarvathā |
teṣāṃ śāntiṃ vidhāyaiva yāyāṃ dhāma nijaṃ 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam: There are two accounts about the origin of Śikṣāpatrī. In the first one Swaminarayana is described as writing the text; in the second one Śatānanda is told to transform this text into Sanskrit verses. Thus, if the specificity of the version inserted in the Satsaṅgijīvanam is said to consist in being in Sanskrit and in anuṣṭhubh 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 Śatānanda 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam about the authorship of the received text of the Śikṣāpatrī concern the historical value of all information in the Satsaṅgijīvanam. 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam 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 Satsaṅgijīvanam provokes such questions. Answering them is a task for further historical research.

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