

# The Sanskrit literary tradition of the Swami Narayana Movement

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# THE SANSKRIT LITERARY TRADITION OF THE SWAMI NARAYANA MOVEMENT

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## *Purāṇa* research

In Sanskrit there are still many literary works that have gone unnoticed and hence are unexplored. This is especially true for works of the modern period, i.e. the 19th and 20th century. The *Purāṇās* are one such sort of texts and field of research interest. They provide important data for research into the culture and religion of India. Social, political, economic and philosophical principles are dealt with in them, rather interestingly in the form of narration so as to pass the knowledge from generation to generation for the well-being and the benefit of mankind.

## The Zürich *Satsaṅgijīvanam*-Project

In Zürich a project of analysing one such modern Purāṇic text has found the financial support of the Swiss National Science Foundation. The official title of the project is: "The Sanskrit literary tradition of the Swami Narayana Movement."<sup>1</sup>

## The *Satsaṅgijīvanam* (SSJ)

The text with which the project is carried on is the *Satsaṅgijīvanam*. It is a voluminous work by Śātānanda Muni (written less than two centuries ago, in the middle of the 19th century). This work speaks of the life and teachings of the great Hindu reformer, known as Svāmi Nārāyaṇa who lived from 1781-1830. The followers of this sect (*saṃpradāya*) come mainly from Gujarat. Even during his lifetime, he was accepted and worshipped as an incarnation of Nara-Nārāyaṇa.

The SSJ is written in Sanskrit. It is composed in five books (*prakaraṇa*) comprising 315 chapters and about 16,000 verses in different metres. The first book deals with the birth and childhood of Svāmi Nārāyaṇa, the second book speaks of his celibate life as an ascetic and his approaching Rāmānanda as his holy teacher. The third book deals with his various

1 The author of this paper is selected and invited from India to work on this project for 18 months in the Abteilung für Indologie, University of Zurich.

preachings to the public and reads like a *Dharmaśāstra*. The fourth book contains debates and discussions about his philosophy and descriptions of the festivities which he introduced among his followers. The fifth consists of sermons and precepts about the conduct of life.<sup>2</sup>

#### Method and steps of textual analysis

The input of the text in machine-readable form is being prepared with the help of TUSTEP (Tübinger System von Textverarbeitungsprogrammen). We have adopted TUSTEP for preparing the text in machine-readable form; this input text can be used as a "vulgate" for many tasks of analysis and research (e.g. indexes). In order to avoid unnecessary as well as tiresome efforts in using ALT- or CTRL-keys to represent diacritics we have opted for input conventions which will be transformed to the diacritic printout with the help of internal TUSTEP-programmes. At present the text is being typed into the computer in what we call our "input-format". The general observations, parallels with other texts of the same genre, the grammatical and the linguistic specialities are noted down even in the process of transliterating text.

#### Results and output

The aim of the project is a linguistic analysis as well as an analysis of the historical and religious content of the SSJ.

#### Linguistic analysis

Naturally, indexes of words or *pādas*, reverse indexes of forms, and other automatically generated tools for linguistic analysis can be easily provided for a text in machine-readable form. Any particular verbal forms, nominal compounds and adverbial phrases<sup>3</sup> can be searched, sorted etc. TUSTEP also helps in comparing different versions and/or MSS. which can be collated and printed with a critical apparatus of the variants.

It is one working hypothesis of our project that a Sanskrit text which has been composed in Gujarat should show the impact of the Gujarati language of its time; if such Gujarati traits of the language could be

2 See DAVE, H.T., *Life and Philosophy of Shree Swaminarayan*, ed. Shepard Leslie, pub. George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1974, p.73.

3 E.g. *acīkarat* = has done, *nārāyaṇa+muni* = Svāmi Nārāyaṇa , *sāmpratam* = at present.

identified, this would provide an important clue for determining the regional origin of other texts of the same sort or genre. Such influences may concern the vocabulary and the grammar.

The Gujarati vocabulary has influenced the author in such a way that frequently he has coined new Sanskrit words, such as:

- (a) 1. *cokṣā* (4,14.56), which is based on *chokkhā*: *chokkhuṃ* means clear.<sup>4</sup>  
 2. *ekalo* (*ekalaḥ*) (1,49; 1,23) meaning "all alone" has become *ekalaḥ* (used in the sense of the Skt. word *ekākin*).<sup>5</sup>  
 3. *utaryāṃ* in Gujarati means "to stay for a night halt" and is used in this sense even today; the text uses the Sanskrit word *uttatāra* (4,13.14) from *ut+tī* (*uttarati*) "to descend" in the Gujarati sense.  
 4. The Sanskrit word *khāta* (ditch) means *khāḍī* in Gujarati, but the author uses only *khāḍī* (1,48.10;.25) or *khāḍikā*(1,53.10).
- (b) The names of the cities and the villages are sanskritised: Darbhāvati for Dabhāṇa (and not modern Dabhoi), Jayantapuram or Jayatalpapuram for Jetalpur, Phaṇigrāma for Phaṇeṇī, Mummahipattanam for Mumbai (modern Bombay), Ojasvati river for Ojhat river, and so on.

#### Literary sources and parallels of contents and style

Another aspect of the evaluation of the text concerns its style. The author Śatānanda Muni is described in the contemporary texts of the *Svāmīnārāyaṇa Saṃpradāya* as a scholar of many scientific works and a champion of the *Śrīmadbhāgavata Purāṇa*. Hence his style is very near to the *Śrīmadbhāgavatam*. But at the same time his scholarship is revealed by the descriptions, discussions, eulogies and narrations in the SSJ. The use of different metres<sup>6</sup> also bespeaks of his poetic talent of lucidity and simplicity. We try to collect as much evidence as possible concerning peculiarities of his style and scholarship. The parallels of *Śrīmadbhāgavatam*, *Bhagavadgītā*, other *Purāṇas* and of poets like Kālidāsa etc. are also noted in the summary of contents.

4 As per the linguistic morphological change of *kṣa* of Skt. as *kha* in Gujarati, as e.g. *kṣatriya* — *khatrī*, *pakṣī* — *paṅkhī* and so on.

5 Cp. Pāṇini 5,3.52: *ekād ākinic cāsaḥāye*.

6 The major part of the work is in Anuṣṭubh metre, with Upajāti often used to indicate the end of the chapter. Most of the eulogies (*stotra*) are in various metres.

### Summary of contents with index of names and motifs

The historical and religious contents of the text are analysed by writing a summary of contents for each chapter (in English); these summaries will be indexed in order to be able to find references to motifs, concepts, names, metres, etc. as well as the various eulogies (*stutis*) like *Gaṅgā-stuti* (1,5. 19-26), *Hari-gītā* (1,32-1,36), *Nārāyaṇa-gītā* (2,7), *Gaṇeśa-stuti* (1,42.4-11) and so on. Thus the summary of contents should become useful as a compendium of the customs, the social condition, the beliefs and conventions of the time and the political set-up in the small states as well as the historical events of Gujarat.