

CHAPTER : VI
SWAMINARAYANA

As it gets clear from the discussion in earlier chapter that sectarian writings can play significant role in continuing the flow of endeavors in writing, although it may be in a different form and language. Earlier we have seen that Sanskrit books written by priests and preachers of the Bauddha, the Jain, and the Vaiṣṇava sects located in the Bharūch region may claim a share in the development of Sanskrit literature. Then followed a kind of writing that offered interpretation preferably in the people's language, i.e. Gujarāti, through translation or explanation. Such kind of writing attempted to erect a bridge between the sublime of the Vedic and Upanishad knowledge and the understanding of the common mass. It was aimed at generating awareness to good living and thinking that makes the society healthy and positive. It was a time when flow of such writing was enormous. The Svāminārāyaṇa sect too involved in endeavours of such kinds.

One notable person of the sect was Dīnānātha Bhaṭṭa who lived in Bharūch around the year 1870. He is among eminent Sanskrit scholars belonging to the Svāminārāyaṇa sect. Born at Āmoda town in a caste called Raikva he earned recognition and honour from Sahajānanda Mahārāja, the

founder of the sect. With his help and support, he wrote number of books like śikṣāpatri, etc. that were found worthy of keeping in the store of knowledge by good people. He also formed the Uddhava sect and displayed his brilliance. He also wrote the Dākora Mahātmya. These two books are mentioned in his name in the essay titled “Jñāndīpa”.

The book, śikṣāpatri is a basic book of the Svāminārāyaṇa Sect. It contains in the form of letters the principles and duties that the founder, Sahajānanda Svāmi preached to his followers and the followers are supposed to practice them with utmost devotion. The book is in Sanskrit and it contains 212 shlokas. All the shlokas are in the ‘anushtup’ metre, while the last concluding stanza is in the ‘Upajāti’ metre. The book prescribes various norms of good behavior, decency, holding the marks of the sect, the method of daily work that a noble person should follow the philosophical doctrines of the sect, the preacher, the duties of a preacher’s wife, duties of married people, etc.

There prevails a controversy about the writer of the śikṣāpatri. One opinion states that Bhagavān Svāminārāyaṇ did not write the book. He just preached the principles. His disciple

namely śatānandmuni prepared a transcript of the preaching's in Sanskrit stanzas. Some other believes that Bhagavāna Svāminārayaṇa wrote the śikṣāpatrī originally in the Prākṛt language and śatānandmuni then translated it into Sanskrit². Some other believes that Dīnānātha Bhaṭṭa was the one to formulate the preaching into Sanskrit stanzas. Among these controversial opinions, there is also one opinion that says that the name of the "Śatānanda" was indeed a literary name of Dinanatha Bhaṭṭa³. Kīśorilāl Maśrūvālā too confirms Dīnānātha Bhaṭṭa as a writer of the śikṣāpatrī⁴. Kīśorilāl informs that in order to defect other scholars in discourse Bhagavāna Svāminārayaṇa commanded all the hermits of his sect to learn Sanskrit. The result was that the sect could give out number of poets, scholars of Vedānta, justice, commentators on the scriptures who wrote in Sanskrit. At that time, Dīnānātha Bhaṭṭa was highly reputed in the field and Svāmi Sahajānanda engaged him to write books in Sanskrit.

Dīnānātha Bhaṭṭa infect wrote a voluminous book in Sanskrit namely, Satsangijīvana. Kīśorilāl believes that the book was written by one sage namely śatānandmuni. But no clear evidence is available to support the belief⁵ "śikṣāpatrī" is

the 44th canto in the fourth chapter of the book. Sahajānanda Svāmi put into it the essence of the tenth and the fifth cantos of the Bhāgavat Purāṇ that he delivered to his disciples during his stay at Vādilāl. As mentioned in the stanza 211, the book was written in 1882 and about eight copies were made and distributed among the followers of the sect. Whereas the book Satsangijīvana was written in 1885-86. It means that the śikṣāpatri was first produced independently in Gujarāt by Svāmi Sahajānanda and Dīnānātha Bhaṭṭa must have translated in Sanskrit and incorporated it in the book, Satsangijivana that narrates the life sketch of Sahajānanda Svāmi. The book acquires a prime status in the literature of the Svāminārayaṇa Sect.

The book is written in Sanskrit. It has five chapters and 319 cantos. It narrates the life story of Sahajānanda Svāmi since his birth to the point when he received a sacred vow from his guru Shri Rāmānanda Svāmi. The book also informs about different celebrations of the sect and various temples that were erected at Ahmedābāda, Bhuj, Vaḍatāla and Dholerā together with ritualistic installation of the Lords' idols.

This single book calls for our attention by the very fact that it stays among recent Sanskrit writings. It may have very little literary merits or may lack creativity. But it does continue the tradition of writing in Sanskrit. It does work to cultivate people's taste in Sanskrit. It does work to cultivate people's taste in Sanskrit. Through references to various sculptures the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Mahābhārat, the Bhāgavata Gītā with an interpretation of Shrimada Rāmānujācārya, the Skandapurāṇa, the Vidurnīti, the Yājñvalkyā stuti, etc. it does like a common reader to a great treasure of Sanskrit knowledge and literature and cultivate among people curiosity to know and think about great knowledge in Sanskrit.

All this was being done when the Indian culture and civilization was passing through severe crisis under the foreign influences and there was a dire need to revive people's interest in the cultural heritage that is store in Sanskrit literature. Thus, the value of the book by Dīnānāth Bhaṭṭ may be ascertained in this light.

Work of Dinānath Bhaṭṭ

- 1 वैष्णववल्लभ टीका.
- 2 उदामदंडक स्तोत्र.

- 3 नारायणमुनि प्रातस्मरण अष्टक.
- 4 भजनाष्टक.
- 5 विज्ञानपति पंचक.
- 6 वीरहस्तापदी.
- 7 शिक्षा पंचक.
- 8 सहजानंद स्वामी नीराजनस्तोत्र.
- 9 हरिजिनअष्टक.
- 10 श्रीगुरुभजनस्तोत्रम् वियोगिनी वृत्तम्.
- 11 श्रीगुरुभजनस्तोत्रम् प्रहर्षणीयम् वृत्तम्.
- 12 श्रीगुरुभजनस्तोत्रम् द्रुतविलंबित वृत्तम्.
- 13 दशावतारस्तोत्रम्.
- 14 श्रीसत्संगीजीवने दीनानाथकृत नारायण स्तवनाष्टक.
- 15 श्रीसत्संगीजीवने दीनानाथकृत श्रीहरिध्यान स्तोत्र.

References:

1. Bhaṭṭa, Vaijanaāhaa 1914 Jñāndīp. Translation in Gujarati.
Bhaṭṭa Narbherama, P 62 Stanza 31-32.
2. Pandyā, Rameshchandra Lābhaśankar, Śikshāptiri, P 2-3
3. Ibid.
4. Maśaruvālā Kishorilāl, Sahajānand Svāmi OR Svāminārayaṇ Sampradāy. A commentary P 39.
5. Ibid.