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A BRIEF HISTORY BHAGWANSWAMINARAYAN AND ITS SAMPRADAYA

Pradip Kumar Misra

Research Scholar (MGKVP) University

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ABSTRACT

The word 'Sampraday' emphasizes the fact that the Movement, its philosophy and principles have been continually guided and preserved, in all their purity, by an unbroken and untainted spiritual hierarchy of enlightened Gurus. At 20, the Lord was in Ramanand Swami's Ashram serving as a humble servant. He was named Sahajanand when Ramanand Swami initiated Him. The Lord became the sole spiritual master when Ramanand Swami appointed Him as the Guru of his ashram. A month later, Ramanand Swami passed away. On the 14th day of the funeral rites, in the village of Faneni, the Lord introduced the new Swaminarayan Mantra. News of this Mantra spread far and wide. And its spiritual power was felt everywhere. Sahajanand Swami now became known as Bhagwan Swaminarayan. Anyone who chanted the Mantra enjoyed samadhi - the ultimate spiritual experience. Those who heard it, wrote it or thought of it experienced samadhi. Others who saw Bhagwan Swaminarayan, heard the sound of His sandals, or discussed His philosophy saw a divine light and beheld the visions of the great incarnations of God - Rama, Krishna and Shiva. Since the trance was an experience of His grace, it was called krupasamadhi.

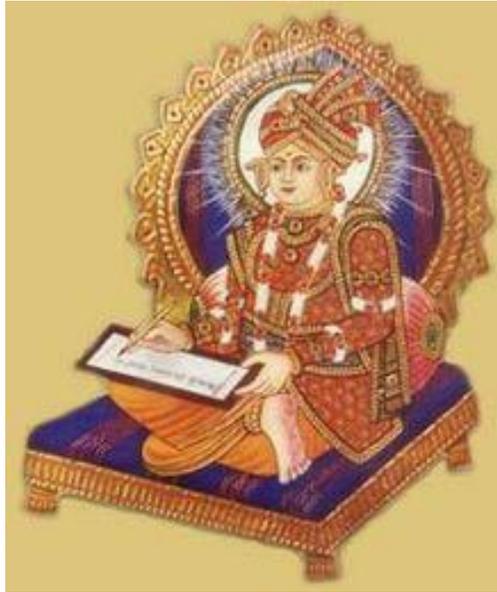
KEYWORDS: Bhagwan Swaminarayan, philosophy, principles, Ramanand Swami's.

INTRODUCTION: The Hinduism is known as a sanatana Dharma because of no one was founder, even then spiritual life of all people in India over more than 5000 years has been practiced in religious

pluralism in day to day life. Each Hindu Sampradyay has been praying and worship his own Ista Devata with the faith that he /she supreme. There are many many Mahapurushes (Avatars) incarnated as and

when needs in the Yuge Yuge in North-South and East-West, out of which one remarkable one, was Sri Sri Swami Narayan who appeared on 2nd April 1781 AD in the

village Chhapiya in the north part of India near Ayodhya where incarnated avatar Sri Rama Chandra was the kind in Treta Yug.



Swaminarayan (□□□□□□□□□□)

Bhawan Swaminarayan was a brilliant scholar and master of all Vedas and Sastras at the age of ten under teachership of Dharmadeva when his teacher and philosopher Dharmaddeva was on the chair for scholarly debate in Varanashi, the centre of knowledge in India. Sri Swaminarayan (Ghanaswam) gave a brilliant exposition and convincing the participated scholars Regarding Ramanuja's Bishishtadvatia philosophy of non-dualism. After his parents (Both) passed away Ganashyam had left Ayodhya and travelled towards Himalayas for silent Yoga on 29th June 1792 at the age

of 11 and arrived back at the age of 16 on 21st August 1799 in Loj Ashram after completion of Neel Kant's Kalyan Yatra of 1200 Kilometer distance and at about 187 most important pilgrimage places in the time duration of 7 years 53 days with as hardest as possible by endangering the wild animals in the deep forest.

This Yatra was called Neel Kant's Kalyan Yatra . In the Loj Ashram Neelkant was the apprentice of Sadhu Sanga with full devotions like guru seva , Ashram works etc.(Washing utensils and cloths, collecting

cow-dung for cooking , massages to Ashram Sadhus , Brooming and so many menial tasks).His mul Mantra (Main Philosophy was divine leadership for yoga by serving in the society, abolishing animals'- slaughter upgrading the women's status by abolishing female infanticide and sati-pratha and special platform for the women in religious functions and satsangsabha and worship places . He had introduced lifelong devotion being aloof from man mastering. In his speech he said "Dharma (Righteousness) must be Niskam (Non-Lusting) by the co-association of both sex in the same platform while offering God , or doing Yoga or meditation could be adultery because lust at the female devotees incurred Pap Karma (Sin) . The female were to be regarded as one's own mother, sister or daughter. His religious speech was based on the purity on Bhakti not the superfluous ones.He also started that Sharma festivals being formed an integral part of Hindu's life because sanatan dharma have had explain the rites and rituals of festivals.Sri Swaminarayan's dharma mission was indeed also respectable dharma in the form of festival based as purification as possible.

He deed the great emphasis on Bhakti by absolute tyag (Selfness-need) for which must needed divine holly place that's are

Mandir which serve as much as eight important purposes such as

- a) Place of worship
- b) Boosted spirituality
- c) Increase human brotherhood
- d) Self-less service to God whom one's believe
- e) Keeping away human ego etc.
- f) Temples are the divine grace of the people never the less, Swami Narayan had accepted the member of lower section of the society in his samprady even he reflected his choice his personal attendants whose where Muslims , Kambis and Kathis

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: Regarding Moksha Sri Swami Narayan said that, "Four Vedas, 18 Puranas, SriMod Bhagabhat Gita, Itihas, Ramayan (Originally written by Valmiki) , Mahavarata (Written by VyasDev) very clearly stated that only Paramatma and true disciples can achieve Moksha only.

1. The Niskam, Nirlobh, Nirman, Niswad and Nissneh are the ornaments (Alankar) of the character to get bliss from Paramatma and shows the way of Moksha.

2. The blissful Darshan of Paramatma even for a second get more blessing and get more happiness than the materialistic millions of Universe .

3. Regarding the universal suffering what Lord Buddha said in his Moksha conclusion that similarly torched by Bhagaban Swami Narayan. He said, "Greediness for wealth and desire for physical relationship with the women human ego and non-veg food non-purified food are the elements which never experience the happiness in life or after life.

Though his short life span yet dynamic of 49 years , Bhagawan Swami Narayan successfully executed the purpose of his incarnation on earth in human form before his departure and pravu his nominated his successor Aksharabrahma Gunatitanand Swami and foremost faithful disciple since then Swami Narayan Sanstha advocated Guru Parampara System .

AKSHARBRAHMA GUNATINAND SWAMIJI: His childhood name was Mulji Sharma and born in Brahmin family. He preached Bhagawan Swami Narayan's true glory of supreme divine visions and powerful command on righteousness and wisdom to transform the society at large in all stages caste, creed, religious and

languages. He had carry the religion and philosophical torch to the corner to corner of the villages and towns to spread the messages of SwamiNarayan till his departure from the Earth at the age of 85 years and blessed his successor to be next commanding Guru Bagat Ji Majoraj for the essence of his Ekantic Bhakti to Bhaabawan Swami Narayan even though he was house holder and lower cast.

BHAGAT JI MAHARAJ: Though he was born in lower caste and house holder but he was inborn spiritual tendencies. Initially he adopted gopaland swami as his Guru and served him as best as possible. By the advice of his Guru since his spiritual thrust could be quenched by Gunatinand swami who was the glory of Bhagwan Swami Narayan's foremost devotee, to pay the visit for his divine bliss to get proper religious light in his future course of Karma Yatra and he did so thereby he got divine success. His Guru Swami Gunatinand educated him perfect spirituality from his young age though he had hardest spiritual task for nine years from Sri Gopaland Swami Ji. Before leaving from the Earth he had recommended Shastriji Maharaj as the third successor of this Sampradaya.

SHASTRI JI MAHARAJ: Sastriji Maharaj was the 3rd successor of Sri Swami Narayan Sampradaya and he was from Patel family. When he was at the age one year child, he was blessed by Gunatinand Swami for flowering SwamiNarayan's glory and religious philosophy and boost the Satsang. He duely completed all relative Sanskrit studies (Hindu religious literatures from Veda to till date) from Vignanand Swami who was one of the senior sadhu of this sampradaya. After Swami Bhagatji heavenly departure, he was devoteed continued satsang, social upliftment. The SwamiNarayan's aim and desire for temple construction in BOCHASAN and Murtis of Gunatitanad Swami as Akshar and BhagwanSwamiNarayan as PURUSHOTTAM in the central shrine. Later on this was named BAPS on 5.6.1907 (Bochasanwasi Sri AksharPurushottal Swami Narayan Sanstha – BAPS).

This is at present very powerful (NGO) Sanstha of Swami Narayan Sampradaya through this BAPS Shastriji could founded many Mandirs such at Sarangpur, Gondal. Atladana and Gadhada. The mission and vision of the Sampradaya Sasthriji revealed that "I am yogi and yogi is me" (Swami Narayan Sampradaya P-38) at the end of his life. After confirming his successor Sri

Yogijimaharaj, he took the last breath on 10th May, 1951 at Savangpur at the age of 86 years.

SRI YOGI JI MAHARA: Sri Yogi JiMaharaj was the fifth Guru of Swaminarayan Sampradaya and fourth successor. From the childhood Sri Yogi JiMaharaj performed Puja (Offering to God) and Dhyan (Meditation) in his own village temple. He did selfless service and mindful seba to the senior sadhus and yogis, out of them many were contemporary to swami Gunatinandji, while doing dharma yatra to visit village to village to preach blossom the floweriest glory of Swami Narayan he was insulted, harassed and got beaten and hard torturing from the people of the villages but he never turned back from his mission.

During the construction of temples, food for sadhus and stone workers and associated people of temple work, he himself managed and looked their food before sunrise. He took fast from food eight to ten days in a month due to hardship of fund. He visited many places of overseas such as London (UK) in 1953, in African countries in 1955, Kenya in 1959, Mombasa either for temple construction or organise satsang under BAPS. This was the first foundation in Europe and many parts of overseas. Never

the less he had made foot step in Uganda, Kampala, Jinaja and Tororo in East Africa in his second time visit. He was the first guru of Swami Narayan Sampradaya to cross the ocean and revived Sanatan Dharma in the Asian-Indian group. His prayer to the God – Fraternity, Solidarity, Unity of Satsang. Despite of his ill health, he was compelled to move around in while chair at his late sixties (60) he made his final overseas tour to East Africa , London in 1970 for foundation of Swami Narayan's temples. After confirming his successor to Promukh Swami Maharaj he passed away on 23rd Jan., 1971. His end use religious contributions cannot be counted even one can count stars at sight.

SRISRI PRAMUKH SWAMI MAHARAJ: The Sixth Guru and fifth successor of Swami Narayan Sampradaya, Sri Pramukh Swami Maharaj was the son of farmer family but devotional one because his parents were faithful, true disciple of Shri Shastriji Maharaj. In one word one can say in Vedic Kali Yug Promukh Swami Maharaj is the very remarkable spiritual personality of Sanatan Dharma. He has rapidly progressed to place himself as a glorious promoting Hinduism personality in global religious network centre and uplift Indian Heritage culture.

The most important glorious works are Promoter highest leader of new hundreds Swami Narayan's temple construction. Cultural festival of India in London 1985 and Edison New Jersey 1901. Construction fines Vedic stone Mandia in London. This is also accepted in Guinness world record as longest stone Hindu temple.

First three pinnacted Mandirs in African continent in Nairobi in 29th Aug., 1999. In USA first Vedic Mandir in Houston in 25th Jul., 2004 and Chicago on 7th Aug., 2004. The next stone Mandirs in Atta Attanta and Toronto in 2007. On 5th Nov., 2005 , Sri Promukh Swami Maharaj inaugurated Swami Narayan Akshardham on the bank of river Yamuna in Delhi.

Likewise at present about eleven hundreds total temples of Swami Narayan at present in India and other parts of Universe to promote sanatan dharma, peace, brotherhood, harmony for the glory of this Sanstha. Sri Promukh Swami Maharaj also advocated his Guru Yogiji Mahaaj's Bani (Words) to do good of all and for all, eradicate stubbornness, ego and jealousy for other happieness. Sri Pramukh Swami Maharaj oftenly voiced in the satsang and devotees' gathering that jay of others, progress of others and good of others are the

happiness of our own. The satsang purify the mind body and atma.

In the scholarly opinion though Swami Narayan's sanstha is a guru parampara institution, all these gurus at present six guru with in five successor gurus. But the successor gurus are only advocate the main religious philosophy and social philosophy of the founder of this sanstha of Sri Sri

Swami Narayan. There hardly any new philosophy of any one of the successor guru. The Satsang, temple construction and some part of social upliftment only. There by it can be concluded that Sri Sri Swami Narayan, the founder is the only one incarnated God of human form who appeared to re-establish Dharma and uplift the society from the destructives' hand in his stay on Earth.

Sl. No.	Name of Mahaprabhu	Appearance on Earth	Disappearance from Earth
1	Bhagwan Swami Narayan	1781 AD 3 rd April	1830 AD 1 st Jun
2	Akshar Brahma GunatinandSwamiji	1785 AD 17 th October	1867 AD 11 th October
3	BhagatJiMaharaj	1829 AD 20 th March	1897 AD 7 th Nov
4	Sri SriSastrijiMaharaj	1865 AD 31 st March	1951 10 th May
5	Sri Sri Yogi jiMaharaj	1892 AD 23 rd May	1971 AD 23 rd Jan
6	Sri SriPramukh Swami Maharaj	1921 AD 7 th Dec	2016 AD and continuing

CHILDHOOD AS GHANSHYAM:

Swaminarayan was born on 3 April 1781 (ChaitraSud 9, Samvat 1837) in Chhapaiya, Uttar Pradesh, a village near Ayodhya, in a Hindi speaking region in India. Born into the brahmin or priestly caste of Sarvariya, Swaminarayan was named GhanshyamPande by his parents, HariprasadPande (father, also known as Dharmadev) and PremvatiPande (mother,

also known as Bhaktimata and Murtidevi). The birth of Swaminarayan coincided with the Hindu festival of Rama Navami, celebrating the birth of Rama. The ninth lunar day in the fortnight of the waxing moon in the month of Chaitra (March–April) is celebrated as both Rama Navami and Swaminarayan Jayanti by Swaminarayan followers. This celebration

also marks the beginning of a ritual calendar for the followers. Swaminarayan had an elder brother, Rampratap Pande, and a younger brother, Ichcharam Pande. He is said to have mastered the scriptures, including the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Puranas, the Ramayana, and the Mahabharata by the age of seven.

LEADERSHIP AS SAHAJANAND SWAMI: According to the sect, Nilkanth's understanding of the metaphysical and epistemological concepts of the pancha-tattvas (five eternal elements), together with his mental and physical discipline, inspired senior sadhus of Ramanand Swami.

Nilkanth Varni received sannyasa initiation from Ramanand Swami on 20 October 1800, and with it was granted the names Sahajanand Swami and Narayan Muni to signify his new status.

At the age of 21, Sahajanand Swami was appointed successor to Ramanand Swami as the leader of the UddhavSampraday by Ramanand Swami, prior to his death. The UddhavSampraday henceforth came to be known as the Swaminarayan Sampraday. According to sources he

proclaimed the worship of one sole deity, Krishna or Narayana. Krishna was considered by him his own istadevata. In contrast with the Vaishnava sect known as the Radha-vallabha Sampradaya, he had a more puritanical approach, rather than the theological views of Krishna that are strongly capricious in character and imagery. While being a worshipper of Krishna, Swaminarayan rejected licentious elements in Krishnology in favor of worship in the mood of majesty, alike to earlier Vaisnava teachers, Ramanuja and Yamunacarya.

Sahajanand Swami was later known as Swaminarayan after the mantra he taught at a gathering, in Faneni, a fortnight after the death of Ramanand Swami. He gave his followers a new mantra, known as the Swaminarayan mantra, to repeat in their rituals: Swaminarayan. When chanting this mantra, some devotees went into samadhi (a form of meditation) This act is also called maha-samadhi ("great samadhi") and claimed that they could see their personal gods, even though they had no knowledge of Astanga Yoga. Swaminarayan also became known by the names Ghanshyam Maharaj, Shreeji Maharaj, Hari Krishna Maharaj and ShriHari. As early as 1804, Swaminarayan, who was reported to have

performed miracles, was described as a manifestation of God in the first work written by a disciple and paramhansa, Nishkulanand Swami. This work, the Yama Danda, was the first piece of literature written within the Swaminarayan sect.

WORK AND VIEWS:

Women: Swaminarayan insisted that education was the inherent right of all people, including women, despite considerable criticism from those in his own contemporary society who "loathed the uplift of lower caste women". At that time, influential and wealthy individuals educated their girls through private and personal tuition. Male followers of Swaminarayan made arrangements to educate their female family members. The literacy rate among females began to increase during Swaminarayan's time, and they were able to give discourses on spiritual subjects. Members of the sect consider Swaminarayan a pioneer of education of females in India.

According to the author Raymond Brady Williams, "Swaminarayan is an early representative of the practice of advocacy of women's rights without personal

involvement with women". To counter the practice of sati (self-immolation by a widow on her husband's funeral pyre), Swaminarayan argued that, as human life was given by God it could be taken only by God, and that sati had no Vedic sanction. He went to the extent to call sati nothing but suicide. Swaminarayan offered parents help with dowry expenses to discourage female infanticide, calling infanticide a sin. For calling a halt to these prevailing practices, Swaminarayan's "contemporaries naturally saw in him a pioneer of a reformed and purified Hinduism, and Swaminarayan Hinduism an 'ingrazi dharma' or British religion."

Professor David Harman observed that Swaminarayan "criticized the popular shakta cults and 'gosai' and 'nath' ascetics for the contemptuous and instrumental way in which they viewed and treated women. These cults were often responsible for gross sexual abuse of women." Hardiman added that Swaminarayan's view towards women was not in line with this type of misogyny and was rooted in his desire to protect the ill treatment of women along with promoting celibacy for ascetics. Swaminarayan "forbade all sadhus and sadhvis (that is, male and female ascetics) of his sect from having any contact whatsoever with

members of the opposite sex." This strict precept was one he likely internalized "after travelling as an ascetic throughout India [when] he was reported to vomit if approached by even the shadow of a woman". To help his male ascetic followers maintain their vow of celibacy, Swaminarayan taught "the woman who attracts attention is made up of bones, blood vessels, spittle, blood, mucus and feces; she is simply a collection of these things, and there is nothing to be attractive.

This may seem regressive; however it gave them "a respected and secure place in the social order" of the time. Swaminarayan restricted widows "to live always under the control of male members of their family and prohibited them from receiving instruction in any science from any man excepting their nearest relations."

CONCLUSION: Bhagwan Swaminarayan is Purushottam - the God Supreme. And Gunatitanand Swami is Aksharbrahman - His divine abode, also called Akshardham. The Lord in His fullest glory, eternally resides in Gunatitanand Swami. They are ever together, inseparable - The Lord as the Master and Gunatitanand Swami as the ideal devotee, the disciple. On earth, every spiritual Guru in Bhagwan Swaminarayan's

succession is the incarnation of Aksharbrahman in whom the Lord resides fully and eternally. As every Guru is the same Aksharbrahman entity, the devotees feel no spiritual change, except the physical change of another successor. It is clear that the Guru is not God, but is God's ideal devotee in whom God resides eternally.

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