

38. Adhyatma Yogi Shri Sahajanandji Varni

(Adhyatma Yogi is a person who performs Yoga in spiritualism)

Introduction:

We have in India very high traditions of expanding knowledge and these traditions continue since time immemorial. The credit of continuing these traditions goes to the persons of deep knowledge, teachers, students and devotees. Shri Sahajanandji Manoharlalji Varni was a learned person of very high status; he was a renunciate, writer of extra-ordinary spiritual books and an able orator. He is an important organ to continue to the traditions of expanding knowledge. He wrote many spiritual, scriptural and authoritarian books for the good of himself and of others. His works were praiseworthy and need be imitated. The society could never come of this debt owed to him. He was engaged in continuous studies and undisturbed practices in literature. He was all the time in worship of the goddess of knowledge (Saraswati). He was a teacher of spirituality. He came out in time with the tradition of former spiritual teacher Shri GaneshPrasadji Varni (older Varniji) and this younger Varniji was his outstanding disciple. His power to studying difficult things very easily, and his impressive face duly justifies his title of younger Varniji and also of Sahajanand.

Childhood:

Shri Manoharlalji Varni was born in 1916 at Damdama Village of Zansi District. Shri Gulabramji and Shrimati Tulsibai were his parents. He had serious disease in his stomach in childhood and therefore, his name was kept as Maganlal. After painful efforts he was cured and the child began to reveal his impression of his previous lives.

The child Maganlal started his learning at the age of six in the village school and after a year and a half he was admitted to Sagar Vidyalaya, which was established by the elder Varniji. His father had deep love, respect and family relations with elder Varniji as well as Chironjabai. Maganlal could study very well. He was taking active part in games and exercises. He was interested in music also. He knew playing with harmonium, flute etc. His voice was also pleasing and suitable for music. His nature, his face and his speech were attractive and therefore, he was known as Manohar (something which captures mind). He was betrothed against his will during the vacation of Sagar Vidyalaya in his young age due to the pressure of relatives, and even after the betrothal, he was indifferent for family life. He did not like to talk about marriage. He was always engaged in his studies. He passed the examinations for the degree of Shastri at the age of 15 to 17. He obtained the degree of Nyaya Tirth at the age of 18. Thus, he was very well learned at the young age of 20. He was totally devoted to his teachers and extended lovable behavior with everyone. As he was deeply interested in studies, he was equally interested in teaching also. He worked as a teacher in Sanskrit for sometime in Sanskrit school. He considered teaching to be the most pious act of charity and taught his students with best of his efforts and attachment.

Moments of Change: on the Way to Detachment:

Worldly relations are short-lived in the lives of great men and they also meet with such circumstances. Varniji also had similar circumstances. His wife expired when he was only 20 years of age but had to have second marriage because of the pressure of his relatives. His second wife also died after six years and now his desired way of life was clear. He now began with a new chapter of his life. He adopted the vow of absolute celibacy at the age of 26. His line of thinking also became detached with worldly affairs. As a result of this, Shri Varniji adopted life-long celibacy and other vows of Shravaks (rules of Jain family life) in the presence of and at the hands of elder. Varniji Shri GaneshPrasadji at Siddhikshetra Shri Shikharji in 1944. He now started to walk fast on the way of eternal happiness. He

was more and more detached and after two years, he adopted the vows of seventh idol at Kashi (religious restrictions). After this he accepted eighth idol at Jabalpur, ninth at Balashinor and tenth at Agra in the presence of elder Varniji in December 1948. His renunciation became stronger and then he adopted 11th idol in 1949 at Hastinapur in the presence of elder Varniji. From now onwards he was known as chhote Varniji, i.e. younger Varniji.

He had done his monsoon of 1974 AD at Ahmedabad. His 58th birthday was also celebrated here with great enthusiasm and All-Religion Conference was also arranged. Shri Atmanandji and Shri Gokulbhai had adopted vows of life-long celibacy before him. Some of his books were translated into Gujarati and English in which Dravya Sangrah Tika. "Comments on the collection of materials" and "Address to self" were important. His outlook was wide and spiritual and hence he had gone to Shrimad Rajchandra Vihar Bhavan, Idar and had held discourses and questions answers with many devotees.

Successful Writer and Spiritual Speaker:

Varniji was famous for his renunciation, penance and learning. Alongwith this, he was a philosophical and spiritual writer of very high level. He was famous as an effective orator. He could explain serious and complicated spiritual issues in simple but impressive language. His style of preaching was impressive and effective. His acquaintances and contacts were many in Uttar Pradesh and many gentlemen of Saharanpur; Meerut, Muzaffarnagar, Delhi and other cities were deeply impressed by his sweet and effective speech. Whenever Varniji went, the people were attracted to him because of his pointed preachings. He had total hold over all the four Anuyog. He had delivered lectures on Samaysar, Pravachansar, Niyamsar, AshtaSahasri, Pariksha Mool and other books-all these are Jain scriptures. These lectures are published in the form of a book also.

In all about 565 works of Shri Varniji are available, in which 65 are hand-written and 500 are in the form of lectures. He was a writer of such a big lot of literature and yet he was quite simple, natural, prideless, unattached, unprejudicial and fearless. He had decorated his life with these virtues. It is not known that any one person has given so many books since last several decades. Varniji was an established and successful writer and speaker. His Parmatma Arti, Atmakirtan, Sahajanand Gita, Sapta Dashangi Tika and many other creations are very famous. I am independent, unshakable, without desires, knower and seer of things; I am the soul etc. is all his addresses to the self and recited at every house. His style of language was impressive, spiritual and philosophical and people heard him most attentively.

He had studied almost all the scriptures in depth, he had served his teachers with total faith, he had thought continuously about the Absolute, he had made prayers and penance day and night and hence he had obtained pure vision. His small but best work is Aviruddha Nirnaya in which Principle and Spirituality are systematically connected and consolidated. This book was published in Hindi and also in Gujarati. It is very much useful to practicing devotees. With these works, he was well respected by the religious minded people of India but the climax of this creation of literature rests in his Sapta Dashangi. Commentaries of the two great spiritual books Shri Samaysar and Shri Pravachansar. He earned great fame and credit among the literary personalities of the whole of India. The publication ceremony of his commentary on Shri SamayaSarji was done by the then Vice President of India. Dr. B. D. Jatti on 18-12-78 at the Vivekanand Hall of the Delhi University. This was a memorable event in the history of Digambar Jains and a grand beginning of the exploration of the influences and inspirations of Jainism. In the present days, Sahajanand Granthmala, Meerut has published his literature and Varni Pravachan-Prakashini Sanstha-both is publishing houses. The monthly periodical titled Varni Pravachan also publishes Varniji's lectures and writings. It is engaged in propagating and promoting the literature created by Shri Varniji.

Shri Varniji deeply desired that the spiritual knowledge spreads very well all around, the traditions of Jainism be well preserved and people may be lead to follow good behavior, truth, restraint and renunciation. He tried his best to achieve these goals wherever he moved during his saintly-life, wherever he spent his monsoons and wherever he made speeches and preachings. He was the only hope of inspiration and faith after the demise of elder Varniji and the society could get his advice and guidance as time demanded even though most of his time was passing away in reading, writing and thinking.

Varniji's last desire was to adopt the position of Nirgranth, i.e. undoing anything till death, but it was not fulfilled. He suddenly expired in Meerut on 29 March 1978 by a severe heart attack while performing Samayik, a religious rite. A glorious star of Jain community was lost untimely. He is present before us in the form of his books, writings and speeches and this is the only solace to us.

Conclusion:

One beautiful memorial book on the personality and works of Shri Sahajanandji Varni was published at Meerut before about three years. It contains tribute to this great person by the prominent persons from all over India. It also contains the articles of accredited writers on Jainism and spiritual subjects. A grand memorial is under construction at the holy place of Hastinapur under the auspices of Trilok Research Institute where several activities for the research and propagation of Jain Studies and Jain Culture are being carried on. Our best tribute to Varniji will be to follow the spiritual ideals of Lord Mahavir as cited by Shri Varniji and develop our knowledge and character in that direction with total devotion to Shri Varniji.