

!! Shree Ram Samarth !!

Samartha Ramdas Swami

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The birth name of Samartha Ramdas Swami was Narayan Suryaji Thosar. He was born on Ramnavmi (in the month of 'chaitra') in the year – 1530 (marathi), 1608 AD, in the Jamb village in the Ambad Taluka of Aurangabad District, on the banks of the Godavari river. His parents were Suryaji Pant and Ranubai and his elder brother was Gangadhar. His family had been worshipping the Sun and Lord Ram for many generations.

During childhood Narayan was fond of all vigorous and physical games. He loved to exercise due to which he was well built. He was very intelligent too. He was a very firm believer and stood by his principles. His whole persona shone with devotion for Hanuman and Lord Ram. Having devotion and strength of character, he felt sad for the common people who got stuck in the eternal cycle of Life and Death. Right from his childhood he was thinking about how to relieve masses from this cycle. Marriage and settling down with his own family was not his priority. He preferred life of a hermit.

At the age of 11, he attained enlightenment. He was visited by Lord Ram himself. Lord Ram told him, "Go to the banks of the river Krishna and start a new religion. The descendant of the Shisodia dynasty is going to take an avatar. You will guide him with devotion."

To satisfy his mother's wishes, Narayan agreed to marry. He was 12 years of age. But as soon as he heard the word 'Savadhan' (caution) in the wedding vows, he became cautious and ran away. He went straight to Panchavati, in Nashik district. This was the place where Lord Ram, his wife Sita and his brother Laxman had stayed during their 14 years in exile (Vanvas). Then he went to Takli village near Nashik, where the rivers Godavari and Nandini meet, for a life of extreme devotion and spiritual study.

Devotion and worship – He would wake up before sunrise, have refreshment and bath, followed by exercise. This special exercise consists of 'Surya Namaskar' a series of positions each of which prays to the Sun. Then stand in the river with the water reaching waist height and chant the 13 syllable mantra of Lord Ram – "Shri Ram Jai Ram Jai Jai Ram". 13 is considered an auspicious number. This was chanted until the Sun reached the top of his head (noon). Then he would ask for food (madhukari) in only 5 houses. Then offer a small part to Lord Ram before actually eating. In the afternoon he would go to Lord Ram's temple in the forest and extensively read spiritual books and also listen to spiritual knowledge of the elders who visited the temple. He extensively studied the Ramayan written by the Saint Valmiki. This is great epic of the life and death of Lord Ram, one of the oldest scriptures ever written about Lord Ram. In the evening he attended lectures on spirituality and programs of songs praising Lord Ram and narration of his good qualities and his stories. At night he listened to Bhajans, a special kind of devotional songs. He prayed to Lord Ram before sleeping.

He followed this routine continuously for a period of 12 years. He uttered Lord Ram's name **13 crore** (seven zeroes) times. As a result of such a tremendous devotion, he was gifted with 8 powers by Lord Ram himself, who appeared and asked him to start a new religion. Lord Ram himself gave him the Title of Samartha (most competent/capable/proficient). Everyone

forgot his original name 'Narayan' and started calling him 'Samartha Ramdas'. Ramdas literally means 'the most loyal devotee of Lord Ram'.

Spiritual Journey and Condition of the People – In the Marathi year 1554 or 1632 AD, he left the village of Takli to start his spiritual journey and also to start his new religion. For the next 12 years, he journeyed through all corners of India. He minutely observed the condition of the people across India. He realized that the frequent floods and famines and the attacks by the Muslims whenever they wished, which were actually helped by our own people, had destroyed the society and social life of the people. Everyone was scared and depressed. Based on these experiences he wrote 2 books named "Asmani Sultani" and "Parachakraniroopan" detailing his minute observation of the common man. These are the only 2 books in the whole of the Saint literature of India which describe and record the condition of the people at their times.

Ramdas Swami felt very bad to see the society depending so much on luck and providence. But his mission of world peace would not let him sit quietly. He knew for a new society to take shape he will have to strive very hard for self governance, a new religion to build self confidence in the people.

== Samarth Ramdas Swami chose 'Chafal' for initiating this mission and started this work in Marathi year 1566, or 1644 AD. He installed a statue of Lord Ram and started celebrating the festival of 'Birth of Lord Ram' (Ram janmotsava) with fanfare.

His teaching of not losing patience and having faith in face of adversities, being fearless in difficult situation helped people to deal with dangerous conditions.

He chose Hanuman, who was extremely strong, who would get furious when facing the enemy and act accordingly as a role model for the common man to combat the opponents. Lord Ram, the great Archer, who killed Ravana, and helped the Gods who were captured by him, was another role model he chose for the common man. He felt that their personalities and characteristics would be good for the masses to follow.

He established temples of Hanuman at towns and villages and passed the message of exercising for strength to the youth. He also taught the young to get together and fight the enemy. He stressed the importance of strength along with use of knowledge, insisting that the weak has no place in the world.

Emphasizing the role of hard work he says that the lazy would feel good for the time being, but it is the hard working individual who would be happy in the end.

He also highlighted the warriors' role in running the society smoothly. Their duty towards society and martyrdom for the country was given utmost importance.

While talking about the country, the society, he has not neglected the family life on an individual. In some of his verses he has told the importance of bringing up a healthy family, looking after the family needs. It is wise to look at the societal demands only after fulfilling the demands by the family.

Samartha Ramdas Swami established many study centers all over the country, where his teachings and preaching were taught. These created many disciples and followers all over the country.

He understood the importance of the role of women in a harmonious society. He encouraged the women to participate in the religious work, and gave them positions of authority. He had 18 staunch women disciples. Wennabai took care of the study center at Miraj, Akkabai took charge of Chafal and Sajjangad. He strongly reprimanded an old man who was against women participation by saying that everyone came from a woman's womb and those who do not understand the importance of this are not worthy of being called a man. Respecting the role of women in the society and giving them equal position was good for the future of a healthy society according to Samartha Ramdas Swami.

He abhorred distinction based on caste and creed. He preached that all human beings are equal. Socialism, secular society was his dream and firm belief.

During this period, Raja Shivaji was in the process of establishing 'Hindavi Swaraj'. Samartha Ramdas Swami through his teachings, his impact on society and especially Shivaji Maharaj helped him to do so. He was elated when Shivaji Maharaj defeated the Moughals and was enthroned.

Samartha Ramdas Swami and Shivaji Maharaj met in a historical meeting at Shinganwadi near Chafal in 1571(Marathi year), 1649 AD. Shivaji Maharaj became his disciple and they met many times thereafter. Praising the Raja Samartha Ramdas Swami says that the religion in Maharashtra still exists because of Shivaji Maharaj and there is none other like him who would defend the religion. The way one can't measure the water in the river, or the brightness of the sun likewise no one can win against Shivaji Maharaj.

Shivaji Maharaj sent his son, Sambhajiraje to get guidance from Samartha Ramdas Swami at Sajjangad. After Shivaji Maharaj's demise Samartha Ramdas Swami in his letter to Sambhajiraje wrote : remember Shivaji, and be remembered on this earth as the one who has achieved great heights.

By this time Samartha Ramdas Swami had a feeling that his days on this earth are coming to an end. He sermonized to his disciples: even if my body will not be with you, I will always remain near you through my books which will guide you in every situation.

Samartha Ramdas Swami left for his heavenly abode on the **9th day** of Magh in 1603(Marathi year), 1681 AD at Sajjangad.

His contribution to the world of literature is unparalleled. His books like 'Dasbodh', 'Manache Shlok', 'Atmaram', 'Manapanchak', 'Anandavanbhuvan', 'Shivakalyanaraja' and many more are very relevant even today. They are guiding lights in today's troubled times.

!! Jai Jai Raghuveer Samarth !!