

Shrimanta Sankardev

Shrimanta Sankardev, a 16th-century saint-scholar and cultural icon in Assam, India, played a pivotal role in shaping the socio-cultural landscape of the region. A key component of his work was advocating for social equality and challenging caste-based discrimination.

Shrimanta Sankardev is a name known to all, whose birthplace is Assam, considered a significant pilgrimage. However, the significance of Shrimanta Sankardev remained obscure from the Indian psyche for a long time. He worked as a proponent of the Vaishnavism faith in Assam. At one hundred and twenty years old, the great devotee Sankardev concluded his earthly journey and attained the supreme state. To understand the nature of religious consciousness suitable for the diverse people of Assam, Sankardev had to engage in deep contemplation and mental churning. Eventually, he founded the 'Eksharan-Nam-Dharma' (Single Refuge Name-Religion). And he began to guide people towards the 'Vaishnavism' based on the Shrimad Bhagavatam. In Assam, the sentiment of national unity was first embraced by him during the medieval period.



Sankardev had provided a new consciousness to the residents of Assam during the medieval period. Having travelled from Kamrup to Kanyakumari, the credit for connecting Assam

linguistically, culturally, and religiously with the rest of India goes to Sankardev. Today, our country places greater emphasis on emotional unity. For this, we must familiarize ourselves with the literature and culture of every region of this nation and strengthen mutual goodwill. The philosophy of life of the great sage Sankardev conveys this message.

It can be believed that internal and external struggles shaped Sankardev's personality. At a very young age, he lost both his parents, so that he couldn't experience the love and care of his parents. This absence might have made him yearn for affection. During his lifetime, Sankardev travelled to places like Gaya, Kashi, Prayag, Vrindavan, Mathura, Ayodhya, Sitakund, Dwarka, and as far south as Rameswaram for pilgrimage purposes. During this period, he met various Sants and sages and got acquainted with India's rising wave of Neo-Vaishnavism devotion. He also became familiar with India's contemporary political, social, and cultural conditions and diversities. His ascetic heart became steadfast and deeply devoted to the name of Krishna.

After returning from Kamrup, he promoted the 'Eksharaniya Bhagvati Nam-Dharma' (Single Refuge in the Divine Name-Religion). In the Brahmaputra Valley, inhabited by various castes, tribes, and communities, he propagated the 'Eksharan Nam Dharma' (Single Refuge Name Religion) through different methods tailored to their mental levels. The chanting of this name and the singing and enactment of his tales were accepted as a means of devotion. Consequently, Sankardev not only connected the society, which had been confined to worshipping various deities in different regions and communities, with the 'Eksharan Dharma,' but once again, the entire Northeast India was also reconnected with the ancient cultural tradition of India. The 'Satras' and 'Kirtanghars' (places of worship and community gathering) were opened to people of all castes, which infused new strength into the collective consciousness and sentiment. Due to Sankardev's endeavors, the entire Kamrup, today's Assam, became imbued with a unique cultural, religious, and philosophical consciousness. The flow of knowledge mixed with devotion that he initiated still reflects in not just Assam but almost the entire Northeast India, showcasing that cultural, religious, and philosophical consciousness.

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Reference: Sankardev aur Tulsidas ki Vaicharik bhavbhumi- Dr. Bhupendra Raychaudhari