

Sankardeva's "Eka-Sarana Nama Dharma" and Its Contribution Towards the Formation of a Greater Assamese Society

Chunchuni Borah



Abstract: *Srimanta sankardeva, the great soul of Assam, played a pivotal role in the formation of a larger assamese society. During the time of sankardeva's birth, the atmosphere of Assam was clouded by many uncivil practices(Goswami 2018) .Sankardeva was able to open the eyes of all the people by spreading the seeds of " Eka –sarana nama dharma" in the beautiful land of Assam. Sankardeva envisioned Assam as a divine garden where all the people of different ethnic groups and tribes live their lives. He broke down all the instability by uniting them through the thread of bhakti.*

Keywords: Tribes, Sankardeva, Srimanta

I. INTRODUCTION

Srimanta Sankardeva was the versatile genius of assam. He was also regarded as worthy son of God. In 15th and 16th century there was brahminical dominancy or the caste hierarchy in the name of devotion of God. Most of the people of that time were illiterate and unintelligent.They were dominated by the higher caste people and they were not allowed to participate in the religious ceremonies and interpretation of the holy scriptures. Srimanta Sankardeva spearheaded " Neo-vaishnavite" movement in Assam which was later known as " Eka –sarana nama dharma". "Eka-sarana nama dharma" means complete self surrender to one God or to the Almighty.He is Hari, Krishna, lord Vishnu.Sankardeva emphasized only in sravana and kirtana. Only by chanting the name of God one can redeem from the cycle of birth and death.The "Neo-vaishnavite" movement brought an incredible changes in the socio –cultural and religious history of Assam. Through the " Neo-vaishnavite" movement sankardeva founded an egalitarian society where people irrespective of their caste and creed get an equal opportunity and can live their lives happily and peacefully. He revolutionized the whole Assamese society in every aspects and therefore he was a revolutionary reformer of Assam.The service of humanity is service of God had been the main motto of "Neo-vaishnavite movement.

Dr. sarvapalli Radhakrishnan's famous saying in " Earth one family" is : Religious men will be revolutionaries as long as there are errors to be corrected and evils to be overcome . Their ambition would be to remove the greatest burden of men, namely the exploitation of man by man(broadcast on kiev radio, Russia,26th June,1956).Religious people must think about those people who are helpless, who are always oppressed by powerful;they must think about the freedom of those downtrodden,dalit people,the untouchable,who are victim of social injustice and discrimination on the basis of religion,class and creed. The great devotee Bhakta prahlada once said , " Naitan bisaykripanaan bimuksho ekah".(I don't want to attain freedom without thinking about this unfortunate people). (Saikia, G).

II. METHODOLOGY

This paper contains a qualitative method where all the data are analytically collected from the secondary sources like published paper, journals, books etc.

1. Objectives: To study about Sankardeva's "Eka-sarana nama dharma".
2. To study about contribution of "Eka-sarana nama dharma" towards the growth and development of larger assamese society.

III. RIVIEW OF LITERATURE

1. The neo- vaishnavism of Srimanta sankardeva:a great socio –cultural revolution in Assam, MSSV JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES, VOL.1 NO.1(ISSN 2455-7706),Rinku Borah discussed about neo-vaishnavism and it's impact on the socio-cultural life of the people of Assam.
2. Srimanta Sankardeva: The savior of the subaltern, Gitali Saikia briefly wrote about impact of "Eka-sarana nama dharma in the assamese society".

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

On the basis of the objectives, the following description are made to highlight the findings of the paper.

A. Universal Love and Brotherhood

Love and respect for every living being is reflected in Sankardeva's "Neo-vaishnavism" or "Eka-sarana nama dharma. We all are the manifestation of God. God is in everybody's heart. Therefore we are all equal and identical in nature. Sankardeva broke down the caste hierarchy which was prevalent at that time.

Manuscript received on 28 October 2023 | Revised Manuscript received on 25 November 2023 | Manuscript Accepted on 15 February 2024 | Manuscript published on 28 February 2024.

*Correspondence Author(s)

Chunchuni Borah*, Department of Philosophy, Cotton University, Lakhimpur, Assam, India. E-mail: chunchuniborah@gmail.com

© The Authors. Published by Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering and Sciences Publication (BEIESP). This is an open access article under the CC-BY-NC-ND license <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>

Sankardeva accepted all his followers as his disciples belonging to different caste and communities. Among them, Narottam of Nagas, Govinda of Garos as well as Chandchai of Muslims were noteworthy. Sankardeva said:

"Nabachai bhakati jati ajati
Krsnara kirtane jati ajati nabache"

(There is no discrimination in bhakti)

According to Sankardeva no one become a Brahman by his race or by his or her birth. One must become a Brahman only by chanting the name of God by pure heart. Not only for human being, Sankardeva promote kindness, love and respect for animals also. Sankardeva said:

"Kukuro srigalo hari godorvoru atmaram

Janiya sobako pori koriba pronam

Somosto bhutote byapi asu moyi hari

Saboko maniba tumi Vishnu budhi kori

Brahmanor chandalor nibisari kul

Datat surot jen dristi eko tul

Nisot sadhut jaro voilo eko jnana

Tahakehe pandit buliya hobe jano"

(Even in the dog, foxes God is within their souls. He is the only wise people who doesnot discriminate between Brahman, the high caste people and the chandal, the lower caste people, who accept all are as brother and sister as we are the children of the same Divinity.)

The assamese society of Sankardeva's time was very much influenced by saktism, even Sankardeva's prime disciple Madhavdeva, before they meet was a follower of saktism. Saktism mainly concentrated on sacrifice of animals and even human also in the name of devotion of God. But Sankardeva totally ignored this kind of religious faith and beliefs and he propagated "Eka-sarana nam dharma" by saying that there is only one supreme reality, who assumes forms and who is the cause of all incarnations. Sankardeva wrote:

Prathame pranamo brahmarupi sanatan

Sarva abatarara karana narayana 15

First of all I bow down to Narayana, the eternal one, in the form of Brahman, the cause of all incarnations (N, Kanta 2020)

Madhavdeva following Sankardeva says,

Matsya kurmma narasimha Vamana parashurama

Halirama varaha shri rama

Buddha Kalki name dasa Akriti dhoricha Krishna

Taju pawe karo ho pranama (Namghosha 3).

(Meaning: Krishna has taken ten incarnations as fish, tortoise, half-man half lion, the dwarf, Parashurama, Halirama, the Boar, Rama of Ramayana, Buddha and Kalki).

So, according to Sankardeva Krishna or lord Vishnu is the root cause of the creation of the universe.

B. Bhakti Marga

Among the three marga of attaining moksha or liberation, Sankardeva considered bhakti as the only easiest way or marga to attain moksha. The other two path are full of difficulties. Karma marga is not fit, especially for this kali yoga. (Chutiya) Srimanta Sankardeva says:

Nalage bhaktita deva dvija rsi huibe

Nalage sambhrita sastra vistara janibe

Yaksa raksha stri sudra yata brajabasi

Pakshi mrigo Vishnu bhaliya Krishnaka upasi

Srimanta Sankardeva's bhakti marga does not required a person to be a Brahman by caste and it is not mandatory to

know all the sastras. By worshipping or having unflinching faith in Krishna, Yakshas, Rakshasas, the women, the sudras, all the inhabitants of Braja (vrindavana) and even the birds and beasts became Vishnu. According to Sankardeva's "Eka-sarana nama dharma" in doing bhakti one should not perform any ritualistic ceremony to satisfy God. Sankardeva said in Prahlada Charita :

"Tapo japo yajna dana bidamvna

Kevala bhaktita tusta hanta Narayan. (Kirtana 380)

Nuhi puspa bhala nuhi banaphula

Janiba nadira jale

nuje bhakti kari nomo Krishna buli

muhuro pada kamala. (Bhagawata, 16112)

(I don't want beautiful flower or delicious fruit as offering; like you pronounce my name with bhakti with sincere devotion and complete surrender to me.)

C. On the Universe

We find that Srimanta Sankardeva thought about the nature of our universe. According to him from the transcendental point of view universe not an illusion. The universe is created by God who is real and therefore world is also real. Sankardeva said that there is no difference between gold and the gold ornaments, in the same way there is no difference between God and the universe. (Boruah 2018). Sankardeva said: Tumi karya karana samasta caracara Suvarne kundale yena naahike antara (Kirtana, 520).

Again said,

Tumi satya brahma Tomaata prakaashe

Jagatate sadaa Tumio prakaashaa

Antaryami bhagavanta

Etekesa jnani Gane avasheshi

Jagataka bole hari (Kirtana 1661)

(This means that you are the real Brahman. The unreal universe is the manifestation of you. You also manifest yourself in the universe. Because of this reason the wise people regard universe as God.

D. Namghar and Satras

Namghar and satras are the most influential institution to spread Nam dharma among the people. Namghar and satras are the integral part of the Assamese society. Namghar are the network to attract and connect different people from different parts of the north-east with different attractive activities like "bhaona", "borgeet", "dihanam" etc. Bhaonas were played in brajavali language. Namghar are the centre to discuss and solve different social and religious issues where all the people can present their opinions without any restriction. So namghar create equality and respect among the people by giving them opportunity to offer their prayers or devotion to God.

V. CONCLUSION

On the basis of above discussion we can conclude that "Eka-sarana nama dharma" through the neo-vaishnavite movement revolutionized the whole assamese society.



It unite all the people from different caste and communities without any discrimination by breaking down the caste hierarchy. Everyone can chant the name of God by his or her pure heart . There is no hard and fast ritualistic principles for the devotion of God . One can obtain liberation from the endless cycle of birth and death through doing bhakti by pure heart. Trough the universal love and brotherhood Sankardeva teaches us that we all are the children of same divinity and therefore we should have love and respect for each other. Sankardeva’s religion is most simple and liberal religion. Sankardeva was not only a religious guru but also social reformer .For his incredible contribution towards the creation of greater Assamese society will always remember him as a star, without whom Assamese society will be incomplete.

DECLARATION STATEMENT

Funding	No, I did not receive.
Conflicts of Interest	No conflicts of interest to the best of our knowledge.
Ethical Approval and Consent to Participate	No, the article does not require ethical approval and consent to participate with evidence.
Availability of Data and Material/ Data Access Statement	Not relevant.
Authors Contributions	I am only the sole author of the article.

REFERENCES

1. Borah, R: The neo-vaishnavism of Srimanta Sankardeva : a great socio –cultural revolution in Assam, Mssv journal of humanities and social sciences , vol. no. 1
2. Paul,S: R: Role of satra and namghar in the vaishnava tradition of Srimanta Sankardeva ,International journal social sciences ,vol 7 ,no .2 June 2018
3. Neog,D : Jagat –Guru Sankardew : The founder of mahapurushism, Srimanta Sankardev Sangha,Nagaon,May1, 1963.
4. Bezbaroa,L: History of Vaishnavism in India,Srimanta Sankar Kristi BikashSamiti, December,2004.
5. Hussain,A :Contribution of mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva to Assamese literature and culture, International journal of innovative technology and exploring engineering, vol-2,May 7.
6. Goswami Sauravpran:Religious philosophy of Sankardeva A Glimpse , June 2018
7. Chutiya,S: Srimanta Sankardeva and his Eka-Sarana Hari-Nama Dharma.
8. Saikia,G: Srimanta Sankardeva : saviour of the subaltem,Academia.edu.
9. Hussain, A. (2021). Contribution of Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva to Assamese Literature and Culture. In International Journal of Innovative Technology and Exploring Engineering (Vol. 10, Issue 7, pp. 65–67). <https://doi.org/10.35940/ijitee.g8958.0510721>

Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note: The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of the Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering and Sciences Publication (BEIESP)/ journal and/or the editor(s). The Blue Eyes Intelligence Engineering and Sciences Publication (BEIESP) and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.

