

JAI GURU SANKAR
WHY SHOULD WE FOLLOW JAGAT GURU SRIMANTA
SANKARADEVA?

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Our earth has been shielded and protected by gurus, saints and noble souls. To follow the principles and path shown by them is the secret of being successful in society. These principles, paths and values are also a part of religion. To come out of these principles, values or paths is straying out of religion to some. Again to some, religion is nothing but having a true heart where forgiveness, love, brotherhood exists and threads of affection bind them together. Wherever there is a lack of these values there is rise in cruelty, looting, thuggery, injustice, rape, torture and hatred. That is why we regard the gurus of the world as representatives of God. Despite these why is it that we get exceptionally attracted towards Guru Sankaradeva and try to get the world attracted towards him? The answer is very simple and easy.

1) The teachings of Sankaradeva have not only benefited the common masses immensely but have also brought in a wave to rediscover him. It is difficult to see such an impact in the case of other gurus. Gurus have always highlighted that service to man is the service to God. However Sankaradeva took this a lot further and clearly taught: service to all living entity is actually service to God.

The well accepted “taking refuge in God’s mercy” is another unique preaching of Sankaradeva. It means that there is nothing else in this universe except God. Just like water and air taking these forms God also is present in all entities in a formless state. He is hence present in the clouds, sky, earth, water, air, fire and in all living entity as soul. *Sankaradeva was successful in completely exploring this reality.* This is why if someone realizes this basic philosophy of God he will never forget the preaching of Srimanta Sankaradeva.

2) Most gurus have encouraged the visit to holy places particularly to places like Amarnath, Tirupati, Jagannath Puri, Kashi, Gaya, Vaishno Devi, Kamakhya, Parasuram Kunda, etc. They have always focused the visit to these places as an integral part of religion. Hence it has been a common practice among followers of different religions to find God at holy places.

It is Sankaradeva alone who is an exception to the above view. He said, besides these holy places there is a greater holy place. He has described this greater holy place, as one’s own home. He said "Grihot Thakia Koru Hari Bhokoti" which means: *I pay my respect to the Almighty staying at home. In other words he has*

advised to transform one's own home to a holy place. By controlling the mind and the senses, salute your home as heaven. A place where there is no violence, fear, shame, illness, criticism and hatred.

The place we live can be transformed into heaven. It is in this peaceful and holy place that one can certainly feel the presence of God. This beautiful arrangement is in fact superior to the immortalizing nectar. A place where husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, sons and daughters all live together cheerfully and enjoy eternal happiness. God resides in true sense wherever there is sweet flow of happiness.

3) It has been generally accepted by all gurus that heaven is beyond the fourteen worlds. *But it is Sankaradeva who has made it possible to reach this heaven at arm's length. This heaven is our Elysium, heart.* To realize this heaven, one has to realize **Krishna**. It is only our Guru **Srimanta Sankaradeva** who has been able to experience the completeness of God in the form of Krishna from all sides. He said that the Krishna we see is the Almighty Soul, which is Hari. It is this Soul that also keeps our heart alive. He says that we should worship the all blissful Krishna with our heart, every day.

In his compositions Sankaradeva said, we can see the beautiful face of Krishna with our heart. *This means the almighty God resides in our heart and meditation of this form within the heart is real meditation. He says that worship from the heart is the real worship.* The devotee who is capable of discovering God at the centre of the heart is the crown amongst devotees.

4) Sankaradeva is probably the only guru known who has preached without criticizing any religion or beliefs. He had always asked his followers to practise their religion at their best, without criticizing other religions. In his teachings he has clearly said, "*ek Krishna debok bhajanta aan debok ninda nokoronto*", which means: worship only Krishna but do not criticize other gods. In other words it means: You worship God in any form you want, but do not criticize deities of other religions and beliefs.

Having preached with such a liberal view and with such peaceful quotes - how can we keep away from this Great Guru? And having found such an accomplished Guru can we ever be tempted to follow another guru?

5) Another direction of his philosophy is that – *Devotees are even greater than God.* He has hence always had greater regard towards the person who worships God, than God Himself.

"Muktita nispriha jitu sehi bhokotoka nomo; Bhokotehe mor hridi janiba nicoi; Bhokotehe dhyan, Bhokotehe gnyan, Bhokotot pore moi nicinto aan", which means: I worship the Devotee for whom Devotion is dearer than liberation; Only Devotees can understand my heart; Devotees are my meditation, Devotees are my knowledge. I do not know anybody else except my Devotees.

Only the holy person who can say such great things for the welfare of this world and can also set an example by practicing these himself – can be called “Jagat Guru”, i.e. Guru of the World. It is none other than Guru Sankaradeva. Throughout his entire life he has given us clues of discovering God. Via his dear devotee Madhavadeva he got us some great hymns for use [recitation] by everybody like ‘The Creeper Inscribing hymn’, ‘The Honey hymn’, ‘The Rowing hymn’, ‘The Drumbeat hymn’, etc.

These are divine nectar for attaining God; they give us real clues of how God may be attained by all. An artist may inscribe lovely creepers in wood or stone, but for Sankaradeva it is nothing except beauty for the eyes. It will get destroyed one day. But the ‘creepers’ he got inscribed in the form of hymns through his learned disciple Madhavadeva, are indestructible and has the Real Truth. *It is these divine creepers which if you climb can take you to heaven, from this perishable earth.* These great words and hymns are like “*Sanjivani*”, (a herb capable of bringing the dead back to life) and may be called, “*Sanjivani Mahamantra*”.

Only Sankaradeva was able to achieve a confluence of unmatched discipline, devotion, religion, dedication and absorbing composition. So why should we continuously not ask all to follow the examples shown by our Guru Sankaradeva.

6) Guru Sankaradeva has always considered himself as a messenger of Lord Krishna. In the case of most gurus it is seen that they are busy focusing themselves. Along with these, some are also known to cunningly tailor their teachings for self-gain. To have considered himself only as a servant of Lord Krishna and to have attracted the masses towards him by setting great examples is none other than Sankaradeva.

To have given us the true values and virtues of life itself, Sankaradeva is second to none. It is with a free mind that we all can claim that Sankaradeva is a Great Guru.

7) We have mentioned earlier that all gurus are respectable to us. However we must mention one important thing in the case of other gurus – some can speak but cannot write; some can speak and also write but cannot dance and so on. *Sankaradeva is the one and only guru, who can read, write, speak, compose, sing, act, play musical instruments, dance, make things, paint and what not – to the level of perfection.* He was an expert poet, singer, musician, composer, author, dancer, actor, social worker, agriculturist, athlete and swimmer.

To be able to carry out the above as a culture associated with Lord Krishna and to teach others [to do so] was none other than Sankaradeva. How many gurus are there, who can do and teach the above? So we all have to come to such a guru with all heart and soul.

8) It is very interesting to note that, “*Mati Akhora*” (which are some of the basic steps of Sattriya dance - a classical dance form of India founded by Srimanta

Sankaradeva) provides the blend of 64 arts that are vital for our physical wellbeing. *These kinds of examples are rare achievements of our Guru Srimanta Sankaradeva which not only make him great but make him stand out amongst the rest.*

If we look at various holy places of India or the world, we see that the *prasad* (a material substance that is first offered to a deity and then consumed) offered are mainly oil, milk or sugar based products. However in case of Sankaradeva not only the prayer halls were unique but also the offerings and *prasad*. He offered God a mixture of soaked gram, pulses, rice together with fruits and roots - like bananas, coconuts and ginger. This mixture is not only balanced and tasty, but also does not provoke any disease if taken regularly. Instead it regularizes bladder and bowel function. Only people who have tasted this mixture can appreciate the taste and benefits of it.

Again at this juncture we may ask what may be greater than the ocean and who may be greater than Sankaradeva.

9) Another major fact is that for our guru there is only one caste, class or creed among people. *It is the class of human being.* There is hence no discrimination based on caste, color or language. Here the cultured and civilized received respectable position. His pupil Madhavadeva has written “[People have] forgotten their races, they have built the bridge that unites them together praying to Hari with an open heart”. This means that if we keep thinking about the different classes and communities we come from we will not be able to form a greater and united society. This will not only disintegrate us, but will also degrade us.

Sankaradeva’s teachings have not only united different communities but have also served as a fool-proof model for the society to progress, not only culturally but on all fronts. Will we ever find a similar guru anywhere? His dear student Madhavadeva says,

*“Sankare samsaya cedi sastroro tottvaka bhedi procarise Krishnara bhokoti,
tanko eri ki karone aanok buloyo guru, kinu loka maha murhamoti”*

This means: Sankaradeva has given us the hidden treasures of the Holy Scriptures. He has spread the devotion for Lord Krishna. It will be unwise to follow others as your guru when we have such a Great One.

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