

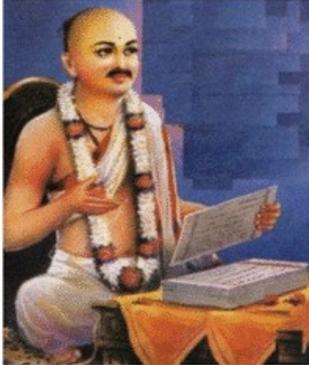


NEW

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Glory of Bharath » Santh Darsan

Eknath



Eknath (1533-1599) was a prominent Marathi religious poet in the Hindu tradition in India.

He was born and lived most of his life in Paithan in Maharashtra, India. Eknath was well-versed in Sanskrit, Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Hindi languages besides Marathi.

Shantibrahma, a great man who achieved sainthood, a social reformer of the highest order, a highly principled man, a thorough scholar of the Sanskrit language, who is known as Dnyanacha Eka (Eka who belongs to Saint Dyaneshwar or Eka who is knowledgeable) in entire Maharashtra - this great personality is Saint Eknath ! An ideal householder, son of Marathi language, a learned Pandit of varied subjects and an ocean of compassion are also other appropriate words to describe him.

Bhaskarpant Kulkarni, who resided in Pratisthan (Paithan), was his ancestor. He was a Deshast Rigvedi Brahman (a Hindu upper caste). Saint Bhanudas was his great grandfather, who is well known to have returned the idol of God Vitthal back to Pandharpur from Hampi, where it had been taken by the King Krishnadeva Raya of Vijaynagar for safety. God Suryanarayan was his family deity. His father's name was Suryanarayan and mother's name Rukmini. It is believed that he was born sometime between 1528 to 1533. Unfortunately, he lost his parents at a very young age; he was brought up by his grandparents, Chakrapani and Saraswati. From a young age, he had a fondness for spirituality and Harikirtan.

Sadguru Janardan Swami was an important minister in the court of the Muslim kingdom at Devgad (Devgiri). He was originally a resident of Chalisgaon; his last name (family name) was Deshpande. He too was a Rigvedi Brahman, and a great devotee of the deity Dattatraya. Eknath had secretly accepted Janardan as his Sadguru (Ultimate Guru). Janardanpant was an intellectual and honest man. Saint Eknath toiled hard for six years to serve his Guru. As an accountant Eknath once spent the whole night to find a mistake of one paisa. Janardan Swami was delighted to find such dedication. He directed Eknath's dedication towards the path of God. The vision of the deity Dattatraya appeared before Eknath. Eknath's life was blessed by Atmabodh, complete favour of his Guru, and the vision of God Dattatraya that appeared before him. He went on several pilgrimages. He married a virtuous lady from Vajapur near Paithan. She was named Girija after marriage and they had two daughters, Godavari and Ganga, and a son, Hari. The son later was well known as HariPandit, and was proud of his heritage and culture. Poet Mukteshwar was Eknath's grandson.

Saint Eknath was born 237 years after Saint Dnyaneshwar, in extremely adverse times. The Muslim dynasty was ruling. The Hindu Kingdom of Vijaynagar was destroyed. The entire society had turned irresponsible. There was total ignorance of one's duty towards one's society, self-governance or any patriotism. There was a tendency towards doggedness and simply discharging religious rites and rituals, disregarding religion. Women were kidnapped and converted into Muslims in broad daylight. Under such an exigency, Saint Eknath prayed to Goddess Jagdamba for help in social reform. Baye Daar Ugadh (Dear lady, open the door), so saying Eknath awakened the society using different styles of religious songs like Bharud, Jogva and Gondhal. Saint Eknath was a saint-poet, intellectual-poet and ballad (Shahir) poet. By enrapturing and awakening the despondent society, he guided them on the right path and awakened Maharashtra's emancipation. Eknath was a devout disciple of his Guru and wrote under the name of Eka-janardana meaning Eka (nath) of Janardana.

He wrote a lot of verses (ovi), Abhanga, Gavhani. The Eknath Bhagwad, a commentary on the eleventh canto of Sanskrit Bhagwat Purana, an ancient script, written by him is very popular. There are altogether 1367 Shlokas (verses), on which he wrote 18,810 Ovi. The original Bhagwat has 12 chapters. It is Purana based poetry that blesses the listener and reader. The Bhavarth Ramayan was written by him for which he wrote 25,000 ovi and was completed by his disciple with 15000 more ovi. His Rukmini Swayamvar is extremely popular. His hymn to God Dattatreya is also famous. This great soul created abundant literature and enriched the Marathi language. Most importantly, he meticulously prepared an authentic edition of the Dnyaneshwari. Eknath was a MahaVaishnav (a great follower of the Vaishnav sect of Brahmins), a devotee of God Dattatreya and also of Goddess Jagdamba.

Sant Eknath was the disciple of Sri Janardana Swami - a highly ranked minister in the kingdom of Devgarh. Sant Eknath had surrendered his life at the lotus feet of his Gurudev since he was just 10 years old. He used to wash Guruji's clothes, get flowers for worshipping, when Gurudev used to sit for meals, he used to fan him with a hand-fan, he used to take care of the sons of Guruji, he used to read letters sent to Guruji & give corresponding replies as directed by Guruji. While performing these duties & several other big & small duties he surrendered at the divine feet of Gurudev.

Once Gurudev told Eknath to do the accounting of the expenses of the king's ministry. The accounts were to be submitted to the king next morning. The whole day was spent in writing & checking the accounts. The night came. The servant kept a candle near Eknath & went away. Eknath didn't even come to know that night had begun. A mistake of one penny was there in the accounts. It had become midnight & still that mistake of one penny was not traceable. Eknath kept on working...Early in the morning Gurudev saw that Eknath is still busy with the accounts. He silently came & stood in front of the candle. Shadow was now falling on the account-books, but Eknath still kept on looking into the account-books with full concentration. He was so involved with his work that even in darkness, the letters of the account-book were clearly visible

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to him.

All of a sudden the mistake of one penny was figured out. Eknath was so happy that he shouted: "Found it... Found it... !"

Gurudev asked: "What did you find, son?"

Eknath was totally surprised to hear Gurudev's voice. When he looked up, he saw Gurudev standing. He got up & bowed to Gurudev & said: "Gurudev! A mistake of one penny was not traceable. Now it is found."

Only a mistake of one penny in the accounts of thousands! And to remain awake the whole night to figure that out. So much dedication in Guru-Seva! Shri Janardana Swami's heart was filled with Guru-Grace seeing so much devotion & endurance in Eknath. He found a capable heir who could be showered with the nectar of True Knowledge. The true disciple capable of taking care of the spiritual property of the SatGuru was found. Thereafter the sun of True-Knowledge arose in Eknath's heart & in his divine presence several other aspirants were overwhelmed being able to experience this Supreme Bliss. The Mother Godavari (river Godavari disguised as a lady) herself used to come to attend Sant Eknath's spiritual discourses to wash away the sins which other people used to put in her.

Old Marathi Literature covers about eight centuries. Its pioneers and founders were Mukundaraj (Vivekasindhu) and Dnyaneshwar (Dnyaneshwari) whose younger contemporary Namdeo (1270-1350) wrote devotional verses in a simple language for the people. Two centuries later came the great saint and greater poet Eknath whose Ekanathi Bhagavata is a literary masterpiece of Marathi literature. Eknath had a simple and attractive style of composing poetry and was the founder of secular poetry in Marathi.

For his spiritual development in his youth, Eknath had accepted the discipleship of a Guru named Janardan Swami. At the suggestion of his Guru, Eknath wrote as his first composition a Marathi commentary in verse form named Chatushloki Bhagwat based on certain four verses in Sanskrit Bhagwat. The elaborate commentary consisted of 1,036 owees. About 230 years before the birth of Eknath, Dnyaneshwar had written an important commentary in verse form in Marathi named Bhawarth-Deepika, (popularly known as Dnyaneshwari) on Sanskrit Bhagawad Geeta. After elaborate research, Eknath meticulously prepared an authentic edition of Dnyaneshwari. Almost all of Eknath's writings were in verse form in Marathi. Eknath wrote a scholarly and lucid commentary, Eknathi Bhagawat, on the Eleventh Canto of Sanskrit Bhagawat Purana. The commentary involved 18,800 owees. He wrote the first 25,000 owees of his another major work, Bhawartha-Ramayana. A disciple of his had added 15,000 owees to complete this work. Eknath wrote Rukmini Swayamwar comprising 1,711 owees; it was based on 144 shlok from Bhagawat Purana. His work, Hastamalak, comprised 764 owees, and it was based on a 14-shlok Sanskrit hymn with the same name by Shankaracharya. He further wrote Shukashtak (447 owees), Swatma-Sukha (510 owees), Ananda-Lahari (154 owees), Chiranjeewa-Pad (42 owees), Geeta-Sar and Prahlad-Vijaya.

Eknath introduced a new form of Marathi religious songs called Bharood , writing 300 of them. He wrote 300 religious songs in the Abhang form. In his adult life, Eknath gave many lucid religious public discourses. Eknath initiated in Maharashtra a movement called Wasudewa Sanstha. It involves house-to-house visitations by individuals known as Wasudewa, who, standing in front of people's houses, spread religious messages through bhajan chants.

He has given a simple and straightforward message:

Eka Janardani Sopa, Vithalnaam Mantra Japa

(Listen to Eknath, keep repeating the name of god)

In 1599 he took jalsamadhi (jal:water, samadhi:the soul discards the body) by wading into the River Godavari.



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