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## Context to the nugget conversation

Pradeep speaks about Srimanta Sankardev who was a 15th-16th century polymath from Assam. He was a saint-scholar, poet, playwright, dancer, actor, musician, artist social-religious reformer and a figure of importance in the cultural and religious history of Assam, India. Pradeep speaks about how Sankardev used various forms of content to bring people together and for people to build trust with him.

## Transcription

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Deepak Jayaraman (DJ): In a different part of the book Pradeep, you make the connection between Sankardeva and what he did with music and images and fascinatingly enough, you connect it to how leaders of today use social media, connect the dots for us.

Pradeep Chakravarthy (PC): Right. So who is Sankardeva, Sankardeva was a poet saint from Assam, and he is largely credited today for spreading Vaishnavism or the worship of Vishnu in Assam. We do not have many sources of his life history, and this is not to say Deepak that we are looking only at written sources. I am very clear, in India, we have always looked at oral traditions as well. And in fact, I have struggled a lot with this period and I will struggle a lot more with the earlier periods because many of these oral traditions have actually vanished in the last 20-30 years or 40 years because we have lost that generation, as and when each generation passes away, that oral tradition goes away. But Sankardeva was somebody who was able to bring Assam, especially the various smaller rulers of Assam, to move from the earlier religions they were practicing into Vaishnavism, and not only did he bring them into Vaishnavism, he was able to unite that entire region on the basis of Vaishnavism. And what he has done is very interesting. He has worked with the kings in a particular way and there, it has largely been practice of personal leadership, and I have taken the Sikh Gurus as well, so they have also done this, small acts which showed personal example of leadership. So in terms of living a life of the values that he preached, or never asking a king for favours, or never admonishing a king in public or giving advice to the king in terms of how he should rule but never thrusting himself at a level of the king. But at the mass level, he has also looked at how do I communicate stories to the larger groups of people. And what are these stories really all about, all the stories of our texts in the religion are stories of hope. And he has looked at these stories of hope to really give hope to people and improve their self-identity. So he has created these bhajan mandals as they are known today in terms of bringing people together through music. And as they sing, they connect with each other, there is an emotional outlet for the music, they are able to bring each other closer to themselves, and he has also used visual images. So he had this huge scroll painted with all the stories. And even today in the Assam Bengal region, I mean, I suppose it is a dying art, you have these stories which are painted in paper, and as the story moves, the paper also moves. So it is like your PPT in the olden days, but visually capturing what the aspirations could be.

And we do this even today, right, when many coaches, when we want to inspire somebody, we paint a picture of what the future looks like. And that image can be a very powerful source of inspiring us. And people like Sankardeva used it very well to bring people together and also develop a sense of self-respect. And he was able to use this to bring people together and remove a lot of the caste barriers, which has been a curse in India for many years.

## Reflections from Deepak Jayaraman

DJ: Thank you for listening. For more please visit [www.playtopotential.com](http://www.playtopotential.com).

## End of nugget transcription

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### About Deepak Jayaraman

Deepak seeks to unlock the human potential of senior executive's / leadership teams by working with them as an Executive Coach / Sounding Board / Transition Advisor. You can know more about his work [here](#).

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