

# Tukaram

Prof. K. V. BELSARE



181.48  
B 419 T

B419 T

**November, 1967**

**TUKARAM**

*Published by:*

Maharashtra Information Centre  
GOVERNMENT OF MAHARASHTRA  
30-31, York Hotel Building  
Connaught Circus  
NEW DELHI-1

TUKARAM

K. V. BELSARE

DATA ENTERED

JANUARY, 1967  
PAUSA, 1888

 **Library** IAS, Shimla



00027224

© Maharashtra Information Centre

181.48  
T 412 T

Price Rupee One

27224  
16.11.61

*Published by :*

THE CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER  
MAHARASHTRA INFORMATION CENTRE  
CONNAUGHT CIRCUS, NEW DELHI

*Printed by :*

THE MANAGER, GOVERNMENT CENTRAL PRESS  
BOMBAY-4

The cultural heritage of our motherland in all its diverse forms is the common property of not only the people of India but of the whole of mankind and it involves obligation on the part of all of us to enrich it in every way possible.

An attempt however small to bring within reach of an average Indian authentic information on the important aspects of this history and culture in order to make possible a two-way flow of information between the different States of India, could supply an essential need for securing harmony in inter-State relations and promote national integration.

The Maharashtra Information Centre has, with these humble objects in view, projected a series of booklets on Maharashtra. They will be only introductory but will deal with most aspects of the history, and the economic and cultural life of the people of the State. The contributors are authorities in their subjects and well known for their erudition.

The present series which includes twelve booklets is published in English and Hindi and attempts will be made to publish them in other Indian languages. About a dozen more titles are also envisaged in the near future. Both series are only illustrative and

not comprehensive in character and in design. Nor will there be any rigidity of opinions expressed by the authors.

It is hoped that the series will help to remove the lack of understanding which retards the growth of a healthy national feeling and go a long way in bringing the people of Maharashtra closer to the people of other States.

The Maharashtra Information Centre extends its cordial thanks to all the authors and artists who have participated in this venture.

## 1. *Introduction :*

PETERILIM SOROKIN, the famous American social philosopher, classifies world cultures into : (i) Sensate ; (ii) Ideational ; and (iii) Idealistic types. Each culture represents a well-marked pattern of social life. Each again is based on a major premise which serves as the fundamental principle for outlook on life and its values. (i) The people brought up in a Sensate culture do not believe in any Reality beyond the senses. Their needs and ends are mainly physical. The Scientist is their ideal man and Epicureanism their ideal life. (ii) The people who are brought up in an Ideational culture believe that Reality is beyond the senses. Their needs and ends are mainly spiritual. They reject normal pleasures of life and retire into solitude. The ascetic or the solitary Yogi is their ideal man and Stoicism their ideal life. (iii) The people who are brought up in an Idealistic culture too believe that Reality is beyond the senses, but that it is very creative and expresses itself in the form of the universe. The needs and ends of people in an Idealistic culture are organized into a balanced harmony of spiritual and material activities. They do not reject sense pleasures but at the same time they do not overrate their place in human life. The benevolent Saint is their ideal

man and creative social work is their ideal life.

Hindu Culture is an Idealistic type of culture. As a consequence, a Saint is looked upon with supreme reverence in India. Scientists, politicians, writers and even warriors hold a secondary place in the eyes of Indians. India has a long tradition of Saints among whom Tukaram holds a unique place.

The Saint is a person who has reached the supreme heights of self-realization. He sees God face to face ; and he enjoys unmixed Divine Bliss. A Saint knows God so intimately that he himself becomes divine. His life is holy in all its aspects. He is king over himself and therefore belongs to the Kingdom of God. Not only does he know the Divine Being but also possesses Him all in all. That makes him free from fear and ignorance. A Saint is a warrior of a different category. The ancient Greek philosopher Heraclitus declared that war is the father of all things. The great *Bhagavadgita* begins with the scene of a great war. The life of a Saint too consists of a war. But his war is fought on the plane of the spirit. He has to face a tormenting conflict between the asserting self-will and the quality demanding self-surrender to the will of the Divine Being. A person reaches sainthood when he wins the battle under the guidance of God. The Light of God, that is, the



Light of Knowledge, burns steadily in the heart of a Saint. Through it he sees the divine purpose working within himself and the universe. He smilingly co-operates with the divine purpose and as a result, realizes the presence of God within and without. Therefore, he faces the ups and downs of life with sublime serenity. He remains unmoved by the usual calamities of worldly life because he sees the Divine hand working behind every event. Holiness, fearlessness, and love for all beings are the marks of a saintly life. A Saint derives great strength from his contact with God. He pours that strength into the hearts of men and women who labour for peace in life. Hence a Saint is always a source of inspiration and solace to the sorrow-ridden world. His benevolence knows no bounds. His kindness has the motherly charm. His self is untouched by narrowness or meanness. Hence a Saint is a Mahatma, that is, a great soul, in every sense. He is a wise man whose wisdom consists in leading men and women towards God with all the gentleness and tact of a born teacher. His contemporaries often treat him with contempt. The wicked in society generally persecute him and put him to great suffering. But in spite of all, his faith in God and inward peace remain unmoved. A Saint, in short, is a shrine

of God on earth, vibrant with the unseen presence of the Deity.

Tukaram was a Saint in this sense. His personality and his literature have exercised a continued influence on the people of Maharashtra during the last three hundred years and it is impossible to forget him.

## 2. *Brief Sketch of Tukaram's Life :*

Saint Tukaram was born at Dehu in the year A.D. 1608. He came from a family of devotees of Vitthal of Pandharpur. His parents were well placed in life. They were persons of high moral character and carried on very devotedly the family tradition of visits to Pandharpur. His father ran a small shop in the village and made good business. But he was essentially a spiritual man and worshipped his family deity with devotion. He told his rosary regularly, uttering the Divine Name, and studied the *Bhagavadgita*. He sang *bhajans* every night along with his neighbours and was a friend and guide to all. Tukaram's mother was a selfless lady who worked in the home from morn till night. She was large-hearted towards her neighbours and rendered them every kind of help. She had firm faith in Vitthal and strictly observed her religious routine. Tukaram's home was a place

of peace and plenty for the guests and the relatives as well as for the needy and the poor.

Tukaram was married early in life, probably when he was fifteen years old. His wife suffered from asthma and so he married a second time. His parents died soon after and their death affected the fortunes of the family. A great famine raged over Maharashtra and Tukaram had to struggle very hard to make both ends meet. The shop ran into difficulties, the business declined and his economic condition became worse. He was forced to sell his valuables, cattle, lands, etc. to maintain the family and pay off the creditors. His first wife Rakhmabai and a son died of starvation. Most of the remaining cattle too perished and the shop had to be closed down. Tukaram had come to the end of his tether. His father-in-law extended a helping hand with



a loan of Rs. 200. Tukaram invested the amount in business but suffered a heavy loss.

These calamities exercised a powerful influence on Tukaram who, from personal experience, now realized the vanity of earthly pursuits. He was inwardly transformed with a profound change in his outlook on men and things. His heart was filled with a new longing and he began to read holy books and to meditate on God. He spent most of his day in the solitude of two hills, Bhamnath and Bhandara close to Dehu and returned in the evening to perform a *kirtan* (religious discourse accompanied by music) in the village temple of Vitthal he himself had built in more affluent times. His fame as an excellent *kirtankar* and a saintly person gradually spread



among the people. They began to revere him as a Saint, which aroused the jealousy of Mambaji Gosavi, a professional preacher of the village, because as more and more people flocked to listen to Tukaram's *kirtans*, Mambaji's earnings dwindled. He looked for an opportunity to teach a lesson to this low-caste upstart and had not to wait long — one day a cow owned by Tukaram entered into his field and caused much damage to the growing crop. Mambaji vented his anger by violently belabouring both the animal and its master. Tukaram suffered the indignity with true Vaishnav humility.

Rameshwarbhat, a learned Brahmin of Dehu, was furious when he learnt that Tukaram, though belong-



ing to a low caste, had written a large number of poems expounding the philosophy of the *Bhagavad-gita*. He issued an injunction prohibiting Tukaram from writing any poems and ordering him to throw into a nearby river those already written. With a sad and heavy heart Tukaram obeyed ; but he fasted for twelve days on the bank of the Indrayani, the said river. The legend has it that the river Goodess appeared in person on the thirteenth day to return the bundle of his poems which had sunk to the bottom. Modern scholars explain the incident as a form of water-ordeal which Tukaram's poems successfully survived.

Tukaram had two children, a son and a daughter.



Though he remained poor during the rest of his life he was never in want. His second wife, Jijabai, had a shrewish temper and not infrequently Tukaram bore its full brunt with Socratic patience, and a lively sense of humour. Shivaji and Saint Ramdas were his contemporaries and it is likely that he met both of them. Shivaji, it is said, once sent rich gifts of clothes and gold ornaments to Tukaram but the latter returned them. Tukaram continued preaching and teaching the secrets of spiritual life to the people, though he had to face opposition from the orthodox in one form or another till the very end. He had a large number of disciples, drawn from all sections of society, who were sincerely devoted to him.

His poems were truly inspired, and flowed from his lips as 'spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings' at the time of his *kirtans*. The credit for recording them goes to two of his disciples, Gangaram Maval and Santaji Teli. Tukaram's poems known as *abhangas* (literally 'the unbreakable ones') have become a part of the public memory of Maharashtra. They are sung in every village and in every home. No *kirtan* is a success without drawing heavily upon them and it has become an established custom to end one with Tukaram's song of prayer.

A popular story commemorates Tukaram's equani-



mity of temper and faith in God. Once, the wife of one of his disciples squirted scalding hot water on Tukaram, blaming him for her husband's neglect of household duties. Tukaram quietly bore the ordeal, loudly raising his voice in prayer to God. He did not suffer any ill effects. The incident, like many others, tested his saintliness and helped to spread his fame wider. Tukaram performed his last *kirtan* in Dehu, near the river, exhorting the people to dedicate themselves to the service of God. He quietly passed away in A.D. 1660. The most loved among the saints, Tukaram holds a powerful sway





over the hearts of his people through the divine sweetness and high sincerity of his *abhangas*. They



remain as fresh today as on the day they were sung for the first time in the Viththal temple at Dehu, from the inspired heart of saintly Tukaram.

### 3. *Spiritual Career :*

Shri Aurobindo was once asked about his biography. The great sage of Pondicheri replied : 'My bodily life is not of much importance. My inner life is that which has the most significance.' The remark of a great modern man of self-realization applies to the lives of Saints of all times. Saints live a richer inner life. But unlike the common man they are generally



unwilling to reveal it to the public at large. There are three reasons for this. First, the various experiences which a Saint undergoes are intensely personal and intuitional. They are held to be very sacred because they reveal the story of the gradual discovery of love divine by a soul thirsting for God, and such experiences may lose something of their sacredness if made public. Secondly, the common man is likely to misinterpret the divine visitations which come to the Saint. Thirdly, spiritual experiences lie on a higher plane than the material. It requires detached introspection and highly developed powers of description to put them in proper phrases. Saint Tukaram was however one of those rare individuals in world history who possessed the supreme gift of poetic description and he was gifted enough to embody his rich spiritual experience in the simple language of the villager. We can draw a faithful picture (of course in outline) of Tukaram's spiritual development on the basis of his *abhangas*.

It is said that a Saint has to pass through a sequence of stages in his journey towards God. The stages are (i) Awakening of the self to God ; (ii) Purification of the self ; (iii) Practice of prayer ; (iv) Art of contemplation ; (v) Ecstasy ; (vi) The Life Divine. A Saint is a highly creative and dynamic personality.

As such it is not possible to fit his life into any mechanical scheme. But the stages mentioned above represent a broad outline of the psychological development of any seeker after God. Tukaram is of special interest to the beginner in spiritual life because he has left us a record of his ups and downs in all the stages of spiritual discipline.

(i) *The Awakening*.—A Saint is a man of God and a man of God believes that there is a supernatural order which guides our lives. The order is no doubt unseen but it shows its working in the concrete events of the world. The Saints believe that man's supreme good lies in a willing submission to this supernatural order. The first step in the achievement of the supreme good is to become keenly conscious of the imperfection of the natural order. This consciousness is called the Awakening of the Self. Loss of health and wealth, sudden death of near and dear ones, or a setback to ambition very often serves as a soul-shaking experience which awakens the slumbering self. The man whose self is thus awakened is filled with repentance and remorse, with an intense feeling of being sinful and therefore of being far away from God. Tukaram lived through all these experiences. When life was smooth, he enjoyed health and wealth. He had a loving wife and a group

of admiring friends. But when times changed, life became dreary ; disasters overwhelmed him on all sides. He was reduced to poverty. He had to close down his shop. His dear wife passed away and his ambitions were completely shattered. The insecurity of worldly things came home to him with a convincing proof. He realized that the pleasures of life were superficial, and only hid the face of disease, starvation, humiliation, disaster, and death. Everything in the world was so fugitive. He very keenly realized that life goes along with death, health with disease, youth with old age, and pleasure with pain. The truth dawned upon him that genuine happiness was to be found only in the love of God. He remarks : 'I get a feeling of desolation, almost of despair, when I see suffering. I am convinced that no one can be completely happy with the things of the earth. The world seems to me to be remote and strange. Its colour and charm are gone. It leaves me cold. God alone is real. All else is deception, played by *maya* on the various *jivas*.' The onset of calamities brought about a radical transformation in Tukaram's attitude towards men and matters. He was an ambitious young man, brought up in a deeply religious home. Young and full of vitality, the pleasures of the world attracted him. Naturally the

instinct for God lay dormant in his self. The self, therefore, had to be violently awakened. But once it was awakened there was a complete shake-up of his ideas, attitudes, and beliefs. He now began to seek within what he had so far sought without. He developed a mood of self-analysis and became very conscious of his faults and imperfections. He complains to God : 'I know my own faults too well, O God. But I cannot help the wanderings of my mind. I have become solely a slave to my senses. My mind tells me that my conduct is wicked. I have been verily ashamed of my life. There is no limit to my sin and to my misery. I have become a burden to this earth. In body, speech, and mind I have done evil things. I am now falling on Thy compassion, O God, You may do whatever You think is right.' The awakening of Tukaram's self generated a passion for God in him. The rhythm of the old life changed and he attempted to establish harmony with God and His will. Tukaram came to the decision — 'Now God alone and nothing else.' But this very decision was the cause of an internal conflict which he had to fight out with the help of the Divine Name.

(ii) *The Purification.*—Tukaram decided once for all that quest of God was to be his only business in

life. With this decision he appeared to enter a new world and to start on a holy pilgrimage. The journey was long and the road was unknown. God will operate upon man only when the inner obstacles are removed and the self has achieved the holiness of spirit. Hence breaking down the impediments which stand between himself and God constitutes the first step of a spiritual aspirant. This process of removing the barriers which prevent the self from approaching God is called Purgation or Purification. Tukaram now entered the phase of Purgation of the Self. He had to learn to see the divine presence of both within and without. To achieve this vision of God – and this is the true achievement of a Saint – the old self is to be completely remade. In his mood of self-analysis, Tukaram realized that pride and self-love were deeply rooted in his self. They had made his heart as hard as stone. It had to be made as soft as down through humility and self-surrender, if divine love were to arise within it. He had to chasten his self all over.

So far he had harboured all kinds of un-divine thoughts and un-divine desires. They had created a hard covering over his self which shut it away from God. The covering consisted of strong attachment to earthly objects, evil habits, pride, lust, anger, greed,

and hatred. It gave rise to intense selfishness, false valuation, narrow outlook and perverse attitudes towards men and things. All these had to be ruthlessly removed. Therefore, Tukaram got ready to cut off all that bound his self down to the non-divine. He gathered courage to fight and to kill if necessary the old Adam in him. He started to win back his lost companionship with the Lord.

Herein lies the great appeal of Tukaram for the common man. Most of the great Saints were born with a spiritual genius. Either they had a natural aptitude for God or they had a psychological make-up which could easily adjust the self to the presence of the Divine. But Tukaram possessed neither. He walked the way to God with as much difficulty as most men would. He had to pass through all the trials which confront the common seeker of God. The process of purification of the self is the heart of spiritual discipline. The self has to be divinized in all its aspects if it is to establish a permanent contact with the Divine Being. The process is hard and tedious. Many seekers fail in the spiritual endeavour because they lack the sustained effort and patient courage to remake the old self. Hence Tukaram serves as a source of great inspiration to every spiritual aspirant. Saints very rightly say that the



pilgrimage to God is an ascent full of ups and downs — the ups consisting of flashes of God's grace and the downs consisting of depths of despair. Tukaram has left us a splendid record of the vicissitudes of his spiritual progress.

When Tukaram began to look within himself, he saw that there was a tremendous gulf between what he ought to be and what he actually was. This created a profound feeling of repentance. His repentance was so strong that his whole personality was shaken to its roots. Saints compare repentance to a purifying fire. A truly repentant soul is cleansed of its sins and it becomes fit for the pilgrimage to God. The great Dnyaneshwar calls repentance the holy Ganges of spiritual life. One who takes a dip in the cleansing waters of repentance immediately becomes a man of God. True repentance made Tukaram realize that his life so far had been a waste, and that his self was so ugly and so full of vices. He resolved, therefore, to commit no more sins and adopted habits favourable to walking in the way of the Lord. He decided to do away with pride, envy, chronic anger, and uncharitableness. He imposed upon himself fasting, prayer, solitude, and spiritual reading. He seriously tried to develop the virtues of prudence, fortitude, faith, temperance,

and continence. He got ready to suffer for God. He began to appeal to his self saying : ‘ Come, my Self ! Get away from the joys of the senses. Release thyself from pride. Stay at the feet of the Lord and allow me to sing His Holy Name.’ But the old self would not listen. There came into existence two different selves in his heart as it were, and a terrible tug-of-war began between the old self and the new. In an interesting passage Tukaram remarks : ‘ O Lord ! I have two selves within me. My first self is the old self. It is attached to sense pleasures and all that is a hindrance on the way unto You. My second self is a new self. It is the *satvik* (pure) me who wants to walk in Your way. See how I am carried away by the old self. Are You not aware of my plight ? ’

In the first onset of repentance Tukaram began to dislike himself and his relatives. He found that his mind refused to submit quietly to the will of the Lord even at the time of prayer. The reason was simple. His mind was still attached to earthly things, to name and fame, wealth and property. Hence the main task before him was acquiring the spiritual virtue of non-attachment. As a matter of fact, non-attachment to everything that is not God is the foundation of spiritual discipline. All spiritual

endeavour bears fruit only if it is carried on the basis of true detachment. Tukaram was convinced that if he would fix his mind on God, he must free it from all other affections. He must cast off the yoke of the senses because sense pleasures are unreal and God alone is real. The self which is bound to the senses has to be released to be able to rise to the throne of God. The attachment to 'I, Me and Mine' leads the self away from God. Non-attachment is holiness and the home of everything that is dear to God. It can be achieved only by surrendering self-will to the will of God. Tukaram became conscious of the importance of detachment and he insists a hundred times on the surrender of the self to the will of the Lord. He remarks: 'It is easier to impose great penances upon oneself than to suffer the crosses of daily life in patience, charity, and humility. I am convinced that elimination of self-will and self-centred thinking, wishing, and imagining is the essence of spiritual *sadhana*.' Some trials which Tukaram underwent in the process of Purgation are truly classical. Once a wicked man in the village gave bad words to Tukaram. For some time he bore them in peace. But when the man crossed the limits of decency, Tukaram slipped from his poise and gave a lot of angry abuses in return.

When the emotion subsided he was filled with repentance. He prayed to God: 'Lord, just see how I have fallen a prey to this demon anger. I have uttered wicked abuses under its influence. I could not control it. Now I feel so sorry. I sing Thy Name. Do Thou cleanse my self of the stains of anger.'

Forgiveness is a quality very highly prized by the Saints and Tukaram learnt it at a high cost. Mambaji was waiting again for a chance to take vengeance on Tukaram, simply because Tukaram was fast advancing spiritually. One day when he came upon Tukaram, he humiliated the Saint publicly with the most vulgar abuse and gave him a very severe beating. Tukaram bore the humiliation as well as the bodily pain with great fortitude—Nay, he overlooked both and requested Mambaji to attend his (Tukaram's) *kirtan*. Contrarily Mambaji complained that he was exhausted by beating Tukaram and Tukaram thereupon massaged Mambaji's body with oil and respectfully brought him along to the temple. Tukaram bore scornful words in God's name. To suffer humiliation and suffering in God's name and to keep the self free from anger and hatred are the greatest achievements of the Purgative stage. Tukaram deliberately practised the control of sex,

as also of anger. In order to learn humility, he would do the meanest work in the village. At times the people thought that he had gone mad. But he was the sanest among them all. He distributed his belongings to the poor people and earned his livelihood by labour.

(iii) *Practice of Prayer.*—Tukaram had to learn one more important lesson. It was the lesson of self-surrender. A cleansing of the self from the bondage of sensual urges is necessary but not enough to reach the feet of God. The cleansed self must be laid at the feet of the Lord through complete surrender of the individual will. Just as there can be no holiness without detachment, so also there can be no love of God without self-surrender. The Saint says that the world belongs to God, therefore, as such how can we claim anything in the world to be our own? The possessive case, i.e. My or Mine, is a crime against God. The self guilty of this crime is unfit to approach the Divine Majesty. Hence Tukaram practised offering himself and his all at the feet of the Lord. This process of surrendering one's will voluntarily to the will of God is most painful. It means a voluntary elimination of all preferences which are the very breath of the normal life. Naturally Tukaram had to gather up enough strength to sur-

render his self to God and to see his hand in every event of his life. He could not achieve it all of a sudden. He had many falls and would at times doubt if the Lord really cared for him. He had to struggle with his desires, conquer his unruly passions, and lay all his ambitions to rest. Sometimes his senses were so violent that he felt completely frustrated and let them go their own way. Sometimes he lost his balance of mind, doubted his faith, and was sceptical about the new way of life which he had adopted. But the Divine Name came to his help on every such occasion. In an interesting *abhang*, he points out that the spiritual pilgrimage is a continuous warfare between the self on the one hand and the inner and outer environment on the other. The old desires and passions direct their attacks on the self who is a novice on the path of God. But with patience, prayer, and the repetition of the Divine Name, Tukaram assures us, the seeker of God sees success ultimately coming over to his side.

This practice of prayer is an indispensable step in spiritual life. The seeker desires to establish personal relations with the Deity and worship is the royal road to that. Prayer is the heart of worship because it brings about a real spiritual communion between the self and God. Tukaram now thirsted

to worship his deity Viththal. But he wanted an assurance that his worship would be accepted by God and that his prayers would reach Him. Such an assurance could be given only by the Guru, that is, by the Spiritual Master. Hence Tukaram sincerely desired to meet a spiritual guide. He had not to wait for long. He was initiated by Babaji Chaitanya soon after. Tukaram has left us a detailed account of the initiation. He says : 'I was initiated in a dream. I met my Master on his way to the river to bathe. He placed his hand upon my head and asked me to give him some ghee, which unfortunately I could not. He told me of his spiritual lineage, starting from his grandfather Raghav Chaitanya to Keshav Chaitanya, and from him to his own self. His own name was Babaji. He advised me to repeat the Divine Name—Rama Krishna Hari—which I liked with all my heart. The date was the tenth day of the bright half of Magha, a Thursday. My Master knew my spiritual longings and blessed me with the Divine Mantra. It has guided many to the feet of the Lord.'

Tukaram realized that he must appeal to God for the satisfaction of his spiritual needs. He began to pray for spiritual blessings, namely, a pure heart, a steady faith and an inner transformation. We are

finite creatures. We are ignorant of and dependent upon God. We can progress through prayer alone. Prayer means an intimate converse with God and therefore it generates the mood of self-surrender. 'Lord, let Thy will be done,' is the supreme prayer. When Tukaram began to meditate on the Divine Name he found that it was difficult to maintain the mood of surrender or the attitude of spiritual humility. He also found that he could maintain his spiritual heights only in the company of Saints — which, as a consequence, he eagerly sought. To live with the Saints is a great boon to the spiritual seeker. Tukaram remarks : 'Saints are the chosen sons of God. My mind pants to meet them. My life will be blessed only when I get an opportunity to embrace the Saints. I shall touch their feet and do the meanest work to serve them. Oh ! how can I express my gratitude to them ! How shall I repay their kindness ! They keep me spiritually ever awake. They dearly love me even as a cow does her calf.' Out of the repetition of the Divine Name and constant company of Saints Tukaram became master of the art of contemplation. This was the time when he saw a grand vision of God.

We have already seen how the orthodox Rameshwarbhat had wanted him to stop writing any poems



and to destroy those which were already written. With a heavy heart Tukaram permitted his treasure to be thrown into the river. But he invoked God to restore his poems to him. If the miracle did not happen, Tukaram was determined to fast unto death. It was a terrible penance which continued for thirteen days. The poems were restored. God appeared before him in a beautiful human form and filled him with great happiness. Tukaram describes this unique event in words charged with high emotion. He says : ‘ My Lord, You follow me like a shadow. You came close to me and allayed my fears. You not only manifested your beautiful form but also embraced me. This set my mind at rest. But, O God, I troubled You for nothing. Forgive me, I shall never again put You to such trouble (on my account).’ Such grand visions of divine expression are like milestones on the path to God. The seeker is assured that he is on the right road. But the coming of such visions should be left entirely to the will of the Lord.

(iv) *The Art of Contemplation*.—Saints of all times admit that God is everywhere. But they also point out that God is not everywhere for us. For the spiritual seeker God is to be found within his own self. Anyone who wants to see Him must reach

the centre of his own soul. Contemplation is the art which teaches the seeker to enter into the interior of the self and to meet God face to face in the sanctuary of his own heart. Tukaram's uniqueness lies in the fact that he learnt the art of contemplation from the lowest stage and by sheer force of devotion reached the supreme heights of divine experience. It was a slow and weary pilgrimage from bondage of the flesh to identity with the Divine Being. But Tukaram went through it successfully with only the assistance of love. He has left us a true description of the various phases of the contemplative life in a grand but homely style.

But Tukaram soon understood that a Saint cannot live on visions alone. He must live on something deeper, something even more spiritual. That something was communion with God within the heart. The vision at best assured him of God's immense love for the Bhakta. But he had to stabilize the love in his own self. With his extraordinary powers of self-observation and self-analysis, he set about the task of teaching his self to feed on love of God alone. He slowly trained his self to enjoy the presence of God through contemplation, and directed his attention inwards through constant *japa* (repetition) of the Divine Name. He not only gathered in all the

scattered powers of his self but also drove out of his mind all the impressions, ideas, and thoughts of external things. Tukaram had to retire to solitude on a hill-top outside the village. There he practised retiring into himself and deeply mediated upon the loving kindness of the Lord. In the deep silence of the Divine Name, he learnt the mysteries of Divine Love. The clamour of the flesh was silenced. The intellect also stopped working and became free from all distracting thoughts. Tukaram was conscious of only two things — the sweet name of God and the sweet form of the Lord. By hard practice of contemplation and by surrender to His intense love, Tukaram found that the Lord was present wherever he went. He remarks: 'The Lord follows me wherever I go. He makes it impossible for me to forget Him. He has robbed me of my heart which was always my treasure. He showed Himself to me and I have gone mad after Him. How can I describe Him? My mouth refuses to speak, my ears refuse to hear. My whole body is filled with love divine.'

This feeling of divine presence was a great achievement for Tukaram. It was a state of mind in which his self became supremely respectful to everything spiritual. He did not see God with his physical eyes. He did not hear the words of God with his physical

ears. Nor did he arrive at the conviction of the divine presence through a process of logical reasoning. It was an intuitive experience which was the gift of the art of contemplation. The feeling of the divine presence was an immediate apprehension which resulted in a state of fearlessness and well-being on all fronts of life. Therefore, Tukaram now felt that everything was well and it was what it ought to be. The indwelling divine presence made him inwardly disposed and so, naturally, he became indifferent to wealth, misery, and words of scorn or ridicule. God became the nearest and dearest to him and he spoke to God with as much confidence as to a friend. In short, Tukaram began to enjoy the sweet companionship of his deity Viththal through His benign love.

He had started his spiritual career with purification of the self. He had turned his attention inwards and gradually stripped his self of the veils of carnal desires. With the help of the Divine Name he had learnt worship and developed an humble, steadfast, and loving attentiveness to God in the solitude of his own self. It had meant a concentration of attention and an absorption in His Name and His works. This resulted in the feeling of divine presence which was a spiritual achievement because he could get an inti-

mately personal knowledge of God. His soul enjoyed complete passivity and therefore was now ready to surrender itself completely to God.

(v) *Ecstasy*.—The path which leads to God is no doubt a path which culminates ultimately into a state of unmixed bliss. But it would be a mistake to suppose that the seeker walks on the way without pain of any sort. The feeling of divine presence is a new level of consciousness and the self is not yet fully remade so as to remain permanently on the new level. Therefore, after enjoying the sweet companionship of God for some time, the self of the seeker comes down from the heights. This period of coming back to the old life is not a happy time and the Saints call it 'the period of dryness', or 'the dark night of the soul'. The seeker thinks that he has lost his God, that God has withheld His love from him and he is lost for ever. The old state of repentance comes back with vehemence and the seeker suffers from a sense of sin, a feeling of unworthiness and a conviction of frustration in life. Like a true child of God, Tukaram had to pass through such a period of 'dryness' in his spiritual career. The dark night of his soul was very intense and continued for a considerable period. When the presence of God withdrew from the consciousness of

Tukaram, he felt keenly the agonies of separation. His self began to thirst for that nearness to God which it had enjoyed for a time. He was again oppressed by doubt, dread, and emptiness. He was in a state of crisis which was also a state of high spiritual tension. He thought that he had lost his way and did not know what to do. For hours he would sit before his Deity, giving vent to his emotions, with tears streaming from his eyes. He sent his prayers to God with all the intensity of feeling of his nature. But they had no effect. He cried : 'O God, my heart tells me that I have not known You. My request to You has fallen on deaf ears. You have not given me comfort. I feel ashamed of sitting in the company of Saints who have seen You. I have lost all courage. I think I am forlorn. My soul likes nothing but Your presence and pines for a vision of Your feet. I wish to see the same form which You have shown to bygone Saints. I have become mad after You. I pant for You as a fish without water. Shall I be fortunate enough to enjoy divine bliss? I request you, O Saints, to persuade God to come and meet me. How long shall I wait? I see no sign of God's presence. It seems to me, O God, that You and I shall now have to part. I have lost all patience. You have not accepted me. My

cries are of no avail. My love towards You is gradually getting less. To me, God is dead. My hopes are shattered and I have lost everything.' In a series of beautiful *abhangas* which are charged with emotion and spiritual ardour, Tukaram tells how God showed Himself to him and then for some reason withdrew His presence. Tukaram had enjoyed an intimate and personal love, which had now ceased. He felt as if he was cast into the shadows of darkness where everything was black.

This was, however, the darkness before the dawn. Tukaram soon crossed the agonies of the dark night of his soul and was caught up to God. Saints say that the factor of Divine Grace plays an important role at this stage in the life of the seeker. The seeker becomes powerless to proceed on his way because he is exhausted spiritually and the Grace of God alone can lift the suffering soul out of the dark night. Tukaram was very fortunate because Divine Grace soon descended on him and his self was pushed in front of the blinding light of God. It was a sudden experience which lasted for a short time. But even in that brief experience Tukaram was convinced beyond doubt that he saw God as He is. In the language of the Upanishadic seers, Tukaram had *Atma-Darshana*, a glimpse into Eternal Reality.

The experience had a revolutionary influence and it became a permanent possession of his soul. Tukaram saw God in the very centre of his soul by becoming one with Him. He realized God by himself becoming Divine. He describes the grand experience thus—‘I see God’s face and the vision gives me infinite bliss. My mind is riveted on it and my hands cling to His feet. As I look at Him, all my mental agony vanishes. Bliss leads me to greater bliss. Blessed am I that my efforts are crowned with success. I have attained the desired end. I have seen the Formless Person. I have obtained a treasure which has existed from times immemorial. God has accepted me.’

(vi) *The Life Divine*.—Sainthood implies both a direct, first-hand acquaintance with God and also an active life immersed in the knowledge of God. This experience is one of its own kind and therefore it makes the Saint a human being clearly distinguishable from anyone else. By the force of devotion and also by the Grace of God, Tukaram tasted the divine experience and as a natural consequence was raised to the status of sainthood. The experience so transformed his self that he developed a permanent sense of divine guidance and an entire submission to the divine will. His separative self, i.e. his



*ahamkara* disappeared for good and God took complete possession of his self. His soul sat in repose at the feet of the Lord, so that the Lord might act freely through him. His mind became incapable of harbouring un-divine thoughts and so it was saturated by the presence of God and His unmixed *Ananda* (Bliss Eternal). In fact, the soul of Tukaram was bathed in Divine *Ananda* and Divine Knowledge. An entirely new level of consciousness arose within him. He became one with the Universal Spirit and hence he saw that his soul filled the whole world. His ignorance was destroyed and the world revealed itself to him with a new meaning and beauty. He cast off all desires and became free from the bonds of Karma. He shook off sin completely and heaven and hell lost their meaning for him. He lived and moved and talked in God because divine life dawned upon him. He re-entered the order of the Gods. He had no pain, no sorrow, no fear, no limitations, and no unfulfilled desires. He had attained victory over evil and death. He became a *Jivan-mukta*, i.e. a man who has attained divinity here on this earth. Tukaram describes his state of liberation in the following words : ‘How blessed am I that I have seen Your feet today! Now I shall not be subject to Time. Divine *Ananda* is overflowing through my body. My

very body becomes divine when I sing the praise of God. The waves and the ocean have become one. God envelops my self all around. All things have merged into unity. All creatures have become divine to me. I do not belong to any place or time. I witnessed my own death and my limited self merged into God. I am not going to be born again. I am as I am.'

Shankara, the great apostle of Sanyasa, is of opinion that there is no inherent contradiction between the state of a *Jivan-mukta* and his activity for social well-being. As a matter of fact, a Saint is the supreme specimen of humanity and as such he contributes much to the advancement of contemporary society in his own way. Tukaram was no exception to this rule. After reaching the heights of divine experience, he did neither retire into solitude to enjoy his *Ananda* nor did he abandon the duties of social life. On the contrary he lived as an active member of society in his village and took part in all normal social functions. He continued his yearly visits to Pandharpur. He did not establish a monastery of his own. So also he did not organize a regular school of disciples. Like Socrates of old, he always took the opportunity to guide all those individuals who met him in social life and create in

them a sincere desire to live the best life possible for a rational being. He continued to perform his daily *kirtana* and often visited the nearby villages when he was invited by his intimate friends and acquaintances. Like a God walking on the earth, he kept himself above all distinctions of caste and creed, of rich and poor, of the learned and the illiterate. He attempted to teach a philosophy of life which was at once a theory of God and also a practice of the divine life. But his language was so simple and homely that even the most unsophisticated villagers understood it completely. He was like a bright light that dispelled the darkness of ignorance and showed everyone the surest way to reach the blessed feet of the Lord. He did not live to a ripe old age. However, during his lifetime itself, his selfless work bore fruit and he saw quite a large number of men and women devoting themselves sincerely to the Divine Name and leading a truly spiritual life. Tukaram really became the crown of the democratic type of Mysticism which was started by the great Dnyaneshwar towards the end of the thirteenth century.

#### 4. *The Mission of Tukaram :*

In a couple of well-known *abhangas*, Tukaram himself declares unequivocally what his mission was.

He says : 'I have come to illumine the ways of God and to distinguish the true from the false. God always keeps me company and makes me speak. I am a denizen of the Kingdom of God. Like the Saints of old, I have come down to the earth to pursue the path of truth. I will clear the path of the Saints. People have wandered away from it due to ignorance. The true meaning of Scripture is obscured. Pandits keep wrangling over words. Men are given over to the life of the senses. I will ring the bell of Bhakti and carry you safe to the feet of God by the help of His Name.'

Human life in any civilized society possesses two inseparable aspects, namely, the material and the spiritual, the temporary and the eternal, the personal and the super-personal. The material or the temporary aspect belongs to the day-to-day business of life. The spiritual or the super-personal aspects belong to the timeless values and they are the supreme ends of man's life on earth. The common individual in any society is normally absorbed in the material aspect of life. But a living culture possesses the vitality to produce from time to time individuals of great stature who live their lives on the spiritual plane. They are the hope of the common man because they attempt to lift humanity from the

material to the spiritual life. Tukaram is an illustrious example of such rare individuals. Like the great sages of the Vedic times, he gave the world something more than a sublime moral teaching. Like the Buddha, he gave the world something more than the spirit of renunciation. Like Jesus the Christ, he gave humanity something more than unselfish love. Like Shankara and Dnyaneshwar, he revealed the secrets of God to humanity and taught the world the way to share the holy life of the Divine Being. This was the mission of the great Tukaram and he fulfilled it very ably.

Tukaram proclaimed the supreme worth of man. Man's life on earth is a treasure beyond all price. The self of man cannot be bought or measured by material things. Every human being, however, humble or insignificant he might be, possesses the divine spark within his heart. It lies dormant in the common man. But it can be awakened if the right means are used. The mission of a Saint is to awaken the divine spark in man. Tukaram was never tired of insisting that human life becomes truncated when it is lived only on the plane of the senses. Such a life harms the soul, i.e. injures it and leads to moral depravity. Whatever injures the soul of man creates a confusion in his moral and spiritual

outlook. The soul gets stains of sin and moves farther away from God. When the soul is corrupted by sin and moves farther, it loses the power to see God and thus becomes incapable of enjoying *Ananda* — bliss in life. On the other hand, human life becomes holy, perfect, and beautiful when it is lived on the plane of the spirit. Spiritual life is the only good life for man. It is the end for which everything else exists. We should be prepared to part with earthly possessions and earthly comforts if they stand between our soul and fellowship with God. Spiritual life affords supreme enlightenment and gives a comprehensive view of man and his place in the universe. Man's speciality as a human being, therefore, lies in living on the spiritual plane. When he forgets this main vocation of his life, sin arises. The seat of sin is found in the heart of man. Not words and outward actions make a man sinful. He becomes sinful when his thoughts are impure and his disposition is mean and selfish. An evil will is the birth-place of sin. But like a true messenger of God, Tukaram did neither despise the sinner nor did he abandon him. Tukaram believed that there are boundless resources of divine power in the heart of man. Hence there are immense possibilities of reformation even in sinful persons. Tukaram con-

demned sin in every form. But at the same time he extended the helping hand of love and hope to the sinners whom he met. He remarks : 'My fellow-men ! I forgive you all for whatever has happened hitherto through ignorance. But do not commit any sins henceforth. Your sins will be washed away if you repent and never commit them again. Utter the holy name of Vitthal and you will be free from your sins. Do not look backward. I stand to redeem your sins.' Sins could be washed by curing the evil will of the sinner. An evil will could be cured by directing it towards God. This is definitely a deeper view of man. According to it, every human being can and ought to be cured of sin by loving kindness and he should be taught a life of virtue in God. No man is either wholly good or wholly bad. He does not become as good as he can. He also does not become as bad as he can. Therefore a bad man can be saved from evil by an appeal to his goodness and made into a man of God. This means that man is a creative centre of the Divine and he possesses the potential power to participate in the spiritual remaking of the world. Such participation needs an immediate and first-hand divine experience. In a hundred ways, therefore, Tukaram exhorted his fellow-men to wash the stains of their

sins through repentance and holy utterance of the Name of God and begin to tread, in all seriousness, the way of God.

Being a voice from the Kingdom of God, Tukaram made an unceasing effort to transform every individual into a saintly person. To him sainthood was the only ideal worthy of humanity. A Saint is a human being who carries the Word of God in his heart. He is a splendid synthesis of the human and the divine on the human plane. A Saint is human because he possesses all the essential human attributes. He is hungry and thirsty. He works and feels tired. He has friends and relatives whose sufferings make him sad. But at the same time a Saint is divine because he possesses all the essential attributes of God. He is above lust and greed, anger and hatred. He is indifferent to personal pleasures. He bears unselfish love towards all beings. He is patient, unassuming, and humble. Above all he is completely detached from material things and has fully surrendered his will to Providence. A Saint is a member of the Kingdom of God and he labours hard to turn every fellow-man into a Saint simply because he wants to bring the Kingdom of God here on this earth. This does not mean a renunciation of social life. Tukaram was no hermit. He freely participated in social



functions and mingled freely with his fellow-men who were mostly farmers and common villagers. But he seized every opportunity to appeal to their pure reason and convince them of the grandeur of the saintly life. He held the institution of family to be sacred and exalted the sacredness of the marriage bond. He pointed out that the spiritual ideal presupposes the moral ideal. A man of immoral habits is the last person to be able to tread the way of the Lord. Adultery and wealth acquired by wicked means are the two most immoral deeds. A man guilty of them is a shame to humanity. Tukaram did not preach an ascetic mode of life. But he was never tired of emphasizing the evils of inordinate sex indulgence and unlimited covetousness. He agreed that food, clothes, and shelter are the primary needs of life. He exhorts us to pray to the Lord to provide for these needs. Even sex is a primary need. But sex and wealth become sources of peril and abuse when man forgets God in their pursuit. Man ought to live a life sanctified by a personal relation to God and an unselfish affection for humanity. This is the recurring theme in the teachings of Tukaram.

Love to God and love to man are two inseparable aspects of one and the same divine life. Love is

the essence of Bhakti and through love alone does man realize his kinship with the Divine. Love is spiritually elevating and therefore it alone can build a better world, a world without conflict, hatred, and man-made misery. A strong soul can sustain such love and that strength comes to the soul from devotion to God. This is the reason why Tukaram constantly exhorts his fellow-men to take to the path of Bhakti. He points out that the Kingdom of God is ultimately to be realized here in this world which works within the limitations of Nature's laws. Life in a human society is full of passions and selfishness, which lead to narrowness of outlook, intellectual error, and spiritual blindness. These are the forces of evil. They are seated deep within a man's heart. To defeat these forces we must fight the battle first on the home front, that is, within our own selves. The battle needs no physical weapons. Its weapons are moral and spiritual, namely, self-control, moral courage, detachment, implicit faith in God, and surrender to the Divine Will.

Tukaram held that non-attachment to material things is the essence of God's law on earth. Non-attachment constitutes righteousness. It alone makes man acceptable to God. In a life of non-attachment man realizes his true relationship with the Divine.

It is the principle of the perfect life, the good life, because it makes a man Godlike. If anyone wants to realize the peace and joy of God here on this earth he must, Tukaram says, achieve the great quality of detachment. He must wash his self clean of impurity, i.e. of lust, anger, hatred, and greed. Non-attachment requires self-restraint as against self-indulgence, sincerity as against hypocrisy, forgiveness as against vengeance, and love of God as against love of self. When man is infused with the spirit of non-attachment, he can easily put loving trust in God. Such loving trust delivers him from all fears and anxieties and distractions. He gathers up all his scattered thoughts and emotions and leads them on to union with God. Thus non-attachment to material things coupled with Bhakti, i.e. love of God, carries a man to the level of sainthood.

One thing, however, needs mention here. Tukaram is very careful to point out that people often misunderstand the true nature of non-attachment as well as of love of God. Non-attachment is an attitude of mind. It is a mode of judging the value of things. It does not consist in abandoning the normal family and social ties. Again, it does not consist in suppressing the normal demands of the body. Non-attachment consists in the elimination of self-hood

and in the offering of self-will at the feet of God. It is made of complete obedience to the will of Providence.

History shows that quite a large section of humanity has always believed in a Divine Being. But a very large number of persons have held a wrong (almost a corrupt) conception of God. The great mission of Tukaram was to reveal to humanity the secrets of God, the true nature of the Divine Being. God is the very essence of man, namely the Atman. He is the core of a man's self and hence anyone who desires to see Him must enter into the centre of his own self. Man can commune with God through prayer. Prayer does not mean a persistent begging for the benefits of material life. It is a loving thirst for God's companionship in all walks of life. The holy Name of God is the supreme form of prayer. A life of prayer and of love for God is essentially a life of inner peace and comfort. At the same time it is full of action and service. It is a life of generosity, forgiveness, and readiness to render help to all. After self-realization, Tukaram spent every moment of his remaining life in revealing the goodness of God to his fellow-men and in training them to share the beauty of divine life. He declared forgiveness to sinners provided they repented and sinned no

more. He assured hope of salvation to those who were frustrated in life. He promised Divine grace, guidance, and companionship to all those who sincerely uttered the holy Name of God. In fact, Tukaram thirsted to communicate the grandeur of the divine life to the suffering humanity around him. Being guided by God, he carried on his work patiently with the firm conviction that it was possible to build a better world out of the available material. No doubt the material was poor, as it is bound to be, everywhere. But his optimism knew no defeat and he succeeded to a remarkable extent in inspiring his fellow-men with a genuine desire to enter into the secrets of love divine. God loves the world because it is His creation and He is immanent in it. Therefore whoever walks in His way receives guidance from Him.

Men like Tukaram are the favourites of God. They see Him face to face and naturally understand the divine purpose working in the universe. Being aware of the plan of God unfolding itself in the course of historical events, they strive to keep people on the right path and help God to realize His purpose in the best way possible. They invite every individual to become a member of the Kingdom of God and to live a life in communion with the divine purpose.

Tukaram was loved by all those who were eager to see God. He was despised by all those who were immersed in the pleasures of the senses. Like a beacon light, however, he made a stupendous effort to dispel human ignorance and to keep on seeking ways and means to lift humanity to a vision of the spirit. He is one of the great immortals among men and holds a place of pride among them.

## 5. *The Philosophy of Tukaram :*

(i) *The Function of Philosophy.*—The Saints have a philosophy of their own. It is called Absolute Spiritual Idealism in the technical language of the philosophers. Tukaram is an Absolute Idealist who held that Reality is the Absolute and that it is spiritual in essence. He does not give us a reasoned account of his philosophy but we can very reliably construct it from his various philosophical *abhangas*.

He had a special conception about the function of philosophy. Firstly, philosophy ought to be universal in scope. It should transcend the limitations of geography, creed or language. The hopes and illusions, the ends and ideals, the instincts and destiny of mankind are almost the same all over the course of human history. Philosophy ought to take a comprehensive view of man and his place in the

universe. It should lay bare the nature and purpose of the universe so that man may become aware of his true vocation in life. Secondly, Tukaram insisted that a philosophy should grow out of concrete situations in life. Every human life is a personal adventure and therefore any philosophy worth the name should emerge from life itself in all its immense variety. Thirdly, like all great Saints, Tukaram contends that man is the only animal who possesses a distinct inner life. Hence his true growth as an individual must be a growth from inside. Philosophy should point the way to the inner growth and regeneration of individual selves. It ought to provide rules of guidance to deliver the self from fear, anxiety and ignorance. Lastly, Tukaram argues that man has a double function to perform. He must live his life in such a way that the present is integrated with the past and the present and the future are planned with reference to the supreme values. Life ought to be a harmonious synthesis of the influence of tradition and the play of free reason. That is to say, man must live in time in such a way that in the end he goes beyond time. This mode of life implies an ascension to the spiritual dimension of existence where man sees directly the face of Truth. Philosophy, therefore, is an account of the life of the spirit

and a philosopher is a wise man who has dispelled the darkness of ignorance in himself. He serves society by conveying his wisdom to others and by attempting to raise them to his spiritual level.

It might be said with proper reservations that the conception of philosophy outlined above agrees to some extent with that of Karl Marx. Marx affirms that the function of knowledge is to bring about a change in what is known. All knowledge is for the sake of action. Knowledge involves contemplation but it is not mere contemplation of the outside world. The true purpose of man's knowledge is to change the world. Therefore Marx proclaims : 'Philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways, but the real task is to alter it.' All knowing has a purpose which is to change what is known. Tukaram says that philosophy is knowledge about man and the universe. The real task of philosophy is to bring about a complete change within the self of man. The self of man is an object of knowledge as good as any other object in the outside world. Philosophical knowledge ought to enable us to bring about a change in it. Through a change in one's self, a change in the selves of others can be brought about. This is the unique conception of



world reformation which the Saints have.

(ii) *Theory of Reality*.—Tukaram belongs to the ancient tradition of the great Advaita thinkers in India. He affirms the reality of the supreme *Brahman* after the Upanishadic fashion. Personal spiritual experience, Tukaram says, is the most convincing guarantee for the existence of Absolute Reality. Such experience reveals the nature of *Brahman* as infinite, perfect, and the most real. *Brahman* is super-sensible and super-personal. It is supra-cosmic and so space and time have no finality in it. Being the support of everything, *Brahman* does not need the support of anything else. It is Being pure and simple. It is like itself, that is, one without a second. *Brahman* is the foundation of all processes as also of the process of knowledge. Therefore it lies beyond all human determination. It cannot be adequately described because all descriptions lie within the realm of human thought and human thought moves in the realm of the finite. *Brahman* is not a substance because substance is a category within the world of change and *Brahman* is beyond change. We cannot say that *Brahman* is a thing, because thinghood is a category of space, time, cause, and relation and *Brahman* is beyond all these. There is no here and there, old and new,

large and small, growth and decay in *Brahman*. It can therefore be described only in a negative way. But a negative description does not mean that *Brahman* is nothing. It is not *shunya*. It is *nirguna*, i.e. it is beyond all conceptions of attributes residing in a substance. The world of space and time is finite. But *Brahman* cannot be drawn towards anything because there can be nothing beyond it. Tukaram often describes *Brahman* as Paramatman, i.e. the Universal Spirit. He speaks of it as the Unmanifest, the Unchanging, the Unthinkable, Supra-cosmic, Timeless Reality.

Again like all persons of divine realization, Tukaram asserts that this Supra-cosmic Reality touches us at the centre of our soul. In fact it leads the centre of our soul. It is called the *Atman* in man and *Atman* in *Brahman*. The *Mundaka Upanishad* says in a famous simile that there are two birds dwelling in the same tree. One eats the sweet fruit while the other looks on without eating. The first is the *Jiva* while the second is the *Atman*. Everything else in the structure of man—his body, his thoughts and emotions, his beliefs and opinions—undergoes a change. But the *Atman*, namely, the real 'I' in him remains unchanged. He is the pure subject who becomes his own object and hence

does not need any proof. He is *Svatah-siddha*, i.e. self-proved, *Svayamprakasha*, i.e. self-revealed, and *Svastha*, i.e. perfect in himself. He is pure awareness. Man becomes conscious of the existence of the *Atman* through the irrepressible urge towards perfection. We are drawn towards *Atman* through three gateways, namely, through *Sat* or Truth, through *Chit* or Pure Awareness, and through *Ananda* or Pure Joy. *Sat*, *Chit* and *Ananda* are not three separate entities but they are three aspects of one and the same *Brahman* conceived by men in sublime moments of divine experience.

(iii) *Nature of God.*—*Brahman* possesses different dimensions like Existence, Infinity, Knowledge, Pure Awareness, Absolute Freedom, Unmixed Bliss, etc. These dimensions are not mutually exclusive. They are the supreme forms under which man contemplates Reality. Tukaram insists that *Brahman* as *Ananda* becomes Ishwara or God. What is God? Tukaram answers : *Ananda*. *Ananda* is the *Rasa* of *Brahman*. *Rasa* means the essence or value of anything. *Ananda* is the reality of the Real. *Ananda* is real existence. *Ananda* personified is God. *Ananda* is infinite, dynamic and divine. *Ananda* is the supreme value in human life. God creates the universe out of Himself and pervades it. He is immanent in

everything, in every form. He is the inner essence of the earth, of water, fire, plants, animals, and of course, of man. God is self-formed. He has no visible form but He is the power which creates and moves all visible forms. He is the Lord of the universe who governs the movement of the cosmos.

Tukaram points out that God has three aspects, namely, the creative, the preservative, and the destructive. Looked at from the creative aspect, God is Brahma, the Creator of the universe. He creates the universe on the basis of the divine plan which is gradually being worked out in the history of the world. Again, the process of creation is brought about by His inherent power called *Prakriti*. *Prakriti* supplies the stuff which God uses as the medium for making His plan actual. Looked at from the preservative aspect, God is Vishnu, the Loving Lord of the universe. Through His infinite love and patience, God as Vishnu showers His Grace over the face of the world. Just as the waves arise out of the sea and are sustained by the sea, so also the world arises out of God and is sustained by Him. He is the support and the moving power of the world. He directs the development of the world towards *Ananda*, i.e. towards Himself. But the development obeys an order. The universe is a cosmos and not

a chaos. It is under the guidance of *Rita* or the moral law of Karma. The moral law serves to unfold the divine plan through the various happenings in nature. Hence all natural laws are the will of God and they work under His guidance. He is omnipotent because He is the source of power and no power lies outside of Him. Hence nothing can put a limitation on the activity of God. He is goodness itself and resides in the world as the essence of every being. All visible forms walk with their face towards God, i.e. towards *Ananda*. Others do it unknowingly while man alone can do it knowingly. That is the special prerogative of man. God is thus not only the supreme value but He is also the source and support of all other values. His love for the world is boundless and infinite.

Looked at from the destructive aspect, God is Shiva, the Great Destroyer. Creation and destruction are the two phases of the time process. If creation is the activity of God in self-manifestation, destruction is His activity of self-withdrawal. He is beyond time Himself, i.e. He is eternal, but He expresses Himself in time as Becoming. The process of withdrawing into Himself is not arbitrary. It obeys the law of Karma. God destroys according to His plan.

Like the *Bhagawadgita*, Tukaram addresses God

as Purushottam, i.e. the Supreme Person. God is a person only in a symbolic sense. He has personality but it has cosmic dimensions. He has a self but it pervades the universe. He has a life of His own but it lies beyond the frontiers of time. He has no body in the human sense. He is neither born nor does He die as human beings do.

God is interested in worship. He enters into personal relationship with those who worship Him and pray to Him with a holy heart. He fills the world but His Being is not exhausted by it.

Evil exists in the world but it has no independent metaphysical reality. Evil is the voluntary self-absorption of *Ananda*. The world at the present stage is partially good and partially evil, because God is partially manifested in visible forms. Every individual human being has the freedom to choose. He can use his freedom to strive towards God and thus save himself or he can use it to get away from God and thus damn himself. Tukaram spares no pains to emphasize that *ahamkara* — egoism, self-will, or the separative self — is the root of all evil. It is the cause of alienation from *Ananda*. Self-will is the origin of all discord and discontent in life. Nay, it is the main and the most formidable hindrance man has to encounter on the path to God. Tukaram says

that selfhood as such is not harmful. It becomes the cause of evil only when it becomes assertive and assumes finality or an absolute reality. God, therefore, is not responsible for the evil in the world. Evil arises when man misuses his freedom. But when man becomes conscious of the true nature of the existence of God and establishes a link with Him, evil disappears. God helps him willingly to resist the forces of evil, namely, the darkness of ignorance, falsehood, injustice, cruelty, and death. God becomes the true friend, help and guide of a devotee. In the present order of humanity, error and ugliness, ignorance and injustice, evil and death are dis-values which are necessary to inspire man to strive for the supreme values of the True, the Beautiful, and the Good, whose unity is God. As creator of the cosmos, God has genuine interest in the world and also in the future of individual souls. The world is a training ground for developing human selves who must learn to fight out successfully the perpetual struggle between the forces of good which generally appear to lose ground and the forces of evil. Good people suffer more than bad people. God is concerned with the suffering of the good people and He never fails those who suffer in His name.

(iv) *Theory of Avatara*.—Tukaram believes that metaphysically God has no birth and death because He lives beyond the sphere of time. On certain occasions, however, He appears into the world in a visible form as though born and embodied. The world is a two-way process. On the one hand the plan of God is seeking actualization through historical events and at the same time the world is striving to reach God on the other. Man stands midway in the process. When he directs his free will in the path of God, righteousness is on the increase. But when he misuses his free will and directs it in the path of the Devil, that is, away from the path of God, unrighteousness is on the increase. When unrighteousness increases beyond a certain limit, the balance of the world process is upset and the working out of God's plan is blocked. At such a critical period of world history, God assumes a human form and removes the obstacles which stagnate world progress. He raises the world to a new spiritual level. God has infinite love for his creation and he assumes visible form to restore the balance between the forces of good and evil. Ordinary human souls are forced to be born by their past Karma, but God takes on a human form out of his own free will. Such embodiment as a human individual does not affect the original status of God. His



*Ananda* remains intact. Tukaram also makes it clear that there are as many Avatars as there are Bhaktas. These Avatars lift individual devotees to sainthood. The other type of Avatar works for the benefit of the whole world. All Avatars, however, are equally divine.

(v) *Theory of Knowledge*.—Tukaram proclaims that Reality has innumerable dimensions. But human beings are acquainted with only three of them. The world as seen through the senses is the first mode of being which Reality manifests to us. The world as known through thought is its second mode of being, while the same world as experienced and understood through intuition is its third mode of being. Tukaram has no doubt that knowledge acquired through intuition or divine inspiration is the only real knowledge. Knowledge acquired through the senses and thought gives us only appearance. When we attempt to understand the world process through thought we have to move in the sphere of duality. The known is something other than the knower. This principle of otherness which can be traced to God is called *maya*. It is the element of negativity necessary for the explanation of the world process on the basis of thought. *Maya* is essentially active and creative. She is Shakti while God is Shiva. Shakti

is God's power of self-manifestation. The world is the visible form of the process of God's self-manifestation. The world entirely depends upon God but God does not depend upon the world. He does not need the world for His being. The world is not as real as God. At the same time it is not completely unreal. God plays hide and seek in the world. Why does He do so? Tukaram answers that it is a mystery. We can only say that God enjoys the creation and absorption of the world show. When man forgets God and looks at the world show, he is deluded by *maya*. He is then under the influence of *Avidya*. But when he sees the hand of God working in the world process, the world show becomes divinized for him. It then becomes a stepping stone to rise to the heights of divine experience. Tukaram affirms that such an attitude towards life is the beginning of Bhakti.

In fact, he tells us in a hundred ways that Bhakti is the shortest and the safest way to divine knowledge. If intuition is to arise, it is necessary that the senses and the intellect be silent for some time. This silence can be achieved through contemplation of God, which again can be achieved without effort through a loving attachment to God. Dnyana and Karma automatically follow Bhakti. God fills the self

of a Bhakta with divine love which finally culminates into a spiritual union of self and God. God comes to stay in the heart of man and all his movements are made with divine inspiration. The Holy Name of God leads the Bhakta gradually towards his destination.

## 6. *Tukaram's Social Philosophy :*

Like all Saints who care for the uplift of the masses, Tukaram had definite views on man and his relations to society. He believes that man and society always go together. But man as an individual possesses greater value, and therefore society must provide proper environment for the spiritual development of its members. The values of human life are a ladder with four steps. Divine experience stands at the top while a life of righteousness of pleasures comes next in order. The ideal man for Tukaram is not the king or the hero or the successful businessman but the man who has achieved divine realization. The king or the rich man should bow down to the man of God. A holy man who lives the life divine is Tukaram's ideal. There is no doubt that a man — even a holy man — must have the means to support his body. He must have enough food and drink and dress and shelter before he can

think of God. Man must also have a family to give proper expression to the sex instinct. But all these possess instrumental value while divine experience alone possesses intrinsic value. Even ethical living is a stepping stone to the divine life.

Again, Tukaram agrees in principle with the four-fold scheme of life, namely the Pupil, the Family Man, the Retired Man, and the Monk. But he is very keenly conscious that the true spirit of the scheme is already lost. Therefore, he strongly advocates a normal family life in which each individual is a useful and dutiful member of society and at the same time does not forget his spiritual ideal in life.

Lastly, Tukaram believes in the four-fold order of society, namely, the Wise Man, the Warrior, the Trader, and the Labourer. He bitterly complains that these classes have become rigid and watertight castes, closed societies. He uses abusive and rude language to expose some of the worst evils of the caste system. He raises his voice against the narrowness, oppression, intolerance, and selfishness of the higher castes, particularly when they become a hindrance in the pursuit of God.

Tukaram has a firm conviction that a period of decadence has set in. He calls it the coming of Kali Yuga. The marks of decadence are : (a) Scriptures

will be misinterpreted ; (b) Leaders of men will be given to gross immorality ; (c) Men will prize animal pleasures and wealth above God ; (d) Conflicts and wars will increase ; (e) Extreme selfishness will be the order of the day. Tukaram argues that an extremely selfish man can never possess goodness. He moves more and more away from God. Such men become a danger to society and to themselves. Therefore Tukaram invites all, high and low, to the holy city of God to avoid future calamities.

## 7. *Conclusion :*

Tukaram affirms that man possesses the potentiality to become God on earth. He can achieve spiritual enlightenment and become an instrument in the hands of the Divine to create a new world of peace and comfort. Man has much knowledge of the world but he is ignorant of his own self. He has much art depicting the beauty of nature but he has remained ugly in his own self. The paramount need of society is goodness. Man can hope to enjoy a peaceful life on earth only if a sufficient amount of goodness is created. Goodness implies unselfish love between man and man. Such love can arise in the heart of man only when he begins to love God. Tukaram, therefore, implores us to dedicate our

lives to the pursuit of divine experience.

Saint Tukaram was great because he dedicated his life to God. He was greater because he achieved himself a first-hand knowledge of God and rose for sainthood here in this life. He was one of the greatest because he taught humanity the simplest way to reach the feet of God and enjoy a life of peace and inner comfort. He was more like an Upanishadic *Rishi* born to guide erring humanity to its destined goal, namely, a divine life here on this earth.

27224

16.11.67

# **BASIC PAMPHLETS ON LIFE AND CULTURE OF MAHARASHTRA**

- ▲ Inside Maharashtra  
M. M. D. V. Potdar
- ▲ Maharashtra—Land, Its People & Culture  
S. R. Tikekar
- ▲ Eknath  
Dr. Shridhar Kulkarni
- ▲ Origin of Marathi Theatre  
B. S. Naik
- ▲ A Century of Marathi Theatre  
K. Narain Kale
- ▲ Modern Marathi Theatre  
D. G. Nadkarni
- ▲ Marathi Literature—A Review  
Kusumavati Deshpande
- ▲ Music of Maharashtra  
Prof. G. H. Ranade
- ▲ Marathi Folk-lore  
Dr. Sarojini Babar
- ▲ Paranjape—The Orator of Patriotism

4

5

6