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BHAVAN'S BOOK UNIVERSITY

**TUKARAM'S
TEACHINGS**

S. R. Sharma

GENERAL EDITORS

K. M. MUNSHI

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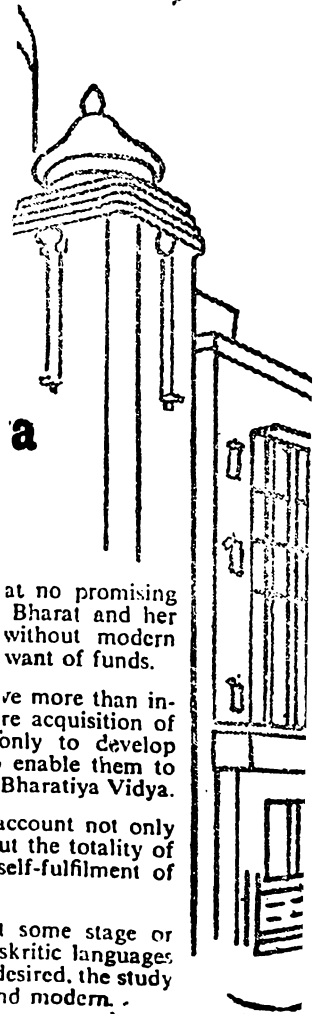
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BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN BOMBAY



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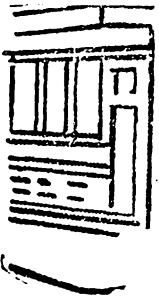
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knowledge. Its legitimate sphere is not only to develop natural talents but so to shape them as to enable them to absorb and express the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya.

3. Bharatiya Shiksha must take into account not only the full growth of a student's personality but the totality of his relations and lead him to the highest self-fulfilment of which he is capable.

4. Bharatiya Shiksha must involve at some stage or other an intensive study of Sanskrit or Sanskritic languages and their literature, without excluding, if so desired, the study of other languages and literature, ancient and modern.



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5. The re-integration of Bharatiya Vidya, which is the primary object of Bharatiya Shiksha, can only be attained through a study of forces, movements, motives, ideas, forms and art of creative life-energy through which it has expressed itself in different ages as a single continuous process.

6. Bharatiya Shiksha must stimulate the student's power of expression, both written and oral, at every stage in accordance with the highest ideals attained by the great literary masters in the intellectual and moral spheres.

7. The technique of Bharatiya Shiksha must involve—

(a) the adoption by the teacher of the *Guru* attitude which consists in taking a personal interest in the student; inspiring and encouraging him to achieve distinction in his studies; entering into his life with a view to form ideals and remove psychological obstacles; and creating in him a spirit of consecration; and

(b) the adoption by the student of the *Shishya* attitude by the development of—

(i) respect for the teacher,

(ii) a spirit of inquiry,

(iii) a spirit of service towards the teacher, the institution, Bharat and Bharatiya Vidya.

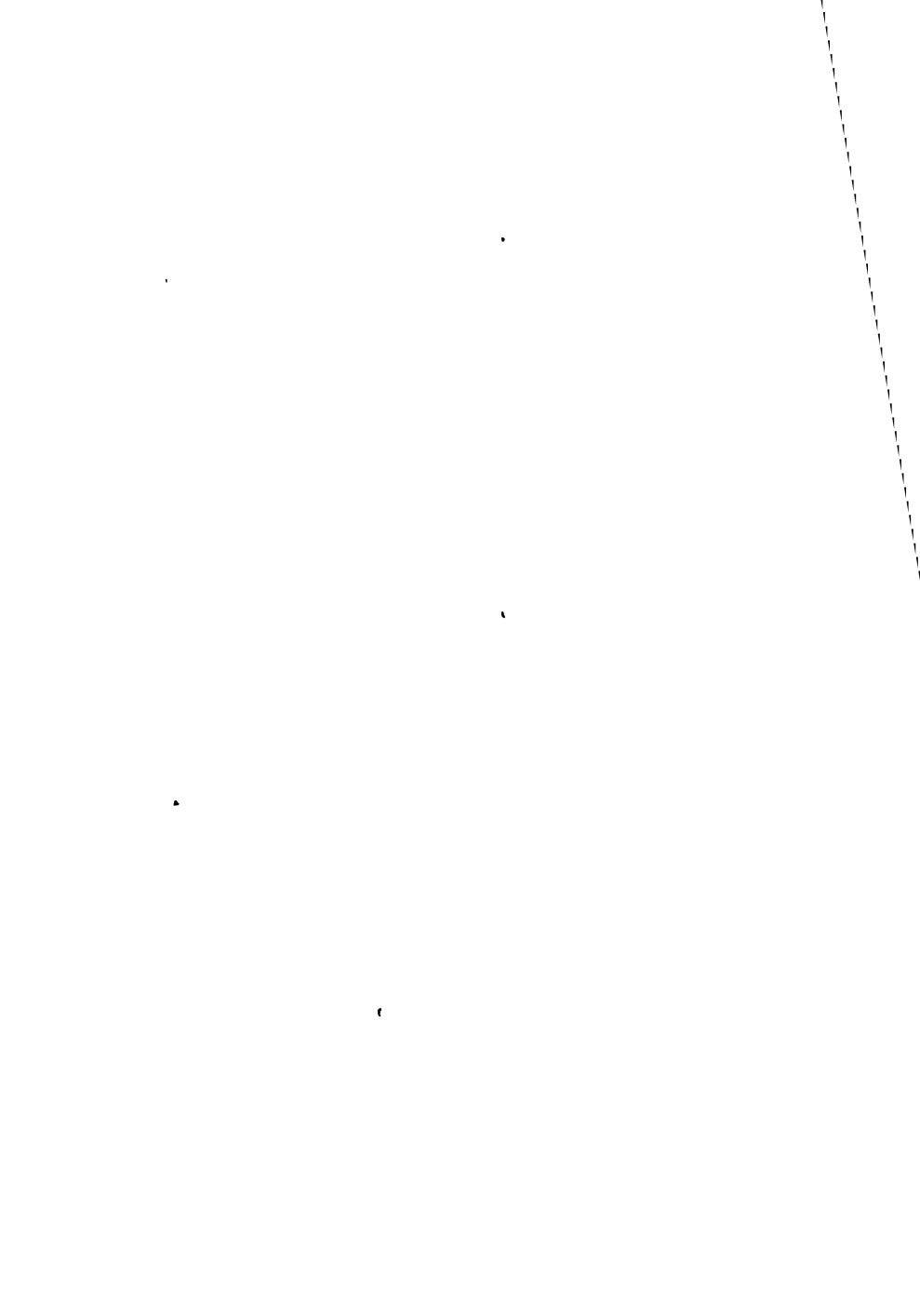
8. The ultimate aim of Bharatiya Shiksha is to teach the younger generation to appreciate and live up to the permanent values of Bharatiya Vidya which flowing from the supreme art of creative life-energy as represented by Shri Ramachandra, Shri Krishna, Vyasa, Buddha and Mahavira have expressed themselves in modern times in the life of Shri Ramakrishna Paramahansa, Swami Dayananda Saraswati, and Swami Vivekananda, Shri Aurobindo and Mahatma Gandhi.

9. Bharatiya Shiksha while equipping the student with every kind of scientific and technical training must teach the student, not to sacrifice an ancient form or attitude to an unreasoning passion for change; not to retain a form or attitude which in the light of modern times can be replaced by another form or attitude which is a truer and more effective expression of the spirit of Bharatiya Vidya; and to capture the spirit afresh for each generation to present it to the world



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आ नो भद्राः क्रतवो यन्तु विश्वतः ।

Let noble thoughts come to us from every side

—Rigveda, I-89-i

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BY

S. R. SHARMA

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TUKARAM'S TEACHINGS

S. R. SHARMA



1964

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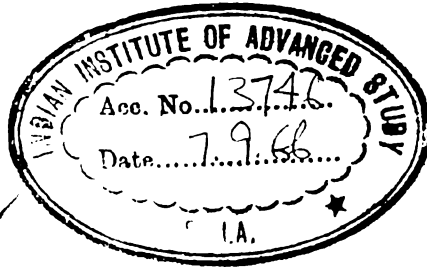
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GENERAL EDITOR'S PREFACE

The Bhavan's Book University volumes had rare success. About a million and a quarter volumes have been sold in about eleven years. However, there is an insistent demand for the stray volumes which the Bhavan has issued from time to time at a lower price. In order to meet this demand, it has been decided to issue the new One-Rupee Book University Series side by side with the Book University Series.

I hope this new One-Rupee Series will have the same good fortune which the other Series had, of being useful to those who are interested in the fundamental values of Indian Culture, and of reaching out to a wider audience.

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
Chowpatty Road, Bombay-7.
Vijaya Dashami
September 28, 1963

K. M. MUNSHI

INTRODUCTION

During the four centuries that elapsed between the advent of Dnyanadeva and the exit of Samartha Ramadas, Maharashtra was blessed by a galaxy of great saints whose role is not appreciated by those whose eyes are focussed merely on the political history of the times. This betrays an inadequate understanding of the forces that were at work during the period, behind the pyrotechnics of war and politics. But the makers of Maratha History knew the sources of their inspiration better than we at this distance are aware of. It is often wrongly stressed that the saints were too other-worldly to care for what the worldly minded monarchs and warriors fought for and achieved. But we have to remember that they were times when men and women all over the land valued religion—their inherited way of life—more than anything else. The invaders (from Ala-ud-din Khalji to Aurangzeb) were, therefore, regarded more as a menace to our culture-cum-religion than as mere political adventurers. The common people were fired with a zeal to counter that challenge, not for the defence of their earthly possessions only; they also fought “for the ashes of their fathers and the temples of their gods.” Thus a deep-rooted instinct (may be in the “collective subconscious”) made Dnyanadeva write his immortal *Dnyanesvari*: an elaborate exposition of the *Bhagavad Geeta*—the most stimulating inspirer to *Karma-Yoga* for more

than earthly ends. This trend culminated in Samartha Ramadas preaching, in his *Das-bodh*, the pragmatic philosophy of *Maharashtra Dharma*. In Tukaram, who is the subject of this essay, we have a contemporary of Ramadas, considered as the most docile of saints—an antithesis of the *Samartha*. But Tukaram too speaks of the constant ‘war we wage within and without’:

रात्रंदिन आम्हा युद्धाचा प्रसंग ।

अंतर्बाह्य जग आणि मन ॥

To understand the fullest implications of this cryptic citation, it is necessary to go into the whole Teaching of Tukaram as revealed in his life and *Gatha*.

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1. LIFE

Tukaram's life is as instructive as his *abhangas* collected in the *Gatha*. The details of his career are mostly gathered from Mahipati's *Bhakta-Leelamrita*, composed about a century and a quarter after Tukaram's mysterious disappearance in 1650 A.D. The precise year of Tukaram's birth is still uncertain. But 1608 is generally accepted as probable. Samartha Ramadas too was born in that year.

The place of Tukaram's birth was Dehu (near Poona) where his ancestral house still stands. Vishvambhar who was a contemporary of Saint Namadeva (D. 1350) was the earliest known ancestor of Tukaram, according to Mahipati. The family was noted for the great number of devotees it produced. Vishvambhar himself resembled Namadeva in his simplicity and ardent faith. They were all *Varkaris* or pilgrims of Pandharpur (by vow) and never failed to visit the Abode of Vitthala regularly—especially on *Ashadhi Ekadasi* which was held most sacred. Like Tukaram later, Vishvambhar felt like a fish out of water if illness prevented him from going to Pandharpur.

Once it so happened. But Vithoba, recognising his sincere devotion, appeared in his dream and promised to make Dehu itself His permanent (secondary) camp. Vishvambhar (as indicated in his dream) actually found an image of Vitthala with Rakhumai in the vicinity of his own house. The twin images still stand at Dehu, as installed by Vishvambhar about six hundred years ago. Dehu thus became a second Pandhari for all *Varkaris*. Alandi

consecrated by Dnyanadeva on the Indrayani—is not far from Dehu.

As legend would have it, Tukaram's nativity was attended by Rukmini in person and she sang a Lullaby at the cradle-ceremony. Mahipati records the song of deep mystical significance. Mythology is the language of the soul—of little meaning to those who cannot go beyond the intellect. But the hearts of the devout understand such things better.

Mahipati himself writes that he was inspired by Tukaram in a dream to compose his work, though he spared no pains to collect his materials from all sources available to him. These dream-inspirations and visions were common experiences. Tukaram, too, had them more than once. His *Guru*, Baba Chaitanya, appeared to him in a dream and imparted to him the "guru-mantra"—"Rama-Krishna-Hari" which was already his favourite. Then Namadeva appeared in another dream, accompanied by Vithoba Himself and commanded Tukaram to carry forward to completion the composition of the *abhangas* Namadeva had left unwritten. No wonder people regarded Tukaram as an *avatar* of Namadeva. The two were spiritual doubles.

Bahinabai was born at Kolhapur; but Tukaram appeared to her in a dream, gave her a copy of his *Mantra-Geeta*, and blessed her—as she tells us in one of her songs. Niloba who was born in the year of Tukaram's *niryana* also reports similar experiences.

Tukaram was a *Kunbi* (farmer) carrying on business as *Vani* (trader). His father Balhoba was also a village official. Fairly prosperous as the family was, the calamity of a devastating famine

brought them to the verge of starvation. Tukaram's first wife and son fell victims to this "act of God". His elder brother left home in a fit of renunciation and was never heard of again. Since the death of both his parents, Tukaram carried on for some time the onerous responsibilities, until the great crisis transfigured him. Mahipati writes: गुरुकृपा झाली । पूर्वार्ध संपले ॥ 'The first part ended with the benediction of the Guru.'

Indigent as Tukaram was, he tore up the family papers relating to his own share of the patrimony, and left the rest entirely to his younger brother Kanhoba. In one of his *abhangas* he proudly proclaims that the pilgrimage to Pandharpur was the most precious part of the legacy left to him by his ancestors. When Shivaji sent him a covetable treasure as subsidy, Tukaram spurned it saying that Vitthala was more than enough for him—though (like the Sufi mystic Nizam-ud-din Aulia of Delhi) he had very often little to eat and yet declared: "Today I am the guest of God!"

Tukaram was a lover of solitude where alone God speaks in the silence of the soul. While in the wilderness, he was molested by the denizens of the forest; but he was determined not to return home until God should reveal Himself. This sit-down strike and ultimatum reached Vitthala: it bore the desired fruit.

पंधरा दिवसांमाजी झाला साक्षात्कार ।
विठोबा भेटला निराकार ॥

'In fifteen days Vithoba revealed Himself as a formless presence: realisation came about.'

Nevertheless Tukaram's trials did not end: gold

is purified only in the crucible after it is smelted over the fire. When he started composing *abhangas*, and performing soul-entrancing *Kirtans* (song-sermons) attracting crowds, he drew upon himself the wrath of the 'demi-gods' of the village. Rameshvar Bhat—the arch-champion of orthodoxy—summoned the *Kunbi* "imposter" to answer Brahmanical charges of heretical practices i.e. purveying the sacred teachings of the *Sastras* in the *patois* of the Sudras. The manuscripts of the *Gatha* were pontifically ordered to be cast into the river, which order the submissive saint promptly obeyed. But God came to Tukaram's rescue: the Indrayani bore up the documents पद्मपत्र इवाम्भसा and restored the *abhangas* to their author unwetted!

Tukaram was beaten black and blue by his detractors; but like Buddha he too did not harbour any ill-will toward his persecutors: and returned only good for evil.

चित्त शुद्ध तया शत्रु मित्र होति ॥

'To the pure-hearted, even enemies become friends.' Rameshvar Bhat not merely became a disciple, but also a channel to carry forward the message and mission of Tukaram. He too composed *abhangas* in one of which he proclaims that in 'devotion, knowledge and renunciation, the eye has not seen another like Tukoba.'

भक्ति, ज्ञाने आणि वंराग्ये आगळा ।
ऐसा नाही डोळां देखियेला ॥

Tukaram's domestic life too was not calculated to make him happy in the worldly way. His wife, Jizai, though very faithful and devoted to him did not like his saintly ways which virtually neglec-

ted the family. But for all her cantankerous criticism and loud protests, Tukaram did not deviate even a hair's breadth from the path he had chosen for himself:

हित तें करावें देवाचें चिंतन ।
करुनियां मन एकविध ॥

'Real well-being lies in contemplating God to the exclusion of all else' was his motto. So he was never upset or irritated by her irascible conduct. He affectionately expostulated with her and tolerated all her idiosyncrasies uttering "Panduranga, Panduranga!"

As with his wife, so with the rest of the world: भूर्तो भगवंत 'God in all creatures'—not in words only, but also in action. Once he was warned by the villagers against a rabid dog of which every one was afraid. But Tukaram ignored their warning and went his way singing the name of God. The ferocious dog, no sooner than it saw the saint, fawned at his feet like a pet! A similar incident is narrated about St. Francis of Assissi whom Tukaram very much resembled: only it was a wild wolf instead of a rabid dog.

Another typical anecdote is about how Tukaram behaved with the birds he was asked to "take care of" in a harvest field. Tukaram literally took 'care of the birds' by allowing them to freely quench their appetite, instead of driving them away!

On yet another occasion, Tukaram found a drove of pigeons flying away at his approach, scared by his presence, though he intended no harm to them. He at once stopped and prayed for their

return; and the birds came back and perched on his head and shoulders, as on a tree.

Tukaram was friendly towards all: man, bird, or beast. He served every one who needed his help, though some took undue advantage of his goodness and often used him as a beast of burden. But Tukaram did not demur as he considered serving men was serving God Himself.

Such, in brief, was Tukaram—the saint of Dehu. His story is crammed with miracles. Once while he was performing *Kirtan*, Shivaji was also among the listeners. The Muslim *Subadar* having got scent of his presence, sent his soldiers to capture Shivaji. It was a critical moment, and Tukaram desperately beseeched his Panduranga to rescue Shivaji—the champion of *Maharashtra Dharma*. God worked a miracle!—to the pursuers every one in the audience looked like Shivaji. Totally baffled and bewildered by the spectacle, the minions of the *Subadar* gave up the chase in despair.

The mysterious *denouement* of Tukaram's life is an enigma too intriguing for facile explanation. It is popularly believed that the saint left for *Vaikuntha* in a celestial vehicle in the early hours of the morning ever since celebrated as *Tukaram Beeja*. Mahipati dramatically portrays the situation; and some *abhangas* from the *Gatha* are cited as corroborating the legendary details. But it is more reasonable to assume that Tukaram, as Mahipati himself says, had 'transcended his corporeal entity even while he was in his body':

देहींच विदेहत्व पावोनियां । केली काया ब्रह्मरूप ॥

The factual description of the situation, as described by Mahipati, is quite realistic.

Tukaram was performing *Kirtan* until the late hours of the night. At the peak of his ecstasy there was a blinding blaze of light which made the listeners shut their eyes. When they reopened their eyes, Tukaram was nowhere visible!

*Higher still and higher
From the earth thou springest,
Like a cloud of fire
Into the blue deep thou wingest!*

2. ASPIRATIONS AND STRUGGLES

The practical utility of Tukaram's example and precept for us lies in its inspiring incentives. Tukaram began his life with no prophecy of his potential fulfilment as a spiritual guide *par excellence*, as he has been to millions ever since. He had a very normal career up to his 'conversion' in the mystical sense. Apart from Mahipati's account of his early life, the *Gatha* affords ample testimony to this. He had his full share of joys and sorrows like any of us. He married more than once, had children, carried on the ordinary business of life like others; in short, Tukaram was very human in all things he did. What he ultimately became was the outcome of his own aspirations and struggles. Herein lies his importance for all earnest seekers who aspire to reach the goal all saints point to. Divested of all mythological allusions, we have in Tukaram's life and precepts an inexhaustible store of actual experience to encourage ordinary mortals to make "our lives sublime". But it is well to remember that

The heights by Tukaram reached and kept
Were not attained by sudden flight:
He, while his companions slept,
Was toiling upward in the night.

The calamity of the famine and the consequent domestic tragedies were suffered by all; but Tukaram alone survived the catastrophe as an Immortal. This is significant and thought-provoking.

The *Gatha* contains *abhangas* revealing Tukaram in all phases and aspects. His acquaintance with the rural games he played in his boyhood, his meticulous conduct in the transactions of shop-keeping, as well as his study of the traditional lore, are all mirrored in his compositions. But through all the common preoccupations of ordinary people, Tukaram had a vision which was *uncommon*. So he pleaded:

आतां तरी पुढें हाचि उपदेश । नका करं नाश आयुष्याचा ॥
सकळांच्या पायां माझे दंडघत । आपुलालें चित्त शुद्ध करा ॥

“The world is too much with us”, Wordsworth wrote, “getting and spending we lay, waste our powers”. ‘Vanity of vanities’, says the Psalmist, ‘all is vanity, except to love God’. So too did Tukaram:

‘Do not fritter away your life in frivolities.
Purify your mind.’

By “purification” he meant more than conventional abstinences: he goes beyond the Ten Commandments. His self-discipline went to the root of the matter and tackled the mind at its very source.

Outwardly, Tukaram followed all the religious and ethical rules inculcated by tradition and contemporary society. But inwardly, he went deeper: from the letter ‘which killeth’ to the spirit which alone ‘giveth life’. This meant *re-forming* oneself in the ‘Great Task Master’s eye’. Eternal vigilance is the price of real freedom. Hence Tukaram urges:

मना पाहिजे अंकुश । नित्य नचा दिस जागृतीचा ॥

‘The mind requires a goad, alert vigilance day-in and day-out without remission’.

This is no easy task: to tread the 'razor-edged path'. Tukaram found it so to his own cost—for our edification. Years of affliction preceded his awakening: "The Dark Night of the Soul" as the Western mystics call it. Some of these sufferings have been sampled before in the brief characterisation of Tukaram's life. Here too we can do no more than indicate the nature of the ordeals the saint had to pass through before his enlightenment. These were physical, social, domestic, as well as mental. But relief ultimately came to him through his unshakable faith in Vitthala.

Physical suffering came in the shape of actual belabouring by some ruffians "in defence of orthodoxy". Sometimes when sorely tried, he cried out—

धांव घालि बिठू आतां । चालू नको मंद ॥
 बडवे मला मारिती । असा काय अपराध ? ॥

These lines of Chokhamela are true of Tukaram also as of Jesus Christ: "Father, why hast thou forsaken me?" But soon, coming to himself, even like Christ, he seemed to echo: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" Nay, he went further and lovingly chafed the hands of his persecutors, asking them whether they were not injured or pained while beating him!

While sitting on the Bhandara hill, desperately praying and meditating, he was molested by 'serpents, scorpions and tigers'. "सर्प बिचू व्याघ्र शौंबती ।" he says in his abhanga on the experience. But he did not flinch: धीरस्तत्र न मुह्यति ।

When Rameshvar Bhat ordered him to throw his precious manuscripts into the Indrayani, he

promptly obeyed (like Socrates condemned to drink the deadly hemloc); but, at the same time, went on a hungerstrike which lasted for thirteen days when God rescued him from his ordeal by working a miracle: the manuscripts floated on the surface without being drenched or damaged. Yet, it is obvious, that it was at once a physical and mental ordeal for Tukaram.

At home he had to endure the tragic death from starvation of his first wife and son during the famine when he was found praying— **पोटापुरते देवा देवा । भाकरी ताजी अथवा शिळी ॥** “Give us this day our daily bread”.

His second wife Jizabai (or Avali) has been referred to before. She was a strange mixture of opposites. She had an explosive temper and was scorpion-tongued in her vituperations, though she served Tukaram with a rare devotion. In several respects she was a study in contrast to her husband. Above all, she hated Tukaram’s pious companions like Santu Teli to whom we owe the original copy of the *Gatha*, which he devoutly wrote out as the immortal *abhangas* issued from the lips of the God-intoxicated saint. Jizai did not spare even Vitthala whom she called “Kalya the Black One,” Further details of the domestic *milieu* are superfluous. Suffice it to say that Tukaram endured her with more than the patient good humour of a Socrates who appears to have had a similar partner in life.

“योग-संग्राम” is an allegory of spiritual struggle by Sheikh Muhammad who was a contemporary of Tukaram. The tomb of this Muslim saint is at Ahmednagar. Tukaram, too, has a satire on the warrior who rides a heavily accoutred horse, and

is fully armed *cap-a-pie*, but complains that he cannot fight because, unfortunately, his feet are fettered in the stirrup, his hands are handicapped by the shield and arms he is obliged to carry, and the body is entrapped in chain armour!

We quoted before two lines from Tukaram, wherein he speaks of the 'war we wage within and without—night and day'. This symbolises his early struggles in life which appeared to him a veritable 'Field of Mars'. Both society and the conditions at home seemed to conspire against him. At times he was in such despair that he desperately challenged Vithoba to save him or kill him outright. The world was to him arid as a desert, his body itself a solitary prison cell— कोंडलिये दिस गमेचिना— and his term of imprisonment unending. When he crossed over one mountain of difficulties, another appeared before him. Tidal waves of sorrow threatened to engulf him. He felt like grain fried in fire. He was tempted to drown himself in the flood of the Chandrabhaga (at Pandharpur) charging Vithoba with murder! But his inflexible determination to carry on somehow, and his faith in his God, saved him.

Tukaram, the picture of patience we admire, was hard-boiled in suffering. He was not a 'jelly-fish'. He could be hard as flint when confronted by a crisis.

आम्ही विष्णुदास मेणाहुनी मचाळ ।

he says, but at the same time चज्राहुनी कठोर too: 'We the slaves of Vishnu are soft as wax and, paradoxically, harder than diamond.' He further says, 'We are more affectionate than a mother, yet more ferocious than any enemy. If we are generous we

will give away everything to the last fragment of cloth on our bodies'. Such flexibility or elasticity of mood and temper were attained after going through the fire-ordeal of long suffering. He tells us that sainthood cannot be bought in the bazaar. *Bhakti* is like a cake fixed on the tip of a pike: सुळावरची पोळी । He that would take it is a hero rare to find: विरळा शूर । तुका म्हणे तोची संत । सोशी जगाचे आघात ॥ Tuka says, 'He is verily a saint who endures the buffets of the world'. The stone assumes a godly form only after sustaining the strokes of hammer and chisel—i.e. at the sculptor's hand. He also says, एक बीजा । केला नास । मग भोगिले कणिस ॥ 'The seed is sacrificed in order to reap a rich harvest'. Though he found his mind intractable to begin with काय करं हे मन अनावर । —he ultimately, through persistent effort, gained complete mastery over it. Even poison could be assimilated, he says, by accustoming ourselves to it in small doses:

अभ्यासेन तु कौंतेय, वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ।

says the *Gita*; and Tukaram knew his *Geeta* too well. He had rendered it into Marathi verse in the "मंत्र-गीता" referred to by Bahinabai in her reported dream-vision. His attitude towards everything was that of the स्थितप्रज्ञ described in the second chapter of the *Geeta*. He said to himself

आगमापायिनो अनित्यः तां तितिक्षस्व भारत ॥
तुका म्हणे उगी राहं । जेजे होईल ते तें पाहं ॥
नाशवंत हे सकळ । आठवे गोपाळ तेचि हित ॥

He cultivated the habit of being a detached witness to whatever transpired: साक्षी चेता केवलो निर्गुणश्च ॥ He lived like the lotus leaf in water—पद्म पत्र जैसा

जळीं । He became restless—not about any worldly matters—but only when prevented by illness from keeping his vows as a *Varkari*, going to Pandharpur as a pilgrim on the sacred days. Then he felt like a fish out of water:

जीवनाषांचोन मासोळी ॥

3. PANDHARI AND BEYOND

मोक्षासी तीर्थं न लगे चाराणसी ।
येति तयापासी अघर्षी जने ॥
तीर्यासि तीर्थं ज्ञाला तोचि ।
तेणे एक दृशणे ॥

‘To attain *Moksha* it is not necessary to go to Varanasi: He has become a *Tirtha* in himself, and all people go to him on pilgrimage. To behold him is enough’.

Tukaram started as a *Varkari* in the family tradition. But, stage by stage, he went far beyond. At first Pandharpur was his Vaikuntha (the abode of Vishnu). Later he realised that places of pilgrimage were in no way different from others:

तीर्थक्षेत्रे घोंडा पाणी । देव रोकडा साधु सज्जनीं ॥

‘There is but water there and stone: God is verily immanent in the *Sadhus* and sages’.

संत येती घरा तोचि दिवाळी दसरा ॥

‘The day saints come to the house is indeed like *Divali* and *Dasara*’. घरा आलें वंकुंठपीठ ॥ ‘Vaikuntha is come home to me!’

Tukaram was “born in a church”, but he did not “die in it”. He was no bird for any cage. He was free like the wind which bloweth where it listeth. Without flouting tradition, he transcended it. He was not sophisticated and cared little for conventional codes of speech and conduct. His *Gatha* contains expressions which may be deleted

in any expurgated edition intended for “decent” readers.

अनेक बुद्धिचे तरंग । क्षणक्षणा पालटती रंग ॥

‘The waves of the intellect are numerous: they change complexion from moment to moment’, he confesses. Yet there was a “method in his madness”. Though the river of his spiritual life followed a zig-zag course, its destination was oceanic experience:

क्षरला सागर गंगा ओघों मिल्हे ।
आपणची खेळे आपणासि ॥

‘The Ganges merging in the ocean sports in that commingling all with itself’.

देव पाहावया मी गेलों ।
तेथे देवची होऊन ठेलों ॥

‘I went to see God: there I stood transfigured into God Himself!’

This consummation, however, was not reached by ‘sudden flight’. Tukaram, to begin with was not unlike other common believers: finding solace in frequently going to Pandharpur, bathing in the Chandrabhaga, keeping the *Ēkadashi* fast, and feasting his eyes on the image of Vitthala—standing there for ‘28 temporal cycles’ (युगे आठ्ठाविस) since Pundalika threw Him a brick to stand on—arms akimbo—showing His readiness to save His devotees (including sinners like Ajamela). There also thronged the saints of all ages and castes—Kabir, Mirabai, Rohidas, etc.—the very dust from whose feet Tukaram would reverently place on his head, and the leavings from whose meals he would eat with gusto and consider himself sanctified thereby. He would feel exceedingly happy if he

could be a mere dog guarding their doors. These were not mere poetic sentiments but the genuine outpourings of a fervent soul, literally meant to be factually translated into action. Tukaram was the sincerest, humblest, and purest of all pilgrims to that spiritual capital of Maharashtra. His Vitthala was to him more real than the people he lived amongst. He would talk to Him, pray to Him, plead and argue with Him, and even throw out challenges and threats to Him—calling Him names as though Vitthala were a fellow rustic of Dehu. By thus humanising his Idol, Tukaram divinised himself. We feel the ring of his voice—his very intonations—in his *abhangas* even today after over three centuries.

‘God is ours, yea, ours is He,
Soul of all the souls that be.
God is nigh without a doubt,
Nigh to all, within, without.
God is gracious, gracious still;
Every longing He’ll fulfil.

(Macnicol’s tr.)

Vitthala was Tukaram’s All-in-All: He was omnipresent, He filled his entire being, governed his every action—thought, word, and deed—; there was no existence besides or beyond, or apart from Vitthala.

“Vitthala is my kinsman and companion, Vitthala is seated in my heart. Vitthala fills my body and limbs. Vitthala is for me a shadow of myself (!) Vitthala sits on the tip of my tongue:

I speak of nothing else but
Vitthala Tuka says, I can
no longer separate myself from
Vitthala.”

* * *

“When I meditate on the Lord of Pandhari,
the body gets transfigured together with the mind.
Where then is any room left for speech? My very
‘I-ness’ is become Hari. The mind merged in divine
consciousness, the entire creation is divinised.
Tuka says, How shall I express it? All at once, I
am lost in God-intoxication.”

* * *

जेथें जातों तेथें तूं माझा सांगाती ।
चालविसी हातों धरुनियां ॥

‘Wherever I go, there you are with me;
you lead me holding my hand.’

This “practice of the presence of God” came
to Tukaram through intense longing, utter self-
abnegation. But he was no body-crucifying ascetic.
He lived a normal family life. He neither pampered
nor punished his body. “देह देवाचें देऊळ” he sang,
“अंतर्बाहीं निर्मळ” —‘The body is the temple of God,
pure within him and without’. He further adds: ‘the
body is the home of happiness and misery; but
it is also the instrument of God-realisation. The
body is neither good nor bad in itself, but thinking
makes it so’—like Milton (his English contempo-
rary, born in 1608), Tukaram considered:

“The mind is its own place,
And in itself can make
A heaven of hell and
A hell of heaven.”

His manner of tackling the mind was a cheerful and self-reliant optimism:

मन करारे प्रसन्न । सर्वसिद्धीचें कारण ।
मोक्ष अथवा बंधन । सुख समाधान इच्छाते ।....
मन माऊली सकळांची ॥

‘Give the mind some taste of God’, he says ‘and it will not deviate from His pursuit’.

When we see Tukaram almost raving in his infatuation with the image of Vitthala, as he does in several *abhangas*, modern “Protestants” are provoked into dubbing him an incorrigible idolater. But we also find him declaring:

मनें प्रतिमा स्थापिली । मनें मना पूजा केली ॥

‘The idol is installed within the mind, and the mind worships itself therein.’

His freedom of thought is further illustrated by his occasional *obiter dicta* regarding popularly held beliefs, sentiments, and orthodox conceptions. “राम हा कालचा, सुत दशरथाचा, he says, “आत्माराम अनंत युगाचा”: ‘Rama, the son of Dasaratha, is but of yesterday; while Atmarama (the soul) is Eternal’.

Similarly *Guru-apotheosis* was (and is still) very much in vogue. But Tukaram (who had only a dream-Guru) declares:

“मन. गुरु आणि शिष्य, करी आपुलेंचि दास्य ।
प्रसन्न आप आपणास । गति अथवा अघोगति ।”

‘The mind is itself *Guru* and disciple: it smiles on itself, and is the cause of its own wellbeing or ruin’. He has even the courage and frankness to pronounce the verdict:

“गुरु शिष्यपण । हें तो अघम लक्षण ॥”

‘Guru disciple relationship is a sign of immaturity’.
For he saw God in all with an equal eye:

“भूतों नारायण खरा । आप तैसाचि दुसरा ॥”

Nay, he had the temerity to confess to an outright denial of God.

“माझे लेखीं देव मेला । असो त्याला असेल ॥”

‘In my view God is dead; let others have Him as they like.’ This was not stark atheism, but a momentary explosion of an exasperating experience: like Christ’s “Father, why hast thou forsaken me?” Again, he declares:

“आहे देव ऐसा वदनीं वदावें । नाहीं ऐसा मनीं अनुभवावें ॥”

‘God’s existence must be admitted in speech; but its opposite should be experienced within the mind’.

This is an enigmatic assertion likely to be misunderstood by superficial listeners. I have attempted a fuller explanation of it in my *Focus on Tukaram from a Fresh Angle* (Popular Book Depot, Bombay, 1962). Briefly, it is an honest and correct statement. It is cautious as against being dogmatic about Divine Reality. “A God defined”, said Swami Rama Tirtha, “is a God confined.” Tukaram’s emphasis is not on the existence or otherwise of God, but on attempts to define Him as being “thus and thus”—ऐसा आहे.

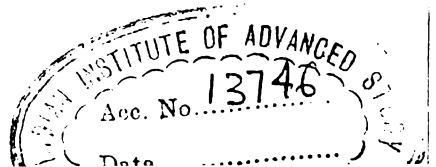
In another *abhanga* Tukaram says: “How should I, an ignoramus, know Your limits, O Panduranga? I became at first very impatient, being of poor understanding You are the God of Gods. Of the entire Universe You are the very Life.” He made no difference between the

various Pauranic representations of Him as Hara and Hari, or Rama and Uma.

हरिहरांघे नार्ही भेद । भेदकांसी नाड ।
एक वेलांटीचि आड ॥

'Beyond the variation of half a letter (हरि-हर) there is no difference between the two.' He likewise institutes a close comparison between Pandhari and Varanasi—with relevant details—and emphasises the identity of both in point of sanctity: the former being popularly regarded as sacred to Vishnu, and the latter to Siva. It is also significant that on the head of the image of Panduranga or Vitthala at Pandharpur is the symbol (लिंग or पिंडी) of Mahadeva. According to the *Padma Purana* the word "चिठ्ठल" is derived from चिदा लाति इति चिठ्ठलः । 'He who draws unto Himself his devotees, through right knowledge or understanding, is Vitthala.'

Like a well cut diamond, Tukaram's life had many facets through which the Light of Heaven sparkled.



4. EVOLUTION OF SAINTHOOD

Tukaram's evolution into a paragon of saints is one of the most inspiring stories in the hagiology of the world. Bahinabai in a beautiful song declares:

ज्ञानदेवें रचिला पाया । तुका झालासे कळस ॥

'Dnyanadeva laid the foundation . . . and Tukaram became the pinnacle.'

This is the alpha and omega of the Bhagavata tradition in Maharashtra. Tukaram attained this status just as a lotus rises to the surface of the water—with its roots deep down in the lake. The legacy of Dnyanadeva, reaching down to Tukaram, was the long stalk through which the nourishing sap of spiritual inspiration flowed. Bahinabai uses another metaphor: The edifice of *Bhagavata Dharma*, whose foundation was laid by Dnyanadeva at the close of the 13th century, was raised by Namadeva in the 14th century, and perfected by Eka-Janardan in the generation preceding the birth of Tukaram. This continuity was maintained through the centuries without any change in the essential teaching. Its cardinal message was conveyed to the people at large by the varkari movement. Its pivot was the image of Vitthala at Pandharpur—standing with 'even feet' (सम-चरण) on a brick, and arms akimbo. To all appearances this is a static pose; but the position of the arms is potentially dynamic. This is truly symbolic of the lives of all the saints of Maharashtra. A brief

epitome of their works will serve to clarify the inspirations of Tukaram, who does homage to Dnyanadeva in no uncertain terms. With characteristic humility, Tukaram lays his devout head at the feet of Dnyaneshvara and says that the right place for sandals is under the feet! At the same time, he describes the *Dnyaneshvari* as a tidal wave of Divinity's essence: "एक ओवी तरी अनुभवावी।" 'at least a line from it *should be experienced*'. How Tukaram imbibed this teaching is well indicated by Mahipati in the following excerpt from the *Bhakta-Leelamrita*:

'He began by committing to memory verses from the ancient poet-saints: Nama-deva's, Kabir's, Dnyanadeva's and Ekanath's. He studied them in the solitude of the Bhandara hill. By attentive study, the words stuck to his tongue. He did not have to make an effort to memorise.

'Ekanatha's inspiring composition was the *Bhavartha Ramayana*—with feelings of love. Tukaram committed the whole to memory. The stories from the *Bhagavata* he familiarised himself with. Also the *Yogavasishta* and *Anubhavamrita* of Sri Dnyaneshvara. He studied and searched for their meaning. If the heart is not pure, though one sits alone worshipping God, the mind begins to recollect its desires, and they make his mind wander far afield from the book. But it was not so with Tuka. He first made his heart pure, and then, going to some secluded spot, he would search for the true meaning of the book.'

It is tempting to go on with Mahipati's matchless characterisation of Tukaram. His portrayal is very vivid and true to life. But it is impossible to feel its aroma in any translation. He speaks of Tukaram's meticulous care for truthfulness—in thought, word, and deed:

सत्यापरता नाहीं धर्म । सत्य तेचि परब्रह्म ॥

'There is no *Dharma* (untranslatable word) other than truth; Truth is itself *Para-Brahma* (Supreme Reality).' Sympathy for all creatures dwelt in his heart. Particularly had he a soft corner for the "poorest, the lowliest, and lost". His *abhanga*

जे कां रंजले गांजले । त्यासि म्हणे जो आपुले ॥
तोचि साधु ओळखावा ॥

reveals his compassion and is thus rendered into English by Rev. Macnicol:—

'Is there a man who says of all,
Whether upon them sorrow fall,
Or whether joy,—“These are mine”?
That is the saint: mark well the sign.
God dwells in him. The good man's breast
Is of all men the tenderest.
Is any helpless, or undone?
Be he a slave, be he a son:
On all alike he mercy shows,
On all an equal love bestows.
How oft must I this tale repeat?
That man is God's own counterfeit.'

Tukaram, popularly regarded as an *avatar*, most resembled his prototype Namadeva in his simple childlike faith in Vithoba. Like the tailor-saint

he attained to a higher spiritual consummation, but by his own ratiocination and experience—not through initiation by another.

Namadeva was invited by Dnyanadeva to join him in a wide pilgrimage, but Namadeva was so enamoured of his Idol in Pandharpur, that he was very reluctant to leave the place in search of God elsewhere—in spite of Dnyanadeva telling him that God was not confined to the image of Vitthala at Pandharpur. The precocious girl saint Muktabai had, therefore, recourse to proving Namadeva's immaturity by exposing him to the potter-saint Gora's quaint test. Finally, he was directed by Vitthala Himself to go to Visoba Khechar for enlightenment. He was consequently convinced that, after all, his *bhakti*, however genuine or ardent, was too narrow. He thus came to realise: "केशवची नामा, नामाची केशव ।" 'Nama and Keshava are the same.' Tukaram, Mahipati tells us, 'regarded the whole universe as himself: he saw no duality even in his dreams In worshipping Panduranga with his enthusiastic love, he himself became Panduranga. If God alone exists, who is to worship whom?' Bahinabai also says the same thing. 'Tukaram and Panduranga no longer remained different. In thought, word, and deed, the two become one. तुका झाला पांडुरंग.

Ekanath lived only a generation before Tukaram's birth—(1533-99). Balhoba (Tukaram's father) had listened to Ekanath's inspired and ecstatic *Kirtans*. Though Ekanath was poetically more gifted, learned, and versatile in his compositions, Tukaram was greatly influenced by Ekanath's commentary on the *Bhagavata*, and inspired by his exemplary and unconventional conduct. Ekanath per-

sonally served lepers and other “untouchables”, he fed a dying donkey with the holy water intended for ritualistic use, and above all showed admirable patience and forbearance toward a Muslim miscreant who repeatedly spat on Ekanath while returning from his bath in the sacred Godavari. Ekanath only smiled and thanked the miscreant, saying: “Instead of a single bath, he gave me the opportunity to bathe thrice, augmenting merit threefold!”

Such were the models Tukaram had before him. He combined in himself the best he received from his forebears: Dnyanadeva, Namadeva, and Ekanath. He smelted this in the crucible of his own direct experience, and presented to the world the rich amalgam compounded of the best of the rest. He proclaimed the result crying from the house-tops:

यारे यारे, लहान थोर । नारी आणि नर ॥—

‘Eureka! Come one, Come all: both men and women—young and old!’

पिटूँ भक्तिचा डंगोरा । कळि कालासी दरारा ॥—

‘Beat the big drum of *Bhakti*: very terrifying to this Iron Age!’

Tukaram, the humblest of mortals, had become Immortal—

मरण माझें मरोन गेलें । मज केलें अमर ।

तुका म्हणे बुनादीचें । जालें साचें उजवणें ॥

‘Tuka says, My death is dead. I have been made Immortal. The foundation is thus truly brought to light.’

5. THE PATH OF ENLIGHTENMENT

The *Gatha*, as it has come down to us, contains well nigh 5,000 *abhangas*. "Abhanga" literally means "unbroken or indivisible". They are of all sizes and deal with all sorts of myths, legends, contexts, ideas, concepts, sentiments, and miscellaneous topics—personal, domestic, philosophical and religious. The original manuscript is not yet traced. But the available texts are from copies found in various places. There is no doubt, however that most of these are authentic and reliable, though a few of the songs appear to be of doubtful authorship. The edition published by the Government of Maharashtra may be regarded as the most dependable for our purpose here. There are various others with some attempt at classification according to the prevailing tone or topic. But Tukaram did not write like a modern composer. The *abhangas* were uttered rather than deliberately written out as 'printers' copy'. Hence we are left to ourselves to rearrange them editorially. The order must be essentially *logical* not *chronological*. "From the words of poets", Tagore observes, "readers deduce what meanings they find pleasing to themselves." This dictum is applicable to the present interpretation as well.

The Path of Enlightenment cannot be the same for all,—'all roads lead to Rome.'

आकाशात् पतितं तोयं यथा गच्छति सागरम् ।
सर्वं देव नमस्कारं केशवं प्रति गच्छति ॥

We have before referred to Tukaram's non-secta-

rian attitude to God as represented in the *Puranas*. He saw no difference between हरि and हर. Varanasi and Pandhari were equally sacred to him. His stress was not on outward things, but inward realities. 'The musk-deer frantically roams over the whole forest in search of the musk which is within itself', he says. But, before proceeding to any *a priori* conclusions, let us take the *Gatha* (Govt. ed.) itself for our guide. Though its *abhangas* are numbered serially up to 4607 (with 37 added from other sources) without classification according to objectives, it is helpful in our present context.

The very first abhanga reads:—

समचरणदृष्टि चित्तेवरी साजिरी । तेथें माझी हरी वृत्ति राहो ॥
 आणीक न लगे मायिक पदार्थ । तेथें माझे आर्त नको देवा ॥
 ब्रह्मादिक पदें दुःखाची शिराणी । तेथें दुःखित झणी जडों देसी ॥
 तुका म्हणे त्याचें कळलें आम्हां घर्म । जे जे कर्मघर्म नाशवंत ॥

No. 4069 goes on to state:—

वेद अनंत बोलिला । अर्थ इतकाचि साधिला ॥
 धिठोबासी शरण जावें । निजनिष्ठा नाम गावें ॥
 सकळशास्त्रांचा धिचार । अंतीं इतकाचि निर्धार ॥
 अठरापुराणों सिद्धांत । तुका म्हणे हाचि हेत ॥

In No. 4503 he declares:—

ॐ तत्सदिति सुत्राचे सार । कृपेचा सागर पांडुरंग ॥
 हरिःॐ सहित उदत अनुदत । प्रचुरीश्वरासहित पांडुरंग ।
 गोब्राह्मणहिता होऊनि निराळे । वेदाचें तें मूळ तुका म्हणे ॥

These three *abhangas* afford us a clue to Tuka-ram's trends in his emancipation. In the first, he prays with his gaze on the feet of Vitthala's image which ravished his eyes. He wants nothing else that is but a passing show. Even godly states are a source of great affliction. 'Tuka says, I have learnt the

secret of all this: whatever is considered as prescriptive duty is ephemeral.'

In the second he says: 'The *Vedas* tell us many things, but their import is only surrender to Vithoba. This, too, is the sum and substance of all the *Sastras* and the 18 *Puranas*.'

In the third, he concludes: 'The essence of the cryptic formula *Om Tat Sat*, the upper and lower stresses and intonations, and the adoration of Iswara, together with the well being of Brahmanas and cows,—this and beyond all this is Panduranga.'

It is clear from the above citations that Tukaram's vision was far higher than what commonly passes for piety. To know his spiritual plenitude we have to read his *Gatha* as a whole—not piecemeal in isolated *abhangas*—in the spirit of his own advice: तुका म्हणे सार घ्यावें । मने हरिरूप व्हावे ॥ 'Tuka says, imbibe the essence and mentally merge into God.' This is, obviously, not easy to achieve.

THE NATURE OF BHAKTI

Bhakti or devotion is popularly regarded as the easiest way to attain God. This view is so often dinned into our ears that we are hypnotised into missing its real character altogether. The way this is practised is too familiar to need elaboration. To get engrossed in formal ritualistic worship, to indulge in singing devotional songs, to be particular in the observance of prescribed fasts, and to go on frequent pilgrimages to holy places these seem to exhaust the code of piety without reference to the rest of one's life and conduct. Relevant texts in support of these activities and the like are quoted

to divert our attention from true *Bhakti* as taught by the saints through example and precepts. In this matter Tukaram did more than we imagine—misled by legendary accounts and a superficial reading of the *Gatha*. For a proper understanding it is necessary to go deeper into both.

The first desideratum is to recognise that, as Tukaram warns us, *Bhakti is not so easy* as popularly believed. What the other saints also thought about it may be gathered from the following *abhanga* of Janabai, the maid-servant of Nama-deva:—

भक्ति ते कठीण इंगळाचि खाई । रिघणे त्या डोहीं कठीण असे ।
 भक्ति ते कठीण विषग्रास घेणे । उदास पं होणें जीवें भावें ॥
 भक्ति ते कठीण भक्ति ते कठीण । खडगाची धार, बाण न सोशीतया ॥
 भक्ति ते कठीण विचारुन पाहे । भक्ति योगें संतसमागमीं सर्वसिद्धि ॥

‘*Bhakti* is hard, very hard’, says, Jani, ‘it is like eating live embers; it is dangerous like plunging into a flood; like swallowing poison; it makes one despair of his life; it is sharp as the edge of a sword. Think of this well; but every thing is possible in the company of saints.’

Tukaram, and all earnest seekers, have found it so. To earn the Grace of God one must pay the price; and God’s tests are not easy.

देवाची ते खूण आला ज्याच्या घरा ।
 त्याच्या पडे चिरा मनुष्येपणा ॥
 देवाची ते खूण करावें वाटोळें ।
 आपणा वेगळें कोणी नाहीं ॥
 देवाची ते खूण गुंतों नेदी आशा ।
 ममतेच्या पाशा शिवों नेदी ॥
 देवाची ते खूण गुंतो नेदी वाचा ।
 लागीं असत्याचा मळ नेदी ॥

देवाची ते खूण तोडी मायाजाळ ।
 आणि हें सकळ जग हरी ॥
 पहा देवें तेंचि बळकाविलें स्थळ ।
 तुवयाचें सकळ चिन्हें त्याचीं ॥

'The sign of God's favour or touch', says Tukaram from his own personal experience, 'is that He shatters your house of human existence. He deprives you of all your possessions, as though beside Himself there is nothing valuable; He allows no room for desires, or contamination of mineness; He controls your speech to save it from untruth; He brushes away the cobwebs of illusion and delusion, making you realise that the whole world is nothing but God. He fills all, including Tuka. This verily is the sign of His Grace.'

It is important to dwell on this aspect of *Bhakti*. For those who claim to be paragons of piety do not generally go deep enough into these implications. It is easy to observe all the outer signs of devotion, or wear all the symbols of piety, without suffering the rigors of inward spiritual discipline. Several of Tukaram's *abhangas* draw pointed attention to this contrast between the inner and outer marks of the devotees—real and false:

ऐसे कैसे झाले भोंदू । कर्म करोनी म्हणती साधु ॥
 अंगा लावूनिया राख । डोळे झांकुनी करितील पाप ॥
 दावुनि वैराग्याची कळा । भोगी विषयांचा सोहळा ॥
 तुका म्हणे सांगो कित्ती । जळो तयांची संगती ॥ (४३१०)

बळे बाह्यात्कारें संपादिलें सोंग । नाहीं जाला त्याग अंतरीचा ॥
 ऐसें येतें नित्य माझ्या अनुभवा । मनासी हाठाचा समाचार ॥
 प्रपंचा बाहेरी नाहीं आलें चित्त । केलें करी नित्य वेवसाय ॥
 तुका म्हणे भोरप्याची परी । जाले सोंग वरी आंत तैसें ॥ (८६६)

‘How shall we count these *sadhus*, without action to match? They daub their bodies with ash, but commit sins closing their eyes; flaunting indications of renunciation, they continue to indulge in sensuality. Why should I reiterate all this? Fie on their companionship!’

‘By force the outer pretensions have been achieved; but there is no inner detachment or renunciation. This is my daily experience. I know this too well. . . The mind has not come out of worldliness—doing works by mechanical habit. Tuka wishes there were concordance between the inner and outer qualities.’

Tukaram acted what he preached. बोले तैसा चाले । त्याचीं वंदावीं पावुलें ‘Worship the feet of him who acts as he speaks’, he said. There are nine forms of *Bhakti* traditionally inculcated. नवविधा भक्ति । Tukaram practised all these.

Even Sri Sankaracharya, the greatest protagonist of *Advaita*, sang in praise of the popular deities with ardent devotion in his *Stotras*. Of all *sadhanas*, he said, *Bhakti* is pre-eminent. But he defined *Bhakti* as स्वस्वरूपानुसंधान— ultimate Communion with one’s own true Self. *Narada Bhakti Sutra* states the philosophy of *Bhakti* in an epigrammatic form. Samartha Ramadas, in his ‘*Das-Bodh*’ dwells on all aspects of *Bhakti* more elaborately. Tukaram was his contemporary. Ekanath, a little before him, described it briefly and vividly thus:

सगुण स्वरूप समर्थ भर्ता । निघोन गेलिया तत्त्वतां ॥
 त्यालागीं तळमळी कांता । तैशी कळवळता जें उठी ॥
 त्या नांव गा माझी भक्ती । उद्धवा जाण निश्चितीं ॥

In substance, this means: 'My *Bhakti* is verily like the tumultuous longing of a loving wife for her virtuous, charming, strong and healthy husband who is absent'. Tukaram uses the simile of a fish out of water struggling for very life:

जीवनाघांचोनी मासोळी ॥

The stages by which Tukaram attained to this consummation as a devotee are well indicated in the *Gatha*. They followed the course succinctly epitomised by Ekanath in the following lines:—

हृदयीं माझे नित्य ध्यान । मुखीं माझे नामकीर्तन ।
 श्रवणीं माझे कथाश्रवण । करीं मदर्चन सर्वदा ॥
 नयनीं मम मूर्तिदर्शन । चरणीं मदलेयं गमन ।
 रसनें मम तीर्थे प्राशन । मत्प्रसाद भोजन अत्यादरें ॥
 साष्टांगे मजसी नमन । आल्हादे मदभक्तां आर्लिंगन ।
 सप्रेम माझे सेवेवीण । रिता अर्धक्षण जाऊ नेदी ॥

'In the heart, my perpetual meditation; the lips always lisping my name; ears ever listening to my story; the hands engaged in my worship, and the eyes beholding my image, and the feet on the path to my temple; the tongue tasting my *tirtha*, and receiving my *prasad* with utmost reverence; prostrating before me with the whole body, and embracing my devotees with great joy: in short, not allowing a single moment to pass without loving service of me.' It is Sri Krishna speaking in the first person singular, to Uddhava. The passage concludes:

ऐसी सेवा करितां पाहे हो । सर्व भूतीं देखे मद्भावो ।
 हा सर्व धर्मां माजी रावो । तेथें अपारों कदा न रिधे ॥
 सर्व भूतीं माझे दर्शन । तेव्हां वंराग्य वोसंडे पूर्ण ।
 तेथे सहज उठे शुद्ध ज्ञान । देहाभिमानच्छेदिक ॥

संसार मायिक रचना । सत्यत्वे कळलें ज्याच्या मना ।
तें मनचि लाजे मनपणा । विज्ञान जाणा त्या नांव ॥
(एकनाथी भागवत)

‘Serving me thus, the devotee sees only myself in all creatures. This is the highest *Dharma*, and there is no danger in it whatsoever. When one sees me thus, omnipresent, true renunciation results, and pure knowledge is the outcome. Body-consciousness is destroyed, all creation appears illusory. He who understands this truly transcends the ordinary mind. This is verily the highest knowledge.’

Every word of the above excerpts from Ekanath is literally true of Tukaram’s *Bhakti*. It is very tempting to go on with Ekanath whose prolific writings anticipated practically all that Tukaram was in life and song. The only difference is that Ekanath was more erudite, more versatile, and a consummate artist in literary expression. He summed up in himself all the traits and teaching of all his predecessors. Tukaram’s *Gatha* may be regarded as an epitomised popular version of Ekanath’s writings in the simple idiom of a rustic. Yet there is in it copious evidence of Tukaram’s direct inspiration and personal experience. In short, there is nothing in the *Gatha* to suggest borrowing or emulation, though certain *abhangas* or *ovis* are found to be almost verbatim reproductions from Namadeva, particularly.

Tukaram started with repairing a shrine in his neighbourhood, working as a mason and artisan doing manual labour as an act of service to God:

laborare est orare: 'to labour is to pray'. As Samartha Ramadas puts it:

देव पाहावया कारणें । देऊळें लागती पाहाणें ॥
कोठें तरी देऊळाच्या गुणें । देव प्रगटे ॥
देऊळे म्हणिजे नाना शरीरें । तेथें राहिजे जीवेश्वरें ॥
नाना शरीरें नाना प्रकारें । अनंत भेदे ॥
विवेक योगे सकळ प्रयोग । करीत जावें ॥

'To see God it is necessary to go to temples. For by so doing, somehow, God will reveal Himself. By temples I mean various bodies wherein God dwells in the form of individuals. In a variety of forms the Infinite is to be realised. . . Through discriminating practices we must go on progressively.'

This is what Tukaram did actually. He regarded the body as a temple—pure within and without. Then he went on to see God in all creatures भूतीं भगवंत. Finally, he attained to unity with all existence: विद्मि विद्मंभरं । अद्य देव ॥

6. TUKARAM'S RELIGION

We now come to the core of our subject. But it is not easy to tackle it. Tukaram appears to be, like God Himself, all things to all men. His life and *Gatha* are equally enigmatic to those who try to squeeze them into a single, simple, doctrinaire formula.

Was Tukaram idolatrous? Was he a *saguna* or *nirguna* worshipper? Was he a dualist? Non-dualist? Or a paradoxical compound of both? Does he teach a world-shunning anti-social philosophy? Was he mystic? None of these queries could be answered in categorical terms. The best thing for us to do is to read the *Gatha* itself in the light of his actual life and *vice versa*: look at his life in the light of his *Gatha*.

There is no doubt that Vitthala was his be-all and end-all; he lived only for Him; he thought only of Him; he wanted to speak only of Him; his mind and heart were full of Vitthala or Panduranga. He was enamoured of the image at Pandharpur. He gloated over it and was never tired of going into ecstasies over his fascination for it. There are hundreds of *abhangas* descriptive of every feature of its form. These undoubtedly appear idolatrous. He did this not only in the initial stages, but throughout his life—to its very close. Nevertheless it is difficult to reconcile all this with what he says—not condemning, but explaining the significance of image-worship in spiritual life. His first vision of

Vithala was as a formless presence. His reference to this revelation is a significant anticipation of his ultimate realisation.

पंधरा दिवसांमाजी साक्षात्कार जाला । विठोबा भेटला निराकार ॥
दीपकीं कर्पूर केंसा तो निराळा । तेंसा देह जाला तुका म्हणे ॥ (४३५४)

‘In fifteen days, Vithoba revealed Himself as a formless presence. . . . Tuka says, The body became indistinguishable from Him, even like camphor and flame in ignition.’

The next verse in the Gatha is also revealing:—

अज्ञान हा देह स्वरूपीं मीनला । सर्व बोसावला देहपात ॥
ज्ञानस्वरुपाची सांगड मिळाली । अंतरीं पाहिली ज्ञानज्योती ॥
तुका म्हणे चित्तस्वरुपीं राहिलें । देह विसावले तुझ्यापायीं ॥ (४३५५)

‘This body of ignorance got dissolved in the Self: all was liquidated in the shedding of body consciousness. Linked up with the knowledge of Self, I saw within myself the revealing flame. Tuka says, the mind became rooted in the Self, and the body found its resting place at your feet.’

Was this experience dualistic or unitary? If it was unitary, why did Tukaram, after this consummation, continue to act like an ordinary dualistic devotee? The nature of the popular manifestation of *Bhakti* is too familiar to need description or comment. We have hundreds of *abhangas* illustrating it in detail. We have also Tukaram’s own explanation of the *raison d’etre* of his practice.

धर्म रक्षाचयासाठीं । करणें आटी आम्हासि ॥
वाचा बोलों वेद नीती । करूं संतीं केले तें ॥
न बाणतां स्थिति अंगीं । कर्म त्यागी लंड तो ॥ (२६०)

आम्हीं वैकुण्ठासी । आलो याचि कारणासी ॥
 बोलिले जे श्रुषी । साच भावें वर्ताविया ॥
 अर्थ लोपलीं पुराणें । नाश केला शब्दज्ञानें ॥
 विषयलोभी मन । साधनें बुडविलीं ॥
 पिट्टं भक्तीचा डांगोरा । कळिकाळासी दरारा ॥
 तुका म्हणे करा । जयजयकार आनंदे ॥ (५२०)

'For the protection of *Dharma*, we have to do all this. In speech we repeat the inculcations of the *Vedas*; and act as did the saints. Without attaining direct experience, to renounce action is sheer impotence.' . . .

'We are residents of Vaikuntha, come hither for this very reason: to render in action what the sages recommended in words. The *Puranas* have lost their significance: verbosity has done great harm. Sensual concupiscence has eclipsed spiritual endeavours. We come to proclaim the message of *Bhakti* which is so very terrifying to this dark age. Tuka says, Victory, Victory! Sing this in triumphant Joy!'

Tukaram's adoration or glorification of Vithoba was more meaningful than the formal routines of the ritualists. He knew that icons made of metal, clay, and stone had their proper part to play in the religious life; but the true nature of devotion was the heart's genuine surrender to the will of God in all things.

विष्णु केला पाषाणाचा । विष्णु पूजा विष्णूसी ।
 पाषाण राहिला पाषाणचि ॥

'We make a stone image of Vishnu. The adoration goes to Vishnu, and the stone remains a stone'. It is like the radio-transmitter: the message goes

through, while the contraption remains a mere mechanism. There is in the following *abhanga* a very lucid exposition of the real thought behind the customary forms of worship:—

अवघ्या दशा येणें साधती । मुख्य उपासना सगुणभक्ति ॥
 प्रगटे हृदयींची मूर्ती । भावशुद्धि जाणोनियां ॥
 बीज आणि फळ हरीचें नाम । सकळ पुण्य सकळ धर्म ॥
 सकळां कळांचें हें धर्म । निवारी श्रम सकळ ही ॥
 जेथें कीर्तन हें नामघोष । करिती निर्लज्य हरीचे दास ॥
 सकळ बोथंबले रस । तुटती पाश भवबंधाचे ॥
 येती अंगा वसती लक्षणे । अंतरीं देवें धरिलें ठाणें ॥
 आपणचि तयाचे गुण । जाणें येणें खुंटे वस्तीचें ॥
 न लगें सांडावा आश्रम । उपजते कुळांचे धर्म ॥
 आणिक न करावे श्रम । एक पुरे नाम विठोवाचें ॥
 वेदपुरुष नारायण । योगियांचें ब्रह्म शून्य ॥
 मुक्ता आत्मा परिपूर्ण । तुका म्हणे सगुण भोळ्या आम्हां ॥
 (६४५)

‘All states are thus attainable. The chief worship is of God with attributes. *Bhakti* reveals the image within the heart knowing the purity of attitude. Seed and fruit are both the names of Hari. They constitute all that is meant by meritorious deeds and *Dharma*. This is the secret of all accomplishments. It affords restfulness in all strenuous activity. Where they sing the praises of God, forgetful of shame, there is real bliss; and all bondage of worldliness is broken. When you are God-possessed, all divine virtues flock to you, whereby the cycle of rebirths comes to an end. This does not demand of you rejection of family-duties or personal status: nor does it involve strenuous labour. Singing the Name of Vitthala alone suffices. Narayana is the name sanctified by the *Veda*; the Brahma of

the *yogis* amounts to a cypher. The liberated Soul is perfect. Tuka says, God with attributes is good for simple folk like us.’

Elsewhere he says:

काय तो विवाद असो भेदाभेद । साधा परमानंद एका भावें ॥ (३१४२)
 सगुण निर्गुण जयाचीं हीं अंगे । तोचि आम्हासंगे क्रीडा करी ॥ (२९५)
 तुका म्हणें भक्तिभाव । हाचि देवांचाहि देव ॥ (२१०३)
 आमूचिया भावें तुज देवपण । हें कां विसरोन राहिलासी ॥ (२९४६)

Regarding all discussion about the सगुण and निर्गुण (God with attributes and God without attributes) Tukaram asks, ‘Why this wrangling over differences? Remain firm in the bliss of Unity’. ‘He who is both at once is verily sporting with us.’ ‘Tuka says, the attitude of loving devotion is the God of gods.’ ‘Our own attitude has conferred godhood upon You (i.e. Vitthala); why do You forget this?’

The above citations could not come from an idolatrous worshipper. भाव is not easy to render into English. It connotes not only *belief* but also *being* its opposite being अ-भाव or non-existence. Everything we say about God depends upon our attitude: भावना is कल्पना God is what we think of Him: ‘By Faith and Faith alone embrace, Believing where we cannot prove! Proof is a matter of the intellect. But God is beyond the reach of our reasoning faculty.’

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते, अप्राप्य मनसा सह ॥

Tukaram’s religion was, therefore, more than what is commonly understood by that term. He categorically states:

तुका म्हणे शब्दचि हा देव । शब्देंचि गौरव पूजा करूं ॥ (३३९६)

‘Tuka declares, the word itself is God. We shall glorify and worship Him with words.’

‘In the beginning was the Word,
The Word was with God,
The Word was God.’—St. John.

Tukaram further says,

अंतरीचे ध्यान । मुख्य या नावे पूजन ॥ (१२९८)

The nature of this kind of worship is well described by Ekanath in the following *abhanga*:—

देवपूजे ठेचिता भावो । तो स्वये चि ज्ञाला देवो ॥
आतां कैसेनि पूजूं देवा । माझी मज होतसे सेवा ॥
अन्न गंध धूप दीप । ते ही माझेचि स्वरूप ॥
एका जनादनीं करी पूजा । तेथ पुज्य पूजक नाहीं दुजा ॥

That Tukaram, too, attained to this very attitude cannot be gainsaid. Parallel expressions are scattered through The *Gatha*. I have quoted from Ekanath only for the sake of brevity.

‘When I go to worship God’, says Ekanath, ‘I become myself God. How then shall I worship You, God? It reduces itself to worshipping myself! All the paraphernalia of worship is my own self. For Eka-Janardana, the worshipful and worshipper are identical, not different.’

To cite one parallel from Tukaram:

ध्यानीं ध्यातां पंढरीराया । मनासहित पालटे काया ॥
तेथ बोला कैची उरी । माझे मीपण जाला हरी ॥
चंतन्यां पडतां मिठी । दिसे हरिरूप अवघी सृष्टी ॥
तुका म्हणे सांगो काय । एकाएकीं हरि वृत्तिमय ॥ (४०७७)

‘When I meditate on the Lord of Pandhari, body and mind get transfigured; where there is

then room for words? My my-ness is become Hari. In my union with, or merger in (supra-mental) awareness, entire creation assumes the form of Hari. Tuka says, what more shall I add? All at once my consciousness became one with Hari's'.

7. TUKARAM'S MYSTICISM

Mysticism is a modern English word. Its implications are fully conveyed by the word भक्ति as suggested above, very briefly. A *Bhakta*, therefore, was a mystic like Tukaram to understand whom is not easy भक्तांचा महिमा भक्तची जाणे। says Tukaram himself. To understand a saint, one must become a saint oneself. This Sri Aurobindo calls "knowledge by identity". Tukaram understood God by experiencing complete identity with Him. The nature of this realisation is conveyed to us—so far as it is communicable in speech—in several of his *abhangas*. It is well to remember here that अभाग literally means "indivisible". The mystical experience, too, is unitary.

In a sense all religions are mystical in ultimate experience. In their popular forms they may appear even crude in outward expression. Mysticism is to religion what fragrance is to a flower, or light is to a flame. Tukaram shared this with all other saints. He started with tending the wick and oil that fed the flame. The outcome was the light which could not have been, but for its tangible accessories in the lamp. Pandhari was the lamp, the image of Vitthala was the wick, the spirit of devotion was the oil, and the company of the saints was the oxygen that kept the flame burning. The saints were awake when the common people were either dosing or fast asleep. The visions they saw were not mere dreams or hallucinations. Their ecs-

tatic declarations had a core of truth which is missed by the unbelievers. Mysticism is not obscurantism. To confine ourselves to one important feature, we might refer to the stress laid by all saints upon the potency of the Name of God— नाम-स्मरण Ekanath declares:

स्मरण तेंचि मुक्ति । विस्मरण तेंचि अधोगति ॥
नामाचा उच्चार मुख्य हेचि भक्ति ॥
एका जनार्दनी विरक्ति तेणें जोडे ॥

‘Remembrance is liberation, forgetfulness is regression. Utterance of the Name is essential *Bhakti*: Revulsion from worldliness is attained thereby’.

Tukaram goes into ecstasies over it:

लागलें भरतें ब्रह्मानंदाहि धरतें ॥
झाला हरिनामाचा तारा । शीड लागलें फरारा ॥
(३३१२)

वेद अनंत बोलिला । अर्थ इतुकाचि साधिला ॥
विठोबासी शरण जावें । निजनिष्ठें नाम गावें ॥
(४०६२)

न कळें तें कळों येईल उगलें । नामें या विठ्ठलाचिया ॥
न दिसे तें दिसों येईल उगलें । नामें या विठ्ठलाचिया ॥
न बोलों तें बोलों येईल उगलें । नामें या विठ्ठलाचिया ॥
न भेटे तें भेटों येईल उगलें । नाम या विठ्ठलाचिया ॥
अलभ्य तो लाभ होईल अपार । नाम निरंतर वाचे ॥
तुका म्हणे आसक्त जीव सर्वभावे । तरतील नावें विठोबाच्या ॥
(३०४७)

ठायींच बेंसोनि करा एक चित्त । आवडी अनंत आळवाधा ॥
रामकृष्ण हरी विठ्ठल केशवा । मंत्र हा जपाचा सर्वकाळ ॥
याविण असतां आणिक साधन । वाहतसे आण विठोबाची ॥
तुका म्हणे सोपें आहे सर्वाहुनी । शाहाणा तो घणी घेतो येथें ॥
(२४५८)

‘There is a tide which rises higher than God-ecstasy: it is the life-boat of the Name of Hari, whose sails are fluttering. The *Vedas* tell of many things, but their essential import is only this: Surrender to Vithoba and sing His Name with undeviating zeal. Then you will come to know what is not known; you will see what is not seen; you will utter what is not utterable; you will meet with what you missed before; your gain will be beyond measure. Tuka says, the life of attachment and bondage will be transcended by uttering the Name of Vithoba. . . . Sit still where you are with the mind made single. All the time sing: Rama-Krishna Hari-Vitthala-Keshava! If there is any other means more efficacious, I swear by the Name of Vithoba (there is none). Tuka says, this is easiest of all. The wise ones find contentment in this.’

The mystical view conveyed in the above is obvious. It is a forthright avowal of the Faith of all saints in the efficacy of the *Name*. It is clear that no sanctity is attached to any name in particular: Rama, Krishna, Hari, Vitthala, Keshava, or any other.

सर्वदेव नमस्कारं केशवं प्रति गच्छति ।

The modern mind does not easily catch the significance of all this. That is because it relies on what it calls “reason”, but does not go deep enough. Reason to be consistent must go beyond itself into *Experience*.

तुका म्हणे सतत ध्यातां । परब्रह्मचि आलें हातां ॥ (३९८०)

अनुभवे आले अंगा । ते या जगा देतसें ॥

..... मूळ ओल अंतरीची ॥

..... तुका म्हणे दुसरे नाही ॥ (२८४५)

‘Tuka says, constant and continuous meditation brings Para-Brahman into our hands. This is my personal experience, and I proclaim it to the world. Tuka says, the moisture is deep within, nowhere else.’

Chokhamela, the sweeper-saint, declared:

देवा नाहीं रूप, देवा नाहीं नाम ॥

and Namadeva said:

नाम तेंचि रूप, रूप तेंचि नाम । नाम रूपा भिन्न नाहीं नाहीं ॥
 आकारला देव नामरूपा आला । म्हणोनि स्थापिले नाम वेदीं ॥
 नामा परता मंत्र नाही हो आणिक । सांगती ते मूर्ख ज्ञान हीन ॥
 नामा म्हणे नाम केशव केवळ । जाणती प्रेमळ भक्त भले ॥

‘God has no form, God has no name’, says Chokha. ‘Name itself is form, form itself is name: the two are not different. God assumed form and thus became cognisable, wherefore the *Vedas* established the Name. Beyond Name there is no sacred formula. Only the ignorant think otherwise. Namadeva says, the Name itself is Keshava: loving devotees understand this well.’

The saints delighted in singing the Name in chorus. But they also sat alone in silence and mentally repeated the Name. Dnyanadeva says: ज्ञानदेवा मौन, जपमाळ अंतरां ॥— ‘Dnyanadeva is silent, the rosary is within himself’.

‘The short prayer reacheth Heaven quickest’, say the Christian mystics. They “practised the presence of God”, and were used to the “prayer of quiet.” ‘Be still,’ says the Gospel of St. John, ‘and know that I am God’. Loud prayers may help to attune the mind to prepare itself for the prayer in the silence of God where one communes with one-

self. Dr. Alexis Carrel writes: "Prayer is the most powerful of energy one can generate. It is a force as real as terrestrial gravity. As a physician, I have seen men, after all their therapy had failed, lifted out of a disease and melancholy by the serene effort of prayer. . . . Prayer like radium is a source of luminous, self-generating energy. . . . In prayer human beings seek to augment their finite energy by addressing themselves to the Infinite source of all energy. When we pray, we link ourselves with the inexhaustible motive power that spins the universe, we ask that a part of this power be apportioned to our needs. Even in asking, our human deficiencies are filled, and we arise strengthened and repaired. . . . Whenever we address God in fervent prayer, we change both soul and body for the better. It could not happen that any man or woman could pray for a single moment without some good result'.

In the face of this impressive statement by a Nobel Laureate of our Faithless and sordid age, we have no difficulty in understanding the mystical esoteric experiences of Tukaram. He says:

अंतरी गेलिया अमृत । बाहेरी काया लखलखित ॥

'When nectar fills it, the body shines with glowing lustre'. This is the ambrosia of the experience of Union with Divinity. Several *abhangas* are bubbling with the joy of this communion. Only a few samples could be cited here.

अनुभवे अनुभव अवघाचि साधिला । . . .

एकचि उरले काया वाचा मना । अनंद भवनामाजीं त्रयीं ।

तुका म्हणे आम्ही जिंकिला संसार । होऊनि किंकर विठोबाचे ॥

(१३२४)

‘I gained the acme of experiences: Only the one remained in body, mind and speech. This was Bliss in all the three worlds! Tuka says, we have conquered this transitory existence by becoming slaves of Vithoba’.

लवण मेळविता जळें । काय उरलें निराळें ॥
 तैसा समरस जालों । तुजमाजी हरपलों ॥
 अग्निकर्पूराच्या मेळों । काय उरली काजळी ॥
 तुका म्हणे होती । तुझी माझी एक ज्योती ॥ (२४८४)

‘When salt is dissolved in water, what remains different? So am I merged in Thee: I am lost in Thee. When fire and camphor meet what is left except soot? Tuka says, we two were but one flame.’

अंतरीची ज्योति प्रकाशली दीप्ति । मुळींची जे होती आच्छादिली ।
 तेथींचा आनंद ब्रह्मांडीं न माय । उपमेशीं काय देऊं सुखा ॥
 भावाचें मथिलें निर्गुण संचलें । तें हें उभें केलें विटेवरी ॥
 तुका म्हणे आम्हां ब्रह्मांड पंढरी । प्रेमाची जे थोरी साठवण ॥
 (२८४७)

‘The inner light shone forth—that which was at first eclipsed. The ecstasy of this realisation could not be contained by the universe: the attributeless essence of the mental state was made to stand on a brick. Tuka says, for us the entire universe is Pandhari—a reminder of the glory of love’.

देशकालवस्तुभेद मावळला । आत्मा निर्वाळला विश्वाकार ॥
 न जाला प्रपंच आहे परब्रह्म । अहं सोहं ब्रह्म आकळलें ॥
 तत्त्वमसि विद्या ब्रह्मानंद सांग । तें चि झाला अंगें तुका आतां ॥
 (४३१३)

‘Space, time, things—all distinctions are transcended. Atman has taken the universal form. The world never was, only Para-Brahman is. I AM THAT I

AM is now realised. The awareness of That Thou Art instils *Brahmananda*. Tuka has verily become identical in person with all this’.

निरंजनीं आम्हीं बांधियलें घर । निराकारीं निरंतर राहिलों आम्ही ॥
निराभासीं पूर्ण जालों समरस । अखंड ऐक्यास पावलो आम्ही ॥

तुका म्हणे आतां नाही अहंकार । जालों तदाकार नित्य शुद्ध ॥
(४३२६)

‘I have built my house in the stainless. I am merged in the formless. I am one with the illusionless. I have attained to unbreakable unity. Tuka says, now there is no room for egoism. I am identified with the Eternally Pure.’

बोलों अबोलणें मरोनियां जिणें । असोनि नसणें जनि आम्हां ॥

भोगी त्याग जाला संगी च असंग । तोडियेले लाग माग दोन्ही ॥

तुका म्हणे नव्हे दिसतों मी तैसा । पुसणें तें पुसा पांडुरंगा ।
(५३७)

‘Speaking, I am silent; and being dead, am I alive. Being among the people, I am not. My renunciation is in enjoyment; in attachment is non-attachment. I have broken all bonds either way. Tuka says, I am not what I appear. Ask Panduranga for an explanation of this enigma.’

आनंदाच्या कोटी । सांढल्या आम्हां पोटीं ॥

प्रेम चालला प्रवाहो ; नामओघ लवलाहो ॥

अखंड खंडेना जीवन । राम कृष्ण नारायण ॥

थडी आहिक्या परत्र । तुका म्हणें सम तीर ॥ (१९७८)

‘Infinite Bliss fills my being. Love’s stream is flowing ebulliently singing the Name. Life will not give up its unity with Rama, Krishna, Narayana. Tuka says, this side and that are the same to me.’

8. TUKARAM'S SADHANA

Sadhana is spiritual endeavour, striving on the pathway to God. The *Bhagavad Geeta* is generally considered as a guide in the triple aspects of भक्ति, ज्ञान and कर्म the three strands of *Sadhana* which constitutes, according to Shri Aurobindo, "the synthesis of Integral Yoga". This *Yoga* pertains to the body, mind, and soul. *Hata-yoga* concentrates on bodily functions and their control: इंद्रिय निग्रह The mind being अंतःकरण the inner instrument—holds the key to all varieties of *sadhana*. Its regulation and discipline are of cardinal importance. When these elements—body and mind—are thoroughly subordinated to the demands of the Soul, all is well with *sadhana*. Tukaram's *sadhana* comprehended all this.

तपःस्वाध्याय ईश्वरप्रणिधानानि क्रियायोगः ।

declares Patanjali. Tukaram led a normal life of conventional piety up to the crisis of the disastrous famine which resulted in his total conversion. His only refuge and anchor then became Vitthala—the family deity. Complete surrender to Him seemed the only way. But this was not easy. So Tukaram began his *tapas* in the wilderness of Bhamgiri for fifteen days, eschewing food and drink, and challenging God to reveal Himself—with the results we have already noted. The only occasion when Tukaram had recourse to a similar penance was when his manuscripts were thrown into the Indrayani: this time for thirteen days. Beyond this he does not

seem to have undergone bodily *tapas*, except fasting on *Ekadashi*.

His *स्वाध्याय* has been referred to before. He retired to a secluded place, and there imbibed the contents of books like the *Geeta*, *Bhagavata*, *Yoga-Vasishtha*, and *Anubhavamrita*. He also attended *Kirtans* and memorised the sayings of the saints. He prayed for association with those who studied the *Geeta* and the *Bhagavata*, and never craved for any other company. He repeatedly emphasises the value of spending time “alone in communion with God”; but discourages excesses of all sorts: *समत्वं योग उच्यते* was his ideal.

Considering the body as the Temple of God, he strove to keep it pure within and without. This did not demand ascetic self-denials with a hardened will and clenched teeth. Enjoyment in moderation and rational self-restraint are all that we need.

विधीनें सेवन । विषयत्यागार्ते समान ॥

मुख्य धर्मं देव चिन्ती । आदि अवसान अन्ती ॥

बहु अतिशय खोटा । तर्कं होती बहु बाटा ॥

तुका म्हणें भावें । कृपा करीजेतें देवे ॥

(३१६)

‘Regulated enjoyment is equal to renouncing sensuality. The important thing is to have God in mind always. All excess is vain. Discussing this leads us astray. Tuka says, pray earnestly for God’s Grace.’

Tukaram’s elder brother Savji left home, wife and child, out of revulsion. But Tukaram himself married twice, had children—the youngest, Narayana, being posthumously born, after Tukaram bodily left this earth. Tukaram was in his early forties then. He took his family responsibilities

easy, and bore the irritations of Jizabai with cheerful forbearance. The family and the unsympathetic world around him were for Tukaram not obstacles to spiritual life, but aids rather.

ठेचिले अनंतें तैसेंचि राहावें । चित्तीं असूं द्यावें समाधान ॥

‘Be content with how God has placed you: let there be serene satisfaction in your mind’. This was his panacea for all ills. He said:

ऐसा घेई कां रे संन्यास । करीं संकल्पाचा न्यास ॥

मग तूं राहें भलते ठायीं । जनीं वनीं भोई ॥

तोडी जाणिवेची कळा । होई वृत्तीसी वेगळा ॥

तुका म्हणे नभा । होई आमुचा ही भागा ॥ (२१५२)

‘Take *sannyasa* thus: i.e. relinquishing desire. Then you can stay wherever you like: among the people or in a forest, etc. Eschew your wiseacre vanity and be detached from the vagaries of the mind. Tuka says, Let me be like the pure sky—unaffected by passing clouds’—पद्मपत्र जैसे जळी ‘Like the lotus-leaf in water’.

To all appearances, Tukaram was a simpleton, pious, and too otherworldly. But he possessed a hard core of conviction and a dedicated will surrendered to Vitthala. His advice to all *sadhakas* was—

साधकाची दशा उदास असावी । उपाधि नसात्री अंतर्बाहीं ॥

‘The state of the seeker ought to be one of listlessness: inside and out’.

But this was no indiscriminate stipulation. What he meant thereby was what Aldous Huxley meant by “holy indifference”—i.e. attention directed to, and absorbed only in, matters conducive to spiritual advancement. Like all others, Tukaram

too was outwardly a man of the world: he was a trader (वाणी) and carried on the 'ordinary business of Life'. Even in his dealings with Vitthala he warns Him that he is a *Vani* and no ordinary *Bhakta* to be easily pleased or placated by the offer of a tempting reward like मुक्ति or मोक्ष. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore, his prayer was: "That I want Thee, only Thee, Let my heart repeat without end. Let only that little be left of me Whereby I may name Thee my All."

हे चि दान देगा देवा । तुझा विसर न व्हावा ॥
 गुण गाईन आवडी । हे चि माझी सर्व जोडी ॥
 न लगे मुक्ति आणि संपदा । संतसंग देई सदा ॥
 तुका म्हणूँ गर्भवासीं । सुखें घालावें आम्हासी ॥ (२३०६)

'O God give me but this gift: I should never be forgetful of Thee. I shall sing Thy glory lovingly. This is all the fruit of service I crave for. I do not need liberation and prosperity. Grant me ever the company of the saints. Tuka says, Send me into this life again and again—just as you please.' This does not bespeak of "other-worldliness" as is generally supposed.

This world was for Tukaram भूवंकुंठ —Paradise on earth—and, what is more, a school of discipline. His service of God did not take the form of ritualistic observances. In fact, he thanked God for making him a *Kunbi* (farmer) rather than *Brahmana*—thus saving him from getting engrossed in formal worship. A typical *abhanga* declares:

कासियानें पूजा करुं केशीराजा । हा चि संदेह माझा फेडीं आतां ॥
 उदकें न्हाणूँ तरी स्वरूप तें तुझें । तेथे काय माझें वेचे देवा ॥
 गंधाचा सुगंध पुष्पाचा परिमळ । तेथें मी दुर्बळ काय करुं ॥
 फळदाता तूंच तांबोल अक्षता । तरी काय आतां वाहो तुज ॥

चाहूँ दक्षिणा जरी धातु नारायण । ब्रह्म तेँ चि अन्न दुजें काई ॥
 गातां तूं ओंकार टाळी नादेश्वर । नाचावया थार नाहीं कोठें ॥
 तुका म्हणें मज अवघे तुझें नाम । धूप दीप रामकृष्णहरि ॥ (१७२९)

It is comon knowledge that most religious minded people are content with the kind of worship alluded to in the above: but their inner significance is lost to them. *Puja* for them consists of bathing the image, smearing it with sandal-wood paste, or burning incense before it, waving lights, offering fruit and betel leaf, sprinkling saffron rice, chanting *mantras*, clapping hands, and dancing before the image of God. Tukaram is at a loss to know how he is to go through all these minutiae of worship when he feels that every item of it is God in so many forms: 'water is in essence only God: then how shall I bathe God'? You are the fragrance in flowers, the aroma of incense; you are the giver of fruits, betel and rice; you are the metal in the coins; and the very sound (*Om*); for dancing there is no room left, as you are omnipresent. So, for me, all is comprised in the Name of Rama-Krishna-Hari, says Tuka,—incense and light are He alone.'

देव जवळी अंतरीं । भेटी नाहीं जन्मवरी ॥

said Samartha Ramadas. To worship God externally is easy. But to do this internally is difficult. Hence temples and images, music and dance, illuminations and band-playings. Tukaram is bewildered and asks

कैसी करुं तुझी सेवा । ऐसैं सांगावें जी देवा ॥
 कैसा आणूं अनुभवा । होशी ठावा कैशापरी ॥१॥

कर्मभ्रष्ट माझे मन । नेणे जप तप अनुष्ठान ॥
 नाही इंद्रियांसि दमन । नव्हे मन एकविध ॥
 नेणे यातीचा आचार । नेणे भक्तीचा विचार ॥
 मज नाही संतांचा आधार । नाही स्थिर बुद्धि माझी ॥
 न सुट मायाजाळ । नाही वैराग्याचें बळ ॥
 न जिकवती सबळ । काम क्रोध शरीरीं ॥
 आतां राख कैसें तरि । मज नुपेक्षावें हरी ॥
 तुझीं ब्रिदें चराचरीं । तैसीं साच करीं तुका म्हणे ॥ (४४२४)

'O God, tell me how I should worship Thee? Experience Thee? How shall I attain to Thy knowledge? My mind is derelict from duty. I know not *japa, tapa* and other regular ways of adoration. I have not controlled my senses. I cannot make my mind one-pointed. I am not aware of caste-regulations, nor do I know the nature of *Bhakti*. I lack the support of the saints. My understanding is unsteady. The snares of delusion do not snap. There is no dispassion or renunciation in me: Lust and anger have their stronghold in my body. Now protect me somehow, Hari—do not neglect me. Be true to your reputation among the moving and the unmoving.

Tukaram was in deadly earnest and went to the heretic extreme of saying:

देव जोडे तें करावें अधर्म । अंतरें तें कर्म नाचरावें ॥

'If God could be thereby realised, do even unscriptural acts otherwise ignore even scriptural injunctions!' His main focus was within himself. The body is the citadel of the ego. To subdue it is the crux of the spiritual problem. It was to achieve this fundamental victory over himself that Tukaram concentrated all his *sadhana*. Only a few citations

from the *abhangas* should suffice to illustrate this.
His ideal came from the *Bhaktas*.

भक्त ऐसे जाणा जे देहीं उदास । गेले आशापाश निवारनि ॥
विषय तो त्यांचा जाला नारायण । नावडे धन जन माता पिता ॥
निर्वाणीं गोविंद असे मागेंपुढें । कांहीं न सांकडें पडों नेदी ॥
तुका म्हणे सत्य कर्मा व्हावें साह्ये । घातलिया भये नर्का जाणें ॥

‘True *Bhaktas* are those who are indifferent to the body and have transcended the bondage of desires. Narayana is all their interest. For His sake they have no attachment to wealth, world, mother or father. Ultimately, Govinda is before and behind them: They permit no other bondage to hold them. Tuka says, one’s meritorious deeds should help in this. If fear stands in the way, hell is the end.’ Hence Tukaram’s constant prayer was:

देवा आतां ऐसा करीं उपकार । देहाचा विसर पाडों मज ॥
तरीं च हा जीव सुख पावे माझा । बरें केशीराजा कळों आलें ॥
ठाव देई चिन्ता राखें पायांपाशीं । सकळ वृत्तींसी अखंडित ॥
आस भय चिन्ता लाज काम क्रोध । तोडावा संबंध यांचा माझा ॥
मागणें तें एक हें चि आहे आतां । नाम मुखी संतससंग देई ॥
तुका म्हणे नको वरपंग देवा । घेई माझी सेवा भावशुद्ध ॥

‘O God, now do me but this favour: make me oblivious of the body. Then only shall my life feel happy. Shelter me at Thy feet—with all my inclinations stabilised. Cut off my relations with desire, fear, anxiety, shame, lust and anger. . . . Tuka says, enough of pretensions: let my service be sincere and pure.’

God heard this fervent appeal and Tukaram attained total emancipation. He says he witnessed the death of his own body. He was no longer tied down by it, but became Universal. He achieved

this state by wanting to be—not great—but smaller than the smallest.

अणुरणीयां थोकडा । तुका आकाशाएवढा ॥

According to him the essence of all sadhanas is no more than shedding body-consciousness and looking at all else as mere vanity:

अवघ्या साधनांचें सार । न लगे फार शोधवें ।

तुका म्हणे लटिकें पाहें । सांडीं देह अभिमान ॥

The token of this is serenity of mind and heart, to be ever sustained through discrimination and living in the awareness of Atman:

.....चित्त समाधान खूण त्याची ॥

सर्वकाळ हाचि करणें विचार । विवेकी सादर आत्मत्वाचें ॥

9. TUKARAM'S IMPORTANCE

पवित्र तें कुळ पावन तो देश । जेथें हरीचे दास जन्म घेती ॥

'Sacred the family, and pure the land, where are born the devotees of God'. This was said by Tukaram himself with reference to the saints of all times and places. After more than three centuries his memory is lovingly cherished by millions of people beyond the cradle of his nativity. His *abhangas* are recited in *bhajans* and *kirtans*, and today broadcast on the ubiquitous radio: they continue to inspire and instruct all those whose aspirations are not confined to things that are merely a "passing show".

Christian missionaries like Rev. Abbott and Macnicol have bestowed on Tukaram encomiums that bespeak their sincere appreciation and admiration of the rustic saint of Dehu who was as practical as he was idealistic. Justin E. Abbott (who translated Mahipati's life of Tukaram into English) wrote: "The life of Tukaram is full of human interest, full of food for the moralist, full of suggestions for the idealist, and to every one an inspiration for a better and nobler life."

Nelson Fraser wrote: "Tukaram teaches his fellowmen not chiefly by what he says, but by what we realise him to have felt and experienced of aspiration, conflict and communion."

We said in the Introduction that the saints of Maharashtra were a source of inspiration to the rise of the Maratha power and the Maratha fight

for freedom. But for this inspiration the Maratha struggle for independence would be meaningless and shorn of all the nobility personified in Shivaji the Great. The *Dnyaneshvari*, Ekanathi *Bhagavata* and Tukaram's *Gatha* have long outlived the political achievements and military adventures of the Chhatrapatis and the Peshvas:

तुका म्हणे नाशवंत हें सकळ । आठवे गोपाळ तेंचि हित ॥

'The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things'

has been proved true. Man cannot live by bread alone.

काय वानू हे संतांचे उपकार । आम्हा निरंतर जागवीति ॥

'How shall we praise the good that the saints have done for us? They perpetually keep us awake and alert', says Tukaram.

William James, in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, concludes his lecture on "the value of Saintliness" with these remarks:—

"In a general way, then, 'on the whole' our testing of religion by practical common sense and the empirical method, leave it in possession of its towering place in history. Economically, the saintly group of qualities is indispensable to the world's welfare. The great saints are immediate successes; the smaller ones are at least heralds and harbingers, and they may be leavens also, of a better mundane order. *Let us be saints, then, if we can, whether or not we succeed visibly or temporarily.* But in our Father's house there are many mansions, and each of us must discover for himself the kind of religion and the amount of saint-

ship which best comports with what he believes to be his powers and feels to be his mission and vocation.”

Hence Tukaram declared: अधिकार तैसा कहं उवदेश ॥ ‘To each according to his needs and capacity’. He did not preach any single doctrine, or tender the same advice to all. His *Gatha*, consequently, appears to speak with many voices. His life too had many facets: but only One Light shines through all his sayings and doings. We may express this in only five words:

Faith, Fearlessness, Freedom, Fortitude and Forbearance.



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