

## Saint Tukaram: An Introduction

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### Abstract

Saint Tukaram (1608 - 1650), lived in the Sixteenth Century, guided the entire world through his abhangas which have the power to change the perspective, we get an optimism by studying his life thereafter he becomes a guide for us all in any situation of life, his abhangas have timeless significance and have an ability to show the right path to today's troubled and tormented society.

**Key Words:** Abhangas, Bhakti, Bhakti Movements, Saints, Counseling, Society, Values

### Introduction:

The proposed research paper is an attempt to trace the life of Saint Tukaram and how he becomes a 'beacon- light' for today's tormented and troubled world though it have been nearly 370 years after his bodily departure.

Many saints have contributed their share for changing the views of the society. Bhakti movement in India is known for its values, trends and set patterns. It played an important role in socio-cultural history. The Varkari Movement in Maharashtra is popular and known for its pattern that strongly recommends and strives to uproot the destructive social evils that damaged and affected personal and religious life of the society. Varkari movement in Maharashtra has a strong chain of saint poets with potential. "Saint Dnyaneshwar, Saint Namdeo, Saint Sopandeo, Saint Muktabai, Saint Eknath, Saint Bhanudas, Saint Ramdas, Saint Tukaram and others are known for their Abhangas (psalms) and other literature."<sup>1</sup> The Mahanubhavas, Naths (Gosavis), Chaitanyas and the major saint poets like Savtoba, Namdeva, Dnyaneshwar,

Goroba, Chokhoba, Narahari Sonar, Janabai, Muktabai, Nivruttinath, Sopankaka, Soyarabai, Visoba Khechar, Parisa Bhagwat, Eknath and Tukaram and all other saint poets from the high- low castes contributed a lot with their mesmerizing words and constructed the foundation of the sect.

Saint Tukaram was imbued with values by his parents. He devoted his entire life to uplift the life of common people. He studied the Dnyaneshwari, the Vedas, the Shastras and other spiritual literature which made him a staunch scholar and a spiritual mentor; consequently he was genuinely concerned to offer services to common people. His sensitive mind could not bear the sufferings and sorrows of the tormented people, he writes, "*Budata he jan dekhavena dola / yeto kalvalaa mhanavuni ||2||*" (Verse- 582, pp. 157) My eyes cannot bear the people who are drowning in distress hence I feel sympathy for them."

When Saint Tukaram was born, it can be said that it was an unhealthy era since the social security was in chaos. 'The foreign invaders were looting recklessly everywhere.'<sup>3</sup> The distressed people were

looking for a new sunrise to save them from this anarchy, and in the same century the two suns rose- one at 'the Shivneri Fort' and one in 'the soil of Deu', the light of hopes for the tormented people.

In the year 1629 and 1630, the next terrible happenings destroyed Saint Tukaram's peace of mind as well as his entire life. The famine destroyed everything. Not only famine but also the ravaging troops of Moghul turned the region like a barren land. In this devastating situation, he got dishonor, humiliation everywhere after losing everything.<sup>4</sup> This condition took away his equanimity from samsara. Still the stout Tukaram managed the burden of the family, the business that solely fell onto his shoulders but never thought of pessimism.

As far as his last days are concerned, they went with a quite happiness. He had envisaged his last time was coming near, he clearly visualized it and mentioned in many abhangas in his last days. On Vadya Dvitiya, Shake 1573, Monday, he called all his villagers, followers and relatives performed his last kirtan and declared there, he was going to Vaikuntha (The Holy abode of Lord Vitthal and Rukhmini) then. *Aamhi jaato aamuchya gaava | Aamucha Ram Ram ghyaava ||*<sup>5</sup> (Verse- 148, pg-1171) It is said that Lord Vishnu had sent his Vahan Garuda to take him up to his holy abode, 'Vaikuntha Lok'. Tukaram bodily sat in the chariot of God brought on the back of Garuda and soon disappeared in the sky. Everyone present there were greatly surprised to see this unbelievable incident. Saint Bahinabai says, "*Tukarama tav dekhataa dekhataa | aale akasmaat gupta rup||*"<sup>6</sup> Saint Santaji Jagnade Teli, Rameshwar Bhatt and his brother Tukaya Bandhu, Kanhoba, say the

same things in their verses that Saint Tukaram bodily attained the Vaikuntha.<sup>7</sup>

He truly can be called as a prolific writer and versatile genius since his verses belong to masses; create aesthetic impacts which are written in the layperson's language. To present the characters from various cultural identities and different types of personality traits, he used many innovative poetic forms in his abhangas. He reached to each and every individual through his abhangas at various occasions to speak about love, equality, fraternity, peace, freedom, human co-existence, human empowerment, human dignity, respect to all, human progress, woman empowerment and development, self-criticism, safety of nature and wildlife. These things he inculcated in his abhangas to make people aware of current issues and gradually take proper actions to make their life better. Sense of humor, critical commentary on socio-political and historical issues etc. are also seen in some of his abhangas.

He does not present only theoretical comments instead gives practical solutions to all issues of life hence his teaching is universal and vast which speaks on various subjects. He asks people to be an honest and sincere without making any compromises to the moral and legal principles of life. He counsels, "*Joduniya dhan uttam Vyahare||*"<sup>8</sup> (Verse- 1178, pp. 309) we must earn money with honest and sincere ways. It is said that 'money makes the world go'<sup>9</sup>. Today people try to attain everything with money and thus the society is heavily dependent on money itself. In the process of getting everything with money, people use wrong ways to attain it. Saint Tukaram says that it is the fact that the rich man gets

honored everywhere. *Dhanavanta laagi | sarvmaanyata he jagi ||1||*<sup>10</sup> (Verse- 1227, pp-322) But it doesn't mean that one should use wrong, illegal ways to make money and become a rich person. He expects sublime views regarding this. Today the people of this age have made money the central part of their lives that they place the money above their life as well as happiness. This pursuit has made them all a selfish one. According to him, we should not neglect the other aspects of life and should not go blindly behind the material wealth.

According to him, offering service to the old parents and the needy people is the only service to the God. In today's modern age, the idea combined family is going to be vanished; people are not ready to accept the role of their parents in their domestic life. They neither have time, nor are in the mood of taking responsibilities of their parents. They are looking at their parents as it is just their liability. Thus, the numbers of people at old age home are increasing day by day. He says, "*Maay baap keval Kashi | te na vajaave tirthaanshi ||1|| Tuka mhane may baape | avaghi devaachi swarupe ||4||*"<sup>11</sup> (Verse- 389, pp-1231) one need not to visit any pilgrimage, the parents are the forms of God himself." If such a teaching is brought to the notice of today's generation, they will understand the values of offering services to their parents and the needy people.

Saint Tukaram, through his verses lashes the idea of caste system. He convinces us to devote service to mankind and live a simple life, the person who is the devotee of God, leads a humble and devoted life. "These people are the 'forms of God' on the earth who always strive to help the tormented and

distressed people. He mentions, "*Je ka ranjale gaanjale | tyaasi mhane jo aapule ||1|| Tochi sadhu olakhaava | dev tethechi jaanava ||2||*"<sup>12</sup> (Verse- 204, pp. 67) In today's context many people are there who are distressed, confused, ill-treated and harassed. If the basic principles advocated by Saint Tukaram are taught to the current generation, they will learn the empathy and will offer their service to the needy.

Today a girl or a woman is not safe, they are at a risk. People view them as a resource to be used. Each and every day, from every state, we come across the news of rapes or gang rapes. It seems that people are becoming valueless and insensitive to the girls and women. Saint Tukaram teaches all to respect every single woman and the feministic principles. He says, "'parastri', every single other woman, is like a mother. "*Paraaviyaa naari maauli samaan ||1||*"<sup>13</sup> (Verse- 36, pp. 22) if such teaching is inculcated in the minds of everyone from early stage of their life, the cases of rape and gang rape will surely decrease. Only then the girls and women will be able to live their live freely and fearlessly.

### Conclusion:

Saint Tukaram has to be listened for the betterment of the present society. Hence his contribution to the society has made him the ultimate towering personality. He says, "*Tuka aakasha evhadha |*"<sup>14</sup> (Verse- 627, pp. 169) and we should try to follow his teachings for the betterment of humanity. Thus, Saint Tukaram becomes 'a beacon-light', a sacred guide for the people far and wide. Saint Tukaram interpreted the worldly situations, expressed his concern about it through the affinity to the common life of a

common man, the sorrows of the downtrodden, low-caste people and inception of equality.<sup>15</sup> Though these abhangas were set for the then society, they

are still applicable to the modern society of twenty first century; his verses have the touch of timeless significance.

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