



18

## **SANT TUKARAMA'S ABHANGA: THE BEATS OF CONSCIENCE**

**Dr. Vitthal Khanduji Jaybhaye**

Department of English

Late Ramesh Warpudkar ACS College, Sonpeth

Dist. Parbhani, MS., India

\*\*\*\*\*

### **Abstract:**

*Sant Tukarama is the Saint and among the major Marathi poets of Maharashtra. He is also accredited as Kalash of Warkari Sampradaya in Maharashtra. His Abhangas are the true essence of the fighting spirit of human life. The day today life and his experienced verses has changed the scenario of Marathi literature. Many Abhngas of Sant Tukarama are translated in various languages of the World. Apart from this, many stalwarts from Maharashtra as well as the field of literature has translated his Abhangas in English. Not only Indian but the British writers were influenced with the philosophy and life of Sant Tukarama. In this research paper, the researcher tried to focus on few selected Abhangas of Sant Tukarama, which are really expressing the conscience of the poet Tukarama. Sant Tukarama is the all time universal poet, who totally devoted his life foe upliftment of the society from the old, out dated traditions and guided the whole community with the examples and verses from his own life.*

**Keywords:** *Abhanga, Bhakti, Kirtana, Kalash, Warkari Sampradaya, etc.*

Sant Tukarama acknowledged as the poet's poet in the sphere of literary creations in India, especially in Maharashtra. In English literature, Edmund Spenser is called as 'the poet's poet' because of his unique and radical facets of the poetry. Apart from this, Homer was the first and foremost poet from the Greek literature who was successfully transformed his epic poetry in the western canon of Europe. Likely, Sant Tukarama's *Abhanga* has the spirit of human emancipation from all sorts of challenges and perils. As Sadanand More has mentioned about the universal thoughts and visions of Sant Tukarama in his critical Marathi book *Tukaram Darshan*,

Sant Tukarama's *abhnga* has deeply influenced the language and literature of Maharashtra. Many lines of his *abhangas* are used as the quotations and proverbs. Even though, the people who didn't knows the *abhngas* of Tuakarama, perfectly using the lines of his *abhanga* for the daily usages. His poetry was deeply soaked in the soil of Maharashtra, where the reformers and writers like Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, P. K. Atre or P.L. Deshpande has used the *abhangas* or the lines of Tukarama for the titles to their books or articles (More, 38).

It shows the influence of the *abhangas* of Tukarama on the life, literature and culture of the nation. His abhangas have many dimensions and visions regarding the day today life of the World. Plato, the pioneer of the philosophy and criticism has appropriately mentioned that, "Literature is the mere imitation of life." (Literature is the Mirror of Life) It is also applicable to the life and literature of Sant Tukarama. His *abhangas* are the outcome of his burning life experiences and observations.



As the life and events from it has transformed the farmer and merchant Tukarama, as the poet-prophet of the contemporary situations. There were series of calamities falling on Tukarama and the entire life was filled with the responsibilities at the age of seventeen. Apart from this, "There are stories of rogues deceiving him frequently causing him financial losses. ...Then about the year 1629, there were terrible happenings, which destroyed Tukaram's peace forever" (Nemade, 16). The dreadful famine has swept all the Deccan of Maharashtra. There were no rains for two years, all rivers were dried and question of the food and grain was major during the time. Most of the villages and villagers were disappeared and no fields were remaining for cultivation the grain. At this dangerous condition, the cholera epidemic attacked the region badly. "Contemporary historians like Abdul Hameed Lahiri, Mirza Amin and Kuzwini, who eye witnessed this famine, describe it with great horror. Thousands of people died of starvation" (Nemade, 17). It shows the heartrending conditions of the region, where horrifying sufferings prevailed everywhere. One can easily envisage the predicaments of the conscience of young Tukarama of that fearful situation. As Tukarama recorded the condition, God, humanity itself has vanished, I cannot bear seeing it, such is wailing, My heart grieves at their sufferings.

The young life of Tukarama was spoiled due to the calamity. His farming and business was stopped. His cattle were died due to starvation. It was the dangerous crisis in his life. At the age of seventeen he lost his parents, elder brother's wife and his wife also! It was the unbearable blow on the life of Tukarama. Totally, he became bankrupt. He became very sensitive and turned his life and thinking on the side of *bhakti* and singing *abhangas* for God Vitthala! "In just four years, he saw several deaths in the family; and the bankruptcy, poverty, dishonor and humiliation destroyed his sense of security forever" (Nemade 18). The famine ended and life became normal, but Tukarama was totally changed. The calamity has changed his life and thinking. Now he deeply thinks on the various situations of life and without defending anybody, he directly doing the discourse with God Vitthala! The sense of incompleteness and conviction of sin brought him on the verge of deep introspection of the life and its futility. Now, he was trying to make the balance between his sufferings and the nature in forms of writing *abhangas*. His *abhangas* were expressing the agonies, challenges and mental situation. He writes:

संसार तापे तापलो मी देवा ॥ करीता या सेवा कुटुंबाची  
म्हणवूनी तुझे अठविले पाय ॥ ये वो माझे माय पांडुरंगे ॥ (तुकाराम गाथा ६६)  
I am scorched by the fire of Samsar,  
While serving this household;  
And therefore remember your feet, God,  
Come to me my mother (Nemade, 18).

Such type of his *abhangas* came before us, where he directly and harshly condemning the challenges and calamities in *samsara* i.e. life and family. The words has transformed into his *abhangas*, they are the essence of his life and learning. In this *abhangas*,

अनुभवे अलें अंगा । ते या जगा देतसें ॥१॥  
नव्ही हाततुके बोल । मूळ ओल अंतरिंची ॥२॥  
उतरुनि दिलें कशीं । शुद्धरसीं सरे तें ॥३॥  
तुका म्हणे दुसरें नाहीं । ऐसी ग्वाही गुजरली ॥४॥ (तुकाराम गाथा  
२८४५)

These are my experiences, Sharing with the World



Not the simple words, Essence of inner-self  
I am sharing the pure, Purified with the life  
Says Tuka here are, My promising words.

These lines are showing the real zeal before the experiences. He has openly confessed the internal as well as the external expressions and experiences from his life. He was the outspoken public poet, where he sings all his *abhangas* in public discourse, *Kirtana*. His aim was awakening the people for facing the challenges of life itself. His words are promising to the public who was the part and parcel of his *Kirtana*.

William Wordsworth in his *Lyrical Ballads* has defined the poetry as, “The poetry is the overflow of powerful feelings, recollected in tranquility” (Wordsworth and Coleridge, 189). This definition was done after two hundred years, where Tukarama already defined it in seventeenth century. It is found that, to glancing at literary creations of Tukarama, his *abhangas* are the nucleus accent of the heart. These are the real experiences, where Tukarama has delivered fluently in his *Kirtanas*. It was his specialty, where all the audiences from his *Kirtana* remembering his lines and words and using in day today life. He is poet of the poet, where his lines became the guidelines of the world for all time. Sant Tukaram has the special vision to look at his life with equanimity, at expressed in his *abhangas*,

बरे झाले देवा निघाले दिवाळे । बरी या दुष्काळे पीडा केली ॥  
अनुतापे तुझे राहिले चिंतन । जाला हा वमन संवसार ॥  
बरे झाले देवा बाईल कर्कशा । बरी ही दुर्दशा जनामध्ये ॥  
बरे झाले जगी पावलो अपमान । बरे गेले धन ढोरे गुरे ॥  
बरे झाले नाही धरिली लोकलाज । बरा आलो तुज शरण देवा ॥  
बरे झाले तुझे केले देवाईल । लेकरे बाईल उपेक्षिली ॥  
तुका म्हणे बरे व्रत एकादशी । केले उपवासी जागरण ॥ तुकाराम गाथा ७६९)

Well done, o God, I became bankrupt,  
Well done, this famine has tormented me;  
Repentance retained the meditation of you  
And the very life has become omit.  
Well done, O God, the wife is a shrew  
Well done, this distress in the eyes of the people;  
Well done, I am dishonored in the world,  
Well done, I have lost all my wealth and cattle.  
Well done, I care not for public shame,  
Well done, I have surrendered myself to you, O God;  
Well done, I built a temple to you,  
And neglected my children and wife.  
Tuka says this vow of Ekadashi is good,  
I could keep awake all the night due to empty stomach. (Nemade, 19)

This *abhangas* of Tukarama has the real feelings of the renunciation, where he accepted the perilous life contentedly and only doing dialogue with the God Vitthal. His every line of the *abhangas* is the part of his autobiographical discourse. There are many *abhangas* of Tukarama has the vivid picture of his challenging life, which resembles with the life of you and me. His *abhangas* are universal feelings,



where everybody can learn massages and guidance from it. The *abhangas* of Tukarama are executing as lighthouse in the path of *samsara*.

An extraordinary expressions regarding life and death are always opening the eyes of the reader. Everybody must contemplate after reading his *abhangas*. His contemplation and use of rich and fruitful language is the epoch making facts of the life and literature.

आपुले मरण पाहिले म्या डोळा । तो जाला सोहळा अनुपम्य ॥  
आनंदे दाटली तिन्ही त्रिभुवने । सर्वात्मकपणे भोग जाला ॥  
तुका म्हणे उमटूनि जगी । घेतले ते अंगी लावूनिया ॥ (तुकाराम गाथा १५५)

I have seen my death with my own eyes,  
That was indeed an incomparable festivity;  
The three worlds were filled with joy,  
I enjoyed it as the Universal soul;  
I was confined to the one region bound by egoism,  
By renouncing it, plentitude followed,  
The obsequies of birth and death are over,  
Now I am separated from my own contraction. (Nemade 38)

याजसाटी केला होता अट्टहास । शेवटचा दिस गोड व्हावा ।।  
आता निश्चिंतीने पावलो विसावा । खुंटलिया धांवा तृष्णेचिया ।। (तुकाराम गाथा १३२३)  
It was for this that I had toiled frantically,  
So that the last day would become sweet;  
Now without anguish, I relax,  
As the race of desires has come to a halt (Nemade, 39).

After reading these and many more *abhangas* from *Tukaram Gatha*, we come across to acknowledge Tukarama's scholarship regarding the life and its various dimensions. The life itself is the best source of writings, where he exploited all experiences in his universal literature. It is found that, Tukarama has he deeply retrospect the life and portrayed it in his *abhangas*. As Bhalchandra Nemade writes,

He was fully conscious of his role as a spiritual guide, thinking it was essential for him as a poet to convince the people that a man must discover the basic truths for himself, not just accept them with blind faith. In his poems, there is a clear emphasis on personal existence and subjectivity. To him, literature was a part of his faith in life (Nemade, 41).

It has clarified that the life and literature of Sant Tukarama has the individual vision to express in the world for all time. His poems achieved the sensitivity of common man. His poems are all time flowing river, anybody who wants to fulfill thrust, has to feel his or her thrust and enjoy the beautiful, challengeable life. He has pen pictured his internal conflicts as well as his mystical aspects in his poetry and flowered the life with great poetry of life. He became the guiding soul for every writer of all cultures and sects of religion.

As the *warkari* saint and devote of Shri Vitthala, Sant Tukaram was entirely conscious about his role for awakening the people from the *Warkari Sampraday*. He has made his poetry as the part of faith in life and Shri Vitthala.





As supreme exponent of Bhakti in Marathi poetry, Tukaram can be observed passing through the evolution of spiritual attainment, though such a study of his *abhangas* must always remain tentative. It is interesting to see how the various stages of this evolution intrinsically correlate with the creative process (Nemade, 40-41)

It assumes the universal aspects of Sant Tukarama's poetry in literature. All time, the purification process of the self was went through the veins of the society. He always tried to liberate from the self and searching the internal reality of the life through the *abhangas* as well as the *Warkari Kartanas* in public. For him the Kirtana is the source of internal and external purification.

कीर्तन चांग कीर्तन चांग ॥ होय अंग हरिरूप ॥

The Kirtan is great, One can purify through it

It was Tukarama's vital aspects regarding the Warkari Kirtana and the words of the poetry were the jewels for him. The energy of spirituality was fully flowing through the veins of Tukarama, where he directly communicating and confessing with God Shri Vitthala. For, him, God Vitthala was everything and he was with him for celebrations and grief. He loves Him and also laments with Him. He completely surrenders before God Vitthala and completely rely on him. Shri Vitthala was his life and breath.

तू माउलीहुनी मयाळ ॥ चंद्राहूनी शीतळ ॥

पाणियाहुनी पातळ ॥ कल्लोळ प्रेमाचा ॥

You are more loving than a mother,

You are cooler than the moon,

You are more yielding than water,

You are a roaring surge of love (Nemade, 44)

It shows the attachment of Sant Tukarama with Lord Vitthala. He has seen the Warkari Sampraday and God Vitthala was not only the source of worship but the salvation of the self and the whole mankind. The God was the central for his Bhakti as well as for his renunciation of the life. The Warkari movement was the intense for him, which was the source of inspiration for him. He created the Kirtan as his life and without any question, he jumped in public for singing and dancing in Kitana. He became the charismatic personality of the Warkari Sampradaya till today and called as the guiding star of Warkari Sampradaya. Sant Tukarama is one of the great social reformers from the socio-cultural movements of Maharashtra.

Hence, to conclude, the *abhangas* of Tukarama are the beats of conscience. His life was filled with the challenges and solutions through the writings. Near about over four centuries, Tukarama's *abhangas* has exercised a insightful influence on the religion and philosophy of Marathi life and Bhakti movement of Maharashtra. His *abhangas* are overwhelmingly influenced the literary works and the life of Maharashtra. Hence, it is noticed that, "In almost every generation his poems have been widely read, copied and sung. The influence has not been confined to religious circles and illiterate devotees, but has spread to all types of linguistic behavior, prose and poetry down the centuries; it covers much of the great poetry written after him" (Nemade 58). His internal conflicts and external performance is musically flowed through the society and culture of Maharashtra. Sant Tukarama is the breath of Maharashtra culture and literature. He has strongly proved his human as well as divine aspirations through his poetry. He expressed his experiences for purification of the self with the universal problems of the World. The complete freedom and individual responsibility were the major facets of



his *abhanga*. The *abhngas* of Sant Tukarama are content with the sincerity, brevity, loyalty and purity like sandalwood and frequently doing its genuine business of awakening the society for all time. All *abhngas* are beating the hearts of the people for happy approval of day today life and livelihood.

### References

- Fraser, James N., et al. The Poems of Tukārāma. Translated and Re-arranged, with Notes and an Introduction, by J. Nelson Fraser ... and K. B. Marathe, Etc. 1909. Print.
- "Literature Is The Mirror Of Life." Homework Help and Textbook Solutions | Bartleby, [www.bartleby.com/essay/Literature-Is-The-Mirror-Of-Life-PCJTSYMBNR](http://www.bartleby.com/essay/Literature-Is-The-Mirror-Of-Life-PCJTSYMBNR). Print.
- Mahīpati, and Justin E. Abbott. Life of Tukaram: Translation from Mahipati's Bhaktalilamrita, Chapters 25 to 40. Motilal Banarsidass Publishe, 1980. Print.
- Mahīpati. Stories of Indian Saints: An English Translation of Mahīpati's Marathi Bhaktavijaya: By Justin E. Abbott and Narhar R. Godbole. 1933. Print.
- More, Sadanand. Tukaram Darshan (Marathi). 1st ed., Sakal Papers Pvt. Ltd. Pune, 2014. Print.
- Nemade, Bhalchandra. Makers Of Indian Literature Tukaram. 2005. Print.
- Roy, Sumita. Poet Saints of India. Sterling Publishers Pvt., 1996. Print.
- Upadhye, Swati. Sant Tukaram: Great Personalities of India. Diamond Pocket Books Pvt,
- Wordsworth, William, and Samuel T. Coleridge. Lyrical Ballads: With a Few Other Poems. IndyPublish.com, 1798. Print.

- 
- **Glossary** (Nemade 65, 66, 67)
  - *Abhanga*: A hymn, lyrical poem meant to be sung, written in a particular metrical form which has a folk origin
  - *Bhakti*: Personal relation to God, predominantly emotional in character.
  - *Kirtan*: A gathering of devotees in which a theme is expounded with supporting verses and illustrations from Hindu epics, scriptures and lives of great men to educate the audience.
  - *Samsar*: Affairs of life with its cares and troubles, mundane existence, the world human life.
  - *Warkari*: Sect found in the thirteen century by Sant Namdev and Dnyandev as reaction to extreme Brahman orthodoxy; the most popular religious sect in Maharashtra and Karnataka. Worshipping Shri Vitthal of Pandharpur on the banks of river Chandrbhaga.
  - *Vitthal*: The idol of the God at Pandharpur. The origin of this God is unknown, though he is believed to be the incarnation of Vishnu.



This is an Open Access e-Journal Published Under A Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License

**To Cite the Article:** Jaybhaye, Vitthal, "Sant Tukaram's Abhanga: The beats of Conscience". Literary Cognizance, III-1 (June, 2022): 85-90. Web.