

## Exploring the Spiritual Synergy: An Analytical Examination of Sant Tukaram and Sant Dnyaneshwar's Bhakti Poetry

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### ABSTRACT

Sant Tukaram and Sant Dnyaneshwar are the two most reverential figures in Indian spirituality. This paper aims to explore the philosophical ideas and spiritual insights of the Sant Dhyaneswar and Sant Tukaram. The Dnyaneshwari and Abhangas remain timeless works with significant relevance in the modern world. At the heart of Dnyaneshwari, lies a profound exploration of the human experience, delving into the complex interplay between the individual and the societal constructs that shape our reality. In the corporate world, people are under tremendous intentional stress due to the pressure of output and expectations, and Sant's teachings often bring comfort and solace. With his heartfelt Abhangas, Sant Tukaram taught the essence of devotion and spiritual liberation on the basis of social equality and inner purity, which fostered a spiritual revolution in Marathi culture and tradition. Similarly, Sant Dhyaneswar, with his balanced intellectual candour combined with spiritual fervour, offered a holistic approach to spirituality

**Keywords:** *Bhakti, Divine, Spiritual, Synergy, Advaita, Relevance, Modern.*

### Introduction

Sant Dnyaneshwar (also known as Jnaneshwar or Dnyaneshwar Maharaj) was a prominent Marathi saint, poet, and philosopher of the 13th century. He played a significant role in the Bhakti movement in India, a devotional movement that emphasized personal devotion to God over ritualistic practices and caste distinctions. His contributions had a lasting impact on the spiritual and cultural life of the region. Sant Dnyaneshwar is a key figure in the Bhakti Movement. His teachings transcend religious and linguistic barriers. He laid the foundation for a rich tradition of devotional poetry. He started Varkari Sampradaya in Maharashtra, which

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Received 23 Aug. 2024; Accepted 12 Sep. 2024. Available online: 25 Sep. 2024.

Published by SAFE. (Society for Academic Facilitation and Extension)

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believes in the chanting of the names of Lord Vitthal, (an incarnation of Lord Krishna), simple living and the pilgrimage to Pandharpur.

Sant Tukaram Maharaj infused his Abhangas with a profound blend of knowledge, ethics, and behaviour. His Abhangas, recognized and revered globally, carry a depth that resonates in the hearts of many. The philosophical knowledge present in his Abhanga poetry is naturally reflected in the singing and behaviour of the farmers, hardworking individuals, and many other people from the state of Maharashtra. Despite the lack of a formal education system at the time, he made society wise, knowledgeable, devoted, loving, ethical, and discerning through his Abhangas.

### **Objectives**

1. To analyze and explore spiritual concepts in Sant Tukaram's Abhanga Sant Dnyaneshwar's Dnyaneshwari
2. To discuss the spiritual significance of the values Sant Tukaram and Sant Dnyaneshwar taught.

### **Hypothesis**

Maharashtra's great Sants, both Dnyaneshwar Maharaj and Tukaram Maharaj through the poetry of devotion, provide timeless and priceless spiritual and social values that have universal applicability.

### **Research Methodology**

Analyse specific Abhangas that focus on the mind and discuss how these teachings align with or differ from modern psychological approaches to mental health and well-being. Since this research work is historical, descriptive, and literary in nature, primary and secondary data is used for the study. Intensive library sources are utilized for analytical and descriptive research and data collection

### **Literature Review**

Critics of Sant Tukaram and Sant Dnyaneshwar have explored close resemblances in their works. Eleanor Zelliot and Ravindra Khare, have explored how both towering personalities

shared a common vision of devotion and how their teachings dismantled the barriers of caste discrimination and promoted a universal brotherhood.

Khare (1984) contrasts their approaches—Tukaram’s direct, emotionally charged abhangas versus Dnyaneshwar’s philosophical and contemplative prose—highlighting how each engaged with their respective audiences. According to him, Abhangas are immediate and personal, while Dnyaneshwari is reflective and philosophical. But both converge on the essentials of Bhakti principle and reflect on the importance of inner purity, the self and God, offering a divine vision of life that transcends material concerns. Their literary contributions have been foundational in shaping the spiritual landscape of Maharashtra and continue to influence contemporary thought and practice. This review highlights the need for further research that deepens our understanding of these two saints and situates their teachings within the larger context of Indian philosophy and literature and their relevance in the modern context. What Mr. Tulpule and other scholars say in this regard is quite relevant here:

The impact of Sant Tukaram and Sant Dnyaneshwar on the Bhakti movement and Indian society at large cannot be overstated. Their teachings have been the subject of extensive research.

After close reading of the text, one can discover that Dnyaneshwara made available the teachings of *Bhagvad Gita* to the common people. It is an amalgamation of Bhakti movement and Vedanta knowledge. Enhancing a form of devotion that is inclusive and universal. Dnyaneshwar articulates the concept of Advaita (non-dualism) while emphasizing the importance of devotion (bhakti) in attaining self-realization. This dual emphasis on knowledge and devotion has been the subject of numerous studies, including those by S.G. Tulpule and N.B. Palsule, who highlight Dnyaneshwar’s role in bridging the gap between the learned and the laypeople. (Tulpule, 1973)

### **Discussion**

In a world where literature has the power to shape and transform the very fabric of our existence, the work of Dnyaneshwar, particularly his seminal piece of work, Dnyaneshwari, stands as a testament to the profound impact that a single text can have on the collective consciousness of humanity. At the heart of Dnyaneshwari, lies a profound exploration of the human experience, delving into the complex interplay between the individual and the societal

constructs that shape our reality. Through a masterful weaving of narrative, philosophy, and cultural nuance, Dyneshawari has transcended the boundaries of its physical form, becoming a touchstone for individuals from all walks of life, offering a profound exploration of the human condition that resonates with readers across time and space. (Khaing 1962)

The Abhangas are a symphony of the soul, where every word and rhythm resonates with the divine. They are masterpieces of spiritual literature that continue to inspire and uplift. (Gharpure 1974)

God tested Sant Tukaram Maharaj in the turbulent time of drought, and there was crop failure with drought. Despite widespread hunger, Sant Tukaram showed magnanimity during famine and drought. All stored grain and money he saved were donated to save the families from hunger. During his prosperity, he was treated with respect. But people and relatives mistreated him when he was destitute. He remained unmoved and steadfast and completely detached from worldly pleasures. He longed for the inner self. Like Kabir, Tukaram Maharaj used his Abhangas not to give humanity consolation but to shake and rouse it from a deep slumber. He attacked on the meaningless rituals and unjust social practices. He had a humanistic concern and appealed for universal brotherhood, peace, love, and harmony for all sentient and non-sentient beings. He strongly attacks the bigotry and exploitation of gullible people in the name of religion. Here, he plays the role of an astute social reformer since he refuted and attacked the unjust and evil practices prevalent in the seventeenth century. He was agonised in the agonies of others. He felt deep pain when he looked at the people wallowing in the mud of superstitions. Sant Tukaram, a renowned 17th-century Marathi saint and poet, left an indelible mark on India's spiritual and literary landscape.

He managed criticism in three different situations, in accordance with your disposition, in line with your abilities and by maintaining proper conduct. For him, criticism with compassion is the most adorable thing. If one criticizes people just to pull someone down. That criticism comes from a malefic set of minds. Don't let it affect you. Don't hesitate to act against it if you have the authority to do it. Don't listen to the criticism of those who live only to criticize. Thus, he offers valuable advice on managing negative feedback. In his own words:

भुंक्ती ती द्यावीं भुंकों भाविकांनी दुर्जनाचें । काहीं मानूं नये साचें ॥१॥

होईल तैसें बळ । फजित करावे ते खळ ॥३॥

तुका म्हणे त्यांचें । पाप नाहीं ताडणाचें ॥४॥

Thus, his teachings on positivity and perseverance are relevant and inspiring for today's modern world. Our internal state decides how we perceive the external world. A person who is suffering from severe illness does find delicious food tasteless.

रोग्या विषतुल्य लागे हे मिष्टान्न तोंडासि कारण चवी नाही।।

तुका म्हणे जे दर्पणी बिंबलो ते तया बाणले निश्चयेसि। (Baraskar, 2023)

He always maintains a constructive and nurturing outlook. A positive attitude paves the way for success.

For him, a brave person is not greedy for someone else's wealth, is ever ready to sacrifice his life for his country, and treats a woman as equal to his mother. Such a person is called brave. He gives a definition of a person in the following lines:

पराविया नारी माउलीसमान । परधनीं बाटों नेदीं मना

जीवित्व तें तृणासमान । स्वामिकार्जी जाण शूर म्हणों तया।। (Baraskar 2023)

Thus, Tukaram Maharaj was a man of action and of great wisdom. He practiced what he taught. He embodied the qualities of a warrior. Then, he advised others to follow his suit.

Sant Tukaram believes that God dwells in those who alleviate the sufferings of the poor and destitute rather than hurting them. They both favoured behaviour, thoughts, and feelings over wealth, caste, and scholarly knowledge. All human beings are the manifestations of one God, regardless of their social and economic status. He abhors discrimination on the basis of caste, creed and religion. His message is unconditional love for all. He implores the people to look beyond these narrow distinctions and treat everyone with respect and compassion.

*The Bhavarth Dipika, Jnaneshwari, or Bhagavad Gita* is a superb philosophical epic poem. It is often referred as a literary gem composed in the Marathi language. He lived in the thirteenth century A.D. He took samadhi at the very tender age of twenty-two. In his own words, the whole universe is my home. अवघे विश्वचि माझे घर. His message is universal and is relevant even in the present time.

This research paper is a humble attempt to highlight this work in lucid English to enable English-speaking people to know and understand his philosophy and the spiritual tenets he recommended.

According to Shri Jnaneshwara, any of the three ways of knowledge, action, and devotion can lead to self-realization, enlightenment, and pure bliss. But more often than not, he has stressed the disinterested performance of svadharma in a spirit of dedication to God.

In his Dnyaneshwari, he explains that one should worship God through actions. According to him, this Svadharma means the performance of one's duty honestly. The duty comes to one's lot as a result of one's natural aptitude and experience. This, however, does not mean that one should not receive reasonable and legitimate remuneration or profit. However, one should not earn money through improper means. Suppose men perform their duty with dedication as a worship of God. In that case, they will strengthen the social fabric and also attain God-realisation.

Today, the world is fragmented on the basis of complex social and economic discriminations, and the enduring relevance of Tukaram's Abhangas has become even more significant. Another hallmark of his poetry is marked by originality, simplicity, emotional depth, and unwavering commitment to the path of devotion, which combines the evocativeness of the language. The underlying qualities of his poetry are the divine-human connection, the nature of self, and the thirst for spiritual fulfillment, all of these reside at the heart of the human experience. Sant Tukaram implores the people to be a part of his spiritual journey of self-realization, questioning the basis of our existence. For him, the purpose of life is life of purpose.

Sant Tukaram Maharaj realized the importance of moving past one's errors and focusing on the present. He believes in the present moment and advises us not to live in the past, which is no more, and not to dwell in the future which is yet to come. If we hold on to our past mistakes and keep on repeating them again and again, we block our success and development. This is what constitutes our progress. Failure is not a mistake, but repeating is.

We are caught in the vicious cycle of negative thought processes that hold us back from achieving our desired goals. However, suppose we let out our past mistakes and focus on our target. In that case, we open ourselves up to new challenges and opportunities. What we need to do is to train our minds to let go of our negative thoughts and welcome positive thoughts. Discipline and a willingness to change our thought process.

Charles Dickens, once wrote about a prisoner who was imprisoned for several years in a dungeon. After serving his long sentence, he was released and brought out of jail. When he

came in contact with the bright daylight of the outside world. The prisoner was afraid of the freedom and bright daylight. He becomes uncomfortable with this. He requests to take him back to the dungeon. He was happy with the dungeon, the chains, and darkness. That environment of the jail was more comfortable for him. This is how the human mind reacts to change, regardless of whether the change is positive or negative, change is always stressful. At times, we get so comfortable with surrounding negativity that even if the change is for the better, our minds don't accept it. We need to have a strong and steadfast mind, which will ultimately help us develop a positive mindset. As a poet, Sant Tukaram emphasizes the significance of controlling the fluctuating mind to attain spiritual growth. In today's fast-paced world, where stress and mental health issues are prevalent everywhere.

Sant Tukaram Maharaj realized that the mind plays a pivotal role in shaping our experiences and outcomes. By keeping the mind joyful and positive, we align ourselves with the energies that lead to the realization of our goals. This principle is echoed in various spiritual and psychological practices, which advocate techniques such as meditation, affirmations, visualization, and yoga to stabilize and elevate the mind. A happy mind is more resilient in facing challenges and more creative and open to opportunities. On the other hand, when negative emotions dominate, they can create obstacles, making it harder to achieve our aspirations. At a time when global issues such as social inequality, environmental degradation, and the search for meaning have taken center stage, the teachings of Sant Tukaram and his Abhangas offer a unique and valuable perspective. (Sawai 1987). S. R. Tikekar points out succinctly:

The Abhangas, while emotionally powerful, sometimes lack the intellectual rigor that other forms of spiritual literature possess. Yet, their simplicity makes them accessible to the masses and resonates deeply on an emotional level. (Tikekar 1984)

Dhyaneswar was a Sant-poet and philosopher of great repute in Marathi Literature, perhaps equal to the epic poet Valmiki. He lived in the 13th century from 1275-1296. Sant Dnyaneswar focuses on non-dualistic Advaita Vedanta philosophy and Yoga bhakti for Vithoba, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. His interpretation of problematic words like 'yoginishta' in the second chapter of Dnyaneshwari reveals his high level of reasoning ability. Therefore, he is immortally remembered as Saint Dhyaneswar. The Dnyaneshwari, though an interpretation of the Bhagavad Gita, is a work of great literary merit in Marathi. However, its



complex use of metaphors and philosophical jargon makes it difficult for those without a background in Vedanta to fully appreciate its depth. (Kane 1962)

The Dnyaneshwari, also known as the Bhavarth Deepika, the most revered work, continues to be relevant today, as it offers deep philosophical insights and spiritual guidance to the modern seekers which can be applied to contemporary life and challenges. This analysis explores its significance in today's world, focusing on its philosophical, spiritual, and practical applications. It is perfect blending of Advaita Vedanta with Bhakti (devotion) and Karma (action). In a modern context, this fusion can be seen as a guide for integrating spirituality with daily life, emphasizing the importance of inner growth alongside external responsibilities. The work addresses timeless questions about the nature of the self, the universe, and the path to liberation, offering a framework for navigating the complexities of modern life.

Dnyaneshwar nicely illustrated the Karma Yoga theory in chapter 2, verse-47, paraphrasing *Bhagvad Gita*, in his own words: "You have the right to perform your duty, but not to the fruits thereof."

Here, he elucidates the concept of performing one's duty with devotion and dedication but with detachment. In the corporate world, people are under tremendous intentional stress due to the pressure of output and expectations, and Sant's teachings often bring comfort and solace. For him, tomorrow never exists, it is just the process of worrying. Be in the present moment and focus on the present work and duties without keeping an eye on fruits. By doing so, one can cultivate mindfulness, awareness, and alertness. It is the need of the fast-changing materialistic world where bhoga is replaced by tyaga and vice versa.

Dnyaneshwari also focuses on the unity of all beings and advises us to be more empathetic and compassionate. Cultivation of compassion, pity, peace, and love, the world will become more harmonious and inclusive. This holy book also inspires us to have a personal connection with the divine. Believe in the reality of the unseen, which can provide succor and meaningfulness in this world full of uncertainty and stress. Apart from it, it provides valuable lessons on ethical, selfless service and social responsibility. It can be applied in various fields like education, management, and the environment.

Dnyaneshwari has tremendously influenced our culture and ethos. Moreover, it has helped preserve and evolve Marathi literature. Spiritual guidance and practical wisdom are more



significant for people and society to walk on the path of a more ethical, balanced, harmonious and spiritually enriched life. Such is the enduring power of Dnyaneshwari. Thus, Sant Dhyaneswar, 13- century mystic and poet, is a significant contributor and influential force in the Bhakti Movement, which had changed India's cultural and religious landscape.

Similarly, in chapter-2, verse -14, Dnyaneshwar says how transient our pain and pleasure are. In his own words:

“O Arjuna, the non-permanent appearance of happiness and distress, and their disappearance in due course, are like the appearance and disappearance of winter and summer seasons. They arise from sense perception, and one must learn to tolerate them without being disturbed.”

Nothing is permanent in this temporary existence, not even our trouble. This is how the teaching of Sant Dhyaneswar is relevant in dealing with life's ups and down in modern time by teaching resilience which promotes an attitude of endurance. All this is required for the mental and physical well-being. It really transcends time and space and offers practical guidance for modern problems. Thus, it is how valuable resource for contemporary living.

In Chapter 6, Verse 34, Dnyaneshwar discusses the restless nature of the mind: “The mind is restless, turbulent, powerful, and obstinate. It seems as difficult to control as the wind.” The struggle to control the mind is a universal issue, particularly relevant in the age of information overload, social media distractions, and mental health challenges. Dnyaneshwar's teachings emphasize the importance of meditation, self-discipline, and mindfulness to calm the mind. This can be applied in modern practices like mindfulness meditation, cognitive behavioural therapy, and other mental wellness techniques that are widely adopted today. In the words of R. D. Ranade:

“The Dnyaneshwari stands as a towering commentary, but its strong Advaitic interpretation may not be agreeable to all, especially those from other philosophical schools. Yet, its ability to integrate jnana with bhakti makes it a unique spiritual text.” (Kane 1962)

There is perfect blending of Advaita Vedanta (non-dualism) with Bhakti (devotion) and Karma (action) The Dnyaneshwari offers a holistic approach to life. For instance, in Chapter 3, Verse 19, Dnyaneshwar elucidates on Karma Yoga, the yoga of action, emphasizing the importance of performing one's duty without attachment to the results. This teaching is crucial in today's high-pressure environments, where focusing on processes rather than outcomes can reduce stress and promote mental well-being.

In this way, Dnyaneshwari focusses on interconnectedness of all beings. It also vouches for universal brotherhood. Such wisdom is necessary for solving modern issues like social inequality, communal disharmony, environmental degradation etc. Suppose all beings are treated as equal and interconnected. In that case, all can work together in unison, creating a sustainable and more compassionate world.

Sant Dnyaneshwar holds the view that no one can attain liberation without complete self-surrender to God, without which one cannot gain the grace of God. We do not need to perform actions or yoga! Dr. Ranade quoted a beautiful passage that succinctly explained his viewpoint.

The Gita is not a book of ethics but of spiritual life. It teaches not human but divine action; not the disinterested performance of duties but the following of the divine Will; not a performance of social duties, but the abandonment of all standards of duty (sarvdharma), to take refuge in the Supreme alone; not social service but the action of the god-possessed, the Master-men and as a sacrifice to Him, who stands. (Dandekar 1979)

According to Dnyaneshwari, one should place all actions like flowers at the lotus feet of Lord Vitthala. He says that his recital of dharma in a sermon (Kirtan) is a grand success. It must be remembered here that Shri Jnaneshwar takes dharma in the sense of duty, which has fallen to one's lot on account of one's qualities and actions. In his last prayer, he also prays to God to let the sense of duty dawn upon the world.

Afterwards, this great Warkari Sampradaya tradition was carried forward by Sant Tukaram, Sant Narahari Sonar, Sant Namdeva, Gora Kumbhar and Chokha Mahar.

After Shri Dnyaneshwar met Namadeva, he also came to know the other great Warkari saints. These Warkari saints performed their duties diligently and worshipped Lord Vitthala with devotional love according to the Bhagavata Dharma. The following passages will show how they found spiritual meaning in their everyday life.

As a barber, I shall give a dressing (lit. haircut) to men. I shall explain the purpose of life (clean the armpits) and pare the nails of desire and anger. (Sena Nhavi)

Onions, radish and vegetables, these are my Vithabai (Vuthal) (Savata Mali)

O God, I am your goldsmith and carry on the business of your name; I blow the bellows of Jiva and Shiva and beat the gold (taking the name of God) day and night. (Narhari Sonar)

These saints were greatly influenced by Shri Dnyaneshwar and took refuge at his feet. Shri Jnaneshwar, but became the Mauli (mother) of the Warkaris and all devotees. Today, all devotees of Shri Dnyaneshwar swarm to Alandi at the time of Ashadhi Ekadashi when the palanquin containing the padukas of Shri Dnyaneshwar is taken to Pandharpur, two hundred seventy kms. from Alandi; warkaris and devotees in thousands tread this distance in rain and sun. singing the Haripatha. On the occasion of the Kartiki Ekadashi a fair is held at Alandi where his devotees flock in lakhs. (Yardi 1995)

### **Conclusion**

Sant Tukaram Maharaj says that even an illiterate person can become a scholar with sincerity and devotion. One must note here that his philosophy is not limited to Hindus alone but it can be useful to all. In the 18th century, Alexander Grant, a Vice Chancellor at the University of Mumbai, and the then Governor of Bombay, Henry Bartle Frere, were fascinated by his philosophical knowledge. Sant Tukaram Maharaj's God is qualitative, and one possessing virtues is similar to God.

Secondly, Sant Dnyaneshwar Maharaj believes that the true glory of a person lies in their virtues. With virtues come prosperity and reputation. That's why he places great importance on virtues and promises Lord Vitthal that he will follow good virtues throughout his life. Through his Dnyaneshwari, devotees are touched by the profound wisdom.

Thus, they have strong beliefs and values. Our behaviour is an outward reflection of the inner being. Moreover, these two saints taught us the importance of cultivating a positive attitude and a constructive and beneficial outlook. Their devotional poetic compositions known to us serve as a timeless testament to their profound wisdom, devotion, and understanding of the human condition.

### **Scope for further research**

Sant Dnyaneshwar's Dnyaneshwari and Sant Tukaram's Abhangas can be investigated on the topic of pantheism- the juxtaposition of man, nature, and God (their implications for environmental ethics and sustainability) since their works offer a wealth of knowledge from this perspective, making fertile ground for further research.

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