Chapter Five: Conclusions

This is a general sum-up of all the foregoing chapters and also includes some observations and inferences. The previous chapters have shown how comparative, literary and cultural studies can be more revealing and rewarding than monoliterary and single author studies. Moreover, they reveal how the concepts such as east and west are not totally binary. It is a thematic study which helps us examine differences and similarities in cultures. It is believed that spiritualism and mysticism are universally accepted philosophical concepts. Yet they take different forms in poetry. Several new possibilities of comparative cultural studies have been investigated in this study. There is a revolution in signifying cultural practices and modes of interpreting cultural and literary symbols in terms of semiotic studies. The comparison of the poetry of Saint Tukaram and William Blake, in the ultimate analysis results in establishing a conceptual framework of some similarities and differences.

The study has helped to define the nature and scope of the mystic’s experience as reflected in the creative/aesthetic process of writing poetry. It is in this context that Saint Tukaram and William Blake, the mystic poets of the east and west, respectively, should be of great interest, importance and relevance to the readers today. It seeks to explore and examine the mystical and spiritual elements in their poetry.

In the opening chapter aims and objectives are enlisted. The limitations of the study fixed the area of research. However, it has revealed that the study demands more explorations with the help of different versions of their poetry such as film, painting, etc. “Journey of poetry of Tukaram and Blake from manuscript to audio-visual version” could be an interesting topic for further research.

Several versions of Tukaram Gatha and its available English translations are used as primary sources. Some poems of Tukaram with mystical and spiritual elements are translated by the researcher. Though Blake’s poems Poetical Sketches, Songs of Innocence and of Experience were selected as primary sources his other poems and prophetical writings are also used in the course of time.

The hypothesis of the study that there are certain similarities and differences in the devotional poems of Tukaram and Blake has come true. The east and west cultures are juxtaposed through this study. The spiritual and mystical elements have been traced and illustrated in the poems of both the poets. The cultural study has
necessitated the application of multiple approaches such as — philosophical, religious, historical, biographical, etc. And the methods adopted are historical, explorative, descriptive, comparative, analytical, etc. The principal argument is in keeping with the demands of the inductive and/or deductive logic.

Nature of mysticism and spiritualism has been examined to create a background of the study. Ineffability, noetic quality, sense of integrity, passivity, and transiency have been explained and illustrated as the most important characteristics of mysticism. It is argued that spiritualism is a living, dynamic process which issues from and is oriented towards whatever an individual may hold sacred. The core of the argument lies in the statement that religion is based on true spirituality which leads to the experience of oneness: we are in God and God is in us. This is experienced in mystical i.e. supra-sensual state of mind to put it in short, mysticism is the immediate feeling of the unity of the individual self with the divine self. It is used here as an umbrella term bringing within its compass the realm of the unknown and the invisible. It is an attitude towards rather than a belief in the ultimate reality. This is the highest phase in a man's spiritual life acquired through the purgation of his soul. Intelligence, will, and feeling play their respective roles in the mystical stance and exercise. The devotee's love or affection finds its best expression in his devotion to God which paves way for his identity with God. So, it is observed: whether it is east or west, mysticism implies that the whole universe is one vast organism and the heart of God which lies at its centre constitutes the source of all being, all existence. The differences are also noted down in the process of comparison. Those are obvious as commented by Mark Currie:

We live in the world of difference, a world in which people and places differ from each other. This means that though there is a complicated philosophical and linguistic background for the term "difference", there is also a very familiar meaning which describes the diversity of the world. . . .the term "difference" is the extent to which it has managed to combine easy, readily understandable meanings with those derived from a more complex rhetorical background. As a critical concept cultural difference often has this doubleness about it: on the one hand, the most straightforwardly dull observation that the world is not a singularity, and
on the other, the articulation of that observation to a complex rhetorical framework.¹

The comparison of western mysticism with eastern mysticism also sheds light on the difference between the individual soul and the universal soul. Eastern thought centres round the pure self-consciousness. It seeks to annihilate the flesh by denying its reality. It looks within and gains enlightenment (moksha) through a life of renunciation. Christianity, on the other hand, is centred on the extraneous doctrine of the incarnation, in the mystery of God. Father is revealing Himself in human form — the son i.e. Jesus. Western mystical thought rests on a kind of symbolism, with all its sacredness. It stands for all that is human — human love, intellect, instinct, etc. "Humanistic approach of mystic poets" can be the interesting topic for further research.

It is noted that mysticism and spiritualism are the products of religion and these experiences are expressed through poetry. Poetry and religion belong to the realms of human consciousness which lie beyond the purview of scientific enquiry. They enable the individual human being to free himself from the tyranny of continuous anxiety and spacio-temporal bondage. These two i.e. religion and poetry in their different journeys guide us on the way to the final destination, i.e. spiritual freedom. "Semiotic study of mysticism" will be the most interesting and challenging study.

The chapter one is Introduction which forms the backbone of this study. The life of the mystic or visionary, the seer or the saint is divided into three phases according to the experience of the poets, those are — initiation, progression and culmination/discovery. It is observed that Paradox, personification, aphorism, epigram, symbolism, imagery, etc. are used as the vehicle of mystical experience. It is also true about the poets under study. The mystic gives us a glimpse of the infinite as against the finite and of the eternal as against the temporal, speaking, in spiritual terms, both verbal and conceptual, of freedom.

Both the mystic and the poetic exercises demand self-denial and they are characterized by the flash of insight, certainty, authenticity, intimacy of the experience. Both the activities are of deeply personal nature and unique to the individual. What authenticity and austerity (implying detachment or renunciation) are to the mystics, alienation and isolation (implying disinterestedness) are to the artists.
or the poets. For prophetic vision, one should have concentration and contemplation upon, devotion to, and communion with God, whether personal or impersonal, abstract or concrete. Blake claims to have written the poem *Milton* from immediate dictation in a state of mystical ecstasy. Tukaram also frequently gives the credit of his poems to his favourite deity, Viththal. Both lived a life of detachment and creativity that lead ultimately to enlightenment and liberation. The mysticism of God’s union, despite its ineffability, is most often described in the Christian literature. In the Vedic literature also a mystic is shown as holding a communion with what they usually call nature or universal spirit or God. The two icons presented here by the two great poets are: the one of the personal, concretized human form of God Viththal for Tukaram and the other of Jesus for Blake. With respect to religious mysticism whether in the eastern or the western tradition, God is looked upon as father or mother, lover or beloved, bridegroom or bride, child, shepherd, etc.

Tukaram is a man of humble beginning and is ultimately drawn close to God. His poetic life is a journey of his soul. His *Abhanga Gatha* is the history of his spiritual life, i.e. his autobiography with all the trials and tribulations and heart-rending experiences. At last, there falls a beam of light on his body and soul so that he realizes God and becomes one with Him. Blake, on the other hand, is the son of a hosier, a poet, a painter, an engraver and a prophet. His mystical bent of mind is revealed in the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* but finds its fullest expression in *Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, Milton, Jerusalem*. There is something prophetic about his visionary thoughts and poetic utterances. Being profoundly spiritual, he believes in imaginative faculty as a key to the understanding of God. God and imagination are often used as synonyms in his poetry, which harmoniously combine both creativity and divinity.

The Second Chapter gives the details of the comparison of the initial phase of the poetry of both poets. The initial phase of the journey of these poets is traced through the study of their initial works such as autobiographical *abhangas* of Tukaram and *Poetical Sketches* and *Songs of Innocence* of Blake. The devotional/religious poetry in Marathi flourished from the end of the 13th century to the beginning of the 17th century. Tukaram is the chief spokesman of *bhakti* tradition. Jnanesvar, Namdeo, Eknath, Ramdas, and Tukaram, are the five remarkable saints of this cult who have spread the spiritual message. Mystical verse (of the metaphysical school) flourished in England in the 17th century which is called the period of settled
belief. The divine/devotional poetry reveals sensibility akin to the mystical. George Herbert, Richard Crashaw, Henry Vaughan, etc. wrote the metaphysical poetry with overtones. Blake belongs to the early 19th century and is acknowledged as the precursor of romanticism. In Caroline Spurgeon’s view, the English mystics are of the different types such as love mystics, nature mystics, philosophical mystics, devotional and religious mystics. William Blake is seen as belonging to the last group – that of the religious our mystics. Thus, the poetic traditions of both the poets are similar to each other. They treat of the religious themes related to the non-conformist but humanistic tradition.

These poets seek their inspiration from God through dreams and visions they have at the threshold of their lives. They claim that they have written poetry under divine influence and also think it is their pious duty to compose poetry. So, it is observed that from the beginning of their career both of them seem to be inclined to devotional life through their poetic composition. The devotional poets naturally have a religious bent of mind from which issues their spiritual leanings or inclinations. Both are born and brought up in different religions and cultures, so there are certain obvious differences in their lives and writings. Their early poetry reveals their spiritual awakening. Both are the lovers of goodness, reality, humanity and finally of God. Thus, the discussion throws light on the truth that, for all the mystics, supreme reality is located within spirit individual and universal.

Both the poets’ journey starts in the right direction and moves from darkness to light. They know that, for reaching the goal, purgation or purification of heart is essential. The early poems reveal the spiritual/mystical consciousness of the poets. The essential factors required for intuition have received due critical attention. Tukaram gives importance to the scattering of the ego and Blake uses the symbol of cloud to denote the hindrance in the path of mysticism. At the end of this phase, both of them are liberated wholly and completely from the mundane existence and its material entrapment.

The middle phase of the poets’ spiritual journey shows progression in their mystical awareness. It establishes a linkage between their spiritual explorations and mystic visions. They are coming closer to the cosmic divine spirit – the universal soul – of vital importance but prior to that they experience the dark night of the soul. Progression is a long process of awakening in which spiritual practice carries great importance. In Hinduism, name-recital, kirtana, meditation and yoga are the
devotional practices used by the spiritual aspirants. In Christianity also, there is the importance of God’s name, prayer, meditation and service to people. The poets under study are not practising mystics but they are poet-mystics or better to call them poets with mystical overtones. So, the question of taking mystic stances or doing yogic exercises as such does not arise in the case of both the poets.

For Tukaram, the saint’s company is thought essential for reaching the goal of divinity. For Blake, angels are the mediators between him and God. Blake also gives importance to God’s name but unlike he does not practise it. Both of them have written a number of poems in the praise of God, in His love and adoration. They are happy to go along the divine path in the light of saints and angels, respectively. Saints for Tukaram and angels for Blake are nothing but the offsprings, if not the messiahs or descendents of God.

It is observed that both the poets are not traditional mystics but they are rebels. Mystics are ethically superior people who give strife for love and compassion, morality and social justice. Being selfless and spiritually strong, the poets revolt against orthodoxy, caste hierarchy and social or sectarian discrimination. A rebel is an opponent, a non-conformist who fights against any sort of injustice. It is inferred that the poets launch a struggle to free scriptures from the clutches of orthodoxy. Both challenge the authority and lay the claim that they know the true meaning of scriptures. Both the poets have a peep into the very core of life and contend, either implicitly or explicitly, that the contraries in life are but natural and inevitable. In Blake’s view, body/soul, energy/reason, conservative/radical are not just contrary but complementary also. They cannot be seen as opposites or alternatives; they are inseparable and are one as seen in his prophetic works of mature years. Humility is the key to or pre-condition of their spiritual awareness or progression. Both of them are seen as humble devotees, the true servants of God, giving due importance to the small and minute things in this world. There are references to the holy shrines in their poems. For Tukaram, “Pandharpur” is the holy place of pilgrimage, and for Blake, “Jerusalem” is the city of God. They eulogise the glory of their holy places as the seats of their respective religion and culture.

For both, this world is a medium to reach the other world which is real. It is noticed that of all the English poets, Blake alone compares well with Tukaram in his spiritual explorations and mystic visions. The vision of God seems to be clouded by the dark night of the soul implicitly present in the philosophies of both Hinduism and
Christianity. Despite the success on the spiritual path, there descends the dark night of the soul prior to the state of illumination. It represents the changing mood, anger, despair and frustration experienced by both the mystic poets. Tukaram has a quarrel, a lover's quarrel with God. He suffers from frustration because of his failure to see God face to face and thus experiences the dark night of the soul. Similarly, Blake is also seen facing frustration due to the failure of the Church and the Papal authorities to serve humanity in all earnestness. In the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* he feels: if the doors of perception are closed, nothing would appear to man as it is, infinite and eternal.

The Third Phase — the mature phase of revelation or fructification, also called discovery or illumination. Tukaram's revelatory *abhanga*s and Blake's deeply mystical poems throw light on their being saints or seers, mystics or visionaries. It is the world not of reason, but of faith, of imagination. Vision of God brings 'spiritual bliss', the highest kind of joy, to these two great mystic-poets of the two different literary and cultural traditions. For them, the world of spirit is immutable, eternal and infinite.

Tukaram's *Abhang Gatha* is a long story of his spiritual odyssey from manhood to sainthood. In these verses, he depicted with great honesty his own past life and his anguish and his search for God. Mystically enlightened as he is, his poetry acquires a magical lyrical quality with hypnotic effects. There is the element of picturesqueness which makes itself manifest through Tukaram's imagery. Blake's major poems present a unique world of symbolism. For example, Urizen, is the intellect; Luvah, the emotions; Tharmas, the instinct; and Urthona, the dark earthly passion allowing Los and Enitharmon the powers of inspiration to occupy the centre of all. Then appears the complexity of his vast mythology, yielding an amazing set of correspondences and significances of the different universes from which he works out the symbolic characters Urizen, Luvah, Tharmas, etc.

It is interesting to bring out the relationship between man and God as revealed in these divine poems. It is a metaphysical relation aiming at the inculcation of the spirit of universal fellowship. The tradition of the Marathi saints conceives the role of a poem in its own unique way and it carries some deep ethnopoetic significance. Vithoba is not a sectarian God but the God of the masses. He is the greatest source of spiritual joy and universal love. Poetry is the highest expression of devotional fellow-feeling on the spiritual path. The message of Blake's poetry from the *Songs of*
Experience to the Ghost of Abel is revolutionary, because it is a kind of impassioned and sustained criticism of race, moment and milieu. We come across in Blake various aspects of the ethnopoetic problems related to socio-cultural dynamics of the European countries - hypocrisy, jealousy, chastity, etc. Both the poets mercilessly attack the hazy, hypocritical, sceptical attitude towards God and religion. They inspired the soldiers through their poems.

The poets come out of the dark night of the soul and appear in the broad daylight of the sun to reach their goals. They are firm and there is no vacillation. They are going from myth to reality - to the ultimate divine truth. There is no despair; patience is the test of God's pleasure. Tukaram seems to believe in the theory of rebirth and soul's immortality. Unlike Blake, who deals in paradoxes and personifications, Tukaram uses the figures of speech called simile, metaphor, illustration to define his loving relationship with God. Purged and purified, he would bow down to the feet of God. Tukaram's passing away in 1649 is looked upon as 'ascension' to heaven (Vaikuntha), the other world or the world beyond, in a deep spiritual sense. Blake also refers to the incident of God's presence near his death-bed to lift him up. It is clear that, for Blake, there are two universes, the world in which we live, and the world beyond this world i.e. the world of spirit.

It may be noted that both the poets are the innovators of new myths; they have their own philosophy. After the water ordeal Tukaram becomes a legendary figure and people start adoring him, for he becomes a saint. Blake, too, is a prophet -- a person of high stature, who combines three modes of knowledge - vision, revelation, illumination. Thus, both the poets are the men of God, born with a purpose to serve humanity. Preaching and practising religion has a specific mission of their lives. Tukaram's philosophy of monism (advait) and Blake's that of Unitarianism are not far different from, if not similar to each other. It may be claimed that Blake's philosophy is manifest in his aphorisms, while Tukaram's abhangas, too, have proverbial ring and are produced as maxims on occasions in public life.

The poets believe that poetry is inherently endowed with the power of transmitting divine communication. Their poetry, being sublime, gives the supreme truth. It is explored that in this final stage they attain self-fulfilment. They get closer to God and, hence, paradoxically the suprasensual knowledge is experienced by the senses themselves. The knower and the knowable thus become one, leading to the experience of supreme knowledge. Now, there is no difference among devotee, saint,
angel, prophet and God, for all is one.

The feeling of divine presence is a great achievement for Tukaram. He is the happiest man on the earth enjoying the sweetest company of God. He is an icon and shows, by his own example, how, with unceasing efforts, an ordinary individual can transform himself into a great saint. Similarly, the last stage in the growth of Blake’s mind also is his discovery or spiritual illumination. The intellectual and emotional understanding has given place to something higher: the sage or the seer or the spiritual visionary is born. The theme of his poetry and painting is the 'soul of man'. These are all metaphysical concerns of his poetry. The mystic Blake applies poetic imagination to the soul of man — the soul enters into the body and the body houses the soul and he sees God. In his view, man is only 'a human form divine'. That is why even Christ seems to have been humanized by Blake.

The poetry of seers or mystics reveals their spiritual vision. In their endeavour to reach the ultimate reality, they are illumined, enlightened. The darkness is dispelled by the spiritual light and life becomes clear and radiant like the sunlight. They experience the height of mystical union, ecstasy and bliss and give their hearts' pouring in their poems. Thus, the inexplicable, ineffable experience is brought within the reach of common man, bringing him all joy and peace, happiness, contentment. Both the poets have humanitarian approach. They are ahead of their time.

So, in Conclusion, we see that the central argument of this discourse on spiritualism and mysticism is carried out in terms of binary oppositions — body and soul, good and evil, heaven and hell, this world and the other world, etc. So, the contraries such as God (universal self) and Man-(individual self), the eternal and the temporal (immortality and mortality), macrocosm and microcosm, the abstract and the concrete etc. do not represent bipolarity but equality. By a merger, the differences sink and they become unipolar. It is the parts that make the whole. We call it one or unity that makes life meaningful. The merger brings not only unity but harmony in life also.

This comparative work on mysticism and spiritualism in literature, particularly poetry, throws light on the prospects of further study, for example, “The Concept of Sainthood in the Modern Literature”; “The Role of Reason (intellect) and Faith (intuition) in Building up a Value System”; “Truth, Beauty and Goodness: Their spiritual coalescence in Literature”; “The Nature and Function of Devotional Poetry in Marathi and English”, “Images related to revelation”, “Thematic aspects of
In its final analysis, this critical study leads to emotional integration on the local level and unity of mankind and federation of the world. This comparative cultural study throws a flood of light on surprising similarities in the mystical experience and thoughts of the two poets through which it pointed out the universal brotherhood.

So, let us hope that the present research work will go a long way in constructing a cultural bridge across nations and religions through this critical venture – a part of interdisciplinary culture studies on comparative lines.

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