Abstract

It is a comparative study of the two poets, Saint Tukaram and William Blake, the one in Marathi and the other in English. The study deals with mysticism and spiritualism in their poetry. These poets are the representatives of two different nations, cultures, religions, languages, poetic traditions and value systems. The very title of the study shows that the emphasis is laid mainly on three aspects of these poets' works: the mystic, the spiritual and the poetic. This is for the first time that these poets have been juxtaposed and studied with special reference to mysticism and spiritualism. Their work is divided into three phases: (i) Initiation, (ii) Progression, and (iii) Discovery. While studying mysticism and spiritualism of these poets the eastern and the western cultures have been compared. In a way it is a comparative cultural study.

The opening chapter consists of aims and objectives, primary and secondary sources, limitations of the study, plan of the study, relevance to present times, etc. The clarification of the terms such as comparative study, mysticism, spiritualism, religion, culture is made as an essential part of the background.

The discussion of methods and sources brings out the scope of the study with its limitations. Multiple approaches also bring out the limitations of a single-approach, single author study in the age of electronic gadgets and world-wide websites. The cultural study needs multiple and pluralistic approaches such as - philosophical, religious, historical, biographical, etc. Different approaches are essential for a bi-lingual, bi-cultural, bi-literary and interdisciplinary study. Various methods are adopted for this study like critical, explorative, analytical, inductive, deductive, etc.

The early poetry of both the poets has been studied in the second
chapter i.e. “Initiation”. The initial stage of their spiritual consciousness is the one in which they are spiritually awakened. It is the starting point of the journey. Tukaram belongs to the bhakti cult and Blake is known as the precursor of Romanticism. Both the traditions are somewhat similar to each other. They project the themes related to humanistic aspects.

The family backgrounds, childhood experiences, dreams and visions, surroundings shaped the minds of the poets. Both the poets’ journey starts from darkness and moves towards light. They know that, for reaching the goal, purification of heart is the precondition. Thus the early poems may be seen as revealing the spiritual/mystical consciousness of the poets.

Middle phase is traced in the third chapter, which shows the progression in the mystical journey. This chapter establishes the linkages between the poets’ spiritual explorations and mystic visions. They are coming closer to the universal spirit i.e. God but prior to that they experience “the dark night of the soul”. Progression is a long process in which spiritual practice is important. 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 can be poets with mystical overtones. Both of them are poets and singers celebrating divinity in their own ways. Both of them are happy in the light of saints and angels, respectively. Being spiritually strong, the poets revolt against religious orthodoxy, social hierarchy and latent discrimination of every sort. They have poeticized their holy shrines -- Pandharpur (by Tukaram) and Jerusalem (by Blake). At the end of this phase, there found the experience of journeying through dark night of the soul towards enlightenment.

Then comes the mature phase -- the phase of revelation or
fructification in the fourth chapter. Tukaram’s revelatory abhangas and Blake’s deeply mystical poems throw light on their being saints or seers, mystics or visionaries. The relation between man and God is focused in these divine poems or spiritual verses. It is a metaphysical relation aiming at the inculcation of the spirit of universal fellowship. They speak about the highest humanity and believe that God lives there.

Both are the innovators of new myths and symbols using maxims and aphorisms in the course of their poetic argument. The poets believe that poetry is endowed with the power, that is, of transmitting divine communication. Both speak the truth, their poetry is “sublime.” This is the final stage when they reach the phase of self-fulfilment. God comes closer to them. The supra-sensual knowledge beyond is thus within the compass of senses. Now, there is no difference between the devotee, the saint, the prophet and God, for all is one.

The last chapter summarizes the arguments put forward in the earlier chapters, followed by some important observations and inferences, related to the topic under study. It makes suggestions regarding the lines prospects of further research and also sheds light on the significance and relevance of the present research. The main argument centres round spiritualism and mysticism in terms of binary oppositions. So, the contraries such as spirit and body, God (universal self) and Man (individual self), heaven and hell, the eternal and the temporal (immortality and mortality), macrocosm and microcosm, etc. do not represent bipolarity and opposition, but equality and complementation. It is the parts that make the whole. Philosophically, we call it “monism” i.e. oneness or unity that makes life meaningful. The merger brings not only unity but harmony and contentment in life.