Chapter One

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1.1 Background

This is a comparative study of two poets: Saint Tukaram (in Marathi) and William Blake (in English). It deals with mysticism and spiritualism in the poetry of these great poets from two different nations, cultures, religions, and value systems. The very title of the study shows that a great emphasis is laid mainly on three aspects of these poets' works: the mystic, the spiritual and the poetic. It leads the reader into the realm of heart versus head, imagination versus intellect, sensibility versus ratiocination. The two worlds are simultaneously presented here — the secular and the spiritual in contrast with each other. The perennial conflict of good and evil is at the core of the analytical study of these poets' poems. As Tukaram is a classic and challenging poet, a lot of critical work on him is available in Marathi. But the critical work available on him in English is very scant. He has been compared with many poets by scholars. Blake also has been critically examined by a good number of critics, for example, Dr. Helen White, Caroline Spurgeon and Max Plowman, etc. But this is for the first time that Tukaram and Blake are compared with special reference to mysticism and spiritualism in their poetry by dividing their works in three phases: (i) initiation (ii) progression and (iii) revelation. The study undertaken constitutes a part of cultural studies. The eastern and western cultures can be compared in a small way in the comparative study on these two poets. So the title of the study is:

"Mysticism and Spiritualism in the Poetry of Saint Tukaram and William Blake: A Comparative Study."

"In the 19th century, the term 'mysticism' was suspected in the west as it was much abused and often confounded with sheer emotionalism, it generally suggested what is 'vague'. In the last few decades it has been experiencing a "renewed interest and understanding". A new trend of modern thinking indicates a more balanced view of it. It claims a sharp interest in the study of the subject. It helps to define the nature and scope of the mystic's experience in relation to the aesthetic process. It is in this context that Saint Tukaram and William Blake, the mystic poets, should be of great interest to the readers today."
1.2 Aims and Objectives

The aim and scope of the study is determined and delimited by three areas of 'comparative study', 'mysticism', and 'spiritualism'. The aim of the present study is to compare the two poets, their poems in spiritual and mystical tone, their poetic traditions, languages and cultures. It throws light on these poets’ treatment of 'spiritualism' and 'mysticism' in their poems. The main features of this study can be listed thus:

1. The hypothesis is that there are certain resemblances and differences in the devotional poems of both the poets. The two elements – spiritual and mystical – present therein need to be explored into this incisive, in-depth critical study. One of the objectives of this research is comparative analysis of the poems with reference to culture and religion of these poets. Their poetry is the product of their culture. Their poems will be analyzed as the products of their time and clime. In a limited sense, it may be seen as a part of comparative cultural studies.

2. This is a preliminary attempt to scrutinize some aspects of these concepts: 'mysticism' and 'spiritualism'. Various aspects of spiritualism and mysticism in the poems will be discussed. The different themes, forms, styles, and the various contexts of selected poems will also be examined. Their treatment of themes and individual experiences of spiritualism and mysticism will be compared to establish similarities and dissimilarities.

3. The present study focuses on the dual aspects of two poets’ creative minds and artistic personalities. What counts most is their world view, their vision. The idealistic and realistic features make themselves felt in most of these poems, in which some resemblances and some differences are noticed.

4. Their poems are expressions of individual geniuses born and bred in oriental and occidental cultures. The East and the West, the two halves of the earth which seem to be different when contrasted with each other but the fact is that they share a lot of common ground. The paths are different in the journey of life but the goal is the same, it is one that is humanity, the ultimate reality. The spiritual journey of both the poets is traced here from its beginning (initiation) to its end (culmination/destination) with bivouacs (progression) in- between.

5. The verses of these poets reveal their spiritual tendency. In this study their journey towards supreme goal will be traced by finding the different turning points in
their different literary careers. The socio-political, religious and cultural, and familial backgrounds which shaped their writings and careers will be discussed.

6. Finally, it provides a comparative perspective on their poetry. Such a contrapuntal analysis of their poetry might throw light on the conventional binaries and similarities in two distinct traditions of religious poetry. Since it is a comparative study, it will employ several approaches for the analysis of the sample texts. The present research is an attempt to provide an objective, factual perspective upon the discipline of 'Comparative Literature' with particular focus on the poems of these two poets.

1.3 Comparative Study

The comparative study is the need of the time. With the changing time and globalization, it is merging with other disciplines. Interdisciplinary study is a new trend. The term 'comparative literature' was first used in German by Goethe and in English by Mathew Arnold. The latter popularized the term through his lectures in 1848 and 1857. The term comparative literature is gaining greater currency with its fresh connotation in the new millennium. There is a great change in the concept of comparative literature as Gayatri Chakravorti Spivak writes:

I thought comparative literature should be world embracing at the beginning of my career. And I continue to believe that the politics of the production of knowledge in area studies (and also anthropology and the other "human sciences") can be touched by a new Comparative Literature, whose hallmark remains a care for language and idiom.2

It is very difficult to define this term while no definition can manage to cover in a satisfactory manner all the aspects and details of this intricate, complex field. But for convenience we can record a few of the definitions given by some of the influential scholars in this domain. Oscar James Campbell says:

Comparative literature. . . endeavours, in the first place, to discover general laws which transcend any one literature, such as the developments of types and forms under the progressive relationships of different literatures. In the second place, it seeks to reveal relations of affinity within two or more literatures. Finally, through the
discovery of similarities and differences by means of comparison, it
endeavours to explain the inception and growth of the individual
works.3

The comparative study includes the devices of comparison on the basis of
multilingual and intercultural investigations. According to Prawer:

An examination of literary texts (including works of literary theory
and criticism) in more than one language, through an investigation of
contrast, analogy, provenance or influence or a study of literary
relations and communications between two or more groups that speak
different languages.4

It suggests that comparative study emphasizes the 'examination of correlations rather
than of the texts themselves.' Comparative study is carried out through an
interdisciplinary approach. In it, literature is studied across national borders, time,
periods, languages, genres, disciplines. It has a universal point of view. It is the study
of two or more than two literatures. So, the work is undertaken with a view to
arguably contesting the so-called well-established truth of the famous couplet by the
great poet Rudyard Kipling:

East is east and West is west
And never the twain shall meet.5

According to Rudyard Kipling, the east and the west seem diametrically opposed to
each other, but they are not necessarily so. There is no bipolarity, no dichotomy, but
supplementation instead – the one supplementing the other. Similarities between the
two approaches to God and his creation, between the two ways of life establish their
unity, their oneness, while the differences between the two establish their separate
identities. So, there is a common platform, a common ground of understanding, and a
common humanity, which provide the basis of this work. Apart from the differences,
the two religions, and the two cultures can move in the direction of humanity – “the
unity of man and the federation of the world.” William Blake’s “All religions are
one.” and the same universal approach is adopted by Saint Tukaram. According to
him, God is the pool that links a person to the whole world. Such poems of both poets
will be discussed in detail in the third chapter. Following lines reveal the feature of
universality of religions.
The world becomes kith and kin due to God

Other's joys and sufferings reflect in the heart.

(427)

All these examples illustrate how both the poets are universal in their approach to life. The mystics of different times and places have the universal attitude. Similarly, in the words of Swami Vivekananda, "The end of all religions is the realizing of God in the soul. That is the one. If there is one universal truth in all religions, I place it here – in realizing God. Ideals and methods may differ, but that is a central point." Vivekananda goes further and asks: "Are all the religions of the world contradictory?" That is a rhetorical question. So, the answer is a simple "No" and Vivekananda adds: "They are not contradictory; they are supplementary. Each religion, as it were, takes up one part of the great universal truth, and spends its whole force in embodying and typifying that part of the great truth." While comparing the poems from two religions and cultures (the Hindu and Christian), the same universality will be kept in view.

Spiritualism and mysticism are the two phases in the growth and development of human mind. It is the world of metaphysics, wherein we study the inter-relationship between God, man, and nature/universe. It is the world of supra-consciousness, where imagination and not reason reigns supreme. The relation between the prakriti and the purusha forms the basis of the metaphysical world. The ground for which is prepared by the Bhagvad Geeta. And there is a great impact of it on the world particularly on the poets of the varkari tradition. In the ninth chapter of Jnanesvari, Jnanesvar tells us how atman (self) is the eternal spectator while prakriti is the uniform actor. The poems of the two poets reflect somewhat similarity in idiom and thought. The resemblances and differences in this regard will be illustrated and discussed in the next chapter. These poets have not been studied here merely as poets but as seers or visionaries. There is something fantastic, miraculous, and prophetic about the truths they have given through their innumerable maxims and aphorisms. God and Self are not two distinct or separate entities, but the one is macrocosm and the other microcosm of the universal spirit. God is the universal self, while self implies the individual self. The former is the One and the latter the Other, and together they make the ONE. There are many abhangas of Tukaram about the unity of God and the devotee. Tukaram says that the culmination of devotee's life is the
oneness of soul and divine/supreme soul. This unity and its implications will be worked out in detail in the fourth chapter. The following abhanga treats of the theme, thus:

The devotee dreams of God,
God is happy in devotee's company.
God has given shape to bhakta,
....
Tuka says there is no difference
Devotee is God, God is devotee.

(414)

The same message is given by Blake through his writings. In the poem "The Divine Image" from the Songs of Innocence, he writes:

And all must love the human form,
In heathen, turk or jew.

("The Divine Image", Songs of Innocence)

According to Blake, the divine love is gained through human form (i.e. Jesus here). And human icon prioritizes compassion over abstraction. Vivekananda is worth quoting, again, "There is no God separate from you, no God higher than you, the real 'you'."9 What is monism in Hindu philosophy can very well be compared to Unitarianism of Christianity. One more objective of the research project is intended and also designed to explore the spiritual kinship of the two religions, Hinduism and Christianity, at the theistic level as reflected in their poetry. They share the somewhat similar modes or patterns of religious thinking, feeling and behaving. Similarly their experiences and expressions in poetry can be compared with metaphysical themes according to John Donne and T.S. Eliot.

1.4 A Critique of Spiritualism and Mysticism

As the present work is a study of mysticism and spiritualism, it will be appropriate to discuss a few concepts related to 'spiritualism' and 'mysticism', along with the definitions of these key terms.
1.4.1 The Definition and Nature of Spiritualism

The term 'spirituality' comes from the word 'spirit' (to breathe) and there is general agreement that spirituality is a living, dynamic process that is oriented from whatever the individual may hold sacred. It is defined in *Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology* as follows: The sacred refers to concepts of God and transcendent reality as well as other aspects of life that take on divine character and significance by virtue of their association with the holy. One more definition of spiritualism in *Merriam Webster Online Dictionary* is:

Spiritualism, in philosophy, is a characteristic of any system of thought that affirms the existence of immaterial reality imperceptible to the senses. So defined, spiritualism embraces a vast array of highly diversified philosophical views. Most patently, it applies to any philosophy accepting the notion of an infinite, personal God, the immortality of the soul, or the immateriality.

In religion, spiritualism is reposing faith in God as supreme. It also implies a belief, with something magical or ritualistic about it, that departed souls hold intercourse with mortals, usually through a medium by means of physical phenomena or during abnormal mental states, such as trances. Spiritualism is a philosophy, doctrine, or religion emphasizing the spiritual aspect of being. The term is defined in *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

1. The exercise of the mental or intellectual faculties, or their predominance over body. 2. Tendency towards, or advocacy of, a spiritual view or estimate of things, esp. as a leading principle in philosophy or religion. 3. Belief in the existence and influence of spiritual beings.

The term 'spirituality' is an important and leading principle of philosophy and religion. It is a life-blood of religion. Everything pure and sacred is there in spirituality.

In spiritualism, the search for the sacred becomes inevitable and very important. Different ways are followed by different people for this search. It includes traditional or non-traditional organized religious beliefs (for example — God, re-birth, *Karma*), practices (e.g. prayer, meditation, rituals), experiences (e.g. mystical
consciousness, conversion), and institutions (e.g. Church attendance, Bible study). During a lifespan the search for the sacred can unfold in many directions as given in Encyclopedia of Positive Psychology:

For some, spirituality is a relatively smooth, stable process. For others, spirituality involves sharp shifts in spiritual pathways and understandings of the sacred itself. Some embed their spirituality in a traditional religious milieu. Others leave traditional religious settings and pursue more individualized spiritual pathways and destinations. Still others join and leave a variety of religious contexts, traditional and non-traditional, over their lives. Spirituality is, in short, a rich, complex, and multiform process.¹³

Spiritualism is a religion because it strives to understand and to comply with the physical, mental and spiritual laws of nature which are covertly the laws of God. It is a true love of God. As Christopher Mendonca observes:

Our spiritual experiences grow deeper in proportion to our experience of being loved and being able to love in return. The progressive and in the end complete loss of self in the act of Self-giving enables us to connect with the divine for whom the whole of creation is just the outpouring of the Divine Self. Truly, in God “we live, move and have our being.” In love, there is no room for fear. One of the characteristics of a genuine spiritual experience is therefore the absence of fear.¹⁴

For self-preservation, the experience of fear is needed. At physical level, it is important to remove the dangers and minimize the threats to life. At the physiological level, it manifests itself in stress. It is not surprising, therefore, that meditation techniques are helpful in leading a tension-free life. At this point, religion parts ways with spirituality. Christopher Mendonca argues:

Religion degenerates into magic. A spirituality based on such a religion is nothing more than a caricature. Meditation on the other hand as the art of learning to “pay attention”, becomes the link between the ritual and the spi-ritual . . . . It is the practice of meditation that enables us to slowly begin progressively functioning
not from our ‘ego’ but from our true Self. The true Self is God and God is love.¹⁵

So, it is to be noted that religion is based on true spirituality which leads to the experience of “we are in God and God is in us”. This is what a mystic experiences in his ecstatic state of mind a unity of being.

Spiritual involution is witnessed as the means to redeem yourself from the transitariness of life itself and reach the pinnacle of eternal truth. Spiritual associations enable the mind to understand the truths of life in connection to the cosmic bondage.¹⁶

In the light of these definitions and their implications, spiritualism in the poems will be subjected to critical scrutiny. The inner self, the supreme soul is thus very important. Spiritualism is the opposite of materialism, secularism; it supersedes religion, and mystical experience is perhaps, its best expression. In the same way, the broad definition and analysis of the concept ‘mysticism’ will provide a broad frame of reference for the present study.

1.4.2 The Definition and Nature of Mysticism

Mysticism implies mystery, the term is derived from the Greek verb “muw” signifying “to close the lips, eyes and ears; and to shut the doors of eating senses and passing passions.” The mysterious evokes in him curiosity leading to a joyous experience -- it is a prerequisite of spiritual perception. The mirror of the mind then becomes clean so that it reflects the divine light. In ancient Greece, such a person was called the “mystes” (“mystic” in English) meaning the enlightened, the deified one, the seer, the saint, and the philosopher. Such a man was initiated into the mysteries of existence and the esoteric knowledge of the realities of life and death, body and soul, and so on and so forth. Needless to add that the sense of mystery is inherent in man. Albert Einstein observes it in the following lines:

The fairest thing we can experience is the mysterious. It is the fundamental emotion which stands at the cradle of true art and true science. He who knows it not and can no longer wonder... is as good as dead...”¹⁷ (emphasis added)
In the Gospel of St. Mar (IV—11), there occurs a passage where Jesus is quoted to have said, thus: "Unto you (who is initiated) it is given to know the mystery of the Kingdom of God." Initiation is, thus, a precondition of what you call the spiritual life. The list of twenty-five definitions of mysticism was given by Dean W.R. Inge in 1899. It has resulted in the expansion of the study of world religions and then mystical cults have sprung up everywhere. The word ‘mysticism’ is derived from the Greek word *muein* (to remain silent) which probably refers to the secrecy of the initiation rites. Later on, in Neoplatonic theory, mystical silence becomes the wordless meditation. According to the modern usage of mysticism, the state of consciousness surpasses ordinary experience and there is the union with a transcendent reality.

W. R. Inge in his *Mysticism in Religion* has given different definitions of mysticism. Some of them are given below:

1. According to Otto Pfleiderer, “mysticism is the immediate feeling of the unity of the self with God.”
2. Edward Caird says, “mysticism is that attitude of mind in which all relations are swallowed up in the relation of the soul to God.”
3. Richard Nettleship defines it, thus: “True mysticism is the consciousness that everything that we experience is an element and only an element in fact, i.e. in being what it is, it is symbolic of something else.”

In this way, mysticism is an umbrella term that brings within its compass the realm of the unknown and the invisible. Moreover, it is more an attitude towards than a belief in the Ultimate Reality.

Mysticism is a broad term signifying an area of concern rather a specific set of beliefs. It is the concern with the area of the ultimate reality. It includes both means and ends, both the goal and the way. Mysticism is the art and science of living perfectly; it is the Self-Knowledge that subsumes knowledge of the world. It is the quest for, and the union with, the Absolute. To the religious minded, it is the search for God; to the lover, it is the quest for the beloved; to the man of action it is the search for the secret of perfect action; to the artist it is the quest for beauty; to the scholar it is the search for truth.
Such is the thorough explanation of the term mysticism by an eminent professor and a critic Makarand Paranjape. R.D. Ranade’s comments on this term are of great relevance here. He starts the preface of his famous book *Mysticism in Maharashtra* with the explanation of the term ‘mysticism’. According to him:

Mysticism denotes that attitude of mind which involves a direct, immediate, first-hand, intuitive apprehension of God . . . . It is an irony of fate that a word which deserves to signify the highest attitude of which *man is capable*, namely, a restful and loving *contemplation of God*, should be taken to signify things which are incomparably low in the scale of being.20 (emphasis added)

In Ranade’s view, the highest phase of mysticism is acquired through the purgation of soul. He concludes his argument by saying, “Thus it seems that Intelligence, Will, and Feeling are all necessary in the case of mystical endeavour.”21 Mysticism incorporates an unworldly life with different means and ends. It leads us on the path of devotion and knowledge towards divinity. It implies solitary life, a life of renunciation leading first to self-knowledge and then to the knowledge of God. The mind of the mystic goes farther than the religious, it grows spiritual. It has the quest for and the union with God through self-realization. There is the complete uprooting of the ego followed by the end of all suffering. Illusion gives way to reality, and duality or diversity dissolves in unity. There is the complete freedom – the joy and the bliss of transcendence and ecstasy. A mystic is a man of supra-consciousness; superhuman as he is, he leads a life of peace and harmony. Love, all-encompassing love, reigns supreme in his world. He is rid of all existential anxieties, doubts, and dilemmas that plague ordinary men and women.

Mysticism deals with the knowledge of God and His presence and is as such concerned with philosophy. It denotes vaguely a kind of occultism or spiritualism. It rouses our curiosity giving us a glimpse of fantastic and miraculous vision of God and the universe. As it is given in *Concise Oxford Dictionary* (1911) a mystic is “One who believes in spiritual apprehension of truth beyond understanding”. Thus, mysticism implies a state of supra-consciousness, a kind of divine knowledge. Mystery surrounds the word, for the mystic knowledge has its currency, as already mentioned, “with the mouths shut and the eyes closed”. A man is born or becomes a mystic due to nature and disposition or temperament. Mysticism constitutes the very centre of his
being. It is a continually burning flame which feeds his whole life. He is intensely and supremely happy, for he rolls in spirituality. In Caroline F.E. Spurgeon's view, "mysticism is ... a temper rather than a doctrine, an atmosphere rather than a system of philosophy." Broadly speaking, mysticism informs all life. Sisirkumar Ghose sums it up, thus: “mysticism proves the individual’s capacity to rise above the conditioning factors of nature, nurture and history, to achieve a third force which, if we only knew how, might change the core and contour of our collective life. In the light of these definitions and their implications, mysticism in the poetry of the poets will be studied in minute details. Most of the Indian as well as western mystic-poets love nature. Love of nature is a mile-stone in their spiritual journey. As Blake sings:

Mountain, hill, earth and sea,
Cloud, meteor, and star
Are men seen afar.
*(Letters, p. 82)*

Tukaram’s love of nature is revealed in the following lines:

Trees and creepers and beasts have become my kins,
And the birds too sing in their sweet voice,
Due to this pleasure, this stay of solitude has become dear to me.
*(T, p.23)*

The point will be further discussed in the forthcoming chapter. Several other mystics also have the same experiences. It will not be out of place to quote one of them here. The famous Indian mystic Swami Rama Tirtha claims such universal unity in the section II, of the poem No. 11.

I am the mote of the sunbeam,
and I am the burning Sun,

... I am the blush of the morning,
and I am the evening breeze;
I am the leaf’s low murmur, the swell
of the terrible seas.
I am the net, the flower, the bird
and its frightened cry.24

A mystic sees truth from different angles transfigured by divert emotions such as love, beauty, devotion, etc. Wordsworth also gained his revelation of divinity through nature. To him, nature was a teacher but to Blake, imagination was the only key to the knowledge of reality. For Tukaram, nature is one of the means to reach God. Thus, the mystics differ from each other in their philosophical stances and yet agree with each other in one passionate assertion: “Unity underlies diversity”. Thus, all the mystics have a common starting-point and a common goal or destination, although their paths are different. They share an attitude of mind founded upon an intuitive experience, conviction of unity or oneness, or identity in all things. This is the fountain-head of all mystical thought, it will be in the fitness of things to quote the words of Lord Krishna from the Bhagvad-Geeta, Chapter XVIII:

There is true knowledge,
Learn, thou, it is this:
To see one changeless life in all the lives,
As in the separate One Inseparable.

The Bhagvat-Geeta provides a good foundation of all religious poetry. Similarly, the Bible is the bed-rock of the western metaphysical poetry. So, all the mystics have a fundamental belief in this cosmic unity. This belief leads to another belief that all things about us are forms or manifestations of the one divine entity called God, Nature or Brahma (the Absolute One). The phenomena around us are fleeting and transient, although the spirit which embodies them is enduring, immortal and, therefore, eternal. These beliefs convince us of the truth of the Platonic dictum: “The Ideal is the only Real”. Let us take one more definition of mysticism to clarity how the terms spiritualism and mysticism are closely related. Mysticism is a belief in the direct apprehension of divine or eternal reality by means of spiritual contemplation distinct from more ordinary avenues of human knowledge.25 In the light of these definitions and their discussion, mysticism and spiritualism will be brought into focus. There are certain characteristics of mysticism which are needed to be listed here.
1.4.3 Common Characteristics of Mysticism

In William James'\textsuperscript{26} \textit{The Varieties of Religious Experience}, the most commonly accepted, characteristics of mystical experiences are mentioned. The first characteristic is 'ineffability' which emphasizes the private, or at least incommunicable, quality of the experience. The 'noetic quality' of the experience is mentioned by James. Instead of arguing for the theoretical knowledge, mystical insight suffuses a person's knowledge with a unique, noetic order that has all-encompassing 'sense of integrity'. 'Passivity' is the most distinct characteristic of mystical experience. 'Meditative techniques' and 'ascetic exercises' are applied by a mystic. The next, controversial characteristic is 'Transiency' in which the great mystics accept the challenge of remaining in enhanced states of consciousness for a prolonged period. The mystics have intermittent intensive experiences in which they have surpassing awareness. "Rhythmic quality" of mystical experience is another characteristic which is more remarkable than the transient one. James has given these four characteristics to which we can add one more that is "Integration". The previously existing opposition is overcome by mystical consciousness in its integration with a higher reality. Some mystics maintain a 'sense of transcendence' within the union, which gives them religious character.

Mysticism is, thus, the ineffable, intuitive experience or direct union with the divine. It implies that the divine reality usually addressed as the One may be realized directly. The mystic can hold the direct and immediate communion with it. This divine reality is infinite and eternal. \textit{Brihadaranyaka Upanisad} explicitly states:

\begin{quote}
All the desires that dwell in the heart are cast away,

Then does the mortal become immortal,

Then he attains Brahman.\textsuperscript{27}
\end{quote}

It is a direct union with the divine reality. Here, there is no wall between the two worlds -- finite and infinite. For example, in \textit{Mundaka Upanisad} (III.2.9.8), it is stated that "Just as the flowing river disappears in the ocean casting off name and shape, even so the knower, freed from name and shape, attains to the divine person, higher than the high."\textsuperscript{28} In the words of Kabir,

\begin{quote}
If you \textit{merge your life}

In the \textit{Ocean of Life},
\end{quote}
You will find your life in the Supreme, Land of Bliss.29 (emphasis added)

Tukaram uses the same symbol of ‘ocean’ for God in the following *abhanga*.

Let us go to God’s own town
God will give us relief

Let us tell God what we’ve gone through
He will set our craving at ease.

Let us remain close to God
For God is the *ocean of bliss*.
(emphasis added) (S.T. p. 112)

It is surprising to observe that the mystics of different places have the same experiences and use somewhat identical expressions. The mystics of different time and clime seem to share certain common visions. (Chap. IV, 4.5)

**1.4.4 Mystical Vision and Experience**

Both Tukaram and Blake are visionary poets. Hence, it is necessary to develop a frame of reference to analyze these poets’ poetry. Vision does not constitute the core of mystical thought or experience. Whether it is dream or vision, both the poets had the experiences of them. Nevertheless, they do not constitute the essence of their mystical philosophy. That is why Shri Aurobindo30 is justified in saying: “Vision is not sufficient; one must become what inwardly one sees.” Aurobindo’s *Savitri* is the finest example of Indian mystical poetry in English and it will be the next step in investigating the metaphysical link between Tukaram’s Aurobido’s poetry and other mystic’s poetry. That is why the exclusion of vision as a component of mystical phenomenon is due to the fact that vision is a sensuous experience, whereas a genuine mystical experience is essentially a non-sensuous experience. In her classical work entitled *Mysticism*, Evelyn Underhill31 arrives at a golden mean, when she argues: “visionary experience is — or at least may be — the outward sign of a real experience.”

Mystics are essentially virtuous people. They achieve mystical states as a result of long and arduous spiritual exercises, fasting and praying, observing silence,
remembering name, and all kinds of physical austerities. The climax of a mystical experience lies in the achievement of unity, which is the founding principle of the universe. As already referred to in an earlier paragraph, a man's self is in the universal self and the universal self is in man's self – the two are inseparable and hence united. A mystic aspires for complete freedom from pain and pleasure, life and death, and aspires for the attainment of the divine bliss. In his work *The Idea of the Holy*, Rudolf Otto describes the mystical experience: "The feeling... comes sweeping like a gentle tide, pervading the mind in a tranquil mood of deepest worship.... It may burst in sudden eruption up from the depths of the soul." The biographical sketches of both the poets will also illustrate some of these experiences and vital aspects of mysticism.

The mystical experience is wholly unique, unlike the sense experience of spacio-temporal order of existence. Bergson says, "... mysticism means nothing, absolutely nothing, to the man who has no experience of it, however slight." Einstein joins hands with him, when he says:

The most beautiful and most profound emotion we can experience with the sensation of the mystical. It is the sower of all true science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead. To know what is impenetrable to us exists, manifesting itself as higher wisdom.

In this way, the mystic experience is very important and it is a unique experience of the "Absolute", i.e. the divine unity. This discussion is helpful while discussing the experience of both the poets. As it is a study of poetry that too of religious nature, it is necessary to closely study the mystical texture of both the poets' religion and poetry. Poetry in which God-devotee relationship is revealed is a type of metaphysical poetry.

(Chap. IV, 4.2)

1.4.5 Metaphysical Poetry: A Critical Concept

The term metaphysical poetry is coined by the poet and critic Dr. Samuel Johnson to describe a loose group of British lyric poets of the 17th century.

It includes the poets who shared an interest in metaphysical concerns and a common way of investigating them, and whose work was characterized by inventiveness of metaphor (these involved comparisons being known as metaphysical conceits.)
The term metaphysical as applied to English and continental European poets of the seventeenth century, was used by Augustan poets John Dryden and Samuel Johnson to reprove those poets for their 'unnaturalness'. As Goethe wrote, however, "the unnatural that too is natural," and the metaphysical poets continue to be studied and revered for their intricacy and originality. Such links to the poems of the poets under study are of great help. In the world of materialism, morality and ethics projected by the poets. T.S. Eliot commented on the condition of modern world in the following lines.

We are the hollow men,
We are the stuffed men.
Leaning together
Headpiece filled with straw. Alas!
Our dried voices, when
We whisper together
Are quiet and meaningless
And wind in dry grass
Or rat's feet over broken glass
In our dry cellar
Shape without form, shade without colour
Paralysed force, gesture without motion.  

This is the condition of men in the waste land, where there are stones and no water. The poets under study also speak of the transitoriness of material world. Their study is of great relevance to the predicament of the modern world also. Eliot has written an essay on modernism and metaphysical aspects in Donne's metaphysical poetry. Donne set the metaphysical pattern by writing poems which are sharply opposed to the rich mellifluousness, the sense of human dignity, and the idealized view of sexual love, which had constituted a central tradition in Elizabethan poetry, especially in the writings of Spenser and the Petrarchan sonneteers. Instead, he wrote in diction and meter modeled on the rough give and take of actual speech, and usually organized his poems in the dramatic and rhetorical form of an urgent argument — with a reluctant mistress, or an intruding friend, or God, or Death, or with himself.  

The characteristics of the metaphysical poetry should be listed in brief.
1. Argumentative structure – It shows that the poems often engage in a debate or persuasive presentation, the poem is an intellectual exercise as well as or instead of an emotional effusion.

2. Dramatic and colloquial mode – The poem describes a dramatic event rather than being a reverie, a thought, or contemplation. Diction is simple and usually direct, inversion is limited. The verse is occasionally rough, like speech, rather than written in perfect meter.

3. Acute realism – The psychological analysis is revealed by the poem. The learned style of thinking and writing is seen there. The poetry is highly intellectual.38

An account of these characteristics forms a background for the study. The poems will be examined in the light of the above discussion. For the study of devotional poetry, it becomes essential to list and examine a few important definitions of religion.

1.5 Religion: A Brief Note

At the outset, it is necessary to discuss in brief the concept of the In fact it was associated with rituals and rites, prayers, songs and dance. Tukaram's poetry exhibits some of these characteristics. His abhangas are meant for performance in kirtana. Blake also wrote songs for singing.

The English word ‘religion’ is derived from the French word religion which in turn is derived from the Latin religio, which means beliefs about and reverence for the Gods. Apparently, the Latin root of religio is the verb religare, ‘to bind together’. The religion is a relationship between the religious devotee and that which is the object of religious devotion (God, Tao, Holy, etc.), a relationship that binds the two together. Secondarily, and very importantly, religion is also a binding together of all those who share the same or similar religious attitudes. In this way, religion gives rise to a community of devotees, a collectivity which is bound to devotion. Religion signifies the outward manifestation of an inner attitude, the expression of our being ‘linked’ to the divine which we have experienced deep at the centre of our being.

Thus, through religion, devotees are bound together with one another, forming a community of devotion; and they are, even more importantly, bound together with the ‘supreme reality’ to which they are devoted. The ‘here and now’ is joined to ‘the beyond’; the human to the superhuman; natural to the supernatural; the immanent to the transcendent; the secular and the profane to the holy, the sacred, and the divine;
the finite to the infinite; the temporal to the eternal; the mutable and the transient on the one hand to the immutable and the permanent on the other.

As there are many religious people in this world, there are many definitions of religion. Some of them are listed here

1. The *Concise Columbia Encyclopedia*: Religion . . . is a system of thought, feeling, and action shared by a group that gives members an object of devotion; a code of ethics governing personal and social conduct; a code of ethics governing personal and social conduct; and a frame of reference relating individuals to their group and the universe. Usually, religion concerns itself with what transcends the known, the natural, or the expected; it is an acknowledgment of the extraordinary, the mysterious, and the supernatural.

2. Webster's *New World College Dictionary* (4th ed.): Religion . . . (a) belief in a divine or superhuman power or powers to be obeyed and worshipped as the creator(s) and ruler(s) of the universe [and] (b) expression of such a belief in conduct and ritual

3. Karl Marx: "Religion is the sigh of the afflicted creature, the soul of a heartless world, as it is also the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is opium of the people . . . .[it is] the illusory sun which revolves around man as long as he does not revolve around himself."

4. Karl Rahner and Herbert Vorgrimler, from their *Theological Dictionary*: Religion in general . . . can be described as man's relations with the holy; subjective religion is veneration and adoration, which becomes objective religion when embodied in creed, word, actions (gestures, dance, ablutions, blessing, sacrifice, sacrificial meal), and law."

5. James Martineau: "Religion is the belief in an everlasting God, that is, in a Divine Mind and Will ruling the universe and holding moral relations with mankind."

Thus, man's relation with God constitutes spirituality which is the essence of religion. Different people have different modes of rituals or worship. Rituals, it would seem, are an indispensable part of religion and are often identified with it. These are the tools to keep alive the initial experience from which they emerge. The common and
typical components of a religious system are (1) a vision of reality, (2) a doctrine of salvation, (3) a doctrine of right conduct, (4) a doctrine of the ultimate destiny of all things, and (5) a delineation of the nature and membership of the religion’s community of devotion. Next come points that establish the links between poetry and religion bringing out some important aspects related to spirituality and mysticism.

1.5.1. Poetry and Religion

Mysticism and spiritualism are closely related to poetry. They are the products of religion. Poetry was born in religion. The scriptures were written in verse or poetic form. Poetry and Religion (inclined to both spirituality and mysticism) belong to those realms of a human consciousness which are beyond the purview of scientific enquiry. Millions and millions of people believe that they do not live by bread alone but by the word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The word establishes a rapport, a communion between God and man. Poetry and religion thus enable the individual human being to free himself/herself from the tyranny of continuous anxiety caused by the dignity. Avidya (non-learning), kama (desire) and karma (action), leading to ceaseless strife arising out of an ignorance of the Ultimate Truth. Poetry and religion, in their different journeys, pave the way towards spiritual liberation.

Pantheism i.e. the presence of the Divine in nature is perceived both in religion and poetry. Transcendentalism is the common ground shared by both. The self or atman which permeates all things is common to both. Thus, the individual self is seen as part of the universal self. The union of the one with the other is the essence of all religions. This essence concerns all existence, all creation; and love is the supreme expression of that essence, a bond that unites all.

Spiritual experience begins at the moment of apprehending that there is a ‘beyond’, that the nature of the Ultimate Reality is a great mystery and hence difficult to acquiesce. Human beings, through the medium of language, aspire to reach the source of this mystery. There is something miraculous about it. The language falls short and hence its special use in poetry, myth and religion. All these three streams attempt to discover, in their different ways, what lies within and without man’s self.
1.5.2 Nature of Poetry: Spiritual and Mystic

When the spirit speaks in its own language, in its own name or entity, we have what is called spiritual poetry. When the spirit speaks in the idealistic or philosophical strain, we have mystic poetry. Authenticity is its high water-mark, both in terms of thought and language.

Mysticism expresses itself mostly in allegorical or symbolic terms; at times, paradoxes are used – to resolve the contradictions. Sometimes, personification is used as the best mode of its expression.

The religious poet usually seeks to tone down or cover up the mundane life; tentative as it is, he does not know how to transcend it totally. The two strategies that he employs are –
1. A strong thought content coloured by metaphysical element, and
2. A strong symbolism going the occult way.

Donne takes up the first recourse, Blake the second. And the alchemy of these two processes transforms the merely religious experience into the mystical experience. The truly spiritual poet, whether it is Dante or Blake, or Jnanesvar or Tukaram, is in possession of something higher than the mere religious consciousness.

The mystic gives us the magic of the infinite, giving it in spiritual terms both verbally and conceptually. What is of utmost importance is giving expression to something that is ineffable. For example, the Upanisada gives us a glimpse into what the spiritual consciousness constitutes – a high degree of originality, pristine purity and perfection in the highest sense of that word. Essential simplicity characterizes spiritual poetry whether it is Blake’s or Tukaram’s. But behind the apparent simplicity of language and thought is hidden its complexity, and its subtlety, too.

Blake had this wonderful gift of transmuting the baser metal of mundane experience into the gold of a deep mystic and spiritual experience.

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear!
O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!
(emphasis added) (Milton, p.95)
An allegorical structure has been transfused here into a living and burning symbolism of an inner world. In the above lines, Blake uses the figure of speech 'personification'. Parallel to the above lines are Tukaram's verses, in which the figure of speech used is 'illustration' (drishtant):

Don't leave food, don't go to forest,
Remember Narayana always, in all walks of life,
A child is not a load on the shoulder of the mother,
There are different feelings in different minds,
Don't get engrossed in enjoyment,
Don't get lost in renouncement;
God's body is touched and withdrawn.
Tuka says don't ask again and again—
There is no other advice beyond this.

(emphasis added) (Tukaram's Poems, Prabhakar Machwe, 713)

The emphasized portions of the lines from Blake and Tukaram speak volumes of the great spiritual virtue called 'equanimity of mind' which obliquely implies 'purification' and 'remembrance' that is repetition of God's name (namasmaran) aimed at achieving 'the purity of heart'. (Chap.III, 3.2.1)

For the mystic, as for an artist, ultimate reality is personal: the inward turn is always there. Both the mystic and the poetic exercises demand self-denial for the pursuit of the calling. There is the concentration followed by passivity also. Both of them 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. Passivity, which implies self-surrender, a sort of "disinterestedness" is indispensable, a pre-condition for both artistic and mystical experiences and exercises.

What the austerities are to the mystics, alienation and isolation are to the artists. For prophetic visions, one should have concentration and contemplation upon, devotion to, and communion with God for a union with the Universal Spirit. Blake, it is reported, wrote the poem Milton from immediate dictation in a state of mystical ecstasy. If Blake is a mystic or visionary poet, Tukaram is also a saint-poet. Both have lived a life of self-denial and creativity that implies enlightenment and liberation of the individual life. Withdrawal into oneself is a common feature of both the mystical and the creative experiences. In Dante's view, "Art is the grandchild of God". It is the
product of the artist and the artist is hidden in man. Religious or spiritual feeling evokes awe and humility. The artist, unlike the mystic, pours his religious feeling for reverence into the world, not into himself. For the artist, work is worship, a religious service; for the mystic the longing for perfection is rather aesthetic leading to supreme joy.

The religious individual with skill in writing (e.g. Blake or Hopkins) or the poet with mystical sensitivity (e.g. Tennyson or Browning in English or Jnanesvar or Tukaram in Marathi) uncovers the creative principle at the depth of the mystical. The joy of the discovery is common to both the mystic and the poet. There cannot be great art without self-surrender or that 'extinction of personality' Eliot so highly speaks of. Self-denial may, then, be seen as a mode of active passivity. That is the only and prime condition of submission.

So, sometimes the active is passive and the passive is active. Heraclitus rightly states: "The road up and the road down are the same". What Eckermann says of Goethe, we can very well say of Tukaram and Blake as well: "Genius does not struggle to reach the heights, genius soars". According to G.V. Tulpule this road is not straight but it is full of ups and downs. A devotee travels with patience and uses his greatest efforts to reach the destination. Both the poets, Tukaram and Blake travelled the same path.

The mysticism of God's union, despite its ineffability, is most often described in the Christian literature. In the Asian literature also, a mystic is shown as holding a communion with Nature or Universal Spirit or God. God here is Absolute, Infinite, and Eternal. He is super-sensual and super-rational. The One is the personal God in concretized human form — may be 'Viththal' for Tukaram and 'Jesus' for Blake — and the Other is His devotee. If the One is impersonal, it is the Absolute as in the Advaita of Hindu philosophy or Unitarianism of Christianity. Thus, it is interestingly found that the mystic leaves the world and the artist returns to it. So, we see that art, like mystical experience, achieves truth in perceptual immediacy. Both the experiences — creative and mystical — are ineffable. But ineffability is a psychological fact, not a limitation of language. Religion is replete with images, symbols, and metaphors. With respect to religious mysticism, God is looked upon as the father or mother, the lover or beloved, the bridegroom or bride. There are a number of verses to this effect both in Tukaram and Blake, which will be dwelt upon at length in the course of the study. The poetry of these two poets has mystical structure and texture.
So, while studying mysticism in religious poetry it is important to discuss mystical texture of religion and poetry. The miraculous manifests itself in many ways: Yearly harvest, the sower, and his seed, the jawar crops standing in the field, the bread made from flour, the fire going up and the water going down, the mystery of the wind that blows and gathers into the storm, the breeze that remains unseen but felt. These seem to embody and exemplify great and abiding truth about nature or the universe. The phenomena or events evoke a good deal of thought and feeling mingled with each other. They represent a certain attitude which, though it is ambiguous and mysterious, lies at the heart of mysticism. There is nothing trivial or commonplace, nothing unimportant or useless in this world. The world can be perceived and visualized sometimes as heaven and sometimes as infinity or eternity. Blake's poetry reveals his mystical attitude. ("Auguries of Innocence")

A true mystic experiences unity in the midst of diversity at the centre of all existence. True mysticism implies an experience and a life of the world beyond senses. It exposes the limitation or inadequacy of the reason to apprehend the spiritual reality which is, in Thomas Patmore's view, "incommunicable to those who have not experienced it like the odour of a violet to those who have never smelt it." A mystic experience consummates into the supreme adventure of the soul. Indescribable though it is, the great ancient Greek philosopher Plotinus describes it in his matchless words by calling it "the flight of the alone to the alone."

The practical mystic has a fund of imagination which helps him acquire the direct knowledge of truth. This truth is absolute like God. That is why he becomes godlike, merging his soul into the divine soul. Blake sees the divine form in humanity. He sings:

> Then every man of every clime,
> That prays in his distress,
> Prays to the human form divine
> Love Mercy Pity Peace.

("The Divine Image", Songs of Experience)

Surprisingly, same expressions are found in Tukaram's abhangas.

> I burnt the seed itself
> And pop it went .
> Now I have gone beyond
Life and death

What space can enclose my form?
My body itself is God.
(S.T., p.235)

Whether it is Blake or Tukaram, he is in possession of a great soul. Each has his invisible flight of imagination, whose product is the volumes of poetry permeated by mystical thought. As a result, quite a substantial part of their poetry is steeped in mysticism. Humanity is not wholly blind to the existence of God. One can glimpse, if not share, the experience of that great universal spirit through the reading of their verses. Mysticism is akin to poetry in imparting to us the knowledge of truth and beauty, the twin principles of life governed by divinity. There is something ambiguously philosophical about mysticism and poetry. The mystic has a direct contact with the supreme reality; the poet encounters it rather obliquely; that is why we have heard Shakespeare say so: Tongues in trees, books in running brooks/ Sermons in stones, and good in everything.

Both, the mystic and the poet share the same unique transcendental feeling. Needless to add that mystical strain underlies the thought of most of our great poets, the sages or the saint-poets. (Chap. II, 2.6.1)

A mystic-poet need not necessarily be a metaphysician who is interested in seeking more the beginnings or the causes of the things than their ends. The mystic, on the other hand, has a firm conviction that he knows the end of things and that all nature is leading up to a union with the universal one. Both the English and the Indians have a marked tendency towards mysticism; it is a part of their innate nature. Plotinus, Plato’s disciple, lays down the theoretical foundation of mysticism. There is a lot of mysticism in Blake, Wordsworth, W.B. Yeats, etc. Blake is aware of the role of imagination in cultivating the mystical feeling. For him, ‘the lamb’ is the symbol of innocence and ‘the tiger’ that of fearful symmetry. For Wordsworth, both contemplation and meditation are important, for they help him discover that man is a part of nature, representing the universal spirit – the beauty and the joy associated with it. For W. B. Yeats, “Byzantium” symbolizes the land of imagination, poetry and philosophy. He has visions of ‘the Golden Bird, taking bodily form’. In a Godless world, he sees: “Things fall apart and the centre cannot hold”. That is the condition of
the universe and the predicament of man. In Indian context also, mysticism seems to go on forever from the beginnings of the *Vedic* age to the present times, from the *Vedic* verses to J. Krishnmurthi. He addresses:

In thee alone is the God, for there is no other God,
Thou art the God that all religions and nations worship
In thee alone are joy, ecstasy, power and strength.\(^{43}\)

The *bhakti* cult in Maharashtra and elsewhere represents a rich Indian mystical tradition. A mystical vision necessitates the cleansing of the inner life, the purgation of soul, giving us a glimpse of the rose garden, the Eden or the paradise. God lives in an abode on the mount Olympus where we have come from and where we return to. We are a part and parcel of the Divine Presence. The Bible reminds us of our great heritage: From dust thou comest,/To dust thou returnest. The dust represents (a) the earth, one of the four elements constituting the universe, (b) the creation, and (c) the creator, that is, God. It is said that mystic truths can neither age nor die; they are eternal; they are infinite.

Nature is the reservoir of all that is good, beautiful and true. All the avenues of sensation are opened up in our approach to nature. Nature is the embodiment of God here. Love, beauty, wisdom and devotion are all well-trodden paths to the One, the Almighty. We see the intense feeling of divinity made manifest in Nature. Great poetry is always steeped in the mystic vision of its author. A great poet, be it Valmiki or Homer, is mostly a poet-seer crystallizing his poetic vision in immortal lines. Mysticism is deeply rooted in the great oriental or occidental cultures and religions. The *Upanisadas* tell us the secret that the soul or spiritual consciousness is the only source of true knowledge. The soul is the ‘seer’ or the ‘knower’ that acts like a great “I” in the centre of man’s being while approaching reality. Following is a good example of greater ‘soul’ of how a small ‘I’ becomes a great ‘I’ i.e. the soul of wisdom. See, how it is made clear in the lines below.

I heard the song of *Vinaveda* and I knew that I am *nitya*, the soul of eternity, I am *suddha*, the soul of purity, I am *Buddha*, the soul of wisdom, I am *mukta*, emancipation. I dwell in the universe of *Nirvan*.\(^{44}\)
The great soul, in Hindu mind, is the Brahman (or for the Buddhist mind it is “nirvana”), the universal soul, from which the individual soul springs and into which it merges ultimately. So, the soul is regarded as immortal and eternal. There is a dichotomy between the soul and the matter. The former is indestructible and the latter destructible. The matter belongs to the material world as opposed to the spiritual world and is a great illusion. That is why the eastern mystic abhors all that is material; he bends all his faculties on realizing God, the supreme reality through his spiritual consciousness.

In Greek mysticism, much of Plato’s thought is mystical in essence. According to him, the philosophic mind is usually motivated by mystical considerations. Mysticism and philosophy are seen as akin to each other. A mystic is compared by Plato to a dog that is angry with the stranger but happy with his friend. Familiarity breeds akinness, it brings affection, which leads to love and affection. This love or affection, through devotion, establishes identity with God. Tukaram has also written many such abhangas in which he calls himself a dog of God. Here is an example:

Dogs are possessive
About their own place
Tuka won’t let
Anyone near
Except
In the company
Of God.
(S.T., p.100)

The soul has a yearning to join itself to the universal spirit. Even Socrates, Plato’s teacher, who is almost like a prophet, shows us the path along which the soul must travel. He points to the steps of the ladder, the soul should climb in order to attain to its union with the divine. Caroline F. E. Spurgeon\(^{45}\) says it, quite justifiably: “From beauty of form and body, we rise to beauty of mind and spirit, and so to the beauty of God Himself.”

Mysticism has two aspects: practical and speculative. Plato is the pioneer of speculative mysticism in Europe. Plotinus follows in the footsteps of his master but adds the practical to the speculative. Plotinus, an Egyptian by birth, is perhaps the
most profound exponent of mysticism and has attained to the ecstatic union with the One. In his view, "God is not external to anyone, but is present in all things." He thinks that our life is discordant because of our ignorance of the indwelling of God. The fact is that we do not know ourselves and also that the way home to God lies within ourselves. The soul has its energy, not outside but round a centre which is within ourselves. God is found within and around by every mystic. The mystic experiences the merging into holiness of God. He sees the things with an altered vision. The Punjabi mystic Puran Singh sings —

My steps are unsteady with joy!
I fall, I rise, I sink and soar in Him.
The rain of Nectar floods my heart and melts my mind away
in holiness of God,
Enraptured thus and with His sight I see all things are divine
and fair.
Glory! Glory! Everywhere.46

Mysticism implies that the whole universe is one vast organism and the heart of God which lies at the centre of it is the source of all life. Even Emerson speaks of ‘the over-soul’ of the universe, which is akin to Plotinus’ ‘over-mind’ of the universe. It is a link, a rapport between man and God. According to Plotinus, the individual souls merge into this world soul and they partake of its nature. Its nature is triple:

1. the animal or sensual soul, closely bound to the body;
2. the logically reasoning human soul, bound to brain; and
3. the intellectual soul, which is one with the divine mind from whence it comes and of which it is an image.47

The individual soul, during its worldly existence, (which is, in Blake’s terminology, the ‘world of experience’) forgets its divine origin; it is steeped in the joys and the pleasures of the earthly life. It thus becomes oblivious of its true nature. So, the most important goal of individual life is first to know oneself and then to know God. Thus, the individual soul merges with the universal soul and paves way for the unity of creation.

The mind is illumined, when it achieves the highest unity which can be subsumed as the integration/concentration of all the faculties — will, intellect, and feeling — upon God. There is a desire on the part of man to lead a unitive life, a life of
contemplation, arousing the intense desire of the soul for a union with God. A mystic has the experience of it, a journey home, a supreme adventure, an ascent to the One. Such a kind of mystic experience is ineffable, that is indescribable and inexplicable. It is a state beyond words, a vision of an ecstasy. God embodies both the individual soul and the universal soul; there is nothing between them; the two become One, the universal soul without body aspiring for the bliss in the heaven itself.

The comparison of the western mysticism with the eastern mysticism also sheds light on the difference between the two. Eastern thought centres round the pure self-consciousness; it seeks to annihilate the flesh by denying its reality; it looks within and gains enlightenment. Christianity, on the other hand, is centred on the extraneous doctrine of the Incarnation, in the mystery of God, the Father revealing Himself in human form. So, in Christianity, human body, human love and relationship become sanctified. All these are looked upon as a means of revelation of the divine. In consequence, a Christian mystic does not direct his thoughts just in words but turns them also outwards and upwards to the Father who loves him and to the Son who dies for Him. Thus, the western mystical thought rests on a kind of symbolism, which, with all its sacredness, stands for all that is human — human love, human intellect, etc. To the eastern mystic all that is human, whether flesh or body or intellect, is an obstruction on the path towards the realization of God, whereas to the western mystic, it is the very means of spiritual ascent. For the eastern mystic asserts: “I am a Brahman”; the western mystic, on the other hand, believes: “He who sees the infinite in all things sees God.” In short, the mystical literature whether of India or of England deals with the inner life and is, in the main, of religious or devotional nature. It dwells on the inner workings of the individual soul with its progressive march of purgation and contemplation/meditation towards an ecstatic union with the universal soul through the media of devotion and knowledge. There is love in the mind of the mystic that kindles beauty that further leads to the ecstasy of the soul reminding it of its divine origin. Renunciation leads to devotion and devotion to love and love to beauty and joy, ecstasy. These are all the stages of ascent traversed by the mystic who becomes ultimately one with God. This discussion will be of great help while tracing the different paths trodden by the poets, Tukaram and Blake. They have used poetry as a form of expression to give vent to their experience of unity.
1.5.3 Mystical Approach to Poetry

Mysticism is the intuitive perception of the essential unity of all things and beings of the world. It will be traced how Tukaram and Blake experienced this unity and how they gave outlet to this blissful experience. The lines from Tukaram’s *abhanga* are taken here for illustration:

1. Says Tuka, I serve with the certainty
   The God isn’t other than me.
   *(S.T., p. 153)*

2. The main message is absolutely clear:
   This whole world is God.
   *(S.T., p. 169)*

These lines can be paralleled in Blake as indicated in the following extract:

All Human Forms identified even Tree Metal Earth and Stone.
Human Forms identified, living going forth and returning wearied
Into the Planetary lives of Years Months Days and Hours reposing
And then Awaking into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality.
*(Jerusalem, 258)*

Bertrand Russell\(^{48}\) justifiably opines: “One of the most convincing aspects of the mystic illumination is the apparent revelation of the oneness of all things, giving rise to pantheism in religion and to monism in philosophy.” The mystic realizes that all is in each and each is in all and also that God is in all and that all is in God.

Lord Krishna in the verse 30 of the 6th chapter of the *Bhagvad Geeta* assures:
“He who sees me everywhere and sees all in me, I am not lost to him, nor is he lost to me.” Tukaram also joins him by saying that wherever he goes God is with him. Blake also sees God everywhere, in the smallest cause and the greatest effect. No mystical experience is possible without a plenitude of final emotion – all turned to the experience of God. Spinoza also states that emotions must be transcendent in an intellectual love of God. And that is a true sign of mystical life. In his book, titled *Eastern Religion and Western Thought*, Radhakrishnan writes about the affective aspect of the mystic experience, saying: “A sense of rapture is a frequent accompaniment of mystic states, but it by no means implies a disintegration of the
self. To be rapt is not to pass beyond one's self but to be intensely one's self, not to lose self-consciousness but to be greatly conscious".49

The devotion which aims at the attainment of the Supreme Being is an ordinary form of devotion; it is not the highest manifestation of devotion characterized as love; the real devotion is of the nature of peace, joy, and blessedness leading the devotee from separation to the blissful union with the Supreme Being. In Bergson's words, "Divine love is not a thing of God: it is God Himself." This love for divinity and humanity is frequently projected by mystic poets.

Now, let us enumerate here some of the most important salient features are enlisted here of mystical literature. According to Makarand Paranjape50, they are as follows:

1. Simplicity — Mystical literature is often readable; very rarely it is vague or obscure. It is simple and spontaneous. It makes one think and feel also.
2. Sweetness — Mystical literature is not only simple but sweet also. Mellifluousness characterizes it. The emotive tone of mystical writing rivals with that of lyrical poetry.
3. Efficacy — The most crucial test of its power is its efficacy. It has its desired effect i.e. rousing piety and sublimity of mind. In short, it is inspiring and enlightening — on the other hand it arouses one's curiosity leading to spiritual awareness; it has its cathartic effect on the troubled and agonized mind; it brings moral ethical rectitude, peace and harmony. A mystic can never be a fanatical, prejudiced or intolerant like the so-called religious person. His is a genuine faith, never fake or superfluous. Spiritual awareness is the key to mysticism that aims at reaching the ever-changing and the ever-renewing Divine Reality or the Absolute.

It is an attempt to identify some points of comparison between the Indian views on bhakti and the Christian concept of devotion. Both the perspectives — the Hindu and the Christian — on devotion are committed to a personalized God and religion. That is why mystical experience — direct and immediate awareness without any mediation — is given primacy. To apprehend the Ultimate Reality, not rationally but emotionally, rather intuitively, is central to both the Hindu and the Christian mystics.

With the primacy accorded to the felt experience, we have in both the systems an assertion of the individual. In the bhakti tradition, the poet-saints — unlike the impersonal Vedic seers — put their own signatures to whatever they articulated. As a
result we have the tag line, bearing their individual names, associated with their verses for example, Tukaram, Kabir, Meera, etc. In the western tradition, we have distinct mystical approaches associated with such revered names as St. Augustine, St. John of the Cross, Teresa of Avila, etc. represented in the present study by Blake. The Acharya tradition in Hinduism is analogous to the Papal tradition in Christianity – both representing by their respective spiritual figure heads.

One more significant point of comparison is the varying attitude towards the outer and the inner. In the words of Rabindranath Tagore,\textsuperscript{51} “True spirituality ... is calmly balanced in strength, in the co-relation of the within and the without.” The neglect of the one has caused the imbalanced growth of the other – aberration of a very serious order in culture. Thus, the secular and the sacred are often allowed to go separately resulting into what Eliot calls ‘dissociation of sensibility’, but in a different context.

Protest is implicit in both the movements – in the Varkari sect and so also in the Protestant one – and also in both the poets under study. It will be discussed in detail in the third chapter. Both of them have attempted to free religion from the clutches of ritualism, formalism, and priest-craft. Both the sects believe in democracy, pluralism, and inclusiveness. Both the cults seek to democratize the layman's accessibility to spiritual truth, offering salvation to one and all irrespective of caste, creed, religion, or sex. Both the cults lay emphasis on God’s grace and also on man's action: but God’s will is given primacy over the individual will. Chaitanya, or Kabir, or Tukaram may be compared to Martin Luther, St. Thomas Beckett, St. John and other religious rebels. Blake in upholding protest as a means of revolution favours a change for the better. The point of revolt or rebellion as a part of protest will be discussed in detail in the third chapter. (3.3)

Finally, the emergence of a vernacular language as a vehicle of religious hymns and songs is a point of comparison. Jnanesvar wrote in Marathi, Dante in Italian – both used the vernacular languages of the folks, and this goes counter to the great classical tradition. The devotional verses are always in the folk languages. Tukaram’s \textit{abhangas} in Marathi, \textit{Das Sahitya} in Kannad, Kabir’s \textit{dohas} in Hindi, Nanak’s \textit{sabad} in Gurumukhi (Punjabi), Verman’s verses in Telugu, so on and so forth. Surprisingly enough, the King James’ version of the Bible is also in people’s English. Likewise, Blake, too, is also seen writing in simple colloquial English. Later on this trend led William Wordsworth to propose a new theory of poetry which gave
prominence to the language of the rustics or common people in poetry.

The poetry of the bhakti movement all over India finds its best expression in language, be it Hindi or Marathi or Gujarati or any other language. According to M. Sivaramkrishna,52 “Language is both a trap and a mode of release... the relation between the word and its referent is not always arbitrary or conventional.” Obviously, Saussurean linguistics, too, has its limitations. There are areas where the word is God’s Word that is truth, Absolute Truth. It will be interesting to examine how the poets, Tukaram and Blake, talked about this truth in their poems.

Words may be seen as images, as symbols signifying some meaning that is the vishaya, the subject-matter, the thematic. A Kabir doha may, therefore, be seen as a typical cluster of intricately structured images. In one of his poems, the poet says:

Speech is priceless,
If you speak with knowledge.
Weigh it in the scales of the heart
Before it comes from the mind.53

Language is specific when it is used to communicate supreme knowledge and this knowledge comes only through experience. So, both knowledge and experience are of vital importance as much in poetry as in religion. Whether it is the doha of Kabir, the abhanga of Tukaram or the kirtana of Tyagraj or the Vachana of the Kannad poets. We have to face the dual challenge of language — as a trap and as a release. The words are important, why? Tukaram answers:

I pine
For the truth
It’s therefore I worry
About words
(S. T., p. 20)

Blake also tells the importance of “word”:

Hear the voice of the Bard!
Who Present, Past, & Future sees
Whose ears have heard,
The Holy Word,
That walk’d among the ancient trees.
(“Introduction”, Experience)
Kabir deals with devotion in terms of paradoxical images, for God's existence is described thus:

A flame without a lamp,
A lamp without a flame,
An unsounded sound that sounds without end.54

Tukaram compares his knowledge of God to a treasure and the words to a mirror. The lines go thus:

My knowledge of you
Is reproduced
From
Learnt words:
It's like
A treasure
Extracted
From a mirror.
(S. T., p. 21)

In the "Everlasting Gospel", Blake emphasizes, transcending his usual paradoxical language, the inherent divinity of man. God, speaking to Christ as the highest idol of humanity, says:

If thou humblest thyself,
Thou humblest me.
Thou also dwellest in Eternity,
Thou art a man:
God is no more
Thy own humanity learns to adore,
For that is my Spirit of Life.
(Poetical Sketches, p. 253)

From this perspective, one is justified in stating that the language of the saint-poet Tukaram and the mystic poet Blake has two significant dimensions: it integrates the experience and it transcends the experience. The point will be discussed at length in the forthcoming chapters. (Chap. IV, 4.6)

The vision is important, but the experience of the vision and its expression are perhaps more important. There is a quest culminating in discovery. There is resistance
first followed by revolt and climaxed then into submission, a total surrender. The truth about God is thus experienced and expressed in words — "The best words in the best order." The words constitute a mode of supplication, a medium of prayer. The quest ends with the discovery leading to all-encompassing, benign love which is redemptive in nature. This all-encompassing love of both the poets will be highlighted through their poetry in the fourth chapter.

1.6 Culture: A Brief Note

In this study, it is desirable to select the definitions and to clarify the meaning of culture. For the comparative analysis of mysticism and spiritualism, it is necessary to define the term culture. Culture is a highly complicated expression as there are variations in the use of it in different contexts.

The definition of culture given in the dictionary is: The customs, beliefs, art, way of life and social organization of a particular country or group. It is the socially inherited assemblage of practices and beliefs that determines the texture of our lives.55

The word 'culture' is used with several different connotations. Its meaning changes with the changing time. The different definitions are given below.

1. Culture refers to the cumulative deposit of knowledge, experience, beliefs, values, attitudes, meanings, hierarchies religion, notions of time, roles, spatial relations, concepts of the universe, and material objects and possessions acquired by a group of people in the course of generations through individual and group striving. Culture is the system of knowledge shared by a relatively large group of people.

2. Culture is communication, communication is culture.

3. Culture is cultivated behaviours; that is the totality of a person’s learned, accumulated experience which is socially transmitted, or more briefly, behaviour through social learning.56

The discussion of culture and its representation in British society is very much in keeping with the spirit of modern times. Raymond Williams defines 'culture' as follows:

... , a whole way of life. The common meanings; to mean the arts and learning. The special processes of discovery and creative effort.
Culture is manifested in human artifacts and activities, lifestyle, food, painting and sculpture, theatre and film.\textsuperscript{57}

Culture is thus present in every society and in every mind. In this way culture is 'a way of life'. It is a 'structure of feelings' which is very important in poetry. It is an all-inclusive, all embracing concept. It includes entire range of customs, beliefs, institutions, artifacts and practices that make up human life. Culture is the best that has been thought and said and incorporates the study of perfection. Mysticism and spiritualism have the reflection of religion and culture. The poetry of Saint Tukaram and William Blake are the products of their respective religion and culture. So it becomes important to see how they have reflected mysticism and spiritualism in their works, in their verses. The next part of this study introduces us to the new concept of comparative cultural studies.

1.6.1 Comparative Cultural Studies

As mentioned earlier the comparative method is used for the study. Yet it has been further strengthened by combining the features of cultural studies. The study of culture is performed in a contextual framework with the use of interdisciplinary methods and approaches.

This study will reveal the features of comparative cultural studies. It aims at studying culture and its various products and processes. Stephen Totosy de Zepetnek defines comparative cultural studies as follows:

\ldots, a field of study where selected tenets of the discipline of comparative literature are merged with selected tenets of the field of cultural studies meaning that the study of culture and culture products -- including but not restricted to literature, communication, media, art, etc. is performed in a contextual and relational construction and with a plurality of methods and approaches, inter-disciplinary, and if and when required, including team work.\textsuperscript{58}

The above quotation makes it clear that the principles of comparative literature and cultural studies are merged in one another. The poems of both the poets under study reveal the distinct identity of their culture and religion. Tukaram's poems reveal Indian culture and Blake's that of English culture. For example:

I look for You
O Keshava
With the wistful eyes
Of a married daughter
Leaving her parental home.
(S.T., p. 79)

Thus, the event of Indian tradition that is of a newly married daughter leaving her parental home is used as an image to express the intensity of pining for God by Tukaram.

In a poem Blake sings:

'T was on a Holy Thursday their innocent faces clean
The children walking two and two in red and blue and green
Grey headed beadles walk'd before with wands as white as snow
Till into the high dome of Paul's they like Thames waters flow

O what a multitude they seemed these flowers of London town
Seated in companies they sit with radiance all their own
The hum of multitudes was there but multitudes of lambs
Thousands of little boys and girls raising their innocent hands.

("Holy Thursday", Innocence)

Thus, the entire culture of England is reflected in the "innocent faces" of the children, "the lambs, boys, girls as indicated in above poem. Such aspects of culture will be revealed in the course of this study, wherever necessary.

Totosy has suggested a ten-point preliminary outline of comparative cultural studies. He introduces the beginnings of a theoretical framework for studying literature and culture. He believes that culture and literature in the shape of comparative cultural studies enhances scholarship. His major ideas are summarized in the following points:

1. Comparative cultural studies define 'culture' as all the human activities resulted in artistic production. These poets life is portrayed from different philosophical, psychological, sociological and political aspects.

2. Comparative cultural studies move between cultures, languages, literatures and disciplines. The cultures, languages and literatures of the poets' countries are projected by their poems.
3. These studies need in-depth grounding in more than one language and culture. Therefore, a comparatist has to get acquainted with more than one culture.

4. It focuses on the study of culture in relation to other forms of human expression and activities. It is beyond the scope of the present work to go into details of these aspects. However, the cultural values of India and England will be presented through mysticism and spiritualism.

5. It puts emphasis on the evidence-based as well as theoretical research and analysis. The sample texts are used to illustrate the relevant points.

6. It is kept in mind that this kind of study demands the application of various kinds of approaches. These are intra-disciplinary, inter-disciplinary and multi-disciplinary methodologies.

7. It examines the contemporary paradox of globalization versus localization. However, these poets have merged the universal and the particular into one organic whole.

8. It deals with the troubled intellectual and institutional situation of the humanities. It seeks to study the literary texts in the context of cultural norms and values.

The method of comparative literature brings out similarities as well as differences among different cultural ideologies. Linguistics, social, political, ethnic, religious, etc. are the components of culture of which poetry is the product. The poetry of two poets will be illustrated on the basis of these cultural factors and determinants. The poets are the representatives of their culture and religion, the one is of Hindu and other of Christian. Hence it is essential to describe Hindu view and Christian view in our approach to mysticism.

1.6.2 Hindu View of Mysticism

In the beginning religion was associated with the fear of natural forces such as thundering and lightning. Spiritualism and mysticism are deeply rooted in Hindu religion. India is the land of religious people. Mysticism is the finest outcome of religion. A kind of insight is given into religion by mystical experience. Getting free from change and from the cycle of life and death is a march of words “Moksha”, the highest freedom. By achieving the state of changeless permanence, it aims at extinction of all desires in this life. A strong awareness of the sorrowful quality of the human condition which is uncommon is displayed by Hindu spirituality. In Hinduism,
there is a variety of religious doctrines but still, a similar, inward-directed mystical tendency warrants brief discussion in a few paragraphs.

*Vedic* religion lays stress on sacrifice and rite, but these are remote from the current usage of the term “mysticism”. For actual sacrifice, forms of meditation are important. There is hardly any similarity between concentration and contemplation. Nevertheless, they initiate an interiorization that Hinduism would pursue further than any other religion. The term *Brahman* originally meant the sacred power present in ritual and sacrifice, gradually came to mean a single, abstractly conceived Absolute. The spiritualizing and the unifying tendencies are merged in the idea of an inner soul (*atman*), the Absolute at the heart of all reality to which only the mind has access. In the *Katha Upanisad*, it is given thus:

The inner Soul of all things, the One Controller,
who makes his one form manifold –
The wise who perceive Him as standing in oneself.
They, and no others, have eternal happiness!59

This is a mystical path for liberation. The desires, oppositions, and limitations of individual selfhood are the obstacles in this path but, to overcome these, one requires ascetical training and mental discipline.

As a man, when in the embrace of a beloved wife, knows nothing within or without; so, this person, when in the embrace of the intelligent Soul, knows nothing within or without.”60

Such expressions are found in Tukaram’s poetry frequently. For example,

I have untied the knot where it was fastened the hardest;
I am free to embrace Him as long as I wish.

(*S.T.*, p.245)

It is the non-dualist (*advaita*) monism that would become dominant in classical Hinduism. Later is the highest state of consciousness anticipated by the *Mandukya Upanisad*. The topmost place is the place of the deeper self (*atman*) that is discovered with *Brahman* (*sat-chit-anand*) itself. The deeper self does not tolerate any type of subject-object opposition. There is elimination of personal consciousness, freedom from *maya* (the world) that is the illusion and achievement of a “mystical” state.

*Bhagvad Geeta* gives the very important message to mankind that a person
should act with total detachment from the fruits of his deed. An active person can
detect the presence of Brahman through equanimity of emotions, purity of heart and
holy indifference. A vision of God, is possible in mystical work. One can seek God in
the ordinary way of piety instead of self-concentration. This advice of Lord Krishna
was taken up by bhakti movement on its spiritual path. After getting united with God
the whole world becomes a family for a mystic. The same feeling is experienced by
Tukaram, when he sings:

Blend with all
You’ll join
A global family.
(ST., p. 177)

The same experience is given expression with slight differences by different mystics.
The poets have cosmic consciousness which is expressed in the following lines by
Paramhansa Yogananda:

For I am the Life,
And my body is the universe.
Smaller am I than all little things made --
I can hide behind a speck of electron --
And bigger am I than the sphere in which the cosmos
breathes.61

Mystical union is the ecstatic, transforming experience of the union of man’s soul
with the supreme soul, i.e. reality. This experience is unmediated. This union is the
supreme goal of mystics. As we have different religious traditions, there are different
ways of mystical union but everywhere this union is heightened by the sense of
release, ineffable joy, and peace of mind. That is why the synonyms for the union are:
beatific vision, ecstasy, deification, Samadhi, sanctification, bliss, vision face-to-face,
nirvana, and so on. A great Indian mystic J. Krishnamurti expresses his experience of
mystical union in the following lines:

In thee I behold all things.
I myself, am God.62

The journey of the mystic is undertaken on a strenuous, long path which first
leads to the awareness of the purgation of the soul then on to meditation and
contemplation towards the final goal of illumination. The union of the divine object with the subject is the supreme stage of mystical experience. It can be achieved by passive way, meaning a total receptivity and openness towards the divine. The rewarding stage of human destiny is mystical union. Here, the Christian concept of grace offers a useful insight. In the Upanisad, the term Brahman refers to the whole universe, as distinguished from atman, or the individual soul, a golden, self-luminous being which makes the body sleep but is itself eternally awake. Mystical union is the unification of atman and Brahman, which is the end of all duality and result of supreme impassivity. Thus, in Sankara’s view this union is understood not as a mere combination but as a real identity.

All these characteristics can be contrasted with the scientific Buddhist views. Buddhism is atheistic and skeptical about the soul. It knows an analog on of mystical union in the series of trances that led Buddha to nirvana, a state without time that is ‘unborn, unmade, unbecome, and incomposite,’ and, so, unifying and unified. Buddha is called Tathagat i.e. the enlightened, the perfect one having unlimited insight. Nirvana is nonlogical, indescribable, essence. It is realized by absolute desirelessness, the complete extinction of all sorrows and pleasures. It is the detachment from sympathy and antipathy. The highest degree of self-control and supra-intellectual wisdom is nirvana which is not fathomable by common comprehension. Sadanand More compares Tukaram with Buddha. According to him, “Whether it is Buddha or Tukaram, transformation of heart was possible due to the compassion which was the core of their heart.”

1.6.3 Christian View of Mysticism

A mystic’s firm conviction is: Unity lies at the root of all things. He believes that there is the spark of the divine in man, that man has his share of Godliness, and that man is capable of knowing God through this Godlike part of his own nature, i.e. his soul or spirit. The spirit is always ready to apprehend the spiritual. For him, to disregard the spirit amounts to trusting the reason. In his view, it is an act of stupidity. In order to know a thing spiritually, one has to just become it. One does not then just talk about it or look at it, one becomes it. So, in order to know what God is, we must be in love of God. In short, we must be Godlike and in the ultimate analysis, God Himself. A man who loves God is a devotee, he is devoted to God, the object of his devotion is God, the Divine Presence. The devotee may be seen as a subject in love
of the object called God. The subject is ultimately identified with the object; they become integrated. So, the aim of a mystic's life is to become like God and thereby to attain to union with the divine. So, for him, life is a continual progress, a ceaseless journey towards the supreme truth. For that, he becomes a seeker after a vision, a kind of spiritual vista ever expanding and charged with profounder meaning. Once, we stood on this side and God on the other and there was the schism between the two. Now the position is not so, the gap is bridged by love of God that is devotion. Now, God and the devotee have become one in the act of perceiving Him through love and devotion. Blake's following lines express the same idea or feeling:

They behold Multitude or Expanding they behold as one
As One Man all the universal family and that one Man
They call Jesus the Christ and they in him and he in them
Live in Perfect harmony in Eden the land of life.

(The Four Zoas, 311)

Though mystics of the world reveal the same idea, their ways are different. It will be further explained and elaborated in the forthcoming chapters.

The sense of unity between man and God compels the mystic to think, on the Platonic line that all knowledge is recollection. This belief impels you to have faith in pre-existence and post-existence and, by, extension in continual, external life. There is no beginning and there is no end. The body perishes, but not the soul, the soul is immortal. Neither fire nor water nor any weapons can destroy it. The soul is thus, indestructible, or imperishable, and, therefore, it is immortal. Mystic knowledge is not, therefore, bound by reason or logic; it goes beyond that. It is the world, not of cognition but of feeling. It is not the physical/material or sensual knowledge of the world; it is rather intuitive, inner knowledge issued not from the normal, human cerebral vortex but from the great, superhuman mystic self/spirit to merge into the Divine Presence, that is God Himself.

A mystic is one who feels, sees, and is wholly convinced of the supreme reality. He lives in the world of the blind. He is alone to see the light, sometimes the glory of the light and tries his best to convey, however waveringly and hazily, the vision of the Almighty. Thus, he commands the audience of the people who are not totally blind. There is something like 'a mystic germ', in the words of William James, that impels him to respond to the message. There is an inner desire in the
mind awakened to go 'beyond', to have the glimpse of 'the known'. In the absence of these visionary moments, there is 'a great void' in one's life.

Even an ordinary, normal person, a layman, is endowed with some spiritual power, a kind of transcendental feeling (James Joyce calls it 'epiphany'): such a mystic experience is associated with seer's 'cosmic consciousness', ecstasy or vision. Great teachers, philosophers, and poets (and also the lovers and the lunatics as enlisted by Shakespeare) bear testimony to the miraculous experience. One is reminded of what Wordsworth says in his poetic masterpiece, "Tintern Abbey":

That serene and blessed mood in which...
...we are laid asleep
In body, and become a living soul.
While with an eye made quiet by the power
of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
we see into the life of things.\(^6^5\)

It is love and peace, joy and harmony which help us approach the vision of God on rare occasions.

Caroline F. E. Spurgeon\(^6^6\) puts it very succinctly: "The mystic reverses the ordinary methods of reasoning: he must believe before he can know." That is why the mystic is seen seeking after not material knowledge but spiritual knowledge. He does not require any intellectual method to prove his experience. His is the realm of imagination. He is not concerned with this world; but with the other world. He does not describe but expresses his unique experience in symbolic terms. He seeks his resort in the vales and caves of symbolism, like Wordsworth does in his countryside.

A mystic believes in the great principle of unity of things, i.e. universal unity. For him, human love is symbolic of divine love as much as the sprouting leaves symbolic of life and the falling leaves of death. Thus, symbolism is an aid for him: it enables him to catch a reflection of truth. For example, bread loses itself into food which converts itself into blood. Thus, bread becomes blood. Similarly, the devotee's love of God transforms itself into devotion. The two become One – God and the devotee, and they become inseparable. What is important in mysticism is the mystic's temperament or his disposition. His spirit makes him say things which throw more light than volumes of sermons. The greatest truth about mysticism is its belief in unity or integrity of the Divine Presence.
Christianity has not equated its ideal of holiness with the attainment of mystical states like it is in some other world religions. It is mystical impulse that has pushed it in its origin and determined much of its later development. Jesus is the son of God whose public life begins with a prayer and a vision. He applies Isaiah’s messianic words to himself: “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me.” He promises the same spirit to all the people who pray him. According to John’s Gospel, the two important currents of Christian mysticism have their source: the theology of divine image that calls the Christian to conformity, and the theology of intimate relation of universal love with God.

A neoplatonist identifies God with the Nameless One. The mystical ascent moves towards that nameless One. The mystical ascent’s principle is the primordial union of the soul with God. According to Dionysius’ ecstatic mystical theology, soul can get united with God only by losing herself in the recesses of the divine super-essence.

Johannes Eckhart is one of the most powerful mystical Christian theologians of the medieval times. His vision is the entire theology and as such belongs to metaphysics of being. Being and God are the same and inseparable. Hence, God is totally dwelling in the creature as its very being, while totally transcending it as the only being. In this way, God is just like the creature; yet, lacking any of its determinants, He is totally unlike it.

All western religions have produced mystics of love. Divine transcendence stopped to imply a negation of the created world. It is not a mere coincident that most of the love mystics become ‘Saints’. Those, who could learn to love, without possessiveness, by heroic virtue could become saints. Mysticism of any type demands mental purity.

The eminent Christian mystic, John of the Cross, describes the process of spiritualism as an increasing purification, a ‘night’ starting with senses that spreads to understanding, and concludes in the total darkness of union with God. Most of the mystics emphasize the initiation implying ‘detachment’ (renunciation) as the first stage, they call the second and the third stages as ‘illumination’ and ‘union’. It is important to note that all these three stages are there in the spiritual journeys of both Tukaram and Blake. For the people of this tradition, the mystical life is equal to a state of passive prayer that excludes the ability to meditate. Though all do not agree with John of Cross’s mystical life’s beginning but all stress the need for total passivity.
with respect to the divine operation. Teresa of Avila states the prayer of quiet is the goal of spiritual life.

According to John of Cross, the soul has thirst for God, the soul has a great desire, longing for this union. This union is a mutual possession by which the soul is made divine. The key to Christian mysticism is the gift of love. The increasing spiritualization is required by this beatific vision. It rises from earthly contemplation to the higher states illuminated by supernatural charity. Christian mystical union is the permanent union of a human nature with the divine. Deification is the revelation of the personal God in man who is illuminated with grace, flooded with the Holy Spirit, and brightened with the divine light. For becoming like God one needs God’s grace. In the book VII of the Confession, Augustine provides a glimpse of the ineffability of mystical experience: it is a contemplation of truth and light, and he who knows it knows eternity; but love alone can approach this light, for understanding is absolutely inferior to this divine subject, impotent to comprehend God.

Dionysius describes the mystical union which is similar to Hindu mysticism (dealt with separately in the following section). In it, soul reaches the purest and the deepest truths. The pure and devout soul can experience divine darkness; for it, intellect must be left behind. Mystical union transcends the intelligible world. Seeing God’s face is nothing but possessing God and having the same knowledge that God has of Himself.

Eckhart believed in the direct, intuitive knowledge of God. For him, mystical union is “the experimental birth of the World in the Soul,” signified by the light of divine glory. Two metaphysical concepts describing the path to the mystical union are—

1. The state of detachment or separation from all worldly worries (Abgeschiehenheit).
2. The subtlest state in mystical awareness, the letting go of everything, including God – the soul’s supreme release (Gelassenheit).

In all forms of mysticism, this symbolism of ascension is central to the description of the stages preparing the ground for the mystical union.

In spite of the almost universal claim to the ineffability of mystical union, both literary and theological descriptions of it abound in the world’s sacred and poetic writings. With this mystical union, the mystic achieves psychological rejuvenation, philosophical insight, moral innovation, and artistic creativity. It will be analyzed in the forthcoming chapters how these themes reappear in the poetry of the poets.
selected for comparison. The following sections are devoted to the life-sketches of the two poets.

1.7 The Two Poets

The two poets under study are from different nations and centuries. For the comparison of their poetry it is essential to study the biography of them which influenced their writings and thoughts. What follows here is the biographical note on each of the poets under study.

1.7.1 Saint Tukaram: A Life Sketch

Tukaram was a great Marathi poet. He was a remarkable poet of *varkari* or *bhakti* cult. There are controversies and mysteries about the life and work of Saint Tukaram. Different scholars have different opinions about it. His verses tell us about him. As Dilip Chitre says:

> What little we know of his life is a reconstruction from his own autobiographical poems, the contemporary poetess Bahinabai’s memoirs in verse, and the later biographer of Marathi poet-saints, Mahipati’s account. The rest is all folklore, though it cannot be dismissed on those grounds alone.\(^{69}\)

Tukaram was born in 1608, at Dehu, near Pune, and vanished without a trace in 1650. His complete name was Tukaram Bolhoba Ambile (More). He had two wives, Rukhumabai and Jijabai. When he was hardly twenty, there was a dire famine in Maharashtra, in which he lost his wife Rukhumabai, son Santu and a little later his parents also. He suffered a great loss in his trade. Then, he gave himself up to the life of contemplation of God in his twenties and on *Magh Shuddha* 10, Thursday, he was initiated by Babaji in a dream. Thus, he spent early years of his adolescence in worldly life (sansara) and the later years of his manhood in spiritual life (parmartha). It is during this phase of his life that Tukaram became a spiritual seeker, who turned into a devotee first and a saint later. With the passage of years, his spiritual teaching began to sprout first, flower then, and fructify at last. He visited Bhambanatha and Bhandara and other places to live a life of solitude for the time being. The restlessness of mind led him to go on a spiritual quest after he was initiated by his *guru* Babaji in a dream with the mantra “Ram-Krishna-Hari”. It is here and now he experienced ‘the
dark night of the soul'. And the agonies of aching heart that he poured forth into his *abhanga*s, constituted the devotional verses 'the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings'. He recited these *abhanga*s in his *kirtana*s. It is through these *kirtana*s that he preached and practiced his spiritual life. Thus, with his soul purged and purified, Tukaram had his vision of God. He became Godlike and ultimately God Himself in an atmosphere of spiritual bliss and beatitude. The story has it that Tukaram ascended to heaven with his body – an event comparable only to the ascension of Christ. That is why there is no *Samadhi* of Tukaram (like Namdeva's or Jnanesvar's) – either at Dehu or any other place. For Tukaram, even death dies, for he is liberated, body and soul by virtue of God's grace. That is why his very body becomes divine in the process of contemplation. The spiritual greatness of Tukaram is accepted by everyone. Gail Omvedt writes of Tukaram:

... the seventeenth – century writer who represented the culmination of three centuries of a radical *bhakti* (devotional) movement that had swept over northern and western India, bringing together women and men of low caste to proclaim equality and reject Brahmanic ritualism and caste hierarchy.70

In this way Tukaram started the movement of devotion. From spiritual point of view, the greatest influence on Tukaram was Babaji's. That is a long, spiritual lineage tracing from Raghav Chaitanya to Jnandeva. The other spiritual influences were those of Namdeva, Kabir and Eknath. In Pangarkar's view, Jnandeva's *Jnanesvari*, Eknatha's *Bhagvat*, and Namdeva's *Abhangas* moulded Tukaram's spiritual life. He had a spiritual mission coming as a legacy from Namdeva because of which he was inclined to live a life of mystical experience, a kind of knowledge that transcends all the five senses. He lived a life of solitude; reciting the *mantra*, he resigned his mind and surrendered his will to God – renouncing all earthly things. He had set his heart on realizing God. Seeing God face-to-face was the be–all and the end–all of his spiritual existence. Tukaram had a distinguished galaxy of disciples around him. In Dilip Chitre's words,

Tukaram had many contemporary followers. According to the *Varkari* pilgrims' tradition, fourteen accompanists supported Tukaram whenever he sang in public. Manuscripts attributed to some of these
are among the chief sources from which the present editions of Tukaram’s collected poetry derive.\textsuperscript{71}

All the followers of Tukaram belonged to the \textit{bhakti} cult, worshipped Vithoba and visited Pandharpur on pilgrimage. They had profound admiration for him, their mentor. Among them were two great disciples Santaji Teli and Gangaram Mavala, who wrote out his \textit{abhängas}. Similarly, Rameshwar Bhatta, Mambaji, and Sivaba Kasar, who earlier were his great enemies, came to be his disciples in the later years of Tukaram’s life. Mahadi Pant Kulkarni was also a very honest and straightforward disciple of Tukaram. Niloba, perhaps the greatest of Tukaram’s disciples, was initiated in his dream by Tukaram himself. Bahinabai, a female member of the \textit{bhakti} cult, also became his disciple and composed verses in praise of her \textit{Guru}.

Tukaram’s \textit{abhängas} together, originally written about 6000 and odd, and the survived ones above 4000 and odd, are called \textit{Gatha}, a collection of devotional poems. All these throw a flood of light on their author’s spiritual career and teaching. We have a glimpse here, in these \textit{abhängas}, of Tukaram, the saint, the seeker, and the visionary.

Tukaram in the early phase of his poetic career was put to a great humiliation and harassment by the people of the upper caste, particularly the Brahmins. Rameshwar Bhatta, a learned Brahmin, who did not know what spiritual life means persecuted Tukaram. Once, someone threw boiling water on Tukaram while he was going along the street. Tukaram was in a state of agony. When he said that his body was burning as though in fire, he invoked God to run to his succor and pour cold water on his body for relief. God alone, he felt, could save his devotee in his distress playing the role of a mother (abh. 3956). Another \textit{abhanga} 3957 also refers to the same incident, narrating “If the mind is pure, even the enemies become friends. Neither tigers nor serpents can do any harm. Poison then becomes nectar and a blow a help. The course of moral action is open converting the sorrow into a cause of happiness. The flames of fire will then become cool. It is true that there is God, immanent reigning in the hearts of all.” Rameshwar Bhatta gave up his animus against Tukaram and ultimately became his disciple. The story of Tukaram’s spiritual transformation finds its best expression in the \textit{abh.} 4144, in which he says: “However learned a man may be and however well-versed he is in the \textit{Vedas}, he can never equal Tukaram. Neither those who read the \textit{Puranas} nor those who study the \textit{Bhagvad
Geeta can come to know the secret of spiritual life. The Brahmins have been spoiled by their arrogance and superiority as a result of their caste consciousness. Tukaram, though a grocer, loved God and used words as sweet as nectar while expounding the real meaning of the Vedas.” In devotion, knowledge, and dispassionateness, there was none who could equal him. Great saints lived around him but none could surpass him in spiritual achievement.

There were critical times in the later phase of Tukaram’s poetical career. The learned Brahmins conspired to mar the poetical reputation of Tukaram. He was made, by a decree, to throw all his abhangas into the river Indrayani. Tukaram felt sad at the event. Disheartened though he was, he invoked God to restore his writings. There was a great ruffle in his heart, he went on a fast for thirteen days and felt happy at the sight of the abhangas coming to the surface saved from the destructive plunge. Tukaram’s prayer in the abhanga 1731 to God Viththal on this occasion goes thus: "You hide behind a stone image, but I'll commit suicide and hold you responsible for it. I was awaiting an assurance for you, but in vain. So, I’ll now destroy my life.” With his soul greatly agonized, he could see God face-to-face in his youthful image. By God’s grace, Tukaram was saved – in body and spirit. And spiritually, he felt happy, blessed and comfortable.

Towards the end of his poetic career, Tukaram reached the summit of his spiritual life. He came to be known as a great saint in the bhakti cult and the saintly lineage that begins with Jnanesvar. Day in and day out, he used to perform kirtanas and spread the glory of God’s Name. He lived in a world of spiritual bliss and God descended on the earth to take him to heaven. Tukaram visualized the scene and said thus: “See, God comes there with the conch and the disc in his hands. The eagle, his favourite messenger, comes with ruffled pinions, and says to me ‘fear not, fear not’. The luster of the gems in his crown leaves the sun fed into insignificance. God has a form blue like the sky and is infinitely handsome. He has four hands and down his neck hangs the necklace called vaijayanti. The luster of the cloth on his body fills the atmosphere around with light. Tuka is happy to see that the very heaven has descended into his house”. In the abhanga 3616: “I go to heaven. Compassion is on me from all of you. Tender my supplication to all. The God, Pandurang, is standing up for a long time and is calling me to “Vaikunth” i.e. heaven. Finally, God has come to take me away and Tuka disappears into heaven with his body.” Metaphorically speaking, it means the very physical existence of Tukaram is transformed into the
spiritual from the mundane earth in his ascent to the heaven.

His poetry is in oral tradition. His poems are so deeply rooted and spread in the life of common people that they frequently use the quotes from his verses. He gave the message of humanity. His preaching is universal and it is applicable and useful in any age. Tukaram is glorified by A.H. Salunkhe:

Tukaram! He has projected various experiences of human life in his powerful words. He is the genius, a God of creative words. He is a devotee who has given a new frame of reference — morality and impartiality — to religion. He has used all his powers to wrestle against cultural and social injustice. He is the apostle — a harmonious combination of a genius, a devotee and a wrestler — the poet Tukaram, the saint Tukaram, the rebel Tukaram so to say.72

1.7.2 William Blake: A Life Sketch

William Blake was a famous English poet, painter, and engraver and printmaker. Largely unrecognized during his lifetime, he is now considered a seminal figure in the history of both poetry and visual arts of the Romantic Age. Kathleen Raine writes about Blake in the following words:

William Blake might almost be called a poet of the twentieth century; for it was not until 1927 that Geoffrey Keynes’s None-such edition made his complete writings available to the nation for whom he wrote. Blake has been called a mystic; a word which suggests an other-worldly contemplative. But Blake’s genius was not of that kind. Blake was England’s single prophet, ‘one who speaks for God’, addressing himself to the English nation on matters of public concern.73

Blake was born in London on 28th November 1757. Born of a hosier, he had no formal education and became an engraver. He had three brothers and one sister. He was the third son of his parents. He was the only one to achieve distinction among the siblings. His father, James, was a hosier. His mother, Catherine, taught him at home. The Blakes were Dissenters, and were believed to have belonged to the Moravian Church. The Bible was an early and profound influence on him and would remain a source of inspiration throughout his life.74 Married to Catherine in young age, he fathered no children. His wife helped him in work and proved a perfect wife. He lived
Like Tukaram, William Blake was not merely a poet and an artist but a mystic also. Born in a humble family, he came to be one of the greatest poets, England has ever produced. His creative faculty found its best expression even in his early poetry—Poetical Sketches, Songs of Innocence, Songs of Innocence and of Experience, Showing the Two Contrary States of the Human Soul. The mystical strain perceived in the early poems becomes more conspicuous and more mature in the later works among which can be enlisted The Book of Thel (1789), The Marriage of Heaven and Hell (1793), Visions of the Daughters of Albion (1793), Urizen (1794), and The Book of Los (1795), etc.

In his teens, he started his career as an engraver and painter. The earliest volume of his poetry Poetical Sketches (1783) was written between the ages of 12 and 20. At the age of fifteen he was apprenticed to an engraver. He had his apprenticeship as a craftsman in the workshop of a master engraver James Basire. He not only wrote poetry but also illustrated it.

William Blake was brought up in Swendenborgeon family inclined to the hazier parts of religion. He was a voracious reader and composed his imaginative treatises on Gnosticism and Druidism. He had immense faith in Supreme Creative Will. A definite Oriental dualism of good and evil is an essential feature of Gnosticism. From this cult of Gnosticism, Blake derived his doctrine of emanations of cosmic female form, which are perceived by the corresponding Spectres for male forms. It was Blake who made Jesus walk upon England’s pleasant pastures; as a result, he regarded himself not only as a simple singer but as a seer and a prophet also.

As George Sampson writes:

Blake regarded himself not as a simple singer but as a seer, when, however, he left the region of pure song in which the poets had been the directors of his natural instincts, he wandered precariously into a new world of expression without the guidance either of formal education or of good models.75

Blake is sometimes obscure simply, because he did not know how to make himself clear, and not because he was unusually profound. Qualified for religious service, he remains one of the most astonishing of men, a true mystic to whom the eternal was natural and the human indistinguishable from the divine. There was the
influence of the Gothic art upon the adolescent youth. He tried to imitate but the
imitations were not more than experiments to Blake himself; but in the eyes of his
friends, there were performances. The *Poetical Sketches*, though shabby in part, is an
astonishing little volume of poetry. Some of the poems are failures but others are pure
lyrics not only original in substance but daring in form and exquisite in quality. There
are gems, perfect poems in the anthology, for example, "To The Evening Star", "How
Sweet I Rom'd From Field To Field", "My Silks and Fine Array", and "To the
Muses", with its memorable last stanza.

Then, there are volumes called *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*
put together showing the contrary states of the human soul. "The Little Girl Lost" of the *Innocence* volume is found in the *Experience* volume. She is lost because of her
learning. She is recovered and redeemed because of the new awareness. The contrast
between the pair of "Chimney Sweeper" poems is almost unbearable. In the first
"Holy Thursday", we have the sweetness of charity; in the second; the bitter crime of
poverty. The poems have genuine evocations of the spirit of childhood and they are
real songs. With the passage of time in the second or the third phase of his poetic
journey, for Blake, the symbol was to be more important than the song. The idyllic
gentleness of its imagery and a happy blending of simplicity and formalism
characterize the spontaneity of the *Songs of Innocence and of Experience*. There is
extension of Blake's "Experience" poems towards, rather their culmination into,
"Vision" in the later and more mature poems. Blake's masterpiece of mystical poetry
*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* opens as an unrhymed lyric, then proceeds in prose
aphorisms long and short, rich in iconoclastic paradox. Here, we have the first fruit of
Blake's Gnostic reading, in which he found the dualism of Good and Evil, with evil as
the work of Just God of the Law and good as the work of the liberal Creative Spirit.
So, *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* seems to introduce Blake as the revolutionary
mystic assailing the false dualism of the accepted religion. That is why active evil is
seen as better than passive good. Love joined to Energy is "The Marriage of Heaven
and Hell." There is another important collection of songs by Blake titled *Visions of
the Daughters of Albion*. In it, we meet Urizen, God of the restrictive Law. He is the
source of all repressive force.

So far Blake's writings preserve spontaneity, confidence and strength that
enrich the beauty of the *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Now is heard a more somber
note of his poem. The explicit heart-touching poetry of his early songs gives place to
the troubled utterance of prophecy. One notices a great change in spirit from the *Songs of Innocence* to the *Songs of Experience*. If his early poetry dwells on perfect natural simplicity, his later poems dwell on the most mature complexity of his visions. To see vision is not enough; the poet must be able to say what he saw. Blake was fiercely honest: he tried hard to find truth for himself in the forms of his own mythology and gave expression to his conviction in a sublime dialect of his own creation. It conceals rather than reveals minute particulars of his highly individualized scriptural text. Here, we hear the voice of a major poet but only intermittently in the long soliloquies of a minor poem. He wrote a poem titled *Milton* (1804-1815), to show that Milton was a poet who belonged to the devil’s party without knowing it and, hence, could not justify his glorification (may be for us it is humanization) of Satan in spite the poetic beauty of his verses.

As a man of character, Blake had a lot of intellectual honesty and integrity. For him, imagination was man’s highest faculty. The heart of Blake’s philosophy is to be sought in what he said about man. Like Tukaram he was deeply religious and his morality, in the highest sense of that word, knew no bounds. He had a vision particularly in his mature ripened years in which Christ became identified with his art and humanity. Blake was known to his readers for his aphorisms which represent perhaps the most illuminating revelation of his mind like Tukaram’s epigrams with their proverbial ring.

Unlike Tukaram, Blake suffered from obscurity during his time. His contemporaries did not know him. He became famous only after the publication of his biography written by Alexander Gilchrist in 1863 and reprinted under the supervision of D.G. Rossetti in 1880. Since then he gained full recognition of his poetic talent and artistic genius — his prowess and originality. He had the honour of having his bronze bust being placed in the poet’s corner of the Westminster Abbey (1957) as a part of the bicentenary celebration of his birth, like Tukaram’s arch at Dehu to celebrate his 300 years of his birth anniversary.

Blake being a romantic thinker and theorist hates classical tenets in art and criticism. In the preface to *Milton*, he states:

> We do not want either Greek or Roman models.
> If we are but just and true to our own imagination. (95)
George Richmond gives the following account of Blake's death in a letter to Samuel Palmer:

He died...in a most glorious manner. He said He was going to that country he had all his life wished to see and expressed himself happy, hoping for salvation through Jesus Christ—just before he died his countenance became fair. His eyes brightened and he burst out singing of the things he saw in Heaven.\(^77\)

In this way the life of a great poet ends. This is how Tukaram also bade goodbye to the world. Both the poets' works were posthumously edited and published in their well-known standard format. The similarities and differences in the life and death of both the poets will be compared in the next chapter.

1.7.3 Saint Tukaram and William Blake as Spiritual and Mystic Poets.

Tukaram is a *kunabi* (farmer), a man of humble living but we see him ultimately drawn quite close to God. Tukaram's poetic life is a journey of his soul. It is the history of his spiritual life with all the trials and tribulations and heart-rending experiences. At last, there fell a beam of light on his body and soul so that he could realize God and become one with Him. Thus, we come across the three phases of his life in the series of *abhanga*s he wrote on numerous occasions. They are as follows:

In the first phase of his life, we see Tukaram as a spiritual aspirant. At the beginning of his spiritual career, he seems to withdraw himself from the worldly life. He is determined to gain spiritual knowledge and start on a journey towards sainthood on the path of *bhakti* or devotion. Here, we have a kind of self-assurance on the one hand and a kind of positive affirmation of his faith in God on the other. This is the 'Initiation' phase. In the second phase of his life, we hear the heart-rending cries of Tukaram in the quest of God. Here, the tone is one of frustration and pessimism. The mind has taken a negative turn and there is 'the dark night of the soul'. Tukaram is seen now warring with his own self. This is the 'Progression' phase.

Then, in the final phase of his life, he seems to realize God and have the union with Him. Now, there is a renewal of faith, a new affirmation. We have a mature Tukaram, a beloved devotee of God on his final spiritual journey to the heaven with the whole of his 'being'. That is why we see that R.D. Ranade\(^78\) is justified in declaring: "There is a sort of a Hegelian dialectic in Tukaram's soul," that takes us
from “thesis to anti-thesis and from anti-thesis to synthesis.” Tukaram’s devotional mind (thesis), the conflict – outer and inner – therein (anti-thesis), and the final consummation of his devotion into his ascent to the Vaikunth signifies a happy end (synthesis) of that long drawn-out spiritual struggle for the Mukti i.e. freedom of soul from the trappings of the mundane existence. This is the final culminating phase.

All these abhangas reveal a high degree of religious depth and a wide range of practical wisdom. His teachings can be summed up in the broad tenets of the Varkari sect: to recognize and worship the divine in all objects of creation without any discrimination of caste, creed, religion, or sex. One should worship God Viththal as an incarnation of Vishnu as a principal deity. The sect believes in the oneness of God despite His several manifestations. A Varkari is a spiritual pilgrim, who follows the basic tenets shared by all religions. He practises truth and non-violence in thought, word and deed. He has to transcend passions, give up the feeling of doer-ship in action and achieve tranquillity of mind. He always lives in a state of detachment and feels compassion for the poor and the down-trodden and practises tolerance and forgiveness.

Tukaram’s abhangas are autobiographical in nature. They relate the story of his life to some secular and some religious experience and can help us trace his spiritual development, from Tukaram, the man to Tukaram, the Saint, through the medium of the world’s best devotional poetry in Marathi. The abhangas can be classified in terms of the poet-saint’s experience in the following manner:

1. Those that dwell on lapses and sins,
2. Those that shed light on the obstacle to the devotion to God on the path of spirituality,
3. Those that narrate the story of his renunciation,
4. Those that preach moral and spiritual discipline from the path to sainthood,
5. Those that are related to God’s relation to his devotees, and
6. Those that give a glimpse of God’s vision, his abode (vaikuntha) and his ascension to the heaven of bliss and beatitude.

Tukaram is the culminating point of the edifice of the bhakti cult of which Jnanesvar laid the foundation stone. He strengthens the Varkari cult by giving it a new spiritual awareness and revolutionary humanistic term. Self-realization gave spiritual momentum to devotion that transcended both monism and dualism and
revived the Bhagvad Dharma in Maharashtra.

Approaching Blake, we see that the pioneering poet’s mystical bent of mind is revealed in the Songs of Innocence and of Experience. But it finds full expression in The Book of Thel, The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, Milton, Jerusalem, etc. All the above phases are seen in the spiritual journey of Blake and his writings also. His mysticism may be traced particularly in his visions and prophetic books. By nature, the poet was profoundly spiritual—a great believer in the imaginative faculty. Somewhere he said: “One power alone makes a poem: Imagination, the Divine Vision.” For Blake, God and the Imagination are one; that is, God is the creative and spiritual power in man, and apart from man the idea of God has no meaning.

Blake was not a mere poet and painter; he was a visionary, a seer also. He lived in the world of dreams and visions, the world of soul and spirit, where he witnessed innocence and terror, the ‘lamb’ and the ‘tiger’.

Blake was deadly opposed to the divorce between imagination and reason. He has immense faith in man’s natural energy ‘Energy is eternal delight’, he says. He denies validity of ideas imposed by law, custom and convention. He declares that his vision is a vision of truth. Like Tukaram for his proverbs and maxims, Blake, too, is known for his aphorisms, for instance, “human imagination is the divine vision and fruition” or “He who sees the Infinite in all things, sees God”. (Likewise, Tukaram speaks of “Ananta”, the Endless One.) Inspiration is also a key word in Blake’s poetry. Blake, when inspired, sees the Divine Vision by means of his imagination. Energy and delight are the horses of his chariot. It is with the help of his ‘mind’s eye’ that he sees a new world of reality. This is how the imaginative experience of a poet-artist and a seer is of prime importance. In Blake’s view, the aim of a poem is not to please, or to offer rational instruction, but to reveal: to reveal what is given to him as true. Truth is his religion. For him, art is not just an expression of one’s personality but is something more than that—it is the representation of infinite, eternal truth. While reading Blake’s poetry, we see that his theory prevails over his poetical practice. More important than ratiocination is his artistic sensibility, his poetic vision. That is why his poetry displays a greater tilt towards romantic inclinations than towards metaphysical ones. However, his poetry is sometimes marred by the mystic’s practice of mingling imagery and dogmatism. But his painting and engraving reveal
his true artistic genius. Unlike in Tukaram, in Blake the artist is sometimes confounded with the seer and the prophet, however.

1.8 Research Methodology

The methodology adopted suits the comparative study undertaken. Generally speaking, it is a part of culture studies. The approach is critical, analytical, descriptive and explorative. In the logical treatment of the subject, both the deductive and inductive modes of thinking have been resorted to. It is an example of close textual study of two great poets bred in two diverse poetic traditions, cultures and religions. The hypothesis is that there are certain similarities and dissimilarities in the poems of the two poets with respect to spiritualism and mysticism.

1.8.1 Sources: Primary and Secondary

**Primary Sources** - The sources of the present study can be classified in two major groups: primary sources and secondary sources. The primary sources are those works which form the basis of the investigation to be undertaken. This study aims at tracing the spiritual and mystical journey in the poems of these two poets. The study of the related literature is an indispensable part of the research work. The primary sources are located in the complete poetical works of both the poets, Tukaram and Blake. There are various editions called *Gathas* of Tukaram’s *Abhangas*. Several versions of *Gathas* are used for this study. Tukaram’s poems are cumulatively called *Abhanga Gatha* which is partly available in English translation, in prose by Fraser and Marathe and in verse by Dilip Chitre, (besides Arun Kolatkar, Bhalchandra Nemade, Rabindranath Tagore too), respectively. The available translated versions are useful for this study. The poems with mystical, spiritual and religious elements are selected.

So far as Blake is concerned, the study centres on the critical scrutiny of his early collection *Poetical Sketches*, and the excellent *Songs of Innocence*, and *Songs of Experience* in the main, but his later works – major and mature – particularly *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell, Jerusalem, Visions of the Daughters of Albion, Milton*, etc. have been referred to, wherever and whenever necessary, in the course of discussion.

**Secondary Sources** – The secondary sources of the study may be traced to the numerous critical books and journals, dealing with mysticism and spiritualism, Tukaram and Blake in general as well as in comparative context. The poetry of the
two poets have been studied and commented upon from different points of views. Many other works and reference books also are consulted. Encyclopedia, Dictionaries, glossaries, Compendium, histories of literature and literary criticism, check lists, internet entries, newspapers, magazines, periodicals and other library materials have been studied in order to up-date the informative spectrum of these two poets and their works. Many research studies have been conducted on Tukaram in Marathi language they too have been taken into consideration. Marathi critics and commentators of Tukaram’s poetry also need a special mention in giving a shape to this work.

Both the primary and secondary sources have been listed to determine nature, method and scope of this research work. Many other critical works, articles, reviews, electronic media, etc. have been consulted, cited and referred to, wherever necessary.

The bibliography at the end of this thesis will document all these sources. The printed versions of poetry will be used for the study. The film, T.V., radio and all other versions are excluded in this research project. The use of electronic source like internet will be acknowledged wherever necessary.

1.8.2 Limitations of the Study

The present study is, of course, limited by the use of its methodology – techniques and strategies – adopted in investigation. The comparative method has immense possibilities as anything under or above the sun can be compared and contrasted with any other thing which may sound similar or dissimilar.

There are several aspects of both the poets which are left unexplored because of time constraint and limited financial resources. The thematic study is carried out with the help of critico-aesthetic terms and with a focus on the spiritual and the mystical elements.

It is true that the work of both the poets is vast but their poems which carry spiritual and mystical elements will be studied here. There will be perhaps occasional references to their other works like aphorisms/paintings of William Blake, whenever necessary. But the main focus will be on the comparative study of mysticism and spiritualism in their poetry.

Saint Tukaram’s poetry will be studied with the help of both original Marathi texts and their translations also. But the manuscripts and controversial documents will not be consulted here. There is a dispute about the total number of abhangas of
Tukaram. Besides, we do not have a single order of the *abhangas*. The versions of his poetry available in multimedia and performances will not be taken into consideration. The incomplete works of Blake, his paintings and sketches will not be analysed and studied. There may be scant occasions when the references will be made to painting and music keeping in view the demands of the context.

No critics will be interviewed. The criterion for the selection of the sample texts is their spiritual and/or mystical significance. These limitations, however, make the investigatory procedure pointed towards the treatment of the key concepts through the pre-determined approaches of critical inquiry.

1.8.3 Multiple Approaches

Critical approach is mainly comparative; it is historical and biographical also in some parts. It is intended to be an interdisciplinary culture study. So, multiple approaches will be used. That is why it touches at some points such areas of knowledge as sociology, economics, politics, literature, religion, philosophy, etc. The verses of these poets, Tukaram’s *abhangas* and Blake’s lyrics, are as much spiritual (and at times mystical also) as poetic. These approaches will help us to throw light on simplicity and spontaneity on the one hand and ambiguity and complexity on the other. Their poetry helps us tread along the path of spirituality leading ultimately into the perfect world of divinity in which God, Love, Freedom, and Truth reign supreme. Whether it is poetry or religion, the common ground is imagination, the inner eye, or creativity. The poetic is the spiritual, and vice versa, in the highest sense of these concepts. Both of them have something artistic about them. Both of them are vibrant with the same sweet harmony. For example, sublimity is a characteristic shared by both poetry and religion, apart from the visionary quality. What poetry is to mind, religion is to soul. Both of them have found the best expression in different times and climes. The difference, if there is any, is one of expression and not of substance as such. The cultural approach will help us analyze the religious themes and its different manifestations in the various creeds and cults. Moreover, the philosophical approach will demonstrate how essential unity lies in their similarity which is intrinsic. The language of soul, in whatever part of the world you go, is one in terms of its appeal and effect. Sociological approach is also used in this study to examine and explore the meaning of the poems from different religions and societies.

The broad area of this research is ‘philosophical poetry’, with theism at its
core, approached from two different religious and cultural traditions—oriental and occidental—with a greater number of similarities than a few dissimilarities. The study deals, by and large, with two vital aspects of life, the sacred and the profane, the spiritual and the mundane/secular, the supra-sensual and the empirical. The juxtaposition of the poems of Tukaram and Blake in terms of spiritualism and mysticism will bring out resemblances and differences in the two poets' approaches to God and His realization. The phases of their spiritual journey can be described thus: (1) Initiation, (2) Progression, and (3) Culmination/Fruition. Self-realization is God-realization. In brief, the paths are somewhat diverse, but the goal is the same. Multiple approaches will be used while comparing their spiritual lives and value systems.

1.8.4 The Plan of the Study

The research design is, as indicated earlier, one of the descriptive, explorative, and analytical type. The critical approach is one of close textual study of the poems—of course, keeping in view their spiritual and the mystical aspects. In the choice of the samples, (extracts from the poetry of both the poets) elective approach is adopted. Thus, the collected data are used, classified, analyzed, and interpreted. The observations and inferences confirm the hypothesis which has initiated the study.

The chapter scheme goes along the conceptual and the practical lines of the proposed framework. It incorporates the following chapters:

(I) Chapter One: Introduction

(II) Chapter Two: Initiation (Beginning)

(III) Chapter Three: Progression (Quest)

(IV) Chapter Four: Discovery (Revelation)

(V) Chapter Five: Conclusion

The first chapter is, of course, "Introduction". It includes the different sections and sub-sections such as aims and objectives, methodology, plan of study, sources, limitations, multiple approaches, etc. It also includes other important sections as background, comparative study, critique of spiritualism and mysticism, religion, culture, and life sketch of two poets.

The second chapter discusses the early poetry of both -- Tukaram and Blake. Tukaram's autobiographical abhangas with personal references to the events of his
life form the early part of his poetry will be discussed here. These may be paralleled by Blake’s early poems from the *Poetical Sketches* and a few others from *Songs*. Although the mystical note is conspicuously missing in the early poetry of both the poets, it is marked by a kind of naivety, simplicity, and spontaneity. Tukaram’s poetry is in the tradition of *bhakti* cult which was in vogue from the 13th to the 17th century in Maharashtra. The early *abhängas* give us a hint of how he was awakened to the state of spiritual consciousness. Blake’s poems in the *Poetical Sketches* reveal, by and large, his imitativeness: he imitated the Elizabethans like Spenser and Shakespeare and the metaphysical poets like Herbert and others. Milton also was his ideal of ideational and expressive modes of poetic craftsmanship. Mysticism and Spiritualism, though scarce in these verses, may be traced, more covertly than overtly, in the poetry of both the poets of getting inclined to or initiated into the spiritual fold. The literary, cultural, family backgrounds of the poets are traced here. Their childhood experiences, visions and dreams, spiritual awakening, journey from darkness to light, mystical consciousness, etc are the important points to be discussed here.

The third chapter deals with the middle phase of the poetical career of the two poets under study. Some of Tukaram’s *abhängas* and Blake’s *Songs of Innocence and of Experience* show us the progression of their spiritual journey. The conflict between the body and the soul, the mundane and the spiritual, the profane and the sacred, the commonplace, the trivial (or the ridiculous), and sublime, etc. is of prime importance here. Both the poets have undergone “the dark night of the soul” and come to see the beams of divine love. Tukaram and Blake are not mere poets but devotees. Though belonging to the different cultures, creeds and faiths, they tread along the same spiritual path which leads to the “kingdom of God”. There will be a comparison here of the two poets in terms of their poetic themes and modes of expression. Their spiritual practices, the rebel poets, contraries in their life, divine love and mercy, mystical experience are the notable things at this stage.

The fourth chapter is concerned with the later, more mature poems of each of the poets; Tukaram’s revelatory *abhängas* and Blake’s deeply perceptive spiritual writings in poetic prose throw light on their being seers, mystics or visionaries. Some of Tukaram’s *abhängas* describe the spiritual state of his “being” in existential terms. So is the case with Blake also. The ‘Innocence’ poems of Blake are in contrast with his ‘Experience’ poems; there is no returning here to the world of innocence, for the return journey is as tedious as go over towards the world of experience. By going
ahead, one explores the possibility of redemption, of reaching God, of self-realization. It is the world not of reason, but of faith, of Imagination – W.B.Yeats’s Byzantium or Tukaram’s *Vaikunth* or Blake’s Jerusalem or heaven. Vision of God brings “spiritual bliss”, the highest kind of joy to these two great mystic-poets of the two different religio-poetic traditions. In their view, God is Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient and the world of spirit is infinite and eternal. This chapter consists of the relation between God and man, the innovators of new myths, reaching the goal of self-fulfilment and poets’ mystical visions.

The *fifth* and the last chapter is, of course, “Conclusion”. It summarizes the most important observations and inferences of the study. The findings, though a few in number, are quite significant. The comparative evaluation of these great poets in terms of spiritualism and mysticism goes a long way to establish the principle of unity in all spheres of existence. So, it is a comparative study not only of the two great poets but of the two religions, cultures, and two great poetical as well as spiritual and/or mystical traditions. So, the relevance of the study is out of question.

Thus, to sum up, the study will lay stress on comparative analysis of two major poets relating to their spiritual growth and mystical understanding of life on individual and societal planes. In a way, it is a thematic as well as a cultural study. Contrapuntal understanding of different religions and cultures is the need of the time in the contemporary global situation. This primary study, it is hoped, will open up new vistas for further excavations and discoveries. So, this thesis is intended to be a part of culture study supplemented, wherever and whenever needed, by an interdisciplinary approach and critico-aesthetic perspective.
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