CHAPTER - II
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REQUISITES OF THE COMPARATIVE STUDIES: 
THE WHY AND THE HOW OF COMPARISON BETWEEN BASAVA AND TAGORE.

When different perspectives of reality and life are before us, we, all of us have to face sooner rather than later the real question of choosing the one rather than the other. How are we going to choose? It is here that a comparative study of the different perspectives becomes necessary. The criterion of accepting this rather than that approach can only be logical coherence combined with comprehensiveness and the depth of insight into reality and life. Any human quest is concerned with the truth of experience. As Amiya Dev puts it: "After all our ultimate commitment is not to literature or lore, but experience; and whatever fosters our understanding of experience, whether literature or lore or any other discourse is welcome to us." He further emphasizes that thematic studies are "legitimate domain of comparative studies" and that "illustrations will be taken from literature nearer home." Accordingly the theme of mysticism in Basava and Tagore is chosen for investigation in this thesis. This is all the more important in the Indian context because of its rich diversity of language, caste, creed, national movements, philosophy and religious bhakti movements. Man's all-round development is central. Both in the South and North of India man-God circuit is pivotal in producing great heights of bhakti movements such as Tamil Alwars, Kannada Virasaivas, Dasa literature and so on.

This study of comparing the mystic elements in the writings of Basava and Tagore has faith in the civilizing power of literature and religion insofar as both of them have sprung up from the same ancient continuing cultural ambience. These mystic poets in themselves belong to different times and places. The historical account of mystical experience in Basava and Tagore is
"temporally syncretic, i.e., the past and the present are simultaneous in it. Along with diachronies we can speak of an inner synchrony: Kalidasa (Basava sic) and Tagore, ..." ² It is a search for a coherent system or a grammar of their mystic utterances. If it is the way everybody else sees them then, there is no point in undertaking to write this thesis. But "It is we who engage in this activity, and comparing, needless to say, presupposes in-depth knowledge of the constituents compared." ³

This orientation of comparing is a legacy, which dogs us from our days of our examination questions asking us to compare, contrast or discuss. The stuff of experience, life, and human nature are one and the same all over the world. Accordingly the intuitive insights flashed upon the minds of mystic poets are the same. For example, passions, love, hatred, greed, Reason, Will and so on. But their articulation may take different mediums such as language, color, dance, music, myths, symbols, parables and so on. It is the task of the comparative literature theorist to discern the patterns and the generalizations. The criteria for judging the adequacy or otherwise, of the insights articulated in any of the mediums must have organic coherence.

Our aim in this investigation is to emphasize the similarities and differences between Basava and Tagore. Consequently such a comparison may improve a taste to overcome the narrowness of provincialism and relativism. This discipline of comparison is necessitated to counteract the notion of the autonomy of vernacular literatures, whatever the degree of success. A comparative study requires minimum two literatures, which have withstood the test of time. Such literatures articulate the greatness of experience in the form of the finest achievements of man. We have to transcend the confines of language and geographical limitations in order to understand the relationships between them. This comparative study "differs from the study of single literatures not in method, but in matter, attitude and..."
perspective. It (comparative literature) can go on extending its area of operation—its ultimate limit is the literatures of the whole world. Its strength and its weakness lie in its cosmopolitanism.”

But, to this day the study of comparative literature means comparative western literature only. That is why this study of comparing Basava and Tagore is undertaken in contrast to the western bias and European studies. This study is based on the principle of comparison of literatures and religions within the same cultural ambience. It must be as valid as western comparative literature. As Sisirkumar Das puts it: “whatever be the goal of comparative literature, it must have a terrafirma, a solid ground. Indian literatures, produced in Indian languages like Hindi or Tamil, (Kannada or Bengali) alone provide that solid ground to start with. Literature deals with the concrete, not with abstractions. It is born of language and yet it goes beyond language; it is nourished by a culture. Its meaning and significance comes out of its relation with that culture. Any attempt towards a literary cosmopolitanism neglecting the literature or literatures that are components of a cultural history is bound to turn into dilettantism.”

Therefore our study can only be the comparative study of the relations of the literatures of the Indian people only, since nothing else can be the basis of our literary study of the mystical element. Here it should not be taken to mean Chauvinism of vernacular literatures like Kannada or Bengali, or the linguistic patriotism. This is so because we have in India many languages, which have interacted and influenced in making transition from one to the other. It makes way in creating a new language such as Manipravala. So multilingualism of India is a check against linguistic chauvinism. Any sincere student of Indian literature must have to study other literatures and thus widen one’s own perspective. In other words such comparative studies have to be pursued with a new range and vision. The very fact of translations of one literature into the language of another, throws the challenge to any student of comparative studies. The historical circumstances also condition this effort.
This comparative study facilitates the cross fertilization of thoughts, beliefs and the practice of life. Consequently it leads to a deeper understanding and mutual enlightenment opening new horizons. Such comparative study is bound to disclose the merits and demerits of each in the light of the other and thus expose the dogma of self-sufficiency and the infallibility and the sense of superiority. This is so because no one people, however great a genius they may be has the monopoly of complete truth and knowledge about reality. A comparison of different literatures, by bringing them together on the plane of experience, is necessary for mutual understanding and inter-learning. This adds to the richness of our vision of things. Such an attempt may be conducive to bring about unity of outlook, which can bind the people into one community or nation. It leads to recognizing and respecting similarities and differences. The least it achieves is the scope for minimizing misunderstanding, misinterpretation and removal of suspicions and mutual acrimony. Furthermore it leads to the mutual appreciation of the cultural values highlighted in their perspective. A UNESCO project, in this respect, appeals to encourage and respect “the part that research workers play in this great field of mutual understanding.”6 It further holds out promises, practical in nature, for the future of mankind. It is in this context that the comparative study of Basava and Tagore is undertaken as a significant task for the promotion of our national integration. We are living in an interdependent modern world. In these days of speedy transport and instant communication, we cannot remain indifferent and isolated from each other. “To avoid misunderstanding, to bring home to others that our philosophy (Literature, Religion and Style of life) is as living as theirs, there would be no better way than comparison. The rationality of our systems and the presence in them of elements of universal interests can be best exhibited by this method. This would be useful not only in making others understand us, but also in finding out what is living and what is dead in our philosophy.”7
Modern life compels us to transcend the narrowness of outlook in the form of provincialism. It is impossible to remain immovably encased in the shell of our own abstractions. Transcending the narrowness of provincialism is an unfinished task in so far as our mental horizons are ever receding and ever widening. So any number of attempts at comparative studies is needed in our quest after truth. Basava and Tagore in their own way have expressed promptings of the human spirit. An impartial attitude free from our prejudices is necessary in order to appreciate the weight of their contributions being as close to experience as is possible. The investigator has to be open minded, truthful and at all costs avoiding furtive attempt at propaganda. In the task of any comparative study, “everyone must be honest with himself, not surrendering his faith, or softening down his convictions but outspoken and sincere, holding to what he believed to be the truth and ready to declare it, and yet maintaining a tolerant and open mind”. 8 A comparative study of this kind is bound to promote avenues of communication with peoples of different persuasions and bring about cordiality mutually. The influence of such a study on the lives of people, when effective may be compared to the expansion of ripples when a stone is thrown into a still pond. Such a cross fertilization of studies most likely produces an integral perspective. In our comparative study of Basava and Tagore provincialism of specialist studies is avoided by keeping to the universal elements from the perspective of non-specialists. In the literatures of Basava and Tagore there is congruence in the subject matter of spiritual fullness in so far as both of them have sprung up from out of common cultural ambience. Also such comparative study must naturally be cosmopolitan, rooted in basic experience the same for all. Frank J. Wranke writes “the study of roots is perhaps the base of our discipline, a discipline that should be concerned not merely with the delighted (and sometimes superficial) noting of similarities among text but also with the unavoidable
differences -of culture, of language itself - that we ignore only at the peril of sinking into the dreaded quagmire of dilettantism."\textsuperscript{9} Scholars should approach such comparative study equipped with a broader awareness that may enable to find new matters for research. Also one might find new texts for teaching so as to serve the purpose of the unity of the nation and its cultural aspirations. Such comparative attempts bring to our awareness great authors from smaller literatures of different nations. Consequently there is gain of valuable experiences facilitated by making translations of masterpieces from different languages possible. One must be cautious not to be hopelessly idealistic about the whole thing in so far as we may have to combat comparatist's proneness to provincialism.

As a preliminary, certain homogeneity in disciplinary outlook is necessary. The constituents of comparative study have to be diverse. It prefers the general to the particular. Francis Jost is quoted to say, 'Comparative literature represents a philosophy of letters, a new humanism. Its fundamental principle consists of the belief in the wholeness of the literary phenomenon, in the negation of national autarkies in cultural economics, and as a consequence in the necessity of a new axiology. "National literature" cannot constitute an intelligible field of study because of its arbitrarily limited perspective. International contextualism in literary history and criticism has become a law. Comparative literature represents more than an academic discipline. It is an overall view of literature, of the world of letters, a humanistic ecology, a literary Weltanschauung, a vision of the cultural universe, inclusive and comprehensive.... Comparative literature is the ineluctable result of general historical development."\textsuperscript{10} Its approach must tend to be universal. ' "Universal" is an unforgiving concept. It will not let us stop, for example, with "the whole western tradition" or, even with "all the major literatures." \textsuperscript{11} Students in Comparative Literatures have, moreover, had to become conversant with more than just any single critical school.
Hence we are comparing different literatures of writers like Basava and Tagore within the same national literatures in respect of "extra literary" concerns such as mystical element in their writings. It has a shared perspective that sees literary activity as involved in a complex web of cultural relations and value systems. Its role is to create a community of values. Clayton Koelb and Susan Noakes conclude their editorial introduction thus: "If there is one principle, Comparative Literature in all its forms has stood for over the years, it is the necessity to understand literary texts, whether belonging to other languages and cultures, other disciplines, other races, or the other sex. That necessity continues to inform the comparative perspective today." 12

This is so because no sensitive peoples can shelter themselves and live in isolation from others by adopting ostrich mentality in the face of challenges and conflicts. It is a compulsion of modern life to transcend provincialism of our outlook and enter upon ever-widening and ever-receding mental horizons. This is an unfinished business in which no one can attain complete success.
REFERENCES:


2. Ibid, Chapter: Literary History from Below, p.320.

3. Ibid, Foreword


5. Ibid, p.100.


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