



NEW

July 2010

Glory of Bharath » Santh Darsan

Tukaram

Tukaram was born in 1598 A.D. at Dehu near Pune (Poona). He was born in a Sudra family which for generations had been devoted to Lord Vithal. His parents were Bolhoba and Kanakai. Professionally they were traders. Tukaram had two brothers, one elder and the other younger respectively. Tukaram married twice. His first wife Rakhumai was asthmatic and the second wife Jijai was hot tempered. Whether he had any money or not, he could never resist serving sadhus, guests and the needy, sacrificing the needs of the family. Everyone used to blame him for the financial ruin which he had brought upon himself and the family by his deeds.

Tukaram was overcome with intense vairagya towards worldly life. He used to spend most of the time on a quiet spot either in reading or in meditation. Tukaram's devotion was becoming more and more intense day by day. He began composing heart-rending poems of longing for God, and songs of praise of His glory. The great saint Namdev appeared to him in a dream accompanied by Lord Vithal. Namdev pleaded with Tukaram to take up the link where he (Namdev) had left off, and to continue composing abhangas and complete them. Namdev further told that God would mark the measure for each one of his compositions. With new inspiration, Tukaram held kirtans in Dehu, Pune.

By his ecstatic singing, he won the hearts of all, and his abhangas began to become most popular. Everyone started singing Tukaram's compositions in their homes, even when they were engaged in their vocations outside. This overwhelming popularity of Tukaram caused jealousy in some. One Rameshwara Bhat especially, started to vilify him in several ways. He branded abhangas as being against the spirit of the Vedas and Sastras, and he being a Sudra and also being unlettered in scriptures, should not venture composing Kirtanas. He caused all the writings to be thrown into flooded waters of river Indrayani.

Tukaram sat on the banks of the river, refusing food and even water. It was on the 15th day that the miracle of miracles happened. Before the astonished gaze of all and to the utter joy of Tukaram, the manuscripts of the abhangas surfaced on the water and glided gently to the shore. While the devotees rushed down to retrieve the cherished manuscripts, Tukaram had the blissful vision of the smiling and benevolent Lord Vithal.

Rameshwar Bhat after causing much pain and agony to Tukaram upon the instigation of Saint Jnaneshwar, sought pardon and became the most ardent disciple of Tukaram. Rameshwar Bhat is the one who provided the detailed record of events of Tukaram's life and the numberless abhangas that he sang.

Emperor Shivaji had also heard about Tukaram and felt very much drawn to him. Once, Shivaji sent him rich treasures in Tukaram's absence. Tukaram came home and saw the heaps of treasures he recoiled as if bitten by a cobra. He asked the bearers to take back all what they had brought, saying that Vithal was all his treasure. Shivaji became more enamoured of Tukaram's seeing the latter's total conquest of desire and spirit of renunciation.

Having led an intensely spiritual life, leaving a great legacy of sweet abhangas, Tukaram ascended to Heaven with his body in 1650 A.D. Rameshwara Bhat and Tukaram's younger brother Kanhoba and others remained for three days on the river ghat singing kirtans and doing fasting, praying to Tukaram to give them a token of his presence wherever he was. On the third day, Tukaram's cymbals fell down from the skies and the devotees sang in joy and the sound of 'Vithala, Vithala, Panduranga!' resounded for days on end.

Tukaram, by his pure devotion, made for himself a special niche in the heart of the Lord Vithal, and also in the hearts of the people of Maharashtra. His Abhangas resound and echo in every home. They have a nectarine sweetness, overflowing with the richest wisdom, throwing light on all aspects of life, moral, ethical, spiritual, social, human and every segment of life. "Jai Jai Ramakrishna Hari!" was the mantra practiced by Tukaram. This mantra made him scale to the highest spiritual speaks ever reached by any. It is God alone that mattered for Tukaram all his life. God alone, he deemed as his wealth, sustenance, succor and all. Living in the midst of the world, yet a truest renunciate he was, with body, mind, heart and soul totally surrendered at the feet of the Lord.

Jai Jai Vithal ! Jai Hari Vithal !



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