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FROM THE PROFANE TO THE TRANSCENDENT : JAPA IN TUKARAM'S MYSTICISM

1. Introduction

This paper focuses on the role of *Japa* 'repetition of god's name' in the mystical doctrine of Tukārām, a 17th century Indian mystic poet of Maharashtra, one of the major states of India. Repetition of god's name is part of the diverse religious traditions of Hinduism (Tantra, Yoga, Bhakti, etc.) and of other religious traditions such as Buddhism, Islam and Christianity. This paper examines the form and function of *Japa* in the mystical doctrine of Tukārām. The analysis is intended to provide a point of comparison across diverse systems of mysticism, which will be useful for defining universal as well as particular features of *Japa* across religions. Although *Japa* has been discussed in several works on Tukārām, its role in the entire mystical doctrine of Tukārām has not been fully examined.

2. Tukaram's mysticism and *Japa*

Tukārām did not fully adhere to any one of the traditions of Hinduism, such as Advaita Vedānta or Bhakti. In fact, his mission was to emancipate the religion from the dogmas of both, the Jñāna-mārga 'the path of knowledge' and ritualistic Bhakti-mārga 'the path of devotion.' He intended to provide an alternative to both. Therefore, mere similarity of his system with the Advaita Vedānta and Bhakti tradition can not be taken to be evidence for labelling him purely as Advaitin or Bhakta.¹ Scholars, have acknowledged tendencies of Vedānta and Bhakti in Tukārām's system. To label Tukārām as one or the other is to miss the whole orientation of his religious system. In the following discussion similarities of Tukārām's system with the Advaita Vedānta and Bhakti will be pointed out. Also, it will be shown that his system significantly differs from both.

1. Radhakrishnan (1948:17) mentions the mystic poets who have adopted Śankara's Advaita doctrine. He comments, "The Marātha saints, Tukārām and Jñāneśvar, are great devotees though they accept the position of Śankara in metaphysics."

3. Tukārām and Advaita Vedānta

Tukārām's mystical experience can be divided into three parts, i.e., the mystical experience, the mystical doctrine, and the mystical technique. The mystical experience, according to Tukārām was the experience of identity with Brahman, the permanent, the one, and the all-pervasive ultimate reality (Tukārāmācī Gāthā: 4419, 2668). Tukārām's view of the ultimate reality is similar to the Vedāntic view of Śankara's philosophical tradition in the 8th century Hinduism.² Brahman for Tukārām was the supreme god who transcended the world of multiplicity of forms. The world of ever changing forms was viewed as profane by Tukārām. The distinction between Brahman and the world was that Brahman was transcendent, permanent, and one, while the profane was transitory and contained multiple forms. The mystical experience for Tukārām was of the identity with Brahman which according to him culminated in the experience of the identity of the profane and Brahman.

Jñāna mārga of the advaita Vedānta, as propounded by Śankara, treats the world as māyā the illusion of the multiplicity of forms which restrict the experience of the transcendent Brahman. Therefore, the mystical doctrine is viewed as the journey from the profane to the transcendent. This journey in Sankara's system involves a total negation of and withdrawal from the profane, the transitory world, and the union

2. Tukārām's doctrine is similar to that of the advaita Vedānta of Śankara (8th century A.D.). According to Tukārām, similar to the Vedānta, the only one, the highest, and the ultimate reality is Brahman which is beginningless (anādi) and endless (ananta), (for further discussion on the nature of Brahman see Dasgupta 1951-55, and for Tukārām see the abhangas (verses) 2345-2951 in Tukārāmācī Gāthā). The world of multiplicity is viewed as māyā 'illusion' by both, the Vedānta and Tukārām. (see Tukārāmācī Gāthā 1215). According to both, the goal of life is to realize the identity of the world and god (Brahman). It is only due to ignorance (avidyā) that the ultimate reality, Brahman, is viewed as manifold. The distinction between the profane and the transcendent lasts only until the mystical experience of the realization that (a) Brahman alone exists, and (b) the world does not exist' independently of Brahman 'the manifoldness does not exist' (T. G. 1889.8).

Tukārām follows the advaita Vedāntic view of causality (Satkāryavāda) in order to explain the unity of Brahman and the world of multiplicity. According to Śankara, the kārya (effect) is already existent in the kārāṇa (cause) (for further discussion see Sankara's Bhasya on Brahmasūtra 2.1.14). Therefore, the world (effect) must exist in Brahman (cause). Tukārām reiterates this view in the following verse *phala te ci bīja, bīja te ci phala* (2427) 'the fruit is the seed and the seed indeed is the fruit.' By using this metaphor, Tukārām explains why the world must exist in Brahman and that its separateness from Brahman is an illusion.

with the Ultimate. It was the journey from the form to the formless, from the concrete to the abstract. Tukārām's doctrine on the other hand was of experiencing the transcendent through the profane, the formless through the form and the abstract through the concrete. The ultimate realization according to him was not of the separation of the profane from the transcendent, but rather, of the identity of the two, i.e., the realization that every form exists in Brahman and Brahman in every form. Brahman is transcendent because it is not limited to any particular form. According to Tukārām, the world of multiple forms, including human beings remains profane until it is viewed separately from the transcendent. Once their identity is realized, the distinction between the profane and the transcendent vanishes. For Tukārām, the identity with the ultimate reality brings the realization of the identity of the whole world with God (Brahman) (*Tukārāmci Gāthā* 1338.1). Tukārām's belief in the Advaitavāda is confirmed in the abhanga where he claims, "I do not desire a meeting with cāndāi (the terrible one) who cherishes *duality* within himself" (*Tukārāmāci Gāthā* 1469.3; hereafter T.G.).

Tukārām does not negate the transcendence of Brahman but simultaneously maintains its immanence. He differs from the Vedāntic system of Śankara on the following two grounds: (a) he claims that the transcendent can be reached through the personal god (Viṭṭhal-Tukārām's personal god) whom he considers as Brahman incarnate (*Saguna Brahma*), and (b) he views Bhakti, 'devotion,' rather than *Jñāna* 'knowledge' as the path for attaining identity with Brahman. Bhakti establishes a bond, a relationship between the devotee and the god which ultimately culminates into the identity of the two. Thus while maintaining the similarity with the Vedāntic view about the mystical experience, Tukārām differs from it with respect to the path to achieve the goal (For discussion on Bhakti and its superiority over the path of knowledge, see T.G. 645, 759, 949, 2070, and 2431).

4. Tukaram and Bhakti

Tukārām is identified as Bhakta on the following grounds: (a) Tukārām stresses *prem* 'love, or intense emotional attachment' to his personal god (Viṭṭhal) as the path to achieve the goal (i.e. identity with Brahman), and (b) Tukārām, unlike the Vedānta system, believed in the *form* (Viṭṭhal) of the Brahman, and also in the worship of Viṭṭhal.

Although Tukārām accepted to the path of Bhakti, he ridiculed the rituals which were integral to the *Bhakti mārga* in the contemporary Hindu traditions.³ *Yajña* 'sacrifices,' *tapas* 'severe austerities,' pilgrimages, ritual worship were viewed as part of the technique toward the attainment of the mystical experience of the union with Brahman. This mediation of religious rituals was not acceptable to Tukārām who proposed the doctrine of establishing a direct relationship with the god. Tukārām differed from the Bhakti-tradition in the following respects: According to him, there is no duality; it is only the manifestation/form of the non-dual/one Brahman (T.G. 3749.1). It is the underlying *advaya* 'non-dual/one' which is the cause of the apparent duality. Duality originates from and abides in one. It is identical with one (see note 2). Also, unlike other Bhakta (e.g. Eknāth), Tukārām does not insist on worshipping only one personal god (Viṭṭhal), rather, for him, god is one; we may call him by any name:⁴ "His names are many but he is one." (T.G. 4524.1).

The above discussion shows that Tukārām's system incorporated the features of both Vedānta and Bhakti traditions and yet differed from both. Tukārām blended the two traditions by proposing the mediation of the concrete from in the realization of the transcendent and in so doing, he took away the mediation of the rituals.

3. The reference here is to the contemporary Brāhmanic ritualistic traditions which were prevalent in the Hindu society. Tukārām specially condemned two major aspects of this tradition: (a) recitation of the Vedic and/or Purāṇic texts without understanding their meaning. By the 17th century A.D., Sanskrit was no longer studied by the common people and therefore, those who recited the texts did not necessarily understand either the meaning or the significance of the texts. According to Tukārām, such recitation was of no use in the mystical doctrine. (b) Sectarianism. The religion of the common people at the time of Tukārām was marked by sectarianism. Nāth school, Vīra-gaivism, Jainism, and Lingayatāe were the major sects which placed tremendous emphasis on ritualistic practices such as sacrifices, penances, and pilgrimages. There were constant fights among those sects on the basis of differences in their ritual practices (for further discussion on the sects in 17th century Mahārāshtra, see *The saint-poets of Maharashtra* by G.B. Sardar, 1969). Tukārām sees these rituals as unnecessary since they focus only on the external aspect of the mystical doctrine, i.e. they regulate only the physical behavior of the mystic/devotee without any consideration to the state of mystic's mind which constitutes the internal dimension of mystic's personality. (c) they propagate differences among diverse groups of people.
4. e.g., Viṣṇu's names: Rama, Krishna, Govinda, Hari, Keshava, Paṇduranga (T. G. 4013.1). Śivas names: Mahādeva, Mahākālakardana, Trinayana, Pārvatīvara, Sankara, Siva . . . (T. G. 1579. 1-2).

Central to his mystical doctrine is the technique of *Japa* which he perceives as an alternative to both, the *Jñāna mārga*, and ritualistic *Bhakti mārga*. In his mystical doctrine, the name of god, *nāma*, is the form of the transcendent, and its repetition is the ritual. In the following abhanga Tukārām clearly illustrates his view:

I do not know a single trick to take away people's senses, I can not display the knowledge of herbs, or marvels of sleight of hand, I have no following of pupils; I do not pretend that I am not a beggar. I am not the head of the school; I am not lord of lands. I preside over no formal worship. I have not opened a shop of that kind. I can not declare secrets. I am not a miserable scholar lost in the philosophical arguments. I am not like these men. All I do is repeatedly sing the praise of god (T.G. 272.2-9).

5. *Japa*: An integrated approach

In what follows, I will discuss the form and function of *Japa* and point out how it replaces both *Jñāna mārga* and ritualistic *Bhakti mārga* in Tukārām's doctrine and yet accomplishes the goal of the mystic which is the union with Brahman. For Tukārām the path of *Japa* had three dimensions: *nāma* 'name,' *Japa* the 'repetition of the name,' and *kīrtan* 'singing continuously the praise of god.' A close examination of the above three shows that they are in consonance with Tukārām's overall approach toward the union with the transcendent through the world of forms, actions, and human emotions. For Tukārām, *nāma* is the form of the transcendent, *japa* is the process-the 'ritual' which turns the profane existence toward the transcendent, and *kīrtana* is the expression of the human emotion of love which binds and unifies the mystic with the transcendent. The following abhanga from Tukārām clearly illustrates this view:

This *nāma* is the immeasurable joy! The formless has been transformed into a form (T.G. 4505.6).

Tukārām ridicules the Vedas for depriving the ultimate of the forms by calling it *neṣī, neṣī* (it is not this, it is not that, i.e., it is beyond forms). His technique is just the opposite. What the Vedas missed in every form is captured precisely through every form by Tukārām. Consider the following abhanga:

With all their strength, the Vedas could characterize it (the Ultimate) only negatively as '*neṭi, neṭi.*' Weak as I am, my speech is powerful to describe the glory of his *nāma.*' (T.G. 4505, 82-83).

6. *Japa*: Silent and loud

The major function of *Japa* in Tukārām's doctrine is to turn the mind and body of the mystic to the transcendent. *Japa* can be both loud and silent. In the latter form it resembles *dhyāna* 'meditation' in the Pātanjala yoga.⁵ They both involve an uninterrupted concentration on the object of meditation which establishes a link between the mind of the mystic and Brahman. The mind which wavers between the transcendent and the profane is continuously focussed on the transcendent Brahman. According to Tukārām, the mystic wants to focus his mind on Brahman but is continuously diverted by the outer world. *Japa* resolves the conflict of mind by linking it up with the transcendent:

Day and night we face the conflict between the inner and the outer world. Tukārām says 'your name has resolved it' (T.G. 4091. 1, 2).

Japa: The loud repetition⁶

The loud repetition of god's name, according to Tukārām is part of the doctrine of turning the physical existence of the mystic toward

5. For further discussion on *dhyāna* see Yoga Sūtra 3.2 in the Yoga Philosophy of Patanjali by Sāmkhya Yogācharya Swami Hariharānanda Aranya. (English translation by P.N. Mukherji 1983. State University of New York Press, Albany). Patanjali defines *dhyāna* 'meditation' as follows: '*tatra pratyayaikatānatā dhyānam*' (3.2) 'In that (in concentration-dhāraṇā) the continuous (uninterrupted) the fixation of the mind (on the object of meditation) is called *dhyāna* 'meditation.' In (3.1) Patanjali defines concentration (dhāraṇā) as fixation of mind on a particular point in space. In the Bhāṣya (commentary) Vyāsa points out that concentration is the first step toward meditation. The object of concentration according to him can be the 'naval circle, the heart, center of the head, tip of the nose, tongue, or any external object.' The distinction between concentration and meditation is that while concentration is discontinuous, meditation is the continuous flow of mind toward the object. Tukārām's concept of *Japa* is similar to the meditation which establishes a link between the mind and the object of meditation.
6. Loud *Japa* is an aid to dhāraṇā 'concentration' in Patanjala Yoga (see dhāraṇā in the Bhāṣya of Vyāsa on 1.28). In Tukārām's doctrine, loud *Japa* needs to be viewed along with the other processes which together add up to the 'ritual' of focusing the physical existence toward Vitthal. Each and every sensory organ focuses on Vitthal, i.e., the eyes see only Vitthal, the ears hear only Vitthal's name, etc.

Brahman. This is done by concentrating all sensory organs toward Viṭṭhal-Tukārām's personal god, Brahman personified. By watching Viṭṭhal, uttering his name, listening to him, and thinking about him, a link is established between the profane and the transcendent, i.e., the physical form of the mystic and the transcendent Brahman; he writes:

My tongue! say the sweet name of Viṭṭhal! Eyes! behold Viṭṭhal's form. Ears! listen to the song of Viṭṭhal. Mind! rush to him and stay close to him; do not leave him (T.G. 756.1-4).

7. *Kirtana*: 'Continuous singing of the praise of god'

Kirtana, the third dimension of *Japa*, is, according to Tukārām, the bond of love which binds the mystic with the transcendent Brahman. The god then spreads over the mystic and releases him from its profane character (body), and thereby from the cycle of rebirth, since *Samsāra* 'cycle of rebirth' is applicable only to the body and not to Brahman. The following *abhanga* expresses his view:

Sing and repeat the name Rām, Rām which is the instrument of joy. The god cannot slip away, since he is settled within (the speech organ). The god spreads over the entire body of the mystic and does not let the mystic forget him. He releases his devotee from the pain and the cycle of rebirth (T.G. 4505.93-95).

This whole process of migration from the profane world to the transcendent is described by Tukārām as a journey to the "other shore." "With the name," says Tukārām, "I am liberated from *Samsāra*; I have crossed the ocean with the boat of the name" (T.G. 1524.1).

Your name and its repetition is my song. Your name is my glory. I am transported to the other shore. I hold your name within my speech organ and I am delivered from the cycle of rebirth (T.G. 763.1,2).

If there is name in the mouth, there is *mokṣa* 'liberation' in the hand; such is the witness of many (T.G. 2295.1).

9. Using the boat of Haris name, I crossed the ocean of *Samsāra* (T.G. 1524.1).

8. The mystical experience

Thus Tukārām's path, as discussed so far is the path of the union with the ultimate through the form-*nāma*, human action-*japa*, and

the expression of the emotion of love-*kirtana*. The mystical experience Which Tukārām describes is of the withdrawal from the profane while being in the profane form, since once united with Brahman, the profane form loses its profanity (i.e., separateness from Brahman) and radiates the nature of the transcendent. Tukārām says, 'I have seen my death with my own eyes.' He clearly indicates in this expression the change of the profane into the transcendent:

I saw my death with my own eyes. It was a celebration beyond comparison. Joy fills the three worlds and I rejoice in the soul of everything. My ego has vanished. I am released and free. The bonds of rebirth are cut off and I am free from the sense of 'I'. Nārāyaṇa placed me here, where I abide in faith." (T.G. 2669.1-5). This was his experience of the transcendent within the profane form.

Tukā says 'while living within the *deha* '(body/form)' the saints have transcended *deha* "body/form" (T.G. 782.6).

Just as Tukārām insists on experiencing the transcendent within the body, he also insists on the vision of the transcendent through its concrete form, such as *nāma* or *mūrti* 'image' of Vitthal. In the following abhangas Tukārām clearly argues for the experience of the nirguṇa (the one without attributes) as saḡuṇa (the one with attributes).

It is the vision of nirguṇa as saḡuṇa. It is through the attributes that I had the vision of attributeless.

It was your form alone on which I contemplated and meditated. (T.G. 2054; 2328).

9. Nama-Japa-kirtana: An alternative to rituals

Although Tukārām insists on the experience of the transcendent through the world of human actions, he vehemently ridicules rituals such as tapas, pilgrimages, and ritual worship as being cumbersome, unnecessary, and inadequate for achieving the goal of the union with Brahman. In contrast to this, his path of *nāma-japa-kirtana* is simple, adequate, and necessary. It is superior to rituals because it performs the functions of the rituals and moreover, it brings about the union with Brahman. Consider the following abhangas which clearly indicate Tukārām's view on the futility of tapas, pilgrimages, and other rituals.

Why build the mountains of tapas? They are heaps of pain. Why wander from country to country? That will increase your desire for more. Why worship many gods? Once you are content, there is no use for all of this. Why struggle for liberation when you can easily get it at Pandhari? You should resort to kīrtana. Repeat god's name in praise and you will get everything you want (T. G. 4506. 1-4).

One does not have to go to the forest, Nārāyaṇa the ultimate comes to you. You should continuously chant the *mantra* 'Rāma Krishṇa Hari Viṭṭhal Keshav' (T. G. 2458.4,5).

10. *Japa* as the transformer of the destiny

Rituals in the Brāhmanic as well as medieval Bhakti traditions function as the transformers of karma, the destiny in that they 'burn' and destroy *pāpa* 'sin, sinful karma.' When the *pāpa* is destroyed, the performer of the rituals is released from the cycle of rebirth. According to Tukārām, *Japa* performs a similar function. This view is expressed in the following verse:

Nāma-Saṁkīrtana 'repeating and singing the name,' is an easy path. The sins will be burnt and the cycle of rebirth will stop. 'The one who repeatedly utters Vithoba's name, sinner he may be, he will be uplifted' (T. G. 2458; 4048.1).

11. Tukārām's notion of sin and the role of *Japa*

Tukārām's claim of the superiority of his doctrine of *Japa* over other rituals has to be understood in the context of his interpretation of *pāpa* 'sin.' 'Tukārām' 'has dealt with sin (*pāpa*) and not with sins. He is speaking of the general concept of sin, apparent from his description of sin, as something which separates him from God.' He defines it as *ḍeva aṅṅare ṅe pāpa* (T.G. 93) 'that which keeps god away from us is sin.' Thus for him to be involved in the world of senses is the sin which ties human beings to the cycle of rebirth. *Japa* is the direct path to get away from the sin, since through *Japa*, the mystic comes closer to Viṭṭhal. Moreover, since *Japa* leads to the mystical experience of identity with Brahman, it is instrumental in terminating the cycle of rebirth because the cycle of rebirth is applicable to the body only until it is viewed separately from Brahman.

12: Superiority of Japa over other rituals

Tukārām's revolt against religious rituals was based on three major arguments. First, the contemporary religious rituals required scriptural sanctions regarding who was authorized to perform the rituals and how they had to be performed. This left the brāhmaṇas with an enormous power over the other classes (i.e., Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras) since they were the only privileged group in the society who had an access to the knowledge of the scriptures. The fourth class (Śūdras) was denied the right to learn the scriptures and perform rituals. Tukārām himself was a victim of discrimination, since he was a Śūdra. The rituals thus divided the people into separate groups. According to Tukārām, rituals missed the major point in the religious doctrine, namely that Brahman abides in everyone and everything and that there does not exist any difference among people. So he insisted on equality of the people in the religious sphere.⁷ Tukārām's 'ritual' of *Japa* is available to everyone irrespective of their caste. According to him, 'All are privileged to approach him, the Brāhmaṇas, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, and Śūdras - (T.G. 1142). Tukārām says, 'He who repeats Hari's name as the (source) seed alone is a Brāhmaṇ among all castes' (T.G. 1558). Secondly, he refutes the ritual of worship on the basis of the phenomenology of his religious doctrine. According to Tukārām, the accessories of worship, e.g., water, flowers, fruit, betel leaf, rice, coins, food, the sound *Om*, etc. do not exist independently of Brahman. Thus the ritual of offering what already exist in Brahman is meaningless. Moreover, these offerings do not remove the perception of duality between the mystic and Brahman. What needs to be offered is the 'ego, the sense of 'I' which separates the mystic from Brahman. If this I-ness (ego) does not vanish, the rituals are futile and if it does, the rituals are unnecessary. Tukārām says, 'I have surrendered myself to you. I have abandoned my individuality. Now you abide in everything here. 'I' being dead, you established yourself here. Now nothing like me or mine remains here'' (T. G. 2669. 1-5). Since the ritual of *Japa* brings about the realization of identity with Brahman, Tukārām treats it as superior to other rituals. The third objection is that the rituals are concerned with the purification of the body but ignore the 'soiled' mind.

7. For further discussion see *Lokhande, A. Tukārām, his Person and Religion. A Religio-historical, Phenomenological and Typological Inquiry. Frankfurt: Peter Lang. 1976, p. 121.*

For him a ritual which does not cleanse the mind of its 'impurity,' i.e., its involvement with the profane, *māyā*, or the self-centered view of the world, is of no use. Since *Japa* focuses on both, the external and internal purification of the mystic, he advocates its superiority over other rituals:

What have you done by going to a sacred river? You have washed your skin. In what way has the interior been purified? By doing this (i.e., performing rituals) you have only enhanced your ego. Even if the bitter *Vṛndāvana* fruit is coated with sugar, its bitterness is not lessened. If peace, forgiveness, and sympathy are not acquired, why should you take any trouble? (T. G. 1732. 1-3).

Without the name of god the sacrifices (and such) and *tapas* are not capable of breaking the chains of *Samsāra* - the cycle of rebirth (T.G. 4506.29).

When the life is not clean, what can the soap do? (T.G. 765.1).

13. *Japa* in Tukaram's and other traditions

Tukārām's *Japa* is similar to Kabir's *Japa*. Kabir (a 16th century mystic) argued for the *japa* of any name of any god in either Hinduism or Islam. Kabir said that Rāma and Allah are two names of the same god. However, Tukārām's *Japa* was different from the *Japa* propounded in the systems of the Vaiṣṇava schools of Bhakti traditions where the insistence was on the name of a particular god (i.e., Viṣṇu's name for the Vaiṣṇava's and Śiva's name for the Śaivās).⁸ Tukārām's *Japa* was different from the mantra 'Vedic chant' because it did not have the constraint of the language such as Sanskrit for chanting the name of the god. Although both, the Vedic mantra and Tukārām's *Japa* aimed at reducing the distance between the mystic and the god, they were not functionally similar. While the Vedic chant was aimed at communication with the god for the purpose of asking his favor, Tukārām's *Japa* aimed at bringing about the union of the mystic with the transcendent. While the Vedic mantra was believed to have the power to influence god (s) and attract their attention to the devotee, Tukārām's *Japa* was aimed at influencing and later changing the profane character or the devotee.

8. For further discussion on Chaitanya Vaiṣṇavism and *vīra*grava ṣaivism see Kennedy, 1925; Bhandarkar, 1913; Gonda, 1954.

Tukārām's *Japa* was different from the one in the Pātanjala Yoga because *Japa* in the system of Yoga aimed at cleansing the mystic of the human emotions. In contrast to this, Tukārām's *Japa* uses the human emotion of love to 'feel' the transcendent within the profane form of the human body.

The above differences stem from the fact that Tukārām does not negate the human dimension of the mystical technique and experience, and he accepts its unity with the transcendent. It is the separation from the transcendent of the human form, actions, and emotions which them profane. *Japa* according to Tukārām establishes the identity of the two.

14. Conclusion

The preceding discussion shows that Tukārām's path of *Japa* is free from the dogma of both *jñāna mārga* and ritualistic *Bhakti mārga*. His path of *Japa* provided form to the formless and a ritual for the transformation of the profane into the transcendent. Implications of the above treatment of *Japa* in Tukārām's doctrine can be summarized as follows:

First, Tukārām's path did not require the follower to have any particular training in the language (Sanskrit) or of the scriptures (the Vedas, Brāhmaṇas, and Purāṇas) nor was it restricted to a particular caste or class.

Second, unlike the Śaiva and Vaiṣṇava traditions of his time, Tukārām did not insist on the repetition of the name of any particular god.

Third, Tukārām's religious system of nāma-japa-kīrtana provided a path to establish a direct relationship with Viṭthal or Brahman without having to resort to any particular religious tradition.

Fourth, the preceding discussion shows that his system, although formally different, performed the same functions of the jñāna and Bhakti mārga such as breaking the barriers of *saṃsāra* and releasing the devotee from sin.

This paper also indicates that certain features (such as the repetition of god's name) of mystical doctrines of diverse religious traditions may look similar but an investigation of their role in specific mystical doctrines reveals that they are in fact different in terms of their

function. It is necessary to examine such features carefully before making any judgements about their role(s) in mystical doctrines. This paper explicates also two implicit assumptions about the theory of mysticism, namely that mysticism in its entirety can be understood only in the context of the system of beliefs of the mystic, and that a study of similar features in diverse mystical traditions is essential for a better understanding of their universal as well as specific features.