

One Hundred Poems of Tukaram

by Chandrakant Kaluram Mhatre



Poetry - General

Kindle Edition

Reviewed on 05/11/2015

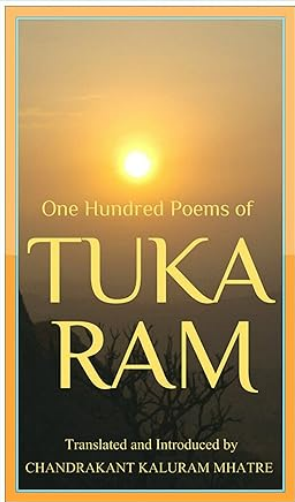
Book Review

Reviewed by Nandita Keshavan for Readers' Favorite

One Hundred Poems of Tukaram, translated by Chandrakant Mhatre, is a wonderful collection of poetry by a famous Indian saint, Tukaram. The book features an introduction which describes the style, context, and language of Tukaram's poetry. The context covers the deity he worshipped, main events in his life, and the events leading to him becoming a saint. In many poems, Tukaram praises and longs for his beloved deity, Vittal, a form of Krishna.

However, his poetry is unique since he wrote in the colloquial language of his region, rather than in Sanskritized Marathi. In doing this, he removes the impression of being learned, and his verses achieve a more down to earth style. His depth of love for God is widespread in his poetry, and this contrasts with his distaste for those who accumulate wealth, avoid spirituality and harbour a restless mind ("greatly wrongful excess is"/ "mind's restlessness makes even sandalwood scald body").

Tukaram's verses are short but effective. Even in English, they carry an aphoristic power which would capture audiences if spoken aloud. There are universal truths in his verses which are laid bare for all to appreciate, since Tukaram was heavily opposed to class divisions and sincerely believed in a two-pronged approach to spirituality ("Protection of Dharma/ refutation of diabolism"). Aside from the world, Tukaram's devotion is about the individual soul merging with the Supreme soul, and this is beautiful to see expressed in verse (Fire and camphor coupling, does there remain any soot?). The poem "So much better O Lord" captures effectively the response of a devotee to losses and poverty. It's difficult to do justice to the depth and breadth of Tukaram's poetry in a short review. I highly recommend it to people interested in aphoristic spiritual poetry with true devotion.



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Author Biography



Chandrakant Kaluram Mhatre is a bilingual poet and writer of short fiction from Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra State of India, writing in English as well as his mother-tongue, Marathi. He is a translator of Marathi literature into English and is also a keen researcher of folk culture, language and literature. He teaches English Language & Literature in a college affiliated to University of Mumbai.