

Sant Tukdoji Maharaj

Tukdoji Maharaj was a saint, spiritual leader, social reformer, and freedom fighter who worked to awaken the people of rural India. He believed that spirituality was not separate from daily life but should inspire people to live with honesty, kindness, and responsibility. Through his songs, teachings, and actions, he helped to bring change in villages and inspired people to work for a better society. Even today, his ideas about rural development, equality, and service remain meaningful.



Born as Manikdev Banduji Ingale in 1909 in the small village of Yavali, Maharashtra. From an early age, he showed a deep interest in spirituality. While other children were busy playing, Manik spent his time singing bhajans and listening to saints. He was deeply inspired by Samarth Adkoji Maharaj, a revered spiritual figure who guided him on his path.

His extraordinary devotion earned him the name Tukdoji Maharaj. He travelled across villages, singing devotional songs and spreading messages of love, unity, and moral living. For villagers, his kirtans were not just religious events, they were moments of reflection and inspiration.

Unlike many saints who focused only on religious rituals, Tukdoji Maharaj believed that true spirituality must reflect in everyday life. He taught that prayer is not only about chanting hymns but also about performing good deeds and serving others. His philosophy was simple

yet transformative: live honestly, work selflessly, and treat everyone with respect.

Through bhajans and kirtans, he communicated moral and social messages in a language that ordinary people could understand. He connected spirituality with social responsibility, reminding villagers that clean surroundings, education, and cooperation were also acts of devotion.

“A pure heart and a selfless deed are stronger than a thousand rituals.” - Tukdoji Maharaj

Tukdoji Maharaj lived during a time when India was fighting for independence. He wholeheartedly supported Mahatma Gandhi’s principles of truth, non-violence, and self-rule. His songs became tools of awakening, inspiring people in remote villages to rise against colonial injustice.

Aside from his efforts in the freedom struggle, he worked diligently to improve social conditions. He spoke out against alcohol addiction, promoted education, and advocated for hygiene and cleanliness. He believed that true change starts in the villages, where the majority of Indians reside. Since India is primarily made up of villages, he felt that genuine development should begin in these areas. One of the most remarkable aspects of Tukdoji Maharaj’s work was his strong stand against caste discrimination and untouchability. At a time when social divisions were deeply rooted, he openly rejected caste-based hierarchies.

He often ate, lived, and worked with people from oppressed castes, challenging the rigid social norms of his time. Through his teachings, he reminded people that God lives in every human being, and no one can be considered impure.

“If God resides in every being, then how can one human be untouchable to another?” - Tukdoji Maharaj, Gramgeeta. Chapter 5, Swarup Chintan

His ashram welcomed people of all backgrounds, and he used education as a tool to uplift marginalized communities. His vision aligned with the broader anti-caste reform movements in Maharashtra, making him a moral force for equality and justice.

Tukdoji Maharaj’s most famous work, “Gramgeeta,” is a masterpiece of rural philosophy. Written in Marathi, this book offers a clear and practical vision for developing self-reliant, morally strong villages. It is often called the “Gita of the villages.”

In *Gramgeeta*, he speaks about cleanliness, cooperation, moral values, education, and community participation. He believed that India’s soul lives in its villages, and their progress is essential for the nation’s future.

“ग्राम म्हणजे केवळ वस्ती नव्हे, ती आहे माणुसकीची शाळा.”

“A village is not just a settlement; it is a school of humanity.” - Gramgeeta

Many of his ideas, such as community cleanliness and self-help groups, find echoes in modern development programs like Swachh Bharat Abhiyan and rural self-governance initiatives.

Tukdoji Maharaj established Gurukunj Ashram near Amravati, which remains a vibrant centre for spiritual and social work. In 1955, UNESCO recognized Tukdoji Maharaj as a “World Peace Messenger” for his contributions to social upliftment and moral reform. Even

decades after his passing in 1968, his influence continues to inspire rural development programs, moral education initiatives, and environmental movements across India. His life demonstrates that true leadership is not about authority but about inspiring change through values, service, and vision.

Tukdoji Maharaj was not just a saint who preached from a distance; instead, he walked with the people, understood their struggles, and worked for their upliftment. His blend of spirituality and social reform made him a rare and powerful figure in modern Indian history.

Today, as India continues to develop and modernize, his messages of equality, rural empowerment, and moral living are more relevant than ever. Remembering Tukdoji Maharaj is not only about honoring the past but also about learning how to build a more just and harmonious future. *“To serve humanity is to serve God. Tukdoji Maharaj lived this truth.”*

Sayali (ksayali0205@gmail.com)

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