

Original Article

Gramgeeta: A Scientific Manual for Rural Reconstruction

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Manuscript ID:

Abstract

JRD -2026-180418

ISSN: 2230-9578

Volume 18

Issue 4

Pp 119-121

April- 2026

Submitted: 18 Mar. 2026

Revised: 28 Mar. 2026

Accepted: 14 Apr. 2026

Published: 30 April. 2026

The twentieth century was a transformative period in Indian society, characterized by the struggle for independence, social reforms and the emergence of new ideas in education, science and literature. While many Indian saints, reformers and thinkers contributed to the moral and spiritual progress of society, Rashtra Sant Tukdoji Maharaj (1909- 1968) stands out as a unique figure who combined spirituality, rationality and a pragmatic approach to life. His literature comprising bhajans, discourses, essays and his monumental work Gramgeeta- is not only deeply spiritual but also permeated with a scientific attitude. By scientific attitude, I mean the disposition to view life and problems objectively, rationally and critically, while emphasizing observation, reasoning and experimentation over blind belief, superstition or dogma. His writings repeatedly stressed the need for rational thinking, systematic social reforms, scientific agriculture, modern education and balanced living. He envisioned a society where science and spirituality coexisted harmoniously for human welfare. This paper explores in detail how Tukdoji Maharaj's literature reflects a scientific attitude, with emphasis on his critical view of superstition, his progressive educational ideas, his approach to rural development and his larger vision of integrating science with spirituality for human progress. His folk bhajans or his philosophical Gramgeeta is a shining example of scientific attitude in Indian thought. Through bhajans, he taught villagers to reject superstition, value cleanliness, work hard and learn science -based knowledge. Through Gramgeeta, he presented a rational blueprint for rural development- scientific agriculture, sanitation, education, equality and sustainable use of resources. His insistence on combining science with spirituality made his vision holistic, ensuring progress without losing ethical grounding. His literature not only inspired spiritual awakening but also cultivated scientific temper, much in line with what India's Constitution later enshrined as a fundamental duty.

Key words: transformative period, Rashtra Sant, pragmatic approach and scientific temper.

Introduction

A significant reflection of Tukdoji Maharaj's scientific outlook lies in his rejection of superstitions and rituals that enslaved common people. In many of his bhajans he openly condemned practices such as animal sacrifice, black magic and blind worship without understanding the essence of divinity. He insisted that true religion was not ritualistic but rational, ethical and humanitarian. He encouraged people to question the authority of customs that exploited them in the name of God or tradition. This attitude mirrors the scientific spirit of questioning and evidence- based reasoning. By attacking irrational practices, he freed people's minds for constructive thinking and action. He asks a question that the great God has created all living beings then how can the Kind Creator find pleasure in accepting the sacrifices of his own creation. There are the middlemen and brokers who kill the poor mute animals and earn their living and get their pleasures fulfilled.

Created God living beings; not passionate to kill them?

Play their roles intermediators to satisfy their hobby. ll 18 ll (Tukdoji 125)

The ancient shastraas have established a tradition of observing impurity through death (sutaka) which has resulted in increasing the mourning for the death of the person. If such traditions and usages are becoming stumbling blocks in the way of our progress and prosperity, they should be considerably removed and discarded immediately.



Quick Response Code:



Website:

<https://jrdvrb.org/>

DOI:

10.5281/zenodo.20355015



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How to cite this article:

Banasure, S. R. (2026). Gramgeeta: A Scientific Manual for Rural Reconstruction. Journal of Research & Development, 18(4), 119–121. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.20355015>

In fact, the real original purpose in establishing the custom of observing 'sutak' (impurity) was maintaining good health and hygiene. Person, who comes in the close contact of the patient and the dead person to make necessary arrangements or to nurse, may get affected by the unseen minute microbes of the diseases which the dead one had been suffering from and died of. So, to keep all in the family of the dead away from other healthy people had become the usage. But, father of someone dies in a village hundreds of miles away and his son, living in Mumbai observes the impurity (sutak). This means that the basic principle behind the custom has been forgotten and the custom is followed blindly and senselessly. It should be discarded by educating the purposes behind the customs and usages. All the rules laid down by shastras such to sprinkle cow-urine (at the spot and all surrounding area of the house), to chew the leaves of the neem tree, to burn the dead body on the pyre, while employing religious rites upon the dead, to observe impurity (sutak) and avoid contact with others etc. are prescribed to maintain good health and hygiene of the other living people. Therefore (for observing this usage of sutak) all in the contact of the dead person should have bath of pure water. Clean clothes should be put on. All clothes and pots and utensils used by the dead person, suffering from diseases, should be washed and cleaned. It is essential to follow the rules laid to observe impurity (sutak) to protect our health and hygiene. But to observe the rite of mourning for the dead for a long period of ten days is surely not agreeable to our sensible reasoning.

“Sprinkling of cow urine, to eat lemon, agnisanskar for corpse;
Aloofness, not to touch, all for hygiene. II 41II
So, bathing with pure water, clean cloth to wear;
Whatever clothes and utensils, to be washed of patients. II 42II (Tukdoji 197)

In the past, as the cow dung and urine had been available on a tremendously large scale, the productive essence and strength of the land could have been survived. So, the land used to yield such a bumper crop that the barns of the village had always been brimful with food grains. Land and animals provided enormous production. One cow produces so many heifers and calves and soon the cow keeper can have herds of cows. Every house, in the past, used to keep cows because it had become a secondary and complementary business to their main agriculture profession. In each and every house, daily food in meals had a good supporting complement of milk, curd, butter etc. It was a very nutritious addition to edibles. So, all from the infants to the aged old members of family had always enjoyed strong, energetic and healthy lives. Therefore, in the past, the cows and cattle had been rightly titled as 'Godhan'-the wealth of cows and cattle. Our ancestors- maintained cattle in happy condition. So, India in the long past had also been the happiest land. But further people began to connive at the cows and cattle. In some degree, the rulers and governments had not so supportive to cow- clan and cow- keeping profession. Some people began to consume cow- meat. (cows and calves in great number have regularly been slaughtered) All these factors resulted in decreasing the number of cows in the country.

“Land and cattle, reservoir this of production;
New animals form one co-business in every house. II 11 II (Tukdoji 135)

Science is paralytic without religion and vice versa. Albert Einstein has exhorted, “Science without religion is lame, religion without science is blind.”¹ He has profound faith in religion and its adherence to human values. Vinoba Bhav expounded in his speech on 12th July, 1965 at Gurukunj:

My assertion is that the power of science is to conjunct with spiritual knowledge
and by combining two, village creation is to be. Today science has started devastating
villages and spiritual knowledge are left behind, as native entity...this which is the
power of science is to be applied in agriculture.”²

Education occupies a central place in his thought and he linked it directly with scientific progress. In his writings, he criticized the rote- learning system and advocated skill- based, practical and scientific education that would empower individuals to face real- life challenges. He urged that schools and colleges should teach scientific agriculture, hygiene, health education and technology relevant to village life. His call for experimental learning reflects the same principles that modern science- based education promotes; observation, analysis and practical application. He envisions a new rural education that combines moral values with scientific knowledge, producing not only spiritually enlightened individuals but also technically competent and socially responsible citizens. Gramgeeta is progressive from an individual to village, village to nation, nation to the world, and the world to cosmos. The thoughts in Gramgeeta are pragmatic, inclusive, and irrespective of caste, race, creed, and religion; and have practical applications.

Tukdoji Maharaj emphasized scientific farming, proper irrigation methods, crop rotation, soil testing and the use of modern tools. He warned against unscientific methods of cultivation that exhausted the soil and reduced productivity. He insisted that villagers should understand the science of sanitation, clean water, balanced diet and preventive health. He linked diseases not to fate or divine punishment but to ignorance of scientific hygiene. His insistence on harmony between man and nature reflects ecological science at its core.

One might assume that a saint would advocate only spiritual ideals. Yet Tukdoji Maharaj had a unique ability to merge spirituality with scientific thinking. For him, religion without rationality becomes blind ritual, while science without spirituality becomes destructive. He saw spirituality as the moral compass that guides scientific progress for the welfare of humanity. He believed in experimentation in spiritual practice as much as science believes in experimentation; insisting that truth in both fields must be verified by experience. This integration of spirituality and science is what made him stand apart from both traditional saints and modern scientists. He presented a holistic vision where rationality and devotion, science and morality, went hand in hand.

Today, when India emphasizes scientific temper as enshrined in the Constitution (Article 51A), Tukdoji Maharaj's literature becomes even more relevant. His ideas anticipated many modern reforms: Skill- based education and vocational training, Sustainable agriculture and ecological awareness, Rational health practices and hygiene, Integration of moral values with science and technology. His writings show that true spirituality is not opposed to science; instead, it nurtures the scientific spirit for the welfare of all.

Conclusion

Rashtrasant Tukdoji Maharaj's literature is a shining example of how a saint, deeply rooted in tradition, could embrace modern scientific thinking without conflict. His scientific attitude is evident in his criticism of superstitions, his advocacy of rational education, his vision for rural development in Gramgeeta, and his holistic integration of science with spirituality. He taught that blind faith leads to stagnation, while scientific reasoning combined with moral values leads to progress. For him, true religion was rational and humanitarian and true science was compassionate and ethical. In today's world, where superstition still lingers and scientific progress sometimes lacks moral guidance, Tukdoji Maharaj's balanced vision remains profoundly relevant. His literature is not just a spiritual treasure but also a rational guide for building a society rooted in scientific temper, ethical responsibility and holistic development. His vision remains a beacon for building a society that is both scientifically progressive and ethically grounded. In true sense Gramgeeta is a scientific manual for rural reconstruction in modern era.

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