

Spiritual Journey Of Women In Sanskrit Literature

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Abstract

The Divine Feminine – A Journey Through Devotion, Silence, and Strength This compilation explores the spiritual essence of womanhood as reflected in India's sacred traditions, devotional literature, and real-life exemplars. From the universal concept of the Bhakti Stree—the devotional woman as a symbol of patience, surrender, and divine strength—to the silent but powerful life of Tañjāmbā, wife of Bhagavat Ramanujacharya, we witness how women have shaped and supported India's spiritual evolution not just through public action, but also through quiet inner strength. Sacred verses such as "Ya Devi Sarva Bhuteshu Shakti Rupena Samsthita" and hymns praising Annapurna, Lalitāmbikā, and other forms of the Divine Mother, highlight the cosmic presence of feminine energy (Shakti)—as mother, giver, and sustainer of the universe. Verses like “Na tvaham jeevitum shakyē” and “Payo ji maine to prem ratan dhan payo” reveal the depths of divine longing, unconditional love, and the soul’s yearning for union with the Absolute. In Tañjāmbā’s story, her faithful support, spiritual silence, and acceptance of separation from Ramanuja exemplify the unspoken sacrifices women make on the spiritual path. Though left behind, she never lost her dharma, and through patience and devotion, she became an invisible yet potent force in Ramanuja’s mission. This unified reflection reminds us that the spiritual journeys of women—whether sung in verses or lived in silence—are foundational to India’s spiritual legacy. They embody the power of silent surrender, resilient devotion, and the divine feminine principle that sustains all life and dharma.

Keywords: Spiritual, Literature

Introduction

Sanskrit literature, a treasure trove of ancient wisdom, offers profound insights into the spiritual journeys of women. This article explores the diverse expressions of spirituality found in the voices and experiences of female figures across various Sanskrit texts. From the powerful goddesses to the devoted bhaktas, we delve into the depths of their devotion, strength, and wisdom. The verses and stories presented here, drawn from the Vedas, Upanishads, epics, and devotional poetry, illuminate the multifaceted roles women played in shaping the spiritual landscape of ancient India. Through their unwavering faith, resilience, and profound

understanding of dharma, these women continue to inspire and guide seekers on their own spiritual paths.

Divine Feminine: Goddesses

In Indian culture, the contribution of women in the spiritual tradition, especially through devotion, holds a significant place. A Bhakti Stree (devotional woman) is not merely a worshipper of the Divine, but she is also the embodiment of dharma (righteousness), tolerance, and compassion. A spiritual devotee woman does not confine her life only to worldly duties, but constantly strives for self-realization and union with the Supreme. Her devotion is adorned with qualities like selflessness, surrender, and unwavering faith. In history, figures such as Meera Bai, Andal, Akka Mahadevi, Janabai, and others serve as shining examples. Their lives demonstrate that women, too, can attain an independent and honored place on the spiritual path. This form of devotion transcends social restrictions and manifests inner strength and divine love. Thus, the spiritual journey of such women not only opens their path toward liberation (moksha), but also conveys a universal message of faith, endurance, and love to the world. The concept of *shakti*, is central to many spiritual traditions in India. Goddesses are revered as the embodiment of cosmic energy, wisdom, and compassion. The following verse encapsulates this essence:

To that Goddess who resides in all beings in the form of Power (Shakti),

Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, Salutations to Her, again and again.

This powerful mantra from the Devi Mahatmyam (Durga Saptashati) honors the Divine Feminine present in every living being as Shakti, the ultimate cosmic energy. It is a repeated offering of reverence to the Goddess in her universal presence.

Translation: The Goddess who resides in all beings as power; salutations to Her, salutations to Her, salutations to Her, again and again.

Sītā's Strength – Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa

Sītā, the epitome of wifely devotion and strength, faces immense trials in the Valmiki Rāmāyaṇa. Her unwavering faith and moral fortitude make her an inspiring figure. Despite her suffering, she maintains her dignity and spiritual integrity.

I cannot live at all if you abandon me;

just as a fish cannot survive or even breathe for a moment without water.

This verse expresses deep emotional attachment and dependence, often used in the context of intense love or devotion — where separation from the beloved or the Divine feels as unbearable as a fish without water.

Translation: I cannot live, in any way, if abandoned by you, nor even breathe for a moment, like a fish out of water.

Annapūrṇa Stotram

The Annapūrṇa Stotram praises the goddess Annapūrṇa, the bestower of food and nourishment. This hymn celebrates the importance of sustenance, both physical and spiritual, and acknowledges the goddess as the source of all abundance.

She who bestows eternal bliss,
Granter of boons and fearless peace.
She who brings joy and fulfills all desires,
Auspicious Shankari, whom all hearts admire.
Visible form of the great Maheshwari divine,
In Kailasa's caves, she loves to reside.
She is Gauri, Uma, consort of Shankara,
Pure and radiant, sacred and fair.
The youthful Goddess, knower of Vedic lore,
O Annapurna! We bow and adore.

Translation: She who is the constant source of bliss, bestower of boons and fearlessness, giver of happiness and fulfiller of desires, auspicious consort of Sri Shankara, visibly the great Goddess, who resides in the cave of Mount Kailasa, Gauri, Uma, Shankari, Kumari, whose nature is to make the meaning of the Vedas attainable, Om, Annapurneshwari!

Mīrābāī Bhakti Verse

Mīrābāī, a Rajput princess, renounced her worldly life to devote herself to Lord Krishna. Her poems and songs express her intense love and longing for the divine. Her bhakti (devotion) is a testament to the transformative power of faith.

*I have received the treasure, the jewel of divine love,
A priceless gift that shines from the heavens above.
My True Guru gave it with grace so kind,
And welcomed me with an awakened mind.
This gift is beyond gold, beyond all measure,
A wealth of the soul, an eternal treasure.
Through the Guru's mercy, I found this way,
And in divine love, my*

Translation: I have attained the treasure of love. My true guru gave me this priceless object, and accepted me with his grace.

Lalitā Sahasranāma Verse

The Lalitā Sahasranāma is a sacred text that praises the goddess Lalitā Tripurasundarī by listing her thousand names. Each name represents a different aspect of her divine qualities, her beauty, power, and grace.

She is the Holy Mother, the Supreme Queen,

The Great Beauty of the Three Worlds.

She is Divine Shiva Herself,

The embodiment of the unity of Shiva and Shakti.

She is Lalitāmbikā – the playful, graceful Divine Mother.

Translation: She is the Divine Mother, the Supreme Queen, the most beautiful Goddess of the three cities; She is Shiva, the embodiment of the unity of Shiva and Shakti, She is Lalitambika.

Upanishadic Verse

The Upanishads explore the nature of reality and the relationship between the individual soul (Atman) and the ultimate reality (Brahman). Women like Maitreyi feature in these dialogues, seeking profound wisdom from their husbands or gurus.

This sutra marks the formal beginning of a spiritual seeker's journey into the knowledge of the Supreme Truth. It implies that after gaining maturity, ethical preparation, and detachment from worldly distractions, one is now ready to pursue the highest wisdom — the understanding of Brahman, the unchanging, infinite, eternal reality behind all existence.

Translation: Now, therefore, the inquiry into Brahman.

Conclusion

The spiritual journey of women in Sanskrit literature is a testament to their strength, wisdom, and unwavering devotion. Through goddesses, epic heroines, and devotional poets, we gain insight into the multifaceted expressions of spirituality in ancient India. The verses and stories explored here serve as a timeless source of inspiration, inviting us to reflect on our own spiritual paths and embrace the divine feminine within.