

Abstract: 'Vamakshi: Bhakti through the Eyes of Women'

The lecture demonstration '*Vamakshi: Bhakti through the Eyes of Women*' by Dr. Subhadra Desai explores the synthesis of literature and music as mediums of spiritual expression, focusing on the remarkable contributions of women seers and saint-poets in India's rich cultural and spiritual history.

Beginning with the Vedic era, the presentation highlights the hymns attributed to women seers in texts such as the *Rigveda Samhita*, *Samaveda Samhita*, and *Samagana Samhita*. These hymns, regarded as some of the earliest poetic expressions of humanity, are examined alongside their unique singing traditions, preserved over millennia.

Transitioning to the Bhakti period (6th to 20th century), the lecture delves into the lives and works of women saint-poets such as Mirabai, whose devotional compositions embody a profound spiritual quest. The Bhakti tradition is characterized by a deep, personal connection to the divine, often expressed through poignant poetry and music transcending linguistic and temporal boundaries.

The lecture also investigates the broader definitions of 'seer,' 'saint,' and 'poet' in the Indian tradition, emphasising their interconnectedness and the unique identity of women seers as spiritual visionaries, exceptional poets, and creators of timeless devotional songs. It reflects on how these women navigated societal challenges, reshaping the spiritual and cultural landscape through their unyielding devotion and artistic expression.

Through this presentation, Dr Desai illuminates the enduring legacy of these women, whose songs and hymns continue to inspire and resonate, offering insights into the spiritual, poetic, and cultural dimensions of their times. The convergence of literature and music in their works is celebrated as a testament to their spiritual heroism and creative genius.