



## **The Graceful Guru: Hindu Female Gurus in India and the United States**

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A distinctive aspect of Hindu devotion is the veneration of a human guru, who is not only an exemplar and a teacher but is also understood to be an embodiment of the divine. Historically, the role of guru in the public domain has been exclusive to men. The new visibility of female gurus in India and the U.S. today, and indeed across the globe, has inspired this first-ever scholarly study of the origins, variety, and worldwide popularity of Hindu female gurus. In the Introduction, Karen Pechilis examines the historical emergence of Hindu female gurus with reference to the Hindu philosophy of the self, women spiritual exemplars as wives and saints, Tantric worship of the Goddess, and the internationalization of gurus in the U.S. in the twentieth century. Nine essays profile specific female gurus, presenting biographies of these remarkable women while highlighting overarching issues and themes concerning women's status as religious leaders; these themes are nuanced in the afterword to the volume. The essays explore how Hindu female gurus embody grace in both senses--as a feminine ideal and an attribute of the divine--and argue that their status as leaders is grounded in their negotiation of these two types of grace. This book provides biographical profiles of the following female gurus plus sensitive scholarly analysis of their spiritual paths: Ammachi, Anandamayi Ma, Gauri Ma, Gurumayi, Jayashri Ma, Karunamayi Ma, Ma Jaya Sati Bhagavati, Mother Meera, Shree Maa and Sita Devi.

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