



Women Empowerment: Spiritual Perspective of the Warrior Woman from Sri Aurobindo's Savitri

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Abstract

Sri Aurobindo's (1872-1950), Yogi, poet, philosopher and one of the staunch pillars of the Indian knowledge tradition, has presented the concept of the warrior woman in his spiritual epic Savitri: A Legend and Symbol. Many of his longer poems and plays have female protagonists with strong character and resolutions. Contemporary India, particularly the narrative around women's empowerment in the Indian intellectual atmosphere, can take a leaf from Sri Aurobindo's book in terms of the true nature, process, and perspective of women's empowerment. Moreover, his ashram in Pondicherry is a glaring example of his vision and viewpoint of women's empowerment, as there is total parity between men and women in the Ashram. In the present paper, the researcher will try to investigate the major spiritual perspectives of women and their life's agonies and ordeals, as seen and discussed by Sri Aurobindo's in his Savitri. The paper will discuss in detail the key points that define the ardour and spiritual audacity of Savitri, the woman in the epic, and how many of her characteristics could play a vital role in addressing the issues faced by modern Indian women. The paper will also explore the spiritual perspectives on the term 'women empowerment' and the concept of feminism in the Indian context.

Keywords: Women Empowerment, evolution, gender discrimination, educational Renaissance, liberation.

Introduction

Sri Aurobindo (15 August 1872 - 5 December 1950) is revered, respected, and remembered in India as a yogi, philosopher,

Maharishi, poet, Indian Nationalist leader, Spiritual Guru, and a remarkable author of Indian writing in English. He was also a journalist, editing newspapers such as Vande

Mataram. Aurobindo Ghose was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata), Bengal Presidency, India, on 15 August 1872, in a Bengali family associated with the village of Kon Nagar in the Hooghly district of present-day West Bengal. M. G. Umar writes about Sri Aurobindo, "when he comes into our mortal world, he does his mighty work and stamps the stamp of his mighty personality upon the human civilisation". (2)

Empowerment of women in general is one of the highly reviewed subject matters in post-independence India. Researchers partially touch the spiritual canon; therefore, despite adoration for cosmic vision and spirituality, large numbers of women continue to face difficulties in openly expressing themselves in patriarchal structures. Men always remain the epicentre of societal distribution of power, position, and influence. In many countries, including India, the educational development of women appears to be less advanced compared to that of men. The social, political, economic, and academic women's wing has consistently made an effort to raise sufficient awareness. It is indeed true that women's empowerment has become a necessity of our time. Women should possess liberty, faith, free will, and self-worth to meet their needs and demands. Discrimination based on gender is useless and is having zero worth by looking at the growth of women in the last few decades.

This research paper writes about the investigations of Women Empowerment: spiritual perspective of the warrior woman from Sri Aurobindo's, explicitly focusing on Sri Aurobindo's epic poem, 'Savitri.' While conventionally literary analyses often discuss the portrayal of women in spirituality and divinity, this study aims to uncover the subtle and empowering picture of women characters within the context of Aurobindo's occultism. The research employs an approach that emphasises the combination of feminist literary theory, psychoanalytic perspectives and spiritual philosophy to unearth the many hidden prospects of significance ascribed to

women in 'Savitri.' Through a thorough study of key women characters, such as Savitri, this paper aims to illuminate how Aurobindo's challenges and transcends traditional gender roles, fostering a spiritually enriched soul.

Definition: Women's empowerment is the process by which women become aware of gender-based unequal power relationships and acquire a greater voice in which to speak out against the inequality found in the home, workplace, and community. It involves women taking control over their lives, setting their agendas, acquiring skills, solving problems, and developing self-reliance.

The act or action of empowering someone or something: the granting of the power, right, or authority to perform various acts or duties. It is the process of becoming stronger and more confident, particularly in taking control of one's life and asserting one's rights. In this context, Dr. Alok Pandey discusses women in the book *The Eternal Feminine*: This is no ordinary woman dependent on her husband for empowerment. Nor does her empowerment depend upon her outer actions, nor even on economic and other forms of freedom. It is an inner Freedom that wins for her the outer freedom. (242)

Need and Effectiveness of Women Empowerment: The truth is that women are numerically half of the Indian population, but they are being forced to get a secondary place in all spheres of life. This has prevented women from assuming a position of human values and glory as independent entities, connected with men as intellectual and professional companions. In the Vedic period, women were authorised to engage in all activities. Still, over time, reproduction and the drawbacks of pregnancy and childbirth, post-partum depression complications, made them dependent on men for security and livelihood. Empowerment of women is considered a multidimensional concept that encompasses aspects of women's lives, including self-esteem, self-worth, decision-making, access to spiritual

opportunities, and their ability to contribute to social progress towards a more balanced society.

Currently, the ultimate goal of women is to achieve financial capability and prosperity, and money is considered of utmost importance; in this context, empowering women becomes a significant challenge. It is believed that economic prosperity is necessary to move forward on the path of development, but it is also essential to sustain humanity, which requires eliminating gender discrimination. Therefore, if women are to be empowered today, they should not be honoured with words like grace. That women are blessed, and after that, it is a matter of making themselves capable. Whereas, if understood in real terms, women are to be empowered, then words like 'grace' should be kept away. Therefore, spirituality works inward by opening the mind, as well as the vital and physical aspects of ourselves, to the inner reality within us. (Nadkarni 70)

In the same sequence, Sri Aurobindo mentions in his epic Savitri that to empower today's women, they must pay attention to specific facts. Until the intellectual development and understanding of spiritual knowledge are within them, they cannot empower themselves in this world. Therefore, Sri Aurobindo does not view the character of Savitri in Savitri as an ordinary woman, because there is a distinct difference between an ordinary woman and a divine woman. Therefore, the present age should learn from this chapter so that it can succeed in empowering and making the present women independent the ultimate solution is provided in all the chapters of Savitri epic poem, where they are able and successful in recognizing their power in its proper form, and helps the present women to become courageous, sensible, spiritually successful and strong in achieving their purpose or goals.

Insights from Sri Aurobindo's Savitri for the Modern Woman

(A) The Spiritual Perspective of Woman Empowerment;

Women are not just bodies but conscious souls and sparks of the Divine. In Indian-tradition, they are venerated as goddesses and manifestations of divinity. They are the ones who protect society, not the other way round. Spiritually, women's empowerment means a society where women are not merely miserable but mighty, empowered not just by education but also by inner awareness and spiritual awakening, morally and spiritually upright and upbeat, and strong in character and candour. Their most excellent power comes through meditation and yoga, as well as self-study and introspection.

Generally, women are associated with material happiness, whereas without intelligence and spiritual experience, everything is useless. Women are often considered weak, soft, and kind, and keeping these qualities in mind, they are helped with the word of kindness (Kripa). Whereas women can help themselves from within with the help of spirituality. Therefore, the way we see the current conditions of women in this world, Sri Aurobindo rejects all those beliefs and tries to give a new perspective to the central role of equality in the status of women, and explains the need for both to live with respect and to be supportive of each other, without any discrimination between men and women in the human race. He wants to expand this perspective in the present era, and through the poem Savitri, it is repeatedly said that women can develop themselves further in the way they want to be seen.

(B) Courage and Conviction for Life; no Challenge is Invincible, no Enemy Indefatigable.

Sri Aurobindo gives a new definition and character to the role of the protagonist Savitri. She is a samurai, a warrior woman who is ready to fight with Death and Disaster! The

source of her power lies in spirituality, as well as the force of her purity and divinity.

"Well, is the unconscious rule for the animal breeds.

Content to live beneath the immutable yoke;

Man turns to a nobler walk, a master path.

I trample on thy law with living feet;

For to arise in freedom, I was born".
(Aurobindo 652)

The living reality of the ritual worship of the goddess Savitri, practised by generations of Indian women. Indian women, every year, when they pray to the goddess fervently to bestow on them the incredible power of a faithful wife's love and devotion, whereby they would never be widowed. Thus, the personality of Savitri has been inspiring men and women as the most potent symbol of womanhood, of a wife's intense love and unflinching devotion that can overcome all evils, including the greatest of those, death. Savitri boldly says to the God of Death in the Savitri;

The shallow discourses that we see in India about women's empowerment are in serious need of radical changes. A woman cannot be understood unless we see her for what she fundamentally is, a spiritual force of God at work. Sri Aurobindo's epic poem Savitri, a Legend and Symbol, reflects the victory over many modern women's issues regarding love and honour. A healthy discussion on the portrayal of women in the works of Sri Aurobindo provides a perfect understanding of women's capabilities that have been underestimated due to women's objections to equality, protest against every form of exploitation, equity and biases, and finally, the identification of women and the question of female identity.

I am a woman, a nurse and an enslaved person and a beaten beast.

I tend the hands that gave me cruel blows.

The hearts that spurned my love and zeal I serve;

I am the courted queen, the pampered do

I am the giver of the bowl of rice,

I am the worshipped Angel of the House. (Aurobindo 504)

(C) Women are their liberators

No society, political and religious order or authority can liberate women if they are not empowered themselves. Only they can, like Savitri, liberate themselves. They are not weak or meek, docile and desolate, but instruments of God's fire and forced, equipped with his delight and might, wit and intelligence, exuberance and ecstasy.

"Thus, woman is enslaved to man because of the attraction she feels for the male and his strength, because of the desire for a home and the security it brings, and lastly because of the attachment to motherhood. Man, too, on his side, is enslaved to woman, because of his possessiveness, his thirst for power and domination, because of his desire for sexual relations and because of his attachment to the little comforts and conveniences of married life".
(Mother 103-104)

Empowering women can be understood; neither Savitri's childhood nor her growth was given much importance in the original legend. Instead, the story suddenly "wakes up", as though in a scenario where this daughter turns into a young maiden. She grew up to be so brilliant and intelligent with such a charming personality that she was known as being relatively too strong and brilliant for a typical princess. Therefore, no ordinary prince dared approach her and ask for her hand in Swayamvara. In this ancient Indian custom, a princess was given the liberty to choose her husband among many eligible princes, proving

their valour in an assembly in the court. It was then that one day, Aswapati called her young marriageable daughter and told her to go outside the kingdom to look for her companion. Obeying her father, Savitri ventured out into the world and found her soulmate. When she returned home, it so happened that Devarishi Narada was present in the palace. We know that Rishi Narada does not visit anyone without a purpose. In this case, he knew the future of Savitri. After coming to the court, she declared that she had chosen Satyavan, son of Dyumatsena and would marry him. In today's context of societal perceptions, it is portrayed that women do not have the freedom to look for their soulmate.

Conclusion

Savitri does not fight with weapons, but with courage, spiritual will, and love, defying even Death itself to save her husband. Shakti is not passive or subordinate; She is active, dynamic, and transformative. For Sri Aurobindo, true warriors are not just those who fight external enemies, but those who conquer inner darkness, ego, and ignorance. The spiritual warrior woman fights the battle of the soul; her weapons are wisdom, purity, love, and fearless will. Savitri is called a "Warrior-Mother," not because she kills, but because she challenges the cosmic forces of fate and death with divine force and inner light.

Sri Aurobindo believes that man and woman are spiritually equal: Both are essential aspects of the Divine. He rejects the idea of a woman as secondary. In fact, in his yogic vision, the woman can lead spiritual transformation by invoking the higher powers. The warrior woman symbolises the active participation of women in the world's upliftment, not as helpers but as leaders of transformation. Women's empowerment widely talks about the spiritual, political, social, educational, gender and economic strength of women in their personal and professional lives. The empowerment of women is discussed as an inferior subject in the

gender issues, which seeks to retain its moment not only in India but also in the cosmos. Sri Aurobindo's denial of social and cultural stereotypes remains a target of social reproduction.

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