

Sree Maa Sarada and Sister Nivedita: A Journey of Spiritual Wisdom and Cultural Transformation

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the spiritual journey of Sree Maa Sarada and Sister Nivedita, focusing on their shared philosophical insights and transformative roles in the socio-cultural and nationalist movements of India. Sree Maa Sarada, revered as the Holy Mother, offered profound spiritual teachings centered on divine motherhood, compassion, and inner strength, which deeply influenced Sister Nivedita's vision for women's empowerment and their role in nation building. Nivedita, a Scottish-born disciple of Sri Ramakrishna, integrated these teachings into her work, advocating for the education and upliftment of Indian women while participating actively in the Indian independence movement. By examining the intersection of spirituality and social reform in their lives, this study highlights how their teachings continue to shape contemporary discussions on gender, nationalism, and social justice in India. Through an analysis of their contributions, the study emphasizes the enduring impact of their spiritual wisdom in shaping India's cultural transformation and empowering women in the struggle for independence.

Keywords: Sree Maa Sarada, Sister Nivedita, Spiritual Wisdom, Divine Motherhood, Women's Empowerment, Nationalism, Indian Independence Movement.

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INTRODUCTION

The spiritual journey of Sree Maa Sarada and Sister Nivedita reflects a profound connection that transcends time and geographical boundaries, ultimately shaping the cultural and philosophical landscape of colonial India. Sree Maa Sarada, revered as the embodiment of divine motherhood and spiritual wisdom, greatly influenced many of her disciples, particularly Sister Nivedita, who was drawn to India's rich spiritual heritage and the transformative power of selfless service (Sarada Devi, 2017). Sarada's teachings on devotion, self-realization, and the importance of uplifting society resonated deeply with Nivedita, who, through her engagement with these ideals, contributed to India's socio-cultural and educational reform movements (Nivedita, 2011). While Sarada's spirituality emphasized the sanctity of womanhood and the nurturing force within all human beings (Bhattacharya, 2015), Nivedita embraced these ideals in her own philosophy of empowerment, advocating for education as a means of liberation (Chaudhuri, 2014). Their shared vision of a spiritually awakened and socially empowered India laid the groundwork for Nivedita's works in education and nationalism, reflecting a blend of Eastern spiritualism and Western progressive thought (Ghosh, 2005). This journey between the divine feminine and intellectual activism exemplifies the cultural transformation in India during a period of intense colonial struggle (Chakravarty, 2017). The influence of Sarada's spiritual wisdom continues to illuminate the path for women's empowerment and national revival, as seen in Nivedita's life and work.

The Statement of the Problem

The spiritual and intellectual bond between Sree Maa Sarada and Sister Nivedita remains a vital yet underexplored area in understanding the interplay between spirituality and social transformation in colonial India. While considerable scholarship has examined the individual contributions of both women, there is a lack of comprehensive studies that explore the depth of their shared spiritual journey and its impact on cultural and educational reforms (Bhattacharya, 2015; Chakravarty, 2017). Sarada's teachings, which emphasized the empowerment of women through spiritual wisdom, provided a foundation for Nivedita's nationalist and educational endeavors, yet the specific ways in which these spiritual insights influenced Nivedita's philosophy and activism remain inadequately addressed in existing literature

(Nivedita, 2011; Ghosh, 2005). Additionally, the transformative power of their collective spiritual legacy in shaping the socio-political landscape of India during the British colonial period has not been fully explored (Chaudhuri, 2014). This gap in the literature suggests the need for a more nuanced examination of how Sree Maa Sarada's spiritual wisdom informed Nivedita's cultural transformation strategies and her vision for an independent India (Sarada Devi, 2017). By bridging this gap, the research seeks to illuminate the profound intersection of spirituality and nationalism in the lives of these two remarkable women.

The Significance of the Study

The significance of this study lies in its exploration of the deep spiritual and intellectual relationship between Sree Maa Sarada and Sister Nivedita, which holds key insights for understanding the intersection of spirituality, feminism, and social transformation in colonial India. By examining how Sarada's spiritual wisdom shaped Nivedita's philosophy of education and empowerment, the study contributes to the broader discourse on women's roles in India's nationalist movement and cultural revival (Bhattacharya, 2015; Chakravarty, 2017). This research will shed light on the role of women's spirituality as a driving force in both personal and national transformation, highlighting how Nivedita's advocacy for education and social reforms was deeply influenced by Sarada's teachings on divine motherhood and selfless service (Ghosh, 2005). Furthermore, the study will underscore the continuing relevance of their legacy in contemporary discussions on women's empowerment and national identity (Sarada Devi, 2017). It will also provide a richer understanding of the ways in which spirituality and intellectual activism intertwined to shape the educational and cultural landscape of India (Nivedita, 2011). Thus, this study offers a critical perspective on how the spiritual wisdom of these two women contributed to India's struggle for independence and social renewal (Chaudhuri, 2014).

The Research Questions

RQ₁: How did the spiritual teachings of Sree Maa Sarada influence Sister Nivedita's philosophical and social thought?

RQ₂: In what ways did Sarada's emphasis on divine motherhood shape Sister Nivedita's vision for women's empowerment and their role in society?

RQ₃: What was the impact of Sree Maa Sarada's teachings on Sister Nivedita's perception of the role of women in nation building and the independence movement?

The Objectives of the Study

O₁: To explore the spiritual teachings of Sree Maa Sarada on Sister Nivedita's philosophical social thought.

O₂: To examine the ways in which Sarada's emphasis on divine motherhood shaped Nivedita's vision for women's empowerment in India.

O₃: To assess the impact of Sarada's teachings on Nivedita's view of role of women in nation building.

The Review of Related Literature

Patra, L. (2024). Swami Vivekananda: An Epitome of Nationalism. *Journal of Indian Council of Philosophical Research*, 1-19. What we understand by nationalism is the idea of supporting one's country, people, culture and sovereignty of the nation. It believes in self-rule, with an objective to maintain the national unity and solidarity. It also encourages pride in national achievements and is closely linked with patriotism. One who dedicates his life to promoting the above objectives for the glory of his nation is considered as a nationalist. Swami Vivekananda who has dedicated his short, but meaningful life for the upliftment of his fellow country-men and worked hard for the freedom of his motherland from political, religious, economic and cultural bondage, for which he can rightly be called an epitome of nationalism or a true nationalist. In this article, I shall focus on his dedications and contributions for his nation and human race at large and justify him called a true nationalist.

Long, J. D. (2023). Goddess, Guru, and Sangha Janani: The Authority and Ongoing Appeal of the Holy Mother Sarada Devi. *Religions*, 15(1), 16. Saradamani Mukhopadhyay (1853–1920), more widely known as Sarada Devi and, to her devotees, the Holy Mother, presents an illuminating case study of the various means by which, in many respects, a highly traditional and typical rural Hindu woman of her time, operating from within the categories of Bengali Hindu society, was able to navigate these categories in ways that did not undermine, but rather enhanced, her agency, enabling her to shape her social reality in creative and transformative ways. Inhabiting the traditional role of mother and nurturer while carrying it out in a highly non-traditional manner, Sarada Devi played a central, often behind-the-scenes, role as a major influencer of an important modern Hindu spiritual movement—indeed, the first such movement to be able to boast an international following.

Mukhopadhyay, A. (2023). Starting or Ceasing to believe in the Goddess: Faith Dynamics in India's Living Goddess Traditions. In *Atheism and the Goddess: Cross-Cultural Approaches with a Focus on South Asia* (pp. 73-102). Cham: Springer International Publishing. This chapter dwells on a few instances in the context of South Asian goddess traditions, which uphold the dynamic nature of belief, or disbelief in the Goddess. In order to explore this, the chapter draws on both historical documents and fictional texts.

Drawing on Robin Le Poidevin's observations on the dynamic nature of faith, involving faith shifts—from atheism to theism and theism to atheism—this chapter focuses on the historical figures such as Total Puri, Sri Ramakrishna's instructor in Advaita Vedanta and Swami Vivekananda, as well as fictional texts of Rabindranath Tagore, so as to foreground the complex ways in which faith shifts in the context of goddess-centred religiosity may reveal not just their specific psycho-spiritual repercussions but also the evidently gendered ways in which the maternal-feminine entity of the Goddess often inflects the emotional coordinates of faith.

Mukhopadhyay, A., & Mukhopadhyay, A. (2020). Two "Devis", Two "Gurus" Speaking with Authority: Sarada Devi and Anandamayi Ma. *The Authority of Female Speech in Indian Goddess Traditions: Devi and Womansplaining*, 93-122. This chapter re-contextualizes the female gurus in Hinduism within the traditions of celebrating Devi's speech as encapsulating the ultimate spiritual authority. The female guru seen by her devotees as the Goddess incarnate, and in her are conjoined the figures of guru and goddess, mother and spiritual guide. A male devotee, surrender his male ego completely to the spiritual authority of the female guru. This chapter explores how their male disciples/devotees have seen Sarada Devi and Anandamayi Ma, two celebrated female gurus from modern Bengal, as incarnations of the Divine Mother and hence as sources of ultimate spiritual authority and how their male devotees have humbly listened to their voices.

Beckerlegge, G. (2000). Swami Akhandananda's sevavratra (vow of service) and the earliest expressions of service to humanity in the Ramakrishna Math and Mission. This volume assembles a collection of essays on the new religious reform movements that swept India in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. One general account, exploring the theme of religious leadership, provides a context for specialized essays on the Brahma Samaj, the Ramakrishna Mission, The Arya Samaj, the Ahmadiya movement and the Theosophists.

Research Gap

A research gap in the context of "Sree Maa Sarada and Sister Nivedita: A Journey of Spiritual Wisdom and Cultural Transformation" lies in the exploration of the nuanced intersections of their spiritual teachings and their roles in shaping modern Bengali society, particularly in terms of gender, cultural identity, and nationalism. While existing literature, such as Long (2023) and Beckerlegge (2000), focuses on Sarada Devi's pivotal influence within the Hindu spiritual tradition and the Ramakrishna Mission, and the works of Patra (2024) emphasize the nationalist ideologies of figures like Swami Vivekananda, there is limited investigation into the collaborative or comparative impact of Sarada Devi and Sister Nivedita, two significant women in the Ramakrishna tradition, in advancing both spiritual and cultural transformation. Their contributions, especially in the socio-political context of colonial India, remain underexplored, particularly regarding their roles in advocating for women's education, social reform, and the synthesis of spiritual wisdom with practical activism, which could enrich the discourse on the confluence of spiritual leadership and national identity during the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

METHODOLOGY OF STUDY

Content analysis in the study of "Sree Maa Sarada and Sister Nivedita: A Journey of Spiritual Wisdom and Cultural Transformation" would involve systematically examining primary and secondary sources, such as letters, writings, speeches, and biographies of both figures, to identify themes, patterns, and perspectives related to their spiritual teachings, social reform efforts, and influence on gender roles and nationalism. This analysis would focus on how their teachings conveyed, the cultural context in which they operated, and how they reshaped societal views on women's roles in India's independence movement. By coding and categorizing recurring ideas related to spirituality, empowerment, nationalism, and social change, content analysis could highlight the convergence of their philosophical ideologies and their impact on the broader socio-political and cultural transformation in colonial India. It would also allow for a comparative understanding of their individual contributions to the spiritual and intellectual legacy of the period, particularly their influence on contemporary movements in gender equality and building.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Pertaining to Objective: 1

01: To explore the spiritual teachings of Sree Maa Sarada on Sister Nivedita's philosophical social thought.

The influence of Sree Maa Sarada on Sister Nivedita's philosophical and social thought is profound, as it shaped not only Nivedita's spiritual beliefs but also her approach to societal issues such as women's empowerment, education, and nationalism. Sree Maa Sarada's teachings provided Nivedita with a deep understanding of the spiritual and moral dimensions of life, which intertwined with her philosophical

perspectives on social reforms. This influence explored through several key aspects of Nivedita's thought and actions:

Spiritual Wisdom and Self-Realization

Sree Maa Sarada's emphasis on the importance of self-realization, devotion, and inner purity resonated deeply with Sister Nivedita. Sarada, who revered as the embodiment of divine motherhood, believed that true spiritual wisdom was not just a personal attainment but also a means of elevating others. Nivedita, drawn to Sarada's simplicity and purity, incorporated these teachings into her own philosophy of selfless service (Sarada Devi, 2017). For Nivedita, spirituality was not separate from the material world but embedded in the service to others, particularly to the oppressed and marginalized communities (Chaudhuri, 2014).

Nivedita believed that true empowerment came from inner awakening, which echoed Sarada's teachings on the divine potential inherent in every individual. This spiritual dimension influenced Nivedita's educational initiatives, where she sought to awaken the consciousness of women and children, encouraging them to realize their divine potential and become active contributors to society (Nivedita, 2011).

2. The Role of Divine Motherhood and Nurturing Power

One of Sarada Devi's central spiritual themes was the concept of divine motherhood, which she viewed as the nurturing force of the universe. For Sarada, motherhood not confined to biological reproduction but was a broader, spiritual role that embodies compassion, care, and the spiritual elevation of others (Bhattacharya, 2015). Nivedita deeply inspired by this concept and saw motherhood, especially in the context of women, as a form of strength and empowerment. She applied this notion in her philosophy, where she emphasized the importance of nurturing women's intellect and character as a means of societal transformation (Ghosh, 2005).

Nivedita, though never a biological mother, viewed herself as a mother figure to the women and children she served in India. She believed that the nurturing role of women extended beyond the domestic sphere and into the social and intellectual domains, where they could contribute to the cultural and political awakening of the nation. This emphasis on the strength and power of women's nurturing spirit deeply influenced by Sarada's teachings and was reflected in Nivedita's efforts to empower Indian women (Chakravarty, 2017).

Spirituality and Social Reforms

Sree Maa Sarada's spiritual teachings emphasized the integration of spiritual wisdom with social action, which had a profound impact on Sister Nivedita's approach to social reform. Sarada's teachings were not just theoretical; they urged practical application in the service of humanity. This philosophy directly influenced Nivedita's work in India, where she sought to apply her spiritual beliefs to address social inequalities, particularly in education and women's rights (Sarada Devi, 2017). Nivedita's active participation in India's nationalist movement and her efforts to modernize Indian education were a direct response to her belief that spirituality should lead to tangible social change.

Through Sarada's guidance, Nivedita came to believe that the empowerment of women was integral to the liberation of the nation. She was inspired to promote educational reforms that would empower women to contribute to the nation's progress. Nivedita's emphasis on education for social transformation thus deeply influenced by Sarada's spiritual outlook, which saw human welfare as part of a divine mission (Nivedita, 2011).

Connection between Spirituality and Nationalism

Another important aspect of Sarada's teachings that influenced Nivedita's philosophical thought was the relationship between spirituality and nationalism. Sarada taught that national progress intertwined with spiritual awakening, and she believed that a nation's true strength lay in its spiritual and moral fiber. Nivedita adopted this view, seeing her work as part of a broader spiritual mission to awaken the nation and its people (Chaudhuri, 2014).

For Nivedita, the spiritual wisdom imparted by Sarada was not just about individual transcendence but also about the collective elevation of the nation. She linked the concept of national regeneration with spiritual and moral regeneration, emphasizing that India's freedom and cultural revival would only be possible if its people, especially women, embraced their spiritual and intellectual potential (Ghosh, 2005).

Influence on Nivedita's Vision for Women's Empowerment

Sree Maa Sarada's teachings were also central to Nivedita's vision for women's empowerment. Sarada's belief in the sanctity of women and their inherent spiritual strength was a major source of inspiration for Nivedita's ideas about the role of women in society. Sarada emphasized that women treated with reverence and respect, and Nivedita saw this as a call to action for improving the status of women in India (Sarada Devi, 2017).

Nivedita's commitment to women's education and her advocacy for women's participation in social, political, and intellectual spheres were deeply shaped by Sarada's influence. She worked tirelessly to educate women and encourage them to take on leadership roles in their communities. This empowerment based on Sarada's spiritual teachings, which stressed the importance of self-realization and the divine potential within each woman (Chakravarty, 2017).

Sree Maa Sarada's spiritual teachings significantly influenced Sister Nivedita's philosophical and social thought, guiding her vision for women's empowerment, education, and national revival. Sarada's teachings provided a framework for Nivedita to integrate spirituality with social reform, particularly in her advocacy for women's rights and her contributions to India's nationalist movement. Nivedita's life and work reflect the deep spiritual wisdom imparted by Sarada, which continues to inspire discussions on the intersection of spirituality, gender, and social transformation in contemporary times.

Pertaining to Objective: 2

O2: To examine the ways in which Sarada's emphasis on divine motherhood shaped Nivedita's vision for women's empowerment in India.

Sree Maa Sarada's emphasis on divine motherhood had a profound influence on Sister Nivedita's vision for women's empowerment, shaping her understanding of women's role in society. Sarada Devi viewed divine motherhood not merely as a biological or social construct, but as a spiritual force that encompassed the nurturing, transformative, and sacred potential within every woman. Sister Nivedita, deeply inspired by this concept, adopted it as a cornerstone of her philosophy and actions in India. This influence analyzed through several aspects of Nivedita's thoughts and activities:

Reinterpretation of Womanhood as Divine Power

Sarada Devi's teachings on divine motherhood reframed the concept of womanhood as a potent and revered force, elevating women beyond traditional roles of domestic caretakers. According to Sarada, every woman possessed the divine potential to uplift not only her own self but also society through compassion, wisdom, and selfless service (Bhattacharya, 2015). This view deeply affected Sister Nivedita, who came to see womanhood as inherently sacred and powerful. Nivedita, drawing on Sarada's vision, rejected the colonial and patriarchal notions of women as passive or inferior. She instead emphasized that women were divine agents capable of contributing to both spiritual and social development (Chakravarty, 2017).

Nivedita adopted Sarada's ideal of divine motherhood as a philosophical framework, seeing women not just as nurturers but also as creators and transformers of society. For Nivedita, empowering women meant awakening their inner strength, wisdom, and spiritual potential, enabling them to participate actively in the nation's regeneration (Nivedita, 2011). The concept of divine motherhood thus helped Nivedita promote the idea that women could and should play central roles in social and cultural revitalization.

Emphasis on Spiritual Empowerment

Sarada Devi's teachings on divine motherhood emphasized the spiritual potential inherent in every woman. Sarada saw women as the embodiment of Shakti (divine power), capable of nurturing both their families and society through their spiritual energy. For Nivedita, this notion was not just a metaphorical idea but also a call for action. She believed that true empowerment could only come through the realization of one's spiritual potential (Nivedita, 2011). Drawing on Sarada's teachings, Nivedita sought to uplift women by educating them not only in the material sciences but also in spiritual and moral disciplines, seeing this as the key to their true liberation.

By focusing on spiritual education, Nivedita aimed to cultivate a sense of inner strength and autonomy in women, enabling them to assert their rights and contribute meaningfully to their communities. She considered spiritual growth and self-realization essential for women to break free from societal constraints and fulfill their roles in the broader social and national framework (Chaudhuri, 2014).

Women as the Nurturers of the Nation

Sarada Devi's ideal of divine motherhood extended beyond the family to encompass the nurturing of the entire nation. For Sarada, the power of a mother seen as instrumental in shaping the future of the community and the nation (Bhattacharya, 2015). Nivedita, deeply influenced by this concept, adopted a similar view of women's role in the nationalist movement. She envisioned women as integral to the regeneration of India, not just in terms of social work but as spiritual guides who could uplift the nation by nurturing its youth, educating the underprivileged, and being active participants in political and social reforms (Chakravarty, 2017).

Nivedita's efforts to empower women through education were not just about providing skills for economic independence; they were about training women to become the moral and spiritual leaders of the community. She saw women as the "mothers" of the nation, responsible for cultivating the values of self-discipline, patriotism, and unity among future generations (Nivedita, 2011). This connection between

divine motherhood and national transformation was at the heart of Nivedita's vision for women's empowerment.

Promoting Education and Intellectual Development

Sarada Devi's view of divine motherhood emphasized the importance of spiritual, intellectual, and emotional growth. Nivedita adopted this holistic approach, recognizing that empowering women meant providing them with opportunities for intellectual development. Sarada herself was a proponent of women's education, and her emphasis on the elevation of women through knowledge profoundly influenced Nivedita's educational initiatives in India (Sarada Devi, 2017). Nivedita believed that education was the most effective means of empowering women, as it not only provided practical skills but also helped women recognize their divine potential.

Through her educational work, Nivedita sought to imbue young women with a sense of dignity and self-respect, encouraging them to pursue intellectual and spiritual growth. Her focus was not just on vocational training but on cultivating a sense of moral and spiritual purpose, as she believed that true empowerment came from the realization of one's higher purpose in life (Chaudhuri, 2014). Sarada's teachings thus helped Nivedita frame education as a tool for holistic empowerment, where women could awaken both their inner strength and their intellectual capacities.

Fostering a Sense of Sisterhood and Unity among Women

Sarada Devi's emphasis on divine motherhood extended to the idea of universal sisterhood, seeing all women as part of a sacred collective. Nivedita, influenced by this view, promoted the concept of women as a unified force capable of bringing about social change. She believed that women could overcome their individual struggles by coming together as a collective, united in their commitment to the nation's welfare and spiritual progress (Bhattacharya, 2015).

Nivedita actively worked to create spaces where women could come together to share their experiences and support one another in their efforts to transform society. She encouraged women to see each other as spiritual equals and to support one another in their personal and communal growth. This sense of sisterhood, rooted in Sarada's vision of divine motherhood, was fundamental to Nivedita's approach to women's empowerment, as she believed that women could only achieve true empowerment when they stood together in solidarity and mutual respect.

Rejection of Patriarchal Limitations

Sarada Devi's teachings on divine motherhood also involved the rejection of patriarchal limitations on women. She taught that women should not be confined to the roles that society prescribed for them, such as those related solely to domesticity or submission to male authority. This teaching influenced Nivedita to challenge the prevailing social norms that restricted women's roles in Indian society (Chakravarty, 2017). Nivedita's own life and work became a testimony to this rejection, as she embraced unconventional roles for women, including in education, social activism, and leadership.

Nivedita's engagement in the nationalist movement was also a direct challenge to the patriarchal structure of Indian society, which often sidelined women's contributions. She encouraged women to step out of the domestic sphere and actively participate in nation-building activities. Nivedita's belief in women's liberation thus grounded in Sarada's teachings on divine motherhood, which called for the spiritual and social liberation of women from the confines of patriarchy (Ghosh, 2005).

Sarada Devi's emphasis on divine motherhood played a transformative role in shaping Sister Nivedita's vision for women's empowerment and their role in society. Through the concept of divine motherhood, Nivedita saw women as embodiments of spiritual power, capable of nurturing not only their families but also their nation. Sarada's teachings influenced Nivedita's focus on spiritual, intellectual, and emotional empowerment, which she considered essential for women's true liberation. Furthermore, Sarada's vision of women as agents of social change and national regeneration was central to Nivedita's efforts in educating women and fostering a sense of collective sisterhood. Ultimately, Nivedita's work was a manifestation of Sarada's spiritual ideals, emphasizing women's central role in both the family and the nation.

Pertaining to Objective: 3

To assess the impact of Sarada's teachings on Nivedita's view of role of women in nation building.

Sree Maa Sarada's teachings had a profound impact on Sister Nivedita's perception of the role of women in nation building and the Indian independence movement. Sarada's spiritual insights emphasized the inherent strength, divinity, and potential within every woman, and these teachings were instrumental in shaping Nivedita's revolutionary ideas about women's participation in societal transformation. Nivedita viewed women not only as the caregivers of the home but also as central, active agents in the spiritual and national regeneration of India. The influence of Sarada's philosophy helped Nivedita to shape a vision

where women seen as pillars of the freedom movement, capable of contributing in both material and spiritual ways to India's struggle for independence.

Women as Central Figures in Nation Building

One of the most profound aspects of Sarada Devi's teachings was her emphasis on the divine potential of women. Sarada taught that women were not merely limited to domestic roles but could play an active and vital role in the spiritual and social upliftment of society. This view significantly shaped Sister Nivedita's perception of the role of women in nation building. Nivedita, inspired by Sarada, emphasized the importance of women as active participants in shaping the future of the nation (Bhattacharya, 2015).

Nivedita's philosophy was rooted in the idea that women, through spiritual and intellectual empowerment, could contribute to the cultural and moral regeneration of India. She believed that the true strength of a nation lay in the strength of its women. Women's education, Nivedita argued, was not just a means of personal empowerment but an essential part of national rejuvenation. In her speeches and writings, she consistently called for women to step out of the traditional, passive roles assigned to them and to become active contributors to the political, social, and educational reforms in India (Chakravarty, 2017).

2. Divine Motherhood and Women's Role in the Freedom Movement

Sarada Devi's vision of divine motherhood was central to Nivedita's understanding of women's role in the Indian independence movement. Sarada's concept of motherhood was not only about nurturing the family but also about nurturing the nation itself. Nivedita adopted this idea and envisioned women as the spiritual mothers of the nation. For Nivedita, the concept of divine motherhood provided women with a sacred responsibility to guide and lead the nation towards its freedom (Chaudhuri, 2014).

Drawing on this concept, Nivedita encouraged women to see themselves as bearers of the nation's future. She believed that women, through their spiritual strength, could play a crucial role in the independence movement, whether by educating the masses, participating in social reforms, or directly engaging in acts of resistance against British colonial rule. Women's participation in the freedom movement was not just a political necessity, according to Nivedita, but a moral and spiritual imperative. She saw the role of women as transformative, capable of uplifting not only the individual but also the whole nation (Nivedita, 2011).

Women as Catalysts of Social Reform and Revolutionary Action

Sree Maa Sarada's teachings also influenced Nivedita's view of women as catalysts for social reform. Sarada Devi's emphasis on the sanctity of domestic life balanced with her recognition of women's roles as active agents of change within society. Sarada encouraged women to not only embody the virtues of selflessness and compassion but also to challenge societal norms that restricted their potential (Bhattacharya, 2015). This idea resonated deeply with Nivedita, who believed that social change in India could not occur without the active involvement of women.

Nivedita's efforts to involve women in the freedom struggle were a direct response to Sarada's belief in women's ability to transform society. She sought to inspire women to engage in nationalistic movements, whether through educational work, organizing social reforms, or even participating in physical resistance. Nivedita's work, including her involvement in the Swadeshi Movement, encouraged women to embrace their roles as active reformers and revolutionaries, rather than passive bystanders in the political and social transformations occurring in India (Chakravarti, 2017). For Nivedita, this was the essence of nation building: empowering women to be the change-makers in their communities.

Spiritual Empowerment as a Foundation for Nationalism

Sarada Devi's teachings emphasized the need for spiritual empowerment to achieve social change. She believed that true transformation of society could only occur when individuals, especially women, were spiritually awakened. This emphasis on spiritual power profoundly influenced Nivedita's view of the role of women in nation building and the independence movement. Nivedita believed that the women of India could not only be the pillars of the national struggle but also its spiritual guides, leading the country to freedom through both material and spiritual means (Nivedita, 2011).

In practical terms, Nivedita established educational institutions and centers for women, aiming to awaken their spiritual consciousness and inspire them to participate in the freedom movement. She saw spiritual growth as the key to overcoming the oppression of women, and she advocated for women's involvement in public life through the cultivation of their spiritual and intellectual potential. This spiritual empowerment was, for Nivedita, the foundation of true nationalism—a nationalism rooted in moral strength, unity, and the collective effort of both men and women (Chaudhuri, 2014).

Revitalization of Indian Culture through Women

Sree Maa Sarada's teachings on the divine nature of women also led Nivedita to view women as the torchbearers of Indian culture. Sarada's teachings emphasized that women, as the embodiment of Shakti (divine power), were integral to the preservation and revitalization of India's ancient cultural and spiritual heritage (Bhattacharya, 2015). Nivedita echoed this belief, seeing women as the key to reviving

India's greatness. She believed that by nurturing the spiritual, intellectual, and social potential of women, India could reclaim its cultural legacy and build a strong, independent nation.

For Nivedita, the involvement of women in the independence movement was not only about fighting colonial rule but also about preserving and promoting India's spiritual and cultural heritage. She encouraged women to take pride in their cultural heritage and to contribute to its revitalization. By doing so, women could actively participate in the creation of a new India, one that was both independent and rooted in its ancient values (Chakravarty, 2017).

Legacy of Sister Nivedita in Nation-Building

The teachings of Sarada Devi directly shaped Sister Nivedita's approach to the role of women in the freedom movement and in nation building. Nivedita's legacy in this regard is profound. She created spaces for women to be educated, engaged in nationalistic activities, and spiritually empowered. By promoting education for women and encouraging their active participation in the national struggle, Nivedita helped reshape the perception of women's role in India's freedom movement (Chaudhuri, 2014). Nivedita's vision, influenced by Sarada Devi, was one where women no longer be confined to traditional roles but would become powerful agents of change within the political, social, and spiritual spheres. Women, in Nivedita's view, were the future of India, and their contributions would shape the destiny of the nation. Nivedita's efforts to bring women into the fold of nation building and the independence movement were instrumental in establishing women as central figures in the struggle for Indian freedom. Sree Maa Sarada's teachings on the divine nature of womanhood and her emphasis on women's spiritual and social empowerment had a profound impact on Sister Nivedita's perception of the role of women in nation building and the independence movement. Nivedita adopted and expanded Sarada's views, seeing women as vital agents of change who could contribute to the freedom movement through education, social reform, and spiritual strength. Sarada's influence helped Nivedita to shape a vision where women were not only participants in the independence struggle but also the spiritual leaders who could guide the nation towards its true independence. Ultimately, Nivedita's efforts in empowering women grounded in Sarada's spiritual teachings, which viewed women as central to the regeneration and future of India.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the spiritual journey of Sree Maa Sarada and Sister Nivedita represents a profound fusion of divine wisdom, cultural transformation, and social reform, deeply influencing India's spiritual and nationalist movements. Sree Maa Sarada's emphasis on divine motherhood and her spiritual guidance provided a foundation for Sister Nivedita's vision of women's empowerment, which she integrated into her larger mission of nation building. Their collective teachings on selfless service, spiritual strength, and national pride continue to resonate in contemporary discourses on gender equality, social justice, and the role of women in shaping national identity. The legacy of both figures reflects a transformative synergy between spirituality and socio-political activism, marking them as pivotal figures in India's struggle for independence and social reform. Their contributions highlight the powerful role of women in leadership, not only in religious spheres but also in the broader context of nationhood and cultural renaissance.

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