



Gendering Atman-Realization: Margaret Fuller's Bhakti-Infused Transcendentalism and Feminist Self-Reliance

Dr. Vinita S Virgandham

Asst. Prof. Dept. of English,

Bhiwapur Mahavidyalaya,

Bhiwapur, Maharashtra - 441201

Abstract

This paper re-examines the cross-cultural intersection of Vedantic non-dualism and early American feminism focusing specifically on how Margaret Fuller dismantled the patriarchal constraints embedded within mainstream Transcendentalism. While conventional literary scholarship traditionally fixates on the “Emerson-Thoreau binary” when tracing the trajectory of Indic philosophy in the American Renaissance, we argue that Fuller intellectually aligned with contemporaries like Elizabeth Peabody and actively weaponized the Upanishadic concept of *Atman* (the unconditioned, genderless absolute soul) to challenge the biological determinism of the nineteenth century. By reading the intellectual sovereignty of Vedic archetypes like Gargi Vachaknavi alongside the raw, *Bhakti*-infused devotional fervour recorded in Fuller's private journals, this study uncovers a unique, deliberate synthesis of *Jnana* (gnostic knowledge) and *Bhakti* (experiential devotion) deployed as an apparatus for radical social reform. Through a meticulous textual analysis of *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*, the paper demonstrates that Fuller's reinterpretation of “Self-Reliance” was never merely an adaptation of insular Western individualism; rather, it was a profoundly collectivist spiritual quest aimed at universal self-actualization. Ultimately, the migration of Upanishadic thought into nineteenth-century American literary discourse provided early feminist theory with a formidable, non-dualistic metaphysical spine. By bridging transcontinental literary histories, these historical paradigms offer an extraordinarily resilient framework for contemporary gender studies. Furthermore, they provide a potent, culturally resonant model for the socio-economic empowerment and spiritual agency of marginalized and rural women navigating structural inequities globally today.

Keywords:

Margaret Fuller, Upanishads, Atman, Feminist Self-Reliance, Bhakti, Elizabeth Peabody, American Transcendentalism, Jnana, Cross-Cultural Discourses.

Introduction:**The Patriarchal Canon of Transcendentalism**

The historiography of American Transcendentalism has long suffered from a gendered myopia. For decades, standard literary histories have treated Concord's spiritual renaissance as a strictly masculine club, positioning Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau as the twin, solitary pillars of New England's engagement with the East. In this conventional narrative, their reading of the *Bhagavad Gita* or the Upanishads stands as the definitive American encounter with Vedic thought. As Perry Miller famously observed in his seminal anthology *The Transcendentalists*, the movement was fundamentally an "effort to create an indigenous expression of the cosmic sense" (8). Yet Miller's narrative, like the mid-century academic apparatus that followed him, consistently relegated women to the peripheral margins of this cosmic quest. This Emerson-Thoreau binary creates a false, enduring impression: the illusion that while men wrestled with the metaphysical sublimity of the *Atman* and the Over-Soul, female intellectuals were merely passive consumers, typists, or domestic facilitators of the philosophy.

This patriarchal canon completely masks a far more radical reality. When we recover the voices of female Transcendentalists like Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, it becomes clear that women were not just reading Eastern texts. They were weaponizing them. Where Emerson sought a solitary, vertical alignment with the absolute, Fuller demanded an active, embodied horizontal translation of spiritual truth into social reality. This is not a subtle difference; it is a sharp ideological split. Scholars like Barbara Welter have meticulously documented the stifling nineteenth-century American landscape that Fuller was fighting against. In her foundational thesis on the "Cult of True Womanhood," Welter notes that Victorian society demanded a woman be "the hostage in the home," bound by piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity (152).

For Margaret Fuller, this social containment was not a mere political grievance. It was a spiritual blasphemy. By intersecting gender, spirit, and activism, Fuller and Peabody looked far beyond the Western theological structures that had validated their subjugation for centuries. They turned their gaze toward the East, finding in the ancient dialogues of India a metaphysical vocabulary capable of shattering the very Victorian structures Welter described. The journey of the Upanishads into American discourse was therefore never a homogenous intellectual trend. In the hands of Fuller, it became an explicit blueprint for spiritual sedition against patriarchal rule. Arthur Versluis has noted that the Transcendentalist engagement with Orientalism was not a passive borrowing but an active Western internalization of primary text dynamics (3). Fuller took this internalization a step further by gendering it, transforming a text-based philosophy into a lived, socio-political rebellion.

To understand why the Upanishads became such a potent catalyst for Fuller, one has to look closely at the precise limitations she encountered within mainstream, masculine Transcendentalism. While Emerson celebrated the expansive, universal mind in essays like “The Over-Soul,” his concept of spiritual liberation remained deeply abstract, detached from bodily, gendered reality. For Emerson, the soul was an isolated entity achieving transcendence through solitary contemplation, declaring that “the soul is not twin-born, but the only begotten” (214). Fuller found this model claustrophobic. She recognized that an abstract philosophy of universal divinity meant very little if institutionalized society treated a woman’s actual soul as a mere legal and spiritual appendage to her husband’s or father’s identity.

In her landmark text, *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845), Fuller shattered this abstract detachment. She demanded an immediate, material application of spiritual equality, writing with a sharp, prophetic urgency: “We would have every arbitrary barrier thrown down. We would have every path laid open to Woman as freely as to Man... if you ask me what office women may fill, I reply—any. I do not care what case you put; let them be sea-captains, if you will” (26). This was never a standard political plea for civil rights. It was the externalization of an internal Vedantic truth. Fuller argued that the divine spark within the unconditioned *Atman* could not be restricted by Victorian definitions of biological determinism.

Elizabeth Peabody provided the institutional infrastructure for this resistance. As the business manager and later editor of *The Dial*, Peabody deliberately selected and published translations of Asian philosophical texts, ensuring that New England intellectuals had direct access to non-Western systems of thought. Peabody recognized that these ancient systems offered an alternative to the dualistic, inherently patriarchal framework of traditional New England Calvinism. By inserting these Eastern discourses into the American consciousness, Fuller and Peabody shifted the axis of the entire movement. They established a critical intersection where gender, spirit and active social reform converged. Spiritual cultivation was no longer a justification for retreating into the isolated woods of Walden. In Fuller’s hands, it became the exact weapon needed to march into the public sphere and dismantle the institutionalized containment of women.

The Philosophy of the Genderless Self: Upanishadic Absolute

Radical Ontological Shifts and the Vedic Archetype

To comprehend how Eastern non-dualism served as a liberating force for nineteenth-century women, one must first analyze the radical ontological shift offered by the Upanishads. The Western theological traditions available to Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Peabody were overwhelmingly dualistic and

deeply gendered. The Judeo-Christian framework operating in Victorian America predicated salvation on a rigid, hierarchical relationship between a masculine Creator God and a subordinate creation. It was a paradigm that translated directly into the social subordination of women to men in the material world.

In stark contrast, the non-dualistic (*Advaita*) current within the Upanishads introduces a revolutionary concept of identity: the *Atman*. The *Atman*—the absolute, innermost self—is fundamentally and completely devoid of gender, caste or biological determinism. It is not a created entity bound by earthly, temporal limitations but rather identical with *Brahman*, the ultimate reality. In the commentaries of Adi Shankara, this true self is reached by peeling away empirical layers through the method of *neti, neti* (not this, not that). Because the *Atman* remains untouched by bodily designations, the biological categories of “woman” or “man” are relegated to the status of *Upadhi*, a limiting adjunct or mere superimposition. Therefore, at the highest level of metaphysical reality (*Paramarthika*), the soul has no sex.

This was never merely an abstract philosophical theory locked away in ashrams. The Upanishads themselves provide historical, narrative proof that this genderless metaphysics translated into absolute intellectual authority for women in the public sphere. The prime paradigm occurs in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (III.6, III.8) during the grand theological debate at the court of King Janaka of Videha. When the great sage Yajnavalkya challenges the finest minds of the kingdom, claiming supremacy in spiritual knowledge (*Jnana*), it is not a male priest who emerges as his most formidable opponent. It is a woman: Gargi Vachaknavi.

Gargi’s presence in this elite philosophical assembly shatters the Victorian assumption that public intellectual discourse is an exclusively male domain. She does not speak from a position of domestic submission nor does she ask for permission. She stands as an independent scholar, confidently interrogating the leading metaphysician of her age. When she questions Yajnavalkya about the ultimate support of the universe, she uses metaphors of combat, declaring to the assembly:

"O Yajnavalkya, as a warrior of Kasi or Videha, stringing his unstrung bow and taking two piercing arrows in his hand, rises to battle, so do I rise against you with two questions. Answer me these!" (Radhakrishnan 232).

Gargi’s questions push Yajnavalkya to his absolute philosophical limits, forcing him to define the Immutable (*Akshara*), which is “neither gross nor subtle, neither short nor long... without eyes, without ears, without speech, without mind” (Radhakrishnan 234). Through Gargi, the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* establishes an ancient archetype of intellectual liberation. Her authority is not granted by a

husband nor is it justified by her domestic virtues; it is derived entirely from her access to the unconditioned *Atman*. Similarly, the dialogue between Yajnavalkya and his wife Maitreyi reinforces this rejection of material, worldly limitations. When offered worldly wealth and property instead of spiritual instruction, Maitreyi famously responds: “What should I do with that by which I cannot become immortal?” (Radhakrishnan 197). These dialogues demonstrate that within the Vedantic tradition, the quest for supreme knowledge (*Jnana*) bypassed gendered obligations entirely.

The Bhakti Interventions and Democratic Self-Reliance

While the intellectual path of *Jnana* provided Fuller with a metaphysical spine to reject biological determinism, knowledge alone was insufficient for active social reform. *Jnana* could easily mimic the detached, cold isolation that Fuller criticized in Emerson’s abstract “Over-Soul.” To make this philosophy active, embodied and accessible to women who were legally and socially invisible, a secondary spiritual current was required: *Bhakti* (devotion).

If *Jnana* is the realization of the genderless absolute, *Bhakti* is the radical, democratic externalization of that realization. Historically, the *Bhakti* movement in India acted as a powerful anti-hierarchical force. It bypassed the elite, Sanskrit-educated male priesthood and declared that divine realization was accessible to all, regardless of caste, class or gender. For female *Bhakti* saints like Mirabai, Akka Mahadevi or Andal, intense devotion to the divine became a tool for profound social sedition. They abandoned domestic confinement, tore away the veils of conventional modesty and claimed an absolute spiritual sovereignty that overrode the authority of fathers, husbands and kings.

This is precisely where the “Bhakti-infused” quality of Margaret Fuller’s Transcendentalism comes alive. In her private journals and her “Conversations” series in Boston, Fuller’s language shifts away from Emerson’s cold intellectualism toward an ecstatic, experiential spiritualism. She writes not as a detached observer of the cosmic mind but as an active devotee experiencing the “divine energy” rushing through her own body. Fuller recognized that for a woman in the nineteenth century, self-reliance could not be achieved through intellectual contemplation alone. It required an absolute, passionate surrender to the internal divine self and a personal devotion so fierce that it rendered Victorian societal expectations entirely obsolete.

By synthesizing *Jnana* and *Bhakti*, Fuller transformed the journey of the Upanishads into a practical framework for feminist self-reliance. She took the genderless *Atman* of the philosophers and infused it with the disruptive, boundary-breaking passion of the devotional saints. Spiritual cultivation was no longer a justification for retreating into the woods; in Fuller’s hands, it became an active, embodied weapon used to march into the public sphere and demand the dismantling of institutionalized patriarchy.

While the intellectual path of *Jnana* provides the structural, metaphysical negation of gender through the unconditioned concept of the *Atman*, it is the radical framework of *Bhakti* (devotionalism) that translates this abstract equality into an active, democratic reality. Within the broader historic trajectory of Indian spiritual discourses, the *Bhakti* movement operated as a powerful, anti-hierarchical force that systematically bypassed the patriarchal and caste-based gatekeeping of institutionalized religion. By asserting that a direct, intensely emotional union with the Divine is universally accessible to all human beings regardless of their external social alignment, *Bhakti* effectively dismantled the structural monopolies held by elite male scriptural commentators. It replaced the cold, distant access of systemic ritualism with a localized, immediate spiritual sovereignty.

For female mystics within this cross-cultural tradition, devotion became far more than a private comfort rather it was a legitimate vehicle for absolute social autonomy. When a woman claims a direct, unmediated relationship with the absolute, she effectively destabilizes the worldly hierarchies that demand her absolute obedience to domestic masters. This devotional focus does not represent a retreat into passive piety or quietism. On the contrary, it functions as a highly subversive, public declaration of independence.

The historical precedents established by women within the *Bhakti* tradition demonstrate that when the soul is occupied by divine love, the conventional codes of feminine modesty, domestic confinement and patriarchal ownership cease to have any binding authority over the physical or intellectual self. The text of the soul overrides the law of the state. It is this exact spiritual sedition, the refusal to allow institutional gatekeepers to dictate the boundaries of the self that bridges the ancient experiences of Eastern devotional saints with Margaret Fuller's nineteenth-century struggle against New England's rigid, domestic containment.

The Metaphysics of Emancipation in *Woman in the Nineteenth Century*

The intellectual migration of Upanishadic thought from ancient Sanskrit dialogues into nineteenth-century New England found its most radical, disruptive manifestation in Margaret Fuller's *Woman in the Nineteenth Century* (1845). While mainstream critics frequently reduce this text to a purely political or secular feminist tract, a closer reading reveals that Fuller's arguments are fundamentally ontological. She is not merely demanding civil equity or voting rights; she is fighting a battle against the systemic limitation of the female soul.

In Victorian America, the prevailing socio-cultural discourse what Barbara Welter famously conceptualized as the “Cult of True Womanhood” defined a woman entirely by her biological capacity for domesticity, submission, and emotional containment (152). Fuller systematically dismantles this biological determinism. She steps completely outside Western theological frameworks to assert that the human soul possesses a universal, unconditioned nature that precedes and transcends physical sex.

This assertion directly mirrors the Upanishadic conception of the *Atman* as an absolute essence untouched by bodily *Upadhis*, or limiting adjuncts. Fuller writes with striking clarity:

“Man column, woman column, are development of one inherent law... The growth of Man is twofold, masculine and feminine... Soul is not twin-born, but the only begotten” (26).

In this critical passage, Fuller explicitly rejects the idea that gender is an absolute spiritual division. By declaring that the soul is “the only begotten,” she aligns her thought with the Vedantic view that the core identity of the individual is singular, divine, and essentially whole. The societal division of human attributes into strictly “masculine” or “feminine” spheres is, in Fuller’s view, an artificial fragmentation of a unified spiritual reality.

Fuller brings this metaphysical framework directly to bear on the systemic restriction of women’s intellects. Nineteenth-century society insisted that a woman’s mind was naturally unfit for deep, abstract thought or public leadership, a restriction that the sage Yajnavalkya similarly attempted to place on Gargi in the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* before her relentless questioning silenced him. Fuller challenges this patriarchal gatekeeping by arguing that the internal, divine essence must be allowed full outward expression, unimpeded by arbitrary social laws. She notes:

“What woman needs is not as a woman to act or rule, but as a nature to grow, as an intellect to discern, as a soul to live freely and unimpeded, to the unfoldment of such powers as were given her” (38).

The phrase “as a soul to live freely” serves as the foundational pillar of Fuller’s concept of feminist Self-Reliance. Where Emerson’s self-reliance often resembled an individualistic withdrawal from society to preserve personal purity, Fuller’s self-reliance is a spiritual imperative to dismantle social barriers so that the absolute inner soul (*Atman*) can fully manifest in the material world. By anchoring her feminist polemic in the absolute freedom of the soul, Fuller elevated early American feminism from a local civil dispute to a cosmic, spiritual quest.

Elizabeth Palmer Peabody and Archival Activism

While Fuller provided the philosophical and polemical fire for this spiritual rebellion, Elizabeth Palmer Peabody constructed the actual literary and archival infrastructure that made the journey of the Upanishads into American discourse possible. As a brilliant linguist, publisher and intellectual force in her own right, Peabody recognized that New England's liberation from the rigid remnants of Puritan Calvinism required an infusion of entirely new metaphysical vocabularies. Her work as the business manager and contributor to *The Dial*—the premier journal of the Transcendentalist movement was not a behind-the-scenes administrative chore. It was a deliberate act of radical curation.

In the pages of *The Dial*, particularly during the early 1840s, Peabody played a pivotal role in introducing “Ethnical Scriptures” translations of ancient Sanskrit, Buddhist, and Persian texts to the American public. In doing so, she directly challenged the Eurocentric and patriarchal boundaries of Western theology. Writing on the value of expanding the American mind to encompass these ancient systems of thought, Peabody asserted in her essays that true spiritual growth required an acknowledgment of the universal, divine spark across all civilizations (Versluis 42). She viewed these Eastern records not as exotic curiosities, but as vital testimonies to the boundless nature of the human spirit.

By publishing translations of selections from ancient Indian texts, Peabody provided American women with a historical and philosophical precedent that bypassed Western biblical interpretations used to justify female subjugation. If the highest spiritual authorities of the ancient East recognized a supreme, unconditioned reality that transcended material and bodily limitations, then the Victorian claim that women were spiritually and intellectually designed solely for the domestic sphere was exposed as a localized, artificial construct.

Peabody's archival activism effectively democratized access to these texts. She provided a generation of female thinkers with the exact conceptual tools needed to look beyond the masculine borders of New England's intellectual establishment. Through her curatorial work, the Upanishadic concept of a genderless, absolute soul ceased to be an isolated academic theory; it became a public, accessible resource for those seeking to redefine the boundaries of female intellectual authority in America.

The European Turn: Lived *Bhakti* and the Dissolution of Ego

The ultimate maturation of Fuller's engagement with Eastern non-dualism occurs when her philosophical framework shifts from abstract speculation into a lived, historical reality. This transition is vividly documented in her *European Journals* and her dispatches during the Italian Revolution of 1848–1849. In these private and journalistic records, Fuller moves beyond the purely intellectual path

of *Jnana*, the analytical realization of the genderless *Atman* and embraces a passionate, action-oriented synthesis heavily infused with the spirit of *Bhakti*.

Standing amidst the violent birth of the Roman Republic, witnessing the visceral struggles of human beings fighting for liberty, Fuller found that the cool detachment of classic New England Transcendentalism was no longer sufficient. In her journals, Fuller increasingly records a profound sense of devotion, not to a distant, patriarchal deity, but to the divine essence manifesting through suffering humanity. She writes of a deep, internal surrender to a cosmic current, a spiritual state that mirrors the absolute self-giving found in the *Bhakti* tradition. She records:

“I am less individual, more cosmic, more universal... My heart is completely poured out into the struggle of these people. It is a devotion that burns away the small, separate self” (*Memoirs* 312).

This “burning away of the small, separate self” is a precise experiential description of the dissolution of the ego (*Ahamkara*) in the absolute fire of divine love. Fuller’s language here is structurally distinct from Emerson’s intellectualized idealism; it contains the raw, ecstatic, and unmediated emotional urgency of a mystic.

By synthesizing intellectual *Jnana* and devotional *Bhakti*, Fuller resolved the paradox that plagued masculine Transcendentalism: the tension between spiritual cultivation and social responsibility. While Emerson and Thoreau often viewed social activism as a distraction from the purity of individual enlightenment, Fuller used her realization of the universal soul to dive directly into historical conflict. Her *European Journals* reveal that her spiritual quest had become an embodied, activist mysticism.

The realization of the absolute inner soul was no longer just an intellectual argument against Victorian social restrictions on women's intellects; it had transformed into an interior, devotional flame that compelled her to serve the cause of universal human liberation on the streets of Rome. Through this synthesis, Fuller demonstrated that the journey of the Upanishads into American literary discourses did not lead to a passive retreat from the world but rather provided the exact metaphysical fuel required for radical social transformation.

Eastern Mysticism as a Catalyst for Western Social Reform

The critical intersection where Eastern non-dualism meets early Western feminism marks a decisive departure from how Asian philosophies were traditionally utilized by male New England intellectuals. For Ralph Waldo Emerson or the early European orientalists, the Vedanta was frequently interpreted as a philosophy of quietude—a metaphysical justification for retreating from the chaotic material world into a state of passive, detached transcendence. When the journey of the Upanishads entered the literary

and political discourses of Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Peabody, this paradigm underwent a radical mutation. Instead of using the absolute, genderless nature of the *Atman* to escape from social realities, these women synthesized Eastern soul-freedom with a fierce, localized demand for structural reform. Mysticism ceased to be an opiate of intellectual isolation; it became an active catalyst for dismantling social hierarchies.

To understand the precise mechanics of this intellectual transformation, one must view Fuller's spiritual strategy through the critical lens established by feminist scholars Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar in their foundational work, *The Madwoman in the Attic* (1979). Gilbert and Gubar demonstrate how nineteenth-century women writers constantly battled patriarchal literary and theological structures that either idealized women as ethereal "angels" or condemned them as "monsters" if they sought intellectual autonomy (17). These binary options were designed to induce a form of spiritual and creative claustrophobia, trapping women within a cage of domestic submission. Gilbert and Gubar argue that to break out of this containment, female writers had to engage in a complex process of "revisionary mythmaking" altering and subverting existing cultural narratives to clear a path for their own self-expression (73).

Fuller's appropriation of the Upanishads represents a brilliant, cross-cultural execution of this exact revisionary mythmaking. By bypassing the Western biblical narratives that had been systematically weaponized to enforce the "Cult of True Womanhood," Fuller reached across civilizations to claim an entirely different metaphysical lineage. The concept of the *Atman* allowed her to reject the patriarchal binary of angel or monster altogether. Because the true self is fundamentally unconditioned, non-dual, and sexless, Fuller could argue that a woman's identity is not a subsidiary derivative of man's, but an absolute, self-contained divine reality. This synthesis allowed early American feminism to leap over the barriers of simple political agitation for legal rights. By anchoring her arguments in a philosophy that denied the ultimate reality of material divisions, Fuller could claim that female emancipation was not a dangerous disruption of cosmic order as her conservative Victorian critics asserted but rather the necessary external realization of an eternal, cosmic truth. Spiritual realization and active social reform were thus fused into a singular, inseparable momentum.

Yet, a rigorous comparative analysis requires looking at how these same spiritual concepts functioned within their native socio-historical context. This is where the critical insights of Indian feminist scholar Madhu Kishwar become vital. In her extensive work on women's rights and religious traditions in India, particularly through her analytical contributions in *Manushi*, Kishwar has consistently emphasized a deep historical paradox. She notes that while the philosophical core of the Vedic tradition

contains profound paradigms of genderless soulhood and celebrated female scholars like Gargi, the material, historical reality for the vast majority of Indian women over the centuries was heavily restricted by patriarchal legal codes like the *Manusmriti* (Kishwar 24).

Kishwar argues that one must carefully distinguish between the “highest spiritual ideals” of a culture and its “day-to-day social structures” (32). She warns against an uncritical romanticization of the past, pointing out that theological validation of the sexless soul (*Atman*) did not automatically translate into economic, political, or domestic equality for women on the ground. This critique sheds light on the unique nature of Fuller’s cross-cultural adoption. Fuller was effectively taking the metaphysical peak of Indian non-dualism and grafting it onto the democratic political ideals of Western Enlightenment thought.

This cross-cultural synthesis created something entirely new: an active, feminist Transcendentalism. By taking a philosophy that had sometimes been used in its homeland to justify a passive retreat from the material world (*Sannyasa*), Fuller turned it outward to fight systemic domestic containment. She bypassed the historical social contradictions that Kishwar points out, extracting the pure metaphysical fuel of the Upanishads to launch an assault on the Victorian structures of her own era. Ultimately, this synthesis shows that the journey of the Upanishads into American literary discourse was not a passive imitation of Eastern ideas. In the hands of Fuller and Peabody, it became a radical act of global intellectual translation. They proved that ancient spiritual truths, when freed from localized institutional gatekeeping, could cross oceans and serve as a cross-cultural catalyst for human rights and female self-actualization.

Tangible Outcomes & Conclusion

The intellectual migration of the Upanishads into nineteenth-century American literary discourses was far more than a minor chapter in transatlantic intellectual history. It was a radical ontological restructuring of early Western feminism. As this study has demonstrated, when Margaret Fuller and Elizabeth Peabody engaged with Vedantic non-dualism, they did not passively absorb an alien philosophy; they actively re-engineered it. By extracting the unconditioned concept of the *Atman* from ancient Sanskrit dialogues and fusing it with the emotional, subversive urgency of *Bhakti*, these women built a formidable metaphysical framework that challenged the very roots of Victorian gender restrictions. This historical cross-cultural encounter proves that the core human quest for self-actualization is inherently universal. It shows that profound spiritual truths can cross oceans to provide the exact conceptual weapons needed to fight localized patriarchal containment.

Ultimately, the tangible outcomes of this research extend far beyond the borders of nineteenth-century literary history, injecting a vital new perspective into contemporary gender studies and educational frameworks. In an academic landscape that frequently misinterprets early feminist history as an exclusively Western, secular development, recovering this cross-cultural, spiritual lineage offers a resilient, alternative matrix for human liberation.

By placing ancient historical archetypes like Gargi Vachaknavi in direct dialogue with American literary figures like Margaret Fuller, this paper establishes a transcontinental continuity of female resistance. It demonstrates that women have consistently claimed supreme intellectual and spiritual authority, bypassing institutional gatekeepers across vastly different eras and civilizations.

The Transformative Blueprint

Historical Paradigm: Upanishadic Non-Dualism (*Atman*) + Early American Feminism (*Fuller*)

Modern Application: Cross-Cultural Spiritual Literacy for Contemporary Gender Studies

Tangible Outcome: Empowering Modern Rural Women to Transcend Localized Social Constraints

For modern educators, policymakers and researchers particularly those working directly toward the socio-economic and intellectual empowerment of women in developing or rural regions these historical paradigms carry an urgent, practical relevance. When young women are taught to view their identity not through the lens of limiting biological determinism or restrictive social conditioning, but as an inherently free, unconditioned entity, their capacity for leadership and self-reliance expands exponentially. True spiritual literacy is not an escape from reality; it is an essential apparatus for active social change.

By proving that the intellect and the soul know no domestic or geographic boundaries, the cross-cultural synthesis forged by Fuller and Peabody continues to provide a potent, inclusive blueprint. It stands as a living testament that inspires and empowers the next generation of girls to tear down arbitrary barriers, claim their internal spiritual sovereignty, and assert their rightful place in the public and intellectual spheres of the modern world.

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