

# Political Involvement of Sister Nivedita and its Educational Importance in Present Indian Society

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**Abstract:** *Sister Nivedita, always have been one of the renowned personalities in India since her arrival to this country. She was not an Indian by birth but after experiencing the diversity of India, she did not return to her motherland and decided to devote herself completely for this beautiful land. India was under British rule at that time. The socio economic and educational atmosphere here was not as good as European countries. As a European, Nivedita felt the differences between these two countries and she dreamed to work hard to make India better. She strongly believed in the ideologies of Swami Vivekananda and actively involved in different activities to make people educate and aware regarding various drawbacks of their life. She loved the people of India very much. In a very short span of time, Nivedita became very much familiar with Indian philosophy, traditions, literature, culture by following the views of Swami Vivekananda. After assimilating such things, she involved herself in various social and political activities. Association with several important educated and dignified personalities of India, helped her to achieve the pre-determined goals quite easily.*

*In this research paper, researcher tries to find out about the pre-determined goals of Sister Nivedita, her political contribution in India and also to analyze the educational importance of her political thought in present society. For conducting this study, researcher uses various primary and secondary sources such as letters, books, journals, articles, documents and also various important online data.*

**Key Words:** *Sister Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda, British, Philosophy, Research, India, Motherland, Socio-economic, Education, Culture, Literature, Tradition.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION:

Irish quin sister Nivedita came for reawakening the masses of India. As a daughter of a college professor, she learned from her father the ideal of service to mankind as the true service to God. Nivedita first time came India in 1898. Before coming to Kolkata she met Swami Vivekananda in London in the year 1895. First few days in India Nivedita was taught by Swamiji about India and its people. Swami Vivekananda helped her to love the people of India. Swamiji explained very deeply to sister Nivedita about India's history, philosophy, literature, the life of the common masses, social traditions, and also the lives of great personalities, both ancient and modern. After observing the socio-economic situation of India she fully involved in various social and political activities and dedicated with her best for the development of Indian society. She contributed a lot for empowering the women in India.

## 2. Objectives of the Study:

Major objectives of the study are as follows:

- To analyze the pre-determined goals of Sister Nivedita for making India better.
- To explore the political contribution of Sister Nivedita.
- To analyze the educational importance of her political thought in present Indian society.

## 3. Methodology of the Study:

For conducting this study, researcher uses various primary and secondary sources such as letters, books, journals, articles, documents and also various important online materials.

## 4. The Context of India during Nivedita's Time:

During Nivedita's time, the rule of the British Raj was well consolidated in India. Having absorbed the shock of the Revolt of 1857, the imperial government had made deep inroads into Indian society. The English education system that was introduced in the country, largely replacing the traditional system in India. The main intention was to make clerks for them. But a group of educated Indians raised their voice against this system. They started questioning about different issues especially from the point of view of economic exploitation. Peasant unrest in the country was a natural outcome of land reforms and agrarian policies under the British. The Indian National Congress (INC) was founded in 1885 in order to articulate the grievances of educated Indians against government policies. In course of time, there

emerged a more radical section within the Congress who were dissatisfied with the petition culture of the Congress and were willing to undertake a more high-pitched struggle against the British. At that moment (1898) Nivedita arrived, Calcutta, and then Calcutta was the capital of India. It was the hotbed of politics and the rising tide of nationalism. The involvement of Sister Nivedita in Indian nationalism was a quiver of Indian politics. Nivedita was also emerged as a major theorist of Indian nationality. Her contribution to the discourse of Indian nationhood has been practically ignored by mainstream academia, despite the fact that she engaged with this issue in great depth and breadth.

### **5. Nivedita's Contribution to Indian Nationalism:**

Sister Nivedita deeply involved in the Indian national movement. She was on good terms with INC leaders, cutting across political differences—for instance, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who believed in legislation as a tool against the British, Aurobindo Ghose, appealed for a more radical freedom of India. In another side Nivedita did not support any kind of division in the Congress (which finally happened in 1907). She strongly believed that unity is the only way to resist the against activities of INC and it is needed for us. Nivedita tried to develop a sense of civic nationalism among the Indians through her valuable speeches and writings. She was a famous writer and wrote on a various issue like famine in India and the role of art in shaping nationality etc. When Aurobindo left Pondicherry In 1910, Nivedita took charge as requested by Aurobindo for a few months and continue the paper. Sister Nivedita delivered her lecture at several places like Calcutta, Patna, Lucknow, Baroda, Nagpur, Wardha, Amaravati, Madras and so on. She completed works with five volumes which includes books, essays, lectures, reviews etc. And she had two volumes of letters written to different people. Actually she was an Educationist by vocation, and a nationalist by heart. She was actively involved in the 'National Education' movement, pioneered by the Dawn Society under the leadership of Satish Chandra Mukherjee. Sister Nivedita was in India for a very short time which is just 13 years and within this period of short time she devoted herself for serving Indians in different ways and tried to make Indians awake again. Within this period of time she led an active public life, dividing her time between writing, lecturing and serving India through plague relief programs and running a girls' school.

### **6. Political Vision of Sister Nivedita:**

Sister Nivedita came to India with the desire of becoming an active worker and partner in Swami Vivekananda's social and religious activities. She was an outspoken woman in nature and also true to her commitments till the last day of her life. However, Nivedita started taking active interest in India's political regeneration and gradually involved herself in the political unrest in early twentieth century. This was intensified with the announcement of the partition of Bengal by Lord Curzon in the year 1905. The years 1905 to 1911 ushered in an era of grave political agitation in Bengal. The national struggle against the partition of Bengal took the form of two new techniques Boycott and Swadeshi - boycott of foreign goods and encouragement of country products. The Swadeshi movement in Bengal received enthusiastic support from Sister Nivedita and this brought her into the limelight of Indian politics for a considerable period. Long before coming to India, Nivedita herself was inspired by a great patriotic urge for her motherland, Ireland, where her family and ancestors belonged. She inherited a fierce independent spirit both from her father's and mother's side. Margaret's grandfather, John Noble, actively took up the cause of the Irish rebels against the pro-English Church of Ireland. Her father Samuel Noble, migrated to England, took up a job in the country Parish and worked for the welfare of the people of that area. Margaret's maternal grandfather Hamilton, also a patriotic Irishman, had fought for Home rule all his life and he was the head of the 'Young Ireland' faction. He was connected with a clandestine paper-'The Nation'. Nivedita often said that she learned a lot of things about a nation from her grandmother and grandfather. (Lizelle Reymond, 1985) During her student days in London, Margaret was close to two young Irish brothers, who were active members of Irish Associations in England. Young Margaret, under their influence, joined the 'Free Ireland' group working for Home Rule. She also met the famous Russian revolutionary in exile, Prince Peter Kropoktin, who came to speak to the 'Free Ireland' circle. Thus, before meeting Swami Vivekananda, Margaret was keen on two things her teaching carrier and Irish freedom struggle against England. When she came to India, in January 1898, her principal aim was developmental work among Indian women. Her political urge receded into the background and remained dormant, to be revived again in due course.

### **7. Nivedita's Political involvement:**

One of the great Japan's scholar Okakura wrote a book 'Ideals of the East', where he propounded a theory that all the independent Asian countries have organized themselves in a confederation to destroy European domination. Indian sub-continent should be brought into this confederacy, after making her independent. The manuscript of this book was corrected and edited by Sister Nivedita. She also wrote a preface of the book. Along with it she took upon herself the task of introducing Okakura to her friends, acquaintances and other men of influence. The book had a political overtone and it created great commotion among the intellectuals throughout India. Nivedita planned to take Okakura's help for the nascent underground activities during the Swadeshi period (1903-1905). The Russo- Japanese war (1904) commenced the rise of Japan in Asian politics and India's admiration for Japan's military might grew immensely.

However, it was Japan's political interest that prompted Okakura to plan the anti-British programme in which he was totally dependent on Sister Nivedita and her friend Josephine Macleod, who gave the financial support. Thus Okakura-Nivedita alliance may be called the first phase of Nivedita's political mission in India. However, Swami Vivekananda did not approve of Okakura's political interest and Nivedita's involvement in it. He was totally opposed to foreign help. He realized that Okakura, through the active support of Nivedita, was trying to establish Japanese supremacy and furthering Japanese interest. Vivekananda vehemently discouraged Nivedita on this point. Nivedita got confused and depressed about this attitude of her Master. In later years however, Nivedita realized her mistake as she saw through Okakura's game plan and severed all connections with Okakura. Therefore, Nivedita's first attempt to organize Indian national struggle through foreign help ended abruptly.

### 8. Political activities of Sister Nivedita:

After the death of Vivekananda on 4th July, 1902, Nivedita with respect to her Guru's wish, officially left Ramakrishna Mission as she promised Swamiji not to involve Ramakrishna Mission in politics. Nivedita's next mission was to spread the man-making ideas that Vivekananda preached in order to arouse sense of nationalism among his countrymen. From 1902 onwards she travelled all over India, visited the big cities and gave lectures to the students, youths, women and people of various other professions. Through these lectures, she spread the messages of Swami Vivekananda, who wanted the youth to be physically and mentally strong, fearless and sincere in serving their motherland. She wrote in a letter immediately after Swamiji's demise to her friend Miss Josephine Macleod: "We talk of 'woman making' only I think my task is to awake a nation, not to influence a few women." (Letters of Sister Nivedita, Vol.I, 1982) So her task was to rouse the nation and this she continued to do. Nivedita was conscious of her own powers as a public speaker and writer and she did not hesitate when she was invited to speak or write. She was particularly keen to address the student community as they were the backbone of the nation. On January 22, 1904, she addressed the Hindu Boys Association at Patna where she gave an inspiring lecture. The 'Dawn Society' started by Mr. Satish Chandra Mukhejee for popularizing the idea of National Education, was frequently visited by Sister Nivedita to give talk on various national problems. In a lecture delivered on August 14, 1904, at the Society, Calcutta, she told the students - "In talking to you this evening on the subject of nationality, I shall first of all tell you something that are not, nationality. You shall always bear in mind that there can be no nationality in a country where the people always flying at each other's throats for difference of opinion and sentiment. Let us learn how to present a united front. Let us try to learn how to reserve and concentrate our energies for the great cause we intend to serve." (The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita, vol-V, 1968) In another important public speech Nivedita said that — "I am here to teach you to become man! Live your epics today. The Ramayana is not something that came once and for all, from a society that is dead and gone. Make your own Ramayana, not in written story but in service and achievement for the motherland." (The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita, vol-V, 1968) These lectures and speeches of Nivedita had tremendous impact upon the youth of Bengal. A whole new generation in Bengal came under the spell of Sister Nivedita. From 1902 onwards, she prepared the ground, in which young India was ready to plunge for the freedom of their motherland.

### 9. Educational Importance:

Importance of Nivedita's political life has a great impact on Indian society. As earlier said that Nivedita had a courageous and outspoken personality so that every Indian woman should follow this type of personality for the fulfilment of the needs of themselves as well as the society. She could be a great politician in India but did not devote her life fully in politics. She involved different political activities and organizations mainly for awakening and make people aware. At the time when Nivedita came in India, the social, political, economic and also educational situation was not so good. After observing the situation of India she decided not to come back to her motherland and she devoted her life for the upliftment of Indian people. Nivedita played a great role specially for empowering the women in India.

### 10. Conclusion:

In conclusion, it may be pointed out that it is time to move beyond colonial legacies and think about a truly Indian narrative even on something such as 'nationalism', which is usually associated with the West. The lesson that India has to offer in the histories and prehistories of nationalism is perhaps that one should learn to look at the phenomenon beyond its ideological dimensions and not conceive it exclusively in political terms. Nivedita's active participation in the national struggle of India covers the period from the end of 1902 to the middle of 1911. Her great and unparalleled contribution to the building up the national awakening it must be acknowledged to be a very short span of time. It is important to note that Nivedita was closely connected with every attempt which was being made then to take India forward, be it political, social or intellectual. In some cases, she herself initiated the attempt, while in others, she gave it strength, vigor or new turn, to ensure that it might progress further and help the country the tremendous and irresistible force of nationalism. Against all attempts at domination and oppression by imperialist powers was emphasized vigorously by Nivedita. Through all her activities she tried to reawaken the masses of India and make India a better representative across the globe.

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