



A REVIEW STUDY ON THE ROLE OF SISTER NIVEDITA AS A LEADER IN INDIAN WOMEN'S EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

In this review study on the role of Sister Nivedita as a leader in Indian Women's Education, she was considered as a trailblazing figure in the movement to educate Indian women in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Sister Nivedita, whose given name is Margaret Elizabeth Noble, was born in Ireland. She became a devout follower of Swami Vivekananda and spent her life working to improve Indian society, with a special emphasis on women's education and empowerment. Her innovative approach to female education, which drew from both Western pedagogy and Indian cultural traditions, is the subject of this research. It focuses on her endeavours to build a school for girls in Kolkata, where she encouraged holistic education, character development, and a sense of national pride. Education for women, according to Sister Nivedita, was the key to a nation's revival and societal advancement.

Her dedication, cultural awareness, and capacity to motivate social change in the face of colonial and societal limitations are among the leadership traits examined in deeper detail in the review. It goes on to talk about how she worked with modern thinkers and reformers and how she promoted nationalist beliefs through schooling. Sister Nivedita was a pioneer in Indian women's education and a leader in educational reform; this study highlights her lasting impact in this area. Her legacy lives on in the country's persistent fight for women's emancipation and in the ways that schools are run today.

Keywords : Conventional, commitment, emancipation, orthodox, revolution, spiritual.

INTRODUCTION

An integral aspect of India's cultural and social revolution has been the advancement of women's education. There was a growing need for women's education in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century Indian society, characterised by strong orthodox customs and gender inequity. Within this framework, reformers and visionaries arose to advocate for women's emancipation via education. Sister Nivedita is one of the most important and prominent figures among them. Sister Nivedita, whose

birth name was Margaret Elizabeth Noble, was an Irishwoman who, after receiving spiritual direction from Swami Vivekananda, travelled to India to aid the local population. She realised that women's empowerment and education are key to a nation's development. Sister Nivedita courageously intervened when female literacy was extremely low and women's access to education was severely restricted due to traditional norms. A watershed moment in the history of female education in India came when she founded a school for girls in Kolkata. Her method sought to empower women by integrating nationalist principles, moral principles, and practical knowledge, in contrast to the conventional educational systems that were instituted during colonial authority. She aimed to do more than just provide women with an academic education; she wanted them to be strong, independent women who could make positive contributions to society and the nation.

The impact of Sister Nivedita's leadership on the development of women's education in India is the focus of this literature review. The article highlights her leadership characteristics, educational philosophy, and social change accomplishments. The study examines secondary sources to show how her work paved the way for women's education and motivated reformers and educators in the years to come. Thus, Sister Nivedita is an iconic figure in the history of women's empowerment since her work exemplifies commitment, leadership, and vision in Indian education.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Dr. Sunita (2025) Sister Nivedita was a well-known British-Irish nun who fervently adhered to Swami Vivekananda's philosophy. She also taught, wrote, and worked as a social worker. Despite not being of Indian descent, Sister Nivedita made a substantial impact on women's education in India. Sister Nivedita was presented by Swami Vivekananda. She devoted her life to serving humanity after learning about Indian philosophy, culture, civilization, and history. Sister Nivedita's ideological support for the fight for India's independence shows how much she loved the country and its people. Sister Nivedita later made India her place of employment after being influenced by Swami Vivekananda's talk at the Chicago religious convention. A British Irish woman's decision to work in India was influenced by Indian philosophy and culture. She established her own identity in India and became known as Sister Nivedita by residing there and serving the Indian populace. This study aims to investigate those significant pieces of her life.

Iqbal Jayed (2024) Exploring Sister Nivedita's educational activities through a feminist lens, this research seeks to uncover the tremendous significance of her contributions to women's liberation via education. Sister Nivedita was a notable disciple of Swami Vivekananda. This research delves at Sister

Nivedita's educational philosophies in an effort to tease out the ways in which feminist concepts were woven into her work. The research seeks to find important aspects of her educational philosophy that are in line with feminist principles by investigating her views on the function of education in promoting women's empowerment and autonomy. In order to explore its topic thoroughly, this study uses a qualitative research approach. Primary materials include Sister Nivedita's writings, letters, and contemporary experiences; secondary sources include works on feminist educational theory and colonial India. This research takes a multi-faceted method. To fully grasp Sister Nivedita's groundbreaking work in women's education, this examination delves into the complex relationship between her feminist ideas, the socio-cultural milieu of colonial India, and her own efforts. Gender equality, questioning conventional gender roles, and the promotion of women's rights were central to Sister Nivedita's feminist beliefs as outlined in her educational philosophy, according to the research. Education, in her opinion, was a powerful tool for personal and societal agency, one that attended to more than just one's intellectual but also one's physical, moral, and emotional well. Her diverse methods left an indelible mark on the history of women's emancipation via education and helped dismantle conventional gender roles in colonial India.

Vinayak Lohani (2023) This study follows Sister Nivedita's educational views, from her early days as an English teacher to her transformation into an Indian national consciousness visionary. The study explores how Sister Nivedita was influenced by the theories of Western educationists like Pestalozzi and Froebel, and how she incorporated these ideas into her work in India, guided by Swami Vivekananda's influence and her growing familiarity with Indian society. The study focuses on a few of the main tenets and components of Nivedita's educational philosophy, including education for mass consumption, women's education, manual and technical education, and—above all—education for "nationality" or national consciousness. She believed that the most sacred obligation was to educate her countrymen. Education's main purpose was social in nature, aiming to raise a person's consciousness and facilitate the cleansing of their heart and will. She believed that education needed to be a part of helping Indians, who had a strong sense of the "family ideal," expand it to the point where they identify with their entire country and, by extension, with all of mankind.

Ritushree Sengupta et al. (2022) While accounts of colonial travels from Britain to India were full of stereotypes, noted that Margaret Noble's (1867–1911) journey and her subsequent metamorphosis into Sister Nivedita (the one committed to the cause) were exceptional in many ways. She travelled to Calcutta, India, in 1898, drawn by her spiritual mentor, the Guru, to continue her spiritual journey. There, she became fully integrated into the community, picked up the local language, and made a

substantial contribution to the advancement of women. Her engagement with nationalism and the local intellectuals brought India's virtues, skills, and knowledge to the attention of the outside world. Her expedition established her as one of the principal architects of modern India and demonstrated her character, which could transcend the strict European orthodoxy for white women in a colonised region. There hasn't been any prior research that recognises Nivedita as a social reformer. Writings about her rarely discuss her struggles and eventual victories over restrictions imposed on her due to racial othering, spatial positionality, and gendered subjectivity. This essay discusses her struggle, honours her ability to overcome the constraints and limits of both her Indian and Irish cultures, and emphasises the important contributions she has made to the human species as a whole.

Payel Giri (2021). She investigated the fact that Sister Nivedita has consistently maintained her status as one of India's most well-known figures since her arrival. Despite not being of Indian descent, she chose to dedicate herself entirely to this stunning country after discovering its diversity and refusing to return to her home country. At the time, the British were in charge of India. This country's socioeconomic and educational climates were inferior to those of European nations. Nivedita, a European, was aware of the distinctions between these two nations and aspired to work hard to improve India. She actively participated in several initiatives to educate people about the various negative aspects of life and firmly believed in the ideals of Swami Vivekananda. She had a deep affection for the Indian populace. By adhering to Swami Vivekananda's beliefs, Nivedita quickly gained extensive knowledge of Indian philosophy, customs, literature, and culture. Following her assimilation of these ideas, she became active in a number of social and political causes. Her connections to a number of prominent, well-educated, and respectable Indian figures made it easier for her to accomplish the pre-established objectives. The researcher's objectives in this research study are to learn more about Sister Nivedita's predetermined goals, her political contribution in India, and the educational value of her political ideas in today's culture. The researcher used a variety of primary and secondary sources, including letters, books, journals, articles, papers, and significant internet data, to perform this study.

Pradeep Kumar (2020) Sister Nivedita—who was born Margaret Elizabeth Noble—was unquestionably well-known in contemporary Indian history as Swami Vivekananda's manaskanya, or spiritual daughter. When Margaret met Vivekananda, the greatest follower of Ascetic Masculinity, Bengal School, and Social Ramakrishnadev, she had a revolutionary transformation in her life. Margaret is an Irish teacher, social activist, educationist, and school creator. She gave the underprivileged patients her all while working tirelessly to improve the lot of Indian women of all castes. She was an ardent advocate of India's justifiable cause of independence and in close contact

with figures such as Aurobindo and numerous young Bengali revolutionaries, particularly those affiliated with the covert Anushilan Samiti group. Nivedita wrote numerous well-known works, including *The Web of Indian Life*, *Kali the mother*, and *The Master as I Saw Him*. Abanindranath Tagore, a significant figure in the history of the Bengal School, was impressed by her book *Kali the mother* and went on to paint *Bharat Mata*. To put it briefly, she was deeply involved in every field that was important for the overall development of our colonized homeland and rose to prominence during Bengal's Swadeshi period. I made a lot of effort to portray Nivedita Lokmata's historical contribution to Indian nationalism in this paper.

Barua A (2020) Sister Nivedita, also known as Margaret Elizabeth Noble, was a well-known follower of the Hindu guru Swami Vivekananda. Nivedita cleverly reinterpreted traditional Vedantic vocabulary to portray the "cosmo-national" person as deeply ingrained in national locations rather than in opposition to them. One of the most interesting things about Nivedita's repeated call for Indians to find the universal in and through their own national histories, cultural norms, and religious systems is that it is based on an East-West binary, with material values and spiritual values attached to each pole. This is especially true when we look at her "vernacular cosmopolitanism" in the context of post-Saidian academic cultures. Though she occasionally challenges the binary as an imprecise classification, her life and thought locations within this binary produce a complex combination of certain highly perceptive readings of Eastern lifestyles; spiritual idealization's and ahistorical romanticization's of some traditional Hindu beliefs, traditions, and customs; global visions of internationalist exchanges across humanity; and pointed critiques of the workings of empire.

Toolika Rani (2020) The social and cultural landscape of India experienced a period of renaissance when the nineteenth century was in progress. There were a number of eminent Indians who came to the realization that Indian knowledge was significant and made efforts to rekindle the pride in Indian culture. The upsurge that occurred was a response to the years of mental servitude that had been methodically inflicted. The resurrection of Indian consciousness was a significant phenomenon that occurred after Macaulay's efforts to establish a race that was only Indian in blood but British in taste, language, and ideas were a great deal of success. A foreigner ranks tall in the list of those who helped greatly in igniting that knowledge and disseminating it through relentless efforts. While it was natural for an Indian to take pride in her cultural background, a foreigner stands tall in the list of those who contributed immensely. An Irish woman named Sister Nivedita not only appreciated Indian culture but also exemplified it in her own life. The individuals who had started imitating western culture were reminded of their own magnificence by her. Education was the means by which she chose to contribute to India's development. In contrast to the majority of Indian intellectuals of the time, who believed

that western education was the only way to cure the prevailing social problems, her conception of education was deeply rooted in the indigenous customs and did not involve eradicating everything that was outdated and replacing it with something new. The study of women continued to be a primary emphasis of her work. She believed that Indian women, contrary to the assumptions that are commonly held, were not ignorant. They possessed an extraordinary amount of character, faith, compassion, and service to others, and they were empowered in a way that was unique to one another. She took measures to ensure that the traditional characteristics of women and the spiritual component were incorporated into their contemporary education at the same time. While the plague was raging in Calcutta and the Bengal famine was occurring in 1906, she devoted herself to the cause of the poor and the oppressed, even though she knew that she was putting her own life in danger. Not only would knowledge of her works contribute to a more profound comprehension of the Indian Renaissance, but it would also provide light on the condition of women during that time period.

CONCLUSION

Finally, the findings of this review study provide stronger evidence that Sister Nivedita was an influential leader whose efforts revolutionised the field of education for women in India. The political and social climate of colonial India is crucial to comprehending her work, as it was at this time when women's education was frequently undervalued and hindered by traditional traditions, scarce resources, and an absence of institutional backing. The founding of a school in Kolkata was just the beginning of Sister Nivedita's ambitious plans. Through bringing it into harmony with national awakening and social responsibility, she aimed to reimagine the fundamental goal of women's education. Intellectual prowess, moral fortitude, cultural sensitivity, and a strong feeling of patriotism were the cornerstones of her pedagogical philosophy. By doing so, she paved the way for future generations of women to take an active role in establishing their country.

Her function as an intermediary between Indian cultural traditions and Western educational principles is another important facet emphasised in this research. She made education more acceptable to conservative parts of society by using modern teaching approaches while remaining attentive to Indian beliefs. Her leadership was enhanced and her efforts were ensured to be sustainable by this balanced approach. Her work was enhanced and its influence expanded because of her intellectual connections and collaborations with artists, nationalists, reformers, and others of her period. She drew inspiration from Swami Vivekananda's teachings and saw education for women as a potent tool for societal change and national rejuvenation. Over time, public opinion and legislation were shaped by her efforts to raise awareness about the significance of girls' education.

The study also reveals that Sister Nivedita's leadership was characterized by personal sacrifice, resilience, and unwavering commitment. She immersed herself completely in Indian life, earning the trust and respect of the local community. Her work demonstrated that true leadership in education involves not only imparting knowledge but also inspiring change, building confidence, and fostering independence among learners. In the contemporary context, her legacy remains highly relevant. Issues such as gender disparity in education, access to quality learning, and the need for value-based education continue to be important. Sister Nivedita's holistic approach provides a meaningful framework for addressing these challenges. Her emphasis on character-building, cultural identity, and empowerment aligns closely with modern educational goals and policies in India.

Sister Nivedita was a trailblazing and everlasting figure in the field of Indian women's education, according to the study. Inspiring educators, legislators, and social reformers to strive for equality and inclusive growth, her legacies have laid a solid intellectual and moral groundwork for women's education.

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