

1857 revolt and Sister Nivedita's role as a true sepoy or soldier in Indian National Movement.

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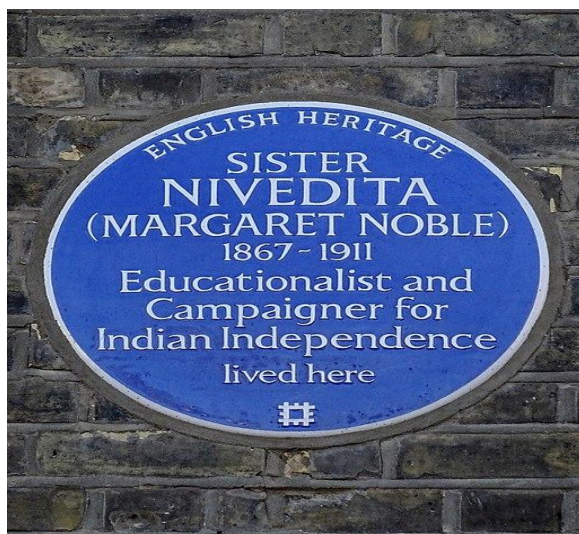
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Abstract :- This article examines the Revolt of 1857 uprising and the role played by Sister Nivedita as a true Sepoy or Soldier in Indian National Movement. The revolt of 1857 was an unprecedented event in the history of British rule in India. Though the revolt failed to achieve the desired goal, it sowed the seeds of Indian nationalism. The struggle for Indian Independence had contributions from various sections of Indian society of all race and religion, but what is often neglected is the role played by those persons that had no connection with India due to their nationality but inspired by that they played a key role in the freedom struggle of India. One such section of people were the groups of women of foreign origin that contributed immensely in the national freedom movement of India. Sister Nivedita is one of them. 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. Sister Nivedita had a multi-dimensional personality. She worked hard for the welfare of Indian people and for the education and empowerment of women. 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. Sister Nivedita deeply involved in the Indian national movement. She was on good terms with Indian National Congress leaders, cutting across political differences. A writer, social worker and disciple of Swami Vivekananda, Margaret Elizabeth Noble was renamed Sister Nivedita by her guru in 1898. Besides working for social causes, she dedicated her years in India to promoting Swami Vivekananda's thoughts and the cause of Indian nationalism.

Key Words: 1857 Revolt, Sister Nivedita, Swami Vivekananda, Education, Culture, Tradition, Nationalism.

1. INTRODUCTION:-

Several foreign women have contributed their part in India's freedom struggle movement. They saw India's religion, philosophy and culture, a hope for the redemption of the world. They thought that in India's spiritual death shall world find its grave. One such section of people were the groups of women of foreign origin that contributed in the national freedom movement of India. Sister Nivedita is one of them. She did not return to her motherland and decided to devote herself for this beautiful sacred land. India was under British rule. The East India Company's rule from 1757 to 1857 had generated a lot of discontent among the different sections of the Indian people against the British. For about 100 years the people of India had witnessed the enormous lot and plunder of wealth from India to Britain. The revolt marked the end of the East India Company's rule in India. But since 1857 revolt, the nationalist spirit started to emerge among the Indian people. After that National Congress established. But from the beginning of the 20th century, the spread of nationalist thoughts can be seen. Sister Nivedita, was an Irish woman and integrated with Indian civilization and culture. She was influenced by Kropotkin's theory that Rebellion is only a period of advance evolution. When Swami Vivekananda came to London, she took him to the political meeting which she habituated.



source: <http://www.asian-voice.com>
Memorial place at sister Nivedita birthplace



source: <http://www.open.ac.uk>
Memorial place where sister Nivedita live

2. Objectives of the Study :-

some objectives of the study are as follows:

- ❖ To analyze the pre-determined goals of Sister Nivedita for making India better.
- ❖ To analyze Sister Nivedita as a true Sepoy or Soldier in Indian National Movement.
- ❖ To explore the socio-political contribution of Sister Nivedita.
- ❖ To analyze the up-liftment of Indian Nationalism by her thought.

3. Methodology of the Study:-

Based on the use of historical method for conducting this study, uses various primary and secondary sources such as letters, books, journals, articles, documents and also various important online/web materials.

4. The Rise of Nationalism :-

The twentieth century saw the rise of nationalism all over the world. (The twenty-first century has, on the other hand, seen a lot of assertion of ethnic identity, religious identity, linguistic identity.) Nationalism was one of the key factors in the American and French Revolutions : “Many historians would agree that, as an ideology and discourse, nationalism became prevalent in America and Western part of Europe in the latter half of the eighteenth century, and shortly thereafter in Latin America. The dates that are often singled out as signaling the advent of nationalism include 1775 (First Partition of Poland), 1776 (American Declaration of Independence), 1789 and 1792 (the commencement and 2nd phase of the French Revolution), and 1807 (Fichte’s *Addresses to the German Nation*).” After 1792, the patriotic ideals of the French Revolution were exported to entire Europe. The territorial and economic basis of nation-states in Europe was already prepared by the late 15 century due to the rise of absolutist states and the failure to reunite Europe on the model of the Roman Empire. While the earliest nation-states were European, nationalism emerged elsewhere as well and became a truly global phenomenon. Thus, the world witnessed for instance, the rise of Japan as a nation state, following the Meiji Restoration (1868) ; Arab nationalisms in the Middle East and North Africa; anti-colonial nationalisms in India and Africa, and so on.

5. Nivedita’s Contribution to Indian Nationalism :-

Sister Nivedita In her speech on unity of India she said ,her mission is to spread the spirit of nationalism among the masses in such a way that it would become part and parcel of their personal life and existence. without the spirit of nationalism, an Indian will not be able to have his own identity. sister Nivedita had a multi-dimensional personality. She worked hard for the welfare of Indian people and for the education and empowerment of women. She even introduced newer ideas on art, handicrafts and drawing in the academic curriculum. She was pivotal in organizing the 1905 anti-partition movement and gave herself to the Swadeshi Movement completely. She even designed an Indian Flag to take to rallies – which was embroidered by her students.

She believed that the Indian states had united and participated in the Great Revolt. One day Indians will be free from slavery. Sister Nivedita deeply involved in the Indian national movement. She was on good terms with Indian National Congress Leader Gopal Krishna Gokhale, who believed in legislation as a tool against the British, Aurobindo appealed for a more radical freedom of India. In another side Nivedita did not support any kind of division in the Congress (which already happened in 1907). She strongly believed that unity is the only way to resist the against activities of Indian National Congress . Nivedita tried to develop 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 many places like Calcutta, Patna, Lucknow, Nagpur, Amaravati, Madras and many states. Actually she was an Educationist and a nationalist by heart. She was actively involved in the ‘National Education’ movement, pioneered by the Dawn Society under the true leadership of Satish Chandra Mukherjee.. 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. In about a decade, a powerful critique of nationalism came from none other than Rabindranath Tagore. He articulated this critique not only through his novels like *Gora* and *Ghare Baire* but also a series of lectures that were published in the form of a book called *Nationalism* in 1917. Tagore’s main objection to the cult of nationalism was this: “Our real problem in India is not political. It is social. Politics in the West have dominated Western ideals, and we in India are trying to imitate you. We have to remember that in Europe, where European peoples had their racial unity from the beginning, and where natural resources were insufficient for the inhabitants, the civilisation has naturally taken the character of political and commercial aggressiveness. For on the one hand they had no internal complications, and on the other they had to deal with neighbours who were strong and rapacious. Each nation must be conscious of its mission, and we, in India, must realise that we cut a poor figure when we are trying to be political...” Tagore was correct in his observations that the historical basis of society in the West has been politics and that it has not been the case with India. However, he said in this context about the basis of developments in India .

6. Contribution to Indian Nationalism through art History :-

Sister Nivedita’s role in Indian art history, has been understated & overlooked for the longest time. In a country “full, full, full of artistic talent” she tried to send a clear message to Indian art students to desist from the existing practice of aping the Western art and strived hard to elaborate and establish the idea of Indian art with its indigenous roots as the binding force. The Bengal school of art under the mentorship of Abanindranath Tagore began as an avant garde and nationalist art movement in the early twentieth century. The vision was to look towards the ‘east’ or the traditional art of India for inspiration and with a conscious attempt to

move away from the imitative style of Western art. Distinguished practitioners of the Bengal school such as, Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar, Surendranath Ganguly, K. Venkatappa, Samarendranath Gupta, Mukul Dey, etc. were mentored and supported by art luminaries like Ananda Coomaraswamy, Gaganendranath Tagore, Sir John Woodroffe, Kakuzo Okakura, Yokohama Taikan, and others. They were also mentored by Sister Nivedita, who took great interest in the work of the young group of artists, encouraging them to exhibit their paintings and pointing out to them what she perceived to be their artistic flaws. Thus, Sister Nivedita remained the vibrant centre of this art movement. In 1909, on the request of a visiting artist (Christiana Herringham), Sister Nivedita convinced Abanindranath Tagore to send his students to the caves of Ajanta to copy its frescoes. It was her way of igniting respect for “Indian” art (which had largely been forgotten) within the young students and believed these could influence their art in future. It could also be looked upon as her way to “save art” by documenting it. Sister Nivedita personally met their expenses of boarding and lodging and even visited them during the assignment. Later in their professional careers, these artists (Nandalal Bose, Asit Kumar Haldar and others) would be greatly benefitted by this decision. Apart from encouraging novice artists, Sister Nivedita worked on the promotion of Indian art by contributing several essays to various magazines and periodicals. Sri Ramananda Chattopadhyay the editor of *The Modern Review*, who became the chief exponent of the art movement (he regularly published illustrations by young artists of the Bengal school to promote them) acknowledged that it was Sister Nivedita who opened his eyes to the brilliance of local Indian painting. She was his chief advisor, and without her guidance, he wouldn't have been able to take Indian artwork to the public. Nivedita was always eager to critique and revise history, ethnography, the arts – all in a bid to advance, inspire, promote India's culture. This was her way of serving the nation. Her major works include: *Kali the Mother*, *The Web of Indian Life*, *Cradle Tales of Hinduism*, *Myths and Legends of the Hindus and Buddhists*, *The Master as I Saw Him*, *Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda* etc.

7. Sister Nivedita's contribution to other aspects of Nation-building :-

Nivedita met Aurobindo and they had a one-one discussion entirely hovering around politics while upholding their mutual agony about how to end the ongoing misrule. By that time Aurobindo had already read Nivedita's *Kali The Mother* and the latter was also in the know of things that he was a rare revolutionary par excellence. Nivedita returned from the West in February 1902 – in her own words ‘to be present at the closing scene, to receive the last benediction’. Her diary on 4th of July 1902 had just two words ‘Swami died’. The one, banking on whom, she had left her home, family, future, and her country to live in a culture vastly different from hers, was no more. A lesser person might have considered return to one's familiar backyard. Only a person made of immense grit could have continued to live under such changed circumstances. But she was made of sterner stuff and with steely resolve she stayed put. Re-gathering herself, she began to give shape to the future direction of her work – translating her Master's ideas of ‘Man-Making’ into ‘Nation-building’.

For Nivedita what India needed was an education established soundly on the basis of a ‘national consciousness’. Nivedita believed that training of the mind and development of power of concentration had been the chief thrust of Hindu education for ages. And therefore, it did not have anything substantial to learn from West towards this. She felt that superiority of the West lay in her realisation of the value of united efforts in any given direction. She referred to this Western trait as ‘organizing of the popular mind.’ It was here she felt India could learn from the West.

According to Nivedita, National Education is first and foremost an education in national idealism with emancipation of sympathy and intellect as its chief aim. For achieving this she wanted the ideals presented before the children and students to be in a form informed by their own past. “Our own imagination must be first based on our own heroic literature. Our hope must be woven out of our own history. From the known to the unknown must be the motto of every teacher, rule of every lesson.” A true national education in India would awaken people towards a life of sacrifice towards what she referred to as ‘*jana-desha-dharma*’.

She thought that the challenge of educating the Indian masses could be best solved by dedicated and inspired educational missionaries coming from within the country. It was her fervent desire to see a band of educational missionaries who would across length and breadth of the country educating the masses. She took the example of many Western countries where young men were required to serve for a few years in the military service and hoped for a similar army of educational missionaries in India. But she believed that best way to do this was by voluntary selflessness of students and youths .

8. Inspiring Youth and Intellectuals in National Movement :-

An important area of her work during these years was to inspire the youth in the ‘religion of nation-building’. She embarked on extensive lecture tours in different legs covering Bombay, Pune, Nagpur, Barooda, Madras, Patna, Lucknow and several other places. When in Calcutta, she used to visit and lecture in various youth and civil groups like the Dawn Society founded by Satischandra Mukherjee, Vivekananda Societies, Anushilan Samity etc. After the appointment of the Universities Commission (1902) by Lord Curzon (leading to the Universities Act in 1904) several leading men in Bengal's public life embarked upon the course of a ‘National Education’. It was not for nothing that Sister Nivedita had made herself independent of the Ramkrishna Order whose rules preclude their members' participation in politics. Sister Nivedita moulded her own life accordingly. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Indian people's consciousness about their rights and their protest because they were deprived of all those rights was revealed. Swami Vivekananda himself had told Nivedita that for the next fifty years Bharatjanani would be their only worship and after that the worship of the supreme seer would come. Sister Nivedita controlled her own life as well, and since she lived in Calcutta—where the national movement was slowly developing—she kept herself in tune with all the schools of thought of the time.

9. Conclusion :- The present study is an attempt to make a comprehensive analysis of various aspects of social, political thinking and also relate to nationalism after great rebellion during her stay in India. The present research work seeks to assess Nivedita's idea of religion, how she felt the importance of reinterpreting Indian history to bring nationalism as a foreign woman. In other words, in the late 19th century, Nivedita was brought to India by Swamiji to serve the great purpose and transformed herself as one of us. The proper evaluation of her contribution in India was made by Rabindranath Tagore when he mentioned: "she was indeed a Lokmata, a mother to the people."



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