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## **INDIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM: A COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS BY SISTER NIVEDITA**

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### **Abstract**

*This paper is a study of the aspects of true Indian education according to Sister Nivedita. Here 'true education' means emphasizing on essential elements for building the right educational path to reach the real objective of humanity. The instrument of learning, the object of learning and the outcome of learning, these are the three basic elements Sister Nivedita elaborates in her work on National Education of India after her intense analysis and deep research. Behind the concept of education there must be a unifying force which she calls as 'soul of education' that trains the heart and will as much as the mind, not the mind alone as in current condition. In the minds of younger generation, education must create a wave of thought to spread knowledge to the unreached lives as one of the prime factor of nation making education. Only a man with such education will serve his motherland. This paper also deals in detail about foreign culture and its impact on the Indian education as perused by Sister Nivedita.*

### **Keywords**

Nation Making Education, Spirituality, Fundamental Knowledge, Humanity, Foreign Culture

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### **1. Introduction**

Indian future depends on the nature of education given to its young minds. At this juncture, reformation of educational pattern is one of the profuse needs of the hour. Education

and refinement are inter-connected. No civilization is ever possible without proper education. The education system of ancient India is considered to be the most unique and distinguishing system in the world. Currently this distinctiveness of the system needs to be clarified, as so many forces and factors have got jumbled up in the Indian atmosphere. It is increasingly difficult to differentiate between the aboriginal and the imported. While attempting to demarcate the national from the alien, an important point has to be noted. In fundamentals there are no geographical distinctions. They are universal in character. What distinguishes the system of education of a country from the rest is its *ideal* in life of a nation. Hence the Indian method, instruments and goal of education have to be clearly defined (Swami Nirvedananda, 2011).

The works of Sister Nivedita on education deals with the aim, basic elements of education and the significant characteristic feature that forms the true education. Her writings give a wide spectrum of theory and practice of education that not only depicts her thorough and in-depth knowledge of the matter but also her deep love for India and the people.

### **1.1 Need of Transfiguration of Indian Education System**

Without understanding the past, one cannot live in the present and overpower in the future (Sister Nivedita, 1900).

Since ages India has a rich tradition of education. Through verbal and inscription mode these were passed on to generations. One of the particular characteristic of bygone India is in its history the human minds are molded and shaped religiously than by political or economic dominance. The total structural collaboration of ideals, practices, and conduct is called Dharma in the ancient tradition. The ultimate goal of human spirit is to lead towards self-development by receiving sound and sterling knowledge from this physical world. The ancient Indians strongly believed to live simple with higher thought levels as the fundamental base of education towards inner progression (Dr. Devidas B. Waydande, 2017). During the Later-Vedic period the basic goal of education has been similar to the Vedic period, but the goal attainment mechanism has been slightly divergent. Essentially we need to note that the ultimate aim of Brahmanic education is self-progression for inner transformation and conservation of human values and culture throughout the nation.

In 1835 Lord Macaulay came forth with a resolution of introducing so called Modern education in India. During those years the national education was offered to the Hindus through Sanskrit medium, while the Muslims living in India received through Arabic. After deep observation and intense analysis he swept away both Sanskrit and Arabic at a single

blow by introducing English language. In his minute Macaulay writes that a group of people has to be formed who are Indian by birth but English in choice, viewpoint and in mind. With the help of these binary personalities he could keep the majority of uneducated Indians permanently under the control of the British. His sole aim was the manufacture of slaves and intellectuals devoid of patriotism. Because of his severe efforts in introducing English education, we are still experiencing the effect even after 200 years! It is still victorious in producing a group of people who are aliens in their own motherland. The overall outcome of this system is the total loss of self-respect and self-confidence, leading to moral and cultural degradation in the natives, moral and cultural domination on the part of the alien, which he knew would be essential for continued political hegemony over the vast nation of India (V.Ravi Kumar & B. Nivedita, 2016).

## **2. Literature Review**

A lot of study has been undergone to improve the quality of overall education system of India by many researchers and educationists. But the growth pace to create an impactful change in the educational standards and quality of system has become sluggish. Some of the research analysis of Scholars is been reviewed.

Zahood Ahmad Rather (2015) in his theoretical work explains about the importance and need of Vedic methodologies in the current modern education system of India. He says for peace loving society human beings with good character and ethics are necessary. This can be achieved through Vedic model of imparting education.

Kalyani Tripathy Dubey, Akhilesh Arvind Nimje (2015) presented a critical analysis of ancient and modern education system of India. They stated that the ultimate goal of ancient system was self- realisation and preservation of noble ideas and culture whereas it does nowhere exist in the current rat race system of education. They also suggested some of the prime factors to be implemented in order to reinvigorate our learning mechanism.

M. S. Khaparde (2002) in his paper detailed about the formulation and implementation of educational policies and programmes in India. According to him consistent efforts is being applied by the governing system (MHRD, NCERT, NIEPA etc.) in order to evolve and develop the learning process of the country.

Anubhav Singh (2015) analysed the challenges faced in Indian education system. Some of the points mentioned were faculty shortage, poor research quality, untrained teachers, irrelevant curriculum, gap in demand and supply. He concludes that by joint efforts

of government, public and private sectors there can be made a significant change and the educational quality can be highly improved.

Mohan Gautam, Sunny Singh, Gopal Fartyal, Ankit Tiwari and Kuldeep Singh Arya (2016) proposed a paper which focused on gap and empty space created within the Indian education system. They attempted to solve this problem by using Capability Approach theory which was basically introduced by Amartya Sen and Martha Nussbaum. Their main aim was to utilise vast existing energy of young Indian minds for the fruitful development of the country through transformed education.

Marie Lall (2005) briefed about the political impact and its consequences on education of Indian children. Quality and access at all levels of education is a major challenge she says. Also she mentions that the manifesto generated by the BJP will be pro nationalistic and the Congress never comes up with any such policies rather projects education as a key issue during their period.

### **3. Indian Education System Analysis By Sister Nivedita**

#### **3.1 About Sister Nivedita**

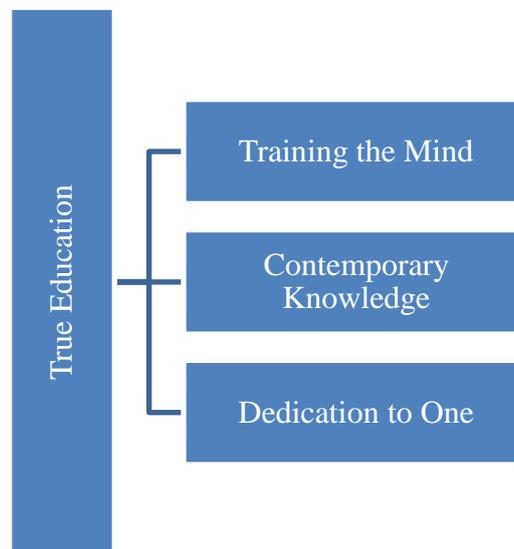
Bhagini Nivedita was born on 28<sup>th</sup> of October 1867 in Ireland. Sister Nivedita was a born teacher. Soon after her education young Margaret chose teaching as her profession which she believed was her calling. As she proceeds in her career, she was introduced to Swiss educationist Pestalozzi and German Froebel's principles of New Education and made a thorough study of them. Later she starts her own school through which she successfully creates an ambience for practical implementation of theories on New Education. By the time Swami Vivekananda visited London in 1895, Margaret had earned a name for herself as a pundit educationist who had a burning desire for service for the upbringing of humanity. Looking at Margaret's zeal and passion towards service, Swami Vivekananda called her for service in the field of education for the Indian women (Lizelle Reymond, 1953).

Sister Nivedita started her own school in Kolkata in 1898 with a purpose of educating Indian orthodox girls as directed by Swamiji. Her school taught Bengali, English, and Mathematics, Science and manual training, giving more emphasis on manual activities (Her schools run till date). The speciality of her school curriculum was to educate Indian girls with new concepts essential for their living without deviating their culture and moral values which the Indian people followed since ages. Sister Nivedita's service in the field of education is two-fold: her educational theory as recorded in her writings and her practical knowledge implemented in schools and other work places. Her thoughts and plans are not just a

reproduction of what she learnt from Pestalozzi and Froebel but rather executed her own creative methods to extended applications. Her work on various levels of school education is an outcome of her experience, while those on collegiate education and technical education show her strong intelligence on the subject and her keen observation of the existing conditions in India and the West. Her ideas on the influence of western culture on true Indian education are a distinctive element. Further a brief study of Sister Nivedita's educational principles and methodologies will be made.

### **3.2 The Three Primary Elements in Indian Education System**

Sister Nivedita states that training on concentration should be the desired goal of education rather than learning any specific subject. According to her in a perfect education there are three different elements to be considered and practised.



**Figure 1:** *Basic elements of Indian Education*

- First element deals with the instrument of learning. It is the initiation level of the 'mind' to learn, practise to accept impressions, and to develop intensively irrespective of the particular branch of knowledge. Regrettably many are unaware of this phase of educational process. Fortunately Indian civilization was aware of the fact that it is the 'mind' which is the vital element the education has to primarily deal with. This was the subtle reason in spite of series of demolition it could withstand the destruction and maintain the secrecy for the future.
- Secondly, the object of learning. In the current era, there are few notion and views which are in common. This is commonly accepted to be the whole of education. 'Geography, History, Algebra and Arithmetic' they are the franchise of the modern

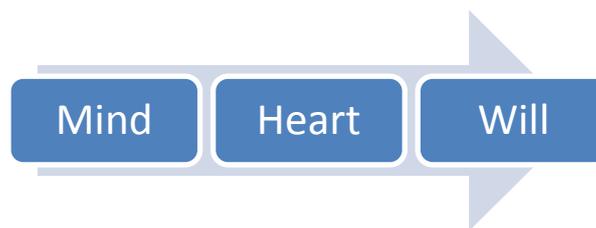
consciousness and rarely the factor for self-realisation. There can be no hint in the history of the world which states the above franchise is largely essential for education as it is today. The contemporary knowledge thus acquired forms a basis of communication with worldwide educated minds.

- Once the above two elements are fully attained it will lead to the outcome of learning i.e. to prepare the mind for real education. The third indispensable element is to absorb a single idea or surrender oneself to a Guru. This makes a student ready to contribute to the riches of humanity as a whole. It is this third prime factor that has made saints and many renowned scholars of the world.

This conception of Education which ultimately converges to Advaitism, that Absolute One is a remarkable ideates of Sister Nivedita! As mentioned in the Rigveda “Ekam sat vipra bahuda vadanti.”

### **3.3 Soul of Education**

The heritage of Humanity is in the life of thought and feeling. Hence it is the mind neither body-soul nor flesh (Sister Nivedita).



**Figure 2:** *Soul of Education*

S.N’s method of education system has a soul which works as a unifying source. She sees the child not as a learning machine but as a human being, to be accepted as a whole. A real education is only complete when we train the feelings as well as choice. Without this one can only earn bread and not be most likeable. In short, one is a smart ape. As discussed previously, ancient method of education always focused on character formation and building. A student was taught to live with sincerity, honesty and truth. Our ancestors knew that it is these qualities that will take a man towards the ultimate goal of his life. Hence our responsibility is to see that the child is taught to live for others not just to live a selfish life. When a mother asks the child, ‘Why are you going to school?’ the child must answer, ‘That I may learn to be a man and HELP!’ (Sister Nivedita).

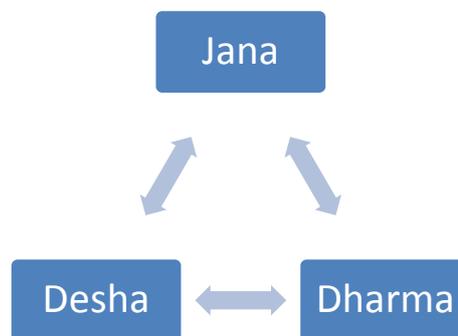
Hence the perfect education for a child is training the mind to concentrate, the heart to feel nobly and the will to act upon intelligible thought and virtuous feeling. Sister Nivedita

redefines real religion of the present day in terms of Education as the fire of faith and action: The will to serve, the progress towards better conditions, to uplift our fellows and to lift the whole!

### 3.4 National to Nation Making Education

India today needs to move from national to nation making education. Our children must be surrounded with nationalistic vibes having the centre of gravity outside their family. This feeling of patriotism is feeling for others. When a child observes his parents considering general good rather than their own they learnt the first lesson of nation making education. The seed and root of nation-making education is sympathy, kindness and a caring heart for the needy. Sister Nivedita gave a best example of Joan of Arc who was a poor girl in an isolated village brooding over her country's sorrowful status. This ideology was similar to the compassion and commiseration of a Buddha but surprisingly this was applied in France!

Also Sister Nivedita beautifully elucidates about Heroes. She says heroes are *made* by thought waves of heroic stress, they are not *born*. She quotes the incident in which two young English men who were killed by an Indian mob, died by saying, 'We are not the last of the English!' Similarly Nivedita wish to see our Indian youth to live in the same proud conviction.



**Figure 3:** Prism factors of Nation making

The nation is a prism with the three planes of Jana- Desha- Dharma. The one who is eager to serve his birth land (Desha) and the people who are born and living on that soil (Jana) must develop a living connectivity to its Dharma or civilization. Dharma is the principal force which unites traditional thought and faith of common custom and understanding that makes an organic and religiously united society. It is a nation's dharma that will shape the character and destiny of the people of that nation. Hence Nivedita's concept of education will succeed in creating a living presence of the national ideals in the hearts of the children of a nation.

### **3.5 Place of Foreign Culture in a True Education**

One of the most significant points which Sister Nivedita stressed is that the place of foreign culture is never at the beginning in a true education system. All actual progress must happen from the known to the unknown, from the intimate to the distant, from the near to the far.

Indian parents often let go their child out into foreign countries to master on scientific industry! But before the boy left India he has to perform few very important tasks:

- To acquire the scientific methodologies.
- To learn all the Swadeshi methods relevant to the subject to be studied abroad.
- Weigh the primitive industry with respect to his own modern schooling
- Analyse the inter gap
- Study and experiment that entire one can look for.

Only then the lad is sent out while his curiosity is already awakened and then he will have the energy to proceed from Swadesh to Videsh.

In the ancient times, through perfect education, the Indian mind was trained in concentration and had gathered a lot of mental energy and that is why Rishi Kanada could propose Three Vaisheshika Sutras 1800 years before English Newton's Three Laws of Motion. By talking about ancient Indian achievements Nivedita makes it clear that we have nothing to learn from the West in the matter of teaching concentration. But there is a lot for the Indian mind to learn from the West as to what to do with its ability to concentrate.

Sister Nivedita received the best of what the West had to give and is clear about the new pathway towards which Indian education has to march. She says the West is superior because they realise the importance of great united force in any direction- even in case of self-education. This India needs to learn from the West. Comparing to Germany or America, India produces a greater number of geniuses, per thousand of her population: but Germany and America very well known to orient the national minds to solve nationalistic problems and challenges! Therefore orientation of Indian minds to Indian problem is of great concern to India. For this, there should be replacement of society well-being than individual well-being. So it is for us the children of India to see what the essentials of the Western education are, and assimilate its features in an appropriate manner in the national education of India.

Nivedita's warning is quite relevant to today's India. Adopting foreign customs without taking into account the ideals behind them that inspired them in the Western society are increasing in the Indian society today. For example, celebrating First of January as New

Year's Day and 14<sup>th</sup> of February as Valentine's Day with unrestricted fun and frolic is gaining ever popularity amongst our younger generations. These are all examples of soulless imitation of the West which is most unsuited to our ideals and traditions. This is nothing but failure to understand the ideals of the West also an equally dangerous failure to remember our own ideals. If continued unthinkingly by our youth it will lead to utter demoralisation and spiritual death for the nation. The only safeguard against this danger is to instil patriotic fervour in the minds of the younger generation. It is with the educational institutions that this responsibility lies. Ultimately humanity is one without any distinction between native and foreign which is absolutely artificial. But this broad humanitarian view will grow only in the heart of one who knows who he is. Those who do not have this identity will be foreign in their own land.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The greatest education is Life with the mind educators being living and experience. A man must not be judged by his intellectual standards, but by the depth and purport of his desires. A man may be a fool in technical and academic knowledge and yet a sage in the way he feels and desires (Sister Nivedita).

Sister Nivedita is one of the rare educationists who have rendered invaluable service to India by both practice and percept. She believed that the combination of all that is best in the eastern and western culture will form the nucleus of a grand educational movement. Modernizing the ancient and nationalizing the modern is the aim of Indian education. The challenge lies in expanding Nivedita's methodologies across the country (already in Kolkata, Hyderabad, Maharashtra, Telangana & Gujarat). Hence by training a single generation of Indian young minds in the system of education as envisaged by Sister Nivedita, India will definitely rise to its true position as the spiritual and cultural leader of the world.

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