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The Disciple of Vivekananda: Nivedita's Thought and the National Reawakening

Vivekananda and Nivedita: Vedantic philosophy and method

Nivedita says that it is easy, as one reads this Letter, to see how he has been thrilled by the congruity of ancient Indian thought with modern science. "Our friend," he writes, "was charmed to hear about the Vedantic *prana* and *akasa* and the *kalpas*, which, according to him, are the only theories modern science can entertain. Now both *akasa* and *prana* again, are produced from the cosmic *mahat*, the universal mind, the *Brahma*, or *Iswara*. He thinks he can demonstrate mathematically that force and matter are reducible to potential energy. I am to go and see him next week, to get this new mathematical demonstration. " (Nivedita 1910, p. 173). Vivekananda tried to reorient the struggle for building a New India with Vedanta philosophy. To him, matter and thought are co-existent; both are products of nature, a third something, known as *Brahman* or *Atman* (Vivekananda, CW, Vol. 5, p. 323). Both matter and mind are really nothing but forces. Matter is changed into mind and *vice versa*. Mind is the refined matter and body the concretized mind. Therefore, nature is homogeneous (Vivekananda, CW, Vol. 6, pp. 245-46). Mind is the name of change, body is the name of another change and all these compose our universe. To him, *Brahman* or *Atman* or Nature is absolute and 'time, space, and causation are like the glass through which the Absolute is seen, and when it is seen on the lower side it appears as the universe.' (Vivekananda, CW, Vol. 2, p. 123). Graphically, it may be presented as in Fig. 1.

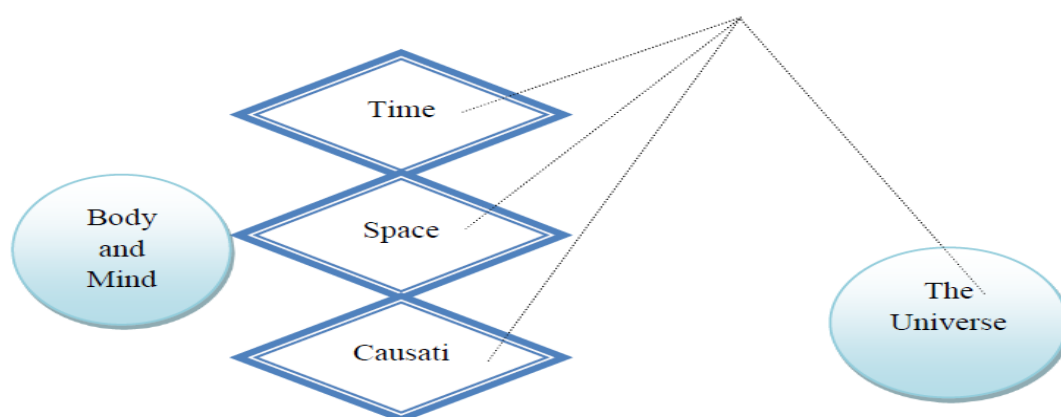


Fig. 1

To him, all that exists in the universe is the result of the manifestation of primary matter, the *akasha* and all the forces of gravitation, attraction and repulsion of the universe are the result of the primary force or form, the *prana*. There also exists *mahat*, the cosmic reason; *akasha* and *prana* both are incorporated into the cosmic *mahat*. ‘We cannot see anything outside the space, yet we do not know space. We cannot perceive anything outside of time, yet we do not know time. We cannot understand anything except in terms of causality, yet we do not know what causation is. These three things – time, space and causality are in and through every phenomenon, but they are not phenomena. They are as it were the forms or moulds in which everything must be cast before it can be apprehended. Matter is substance plus time, space and causation.’ (Vivekananda, CW, Vol. 3, p. 247). Following *Samkhya* philosophy Vivekananda denotes that *prakrti* (matter) and *purusa* (consciousness or soul or form) are separate and independent of each other. *Purusa* may entail *avidya* or ignorance. Only the Yogins can attain freedom of mind with the help of a mixture of *prakrti* and *purusa*, body and soul or matter and mind, when both cannot be independent of each other. Then, the true knowledge can be attained. Man’s physical attainment is negligible and it is ignorance and not conducive to the salvation of man and mankind. Disciplines of morality, body and mind are essential for soul-body unison. Who can freedom? ‘That man alone is wise, who keeps the mastery of himself! If one Ponders on objects of the sense, there springs Attraction; from attraction grows desire, Desire flames to fierce passion, passion breeds Recklessness; then the memory – all betrayed – Lets noble purpose go, and saps the mind, Till purpose, mind, and man are all undone...’ (Bhagavad-Gita 1957, p. 12). Figure 2 explains the triangular relationships between man, *purusa* and *prakrti*.

The concepts of morality and spirituality are associated with the concepts of religion and social co-existence with mutual respect to each other. In association with his conception of sociability Vivekananda tries to find out a theory of social development based on the laws of nature and of human reason. In his conception of sociability, he wrote that ‘people will certainly want the satisfaction of their material needs, less work, no oppression, no war, and more food.’ (Vivekananda 1946, p.39). To Vivekananda, it is

... according to the law of nature, wherever there is an awakening of a new and stronger life, there it tries to conquer and take the place of the old and the decaying. Nature favours the dying out of the unfit and the survival of the fittest... when society has passed its infant stage and reached its vigorous youthful condition, to clothe it by force with the dress which suited it in its infancy, and keep it bound within narrow limits, then... it bursts the bonds by virtue of its own strength... every society attains its manhood, when a strong conflict ensues between the ruling power and the common people... changes revolutionising society have been happening in India again and again, only in this country they have been effected in the name of religion (Vivekananda, CW, Vol. 4, pp. 389, 394-95).

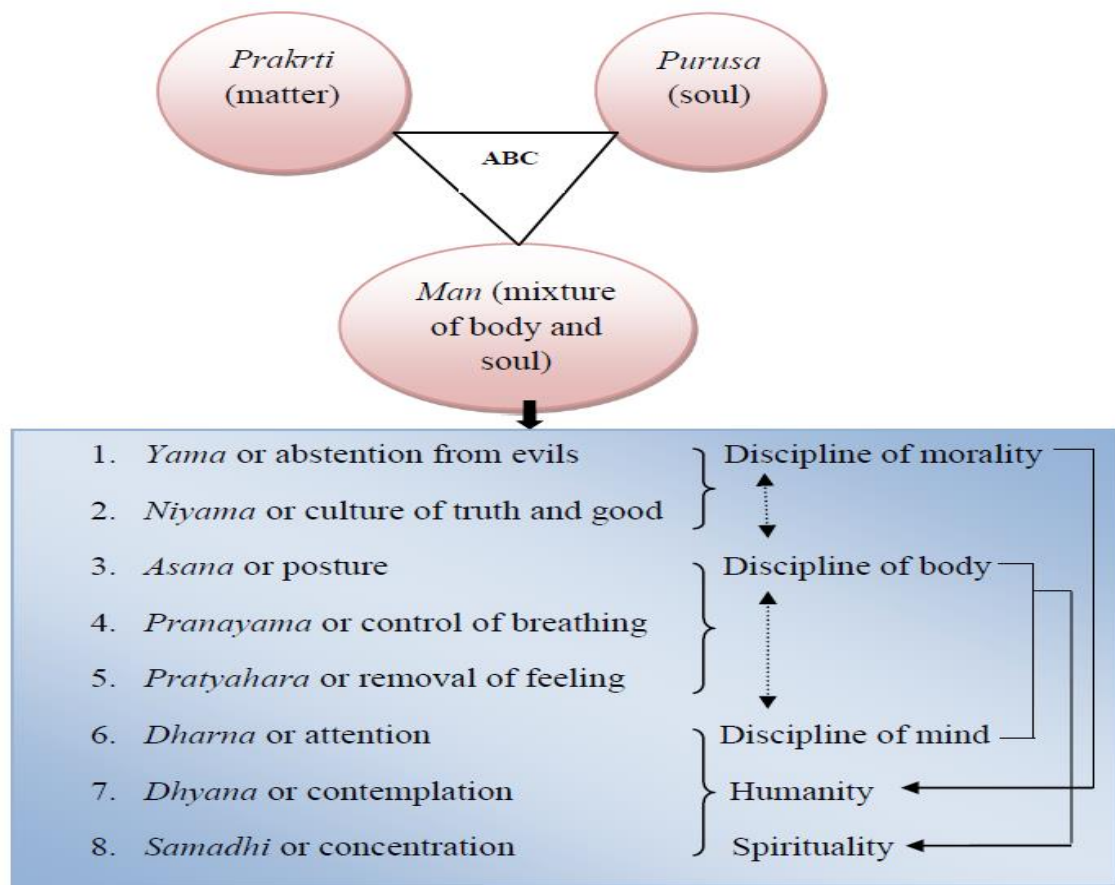
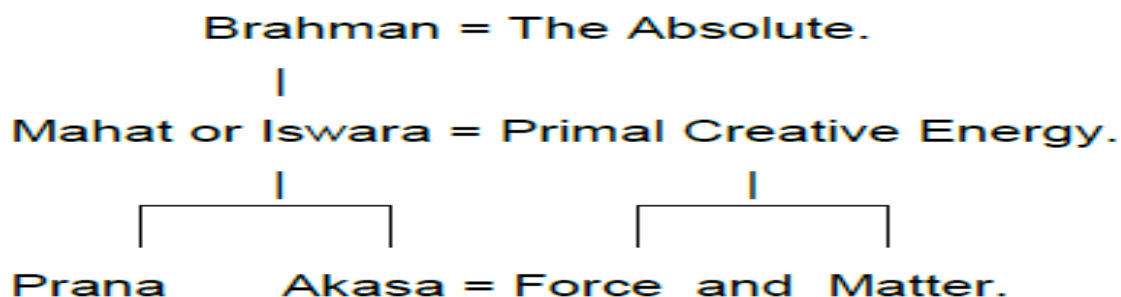


Fig. 2

Like Vivekananda, Nivedita believed that



Source: Nivedita. 1910. *The Master As I Saw Him*. London and New York: Longmans, Green and Co.

“That is to say, the dualist claims that the soul after death passes on to the Solar Sphere, thence to the Lunar Sphere, thence to the Electric Sphere. Thence he is accompanied by a *purusha* to Brahmaloaka. (Thence, says the Advaitist, he goes to Nirvana).” (Nivedita 1910, p. 173). That is to say, the lowest or most condensed is the *Solar Sphere*, consisting of the visible universe; in which *Prana* appear as physical force, and *akasa* as sensible matter. The next is called the *Lunar Sphere*, which surrounds the Solar Sphere. This is not the moon at all, but the habitation of the gods, that is to say, *Prana* appears in it as psychic forces, and *Akasa* as *Tanmatras*, or fine particles. Beyond this is the *Electric Sphere*, that is to say, a condition in which the *Prana* is almost inseparable from *Akasa*, and you can hardly tell whether Electricity is force or matter. Next is the *Brahmaloka*, where there is neither *Prana* nor *Akasa*, but both are merged into the *Mind-stuff*, the primal energy. And here - there being neither *Prana* nor *Akasa* – the *jiva* contemplates the whole universe as *Samashti*, or the sum-total of *Mahat*, or mind. This appears as a *Purusha*, an abstract universal *Soul*, yet not the Absolute, for still there is multiplicity. From this, the *jiva* finds at last that Unity which is the end. (Nivedita 1910, p. 174).

National reawakening

Swamiji pointed out that nothing was basically wrong with India except that she had to regain self-confidence, so that she might apply herself with vigour and determination to the solution of the problems of food, health, and education. He wanted his countrymen to study western science and technology, but he was at the same time utterly opposed to the idea that India should blindly imitate the West. Sister Nivedita said that Vivekananda believed that the time had come when nations were to exchange their ideals, as they were already exchanging the commodities of the market (Nivedita 1982, p. 18). She believed in the universal religion of Swami Vivekananda. Margaret Noble (Nivedita 1982, p. 20) referred to the “equal truth of all religions” as the “master-thought” to which Vivekananda constantly returned in his talks in London in 1895 and 1896. Nivedita tried to imprint nationalist ideas in the minds of her girl students through all their activities and behaviour including language, dress, education, music and everything. She introduced everyday singing of the song *Vande Mātaram* in her school. Any national object, no matter how insignificant it might be, was dear to her like a worshipped deity. She tried to infuse this reverence into her students also so that they could view any national object in such depth. She (2000, p. 86) advised throw yourselves, children

of India, into the worship of these (the ancient chronicles) and your whole past. Strive passionately for knowledge. Yours are the spades and mattocks of this excavation. For with you and not with the foreigner are the thought and language that will make it easy to unearthing the old significance. India's whole hope lies in a deeper research, a more rigid investigation of facts. With her, encouragement and not despair, is on the side of truth.

Like Vivekananda, Nivedita believed in the idea of 'globalism', different from 'orientalism' of the West: "For any European during the nineteenth century - and I think one can say this almost without qualification - Orientalism was such a system of truths, truths in Nietzsche's sense of the word. It is therefore correct that every European, in what he could say about the Orient, was consequently a racist, an imperialist, and almost totally ethnocentric.... My contention is that Orientalism is fundamentally a political doctrine willed over the Orient because the Orient was weaker than the West." (Said 1991, pp. 203-4). Nivedita said that "The land of the Vedas and of Jnana-Yoga has no right to sink into the role of mere critic or imitator of European Letters... The Indianising of India, the organising of our national thought, the laying out of our line of march, all this is to be done by us, not by others on our behalf." (Nivedita 1973, pp. 492, 500). Vivekananda also believed that life is not real, the real is God. Like Vivekananda Aurobindo also believed that this spirituality is the essence of India. Spirituality is the master key of Indian mind. Aurobindo was aware of the influence of the colonial discourse on the formation of this image and tried to enlarge it beyond Western styles (Aurobindo 1997). To Nivedita freedom is ingrained in spiritual freedom. Motherhood becomes the site of struggle in colonial India. The 'Kali, the Mother' is the idol of freedom from negligence and oppression. Nivedita along with Vivekananda and Ramakrishna believed with that conception of motherhood. To Nivedita, "In the Aryan home, woman stands supreme. As wife in the west-lady and queen of her husband-as mother in the east,-a goddess throned in her son's worship-she is the bringer of sanctity and peace". (Nivedita 1983, p. 16). This tone was politicised by the extremist nationalists, setting the ideological tone of so-called terrorism in nationalist politics. To Nivedita, In the east, the accepted symbol is of a woman nude, with flowing hair, so dark a blue that she seems in colour to be black; four handed-two hands in the act of blessing and two holding a knife and bleeding head respectively garlanded with skulls and dancing, with protruding tongue, on the prostrate figure of a man all white with ashes. (Nivedita 1983, p. 20). It is like what Nivedita says that religions called by whatever name, has been ever the love of death. But today the flame of renunciation shall be lighted in my lands and consume men with a passion beyond control of thought. Then shall my people thirst for self-sacrifice as others for enjoyment. Then shall labour and suffering and service be counted sweet instead of bitter. For this age is great in time and I, even I Kali, am the Mother of the nation (Nivedita 1983). Maya is false, Kali is its symbol. If Kali were painted as the ideal Hindu woman, she would have been real. To convey her unreality - as she shows herself, she is painted as the ideal non-woman. The photograph follows like that –



Kali, 1908
Chromolithograph by Calcutta Art Studio
Coll. Royal Anthropological Institute Photographs collection

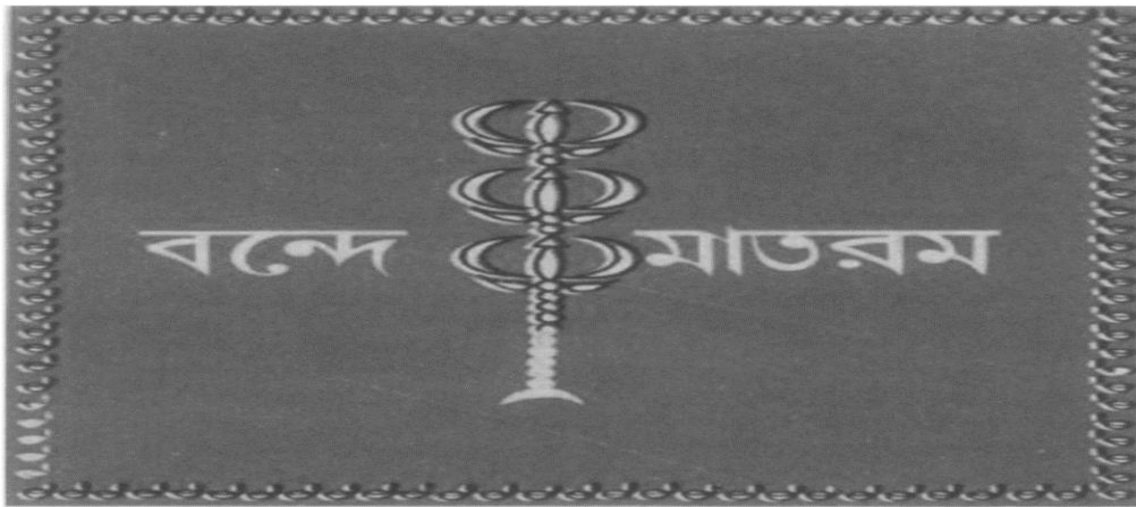
Source: Sen, Geeti. 2003. Iconising the Nation: Political Agendas. *India international Centre Quarterly* 29(3/4), pp. 154-175

In *The Web of Indian Life*, also, she stressed the contrast between Oriental altruistic sacrifice and Western individualism:

Unselfishness and the thirst for service stand out in the Western personality against a background of individualistic conventions, and convey an impression of the eagerness and struggle of pity, without which the world would certainly be the poorer. But the Eastern woman is unaware of any defiance of institutions. She is the product of an ethical civilisation. Her charities are required of her. Her vows and penances are unknown even to her husband; but were they told they would scarcely excite remark in a community where all make similar sacrifices. / This is only to say that she is more deeply self-effacing and more effectively altruistic than any Western. The duty of tending the sick is so much a matter of course to her that she does not dream of it as a special function, for which one might erect hospitals or learn nursing. . . . Throughout the world women are the guardians of humanity's ethical ideals. (Nivedita 1982, p. 68)

These women who may not be able to read and write are deeply, and even passionately, possessed of the spirit of the ancient culture. The philosophy of Maya, not seldom bewildering to the Western savant, has no difficulty for them. They understand to a hair the meaning of the word Nirvana. It is no one special command to deny oneself and take up a cross and follow, that has weight with them; but the bearing of the great law of renunciation on the personal realisation of freedom. Add to all this the inbred habit of life in community, and it will appear that under the old scheme women found not only a training and a discipline, but also a career. (Nivedita 1982, p. 73)

In *Karmayogin*, an English nationalist weekly Nivedita she said that she believed in India, the indissoluble and indivisible unity. National unity rests on the foundation of common hearth, common interest and common love. She believes that the force which is expressed in the Vedas and the Upanishads, in the formation of religions and empires, in the science of savants and in the meditation of saints, is born once more amongst us and has the name of Nationality. Nivedita's visualization of Indianness expressed Hindu identity with Indian national identity. Nivedita's flag expressed 108 oil lamps in the border, a *vajra* or thunderbolt symbol of god Indra in the centre and *Vande Matram*, the popular slogan of anti-partition agitations, inscribed across the flag in Bengali script (Singh 1991). The flag represents like



Nivedita's flag, 1906, Source: Singh, K. V. 1991. *Our National Flag*. New Delhi: Publications Division, Government of India.

In a letter Swami Vivekananda, the master of Nivedita said, *“My ideal indeed can be put into a few words and that is: to preach into mankind their divinity, and how to make it manifest in every movement of life Religions in the world have become mockeries. What the world want is character. The world is in need of those whose life is one burning love, selfless. That love will make every word tell like thunderbolt. I am sure you have the making in you of a world mover, Bold words and bolder deeds are what we want. Awake, awake, great ones! The world is burning with misery. Can you sleep? Let us call and call till the sleeping gods awake, till the god within answers to the call. What more is in life? What greater work? The details come to me as I go. I never make plan. Plans grow and work themselves. I only say, awake, awake!”* (Swami Vivekananda 1970, p. 295, Letter written to Nivedita, dated June, 7, 1896, Ibid, p. 295.) By gradual steps she was moulded by the personality of Vivekananda.

Nivedita wanted to awake the whole nation, not women as such, as to her nation could be regenerated not in isolation, but in total. On July 24, 1902, she wrote of Miss Macleod as follows : *“We talk of 'women-making/ But the great stream of the Oriental Women's life flows on — who am I that I should seek in any way to change it? Is it not rather by taking the national consciousness of the women like that of the men, and getting it towards greater problems and responsibilities, that one can help? I don't know! Only I think my task is to*

awake a nation, not to influence a few women." (Basu 1982, p. 482.). Swami Vivekaanda said to Nivedita that *"India cannot yet produce great women. She must borrow them from other nations. Your education, sincerity, purity, immense love, determination and above all, the Celtic blood make you just the woman wanted"* (Vivekananda, 1970, p. 363, Letter written to Nivedita, dated July 29, 1897.)

For the reawakening of India and freedom from foreign rule Nivedita worked hard for Indian national regeneration. Questions are raised about her revolutionary character. It may be evident and clear beyond a shadow of doubt that Nivedita had been involved deeply in the revolutionary movement at a certain stage. More categorically Dr. Datta writes elsewhere as follows : *"Since the foundation of the Revolutionary Party in Bengal Swamiji's British disciple Sister Nivedita took at first an active part and was a member of the Executive Committee (Datta 1954, p. 213) I do not remember Nivedita speaking to me on spiritual subjects or about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda / was very much enamoured at the time of her book, 'Kali, the Mother' and I think we spoke of that; she had heard, she said, that I was a worshipper of Force, by which she meant that I belonged to the revolutionary party like herself and I was present at her interview with the Maharaja whom she Invited to support the secret revolution; she told that he could communicate with her through me. Sayaji Rao was much too cunning to plunge into such a dangerous business and never spoke to me about It."* (Aurobindo, pp. 96-97). Aurobindo again writes as follows : *"That with my relation with Sister Nivedita — they were purely in the field of politics I met Sister Nivedita first at Baroda when she came to give some lectures there it was in those days that we formed our friendship. After I had started my revolutionary work in Bengal through certain emissaries, I went there personally to see and arrange things myself. I found a number of small groups of evolutionaries that had sprung into existence but all scattered and acting without reference to each other. I tried to unite them under a single organisation with the Barrister P. Mitra as the leader of the revolution in Bengal and a central council of five persons, one of them being Nivedita By that time I had become one of the leaders of the public movement known first as extremism, then as nationalism, but this gave me no occasion to meet her (Nivedita), except once or twice at the congress as my collaboration with her was solely in the secret revolutionary field I was busy with my work, she with hers, and no occasion arose for consultations or decisions about the conduct of the revolutionary movement. Later on, I began to make time to go and see her occasionally at Baghbazar. In one of these visits she informed me that the Government had decided to deport me and she wanted me to go into secrecy or to leave British India and act from outside."* (Aurobindo, pp. 115-17).

But at the same time Nivedita was much greater than a mere worker in the secret revolutionary field. She was a woman of high intellectual stature. She was a nationalist and had close connection with the Indian National Congress. She was deeply impressed with the Swadeshi Movement of 1905. She said, *"It is necessary to say, and I feel that it cannot be said too strongly, that in the Swadeshi Movement the Indian people have found an opportunity to make themselves respected by the whole world. For the world respects that which show that it is to be feared, and the one thing that is to be feared by all is strong, intelligent and united action. The note of manliness, and self-help is sounded throughout the*

Swadeshi Movement. There is here no begging for help, no cringing for concessions. What India can do for herself that she will do."(Nivedita, CW, Vol. IV, p. 276). She said that that the very logic of Swadeshi led to the injury of British interests. She said, *"First we must understand that no work was ever wasted. Every vibration of struggle brings its own results. When enough force has gone out, victory is the return. Ultimately, there is no such thing as defeat. A clear will frustrated, only becomes the clearer. Loss becomes then nothing but gain delayed. Again, victory depends only on effort, never on talk. All India is watching today the struggle that is going on in Bengal. Scarcely a word appears on the papers, yet the knowledge is everywhere. The air is tense with expectation, with sympathy, with pride in those grim heroic people and their silent struggle to the death, for their Swadeshi trade. Quietly all India is assimilating their power....the serious difficulties of the Swadeshi movement lie in the two great fields of Production and Distribution. The obstacle offered by insufficient production is understood by all of us. Indeed it has been the strong and spontaneous union of efforts to bring production up to the required level, in which has lain the dawning hope and joy of all the workers. In distribution, however, we have a problem equally refractory to solve. For even when we know that a certain article is made in the country, we do not yet know where to obtain it. Or the shop at which it can be bought is apt to be inaccessible, or insufficiently supplied."* (Nivedita, CW, Vol. IV, pp. 281-83). She always harped on national reawakening. About Swadeshi Movement she said, *"The boycott meanwhile is spreading even to women and priests — and the amount of sacrifice that has been made is extraordinary. I always feel that by this particular power of unknown people to perform obscure acts of sacrifice under a dominating idea of the community, you can exactly measure the national potentiality. It was by this power in the Russian People that Napoleon's march on Moscow was turned into a disaster. It was by the same power that a few months ago seemed unborn amongst us. Today it is seen on all sides. This is the element of hope — that outshines all others. Even petty shop keepers are found to remonstrate with Indian customers who ask for a videshi commodity."* (Nivedita, CW, Vol. II, p. 758). Maurice Hayes (2010) says that bitterly critical of Lord Curzon for the partition of Bengal and the Indian Universities Act, she blamed British administration and policies for poverty and the poor state of the Indian economy policies. Having little patience with moderate politics or peaceful protest, she came to side actively with the Indian freedom movement and also supported the Swadeshi movement, the educational work of Chandra Bose and the activities of Swami Aurobindo of Auroville, Pondicherry. She is reputed to have smuggled chemicals out of school laboratories for those who were experimenting with bomb-making. Sister Nivedita is remembered in India as the closest disciple of Swami Vivekananda, guru of the Indian spiritual renaissance, and as one of the foremost of an influential group of nationalist thinkers and activists in the first decade of the twentieth century. Tagore knew and admired her, as did Ramsay MacDonald and Lady Minto. For many Europeans she was the voice of radical India. She saw her task as that of awakening the Indian nation, and her contribution to the creation of national consciousness and the making of modern India was recognised in the issue of a postage stamp bearing her image to commemorate the centenary of her birth in 1967 (Hayes 2010, p. 66).

On education Nivedita (2000, p. 85) Nivedita said that the question that has to be solved for Indian women, therefore, is a form of education that might attain this end of developing the faculties of soul and mind in harmony with one another. And in this particular respect there is perhaps no other country in the world so fortunately placed as India. She is, above all others, the land of great women. Whenever we turn, whether to history or literature, we are met on every hand by those figures whose strength she mothered and recognised, while she their memory eternally held sacred. There can never be any sound education of the Indian woman which does not begin and end in exaltation of the national ideals of womanhood, as embodied in her own history and heroic literature.

Concluding remarks

Marx was an internationalist and never cared for the sentiments behind nationalism. The largest gap in his writings in politics was the limited attention given to the nation-state and nationalism. Marx believed that nations were a byproduct of the capital age because of the economic undercurrent bringing about markets for the good produced. Marx proclaimed that workingmen have no country and championed international co-operation of the working class. Vivekananda and Nivedita, on the contrary, was a nationalist to the core and believed in patriotism and national feeling. She was proud of the Indian legacy with the cultural approach and was of the view that every nation is born and not created. According to Swamiji and Nivedita, every nation has a national purpose of its own. Either in obedience to the law of nature, or by virtue of the superior genius of the great ones, the social manners and customs of nations is molded into shape, so as to bring that purpose with fruition. Nivedita wanted each nation to grow to its full stature and strength, thus contributing to the sum total of world's growth and human welfare. Nivedita's nationalism had internationalism in essence and execution. Nivedita had a supreme mission of nation building as a historical imperative. Secondly, she also had a conviction of the indestructibility of the 'Indian soul' and the invincibility of Indian 'spirituality'. Thirdly, her concept of nationalism was an effective and adequate instrument for the fulfillment of India's destiny and formation of Indian nationalism. She used his interpretation of Indian history and culture in the understanding of the concept of nationalism. Vivekananda said, 'Let others talk of politics, of the glory of the acquisition of the immense wealth poured in by trade, of the power and spread of commercialism, of the glorious fountain of physical liberty, the Hindu mind does not understand it. Touch him on spirituality, on religion, on God, on the soul, on the infinite, on spiritual freedom, the lowest peasant, I am sure, is better informed in India than many a so-called philosopher in other lands.' (Vivekananda, CW, Vol. 3, p. 148). The basis of his creative nationalism is Hindu spiritual tradition. Unity of religion in the midst of diversity is absolutely necessary for India's future. His mission was to find the common bases of Hinduism and awaken national consciousness. National unity or union must be gathered up of its scattered spiritual forces. He opposed the social reform movement if it denied the faith in Hinduism. He was against the imitation of Western materialistic tradition. He said that our

life blood is spirituality and if it flows strong and pure, then all social, political and material defects will be cured (Vivekananda, CW, Vols. 3, 5). Nivedita followed Vivekananda. Vivekananda stressed on the cultural and civilizational confidence of the Indian people in total awareness of the modernity without losing Indian identity. He recommended fearless engagement in action of the youth. His messages to all the nationalists were basically 'practical Vedantism', Karma Yoga and 'abhaaya'. Following Professor Hiren Mukherjee (1986) it can be said that Vivekananda's concept of nationalism cannot be treated as religious nationalism (Mukherjee 1986). Vivekananda realized that unity of all religions does not mean religious nationalism and he was against religious quietism. Like Hegel, Vivekananda and Nivedita believed that there is one principle manifesting itself in the life of each nation. Religion, for example, had been the guiding principle in India's history for a moment. He advocated the religious theory of nationalism. Like that of Marx he believes that men cannot make their history at their own sweet will, but have to unite on the basis of spirituality, religion and activism. Individuals are obliged to act for the betterment of society. He proposed a theory of action. It is not possible totally to empower people, but we can create conditions to facilitate the process of empowering the people and to work for common struggle. Leadership is getting people to want to do what the leaders want them to do. People share the leader's goals and values. In his writings on Karma Yoga, Vivekananda expressed his views similar to Abraham Maslow's idea of hierarchy of needs leading to self-actualization and finally to self-transcendence. To him, 'Plunge into the world, and then, after a time, when you have suffered and enjoyed all that is in it, will renunciation come, then will calmness come.' (Vivekananda, CW, Vol. 1, p. 40).

Swami Vivekananda is one of the most enduring icons of the rise of Indian nationalism in modern India. We know him today as being one among the first generation of leaders who raised the voice of Indian nationality. Nivedita followed the ideas of his master. Equally important is that they were an intensely religious man who lived a life immersed in spirituality. Their position was unique in that along with a modern education which gave him a critical attitude, and his account of his experience and the importance of this in his life are as important as his work in nation building. Vivekananda repeatedly told that India's downfall was largely due to her negligence of women. The great images of Brahnavadinis like Maitreyi and Gargi of the Upanishad age, and women missionaries like Sanghamitra carrying Buddha's message to Syria and Macedonia, all were laying buried deep due to millennium of foreign domination. Both glorified Indian women of the past for their great achievements as leaders in various walks of life. They proudly state that Women in statesmanship, managing territories, governing countries, even making war, have proved themselves equal to men, if not superior. Whenever they have had the opportunity, they have proved that they have as much ability as men, with this advantage – that they seldom degenerate. They keep to the moral standard, which is innate in their nature. And thus as governors and rulers of their state, they prove-at least in India far superior to men. John Stuart Mill mentions this fact. When people are discussing as to what man and woman can do, always the same mistake is made. They think they show man at his best because he can fight, for instance, and undergo tremendous physical exertion; and this is pitted against the physical weakness and non-combating quality of woman. This is unjust. Woman is as courageous as

man. Each is equally good in his or her way. What man can bring up a child with such patience, endurance, and love as the woman can? The one has developed the power of doing; the other, the power of suffering. If woman cannot act, neither can man suffer. The whole universe is one of perfect balance (Vivekananda, CW, Vol. 2, pp. 25-26). If you do not allow one to become a lion, he will become a fox. Women are a power, only now it is more evil because man oppresses woman; she is the fox, but when she is no longer oppressed, she will be the lion (Vivekananda, CW, Vol. 7, p. 22). "In India the mother is the center of the family and our highest ideal. She is to us the representative of God, as God is the mother of the universe. It was a female sage who first found the unity of God, and laid down this doctrine in one of the first hymns of the Vedas. Our God is both personal and absolute; the absolute is male, the personal, and female. And thus it comes that we now say: 'The first manifestation of God is the hand that rocks the cradle'." (Vivekananda, CW, Vol. 4, p. 170). Vivekananda declared that the western ideal of womanhood is wife, while the eastern ideal is mother. The very peculiarity of Hindu women which they have developed and which is the ideal of their life, is that of the mother. A nation that has educated itself to look upon God as Mother has learnt to invest its view of woman with the utmost tenderness and reverence. Swami Vivekananda is the first monk to uphold and do work for the freedom and equality of women and realizing her importance for the functioning of home and society. Sister Nivedita followed his path and equate woman as 'Kali, the Mother'.

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