CHAPTER - II

VARIOUS FORMATIVE INFLUENCES THAT TRANSFORMED Nivedita’s mind and concepts
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Various Formative Influences that Transformed Nivedita’s Mind and Concepts

I

Sister Nivedita with her keen intellect, strong insight, and vast reading could not accept whatever she heard without being convinced of the truth about it. But, once she was convinced, she accepted it and followed it with all sincerity. So, when Nivedita came to India in January, 1898, and was initiated and given the name ‘the dedicated’ by Swami Vivekananda ‘as a novice of the order of Ramakrishna’ on March 25, 1898, she continued to be very proud of her English nationality. She declared her allegiance to the British national flag. When Vivekananda made some disparaging remarks about the British, a clash took place between Nivedita and Vivekananda. But through the intervention of some Western lady disciples of Vivekananda, the clash was brought to an end.

Nivedita sustained a rude shock from an incident which occurred in August-September, 1898, and she realised the great injustices of British rulership in India. Vivekananda was on a visit to Kashmir accompanied by Nivedita and some other foreigner-lady-disciples. For the establishment of a Sanskrit College in Kashmir, the Maharaja of Kashmir proposed to grant a plot of land to Vivekananda. The proposal was vetoed by the English Resident in Kashmir. Nivedita with all sincerity tried her best to obtain the consent of the Resident. But she failed in her endeavour. The proposal was vetoed twice by the Resident. This incident completely disillusioned Nivedita. It appeared that the British missionaries had influenced the Resident. Not only Nivedita, but also Mrs. Ole Bull, and Mrs. Patterson (wife of the American Consul) tried their best to induce the Resident to change his decision, but the latter remained adamant. It appeared to Nivedita that the action of the Resident was a mean and detestable one. It hurt her feelings that a British should act in this manner. ¹

From that time onward there was a change of the attitude and outlook of Nivedita. Of course, this change was also largely brought about by the
magnetic personality, and precepts of Swami Vivekananda. But, the change came by stages. A conflict was there within her, and this conflict was manifested in two letters that she wrote to Mrs. Hammond from Almora.

Nivedita wrote on May 22, 1898, to Mrs. Hammond giving expression of her bitter feelings. The bitterness was further added by the news she received that the police were keeping close watch on the movement of the Swami. She wrote: "You cannot imagine what race hatred means, living in England, manliness seems a barrier to nothing. One of the monks has had a warning this morning that the police are watching the Swami through spies. The Swami laughs at it, though I cannot help attaching some importance to it. The government would be mad to attempt to interfere with him, for it would rouse a country, and I, the most loyal English woman whoever breathed in this country (I could not have suspected the depth of my own loyalty till I go here), would be the first to rise up. But let us hope we shall change all this suspicion." ²

Even after this, Nivedita cherished the hope of bringing about a reconciliation between England and India. In another letter to Mrs. Eric Hammond, Nivedita wrote on June 05, 1898: "I see great possibilities before anyone here who has a large and influential English acquaintance, in the way of so utterly changing public opinion and illuminating public ignorance that you can scarcely imagine it. It is the dream of my life to make England and India love each other. To do England justice, I think India is in many ways well and faithfully served by her sons, but not in such a manner as to produce the true emotional response. On the other hand, of course, every nation demands freedom -- Italy from Austria, Greece from Turkey, India from England, naturally -- and in the course of centuries the Hindu may be equal to the peaceful government of himself and the Moslem. At present, the only possible change of the political peace which is essential to India's social development lies in the presence of the strong third power coming from a sufficient distance to be without local prejudice." ³

It becomes evident from this letter that despite the "Kashmir affair", Nivedita not only dreamt of the maintenance of love between England and India, but also she thought of the desirability of the presence of the British
on the Indian soil as a third power to prevent conflict between the Hindus and Muslims.

It is worth noting, on the other hand, that even up to September 02, 1898, Nivedita cherished the hope of being able to bring about a change in the attitude of the British Resident. On September 02, she wrote to Mrs. Hammond as follows: “We are camping here on a piece of ground that the Maharaja wants to give Swami for a Sanskrit School, we, the Missionaries have been stirring up such attacks on the King, that it is very very doubtful that the Resident will consent to the disposal of the land -- and it is just possible if this happens that I may go for private interview with the Resident -- without Swami’s knowledge. I have at least as much right to speak for the Master to the representative of our government as any missionary against him. As a worker I think it would be good for the movement to be opposed officially, but as an English woman how could one bear England to do the mean thing?”

Then in another letter written to Mrs. Eric Hammond on January 04, 1899, Nivedita stated herself very clearly as follows: “My work is here for the present, as you all say, and of course, I never thought of throwing it up suddenly. Perhaps I said outrageous things -- perhaps I was wrong to talk of ‘politics’ at all, but somehow or other I feel sure it will be given to me to utter the deep, heart-felt feeling and meaning of our English nation and sooner or later my work will be recognised as real ‘politics’.

……………… my work is going down into the heart and meaning of the people, and interpreting it as must be the result …………..

If not the action, then the reaction will be political, I agree that I have no ability for the game of politics, but the real movers of the forces are not gamblers, they are sincere and earnest to the core.

Meantime, we must get this action of Sir. A. Talbot noticed -- with whatever result. Please help me.”

It is obvious from this letter that even in January 1899 Nivedita considered herself to be well fitted to interpret the English nation, and its mission in India in true perspective. This might imply “real politics” and acting as a ‘real mover of forces -- sincere and earnest to the core’ -- though
she might not be well-equipped for 'the game of politics.' With all sincerity Nivedita wanted to give publicity to the English Resident’s arbitrary action in vetoing the Kashmir Maharaja’s intended gift of a plot of land to Swami Vivekananda so that the public opinion might be mobilised in England against such capricious behaviour.

We consider it significant to refer to a letter dated July 19, 1901 Nivedita wrote to Miss J. Macleod:

“As for England -- this Boer war seems to spell individual and general degradation ............... England or that was noble in her at least seems dead. Content to be represented by a pack of public-school boys mad after gold-dust ...............”. Turning to England’s rule in India, Nivedita continued --

“............. I have no interest in anything done by government for India. To my mind, what a people do not do for themselves is ill-done, no matter how brilliant it seems. I keep on more and more seeing that what I once saw true for an individual is true for communities. You may employ artists to teach Baby painting and they may touch up her work so that it seems marvellous, but one little scrawl that is really her own is worth thousands of such pictures. And so with countries. What they grow to is good: What is done for them is a painted show.

I am doing nothing for India. I am learning and galvanising. I am trying to see how the plant grows. When I have really understood that, I shall know that there is nothing to be done except defence. I fancy, India was absorbed in study: a gang of robbers came upon her and destroyed her land. The mood is broken. Can the robbers teach her anything? No, she has to turn them out, and go back to where she was before. Something like that, I fancy, is the true programme for India. And so I have nothing to do with ............ Government agencies, as long as the government is Foreign. That which is Indian for India, I touch the feet of, however, stupid and futile. Anything else will do a little good and much harm, and I have nothing to do with it .............

Oh! India! India! Who shall undo this awful doing of my nation to you? Who shall atone for one of the million bitter insults showered daily on the bravest and keenest, nerved and best of all your sons?
How silly I think it now to do anything in England for India. I cannot tell you. What utter waste of Time! Do you think ravening wolves can be made gentle as babes? Can be made polite and sweet as little girls?"

She further added: "......... We want the slow-growing formative forces put well to work. Do not think I can be forgetful of the planting of trees, the training of children, the farming of land. But we want also the ringing cry, the passion of the multitude, the longing for death. And we cannot do without these. When I think of our needs, I am in despair -- but when I remember that the time is ripe, and that MOTHER works, not we, I take courage again.

All we have to do is float with the tide, anywhere it may take us -- to speak the whole word that comes to us -- to strike the blow on the instant of heat. Dare we hope that we shall not fail?

My task is to see and make others see. The rest does itself. The vision is the great crisis.

Now do you see what I feel and why? To me now a missionary is as a snake to be crushed with my heel. The better he is doing, the worse he is -- as far as I am concerned at least.

The English official is a fool, playing amidst smoking ruins and crying on the high way that he builds well.

The Native Christian is a traitor in his own land.

.............. The Congress is foolish, it is true, and mischievous in some ways, but it is 10,000 times better than Mr. Tata's Scheme for instance or the Sorabji business. Swami is the only person I know of who goes to the root of the matter -- national man-making -- and I don't know if Swami formulates all this other. I don't think he does." a

This letter throws considerable light on Nivedita's outlook. In the first place, she condemns England's role in Boer War; condemns also the mad rush after gold-dust in South Africa by the youths of England.

In regard to India, Nivedita wanted the real awakening of the people of India. She wanted that there must be the 'ringing cry', the 'passion of the multitude, the longing for death'. She asserted that the young men must rouse themselves and assume a death defying attitude. Above all, India's
destiny should be left to be worked out by the MOTHER -- the MOTHER being none other than Goddess Kali.

Nivedita had perceived the blazing, burning faith in Mother Kali, the maker and yet the destroyer of the Universe, from Vivekananda. In moments of exalted inspiration Vivekananda had written an awe inspiring poem on Kali. We quote:

**Kali The Mother**

The stars are blotted out,
The clouds are covering clouds,
It is darkness vibrant, sonant.
In the roaring, whirling wind
Are the souls of a million lunatics
Just loose from the prison -- house,
Wrenching trees by the roots,
Sweeping all from the path.
The sea has joined the pray,
And swirls up mountain-waves,
To reach the pitchy sky.
The flush of buried light
Reveals on every side
A thousand, thousand shades
Of death begrimed and black --
Scattering plagues and sorrows,
Dancing mad with joy,
Come, Mother, come!
For Terror in Thy name,
Death is in Thy breath,
And every shaking step
Destroys a world for ev’r.
Thou “Time”, the All-Destroyer!
Come, O Mother come!
Who dares misery love,
And hug the form of Death,
Dance the Destruction’s dance,

To him the Mother comes --

According to Nivedita, Swamiji composed the poem in a mood of inspiration, and he felt utterly exhausted after completing the poem. She observes, “Writing in a fever of inspiration he had fallen on the floor, when he had finished .......... exhausted with his own intensity.”

Soon after this, Swamiji paid a visit to Kshir Bowani where there was a temple of Kali, and when he returned from that place, his whole mood had undergone a complete change. Nivedita continues to write:

"He entered our house boat, -- a transfigured presence, and silently passed from one to another blessing us, and putting the marigolds on our heads .......... We all sat silent. Had we tried to speak, we should have failed, so tense was the spot with something that stilled thought. He opened his lips again. ‘All my patriotism is gone. Everything is gone. Now it’s only Mother, Mother’. "

On October 13, 1898, in one of her letters, Nivedita wrote as follows:

".......... A fortnight ago he went away alone, and it is about 8 days since he came back, like one transfigured and inspired.

I cannot tell you about it. It is too great for words. My pen would have to learn to whisper.

He simply talks like a child, of ‘the Mother’ -- but his soul and his voice are those of a God. The mingled solemnity and exhilaration of his presence have made me retire to the farthest corner, and just worship in silence all the time .............

It has just been the nearness of one who had seen God, and whose eyes even now are full of the vision.

To him at this moment, ‘doing good’ seems horrible. ‘Only the Mother’ does anything .......... .

Silence and austerity and withdrawal are the key-notes of life to him just now and the withdrawal is too holy for us to touch. It is as if every moment not spent with ‘the Mother’ consciously were so much lost .......... .

As I look back on this wonderful summer I wonder how I have come to heights so rare. We have been living and breathing in the sunshine of the
great religious ideals all these months, and God has been more real to us than common men. And in those lost hours yesterday morning, we held our breath and did not dare to stir, while he sang to the Mother and talked to us.”

Vivekananda imbibed his respect for Kali from his Master Ramakrishna, but as we have it on the authority of Nivedita, he did not offer his respect voluntarily, and spontaneously. He resisted and refused to surrender, but at last, he had to yield. Nivedita has written how Swamiji narrated to her his experience in this regard. We quote:

"How I used to hate Kali”, he said, "And all Her ways! That was the ground of my six years’ fight, -- that I would not accept Her. But I had to accept Her at last! Ramakrishna Paramahansa dedicated me to Her, and now I believe that She guides me in every little thing I do, and does with me what She will .......... Yet I fought so long ! I loved him, you see, and that was what held me. I saw his marvellous purity .......... I felt his wonderful love .......... His greatness had not dawned on me then. All that came afterwards when I had given in. At that time I thought him a brain-sick baby, always seeing visions and the rest. I hated it. And then I too had to accept Her!

"No, the thing that made me do it is a secret that will die with me .......... She made a slave of me.”

At this stage, we consider it necessary to examine the role of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in the national insurgence of India. It is significant that the Sedition Enquiry Committee which was appointed in 1917 to study the Revolutionary movement in India has occasion to make a reference of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda in their Report (1918) while considering the beginning of the revolutionary upheaval in Bengal. We quote from the Report:

“In 1886 had died the Bengali ascetic Rama Krishna. He was undoubtedly a remarkable and purely religious man. He strongly defended Hinduism but taught that all religions were true, that all deities were manifestations of the impersonal Supreme, and the Brahmin disdain of low castes was wrong. To him goddess Kali was the goddess of divine strength although another of her attributes is destruction. She was his mother and
the mother of the universe. If he worshipped through idols, it was because he believed that these idols were filled with the presence of the Divinity .......... He died in 1886; and after his death his doctrines were preached by some of his disciples, the chief of whom was Narendra Nath Datta .......... subsequently famous as Swami Vivekananda. Narendra Nath Datta became an ascetic and attended the Parliament of Religions in Chicago as the representative of Hinduism. There he made a great impression, and founded Vendanta societies for spreading the teaching of the Hindu scriptures (Vedas). He returned to India in 1897 with a small band of followers, and was acclaimed by many educated Hindus as a Saviour and prophet of their faith. He organised centres of philanthropic and religious effort under the supervision of a Rama Krishna Mission, and carrying much further the teachings of his master .......... and that, although India was now subject to a foreign power, she must still be careful to preserve the faith of mankind. She must seek freedom by the aid of the Mother of Strength (Sakti).”

In this context, the following utterance of Vivekananda was also quoted by the Sedition Enquiry Committee in their Report --

"Oh India, wouldest thou, with these provision only, scale the highest pinnacle of civilization and greatness? Wouldest thou attain, by means of thy disgraceful cowardice, that freedom deserved only by the brave and heroic .......... Oh Thou Mother of Strength, take away my weakness, take away my unmanliness, and make me a man.”

So, we see that Vivekananda turned ‘Kali-worship’ to a political purpose. He considered it as a means of reviving the degenerated Indian strength.

Nivedita also was converted to this cult of ‘Kali — worship’. There was no imposition of the cult by Swamiji; rather Nivedita embraced it in a voluntary and spontaneous spirit. Referring to the conversion, Nivedita wrote:

“It would have been altogether inconsistent with the Swami’s idea of freedom, to have sought to impose his own conceptions on a disciple. But everything in my past life as an educationist had contributed to impress on me now the necessity of taking on the Indian consciousness, .......... I set
myself therefore to enter into 'Kali worship', as one would set oneself to learn a new language, or take birth deliberately, perhaps, in a new race. To this fact I owe it that I was able to understand as much as I did of our Master's life and thought. Step by step, glimpse after glimpse, I began to comprehend a little. And in matters religious, he was without knowing it, a born educator. He never checked a struggling thought. Being with him one day when an image of Kali was brought in, and noticing some passing expression, I suddenly said, 'Perhaps Swamiji, Kali is the Vision of Shiva! Is She?' He looked at me for a moment! Well! Well! Express it in your own way' -- he said gently."  

In Nivedita's book, 'Kali, the Mother', the vision of Shiva was an inspired and inspiring piece of writing. It will be appropriate to quote from the book:

"......... Shiva – ideal of Manhood, embodiment of God-head.

As the Purusha, or Soul, He is Consort and Spouse of Maya, Nature, the fleeting diversity of sense. It is in this relation that we find Him beneath the feet of Kali. His recumbent posture signifies inertness, the Soul untouched and indifferent to the external. Kali has been executing a wild dance of carnage. On all sides She has left evidences of Her reign of terror. The garland of skulls is round her neck; still in Her hands She holds the bloody weapon and a freshly — served head. Suddenly, She has stepped unwillingly on the body of Her Husband. Her foot is on His breast. He has looked up, awakened by that touch, and They are gazing into each other's eyes. Her right hands are raised in involuntary blessing, and Her tongue makes an exaggerated gesture of shyness and surprise, once common to Indian women of the villages.

And He, what does He see? To Him, She is all beauty – this woman nude and terrible and black who tells the name of God on the skulls of the dead, who creates the bloodshed on which demons fatten, who slays rejoicing and repents not, and blesses Him only that lies crushed beneath Her feet.

Her mass of black hair flows behind Her like the wind, or like time, 'the drift and passage of things'. ............. She is blue almost to blackness, like a
mighty shadow, and bare like the dread realities of life and death. But for Him there is no shadow. Deep into the heart of that Most Terrible, He looks unshrinking, and in the ecstasy of recognition He calls Her Mother. So shall ever be the union of soul with God!"  

It is worth recalling here that this book of Nivedita on Mother Kali was instrumental in forging a close relationship later between her and Sri Aurobindo. And both became deeply involved in the revolutionary movement in Bengal. Referring to Nivedita's visit to Baroda in 1902, Aurobindo wrote:

"Then about my relations with Sister Nivedita -- they were purely in the field of politics. Spirituality or spiritual matters did not come into them and I do not remember anything passing between us on these subjects when I was with her. Once or twice she showed the spiritual side of her but she was then speaking to someone else who had come to see her while I was there, ............ I met Sister Nivedita first at Baroda when she came to give some lectures there. I went to receive her at the station and to take her to the house assigned to her. I also accompanied her to an interview she had sought with the Maharaja of Baroda."

By the time Nivedita met Aurobindo at Baroda, she had already become associated with secret revolutionary activities. And there developed an understanding and indeed a close relationship between Nivedita and Aurobindo in the matter of revolutionary work, so much so that Nivedita sought the assistance of the Maharaja of Baroda in revolutionary work through Aurobindo. He stated that his collaboration with Nivedita was entirely in the secret revolutionary field. We realise that there was a close intellectual (but not really spiritual) understanding between Aurobindo and Nivedita. Intellectually, they were very much on a common plane. This was indicated by Aurobindo's deep appreciation of Nivedita's book 'Kali the Mother' (This appreciation must be said to have been intellectual and not spiritual because Aurobindo himself says clearly that he never discussed spiritual matters with Nivedita. But could the spiritual element be ignored altogether?) The intellectual affinity and understanding between them is also proved by Aurobindo's request to Nivedita to undertake editorial responsibility for his paper Karmayogin, and assumption and creditable
fulfilment of this responsibility by Nivedita for sometime.

Nivedita requested Maharaja of Baroda to help the revolutionary movement, and this is a very important fact (not withstanding Maharaja’s disinclination to be drawn into this dangerous business as mentioned by Aurobindo). Could it be that she had received inspiration in this regard from her Master Swami Vivekananda? In this connection, certain matters need to be examined. First, on one occasion there was a talk between Vivekananda and Nivedita -- a talk in course of which Vivekananda said that his mission was not to preach Ramakrishna’s ideas or Vedanta, that his mission was to bring manhood to the nation. And Nivedita promised to help him. From this, it becomes evident that Vivekananda did not consider his mission to be a religious one as much; rather he considered his mission to be one of rousing and building the nation.

In this connection, another matter that requires to be stated is that Vivekananda attempted, as revealed by Dr. Bhupendra Nath Datta, to bring about an armed revolution through the Princes of India. Indeed, Vivekananda claimed that he did much more politics than Nivedita. All this was disclosed to Dr. Datta by another western disciple of Swamiji, namely, Sister Christine. It is not unlikely that Nivedita took a leaf from Vivekananda’s book when she approached the Maharaja of Baroda for his assistance in the revolutionary movement. However, let us quote from Dr. Datta’s book:

“’What does Nivedita know of Indian condition and politics?’ (Swamiji said to Sister Christine) ‘I have done more politics in my life than she! I had the idea of forming a combination of Indian Princes for the overthrow of the foreign yoke. For that reason from the Himalayas to Cape Comorin, I have tramped all over the country. For that reason I made friends with the gun-maker Sir Hiram Maxim. But I got no response from the country. The country is dead’. And he narrated further attempt of his at this time in other direction; but he again said, ‘India is in putrefaction. When I want today is a band of selfless young workers, who will educate and uplift the people’. Swamiji narrated further of his doing to Sister Christine. But she refused to divulge it to the writer.”

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Sister Christine, now, was on terms of closest intimacy with Sister Nivedita in connection with the latter’s school work. It is reasonable to presume that what was known to her could not be altogether unknown to Nivedita. Nor need we argue in this roundabout fashion. The intimacy between Vivekananda and his most favourite disciple Nivedita could not be less than that between Vivekananda and Christine. So, Nivedita must have got a fair measure of inkling from Swamiji about his plans in regard to his attempt to bring about revolution with the help of the Princes of Indian States. That must have presumably emboldened Nivedita to request Maharaja of Baroda to give his help in the revolutionary cause.

We also want to keep on record, as Dr. Datta points out, that Swamiji told Pandit Sakharam Ganesh Deuskar, a revolutionary in Bengal politics, the following:

“I know several princes who can successfully carry on the revolution.”

So, it is quite evident that Nivedita who was so close to Vivekananda knew this well.

To sum up the various formative influences that moulded Nivedita’s mind and concepts, we consider it very pertinent to refer to Sister Nivedita’s own account of the transformation of her outlook. In the ‘Notes of some wanderings with Swami Vivekananda’, Nivedita recorded the following account.

“Into these morning talks at Almora, a strange new element, painful but salutary to remember, had crept. There appeared to be, on one side, a curious bitterness and distrust, and, on the other, irritation and defiance. The youngest of the Swami’s disciples at this time, it must be remembered, was an English woman, and of how much this fact meant intellectually, -- what a strong bias it implied, and always does imply, in the reading of India, what an idealism of the English race and all their deeds and history, -- the Swami had had no conception till the day after her initiation at the monastery. Then he had asked her some exultant question, as to which nation she now belonged to, and had been startled to find with what a passion of loyalty and worship she regarded the English flag, giving to it
much of the feeling that an Indian woman would give to her Thakoor. His surprise and disappointment at the moment were scarcely perceptible. A startled look, no more. Nor did his discovery of the superficial way in which this disciple had joined herself with his people in any degree affect his confidence and courtesy during the remaining weeks spent in the plains. But with Almora, it seemed as if a going-to-school, had commenced, and just as schooling is often disagreeable to the taught, so here, though it cost infinite pain, the blindness of a half-view must be done away. A mind must be brought to change its centre of gravity. ‘Really, patriotism like yours is sin!’ he exclaimed once, many weeks later, when the process of obtaining an uncoloured judgment on some incident had been more than commonly exasperating. ‘All that I want you to see is that most people’s actions are the expression of self-interest, and you constantly oppose to this the idea that a certain race are all angels. Ignorance so determined is wickedness!’

Then Nivedita also put on record the following:

“These morning talks at Almora then, took the form of assaults upon deep-rooted preconceptions, social, literary, and artistic, or of long comparison of Indian and European history and sentiments, often containing extended observations of very great value. One characteristic of the Swami was the habit of attaching the abuses of a country or society openly and vigorously when he was in its midst, whereas after he had left it, it would often seem as if nothing but its virtues were remembered by him. He was always testing his disciples, and the manner of these particular discourses was probably adopted in order to put to the proof the courage and sincerity of one who was both woman and European.” The extract shows how hard Vivekananda was trying to train up Nivedita for her future work and responsibilities.

Nivedita described in another book her relations with Vivekananda at Almora at this time as follows:

“My relation to our Master at this time can only be described as one of clash and conflict. I can see now how much there was to learn, and how short was the time for learning to be, and the first of lessons doubtless is the destroying of self-sufficiency in the mind of the taught. But I had been little
prepared for that constant rebuke and attack upon all my most cherished prepossessions which was now my lot. Suffering is often illogical, and I cannot attempt to justify by reason the degree of unhappiness which I experienced at this time, I saw the dream of a friendly and beloved leader falling away from me, and the picture of one who would be at least indifferent, and possibly, silently hostile, substituting itself instead.

Fortunately it never occurred to me to retract my own proffered service, but I was made to realise, as the day went by, that in this there would be no personal sweetness. And then a time came when one of the older ladies of our party, thinking perhaps that such intensity of pain inflicted might easily go too far, interceded kindly and gravely with the Swami. He listened silently and went away. At evening, however, he returned, and finding us together in the verandah, he turned to her and said with the simplicity of a child, 'You were right. There must be a change. I am going away into the forests to be alone, and when I come back I shall bring peace'. Then he turned and saw that above us the moon was new, and a sudden exultation came into his voice as he said, 'See! the Mohammedans think much of the new moon. Let us also with the new moon begin a new life!' As the words ended, he lifted his hands and blessed, with silent depths of blessing, his most rebellious disciple, by this time kneeling before him. 

It was assuredly a moment of wonderful sweetness of reconciliation. But such a moment may heal a wound. It cannot restore an illusion that has been broken into fragments. And I have told its story, only that I may touch upon its sequel. Long, long ago, Sri Ramakrishna had told his disciples that the day would come when his beloved 'Noren' would manifest his own great gift of bestowing knowledge with a touch. That evening at Almora, I proved the truth of his prophecy. For alone, in meditation, I found myself gazing deep into an Infinite Good. And I understood, for the first time, that the greatest teachers may destroy in us a personal relation only in order to bestow the Impersonal Vision.
Though Vivekananda’s objective, primarily, was to train Miss Noble, he would not ordinarily single her out for such training. He would address her along with others and talk to the whole group of Western ladies rather than Miss Noble in isolation. “In all that year of 1899”, as Nivedita writes, “I can remember only one occasion when the Swamiji invited me to walk alone with him for half an hour, and then our conversation — for it was towards the end of the summer, when I had begun to understand my own position a little — was rather of the policy and aims of the future, than of anything more subjective.” That way Swamiji’s method of training proved to be “entirely general.” In order to explain what she meant by an ‘entirely general’ method, Nivedita wrote, “We would sit all together in garden or verandah, and listen, all together, to the discourse of the hour, each appropriating as much as she chose, and studying afterwards as she liked.”

“Each appropriating as much as she chose” is an observation loaded with significance. It brings out the whole approach of Vivekananda as a teacher and as a thinker. He was not the one to give directions. In fact, “no one ever lived who more anxiously sought to escape the office of the spiritual director.” He would light the fire himself. He would show the thing itself, and then leave it to the taught to absorb as much as she liked or as much as she could. “It was not in his nature, as he said once, to interfere with liberty, even to prevent mistakes. It was for him to point out the source of an error, only when it had been committed.” In a word, he believed in growth from within and his method was to encourage the growth from within by one’s own labours, may be at some later time, consequent upon a consciousness that, as Guru, he sought to encourage. “All Western people”, he said, “had to learn the great lesson of holding experience and emotion apart. Watch the fall of leaves, but gather the sentiment of the sight from within, at some later time.” Thus, if Swamiji’s method, as Nivedita observed, was a ‘general’ one, it was a subtle one too, aim as it did towards evoking creative faculty that perhaps lay hidden in a disciple. Vivekananda’s method was to encourage the inner nature of the disciple to develop to its highest point. Such a method demanded of the disciple the elimination of
the ego through humility and at the same time the encouragement of the spirit of liberty.

Vivekananda knew that Nivedita had inherent capacity for self-abnegation which had to be nurtured and developed by the Guru to its highest point. But, at the same time, he also knew that Nivedita was intensely emotional, and the emotional streak in her nature had to be eliminated. As late as October 1, 1899, he wrote to Nivedita, then Margaret Noble, living in England but wanting to come to India:

"I see persons giving me the whole of their love. But I must not give anyone the whole of mine in return, for that day the work would be ruined. Yet there are some who will look for such a return, not having the breadth of the impersonal view. It is absolutely necessary to the work that I should have the enthusiastic love of as many as possible, while I myself remain entirely impersonal. .............. A leader must be impersonal, I am sure, you understand this." 34

Nivedita did not or could not really grasp the essence of what Swamiji sought to convey in this letter. She had lost her father in childhood and she clung to Swamiji with all the attachment as a spiritual daughter to the beloved father, and this emotional streak in her attitude towards him is something that he wanted to end for certain. Nivedita, for her own good and for the good of the work she was to do for India, must be given the breadth of an impersonal view, and this was the end towards which Swamiji directed his teachings to the disciple.

Another essential characteristic of Vivekananda’s method of teaching was to make the end the means, and means the end. The end, so far as it concerned a Western disciple like Nivedita, who was to enter into the Hindu way of life soon, was to endow her with the Indian consciousness. The Indian consciousness was the end, the means, as per Swamiji’s conception had to be Indian too. Such conception of the end and the means Swamiji had could not be better expressed than in the words of Nivedita herself:

"He (Swami Vivekananda) had his own reasons -- which every Hindu will perhaps understand -- for feeling that a European who as to work on his behalf for India must do so in the Indian way. And in this demand, while he
never confused essentials and non-essentials, he regarded no detail as too trivial to be unimportant. To eat only of approved foods, and to do this with the fingers, to sit and sleep on the floor, to perform Hindu ceremonies, and bind oneself strictly by the feelings and observances of Hindu etiquette, were all, to his thinking means of arriving at the Indian consciousness which would afterwards enable one to orient oneself truly to the Indian aspects of larger question.”

Vivekananda wanted to imbue the whole being of Nivedita with Indianess. With this end in view, he exhorted Nivedita in the following terms:

"You have to set yourself to Hinduise your thoughts, your needs, your conceptions, and your habits. Your life, internal and external, has to become all that an orthodox Hindu Brahmin Brahmacharini ought to be. The method will come to you, if only you desire it sufficiently. But you have to forget your own past and cause it to be forgotten. You have to lose even its memory!"

In a word, the essence of Swamiji’s approach lay in giving a unified purpose to Nivedita. Both in the method of education and in the aims of it, he was like a gardener digging, rolling and hoeing the earth for the purpose of making it ready for the seed that is to germinate in it.

In continuation of the course of Nivedita’s Indianisation, Swami Vivekananda took her (along with some other Western disciples and followers such as Miss Ole Bull and Miss Josephine Macleod) on to a tour of the Himalayas in the summer of 1898. During this tour, Swamiji had to take an awful lot of pains in Indianising a Western disciple who was still very ‘English’ in her attitude. The whole exercise -- involving ‘clash and conflict’ (referred to in the preceding paragraphs) between the Indianess that the Master wanted to confer on the disciple and the English background of the disciple with all its predispositions -- which inevitably led to “on one side, a serious bitterness and distrust, and on the other, irritation and defiance” -- eventually changed forever whatever trace there still was of Miss Noble in Sister Nivedita. As to how Swamiji brought forth to Nivedita the realisation of the fullest significance of her new name, the ‘Dedicated’, and as to how he
sought to give her a unified purpose and an undivided loyalty to the association of her new birth is the subject of the following discourse. As the clash and conflict opened the way to Nivedita’s realisation and transformation, it is necessary to dwell at length the nature and dimensions of the dispute.

While the dispute taking the form of a clash between the Master and the disciple, came out into the open around the middle of May in Almora, the inner strife had begun on the day of Margaret Noble’s initiation as Nivedita, i.e. March 25, 1898. Assuming that Nivedita had grasped the significance of her new birth and the new life that the name given to her implied, Swami Vivekananda casually asked her on that day, which nation she thought she now belonged to. He was startled to hear the reply ‘English nation’ from the new disciple. It was just not the word that Nivedita uttered in reply that surprised Swamiji, it was ‘the passion of loyalty and worship’ with which ‘she regarded the English flag, giving to it much of the feeling that an Indian woman would give to her Thakoor’ that hurt Swamiji deeply.

Having recorded the incident, Nivedita makes an observation in her Notes which reveal not only her inner self but also provides a key to understanding why Swami Vivekananda felt compelled to be harsh with her at Almora:

“His (Swamiji’s) surprise and disappointment at the moment (i.e., when the incident took place) were scarcely perceptible. A startled look, no more. Nor did his discovery of the superficial way in which this disciple had joined herself with his people in any degree affect his confidence and courtesy during the remaining weeks spent in the plains. But with Almora, it seemed as if a going-to-school, had commenced, and just as school is often disagreeable to the taught, so here, though it cost infinite pain, the blindness of a half-view must be done away. A mind must be brought to change its centre of gravity. It was never more than this, never the dictating of opinion or creed; never more than emancipation from partiality.”

In the passage quoted above, Nivedita states more clearly the reasons why the clash and conflict took place than any analysis could have accounted for it. Not realising the significance of the new and the deeper
life that was being given to her, Nivedita stuck to her English background and all English prepossessions tenaciously and with a vehemence that made her look upon the British flag as an object of worship and the English race as 'all angels'. It was as if she were an English first and foremost and an English woman above everything else. Nivedita herself points out what it meant to be an English woman, especially at this stage of her development:

"The youngest of the Swami’s disciples (Nivedita was referring to herself) at this time, it must be remembered, was an English woman, and of how much this meant intellectually, .......... what a strong bias it implied, and always does imply, in the reading of India, what an idealism of the English race and all their deeds and history, -- the Swami himself had had no conception till the day after her initiation at the monastery.”

First, as to the English attitude of Nivedita and the bias that such an attitude by her own admission implied vis-a-vis India: The built-in bias of an English woman towards India finds the best expression in the words of Lizelle Reymond, who points out why Nivedita could not free herself from such partiality:

"She (Nivedita) could not, inspite of herself, help recalling what she had heard about India since her childhood -- even before she knew where it was on the map -- and she could not help seeing the sordid misery which had been the main subject of missionary reports. Wherever she went she found examples of this distress, and she became at last seriously disturbed by them; the lepers begging at the road-side, the children running after the carriages and beating their swollen bellies, and in some districts, the scraggy beats searching for a blade of grass to eat.

She pitied the lot of all these wretched folk, and she talked about, charity, and funds to be raised, until Swami Vivekananda said to her sharply: 'All I want you to see is that, with the majority of people, charity is nothing but the expression of an egoistic interest'.

Swami Vivekananda knew well from his experience of travelling in the West of the Western habit of looking upon coloured people as poor and patronised relations. As a matter of fact, he had warned Nivedita (when she was Margaret Noble) against pitying Indians, and yet he knew Nivedita
giving in to her Western mentality, he could not but be unhappy, to the point of flaring up.

Nivedita experienced certain difficulties in her Indian living of which she complained. How could the food sold in the road-side shops in India be considered clean and taken by her? And how could the people who were ignorant of the most elementary principles of hygiene consider her as 'unclean'? Though Vivekananda cautioned her in July, 1897, Nivedita could not, at the initial stage of her Indian living, really form an idea of the misery, the squalor, and the superstition prevailing in India, and as such she was unable to see these problems, as Lizelle Reymond observes, 'in true perspective'. The problem with Nivedita was that she was yet to get over the habit of looking upon India from the outside. Her English background was a real obstacle to her way of truly understanding India. She really did not understand certain things as yet in India. She did not for example, understand what Vivekananda really meant when in Nainital, addressing the people in the palace gardens of his disciple, the Raja of Khetri, Vivekananda exhorted Hindus and Muslims to the following effect:

"The hour of action has sounded. Let us join our forces. We must shake off the lethargy that is stifing us -- we who have become a mass of slaves, without power or freedom, without life and without will .......... We must have strong men who are constructed essentially of elements that are in the soul of India, and who will live their ideal completely." 44

Nivedita, an witness to this speech of Vivekananda, was at a loss to understand the import of the speech. It was as if Vivekananda were saying what her grandfather Hamilton said about Ireland to Irish people. But the objective conditions in Ireland, she reasoned to Vivekananda, were different. The Irish people and the Irish society, she believed, were at a stage of development which made their claim for nationhood and freedom from England viable and sensible. Being Irish by birth she herself fought against the British rule in Ireland, but that was because Ireland was ready for freedom and independence and as such deserved it from the British. But would India possibly ask for such freedom at this stage of her socio-political development? Were the objective conditions in India such as to enable her
to exist now as a ‘nation’ in the same sense in which Ireland could possibly exist as nation? When Nivedita expressed her doubts to Swamiji, he expressed his annoyance by questioning the validity of her comparative approach: “Why do you insist on comparing this country with yours, what is suitable here with what is done there?” At this, Nivedita felt bewildered. She exclaimed, “There are things I do not yet understand!”

Among the things Nivedita did not understand at this stage of her existence in India was the nature of the British rule in India, and the Indian perception, or better still, Swamiji’s perception of such rule. She believed that the British rule in India was benevolent and altruistic in nature, that it gave India stability necessary for the improvement of her material conditions, and that Indians, at this stage of their social development, needed the British, a third power, for their political peace. If we note the evolution of her views on British rule since her arrival in India in January, 1898, we will see that as a British she was predisposed to think as she did in the first few months of her living in India. In less than a fortnight after her arrival at Calcutta on January 28, 1898, she wrote in a letter to a friend in England that while the Theosophical Society of Mrs. Annie Besant was engaged in ‘inciting the people to sedition and mutiny against us’, the Vedanta movement as led by Swami Vivekananda aimed at consolidating the British Empire along spiritual lines and that everyone who joined the movement was ‘passionately loyal to England’. She assured herself as well as the friend in England to the following effect: “When the Swamiji is in India at least as regards the Hindu Section of the Community there will be no sedition or the shadow of it.”

On June 5, 1898, she again wrote to the same friend in England:

“It is the dream of my life to make England and India love each other. To do England justice, I think, India is in many ways well and faithfully served by her sons, but not in such a manner as to produce the true emotional response. On the other hand, of course, every nation demands freedom -- Italy from Austria, Greece from Turkey, India from England, naturally -- and in the course of centuries the Hindu may be equal to the peaceful government of himself and the Moslem. At present the only
possible chance of that political peace which is essential to India’s social
development, lies in the presence of the strong third power, coming from a
sufficient distance to be without local prejudice.” 48

One thing that comes out very clearly from these letters is Nivedita’s
depth of loyalty to England. Over and above again she characterised herself
as ‘the most loyal English woman’ and was frank enough to acknowledge in
her letter dated May 22, 1898, to the same English friend that ‘I could not
have suspected the depth of my own loyalty till I got here (India).’ 49

Nivedita’s loyalty to England at this time was so overwhelming that
she failed to assess correctly how Swami Vivekananda was not a ‘political’
person and therefore refrained from making direct political utterances. But
Nivedita had enough indirect evidence to tell her that Swami Vivekananda
could not be so fond of the British rule in India as to seek to consolidate the
empire along spiritual lines. Some of these evidences Nivedita recorded
herself in the initial months of her stay in India. In March, 1898, for
example, Nivedita noted that Vivekananda has a loathing for bondage and a
horror of those who ‘cover chains with flowers’ 50, and that in the course of a
long political argument he said that ‘in order to become a nation, it appears
that we need a common hate as well as common love’ 51. Similarly, Nivedtia
records:

“When we were at Almora (from May 17 to June 10, 1898), I
remember certain elderly man with a face full of amiable weakness, who
came to put to him a question about Karma. What were they to do, he
asked, whose karma it was, to see the strong oppress the weak ? The
Swami turned on him in surprised indignation. ‘Why thrash the strong, of
course!’ he said. ‘You forget your own part in this karma -- yours is always
the right to rebel!’ ” 52

“Always face the brute” 53, Swamiji used to say. To quote Nivedita
again:

“I remember his saying (in Srinagar in August 1898) amongst other
things, ‘How I wish a law could be broken. If we were really able to break a
law we should be free.’ ” 54

What Swami Vivekananda wrote on July 4, 1898, in celebration of the
American Independence Day as an ode ‘To the Fourth of July’, is beautifully expressive of his prayer to the Lord Almighty for all shackled and subjugated countries, which, of course, included India, the queen of his adoration.

“Bethink thee how the world did wait,
And search for thee, through time and clime,
Some gave up home and love of friends,
And went in quest of thee, self-banished,
Through dreary oceans, through primeval forests.
Each step a struggle for their life or death;
Then came day when work bore fruit,
And worship, love and sacrifice,
Fulfilled, accepted, and complete.
Then thou, propitious, rose to shed
The light of Freedom on mankind!

Move on, Oh Lord, in thy resistless path!
Till thy high noon o’erspreads the world!
Till every land reflects thy light;
Till men and women, with uplifted head,
Behold their shackles broken, and
Know, in springing joy, their life renewed!”

As Nivedita herself noted, “Vivekananda is nothing, if not a breaker of bondage” and a seeker of freedom. To suggest to such a man even remotely or obliquely that India might have benefited from being in bondage to the British was the same as committing a sacrilege.

Referring to Nivedita’s view on England and British imperialism in India and her clash and conflict with Swami Vivekananda on this count Barbara Foxe, a perceptive biographer of Nivedita, aptly observes:

“Her point of view, as regards England and British imperialism in India, was totally prejudiced. She did not weigh up ‘for and against’, as he was prepared to do; it was ‘my country right or wrong’ -- an oddly inconsistent point of view in a woman who fought like a tigress against any compromise with British rule in Ireland. He had to prove to her, as she later said, ‘how
determinately insular my ideals had hitherto been’.

She battled with him, too, on the question of the current European estimate of women. She would not listen quietly, think over what he said, and reach conclusions later.” 58

The last sentence in the quoted observation of Barbara Foxe held the key to Nivedita’s personality as it was at the time of her dispute with her Master. We get a distinct idea of the kind of personality Margaret Noble carried from England to India from the following description given of her by her friend, Mr. Eric Hammond:

“Her portrait at the period of her sailing (for India) shows us a young but distinctive woman with luminous grey blue eyes, with hair of light golden brown, with a complexion radiant in its cleanness; with a smile ingratiating and alluring. Of medium height; alert in every muscle and movement; eager, enterprising, dauntless. She derived from, and was proud of, Irish ancestry, and generous, impulsive, ardent, she embodied much of the charm, the power of ready speech, the fascination of the Celt at his best. All this she carried from the Emerald Isle, by way of England, to India, the home of her adoption.” 59

Having given an account of Nivedita’s Celtic blood, Irish nature and inheritance, Eric Hammond highlights that aspect of her personality which is crucial to an understanding of her conflict with Swami Vivekananda:

“Alive from head to foot, vibrant with intellectual energy, endowed with a personality which attracted and dominated, she revelled in argument and disputation. She would stimulate the combatants, and the fiercer the fight, the happier she grew.” 60

The intimate picture that we get of Nivedita’s personality from the pen of her friend, Eric Hammond, shows that she was given to egoistic reasoning and that if she had an opinion on something she would fight for it every inch of the way seeking to overwhelm her opponents. This was at once a strength and a weakness for her. Strength it was because it showed her fighting qualities, her total loyalty and dedication. And weakness it was at the same time because it showed that if she would be committed to anything and dedicated to it, she would be so combative as to be totally prejudiced
against the either side. It is this sort of prejudice, the refusal to see the other side and weigh up the ‘for and against’ of a thing, which she herself acknowledged later as ‘blindness of a half-view’.\(^6\) It was this sort of blindness and partiality of the ego from which Swami Vivekananda, the great teacher, devoted more than anything else to man-making, wanted to free Nivedita and implant in her a vision based on “the open and disinterested attitude of the mind that welcomes truth.”\(^6\)

Nivedita wanted to make a gift of herself to the service of India ‘through love for her guru,’\(^6\) but Swami Vivekananda would say ‘no’ to her offer. He wanted her to conquer her ego, to consume her entire self in meditation to proceed, so to say, from self to selflessness. He said, “Work, yes: but work of perfect purity. And blessed is he who works on the soil of India”\(^6\). Nivedita was yet to understand the burning renunciation and non-attached work that Swami Vivekananda talked about. She did not know how to conceive, in practice, a work which was at the same time a purity. Not being able to understand, she felt miserable. Her self-confidence wavered and any feeling of self-sufficiency that she had within her was destroyed.\(^6\) She felt infinite pain at the spectacle of ‘a friendly and beloved leader’ falling away from her, and yet she had to learn through the penance and purification of suffering that the relationship of a guru and a disciple is not basically an emotional one and that “when the disciple’s own nature, at its highest, is a strong and militant one, and where passive humility is combined with too much emotion, the guru has to take strong action.”\(^6\)

Writing later with disarming honesty and putting the conflict in its true perspective, Nivedita observed of her guru:

“He had revealed a different standpoint in thought and feeling, so completely and so strongly as to make it impossible for her (Nivedita herself) to rest, until later by her own labours, she had arrived at a view in which both these partial presentments (of English rule and English race) stood rationalised and accounted for ........... But at the time they were a veritable lion in the path, and remained so until I had grasped the folly of allowing anything whatever to obscure to me the personality that was here revealing itself.”\(^6\)
Nivedita had truly been a prisoner of the past. It was her deep-rooted preconceptions in social, political, cultural, literary, and artistic spheres born out of her British past that came in the way of her total identification with India -- the country to which Swami Vivekananda dedicated her, asking her to do what Buddha did in terms of giving life for others.

It was only to impress upon Nivedita the significance of her new and deeper life that Swami Vivekananda engaged himself into a conflict with Nivedita. From Vivekananda’s end, the conflict had a higher goal. That goal was directed towards protecting Nivedita from herself, from the blindness of her half-views and from the partiality of her conception of life. He had to change the centre of gravity of Nivedita’s mind and show her the light in the true spirit of a guru who dispels the darkness born out of the ignorance of the disciple. It is only with this end in view that Swami Vivekananda led the assaults upon all the English prepossessions of Nivedita in his morning talks at Almora in the summer of 1898. He crushed her ego only to encourage her spirit and intellect concerning liberty in the true sense of that term.

One might be curious to know how the conflict ended or how the reconciliation between the guru and the disciple took place. What was the sequel, so to say, to the story of the conflict?

During the days of her estrangement with her guru, when Nivedita felt increasingly abandoned in the face of the ‘withdrawal’ of the guru from herself, she learned heavily on Swami Swarupananda, the young monk who was her daily teacher in Bengali and in Hindu religious scriptures. The young monk did Nivedita a great service on two counts. He taught her to mediate and thereby create a state of calm within her mind. Second he acted as an interpreter of those feelings and ideas of Swami Vivekananda, which were at that time incomprehensible to her. As for the first service, a grateful Sister Nivedita wrote: “Under the influence of Swami Swarupananda, I began seriously the attempt at meditation. And if it had not been for this help of his, one of the greatest hours of my life would have passed by me.” That the practice of meditation was giving peace to her troubled mind at this time can also been seen from her letter of May 22, 1898, written to her friend Mrs. Eric Hammond:
“I cannot tell you how real this idea of meditation grown to me now. One can’t talk about it I suppose, but one can see it and feel it here -- and the very air of these mountains especially in the starlight is heavy with a mystery of peace that I cannot describe to you." 70

As for the second service of Swarupananda, Nivedita wrote in gratitude that “I owed my ability thereafter to read and understand a little of these feelings and ideas with which the air about us was charged.” 71

As Nivedita began to understand her guru a little better, her mind started craving for a reconciliation with him. Not knowing how to achieve this, she began to suffer intensely within herself. It was at this point in time that Mrs. Bull, the oldest lady of the group, kindly and gravely interceded on behalf of Nivedita with Swami Vivekananda. Though Swamiji made no comment at the moment, he came back late in the evening to tell his Western women disciples seated together in the verandah that there must indeed be change in the surcharged atmosphere of tension and conflict. Then, as Nivedita herself tells this story of hers:

“He turned and saw that above us the moon was new, and a sudden exultation came into his voice as he said, ‘See! the Mohammedans think much of the new moon. Let us also with the new moon begin a new life!’ As the words ended, he lifted his hands and blessed, with silent depths of blessing, his most rebellious disciple by this time kneeling before him .......... It was assuredly a moment of wonderful sweetness of reconciliation. But such a moment may heal a wound. It cannot restore an illusion that has been broken into fragments.” 72

The illusion that Nivedita speaks about in the quoted passage is the illusion of a personal and emotional relationship. That was now gone for ever, and in its place was instituted the vision of an impersonal bliss. Nivedita was now completely transformed, totally stripped of the personality that had so long imprisoned her. The blissful knowledge that the touch of her guru on that evening at Almora bestowed on her is best described in the words of Nivedita herself:

“That evening at Almora alone, in meditation, I found myself gazing deep into an Infinite Good to the recognition of which no egoistic reasoning
had led me. I learnt, too, on the physical plane, the simple everyday reality of the experience related in the Hindu books on religious psychology. And I understood, for the first time, that the greatest teachers may destroy in us personal relation only in order to bestow the Impersonal Vision in its place." 73

So, if there is any sequel to this story of clash and conflict between the Master and the disciple, it is this, that with the help and beneficence of her guru, Nivedita had triumphed over her illusion of personal passions, partialities, and half-views. She had achieved victory, so to say, over herself. Completely transformed by the kindly touch and teachings of her guru, she was now well set on the road to real selflessness, which constituted the essence of spirituality. As she herself so beautifully expressed in a letter written at this time to a friend.

"I am learning a great deal .......... that there is a certain definite quality which may be called spirituality, that it is worth having, that the soul may long for GOD as the heart longs for human love; that nothing that I have ever called nobility or unselfishness was anything but the feeblest and most sordid of qualities compared to the fierce white light of real selflessness." 74

Indeed, the new phase of consciousness to which Swami Vivekananda had initiated Nivedita through pain and suffering in the summer of 1898 was to be the most significant step not only in her Indianisation but also in her resultant transformation as a Mother, Maid, and Friend of India, regenerating every aspect of the nation’s life with Eternal Love and Service Free.

Notes and References

1. The whole incident has been described by Atmaprana as follows : "The Swami had gone a second time to Kashmir at the express invitation of the Maharaja to select a piece of land for the establishment of a Math and a Sanskrit College .......... There was
a beautiful stretch of land by the riverside .......... The Swami had selected that site and the Maharaja had approved of it ............... 

After his return from Amarnath, the Swami remained for long in a meditative mood. His disciple also expressed their desire to practice meditation in silence and solitude. The Swami encouraged them and suggested that they should camp on the prospective math ground for sometime. He added that it was considered auspicious by the Hindus to have a new home stead blessed by women. So they decided to establish a temporary ‘Women’s Math’ there before the Maharaja acquired it and handed it over to the Swami. But the Swami’s wish was not fulfilled. In the middle of September news reached them that his choice was twice vetoed by the then acting Resident, Sir Albert Talbot, when it was on the Agenda for the council .......... 

The ladies were disappointed. The three of them together with Mrs. Patterson, wife of the American Consul in Calcutta, tried their best to use their influence to secure this piece of land for him, but they failed. The Resident was adamant. Nivedita felt hurt. She realised for the first time what foreign domination in India meant!” — Pravrajika Atmaprana, Sister Nivedita of Ramakrishna-Vivekananda (Cal. 1977) pp. 60-61.

2. Quoted from Atmaprana’s book, p. 61. See also Letters, Vol. I, p. II. In the latter the language is somewhat different but the idea is the same.
7. By this ‘she’ perhaps meant dirty politics.

N.B. The date of Nivedita’s visit is put as 1904 by Aurobindo. But it must have been sometime in 1902.


22. Nivedita was referring to herself.

23. Chosen deity.


25. Nivedita is of course referring to herself.


27. Ibid, pp. 79-81.


29. Ibid, p. 76.


34. Ibid, p. 206.

35. Ibid, p. 79.


37. Ibid, p. 287.

38. Ibid.

39. Ibid.

40. Ibid, p. 287.


42. ‘Remember, if you love India at all, you must love her as she is, not as you might wish her to become’. *The Complete Works of Sister Nivedita*, Vol. I, p. 373.


49. Ibid, p. 11.


51. Ibid.

52. Ibid, p. 88.
53. Ibid, p. 308.
54. Ibid, p. 353.
55. Ibid, p. 325.
56. Ibid, p. 310, See also p. 67.
57. Lizelle Reymond, p. 105.
60. Barbara Foxe, p. 35.
64. Ibid, p. 110.
68. Ibid, p. 114.
69. Ibid, p. 79.
72. Ibid, p. 80.
73. Ibid, p. 80-81.