EAST WEST INTERFACE IN 20TH CENTURY INDIA: ANALYSIS OF WESTERN WOMEN'S RESPONSES

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY IN HISTORY

By

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UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that Ph.D thesis titled **EAST WEST INTERFACE IN 20TH CENTURY INDIA: ANALYSIS OF WESTERN WOMEN'S RESPONSES** is an original research work done by me under the supervision of **Dr.V. Chitra Devi**. This thesis is submitted to Christ University, Bangalore, for the award of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY in History.

I also declare that this thesis or any part of it has not been submitted to any other university for the award of any degree.

Place: Bengaluru

Date: **Signature of the researcher**

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **EAST WEST INTERFACE IN 20TH CENTURY INDIA: ANALYSIS OF WESTERN WOMEN'S RESPONSES** submitted by the **Aindrila Chakraborty** to **Christ University, Bangalore** for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a bonafide record of research work carried out by her under my supervision. The contents of this thesis, in full or it parts, have not been submitted to any other University for the award of any degree or diploma.

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ABSTRACT

In the twenty-first century, the Western world is seeking a greater understanding of the people and nations of Asia, India in particular. The thesis, "East West Interface in 20th century India: Analysis of Western women's responses" is an attempt to illuminate at least an aspect of that interface during a given period of the past, so as to help shed some light on the present day Western approach to India. Throughout the colonial period, Western women got attracted to India. However, during the 20th century, arrival of four eminent Western women from diverse backgrounds, with different intentions had far-reaching impact for India. Katherine Mayo, Margaret Elizabeth Noble, Annie Besant and Madeline Slade, not only got actively involved with the Indian society but in their own ways contributed towards transforming the Indian society. They left an overwhelming impact on the Indian political fabric. The thesis aims to analyze the contribution of these four outstanding Western women and attempts to understand how Indian socio-political and cultural structure got influenced by and drew inspirations from them. This work also attempts to add to the process of evolution of understanding the East by the West.

Key Words:-

East West Interface

MonoDimensional Representation

Nationalism

Colonialism

Women's Question

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INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the western world, needs and is seeking a greater understanding of the people and nations of Asia and India in particular. The thesis "East West Interface In 20th Century India: Analysis Of Western Women's Responses" is an attempt to illuminate atleast an aspect of that interface, during a given period of the past, so as to help shed some light on the present day western approach to India.

Throughout the colonial period, western women also got attracted to India, for various purposes. Some of them were in search of spiritual heritage in India; some were keen on doing missionary reformist work, wanting to do away with Indian poverty and rural misery and some were with the mission of educational reforms. Needless to say that some of the western women were even very critical of India. But in spite of what the westerners and especially women thought about India with a critical appraisal of the breadth and narrowness of their attitude, there remains a lacuna in the process of understanding the east by the west.

Over a period of time the east- west clash of civilization, became an established phenomenon. It is true, that the process of understanding India by western scholars dates back from the time of the first century generation western scholars, colonial civil servants, who tried to understand and explain India or the Orient to the west for various purposes. But it is also true that the process involved mostly foreign men delegated with official duties with the British East Indian Company and the same time with vested interest. "The year 1818 has been called a watershed in the history of British India. In that year, the British dominion in India became the British dominion of India" (Dyson, 1978 p13). Britain's impact on India had complex ideological background and it got reflected at various levels of British intellectual aspirartions, during a time when the country was going through huge socio political changes. Actually, as the full range of British attitude reveals, imperialism, pure and simple, as it is

understood and condemned today, was only part of Britain's total reaction to India. Britian was a complex society, composed of individuals and groups, who had varied backgrounds, experience, interests and intellectual capacity. To this society, India was a private as well as public concern. British reactions to India did not centre on one attitude, such as imperialism, but represented a variety of conflicting attitudes. The British often found it difficult to determine which attitudes to follow in their relation with India.

It is true that men like Edmund Burke, Warren Hastings, Sir William James and the historian William Robertson perceived the essential viability of Indian values, laws, traditions and institutions, which had survived and served their purposes for centuries with reasonable adequacy and therefore had to be respected. Burke and James Mill offered a comprehensive understanding of India. But most others were rather superficial in their understanding and limited in their interest. The missionaries for example, concentrated on the rudimentary idea that India needed Christianity as a prerequisite for a good society and government and John Bright and the Manchester School relied on 'laissez- faire' in much the same way. A portion of British attitudes represented an effort to synthesize divergent viewpoints. Munro and Elphinstone hoped, by introducing certain liberal principles, into their conservative approach, to achieve some concrete improvement in India. Officials involved in imperial expansion such as Alexander Burnes and Herbert Edwardes, graphically described their own experiences as a way of propagating the imperial objective of civilizing and conquering semi-barbarous people. With such a mass and variety of opinion confronting it, the British public could not escape the political problem of India, though it had difficulty in choosing among conservatism, imperialism and westernization, the right solution to the problem. Besides been a political problem, India was a matter of personal reaction and this added an important dimension to British attitude. (Bearce, 1961 p8)

However, the process of understanding the east, many a times accompanied with the racial arrogance and superiority complex of the west, riding on the belief of the "white man's burden" continued throughout the nineteenth century. The gap between the east and the west further widened. It is relevant in this context to draw our attention to the contribution of western women, who played sometimes a formidable role in forming an image about India.

Many a times we see some western women accompanying their British husbands, came to India but their role was merely restricted to an observer of Indian culture and society rather than as an active catalyst, bringing about changes in the social and cultural context of India. It is around the beginning of the 20th century that we see some interesting exception, with far reaching impact. Four eminent Western women with diverse backgrounds and with different intentions arrived in India- they being Katherine Mayo, Margaret Elizabeth Nobel, Annie Besant and Madeleine Slade. These four ladies not only got actively involved with the Indian society, but in their own ways contributed towards the process of transforming Indian society.They left an overwhelming impact on the Indian political fabric. These four ladies, represent an apocalypse and make it a full circle. They perhaps occupy the centre stage of Indian society and politics though they belonged to the west. All the four outstanding women referenced here in have in their own idiosyncratic manner, brought to the forefront issues that have perpetually been at the cynosure of the Indian subcontinent and are to remain so, for many more years. Their visions paved the way not only for a full-fledged flowering of modern Indian nationalism, but it also facilitated the birth of feminism in India.

It is worth mentioning, that though Katherine Mayo's opinion about India was perhaps diametrically opposite to the thought of other three Western ladies, but all the views, in their own right have significant relevance in the modern Indian society and context. Mayo's outspoken criticism of public health and sanitation and women's plight in India have become the rallying points of feminists and NGOs. Thus more than 80 years, down the memory lane,

Katherine Mayo has become quite relevant in free India. Probably Katherine Mayo and the three other women could not have been more different. One a propagandist for empire and the other three stalwarts, messengers of culture and political life of India to the rest of the world.They reflected very strikingly contrasting opinion, rather thought process about India.Needless to say both Nivedita and Besant were enchanted by India and especially it is Hinduway of life and culture. They saw India above all other "the land of great women" and worked untiringly for the upliftment of the women in Indian society. Truly Nivedita never got tired of romanticizing India and her women, and from the day she set her foot in India, her life was one consuming effort to one herself with the Indian experience.

Perhaps Annie Besant went a step further from Nivedita when she became an active part in Indian political fabric, and added new dimension to India's freedom struggle. Indian politics entered a new phase with Annie Besant's clarion call for Home Rule. "She entered politics because she saw Indian independence was essential for her age old wisdom to become a beacon for the whole world. Inspired by the Irish experiment, Mrs. Besant initiated Home Rule Movement in India. In this pursuit, she was joined by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Although both the leaders were radically different in temperament on various national issues, yet they worked hand in hand, to mobilise not only various strata of Indian politicians, but Indian mass too, to make a concerted demand for Home Rule in India. Significantly, the Indian National Congress as well as Muslim League in 1960 welcomed the proposal of self government that was promulgated by the Home Rule League. Despite short spell of its popularity, Home Rule generated considerable interest, especially among Indian intelligentsia, and thus transformed Indian national movement into a mass movement.

Madeleine Slade (Mira Behn) made a rather late entry in the Indian milieu; to her Mahatma Gandhi were a charismatic saint and sage, who did ascetic politic, bringing morality and spiritualism into secular politics. Following Gandhian path, Mira Behn too lived the life of an

ascetic, dedicating her everyday life to become the most pious companion of Bapu. She not only identified herself with Indian freedom struggle and the causes that were dear to Bapu, but her's was a life of severe simplicity, full of devotion for Bapu and dedicated to the service of India and India's poor masses residing in the villages. Her love covered men, animals, plants and nature in general.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

To determine the breadth, as well as the depth of a research, literature review is perhaps the most important source of evidence. A thorough review of literature only establishes the context of a research, but more importantly it provides a frame work for the same. A literature review provides background information, on existing sources, and thus making space for a new research. A thematic review of literature organised around the topic gives a theoretical structure to a thesis.

There exists a host of literature, dealing with many aspects of the East- West understanding and the western women's contributions towards India. But perhaps George D. Bearce and Allen J. Greenberger, provides the most fundamental guide to understand the intellectual and ideological atmosphere which underlay British rules in India. Bearce through his work, '*British attitudes towards India, 1784-1858*' offers us a powerful insight into the various British attitudes that accompanied the formation of this formidable empire. The book talks about various British aspirations and interests in India, derived from huge source of records, including collection of state papers, private letters, memoirs, travel accounts, newspapers, works of fiction, poetry and so on and so forth. The book reflects, how during a time of changing ideas and social conditions in Britan, the appraisal of various British attitudes, illuminated India's development. Like Bearce, Greenberger, through the substantial study of imperial literature between 1880 and 1980, directs our attention as to how the Britons perceived India. Greenberger like Bearce, not only talks about the various attitudes that helped to shape British literature about India, but also reflects how the relation of literature to history which is truely an intimate one. The books discusses how literature plays significant role in familiarizing people with unknown thoughts and thus help them to develop their opinions and in turn formulate policies. Thus both the authors talks about the eighteenth and nineteenth century British opinion about India, which were reflected in British policies

towards India. To continue with the thematic approach, perhaps the next relevant literature review to be discussed should be Ketaki Kushari Dyson's '*A Various Universe'*. This book is primarily a study of journals and accounts written by both English men and women, who arrived in India in the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century. The book vividly talks about the experiences of these travellers and settlers that they had in India. Surveying over forty individual works, that author with generous excerpts from the original text, balances her own insights, thus offereing lay readers as well as scholars a rich canvas to explore. Dyson through her work undoubtedly provides a wealth of information on every aspect of Indian life, regulated by the Britishers and thus eloquently talking about the East West encounter. If Bearce, Allenberg and Dyson were talking about the ideological basis of British India, and its images and experiences, C.A. Bayly through his work '*Indian Society and the making of the British Empire*' draws our attention, towards the fall of Mughal Empire and the process of India getting transformed into a colony. The book further reflects on the important role, played by the Indian capitalists, in the expansion of the East India Company and its urban settlement. The rebellion of 1857, takes the centre stage to explain the case of Indian resistance towards the spread of British Empire. Thus all these works provides a comprehensive ideological as well as political background to the formation of the East- West relation.

A lots of European women, especially British women who had over the period of time settled in India authored their experiences of this land in the form of diaries, memoirs, journals and so on. Needless to say such records play a vital role in understanding the then Indian society through their eyes and experiences. They also serve as important sources of British narrative about India. Two books, '*Memsahib's Writings: Colonial Narratives on Indian Women*' and '*Women and Empire: Representation in the writings of British India (1858-1900)*' both by Indrani Sen draw heavily from such first hand experiences. Both the works focuses

essentially on relations between Memsahibs (white women) and native women. The narratives not only reflect the interaction that they had but also focuses on how those under actions, had their reflections on perceptions. Both the books form a strong comprehensive basis for the study. If Indrani Sen's works were reflections, of colonial women narratives, '*The History of Doing*' by Radha Kumar is a thematic history of the women's movements in India, both before as well as after independence, covering a period from nineteenth century to present day. The book looks at how women's issues were raised initially by men and as part of social reform movement, but then, gradually with the increased women participation in national movement became very much a part of feminist aspiration. Closely linked with this theme, is Sumit Sarkar and Tanika Sarkar's edited '*Women and Social Reform in Modern India*'. This scholarly work also urges to understand the history of social reform from a much wider perspective.

Geraldine Forbes' two volumes on "*Women In Colonial India"* is a comprehensive and systematic study of Indian women's aspirations and attitudes. Women is colonial India, states how Women's Indian Association and Annie Besant played significant role in Indian feminism. She discusses how Indian Women got to rewrite their own history using solid archival materials to counter act the theories put by Katherine Mayo. The work reflects the inspiration behind the development of women's movement in India, and continues till and after Indian independence. '*Recasting Women: Essays in colonial History*' book by Kumkum Shangari and Sudesh Vaid suggests a different history of 'reform movements' following class and gender relations. The reflection on gender relations, women in colonial India, comes to a full circle with Mrinalini Sinha's '*Selections from Mother India*' and '*Colonial Masculinity*'. Also '*Spectres Of Mother India: The Global Reconstructing Of An Empire*' by Sinha, tells the complex story of how Katherine Mayo's Mother India, became the bone of contention between imperialists and the nationalists, '*Selections from India*' provides a detailed study of

Mayo's '*Mother India*' with Sinha writing a special tribute to her, as to how Mayo by blindly talking about our follies, actually helped us in the process of 'flowering' of Indian feminists. Manoranjan Jha's '*Katherine Mayo and India*' forms an essential read to understand Mayo and her impact on Indian society. Jha through his thorough research draws our attention to the fact, as to how, Katherine Mayo far from being a dispassionate observer and journalist was actually deliberately picked up by the colonial authorities with vested interest. Both Jha and later on Sinha through their works reflected on the various counter arguments that developed against Mayo. Both Jha and Sinha's work provides a strong understanding towards the formation and the background of the thesis. The work which forms the central theme of the Manoranjan Jha and Sinha's work is '*Mother India*' written by Katherine Mayo. This work forms one of the primary sources of the thesis, along with vast resources of other works, and archival materials. '*Mother India*' provided a graphic details of variety of social evils which Mayo felt was a part of the Indian and especially Hindu society. She spoke about the insanitary conditions of India and plight of Indian women and animals. Such propangandist work instantly became an international controversy and generated huge furore.

Mayo reflects one aspect of the thesis and a diametrically and dramatically opposite aspect is reflected in the works of Margaret Elizabeth Noble, Annie Besant and Madeleine Slade. Huge resources of work are dedicated to all these three outstanding western women and all in positive light. Biplab Ranjan Ghosh through his research work on '*Sister Nivedita and the Indian Renaissance*' describes the stupendous role played by Nivedita in the social and political reawakening of India. The book traces the journey of Elizabeth Noble from her birth till the time she met Vivekanada and till she adopted this land as her own and became Nivedita, dedicating her life for the country of her adoption. Saralabala Sarkar who had the priviledge of seeing Nivedita from a close quarter, through her keen insight enables us to understand and reveal the depth of Nivedita's love for India in a very simplistic yet heart

warming way, through her book, '*Nivedita As I Saw Her*'. Perhaps Basudha Chakravarty's '*Sister Nivedita*' is a fitting scholarly companion to Sarkar's writings, dealing with the same outstanding woman and the role she played in the process of Indian and particularly Bengal regeneration and reformation. Shankari Prasad Basu edited '*Letters of Sister Nivedita*' though written in vernacular languages is a vast sea of work, encompassing every aspect of Sister Nivedita. This book enables us to witness a stupendous character from a relatively close distance like the complete works of Sister Nivedita, written by Nivedita, but compiled by Ramakrishna Sarada Mission provides us with an insight into the life and thought of Sister Nivedita, similarly Basu's work enables us to generate much love, affection and respect for the great soul. The huge resources of works written by Nivedita herself title '*Kali The Mother*', '*Master and Saw Him*' just to name a few forms the primary sources of the research.

'*The Autobiography of Annie Besant*' is perhaps just the starting point in an attempt to understand Mrs. Besant. Works of Annie Besant including '*Wake up India*', '*India: Bond or Free*', India's ideals in education, religion and philosophy. '*The Birth of a New India*', the future of Indian politics, are just to name a very few which graphically gives a vivid understanding of this great personality and her thought process about India. Similarly the various volumes of Besant Spirit which are highlights of Mrs. Besant's lectures and public speaking enables us to understand in great details her future plans for her country of adoption, her fundamental principles, for nation building. Annie Besant was concerned with all aspects of Indian life and worked tiredlessly towards its development and regeneration, be it in the sphere of social life, education, statecraft, industry or politics. She had clear vision of India's bright future, derived from her own magnificent past. All her works are glaring testimonies of her such high opinions and plans for India.

Ajit Kumar Dasgupta, through his work '*Home Rule Movement in India*' provides us not only a clear vision of Mrs. Besant's political life in India, but alos provides us a comprehensive

account on an assessment of the Home Rule Movement, envisaged and adopted by Mrs. Besant along with Tilak for India's self rule. Very close to this theme is Gopi Chand's work on '*Home Rule Movement in India*' which talks eloquently about not only the Home Rule Movement, but also helps us to form an idea about the political background of India during the 19th and the 20th century. Both the works justifies amply the aspirations and role played by Mrs. Besant in Indian politics.

Geoffrey West was a close associate and friend of Mrs. Besant. Yet his writing enables us to form a dispassionate opinion about her. His scholarly acumen is reflected in his writing; where there is also reflection of dignified affection expressed by one great soul towards another Theodore Besterman like West also enables us to understand Mrs. Besant's life, her inspiration, background roles and rules. They both form a part essential read to understand and judge Annie Besant. Like wise one more such book is perhaps W.T. Stead's, '*Annie Besant's Character Sketch*.' Stead being a friend and companion of Mrs. Besant, his work perhaps comes to the rank of the vast archival materials including political proceedings, Home Department Papers and secret files that form essential read for Mrs. Besant. Mrs. Besant's huge political works in India were perhaps the main source for such huge reserve of government secret documents. Infact Sister Nivedita too came to the notice of the British Government, because of her close association with the so called revolutionary terrorists of Bengal, which can be identified from the Police Department, archival materials in the form of fornightly Government reports. Annie Besant's Centenary Book is a vast treasure of revered opinions about her, from some of the great personalities of the contemporary period including Sarojini Naidu, Benard Shaw, Tej Bahadur Sapru, Fritz Kunz, to name a few.

It is through various letters, about, more than six hundred in number written by Gandhiji to Mira Behn, that we get an insight to Mira Behn's life, thought, idea and ideology. Various volumes of Bapu's letters to Mira, compiled and published by Navjivan Publishing House,

form one of our primary sources of information of the Gandhi-Mira episode. '*The Spirit's Pilgrimage*' is the autobiography written by Mira Behn, which draws for us a vivid picture of the Sabamrati Ashram, where Mira Behn stayed, after reaching India and Bapu. Mira was at one with Mahatma in the deep things of mind and heart. Through her writings, we have an entrance to not only her life but also to Gandhi's life and thoughts. '*The Old and New Gleanings*' and '*The Gleanings*' are a compilation of Mira Behn's interviews with eminent political thinkers of the contemporary time. They also bare testimony of how Gandhi commanded love and respect through out the Western World. Mira Behn's '*Selected Essays- a centenary Tribute*' reflects the significant social work, which Mira Behn undertook and continued for the betterment of Indian environment in an around the Himalayas, even after the death of her beloved Bapu.

H. Maurice's article, '*Dedicated to Indian nationalism*' reflects on how for many Europeans, Noble was the voice of radical India, and among the foremost of nationalist thinkers, in the first few years of twentieth century. '*Mrs. Annie Besant and the Theosophical Society*' is an article dedicated to discussions and criticisms on Annie Besant drawing upon her great intellectual ability. K. O'Malley's article '*The Elephant and Partition: Ireland and India*' talks how Indian Irish narrative is not solely anti imperial, it looks at the myriad of connections between the two countries. Jasbir Jain's '*Daughters of Mother India in Search of a Nation: Women's Narratives about the Nation*' looks at how nation and nation hood had been defined in women's writing in India. It deals with two main themes- narratives of partition, dominant perceptions reflected in women's writings.

Samuel P. Huntington's '*Clash of Civilizations*' perhaps draws a full circle and enhances the East West interface with his explanation of how clash of culture and civilization is more significant in the coming days rather than political or economic clash. He talks eloquently

about how religious clashes are going to occupy the centre stage in the days to come, thus justifying the very need and necessity of the thesis.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM:

Efforts had also been made by scholars to evaluate the contribution of western women towards Indian socio-economic, political, cultural structures, towards Indian nationalism and women's question in general, who visited India in the nineteenth and twentieth century. But apparently there remains a lacuna in exploring the understanding of four outstanding women, [in this case Katherine Mayo, Margaret Elizabeth Nobel (Sister Nivedita), Annie Besant and Madeleine Slade (Mira Behn)] taken together and to analyse their contributions in socio political milieu of not only twentieth century India but for many more years to come. There also remains a void to evaluate their influences taken together in the evolution of cultural fabric of India and how they altered for centuries, the women's question in India. A gap exists in understanding how together, these four outstanding western women, contributed in the process of development of understanding between the East and the West.

OBJECTIVES OF STUDY:

TO –

(1) Analyse the contributions of Katherine Mayo, Elizabeth Noble, Madeleine Slade andAnnie Besant.

(2) Understand how Indian socio-cultural structure, nationalism and women's questionwere influenced by them.

(3) Add to the process of 'Evolution of understanding between East and West, through Assessment' of the vast literary works of the four outstanding western women.

(4) Deconstruct the somewhat mono-dimensional or Oreintalist representation of the East, its culture and civilization as perceived by the West.

(5) Explore beyond the received narratives of colonialism and nationalism by employing the understandings of - Katherine Mayo, Margaret Elizabeth Noble, Annie Besant and Madeleine Slade.

(6) Analyse the reflections or responses of these women personalities and their impact upon Indian society.

HYPOTHESES –

H (1): KatherineMayo, Annie Besant, Nivedita and Mira Behn had made great contributions to Indian society, culture, nationalism and women's question and nationalism. They influenced Indian politics and society more than any other woman of India at that time.

H (2): They had contributed to the greater understanding of India by the West.

H (3): All the four outstanding women referenced herein, have in their own idiosyncratic manner, brought to the forefront issues that have perpetually been at the cynosure of the Indian subcontinent and are to remain so, for many more years.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

Qualitative Research methodology has been followed. This methodology is frequently used to explain the whys and whereforce of human conduct, opinions, experiences and behaviour which otherwise is difficult to ascertain through quantitative data collection method.

Qualitative Research involves gaining a deeper knowledge through truthful reporting and quotation of actual conversation of a specific event/s rather than surface description. It encompasses within itself the idea of taking the first hand experiences and data of the subject in question. Qualitative research helps in providing complicated textual explanation of human's behaviour. Prevailing traditions in qualitative enquiry are phenomenology, ethnography, thematic analysis, grounded theory, case study approach, narrative analysis, critical interpretative analysis.

Approaches to qualitative research depend on a variety of personal, professional, political and contextual factors.

Research methods which are here involved are: - Narrative analysis, Critical Interpretative analysis, Interdisciplinary analysis and Comparative & historical research.

The sources of data are too extensive ranging from primary, secondary, official, unofficial books, pamphlets, periodicals, documentations, biographies and so on. In short archival as well as non archival, first and personal evidences with biographies have been used to determine the truth.

COLLECTION OF DATA:

The sources of research were collected through the Qualitative methodology. Comparative and historical research which is usually a qualitative method has been used to understand the differences in ideas. Critical interpretative approach includes analyzing and deconstructing familiar problems and materials and thus an attempt to explore beyond the received narratives of colonialism and nationalism. An important part of the preparation consists of using the the research libraries including National Libraries such as Jawahar Lal Nehru National Library and Museum, National Archives of India, Gandhi Memorial Museum and Library and Theosophical Society Library as well as Archive. It is also to be emphasized that while using interdisciplinary analysis, where necessary, the broad basis of investigation still remains the literary documents.

CHAPTER DESIGN:

Introduction:

The Introduction aims to introduce the thesis topic and explain the rationale behind the study.

First chapter- Background:

The first chapter talks about the background of the study with special reference to British approach towards India through out the nineteenth and twentieth century. This chapter also attempts to explain the East West interface through the roles played by various British men and women who came to India.

Second chapter- Responses of Western Women on India: An Analysis:

(A) Katherine Mayo- An Imperial Historian.

(B) Margaret Elizabeth Noble (Sister Nivedita)- A Friend of India.

The second chapter is an attempt to understand and analyze the role played by two outstanding Western Women, towards India's interface with the West and to reflect on how they pointed towards the themes that had been pertinent to the history of India and were to remain so for many more years.

Third chapter- Responses of Western Women on India: An Analysis:

(C) Annie Besant- A Theosophist and Political Acitivist.

(D) Madeleine Slade (Mira Behn)- A Politcal and Social Worker.

Like the second chapter, third chapter also attempts to evaluate and analyze the complex nuances of two other formidable Western Women who made India, their homeland and left India, changed for better.

Conclusion:

The conclusion is an attempt to draw conclusion connecting all the other chapters and finally lay down the purpose and justification of the study.

CHAPTER 1
BACKGROUND

BACKGROUND

During the eighteenth and the nineteenth century, in an era of worldwide imperialism, the British Empire in India, was at the height of its imperial glory. The empire formed around small trading settlements established in the seventeenth century on the fringes of the Mughal Empire. (Bearce, 1961, p3) The first Briton known to have set foot on the Indian soil was a Jesuit named Thomas Stevens, who reached Goa in October 1579. Shortly thereafter, the merchants began to arrive and labour for their ends (Dyson, 1978, p9). An English association or Company to trade with the East was formed in 1599, under the auspices of a group of merchants, known as Merchant Adventurers. The company was granted a Royal Charter and the exclusive privilege to trade in the East by Queen Elizabeth on December 31st, 1600. This was popularly known as the East India Company. From the beginning it was linked with the monarchy. Queen Elizabeth (1558-1603) was one of the shareholders of the Company.

Slowly overcoming the opposition of the Portuguese and winning concessions from the Mughals, the British established themselves as traders, operating from coastal settlements and continued in that role for nearly a hundred and fifty years. In the eighteenth century, the Mughal Empire began to disintegrate. With the weakening of central authority, provincial governors and ambitious adventurers began to carve out principalities for themselves. Midway through the century the British, along with the French, at that time, their only serious European rivals, in Indian trade began to intervene in local power struggles with an eye to securing advantages for themselves.The British effectively squashed French aspirations in Southern India in 1760-61, after a prolonged struggle and in the north gained a foot hold in Bengal in 1757 after the skirmish at Plassey. In 1760, Clive left Calcutta, having setup in Bengal, an Indian state, backed by the East India Company. The next five years have been

described by Percival Spear as the period of open and unashamed plunder, which took twenty years of effort, both in Britain and on the spot to correct. About the time of Clive and Hastings, in the last part of Eighteenth Century, the British became an important territorial power in India. Gradually, through wars and annexations, up to the administration of land Dalhousie, Governor General from 1848-1856, the British gained control of, or directly administered almost the whole of the sub continent, South of the Himalayas. By then it had become an enormous and complex empire, great enough to survive a great rebellion in 1857 and last nearly a hundred years longer. (Bearce, 1961, p5)

With political power, came responsibility. Slowly, but steadily the Company changed its character from that of a trading corporation to that of a body responsible for the government of people. The British presence in India changed its nature, from that of peripheral, littoral aliens to that of colonial rulers involved in some measure, with the matters of local people, whether willingly or otherwise. "This relationship between two far distant areas took place not only in the sphere of law and administration but also in the realm of ideas. While the British were consolidating their power in India, they were both shaping and been shaped by a complex of ideas, attitudes and beliefs, a network of mutually conflicting as well as overlapping ideologies. The diversity is striking: a continual balancing of attitudes and persistent mutual criticism went with the high degree of self consciousness and purposiveness that characterized the British presence in India."(Dyson, 1978 p12)

In the words of Francis G. Hutchins in his book *The Ilusion of Permanance: The British Imperialism in India*, "British attitudes towards India were.....never a monolithic orthodoxy. The British throughout their connections with India engaged with a dialogue amongst themselves and if certain approaches and attitudes were dominant at different times, they were constantly under attack by those who preferred other approaches and attitudes. When

experiences and inclinations dictated the need for a change of the policy, there were always formulated alternatives from which to choose".

Thus British Empire had as its base numerous fascinating British attitudes. From the time of Edmund Burke until John Stuart Mill, roughly from 1784 when the British Parliament first regulated the East India Company's government in India, until 1858 when Company's government was abolished, a host of Britons came in contact with India. "They were from all ranks and intellectual positions- soldiers, officials, political leaders, merchants, missionaries, historians, poets, philosophers. They were confronted with a strange and distant land whose people and social conditions, political and economic practices, art, religions and learning were quiet different from anything in Britain." (Bearce, 1961 p3)They left behind astonishingly large records of their reactions in India, in the form of collections of state papers, private letters, memoirs, travel accounts, newspapers and works of poetry and fiction and it is these collected evidences that formed invaluable source of information in constructing an image of how British perceived India. Bearce in his work "*British attitude towards India 1784- 1858*" foucsses the study of such British attitude towards India, under few headings:

"1. British conceptions on the people, institutions and culture of India;

2. The source of these views of India in Britain's intellectual environment at a time of changing social, political and economic order in Britain.

3. The way in which British attitudes were formed or modified by contact with India and an understanding of the society, institutions and culture of that country,

4. The role of these attitudes in British policy and the administration of India.

5. The effects of these attitudes, so far as they were incorporated in British policy and the Indian outlook upon the people, culture and development of India."(Bearce, 1961 p4)

Thus a look into numerous intellectual trends such as conservatism, imperialism, liberalism, romanticism, explains the standard of British thought and opinion about India and also the amount of ignorance, self interest and knowledge.

It is however imperative to keep in mind that the "contrast between Britain and India was striking. Britain was a growing nation in terms of techniques, organization and energy, which enabled her to become a power. She was in the midst of political, social and economic transformation. Britain's such transformation was of great importance to the development of British's attitudes towards India. At the start, in the decade of 1780s, Britain was noticeably rural, its industry, in spite of some technical improvements was largely handicraft, and its society and culture were predominantly aristocrats and conservative. As the main phase of industrial revolution occurred in Britain, the physical appearance and intellectual outlook of the nature was transformed." (Bearce, 1961 p7) Industries such as cotton manufacturing were established, new sources of power and new machinery were been utilized. Railway and steamship lines, were established, the output of goods, increased tremendously, and Britain's foreign trade expanded greatly. The population of England and Wales had more than doubled between 1801- 1851 and cities such as Manchester became a new centre of political power, based on cotton manufacturing.Such social and economic change had its effect, on Britain, which by then possessed the power necessary for imperial greatness. It also had a society which demanded sweeping changes and which was impatient with the old order of things.

"India on the other hand was politically disunited culturally rather unchanging and seemingly unprepared for the impact of the West. She lacked the leadership, technology and organization, which characterized Britain's rapid rise to world importance. There were few

signs of national consciousness among India's Hindus and Muslims population, for they were tied to their castes and religions and their tribes and feudal realms, their crafts and professions, rather than to the idea of a nation." (Bearce, 1961 p8) India's strength, its impressive cultural traditions and the social and political institutions which had survived there for centuries was on the defensive. Thus Britain's relation with India was a reflection of a contrast between the vigorously changing society, and a rather unchanging traditional order. Much of the history of the period consisted of Britain imposing its military power over India through wars and political pressure against Indian opposition. Under a series of ambitious and able Governor Generals like Cornwallis (1786-1793), Wellesley (1798-1804), Lord Hastings (1813-1823), British power rapidly expanded into Southern India where Tipu Sultan, the ruler of Mysore, though fought valiantly was unsuccessful in maintaining his independence. The Marathas of Central India, the Sikhs of North – West India were subdued too and the Mughal Emperor at Delhi was reduced to a mere titular head. The period of expansion was followed, by a brief period of peace and reform under Lord William Bentinck (1828-1835) and Sir Charles Metcalfe (1836) which was soon to be supplemented by a period of expansion. The war with Afghanistan in 1838 secured the boundaries for the British and under Ellenborough (1824-1844) the entire region of Sindh along the Indus River was annexed. It was under Lord Dalhousie (1848-1856) that even the states of Oudh and Punjab, including many other smaller states, were brought under British rule and thus bringing about an halt to British territorial expansion.

Now this period of political expansion was also accompanied by a period of socio- cultural clash of two opposite contrasting civilization as well as a period of mutual advantageous contract. It was also a period of colonial economic exploitation, propagation of western missionaries and a spread of western ideas and thoughts over Indian social structures and institutions. Britons such as Sir William Jones, a scholar of Oriental literature and language,

tried to introduce an understanding of Indian culture into Europe. Indians such as Ram Mohan Roy became student of Western Science and philosophy and sought to encourage an Indian understanding of Western ideas and institutions. "Such mutual advantageous contract, British appreciation of Indian society and culture and Indian respect of acquiescence in British rule, made the British Empire in India possible." (Bearce, 1961 p9) This kind of social and cultural clash was characterized by Nehru as a "background of one hundred and eighty years of hostility, of exploitation, of bitterness, of promises unfilled, of disruption and reactionary movements encouraged and attempts to break up the national unity of India".(Nehru, 1941 p333) Dyson in her work "*A Various Universe*" talks of a relative lack of arrogance, mixed with a degree of political insecurity that characterized the British presence in India in the eighteenth century. According to her "Philosophically, the eighteenth century British attitude to India was shaped primarily by the Enlightenment, the consolidation of the post – Renaissance tendencies in European thought. The French philosophies, eager to destroy the unique claims of Christianity assert the basic equality and rationality of all men, found an excellent tool at hand in the traveller's accounts of foreign lands that had been pouring in since the first voyages of discovery. For the first time, a real stock taking of these reports began, amounting to the intellectual discovery of the non – European non- Christian world."(Dyson, 1978 p12) "So far as India was concerned her society and religion have passed through numerous phases of change. In her long and chequered history, there have been periods of progress, regeneration and reform, as well as period of decay, dissolution and degeneration. The eighteenth century witnessed the latter tendencies, while in Europe it was the age of Enlightenment, in India; it was a period of stagnation." (Chopra, Puri, Das, 1974)

Thus a clash and collision of civilization, ideas and thoughts were unavoidable. Talking about such collision, Bearce is of the opinion that the collision between East and West, the wars between Britain and India, were a geographical expression of a far more profound collision,

which was between the medieval and aristocratic society which had existed for over a thousand of years in the slowly changing world and the agencies of the modern way, science, industrialization and liberal democracy which were to create a dynamic new society in the nineteenth century. Antipathy in Britain towards the political and social institutions of India was as much a general disapproval of the medieval and aristocratic society passing away, as a failure to understand and appreciate institutions peculiar to India. Conflict and tensions in Britain's intellectual environment were thus manifested in the variety of British attitudes on India. Bearce further opined that in their pattern, British attitudes represented a complex combination of views expressed by; British individuals, British groups and British public at large. However, of these three categories, the attitudes of distinguished individuals were of greatest interest and importance.

Philosophers such as James Mill and Macaulay and literary figures such as Scott and Thaceray had acute and perceptive reactions towards India and had a considerable influence over the attitude of many segments of the British public, during the eighteenth century. Special interest groups such as the civil and military officers of India, the merchants and manufacturers of Manchester, the mercantile and financial interests surrounding the East India Company, and the religions and humanitarian societies were always present to expound their ideas about India. Generally the attitudes of such groups were less impressive philosophically than the views of distinguished individuals, but, however, in spite of that, they were capable spokesmen, exerting great pressure on the formulation of the Indian policy and made their attitudes towards India, well known in the British public. Beyond the attitudes of individuals and groups, there was something which one may discern as the attitudes of the general public consisting of the ordinary business and professional men. Working people, soldiers and their families in India, of course, in an age in which there were no public opinion polls, very few estimates of public opinion, and not too much conviction, that public opinion

was a valuable guide. Such general attitudes might seem amorphous. But still, though the attitudes of Britain as a whole community may be difficult to discern but they cannot be ignored. (Bearce, 1961 p8)

Perhaps the first extensive understanding of India by a British political thinker appears in the works of Sir Edmund Burke- the Father of Modern Conservatism. The political order and chaos in India that surfaced with the disintegration of the Mughal Empire formed the background for Burkes' understanding of India. As the last great Mughal emperor, Aurangzeb died in 1707, there began a speedy disintegration of the political fabric with ominous results for the whole country. In brief, the fall of the Mughal Empire inaugurated an era of unlimited political chaos. For considerable times and over vast areas, there was no authority, no administration, no law and no society. There were prolonged struggle and conflicts among numerous small powers who were striving to make capital out of the decline. The Mughal society had to pass through a period of instability and insecurity and suffered within itself from the stupefying effects. The strong prevailed over the weak, the poor suffered oppression, wayfarers endured plunder, and anarchy became the order of the day. Accounts left by eighteenth century foreign travellers and Indian writers, present such a sad and bleak picture of the state of affairs. After a period of bitter struggle between the French and the British, and with the battle of Plassey in 1757, the British established themselves as paramount power in India. Unfortunately, the British as a predominant power, instead of trying to establish an orderly rule in India, in such a period of political disorder, only further contributed to chaos and confusion and misgovernment. The East India Company, though in possession of political authority seemed unprepared and unwilling too, to perform their responsibilities of governing the Indian territories effectively. Notable governors like Robert Clive to Warren Hastings exercised considerable power to organize and consolidate the newly formed empire but in many occasions they contributed to the persistence of disorder

and chaos, economic exploitation, unjust oppressive taxes, general corruption, characterized the state of affair in India.

Burke advocated substantial changes, to be brought about in British imperial practices in India. He described "the Indian issue as one that began in commerce but ended in empire". Burke possessed a general enthusiasm about Indian institutions, which according to him had not only evolved, but survived without European intervention; therefore, they had to be respected. He defended the constituition, laws and traditions of the people, wherever he found them.

Though initially attracted with pride to British victories in India, the British were soon unavoidably faced with the evidence of grave disorders in their new dominions. Warren Hastings had reported on the decay of trade, the oppression of the people, and the complete devastation, he saw in every village on a tour to Benares. Hastings's enemies in the Bengal Council, led by Burke's friend Sir Philip Francis, reported that a once rich and flourishing India was reduced to beggary and ruin. Parliament and British aristocracy were faced with enriched company's officials; the Nawab's who paraded their ill- gotten gains before them. Indeed the country was flooded with charges of corruption, financial scandals and misgovernment in India. The recognition of disorder reached its apex in the parliamentary investigation on India, which began about in the 1780s and in the passionate convictions of Burke. A committee of the Home of Commons, under the leadership of Pitt's lieutenant, Henry Duncan charged the East India Company with grave wrongs, offensive military operations, the influence of company officials in the domestic and national quarrels' of Indian states, the frequent violations of treaties and breaches of faith, and the 'criminal relaxation' of the East India Company's directors. Burke made Warren Hastings the symbol of disorder which had to be punished and reformed. Though Burke's charges might have been exaggerated if applied solely to Hastings, they summed up deep misgivings about the

administration of India as momentarily found in Britain's political circles. Burke "made the recognition of disorder so unmistakeable that anything but a thorough reform would have been impossible." (Bearce, 1961 p12)

Burke's impeachment of Warren Hastings resulted in the passing of some legislature acts, including the formulation of a board of control, made up of British ministers, and headed by a British cabinet minister to supervise the activities of the East India Company. Indeed, it was Burke and his like minded contemporaries like Sir William Jones and William Robertson's efforts, that not only led to the formation of a conservative theory of Indian Society, but also formulated the guide lines as to how to bring about established order in India under the British and also to determine the principles of future government in India on a much more benevolent line.

Burke's assessment of India as a "civilized polity, possessing laws, institutions, and tradition, worked out through centuries of effort, framed according to needs and representatives of the principles of human order, that is the natural law" was equally appreciated by William Robertson, the historian, who wrote, "the Indians is a most happy race of men; and that the most intelligent modern observers should celebrate the equity, the humanity, and the mildness of the Indian policy". According to Burke, though the Indian contribution was not as great as that of British but still it deserved respect. "India might have faults", he declared, "but god forbid, we should pass judgement upon a people, who formed their laws and institutions prior to our insect origins of yesterday."(Burke, 1865 works p455)

Quiet like Burke, in the works of Sir William Jones (1746-1794) and Sir William Robertson (1721-1793), we find an appreciation of Indian civilization. Sir William Jones was not only instrumental in expressing his profound support towards the conservative view of India, but it is equally important to mention here, that appreciation of Indian culture and heritage, coming

from a man of his stature meant a lot towards the development of understanding the East by the West and formation of British attitude towards India. Before Jones's reference, the idea of Hinduism in Britain was quiet synonymous with the odd practices of the Brahmins which they deemed quiet unrespectful and evil. Contrary to most of the contemporary Britishers who had a set notion of prejudices against India, and its people and culture, Sir Jones came to India to understand the culture and heritage. He did not arrive in India, puzzled and dissatisfied, he came to appreciate the culture with relative ease. Jones was appointed the judge of Supreme Court of Calcutta, the position which he utilized to effectively study Sanskrit and literature and language of the land and transmit it to the West. In his effort, he rediscovered great works of poetry and drama and translated them for European readers, the uncovered neglected treatises on science and philosophy and history. He inquired into the profound theology of the Hindus and wrote comprehensive treatise on Hindu and Mohammedan law. Jones, along with Henry Thomas Colebrooke (1765- 1837) and Nathaniel Halhed (1751- 1830), founded the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal (1784). It was through this society, he encouraged British and Indians alike to explore and propagate the cultural heritage of India. Sir William Jones appreciated Indian culture and its manifestations as a true expression of human potential and endeavour. Jones found, Indian drama and poetry of the highest quality and Indian architecture sublime, as he expected. Indian work in the natural sciences, he found was much more impressive than he had supposed: the Indians were not mere children in science. By 1794, the year of his death in India, he declared that Indians actually understood, in general, the principles of gravitation from earliest times. He found it possible to affirm, "That without detracting, from never fading. Laurels of Newton, the whole of Newton's theology and part of his philosophy were to be found in the Vedas and other religious works." (Bearce, 1961 p23)

A very competent scholar and historian, as William Robertson[1] was, he never visited India, but relied heavily on William Jones's accounts, yet he, in his own wisdom contributed further towards the conservative attitude of India. Unlike Jones, Robertson found both merit and demerits in Indian art and sciences, he also had a less favourable opinion about Indian religion, but being a conservative that Robertson was, he urged that the reforming program of India be best left to the Indians themselves.

James Cumming, a senior clerk in charge of Judicial and Revenue Affairs, at the Board of Control, during 1790s, had opinions about India, quiet somewhat similar to that of Robertson. Cumming in his work, "on Internal Administration in India", expressed his opinion that the Indians should be left on their own to conduct the affairs of their country. Though he did not talk, anything about British withdrawal from India, yet he hoped that the Indians are governed according to their own traditions. It is important to note here that all those conservative scholars though could not bring about much difference in British way of governing India, but indeed they all played a very vital role in building up of a British attitude towards India. They also helped in generating considerable interests among British common minds about India, which were to continue for a long period.

However, the general prevalent mind, among the British was that of an imperial attitude. Most of the British political thinkers and officials were of the opinion, that, the British Empire in India, was a great colonial achievement, and a permanent monument of British success which needed to be preserved. So far as India was concerned they opined that the country which had great inherent defects filled with anarchy, injustice, superstition and crime, were rather in a state of progressive development under the British, who engaged

[1]Wiiliam Robertson was a significant figure in the Scottish Enlightenment. In 1791, he published his work, "Concerning the knowledge which Ancients had of India". In his work he spoke about the trade relations between India and the West, from earlier times, till the end of the fifteenth century.

themselves for the betterment of the hapless lot.On the foundation, led by the Conservative and the Imperialists, a new body of British view point towards India developed with the Liberals and Utilitarians.

James Mill, the secretary, close associate and an ardent follower of Jeremy Bentham[2], the founder of modern utilitarianism, evolved new liberal ideas about India, in his work, "History of British India". Mill never physically came to India, which he considered as an advantage for he thought it enabled him to dispassionately judge all the available information about India, both political as well as apolitical and draw up a rational conclusion, about British imperialism in India. Mill suggested introduction of liberal measures for betterment of British rule in India. It is not that, Mill had a very favourable opinion about India, he criticized Indian, socio- religious institutions, poverty and ignorance and their absence of national thought, but he also opined that the British government has done nothing to solve such issues. Mill recommended the need for introduction of a much more liberal yet efficient and powerful British administration in India which would work for the betterment of both the governed as well as the governors.

The end of the eighteenth century also saw the coming of British missionaries in India, who wielded a considerable influence in formation of British opinion about India. The most notable amongst them were William Carey, Joshua Marshman and William Ward. The British missionary William Carey fondly remembered as father of modern missionaries arrived in British India in 1793.Being denied permission to enter by the non Baptist missionaries, he settled in Sreerampore, then under Dutch, just adjacent to British Indian territory. Staying with the poor people of India, Carey worked tirelessly as a social reformer and educator travelling across villages and talking to the people. He leant a great deal about

[2]Bentham's students included not only James Mill but also Mill's son, John Stuart Mill, John Austin, the legal philopsher, and Robert Owen, one of the founders of the utopian socialism.

the country. He first took up the job of mastering major Indian languages, which he thought was essential for understanding the country in its whole, with its cultural content. Thus, Carey showed considerable maturity compared to many of his predecessors. With intellectual pursuit, Carey, translated Christian scriptures and Bible into not less than 36 Indian languages, compiled grammar, periodicals, and made effort to make western knowledge and Christianity available to the common Indians. Carey, not only studied Indian language and literature but also devoted himself in the study of Indian style of science, technology, agriculture, horticulture and so on. Carey took a strong stand against the evil practices of India, like Sati, caste system, female infanticide, child marriage, and idolatry and likewise, which he thought was impeding the progress of India. In the year 1898, Carey along with Joshua Marshman and William Ward famously known as the Sreerampore Trio founded the famous Sreerampore College, near to Calcutta. Carey's work earned him immense respect, both in Bengal and England. Carey was appointed as a professor of divinity, and lecture on Botany and Zoology, at Lord Wellesley's College of Fort William. "By 1829, the divinity faculty of the college, had become so valuable, that it became a nursery of Eurasian and Native missionaries, and the importance of attracting more of the new generation of educated Hindus within its influence had become so apparent, that Oriental gave place to English literature in the curriculum". Carey thus showed, "how by Bible, church and school, by physical and spiritual truth, India and all Asia could be brought to Christ" which, he deemed as India's greatest possible good. (Bearce, 1961 p76)

Unlike Carey, his predecessor, Rev Claudius Buchanan (1766-1815) rather had a different perception about India. Indian socio- cultural practices, customs and institutions, created a dark impression in his mind, which he thought could only be lightened by enlightened, benevolent rays of Western World. Father Buchanan and his contemporary were of the strong

opinion, that it is the spread of Christianity that can strengthen the imperial presence in India, which was very much essential and viable for the Indian lots.

By 1813, prominent British politicians, like William Wilberforce, Charles Grant, played prominent role, in admitting Christian missionaries in India, overcoming the opposition of the East India Company, and thus played instrumental role in spread of missionary activities in India. Needless to say, such activities not only endeavoured to spread Christianity to India, but also at same time, prepared British mind, back at home, for India, by conjuring upon image of the country, whether positive or negative. Equally important in revealing the maturity of missionary attitudes was a Bishop of Calcutta, Reginald Hebes, who travelled extensively over India and left an account of his travels, "*A Narrative of a Journey through India, 1824-1825*". His work, for its humanity and judgement was inspirational for about half dozen major British books about India. Before going to India in 1823, he had reviewed many books about India for "The Quarterly Review". He did not approach India, with unthinking prejudices, but rather with a desire to be observant, open minded, and just in his appraisal of that country. He did not confine himself to the major British settlements, like most Britons, but travelled widely in India in order to infuse new life into the Christian movement and to understand the people to whom he was bringing Christianity. Heber, revealed an insatiable curiosity about all aspects of Indian life. He was not merely observant: he became familiar with the population and demonstrated kindness and humanity towards the people. Concerned chiefly with Christianity in India, Heber gave little attention to the problems of British rule in that country. He generally considered British rule to be mild, and he felt that except for the old cotton manufacturing areas almost all of India had benefitted from British administration. He occasionally criticized the conduct of this administration, especially when he passed through regions suffering from famine, drought and oppressive taxation. But he remained basically aloof from political problems, which were not ultimately pertinent to his spiritual

endeavours. The success of Christianity did not depend on the main tenancy of the British Empire in India. Heber's attitudes were far more enlightened than those of most other missionaries. Through broad understanding he helped to reverse the earlier unfavourable conception of the Indian people. This was an important service to the Christian and humanitarian cause, in time, it helped bring Britons to grips with India's real condition and real problems. Illusions and misconceptions were not sound foundations for practical measures for improving India. (Bearce, 1961 p85)

Thus the missionary movement, influenced by liberalism, contributed greatly to the westernization of India. They concentrated on establishment of schools, founding newspapers and periodicals, printing books in vernacular language, to be distributed amongst people. Many missionaries sought to bring medical knowledge to India, and same encouraged agricultural improvements a way of alleviating the extreme poverty of the country. The missionaries also attacked the prevalent social and religious evils in India and in time helped alter the social conditions of India.

Both the Evangelical and Utilitarians saw in India, a hopelessly decadent society, in urgent need of reform. Although proceeding from different premises, they could, in the Indian scene, co operate in a number of practical issues, especially on measures of social and humanitarian reform, like the abolition of Sati, and the suppression of infanticide. While the Evangelicals placed their ultimate reliance on God, seeing education as the mundane tool of their revolution. The Utilitarians did not have such a high regard for education as an agent of transformation, but placed greater trust in the power of government and law, believing that could be changed by effective legislation and strong centralized government. Radicals who were not doctrinaire utilitarians, on other hand, placed a greater faith in education, as a means of westernizing India. Of these, T.B. Macaulay, is the most prominent example. In his '*Minute on Education*' (1835) Macaulay dismissed all oriental literature as intrinsically

inferior to Western literature and proposed that the British should train a group of Indians, who would be acting as interpreters between the British and the Indian masses. “A class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect” (Dyson, 1978). It was through his vigorous propaganda as well as the wishes of the Indian intelligentsia that higher education in India under British auspices acquired its overwhelmingly anglicized character.It is the interaction of all these attitudes inherited from the eighteenth century, as well as those emerging in the nineteenth, which formed the fabric of British thought in India, in coming time.

Actually a full range of British attitudes, reveals, imperialism, pure and simple, as it is understood and condemned today, was without a doubt, a part of Britain’s total reaction to India.But, Britain was also complex society, composed of individuals and groups, who had varied backgrounds, experiences, interests and intellectual capacity. To this society, India was a private as well as a public concern. British reactions to India, did not centre on one attitude such as, imperialism, but represented a variety of conflicting attitudes. British often found it difficult to determine what attitudes to follow in their relations with India.

Attention is to be drawn to the special contribution of women, in forming an idea about India, in the British mind. While sharing some of the attitudes of the social circles to which they belonged; they also brought in a degree of independence in their approach and a specifically feminine outlook. Their attitudes were not the exact replicas of those of their male relatives, and they did seem keen to offer criticism of the attitudes prevalent in their social circles. Their journals are particularly literary, rich in detail and local colour. From them we get much rare information on Indian domestic life, wedding rights, zenana parties, fashion, jewellery, food and the like, as well as many valuable details of British social and domestic life in India. The leisure of the Memsahib’s life also induced many of them to indulge in genuine oriental’s preoccupations, some of them showing a high degree of curiosity about

Indian mythology, folklore, arts, crafts and social customs. It is true that whiles a vast majority of white women did maintain a self 'absorbed' silence on native India, there were, at the same time, several others, who did write copiously on the subject.

English women's colonial interactions with local women were made through the prism of race, class, caste, religion and region. Generally speaking, for much of the period, memsahib's, interacted mostly with women, who belonged to the lower classes and castes, such as washerwomen, wives of gardeners, wet nurses and ayahs but occasionally, they also met native women, belonging to upper caste and class, who observed Purdah, and thus formed their first hand information, about the country and its people alike. Women missionaries especially, visited such secluded women and wrote copious and detailed accounts about these encounters. In addition, memsahib's, mostly administrator's wives, sometimes called elite women from aristocratic and princely families such as the wives of 'native' chiefs with whom their husbands who were East India Company servants, would be carrying out official negotiations. From around the late nineteenth century onwards, they also met at 'Purdah parties', at these gatherings organized by white women for Indian female guests, upper class women from both races would meet on a footing of some amount of equality. Moreover, roughly around the same time, white women also started interacting with emancipated, western educated Indian women, some of whom were associated with the nationalist movement. Thus, in this entire varied encounter with colonised women, European women were positioned diversely, as evangelical proselytisers, sexual competitors, imperialists, materialist reformers, secular missionaries, domestic employers and educationists. (Sen, 2008 p introduction xi)

During the early years of East India Company, not many western women would come to India, especially during the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, undertaking long rigorous sea voyages. Many a times we see western women accompanying the British husbands came

to India, but their role was merely restricted to an observer of Indian culture and society, rather than as an active catalyst, bringing about changes in the social and cultural context of India. With the rise of Evangelical fervour, however, the zeal for conversion was not confined to the missionaries alone. It influenced the thinking of the company officials and military men too, and many a cases, had its impact felt upon the wives of the officials too. Some of these western women were keen in doing missionary reformist work, wanting to do away with Indian poverty and rural misery, and some were with the mission of educational reform.

One such example is Mary Martha Sherwood, who visited India, accompanying her military officer husband who was stationed in various parts of Bengal. Sherwood, coming under the influence of the missionary's exhibited Evangelical spirit. However, Julia Maitland accompanying her Company official husband, posted in Madras, engaged herself in setting up schools for local children, with the hope of converting them into Christianity. Thus Maitland realized the need for education as a pre requisite for proselytising activity. Very much like Maitland was Marianne Postan, army official's wife who visited India along with her husband during 1830s. She had more contact with the Indian society and was generally keen on exploring India. Influenced by utilitarian as well as evangelical spirit, Postan believed that the spread of Christianity can be a way of undoing the many wrongs that the imperialists were doing in India. Interestingly in the writing of these women, we find a detailed description of local festivals, wedding rituals and rites, description of dress, jewelleries, and food habits and so on. Gradually in some of their writings, we also find a growing concern about the racial discrimination that was cropping up in the society. Julia Maitland expressed her growing concern over the ill treatment meted out to the Indians, by the British. Such racial discrimination and policy maintaining highhanded attitudes and distance from the natives, further widened the gaps between the Memsahibs and their counterparts. In contrast

to Julia Maitland's time (1830s), the Memsahib of the later era, remained almost completely ignorant of the local languages- which further cut her off from the surrounding culture. British social life in India now consisted of mixing only amongst themselves within Anglo Indian stations. By 1879, the segregation was so complete, that the only 'natives' she interacted with were domestic servants, thus the Indian woman, she came closer in contact with the ayah- who was generally the sole female servant employed in the colonial households (although is some place like Madras Presidency, a Mehthrani, or sweeper, was sometimes also kept). The ayah's job was to look after the children and where there were no children, she functioned as lady's maid. Often as we see in Sarah Jeanette Duncan's 1890s novel or in Alice Perrin's short story written in 1906, she was the Memsahib's only source of information on 'native India'. (Sen, 2008 p introduction xvii)

Like many Indian- born British women who returned to India as grown up daughters after schooling in England, to rejoin their parents, Alice Perrin was the daughter of General John Innes Robinson of the Bengal cavalry. Her husband was a member of the Medical Service of I.C.S. who later became associated with the Ministry of Health. She wrote a large number of novels, set in India, most of which dealt with British social life in the sub continent. Like Alice Perrin, Maud Diver, also returned to India after being educated in England. She was born at a hill station in the Himalayas where her father served as a soldier civilian. Diver returned to India at the age of sixteen, her companion on this trip was her lifelong friend, Mrs Fleming, Rudyard Kipling's sister, who served as critic for Diver's early works. In Diver's writings, we find a sympathetic study of Princes of India, Royal India. We also find a glorious description of the newly encouraging class of educated Indian Women.

Perhaps one of the most impressive accounts of that time, through a Memsahib's eye can be found in the writings of Flora Annie Steel. She was in her day, compared favourably with Kipling, and some critics consider her the greatest novelist in the sense of that word that

Anglo Indian literature has produced. In 1867, she married a member of the Indian Civil Service in the next year, came to India. Most of her time was spent in Punjab, where she advocated education for Indian women. Flora in her work "*The Complete Indian Home keeper and Cook*" (1888), a book for introducing India to the new young Memsahib arriving from England compared the running of a British colonial household, to that of administering the British empire. She was in fact one of the rare memsahib, who learnt to speak the vernacular language and wrote fiction, which featured exclusively Indian characters and settings. She was the first inspector of girls' schools and in 1884, became a member of Provincial Educational Board with John Lockwood Kipling, Rudyard Kipling's father. In 1889, upon her husband's retirement, she went back to England, only to return soon, to do research for her novel "On the face of the water".

It is important here that special mention is made to the host of western women, who accompanied their missionary husbands, and reached India- these ladies, not only worked alongside their husbands, but also contributed to a great deal, towards the formation of British attitude in India and back at home. Women like Mary Weitbrecht, Mrs Marcus (Jenny) Fuller; Mrs Mangaret Urquhart not only did speak the vernacular language fluently, but interacted with the local women, without any prejudices.

In the later part of the nineteenth century, the gap between the races had widened and missionaries were the only group of white women, who mixed closely and on a footing of relative equality with natives. They entered the purdah freely, visiting the 'native' women from upper class/ caste households inside their homes. Their greatest advantage was that they could speak and write the local languages fluently. Moreover, unlike administrators' wives, they moved about freely in the narrow, crowded by lanes of the 'native' quarters of the city, with no concern about rank and prestige. However, it was often this very familiarity with

Indians as well as their lack of official status that made the hierarchical colonial society, look down upon them. (Sen, 2008 p introduction xix)

These women actively participated in the social reform movements of the nineteenth century. They had an equally significant role to play in the spread of education for native girls. They not only taught in regular girls' schools, which they established, but also at the same time, took special classes for women in the Andarmahals. Around this time, there were also some secular white women, who made something short to India, either as a philanthropist, or as a journalist, or sometimes accompanying their brothers or husbands, who ere engaged with imperial service. These women, like Fanny Parke, Mary Carpenter, Annette Aleroyd, Chritina Bremner, Mary Frances Billington were not only keen on reformist activities and establishing school for girls, with the purpose of spreading education, but also at the same time, showed a considerable amount of curiosity, and open minded interest towards the country, which percolated in their works too. Both Mary Carpenter and Annette Aroid worked closely with Keshabchandra Sen, in establishing girls' school in Calcutta. It is also about the same time, when female medical missionaries, i.e. missionaries, who were also trained doctors, carried western medicine into the zenana. Moreover, secular female doctors from America and Britain also came from the 1870s to 1900s to work in hospitals for Purdah women. From 1885 onwards, the Dufferin Fund Program, initiated by Lady Dufferin, wife of the Viceroy, built hospitals meant exclusively for women and sought to provide medical care, along with trained female medical practioners and trained ayahs (midwives). Throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's, the "Dufferin Fund" remained the main health care organization. (Sen, 2008 p introduction xxi)

It is however, important to mention that wave of sympathy for Indians, its values, traditions and institutions did not extend to every example of them. The British attitude towards India and the process of understanding the east, many a times accompanied with the racial

arrogance and superiority complex of the west, riding the belief of the "white man's burden" continued. Throughout the nineteenth century, the difference between the east and the west further widened. Moreover, the early twentieth century was also the period of the anti colonial, national movement.

As the movement gathered momentum, it also saw the emergence and involvement of highly educated intelligent and articulate Indian women like Sarojini Naidu. It is around the beginning of the twentieth century we see some far reaching impact. Four eminent western women with diverse backgrounds and with different intentions arrived in India – they being Katherine Mayo, Margaret Elizabeth Nobel, Annie Besant, and Madeleine Slade. These four women not only got actively involved with the Indian society, but in their own ways contributed towards the process of transforming Indian society and sometimes also led an over whelming impact on the Indian political fabric. These four women represent an apocalypse and make it a full circle. They perhaps occupy the centre stage of Indian society and politics though they belonged to the west. Their visions paved the way not only for a full-fledged flowering of modern Indian Nationalism but it also facilitated the birth of feminism in India.

CHAPTER 2

RESPONSES OF WESTERN WOMEN ON INDIA: AN ANALYSIS-

(A) KATHERINE MAYO, AN IMPERIAL WRITER.

(B) MARGARET ELIZABETH NOBLE (SISTER NIVEDITA), A FRIEND OF INDIA.

Two formidable Western Women Katherine Mayo and Margaret Elizabeth Noble (Sister Nivedita) were born in the same year of 1867. Both the women were born in the western half of the world, and were bound to arrive in a different part of the world, in India, to leave an everlasting impression. Mayo spent three short months in India, and Noble gave nearly forty four years of her life to India. This chapter is an attempt not only to understand Mayo and Noble's socio-political and cultural encounter with India but also to analyze their profuse contributions towards Indian society.

KATHERINE MAYO, AN IMPERIAL WRITER:

The obituary in the New York Times described the American lady Miss Katherine Mayo, as "a woman who ranged the earth in pursuit of what she regarded as fact, only to find that they often became causes." (American National Biography, qtd. Sinha, 1998) Katherine Mayo, (24th Jan 1867- 9th Oct. 1940) an America based journalist; columnist and book writer was born in Ridgeway, Pennsylvania. She was the daughter of James Henry Mayo, a mining engineer and Harriet Elizabeth Ingraham. Mayo since her childhood, moved regularly with her family, as her father pursued mining opportunities. She was educated at various private schools in Boston, Cambridge & Massachusetts, where she lived between 1883 and 1888. Her family then moved to Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey. After finishing school, Mayo pursued studies in colonial history, on her own.

"In the winter of 1925-26, Mayo spent three short months in India. At the end of her stay, she wrote a scathing critique of India and the position of its women, in her bestselling book *Mother India*. The news of the publication of *Mother India* reached India towards the end of July 1927 and it instantly raised a storm not only throughout India but also created a sensation even in the U.S and in Britain. The publication was at that time a cause celebre. Even today, few books apart, perhaps from Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* 1989 can match the scale of international controversy generated by *Mother India*. But Mayo was no

stranger to public controversy before she acquired international recognition as the author of *Mother India*. Even before *Mother India*, Mayo was already well known as the author of several books. The spirit of *Mother India*, indeed was in keeping with much of Mayo's other writings on the various domestics and imperial issues." (Sinha, 1998)

Mayo's career as a writer began in the year 1892, when Mayo sold ' Life Magazine' a sketch of five dollars. Her article in New York Evening Post, in 1894 supposedly used the pseudonym Katherine Prance. She used the same for some of her other articles too. In 1899 she travelled with her father, who was searching for gold in Dutch Guinea in South Africa, where British East Indians constituted a sizable part of the population. During this time Mayo wrote about a range of subjects including life in Dutch Guinea, for magazines like Atlantic Monthly and Scribner's Magazine. Mayo later claimed that an East Indian saved her life, while she was in Guinea. That was how she accounted for her interest in India. Meanwhile, she was collecting samples of native insects to sell to the Entomological News of Philadelphia and collecting indigenous people's relics to sell to Harvard's Peabody Museum. Mayo spent eight years in Dutch Guinea, occasionally contributing magazine pieces about the native people of South America. Mayo then got herself associated as the research assistant for the liberal political figure Oswald Garrison Villard of the New York Evening Post. Villard was one of the co-founders of the National Advancement for coloured people. Mayo started travelling widely for the purpose of finding facts for her research and helped Villard prepare John Brown, (1800-1859) (Cambridge Massachusetts, 1910). Villard became a mentor to Mayo, influencing her to use her journalistic skills as a social reformer. Villard also helped her in getting her stories published in some American magazines. But he detected early that in her stories about the Hindus, she had an affinity to portray only the darker aspects of life. He warned her against this tendency. Mayo also assisted Horace White, editor-in-chief of the New York

Post until 1903, with his work Life of Lyman Trumbull 1913. In September 1910, Mayo met orphaned heiress M. Moyca Newell. Newell became her lifelong inseparable friend, giving Mayo the financial security to follow her writing interests. The two travelled across the globe to Panama, Philippines, Europe & India, gathering information for Mayo's books.

Early in the post-war years, Mayo was seized with the desire to help promote good relations between America and England. To this end she found an organization, the British Apprentice Club, in New York in 1921, with herself as the treasurer and Moyca as the Chairman. The objective of the British Apprentice Club was to give warm welcome and friendship to the cadets of the British Merchant Service who happened to visit the port of New York for the cause of their services. The basic aim of the club, according to the ladies, was to promote understanding between America and England because "nothing in the world today is so essential to world peace as the friendship between the two great English speaking nations." (Jha, 1971)

Very interestingly despite Mayo's association and connection with liberal figures, her reputation as a writer in the U.S. was built on championing very different kinds of political causes. On the surface at least, Mayo's writing career shared much with the well established late nineteenth and early twentieth century tradition of 'muck raking' which produced the kind of journalistic exposes that had resulted in many a progressive era reform in the United States. (Jha, 1971) Unlike much of this 'muck raking' tradition, however, Mayo's pen was typically mobilized in the support of some of the same powerful, establishment interest, that were often the targets of muck raking exposes.

The murder of a paymaster or supervisor in August, 1913 at Newell's estate, Maaikenshof in Bedford Hills, New York prompted Mayo to write her first book *A Historical Study Of The Pennsylvania State Police, Justice to All* 1917. President Theodore Roosevelt even contributed to the book's introduction. This topic intrigued Mayo so much that she wrote

two additional books on the State Police, *The Standard Bearers: True Stories of Heroes of Law and Order* 1918 and *Mounted Justice* 1922. Both these books were credited for having laid the foundations for the state Police force. Mayo's early involvement with state Police reform in the U.S established the class, gender and racial ideologies that coloured much of Mayo's career. In fact Mayo and Newell orchestrated a highly successful campaign for the creation of a rural state police force in New York against a background of stiff opposition especially from socialist and labour groups. In the course of this campaign, Mayo published several books on the Pennsylvanian state Police force, the earliest of the state forces in the U.S and the model for the creation of the New York state constabulary. Now the reputation of the Pennsylvanian force however had already come under a cloud for its highly partisan role in the settlement of labour disputes in the state. During the strike at the Wilkes-Barre Railway Company for example, the unsavoury conduct of the force had resulted in a vast number of citizen complaints about the force. Mayo's book glossed over such complaints and extolled the virtues of the Pennsylvania force in highly embellished stories. Even a member of the Pennsylvanian and force, who was one of Mayo's several informants for her glamorized stories about the state police, commented to her in private "The story is very good but in places highly coloured. You are making the state Policemen too ideal in your stories." (Sinha, 1998) One of Mayo's correspondents, a Cleveland school teacher, who after, thought that Mayo had been too "one- sided" in her latter portrayal of Filipinos and Indians, raised a similar question about her work on the Pennsylvania state Police. ".....is it a wholly commendable and impartial force or whether as labour men often say, it becomes as instrument of the employees to break the unions in strike." (Sinha, 1998) Subtlety and balance obviously were not among Mayo's virtues as a writer.

Mayo's books were, however, highly successful as propaganda for the state Police partly

because of the gendered and racial urgency that she gave her stories on the Pennsylvania force. In making her case for the state Police force, Mayo effectively invoked the twin spectres of hordes of male immigrants and 'Negroes', who lacked `manly self control' and of Anglo-Saxon women, who needed the manly protection of the state Police. Against the violence that Mayo associated with immigrants and African-Americans, the members of the state Police force were portrayed by Mayo as the upholders of law and order and indeed of civilization itself.

In fact her book on the state Police force also put her at odds with many reformist and feminist circles in the United States. While her books enjoyed the support of powerful politicians and public figures, they elicited a much more critical response from the reformers sympathetic to the interests of labour as well as from many liberal women's group and feminists in the U.S. Mayo herself, were quite dismissive of criticism of her books from such quarters. Mayo in fact, received a much more sympathetic hearing from conservative women's groups for whom contemporary feminist activism was tainted and polluted by the evils of 'bolshevism'.

Practically Mayo as a reformer appealed much more to the women's organizations that had a history of 'red-baiting' feminists in the United States, rather than to liberal women's activists. Actually the dominant trend of women's activism in United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, according to Paula Baker was "the domestication of Politics". The results of such women's campaigns were like maternal and child welfare legislations and protective factory legislations. Now Mayo's constituency in United States despite her subsequent re-incarnation as a champion of social welfare legislations in *Mother India* was drawn largely from conservative women's organizations that were opposed to the type of social welfare legislations associated with feminist activism in the United States.

The Massachusetts Public Interest League, for example, had mounted a successful opposition to the child labour amendment as a subversive 'feminist' and 'bolshevist' measure. It was organizations like the Massachusetts Public Interest League who became some of the strongest supporters among women's groups in the U.S. for Mayo's *Mother India*. The Massachusetts public interest League and the equally conservative daughters of the American Revolution welcomed 'Mother India' warmly and invited Mayo to address their respective organizations. Margaret Robinson of the Massachusetts public interest league identified in Mayo, not- withstanding Mayo's ostensible support for social welfare legislations in India, a kindred soul who was opposed to the subversive activities of 'feminists' and 'bolshevists' in the U.S. and of native nationalists abroad. Robinson congratulated Mayo for having produced a book that would be "useful to counteract communist propaganda about India". "Our league", she wrote," is doing valuable work in educating women as to the menace of subversive forces working toward the world." Robinson was concerned quite specifically with the impact of Theosophists and of women, such as Annie Besant in particular, who were putting the "degrading religion of India on a par with or above the Christian religion." (Sinha, 1998) By contrast, the more liberal women's organizations that supported maternity and child welfare legislations in the U.S. remained much more sceptical of Mayo's contribution in *Mother India*. As the account of one of Mayo's supporters revealed, feminists in the U.S., whom he accused of combining support for both control with love for the `Negro' and the 'Hindu', were more likely to question Mayo's new role as a champion of women and children in *Mother India*. Mayo's own sympathies reflected as well in her obsession with the impact of bolshevist' propaganda in India-were in keeping with the conservative women's groups who kept their distance from feminists'. It is perhaps all the more ironic, then, that today some latter day feminists in the U.S. have been trying to reclaim Mayo's *Mother India* for

a progressive feminist politics. (Sinha, 1998)

Actually much earlier, although in the 1920s and 30s both nationalists as well as leaders of women's movements in India had strongly condemned *Mother India*, the book continued to have an enormous influence in shaping perceptions about India and Indian women, especially in Mayo's home country. " A survey of some 350 adults in the U.S. in the 1950s revealed that *Mother India* was second only to the works of Rudyard Kipling as the most popular source of information in the U.S. on India. Anecdotal evidence further suggested that *Mother India* was still being recommended to Peace Corps volunteers as an introduction to India up until the 1970s. The latest chapter in the legend of *Mother India*, however, has been the product of some feminists and women's-studies inspired scholarship in the U.S. in fact although Indian still revile Katherine Mayo, interestingly, there has been an American radical feminist interpretation of her work. Mary Daly in her book *Gyn-Ecology: The Meta-ethics of Radical Feminism* (1978) marked this latest revival in Mother India's reputation. She wrote that 'Mayo shows an understanding of the situation which more famous scholars entirely lack. Her work is in the precise sense of the word exceptional. Mayo in her own way was a feminist and although her observations often reveal more about her than about India, many of the conditions she reported still exist. Katherine Mayo, egregious as her views were, held a certain fascination for me, she had done, after all, what I was trying to do.' Daly's theory of 'planetary patriarchy' relied on and celebrated Mayo's contribution in Mother India uncritically." (Sinha, 1998) Ignoring the contributions of generations of both Indian and foreign women and men, Daly elevated Mayo as the most impatient voice articulating a feminist critique of indigenous patriarchy in India. Then there is again Elisabeth Bumiller, the author of "*May you be the Mother of a Hundred Sons: A Journey Among the women of India*" (1990). In the preface of her book, Bumiller acknowledges

Mayo as an inspiration for her own writing on Indian women, although she mentioned that she had found it difficult to ignore the racist and imperialist tone of *Mother India*, nevertheless she reiterates the view of Mayo as a pioneering, if somewhat flawed US feminist, who was concerned with the condition of women in India. "Mayo says loudly and clearly what later western feminist authors are accused of doing more subtly" writes Bumiller. (Bumiller, 1990) There is indeed a broader revisionism afoot among some scholars, not all of whom were writing from the U.S., for reappraising the nationalists' criticism of Mayo and resurrecting Mayo's reputation in the name of feminist-inspired scholarship.

Despite Dr. Manoranjan Jha's Katherine Mayo and India (New Delhi: People's Publishing House, 1971) - perhaps the best full length scholarly treatment of the Mother India controversy, the Mother India based myth of Mayo as a feminist crusader has persisted. Dr. Jha dedicating his book to those Americans, who despite Katherine Mayo and persons of her ilk, stood by the cause of Indian nationalism, not only demonstrated the political motives behind Mayo's book, but also successfully reconstructed Mayo's connection to the official British imperial propaganda machine. Now one reason for this persistence is that much of this interest in Mother India has been marked by an appalling lack of familiarity with and a failure to engage seriously with the existing scholarship on colonial India and on Indian women. Another reason of course is the isolation, in which Mayo's engagement with India has been typical examined. The long lasting myths about the nature of Mayo's contribution in *Mother India* not only underestimate her role as an adherent for British imperialism in India but also reveal an ignorance of Mayo's involvement in domestic U.S. politics. Mayo's lack of sympathy with feminists in the U.S. for example raised interesting questions about her later glorification as a feminist crusader for Indian women. (Sinha, 1998)

The continuity between Mayo's domestic and imperial politics - too often a casualty of overly rigid disciplinary constraints that tend to compartmentalize scholarship among supposedly discrete national lines, provides a fuller background for understanding *Mother India*. The contribution of *Mother India*, indeed needs to be understood in the differential background of US, British and Indian politics. Mayo had already published five of her books before she visited India and wrote *Mother India*. Of these *The Isles of Fear: An Examination of America's Task in the Philippines*, 1925, is noteworthy in the context of Mayo's subsequent venture in India. Mayo had always favoured a strong Anglo-U.S. imperial alliance, that would jointly keep at bay the demands of various `natives' and their liberal sympathizers for the transfer of greater political responsibility into the hands of the indigenous peoples themselves. This had been the central message of Mayo's *The Isles of Fear: An Examination of America's Task in the Philippines* which was later echoed in *Mother India*. Mayo through her *The Isles of Fear an Examination of America's Task in the Philippines* had painted a picture of the dismal failure of experiments at self government among the Filipinos. In this book she discussed the socio-political problems of the Philippines and bluntly expressed her opinions that except for the politicians, the Filipinos where neither desirous nor ready for independence. She severely indicted the Jones law of 1916, under which President Wilson's administration had tried to introduce a measure of self government in these islands. The indictment is said to have been so effective as to help check the movement in the United States for granting independence to the Philippines. Naturally, the book was greatly acclaimed by Leonard Wood, the then governor- general of the Philippines. Leonard Wood Wrote to Mayo, that he "appreciate" tremendously having the Philippines situation written up. The resulting polemic attack against Filipino politicians angered nationalists in the Philippines, but met with the full approval of Wood, who acknowledged that, Mayo "has done more than she realized, to

help out the situation here...." No sooner the book was published in America; it was published in England as well with an introduction by Lionel Curtis[3], who was one of the authors of the concept of diarchy incorporated in the government of India act of (1919). Knowledgeable circles in England were quick in endorsing the usefulness of the book not only for America but also for England. The comment in the Times Literary Supplement ran as follows:

"We venture to believe that it will leave its mark on America's thinking about the Philippines problem and in due time of England's thinking about India and Egypt too..... It is a book which no serious student of British imperial problems can afford to ignore." (Sinha, 1998)

To sum up the following relevant points emerge from the above:

The British authorities cared for American opinion on India. They were anxious to offset the effect of pro-India activities in America. Immediately after the First World War, they had planned to engage some prominent American journalists and columnists to visit India so that on their return to America they could do propaganda work in favour of British rule in India. They had found it advisable to include a lady journalist among the visiting American journalists. Katherine Mayo had considerable experience in journalism and book writing before she visited India. She was not only pro-British in her attitude and convictions but also strongly hostile to nationalist movement of the subject peoples.

This was clearly reflected in her book *The Isles of Fear: An Examination of America Task in the Philippines,* which caught the attention of the British authorities and public men immediately after its publication in 1925, the year Mayo, visited India.

Katherine Mayo's next venture after *The Isles of Fear: An Examination of America's Task in the Philippines* was naturally *Mother India*. In fact when the British journalist S.K.

[3] Curtis advocated British Empire Federation. His writings influenced the education of the Commonwealth of Nations.

Radcliffe read *The Isles of Fear* in 1925 it seemed to him "certain that she (Mayo) would go next to India and produce a book enforcing a conclusion similar to the one reiterated in *The Isles of Fear*". The book *Mother India* quickly became one of the best sellers in the English speaking world and succeeded in raising an extensive controversy over the character of the Hindu civilization and society. Henceforth, Mayo was best known by this book. "When *Mother India* was published jointly in the U.S. (Harcourt, Bace and Company) and in Britain (Jonathan Cape) in the summer of 1927, it was celebrated by diehard imperialists and reviled by outraged nationalists." (Sinha, 1998) Even Mahatma Gandhi, whom Mayo befriended and interviewed while visiting India, entered the fray denouncing the book as "a drain inspectors report". He was disappointed that an American lady should have given such a distorted picture of the Indian life. He immediately dispatched his trusted friend and colleague Mrs. Sarojini Naidu to U.S. to undo the effect of *Mother India* on the minds of the Americans.

The timing of the book was also highly significant. On the eve of the announcement of the 'all white composition' of the Simon commission, the Raj and the Indian nationalist forces were preparing for a fresh trial of strength. Just then was published this book, seeking to show with lurid details, that Indians social backwardness rendered her unfit for freedom. "The Indians felt that it was a scandalous libel on their civilization and character. Moreover they suspected the hands of the British in the publication and felt that the aim of the book was only to discredit Indian arguments in favour of constitutional reforms. Had Ms. Mayo been detached observer, who had only written what she genuinely believed and had her conclusions, however wrong, been honestly reached, most Indians would not have minded. But it was generally suspected that her book had been officially inspired and was no more than official propaganda. When *Mother India* came out speculation was rife as to what impelled Mayo to mount such as scurrilous attack on

Hinduism and Indian nationalist forces." (Jha, 1971)

Mayo felt called upon to offer explanations and this she did through lectures, group meetings and the journals which had generously opened their columns to her. She gave one such lecture at the house of Lady Lutyens in London early in May, 1928. A few days later, Lady Emily Lutyens, who was present at the meeting, summed up in a letter to Mayo the reasons given by the latter for writing *Mother India* and asked her to comment on the summary she had prepared. "One reason for writing *Mother India*, according to Lady Lutyens, was the need to counteract the anti-British propaganda that was then being carried on in America by the Indians, as also to expose their statements claiming spiritual supremacy for India. Another was to prevent the enactment of a bill then pending before the U.S. Congress which would have granted citizenship rights to the Indians in America." (Sinha, 1998) The third was the suggestion made to Mayo by two American officers of health to the effect that she would attend the international health Congress in Geneva and then go to India and report on health conditions there which could form of a chapter in a book on international health. This according to the American doctors was necessary as India presented a menace to the health of America.

Mayo who was in London at that time, replied to Lady Lutyens, emphatically stating that her purpose in writing *Mother India* had been disclosed in the book itself on pages 20, 21 and 363. In chapter 1 Mayo referred to the "big size of India as also to India's nearness to the United States, Bombay being only three weeks journey from New York." She, therefore, believed some knowledge of the neighbour was absolutely necessary for all Americans in their own interest. She concluded, "It was a dissatisfaction with this status that sent me to India, to see what a volunteer unsubsidized, uncommitted and unattached, could observe of common things in daily human life." (Mayo, 1927)

Mayo further explained that she was interested in observing the common things in the life of

the Indians as it was this facet of their life- namely their habits and practices with regard to public health, sanitation, morals, education, etc., which was likely to affect the common American, more so as the Indians in America were agitating for citizenship rights. That is why, as she narrated in the book, told the official at the India office in London when she called there in October 1925:

"I should like it be accepted that I am neither an idle busybody nor a political agent, but merely an ordinary American citizen seeking test facts to lie before my own people." (Mayo, 1927)

In the concluding chapter Mayo foresaw that the feelings of many Indians would be hurt by the observations made in her book. But the object of the book, she wrote in *Mother India*, would be served if, as a result of this task of telling the truth, "there need be no further waste of life and time for lack of a challenge and a declaration".

Before entering into a controversy with Lady Lutyens with regard to the purpose of her book Mayo had declared through the columns of the Chicago Weekly Liberty, that she was as thorough an American as anybody could be and that she had the privilege of serving her country to the best offer ability whenever she saw an opportunity. The subject of India seemed to offer such an opportunity as India was a big country and a neighbour. She adds: "So, appointing my self to the job, to India went not out of love for the Indian, as some suggest, my desire to help the struggling masses came later, after I had seen their misery....." (Mayo, 1927)

Thus, the primary motive behind *Mother India*, according to Mayo, was nothing but to present to the Americans a truthful picture of the life of the common man in India and thus to serve her country once more. The point to be noted is that in these explanations, she does not speak of her desire to give a bright picture of the British administration in India so as to nullify the effect of the pro-nationalist arguments of the Indians in the United States

and thus help improve Anglo American relations. Basically the fear that expatriate Indians in the United States were a source of potential threat to the dominant religious and cultural fabric of the nation was a strong motivating factor for Mayo in writing the *Mother India*. Mayo, like the Massachusetts public interest league, was aware of a growing trend in the U.S. which she associated especially with women's clubs, of flirting with notions about eastern spiritual superiority over the west. Mayo feared that Americans where succumbing to the superficial charm of eloquent speakers especially visiting Indians who apparently made quite an impression on the lecture circuits in the U.S. The favourable reception of recent visitors to the U.S., such as the Indian Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore, seemed to confirm the suspicions of Mayo and her like minded friends. Tagore's unfavourable comparison of western materialism with eastern spirituality was especially galling to Mayo and her friends. F.C. Mortimer of the New York Times, described Tagore in a letter to Mayo as "a dog that bites the hand that feeds him." To Mortimer, therefore, the real achievement of *Mother India* lay precisely in its response to the sort of propaganda associated with men like Tagore:

"Probably India is much like the other in eastern lands in morals and manners, but unlike the others it has claimed a spiritual superiority to the west and usually this game has been admitted. You have put an end to that." (Mortimer to Mayo, qtd. Sinha, 1998)

"Mayo herself repeated often enough that her aim in writing *Mother India* was to provide the American public with the `true' picture of Indian civilization as a counter to the favourable propaganda that was being swallowed by the India-Lovers' in the U.S. Mayo like the many supporters of the Asian Exclusion Acts was equally concerned about the prospect of citizenship rights for expatriate Indians in the U.S. While commenting on her reasons for writing *Mother India* at a private meeting in London, Mayo was reported to have confessed a report that she later denied-that her concerns had been aroused in

particular by the introduction in the U.S. Senate of the Hindu citizenship Bill." (Sinha, 1998) Senator Royal Copeland's Hindu citizenship Bill of 1927 was itself a response to the lobbying efforts of expatriate Indian organizations and their U.S. sympathizers against recent efforts to deny Indian rights as U.S. citizens. In the landmark Bhagat Singh Third case in 1923, the U.S. Supreme Court had upheld the denaturalization of 42 of the approximately 70 to a 100 Indians who had been naturalized as U.S. citizens between 1907 to 1923. Copeland's Bill sought to classify Indians in the U.S. as 'white persons', on the grounds of that radicalized genealogy that traced both Europeans and Indians back to a so-called 'Aryan' racial stock. "Whether or not efforts such as the Copeland Bill had actually prompted Mayo to write *Mother India*. There is no denying that Mayo was certainly aware of, and highly critical of, the activities of expatriate Indians in the U.S. both on behalf of their struggle against British rule in India and for citizenship rights for Indians residing in the U.S." (Sinha, 1998) It was indeed, a tribute to Mayo's public relations skills that she was able to utilize these same expatriate Indian organizations to generate pre-publication publicity for *Mother India*. Mayo and her supporters taking advantage of the fact that her views on Indians were still not widely known beyond the circle of her friends, had the publishers deliberately prepare harmless pre-publication notices for *Mother India*. These notices were then passed on to an unsuspecting Sailendra Nath Ghosh[4], secretary of the Indian freedom foundation in New York, who had invited Mayo to a banquet in honour of Senator Copeland. These notices were for distribution to the names on Ghosh's

[4] Sailendra Nath Ghosh had initially contacted Mayo, because of her association with such friends of India as O.G. Villard & E. C. Carter. Mayo's secretary declined Ghosh's invitation to Mayo on her behalf, but sent him the specially prepared pre-publication notices for *Mother India. Ghosh to Mayo*, 20 April 1927, (Folder no. 36, Series 1). Cited in Sinha.M. (1998), Selections from *Mother India*, New Delhi, Kali for Women.

organization's mailing list. (Ghosh to Mayo, qtd. Sinha, 1998) It was only after *Mother India* was published that Mayo began to speak out much more openly against citizenship rights for Indians. Her article on this topic, *When Asia Knocks At The Door*, painted a grim picture of the kind of neighbour the Indians would make if allowed to reside permanently in the United States.

Given Mayo's views on Indians at least some of her friends were aware of her decision to visit India and write about British rule in India. Mayo's interest in East Indians dated back to her stay in the early part of her life in the Dutch colony of Surinam in South America. Mayo had encountered communities of indentured Indian labourers in Surinam and in the neighbouring colony of British Guiana (later Guyana). Many of her early journalistic contributions provided a paternalistic, as well as a disparaging, look at the culture of the 'Hindu' labourers. Mayo's particular antipathy towards 'Hindus' was sufficiently pronounced for her former mentor, Millard, to warn Mayo not to let her prejudices against the 'Hindus' cloud her judgment in her writings. E.C. Carter, who was formerly with the Y.M.C.A. in India and who had provided Mayo information for her book *That Damn Y* (1920), was equally nervous about giving Mayo letters of introduction to his friends in India, lest her proposed book on India end up being simply "pro-British" instead of "pro-humanity". Interestingly, it was while working on her book on the Y.M.C.A. that Mayo encountered, and then became obsessed with countering, the claims of some Indian women who blamed the British government for perpetuating the social `backwardness' of India. Mayo's *Mother India*, indeed was shaped as much by her belief in the salutary role of Anglo- U.S. imperialism as by the concerns of domestic U.S. politics. Mayo had always favoured a strong Anglo-U.S. imperial alliance that would jointly keep at bay the demands of various `natives' and their liberal sympathizers for the devolution of greater political responsibility into the hands of the indigenous people themselves. This had been the central

message of Mayo's *the lses of Fear: The Truth about the Philippines* (1925), which was echoed later in *MotherIndia*.

The publication of *Mother India* by Katherine Mayo in 1927 was successful in creating a sensation. Actually Mayo's decision to follow up her book on the Philippines with a book on India could not have come at a better time for British policy makers on India. The official mind' in Britain, especially after the move towards self governing instituitions by the Governemnt of India Act of 1919 was preoccupied precisely with questions about the future direction of imperial policy in India. The concern over the direction of political changes in India came at a time when for a variety of reasons British officials were also becoming increasingly sensitive to international and specially American citizens' opinion about the British rule in India. The foreign office in London and the British embassy in Washington D.C had already been in secret correspondence for some years about a plan, for enlisting local journalists in the U.S., with special attention to the inclusion of women, who would undertake an independent journey to India, to express the British opinion to the American people. It was around this time that Mayo and Newell chose. To visit India and present the British rule in India to the American public. Both the women had been associated with the British library of information in New York, which was the major organization for British propaganda work in the U.S. and was under the supervision of the British embassy in Washington D.C. moreover, together Mayo and Newell possessed the substantial financial means to undertake an 'independent' journey to India.

"The exact nature and extent of the British Government's official involvement in Mayo's project remains clouded in secrecy. Although there is no doubt that *Mother India* was produced with the full knowledge and a blessing of the relevant; colonial authorities concerned with India. Government representatives where forced on several occasions to

deny any official involvement in Mayo's project in response to questions raised in the British parliament and in the central legislative assembly in India. The representatives of the Government, claimed to have provided Mayo with nothing more than what was available to any foreign traveller in India. But the official line however, was under- cut when Mayo herself began to refer to her relationship with the British Government in a very different light. Ignoring the disclaimer that she had printed in *Mother India*, Mayo, committed the political blunder of later acknowledging publicly higher tremendous indebtedness to the British Government, without whose help she now admitted, she could not have written her book. This blunder placed British officials and various Government agencies in India in a very awkward situation." (Jha, 1971)

After the news of the publication of *Mother India* reached India, in the legislative assembly the Government of India, had to face at barrage of questions on 19th and 20th September. All the questions sought to review, to what extent, if any, the Government of India, or the provincial Governments, had assisted Mayo in collecting materials for her book. To one such question J. Crerar, the home member, gave the following answer on September 19, 1927 "I am not aware that the government of India gave any assistance of any sort to Ms. Mayo, but if she did get any assistance, it was no more than would ordinarily be extended to any other member of the public". When the Home member was further pressed to reveal the precise nature and extent of the help given, he answered cautiously: "I did not say that any materials were supplied to Ms Mayo. If ordinary courtesy was extended to her, I think there would be no reasonable objection on that ground". (Jha, 1971) The Home Member denied that Mayo had been a guest of the Superintendent of police in Lahore and that she was provided with information by the head of the department of publicity of the government of India. He also denied that the materials used by her in the book were checked by some officials before their actual

publication. Moreover, he stated that so far as the government was aware, free copies of *Mother India* were not supplied to the officials of the government. There were questions about the book, even in the British House of Commons. The Under Secretary of state for India told a Labour Member on 14th November: "Ms. Mayo received no assistance in the production of her book, either from the India office or from the government of India, beyond the supply of official information on matters of fact which is afforded to any member of the public who asks for it". (Jha, 1971)

Hugh Macgregor, who was the information officer at the India office in London, sympathized with the nervousness of British officials in their future dealings with Mayo. Macgregor, however, decided that for the India office it was much safer, given the nature of Mayo's work to continue to play some role in her future products rather than leave for entirely to her own devices. Macgregor, therefore, first lectured Mayo on her blunder in referring to government help for *Mother India* and then as a condition for his continued support for her subsequent projects, obtained from her the promise that in no circumstances will references again be made to official source of help. The British and the colonial Indian government's denial of any official involvement in Mayo's project was thus a disingenuous half truth.

The production of *Mother India*, in fact, was characterized by government support whether 'official or unofficial' - from the very outset. It has already been seen that when Mayo's book *The Isles of Fear* was published early in 1925, it immediately caught the attention of important Englishmen. They were quick to perceive that the work was of value not only for America in its relation to the Philippines but also for England in its relation to India and Egypt. Very often Mayo used to write directly to the private Secretary of the governor for quick and authoritative checking of facts and the promptness with which the exalted officials complied with her request, is proof of the very special

status that the British Indian government accorded to her. That the British officers also went to the extent of supplying confidential reports or materials to Mayo is brought out by what happened in Calcutta. Chief Secretary Barley passed on to Mayo, confidential copies of two of his interviews one with the Congress leader B.C.Roy (later chief minister of west Bengal) dated 8th March, (1925) and the other with B.N.Sasmal of Contai, dated 6th October, (1921). Both these interviews were related to some legislative measures in Bengal and the intention of Barley in supplying these confidential reports to her seems to have been to show her how the Indians obstructed the government in enacting and implementing even those measures which were clearly aimed at improving the daily life of the masses Even after her return to the United States the British authorities were of assistance to Mayo. Officials were prompt in sending materials that might be useful to her work.

Moreover Mayo kept key colonial officials in both Britain and India appraised from the outset, about the nature and scope of her book on India. Mayo was constantly in close consultation with officials at various levels, from junior to the most senior. She was quite vocal about her aim to help the cause of British India, through her book. Immediately upon her arrival in India, Mayo wrote to Sir Basil Blackett, the finance member of the government of India, explaining her objectives in undertaking her project on India:

"Briefly we want to be useful to our own country and we think that our own country's greatest need is a better understanding of and closer sympathetic relationship with Great Britain. Against such understanding and sympathy there is in America a constant effort - sometimes open, sometimes subtle and covered; and its greatest ally is the ignorance of the public on the points attached…. The British administration in India is always conspicuous among these. And it is therefore occurred to us that if we could do, in India some such work as we did in the Philippines, we might cut some ground from under

the feet of the trouble-makers. But to that end, it was of course necessary to choose some circum- scribed field, and out of that to choose a few striking and representative examples, to sustain statistics and a general argument. A non-political non- controversial field would be best in order to work aside from grounds already occupied by prejudices implanted by the enemy propaganda....And the fact that we come of our own pleasure committed to no one at home or abroad, we have also found in like cases to be an asset went to the India office as well as to the health ministry in London to explain this, and to ask for their approval in the undertaking this errand. (Mayo to Blackett, qtd. Sinha, 1998) Mayo's political objectives were so blatant that even sympathetic government officials who came into contact with her team in India, often expressed their discomfort at her of obvious partisanship. The Lt. Governor of U.P., Sir William Marris, to whom Mayo had letters of introduction from London, expressed his concern to Mayo's Secretary, Harry Field. Field in turn tried to warn Mayo of the impression she was creating among some British officials in India.

At no stage of Mayo's project indeed were Colonial officials ever in doubt about that the general outcome of the disingenuous 'research' that Mayo was undertaking into conditions in India.

While Mayo was in India, some American officials took interest in her work. She got in touch with J.G. Lay, the American consul general in Calcutta. Lay gave Lord Lytton, the Governor of Bengal a copy of *The Isles of Fear*, and the governor asked him to introduce Mayo to some important officials of the government of Bengal. Another American consul at Calcutta, William L. Jenkins could hardly contain his joy when *Mother India* came out. He had been lent a copy of the book by the viceroy himself and since the he had been itching to congratulate Mayo on her achievement. He, in fact, very much wanted to join her in vanquishing those Americans who were critical of her book.

“I understand from my friend Harvey Watts that at a meeting of the contemporary club you completely vanquished opponents such as Rufus Jones and the very misguided Dr. Jesse Holmes. 1 should have liked very much to be there but I know that you need no backing up.” (Jha, 1971)

C.C. Batchelder, a former Trade commissioner for the United States in India, appears to have been of considerable use to Mayo in the matter of collection of if material. He gave her some information which she incorporated in *Mother India* without referring to him as the source. For example, it was Batchelder who gave her the story of the Dewan of an Indian Prince remarking that if the English went, within three months of their departure “not a rupee or a virgin would be left in all Bengal.” It was, again, he, the "trained American observer", who described to her the pitiable lot of the Hindus in the Malabar hills in the wake of the Moplah rebellion. Naturally, Batchelder was full of praise when the book came out:

“I have never happened to see anything to equal it. You have the gift of making statistics interesting and everywhere there are proofs of careful research enough to warrant a Ph.D. from any fair minded college. I do not detect even a questionable point. ..... I think you have done a real service to the world in sweeping away the mirage caused by deceitful propaganda and to India.” (Jha, 1971)

Some American businessmen also interested themselves in Mayo’s trip to India. On 8th October, 1925, Mayo wrote to C.F. Meyer, vice president of the standard oil company of New York, informing him of winter trip through India. Meyer noted this with great interest and assured her.

“If your presentation (as to condition in India) is even approximately as successful as your work on the Philippines, it will be a great service to the world ally at large, as well as to Americans.” (Sinha, 1998) Meyer did not fail to send Mayo letter of introduction addressed

to Walter F. Guthrie, the company's general manager in India, stationed at Calcutta. When Mayo got in touch with Guthrie in Calcutta, he explained to her the various features of the Indian situation. Mayo also did not neglect to keep some prominent American journalists informed of her project on India. She also introduced John Coatman, the officer in the house Department of the government of India, who looked after British propaganda in, the United States, to the editor of the New York Times. Coatman naturally grabbed this opportunity, and recorded his gratefulness to Mayo. He in fact told Mayo, that he was also in touch with her friend I. Ellery Sedgwick, the editor of the well known American journal the Atlantic Monthly. On her return to the United States, Mayo felt that she should ask Sedgwick to help her build-up public support for *Mother India*. But Sedgwick counselled caution. He warned Mayo against enlisting the support of British journalists in the matter, for; in that case, the book might be regarded as a part of organized British, propaganda. Despite Sedgwick's warning Mayo went ahead with her plan to organize public support for *Mother India*. She succeeded in securing the support of some interested groups in these endeavours.

Naturally enough, these groups advised the Americans that if they paid heed to the wise pronouncements found in the pages of this book, they would be contributing greatly to their own vital interests. For example, Mrs. B.L. Robinson, president of the Massachusetts public interest league, who's declared aim, was to prevent socialist legislation in the United States, found the book useful in two ways. First of all, it could be used to show that if the Soviet propaganda in favour of India's freedom from British rule succeeded, a country so weak as India would fall immediate prey to the communists and that with the wealth of India added to their present resources, their menace to the world would be overwhelming. Also it could be used to expose such movements as "the league of neighbours"," union of east and west", and Annie Beasant's theosophy, which in her

view, were out to put the "degrading" religion of India on a par with our above the Christian religion thus doing great harm to the Americans. Robinson told Mayo that she would urge intelligent American women to read the book. She also promised to interpret it to those women who would not take the trouble of reading it themselves. Later, a meeting was held in Boston under the auspices of this organization, with Mayo as the A principal speaker. She violently denounced Indian politicians and the "Swamis, Yogis and travelling teaching men" of India who regarded America as their "largest and richest hunting ground". The cosmos newspaper syndicate of New York too took iritic advantage of Mayo's forensic abilities and circulated one of her speeches entitled, *When Asia Knocks at the Door*. In this speech Mayo warned the Americans that they must "stiffen" their sensibilities and give no quarters to the degraded Hindus "for the sake of the safety of our homes, for the sake of the preservation of our standards". Daughters of the American Revolution did not lag behind in realizing the potentiality of *Mother India*. The New Jersey state chairman of its national defence committee (A.C. Benedict) got in touch with Mayo and prepared to make broad use of her services. (Sinha, 1998)

Apart from the fact, that her literary activities regarding India were politically motivated, there were indications that Mayo did take a positive interest in Indian politics. We have already noted how anxious the British officials in India were to see that her book on India was published in good time, i.e. before the appointment of the statutory Simon commission on India. The viceroy finally announced the personnel of the commission on November 08, 1927. It was however, a painful moment for him to find that not merely the Congress and the Hindu Maha-Sabha, but also the liberal federation of India, led by Tej Bahadur Sapru had decided to boycott the commission.

Mayo too was greatly interested in this matter and she even appears to have tried to prevail upon her Muslim friends in India to cooperate with the commission. In fact the

British officers, whom Mayo employed in the collection of material, did not hesitate to encourage this American lady to widen the rift between the Hindus and Muslims. Mayo was also very particular about winning the applause of those Muslims, who were opposed to the nationalist movement and she, therefore, eagerly awaited their verdict on *Mother India*. Mayo also kept up her contacts with her friends in the depressed classes in India. Her files contain a good number of leaflets issued by Bhagat Ram, vice president of the Andi-Achhut (Depressed classes) Sabha of Ferozepur (Punjab), hailing the publications of *Mother India* and *Slaves of the Gods*, and depicting Mayo as a "greater friend to depressed humanity than all the saints and sages of India up put together". Mayo's interest in Indian politics, especially in respect of the untouchables appears to have been greatly roused during the second round table conference in London. Gandhi had emphatically declared himself against granting separate representation to the untouchables in the institutions of the government, which might emerge from the deliberation of the conference. This in the opinion of B.R. Ambedkar, the representative of the depressed classes in the conference, was nothing but a declaration of war by Gandhi and the Congress against the untouchables. He then sailed to the United States, to tell the Americans the story of his depressed people. In India, a section of the depressed classes raised a hue and cry over the wrong that Gandhi had done to them. (Sinha, 1998)

Thus apart from the Hindu society, Mayo's special target of attack was Gandhi. When Mayo arrived in India, she asked the Bishop of Calcutta to write to Gandhi about her visit to India and her wish to see him. Gandhi promptly gave her an appointment, on 17th march at his Sabarmati Ashram. On the appointment day, Mayo went to the Ashram and had a fairly long interview with Gandhi. Gandhi at the very start told Mayo that one set of Americans overrated the results of his non-co- operation movement while another set not only under rated it but also imputed all kinds of motives to those who were concerned

with the movement. He asked Mayo not to exaggerate one way or the other. In one of his subsequent letters to her, he said that she should take nothing for granted from whatever source it might come, Indian or European, pro Indian or anti Indian. At the same time, he was very keen that she should understand right what he had told her. When, therefore, she sent him the typescript of her interview with him he took pains to fill in the gaps and amplify some of the statements. Mayo also enquired about the source of Gandhi's information on the poverty in India. Gandhi sent her long quotations from the books of such authors as W.W. Hunter and Romesh Chunder Dutt and promised to send her more references, if required.

In the interview itself, Gandhi made a very logical exposition view with regard to the spinning wheel; the exploitation of the Indian resources by the British that defect of the educational system introduced by the British in India, etc. He denounced the practice of untouchability prevalent in the Hindu society. The important question now is: to what extent and in what a way did Mayo use the information and the views given to her by Gandhi? We have already seen how eagerly she used the information and the views given to her by her British friends. But she never used the information or sources given by Gandhi with regard to the poverty in India. She never mentions N.W. Hunter or Romesh Chunder Dutt even to controvert them. An ordinary reader of *Mother India* would never know that there were some recognized authors who would lay the blame for the growing poverty of India at the door of the British authorities and vested interests.

The murky motivations of Mayo are fully exposed in the way she actually used some of the other statements made by Gandhi in his interview. Instead of giving an integrated and full account of Gandhi's statements on the topics she chose to quote Gandhi. on, and reproduced them in such a way as to make his position thoroughly ridiculous.

"Thus there is hardly any scope for doubt that the motives behind Katherine Mayo's *Mother*

India were primarily political to discredit India and the Indian nationalist movement in international opinion, particularly American opinion; to win American support for the British cause in India, and to frighten even British liberals into giving up the constitutional reforms they had envisaged for India." (Jha, 1971) The prospect of the labour party, supposed to be sympathetic to the nationalist cause of India, coming to power in England seems to have prompted conservative elements to rally their forces and do the best they could to prove that India and the Indians were unfit for any measure of self government. Thus the "British masters of India were anxious to win American opinion in their favour, and they cleverly tried to employ American Journalists, publicists and propaganda men to do the work which would serve the British interest. And Katherine Mayo was the most competent person to do this type of work and Katherine Mayo certainly did not disappoint them. Rush brook Williams, who as propaganda man of the Government of India, had undertaken tours of the United States to explore ways and means of creating pro-British opinion there, declared with satisfaction that *Mother India* is likely to mark a turning point in educated American thought." (Sinha, 1998)

Now it is important here to mention, that Mayo, through her polemical attack against India, did succeed not only in marking a crucial turning point in the history of Modern Indian nationalism but most importantly paved the way for the full flowering of middle-class feminism in India, especially in late colonial India. The subsequent myth of Katherine Mayo and her *Mother India* was the effect of a long history of the explanation of the "woman-question" in the struggle between imperialism and nationalism in India. It was the terms of this struggle much more than anything in the book itself- that framed *Mother India* as a contribution to the woman question in India. However several scholars have pointed out, that woman question in colonial India, had already become an ideological battle ground between Indian nationalists and British imperialists long before *Mother India* was

published. It is therefore not surprising, that those parts of the book, which dealt specifically with conditions affecting the status of woman in India, became the focus of attention and generated the most heated exchanges about the respective merits of British imperialism and Indian nationalism.

"Mother India was aptly framed so as to exploit both the imperialist and nationalist histories with the woman question in making its own case against Indian self-government." (Sinha, 1998) It owed its entire discussion on Indian women, to the central argument that had been long established in imperialist writing on women in India. Katherine Mayo defined the problems of women in India, only in relation to "timeless" Hindu cultural practises. But its diagnosis, of the problems of Indian women, ignored both the historical as well as material factors that were behind such particular cultural practises.

Moreover, Katherine Mayo, in her diagnosis of the degrading plight of the women folk in India, did intentionally overlooked the British Government's specific colonial interventions in the Indian economy and in cultural sphere, which caused such effects on Indian women, and thus discounted the colonial Government of any of its responsibility. Furthermore, Katherine Mayo, paid attention only to the contribution of British men and women in the upliftment of Indian women. Neither the colonial Government's repeated opposition to a number of reform measures like those of bill sponsored by India legislators for raising the age of consent, and abolishing child-marriage, nor the many reform initiatives for women, undertaken by Indian men and women themselves held much interest for Miss Mayo; It is ironic therefore, that the book, which hardly acknowledged the agency of Indian women themselves, which was designed to confirm the familiar imperialist trope, which was mighty captured by Gayatri Chakravorty speak in her famous phrase – "white men (and white women) saving brown women from brown men"- became the means to provide greater visibility to the contributions of the organised

women's movement in India. (Chakravorty, 1985, cited in Sinha, 1998)

What set *Mother India* and her creator Katherine Mayo, apart was perhaps that it provided one of the most systematic elaborations for the old imperialist theme that connected the continued political backwardness of India to the condition and treatment of Indian women. Mayo argued that practices such as child marriage and premature maternity had taken their toll on the physical and mental development of the 'race' as a whole, and had rendered the Hindu physically incapable of holding the "reins of government". (Mayo, 1927) For Mayo, in fact, the very character of Indian nationalism was related to the fatal "sexual exaggeration" she found prevalent in India. Hence Bengal, according to Mayo, was the "seat of bitterest political unrest the producer of India's main crop of anarchists, bomb throwers, and assassins" because it was also among the "most sexually exaggerated regions of India". (Mayo, 1927) Mayo's relentless effort to tie her entire discussion of Indian women in *Mother India* to the twin arguments about the benevolence of British rule and the un-fitness of Indians for self-rule was, if anything, a rather crude restatement of arguments that had long been deployed with varying degrees of sophistication in various imperialist writings on Indian women.

Mayo actually had not only intended to glorify the myth (of British benevolence or paternalism in India, especially in regard to Indian women, but also had tried to expose and undermine the nationalist myths about the glories of Indian womanhood. Mayo's book was titled *Mother India* as an insult to Bankim Chandra Chatterjee's poem "Bande Mataram." Thus, now here, perhaps, was Mayo's specific attack on nationalist myths about Indian womanhood more evident, than in her choice for the title of the book. The title eluded both to the nationalist glorification of India, as *Mother India* and to Mayo's scathing description of what the actual Indian Mother, had to undergo during child birth. (Sinha, 1998) Mayo explained her reasons for having closed this title in a story addressed to "*The*

women of Hindu India" that appeared in her collection "*Slaves of the Gods*". The title was close with an object. "Its purpose was to awaken your intelligent patriotism and the consciousness of you men, by making inescapable the contrast between, on the one hand, florid talk of 'devotion' and 'sacrifice' poured out before an abstract figure, and on the other hand, the consideration actually accorded to the living woman, mother of the race." (Mayo, 1927)

Thus *Mother India* unknowing to Mayo's knowledge probably left the woman question in India transformed. In fact it provided greater recognition to the claims of organized woman's movement in India, and also to the claims of middle class Indian women, as the so called authentic voice of modern Indian womanhood. Henceforth the contribution of Mayo became even more difficult to ignore. In fact Mayo's contemporary Indians were not at all late recognising the implications of her "much thought about title" of the controversial book. They responded to Mayo's challenge with books with some of the following titles like:-

A Father India (1927); *Sister India* (1928); My *Mother India* (1930); *A Son of Mother India Answers* (1928); *Long Long Live India: What a Son Has to Say About Mother and Father India* (1932); *My Mother's Picture* (1930); *An Englishman A Defends Mother India* (1929); *The Truth about Mother India* (1928); *Unhappy India* (1928); *The True India* (1939); *Mother India By Those Who Know Her Better Than Miss K. Mayo* (1927); *Miss Mayo's Cruelty to Mother India*; *Mother India Ka Jawab (The Reply to Mother India)* (1928), A *Mother India Aur Uska Jawab* (*Mother India and her Reply*) (1928) & *Bharata Mata ki Sreshthata* (The Truth about *Mother India*) (1928).

In fact among the books; written in response to *Mother India*, there were several written by women and for women in India, like Charulata Devi's *The Fair Sex of India - A Reply to Mother India* (1929). Chandravati Lakhanpal - the author of the prize winning book

Striyon ki Stithi (1934) (*The Situation Of Women*), wrote *Mother India Ka Jawab* (1928) (*The Reply To Mother India*). Uma Nehru's (a frequent contributor to women's journal Stri Darpan) *Mother India Aur Uska Jawab* (1928). Padmabai Sanjeeva Rau, an active educationist and theosophist wrote- *Women's Views on Indian Problems* (1927).

Actually Mayo through her *Mother India*, neither broke any new ground in its revelations of the condition of women in India, nor provided any new explanations for the problems facing Indian women. Mayo's revelations about the condition of women in India were already well known in the social reform literature of the time. Much of this literature was often even more critical of existing social practices in me India than *Mother India*. Mayo's dubious generalizations, crude exaggerations, and relentless emphasis on the sexual . connotations of myriad Hindu cultural practices was probably more disabling than enabling for the work of social reformers and women activists in India. While it was to be expected that Mayo's use of statistics would be open to dispute and varying interpretations, her gross exaggeration of her figures often strained all credibility. Hence Adams, Mayo's long-time mentor, had to correct Mayo that ten and not ninety per cent of Indians, as reported in *Mother India*, suffered from venereal disease.

Never the less *Mother India* added an important chapter in the history of Indian nationalism and in particular in the history of Indian women's question, particularly, because of its perfect timing of appearance. *Mother India* appeared on the scene of Indian history at a critical turning point both for British imperialism and Indian nationalism. The momentous declaration of E.M. Montagu, the secretary of State for India, in 1917, had ushered in a dramatic shift in imperial thinking on India. With this declaration, British official policy in India recognised for the first time, at least in principle, the development of self governing institution for India, even though the nature and pace of this if change was kept firmly in government hands. The political reforms proposed in the government of India Act of

1919, were designed to embody this new imperial order. Even these limited changes, however provoked tremendous anxiety among diehard imperialists about the future of the British Empire in India. The almost unanimous support that all the major political parties in Britain, including the Labour party, gave to the appointment of an "all white" Simon Commission to investigate political reforms in India one that deliberately excluded all Indians may well have been influenced, as nationalist leaders charged, by the impact of *Mother India*. The 1920s were also the period when Indian nationalism itself came of age, with it came new imperatives that seemed to demand a fresh deployment of the woman question in India. Moreover the emergence of Gandhi on the all India scene in 1919 and the adoption by the Indian National Congress in 1920 of Gandhi's Non- Cooperation Movement, with its goal of Swaraj, had breathed new life into the nationalist movement in India. It was thus indeed the changing imperatives of British imperialism and Indian nationalism in the 1920s that helped to make Mayo and her book, which was hardly original in subject or exceptional in its argument, the centre of an unprecedented international controversy. (Jha, 1978)

“During the 19th century, the meaning of Hindu womanhood was dramatically contested. Reformers focused on the treatment of women in their attempt to erase religion’s evil customs, reactionary revivalists saw women as the guardians of Indian tradition, and nascent Indian nationalism constructed notions of 'indigenous superiority' based around the vision of an ideal Hindu woman. This furore came to a head in 1929, via piece of legislation intended to regulate that barest of all acts sex by banning sexual activity in girls younger than 14 years old. The response of the women's movement to Mayo's *Mother India* was, perhaps, most clearly manifest in the efforts to secure the passage of the long delayed Child Marriage Restraint Bill, or Sarda Bill, in India. The passage of the Child Marriage Restraint Act in 1929 was rightly seen as a triumph of the fledgling all India

women's movement. Women's organizations in India had lobbied for child-marriage reform well before the publication of *Mother India*, but support from the government had not been forthcoming. The women's movement thus seized upon the publicity over *Mother India* to gain support for the Sarda Bill both from the colonial government and from male nationalist leaders. Historians concur that Mayo's much raking work precipitated the sudden passing of Sarda Act for, the British Government; the world-wide focus on India was intensely embarrassing. *Mother India* was seen to put the British record in India on the line and the viceroy called for action. In Britain and America, the proceedings of the legislative were followed in as if the outcome would prove or disprove Mayo's conclusions. For Indians, Mayo a racist, and the defamer of a nation, the government was criticized for aiding her research and the benevolent British press for booming the book. But it became obvious to the majority of the Legislative Assembly that the World would condemn them unless they passed the Bill. Thus it is probably true, that in an age when the domestic sphere was still considered a largely private affair, and Mayo flamboyantly exposed the sexual habits of the Hindus, she, through her *Mother India* induced uproar worked in women's favour to shake people out of their complacency". (Sinha, 1998)

KATHERINE MAYO: AN ANALYSIS:-

In the winter of 1925-26, Katherine Mayo and her friend Moyca Newell made a short tour of India for three months. The result was a four hundred odd pages book backed by copious references to several official and non- official sources of India. The book contained a strong argument to continue British rule in India and an equally storng indictment of the demands of Indian self rule. The main thesis of Mayo's *Mother India* (1927) revolved around the various backwardness and ailments that Mayo felt beset the Indian Society. She focused her

criticism on Hindu country's customs and cults, highlighting the deplorable conditions of Indian women, Indian untouchables, Indian animals and the unsanitary conditions of Indian life. She forcefully censured the hypocrisy and hollowness of the educated Indians, especially the new breed of nationalist politicians of the 1920s and 1930s. Mayo further went to the extent of discounting the British rule from any of its responsibility for the degrading plight of the Indian population. "The British administration of India is it good, bad or indifferent, has nothing whatever to do with the conditions above indicated. Inertia, helplessness, lack of initiative and originality, lack of staying power and of sustained loyalties, sterility of enthusiasm, weakness of life vigour itself - all are traits that truly characterize the Indian not only of today, but of long past history. All, furthermore, will continue to characterize him, in increasing degree, until he admits their causes and with his own two hands uproot them. His soul and body are indeed chained in slavery. But he himself wields and hugs his chains and with violence defends them. No agency but a new spirit within his own breast can set him free. And his arrangements of outside elements, past present, or to come, serve only to deceive his own mind and to put off the day of his deliverance". (Mayo, 1927) Such sensational distorted orientalise propaganda categorically became a weapon in the hands of the British imperialists and thus the bone of contention for the outraged Indian nationalists.

When Mayo's *Mother India* was first published, it not only created a sensation on three continents, but quickly became one of the best sellers in the English speaking world and succeeded in raising an extensive controversy over the character of the Hindu civilization and society. Thenceforth, Mayo was best known by this book. Mayo's central argument was that, “the root of all of India's problems lay in the sexual organization of Hindu society.” “The whole pyramid of the Indian woes,” she wrote, “was the result not of any political or economic causes, but of the Indian males’ manner of getting into this world and his sex-

life." (Mayo, 1927) The book thus painted a highly sensationalized picture of rampant sexuality and its consequences in India, masturbation, rape, homosexuality, prostitution, venereal diseases and most important of all, early sexual intercourse and premature maternity. It was the sexual excess of the Indian male, Mayo concluded, that had left him with hands, "too weak, too fluttering".

Mayo further emphasized, "that the ills of the Indian society, which were not to be found anywhere in the west, were not merely problems, that were regrettable, but were thoroughly subject to correction. She opined that the ills of the Indian society, belonged to the very essence of Hinduism, and as such, were actually condoned by Hindu religion and culture. Her argument, that the backwardness of India, stemmed not from political or economic causes, but from religious and cultural ones, served two important purposes: it countered nationalist Indian claims of Indian superiority in the realm of culture and spirituality over the materialist west, and most importantly, she exempted colonial rule from any responsibility for the backwardness of India, eliciting instead, sympathy for the reform work of if the countless British men and women who laboured selflessly against such odds." (Sinha, 1998)

When *Mother India* was first published, jointly in the United States (Harcourt, Brace & Company) and in Britain, (Jonathan Cape) in the summer of 1927, it was celebrated by die hard imperialists and reviled by outraged nationalists. The imperialist nationalist controversy that it generated reverberates even today. For such a crudely propagandist work, Katherine Mayo and her *Mother India* has not only enjoy a curiously long-life, but has acquired something of a legendary status, among the students of colonial India and in particular among Indian women. It was the struggle between the imperialists and the nationalists much more than anything in the book that framed *Mother India* as a contribution to the woman question in India. Thus the massive controversy over *Mother*

India was itself an significant event with huge effects for the future development of Indian nationalism as well as of middle- class feminism. In responding to Mayo's polemical attack against Indian self-rule in her *Mother India*, the leaders of the nationalist movement and of independent women's movement in India laid the foundation of an alliance that gave modern Indian nationalism its distinctive character, which could be captured in the popular nationalist slogan of the time like: "India cannot be free, until its women are free, and women cannot be free, until India is free". Thus the controversy surrounding *Mother India* marked a critical turning point in the history of nationalism and feminism in late colonial India.

Mother India was not the last word in Mayo's crusade against India. She came out with three more books 'on the land of internal antagonism'. The three other books were: *Slaves Of The Gods* (1929), *Short Stories About The Country, Volume II* (1931): which documents findings of Mother India and *The Face Of Mother India* (1935). However none of these books gained the notoriety of Mother India and Mayo was best known by this book. In the first part of Mother India, in the chapter entitled 'The Bus to Mandalay'.Mayo gives a bizarre picture of Calcutta and its Kalighat. "Kalighat— a place of Kali- is the root word of the name Calcutta. Kali is a Hindu Goddess, wife of the great God Siva, whose attribute is destruction and whose thirst is for blood and death sacrifice. Her spiritual domination of the world began about five thousand years ago, and should last nearly four hundred and thirty two thousand years to come". (Mayo, 1927) Such a description, instantly indicates, what image of India and the Indians it is going to present to the world. The very first paragraph of the book also indicates that to tilt the case against the Indians, she was out to exploit the prevailing anticommunist political prejudices of many Americans: "Calcutta, second largest city in the British Empire, spread along the Ganges called Hooghly, at the top of the Bay of Bengal. Calcutta, big, western, modern, with

public buildings, monuments, parks, gardens, hospitals, museums, university, courts of law, hotels, offices, shops, all of which might belong to a prosperous American city; and all backed by an Indian town of temples, mosques, bazaars and intricate courtyards and alleys that has somehow created itself despite the rectangular lines shown on the map. In the courts and alleys and bazaars many little book stalls, where narrow chested, near sighted, anaemic young Bengali students, in native dress, brood over piles of fly-blown Russian pamphlets." (Mayo, 1927)

While describing Kalighat, Mayo gave a harrowing picture of how small goats were sacrificed before the Goddess Kali, in the presence of Hindu devotees men and women, "of a sudden, a piercing outburst of shrill bleating. We turn the corner of the edifice to reach the open courtyard at the end opposite the shrine. Here stand two priests, one with a cutlass in his hand, the other holding a young goat. The goat shrieks, for in the air is that small that all beasts fear. A crash of sound, as before the Goddess drums thunder. The priest who holds the goat swings it up and drops it, stretched by the legs its screaming head held fast in a cleft post. The second priest with a single blow of his cutlass decapitates the little creature. The blood gushes forth on the pavement, the drums and the gongs before the goddess burst out wildly. 'Kali! Kali ! Kali!' shout all the priests and the suppliants together; same flinging them face downward on the temple floor". As if these were not enough to arouse the hatred of her readers against the Hindus and their religious rites, she added watchfully: "In the meantime and instantly, a woman who waited behind the killers of the goat has rushed forward and fallen on all fours to lap up the blood with her tongue in the hope of having a child. And now a second woman, stooping, sops at the blood with a cloth and thrusts the cloth into her blossom, while half a dozen sick, sore dogs, horribly misshapen by nameless diseases, stick their hungry muzzles in to the lengthening pool of gore." (Mayo, 1927)

In the chapter entitled 'The Argument', Mayo complied, that she would confine her inquiry about India, only in the field of such work a day ground as public health and its contributing factors. She also goes on to mention, "that she would try to determine, for example, what situation may be confronted by a public health official charged with the duty of stopping an epidemic of cholera or of plague." (Mayo, 1927) She also expressed her inquisitiveness on elements that would work for and against a campaign against hookworm and forces that would help or hinder a governmental effort to lower infant mortality, and work for better living conditions, including rising of educational levels. Mayo further categorically, lay down that she wishes to leave the realms of religion, politics and arts absolutely untouched. Probably in this context it is worth mentioning what Mayo herself confessed about India just in a few paragraphs before her such solemn declaration. "Under present conditions of human activity, whereby, whether we will or no, the roads that join us to every part of the world continually shorten and multiply, it would appear that same knowledge of main facts concerning so big and today so near a neighbour should be a part of our intelligence and our self protection." In the subsequent chapters Mayo gave a detailed picture of the daily life of the Indians, especially the Hindus. Every child in India, according to her is brought up in an atmosphere "oversaturated" with sex. She painted the Hindus as sexually exhausted. (Jha, 1971) In the chapter 'Slave Mentality' she laid down "Hindu custom demands that a man have a legitimate son at the earliest possible moment- a son to perform the proper religious ceremonies, at and after the death of the father and to crack the father's skull on the funeral pyre, according to his caste's ritual. For this reason as well as from inclination, the beginning of the average boy's sexual commerce barely awaits his ability. Neither general habit nor public opinion confines that commerce to his wife or wives". (Mayo, 1927) According to Mayo, seven to eight out of every ten Hindus who have means to command their pleasures loses all potency between

the ages of twenty five and thirty. “Magical drugs and mechanical contrivances, whether for princes and rich men only, or the humbler and not less familiar 32 Pillars of Strength to prop up you decaying body for One Rupee only, crowd the columns and support the facts.”(Mayo, 1927)

Mayo went on to give a horrid picture of the conditions of women in Hindu Society, particularly the “barbarities”, perpetrated on the child wives by their husbands, their “earthly Gods”, and said that they are beyond description. She recorded: “The case she cited was of well to do, educated, city dwelling stock. But it differed in no essential form, from that of a younger child whom I saw in a village some three hundred miles distant. Married as a baby, sent to her husband at ten, the shock of incessant use was too much for her brain. It went. After that, beat her as he would, all that she could do was to crouch in the corner, a little twisted heap, panting. Not worth the keep. And so at last, in despair and rage over his bad bargain, he slung her small body over his shoulder, carried her out to the edge of the jungle, cast her in among the scrub thicket, and left her there to die.” (Mayo, 1927)

For such a crudely propagandist work Mother India succeeded in enjoying a curiously long life. Infact it quickly became something of a cause celebre in the United States of America, Britain and India. (Sinha, 1998) Without failure, Mayo succeeded in attracting the attention of such famous contemporaries as M. K. Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Rabindra Nath Tagore, E.V.Ramaswami Naicker, Muthulakshmi Reddi, Winston Churchill, Rudyard Kipling, Edward Thompson, Eleanor Rathbone, Annie Besant, Romain Rolland, Wyndham Lewis, Norman Brown and Agnes Smedley. “It was hotly debated on public platforms and in journal and newspaper columns in all three countries. It was protested on the streets of New York, San Francisco, London, and Calcutta, and was burned outside the Town Hall in New York City.” (Sinha, 1998) Questions about the British government's involvement in

the book were raised in the Central Legislative Assembly in India as well as in Parliament in Britain. Some Indian members of the Legislative Assembly even called for banning the book in India. "Far from being banned, however; the book was made available to a larger reading public both abroad and in India through translations of the entire book (or of selected extracts) into various European and vernacular Indian languages, including Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, and Marathi. *Mother India*, in fact, spawned something of a mini-industry, with more than fifty books and pamphlets published in response to it. Mayo's book also inspired a Broadway musical, *Madame Nazimova's India*, about a twelve-year-old Hindu child- bride married to an old and sickly man. Even Hollywood was drawn into the hype surrounding the book, and made an abortive bid to secure the rights to immortalise Mother India on the big screen. By 1950, Harcourt Brace & Company alone reported a sale of 395,678 copies for its various editions of *Mother India*. The book was reprinted several times, including a cheaper edition published by Jonathan Cape in 1930 and a separate Indian edition published by Allied Publishers of Bombay in 1945. More recent reprints of *Mother India* including a 1970 reprint in Britain, a 1984 reprint in the U.S. and a 1986 reprint in India have done little to question the myths surrounding Mother India. Thus the popularity of Mother India has long outlined the immediate circumstances of its intervention." (Jha, 1971)

In fact a number of replies were published from India, one after another like: Dhan Gopal Mukherji's - *A Son of Mother India Answers*.

C. S. Ranga Iyer's - *Sister India*.

Lala Lajpat Rai's - *Unhappy India*.

K. Natarajan's-*Miss Mayo's Mother India*, etc.

In fact Dhan Gopal Mukherji's book, *A Son of Mother India Answers* became one of the five best-sellers among non fiction books in the U.S. that temporarily eclipsed

Mother India and its popularity. Now this is according to a report published in *The Outlook* dated 15th March 1928 where Francis Lamont Robbins editor of the section "speaking of books", hailed Dhan Gopal Mukherji's book as "a capable and temperate answer to Mother *India"*. Much interestingly many Eminent American Missionaries in India too, unhesitatingly and vigorously protested Mayo's work. For example- Reverend Alden H. Clark, a graduate of the Amherst College and a missionary in India for seventeen years wrote a long article in the *Atlantic Monthly* with the title- "*Is India dying : A Reply to Mother India"* refuting basic assertions of Mayo in *Mother India*.

But however on the whole, from the very start Mother India greatly impressed American opinion. When Mayo sent her preliminary draft of the book to her prospective publishers, the Harcourt, Brace & Company of New York, they were delighted. "It most certainly is a book" wrote back A. Harcourt, the President of the Company. He also predicted that the book would "create a stir and do well for so many years." (Jha, 1971)

When the book was published in June 1927, it was widely reviewed by American Journals and newspapers. The American "Political Science Review" wondered how, in view of the conditions, depicted by Mayo, there could be any one alive at all in India, to say nothing of its teeming millions. The book was "a sort of chamber of unhygienic horrors" it commented in disgust. This feeling of horror at the reading of the book was expressed by others also. A. Harcourt, in his letter, had written, that he could not thoroughly read chapter VIII, entitled *Mother India* which dealt with child-wives and the condition of child birth, as it was too terrible for him to read word by word. The reviewer of the *Atlantic Monthly* could scarcely sleep at night after she had read Mother-India. The American Journal

of Public Health and Nation's Health also described the book as one full of “unintentional horror.” (Jha, 1971)

By and large the book was well received by American journals and newspapers, and it succeeded to a great extent in producing the desired effect on the American mind. The New York weekly *The Outlook,* highly eulogised the book, and described it as "free from sentimentalism, partisanship, and preconceived notions". It felt that the Americans had now a new standard by which to judge the teaching of Hindu philosophy. It said that when "Save Gentlemen" from India, preached their "mystic messages” before women clubs and "select circles of these who have nothing better to do", they should be asked to account for the facts presented in *Mother India*. It ridiculed the view that this book should be dismissed as British propaganda, and declared that Great Britain's achievements were not to be measured in terms of any one generation, but in comparison with the magnitude of the task undertaken. “The magnitude of that enterprise" it contended "Is to be spoken of as one speaks of a geologic epoch.” (Sinha, 1998)

At no stage of Mayo's project indeed, were colonial officials ever in doubt about the general outcome of the disingenuous 'research' project that Mayo had undertaken to express conditions in India. *Mother India* moreover also featured in the discussions around several contemporary legislative initiatives: the fate of the 'Hindu' (the term which she loosely used for all inhabitants of India). Citizenship Bill in the U.S. Senate; the composition of the Indian Statutory Commission appointed by the British Parliament; the passage of the Child Marriage Restraint Act for India in the legislative Assembly; and the passage of the Age of Marriage Act for Britain in the British Parliament. Mayo's central argument that India's problems were the result of her "sex-ridden culture" was elaborate in the first two chapters of the book; though

in the later chapters, she however went on to discuss other matters too. Mayo obviously could not resist the temptation of maximising her case against Indian self rule by including a miscellaneous grab-bag of Indian Social ills. She said, “Take a huge population, mainly rural, illiterate and loving its illiteracy, try to give it primary education without employing any of its women as teachers because if you do employ them you invite the ruin of each woman that you so expose. Will you ask why the death rate is high and the people poor?” “Whether British of Russians or Japanese sit in the seat of the highest; whether the native princes divide the land, reviving old days of princely dominance; of whether some autonomy mere complete than that now existing be set up, the only power that can hasten the pace of Indian development towards freedom, beyond the pace it is travelling today, is the power of the men of India, wasting no more time in talk, recriminations and shifting of blame, but facing the attacking, with the best resolution they can muster, the task that awaits them in their own bodies and souls.” (Mayo, 1927)

Yet it was the 'bomb' about Indian sexual practises in the first part of the book that remained the heart of her argument. She wrote "In many parts of the country, north and south, the little boy, his mind so prepared, is likely, if physically attractive, to be drafted for the satisfaction of grown men, or to be regularly attached to a temple, in the capacity of prostitute. Neither parent as a rule sees any harm in this, but is rather, flattered that the son has been found pleasing.” (Mayo, 1927)

She reported that such convention/ system is an addition to the “Devdasis”, the prostitutes of the Gods, “a recognised essential of temple equipment”. Hitting on the Devdasi practice she wrote, “in some parts of the country, more particularly in the Presidency of Madras and in Orissa, a custom obtains among the

Hindus whereby the parents, to persuade some favour from the gods, may vow their next born child, if it be a girl, to the gods. Or, a particularly lovely child, for one reason or another held superfluous in her natural surroundings is presented to the temple. The little creature, accordingly, is delivered to the temple women, her predecessors along the Route, for teaching in dancing and singing. Often by the age of five, when she is considered most desirable, she becomes the priests' own prostitute. If she survives to later years she serves as a dancer and singer before the shrine in the daily temple worship; and in the houses around the temple she is held always ready, at a price, for the use of men pilgrims during their devotional sojourns in the temple precincts. She now goes beautifully attired, often loaded with the jewels of the gods, and leads an active life until her charms fade. Then, stamped with the mark of the god under whose aegis she has lived, she is turned out upon the public, with a small allowance and with the acknowledged right to a beggar's livelihood. Her parents, who may be well-to-do persons of good rank and caste, have lost no face at all by the manner of their disposal of her. Their proceeding, it is held, was entirely reputable. And she and her like form a sort of caste of their own, are called *devadasis,* or "prostitutes of the Gods," and are a recognized essential of temple equipment." (Mayo, 1927)

Thus Katherine Mayo " shocked the American, British and Indian public due to its highly sensational descriptions of the pitiful- life meted out to Indian women by Hinduism. In an age when domestic sphere was still considered a largely private affair, Mayo flamboyantly exposed the sexual habits of Hindus, by asserting that husbands regularly practised the marital rape of sexually immature girls." (Sinha, 1998) To quote her : "To visualize the effects of child-marriage as outlined by the legislators just quoted, one of the most direct means that the foreigner in India can

take is to visit women's hospitals. This I have done from the Punjab to Bombay, from Madras to the United Provinces. This a man can scarcely do, for the reason that, doctor or not, he will rarely be admitted to the sight of a woman patient". She further writes- "Again in the great Madras Presidency, east or west, the tale is no better. For the vast majority of women here, says a widely experienced surgeon, marriage is a physical tragedy. The girl may bring to birth one or two sound children, but is by that time herself ruined and crippled, either from infection or cruel handling. In the thousands of gynaecological cases that I have treated and am still treating, I have never found one woman who had not some form of venereal disease. In other provinces of India, other medical men and women, European and western-educated Indian alike, gave me ample corroborative statements as to the effects of child motherhood. On the mother's part, increased predisposition to tuberculosis; displacement of organs; softening of immature bones, due to weight on spine and pelvis, presently causing disastrous obstructions to birth; hysteria and pathological mental derangements; stunting of mental and physical growth." (Mayo, 1927)

Moreover Mayo continued that the Hindus are sexually so "reckless" that no Indian women of child-bearing age could safely venture without special protection, within the reach of Indian men, so much so that mothers would not leave their daughters behind even in the care of the men of their own household. Mayo gave a sickening picture of the condition, in which expectant mothers are delivered of their children with the assistance of the "dirtiest" and the most ignorant" dhais who, according to her, pass for midwives in India. A *dhai* she says also looks after a family and protects it from the mischief of evil spirit if a woman in the family seems likely to die of childbirth, her child yet undelivered. This is what a dhai does

in such situations according to Mayo- “First she brings pepper and rubs it into the dying eyes, that the soul may be blinded and unable to find its way out. Then she takes two long nails and stretching out her victim's unresisting arms- for the poor creature knows and accepts her fate- drives a spike straight through each palm fast into the floor. This is done to opinion the soul to the ground, to delay its passing so that it may not rise and wander, tensing the living. And so the woman dies, piteously calling to the Gods for pardon for these black sins of a former life for which she now is suffering.” (Mayo, 1927)

Mayo's horrific description of the actual conditions of child-birth-presided over by the allegedly filthy, louse-infested, unscientific Indian dhai or mid wife- presented in the eponymous chapter of the book, together with the terrible consequences of child-marriage on Indian women and children were generally agreed to constitute the main contribution of the book. It was Mayo's description of such practises that led the anonymous reviewer in the *London New Statesman,* a journal that had hitherto been sympathetic to some of the demands of the Indian nationalist movement, to declare that *Mother India* had revealed "the filthy personal habits of even the most highly educated classes in India- which like the degradation of Hindu women, are unequalled among the most primitive African or Australian savages". This reviewer at least concluded that "Mayo" makes the claim for *Swaraj* (self-rule) seem nonsense and the will to grant it almost a crime."

Even Edward Thompson, a liberal critic of many aspects of British rule in India, was moved by the first two chapters of Mayo's book. Thompson's only real criticism of the book was that Mayo had allowed the "general condemnation" of Indian nationalism in the latter half of the book to detract from the powerful critique contained in the first half. (Sinha, 1978)

Mayo paid special attention to the Hindu caste-system. She relates how the Brahmins, under the sanction of the Hindu scriptures and other holy books, acquire a dominating position in the society, which they utilise for their own selfish ends and aggrandisement. She described how in this process they reduce the vast mass of people to a "sub human status," by making them untouchables. The missionaries and the British, she added, are the only saviours of these untouchables. "Regarded as if sub-human, the tasks held basest are reserved for them; dishonour is associated with their name. Some are permitted to serve only as scavengers and removers of night soil; some, through the ignorance to which they are condemned, are loathsome in their habits; and to all of them the privilege of any sort of teaching is sternly denied. They may neither possess nor read the Hindu scriptures. No Brahman priest will minister to them; and, except in rarest instances, they may not enter a Hindu temple to worship or pray. Their children may not come to the public schools. They may not draw water from the public wells; and if their habitation be in a region where water is scarce and sources far apart, his means, for them, not greater consideration from others, but greater suffering and greater toil. They may not enter a court of justice; they may not enter a dispensary to get help for their sick; they may stop at no inn. In some provinces they may not even use the public road, and as labourers or agriculturists, they are con- tonally losers, in that they may not enter the shops or even pass through the streets where shops are, but must trust to a haphazard chain of hungry go betweens to buy or sell their meagre wares. Some, in the abyss of their degradation, are permitted no work at all. These may sell nothing, not even their own labour. They may only be. And even for that purpose they dare not use the road, but must stand far off, unseen, and cry out for alms from those who pass. If alms be given, it must be tossed on. The

ground, well away from the road, and when the giver is out of sight are the roads empty then, and not till then, the watcher may creep up, snatch, and run. Today almost all that can be accomplished by civil law for the Untouchable has been secured. Government has freely opened their way, as far as Government can determine, to every educational advantage and to high offices. And Government's various land- development and cooperative schemes, steadily increasing, have provided tremendous redeeming agencies and avenues of escape. But for Provincial Governments to pass legislation asserting the rights of every citizen to enjoy public facilities, such as public schools, is one thing; to enforce that legislation over enormous countryside's and through multitudinous small villages without the co-operation and against the will of the people, is another. (Mayo, 1927)

Switching on to the political aspect of the Indian situation she narrated the benefits, which this land of chronic poverty, famine, chaos and anarchy, received from the British right from the days of the East India Company. She spoke highly of the efforts made by the British to bring education to the Indian masses despite the tenaciously obstructive Hindu traditions and customs; of British policies and their success in implementing irrigation schemes, setting up power projects and laying railway lines to fight famine and modernise Indian agriculture and industry; and of the sincere attempts of the British to introduce constitutional reforms in the political set-up so as to educate the Indians in the art of self-government.

Mayo extensively quotes Gandhi in support of her contentions about the ills the Indians suffered from, but described his voice as "a voice crying in the wilderness awakening but the faintest of echoes". She moreover directed all her sarcasm at Gandhi potraying him as an arche seditionist and inciter of violence and terrorism. She further showed him as doing his best to induce the young Indians

to forsake modern medicine and says that he regarded the European doctors as the worst of all doctors. She alleged that, when he fell ill with appendicitis, in prison in 1924 the "pleaded" with the British Surgeon to operate upon him and rejected the option given to him of getting treated by an Ayurvedic Surgeon of his own choice. (Sinha, 1998)

Mayo ridiculed Rabindranath Tagore by quoting him, out of context, and portraying him as an advocate of child- marriage. She wrote: "The frank give and takes of the Indian Legislature, between Indian and Indian, deal with facts. But it is instructive to observe the robes that those facts can wear when arrayed by a poet for foreign consideration. Rabindranath Tagore in a recent essay on *The Indian Ideal of Marriage* explains child- marriage as a flower of the sublimated spirit, a conquest over sexuality and materialism won by exalted intellect for the generic uplift of the race. His explanation, however logically implies the assumption, simply, that Indian women must be securely bound and delivered before their womanhood is upon them, if they are to be kept in hands....In other words a woman must be married, before she knows she is one."

"Such matter as this, coming as it does from one of the most widely known of modern Indian writers, may serve to suggest that we of the "material-minded west" shall be misled if we too quickly accept the oriental's phrases as making literal picture of the daily human life of which he seems to speak". Mayo further goes on to mention statistical data, and reaches the conclusion that the number of still births is heavy, in India, syphilis and gonorrhoea are among its main causes to which must be added the sheer inability of the child to bear the strain of coming into the world. Mayo further laid down "In the great orthodox Hindu majority, the girl looks for motherhood nine months after reaching puberty- or anywhere between the

ages of fourteen and eight. She wrote that because of her years and upbringing and because countless generations behind her have been bred even as she, is frail of body. She is also completely unlettered, her stock *of* knowledge comprising only the ritual of worship of the household idols, the rites of placation of the wrath of deities and evil spirits and the detailed ceremony of the service of her husband, who is ritualistically her personal God." (Mayo, 1927)

She drew up the conclusion, that "Of Indian babies born alive about 2,000,000 die each year and according to the latest census based on available statistics of India over forty percent. Of the deaths of infants occur in the first week after birth, and over sixty percent, in the first month." (Mayo, 1927)

With the aim of portraying the degrading plight of the Indian womanhood Mayo did not even hesitate to draw up references from the Puranic code, which she translated according to her own convenience. She recorded..."In the Puranic code great stress is laid upon the duty of the wife to her mother- in-law. Upon this foundation rests a tremendous factor in every woman's life. Not infrequently, in pursuing my inquiry in the rural districts, I came upon the record of suicides of women between the ages of fourteen and nineteen. The commonest cause assigned by the Indian police recorder was colic pains, and a quarrel with the mother-in-law. Rich or poor, high caste or low caste, the mother of a son will idolize the child. She has little knowledge to give him, save knowledge of strange taboos and fears and charms and ceremonies to propitiate a universe of powers unseen. She would never discipline him, even though she knew the meaning of the word. She would never teach him to restrain passion or impulse or appetite. She has not the vaguest conception how to feed him or develop him. Her idea of a sufficient meal is to tie a string around his little brown body and stuff him till the string bursts. And so through all his childhood he grows as

grew his father before him, back into the mists of time." (Mayo, 1927)

In respect to the conditions of widows, Mayo goes on to mention that the widow became the menial of every other person in the house of her late husband, and that, all the hardest and ugliest tasks are hers, and there are no scope for comforts and ease for her.

Administering the political aspect of India, Mayo describes the members of central and provincial legislature as "mischievous children, who by accident have got hold of a magnificent watch", who fight and scramble to thrust their fingers into it, to pull off a wheel or two, to play with the mainspring to pick out jewels." (Mayo, 1927)

The biggest irony, is that, despite *Mother India's* subsequent fame as a book, revealing the problems of child-marriage and premature maternity in India, Mayo had intended originally to write a very different sort of book on India. Mayo's initial plan was to focus on public health in India, especially on epidemics, such as cholera, which were arguably man-made. For, as Mayo had written to Sir Basil Blackett (the Finance member of the Government of India) on arrival in India, that she chose "cholera rather than plague, because cholera is concerned with people rather than rats". Mayo claimed that the idea had been suggested to her by her friends Dr Victor Heiser and Dr George Vincent of the International Health Board of the Rockefeller Foundation, although the foundation itself later disclaimed any official connection with Mayo's project.

A great many Americans felt that apart from exposing Indian mysticism, as a "morass of mud" the book had established the need for continued British rule in India. It was felt that with the facts that was available in *Mother India* there will henceforth be no excuse for criticism of the administration of the British or even

of their presence in India at all, in terms of doctrinaire idealism. *The Independent* went a step ahead and wrote in a forthright way, that *Mother India* had proved that "India lacked independence because she is incapable of anything else". And the "Nashville Tennessean commented that the American reader would thank his stars that India was not his problem. It wrote:

"When he has shuddered at the horrors of her description of childbirth, when he has observed the child like deliberations of the native parliamentary body, when he has sensed the delicate balance which holds mob mania in control... he will be glad that India is Britain's problem and not his own, 100 percent American though he may be. And he is likely to throw his theosophy book out of the window and wash his hands." (Sinha, 1998)

In the view of the *New York Herald Tribune,* the potential value of Mayo's book was that it went farther than any other book had yet dared to go towards revealing the degradation of the Indian social system. The book, in its opinion, presented facts which might easily be denied but could not be disproved or shaken, the "calm, hard-headed- though not hard- hearted- style" in which the author presented her evidence made the conviction all the more ghastly, it commented.

The *New York Times* published a long review by P. W. Wilson under a 4-column caption, "India Her Own Worst Enemy", with a sub-caption, “Miss Mayo's Challenging study arrives at the Conclusion". The review approvingly summarised the substance of *Mother India* and painted a horrid picture of Indian customs and manners. It conceded that in discussing the health of India, one should not forget that the hygiene the Westerners were accustomed to had been developed only at a recent date. But it added, “In the dirt of India, there is, however, a persistence which differentiates it from the dirt of Europe. If Christendom has been

unclean, the reason is a sin of omission. India is unclean as an act of piety. The Ganges at Benares flows with filth, yet it is worshipped as a river of redemption." (Mayo, 1927)

The reviewer held that the detachment of the author was "obvious" and that the facts Mayo had brought to light were not likely to be disputed.

Thus the book was taken as a treatise on the situation in India. It was acknowledged as having proved that Indians were incapable of self-rule and that British rule was necessary to clean up the society. What was worse, it made the average reader feel that the picture he was getting from this book, written by an author who was "neither muckraker, sob sister, alarmist, nor propagandist", was basic to the Indian civilisation and character and that India, nay the whole of the East, was fundamentally different from the West. "I confess I learned more from this book on the inner Indian and why the East is East than I ever knew before", wrote Leon Whipple, while reviewing it in *The Survey*. (Sinha, 1998)

How deep an impression the book made on the American mind can be gauged from the fact that even the *New Republic,* which was traditionally pro-Indian, editorially advised the Indian critics that they would get a better hearing, if instead of indulging in vituperation against the author, they could show that some of the statistical statements made in the book were incorrect. It took cognisance of Gandhi's article in the *Young India* on 15 September 1927 characterising the book as a "Drain Inspector's Report", but pointed out that Gandhi had not refuted any of the more important allegations made by Mayo, especially those relating to the treatment of women and children in India. This, however, does not mean that *Mother India* had a uniformly favourable reception in the United States. The liberal and traditionally pro- Indian journals were, of course, critical of the book and regarded it

as offensive. Although the *New Republic* advised the Indian critics of Mayo to be less vituperative and more attentive to facts, it also published a review which maintained that Mayo, despite her correctness as to a great part of the "facts", had drawn a picture which was on the whole "profoundly untrue". "It is a libel upon a unique civilization and a people of extraordinary virtue, patience and spiritual quality", the reviewer said. The review in *The Nation* was entitled *Carbolic Acid for India*. The review, W. Norman Brown, maintained:

We cannot say that this book reveals itself as the product of a reflective mind. Miss Mayo made of herself a kind of journeying camera through India, selecting for preservation the most horrible and striking scenes that are quickly recorded. But she never gets under the surface to seek for causes in order that suitable remedies may be prescribed.

The Chicago weekly *Unity*, edited by Reverend John Haynes Holmes, the pester of the Community Church in New York, regarded the book as "utterly unreliable, even deliberately wicked" with a "clear purpose of portraying India as an uncivilized country".

In some scholarly journals, too, serious reservations were made. For instance, writing in the *Yale Review,* R. E. Hume expressed the opinion that the picture of India drawn by Mayo was "distorted" and "offensive". He expressed the hope that someday there would arise a great Indian author or authoress who would, with a manifest love for India and with a better knowledge of facts, present a more "winsome and accurate picture of the national difficulties and also the national successes". "In the meantime", he stated, "the West must turn elsewhere for more accurate and more com- apprehensive information."

Even the reviewer in the *New York Times,* while highly appreciative of the book,

had doubted whether Mayo had stated her facts "in their true proportion", He had asked: "Having seen life in India, has she seen it whole?" (Jha, 1971)

Thus, it can be said that a section of the liberal press and some scholarly journals were critical or reserved in their opinion of *Mother India*. On balance, however, American opinion regarded the book as unbiased, objective and truthful, and congratulated Mayo. In any case, the book succeeded in raising widespread discussion in the United States about various facets of life in India. Mayo was sought after by the press for interview, requested by journals for articles and invited by organisations and universities for talks. The result of all this was that *Mother India* emerged as one of the best known and most widely read books in America.

Soon enough *Mother India* became one of the bestsellers in the US market. However, it should be remembered that the popularity of the book was not solely due to the fact that it was taken as a "truthful" book on India as such. The book had other charms also. *The Outlook* , which had editorially praised the book and had taken an interest in recording its growing popularity, once reported that while a quarter of the book's readers were interested in India, the other three-quarters found it pornographic. In fact, the readers had been told that they would find it so. *Mother India* was certainly capable of catering to the taste for pornographic and sensational literature which had a large market in the United States.

However, *Mother India* was not the last word in Mayo's crusade against India. As she came out with three more books in series, on every occasion there were same discussions, among the British authorities as to what attitude should be adopted towards those books. Practically the winning formula that had worked so well in *Mother India* however proved difficult for Mayo to sustain in any of her subsequent books on India. For although Mayo did much to capitalise on her new-

found reputation as champion of the rights of women in India, her efforts were overshadowed by her constant need to find other potentially even more volatile vehicles such as Hindu- Muslim conflict, intension of English Educational schemes etc for pursuing her case against Indian self-rule.

Mayo was quick to recognise the potential of Hindu Muslim divisions in India for making her attack against Indian nationalism. And this idea of Mayo was conspicuously reflected in her writings in the book entitled *The Face of Mother India* where she goes on to declare Modern India - as "Land of internal antagonism". To quote her "Land of internal antagonism so to describe Modern India, would strike close to the core of fact, yet of all the many antagonism, social, political, moral, today growing at India's vitals, the deepest toothed, the least tameable, the strongest, hottest, fiercest is precisely that which few western minds seem willing to face. Politicians are prone to avoid and undervalue it. Idealists misstate and undervalue it, and both in pious hope, try to still if with lullabies so that they may proceed in peace on ways of their own preference. As well sing lullaby to erupting Vesuvius, as wisely forget, under Etna, that ever impending fate, as attempt by any cajolement, any evasion or denial to mask the fiery gulf that yawns between the Hindu and Islam." (Mayo, 1927)

To strengthen her arguments in favour of the potential difference between the Hindus and the Muslims, Mayo went on to draw sharp paradox between the two communities. She asserted: "The Hindu, excepting a few advanced theologians, utterly aloof from and indifferent to the people is the most elaborate of Polytheists. He worships millions of Gods, some by acts that are cardinal offences against any moral code of civilized humanity."

Elevating the position of the Muslims she said- "The Muslim asserted that in the sight of God all men are equal, be they rich or poor, dark or light, bound or free.

"The orthodox Hindu", she referred, "held that his Gods have ordained a social scale at whose top everlastingly sat the Brahmin. Whilst beneath them all wallow helpless and hopeless millions of outcastes humanity born so low that they possess no rights of any sort and their very shadow defiles whatever it falls upon."

Quite contrastingly, according to her, "The Muslims concedes no place for priestly mediation between himself and his Maker, holding that every true believer enjoys immediate access, through his own prayer, straight to the throne of God. The Hindu believes that access to his deities can be attained only through the paid interventions of the Brahmin, and that as charms- mantras- control the Gods and the Brahmins control the charms, the Brahmins, for all practical purposes, dominate the Gods, whose earthly form they are. The Muslim teaches his Bible, Koran, freely and without reserve, to every member of his faith, man, woman and child, and opens his Heaven to all believers."

But "The Hindu counts exclusive control of his holy scriptures amongst the prerogatives of the Brahmin, leaves all women, except as wives, outside the scheme of salvation, and denies to outcastes the right to learns, to use or even to hear, the Vedas".

"The Muslims accepts both our Old and our New Testament, the Law and Gospel, as like his Koran, the revealed Word of God; venerates Christ as like Muhammad, God's chosen prophet; and may intermarry with Jews and Christians though these retain their faith the orthodox Hindu ranks all Jews and Christians amongst the outcastes, 'untouchables', contact with whom is defilement necessitating religious rites of purification."

"The Muslim, bracketing idolatry with polytheism, abhors both as the most blasphemous of sins. The Hindu, in his ultra-polytheism, has devised infinitude of idols, which he venerates daily with elaborate and minutely fixed ceremonial." (Mayo. 1927)

After playing upon Hindu-Muslim contradiction, Mayo then took up the cause of English Educational system- its credits and obviously the discredits of the Hindus (a term

which she used very loosely) – “The English educational scheme for India”, according to her - was far from intended to emphasize bookish attainment as educational goal. On the contrary, it argued studies useful in the practical up building of the country's welfare.”

According to her, scientific agriculture, veterinary science, forestry engineering, commerce- few Hindu youths desired to spend their efforts on humble technical subjects like those, because of cash values, and also because such practical calling were, to them, identified with the lower castes. But the demand for degrees in arts grew apace and universities multiplied to supply them.

Mayo commented that the type of service that their country most needed, these young men were both unprepared and undesirous to render. Anything nearer to the soil than a government clerkship was beneath their dignity to assume. Better slave than accept the humiliation of a merely useful job.

The Face of Mother India by Mayo, which was published in 1935, was a pictorial book, containing about four hundred photographs, showing the various facets of India and its people. Each photo was accompanied by an explanatory note with interesting comments, like “The British saved India from the invasions of the gallant North”, thus showing the orientation of Mayo's mind.

In fact as regards her bias, it is best to quote F. H. Brown, who reviewed the book in the *Observer:-*

"It is to be regretted that so suitable a Christmas gift of well planned pictures should be introduced by a polemical dissertation which shows that these eight years have brought little or no abatement of Miss Mayo's sharply contrasted dislike of and contempt for the Hindu, the Male Hindu at least, and her praise of the Moslem ‘the purest of Monotheists’. In her judgement the Hindu has a double dose of original sin. If there is a hero of the story it is Mahmud Ghazni, of whom she writes exultingly that he destroyed many great

Hindu temples. Shattered many idols, and took back to Ghazni many thousands of slaves and much precious treasure but never did linger in the land of the idolater." (Jha, 1971)

The Face of Mother India, also unfailingly tries to impress upon its readers that- The Hindus, the worshippers of Kali, and a thousand other deities, were degraded, filthy, superstitions, caste- ridden people who are a menace to world Civilization. Actually the British officers, whom Mayo employed in the collection of materials, did not even hesitate to encourage her to widen the difference between the two communities and India- the Hindus and the Muslims. And Mayo was very eager and particular about winning the applause of those Muslims, who were opposed to the nationalist movement. And this made her even more eager to wait for their verdict on *Mother India.*

The Governor's Private Secretary (Graham) was not alone in perceiving the usefulness of *Mother India* in further dividing the Hindus from the Muslims in India. He had a redoubtable friend in the policeman J. H. Adam. Adam wrote to Mayo: "Muslims have welcomed the book- and look on the book as a splendid attack on Hinduism... (and) that is why they want to publish' it in Hindustani." And he advised her to let them publish a translation:

Mother India was followed by Volume Two in 1931, *Mother India* being presumed to be Volume One. In this book, Mayo argued that her charges had been proved by the evidence laid before the Age of Consent Committee appointed by the Government of India in June 1928. To show this, she reproduced all the evidence under various headings in her book. This, according to a reviewer in the *New York Times,* was so effective that one was left with the feeling that "the facts as presented in *Mother India* suffered understatement rather than overstatement".

However Mayo, made some changes in her subsequent editions of *Mother India.* For example, she substituted "Hindu" for "Indian", so as to present her attack in the book, as

directed specifically and pointedly against the Hindu population of India. Mayo also tried to encourage translations of her book into Urdu, with a view towards driving a wedge between Hindu and Muslim public opinion on *Mother India* and this strategy was especially pronounced in Mayo's subsequent book on India, especially in *The Slaves of the Gods* (1929) - a collection of short stories meant to illustrate the arguments of *Mother India.* Mayo decided to portray the social ills of India, as confined to Hindus in particular. In private communications about the book, for example, she admitted to changing the Muslim names of characters in the original stories in order deliberately to make "Hindus out of them". Even more blatant, perhaps, was Mayo's deliberate manipulation of the 'communal card' in *Volume II* (1931), a collection of excerpts from the report of the Age of Consent Committee appointed by the Government of India to explore the need to raise the age of consent for sexual intercourse in India; and in *The Face of Mother India* (1935), a pictorial representation of India and of Indian women.

Mayo's prejudices in these two latter books were so obvious that even her erstwhile allies found them hard to overlook. The British feminist, Eleanor Rathbone, who had been a great supporter of *Mother India* and had been inspired by the book to take upon herself the responsibility for ameliorating the suffering of the child-brides of India, could not help rebuking Mayo for having deliberately misinterpreted evidence on child-marriage in *Volume II.* This later book, according to Rathbone, had lost its usefulness because Mayo was too keen to show that the evils of child marriage were a specifically 'Hindu' phenomenon. The government, on its own initiative, decided to ban *The Face of Mother India* from India because, as one official explained, the "whole thesis of it is Hindu-Muslim antagonism", Cornelia Sorabji, a friend and confidante of Mayo's, and one of the only prominent Indian women to publish a sympathetic review of *Mother India,* had already decided against having her photograph used in *The Face of Mother India* for fear that

it's obvious bias against Hindus would alienate her from her orthodox Hindu friends and clients in India. Even Macgregor of the India Office, who had earlier concluded that it was in the interest of his Office to cooperate with Mayo on *The Face of Mother India,* admitted to Mayo that the "anti-Hindu and pro-Muslim bias of the book was too pronounced" for the government to permit its sale in India. Mayo was thus unable to sustain again what the "accident" of her association with Adams had once made possible in *Mother India:* her masquerade as a genuine crusader against the treatment of women and children in India. (Sinha, 1998)

Glances at the chapters of Mother India, can perhaps, add to Mayo's thoughts about India in a more conclusive way. To quote her- "The preceding chapters of this book state living facts of India today. They can easily be denied, but they cannot be disproved or shaken. That there are other facts, other columns of statistics, other angles left untouched by this research I do not contest. Neither do I wish to imply that some of the most unflattering things were affirmed of India are without counterpart in character and tendency, if not in degree, in certain sections of our western life. But India has carried the principles of egocentricity and of a materialism called spirituality to a further and wider conclusion than has the West. The results, in the individual, the family and the race, are only the more noteworthy for they cast a spotlight toward the end of that road. Some few Indians, will take plain speech as it is meant-as the faithful wounds of a friend; far more will be hurt at heart. Would that this task of truth-telling might prove so radically performed that all shock of resentment were finally absorbed in it, and that there need be no further waste of life and time for lack of a challenge and a declaration." (Mayo, 1927)

"Any close reader of Mayo's book cannot but conclude that she came to India, with a motive, with a set evil purpose to study the evils, not the good of Hindu society, but to hold us up to ridicule and scorn and thus delay the grant of Home rule or self-

government. Throughout her book is revealed contempt for our religion, and a wholesale criticism of all our revered national leaders and sweeping condemnation of all this is Hindu. All her venomous attack is directed against the Hindu habits, manners and customs and such a horrid picture cannot but fill one's mind with disgust and righteous indignation." (Jha, 1971)

There was indeed little in "Mayo's career either before or after *Mother India* that lends credence to her subsequent reputation as a feminist crusader. Mayo's career in the U. S. prior to *Mother India* as well as the particular route by which she happened to arrive at the special focus of *Mother India* suggest that her contribution to women and feminism have been accidental at best: an arbitrary and contingent instrument deployed to advance a colonial agenda." (Sinha, 1998)

However, we express our heartfelt thanks to Katherine Mayo, for she unknowingly pointed our attention to all our defects and shortcomings. It is true that most of Mayo's claims about India were untrue, but it is also true that most of the claims were true. Today, women's studies, public health, sanitation, have become the rallying point of not only the NGOs but also of the government. Mayo, by pointing to our follies has actually helped us to stand up taller and stronger against foreign domination. The passage of child marriage Restrained Bill or Sarda Bill has made Katherine Mayo relevant for years to come.

MARGARET ELIZABETH NOBLE (SISTER NIVEDITA)- A FRIEND OF INDIA: -

"India as she is is a problem which can only be read by the light of Indian history. Only by a gradual and loving study of how she came to be, can we grow to understand what the country actually is, what the intention of her evolution, and what sleeping potentiality may be".

-Sister Nivedita

Swami Vivekananda felt keenly, that there was no chance for the welfare of the country, unless the condition of women was improved, just as he used to say, "It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing". So he paid great attention to the uplift of women in India in his scheme for the regeneration of the nation. At that time, he could not find any woman in this country, who could shoulder this responsibility, and so his choice fell upon Sister Nivedita, then Miss Margaret Elizabeth Noble (28th October 1867 – 13th Ocober 1911). Nivedita met Swami Vivekananda in London in 1895. Vivekananda was on the lookout for a woman, who could help in the amelioration of the lot of women in India, without whose upliftment any real regeneration of India could be possible. He wrote to her, "Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman; a real lioness, to work for the Indians, women especially. (Letters of Swami Vivekananda to Nivedita, 1896 p295) Sister Nivedita responded whole-heartedly to this clarion call of her Guru, and fulfilled his expectations to the letter and spirit by her life and work. Sister Nivedita- a foreigner, adopted this country as her own motherland, and till her death, toiled ceaselessly to mitigate the sufferings of countless Indians." (Ghosh, 2001, p2)

Her life is a profile of courage and devotion- a tribute to humanity. Swami Vivekananda once said to Nivedita "you have the making in your of a world- mover." (Letters of

Vivekananda, 1896) Nivedita turned her world moving power to move the dormant life of Bengal and India. She had made this helpless country her own and gave her life blood. She played an extraordinary role in the awakening of Bengal and India, at a crucial juncture of history. She nurtured all the cultural and political movements of the time. Margaret Noble was of Irish parentage. She was born at Duncannon, County Tyrone, on October 28th 1867. She came to India in (1898) and breathed her last on its sacred soil at Darjeeling on October 13, (1911). She lived for nearly forty four years.

Young Mary Noble was feeling anxious before the birth of her first child. Like all religious women, she vowed that if her child was born safely, she would dedicate it to the service of the Lord. And the vow was fulfilled. The child, Margaret Elizabeth Noble, lived a great life of consecration and earned the name "Nivedita"- the Dedicated, from her Guru, Swami Vivekananda. Discipline wise in true Hindu Style, she offered the fruits of her labours at the feet of her Guru and Parama Guru by adding to her name "Nivedita" the attribute of Ramakrishna Vivekananda, thus pointing out the sanctuary whence she got light and strength.

Nivedita's life can be divided into three distinct periods. First from her birth to the time she met Vivekananda, second from her being aware of the great call in her life to the passing away of her Guru, and third when she emerged as a passionate, selfless worker. In Ireland in the nineteenth century there arose a mighty upsurge for freedom. The formation of the Fenian National Militia and the Home Rule and Land League Movement was the result of waves of agitation against the tyranny of the English rulers who suppressed the Irish. The nature of the national struggle changed with every new agitation, but the goal remained unchanged and it demanded the services of all Irishmen who were imbued with the spirit of nationalism and duty to their country. To this, Margaret's grandparents contributed their mite "we find affinity of spirit" wrote a

competent commentator decades ago, "only in the melancholy literature of the Irish, for long a defeated people like ourselves "who went to baffle, but who always fell". That was the context in which the Irish struggle for freedom, deeply inspired Indians of the last two generations, it also appears to have been the context of Margaret Noble's initiation into the spirit of Indian heritage coupled with active participation in this country's struggle for freedom. (Chakravarty, 1975, p6)

She indeed appears to have been born to her mission in India. John Noble, Sister Nivedita's father's father was a minister of the Wesleyan Church in North Ireland, and he acquired some distinction as a preacher, but that did not prevent him from fighting against the Church of England in the cause of his country's freedom. The Nobles had migrated to Ireland from Scotland in the fourteenth Century. John Noble was happily married to Margaret Elizabeth Nealus. Their fourth child was named Samuel Richmond. John Noble died only in his thirty-fifth year, and Samuel Richmond, somewhat against his will, engaged himself in business pursuits to help his mother. Samuel was prepared for the congregational ministry at the Lancashire Independent College. In time, he married Mary Isabel Hamilton, a neighbour girl, whose father, Richard Hamilton too, had participated in Home Rule movement. Samuel and Mary settled in the town of Duncannon, county Tyrone in North Ireland where their first daughter Margaret was born on October 28th 1867. Samuel and Mary had six children, of whom only Margaret May and Richmond survived. Following his father's footsteps, Samuel then left with his wife for Manchester, to become a student of theology in the Wesleyan Church. When he was ordained he was sent to Oldham, but in 1876 he chose Great Torrington in Devonshire as his field of work. Little Margaret, who had been left with her grand- mother all these years, now joined her parents. Margaret was her father's favourite, and whenever he conducted services or visited the poor, she accompanied him; but the strain of a hard and simple life told upon Samuel's health and he

died at the early age of thirty-four. Margaret was then ten years of age. He had not saved much for the family, and after a time Mary Noble lost heart, staying alone with three children in a foreign land, so she returned with them to Ireland and to her father, Hamilton. She went away for two years to London and took the Kindergarten course. But this work did not enable her to earn enough to bring up her children. It was decided then that with her father's help she will run a guest-house near Belfast and earn her livelihood.

Samuel's religious zeal had made a deep impression on Margaret and from her grandfather Hamilton she imbibed the spirit of freedom and love for Ireland. In due time arrangements were made to send Margaret and May to Halifax College for their education. Halifax College was run by the Chapter of the Congregationalist Church and the college and hostel life offered new opportunities to Margaret. To escape the boredom of the strict routine life in the hostel, Margaret devoted herself with zeal to studies which intensified her desire to know more, and with her twin powers of concentration and perseverance she made rapid progress. It was here that she developed an interest in music, art and the natural sciences. After passing her final examination at the age of seventeen in 1884, she took to teaching at a school in Keswick. In 1886 she went to Rugby to teach in a charitable orphanage under one Miss Nicholson. In 1887 she took up a post at Wrexham in North Wales. It was a coal-mining area. She loved teaching and devoted herself to it with great enthusiasm. She had inherited from her father the spirit of service and love for the poor, and Wrexham, a mining centre, afforded her great scope for a work that she liked very much.

Here she met a young engineer from Wales, with whom she had ideas and interests in common. Their acquaintance soon developed into friendship and then later matured into love. They planned to be married, but destiny willed otherwise. Before their engagement could be announced, the young man fell ill and died. Margaret was now alone and friendless, and it was with a heavy heart that she left Wrexham for Chester in 1889.

Her mind now naturally turned towards her family. May, her younger sister was a teacher in Liverpool, and Richmond was a college student in the same town. Their mother was therefore asked to come over from Ireland to live with them. Thus, after years of separation, a fresh home was set up and Margaret came occasionally from Chester to stay with them. Happily resettled with her own family, Margaret engaged herself with keener interest in education than ever before. Her studies acquainted her with the ideas of the Swiss educational reformer Pestalozzi and with those of the German, Froebel, both of whom laid emphasis on the importance of the pre-school age of the child. "According to them, education should begin by gratifying and cultivating the normal aptitude of the child for exercise, play, observation, imitation, andconstruction." (Ghosh, 2001,p5)

This novel and natural method of teaching greatly appealed to Margaret. Already a group of enthusiastic teachers in England had taken to this new thought and had tried to put it into practice. In Liverpool, Margaret became acquainted with Mr. and Mrs. LogeMann and Mrs. de Leeuw, all of whom advocated the 'New Education'. Through them, she was introduced to the 'Sunday Club' and the 'Liverpool Science Club,' where her talks and writings were highly appreciated.

At the end of two years, Mrs. de Leeuw invited Margaret to help her to start a 'new' school in London. She agreed and in 1891 left Chester and settled with her mother in Wimbledon.

Margaret also continued her own cultural pursuits. She read and discussed Shakespeare with her brother Richmond, held discourses with the Betty brothers- one a poet and other a journalist, - wrote articles in the *Wimbledon News* and also political articles in the *Daily News* and in the *Review of Reviews.* She came in contact with William Stead, the renowned editor of the *Review of Reviews.* She also wrote in the *Research*, a scientific journal. Soon after her arrival in London, she joined "Free Ireland", an Irish revolutionary organisation, spoke at its meetings and organised cells in South England.

Prince Kropotkin, the famous Russian revolutionary and an ideologist of social revolution, was then in London and came to meet the organisation. Margaret kept regular contact with him and obtained guidance on revolutionary work.

Towards the end of 1895, Margaret parted company with Mrs. de Leeuw and started her own school, which she called "Ruskin School". This was a school not merely for children but also for research minded educators. Among the latter was Mr. Ebenezer Cook, who painted for children and whose experiments in the-line had won for him a name. Margaret took lessons in art from him and the knowledge she acquired from him stood in good stead in the promotion of art and art-criticism in subsequent years in India.

Gradually Margaret grew into a mature educator. Her self-confidence grew along with her intellectual acumen experience and she became acquainted in London with some of the most learned and influential people of the time. Among them were Lady Ripon and Lady Isabel Margesson. They had formed a small literary group which later came to be known as the Sesame Club. A keen reader and thinker, Margaret soon became an active and enthusiastic member of this club. It soon became a rendezvous of leading art and literary figures of the day, among them being George Bernard Shaw and Thomas Huxley. Margaret soon came to be recognised as a "woman... well established in a brilliant career as journalist, educationist lecturer and fighter for every kind of emancipation." (Ghosh, 2001, p6) Besides literature, discussions were held on ethics, politics and kindred subjects. In 1892, when the Home Rule Bill for Ireland was before Parliament, Margaret spoke fearlessly in favour of it.

Thus, it continued with Margaret until 1895. Then occurred the event which proved to be a turning point in her life and carried her in due course to India. With her manifold intellectual interests, Margaret had one deep rooted trouble, namely, the growing consciousness of uncertainty and despair with regard to religion. Though, since her

childhood, she had come under various religious influences, none of them could satisfy her. “It was at this time that Swami Vivekananda, the great Hindu Yogi went to London to preach Vedanta and his words 'came as living water to men perishing of thirst'. She met Vivekananda first in November, 1895. His teachings aroused her dormant religious aspirations and desire to serve humanity unselfishly, and she finally decided to take the plunge.” (Ghosh, 2001) Thus, within a few months, Margaret's Life unexpectedly changed its course and purpose.

Swami Vivekananda was not Nivedita's Guru in a general way; he was the mighty flood that carried Nivedita from a far distant land to the shores of India. It was he who for all time made Nivedita, "the Dedicated'. Vivekananda paid great attention to the uplift of women in India, in his scheme for the regeneration of the country. As he could not find any woman in this country who could shoulder this responsibility, his choice fell upon Sister Nivedita. Nivedita had dedicated her life, all her heart and soul, to the service of India. While introducing her to a Calcutta audience; Swami had aptly described her as a 'Gift of England to India'. Many talented and noble ladies of the West responded to the call of Vivekananda, such as, Miss. Muller, Mrs. Ole Bull, Miss Josephine Macleod, but none, perhaps offered herself at the feet of her master with such complete self-dedication as Nivedita. That an English lady could root out the prejudices of the English character, enter so deeply and intimately into the spirit and soul of Indian culture and civilization, shed her instinctive national loyalty, make India her home and the service of the Indian people the consecrated mission of her life, is indeed a testimony to the genius, dynamic personality and spiritual stature of Swami Vivekananda. In Swami Vivekananda the patriotic and spiritual impulses mingled in a supreme desire to uplift the manhood in India, with a view to restoring her, to her proper place among the nations of the world. He believed that the present warring world might be saved by spiritual teachings which India

could impart, but before she would do this, she must enjoy the respect of other nations by raising her own status. It was Vivekananda who for the first time in the modern age, boldly proclaimed before the world the superiority of Hindu culture and civilisation, the greatness of her past and the hope for her future. This combined with his patriotic zeal, made him an embodiment of the highest ideals of the renascent Indian nation.

It was Nivedita's mission to carry the banner of Vivekananda to every corner of India. She became the Prophet's messenger to the cultural and political life of India. At the suggestion of Vivekananda, Nivedita came to India in 1898 and dedicated the remaining fourty four years of her life for the 'Jana-desha-dharma', the people, the land and the religion of the country of her adoption. There were many distinguished personalities in contemporary India, but none could perhaps outweigh the totality of contributions made by Nivedita. The term India to her was not a geographical or ethnic entity, not a clan, caste or blood group, not a subject country, not a black show. She was not a white woman in search of a black God, but India was an idea, an ideal, a legend, a symbol, a movement, a thought, and a summation without the tyranny of geography. She had studied with meticulous care Indian ways of life, thoughts, legends, arts and architecture, so that, she might be fully equipped to play the role, her master wanted her to play- the role of 'the mistress, servant, friend in one' to India. She had become thoroughly 'Indianized' in outlook and she loved and understood India better than an enlightened Indian. In fact, she with her perceptivity, read into many details of Indian life a meaning and a purpose that sophisticated Westernised Indians would fail to recognise. She also saw clear before her eyes the path that must be followed to instil into India fresh life and vigour, so that she might be the dynamic nation that every Indian's cherished dream was to see.

Rabindranath Tagore called her, "mother of the people" (Lokamata); Dr. Jagadish Chandra Bose likened her to the "Lady of the Lamp" and Sri Aurobindo thought she was "Fire"

(Sikhamoyee). She was philosopher and guide to Gokhale and Tilak, and 'Mahashweta' to Abanindranath and Nandalal. Young men of the Dawn Society swore by her. Nivedita lived up to Swamiji's expectations. No son or daughter of India loved her more than Nivedita. Not a problem arose in the country in those years - whether social, political, or educational; whether affecting man, woman or youth-about which she did not feel concerned. She tried to restore India's lost glory and prestige through her activities, utterances and writings. S.K. Radcliffe, the noted editor of the *Statesman,* once wrote, "The influences that have gone to the shaping of New India are still obscure, but this may be said with complete assurance that among them all, there has been no single factor that has surpassed, or equalled, the character and life and words of Sister Nivedita." (Ghosh, 2001, p3)

Environment produces an infinite complexity of feelings and yearnings. Some of these find expression in external work, while some remain dormant. Margaret's external activities brought about an enfoldment of the strength and subtlety of her intellectual understanding and an expansion of her natural faculties. But, at this time, her deep religious feeling agitated her profoundly. She felt uncertain and insecure, for though, since her childhood, she had come under various religious influences, none of them could satisfy her.

She was born of religious parents. Her father was a minister of the church and she had inherited his religious fervour. Also as a student she had been in a Congregationalist boarding school. When she was about fifteen, the Tractarianism movement, which sought to establish the supremacy and dignity of the church above the state, caught her imagination. What appealed to her most in it was the colour which it introduced into its services and the importance it attached to symbols and sacraments. It taught her the value of tradition. But the Tractarianism movement proved too rigid and illiberal for Margaret's

freedom-loving and emotional nature and she left it.

Later, in London, Margaret was to join the Broad Church School of the Church of England, but its teachings seemed to her full of cynicism and it could not satisfy her religious emotions. Margaret withdrew herself from these ecclesiastical systems, for she was in search of a more Christian and a more human religion. At one time she turned to the study of the natural sciences and for some years the Buddha and his doctrines attracted her attention; yet she always felt that she had not found the right path in her quest for Truth. Neither the church nor its doctrines could sustain her till she met Swami Vivekananda in 1895. His teachings seemed to light up all her previous experiences and gave her a new life with a new meaning.

It is of interest here to quote her own words about her earnest efforts as a seeker after truth. In a lecture delivered at the Hindu Ladies' Social Club in Bombay in 1902, she said: "I was born and bred an Englishwoman and up to the age of eighteen I was trained and educated as an English girl. Christian religious doctrines were of course early instilled into me. Even from my girlhood I was inclined to venerate all religious teachings and I devotedly worshipped the child Jesus, loved Him with my whole heart for the self sacrifices He always willingly underwent, and felt I could not worship Him enough for His crucifying Himself to bestow salvation on the human race. But after the age of eighteen I began to harbour doubts as to the truth of the Christian doctrines. Many of them began to seem to me false and incompatible with Truth. These doubts grew stronger and stronger and at the same time my faith in Christianity tottered more and more. For seven years I was in this wavering state of mind, very unhappy and yet very, very eager to seek the Truth. I shunned going to church and yet sometimes my longing to bring restfulness to my spirit impelled me to rush into church and be absorbed in the service in order to feel at peace within, as I had hitherto done, and as others round me were

doing. But alas! No peace, no rest was there for my troubled soul all eager to know the Truth. During the seven years of wavering it occurred to me that in the study of natural science I should surely find the Truth I was seeking. So I began ardently to study how this world was created and all things in it and I discovered that in the laws of Nature at least there was consistency, but it made the doctrines of the Christian religion seem all the more inconsistent. Just then I happened to get a life of Buddha and in it I found that here also was a child who lived ever so many centuries before the child Christ, but whose sacrifices were no less self-abnegating than those of the other. This dear child Gautama took a strong hold on me and for the next three years I plunged into the study of the religion of Buddha, and became more and more convinced that the salvation he preached was decidedly more consistent with the Truth than the preaching is of the Christian religion. And now came the turning point for my faith. ... The Swami I met was no other than Swami Vivekananda who afterwards became my Guru and whose teachings have given the relief that my doubting spirit had been longing for so long." (Nivedita, 1967,p470 qtd. In Atmparana,p8)

The prevailing mood of cultured European thought then was one of doubt and negation. There was lack of feeling and faith in all spheres of life. It was natural, therefore, that an earnest seeker after truth like Margaret, who could not adapt the religious instruction of her childhood to her own mental growth, should experience an anguished sense of uncertainty and void. Her own generous outlook and a readiness to get truth from whatever direction it came, however, led her to accept the Swami's Vedantic doctrine as a whole.

"To not a few of us, the words of Swami Vivekananda came as living water to men perishing of thirst. Many of us had been conscious for years past of that growing uncertainty and despair with regard to religion, which has beset the intellectual life of Europe for half a century. Belief in the dogmas of Christianity had become impossible to us,

and we had no means, such as we now hold, by which to separate the doctrinal shell from the kernel of reality in our faith. To these the Vedanta has given intellectual confirmation and philosophical expression of theirown mistrusted intuitions. The people that walked in Darkness have seen a great light." (Nivedita, 1967, p399 qtd. In Atmaprana p8)

When Swamiji went to London in 1895, he was known as the 'Hindu Yogi'. He gained popularity in a very short time and one day Lady Isabel Margesson invited him to her home. Among the few friends who were invited to meet him and hear him speak was Margaret. Out of curiosity to know what was happening, Margaret accepted the invitation. Events were slowly guiding her to herdestiny.

Thus on a day in November 1895, Mr. Ebenezer Cook invited Miss Margaret Noble to the place of Lady Isabel Margesson, on where a Hindu Yogi would discuss religion. Miss Noble learnt of Mr. Sturdy, Henrietta Muller and other members of the Sesame Club that the Yogi, Swami Vivekananda was in England after a very successful tour of the United States of America, where he had addressed the Parliament of Religions held at Chicago in 1893 and had taken the American public by storm. Here Miss Noble also came to know that he was now staying at Mr. Sturdy's place and had already delivered some lecture in London. Therefore Miss Noble accepted the invitation. On the appointed day, she was one of a group of fifteen or sixteen people before whom the Swami spoke on the need for exchange of ideas between the nations. The Swami said that he had come, because he believed that the time had arrived when nations should exchange ideas, just as they were already exchanging the commodities of the market.

He talked to them about God and the three paths of spiritual progress- Action, Knowledge and Devotion, of Pantheism, Monotheism and Monism; about Hinduism, Buddhism and Christianity. Writing ten years later Sister Nivedita, as Margaret Noble had in the mean time come to be known as, wrote in her book "*The Master As I saw Him"* that the

Swami had dwelt on "Eastern Pantheism, picturing the various sense impressions as but so many different modes of the manifestation of one, and he quoted from the Gita and then translated into English. All these are threaded upon me, as pearls upon a string." (Nivedita, 1982) In her work, *The Master As I Saw Him*, Nivedita further wrote also "He told us that love was recognised in Hinduism as in Christianity, as the highest religious emotion" (Chakravarty, 1975) "And he told us a thing that struck me very much leading me during the following winter to quite new lines of observation that both the mind and the body were regarded by Hindus as moved and dominated by a third called the self." (Nivedita, 1982)

Nivedita also says that Swamiji spoke in that lecture of "the ideal idea of the freedom of the soul, which brought it into apparent conflict with the western conception of the service of humanity, as the goal of the individual." (Nivedita, 1982) Doubts also arose about the consistency of what he said, with the fact that service of humanity was always his whole hope. Swami Vivekananda apparently wished to confront the intellect of his western hearers. There was enough to enthral the listeners but the guests who had been invited were not particularly inclined to accept his views. Most of them were interested in the Modern Movement which regarded psychology as the centre of faith. They were intellectually advanced, but were unable to comprehend the spirit of a strange and bold doctrine of Truth. Committed to their own ideas and with insular pride and indifference, they gave their verdict to their hostess, as they left one by one.

During the following weeks, as Margaret went about her tasks, she felt a votary of truth should have an open mind and be above prejudices. She herself was but feeling her way to an understanding of his teaching. So she listened to two further discourses that he gave in London on that his first visit. As she wrote later in *The Master as I Saw Him,* she had no difficulty in accepting his sayings, that "while no religion was true in a very

real way." His statement that "God really Impersonal, seen through the mists of sense became personal" awed and touched her. She also provisionally accepted his observation that "The spirit behind an act was more powerful than the act itself." (Nivedita, 1967)

Nivedita could not deny that she had seen some truths directly and had been impressed by the loftiness of ideas. For instance, when the Swami talked of Divine Incarnation and quoted the *Bhagavad Gita* "Whenever Dharma decays and Adharma prevails, then I manifest myself. For the protection of the good, for the destruction of the evil, for the firm establishment of Dharma, I am born again and again", she could not but be impressed by the greatness of that idea. (Ghosh, 2001)

She understood why the Swami had said all religions are true and had asked them not to criticize any of the Divine Incarnations. She could not fully understand his assertion that freedom of the soul and not service to humanity was the goal of life; but she was awed and touched by the beauty of the thought that though God was really impersonal, when seen through the mists of sense He became personal religion, as a matter of 'realization' and not mere 'faith' was a new thought that needed consideration. But, above all these, it was the personality of the speaker that so impressed her. He spoke with a sense of conviction born of realization which even an unbeliever could not deny.

As fragments of what the Swami had said came back to her, she became less rigid mentally and decided to understand him better. She attended two more of his lectures, which were delivered on 16th and 23rd of November, but attitude was still that of a sceptic. In the question classes she was always ready with a 'but' and a 'why' on her lips. The fact was, she was unwilling to accept completely what the Swami said for fear of either transcending or rejecting it afterwards. Years later, when one of Margaret's friends teased her on the ground that her own faith in the Swami was greater than hers because she could accept all the statements he made, the Swami said gently to Margaret: "Let none regret that they

were difficult to convince! I fought my Master for six long years, with the result that I know every inch of the way!" (Nivedita, 1967) The time came, however, before the Swami left England, when Margaret addressed him as "Master", she wrote "I had recognised the heroic fibre of the man, and desired to make myself the servant of his love for his own people. But it was his *character* to which I had thus done obeisance. As a religious teacher, I saw that although he had a system of thought to offer, nothing in that system would claim him for a moment, if he found that truth led elsewhere. And to the extent that this recognition implies, I became his disciple. For the rest, I studied his teaching sufficiently to become convinced of its coherence, but never, till I had had experiences that authenticated them, did I inwardly cast in my lot with the final justification of the things he came to say. Nor did I at that time, though deeply attracted by his personality, dream of the immense distance which I was afterwards to see, as between his development and that of any other thinker or man of genius whom I could name." (Nivedita, 1967)

When Swami left for America that winter, Margaret kept pondering over three things concerning him. "First, the breadth of his religious culture; second, the great intellectual newness and interest of the thought he had brought to them; and thirdly, the fact that his call was sounded in the name of that which was most lofty and pure and had no touch of the baser elements in man." (Nivedita, 1967) With other friends, she eagerly awaited her Master's return to London. Sister Nivedita wrote in her book on her Master, to having had her mental window opened to vistas of thought other than the Christian dogmas which had ceased to completely satisfy her. She found she had been introduced to concepts of thought which, in their spirit and approach, struck her as new. She was vastly impressed by the fact that Swamiji made no flourish of knowledge, no pretence at elevating the mean and the lowly but appealed in simple terms to the noblest and best that was among all and thus made them see truth. When Swamiji, returned to London in April 1896 and

continued his discourses in between his tour of some European countries and return to India in December, Margaret Noble imbibed more of his teachings. She said in her book, the Swamiji never preached any specified religion but only the philosophy, which underlines all faiths, drawing upon the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Bhagwad Gita. He explained Maya not as delusion but as the mist with which we are used to cover reality "Because we talk in vain, because we are running after desires". "Know Nature to be Maya", Swami Vivekananda said, "And the mind, the ruler of this Maya, as the lord Himself"."The Maya of the Vedanta," he also said, "in its latest development, is a simple statement of facts what we are and what we see around us. To break through it is Freedom, Mukti. Man has not to be a slave of nature. 'Not the Soul for Nature but Nature for the Soul'. - Swami Vivekananda relied on the Vedanta. (Nivedita, 1982)

Margaret Noble thus realized that "The word (Maya) does not simply refer to the Universe as known through the senses, but also describes the tortuous, erroneous and self contradictory character of that knowledge." She therefore concluded that "By Maya is thus meant that shimmering, elusive half-real, half unreal complexity in which there is no rest, no satisfaction, no ultimate certainty of which we become aware through the senses, and through the mind as dependent on the senses." (Nivedita, 1982) She found Swami Vivekananda's philosophy to be one of renunciation: strict austerity and avoidance of ease which led one away from Maya into the self. Margaret took time to realize this truth, but realization was already dawning upon her. Love meant perfect bliss and any manifestation of regret was detraction from it. Any differentiation between oneself and others was hatred. While this was acceptable, it took time to accept that to do good to others was not the highest end but that spirituality was, the highest aim and intellectual knowledge came next and physical and material help must follow the needs.

Swamiji also said that he had plans for women's education in his own country, and there

Margaret could help him. For Margaret it was the first hint of the call that shaped her life. Margaret spoke of the need to make London beautiful and Swami reminded her of the price, other cities had paid for the purpose. That enabled her to see other people's point of view. One day, during a conversation, the Swami turned to her and said: "I have plans for the women of my own country in which you, I think, could be of great help to me." (Basu, edt. 1982) It was then she knew that she had heard a call that would change her life. For years she had waited for some light to dispel the darkness that was obscuring her progress. She now saw a ray of light and hopefully desired to follow it. Years later, after the publication of her book, *The Web of Indian Life*, she wrote to a friend:

"Suppose he had not come to London that time! Life would have been like a headless torso - for I always knew that I was waiting for something, I always said that a call would come. And it did. But if I had known more of life, I should, perhaps, have doubted whether when the time came I should certainly recognize it. Fortunately, I knew little and was spared the torture. Now I look at the book and say: If he had not come! For always I had this burning voice within, but nothing to utter. How often and often I have sat down, pen in hand, to speak, and there was no speech. And now, there is no end to it! As surely as I am fitted for my world, so surely is my world in need of me, waiting, and ready." (Chakravarty, 1975)

Swami was now eager to return to India. The seviers had already decided to go with him in order to help in starting the Advaita Ashrama in the Himalayas. After Swamiji's return to India, Margaret and Mr. Strudy took charge of the Vedanta centre in London. Swami Vivekananda had in the meantime sent Swami Abhedananda, who held discourses with the admirers of Indian Culture. By this time Margaret had already prepared herself to go to India, but had not yet told the Swami. In fact while Swamiji was still in London, one evening, when Miss Muller told him of Margaret's wish to join him in India for

his work, Swamiji was surprised, but said quietly : “For my own part I will be incarnated two hundred times, if that is necessary, to do this work amongst my people, that I have undertaken”. (Ghosh, 2001)

But still Margaret's plan to come to India, remained stalled until at last she wrote to Swamiji to say, that she wanted to come to India, to learn, how to fulfil oneself through service. Swamiji welcomed this letter as an indication that Margaret had at last given up the role of a giver and wanted to be a learner. She had completely shed her ego and so it was time for her to come. Swamiji warned her in a poignant letter that she would have to live amidst superstition, poverty, exhibition of slave mentality in an alien and uncongenial environment. Also she would have to live in extremes of climate. Swamiji advised her to think seriously before she took the plunge but promised all support in whatever she decided to do. A subsequent letter placed before her the ideal of a leader who led only through love and without any personal consideration. Margaret pondered over these letters and decided on her course of action. It was difficult to tell her mother of her impending departure but her mother had already divined her intention and resigned herself prayerfully to it. Margaret took a few more months in preparation, transferred charge of Ruskin School to her sister Mary, took leave of her friends Neil Hammond and Octavius Betty and sailed on a wet day, being seen off by her mother, sister, brother, Octavius Betty and Ebenezer Cook. Destiny was beckoning her to India.

As the shores of England were left behind, Margaret's thoughts about an uncertain future flitted across her mind like the shadows of passing vapours. She was going to the land of her dreams, but what would it be like? The Mombasa passed Port Said on January 5, Sinai on the 7th, and Aden on the 12th and on the 24th morning at 10 a.m., she touched the shore of Madras. The ship lay in the harbour the whole day and at night. Mr. Goodwin, Vivekananda stenographer disciple, came to meet Margaret, who was overwhelmed by his

goodness. The next day at 10 a.m. she left Madras for Calcutta. As Margaret neared her destination, she wrote in her diary, “In spite of infinite kindness, very, very lonely. What Calcutta will feel like I tremble to think”. On January 28, 1898, she landed at Calcutta. The Swami himself was at the docks to receive her, so that her trembling heart was at rest. They drove to a mansion at 49, Park Street, where she stayed till Miss Muller arrived from Almora. During the first few days, she went sight-seeing with English friends, Messrs. MacDonald, Dadson and Arbuthnot. She saw the Eden Gardens, the Botanical Gardens, the Museum and the Fort. On one Sunday she attended the church services. But her main interest lay in seeing the 'Hindu quarter', so whenever she was alone she hired a cab and drove through the streets in the northern part of the town. She cultivated the acquaintance of Indians like Dr. J. C, Bose and his sister Labanyaprabha Bose who conducted a school, the Tagores and Mataji and Sarala Ghoshal. She also visited such educational institutions as Miss Bose's school, the Bethune’s College and Mathaji’s Pathshala. The Swami had made arrangements for her to take lessons in Bengali. Meanwhile, on February 8, Swami Saradananda arrived by train from Bombay, where he had landed on coming from England. With him were Miss Josephine MacLeod and Mrs. Sarah C. Bull. Margaret had already met Miss MacLeod in London. From America she had gone to England to hear his lectures and now she had come to India to help him in every way. On arrival she asked the Swami how she could best help him and the Swami replied, "Love India". This she carried out by serving India and helping the Math in many ways. Mrs. Bull was the widow of the well-known Norwegian violinist, Ole Bull, and the Swami had been her guest in Boston. Because of her age, quiet dignity and steady intellect, the Swami called her 'Dhira Mata' and always addressed her as 'Mother'. On arrival, these ladies put up at a hotel in Calcutta and met Margaret frequently. In the same month, the Math was transferred from Alambazar to Nilambar Mukherjee's garden house at Belur. In the

meantime negotiations were in progress with regard to the purchase of some adjoining lands and. building by the side of the Ganges, as the permanent abode of the Math.

The land was purchased in the first week of March and the house was thereupon repaired and made habitable. When Mrs. Bull and Miss MacLeod moved into it, they invited Margaret to join them. The Swami had said to her: "You will find that little house of Dhira Mata like heaven, for it is all love, from beginning to end." (Letters of Nivedita, ed. Basu, 1982) So Margaret went most happily to stay with them after some days. Margaret's grasp of the ideal that Swami preached and his efforts in its realization was so clear that as early as February 1898 she wrote to her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Eric Hammond: "Now as to the work here. The Swami's great care now is the establishment of a monastic college for the training of young men for the work of education, not only in India but also in the West. This is the point that I think we have always missed. I am sure you agree with me as to the value of the light that Vedanta throws on all religious life; what one does not realise is that this light has been in the conscious possession of one caste here for at least 3000 years and that instead of giving and spreading it, they have jealously excluded not only the gentiles but even the low castes of their own race. This is the reform the Swami is preaching and this is why we in England must form a source of material supplies...This Movement is no less than the consolidation of the Empire along spiritual lines." (Letters of Nivedita, ed. Basu, 1982)

In 1898, Sri Ramakrishna's birthday, was observed on February 22, and the public celebration on 27th of the same month. The formal establishment of the Math and of the Ramakrishna Mission at Belur, on the day of Sri Ramakrishna's birth anniversary that year, was an occasion of celebration with the participation of all castes and sections of society. March 25 was another great day for Margaret, for that was the day of consecration. Swamiji took Margaret to the chapel; and as an opening step in a life time, first taught her to

perform the worship of Shiva, and then she was initiated into Brahmacharya and given the name Nivedita which means 'the dedicated'. At the end she was asked to offer flowers at the feet of Buddha. In a voice choked with emotion, the Swami said to her: "Go thou and follow Him, Who was born and gave His life for others 'Five Hundred Times' before He attained the vision of the Buddha." (Letters of Nivedita, ed. Basu, 1982) After the service they were taken upstairs. The Swami applied ashes and put on the bone earrings and matted locks of a Shiva Yogi and sang and played Indian music on Indian instruments for an hour. That was the happiest of mornings for Margaret, now Nivedita. Referring to these two important days in her life, on March 17, 1904, she wrote to Miss MacLeod:

"Six years ago this very day, and on a Thursday too, I saw the Holy Mother for the first time, and went home with you again to the cottage. In the cycle of years we have come round to the same days again. Friday next, March 25th, will be the anniversary of the first day I was called 'Nivedita.' We are, then, entering on the seventh year; I wish it might be unflawed, perfect, but this seems too much to ask." (Nivedita, 1982)

On a personal plane, however the consummation was not reached without a struggle. Swamiji insisted on Margaret imbibing the Hindu way of life without sacrificing her personality. That was not an easy thing to do. Margaret had come to India intent on working for women's education as Swamiji had asked her to do. She grew impatient as Swamiji took his own time to ask her to begin the work. Actually Swamiji was leaving her alone to prepare herself for work according to Indian ideals of self-dedication. Now amidst the bewildered ecstasy that accompanied Margaret Noble's transformation into Nivedita, Swami hinted that the hour for her taking up work for women's education had come.

Four days later the Brahmachari who taught Nivedita Bengali, was given Sannyas and named Swami Swarupananda. Nivedita writes of the immense impression his life of intense sympathy with human suffering made on her. It was from him indeed she learnt meditation,

for she had not yet succeeded in adapting herself completely to what Swami Vivekananda wanted her to be. After her initiation the Swamiji had asked her to what nation she belonged then and to his surprise she had said "to the English Nation" and had spoken of her passion of loyalty and worship for the English flag, giving to it much of the feeling that an Indian woman would give to her chosen deity. Swamiji had understood then that his disciple's love for his country was only superficial. He had spoken no more about it. (Nivedita, 1982)

This also showed that she had not yet merged her identity into this country. But all the same she was approaching that much-desired consummation. Swami Vivekananda got her to address a public meeting at Star Theatre, Calcutta, on the occasion of the opening of the Math and Ramakrishna Mission at Belur. Her speech showed deep realization of the meaning of India's spiritual heritage and was much appreciated. The Swami spoke at the meeting of the need for India to develop and express herself before the world on her own lines and also to learn and use western science for the good of her people. Thus Vivkenanda got Nivedita introduced to the Indian people? Another landmark in her life was her meeting with Sarada Devi, the divine consort of Ramkrishna Paramhamsa, whom she first saw accompanied by Mrs Bull and Miss Macleod. A visit to the Mother by these foreign ladies was itself an extraordinary event in those days but she received them kindly. Gopaler Ma (Gopal's mother), an old associate of Ramkrishna, who called her mother, accompanied the ladies on their way back to Belur. Nivedita thus took her place in Hindu society and the Ramkrishna brotherhood.

But her spiritual merger therein was yet to be. That was indeed the process that ran through her pilgrimage with Swami Vivekananda to Amarnath and other places in Northern India. In "*The Master as I Saw Him*" Nivedita describes the Swami's ecstatic experiences which left a decisive impact on her as well. At Almora a regular schooling of Nivedita

started and Vivekananda brought about a change of the angle of vision of Nivedita- Nivedita was not aware of the wrongs that the English as the dominant power had done to India. So when the Swami openly and vigorously attacked the English in his morning talks, she stood for their defence. As in the London classes, she was the one who argued and protested, and always tried to protect her own judgements and assert her views.

The Swami could not tolerate blindness of half-views and prejudices born out of ignorance. So he pointed out errors in her judgements. For instance, one day while the Swami was praising the Chinese race, just then, Nivedita alleged that, as a race, they were notoriously untruthful. The Swami would not accept this misrepresentation and said that words like untruthfulness and social rigidity were very relative terms. He revealed a new standpoint, and then left the disciple to form her own view. He never dictated an opinion, nor did he call for any confession of faith. But when his disciple could not give an uncoloured judgement, he got impatient and irritated. "Really, patriotism like yours is sin! 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 is all of angles. Ignorance so determined is wickedness!" Days passed thus in clashes and conflicts and the inner strife increased. The Swami rebuked and attacked Nivedita's cherished deep-rooted preconceptions- literary, social and historical. It was obviously a conflict of two strong personalities. (Ghosh, 2001)

This period was one of intense stress for Nivedita, who was made to feel that she was still far from complete identification with Indian life. The strain was indeed great, so much so as to make Mrs Bull intervene and Swami Vivekananda announced his intention to withdraw for a few days to seek means of peace. That very announcement made Nivedita resign herself to his will. Swami indeed returned in an aura of peace. Yet the journey to Amaranth on which Nivedita accompanied the Swami, contributed to Nivedita's

complete adaption to Hindu life. She saw the Swami in transition of realization from Shiva to the Mother, in self abnegation so complete that he believed that everything was done by the Mother's will, that he had not the power to do anything himself and was transcending himself into complete union with the Universal will. The impact of all this on Nivedita was great.

An incident in Kashmir which left a most painful impression on Nivedita was the disallowance by the British Resident of the gift by the Maharajah of Kashmir of a piece of land to Swami Vivekananda who would have used it to house a Math and a Sanskrit College. This incident brought home to Nivedita the real nature of British subjection of India. She returned to Calcutta where Swami had preceded her, on November 1, 1898. She then adapted herself to Hindu etiquette, thereby earning the approbation not only of Mother Saradamani who in any case had been benign in her attitude towards her but of the orthodox women most of them old widows, who lived with the Mother. It was time at last for Nivedita to begin the work which had always been in her view. She had, under Swamiji's inspiration, studied the habits and bents of mind of the people among whom she had to work; for her method of education had to be adjusted to those habits and bend of mind. A series of meetings were held at Balaram Bose's house at Bagbazar to prepare the ground for founding of the school.

It was clear to her that the school would be only tentative and experimental in the early stages. For she did not want to follow any stereotyped method of work. After studying the world in which she was to work, she wanted to evolve an educational method that would be "qualitatively true and universally applicable to the work of modern education of Indian women." She had learnt from the Swami that to teach against the aspirations of the taught is to court ill results instead of good and that new ideals have to be approached through the old, the unfamiliar has to be reached through the familiar. So, Nivedita made

honest efforts to make herself familiar with the aims and aspirations of the people amongst whom she lived. On Sunday November 13, the Mother performed the opening of the school at 16, Bosepara Lane. A few girls of the neighbourhood were Nivedita's first pupils. She plunged earnestly into the school work. With a little reading and writing she introduced painting, clay work and sewing. She went into ecstasy over the handwork of the girls and wrote to Mrs Bull on May 31: "I find the children here have as much artistic power as any I ever saw. Their brush work is wonderfully good considering their chances and their colour is excellent. And how they love sewing and manual occupation, you just cannot imagine." (Letters of Nivedita, ed. Basu, 1982)

Before long, she won the hearts of the children who came to her, and the confidence of the mothers. The proud, reserved, orthodox women of the neighbourhood found in Nivedita a good friend. Full welcome was accorded to her at any time of the day or night and they felt happy if they found a chance of helping her. Their little acts of kindness like sending milk or fruits when necessary never missed Nivedita's attention. She gratefully acknowledged them. The pure, sweet, shy and reticent ladies charmed Nivedita and she always praised them in speech and writing. Difference in faith or social status was not a bar to Nivedita's selfless love and charity.

While Sister Nivedita considered the school to be the essential part of her work, she was also called upon to extend her activities in a number of directions including public speaking. After the celebration on December, 9 of the installation of Sri Ramkrishna's picture at Belur Math, the Math started functioning in an organised manner. Nivedita gave lessons to the Brahmacharis or new initiates, in Botany, Drawing, Physiology and Sewing, spoke at the weekly meetings of the Mission, gave lectures on Education at the Brahmo Samaj, and she even successfully started a teachers' training class which was attended by many distinguished ladies. Not only this, she also taught history

at an American missionary school. A speech on "Kali" which she made on February 13, 1899, at Albert Hall proved to be controversial.

Dr. Mahendralal Sarkar, an eminent scientist and doctor of those days, who was one of a distinguished assembly, questioned Nivedita's wisdom in preaching the Kali cult while they were fighting, Dr Sarkar said to remove superstitions of that nature. A gentleman present at the meeting replied forcefully and stampede ensued. All the same, Nivedita was invited to speak on Kali at the Kalighat temple. Before she spoke there, she gave an inspiring lecture at the Minerva Theatre on "Young India Movement." Swamiji and other Monks attended this lecture. Nivedita's speech at the Kalighat temple was a lucid discourse on the significance of Kali worship. She answered all the objections raised at the Albert Hall meeting and delineated the character of Kali both as the Mother and the Destroyer. These lectures were the prelude to Sister Nivedita's book titled as *Kali the Mother*.

But Nivedita was not content with only such activities. In the month of March, plague broke out and was rife in Nivedita's neighbourhood. A plague committee was formed by the Ramkrishna Mission with Nivedita as the Secretary, Swami Sadananda as the supervisor and Swamis Shivananda, Nityananda and Atmananda as members. On April 5th, Nivedita made an appeal through the newspaper for financial aid. It was published on April 6th in *The Statesman* and *The Englishman*.

The same morning Dr. Niel Cook, the Health officer for Calcutta, went to see her and the Chartered Bank sent her a glowing letter and fifty rupees. By Government order, Mr. Bright, Chairman of the Plague Committee went to see her work. Nivedita was happy that the English people were now glad to make her acquaintance, and were offering their services for her humanitarian work.

Nivedita's work to alleviate the suffering of the people during the outbreak of plague in 1899

won the admiration of all her contemporaries among whom Dr R.G. Kar, founder of the R. G. Kar Medical College at Calcutta, has left from his personal experience a vivid tribute to Nivedita's courageous and selfless service to plague victims. That highlighted her increasing moral greatness. During this time she wrote to an English friend, Mrs Coulston, who desired to join her in her Indian work.

"There is endless work. Only to live here is in itself work. I want help in the school more than I can tell you, but still more do I want to extend the work. I ought now to be able to take in boarders, with whom I should go into zenana and live constantly. The girls are here and willing enough, but one must be able to make provision for them. Two of us could do a thousand times more than one, with a thousand times less wear and tear; but money is wanted, and this is the whole burden and difficulty. If only you could come I should bless you, but I dare not say so, because any day I may myself be left where I cannot do another stroke. There are writings, visiting, lecturing, and social intercourse with all, classes, teaching, criticism and a hundred other things." (Nivedita, 1982)

Her admirable work is still remembered by those who worked with her or had seen her work, and it will be gratefully cherished forever. Nivedita's activities for the welfare of the people and the recognition she received as a worker, a speaker and a thinker, did not for a moment make her forget her spiritual aspirations. "Righteousness his duty done: holiness requires renunciation." She once wrote, and she earnestly strove to achieve both. Since 'her initiation, she was trying hard to live up to the ideals of purity, simplicity and austerity of a Brahmacharini. For days she lived on milk and fruits and slept on bare boards. She denied herself even the luxury of a fan during the hot season. Such was the strength of the spirit of a true monastic in her. Mean while under Swamiji's guidance she was being increasingly moulded unto the ideals of the land of her adoption. Inspirited by the Swami's

ideal of a dynamic monastic order, she expressed a desire to devote herself wholly to it and was on March 25, ordained a Naisthik Brahmacharini meaning a Brahmacharini as true as the orthodox members of the order. During this period Nivedita mixed freely with all classes of people, both Indian and European, and as social etiquette demanded, dined with them occasionally. Swamiji while giving her full liberty wanted her to adopt wholly Hindu etiquette. But he also took active steps to break the bounds of prejudices against foreigners and have her accepted into Hindu society. As the prejudices were mostly centred on interlining, Swamiji, saw to it that people associated with him took food and tea from her hands. Nivedita has herself recorded that Mother Saradamani also helped her to be integrated into Hindu society. And on Nivedita's part, she respected the injunctions and prohibitions of orthodoxy and for that earned greater respect for her self. Her one-time colleague and well-known writer, Saralabala Sarkar wrote in her reminiscences of Nivedita: "When Nivedita went to Dakshineshwar, she humbly stood at the gate because she knew that she had no right to enter the temple and see the Goddess. But, alas! I cannot say, how many amongst those who ever had the privilege to worship her, were as-worthy as Nivedita! I have observed that when she came to our houses, she always remained aloof lest by her touch our things might be polluted." (Sarkar, 1999)

However Swami Vivekananda did not grant her request to be initiated as a full Sannyasini. He, however, commended highly her work for women's education; but the work was suffering for lack of funds. It also lacked stability for the pupils were married off before their education could reach fruition. Another difficulty was the lack of women workers. It was felt that dedicated workers could be found only among widows and a Women's Home was necessary for their lodging and training. Ultimately, the school had to close down, much to the regret of Nivedita.

Swami Vivekananda was planning a visit to the West. Swami Turiyananda was to

accompany him and it was decided that Nivedita should also go on a lecture tour of America. That would bring her money and Swamiji advised her also to form a society in Europe and America whose members would give small monthly donations. Their departure was fixed for June 20, 1899.

That visit abroad was destined to set Nivedita on her own path in the world. She of course never for a moment, considered herself, to be but under Swami Vivekananda guidance but he himself left her to act on her own. During the voyage to London Swami, told her about Hindu religious beliefs, lives of Hindu Saints, and other great men. Thus she was not only initiated into the core of Hindu life and thought, but inspired with the thoughts and ideas which subsequently formed the content of her book. She considered herself responsible for carrying the Swami's message to the people through work. They arrived in London on July 31st and Swami left for America on August 16, but Nivedita stayed back to attend her sister's marriage. But Nivedita was anxious to prepare herself for work. Reaching America, she was happy to have the chance of being with her Master once again before plunging into work, but she felt within her a strong urge to live a life of solitude, austerity, isolation and study in observance of the vow of Brahmacharya. The comfort and sweetness of the house was not for her.

One day, therefore, she told the Swami about her desire to go into retreat for some days and also to adopt a special, plain, gown-like dress. The Swami consented. She went into retreat for fifteen days from October 18 to November 1. The same evening he wrote a poem entitled "Peace" and gave it to her.

On October 17, Nivedita shifted to an out house and stayed there till November 1. Here in solitude she completed her book *Kali the Mother* and she dedicated this book to Vireshwar, the Lord of Heroes. Following her Guru's injunction Nivedita now undertook to traverse the arduous path of “Nishkama-karma Yogo”- selfless action i.e. action without

any expectation for oneself. That was a stern lesson. The purpose of Nivedita's mission was two- fold. Firstly, she desired to raise funds for her work amongst the Hindu women whom she lovingly and unselfishly wanted to serve. And secondly, she wanted to make the people of America familiar with the Hindu ideals of womanhood and recognize the ideals which the Hindu women already possessed and cherished. The stage set for her was the same as that set for the Swami a few years ago. The difference was only this. Then it was a Hindu Yogi on the stage, now an English woman. The struggles and sufferings of the Swami were not unknown to her. Therefore though a determined and tireless worker, Nivedita felt great need of the Swami's blessings before taking the plunge. The morning Vivekananda left, he told Nivedita to remember to say 'Durga, Durga' before beginning any work or going anywhere. Since then the holy name of Durga was always on Nivedita's lips, when she undertook to travel or to work.

Swami left for New York and Nivedita for Chicago. On November 16, Nivedita had her first appointed piece of work, a talk on "India" to the children of an elementary school. She spoke to them about the child Christ and then about Dhruva, Prahlada and Gopala of the Paranas. She also gave them an idea about the geography of India-her mountains, rivers and cities. Lectures on "The conditions of Indian women" before a Board of Missionaries and "Religious Life in India" at the house where she was staying, followed. "Ancient Arts of India" was to be the subject of another lecture by Nivedita and a subscription was to be raised for the purpose. The lecture was a great success and brought Nivedita fifty dollars. She also had to join, many informal discussions and question answers-many of them tendentious and hostile. This often depressed her for she was of an impulsive nature. Vivekananda instilled into her courage and patience through instruction as well as by personal example. He himself was facing trials and difficulties.

It was then, that it struck Nivedita for the first time that the Swami's work and hers were

considered different. She had considered herself his instrument; the cause for which she worked was his cause; the message she delivered was his message. Her thoughts were so coloured by his that when she spoke she often felt it was simply the Swami talking and she did not bother about it. “Shall a child not rejoice in speaking its father's message?” When in her talks she had occasions to refer to the Swami she would be so self-absorbed in talking about him that any comment against him would irritate her.

Thus Nivedita also did not find her task easy. Her idea was to form committees at different centres for propagating the Hindu view of life and for raising funds. Unpleasant experiences, pointed her that she must move on her own account and personally shoulder her responsibility and not consider herself only a carrier of the message of her Guru, Swami Vivekananda. She sought comfort of Miss Macleod, who in a remarkable letter asked her to depend on her own strength and derive inspiration from Kali. She approached realization of the ideal of "Nishkam Karma" or selfless action in fulfilment of Swamiji's words to her: Death, not success, is our goal.

At Detroit she was confronted by ladies, particularly those associated with the church, with critical questions relating to Indian life and etiquette. To these she gave sharp replies. She felt it was her duty to defend staunchly Hindu customs. And in her effort, Swami, continued to give her solace and courage. Nivedita was also trying during time to publish her book *Kali the Mother*. In the different American schools Nivedita had spoken about Krishna, Dhruva and other historical and mythological characters, and had written about them. The Swami himself had written some character sketches which he handed over to Nivedita to rewrite and publish. One publisher, Mr Waterman, promised to publish her book of Hindu stories and make it a text book for public schools. But Nivedita failed to evolve the book he wanted, and the idea of publishing it was dropped. In the month of May she went to Jamaica in Massachusetts and delivered a very thoughtful

lecture on 'Our Obligation to the Orient' at the Free Religious Association. On June 17th on New York, Swami spoke on "what is Religion." The same evening Nivedita spoke on 'The Ideals of Hindu Women', giving a most beautiful and sympathetic account of the simple life and purity of thought of the Hindu women. A report says: "The women students, who are always most eager to hear of the everyday life and thought of their Hindu sisters especially enjoyed this talk; Sister Nivedita was pleased at the interest that was felt and answered many questions which were asked, so that most of the people went away with a clearer idea of life in India than they had ever known."(Ghosh, 2001)

On June 23, the Swami conducted the Gita class and on Sunday, June 24, he lectured on 'Mother Worship'. In the evening Nivedita spoke again on 'The Ancient Arts of India'. This entertaining and instructive talk was the last she gave in New York. All friends regretted when, after a few days' stay, Nivedita sailed for Paris on June 28, 1900. (Atmaprana, 1999)

A Congress of the History of Religions was arranged in Paris in 1900 with the Paris Exposition Universelle. Professor Patick Geddes, the reputed British sociologist and thinker invited Nivedita to assist him in his work as organizer of the various sessions, Swami Vivekananda was invited to attend it and he went to Paris, shortly after Nivedita. But it was mere mechanical assistance he wanted of Nivedita in his work at the Congress. She found that there was no scope for her purposeful participation in the work. So she left it but the relation of mutual admiration that had grown between her and the Professor continued. In later years she acknowledged the help she had received from the Professor in writing, *The Web of Indian Life*. At this period Doctor Jagadish Chandra Bose and Mrs Abala Bose were also at Paris. Dr. Bose was struggling to get his great work on plant life recognized. Nivedita took great interest in his work and from that time onward they became great friends.

By this time, Nivedita was indeed set on the final course of her destiny. In 1901 by the month of January and February, she spoke thrice a week to London audience on subjects like-"Ideals of Indian Women", "Spiritual Life in India", "Spiritual Unfoldment in India", "The Indian Problem", "Concentration", "The Kindergarten Methods in Religious Education", "How England has failed in India", "The Future of Indian Women", "Application of Thought to Spiritual Growth", "Hindu social life", "Order of Ramkrishna" etc. There drew the attention of many thoughtful persons in England towards India. Nivedita's *Kali the Mother* had been published by now and was favourably reviewed.

Mr. Ramesh Chandra Dutt of the I.C.S. and a great scholar, whose Economic History of India is an all-time classic, encouraged her to use her pen to further her cause and promised to publish her book. It was at his suggestion that some chapters of the book *The Web of Indian Life* first came to be written. But in spite of all these, Nivedita's heart was set on returning to India, but still she decided to stay a little longer till all this work on hand was finished. But with a great longing to return to India she wrote to Miss MacLeod on April 4, 1901: “I wish I were back in India. I am just longing to get there - though I know of course that I cannot begin to do all the writing we want before that. Plague must be raging in Calcutta. I cannot bear to be away. ...How wonderful India is! I am so glad that you feel India 'sweeter', as you say, 'than ever.’ (Nivedita, 1982)

In the past one year great changes had occurred in Nivedita's life. Carried away, as it were, on the crest of a tremendous thought wave, she had no occasion to pause and think. Now, alone and free, she got the opportunity for recollecting her thoughts. She realized that since her return to England, slowly but perceptibly, her mind had been following a new line of thought. Her love for India was the Swami's legacy. Through a gradual study of India she could now not only understand her but recognize her potentialities. It was her Guru's charge that she should help him in regenerating India through dynamic Hinduism. She

studied the Swami on Hinduism again and .was staggered at the vastness of it. But it dawned on her that the regeneration of the nation through Hinduism was too big a goal to achieve immediately and that what India needed for the present was a point to start with - and that was political freedom.

Thus though her thoughts were not essentially different from the Swami's ideas of love and service to India, they had taken a different turn with regard to the means. She was herself surprised at the changed direction of her thoughts. But once this thought arose in her mind, she worked it up to its logical conclusion. A country under foreign political domination cannot dream of regeneration - whether social or economic, cultural or spiritual. Political freedom is a condition precedent.

One day she had hoped that England and India would be friends. But some of the incidents in India, to which she was a witness, had disillusioned her. Her experiences in America were still more shocking. How grossly had the Christian missionaries misrepresented India to the Western world! They dared to do it only because India was in fetters. One day in America, the Indian leader Bipin Chandra Pal was lecturing when he was told: "Let your country achieve independence first. Then come and talk to us about your religion and philosophy. Then we shall listen to you. (Atmaprana, 1999) In Paris Nivedita had been a proud witness to the honours received by Dr. J.C. Bose. And in contrast, the treatment received by him in England gave Nivedita a rude shock. The great British scientists had combined to crush this lone Indian scientist. She was furious when she came to know the details of his case and condemned England for it.

Previously the question of political dependence of India had not bothered her. Now it claimed her attention. She talked to many leading members of Parliament and found out that except a handful like the liberal leader Mr. Land, most of them were unsympathetic. She contacted many Indians in England. One day Mr. R. C. Dutt collected about thirty-

five Indian students and asked her to address them. She gave an inspiring talk to them on the 'Reawakening of India'. Mr. R. C. Dutt was himself a liberal and from him Nivedita learnt much about the economic condition of India and about the different political parties working in India. She followed with keen interest the proceedings of the Indian National Congress and once even thought of joining its ranks. The news that came from India showed how her people were smarting under political subjection.

For instance, the British Government rejected the scheme of an Indian university put forward by Mr. Jamshedji Tata. Mrs. Besant was not given permission to start a Hindu College in Banaras and she had directly applied to Lord George Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India. Nivedita's spirit revolted against these restrictions on freedom of action. She met in London the Russian revolutionary leader, Prince Kropotkin. Discussions with him on various topics increased her growing prejudice against the British.

Nivedita was aware of the numerous social virtues of the people of England. But she knew that everything was good for one who was within the ring. For one outside the ring, the tall talks of freedom 'meant only British comfort, success and gold'. If freedom did not mean freedom for all the peoples of the earth it was only 'a feast of ashes.' She complained that she was permanently embittered and disillusioned:

As for England, this Boer War seems to spell individual and general degradation. I am sure if he were in England, he would do much he could not help doing much but as far as she herself is concerned, England, or all that was noble in her, at least, seems dead.

With awe Nivedita watched with the world the brilliant discoveries and inventions of Dr. Bose. "Would it not be heavenly to have a native government take up a scientific work which the British were not large-minded enough to protect?" She asked. Dr. Bose's case was only an eye-opener. There was no sympathy for Indians in England, nor was the Government of India keen to do anything essentially good for the people. The only way out

was self-help. (Letters of Nivedita, qtd. Atmaprana, 1999)

There is no doubt that at the root of this feeling was her own realization of the exploitation by the ruling race of this ancient, great and vast land. Political freedom, to her thinking, was now the only means to assuage the pain of dependency. She recognized, of course, that "Swami is at the vitals and all other movements merely attacking symptoms."And more than once she said, "Certainly no one has seen it but Swami, and I know that his vision does not obviate mine, but makes it the more necessary." (Letters of Nivedita, qtd. Atmaprana, 1999)

She was now planning to return to India soon. During this time she also edited Dr. J.C. Bose's book *The Living and Non-Living.* During this second voyage to India Mr. R. C. Dutt and Mrs. Ole BulJ were with Nivedita. On February 3, they reached Madras where they received a great ovation. A public reception was accorded to them at the Mahajana Sabha Hall. Mr. G. Subramanya Iyer, sometime editor of The Hindu, read the welcome address. Nivedita was hailed this time not as a foreigner but as one of the soil, who shared the joys and sorrows of the people and partook of their trials and troubles. After Mr. Dutt, Nivedita addressed the vast audience. In a clear ringing voice she expressed in a forceful language what she felt about India. "Just as it has been realised already that in religion you have a great deal to give, and nothing to learn from the West, so also in social matters it will be well to understand that what changes are necessary you are fully competent to make for yourselves, and no outsider has the right to advise or interfere. Changes no doubt there will be. Change is probably inseparable from the process of life. But these changes must be original, self-determined, self- wrought. What! Does the civilization of three thousand years mean nothing that the young nations of the West should be in a position to lead the peoples of the East?" (Nivedita, qtd. Ghosh, 2001)

She contradicted the observations made against Indian women that they were ignorant,

oppressed and uncultured. She said: “The happiness, the social importance, and may I say, the lofty character of Indian women are amongst the grandest possessions of the national life.” (Nivedita, 1982) In the same strain she answered to the charge that Hinduism was deliberately adding to the degradation and unhappiness of the outcastes. Having dwelt on India's past, she referred to the present, adding here the personal note of her good fortune in being considered the daughter of Swami Vivekananda. She proudly narrated the achievements of Dr. J. C. Bose in the West and said in conclusion:

“I come then; to the application of all that I have said your national customs require no apology. Stand by them. Your great men yield in nothing to the great men of other countries. Glory in them, love them, and encourage them to the top of your heart. They will never give you cause to be ashamed.” (Atmaprana, 1999)

Nivedita's speech was published in the Calcutta daily, Amrita Bazar Patrika, on February 8. It got her name into the bad books of the Government, which thought it necessary to watch her movements and censor her letters thenceforward, particularly because it was noticed that her residence was frequented by many national leaders like Mr. G. K. Gokhale, Mr. Abdur Rehman, Mr. R. C. Dutt and Mr. Ananda Mohan Bose. Gandhiji had come to Calcutta in December 1901 to attend the Congress session. He too went to meet her. As soon as Nivedita settled down at 17 Bosepara Lane she wrote to the Swami about starting her school work again. She received a letter from him dated February 12, as follows:

“May all powers come unto you. May Mother Herself be your hands and mind! It is immense power irresistible, that I pray for you, and, if possible, along with it infinite peace. If there was any truth in Sri Ramakrishna, may He take you into His leading, even as He did me, nay, a thousand times more.” (Letters of Vivekananda, qtd. Atmaprana, 1999)

The same day, the Swami also wrote to Swami Brahmananda: “Regarding Nivedita's School, I have written to her what I have to say. My opinion is that she should do what

she considers to be the best."

Nivedita decided to open her school on the Saraswati Puja day. Swami Brahmananda and Swami Saradananda helped and advised her in all matters as before. Nivedita's school work started in right earnest. Her old nurse Miss Bet had come with her this time and she was a great help. In April Christine Greenstidel came to India and put up with Nivedita at 17 Bosepara Lane. In the summer of 1902 Nivedita and Christine left for Mayavati. With them also was Count Okakura, a great Japanese scholar and artist, President of the Archaeological Reform Society of Japan and also a great lover of Indian art and culture. He had come to India with Mr Oda, the high priest of a Buddhist monastery of Japan to invite Swami Vivekananda to a Parliament of Religions to be held in Japan. Due to ill health Swamiji was unable to accept the invitation but received them with delight. Okakura accompanied Swamiji on his last pilgrimage to Bodh Gaya and Banaras. He stayed a long time in this country and wrote a very valuable book *Ideals of the East.* Nivedita edited and wrote an introduction to the book. According to reliable sources he took an active part in politics as well and had a hand in organizing secret societies in Northern India with the help of Surendranath Tagore, a nephew of Rabindranath Tagore, and a band of young men under him.

He was among the influences which impelled her not to be content with being a preacher of thought but to try for actual realization of that thought in India's national life. After spending over a month in the peace and quiet of the Himalayas, Nivedita and party returned to Calcutta. But soon the hour of parting from her Master had arrived. On her return from Europe, she had seen Swami Vivekananda at Belur Math, but he was not well. On Nivedita's return from Mayavati, on June 26, Swamiji saw her the next day, but Swamiji's health did not improve but continued to deteriorate. And in the early Morning of July 5th a messenger from the Math, conveyed the news of Swamiji's passing away to

Sister Nivedita. Nivedita was thunder-struck. The whole of the morning Nivedita sat by the Swami and fanned him right up to the time of cremation. A small piece of cloth which covered the bed-top was blown out of the burning pyre to her feet-she picked it up reverentially. She had a mind to give it to Miss Josephine MacLeod. She had her last blessings from the Master.

Nivedita inscribed just two words in her diary on July 4, 1902 - "Swami died." No words could express the deep sense of loss she felt at her Master's departure. But she had no time to sorrow; she had to carry on his work. His words spoken years ago rang in her ears. "It may be that I shall find it good to get outside my body to cast it off like a worn-out garment. But I shall not cease to work. I shall inspire men everywhere until the world shall know that it is one with God!" Nivedita knew that the Swami's inspiration was to work through her. She wrote in a prayerful mood to her friend:

“Pray that I may have strength and faithfulness and knowledge to do this and ask no other blessing for me. I want no other. He is NOT dead. He is with us always. I cannot even grieve. I only want to work. Every day that passes show me more plainly that I have indeed undertaken my Father's own work. Pray that I be true to it. Let us all be one soul. Do you gather the strength so, for us all? I want every moment to be the realisation of his will. Regardless of Mukti, regardless of Karma, regardless of anything, to carry out his will, flawless, entire, as he would have loved to carry it, had he been here. I came to India for that-four years ago - that he might feel free to die. Only that -and the moment is her.” (Letters of Nivedita, qtd. Atmaprana, 1999)

Strangely enough, during her stay in the West, Nivedia's work and interests had extended beyond the limits of a strictly spiritual organization like the Ramakrishna Mission. It has been expressly mentioned by the Swami in the Rules and Regulations of the Mission that had been drawn up then that “the aims and ideals of the Mission being purely spiritual and

humanitarian, it shall have no connection with politics. (Life of Vivekananda, qtd. Ghosh, 2001)

Therefore, “a few days after the Swami's death, Nivedita was faced with a grave problem. As a monastic member of the Order it became obligatory on her part to give up her political associations and interests. But her own feelings were against such a step. She was frank about it. “I belong to Hinduism more than I ever did. But I see the political need so clearly too!” A few days before the Swami passed away, she talked to him about it also when she met him at the Belur Math. During the conversation she broached the subject of the Home for widows and orphans of which she had thought so much before she left for the West. The Swami said it was a folly to have such Homes in India for they would do more harm than good. To which Nivedita's immediate rejoinder was: “Yes, don't you see! That's exactly what I say that the other question must be answered first! Then all questions of education.” The Swami understood that by the other question Nivedita meant political freedom.” (Atmaprana, 1999)

Years ago, when the Swami had said to Nivedita, that his mission is neither Ramkrishna’s nor Vedanta's nor anything but simply to bring manhood to his people, Nivedita replied that she would help. Therefore Nivedita thought that it was her duty to give to the nation what she had received from the Swami when the nation needed her. It was the Swami's dream to see India great and strong again. How that could be fulfilled without bringing about a national awakening amongst her children? (Atmaprana, 1999)

Some days later; Swami Brahmananda again wrote to her to learn about her decision. Nivedita replied on July 18, as follows:

Dear Swami Brahmananda,

Will you accept on behalf of the Order? And myself my acknowledgement of your letter

received this evening. Painful as the occasion, I can but acquiesce in any measures that are necessary to my complete personal freedom.

I trust, however, that you and other members of the Order will not fail to lay my love and reverence daily at the foot of the ashes of Sri Ramakrishna and my own beloved Guru.

I shall write to the Indian papers and acquaint them as quietly as possible with my changed position.

Yours,

In all gratitude and good faith,

Nivedita of Ramakrishna. (Atmaprana, 1999)

Up till now Nivedita had signed her name as 'Nivedita of the Ramakrishna Order.' Henceforward she wrote 'Nivedita of Ramakrishna' only, later changing it to 'of Ramakrishna- Vivekananda'. For though she had left the Order, she felt sure she still belonged to them and that the Swami would not hold her less his child than before.

The Amrita Bazaar Patrika of July 19th published the following news item:

SISTER NIVEDITA

We have been requested to inform the public that at the conclusion of the days of mourning of Swami Vivekananda, it has been decided between the members of the Order at Belur Math and Sister Nivedita that her work shall henceforth be regarded as free and entirely independent of their sanction or authority. (Atmaprana, 1999)

With this the second chapter of Nivedita's life came to a close. Prayerfully she wrote: "Keep our faith alive that this, and no other is for us, that there is no unfaithfulness in doing the greatest right and never can be." According to her thinking her views had not changed but had only become larger and truer. The Swami's ideal was there but-it was something impersonal, not limited by name. Her thoughts had been focussed to a central point and that

was ‘nation- making.’ In that context the Swami's idea of ‘man-making’ amounted to 'nation-making', and that was the task she had undertaken.

On July 24, she wrote to Miss MacLeod to whom the story of the change of her thoughts had gone on unfolding in her letters:

We talk of ‘woman-making’. But the great stream of the Oriental woman's life flows on. Who am I that I should in any way seek to change it? Suppose even I could add my impress to ten or twelve girls, would it be so much gain? Is it not rather by taking the national consciousness of the women, like that of the men and setting it towards greater problems and responsibilities that one can help ...I don't know. This may be all my own sophistry, I cannot tell. Only I think my task is to awake the nation, not to influence a few women. (Sister Nivedita, 1982)

Now she earnestly resolved to dedicate herself to the work before her. She decided to travel to different parts of India to obtain first-hand knowledge of the people among whom she intended to propagate the ideas of the Swami. Sister Nivedita's role in the national resurgence of India, covered political as well as cultural aspects. She had acknowledged Swami Vivekananda as her master and guide. Although Vivekananada's message to India and the world was largely spiritual in character, his preaching’s within this country at any rate had strong political overtones. He wanted nothing less than a through national reawakening in India set against the background of the age old glorious cultural tradition of the country dating far back to antiquity and continuing ever since as a living force in the country's history, though sometimes obscured by temporary set-backs. His very object in going to the West was to seek means for bringing about amelioration of the lot of India's down trodden millions and thereby initiate a vital and irresistible momentum for Indian resurgence. Thus the nationalist sentiment that was so strong and irresistible in Vivekananda was naturally communicated by him to his favourite disciple

Sister Nivedita. He chose Nivedita as a fit instrument not only for rousing the womanhood of India, but also for giving guidance and inspiration to the youth of India.

It is reasonable to presume that Vivekananda also thought that Nivedita's work was to be in a much wider field than merely that of running a school for girls. And it is clearly evident from same points in the letter that Swami wrote to Nivedita, just before her coming to India early in 1898. Swami wrote to Nivedita:

"Let me tell you frankly that I am now convinced that you have a great future in the work for India. What was wanted was not a man, but a woman, a real lioness to work for the Indians, women specially. 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". (Letters of Vivekananda)

Thus Swamiji's emphasis on "Real Lioness" and on "Celtic Blood" pointed to a sturdy independence of character that was essential not so much for woman- making as for nation-making.

Opinions vary, over the question, as to whether Nivedita was in anyway, involved in the Revolutionary movement, that swept over Bengal in the days of Anti-partition agitation. Some writers have taken pains to contradict this at some length. Some others have over emphasised the role of Nivedita in the revolutionary movement. Brahmachari Arupchaitanya writes:

“She never took any active part in the revolutionary movement, but keeping herself in the background, she gave encouragement to the revolutionaries. She was Irish by birth. Ireland had fought for her freedom. She often expressed views in favour of Ireland's Independence. Later, coming to India, she, while not taking any direct part in the freedom struggle of India, indirectly exhorted the youth to plunge into the freedom movement. She thought that Indians were weak in heart and soul, but she felt if the gospel of freedom

and nationality was dipped into the ears of the Indians they would wake up and make self sacrifices for the independence of the country."

But a glance, at an account given by Sri Aurobindo, leaves no room, for doubt that Sister Nivedita had a sense of involvement in the secret revolutionary work, at any rate at one critical phase of it. Aurobindo Ghosh refering to Nivedita's first visit to Baroda wrote:

"I do not remember whether she was invited but I think she was there as a State guest, Khasirao and myself went to receive her at the station. I do not remember Nivedita speaking to me on spiritual subjects or about Ramakrishna and Vivekananda... I 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. (Aurobindo qtd.Atmaprana, 1999)

More categorically Dr Bhupendra Nath Datta, a close associated of Sri Arobindo and a leading revolutionary of Bengal, wrote about Nivedita- "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." (Atmaprana, 1999)

This therefore reaffirms, unequivocally Nivedita's direct participation in the revolutionary movement at a certain stage. Actually Nivedita did not believe that non-cooperation and passive resistance could be the sole means of achieving independence. Therefore, she supported Sri Aurobindo's move for maintaining secret revolutionary activity as a preparation for open revolt in case passive resistance failed.

Her collaboration, however, was only limited to presenting books to the Society and giving inspiring lectures to the young men to instil national fervour into them. Addressing the Hindu Boys' Association at Patna she said: "It is the duty of boys to be young heroes.

Think that the whole country is your country and your country needs work, struggle for knowledge, for strength, for happiness and prosperity. Let all these are your aims in life. But by no means be found sleeping when the cry comes for battle." 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 acquainted herself deeply with the spiritual and cultural treasures of India, accumulated from the earliest period to the modern period. Actually the first decade of the 20th century may be called an epoch-making period in Indian history. With the first political stirrings in the country, the British Government, headed by Lord Curzon, adopted strong measures to check the forces of nationalism. But ironically enough, it intensified the desire of the people for political advancement, and in some instances, stirred the patriotic feelings of the people to their very depths. And all these political events, naturally as it has been perceived earlier, brought about a change in the life and work of Nivedita. Her letters since 1900 show her growing interest in the political destiny of India.

Nivedita's work during the following ten years shows how India and her future became her chief concern. Another fact that explains her active work during these years was her stay in Calcutta, which was the seat of the Government then and which witnessed the beginning of a great national movement. Nivedita could neither sit idle nor remain indifferent during this period of unrest and turmoil. She brought the full force of her intellectual and moral powers to bear upon the national movement.

Even with moderate leaders like Mr Gokhale, Nivedita had long discussions on various topics of national interest. Boosting up his morale, she wrote to him on March 20th 1903:

"But I wish I could infect you with my view of the whole thing. Instead of sadness, you wd. then be filled with such an infinite joy! And you might just as well have it. There

is a great festival of struggle and growing life before us. When one feels baffled and sad, it is because one has failed to find the true lines of action, along which the fire leaps to the blaze. When one has found those, is there any time for sighing? Do not let us spend our effort longer in trying to reform abuses; let us make life. Manhood and womanhood will find out for itself what way to work. Set Life free! Accept all that comes of it. The instinct of a great people filled with divine austerity and the highest human passion, will lead them very far from your thoughts or mine about them. So much the better. I wish I could give you this gladness that fills me! I love the sorrow and the struggle and the divine self-sacrifice that may be ours!" (Nivedita qtd. Ghosh, 2001)

Thus to Nivedita, her vision of freedom for the country always filled her heart with joy. Actually to Nivedita "isms" made no difference. The other event of the year that evoked much protest from different quarters of India was the Universities Commission. Lord Curzon had called an educational conference at Simla in 1901, which was followed by the appointment of the Universities Commission in 1902. On the basis of the Commission, a Universities Act was passed in 1904. From one end of the country to the other, educated people protested against its provisions.

Referring to it, the eminent educationist and Congress leader Mr. Surendranath Banerjee wrote: "Of the many the services which Lord Curzon had done to India, his so-called reform of the universities was the most far- reaching in its consequences. Under the plea of efficiency he had officialised the Calcutta Municipality; under the same plea he now proceeded to officialise the universities, and to bring the entire system of higher education under the control of Government. Efficiency was his watchword; popular sentiment counted for nothing, and in his mad worship of this fetish Lord Curzon set popular opinion at open defiance." (Banerjee, qtd. Atmaprana, 1999)

About the Commission Nivedita indignantly wrote in a letter what she felt:-

We have had a Universities Commission lately, which has done its very best to kill all education, and especially all science education. This is the point in India's wrongs that fires me, the right of India to be India, the right of India to think for herself, the right of India to knowledge. Were this not the great grievance I might be fired by her right to bread, to justice, to other things, but this outweighs all. (Nivedita, 1982)

Having been an educationist herself, she naturally felt a deep interest in the educational problem. When the Universities Act was before the Legislative Council in 1904, Nivedita was touring Behar and the United Provinces. She spoke on the educational problems in India more than once, calling it the problem of problems. Not being a politician, she did not make a capital grievance out of it. Nor did her indignation lead her to criticize and complain only. A constructive thinker and worker that she was, she urged the people to rise to the occasion, face the situation squarely and grasp the opportunity to promote national education, instead of looking up to the Government for help. With her characteristic vigour, incisive logic and earnestness she said during a lecture at Bankipore:

"The educational policy which is now being followed gives anything but University education. The Indian Unversities Bill attempts to narrow the sphere of education in this country. But I am not going to make a political speech. My object is to make you think and think. I am ceaselessly thinking on the educational problem. Sometimes, I find a way out and sometimes I do not. I have come here to help you in thinking out for yourself, for I have a belief in the power of right thought." The educational problem is one of national life, and so one ignorant of your national life cannot contribute in any way to your wants. A foreigner can do so only when he acts with a correct ideal of national life and adjusts his deeds to the influences of the times. A foreigner cannot help you and you must help yourselves it is for you to do and you should not crouch before the Government like monkeys to get done by the Government what you ought to do for yourself....You must look

at the educational policy of the Government in a different attitude. By the Bill before the Legislative Council many of the schools are to be disaffiliated and then will come your turn to sweep out the hypnotism out of the past. You must be grateful to Government for the threatened disaffiliation of the schools as such disaffiliation will allow you much freedom of thought. But you must not sit back and thank the Government.You must work, work and work and remake the meaning of Education. (Nivedita, 1982)

Thus Nivedita simultaneously took interest in the different ideologies professed by leaders of the Indian community. The emergence of India, as a strong and powerful nation, was the supreme goal, towards which she wanted to see the country progress.

During 1904-05, Nivedita was in an angry mood and bitterly complained against all repressive measures taken by the government to curb the freedom of Indians. Furiously she wrote to Miss MacLeod in 1904: You do not know how terrible the government is becoming. The Tibet expedition, the new stand about education, the division of Bengal, the official Secrets Bill, the Ancient Monuments. Every measure is oppressive and tyrannical, and aimed at the undermining of the faculty for liberty. (Letters of Nivedita, 1982)

In one of her lectures she said: "Young India is getting ready to run the race in the field of freedom. It has not as yet started the race." This was an apt remark; for during these years of ferment and unrest nothing definite was done or achieved. The only positive gain was that a feeling of 'national-consciousness' had grown in the people and they were ready to face and fight all wrongs.

"Nivedita could not accept any of the interpretations - social reform, political agitation, religious movements or economic grievances. She knew these to be each a part behind which lay a greater reality dominating and coordinating the whole idea of the Indian nationhood." (Atmparana, 1999) Explaining it she said:

"It begins to be thought that there is a religious idea that may be called Indian, but it is of no single sect; that there is a social idea, which is the property of no caste or group; that there is a historic evolution, in which all are united; that it is the thing within all these which alone is to be called 'India." (Nivedita, 1982)

This synthetic approach and the faith that India contained sufficient forces of recovery within herself led Nivedita to take interest in the national awakening in all its aspects. She worked, but made no show of her work. How much of truth is embedded in the assertion that she was a great intellectual and moral force that had come down to us in a time of great national need is for posterity to judge. But the tributes paid by some of her eminent contemporaries may be considered in this context before any judgement is passed on her work. The economist Benoy Sarkar said that she was "the philosopher of Romantic nationalism and aggressive Indianism." Reviewing her work as a whole he wrote later:

Nivedita was a humanist and a public worker in every field-patriotism, education, politics, nationalism, industry, history, moral reform, social service, feminism, and what not. During the glorious Bengali Revolution (1905-10), Nivedita was a name to conjure with in young Bengali. She was a colleague of almost everybody who was anybody in the movement of those days at Calcutta.…If Vivekananda had not done anything but import Nivedita into the Indian sphere of activity his life-work would have still remained exceedingly epoch-making and fruitful. She was his miraculous discovery for India and grew into one of the profoundest treasures of the Indian people. (Ghosh, 2001)

Dr. Rashbehari Ghosh who presided over the memorial meeting held at the Town Hall after Nivedita's death said: "If the dry bones are beginning to stir, it is because Sister Nivedita breathed the breath of life into them. If our young men are now inspired with a burning passion for a new, a higher, a truer and a nobler life the credit is in no small measure due to the lady who has been so prematurely called away from us. An India

united in civic purposes, proud of its past achievements, proud of its contribution to the civilization of mankind, and destined to render still higher service to humanity was the ideal for which she worked. And who can say she worked in vain? Who can say she has not made the steps easier for those who will follow her?

"On one thing I can speak with confidence and that is this. If we are conscious of a budding national life at the present day it is in no small measure due to the teaching of Sister Nivedita." (Ghosh, 2001)

And not without reason did Rabindranath Tagore call her a Mother of the People. In paying a glowing tribute to her he said: "He who has seen her has seen the essential form of a human being, the form of the spirit. It is a piece of great good fortune to be able to see how the inner being of a person reveals itself with unobstructed and undiminished energy and effulgence, nullifying the obstruction of all outer material coatings or impediments. We have been blessed in that we have witnessed that unconquered nobility of a human being in Sister Nivedita. The life which Sister Nivedita gave for us was a very great life. There was no defrauding of us on her part - that is, she gave herself up fully for the service of India; she did not keep anything back for her own use. Every moment of every day she gave whatever was best in her, whatever was noblest. For this she underwent all the privation and austerity that we associate with a person. Her resolve was this and this alone that she would give only that which was absolutely genuine; she would not mix self with it in the least, no, not her hunger or thirst, profit or loss, name or fame; neither fear nor shrinking, nor ease nor rest. She was in fact a Mother of the People." (Ghosh, 2001)

Another illustrious son of India, Mr. G.K. Gokhale, said in his speech in the memorial meeting: "Sister Nivedita's personality was a wonderfully striking personality, so striking indeed, that to meet her was like coming in contact with some great force of nature. Her marvellous intellect, her lyric powers of expression, her great industry, the intensity with

which she held her beliefs and convictions and last but not least, that truly great gift capacity to see the soul of things straightway, all these would have made her a most remarkable woman of any time and in any country. And when to these were joined, as were joined in her case, a love for India, that overflowed all bounds, a passionate devotion to her interest and an utter self-surrender in her service and finally a severe austerity of life accepted not only uncomplainingly but gladly for her sake, is it any wonder that Sister Nivedita touched our imagination and captured our hearts or that she exercised a profound and far-reaching influence on the thoughts and ideas of those around her and that we acclaimed her as one of the greatest men and women that have lived and laboured for any land?" (Ghosh, 2001)

MARGARET ELIZABETH NOBLE (SISTER NIVEDITA): AN ANALYSIS:-

"I love India, as the birth-place of the highest and the best of all religions, as the country that has the grandest mountains, the Himalayas. The country where the homes are simple; where domestic happiness is most to be found; where the woman unselfishly, unobtrusively, ungrudgingly serve the dear ones from early morn to dewy eve."

"India, alone of all the nations of antiquity, is still young, still growing, still keeping a firm hold upon her past, still reverently striving to weave her future out of the past. Are not these things enough for any single people?"

"Other countries have produced art, chivalry, heroic poems, and inventive systems. In none of these has India been altogether wanting, yet none is her distinguishing characteristic. What, then, has she given to the world that is beyond all competition? Today her gifts are decried by all men, for today the mighty mother is become widowed and abased. She who has held open port to all fugitives is unable now to give bread to her own children. She who has prized knowledge above all her treasures finds her learning now without

value in the markets of the world. It is urged that the test of utility is the true standard for things transcendental, and that emancipation into modern commerce and mechanics is a worthier goal for her sons' striving than the old-time aim of knowledge for its own sake, the ideal for itself. And the modern world may be right. But, even so, has India in the past given nothing, without which our whole present would be the poorer?"

"The Indian people have heard, so far, of nothing but their weaknesses. The time has now come when they should meditate on their own strength and proceed to prove it."

"I believe that India is one, indissoluble, indivisible. National unity is built as the common home, the common interest and the common love."

"India is, above all others, the land of great women. Wherever we turn, whether to history or literature, we are met on every hand by those figures, whose strength she mothered and recognised while she keeps their memory eternally sacred. What is the type of woman we most admire? Is she strong, resourceful, inspired, and fit for moments of crisis? Have we not Padmini of Cheetore, Chand Bibi, Jhansi Rani? Is she saintly a poet, and a mystic? Is there not Meera Bai? Is she the queen, great in administration? Where is Rani Bhowani, where Ahalya Bai, where Jahnabi of Mymensingh? Is it wifehood in which we deem that woman shines brightest? What of Sati, of Savitri, of the ever glorious Sita? Is it in maidenhood? There is Uma. And where in all the womanhood of the world, shall be found another as grand as Gandhari?"

"Our history is not dead. It lives in us. History is only character unit large. Character is history in brief. While Egypt, Nineveh, and Babylon are dead, India lives and develops still, responds still to all the living influences of the world about her, and sees before her, as the individual unit that her development has made her, a long vista of growth and perfection to be achieved".

"India is a vast University, and every child born within her borders owes to her the

service of a student. Every life, however simple, helps to build up the inheritance for the future." (Nivedita, 1967)

-Needless to say all the above quotations, are pointers of Miss Margaret Elizabeth Noble, better known to the entire world as Sister Nivedita's, multifarious vision of India- her country of adoption- her own Motherland. Nivedita came to India in 1898 and dedicated the remaining years of her life for the "Jana-desha-dharma", the people, the land and the religion of the country of her adoption. (Nivedita, 1967) She had studied with meticulous care Indian ways of life, thoughts, legends, arts and architecture, so that, she might be fully equipped to play the role her, Master Swami Vivekananda wanted her to play, the role of the mistress, servant, friend in one to India. She saw clear before her eyes the path that must be followed to instil into India fresh life and vigour, so that she might be the, dynamic nation that every Indian's cherished dream was to see.

It is indeed a great fortune that Sister Nivedita who had so great a love for India, and so great an understanding, of Indian thought, should leave a record of her study in a considerable number of books and articles, which illuminates not only the entire vista of Indian life in a comparative estimate of western thought, but provide considerable insight into contemporary political and social movements.

Nivedita became known to a much wider circle of people through her books. Her literary talents helped her to write with ease on a great variety of subjects. We find a fine vein of deep mature reflection, without pedantry or bias, in all her writings, and they are written with such sincerity and earnestness that we cannot treat them as mere literary efforts. Though a polished diction and cultured style characterize her writings, their peculiar charm is their intense suggestiveness.

Her books may be roughly divided into biographical, interpretative and narrative. Among the biographical can be included *The Master as I Saw Him* , *Notes of Some*

Wanderings with Swami Vivekanda and *Kedarnath and Badrinarayan: A Pilgrim's Diary.*

In 1904, Swami Brahmananda told Nivedita to write the life of the Swami in English. But when she took up writing *The Master as I Saw Him*, she was doubtful about her own capacity in making the attempt. Hence in a mood of self- searching she took up her pen and began:

"It is after long thought and many questions that I at last take up my pen to write. Should I tell the story of your life, beloved Master? Alas, I cannot. You satisfied so many, widely diverse, in such widely diverse ways. Who am I, that I should understand it all? In what form do you appeal most deeply to the heart of India? to the Orthodox ? to the Modern ? Is it when, in your babyhood, you sit playing at the meditation of the Shiva-Yogi, or become intoxicated at the call of the begging Bairagi? Or is it in later years when you pass down the roadway, bowl in hand, begging from door to door? Or is it again, when you stand on a platform in a distant land, opening the treasures of your race to aliens, and through your utterance India hears the bell-note of her own name? Or in what form does your western world most love you? How did the Americans see you? How did you show yourself to the Englishman? Only one, whose own hands ranged over as wide a keyboard, could interpret adequately the music that you made. Therefore, I have given up the idea of attempting to write your life, and am content to record the story of my own vision and understanding only. How it began, how it grew, what memories I gathered; my tale will be a record of fragments, and no more. Yet do I pray that through this broken utterance some word of yours may here and there be heard some glimpse caught of the greatness of your Heart. (Nivedita, 1967)

In 1905 she realized how difficult the task was. "Oh, to have written the life of Swamiji ! ...To be properly written, Swamiji's should be all Swamiji. He should move through it, like JESUS through the Gospels, alone, unfettered, unshadowed. But I feel incapable of this, and

capable only of telling what I have seen in him." It was a real Sadhana for her and as she proceeded she felt the inspiration flowing within her. After writing a few chapters she hopefully said, "Of course, I know that, if I succeed, it will be the work of my life, the one thing, in fact, that I have to give. And I feel more and more that all that training was not really given to me, but to all the Indian generations through me, in some way. I am trusting, trusting, trusting that He will guide my hand, line by line, that I might write down those aspects of him that are Eternal, and be enabled to discard remorselessly all the rest." (Letters of Nivedita, 1982)

In beautiful verse, written by Mr. F.J. Alexander after her death, is described the fulfilment of her Sadhana:

Gone now the toil which was her aspiration
Her Master's Message the whole wide world to give.
The written page alone outlives the time
Her Spirit's fleeing to another world;
But Page, inspired, prophetic, resonant
With all she heard and saw and loved
In the Presence of that Light which was her God, Reflected in "The Master as I Saw Him." (Prabudha Bharat, qtd. Atmaprana, 1999)

She took five years to complete the book and on February 1, 1910, on Swami Vivekananda's birthday, she took a bound volume to the Belur Math and placed it reverentially in his room. It was acclaimed as a masterpiece in the literary world. Prof. T.K. Cheyne in his review of the book in the Hibbert Journal (January, 1911) wrote: "This book may be placed among the choicest religious classics, on the same shelf with the Confessions of Saint Augustine and Sabatier's Life of Saint Francis. The subtlety and grandeur of Vivekananda's teachings have been fully brought out in the book."

(Ghosh, 2001)

Notes of Some Wanderings with the Swami Vivekananda is a record of her travels with her Guru in Almora and Kashmir in 1898. It is in the form of a diary wherein the thoughts and impressions of Swami Vivekananda are jotted down. Kedarnath and Badrinarayan are written in the same style. She wrote it after her return from a pilgrimage to these holy ancient shrines in the heart of the Himalayas in (1910). The beauty of these two small books is that, though her style is subjective, there is very little of her in the book.

Kali the Mother was Nivedita's first book that was published. The book depicted 'Kali' as she appears to man in anguish as the Terrible, who plays with him as with a child and thereby selters him in love. The complicated conception was adequately explained in the book, which consisted of essays on various aspects of the subject. Two of its chapters "The story of Kali" and "The Vision of Shiva" were written in India, while the rest of the book was written in America in (1899). Behind the writing of this book was also Swamiji's inspiration.

In (1905) she was invited to Ridgely Manor by Betty Leggett. Sentimentally she wrote to Miss Mac Leod:

"I should love to be there once more. But it could not be this year. How much one had there! And there "Kali" was written. That was the dedication of all works - for I believe that He wrote it through me." (Letters of Nivedita, 1982) Actually Kali-worship was turned by Vivekananda to a political purpose. It was considered by him as 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. 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." (Nivedita qtd. Ghosh, 2001)

This Vision of Shiva was an inspired and inspiring piece of writing in Nivedita's book, *Kali the Mother*. "Shiva-ideal of Manhood, embodiment of Godhead. 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-severed 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!" (Nivedita, 1999)

The book was published in 1900 and was favourably reviewed. It cannot be called biographical, though it contains biographical accounts of two Hindu Saints - Ram Prasad and Sri Ramakrishna. In the chapter - Two Saints of Kali' which she dedicated to them, she goes on to write -

"Highest of all the poets stands the saint. His task is not to take the brilliant patches of love, and sorrow and heroism, and fit them into jewelled settings for the admiration of the many. He takes the whole of life, all the grey, sombre stuff of which it is chiefly made, and the blackest and the brightest with this, and throws on the whole a new light, till even in the eyes of those who suffer it, life is made beautiful. The dramatist deals only with dramatic motives, but to him all is dramatic. The petty needs of childhood are no less related to the World-Heart than the passion by which Othello slays Desdemona." (Nivedita, 1999)

Nivedita's vision of Ram Prasad was:

Apart from his passion of devotion to the Divine Motherhood, there is a whole conception of life in his mind which is unfamiliar to us. The East takes such an utterance as "the pure in heart shall see God" very literally. It places the ideal existence, not in salvation or in the condition of being delivered from sinfulness, but in this very power of direct perception of the Divine.It seems to the Asiatic mind that the body is an actual hindrance to cognition. It is not that meaning is conveyed by language, but

that mind is drawn near to mind. In unskilled speech, words may serve only to conceal thought, but in the most skilled they cannot do more than suggest it. Nerves do not create suffering, for the joy and sorrow that we share in imagination can be far keener than our own. And so this convention, of sight-sound-touch-taste-smell, under which we become aware of the not-myself, is merely a formula which deadens the Real for us till we are strong enough to bear it; and we must stay in the body, or return to it, till we have in some way mastered these conditions. (Nivedita, 1999)

And Sri Ramakrishna to Nivedita was:

"He, at least knew nothing of the difference made by wealth and learning in the world. He dismissed the most important man of his district with a frown from his presence because he stood upon his riches and his name; he would leave companies of distinguished persons to themselves; and he would spend hours listening to the confidences of an anxious woman about her home, or in the instruction of some nameless lad. Yet his touch fell on none lightly. A great preacher, known to the West as to the East, changed his teaching when he knew him, in this new thought of the Motherhood of God. And many of the strongest men in India to-day, sat at his feet in their boyhood. An unlettered peasant, from the Brahmins of the villages scarcely able to read and write he seemed, yet if original thought and wide reading are enough, he was a profound scholar. For he had a remarkable ear and memory that made him retain the sounds of the Sanskrit perfectly, with the translation, and as a vast quantity of literature was read and recited to him from time to time, he had acquired in this way an uncommonly large store."(Nivedita, 1999) Her interpretation of Kali, the Goddess in her own contribution to the theological and philosophical Ideas of the Hindus was:

"Arise, my child, and go forth a man! Bear manfully what is thy lot to bear; that which comes to thy hand to be done, do with full strength and fear not. Forget not that I, the

giver of manhood, the giver of womanhood, the holder of victory, am thy Mother. Think not life is serious! What is destiny but thy Mother's play? Come, be my play fellow awhile, meet all happenings merrily. Murmerest thou of need of purpose? Think'st thou the ball are purposeless, with which the Mother plays? Know'st thou not that her toy is a thunderbolt, charged with power to shatter the worlds, at the turn of her wrist? Ask not of plans. Needs the arrow any plan when it is loosed from the bow? Such art thou. When the life is lived, the plan will stand revealed. Till then, O child of time know nothing! My sport is unerring. For that alone set forth on the day's journey. Think it was for my pleasure thou earnest forth into the world, and for that again, when night falls, and my desire is accomplished, I shall withdraw thee to my rest. Ask nothing. Seek nothing. Plan nothing. Let my will flow through thee, as the ocean through an empty shell. But this thing understands. Not one movement shall be in vain. Not one effort shall fall at last. The dream shall be less, not greater; than the deed. Thou salt go here or there for some petty reason, and thy going shall sub serve great ends. Thou salt meet and speak with many, but some few shall be mine from the beginning. With these thou shall exchange a secret sign, and they shall follow with thee. And that sign? Deep in the heart of hearts of mine own flashes the sacrificial knife of Kali. Worshippers of the Mother are they from their birth in her incarnation of the sword. Lovers of death are they,-not lovers of life - and of storm and stress. Such shall come to thee with torch unlit for fire. My voice cries out over the teeming earth for lives, for the lives and blood of the crowned kings of men. Remember that I who cry have shown also the way to answer. For of every kind has the mother been the first, for protection of her flock, to leap to death." (Nivedita, 1999)

"Nivedita's" *Siva, Buddha* and *An Indian study of Love and Death*- all three written in beautiful poetic proses are also her contribution to the theological and

philosophical ideas of the Hindus.

The two articles of Nivedita, *Lambs among Wolves* and *Aggressive Hinduism*, which were later published in book form, were meant to counteract the half-truths and untruths about Indian social life spread in the West by Christian missionaries for their selfish ends. The defiant and aggressive note of the articles speaks of Nivedita's authority, knowledge and conviction. These two articles together with *The Web of Indian Life* and *Studies from an Eastern Home* attracted much attention as being systematic attempts to reveal the inner life of India. The sweetness of the Hindu way of life and the wide survey of women as they live and think in different parts of India reveal to many Indians themselves the wealth of interest and Romaince that lie hidden in their homes. The intense sympathy, kindness and love of Nivedita for India animate every sentence of the books.

Of these two books special mention may be made of the former, *The Web of Indian Life*. Nivedita first undertook to write the book in 1900 when she was in England. Mr. Romesh Chandra Dutt took great interest in her work and she wrote the first few chapters in England and Norway. She wrote on September 9th 1903 :

You will realise ... as no one else can, that it is not my book at all, but Swamiji's, and that my one hope about it is that I may have said the things that He would have liked said. As to whether this is so or not, you shall be judge. (Nivedita, 1982)

The book was finally brought to light in 1904. It was regarded as an epoch- making book and received world-wide celebrity within a few days of its publication. Almost all the leading newspapers, magazines and journals in India, England and America reviewed it, most of them favourably. Whether it was reviewed favourably or not, one thing was certain, that it attracted, on its own merits, widespread and serious attention as a book of revelation. As the reviewer of the London journal Queen wrote on August 24, 1904! "It is possible that the Western Women who read about their Hindu sisters will have to readjust

their ideas after reading Miss Noble's book. It would be well if those who gather their impressions of our Indian Empire solely from missionaries of preconceived ideas and little sympathy, or from the abstruse works of scholars, or the chatter of Anglo-Indians, were to revise the impressions they gathered from their sources by the light of this poetically written and scholarly book."(Ghosh, 2001)

The missionaries, as it could be easily understood, were angry at the publication of this book and redoubled their efforts to prove that it presented a picture idealized out of all relation to facts. Miss Amy Wilson Carmichael, a missionary lady, immediately after published a book entitled *Things as They Are* with the sole object of undoing Nivedita's work. Nivedita was aware of the reaction of the missionaries.

In a letter written to Miss MacLeod on February 2, 1905 she said: "We are beginning to have counter-blasts from the missionaries now to the book. Sometimes they are very funny, and always they express more than the poor author suspects. It is for India to understand my book and make the world admit that it is not half the truth."(Nivedita, qtd.in Atmaprana, 1999)

The strength and inspiration behind all the works of Nivedita was always Swami Vivekananda and more than once she expressed that sentiment. But when this book received such universal acclamation she could not but feel moved, and with deep emotions wrote to Miss MacLeod on July 26, 1904:

If, when you do dip into it, you recognize Swamiji at all, you will give me great happiness. I have worked for others as a hand or a tool, but Swami demanded the whole of my heart and head and being and left it to me to use them for Him. Both kinds of service, all kinds of service, are great and good, but this alone is all-absorbing, because this alone implies perfect faith. (Nivedita, 1982)

The other interpretative books are all collections of her writings scattered in various

newspapers and magazines. Thus *Religion and Dharma* contains the 'Occasional Notes' written by her in the *Prabuddha Bharata*. *Civic and National Ideals* is a small collection of short essays on cynicism, nationality, art and other topics. It was published in May 1919. *Hints on National Education in India* contains stimulating essays on national education, practical educational projects and educational needs of women and children. In the *Footfalls of Indian History* are collected some historical essays. In dedicating the book to *Mother India*, Nivedita wrote:

THE FOOTFALLS

We hear them, O Mother! Thy
footfalls,
Soft, soft, through the ages touching earth
here and there
And the lotuses left on Thy footprints are
cities historic,
Ancient scriptures and poems and temples, Noble
strivings, stern struggles for Right.

Where lead them, O Mother! Thy
footfalls?
O grants us to drink of their meaning! Grant us
the vision that blinded
The thought that for man is too high. Where lead
them, O Mother!
Thy footfalls?
Approach Thou, 0 Mother, Deliverer! Thy
children, Thy nurslings are we!

On our hearts is the place for Thy stepping, Thane own,

Bhumya Devi, is we.

Where lead them, O Mother! Thy

footfalls?

Even the hard-core Marxist would rejoice over the explicit manner in which Sister Nivedita had delineated the effect of time and place on men's character. So she saw the role of the Prophet of Arabia as a great nation-maker who had welded together the tribes into a mighty nation. The book is a fascinating account of the social and religious movements through the ages and their imprint on history. (Chakravarty, 1975)

Among the narratives are *Cradle Tales of Hinduism* and *Myths of the Hindus and Buddhists*. Both the books are narrations of stories from the Hindu Epics, the Puranas and Buddhist literature. The style is simple, but the books have abiding interest. During her first visit to America, Nivedita had taken up the programme of taking children's classes in schools and telling them stories from the Hindu literature. These stories were finally collected in these two books. They are distinct additions to world literature.

The latter book could not be completed by Nivedita. She died when only one- third of the book was written and Dr. A. K. Coomaraswamy took it upon himself to complete the book. *Civic Ideal and Indian Nationality* commences with this "Daily Aspiration for the Nationalist":

"I believe that India is one, indissoluble, indivisible. National unity is built on the common home, the common interest and common love.

I believe that the strength which spoke in the Vedas and Upanishads, in the making of religions and empires, in the learning of scholars, and the meditation of the saints, is born once more amongst us, and its name today is Nationality.

I believe that the present of India is deep-rooted in her past, and that before her shines a

glorious future.

O Nationality, come thou to me as joy or sorrow, as honour or as shame!

Make me thine own!" (Nivedita, 1967) This certainly seems as legitimate for the Indian nationalist today as it was then. Sister Nivedita stresses the point that nationality cannot survive without a strong sense of civic duty among the people. The ramifications of this position are fully set out in the book.

Hints on National Education in India are a masterly discussion of the requirements of a truly national education. The Introduction to the book calls for a compulsory period of service for young, educated people in the cause of spread of primary education. The papers on education that Sister Nivedita presents in the book stressed:

(i) the need for education being strictly oriented to the understanding of Indian life;

(ii) describes the three elements of education as mental preparedness for learning, absorption of the common social concepts and full human development;

(iii) emphasises the need for training of the emotion no less than that of the intellect;

(iv) Points to the need for directing education to the; duty of nation-making;

(v) Calls for inspiring education with national ideals based on national history and geography. Sister Nivedita proceeds to write on the illusion of the craze for foreign culture for its own sake. She includes in the book an essay on a subject on which she was never tired of writing -namely, the right type of education for Indian women.

Ancillary to this essay was "The Project of the Ramakrishna School for Girls." ‘Suggestions for the Indian Vivekananda Societies’that discussed the method and purpose of training of young men for social work. "Notes on Historical Research" gives useful pointers to

students of history. "A Note on Co-operation" is emphatic in tone. "The Place of the Kindergarten in Indian Schools" is an exhaustive and delightful discourse on the education of very young children. Two essays on 'Manual Training as a Part of General Education in India' completed the compendium on national education that the book really was.

Glimpses of Famine and Flood in East Bengal in 1906 open with these beautiful lines:

"There is no region, even in India, which was intended to compare, at once in extent and in fertility, with the wide- stretching delta-lands of East Bengal. Placed before the extreme mouths of the Ganges and the Brahmaputra, from Calcutta on the west to Chittagong on the east, and Dacca and Mymensingh on the north, lies this vast triangle of country, measuring as the crow flies s , something like two hundred miles or more every way. And it is painted, on the surface of Planet Earth, in nature's most vivid pigments of green and blue. Green for the fields and forests, the palms and the gardens and the grain; and blue, blue, blue, everywhere else, for the sky above and for the waters beneath. To those who know Holland, or even Venice, this land is full of subtle suggestions and reminiscences of distant beauty. For it, too, is a country snatched from the waters, though not by the hand of man. It, too, lies passive and half-expectant under the unbroken dome of heaven. In it, too, the white sail may suddenly come into vision at any moment, across the distant meadows. And it, too, bestows that irresistible calmness of benediction that comes to the infinitely small in the presence of the infinitely great." (Chakravarty, 1975)

The book is a down-to-earth narrative of the author's experiences in course of relief work in East Bengal. Many of her observations have a direct bearing on the problems East Bengal, now Bangladesh, has to face even today.

Altogether the literary creation of Sister Nivedita, presented a panorama of Indian life,

probing deep into the intricacies of Indian society and enabling the reader to live the whole span of existence, as it has been built up by the climate, the conditions, the traditions and the problems of the land that is India. A brief review of Sister Nivedita's "Interpretation of the course of Indian History", also unfailing throws much deserved light on her literary activities. Nivedita keenly felt the need for a thorough rewriting and reconstruction of India's history on a truthful and sound basis. In her writings we find abundant proofs of her knowledge of Indian history, particularly religious history. But she felt that there was need for rediscovering India from her ancient past to later phases. At her time knowledge of Indian history was very limited and inadequate. Available historical works at the time were mostly written by Britishers. In these works distorted accounts were furnished of India's history. That made the task of re-writing of India's history on truly national lines all the more urgent.

In an interesting letter to the historian Dr. Radha Kumud Mukherjee, Sister Nivedita strongly emphasised the need for proper historical research in India. In this connection she mentioned several points. We may note these one by one. She wrote:

"In all that you do, be dominated by the normal air. Remember that Truth, in its fullness, is revealed, not only through the intellect, but also through the heart, and the will." (Nivedita, 1982)

The historical research-worker must have a strong moral sense and a deep regard for truth. This meant that even if some unpleasant facts were found, these also had to be recorded. Another implication of proper research was that the approach was not only to be intellectual, but it was also to be guided by the heart and will. That is to say, a deep feeling and a firm determination were also to be guiding factors, there was to be the element of sympathy, and also the will to know.

“Never be contented with the ideas and the wisdom which are gathered study. We are bodies, as well as minds. We have other senses and other faculties, besides those of language. We have limbs, as well as brains. Use the body. Use all the senses; use even the limbs, in the pursuit of truth. That which is learned, not only with the mind, by means of manuscripts and books, but also through the eyes and the touch, by travel and by work, is really known. Therefore, if you want to understand India, visit the great historic centres of each age. (Nivedita, 1982)

In other words, all the powers of mind and body must be used to the full. Important historical centres must also be visited in order to gain the right perspective.

“Never forget the future. 'By means of the Past to understand the Present, for the conquest of the Future'. Let this be your motto. Knowledge without a purpose is mere pedantry.” (Nivedita, 1982)

This is a highly significant instruction. Historians usually become too much involved in the past. To discover and reveal the past becomes often the consuming passion of the historian. In that event historical research misses its true aim. It becomes purposeless. The right procedure will be to know first the past, then to understand the past in the light of the present, and then with the fund of knowledge thus acquired the attempt should be made to mould the future. Thereby a high purpose is fulfilled. “And now comes the question of the scope of your work, the question of what you are actually to do. On two points I know you to be clear,- first, you are determined, whatever you do, through it to serve the Indian Nationality, and second, you know that to do this, you must make yourself a world-authority in that particular branch of work.” (Nivedita, 1982)

Thus, the historian is to have two high ambitions. First, through his knowledge he must endeavour to serve the cause of the nation. Secondly, he should study his subject so

deeply and widely that he may become an international authority in his branch of specialisation.

She also points out that the field of labour may be wide to such extent that the Indian may truly assimilate the modern spirit. Three elements are important- Modern science, Indian History; and the world-sense or geography. A person may specialise in any one of those three, but he may also try to have a broad background of historical knowledge.

To illustrate the above point, she said:

"If you were a worker in science, you might read a good deal of History, in interesting forms, as recreation. And so on. One of the modes by which a line of high research becomes democratised is just this. But whatever you do, plunge into it heart and soul. Believe that, in a sense, it alone, this modern form of knowledge, young though it is true. Carry into it no prepossessions, no prejudices. Do not try, through it, to prove that your ancestors understood all things."(Nivedita, 1982)

In other words the spirit of work must be thoroughly scientific, absolutely free from any bias or prejudice. There should not in particular, be the tendency to glorify the past (our ancestors) in an emotional way "and now as to the subject itself. Already you have progressed in the direction of History and Indian Economics. It is to be supposed therefore that your work itself will be somewhere in this region. But side by side with your own specialism... do not forget to interest yourself in subjects as whole." (Nivedita, 1982) In this context Nivedita suggested that a person studying history must study geography also. Similarly, the specialist in geography must study history also. This is a very practical suggestion, because there is a close interconnection between the two subjects. Another point made by Nivedita in this context is- "Again if Indian History be your work of research, read the finest European treatises on western History. They may not always be valuable for their facts, but they are priceless for their

methods." (Nivedita, 1982)This is also a highly instructive suggestion. This will not only broaden the horizon of knowledge, but will ensure a thorough training in methods of historical research. To Nivedita it is India, the spirit and soul of India that should catch the imagination of the Indian historian. He should feel intensely the heartbeat of the Indian people. Indian nationalism should be the mainspring of his inspiration no matter in what branch of history he is specialising.

Indian Art was yet another field in which Nivedita's contribution was no less, remarkable. She wrote-

"Hinduism, in one of its aspects, is neither more nor less than a peat school of symbolism. The appeal of this symbolism, moreover, is universal. It matters not what is the language spoken, neither does it matter that whether the reader is literate or illiterate, the picture tells its own story, and tells it unmistakably. Every peasant, every humblest bazaar-dweller, understands and loves a picture, a pot, a statue, a decorative emblem of any sort. The eye for culture is perfect in this land, as it is said to be in Italy; and the ancient habit of image- worship has made straight and short and much travelled, the road from eye to heart. Nature's greatest beauties, like those of the soul, are spiritual and elusive. The highest art is always charged with spiritual intensity, with intellectual and emotional revelation. It follows that it requires the deepest and finest kind of education. For Art, like science, like education, like industry, like trade itself, must now be followed. For the remaking of the Mother-land and for no other aim." (Nivedita, 1982)

It would not be an exaggeration to say that her name will ever shine in the history of the revival of the ancient Indian art of the Ajanta, Rajput and Mogul styles. She was not an artist, but was an erudite judge of art and her inspiration, encouragement and guidance helped many a young artist to tread the obliterated tracks of ancient Indian art. She believed that the rebirth of art was essential to the remaking of the nation. Her appreciation

of the ideals of Indian art and her passion for its revival were derived from Swami Vivekananda. During her travels in northern India with the Swami in 1899, she understood the spiritual importance of Indian Fine Arts. Closely associated in this sphere with Nivedita was an Englishman, who can be considered as the foremost of the group of art connoisseurs and who brought about the aesthetic revival in India. He was Mr. E. B. Havell, head of the School of Art in Calcutta. He said to Nivedita: "I can teach a man to draw and paint, but I cannot make him an artist or a genius."(Letters of Nivedita, qtd.Ghosh, 2001) Nivedita emphatically replied that she believed that love for country, love of fellowmen, pride of birth, hope for the future and dauntless passion for India could create wonders; these could make heroes out of dolts and original geniuses out of copyists.

"Nivedita first met Mr. Havell in 1902. She had paid a visit to the Art School and was glad to know that Mr. Havel's views about Indian art tallied with her own. He often had discussions with Nivedita for he was eager to understand the mystery and esoteric meaning of Indian art. Nivedita instructed him as best as she could. Mr. Nandalal Bose has said: 'I do not know whether Havell has mentioned the name of the Sister anywhere in his books; but she made him understand the viewpoints of Indian aesthetics and philosophy of art.' He was the first foreigner to point out that Indian art was original and was not derived from Greece and that the Greeks no more created Indian Sculpture and Painting than they created Indian Philosophy and Religion. Throughout his published writings, Mr. Havell answered the charge of the derivate character of Indian art. For his outspoken views he had to suffer the displeasure of his compatriots, as Nivedita once said, "Poor Havell! He had to suffer persecution at the hands of the prejudiced Anglo-Indian officialdom."(Atmaprana, 1999)

Mr. Ananda Coomaraswamy expressed the same views. In her own writings she also tried to disprove the fiction of the Hellenic influence in creating the ideals of Indian art.

Thus the three made a united effort to dispel the long-standing prejudice and misapprehension of the Western orientalises as to the claims and ideals of Indian art. The other contribution of Nivedita, Havel and Coomaraswamy was to define the function of Art schools in India. Besides Calcutta, there were Art schools in Madras, Travancore, Lahore and Bombay where the teachers were foreigners and the system followed was also foreign. These three declared unequivocally that the function of the Art school in India was not to introduce European methods and ideals but to bring up and reconstruct the Indian traditions which were rapidly approaching extinction.

When Nivedita came in contact with Mr. Abanindranath Tagore, the Vice- Principal of the Calcutta Art School, she saw that he too was imbued with foreign ideas. Due to Nivedita's influence he later turned to the Indian style. He acknowledged that she had opened the eyes of the Indians to the beautiful aspects of their own country, their own art and their own institutions. Her strong and clear vision of renaissance in art always appealed to him. She once said: "Art must be reborn."

When Abanindranath adopted the Indian style of art, Nivedita was full of praise for him. When his 'Bharat-Mata' or 'India the Mother' was painted, she was in ecstasy and wrote: "We see in this drawing something for which Indian art has long been waiting, the birth of the idea of those new combinations which are to make the modern age in India." (Nivedita, 1982)

Later, she got his paintings reprinted in the Modern Review and wrote critical notes on them. Mr. Ramananda Chatterjee translated her notes into Bengali and had them printed in the Bengali magazine *Prabasi*. Let it not be understood from this that in her passion to see beauty in everything Indian Nivedita was blind to the beauties of Western art. No, she was not. In order to demonstrate the true ideals of Western art she got reprints of good paintings, mostly religious ones, and got them printed in the *Modern Review*

with critical notes. These were also translated into Bengali and published in the *Prabasi*. Thus she made Indians familiar with great Western masters like Raphael, Michelangelo, Millet, Rossetti, Titian, Morris And Burne-Jones, to mention a few.

With Abanindranath veering off the beaten track of imitation of foreign art the Art movement in India received a new vigour. Round him clustered his students and a new School of Art, known later as the Calcutta School grew up. His students like Mr. Nandalal Bose, Mr. Surendranath Ganguly, Mr. Asit Kumar Haldar and Mr. Venkatappa later became famous artists, demonstrate their genius in the sphere of painting and established for themselves the foremost place in Indian art.

Nivedita took deep interest in the work of the younger group of artists and encouraged them. She got their paintings published in magazines and wrote critical notes on them. She met the artist Nandalal Bose when he was a student in the Art School. She visited the school one day and was impressed by Nandalal's paintings. She inspected some of his paintings and pointed out the defects. For instance, seeing the picture of Mother Kali she said, "The image is not in proper order. Why have you put so many garments on her? Kali is sky-clad, she is Fearless and she is the Destroyer. Read the poem on Kali by Swamiji." (Nivedita, 1982)

Thus it is difficult to portray the extraordinary personality of Sister Nivedita. In appearance she was tall and fair, clad in a white silk gown with a rosary of Rudraksha beads around her neck, she naturally drew the attention of everyone. But more arresting was her countenance. Mr Nevinson- the British correspondent beautifully said: "It is as vain to describe Sister Nivedita in two pages, as to reduce fire to a formula and call it knowledge. There was indeed, something flame-like about her, and not only her language but her whole vital personality often reminded me of fire. Like fire, and like Shiva, Kali and other Indian powers of the spirit, she was at once destructive and creative, terrible and

beneficent. There was no dull tolerance about her. I suppose none called her gentle. Even with friends her disagreement could be vehement, and her contradiction was very direct. In the face of the evening her eyes turned to glowing steel, and under anger they deepened in colour, like Garibaldis. Her scorn of presumptuous ignorance and her indignation at wrong were blasting. I do not doubt that rage lacerated her own heart, but she withered the enemy up. No one would call her gentle. But of all nobly sympathetic natures, she was amongst the finest." (Atmaprana, 1999)

Combined thus with a keen intellect was a noble heart. There was no one who was not filled with admiration and reverence for this noble personality.

Katherine Mayo and Sister Nivedita could not have been more different. One: a champion of the Empire and the other: a Prophet's emissary. But needless to say, that both these powerful western women, pointed to concerns that rocked the Indian subcontinent for years to come, and perhaps will continue to do so. It is true that Mayo had a very negative approach and poor opinions about India, but it is also to be agreed that many of those opinions were true and it indeed helped us to awaken from our slumber and work towards modifications of our own faults. Nivedita on the other hand, occupies the foremost position among Western Women who came to India and contributed towards India's enlightened development.

CHAPTER 3

RESPONSES OF WESTERN WOMEN ON INDIA: AN ANALYSIS-

(C)ANNIE BESANT, A THEOSOPHIST AND POLITICAL ACITIVIST.

(D) MADELEINE SLADE (MIRA BEHN), A POLITCAL AND SOCIAL WORKER.

Apparently it was Mrs Annie Besant's zeal for Theosphy that brought her to India in the year 1893. But history proved differently when she surpassed her zeal as a Theosophist and emerged as one of the foremost social and political activist of India. Mrs. Besant's Home Rule Movement made India stand stronger for her freedom.Quiet contrary to Mrs. Besant, Madeleine Slade (Mira Behn) arrived in India simply guided by her love and veneration for the Mahatma. But over the period of time Mira Behn, not only proved herself as one of the most trusted companion and disciple of Bapu but also stood for the cause of India and its environment, even after her beloved Bapu's death. This chapter attempts to delve into the complex nuances of Mrs. Besant's and Madeleine Slade's characters and their political and social engagement with India. The chapter also tries to analyse the everlasting role played by these two women in India.

ANNIE BESANT: A THEOSOPHIST AND POLITICAL ACTIVIST:-

"The life story of Mrs.Annie Besant (1st October, 1847- 20th September 1933) is more than the story of an individual life. She has been always not only a personality but also a potent; she has lived more publicly than privately. Mrs Besant's whole career has been series of explosions of increasing force and effectiveness. The metaphor which comes much more aptly to mind is that of an express train speeding irresistibly on a head long progress continued day after day, year after year, decade after decade, with ever gathering momentum. The traversed landscape seems, as one looks back upon it, littered with the discarded coaches of Christianity, Marriage, Free thought, Malthusianism, Radicalism, Democracy, Republicanism, Trade Unionism, Fabians and Atheism. Today her load is heavier than ever before- her theosophy, Indian education, Indian Nationalism, the World Teacher, and the New Civilization. We catch only the more prominent names as she goes flashing past us. Her Theosophical labours may seem to be the working to a climax, but even the coming of the World Teacher can mark only a crest looking forward to a new and wider horizons, and as

these words are written she is taking up once more with renewed vigour the fight for Indian Home Rule"- such were the words used by Geoffrey West, to introduce Annie Besant in his work "*The life of Annie Besant*".

Annie Wood, as she was known till her marriage, was born on the 1st of October 1847 in London. Both her parents were of Irish descent. Though technically an English woman, born in London, in essences however Annie Besant loved the Irish and Irish ways. She remarked "the Irish tongue is musical in my ear and the Irish nature dear to my heart". (Aiyer, 1963 p9)

Annie's father died of consumption when she was five years old. She says of him that "he was keenly intellectual and splendidly educated a mathematician and a good classical scholar, a master of French, Italian, German, Spanish and Portuguese, with the smattering of Hebrew and Gaelic." It is worthy of remark, in view of her later development, that her father, though he was a student of philosophy, was deeply and steadily sceptical. He outgrew the orthodox beliefs of his days. Her mother was, however, deeply religious although, as she herself remarks, "she put on one side as errors the doctrines of eternal punishment, vicarious atonement and the infallibility of the Bible." (Besant, 2008 p11)

Very remarkably, in her early days, Annie Besant took her religion most seriously. As her mother lay dying, she said to Annie, "My dear, you have always been too religious". (Besant, 2008) As a child, Annie was mystical and imaginative, seeing visions and dreaming dreams. She was sensitive to impressions other than only physical ones. In the family in which she belonged elves and fairies were very real to them.

The childhood of Annie Besant was a period of struggle and anxiety on the part of her mother on account of financial troubles. Mrs Wood resolved that her son should be educated in Harrow. She carried out that scheme although she was practically penniless. She kept a boarding house and maintained herself and educated her son at Harrow on the proceeds. The

task of looking after Annie was taken over by Miss Marryat, sister of the famous novelist, Captain Marryat, Miss Marryat was a born teacher and she pioneered in many ways, the training of children on the basis of the least pain and most enjoyment to themselves, a system analogous to that evolved by Madame Montessori, who later on co- operated with Annie Besant in the educational sphere.

From the earliest years of her public work, Annie Besant insisted upon the importance of the early years of education. “In every transition stage of the world’s history”, she writes in an early pamphlet, “The question of education naturally comes to the front. So much depends on the first impressions of childhood, on the first training of the tender shoot, that it has always been acknowledged from Solomon to Forster that to “train up a child in the way he should go” is among the most important duties of fathers and citizens.”(Besant, 1874 p3)

Annie Besant took upon strong stand against the teaching to children of Sectarian and one sided religious doctrines, and against such teaching, she made a passionate and eloquent plea in a passage which, for sentiment, sincerity and expression, is one of the finest in all her works. “True religion”, she writes, “consists not only in feelings towards God, but also in duties towards men, the first, noble and blessed as they are should, in every healthy religion, give place to the second, for a morally good man who does not believe in God at all, is in a far higher state of being than the man who believes in God and is selfish, cruel and unjust. Error in faith is forgivable; error in life is fatal. The good man shall surely see God, although, for a time, his eyes be Holden:, the evil man, though he hold the noblest faith yet known, shall never taste the joy of God, until he turns from sin, and struggles after holiness. (Besterman, 1874 p5)

Miss Marryat’s tutelage lasted just over seven years. For the first five years most of the time, always excepting the holiday periods, was spent at Fern Hill, a house near Charmouth village,

on the Devon Border of Dorset, where Miss Marryat conducted a Sunday school and Bible class. This was a time of pervasive materialism in England. "It was not the philosophic materialism of the few, but the religious materialism of the many. Annie's education, however, was accented on the religious side and her favourite books were '*The Pilgrim's Progress*' and Milton's '*Paradise Lost*'. Curiously sensitive as she was, she says that she was pained because she could not look back to an hour of 'Conversions', that she felt that her dreamy language were very poor things compared with the vigorous "sense of sin" spoken of by the preachers." (Aiyer, 1963 p10)

Annie was thirteen and a half when in the springs of 1861; she went abroad for the first time with Miss Marryat and two other children. They travelled from London to Antwerp to Bonn. There they spent three months, exploring the lovely country side and rowing on the rivers before returning home. Two months later, in the autumn, they joined Miss Marryat in Paris, to spend their time together. When not engaged in actual lessons; they visited art galleries, and famous churches, gardens and monuments. It is important to observe the practical way in which Miss Marryat taught her charges, not only what those with advantages owe to those without, but also that aid can only be given at the cost of self sacrifice and efforts. No good she insisted, could come simply by wishing it, it was necessary to take definite action by one self. Miss Marryat, at home as well as abroad, believed in her children having plenty of fun and exercise. They were taught riding and went for long walks and pleasant picnics. Annie was always glad to return to Harrow and to her beloved mother, but she was not all unhappy while away. Miss Marryat's religion was however of a sterner variety, evangelical, almost Calvinistic. It meant for her children the learning of Epistles, and chapters of the Bible by heart, and prayer, meetings at which the children in turn, at 'Aunty's' request, 'spoke to lord'. (Besant, 2008) For Annie, she took it so seriously that she grew morbidly pious professing to

suffer for conscience's sake rather than to taste the unanchored joys of theatre or of ball, and as she started growing, her religious devotions, got strengthened.

Training apart, Annie Wood was evidently intelligent child quick- witted eager to learn. In the summer of 1862, Miss Marryat proposed Annie and another of her pupils, for their separation from her. 'More and more' writes Annie Besant in her autobiography, "We were trained to work alone; our leading strings were slackened so that we never felt them save when we blundered". For the winter, they went to London, Annie attending French classes. At the end of the period "Aunty told me that she thought, all she could usefully do was, done, and that it was time that I should try my wings alone". She had done her work well; Mrs Besant declares "supervision ceased, but not the desire for study."(Besant, 2008 p38) Already so early, there may be noted in Annie Wood, the characteristics, which were to shape her life. A fundamental emotionalism appeared in her devotion to her mother and her God, and she longed to make herself, a sacrifice, a personal and dramatic sacrifice by martyrdom. Her religion thus was no salvation from the sorrows and terrors of life, of which she knew nothing, what she sought in sacrifice was simply the emotional pleasure of giving. It was then, ironically enough, her excess of piety combined with her utter ignorance of life, which brought upon her the two main tragedies of her early life.

Her first doubts which finally were to lead to her rejection of Christianity and her marriage. The former was in essence a tragedy of too much believing. She had accepted everything so completely at its face value that when she discovered even one falsity, her whole edifice of faith collapsed; the latter was rather a tragedy of difference, she had never needed to depend upon herself and now when necessity came, when all her being warned her against a course which was being forced on her, she could do nothing. (West, 1929 p30)

In 1886, Annie was introduced to a clergyman, Rev, Frank Besant, "she became engaged to the young clergyman, not because she loved him particularly, or had even the faintest conception of what marriage entailed, but only because it seemed as if, he, being a clergyman, could by his very office bring her nearer to God. The position of a clergymen's wife she remarked, seems second only to that of a nun, and its attractiveness had very little to do with personality of the particular clergyman, who is selected to discharge the sacred functions. When she consented to marry Mr. Besant, she gave up with a sigh of regret her dreams of the religious life, and substituted for them the work, which would have to be done as the wife of a Parish priest, labouring in the church and among the poor. She reluctantly consented to marry a man she did not much care for, because she believed him, by virtue of his office, a half- angelic creative and, to her, wedlock was only a means of self devotion to the cause of the poor and the service of the church. Just before her marriage Miss Wood made her first acquaintance with the religions of political storm and stress in which she was there after to swell. It was by Mr. Robert, that she was first initiated into Radicalism. Mr. Robert, was the Radical lawyer of Manchester, well known for his readiness to fight a poor man's battle, and it was when she was on a visit at his house in Manchester that she first actually participated as a spectator in one of those stormy and tragic interludes of politics, in which she has subsequently passed so much of her life. Mr. Robert was the solicitor for the Irishmen who were tried and hanged at Manchester for the murder of Sergeant Brett. The Irish national anthem, 'God save Ireland' owes its inspiration to the execution that followed that trial." (Stead, 1946)

It was in this year of 1867 that Annie Besant first got to be acquainted with the work of Charles Bradlaugh and as she says, she read with deep emotion the leading article dated 24th November in the National Reformer edited by him. It appeared under the caption "Where is our boasted English freedom?" (Aiyer, 1963 p13)

In her autobiography, Mrs Besant writes-

“I have found, with a keen sense of pleasure, that Mr. Bradlaugh and myself were in 1867 to some extent co workers, although we knew not of each other’s existence, and although he was doing much, and I only giving such poor sympathy as a young girl might, who was only just awakening to the duty of political work.” (Besant, 2008 p59)

“It is not necessary to say, much about the Rev. Frank Besant. He had a trying part to fill and it may be permissible to say, that he was hardly equal to the task. He was a clergy man, conventional and conservative. He had brought home a wild young thing whose heart was aflame with the passion of political sympathy with the Irish and the Radicals. She could not be the bride of Heaven and therefore became the bride of Mr. Frank Besant. He was hardly an adequate substitute.” (Stead, 1946 p29)

“In December 1867, I sailed out of the safe harbour of my happy and peaceful girlhood on to the wide sea of life, and the waves broke roughly as soon as the bar was closed. We were ill matched pair, my husband and I, from the very outset, he with very high ideas of a husband’s authority and a wife’s submission holding strongly to the ‘master- in- my-own-house theory’, thinking much of the details of home arrangement, precise, methodical, easily angered and with difficulty appeased. I, accustomed to freedom, indifferent to home details, impulsive, very hot- tempered, and proud as Lucifer” writes Mrs. Besant in her autobiography.

“Two children were born, first a boy and then a girl, the latter was seven months old, when she became the unconscious instrument in waking the stifled doubts of her mother. It was from a baby’s cradle that the impulse came which drove Mrs. Besant from the Christian fold. Little Mabel Besant, like other infants had whooping cough and it so bad that her life was despaired of, and more than once she was believed to have actually died. Thanks, however, to her mother’s tender care, the child survived. But its mother’s faith was rudely shattered she

tells us that during these silent weeks that she sat with a dying child on her knees, watching for death, until she collapsed from sheer exhaustion, the important change of mind took place. No one who reads the account which Mrs. Besant has given of the horror of that terrible time can doubt the reality and sincerity of her struggle against unbelief." (Stead, 1946 p30)

Explaining her mental state, Mrs. Besant writes in her Autobiography, how she collapsed physically and yet rose up to face her struggle which continued for about three years and which in the end transformed her to an atheist from a pioused Christian. She goes on to write in her autobiography: -

"It was the long months of suffering through which I had been passing, with the seemingly purposeless first stunning blow at my belief in God as a merciful deal, and had marked the patient suffering of their lives; my idolized mother had been defrauded by a lawyer she had trusted, and was plunged into debt by his non- payment of the sums that should have passed through his hands to others; my own bright life had been enshrouded by pain and rendered to me degraded by an intolerable sense of bondage, and here was my helpless, sinless baby tortured for weeks and left frail and suffering. The smooth brightness of my previous life made all the disillusionment more starling and the sudden plunge into conditions so new and so unfavourable dazed and stunned me. My religious past became the worst enemy of the suffering present. All my personal belief in Christ, all my intense continual prayer of realization of his Presence, all were against me now. The very height of my trust was the measure of the shock when the trust gave way."

Conventional consolations and conventional prayers seemed to be an aggravation of suffering. Her attitude, led to grave quarrels, between husband and wife. Her religious wretchedness increased the unhappiness of home life. But in spite of all her outer troubles,

she made up her mind to examine Christianity and its dogmas. She could never say, 'I believe' where she had no proof. She began to study heretical books including the works of Robertson, Brooke, Stanley, Greg, Matthew Arnold, Litton, Mansel and others. She found relief from mental strain in practising social welfare work, nursing the sick and helping the poor. She then learnt many truths regarding agricultural labour and she studied the activities of Agricultural Labour Unions which at that time, incidentally, were opposed by the farmers who gave no work to a Union man. She then came across the Rev. Charles Voysey, the theist preacher. She began to emphasize the humanity of Christ at the expense of the divinity of Christ. She was then faced with the problem that "if she gave up belief in Christ as God, she must give up Christianity as a creed." (Aiyer, 1963 p14-15) She had a brief correspondence with Dr. Pusey but was not convinced. By 1872 she came across Mr. And Mrs. Scott who made their home a centre of heretical thought and Annie Besant's Free Thought essay was written for Thomas Scott.

She thereafter declined to attend the Holy Communion and, when asked, she boldly stated that she did not have the honesty required on the part of the communicant. It was in 1872 that, tormented as she was by her doubts and living an unhappy domestic life, she nevertheless engaged herself in strenuous nursing activity during a severe epidemic which broke in the form of typhoid fever in the village of Sibsey. And it was at that time that she paid a momentous visit to the Sibsey church. The idea suddenly struck that she must preach and she felt that she could speak if she had the chance.

By 1873 the marriage tie was broken. The alternative was given by her husband "conformity or exclusion from home; in her language, hypocrisy or expulsion." (Aiyer, 1963) Her mother was heart- broken but realised the gravity of her problem. For some time, Annie Besant tried fancy needle work and she became a governess. Her children fell ill and she, with her mother, set up the house together.

“Mrs Besant was now fairly launched. She was a lady, unattached, with a baby daughter to look after, and a small annuity. She went to live with her mother, who was also in straitened circumstances, and passed through the usual dismal experience of the gentle woman, seeking employment. She found little work of the paying kind, except occasional nursing and the writing of free thought pamphlets for Mr. Scott.” (Stead, 1946 p52)

She wrote for Mr. Scott, pamphlets on Inspiration, Atonement, Mediation and Salvation, Eternal Torture, Religious Education of Children, and National Religion, as opposed to revealed religion. (Aiyer, 1963) She had long discarded Christianity, and thought, study, and discussion brought her at last to face the question of whether God, in any ordinary meaning of the word, could be said to exist. After her mother’s death, her struggle became even harder. Often she worried go out to study at the British Museum “so as to have my dinner in town”, “the said dinner being conspicuous by its absence.” She writes, “Recalling those days of hard living, I can now look on them without regret. More, I am glad to have passed through them, for they have taught me how to sympathize with those who are struggling, as I struggled than, and I never can hear the words, fall from pale lips, ‘I am hungry’, without remembering how painful a thing hunger is, and without curing that pain, at least for the moment.” (Besant, 2008 p106)

For Mrs. Besant, Theism started fading. She started attended lectures and reading works on Philosphy of Hamilton and Mill and gradually stopped praying and gravitated naturally and of necessity into Atheism. July 1874, brought in significant changes in Mrs. Besant’s life. Attracted by the title, one day she happened to buy a copy of the newspaper, ‘National Reformer’ and learnt of the existence of the National Secular Society, an organization for the propagandist of Free Thought. National Secular Society was the brain child of Charles Brad laugh who was the spearhead of the English Free thought Movement of the day. The Newspaper ‘National Reformer founded in 1860 outlived many difficulties and by 1874, had

a circulation extending to many parts of the world and was paying its way, if not making much profit. (West, 1929 p70-72)

Eloquence, fire, sarcasm, pathos, passion of Bradlaugh's knowledge and language made Mrs. Besant, an ardent member of the society, and sparked a long lasting friendship between the duos. "From the first meeting in the Hall of Science started a friendship that lasted unbroken till Death severed the earthly bond and that to me stretches through Death's gateway and links us together still', writes Mrs. Besant in her Autobiography, regarding her friendship with Charles Bradlaugh.

Strengthened by this friendship and fortified by Bradlaugh's example, Mrs Besant progressed from stage to stage; and in a chapter in her Autobiography entitled, "*Atheism as I Knew and Taught it*", she says:

"Proceeding to search whether any idea of God was attainable, I came to the conclusion that evidence of the existence of a conscious Power was lacking and that the ordinary proofs offered were inconclusive; that we could grasp phenomena and no more."

Mrs Besant was appointed a staff of the 'National Reformer' newspaper, and was paid a weekly salary of a guinea. Her work, it is said, widened the appeal of the paper and increased its circulation. She remained a regular contributor until Bradlaugh's death in 1891. She was the sub editor from 1877 onwards, and from 1881-1887 her name appeared with Brad laugh as co- editor.

Her first contribution to the secularist weekly appeared in the issue dated August 30th 1874. Under the general title of 'Day Break', she adopted the nom de plume 'Ajax'. In the same month, on August 25th she gave a first public lecture at the Co- operative Institute in Castle Street off Oxford Street. Her subject was The Political Status of Women and though she

recalls her nervousness up to the moment of facing the audience, Brad laugh thought it probably the best speech by women he had ever heard. A month later she spoke again, at a chapel in London Town, on 'The Time Basis of Morality' which since became one of the most frequently dealt subject of her lecture, in the platform of National Secular Society.

From 1875, Mrs Besant started her career as lecturer on Free Thought and undertook lecture tours. She says that lecturing acted as a tonic for her. She consulted a doctor as the possibility of her being able to stand on a platform and speak. The answer was "It will cure you or kill you", and she says that it cured her and she grew strong and vigorous. She went about the country speaking upon religion and politics, greeted alternatively with cheers and stones, but making everywhere a deep and deepening impression. It was a magnificent training for her later career. (West, 1929 p77)

There could be no question of her success as a lecturer from the first, favourable comments appeared, she was declared unequalled for force and eloquence, at Aberdeen they found her power as a speaker a strong contrast to her deceptive gentleness of manner and appearance, and when she spoke for the first time in the Hall of Science- the London centre of Free though and Radicalism, on the Gospel of Christianity and the Gospel of Free Thought on February 28th 1875, the audience, accustomed as it was to the trained eloquence of Bradluagh and other leaders, at the end of her eloquent peroration cheered again and again. Tom Mann, (1856-1941), the noted British Trade Unionist, and popular public speaker, hearing Mrs Besant speak in 1875, wrote in his memoirs, "Mrs. Besant transfixed me, her superb control of voice, her whole sorted devotion to the cause she was advocating, her love of the down trodden, and her appeal on behalf of a sound education for all children, created such an impression upon me that I quietly, but firmly, resolved that I would ascertain more correctly the why and where fore of her creed". Hypatia Bradlaugh Bonner recalls her "a very fluent, with a great command of language, and her voice carried well, her throat, weak at first,

rapidly gained in strength, until she became a most forcible speaker. She herself loved speaking, it gave her a deep personal pleasure and sense of power, and, moreover, she always made sure that she had something to say when she spoke." Mrs. Bonner also stresses: "Tireless as a worker, she could both unite and study longer without rest and respite than any other person I have known : and such was her power of concentration that she could work under circumstances that which would have confounded almost every other person." (West, 1929 p78)

It was at this time Bradlaugh's influence was of the greatest possible help to her; it was primarily practical. He set before her an example of what patience, strength, and certainty may accomplish. Spiritually he was rigid; in the seventies he was already set, while she was still developing. Without entering into a detailed examination of Mrs Besant's writings, at least the position, which she and Bradlaugh defended, the principles they fought for must be made clear. The first fundamental point to insist upon is the essentially practical moral basis of her attitude. Her change from Christianity to Atheism was a turning from responsible God to responsible man, to a belief in man, "in man's redeeming powers, in man's remoulding energy; in man's approaching triumph, through knowledge, love, and work." She continuously thought on the importance of moral. In her first pamphlet, the True Basis of Morality (1874), she urged that "only utility can afford us a sure basis, the reasonableness of which will be accepted alike by thoughtful students and hard headed artisans." In her essay, 'On the Nature and the Existence of God', she emphasized on the need for fighting superstitions "because they hinder the advancement of the race." "In 1877 she stumbled, into one of the most important and far reaching of all controversies, with which her name got associated. The stand which together with Mr. Bradlaugh and she took in vindicating the right to print and publish physiological works discussing the best method of checking over the multiplication of population of the planet, led her almost without intending it, into the heart

of the neo- Malthusian Controversy." (Besterman, 1874) The law took its course, both Mr. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant was arrested, tried before the Committee and consequently, Mrs Besant lost custody of her child. Her health broke down, but she took steps to set aside the order. The Court of Appeal upheld in 1879, the absolute right of the father, but allowed her the right of access to the child. She was now as never before, firmly, a public figure.

Mrs Besant's own experiences made her a champion of the right of women. In her pamphlet 'Marriage: As it was, as it is, and as it should be' (1879), she demanded simply that no discrimination be made between the sexes. And she asked, in 'The Political Status of Women' (1885), that the same equality should prevail in every walk of life, urging very reasonably that if women were naturally inferior, they would in the course of open competition soon find their level. Against the argument that women are inherently, inferior to men, Mrs Besant in her, 'The Political Status of Women', replied, "If you are so sure about nature's verdict, do not fear from her arbitration, but if you shrink from our rivalry, we must believe that you feel our equality, and to cover your own doubts of your superiority, you raffle about our feebleness".

Mrs Besant also worked for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Act and for the abolition of Government Regulation of Prostitution. As a radical she attacked the English land system, and declared the interests of tenant farmers and labourers as identical, the landlords, who took all and gave nothing back, were the enemies of both, according to her. She demanded the state ownership of the land, and pointed out that the improvement of the labourer's condition would benefit the farmers too. In this connection she wrote a series of five lectures – 'Free Trade vs. Free Trade (1881)'. She insisted upon the right of the workers to own the land and their right over the wealth that their labour produced, the socialist tendency in market. As an anti- Imperialist she attacked British policy in India and wrote a book, entitled '*England, India and Afghanistan*' (1878).

Mrs Besant's views upon education were liberal. Education she said, "should teach children, how to think, but should never tell them, what to think." (Besterman, 1874 p13) According to her, all branches of human knowledge should be taught, all sciences should be free from subjects of instructions and all teachings should be scientific in method. The truths of religion need to be taught, as much as the truth of science, beginning with easy stories and passing up to Metaphysics. Mrs Besant thought, that physical training should be equally and all pervading, being adapted carefully to the intelligence and the development of the child growing into youth and of the youth into mankind. According to her, the main object of Education, was to train the body in health, vigour and grace, so that it may express the emotions in beauty and the mind with accuracy and strength, to train the emotions to love all that is noble and beautiful, to sympthasize with the joys and sorrows of others. Emphasising on character building, Mrs. Besant expressed that the main purpose of education should be, to evolve and discipline the mind in right thinking, right discrimination, right judgement, and right memory. (Besterman, 1874 p14)

Mrs Besant devoted much attention to the problems of crime and punishment. In her work, 'The Ethics of Punishment' (1880), she questioned the responsibility of the individual criminal and whether the society might not possibly own her certain positive duties. It is scarcely necessary to add that she opposed capital punishment. Mrs Besant attention was drawn, to socialism early in 1883, though socialism was becoming more a matter of public controversy. Mrs Besant confessed, of socialist economics she knew nothing at first. Throughout 1884, she prepared herself through reading, listening and thinking, but said little, until she reached the conclusion, 'that the case for socialism was intellectually complete and ethically beautiful'. In January 1885, she was accused by a correspondent of the 'The National Reformer' of Socialist tendencies, in advocating rate subsidized meals for Board school children. Though she hesitated for some time, before allying herself publicly, with the

advocate of socialism, by 1885, she became closely associated with the Fabien Society some of whose leaders were Bernard Shaw, Sidney Webb, Sidney Olivier, and Ramsay Macdonald. Very quickly she became one of the society's most prominent members. The work of the society was already within its limits being very efficiently carried on, but it lacked effective open air speakers.

"Mrs Besant was at that time by far, the finest, by general consent the greatest orator in England", remarked E.R. Pease in his work, 'History of the Fabien Society'. In a pamphlet entitled 'Why I am a socialist' (1886), which had a very wide circulation, Mrs Besant arranged her reasons under three heads. "I am a Socialist because I am believer in Evolutions, I am a Socialist because of the far live of our present civilization, I am a socialist because the poverty of the workers is and must continue to be, an integral part of the present method of wealth production and wealth distribution...And because no system save that of socialism claims that there shall be no individual monopoly of that on which the whole nation must depend, of the soil on which it is born and must subsist, because no system save that of socialism claims for the whole community control of its land and its capital, because no system save that of socialism declares that wealth created by associated workers should be shared among those workers and that no idlers should have a lieu upon it, because no system save that of socialism makes industry really free and the worker really independent, by substituting co operation among workers, for employed and employing classes because of all this I am a socialist." (Besant, 1886 p6)

Bernard Shaw in the *Annie Besant centenary Book, (1847-1947)* writes, "In selecting the Fabian society for her passage through socialism Mrs Besant made a very sound choice. Her choice of continuous work was prodigious. Her displays of personal courage and resolution, as when she would march into a police court, make her way to the witness stand, and compel the magistrate to listen to her by sheer force of style and character, were trifles compared to

the way in which she worked, day and night to pull through the strike of the over exploited match girls who had walked into her office one day and asked her to help them somehow, anyhow."

Thus Mrs Besant's socialist experience was not just confined to pen and paper. However she refused to adopt the extreme views of the left wing of the labour party. The Women Matchmaker's Union was formed and for some years, Mrs Besant was its secretary, and a long time, it was the strongest Women's Trade Union in England. It is worthy of remark, at this junction that Madam Blavatsky founded a working women's club in London. Most of Mrs. Besant's work for Trade unionism was done through speaking, writing and organizing. In 1889, she attended the Marxist Congress in Paris. Particularly noteworthy was one piece of work, she did for Trade Unionism as a member of the London School Board. She enabled the resolution of 'Fair Wage' to be passed which in due course was adopted by greater municipalities and government and it was ensured that, whether there is Trade Union or not, but a standard rate of pay and hours of labour prevailed. The Fabian Society and British Socialism owe much to Mrs. Besant.

About this period, there opened, completely different chapter in Mrs. Besant's life. A profound change of mental outlook and psychological approach took place. Mrs Besant was getting well aware of a growing dissatisfaction, in her mind. She had been feeling that her philosophy of life was not sufficient. The socialist position, did not suffice, she needed, for her constat inspiration, something more than a political faith. From biology, her interest shifted to psychology, "Under all the rush of the outer life, already sketched", writes Mrs. Besant in her Autobiography, "these questions were washing in my mind, their answers were being diligently sought, I read a variety of books, but could find little in them that satisfied me....by the early spring of 1889, I had grown desperately determined to find at all hazards what I sought..... I heard a voice that was later to become to me the holiest sound on earth,

bidding me take courage for the light was near." Mrs Besant was at that time writing reviews occasionally for the Pall Mall Gazette, edited by W.T. Stead. Stead was a spokesman against social evils, and spearheaded liberal thoughts. Though a devoted Christian, he could identify himself with Annie Besant, who was not only an Atheist but devoted her life for serving humanity and struggling against oppression. Madam Blavatsky's secret doctrine was given to Mrs. Besant for review. The reading of that book proved to be the turning point. "Mrs Besant described the year 1889, as a never to be forgotten year, in which she found her way 'Home' and had the priceless good fortune of meeting and of becoming the pupil of H.P. Blavatsky." (Besant, 2008 p91-92)

Mrs Besant brought to Theosophy, zeal and an enthusiasm just like that of H.P.Blavatsky, while she placed at their service a reputation for absolute and eloquence superior to that of any living platform orator. She espoused Madame Blavatsky's cause with the devotion of a neophyte. She sat at her feet learning like a little child all the lore of the Mahatmas; she was obedient in all things; and with the death of Madame Blavatsky, Mrs. Besant became her only possible successor leading her to finally give up materialism and adopt Theosopy. Mrs. Besant explains in her autobiography as to why she chose Theosophy. She writes "It is not possible for me here to state fully my reasons for joining the Theosophical Society, the three objects of which are: To found a universal Brotherhood without distinction of race or creed; to forward the study of Aryan literature and philosophy; to investigate unexplained laws of nature and the powers latent in man. On matters of religious opinion the members are absolutely free. The founders of the society deny a personal God, and a somewhat subtle form of Pantheism is taught as the Theosophical view of the universe, though even this is not forced on members of the society. I have no desire to hide the fact that this form of Pantheism appears to me to promise solution of some problems, especially problems in psychology, which Atheism leaves untouched."(Besant, 2008 p311)

In 1891 she refused to be re-elected to the London School Board, and two years later, in 1893, with her first visit to India, and her decision to make it her home, for the future, she achieved a practical renunciation of all her past. She must have seemed merely to seal it by her declaration in 1894: “My work in the sphere of politics is over, and I shall never resume it.” (Besant, 2008 p311)

The friends who in England had been in daily contact with her, now ceased to see her at all, her life in England, her past in English politics and English social reform, were over forever. Henceforth she was to give herself wholly to Theosophy and to India.

She felt as if India was her motherland in her earlier birth. Amidst warm feeling poured out to her, she realized for the first time, what love of country meant! She felt as if she belonged to the people. She was happy that at last she had come to the place; she loved and tried even blindly to serve before actually coming to India. (Besant Spirit Series, 1943) To her India was in very truth the Holy Land, the land whose great religion had been “the origin of all the religions, the mother of spirituality, the cradle of civilisation”. She said, that she thought of India in the greatness of her past, not in the degradation of her present. The India that she loved was the India whose “polity was built by King, initiates and whose religion was moulded by divine men.” (Besant Spirit Series, 1943) As a first step she learnt up the ancient lore of the land, its philosophy, its religion and the basic ideals of its culture. She acquainted herself with the manners and customs of the people so that she might not remain a stranger. Then under the auspices of the Theosophical Society she travelled through out the country. She delivered several lectures depicting in vivid language the glory and the greatness of ancient Indian thought. (Dasgupta, 1981 p52)

She actually lived and practised Hindu customes and ideals in her daily life. In 1898 she opened the Banaras College and she entered whole heartedly into the work of raising money

by lectures and pamphelets. Her main arguments were the denunciation of Christian Missions and flattery of Hinduism. By next year, persuing the Maharaja of Benares; she started her work of the Central Hindu College. A feature of her lectures was an appeal for unity between Muslim and Hindus. She was also emphatic in her condemnation of Mission schools. (History Sheet of Besant)

Explaining the considerations that led her to join politics Mrs. Besant wrote, "It is possible that I should have never jumped into political work, had not increasing repression by the authority, narrowing of liberty, the ill treatment of students and the danger of revolution forced me into this field. Besides, her 'Irish blood and Irish heart' was also partially responsible for the drift into a fight against British rule."(Besant, 1917) A new zeal, a vigorous demand and an unyielding determination were added to the Indian national movement with Mrs. Besant's participation in it. Mrs. Besant's entrance into the poltical arena, wrenched Indian politics out of its automatic and placid theorising, made it a living and vital issue before the country and the whole Empire. Mrs. Besant's interest in the political condition of India can be traced back to 1879. In that year was published her little pamphelet on England, India and Afghanistan in which she pointed out that the only answer to British misrule in India lay in conferring the right of self government upon the Indian people in stages. She also suggested the liquidation of the Indian provinces. She wrote, "I would let the supreme power gradually pass, not into the hands of Indian people, so that a mighty self governing nation should slowly arise from the ashes of the dead native and foreign despotism." In 1902 in a speech in London, she criticized the British people for the exploitation of India. "I ask you whether you have a right to rule 30,00,00,000 of people in name and not understand the alphabet of Indian question very largely in your Imperial Parliament."(West, 1929) Sharply criticising England she said, "India is not ruled for the prosperity of the people but rather for the profit of her conquerors and her sons are being

treated as the conquered race. In 1903, Mrs. Besant pleaded that "India must be governed on the basis of Indian feelings, Indian traditions, Indian thought and Indian ideas."

She saw in the Indian village Panchayats a system of indigenous local government which had given Indians many centuries of training in the art of self government. She wrote: "I submit that the spirit in the Indians who built up those village communities in the past and made India a nation so wealthy that....that spirit, like so much else in India is not dead but has only been sleeping and that ..... `the sleeper is waking up and is again showing the ancient capacity and very much of the ancient character." (Besant 1913) In 1905, in a letter to prominent Calcutta Solicitor, she wrote: "The needs of India are among others, the development of a national spirit, and an education founded on Indian ideals and enriched, not dominated, by the thought and culture of the West." (Besterman, 1874 p75)

"During the Swadeshi Movement (1905-1910) Mrs. Besant, came to rank in the main as an opponent, as an apologist of officialism and particularly an enemy of those forms of nationalism which had captured the enthusiasm of Indian youth.She condemned the political activites of the students. This stand of Mrs. Besant on Swadeshi and poltical agitation during the Swadeshi days had alternated her from many persons in the national movement." (West, 1929 p225)

During October and Novemeber 1913 Mrs. Besant gave a series of lectures that marked the beginning of an earnest and concerted movement for the uplifting of India. At a public meeting called by the Madras Congress Committee in 1915, she demanded that a standing committee of the British House of Commons should be set up for consideration of Indian affairs. Also she started Madras Parliament in that year. The Parliament organised for training in parliamentary method and debate, had to its credit: a number of carefully worked out Acts during 1915 and 1916 of which the principal ones are 'Compulsory Elementary Education',

'Madras Panchayats' (Village tribunals for the reinstituition of local government), 'Commonwealth of India Act' (for National self Government within the Empire), a supplementary Act to the foregoing "relating to the Indian Judicature" and the "Religious Education Act".

Mrs. Besant's entry into Indian politics was heralded by the publication of a weekly newspaper, The Commonwealth, which was started by her on January 2nd, 1914. The initial number of the paper set forth its major programmes which were religious liberty, national education, social reform and political reform aiming at self government for India within the British Commonwealth. On her way back to India from London, she brought the 'Madras Standard' and renamed it 'New India'. She joined the Indian National Congress in the same year, that is 1914, and with her she brought new talents, methods, ideas and resources.

Reflecting on the emergence of Mrs. Besant in the Indian political arena the Bombay Chronicle wrote that Mrs. Besant's entry into politics may "prove to be one of the most important events of recent years". Inspired by the Irish experiment, Mrs. Annie Besant initiated Home Rule Movement in India. In this pursuit she was joined by Bal Gangadhar Tilak. Although both radically differed in temperament as on various national issues, yet, they worked in unison to mobilize various strata of Indian politicians to make a concerted demand for Home Rule in India. Significantly both Indian National Congress and Muslim League accepted in 1916 the objective of self government as was propagated by Home Rule League.

That Mrs. Besant was going to lead a political campaign in favour of Swaraj or Home Rule was first indicated in a speech, she delivered at a public reception in Bombay in the beginning of July 1914. She said, "One of the ways in which one could best serve humanity was to ask for full rights of citizenship for India." The first clear announcement of Mrs.

Besant's decision to start a Home Rule Movement appeared in the *New India* in 14th September, 1915. In an article entitled, 'Home Rule for India', published in *New India*, dated 14th Spetember 1915, Mrs. Besant wrote, "Will Indian leaders in every town and village take up the cry of Home Rule for India, hold me to an explain to the masses and make them demand from the liberty loving British race, self government for our country? Will Indian newspapers zealously and perseveringly keep on writing, writing, writing, till the idea permeates Indian society as a whole and demand is clearly echoed, Home Rule for India?" During the months that followed she explained why she was going to introduce English methods of agitation in India. According to her, the agitation was the only way of getting rid of the abysmal ignorance in England of Indian affairs. Thus on September 25th, 1915, the formal announcement about the establishment of the Home Rule League was made, in the *New India.*

Tilak's Indian Home Rule League was founded on April 28th 1916, with headquarters at Poona and Mrs. Besant's Home Rule for India League was established in Madras on September 3rd 1916. While maintaining independent existence, the two leagues worked in close co-operation and under their joint leadership, the Home Rule Movement spread rapidly in different parts of India. Tilak's daily *Kesari* and the weekly *Maharatta* and Mrs. Besant's weekly, *The Commonwealth,* and the daily *New India* carried on incessant propaganda for Home Rule by sharply criticizing England's foreign policy, her policy in regard to home charges, the methods of recruitment in the army, the industrial policy, the land tax, education, etc. Both Tilak and Besant used pen and tongue as weapons and reason unjustice as pleaders for the Home Rule agitation. (Dasgupta, 1981 p54)

The movement spread far and wide and became the only live issue in Indian politics. The British bureaucracy sort to crush the movement, by silencing Mrs. Besant and Tilak. The press at which had originally been used to gauge the terrorist newspapers was now used

against Mrs. Besant, under the provisions of the 'Defence of India Act'. However undaunted Mrs. Besant kept up the momentum of the movement. As a mark of recognition to her service, the All India Congress Committee decided to elect Mrs. Besant as the President of the next annual session (1917) of the Indian National Congress to be held in Calcutta. This historic event brought the women folk closer to the Congress and the struggle for freedom.

The first women's organization to be started on an all India basis was the Women's Indian Association founded in 1917. Mrs. Besant became the first President of the Association. Mrs. Margaret E. Counsins, guided by Mrs. Besant and her Home Rule League, inaugurated the Association. Sarojini Naidu was one of the sponsors from its very inception. The Association offered a common platform for women to ventilate their grievances and demand their rights. One of the first acitvites of the Association was to send the Deputation of the women to wait on Edwin Montague, the Secretary of State for India who came to India in 1917 to discuss the coming reforms. It was this step which later obtained for the Indian women, equal rights in the matter of political franchise.

It is however important to note that the Home Rulers never preached a complete break with Great Britain. The ideal of Indian independence of this time was one of 'Self Government' within the Empire. The constitution of Home Rule laid down that its object was to obtain self government of India by constituitional means. Thus, the general connotation of Home Rule or Self Government was the creation of the political structure controlled by the representatives of the Indian people themselves. Mrs. Besant categorically wrote in *New India*, in March 1915, that she does not want self government by class conflict, as in the West, but a self government for social well being by general consent and co-operation. Thus the Home Rule Movement served well for the time, especially during the war years. In the words of Mrs. Besant herself, as a result of the Home Rule Movement, "India rose from her knees and stood upon her feet." (Dasgupta, 1981 p68)

Despite short spell of its popularity, Home Rule Movement generated considerable interest, especially amongst intelligentsia and women, thus transforming Indian national movement into a mass movement. It is in this context that the Home Rule Movement is considered to have paved way for mass mobilisation of the people in national movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi.

ANNIE BESANT: AN ANALYSIS:-

"India is the key note. India is the centre of that great storm which shall usher in a splendid peace. Wherever else you may be working, remember India, think of her, and know her to be the true hope of the nations of the world. Think truly about India, without the slightest trace of race or creed or colour prejudice ...work for India as opportunity offers. You hasten the growth of all that is dear to you as you hasten the growth of India.....the mighty power she is, as the veritable Holy Land of the World" -13 December 1928, New India.

"So long as I can serve India, I shall continue to do so.....I love the Indian people as I love none other, and....my heart and my mind....have long been laid on the Altar of, the Motherland." -22 June 1918, New India

Born in 1847 in London, Mrs. Annie Besant was an Irish from her mother's and paternal grandmother's side. She joined the Theosophical Society in 1889, landed in India in 1893, settled here and lived in India till her death in 1937. In 1907 she became the President of the Theosophical Society. The headquarters of the society was at Adyar, Madras. Annie Besant's interest in India was not created by her adoption of Theosophy. She joined The Theosophical Society in 1889, but a full ten years before that we find her entering into a passionate defence of India and Afghanistan against the policy of Disraeli in England and Lytton in India. For instance, in 1879 she published through the Free thought Publishing Company, a pamphlet

energetically entitled *The Story of Afghanistan: or why the Tory Government gags the Indian Press. A Plea for the Weak against the Strong.*

Anticipating protest against her criticism of England's conduct in India, Annie Besant wrote in this pamphlet (pg 3-4): "It is said to be unpatriotic to blame one's country. But not so have I read the history of England's noblest patriots. Love of England does not mean approval and endorsement of the policy of some oriental adventurer whom chance and personal ability and unscrupulousness have raised to power. Love of England means reverence for her past, work for her future, it means sympathy with all that is noble and great in her history, and endeavour to render her yet more noble, yet more great, it means triumph in her victories over oppression, delight in her growing freedom, glory in her encouragement of all nations struggling towards liberty.....it means pride in her pure name, in her fair faith, in her unsoiled honour, in her loyal word, it means condemnation of her bullying, boasting, cruel imperialism.... and regretful remorseful turning back to the old, paths of duty, of honour and of faith. Therefore this plea of mine for the weak against the strong is not an unpatriotic attack on our own beloved land, but rather the loving effort of a child to save a mother whose honour and whose life are threatened by unscrupulous betrayers." It was on November 16th 1893 that she landed for the first time in this life- on the sacred soil, which according to her, was a Holy Land.

The History Sheet of Mrs. Annie Besant compiled in the office of the Director of Criminal Intelligence, Delhi, dated 26th February, 1918, forwaded to the Foreign and Political Department described how Mrs. Besant came to India in 1893 ostensibly to work for Theosophy. It recorded her touring of the Madras Presidency and her lecturing on the main theme, which according to the British officials were outrageous flattery of Hindus and Hinduism. They wrote down how "she was treated with enthusiasm and amongst other praise she was described as the veritable goddess of India, coming from the far off west for the

spiritual regeneration of the land." Mrs. Besant herself stated that she was a Hindu Pandit in a former birth.

In 1893, the "Amrita Bazar Patrika" of the 8th December 1893, in an editorial note on Mrs. Besant wrote- "Now that Mrs Besant has become a Theosophist-in other words that she has become a Hindu as she herself says so, we can utilize her services for the reform of the Indian administration, and advocated awakening her interests in such matters."

In the year 1894, two enterprises in which Mrs.Besant was concerned were started.

(1). The Sanatana Dharma Palini Sabha founded at Benares by Colonel Olcott with the object of improving the morals of Hindu students on the lines of ancient Aryan religion, and of endangering a love for Aryan simplicity and Aryan spirituality of which Mrs Besant was a foreign representative.

(2). The "Arya Bala Bodhini", a monthly journal in English; was issued at the nominal rate of Re.1 per annum. Its avowed object was stated to be "through the agency of the rising generation, to restore to India her past greatness in her religion, which was her only life and strength." Mrs. Besant was a contributor.

In the year 1896, she incurred a certain amount of opposition through her interpretation of caste. But her value in rousing Hindu enthusiasim was realised by Hindu leaders and for the most part a discreet silence was maintained by them. In particular she toured in the Punjab and Sind through out November and December lecturing on Hinduism, Mesmerism, Temperance, Vegetarianism, etc.

The importance of her work for India, and its general trend, can be gathered from the following eloquent tribute: Sir Valentine Chirol in his *Times* articles on what is called *"India unrest"*, wrote that "Madame Blavatsky and Colonel Olcott, gave a fresh impetus to the

revival, and certainly no Hindu has done so much to organize and consolidate the movement as Mrs Annie Besant, who, in her Central Hindu College at Benares and her Theosophical Institution at Adyar, near Madras, has openly proclaimed her faith in the superiority of the whole Hindu system to the vaunted civilization of the West. Is it surprising that Hindus should turn their backs upon our civilization, when a European of highly trained intellectual power and with an extraordinary gift of eloquence comes and tells them that it is they who possess and have from all times possessed, the key to supreme wisdom, that their gods, their philosophy, their morality are on a higher plane of thought than the West has ever reached."

Annie Besant after reaching India while contributing to a native paper, "Amrita Bazaar Patrika" of 1893 announced: "The India that I love and reverence and would fair see living among the nations, is not an India westernized, rent with the struggles of political parties, heated with the fires of political passions, with a people ignorant and degraded, while those who might have raised them are fighting for the loaves and fishes of political triumph..... The India to which I belong in faith and heart is....a civilization in which spiritual knowledge was accounted highest title to honour, and in which the people reverenced and sought after spiritual truth. To help in turning India into another Great Britain or another Germany is an ambition that does not allure me, the India I would give my life to help in building is an India learned in the ancient philosophy pulsing with the ancient religion- an India to which all other lands should look for spiritual life- where the life of all should be materially simple, but intellectually noble and spiritually sublime.....I honestly believe that the future of India, the greatness of India, and the happiness of her people, can never be secured by political methods, but only by the revival of her philosophy and religion. To this, therefore, I must give all my energies, and I must refuse to spread them over other fields."

In this statement there is not only a startling renunciation but a very complete dedication of her gifts and energies to India. Soon enough she adopted Benares as her home. Her work in

India since then falls clearly, as she herself points out, into four divisions, each involving a different procedure, subject, and period. Her interest up to 1898 was primarily religious, from 1898 until 1903 she was buried with education, necessarily, according to her ideas, upon a religious basis, about 1903 she took up social reform, and it was until 1913 that at last, definitely and irrevocably, she returned to politics. Each period, it must be noted, included the activities of the one before it, each led on, implicitly, to its successor. (West, 1929 p208)

At first she had devoted herself to the cause of social and educational upliftment of the Indians. Since 1907 she eloquently spoke about Indian glorious heritage and its religion, the Hinduism. She rendered significant services to India by "waking up its sleeping soul" and making Indians respect their ancient heritage and reviving in them the feeling of self respect. She taught them to stand on their own legs. In 1913 she delivered a series of eight lectures in Madras which started her entrance into the arena of Indian politics. These lectures, were later published under the title *Wake up India* covered a wide range of subjects such as India's past and future, caste spirit, social reform, education for women, industrial growth, etc. They also gave an insight into Mrs. Besant's ideas about India. She herself wrote, in a lecture delivered in 1913, "I laid down the views on which my whole work in India has been based: 'the building up of India into a mighty self governing community. The old system of Government in India, more than any other showed a genius for self government in the people. It shows that the India, as it were by nature, is capable of guiding, of shaping, of controlling his own affairs. Competent self government, effective self government can only be carried on over an area where the people who compose the governing body understand the questions with which they have to deal." (Besant, 1926 p410)

Mrs Besant keeping with her believe, in her later life, on the occasion of her Golden Jubilee of Public Work, while addressing a lecture at Queen's Hall London remarked "Trust the Divine life within you and the Divine life within your fellow men, realize that it is in you and

you will see it is everyone around you. Then you will doubt no longer. And if I may finish with words which I believe to be intensely true and that are so often only half said- when Kipling spoke about the East and the West and "Never the twain shall meet" he went on to say:-

But there is neither East nor West,

Border, nor breed nor birth,

When two strong men stand face to face,

Though they come from the ends of the Earth."

And that is true, whether they be from Britain or from India. Whether it is from one side of the world or from other, there is only One Life, and we are one in Him, and we shall bring the outer lands together because the Inner life is ever one. (Besant, 1943)

Mrs. Besant inaugurated her Indian tour with two lectures in Kandy, Colombo. Subsequently she spoke at Tuticorin in the extreme south, and at Bangalore and other places. Then there was the great convention held at Adyar, later the chief headquarters of the society, at which spoke on "the building of the cosmos". During 1894, Mrs. Besant lectured successively at Benares, Agra, Lahore and Bombay, while she was in Adyar, she threw herself into the work of founding on school for backward communities called the "Olcott Panchama School" and began her campaign of national education. At a great meeting in the Pachaippa's college, Madras, she pleaded for the reformation of the Indian education system. Very soon she came into contact with the leaders of Indian life. Mahatma Gandhi, on 2nd October 1928, in India wrote, "It is Dr. Besant who has awakened India from her deep slumber and I pray that she may live long to witness a free India". (Gandhi- 1847 to 1947 p94) Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, who met Mrs Besant for the first time in 1901, wrote, "One of the outstanding events in my

life is the day when I first met Annie Besant. It has been a very great privilege for me to have known her and to have worked with her to some extent, for undoubtedly she was a dominating figure of the age. India especially owes a very deep debt of the great lady for all she did to enable her to find her own soul in the opinion of every section of Indian thought". (Nehru- 1847 to 1947 p95) Subhash Chandra Bose wrote "Regardless of religion or politics, it was she who has laid the foundation of all real and lasting union between the East and the West." (Bose, 1847-1947) "We are the co shares and co trustees of her magnificent legacy of love and truth" opined Sarojini Naidu. She further wrote, "She has left a priceless legacy of unbounded faith in the spiritual values that have been handed down to us from ancient times." (Naidu, 1847 to 1947 p117)

In 1897, in addition to the usual lectures Mrs. Besant in this year started definite work for the future Central Hindu College, Benares. Subscriptions were collected. Her plan was stated to be the foundation of a college where Hindu youths could receive an English education combined with the Shastras.

In the next year she opened her Benares College in July in a house loaned for the purpose and obtained its affiliation to the Intermediate Standard of the Allahabad University. This was the precursor of a much more ambitious scheme of putting the college on a permanent basis with a Boarding House, gymnasium etc. She entered whole heartedly, into the work of raising money by lectures and pamphelets. Her main arguments were a denunciation of Christian Missions and flattery of Hinduism." That was the opinion of the British officials, who were keenly keeping an account of her activities in India with suspicion. And thus, wrote it as a document, in her History Sheet maintained for official references.

In India the most striking aspect of Mrs Besant's work is the fact that to a sweeping and far seeing conception of the task in hand she joined a close and meticulous grasp of details. "Few

imaginations could have conceived the plan for no less a task than the physical, intellectual and spiritual revival of India, a country, nay, a continent, enormous in size, enormous in population, enormous diverse and complex. Fewer could have had the knowledge and understanding to appreciate what paths would have to be trodden to reach the desired goal. But who else than Annie Besant could have added to these things, the patience and devotion required." (Besterman, 1874) With the establishment of the Benares Hindu College, she wrote some of its most important text books, organised its boys into debating clubs, into sports organizations, made them join physical development to intellectual training, lectured to them, and, in short, treated them in such a way that in India there were thousands of men who address Annie Besant as "Mother".

Although she had made it in her lifework to revive in India a pure and orthodox Hinduism, she had not been blind to the anomalies created by that religion in the modern world. Consequently she advocated, and succeeded in The Theosophical Society, at least, in bringing about "a relaxation of the strict rules of caste, she fought for the education of the women and enlargement of its liberty: she took a firm stand against child marriage, not only by argument and by advocacy by closing the upper classes of the Central Hindu School to married boys and by doubling the fees for married first and second year students in the College." (West, 1929 p213)

Mrs Besant regarded India as a special case. Since the Crown had taken over the government of India in the fifties, generations had emerged which accepted their subject position and looked to the West for all things. The ancient forms of village life and government were rapidly disintegrating, and the purely secular Western education of the universities was producing a widespread contempt for Indian religions and customs. It cast out, but put nothing in the place of what cast out. The seventies and eighties saw among students a wave of scepticism similar to that in England, but far more superficial because less deeply rooted.

According to Mrs. Besant there appears at last a real intellectual renaissance, religious in its origins but producing also a new attitude towards the old vernaculars. Among 'other things that awakened pride and self respect were the discovery of the West that Sanskrit was the earliest and in many ways the most remarkable of the known Indo- Aryan languages. It increased study and exaltation of India's ancient literature."

Speaking in 1909 Mrs. Besant said that when Olcott and Madame Blavatsky landed in India in 1879 scepticism and materialism prevailed everywhere, and that the revival began with their propaganda for, Hindu teachings and philosophy, and with their conversion to Buddhism- then the only Eastern religion that would give them shelter. 'Even when I came to India, Indians told me that India was dead; they smiled sadly at my statement that India was not dead, but sleeping. She is not sleeping today." (Besant, 1926 p412) She adopted the attitude she found already prevailing in the society that India's characteristic contribution to the world aggregate was spiritual. There was a place for politics, she admitted, but wisdom was more than the politics. India's heritage is not political, and it would be a world disaster, should she reject the spiritual for the material.

Now there existed in the society, at that time, a policy, if not exactly a tradition, of abstinence from politics, in the beginning, enforced by the nature of its origin. When the founders of Theosophical Society, first arrived India, they were for some time regarded with official disfavour, it being suspected that Madame Blavatsky was a Russian spy. Though those suspicious were quickly dispelled, but members were careful to confine their activities, to non political spheres. It was in fact, Mrs. Besant who first broke away on a large scale from this policy, a step for which numerous Theosophists have attacked her, so that at last she was driven to defend herself. There were two views of Theosophical work, one narrow and one wide, which were current in the Theosophical Society and on which members should make up their minds, and having done so, should act accordingly. The first was the view that the

Divine Wisdom consisted in the teaching of a certain body of doctrines....and this was the only proper work of the Theosophical Society. A certain application of these teachings to the conditions of the day was perhaps allowable, but such application tended to stray into forbidden paths, and was of doubtful desirability. The other view was that the Divine Wisdom, "sweetly and mightily ordering all things, existed in the world for the world's helping, and nothing was alien from it which was of service to Humanity.""The chief work of those who profess themselves in votaries will therefore be the work which is most needed at the time....it is obvious that since I entered the Theosophical Society I have encouraged the wider view" wrote Mrs Besant in the Theosophical journal, "The Theosophist." (Besant,1926)

As Mrs Besant was advocating the organization of education in India upon Indian national lines, she was actually following the example set by Colonel Olcott with his free schools in India and Ceylon for the children of the 'untouchables' and thus the first fruit of her propaganda was the establishment in 1898 of the Central Hindu College in Benares. Originally, this was supported only by local Hindus and some Theosophists, and opened with four classes in a small house, but within a year the Maharajah of Benares gave land and a large block of buildings in the outskirts of the city. The basic principles of the College, summed up by Mrs Besant in 1899, were: "the teaching of the Hindu religion, the uniting of Indians and Englishmen in friendly co operation, in a common work, using racial differences for help, not for hindrance, the affording of a cheap but first class education- the cost being met in the old Indian fashion by the gifts of the pious and the self sacrifice of the teachers, instead of out of the pockets of the students. Her liberalism was revealed in the choice the college gave its pupils between English and Indian education, her good sense was revealed in the decision that English educated must learn Sanskrit, and the Sanskrit- educated, English, so that there might be no barriers to understanding between them. Also, though she held that

the object of education was ‘to raise the intellect of man to understand the problems of life’ she did not hesitate to attack the Hindu students for despising manual and technical training in favour of literary or the clerical. No shame, she insisted, could attach to any honest labour, except when it is badly done. Her declared ideal was ‘an education founded on Indian ideals and enriched, but not dominated, by the thought and culture of the West.” (Besant, 1913)

The college was successful from the beginning, and by 1901, as a result of her hard work, was already on a firm foundation and rapidly expanding, though too slowly to contain all the pupils desiring admission. Boys would walk literally hundreds of miles, begging their way to reach school, and to all arguments as to “no room”, “we cannot take more free scholars”, such a one would only answer: “mother, you must teach me.” (West, 1929 p213) It was affiliated to Allahabad University. In 1905, the college was visited by the King and Queen of England, then Prince and Princess of Wales. This, with the subsequent commendation of her work by the Viceroy, Lord Minto, presumably set the seal of official approval upon the college. Later Mrs Besant, organized a petition to the king for the establishment of an Indian National University upon the Central Hindu College Lines, the petition was not successful but the college, itself became in due course the nucleus of the then Hindu University, a rallying point for many of the best elements in the Hindu thought and culture. “In some quarters, however,” writes Geoffrey West, in his work, “The Life of Annie Besant”. Mrs Besant has been accused of ‘kowtowing’ to officialdom, because she stood so strongly against the participation of her student in politics. Again, in 1913, following the Krishnamurti case, she withdrew from all active connection with the C.H.C. (Central Hindu College) and from the Hindu University Committee ‘because my Theosophy makes me unwelcome there.” It has been alleged that she withdrew because she was forces and had no alternative, but it would be only fair to say that she had proclaimed her intention long before of leaving the C.H.C. to stand on its own feet at the earliest suitable moment. Her action was however,

undoubtedly precipitated by the publication in an Allahabad newspaper *Leader*, April 13th 1913 of a circular letter by G.S.Arundale, Principal of the College. "Addressed to a group of teachers and boys within the College, it expressed their unqualified devotion to Mrs Besant as one about to become one of the greatest rulers of the world of Gods and men. Public allegations were made that the College was not Hindu but Theosophical. Arundale and a number of teachers resigned in a body. The Board of Trustees, without further ado, handed the College over to the Committee of the projected Hindu University." (West, 1929 p215)

Few months later, in November 1913, in "The Young Citizen", Mrs Besant, explicitly expressed her "Ideals in Education." According to her, nothing was more necessary in education than the holding up of ideals, before the minds of the young. One of the greatest defects in the education of boys in India, according to her, was the absence of their presentation of Ideals, and the consequent absence of enthusiasm. Mrs Besant wrote that a really noble manhood cannot grow out of a boyhood, which is left uncultivated on the emotional side. According to her much of the patriotism of Englishmen, which made possible, the growth of the Empire was sown during their school days. When their highest feelings were constantly evoked, by the holding up of the memories of great self sacrifice, in love of country, comparing such zeal of the English men with the Indian boys she remarked that the Indian boys are even more sensitive than Englishmen, to the compelling power of such examples, but those, must be drawn from the past of their own country, and according to her one of the most remarkable things about the Central Hindu College in Benares was the swift response of the students to the great national Ideals, constantly held up before their eyes, Mrs. Besant further wrote that it was one of her greatest joys, there to see the young faces, brighten and glow, as she spoke to them of self sacrifice for the Motherland, of love of country and of service. Talking on the vital necessity for Religious Education, Mrs Besant opined that Religion is necessary as the basis for Morality, as the inspiration of Art, as the

foundation of original literature. It is religion, which is necessary for the greatness of a nation, for there can be no nation, without morality, without art, without literature. According to her, no knowledge was more necessary for a boy than the knowledge of the fundamental doctrines of his religion and everybody should worship, recognising with gratitude, the source of life, strength and joy. Moral education- according to her, should form, part of Curriculum and daily in every class, a brief portion of some sacred book should be read and explained, and its moral lesson enforced by illustrations, their bearing an individual, family, social and national life, should be shown and the evil results of their opposed vices should be expounded. In an effort to evaluate Mrs Besants' contribution towards education, it is significantly important to understand her thought about the "True Object of Education". Writing about the same, in 1926, in her book, "*India: Bond or Free*", Mrs Besant wrote:

"What After All Is The Object Of Education?

To train the body

In health, vigour and grace, so that it may express the emotions in beauty and the mind with accuracy and strength.

To train the emotions

To love all that is noble and beautiful:

To sympathize with the joys and sorrows of others:

To inspire to service ever widening in its area, until we love our elders as our parents, our equals as our brothers and sisters, our younger as our children, and seek to serve them all:

To find joy in sacrifice for great causes and for the helpless:

To feel reverence for all who are worthy of it, and compassion for the outcast and the criminal.

To evolve and discipline the mind- in right thinking, in right discrimination, in right judgement

In right memory....

To subdue body, emotion, and mind to the Spirit, the Inner Ruler Immortal,

Making the mind the mirror of the Ego,

The emotions the mirror of the Intuition,

The body the expression of the Will,

To put all this in a single sentence:

To make the man a good citizen of a free and spiritual Commonwealth of Humanity."

Marking the beginning of an earnest concerted movement, for the upliftment of India, Mrs Besant, dealt with utmost sincerity, the very large, yet difficult question of Mass Education, in India. For a modern India, the question of mass education was of prime importance to her, but then along with that, there emerged in her mind, three other important question, as to what system to adopt, to educate the masses? Who is to bring about the changes, the Government or the people? And when the changes would come, what should be the curriculum of teaching. Through course of her lectures, in Madras, Mrs Besant came up with various suggestions, to respond to the question that she herself proposed. According to her, every village should have had a school attached, with a technical school, of the simplest and most elementary kind, as village unit formed the most important part of Indian life, throughout the whole of Indian history. Interestingly, Mrs. Besant was also aware of the

danger of mass education, and not to over crowd the nation, with people, who would be just able to read and write and join the ranks of clerks, instead of using their hands for the production of wealth and thus increasing the material products of the country. Thus simplest possible technical education was necessary according to her, along with reading, writing and arithmetic. Higher technical schools with inevitable scientific teachings, Mrs Besant allotted for secondary level of education which, according to her could have been shifted to the centres of the town, from the villages. Then logically followed higher education at university level, with its full literacy, scientific and potential training. Dealing with the question of as to who should bring about the changes, Mrs Besant eloquently expressed, that the Government alone cannot fully deal with a question of such magnitude; therefore, it must be absolutely necessary, for every Panchayat and Zamindars, to co-operate, and take up their fair share of work, to bring about success for those schemes. Finally, on deciding the course of curriculum, Mrs Besant, drawing inspiration from Maria Montessori stressed that the ultimate goal of mass education, should be to help every child to teach himself, to draw out the childs' powers of observation, intelligence and reasoning. "If you remember the words of Manu, that every younger is a child to the good man, thenyou will realise that not only our own children in the home, but the little children in the villages and in the towns are all ours, our children, bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh, children of Mother India, who cannot take her place among the nations until these little ones are trained, and are worthy to be citizens of a mighty common wealth. That is the end to which we are looking in all the reforms we are trying to bring about." According to her, education is fundamental and without education we are not worthy of liberty. We shall never learn the duty of a citizen and there is no material prosperity and also no intellectual splendour. And she pleaded that there should be no step children in the house of India, the Mother and that every child, that is born of her shall be born into the birth right of education." (Besant, 1913)

Perhaps, more puzzling in character, than the question of mass education, was the question of female education. The general prevalent idea was that, Indian women exercised an enormous amount of influence in their households, an influence, which whether always exercised in the right direction or not, was none the less potent. But Mrs. Besant believed not withstanding the amount of influence that women exercised; men had not made much progress in educating them, to enable them to take their legitimate share in society. In the case of mass education, the difficulties, were mainly of funds and want of sufficient numbers of suitable teachers, but in the case of female education, the difficulties were created by social usages and by limitation, inspired by social traditions and sentiments and caste usages, girls could not continue to go to school above a certain age, and that was the most serious limitation upon the possibilities of educating girls. Perhaps the most pertinent point at that time in regard to the education of girls was the relation between the education, imparted to them, and their future position in life. It is interesting note here that Mrs Besant seemed no longer to have sought for women the absolute equality, she once claimed. With a changed observation, she eloquently expressed, that women had a different function to fulfil, and the girl must be educated as the wife and mother, not as the rival and competitor of man in all forms of outside and public employment, as woman, under different economic conditions, is coming to be, more and more, in the West. (Besant, 1942)

According to Mrs Besant, the value of women, rested in their diversity, and not in their identity and it is because of that great difference, that the two together are a power and that neither can ever be alone. Every great question in the country, in which the men are interested, demands for its effective solution, the sympathy and the understanding of the Indian women, opined Mrs. Besant. Never yet has a nation, raised to greatness unless the men and women in it walked side by side and hand in hand. It is only then; any great social or political progress is possible for any people. The essentials of desirable training for Indian

girls were, according to Mrs. Besant, first, religious and moral education, second, literary education, including languages, history and geography, third, household knowledge and hygiene, cookery, medicine, etc, fourth artistic education as of music and needle work and fifth physical culture. Upon these principles she founded in 1904 in Benares the Central Hindu Girls School, and two years later and at intervals subsequently there were opened in various parts numerous other schools for women and following Olcott's example for the 'depressed classes' especially. To take over and unite all these activities the Theosophical Educational Trust was established in 1913 as a registered body, with Mrs Besant as president and about twenty other members. Among other products of its work may be mentioned the Madanapalle High School and College, the Adyar national College, and A Women's College in Benares founded in 1916. Mrs Besant's experiences as a teacher and even more as a member of the London School board were invaluable in connection with all her Indian educational work. All over the country a number of Theosophist and National Schools for girls were established. For her educating women, was more important, even than mass education. Stressing on the importance of women education, for the sake of India, she said, while delivering her lecture in Madras in Nov 1913....."What you want most in this country is that practice; spirit of self sacrifice that public spirit which looks on the interests of the individual. You can learn this from women. They sacrifice themselves every day and every night for the interests of the home; they realise the subordination of the one to the benefit of the larger self of the family. Learn that from your women and then you will become great, and India will become great, for if you carry into public life the self sacrifice of women, then the redemption of India will be secured. But you will do it best, if you will go with them into the world hand in hand, men and women together." (Besant, 1912)

In 1921 the Benares Hindu University conferred upon her, the degree of Doctor of Letters in recognition of her valued and continuous services to Indian education. A more substantial

recognition was the special act of the Indian Legislature by which she was enabled to sit upon the governing body of the university- the one exception to the rule which admits only Hindus by birth.

When Mrs. Besant first came to India, she was said to have taken up a reactionary attitude, particularly in field of social reform. Her accusers were on one hand those Indians, who recalled regretfully her radical labours in England, on the other hand, the Christian missionaries but it would be truer to call her attitude preservative. Theosophically, she strove to see the soul of good even in the things of evil; she desired specifically to approach Indian customs and prejudices from the Indian point of view. While delivering a lecture as early as 1893 , she spoke: "When I think of India I think of her in the greatness of past, not in her degradation of present...To me she is in truth the Holy Land, the land whose great philosophy has been the source of all the philosophies of Western World, the land whose religion has been the origin of all the religions, the mother of spirituality, the cradle of civilizations.....I would win your thoughts to India unfallen, the India as she was in her past, as she shall be in her future..... The uniqueness of Indian civilization consisted in the fact that it was all framed for a spiritual purpose, planned to assist spiritual evaluation." (Besant, 1942)

Mrs Besant wanted to avoid any suggestion that she came to India merely, or indeed, in any degree as a westernizer. Yet that she set her face from the very first against what seemed to her definitely cruel or wasteful of human material is clear by the position she adopted in the nineties with regard to the child marriage. The Central Hindu College was for a long while the only institution in India which first excluded married boys from lower classes, then imposed double fees upon married students, and finally shut them out all together. The same principle was followed by all the schools controlled by the Theosophical Educational Trust. The missionaries, she suggested in 1913, might have done better to follow her example instead of merely preaching against child marriage. Child marriage she opposed not only in

the school but on the platform: “The future of India as a nation depends on the abolition of child marriage amongst the people.... as long as that persists, there are certain inevitable consequences of lowered vitality, of the spread of nervous diseases, of premature old age all of which you can see going on in the India of today.” (Besant, 1913) She came to the conclusion that real causes behind child marriage were the demeaning of the status of women, the lessening of women’s education. She opined that as Indian women lost her status of social and civil equality, her education became neglected and her senses were as not trained. Inevitably she was demeaned to a lower position, and was no longer considered as the equal of the man she married. Child marriage meant terrible death rate for the immature mothers. Mrs Besant eloquently described how no woman was fit physiologically to bear a child until the organs of mother hood has reached maturity, and how it is an outrage on nature that she should do so. She addressed to stop the birth of children, from children, and leaving mother hood till the woman has grown and has the right and the duty of child bearing. She worked to ameliorate the lot of child and other widows.

The fact is that in matters of Hindu customs and reforms her idea changed with experience. Her attitude to caste affords an example. In 1894 she took the view that caste originally represented a functional reality, election to one section or another been decided not by birth but by ability. She wrote, “The first eleven years of my working in India, I worked perpetually to revive the idea of Dharma, of function, in relation to the four great castes. By 1905 I had come to the conclusion that it was hopeless; that you cannot get those who were the highest caste to go back to old duties, to give up the power, the wealth, that they were accumulating and the life, the larger life in the world, which had become their natural expression. By that time I saw the task was hopeless; and from that time onwards I have been working slowly to form an opinion in favour of change. I regret it but, I am bound to say that I do not believe the caste system can continue in India in the changing life of the nation, and

with the heavy responsibilities which more and more, still fall upon her sons. Since the caste will not perform their dharma, since none are willing to take up the special work since it is the birth right, I think we must be honest and say that qualities and class are separate. It seems to me, friends, that the steps we have to take now are the steps which shall abolish the distinction of caste which no longer represent realities." (Besant, 1913)

Adopting a pragmatic outlook Mrs. Besant further illustrated "There is the fact that now you have to mingle side by side. I have pleaded for equality, but equality in society and politics means intermingling with people of all castes, and with the English and with the other foreigners as well."Thus Mrs. Besant was clear that the urgent needs of the time was for Indians, to breakthrough all prejudices and intermingle with an open mind and soul. She said that Indians cannot do their duty to Mother India in future, unless they are willing to meet the men of all types or same levels. "What about our Musalman friends? Caste breaks up Indian society far more than anything else.What may not be accomplished if Hindu and Islam are left to mingle without the barrier of caste? If Musalmans and Hindus are to work for the redemption of India side by side this caste division must go. You cannot refuse to work with them; for if you do, it means working against each other. There will then be no possibility for greatness of India which we dream. It is not the division of religion. Your philosophy is the same. If you look into it there will really be no difference in the Vedanta of Hindus and the great Metaphysics if the Middle Age Doctors of Islam. I have read both and I know that of which I speak. I see the bridge between two religions in those wonderful teachings which come from both religions alike." (Besant, 1912) The above opinions are examples of Mrs. Besant's open denouncing of the caste system and its practices of India.

In 1906 she organized within the Theosophical Society the 'Sons of India' and 'Daughters of India', native associations to work for Indian social reform. In 1912 a new body, the 'Theosophical Stalwarts' appeared, each member taking a pledge to show by personal

example that he dissociated himself from certain customs, in 1913 this developed into an 'Order of the Brothers of Service', who bound themselves to disregard all caste restrictions, not to marry their sons under the age of twenty one or their daughters under seventeen, to educate their wives and daughters, to promote the education of women generally and to discountenance their seclusion, to ignore all colour distinctions, and to oppose social ostracism of remarried widows.

In all these things she was trying singly and steadfastly to get to the root of the matter, the building of individual character. Failure in that, she thought, would lead to a failure in efforts of every reform.

At this juncture it is interesting to mention that Geoffrey West in his work, "The life of Annie Besant" while discussing about the latter's social reform works in India draws mention of Katherine Mayo. He writes, "It is worth recording that there is practically nothing in the main indictment of Katherine Mayo's notorious Mother India which is not touched upon generally in some detail, in the voluminous writings of Mrs Besant on India since 1893. But in the latter we find too a far truer perspective. It seems vastly more significant that one who has lived in India for Thirty four years, who has always admitted and faced and fought these unpleasant realities, should finally emerge as a leading champion of Indian Home Rule, than that a visitor of few months should oppose it." (West, 1929)

It was early as 1902 that she came to an open statement of the wider issues implicit in her religious, educational and reformist work in India, which were to lead directly to her open advocacy of politics in 1913. She had always, as any successful statesman must be sensitive to the shifting and wakening of public opinion, and perhaps her change of attitude may be taken as indicative of a gathering change in Indian public opinion dating from the beginning of the century. In an address, delivered in London in 1902 she charged the people of England

with knowing little and caring less about the people of India for whose good government they were responsible. “I ask you whether you have a right to rule 300,000,000 of people in name, and not understand the alphabet of Indian questions, even very largely in your Imperial Parliament.” (Dasgupta)

Once again we stand face to face with Mrs Besant’s extreme pragmatic approach when she stated:

“The main blunders were due to the fact that England sought to rule India on Western rather than on typically Indian lines. Methods of land holding, methods of taxation, economic systems, which are suitable for Great Britain, do not suit this vast Asiatic nation whose traditions, whose customs, whose habits, are utterly different from our own. The attitude of Englishmen going out of England was that of men going out to exile, to make money and return as soon as possible. India is not ruled for the prosperity of the people, but rather for the profit of her conquerors, and her sons is being treated as a conquered race.” (Besant) She spoke, too, of the evils of the famines, which the English sought to relieve while neglecting their causes. Explaining ‘What causes the famines?’ she stated, that it was caused partly due to the financial drain of the ‘Home Charges’ and the huge bureaucracy, partly due to the destruction of the manufacturers of India for the profit of Lancashire and the compulsory forcing on India of English methods of production. According to Mrs. Besant the destruction of the communal system of land tenure, the imposing of the English system of landlordism, of rigid rents and taxes, levied in lieu of the flexible indigenous system of proportionate rents and taxes paid in kind, and the network of railways facilitating the buying up of crops and sweeping them away for export, were causes of famines. Every year, she stated, that while famine threatened, Indian wheat was thrown into foreign markets. She stated her conviction that even the educated Englishmen is not interested in India, and that its satisfactory government by the British Parliament is impossible. Much more practical would be the

establishment in India of a council of the wisest of its people, its best administrators, as feudatory chiefs, gathered around a Viceroy appointed not for political services in England but for some knowledge and understanding of India.

Mrs Besant's active interest in Indian political life and her consequent emergence as the leader of the Home Rule Movement constitute one of the controversial issues of Indian politics. A lady of Irish birth, she had a remarkable public career in England with diverse interests. She was associated with Bradlaugh in his campaign of free thought. In 1886, she became interested in Fabian Society and worked with Sidney Webb, G.B.Shaw and Graham Wallas. From 1886 onwards, she identified herself with the cause of Theosophy and came to India in 1893. On arrival in this country, she declared, "My work in the sphere is over and I shall never resume it." (Amrit Bazar Patrika, 1922) Henceforth she became exclusively interested in India's social and religious problems along with the propagation of Theosophical ideals. But, in 1913, she suddenly switched over to politics and organised a political movement, demanding Home Rule for India. The sudden change in her attitude after a period of twenty years caused surprise to her friends and opponents alike. Consequently, it became an issue of controversy and various explanations were offered regarding the real object of Mrs. Besant's entry into Indian politics.

Geoffrey West in his book, *"The life of Annie Besant"* mentions the moment had come; Mrs Besant seems to have felt, to take up actively the demand for Self Government. "Hardinge was the Viceroy and Gokhale had the leadership of India. It was an atmosphere of mutual respect and trust based on substantial convictions and tried experiences- an atmosphere to be preserved not by standing still but by moving forward. She was not merely inventing a slogan but announcing a fact when in 1913 she began to proclaim publicly that the price of India's loyalty is India's freedom. She was driven into Indian politics because she has said everywhere the intolerable pressure of tyrannical legislation hampered all forward action." "It

is possible that I should have carried out my idea in the nineties, of not resuming any constant political work, had not increasing repression by the authorities, the narrowing of liberty, the ill treatment of students, and the danger of revolution forced me into the field. It became increasingly difficult to do any educational, religious, or social work, and the boys I loved were being maddened into crime. Liberty was being strangled to death, and I, as one of her soldiers, could not stand aside. I joined the political campaign not to lead, but to take risks." (Besant, 1917)

But again a widely held view was that, in resuming her political activity, Mrs. Besant was mainly guided by her inborn British love for freedom coupled with an exclusive sense of nationalism towards India, the country of her adoption. Some have however, attributed to her imperial sentiment, the main reason of her entry into active politics. They maintained that the driving force behind the sudden drift in her attitude was her desire to strengthen India's connection with the British Empire. There were certain others who held that she was driven to politics because the Government of India refused to grant a charter conferring upon her Central Hindu College of Benares, the status of the University and the High Court delivered an unfavourable judgement in the famous Krishnamurti case in which she entangled in 1912. She realised that she could no longer hope for official support and angrily joined politics.

The advocates of Mrs. Besant's exclusive sense of nationalism argue that her participation on political activity in 1913 was "only the final and inevitable step of progress of twenty years." In their opinion, Mrs. Besant had conceived, in 1893, a comprehensive idea of India's national regeneraton and her socio-religious activites were "in fact the prelude to a still greater task, the gaining for Indian self government." (Besterman, 1874) After working for twenty years, she realised that the desired social and religious progress of India was not possible without political freedom. Hence it was necessary to ask for India's right to political liberty, with this leading idea in her mind, she took up the advocacy of Self Government for

India. Her Irish instinct and long training in the British method of political agitation pointed to her the way and she initiated a political movement demanding Home Rule for India.

But some of her contemporaries have pointed out that, in resuming her political activites, Mrs. Besant was guided not only by her untiring zeal and enthusiasm for India, as many people have believed but on account of existence of imperial sentiment in her thought consequent to her anxiety to strengthen India's connection with the British Empire. She regarded "the British Empire as a larger instrument and symbol of evolving brotherhood of man which is the dream of Theosophy to realise on earth. Anxious as she was to maintain this ideal of the imperial union, she saw danger to the imperial unity in the growth of revolutionary spirit in India; she thought it is wise to divert this spirit in the channels of constitutionalism and loyalty to the Empire. Actuated by this feeling, she resumed her political activity in 1913 and organised the Home Rule Movement. B.C. Pal, who had the opportunity to study Mrs. Besant's political psychology from close quarters, gave expression to this view in 1917. According to him, Mrs. Besant brought with her lofty, 'idea of imperialism' and the constitutional method of agitation, which were the two chief governing principles of her politics. "They were", he observes, "the bed rock of her political philosophy even when she religiously kept aloof from all political activites and confined herself absolutely to Theosophist propaganda". This, in his opinion, "explains her earlier as well as the latest attitude towards the Nationalist Movement in this country." (Pal, 1917) A more liberal conception of Indian liberty then that embodied in the Morley- Minto Reforms was thus needed to check this unrest. She, therefore, conceived the idea of Home Rule which she thought would reconcile the rising Indian nationalist aspirations with the imperial ideal and would work as an antidote to the growth of the spirit of separation. "With this cry of Home Rule", remarks B.C. Pal, "she came, therefore to us in 1913 from her last visit to England and organised the Home Rule demand into a well defined political movement which came into

notice prominently in 1915." M.N. Roy, the great Indian revolutionary leader was of the opinion that "Mrs. Besant had always been a champion of the British Empire which she chose to call the foundation of a real 'League of Nations' and in which she desired to incorporate the whole world". It was on account of "her instinctive zeal for the imperial ideal", observed Roy that she viewed with alarm the growth of revolutionary tendency in Indian politics and "the set out with the mission of steming the rising tide of the revolution." (Chand, 1985)

Contemporary official view was that Mrs Besant conceived the Home Rule League idea as a safety valve to the feeling of separation in which she saw danger to the unity and integrity of the British Empire. It has been noticed in one of these records that the political unrest which had gathered momentum since the failure of Morley-Minto reforms had attracted the attention of more thoughtful persons. They apprehended in it a danger to the imperial authority and "became alarmed at the possibility of agitation turning into anarchy unless a safety valve was provided." Moved by this alarm and anxiety, Mrs. Besant initiated the Home Rule Movement which came into prominence at the close of the year of 1915. "It did, according to this view; considerable services in providing an outlet for emotions that otherwise have expressed themselves in crude form." (Chand, 1985)

On several occasions Mrs.Besant had herself expressed the view that by advocating Home Rule Movement for India, she had not abandoned the cause of the Empire as her critics had believed. It was her conviction that the cause of the Empire would be served better by encouraging, India's demand for Self Government rather than by suppressing all agitation. Hence, she had been convinced as she declared, "of the necessity of the two countries remaining together all along from the moment she had landed in the country in 1893." (Besant, 1917) It was in this perspective that Mrs. Besant was acclaimed by Subramaniam Aiyer as "an Empire builder by the unique constitutional and reconciliatory methods." He has pointed out that Mrs. Besant had great faith in the British Empire as an ideal of freedom,

justice and brotherhood. She was consequently, interested in the promotion of this ideal and desired Indian progress in conformity with this ideal. When the First World War threatened the whole fabric of the British Empire, she wanted to stand by it. In her opinion, it was only possible by supporting Indians in their demand for Self Government. "This idea", he observes, "made her preach Home Rule against the wish of ninety nine percent of her race in India". It can therefore, be said that as Hume sought to distract attention from the growing political discontent in India by founding the Indian National Congress in 1885, so Mrs Besant thrity years later, fearing the growing revolutionary attitude in Indian politics, conceived the idea of Home Rule league and organised a political movement, demanding the Home Rule for India within British Empire. (Chand, 1985)

The period from 1858, when the Crown took over the government of India, to 1885, the year of the first meeting of the Indian National Congress, was the vital seeding time. It witnessed a deep and widespread renaissance in Indian religion and the arts, as well as a steady speed of the official administrative machinery to cover inch by inch, ever deeper and ever wider, almost the entire secular life of the people. The congress had quickly given birth to Provincial Conferences and these in their turn to District Conferences. Moreover, the Congress organization, flimsy as it looked on paper, was powerful enough at a moment's notice to organize the voicing of public opinion throughout the country when any occasion of real grievance or danger arose in any locality. In the new government universities students were absorbing Western principles of democracy and free rule. All these conflicting elements found presently inevitable expression in the Indian National Congress, the majority of the founders of which were Indian Theosophists who, after the 1884 Theosophical Convention at Adyar, met in Madras and formed the first Committee of the future Congress which was a purely unofficial body. She approached the Indian National Congress with the request to adopt her four fold programme of national reform, namely religious, social, educational and

political- but her proposal was rejected by the leaders of the Congress on the ground that the Congress was purely a poltical body working only for India's political regeneration. Inspite of this unfavourable reply she made up her mind to enlist the sympathy of Indian National Congress to her side and appeared for the first time at the Madras session of the Congress in 1914, moving a resolution, which was carried, asking for reciprocity between India and Colonies in the matters of emigration. In her speech she pressed India's claim for Home Rule and immediately after the session undertook the work of educating and uniting public opinion on the need for Home Rule.

In Decemeber, 1915 when the Congress and the Muslim League held their sessions in Bombay she convened a meeting of the leading adherents of both the parties and placed before them her scheme of Home Rule League to carry on a strong and sustained political agitation for Home Rule. Her plan did not meet with the approval of the older group of leaders, but it remarkably appealed to the younger generation of politicians. Although she failed to carry her proposal, yet her impact on the poltical activity of the time was clearly discernible. She secured simultaneous action by the Congress and the Muslim league on line which was a considerable advance on anyting yet attempted. Both the National Congress and the All India Muslim League in their annual gatherings in the city of Bombay passed resolutions, directing the preparation of schemes of extensive reforms, it being the intention apparently that the representatives of the two bodies should work in concert. (Home Department, Political, 1916) Although a large body of public opinion had been by now created in favour of the Home Rule League scheme yet anxious as she was to utilise the Congress for her purpose, Mrs. Besant desired that her scheme should be accepted by the Congress. For this purpose she went about the principal centres of political activity delivering lectures to crowded gatherings and meeting people to persuade them on the necessity of Home Rule. She also instituted an All India Propanganda Fund to publish pamphlets n

English and regional languages. In addition to her two pamphlets in English and regional languages, she also brought out a series of Home Rule pamphlets intended to prepare the mind of Indian leaders for the active participation in the new political campaign of Home Rule. Mrs Besant in response to many requests ultimately launched in Spetember 1916 her own Home Rule League and vigorously carried on educative propaganda for Home Rule through her writings and speeches. In that year, her influence was noticeable throughout the country. When the Congress and Muslim League met at Lucknow her work was recognised with appreciation and general enthusiasm prevailed over the Home Rule idea. She was almost unanimously accepted as one of the most influential leaders of poltical thought embodying the national passion for Home Rule.

Meanwhile Tilak who was released in June 1914 soon re-established his lead in Indian politics. He also raised the slogan of Home Rule for India. He believed that Swaraj was absolutely essential for the real indigenous progress and welfare. Since the commencement of his public career he stood for the substituition of Indian and national control in place of English and bureaucractic control in the affairs of India. He had been in continued conflict with the authorities and was not in agreement with the methods of the Moderates. This proved to be a hinderance in the attainment of his object. After his release in 1914 Tilak, however, became more cautious and conciliatory. He assessed the political situation. One of his first acts was therefore to disown his earlier methods and to emphasise common ground between himself and the Moderates. He also wanted to enlist Mrs Besant's help in coming back to the Congress fold. He had been considerably influenced by Mrs. Besant who had organised agitation in South and in U.P. He followed her example in Maharashtra and thus sought to establish his leadership in that area. He also adopted the term of Home Rule as the watch word of his party. The expression Home Rule, as he said, was much familiar to the British and more conciliatory than the term Swaraj which was hitherto associated in the

English mind with sedition. Tilak now proposed to start a Home Rule Movement. He also supported the efforts being made by Mrs Besant for his re entry into the Congress. Side by side he also carried on his efforts to reorganise his party. This was an indication of people's confidence in Tilak's leadership. According to a contemporary police report, "the whole affair was a triumph for Tilak." (Home Department, Political, 1915)

At the Bombay Provincial Conference, Tilak made his first great political speech since his release in which Home Rule was put forward as the only cure for India's political ills and grievances. Tilak was now recognised as the leader of the Home Rule party and the Congress League Scheme, in the formation of which he had a large share, was accepted by the Congress as the national demand. The national movement preceding the birth of Home Rule agitation was dominated by the Moderates represented by such influential leaders G.K. Ghokhale and P.M. Mehta. The Moderates were most powerful and active group in the Indian National Congress but their influence began to wane after the death of Gokhale and Mehta in 1915. This afforded the opportunity to Mrs. Besant and Tilak to get control over the Congress and to commit it to the agitation they had initiated. Hence these circumstances enabled Tilak and Mrs. Besant to secure the recognition of their Home Rule campaign by the Congress in 1916. The Congress at its Bombay session amended its Constitution to facilitate the re entry of Tilak. This was a triumph for Tilak and Mrs. Besant. Both of them were powerful organisers and had remarkable capacity for leadership. They consequently succeeded in bringing the Congress to their way of thinking.

In one of its reports to the Government of India the local Government of Madras indicated that Mrs. Besant's agitation for Home Rule so deeply influenced the educated classes that the moderated seemed "nervous of any open rupture with her and were inclined to participate in the propagandist work under her control." (Home Department, Politcal, 1916) Both Tilak and Mrs. Besant worked hand in hand and brought pressure to bear upon the Indian politicians of

all shades of opinion with the object of inducing them to present a united front in support of India's claim for Home Rule. It was adopted by the Congress as India's minimum immediate demand and formed the basis of its main resolution on Self Government. Thus the Congress in 1916 recognised the Home Rule agitations initiated sometime earlier by Mrs. Besant and Tilak.

The close of the year of 1916, therefore, marked the emergence of a distinct and new phase of national feeling the watch word of which was Home Rule. The history of the Indian Nationalist Movement in the succeeding two years was chiefly concerned with it. The object of the Home Rule movement was the attainment of a system of Self Government or Home Rule for India within the British Empire. Both Mrs. Besant and Tilak were in common agreement with regard to India's claim for Home Rule and laid down it as the policy of their Home Rule Leagues. This did not advocate secession of India from Great Britain. They were anxious to maintain India's connection with the British Empire and desired autonomy in internal affairs only. The object of their agitation therefore was to secure for India a status of a self governing member in the forthcoming reconstruction of the Empire after the War.

The Home Rule Movement was not without opponents. It encountered opposition from those classes and communities whose interest conflicted with the national aspirations and who felt that their existence as a community would be in danger if there was any considerable transfer of power to Indian hands. This feeling lay at the bottom of the opposition led by the Anglo Indians, the Muslims, the non- Brahmins, the Parsees, the land holders and the Zamindars.

In the course of his sermon, Dastur Darabji Sanjana, the Head Priest of the Parsis, spoke:-

"Should India get Home Rule in future, the benefits resulting from this concession will be largely monopolised by the crores of Hindus and Musalmans while it is doubtful if it will prove more beneficial to the Parsis. Under the Home Rule the Hindus will push forward their

own kith and kin, while the Musalmans will promote the welfare of their community as much as they can. But the influence of the Parsis will proportionately decrease and the progress that they have made on account of their personal merits with the help of the impartial British officers will be blocked. It follows therefore that it is only proper for a small community like the Parsis to desire that the constitution of the British rule (in India), should remain unchanged." (Home Department, Political, 1917)

Anglo- Indians who wanted to maintain for themselves to retain the priviledges they had enjoyed under British rule, vehemently opposed the Home Rule demand and were joined by Indian Christians. The Home Rule Movement also aroused opposition from the conservative section of the Muslim opinion. Although the Muslim League had agreed to support the Home Rule demand yet those Muslims who strictly followed the policy of Aligarh School of Thought were opposed to the Home Rule creed.

The Home Rule Movement also encountered a formidable opposition from the non-Brahmins who stood almost as a unit against it. The non Brahmin Movement originated in the days of the Home Rule agitation and was encouraged by the officials of the Madras Government when they were faced with the organised agitation for Home Rule led by Mrs. Besant. The principal leaders of the non Brahmin Movement were landlords, rich non- Brahmins and members of the Legislative Councils. Their leaders T.M. Nair possessed remarkable qualities of leadership and organisation. He was a "powerful writer with a savage pen" as Mrs. Besant admitted. Under his leadership the non- Brahmins organised themselves into a party called the 'Justice Party' with an English daily paper The Justice as its official organ. The aim of the party was to fight for the rights of the non- Brahmins, to expose the oligarchic character of Home Rule, and to obtain communal representation for non-Brahmins. During 1917-18 they carried on a brisk counter propaganda against the demand for Home Rule. Their movement made a rapid head way in the south particularly in the Madras Presidency. The non- Brahmin

communities saw in the immediate grant of Home Rule a serious danger of the supremacy of the high caste Hindus. They linked the question of social advancement with the political reform and held the view that their moral and intellectual progress was impossible under Home Rule which was declared by them to be Brahmin rule. They supported the British authority in India and urged the need for adequate protection of their interest. (Chand, 1985)

The Home Rule Movement led by Mrs. Besant and Tilak was also viewed by the authorities with misgivings. In dealing with it they adopted a policy of discouragement and repression. Though the first reaction of the Government of India towards the Home Rule agitation was of indifference, as they regarded the action against Mrs. Besant as a matter of local importance and left it to discretion of the local governments to deal with her. But latter they felt alarmed at the growing influence of the Home Rule movement and took upon themselves the task of restraining the activities of the Home Rule leaders Consequently they laid down a policy of discouraging and repressing the activities in connection with the Home Rule demand and asked the Local Governments to follow the policy in all earnestness. (Home Department Papers, 1917) Discussions between Government officials of the Home Department suggested a need for imposing some checks on the Home Rule League acitivty-

"As regards the Home Rule agitation I venture to suggest that we are taking things much too easily.....that the scope of Mrs. Besant's Home Rule movement cannot be ignored. Stripped of verbal delicacies the difference between the Congress articles of faith and those of Home Rule is that, whereas the former aims at the gradual growth of self government within the Empire, the latter makes the demand for an immediate grant of complete self government.....it is not sufficient to decide, and to the propagation of the Home Rule League movement. We ought to face what the Home Rule League itself aims at, and if its objective is one which cannot be contemplated, to consider whether it is wise to continue to ignore it-

permitting it's advocated to continueto arouse definite hopes and expectations which cannot be satisfied completely in our time." (Home Department, Notes, Politcal, 1916)

Though projected with great energy the Home Rule Movement soon showed signs of decline. At the end of 1918 it had lost all its former vigour and influence. It was subsequently eclipsed by a more popular movement under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi. Several factors led to its decline. By 1920 the two Home Rule Leagues of Tilak and Mrs. Besant became a spent force. This was obvious because the Movement had inherent limitations. It pressed for a demand that had no chance of immediate realisation, making this failure practically inevitable.

The leaders of the Movement were confident that England, as an ardent champion of liberty and the home of Parliamentary democracy, would confer on India the right of self – government after the war as a reward for her loyalty and services rendered during the war. The pledges and promises, often made publicly by the British statesmen during the war period, increased their expectations. But as the war dragged on, the hollowness of the British promises began to become apparent. Llyod George declared pointblank that Britain's sole aim was to rule India where a "steel frame" of British power and dominance should always prevail. (Dasgupta) The Madras West Coast Spectator, dated May, 10th 1916, compared the idea of Home Rule to a "pleasant dream" that had been "changed into a nightmare". That the British Government would not concede Home Rule to Indians became evident in the Ladybank Speechdelivered by Lord Asquith on 14 June, 1916. In course of this speech Lord Asquith handsomely acknowledged the contributions to British war efforts made by Australia, New Zealand and Canada and asserted that relations between Great Britain and these Dominions as well as Ireland must be reviewed closely after the war. He did not mention India. This significant omission of any reference to India and her future relations with Great Britain did not escape the attention of Indian nationalists. (Dasgupta, 1981)

The Home Rulers championed the cause of Swaraj but did not define it to mean a state of national independence which would guarantee to the Indian workers and peasants a higher standard of living, opportunity for further progress and freedom from exploitation. Obviously, this kept the larger sections of the masses outside the fold of the Home Rule Movement. Opposition of the Andhras and the non – Brahmins of Madras were also two major factors which undermined the position of Mrs. Besant and her movement. Thus ironically, Mrs. Besant, one of the originators and a tower of strength to the Movement, was also responsible for its eventual decline. Her status as a newcomer to the Indian political scene, her foreign ancestry, her attitude towards the Swadeshi Movement (1905-1910), the mixed reactions about her character and ideas and above all, her 'England and India hand in hand' theory were largely responsible for the decline of the Movement. Many political leaders, including Golkhale, viewed her involvement in Indian political affairs with suspicion.

The year 1918 proved to be a crucial one. The Montagu Chelmsford Report on Indian constitutional reforms was published on 8 July. Mrs. Besant described the reforms as "unworthy of England to give and unworthy of India to accept." But later, influenced by C.P. Ramaswami Iyer, she "took the middle course of most vehemently criticising the reforms as they were and then suggesting a large number of changes which would make the reforms acceptable". But the average men found it difficult to understand how she could categorically refuse to accept the reforms and then propose changes in them simultaneously. The inevitable followed and Mrs. Besant was sharply criticized for this Volte-face. Tilak's absence from the Indian political scene at a very critical moment, between September and December 1918, greatly undermined the strength and solidarity of the Home Rule League. Immediately after the special session of the Bombay Congress (September, 1918), Tilak had to go to England to fight his defamation case against Valentine Chirol. The Montford Report came as a veritable

apple of discord. Mrs. Besant, who at first commented that "it was unworthy of England to offer and unworthy of India to accept", later learned towards the Moderate point of view and finally pleaded for the acceptance of the reforms. The Nationalists headed by Tilak stood for its rejection. Jamanadas Dwarkadas wrote in his Memoirs, "Some of us who formed a group of intimate followers of Mrs. Besant were rather perturbed at the tide of unpopularity which we could see was soon coming upon her. The Rowlatt Act was passed on March 18, 1919. It provoked universal opposition in India. As a protest Gandhiji, who had now come to the forefront of the nationalist movement in India, proceeded to launch his Satyagrah- a movement. He founded the Satyagrah Sabha whose members promised to disobey the Act and court arrest voluntarily. The British government came down with an iron hand. The Jalianwala Bagh Massacre (13 April, 1919) led to a universal cry for an enquiry into the Punjab wrongs. Mrs. Besant denounced the Rowlatt Act and even suggested the launching of an agitation against it. She declared that the Act would justify revolution. "But when the agitators contemplated passive resistance under the leadership of Gandhiji, she retraced her steps." On April 18, 1919, she wrote:

"When the mob begins to pelt them with brickbats (the soldiers), it is more merciful to order the soldiers to fire a few volleys of buckshot. The unbelievable statement, which was virtually a condonation of the barbarity committed by General Dyer, came as a rude shock to most Indians." (Dasgupta, 1981 p213)

Thus, the decline of Mrs.Besant and with her that of the Home Rule Movement was a sad episode. With the arrival of M.K. Gandhi in the Indian political, Mrs. Besant receded into the background. Mrs. Besant gave vent to her bitter feelings, in a letter to the Times of India dated 21 April 1919 in which she criticized Gandhiji for "opening the door to revolution" and causing "deadly mischief" to the Home Rule cause. Her opposition to Gandhiji undermined her image not only in Indian politics but also in her legue as well. The death of Tilak in

August 1920 drove the last nail on its coffin. With his death, the Indian Home Rule League withered away. Gandhiji has now emerged as the undisputed leader of the national movement, and as Gandhiji's star rose, so her's fail.

However it goes beyond doubt that India stood stronger for her freedom, much due to the works of Mrs Besant. She persistently gave credit for her work to the Indians in general striving thus to arouse in them self confidence and a sense of responsibility. Mrs. Besant's life above all things had been a great adventure, with a noble purpose for India.

MADELEINE SLADE (MIRA BEHN): A POLITICAL AND SOCIAL WORKER: -

"When I take up my pen to try and write a preface to those letters, my head bows in reverence and my heart overflows at the thought of Bapu's infinite love. How can I express myself in words? For many weeks I have remained in this state of mind, but today November 7th, 1948, I have determined not to put down my pen. This day, twenty-three years ago at 7.45am I reached Sabarmati, and came into Bapu's blessed presence."

-Mira Behn.

"The Gandhi-Mira episode is one of the great idyllic stories of human life. It has always suggested to me the story which must have attached to Jesus relations with the high minded and heroic women who clustered about him in his ancient ministry in Palestine. In the final crisis of his career, when the Nazarene was arrested, tried and crucified, these women faithful to him even when all his disciples except only John had fled away. The utter loyalty in death must have been the reflection of the similar loyalty of these women in life. They followed Jesus and served him because they saved him the Master. So it was with Mira, who saw in Gandhi, the Mahatma," writes John Haynes Homes, the author of "*My Gandhi*" and the reciepient of "Gandhi Peace Award", as an introduction to book, "*Gandhi's letters to a Disciple*" by Mira Behn. This book contains volume of letters, by Gandhi to his most trusted disciple Mira Behn.

In her preface to the volume of Bapu's letters to Mira, Mira tells the dramatic tale of her discovery of Gandhi and its cataclysmic influence upon her life. She was an English girl, Madeleine Slade (22nd November 1892- 20th July, 1982), daughter of distinguished British admiral, a popular social figure, highly educated, tall, beautiful, and proud of bearing, with glowing eyes and liquid voice. Early enraptured by music, she was drawn to Romain Rolland, by his writings on Beethoven, and through Romain Rolland to Bapu, whose biography the

great Frenchman had written. Mira read this book and said, “From that moment I knew that my life was dedicated to Bapu”. In her autobiographical note, written in Febraury 1982, on the eve of her being awarded the distinguished Padma Vibhushan, Mira Behn wrote: “At this time I came in contact with Romain Rolland, who had just written his book, “*Mahatma Gandhi*”. As soon as I read it, the call came. I had to go to India- Sabarmati Ashram. I at once started preparing myself for all the rules and regulations there and when halfway through my year’s training, I wrote to Gandhiji, asking, if I might come. While warning me of the severity of life I would enter into, he agreed, and in the beginning of Novemebr 1925, my life in Gandhiji’s service began, under the new name of Mira. (Mira Behn as in Sister Mira)”

There were undoubtedly various forces at work in this conclusive inward experience. The psychologist would probably describe it as a delayed impulse of adolescence, in which period it is not uncommon for a young girl to be emotionally captivated by an older man, or, for that matter, a young man to be captivated by an older woman. Far more serious and central, undoubtedly, was a profound spiritual awakening, of the type described by William James in his *Varieties of Religious Experience*, which brings, ‘a divided self’ into a unity which means peace and ultimate ‘saintliness’. Mira herself spoke of her experiences as a ‘power’ that was ‘impelling’ her before she knew either Rolland or Gandhi. In the former case it gave her ‘an extraordinary sense of mellowed happiness; and in the latter case, burst forth into a light which, like the dawn, glowed brighter and brighter in my heart,’ and at last became as ‘the Sun of Truth pouring his rays into my soul’. The most remarkable part of her experience is what she did with it. Had it been mere emotionalism of a romantic type, Mira would have rushed to Gandhi, if only to indulge her sentimental intoxication. But she did nothing of the sort. She not only did not go to India, to meet him and sit adoringly at his feet. She did not even write him, or communicate with him in any way. With amazing sanity and self control, she set herself to the business of preparation, both physical and spiritual, for her task of

dedication to the great Indian leader. This involved training in as apparently trivial an exercise as sitting cross legged on the floor, and in as definitely important a one as diet and knowledge of Hindu literature. Only when she had completed almost a year of intense concentration and hard labour, did she feel herself fit to come into Gandhi's presence and offer him the service of her life. (Homes, 1951, p5)

Deeply touching is the scene of her meeting with the Mahatma, "I could see and feel nothing but a heavenly light," she writes. She further writes, "He lifted me up and taking me in his arms said, 'You shall be my daughter.' And so has it been from that day." (Slade, 1960,p66) There can be no doubt as to the nature of this episode. It is religious ecstasy of the highest and purest character. It is the soul obedient to God and to his servant. It is the making of oneself a servant of truth and light. There have been many other instances of this spiritual surrender to, an exalted saint as Gandhi. The latest, and in certain aspects the most remarkable, is that of Vincent Sheean, as recorded in his book, "*Lead, Kindly Light"*. Like Mira, Sheean was possessed of Gandhi while he was still far across the seas, and had never seen and known him. Like Mira, he felt his life transformed, and given a clairvoyance which released the inner secrets of the spirit. Unlike Mira, he hurried to India at his moments of seizure to see Mahatma before his 'martyrdom was upon him', for Sheean foresaw the martyrdom! Unlike Mira, who was away in Pashulok, he was present when the assassin struck, and endured the agonizing experience of the stigma. 'It is all so plain, and yet so wonderful, when the soul takes the command of personality!' (Slade, 1949) Mira was changed in an instant, not by any sentiment of passion, but by a capture of her whole life by the subduing power of the spirit. God spoke in the sudden disclosure of Gandhi to his disciple, and Mira had the courage, and the supreme intelligence to answer. Her life therewith became exalted, and to the end as beautiful as a gift laid upon an altar. (Homes, 1951)

Madeleine Slade was born in 1892. Her father who was a naval officer and would usually be away in foreign lands for long phases of time. Therefore her mother took her children to her father's country home at Milton Heath. "This house stood in some twenty acres of land on high ground, beautifully lay out with gardens, paddocks for the cows, and a rich collection of shrubs and trees. Motorcars did not exist in those days, so there were stables full of fine horses, some for the carriages and some for riding and hunting. At the bottom of the sloping paddocks was a cowshed with four or five jersey cows, chicken house and pigsties. The house had a beautiful view up the Dorking Valley with the North Downs to the right and the Leith Hill Range to the left. The day nursery was on the top floor, so she got the best view of all, and the night nursery was on the middle floor, looking out over the stable yard, which pleased her very much.Though life was carefully regulated she never felt it was monotonous. As she grew older, she learned all about the correct use of saws, hammer, screwdrivers, lanes and chisels. But the place she loved the most was the stable. She watched the horses being groomed, the brushing and rubbing down, the picking out and washing of their hoofs, were all a fascination to a child's eye. The head coachman taught her the how and why of everything, including saddling, bridling, riding horses and harnessing of carriage horses." (Pandya, 2007,p98)

"I spent my childhood and early youth mostly in my maternal grandfather's big country house with large garden near Dorking. The stables were filled with beautiful horses and the cow sheds with Jersey cows. My greatest happiness was in long rides on horseback through the countryside." (Slade, 1960)

When Madeleine was a small girl, her father bought her a piano. For the first time, she heard a Beethoven's Sonata Opus 31, No. 2, she was so fascinated that she would replay it again and again. The tune created in her mind a feeling of deep agony.

"At the age of 15, I heard Beethoven's music for the first time. My spirit was illuminated. His music, his letters and the memories of his contemporaries now absorbed my time and I learnt what is little known, namely, that Beethoven had been profoundly moved by the ancient wisdom of the East and had copied out in German transalation long passages from Sanskrit literature." (Homes, 1951)

"This craving for Beethoven after some years, led her to room in Rolland, in order to get more knowledge about Beethoven. She met Rolland in Villeneuve, where he lived with his sister. In this meeting Romain Rolland mentioned India in context of a small book he had just written, called *Mahatma Gandhi*, and asked if she had ever heard of him. Madeleine replied in negative. He told her that Gandhi was another Christ. These words went deep, but she stored them away and went on her voyage to Alexandria." (Pandya, 2007, p101) Mira read this book and writes, "From that moment I knew that my life was dedicated to Bapu". She lived for 34 years in India from 1925 staying till 1960. To Mira, Gandhi was the 'Mahatma' "who served the oppressed India, through fearless truth and non violence, a cause which though focussed in India, was for the whole of humanity." (Gupta, 1992, p xiii)

From a socially economically privileged life, she moved into a life of deliberate poverty, austerity and self abrogation as a disciple of Mahatma Gandhi. For 25 years, she served him, acting as his secretary, his aide, serving sentence in jail, travelling with him to England, to America, seeking India's freedom and the right to carry on his work among the millions. Hardest of all for her, were the years when she was separated by his direction, least she grew to need his bodily presence too much. And in those years and then since his death, she has carried on in practical measure, with her work for the villages, with her cattle experimentation in the Himalayas and with periods of silence and contemplation. Seeking the spirits goals, she was christened into the new name Mira Behn after Mirabai, the devotee of Krishna. To her, Mahatma was a charismatic saint and sage who did ascetic politics, bringing

morality and spiritualism into secular politics. Her main concern was to aid and sustain Mahatma Gandhi's social cultural and political work. She kept up the ideal of self reliance and rural reconstruction espoused by Gandhi.

Accounts of Mira Behn, presents us, with a frank details of Gandhi's life. Not just of his public life, which was set on the vast stage of world history, but also of his private and personal life in the Ashram, on the road, with his intimate friends and followers.

"That Gandhi wrote to her over six hundred letters is enough testimony of the close ties built up between Gandhiji and his perpetually striving and restless disciple. Apart from her strenuous daily routine, she was with Gandhiji on numerous important occasions. She was with him when he was having long talks with Lord Irwin during the 1930 Civil Disobedience Movement. She was also in London, during the second Round Table conference in 1931. She undertook missions in England and America to promote of what Gandhiji thought and felt on some vital issues concerned with the freedom of India. Mira Behn toured parts of the country in order to assess popular feeling on certain situations connected with war activites in India. Underlying all her work was her soul's search for inner peace and the higher values of life. A good part of Gandhi-Mira correspondence deals with this search" - wrote Sadiq Ali, the senior politician of India and the chairman of Gandhi Smarak Nidhi of India. (Gupta, 1992)

In Mira Behn's own words, "The secretarial side of Bapu's works very rarely fell to my lot. I was much more suited to personal service, and would instinctively leave the taking down of conversations, noting of letters and such like jobs to the other members of the party. Nevertheless, I used to gather up from time to time, some precious fragments, and put them away in my treasure hoard of Bapu's letters to me." (Homes, 1951)

How did Mira Behn transcend the boundaries of affluence to seek voluntary poverty, of course only in material terms? What are the lessons of the discourse between Gandhi and

Mira Behn for contemporary culture of social dialogue? We have to go back to the beginning of her journey to understand the context of the possible answers. (Homes, 1951)

Mira Behn's writes, "Through Beethoven's music, I became led to Romain Rolland, and through Romain Rolland to Bapu. These were not just easy stages. On the contrary turmoil, darkness, hope, despair- all had to be passed through before the pure Light of Truth broke in upon my troubled soul and led me to my destination..... I knew that my life was dedicated to Bapu. That for which I had been waiting had come, and it was this." She writes, "I straight away went to London and booked a passage to India at the P. & O. Office. I also sought out and devoured all the literature I could, writings of Bapu, writings of Tagore, English and French translations of the Bhagavad Gita, and even the Upanishads and Vedas I peeped into. But very soon I began to realize that I was fool to think that I could rush to Bapu like this. I was wholly unfit spiritually and physically, and I must first put myself through a severe training. I accordingly went back to the P. & O. Office and changed my reserved berth for one year later." (Slade, 1960)

With real earnestness Madeleine started preparing herself to become a solemn disciple of Gandhi. She first set herself to learn spinning and weaving, with spinning topping her program. Madeleine was very much aware of how Mahatma Gandhi made spinning the pivot of his constructive program for the millions and millions of Indian masses, and how, he was transforming the Indian political movement into a mass movement making spinning and weaving a household job. She bought herself a spinning wheel and carding brushes, and started spinning wool at home only, as no one used to spin cotton in the West. She got her basics right from the 'Kensington Weavers' run by Dorothy Wilkinson and her sisters, who were old friends of her family. For weaving however, Madeleine enrolled herself in a school. The next level of preparation for coming to India included not only how to sit cross legged on the floor and sleep there too, removing her comfortable bed, but it also involved a drastic

change in her dietary habits. She soon became a vegetarian and a teetotaller. However, Madeleine did realise that it would be foolish to spoil one's health at that crucial time of preparation and decided to proceed gently with her diet. First she gave up alcohol and then progressively limited her food, to a purely vegetarian diet. But perhaps, the most challenging part was to learn the language, and to decide, what language, that should be. For this it was Madeleine's father, who came to her aid. He being a person of position wrote to the then permanent Under Secretary of state at the Indian office, who was a friend of his and asked for his advice. It was suggested, that the language, should be Urdu, and likewise, an Indian student in London was arranged to give her the lessons. Madeleine considering herself, not a natural linguist, found Urdu, extremely difficult and made very slow progress. As for gathering information and reading about India, she immediately, subscribed to Mahatma Gandhi's weekly, 'Young India' and located a shop near the British museum where she could get all her relevant books. It was during her stay in Paris that, for the first time, she read the Bhagvad Gita and some portions of the Rig Veda, though both in French. While back in London in the midst of training herself the news of Gandhiji's twenty one day fast for Hindu Muslim unity, reached her. The news was agonizing for Madeleine like many others was doubtful, whether, Gandhi would be able to survive the ordeal. As day by day, the news grew more alarming, she would only pray in silence. But nothing could deter her from her goal. Though those few days felt endless for Madeleine, she kept on, with her studies, without slackening. When at last, the news of Gandhi successfully breaking the fast reached, an overjoyed Madeleine, decided to write to Gandhi and send him some thanks giving offerings. This was the first communication that Madeleine had made with Bapu. She sent him a letter, along with a cheque of twenty pounds expressing her thankfulness for the successful fulfilment of the fast, and also explaining, how Romain Rolland's book on Gandhi, inspired her to dedicate her life for Bapu, and work towards fulfilment of his vision and goal.

Madeleine wrote about how she not giving by her initial instincts, first decided to put herself, through a year's period of physical as well as mental training so as to become a capable disciple of Gandhi. Little did Madeleine expect a reply when one day a worn looking post card with the signature of M.K. Gandhi reached her. Thus began the long togetherness of Gandhi and his beloved disciple. Gandhi sent back a thanks acknowledgement to her. This was the beginning of their acquaintance. Encouraged by this incident, Madeliene asked for Gandhiji's permission for her to come and stay in Sabarmati Ashram. Gandhiji replied with positivity in August 1925. She was see offed by her mother and her sister at the London station. She met with her father at Paris who cautioned her with the words "Be careful". Then Madeliene paid the visit to Romain Rolland and his sister and bid them goodbye. Romain Rolland just said, "How lucky you are!" she writes.

On October 25, 1925, Mira boarded the P. &O. Steamer at Mersailles. After a long dreamy voyage of spiritual ecstasy of twelve days, she landed in Bombay and in the early morning of November 7th, reached Ahmedabad by train. She writes, as she entered the Sabarmati Ashram, and was ushered into a room. "I became conscious of a small spare figure rising up from a white gaddi, and stepping towards me. I knew it was Bapu, but, so completely overcome I was with reverence and joy, that I could see and feel nothing but a heavenly light. I fell on my knees at Bapu's feet. He lifted me up and taking me in his arms said, 'You shall be my daughter' and so has it been from that day." (Slade, 1960)

"I had reached my destination, the destination from which I was to begin. The old life was finished as if it belonged to a past birth, and I began life anew. And from now the real struggle began. In the old life I had groped my way through mist and fog, led by an inner urge which I could not explain. But now I emerged into the bright sunlight, and the steep, narrow Path of Truth showed clear before me leading up and up, so beautiful, and yet hard to climb! With boundless joy and energy, I started on the pilgrimage. Numberless times have I

slipped and stumbled. Many have been the bruises and cuts. Bitter have been the tears with which I have watered the path, and once or twice the clouds have come down on the mountain and I have all but lost my way. But Bapu's love has at last led me out upon the upper pastures, where God's peace fills the sweet mountain air." (Slade, 1960)

In presence of Bapu, Mira's life was regulated by a strict regimen. She stayed for thirty four years in India. She kept herself busy mostly with spinning, carding, sinning, cooking, cleaning and learning Hindi. Her time was divided between her stay at the Ashram and at other instances travelling with Gandhi. Though sometimes the secretarial side of Bapu's work fell to Mira, but she found herself much more suited for personal service. She was at one with the Mahatma in the deep things of the mind and heart. Through Mira's writings, we get an into the reality of how Gandhi actually lived from day to day. It is as though, Mira became a member of the ashram household and were not only looking at, but participating in the domestic affairs of the little group. In her writings, there is much discussion of diet and health, with careful report of Gandhi's weight and bodily function. There is expression of Gandhi's anxiety for Mira in her illness and his inquiry as to treatment and her physical hygiene. There is much discussion on spinning and the technique of its operation and its deep significance. Through her writings we get an insight into the passing incidents of the days at Sabarmati and also occasional reference to books written by Gandhi, with special emphasis on his works on Hindu hymns and his translation of the Bhagvad Gita. There is also significant mention of spiritual discipline in love, absence and death. It is disappointing perhaps, that there is no expounding of religion and philosophy, little talk of prayer, no interpretation of non violence and its methods and a few charming references to animals and their way.

"From the moment Mira arrived right into the heart of Bapu's daily life, it had tremendous emotional impact on her. She lived from morning to night for the moment when she could set

her eyes on Bapu. She felt to be in his presence, was to be lifted out of oneself. Not that there was anything imposing about his physical appearance, or striking about his manner of speech, but it was indeed the perfect simplicity of both, which held one. Mira Behn could see that Gandhiji activities had two main streams, one was nurturing of the Sabarmati Ashram life, by which he endeavoured to create persons, who would fit in with his search for truth and non violence, second was the Indian National Congress, through which he would work, towards the independence of India, with a band of workers, following the line that Gandhiji enunciated in the public field in India. Living with Bapu, Mira Behn had to be well versed in both.Living the community life of the Ashram, was a tough job for her, and so was the climate of India, but her devotion to Bapu, kept her stead fast in the midst of her aversion. Not very long after her stay in the Ashram, she started wearing sari, got her hair cut and took a vow of celibacy." (Pandya, 2007) After the first two years, she started travelling to various parts of India for work in the villages. Sometimes, she accompanied Gandhi on his tours, where her job was to look after all his personal needs. Through her writings, we get a clear picture of the kind of work that Mira Behn would devote herself to. She writes, "During this touring I was for sometime in charge of Bapu's personal needs. Though these were very simple, the circumstances under which they had to be attended to be were anything but easy. We were continually on the move, with meetings all along the way and two main halts in the twenty four hours, one at midday for bath, clothes washing and lunch, and the other in the evening for dinner and the night rest. Added to this there were endless crowds everywhere-thirsting, yearning, desperately eager crowds that thronged the railway stations blocked the motor roads where they passed through villages, and swarmed all around our halting places. My job was to see that Bapu's personal routine went on smoothly and punctually in the midst of all this rush. While Bapu was attending the full blown public meeting which awaited him at each main halt, I would dash to the quarters allotted to us to see to the arrangements.

Information was always sent some time in advance about all the places we were going to visit, giving exact details of Bapu's requirements. However, one never knew what was one going to find. As a rule, we were put in people's private houses, sometimes in school buildings and the like, and occasionally in camp. The general instructions sent round were for a room for Bapu to be cleared of all furniture, where a gaddi should be placed on the floor and covered with khadi, a bathroom nearby with clean appointments, and fresh raw vegetables, fruits and goat's milk. Sometimes these directions were excellently understood and carried out, but that was not always the case, especially in out of the way rural areas. One was daily faced with unexpected and sometimes desperate difficulties." (Slade, 1949)

Mira Behn accompanied Gandhi in 1931, to the Round Table Conference at England along with Devadas and Mahadev Desai. Then again 1934, she again returned to England for lectures. At this time, she also visited America and gave lectures and talks on radio. She met Mrs. Roosevelt for an interview at the White House. After returing Europe, she interviewed numerous outstanding politicians of England, including Sir Samuel Hoare, Lord Halifax, Winston Churchill, General Smuts, Lloyd George and Attlee. Through these interviews what came up was genuine concern, warm respect, affection and feelings for Gandhi. These interviews also throw conspicuous light on Mira, not only as a devoted disciple of Gandhi, but also on her love and affection towards India.

In her course of interview with Churchill, she writes "And when I referred, in passing, to India as a nation, he had to have his fling, the Indian nation does not exist. There is no such thing." I laughed, and said, "Though there may be many provinces and languages, nevertheless there is a far greater similarity of languages and customs than people, looking on from outside, could realize. All those years I have been living in the very heart of the Indian masses, and you must allow that I do know something of the real atmosphere." He replied, "Oh yes, I should think you must know India inside out." I said, "Then let me assure you that

there is a North to South and from East to West, wherever you go, you find the yearning for freedom." Churchill grunted and did not say much. Later he said that he thought Mr. Gandhi was the finest man possible for moral and spiritual reform, but he would not choose him for flying the latest airship, I replied by telling him that, on contrary, Bapu was one of the most practical people in the world, and loved to call himself a practical idealist. I then told Churchill how Llyod George had been tremendously struck with Bapu's commonsense and practical intelligence." (Slade, 1949)

These interviews also prove, how, Mira Behn, was trying to impress upon important foreign politicians of that time that the need of the hour, was of mutual understanding and contact. Mira Behn spent her life in India, during the heated period of 1927, when the Simon Commission was facing black flags everywhere. People of India, were determined for complete independence in 1929, the Dandi March in 1930, the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1930-31 and the Gandhi- Irwin pact in 1931. The Salt Satyagraha transformed Mira Behn from a mere observer to an active participant in the process of India's struggle for independence. At this time, she embarked upon an extensive Khadi tour, through out the country through Bihar, then down to Madras and then up along the East Coast to Calcutta. The purpose of the tour was not just to collect fund for Gandhian programmes but also to propagate improved methods of aiding and spinning in the villages and to promote the purchase and wearing of Khadi in the cities.

Apart from continuously touring and spreading the message of Khadi, Mira Behn, was also an apt translator of Gandhian philopshy and Gandhian mode of operation to the foreign politicians. An interview of her with Lord Irwin (Later Lord Halifax) explicitly explains the fact. "After a few preliminary remarks, Lord Halifax asked me about the economic conditions in India, which were, at that time, steadily deteriorating. Then he asked me what the Indian peasants pictured in his mind when he spoke of Swaraj. I said, "The simple peasant, as I find

him, is more apt to speak of Gandhiraj and he will tell you how Gandhiraj will mean something more in his stomach, less taxation and a feeling of being cared for". I further explained how, in the villages, one rarely heard *Mahatma Gandhi ki Jay*, but *Gandhi Maharaj ki Jay*. And I described various scenes. Lord Halifax said, "Suppose they feel, he is one of them." I replied, "Yes, that is just it. They feel, "Here is the one who knows and understands our sorrows. He shares our simplicity. He loves us and shares our thoughts and feelings." But at the same time, they feel he is great and holy." (Slade, 1949)

Mira Behn accompanied Gandhi to the Round Table Conference in London in autumn of 1931. When the Japanese invasion was expected in India, Mira Behn went to help the Congress workers, prepare the villagers, on the mantra of Non Violence and Non Co-operation with the Japanese. When the All India Congress Committee took place in Bombay, Mira Behn went there to report to Gandhi, about the situation on the East Coast. She was arrested and kept in detention with Gandhi, in the Aga Khan Palace, Pune in 1942. There she saw Mahadev Desai and Kasturba Gandhi breathing their last. She was also a witness to the Simla Conference and the Cabinet Mission, the Interim Government and the Constituent Assembly, the partition of India, followed by holocaust and the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi.

"Remaining in mid stream Mira Behn always had a role to play. Just like as an inmate of Gandhi Ashram, she travelled far and wide for the propagation of Khadi, similarly with the same motive, she wrote over a number of articles in 'Young India', 'Harijan', 'The Statesman', Calcutta, 'Times of India',Bombay and 'The Hindustan Times', Delhi. She courted arrest a number of times, and whenever she was with Gandhi, she looked after his every minute's details. To plead the case of India, Mira Behn went abroad, as a personal emirate of Gandhi. Just about a year after coming to Bapu, Mira Behn received a cable from her mother saying that her father had passed away. Bapu suggested that she should go to

England, if she wished. But Mira Behn politely declined, and rather decided to concentrate on her learning of Hindi and travel in the northern part of India, and live among the Hindi speaking people. She never turned back to look at the world, she had voluntarily rendered." (Pandya, 2007) These are the testimonials of Mira Behn's strong determination to understand the country of Mahatma Gandhi and its language.

Gandhi, in one of his letter, dated 13th April, 1927, writes to Mira: "I must write on this fasting day to acknowledge your letter containing extracts from Beethoven. They are good spiritual food. I don't want you to forget your music or your taste for it. It would be cruel to forget that to which you owe so much, and which has really brought you to me." (Slade, 1949)

In another letter to Mira Behn dated 28th June, 1927, Bapu wrote "I shall entirely be satisfied with what progress you can make, no matter how slow it is. You will do your Hindi in the way that you think is best, if you find that it is more conducive to your peace of mind to have several other occupations side by side with Hindi, you will take them up. Do not therefore please continuously think of what I would like, but do what you think you can easily without impairing your health, of both body and mind, and in the execution of your plan, when you want my assistance or advice, you shall fall back upon it immediately...."These letters are testimonial of Gandhiji's way of preparing Mira Behn for the life which she chose herself.

Mira Behn never flinched in her service to Bapu and was perhaps his most trusted disciple. She never wanted to be away from Bapu. In a letter date 22nd March, 1927, Bapu wrote to Mira: "The parting today was sad, because I saw that I pained you, and yet, it was inevitable, I want you to be perfect woman. I want you to shed all angularities. All unnecessary reserves must go. Asharam is the centre of your home, but wherever you happen to be, must be your home. Without being a burden on people with whom we come in contact, we must get the

things we need from them. We must feel one with all. And I have discovered that we never give without receiving consciously or unconsciously. There is a reserve which I want us all to have. But that reserve must be a fruit of self denial, not sensitiveness. Yours is due to sensitiveness. This must go; I thought I would draw your attention. But I saw that I should have waited. However, the thing is done. Do throw off the nervousness. You must not cling to me as in this body. The spirit without the body is ever with you. And that is more than the feeble embodied imprisoned spirit with all the limitations that flesh is heir to. The spirit without the flesh is perfect and that is all we need. This can be felt only when we practise detachment. This you must now try to achieve. This is how I would grow if I were you. But you should grow along your own lines. You will, therefore, reject all I have said in this, which does not appeal to your heart or head. You must retain your individuality at all cost. Resist me whem you must. For I may judge you wrongly in spite of all my love for you. I do not want you to impute infallibility to me." (Homes, 1951)

Gradually Mira Behn taking the blessings of Bapu started engaging herself in independent activites. When Gandhiji and his associates, along with Mira Behn was released after spending one and a half year in Aga Khan Palace, (without Kasturba and Mahadev Desai), Mira Behn expressed her desire to start some activites of her own. She decided to start a small ashram of her own at a suitable place in northern India, between Rishikesh and Haridwar, for the promotion and development of Khadi work, and farming. She named it Kisan Ashram. Kisan Ashram started developing rapidly.

"In 1946, Congress ministries were formed in various provinces. The United Provinces had also a strong Congress Government headed by the veteran leader Pandit Govind Ballabh Pant. In the new atmosphere there was a general urge to resuscitate the Province and make an all out drive to increase food production. Quite a lot of good agricultural land had been requisitioned for military airfields and camps, and the sooner these were put back into

cultivation the better. With this idea in her mind she went to Bapu and discussed the matter with him. He, in turn, had a talk with Pandit Pant and Mira Behn was appointed as an Honorary Special Advisor to the U.P. Government in connection with the newly launched 'Grow More Food' campaign." (Pandya, 2007)

In 1947, came the request to start a big cattle centre financed by the centre and the Uttar Pradesh Government, and thus started "Pashulok". Mira Behn handed over the Kishan Ashram to the Gandhian Khadi workers and concentrated on building up Ashram Pashulok near Haridwar. Pashulok gradually developed into a big centre of horticulture as well as animal husbandry. At about this time, the political condition of India became heated. In East Bengal, Naokhali village, Hindus were massacred due to the declaration of "Direct Action" by the Muslim League.

On 30th January 1948, Gandhiji was assassinated. It shattered Mira Behn. She writes in her autobiography, "On January 30, at about 7.30 pm, the news of assassination was brought to me in Pashulok. I had come out on to the verandah. As I heard, the words, I became motionless and gazing up into the sky saw the stars glittering above the forest trees. The only words which spoke in my heart were, "Bapu, Bapu, so it has come!" And with that there came a sense of peace which surmounted even the blinding shock. (Homes, 1951)

Few days after the devastating news of Bapu's death, Mira Behn wrote an article for the press, which started with the lines 'They Have Become One'. She wrote, "For me, there were only two, God and Bapu. And now they have become one! When I heard the news something deep, deep down within me opened the door to the imprisoned soul, and Bapu's spirit entered there. From that moment a new sense of the eternal abides with me. Though Bapu's beloved physical presence is no longer with us, yet his sacred spirit is even nearer. Sometimes Bapu had said to me, 'When the body is no more there will not be separation, but I shall be nearer

to you. The body is a hindrance.' I listened in faith. Now I know, through experience, the divine truth of these words." (Slade, 1960)

"Now must we move heaven and earth to fulfil the task which Bapu has left us. Bapu lived and died for us all- every man, woman and child. He lived, working unceasingly, and died a martyr's death, that we might be turned from the evil path of hatred, greed, violence and untruth. If we are atone for our sins and serve Bapu's sacred cause, communalism in every form must go, and many other things as well, black marketing, corruption, favouritism, jealousies, rivalries, and a host of other dark manifestations of untruth and violence. These must be tackled with a firm will and unfaltering hand. Bapu was full of love and gentleness, but in his fight with evil he was relentless. Bapu could fight the evil without he had mastered the evil within. May God so purify that we may become worthy of the mighty task before us." (Slade, 1960) The above sentences very well sums up what Mira Behn learnt from Bapu. What to Mira Behn, Bapu stood for and what Mira Behn stood for in Bapu's country even after Bapu's death.

Mira Behn stayed in India till 1959 and left for England on 27th January, the same year. During this period she kept herself busy in the Gopal Ashram which she founded in 1952 in Bhilangana. It was here that she carried out the experiments in breeding of the cows. But it is true that inspite of having an active life, Mira Behn somewhere felt a void in her life. She missed Gandhi. Without Gandhi, India was not an ideal place for her to live. Mira Behn's life was that of an austere, illuminated by her best facets and thus inspired generations to selfless service to humanity.

"She lived in the forests, outside Vienna, where all of Beethoven's greatest music was created. In 1969, on the occasion of Gandhi's centenary celebrations, she was invited by Lord Louis Mountbatten to visit England and narrate her experiences and recollection of Mahatma

Gandhi. The Albert Hall was full with nearly seven thousand people. The Prince of Wales, the Prime Minister and many other dignitaries were present. The talk that Mira Behn gave to the gathering was almost beyond the highest expectations of Mountbatten, the audience was spell bound. In 1981, the Government of India honoured Mira Behn with a Padma Vibhushan Award for her meritorious service to India and mankind." (Krishnamurthy, 1992)

Mira Behn's life can be divided in three phases, if she had spent thirty-three years in England, she spent thirty-four years in India, the land which she adopted as her own. The remaining twenty three years, she spent in Vienna, dedicating her life to Beethoven. It was Beethoven that brought her close to Romain Rolland and Romain Rolland, brought her close to Mahatma Gandhi. Gandhiji gave Madeliene Slade, the name Mira Behn, which very well suited her. Mira Behn never aspired to be a political interpretor of Gandhi's thought. It was her simple love towards Gandhi that made her one of the prominent Western Women who came to India and dedicated their life for this land. When she came to India, she came prepared for a life hard enough to be spent in the Ashram. But Mira Behn emerged as a more insightful insider of India. She not only became one with the Ashram life but also with the life of numerous villages of India. It was her plain and simple love and devotion towards Gandhi, that made her feel for India and speak for the betterment of this land, be it for the people of this land or the animals or the environment. She came and adopted herself to a world which was absolutely unaccustomed for her and she became one of the most strong opinion holders for this part of the world, to the outside world.

MADELEINE SLADE (MIRABEHN): AN ANALYSIS:-

"By god's infinite blessings I had arrived not on the outer edge of Bapu's activities, but right in the intimate heart of his daily life. The impact on my emotions was tremendous. From early morning to the last thing at night I lived for the moments when I could set eyes on

Bapu. To be in his presence was to be lifted out of oneself. Not that there was anything imposing about his physical appearance or striking about his manner of speech; indeed it was the perfect simplicity of both which held one. Here one was face to face with a soul which, in its greatness, made the body and speech through which it manifested itself glow with gracious and natural humility. At the same time there was a sense of spiritual strength, quietly confident and all pervading, while the whole presence was made intensely human and appealing by the pure heart and irresistible humour which kept peeping like golden sunshine through the leaves of a deep forest."Mira Behn (Behn, 1960)

The great souls, it is believed, always seek each other out. That is what happened when Mira Behn as a part of her search for larger meanings of life sought to Gandhi. This search was not over when Mira Behn came to join Gandhi and India's struggle for freedom. It continued even after. Her life is a story of simplicity, courage, sacrifice and full of devotion for Bapu. Even though of British origin, she found in India, her spiritual home and shared with Mahatma Gandhi and Kasturba, their hardships and their hope for a free India. She identified herself with the Indian people in their struggle against foreign rule, in their endeavour to build a new India based on social justice and the dignity of all individual. Mira Behn spent the first thirty three years of ehr life in England, the next forty three in India, the country which she adopted as her own, and the next twenty three years in Vienna. Her life in India, other than to Bapu was dedicated to the service of India, and India's poor masses in the villages. Her love covered men, animals, plants and nature in general. She was often known to talk to animals and plants on her walk.

The moral issues involved in India's struggle for freedom left deep imprint upon Mira Behn. She took up to represent the voice of humanity, appalled by the bondage to which the Indian people were subjected to and to the injustice inherent in a situation, which prevented them from shaping their own destiny.

"Mira Behn was truly a reincarnation of India's singer poetess and saint Mirabai of Rajasthan. Mirabai was devoted to Lord Krishna. And Mira Behn born in foreign land in the lap of luxury felt a strong urge to throw her lot with India's Mahatma Gandhi who became Bapu to her as to many of us, young and old. Mira Behn became a real Indian"- writes Dr. Sushila Nayar, sister of Pyarelal Nayar, personal secretary and physician to M.K. Gandhi. Dr. Sushila Nayar herself had the privilege of observing Mira Behn from close quarters. (Gupta, 1992, p xiv) "Right from her childhood, Mira Behn had showed signs of a determined seeker, who could interpret intuitive signals, to its fruitful completion. Most seekers of truths, whether Mahavira, Nanak or Gandhi, had all the affluences in their life, yet they left it all to pursue a path of renunciation. They all had a faith that this path will take them to their goal under the guidance of some unknown divine spirit. Mira Behn's journey was also inspired by such a vision." She observed:

"While I was still very small, five or six years old, inspite of the happy and lovely surroundings in which I lived, my mind began to search in the region of the unknowable ('Agyeya') and was stricken with awe....there was some thing which every now and then wafled me far away. It would come at quiet moments, and always through the voice of nature, the singing of a bird, the sound of the wind in the trees. Through his was the voice of the unknown, I felt no fear, only an infinite joy." (Behn, 1960, p xv) Such was the yearning which brought Madeleine Slade to India. She wrote to Romain Rolland: "Ah! My father, I could never have imagined how divine he is, I had been prepared for a prophet and I have found an Angel. And your letter....your two letters to the Mahatma and to me....thank you! Oh! I may become worthy....." (Behn, 1960,p xv)

Worthy she did become. All the writings and efforts of Mira Behn reflect a constant concern for understanding the true meaning of Gandhian philosophy. Mira was at once with the Mahatma in the deep things of the mind and heart. Long since, she had accepted his way of

life. Ability to see beyond what is visible to an untrained eye was a quality that both shared. That is why Gandhi wrote to her in May 1927:

"You have come to me not for me, but for my ideals in so far as I live them. You know how far I live the ideals I set forth. It is now for you to work out those ideals and practice them to greater perfection than had been given to me to do. He or she who does that will be my first heir and representative. I want you to be the first, if only because you studied me from a distance and made your choice."

And then he advised her soon enough:

"I am most anxious that you should not appear to be what you are not. I must take you as you are and help you to be what you should be. That I can do only if I give you no chance to fear me. That is why I told you once; I wanted to be not merely in the place of father but mother also to you."

Five years later he encouragingly cautioned Mira Behn:

"You have done the right thing. You have left your home, your people and all that people prize most, not to serve me personally but to serve the cause I stand for. All the time you were squandering your love on me personally, I felt guilty of misappropriation. And I exploded on the slightest pretext. Now that you are not with me, my anger turns itself upon me for having given you all those terrible scolding. But I was on a bed of hot ashes all the while I was accepting your service. You will truly serve me by joyously serving the cause. Cheer boys cheer, no more of idle sorrow." (Letters from Gandhi to Mira, qtd in Holmes, 1951)

Thus Gandhiji realised that the task was so big that his life not sufficient to fully expound the ideals. He also appreciated the need for continued experiments to discover newer truths about sustainable lifestyles and inspired Mira Behn with the same ideals.

With Mira Behn, Gandhiji shared some of his most intimate thoughts about his philosophy, faith and search of the unknown. He not only mentioned what he believed but also what he did not understand fully, thus providing ample scope for future reflection and action.

The letters that Gandhiji wrote to Mira are testimonials of letters not written just by a father and a mother too, and a teacher to his daughter and disciple, but by a philosopher to a traveller on the path of devotion. Interestingly the letters did not reflect the visible, dramatic vision of his external life. Instead a personal life space unaffected by worldly upheavals but occupied by an obsession for searching one's own spiritual meaning. They amply reflect Gandhi's ability to care for details, concern for the uncared one in both private as well as public life. Preserving this treasure of letters was not easy. Mira Behn recalled how she saved these letters during colonial rule:

"In the days of arrests and imprisonments, with their accompanying searches and destruction of papers, my only anxiety was for Bapu's letters. Whenever I saw likelihood of arrest approaching, I would leave them with some 'unsuspected' friends or in some institute where no searches were likely to be made." (Behn, 1960,p xvii)

On her first meeting with Gandhiji at Sabarmati, Mira Behn recalled many years later, "As in entered, I became conscious of a small spare figure rising up from a white gaddi and stepping towards me. I knew it was Bapu, but so completely overcome was I with reverence and joy that I could see and feel nothing but a heavenly light. I fell on my knees at Bapu's feet. He lifted me up and taking me in his arms said, you shall be my daughter." (Behn, 1960) And so it has been from that day, Mira Behn adopted a life of Spartan simplicity in India. Her role in

winning support in the UK and other countries for the Indian freedom movement was indeed significant. In Gandhiji and Kasturba, she found spiritual parents with whose loving inspiration she strove tirelessly for the cause of khadi and the social and economic upliftment of the poor. In one of his letters from the Yeravada jail, Gandhiji wrote to her, How Mira Behn was having a variety of experiences and how seekers of truth could turn every one of those experiences into a good account.

Mira Behn was a household name in many humble homes in Garhwal. In the little known village of Garhwal, the khadi clad figure of Gandhiji's English disciple was remembered with fondness and pride, long after she left India, although the ashrams she established, Gopal Ashram, Pakshikunj and Pashulok existed only in name. It was in 1944 that Gandhi, afraid of her deteriorating health during her last long imprisonment in the cause of India's freedom, sent her to the foothills of the Himalayas to recuperate. In her vigorous, practical style she set about making Gandhiji's vision of ideal village life a reality, starting with the establishment of Kisan Ashram near Haridwar, followed by Pashulok at Virbhadra on the banks of the Ganga. Her ashrams were to be models of community living both for humans and animals, and become examples of ideal village governance through community participation.

Faithful to Bapu's injunction she did not rush to his side when he died. Instead she continued her work in community development in the hills. She made numerous journeys on horseback to the lesser known valleys and forest areas of Tehri-Garhwal. Deeply shocked by the rapidly deteriorating condition of the fragile Himalayan environment, largely on account of commercial logging, she wrote number of articles in the press to alert the public to the situation.

Pashulok been situated at the foot of the mountains just where the Ganga emerges from the Himalayan valley. Mira Behn became very realistically aware of the terrible floods which

poured down the Ganga catchment area. As the swirling waters increased nothing could be done to save men or beasts from the turmoil. The sight of these disastrous floods led her each year to investigate the area north of Pashulok. She came to the conclusion that merciless deforestation as well as cultivation of profitable pines in place of broad leaf trees was clearly the cause. But she was not without solutions. In her article titled "Something Wrong in the Himalayas" which was published in the Hindustan Times on 5 June 1950, she wrote, the problem is not beyond solution, for if the trees are lopped methodically, they can still give a large quantity of fodder and yet not become weak and scraggy. At the same time, if the intruding Chile pines are pushed back to their correct altitude and the Banj forests are resuscitated, the burden on the present trees will year by year decrease and the precious fodder for the cattle will become more plentiful. But all these means winning the trust and cooperation of the villagers for the Forest Department, by itself cannot save the situation. Nor can it easily win villagers trust because the relation between the department and the peasantry are very strained practically amounting to open warfare in Chile pine areas. Therefore in order to awaken confidence in people some non official influence is most necessary. With the aid of local constructive workers it should become possible to organise village committees and village guards to function along with the Forest Department field staff which should be increased and also given special training with new outlook for the peasantry. In this way it should be feasible to carry out a long term project for controlled looping and gradual return of the Banj forests to their rightful place by systematic removal of Chile pines above 5500 feet altitude to be followed by the protection of young Banj growth. The Banj forests are very centres of nature's economic cycle on the southern slope of Himalayas. To destroy them is to cut out the heart and thus bring death to the whole structure. (Behn, 1960)

Soon Mira Behn handed over the administration of Pashulok to the Government of India, to start a community project in the valley of Bhilangana. She built ‘Gopal Ashram’, where she

took care of the cattles, worked on breeding of cows as well as on forest problems. Meticulously she listened to the recollection of older villagers and closely examined the condition of the villages. She sent detailed report with many photographs to PanditJawaharlal Nehru- the then Prime Minister of India. Later she also wrote letters to Indira Gandhi bringing to their notice the negative effects of neglecting the ecological health of the watershed of the subcontinent and urging for an enlightened state of policy to reverse degradation. This was perhaps one of the greatest legacies left by Mira Behn for the future generations to come. Rightfully she pointed out “the forests of the Himalayas are the guardians of the northern plains, which in their turn are the granaries of India. Surely such guardians deserve the utmost care and attention that the government can give”. (Selected Essays: Centenary Tribute, 1993) During 1980s and 1981 the crisis of the Himalayan deforestation came to the forefront. Sundarlal Bahuguna, a close collaborator of Mira Behn in setting up the Gopal Ashram, concentrated on Chipkoo Movement, primarily concerned with forest conservation which gradually became a rallying point for many future environmental protests. Unwittingly Mira Behn became one of the torch bearers of the modern India's environmental movement, at a time when the word environment was hardly understood.

The Chipkoo Movement/ Andolan in fact owed its spiritual and ecological foundation to the pioneering work done by Mira Behn in spreading environmental awareness throughout Grahwal. Her sentiments were best expressed when she said "I am not an expert, I am only a devotee- A devotee of great primeval mother Earth. But perhaps in the long run the devotee may have a clearer instinct for true service of mother Earth. (Selected Essays: Centenary Tirbute, 1993)

Mira Behn uprightly pointed her fingers to the fact that no efforts could be fully successful until the central government comes out with a complete re orientation of the forest department's goals putting financial advantage at the bottom and protection of the trees and

soil at the top. During her last lap of stay at India, Mira Behn handed over the community project to the governmental officials and moved across Kashmir to concentrate on Dexter cattle from England for cross breeding with the yak, so that the breed thus produced named Zomba could be most helpful and popular with the frontier people who reached right up to the Tibetan border every day. To tackle the question of good cattle development in the Himalayas, Mira Behn spoke of the dire need of the animal husbandry department officials to work in close cooperation with the Gujjar communities of the Himalayas, who live right alongside their own animals in all places and at all seasons. True to her devoted nature, Mira Behn at all instances reached up to the very source of all issues that troubled her and she worked towards its successful completion.Finally she gave up working through the government and returned to the forests outside Vienna, dedicating the rest of her life to Beethoven.

She wrote-

“Thus my life has been devoted to two great souls with the loftiest ideals- one expressing him self through perpetual activity in moral, social and political reform, and the other, through perpetual expression of spiritual voice that came to him through music. In Beethoven's own words- it is only through the untiring use of the powers with which he has been endowed that man can reverence the creator and preserver of nature." (Gupta, 1992,p xviii)

Mira Behn's acute observation on the consequences of the deforestation and even more, the insidious of species from the natural mixed broad leaves to the timber specific monocultures favoured by the forest department and the consequent deterioration of the quality of life of the hill people are uncomfortably familiar to us, so many decades later. Although she wrote years ago, her work holds great significance even today, in our current ecological

predicament of increasing floods, droughts and deforestration. Mira Behn's words were indeed prophetic.

Annie Besant aroused in Indians and especially among Indian women a sense of self confidence and responsibility. In the nineteenth and the twentieth century, the 'women question' was assuming a greater shape and Mrs. Besant's event of becoming the first woman President of the Indian National Congress, brought the women folk closer not only to the Congress, but towards struggle for freedom. She not only preached new doctrine and inspired millions of Indian men and women, but also taught them what to do with the new experience, thus leaving an everlasting legacy, much like Sister Nivedita. Perhaps it is hard to establish a connection between Annie Besant and Madeleine Slade who arrived in India approximately thirty years later. If Mrs. Besant was a political activist, Madeleine Slade was more of a political and social worker, a follower of Gandhi, or perhaps the most apt translator of Gandhian Philosophy and mode of operation to the outside world, and there in lies the connection- both being interpreter of India to the outside world, both emerging as crusaders for the 'cause of India.'

CONCLUSION

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"World history is entering a new phase and intellectuals have not hesitated to proliferate visions of what it will be – the end of history, the return of traditional rivalries between nation states, and the decline of the nations state from the conflicting pulls of the tribalism and globalism among others. Each of these visions catches aspects of the emerging reality. Yet they all miss a crucial, indeed, a central aspect of what global politics in likely to be in coming years." (Huntington, 1996 p22)

With change been its only consistent attribute, world history is widely believed to acquire the shape of a miasma in its next stage. More specifically, intellectuals argue that the next version would be tantamount to the end of history, marked by not only the resurgence of traditional rivalries between nation states but also the eventual decline of the same, and precipitated by inter alia banes like tribalism and globalism. Yet, none of the theories prescribed by the aforementioned scholars has managed to capture the essence of what global politics will turn out to be like in the coming years.

According to Huntington, the primary reason of conflict in the twentieth century, when the world has entered a new phase is neither political or economic, nor ideological unlike its previous decades, but it is cultural. The cultural differences between nation states, according to him, are real and are here to stay,

Unlike the period of Cold War, when the world was divided ideologically, into first, second and third worlds, now the world is divided according to distinctions, based on culture. A civilization is a cultural entity made up of different nationalities, regions, religious groups, ethnic groups and villages. Each of these smaller units, together make up the cultural heterogeneity of a civilization. Thus, as Samuel Huntington opined, a civilization is the

highest cultural grouping of people providing broadest level of cultural identity, which distinguishes humans from other species and also enables humans to identify themselves from other social groups.

Differences amongst civilizations are based on concepts of culture, tradition, history, language, human relations, ideas of rights, duties, responsibilities and perhaps most importantly religion. Man's understanding of God and his/ her relation to God varies from one cultural group to another. With Neo- globalisation as the world is shrinking into a smaller cosmos, consciousness of uniqueness and similarities between different civilizations are increasing. Moreover, like already mentioned religion has moved in to play a vital role, increasingly the conflict of civilization is getting deeply noted. There is an increasing rise of 'us' versus 'them'.

Thus what is required is an increasing accommodation and reconciliation between the civilizations, between the west and the non west, whose values and interests differ significantly. At the same time, what is required for the west is to develop more profound understanding of other civilizations and their interests. Since West's perception of the non western civilization hold relative importance therefore what is required, is an increasing understanding of similarities between western and non western civilizations. Because only that means, in the relevant future, civilizations, can learn to co exist with each other.

Thus as we are face to face with certain issues, like West's perception of non-west, profound understanding of basic religion, elements of commonality, co existence and so on. It is probably the time to deconstruct the some what mono dimensional representation of the East, its culture and civilization as perceived by the West. It is the time to ask a more pertinent question, that is how do the west perceive India, or how far the image of India and Indian people especially womanhood, that was portrayed by Mayo, long back in 1929, is still carried

around by the rest of the world, especially the west. With the passing of the Empire, and the cooling of emotions, we are now in a position to look at the British- India encounter in a better perspective than would have been possible earlier this century. (Dyson, 1978 p326)

Perhaps the most paramount need of the modern era is the interpretation of the East and especially of India to the world. It is true that some of the Western attitudes about India, formed during the nineteenth and the twentieth century, have disappeared or have been transformed, but it is also true that many more of these old attitudes are still alive, in the Western mind. The purpose of the thesis is to analyse the contributions of four brilliant outstanding Western women, who came to India, and to uphold their views, opinions and observations to further facilitate the East- West interface.

Interestingly all these Western women: Katherine Mayo, Maragaret Elizabeth Noble (Sister Nivedita), Annie Besant and Madeleine Slade (Mira Behn) were not only born in the West, but also were brought up in a very strikingly contrasting socio-economic, political, cultural atmosphere that differed from India. They all came from different backgrounds, but after reaching India, other than Katherine Mayo who upheld an overbearing negative opinon about India, all the other three women, not only transformed India as their mother land but worked tiredlessly for the betterment of the country. Katherine Mayo and Sister Nivedita could not have been more different. One a propandagist for the empire and the other a prophet's messenger of the cultural and political life of India, where as to Annie Besant, India was the key note and the centre of that great storm which was to bring in peace. It goes beyond doubt, that India stood stronger for her freedom, much due to the works of Mrs. Besant. The Home Rule Movement of Annie Besant paved the way for mass mobilisation of the people in national movement. Mira Behn dedicating her life to Bapu lived the life of an ascetic and inspired people to self less service to humanity. Till today, she is a household name in many humble homes in Garhwal. It is undeniable that all of the four outstanding women in their

own ways, added to the process of evolution of understanding between the East and the West, and help us in exploring beyond the received narrative of colonialism and nationalism. More importantly they teach us about life in general, reflects much valuable insight of socio-cultural, political and religious issues, which concern us even today.

It is perhaps also the time to contest Mayo's portrayal of India, with a reverse portrayal of India, as was drawn by the other three western women. To Mayo, India was a land of internal antagonism. Nivedita dedicated her life to India, for which she was ready to live or die, if required. Annie Besant felt, as if India was her mother land in her earlier birth. Amidst warm feelings poured out to her, she realised for the first time, what love of country meant. She felt as if she belonged to the people. For Mira Behn, she understood the real atmospher of India as a nation. According to her, though in India there were many provinces and languages, nevertheless there is a far greater similarity of those languages and customs that people looking on from outside, would hardly realize.

Katherine Mayo, after her short three months visit to India, came up with her book, whose main theme was how to discredit the Indians and strip off their rights towards independence. She was appointed by a defensive colonial government to justify the sustenance of their rule in their colony. Mayo, undoubtedly surpassed the expectations of her recruiters. Contrastingly the unique bond between Sister Nivedita and India was quite wonderful. Some large hearted western women, inspired by Swami Vivekanda's transcendent renunciation and strength of character, chose to follow his path of total sacrifice 'for one's own liberation and for the good of the world' and came forward to dedicate their lives to work for the welfare of India, striken by poverty and distress. It may not be an exaggeration to say, that Sister Nivedita occupies the pre emient position among them all. Annie Besant's arrival in India was not only an example of a startling renunciation of her life and career in England but it was also an example of her complete dedication of her gifts and energies to India. Mrs. Besant envisaged

India as she was in her glorious past, the holy land of great religions, spiritual enhancement and cradle of civilizations. She refused to recognise India, in her the then present state of degradation, which according to the colonial government, needed rectification. For Mira Behn, Gandhi was an impelling power that burst forth into a light which like the dawn glowed brighter and brighter in her heart. She not only renunciated her life for Gandhi and remained his most trusted disciple, but also stood for Gandhi's ideology. India's struggle for freedom left a deep impact on her mind and she took up to represent the voice of humanity. The unjust bondage of Indian people, which restrained them from shaping their own destiny, appalled her. Her entire life had been a glorious example of dedicated service towards the upliftment of the poor.

The difference between Mayo and other three Western Women probably can be marked by a great contrast, as that between the great Himalayas and the rivers flowing towards the sea. Ironically, these women born in the nineteenth century western world were destined to come to India, and make a significant contribution towards India and its people. Though they reflect contrasting opinions rather thought process, about India, yet each of them spoke of issues which remained the focal point of Indian discourses for years and perhaps still remains essential.

The writings of a person are often all but meagre revelation of author's personality. For Sister Nivedita, from the day she set her foot in India, her life was one consuming effort to one her self in the Indian experience. It would be erroneous to suppose that her identification of herself with India, in love and hope, was a matter of no difficulty. On the other hand, it was at an infinite cost to make herself submerge with infinite groping of way, that she was able to obtain the delicacy of insight, which made her not merely India's champion before the world, but also a patriot among patriots and a messenger among messengers of the Indian people.

Intellectually Sister Nivedita was a cast into the moulds of giants. None can read her books, her writings without feeling that she is face to face, with a singular original rich and powerful mind. But her splendid intellectual gifts were the least part of her greatness. It is true that Sister Nivedita was far greater than her writings. It is not the encyclopaedic learning, not even the surpassing literary skill, nor the glow of the rich poetic mounting power, but the inspiration that lies in their soul element that profoundly stirs us. It is true that Sister Nivedita never got tired of Romainticising India, but it is also true, that to her, "India, the mother land is indeed one, that north and south are inextricably knit together and that no story of its analysed fragments, racial, lingual or political could ever be the story of India." (Nivedita, 1967) Nivedita saw India above all others, the land of great women. To her the ideal achievement of Hindu womanhood was like wise of wisdom and service and renunciation rather than of power and love. She was enchanted by the Hindu woman's self abnegation and the magnificence of the widow's resignation to her fate and dedicated way of life. To her "The Bengali wife worships her husband and serves her children and her household with all the rapt idealism of the saint. Today it would seem to the modern mind, that she was oblivious of the sufferings and humiliation of woman in the disguse of dedication and sacrifice. But then again, we can surely not overlook that Nivedita laid great stress on the educational shortcomings of the Indian women, resulting in her being denied, complete fulfilment. She was aware of the modern conditions, in which lack of education left her ill equipped to fulfil the demands of society and the potentialities of her own being. Actually to Nivedita, in all questions, of the moral and personal life, woman was far greater factor than man.

Annie Besant's interest in India was not created by her adoption of Theosophy. She joined the Theosophical Society in 1889, but a full ten years before that; we find her entering in a passionate defense of India and Afghanistan against the policy of Disraeli in England and

Lytton in India. Her two chief lines of approach to the reawakening of India and the achievement of the Home Rule within the Empire were religious and educational, and they were closely interconnected incapable of being separated. To her India was a land whose religion was moulded by divine men. Her coming to India was thus prompted by her disenchantment with the material values of life. Through her studies and reflections, she was thoroughly impressed by the great religion and philosophy of India. She claimed to have found the truth of life and became impatient to try her newly found idealism with the establishment of Brotherhood of man. Mrs. Besant considered India, to be the right place for such a task on the basis of her theosophical belief. Mrs. Besant worked for the possibility of establishing a world empire, in which she believed the friendship of India and England was indispensable. But to her, India enjoyed a high state of civilization, long before the seed of western civilization was sown. Thus while emphasizing loyalty to the British throne; she gave no special place to the English people themselves as a member of the conquering race. Mrs. Besant pointed out that the British rule in India, had given her famines and poverty, by cutting at the very roots of its indigenous economic system. Annie Besant believed that the basis of Indian politics should be natural and indigenous. It should be based upon the revival of her ancient literature, language and by awakening the youth of the country to the Indian ideals of life. She demanded Indian self governance, not as a gift but as a right, under the educative control of British Statesmanship, until the country seemed ready for full colonial autonomy.

In the nineteenth and the twentheith century the ‘woman question’ was very vital. Mrs. Besant worked to ameliorate the lots of child and other widows with education, foremost in her list. The central Hindu College was the first instituition in India, to close its door to married boys at lower classes. They imposed double fees upon married students and finally shut them out all together. In 1917, began the Women’s Indian Association (WIA) in Madras,

by merging the Tamil Women's Association, with a women's improvement society. It was started by Dorothy Graham Jinarajadasa and Margaret Cousins, being converted to Theosophy under the leadership of Annie Besant, the famed feminist and birth control advocate. All of these three women were connected with militant feminism in the British Isles. While their tactics had softened, following their conversion to theosophy and relocation to India, they were still deeply concerned with the improvement of women's status. 'Stridharma' the organ of WIA, provided the platform for discussions on larger issues, concerned with women. (Forbes, 2005 p16) Annie Besant persistently gave credit for her work to the Indians in general striving thus to arouse in them, self confidence, and a sense of responsibility. Mrs. Besant's life above all things had been a great adventure, with a noble purpose for India.

Spurning the comforts of her own life, Mira Behn dedicated her life to Bapu and the cause what he stood for with real earnestness. She prepared herself for her role in India. Though she found herself more suited for Gandhiji's personal work, but that did not stop her from fighting for India's independence. Through her writings, we get a detailed account of the life in the Sabarmati Ashram. She was an apt translator of Gandhian philosophy and mode of operation to the outside world. She took up the vow of celibacy, cut her hair, and clad her self in khadi to make her befitting for her role, in India, which she chose herself. When the final call came, she concentrated herself with service of India and its poor masses. After Gandhi's death during her stay in the foothills of the Himalayas, Mira Behn wrote as well as spoke eloquently about the deforestration of the region. She was instrumental in bringing government notice to the same. Along with Sundar Lal Bahuguna, her close associate and collaborator Mira Behn upheld the agenda of Chipkoo Movement, which was primarily concerned with forest conservation. The movement proved to be the starting point for many future environment protests. Mira Behn unwittingly became one of the torch bearers of

modern India's environmental movement. This was perhaps one of the greatest legacies left by Mira Behn for her future generations. Unlike many others, she was not in India, to bask in the glory of Gandhi, but to make her presence thoroughly felt for years to come.

To Katherine Mayo, 'intertia, helplessness, lack of intiative and orignality, lack of staying power and of sustained loyalties, sterility of enthusiasm, weakness of life-vigor,etc., all are traits that truly characterise the Inda not only of today but of long past history."Mayo envisaged Indian women as "Indian women exists to serve" to her "rich or poor, high caste or low caste, the mother of son will idolize the child. She has little knowledge to give him, save knowledge of strange taboos, and fears and charms and ceremonies to propitiate universe of powers unseen. She would never discipline him, even though she knew the meaning of the word..... And so through all his childhood he grows as grew his father before him, back into the mist of time." (Mayo, 1927)

Katherine Mayo in a chapter entitled, 'to the women of Hindu India' in her book "*Slaves of The Gods"* stated "your culture it is true is under no necessity to satisfy our western judgement. But until it satisfies that judgement in what we consider essential points of common humanity, it msut do without our respect" (Mayo, 1927) Actually Mayo failed to understand the deep rooted Indian culture, traditions, heritages and most significantly her cults and norms. Her thought and opinions about India were superficial and partially true. Any dispassionate reader of Mayo's work cannot refute that there must have been certain motives primarily political behind Mayo's venture in India. Like Mrinalini Sinha pointed out in her work, *"Selections from Mother India"* "Any close reader of Miss Mayo's book, cannot but conclude that she came to India with a set evil purpose to study the evils and not the good of Hindu Society. To hold us upto ridicule and scorn and thus delay the grant of Home Rule or self government." Through out her book is revealed contempt for our religion and a whole sale criticism of all our revered national leaders and sweeping condemnation of all that is

Hindu. “All her venomous attack is directed against the Hindu habits, manners and customs and such a horrid picture cannot but fill one’s mind with disgust and righteous indignation. Mayo’s flamboyantly exposed the sexual habits of the Hindu Andarmahals, by asserting that husbands regulary practised the marital rape of sexually immature girls. Her depiction of India’s sex life grabbed the headlines by linking premature sexual activity to male impotency.” (Sinha, 1998 p3) Thus still today even more than eighty years down the memory line, Indians still revile Katherine Mayo. But can we all together turn a deaf ear and a blind eye to her outspoken criticism of public health and sanitation in India, her depiction of women’s plight in India. Perhaps, Gandhi’s drain inspector’s report after all was not so unpleasant a truth. How can we ignore that Katherine Mayo truly had some saving points? It is true that in the colonial era, Indian nationalists were always over critical towards any criticism of their society, cults and customs and in no less time they labelled such work as pro-imperialist and anti-nationalist work. But now today in the changing global arena, Indians have become more receptive towards their follics and criticism. It is true that most of Mayo’s observations are false and degrading but there can be no denying of the fact, that many of Mayo’s statement are absolutely true. Is it not true that women’s plight in India, and the public health and sanitation system have become the rallying point of feminist and NGOs today? Mayo perhaps unknowingly not only opened our eyes to reality, but also lead to the full fledged flowering of modern Indian nationalism. The response of the women’s movement to Mayo’s “Mother India” was perhaps most clearly manifested in the efforts to secure the passage of the long delayed child marriage Restrained Bill or Sarda Bill in 1929.

Though it is imperative to contest Mayo’s portrayal of India with diametrically reverse opinion about India by other three western women, it is also imperative to maintain that all these four western women, in their own idiosyncratic manner brought to the forefront, issues that have been perpetually at the cynosure of Indian discourses for years and perhaps will

remain for many more years too. It is relevant to mention here, that these four western women were not fighting for their feminist rights, but for greater human values, which also included women's right and upliftment of the society, along with socio- political and cultural changes.

Probably somewhere in between all this esteemed opinion, lies the truth and reality of present modern globalised unbound India, that needs to be envisaged and perceived. That's probably the chip in the block.

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