

A Critical Analysis on Sister Nivedita's Impact on Indian Women's Education

Rituparna Gangopadhyay¹, Dr. Anamika Shrivastava²

^{1,2} Department of Education, Mansarovar Global University, Sehore, MP, India.

ABSTRACT

"A Critical Analysis of Sister Nivedita's Impact on Indian Women's Education" examines Sister Nivedita's monumental late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century contributions to women's education in India. Sister Nivedita was an early advocate for women's education and equality in an era when Indian women were constrained by societal norms that discouraged higher education and when discrimination against them was common. Her life's work was devoted to empowering women and girls in India through education and advancing the ideals espoused by Swami Vivekananda. Her pedagogical stance, practices, and institutional endeavours—most notably, the founding of the girls' school in Kolkata—are examined in this critical analysis. This book delves into her method of producing independent, well-educated, and socially aware women by fusing Western teachings with Indian traditional values. Her works, speeches, and nationalist beliefs are also examined; they influenced educational changes and inspired many women who followed her in the field of social reform and education. Examining Sister Nivedita's work through the lenses of colonial India and the Indian women's movement, this study uses analytical and historical research techniques to assess her efforts and their limitations. From what we can see, her work was essential in breaking down long-standing gender stereotypes and paving the way for more educational opportunities for women in contemporary India. The study shows that Sister Nivedita wanted education to be about more than just getting a degree; it should also be about developing strong characters, fostering a sense of national pride, and empowering women. She is a legendary figure in the annals of social change and women's education in India, and her educational principles are discussed today in conversations about inclusive education and gender equality.

Keywords: *Women's Education, Female Empowerment, Educational Reform, Nationalism, Indian Society, Gender Equality, Social Transformation.*

INTRODUCTION

Education has been one of the most potent tools for societal change and individual progress. Concerns about gender equality, social reform, and India's overall development have all been intertwined with the topic of women's education. Illiteracy, purdah, child marriage, and a lack of educational opportunities were among the social and cultural obstacles that Indian women endured

throughout the 1800s and 1900s. Educators and reformers who championed women's rights and education flourished in this complex social and cultural climate. Sister Nivedita holds a special and important place among them.

One of the most committed advocates of Indian nationalism and social reform, Sister Nivedita (1867–1911) was born Margaret Elizabeth Noble in Ireland. She was a revered follower of Swami Vivekananda. She devoted her life to empowering Indian women and promoting female education, drawn to Vivekananda's goal of nation-building via education. Upon her arrival in India in 1898, she saw that the key to the nation's advancement lay in the education and empowerment of its women.

So, she committed herself to building schools, coming up with new ways of teaching, and empowering Indian women to take part in politics and society. The impact of Sister Nivedita's work on women's education went well beyond the physical construction of schools. She fought for a pedagogical framework that would honour both Western scientific understanding and the moral and cultural traditions of India. The development of women's character, self-confidence, patriotism, and social duty should be the primary goals of education, in her view, rather than just literacy. Her educational philosophy was informed by her extensive research into Indian society; it aimed to foster an atmosphere where women could develop their minds and spirits without sacrificing their heritage.

The educational mission of Sister Nivedita is significant because of the profound effect it has had on Indian society. Many families were encouraged to send their daughters to school when she spoke out against the societal stigma that prevented women from receiving an education and through her writings and speeches she helped dismantle that stigma. Another result of her work was the rise of educated women in India who would go on to have significant impacts in the country's social and nationalist uprisings.

Sister Nivedita's impact on women's education has been relatively under-researched in academic works on the subject, in contrast to her many other accomplishments. Most of Sister Nivedita's works deal with her connections to Swami Vivekananda and Indian nationalism. To fully grasp her impact on Indian education and women's empowerment, it is necessary to conduct a thorough and critical examination of her educational ideology, initiatives, and lasting impact.

The purpose of this study, which is headed "A Critical Analysis on Sister Nivedita's Impact on Indian Women's Education," is to look at her work from a variety of angles, including historical, sociological, and educational. Her educational principles are still relevant in modern India, and this book delves into her goals for women's education as well as her actual work to advance literacy and empowerment among women. The study seeks to analyse Sister Nivedita's life and work in order to emphasise the lasting impact of her contributions to the progress of gender equality in Indian society and the development of women's education.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To analyze the contribution of sister Nivedita as a Leader in Indian Women's Education.
- To explore Sister Nivedita's perspectives on Indian education.

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

A. General Information

1. GENDER

The data was collected regarding the gender of the respondents and the data was tabulated in table.

Table 1.1: The Table Showing Gender of The Respondents

Gender	No of Respondents	Percentage
Male	180	30
Female	420	70
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 70 percent of the respondents was female and 30 percent of the respondents was male. The majority of the respondents are female.

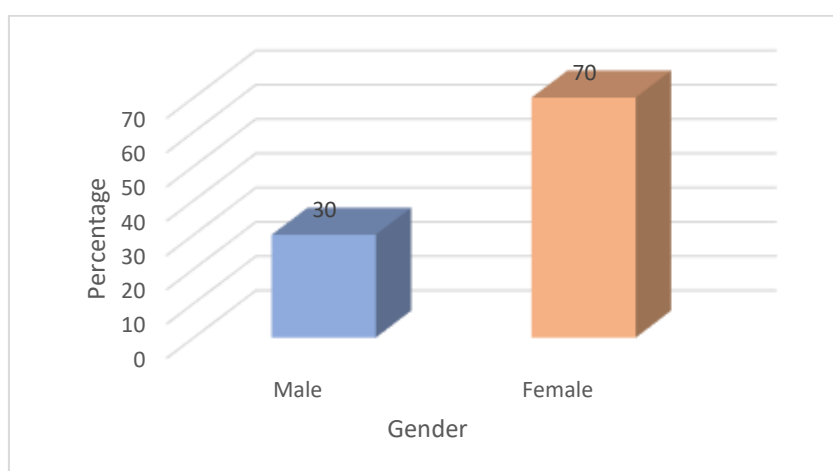


Fig 1.1: Bar Graph Showing Gender of The Respondents

2. AGE GROUP

The data was collected regarding the age of the respondents and the data was tabulated. The age group was taken in four groups Below 20, Between 21-30, Between 31-40 and Above 40.

Table 1.2: The Table Showing Age Group of The Respondents

Age Group	No of Respondents	Percentage
Below 20	300	50
21-30	120	20
31-40	150	25
Above 40	30	5
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 50 percent of the respondents are below 20 age group, 20 percent are between 21-30 age, 25 percent are between 31-40 age group, 5 percent are above 40 age group. The majority of the respondents belongs to below 20 age group.

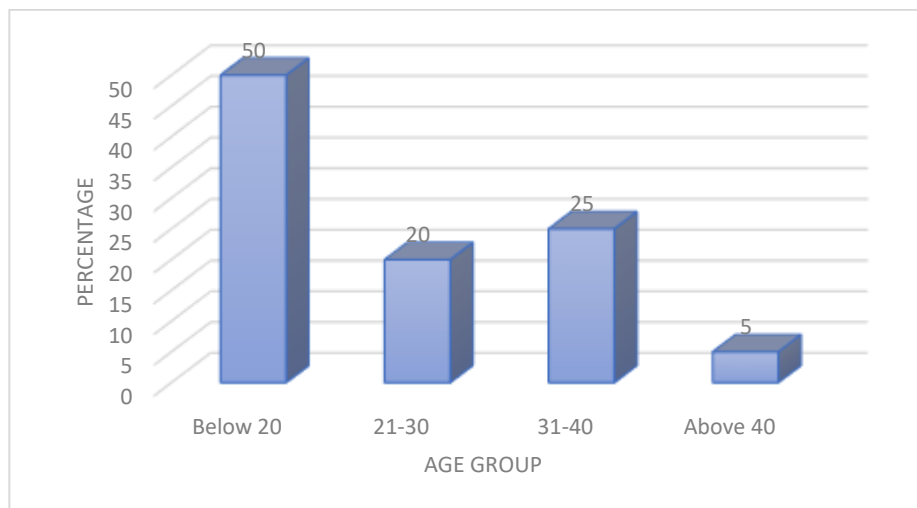


Fig 1.2: Bar Graph Showing Age Group of The Respondents

3. EDUCATIONAL QUALIFICATION

The data was collected regarding educational qualification of the respondents and the data was tabulated as follows: -

Table 1.3: The Table Showing Educational Qualification of The Respondents

Educational Qualification	No of Respondents	Percentage
Undergraduate	240	40
Postgraduate	150	25
Doctorate	90	15
Other	120	20
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 40 percent of the respondents are undergraduate in education, 25 percent are post graduate, 15 percent are doctorate and 20 percent are other in education. The majority of the respondents was undergraduate.

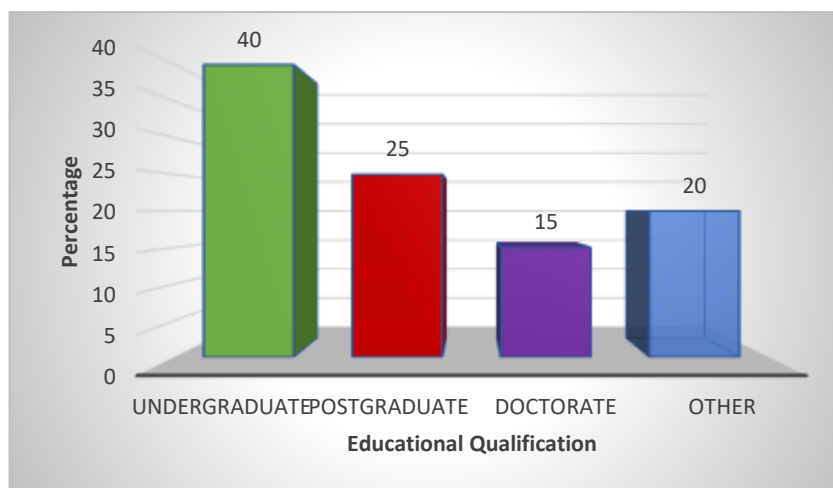


Fig 1.3: Bar Graph Showing Educational Qualification of The Respondents.

4. FIELD OF PROFESSION

The data was collected regarding the profession of the respondents and the data was tabulated as follows:

Table 1.4: Table Showing Field of Profession of The Respondents

Profession	No of Respondents	Percentage
Student	420	70
Faculty	180	30
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that majority of the respondents was student. The 70 percent of the respondents was student and 30 percent of the student was faculty.

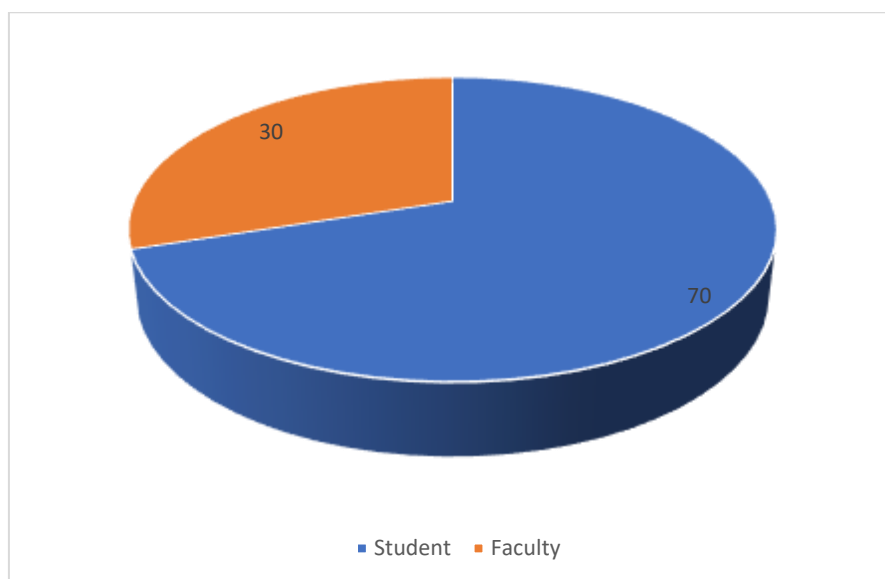


Fig 1.4: Pie Chart Showing Field of Profession of The Respondents

B. Awareness and Background

5. Awareness of The Contributions of Sister Nivedita to Indian Society

The data were collected regarding awareness of the contribution of Sister Nivedita to Indian society. The data was collected in dichotomous question 'Yes' and 'No' option.

Table 1.5: Table Showing Awareness of The Contributions of Sister Nivedita to Indian Society Among the Respondents

Option	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	540	90
No	60	10
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 90 percent were aware of the contribution of Sister Nivedita to Indian society and the respondents answer ‘Yes’. 10 percent were not aware of the contribution of Sister Nivedita to Indian society and they answered ‘No’.

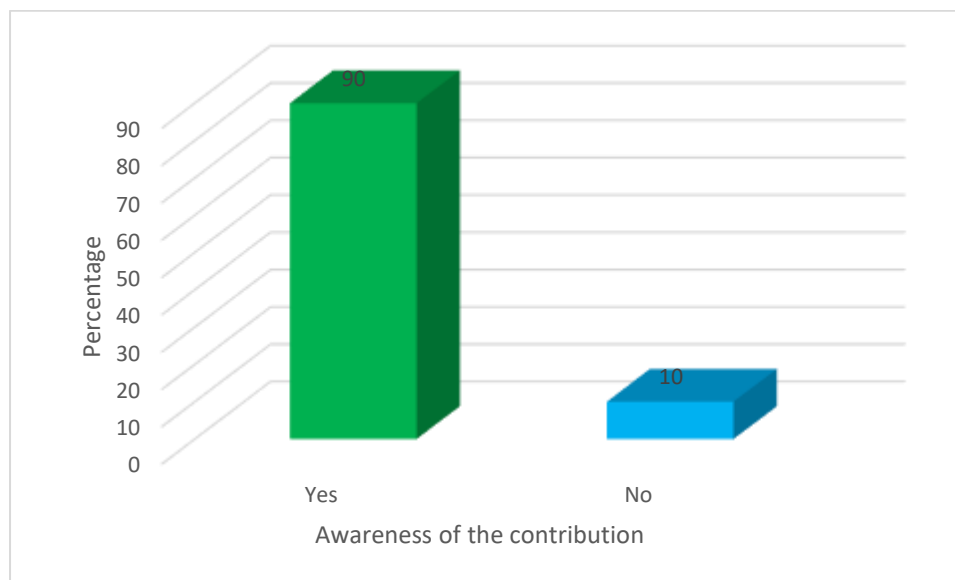


Fig 1.5: Bar Graph Showing Awareness of The Contributions of Sister Nivedita to Indian Society Among the Respondents

6. Source of learning about Sister Nivedita

The data was collected regarding source of learning about Sister Nivedita. The data was tabulated as follows:

Table 1.6: Table Showing Source of Learning About Sister Nivedita Among the Respondents

Source	No of Respondents	Percentage
Textbooks	120	20
Academic lectures	180	30
Books	60	10
Media	90	15
Others	150	25
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 20 percent of the respondents learned about Sister Nivedita from textbooks, 30 percent of the respondents learned about Sister Nivedita from academic lectures, 10 percent of the respondents learned from books, 15 percent of the respondents learned about Sister Nivedita from media and 25 percent of the respondents from others.

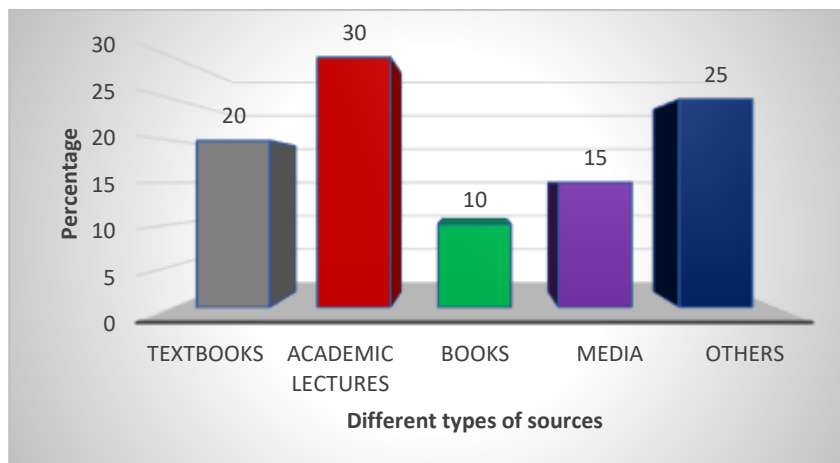


Fig 1.6: Bar Graph Showing Source of Learning About Sister Nivedita Among the Respondents.

7. Rating of level of knowledge about Sister Nivedita

The data was collected regarding the rating of level of knowledge about Sister Nivedita and the rating was tabulated as follows:

Table 1.7: Table Showing Level of Knowledge About Sister Nivedita Among the Respondents

Level of Knowledge	No of Respondents	Percentage
Very high	150	25
High	120	20
Moderate	90	15
Low	150	25
Very Low	90	15
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 25 percent of the respondents rated 'Very high' in Likert scale, 20 percent of the respondents rated 'High', 15 percent rated 'Moderate', 25 percent rated 'Low' and 15 percent rated 'Very low'.

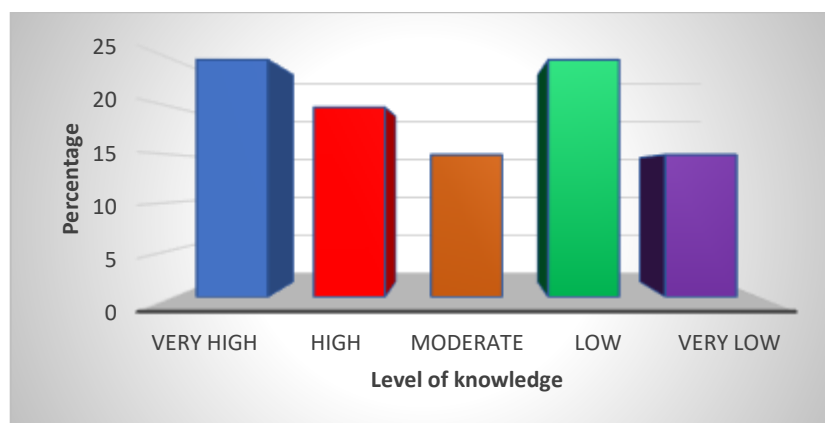


Fig 1.7: Bargraph Showing Level of Knowledge About Sister Nivedita Among the Respondents

C. Leadership and Educational Vision

8. Emphasis of Women's Education as A Means of National Development by Sister Nivedita

The data was collected regarding the rating of emphasis of women's education as a means of national development by Sister Nivedita and the rating was tabulated as follows:

Table 1.8: Opinion Regarding Emphasis of Women's Education as A Means of National Development by Sister Nivedita

Opinion	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	180	30
Agree	120	20
Neutral	120	20
Disagree	90	15
Strongly Disagree	90	15
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 30 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that women's education was a means of national development by Sister Nivedita, 20 percent of the respondents agreed, 20 percent of the respondents stayed neutral, 15 percent of the respondents disagreed to it and 15 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed to it.

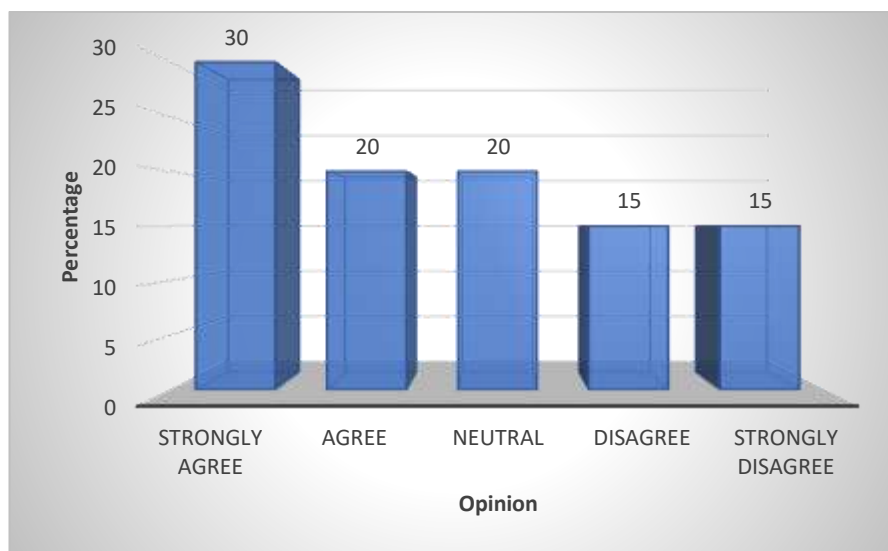


Fig 1.8: Bar Graph Showing Opinion Regarding Emphasis of Women's Education as A Means of National Development by Sister Nivedita

9. Educational Philosophy of Sister Nivedita Influenced by Indian Culture and Values

The data was also collected regarding educational philosophy of sister Nivedita which was influenced by Indian culture and values. The data was collected in Likert scale. The data was tabulated as follows:

Table 1.9: Opinion Regarding Educational Philosophy of Sister Nivedita Which Was Influenced by Indian Culture and Values.

Opinion	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	210	35
Agree	120	20
Neutral	90	15
Disagree	120	20
Strongly Disagree	60	10
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 35 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that educational philosophy of Sister Nivedita was influenced by Indian culture and values, 20 percent of the respondents agreed to it, 15 percent of the respondents were neutral, 20 percent disagreed to it and 10 percent strongly disagreed to it.

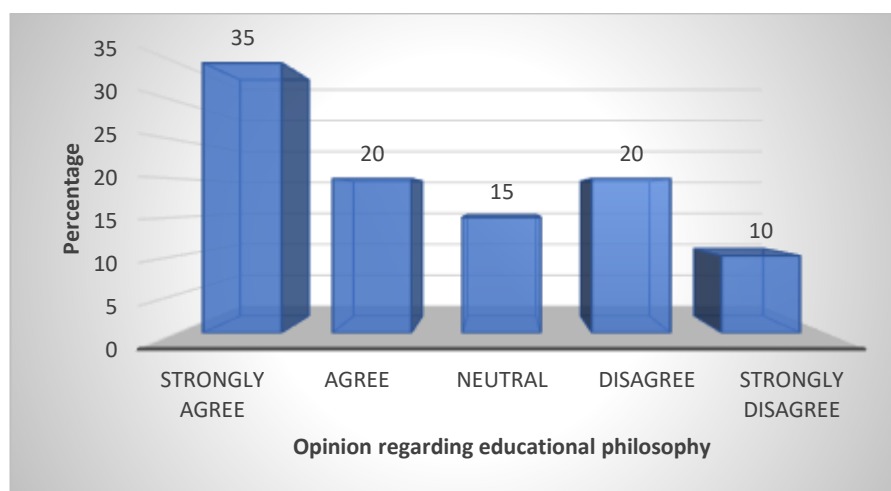


Fig 1.9: Bar Graph Showing Opinion Regarding Educational Philosophy of Sister Nivedita Which Was Influenced by Indian Culture and Values.

10. Sister Nivedita to be considered A Visionary Educational Leader

The data was also collected regarding opinion of Sister Nivedita to be considered a visionary educational leader and the data was tabulated in three options “Yes”, “No” and “Partially”. The data was tabulated as follows:

Table 1.10: Opinion Regarding Educational Philosophy of Sister Nivedita Which Was Influenced by Indian Culture and Values.

Opinion	No of Respondents	Percentage
Yes	270	45
No	180	30
Partially	150	25
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 45 percent of the respondents said ‘Yes’, 30 percent said ‘No’ and 25 percent said ‘Partially’ that educational philosophy of Sister Nivedita was influenced by Indian culture and values.

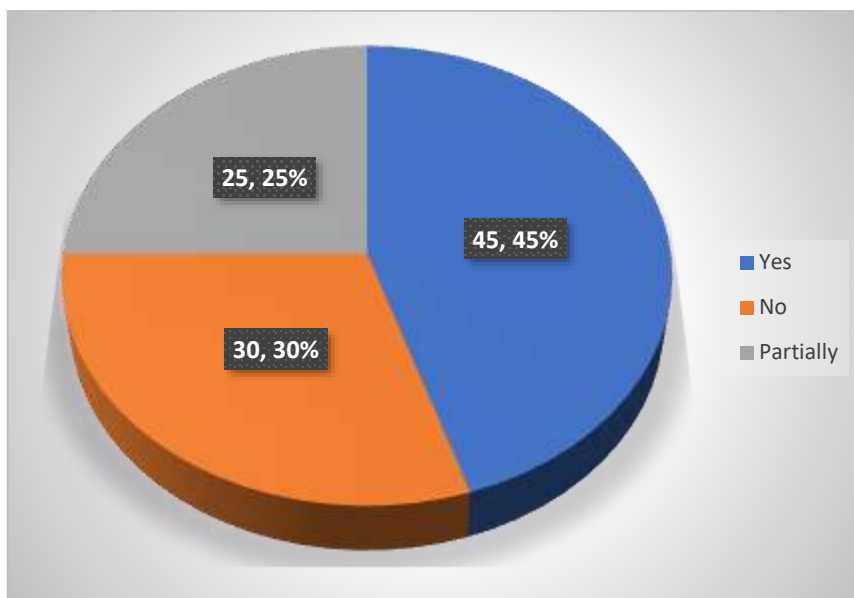


Table 1.10: Pie Chart Showing Opinion Regarding Educational Philosophy of Sister Nivedita Which was Influenced by Indian Culture and Values.

11. Effectiveness of Leadership Style in Motivating Indian Women Toward Education

The data was collected regarding effectiveness of Sister Nivedita’s leadership style in motivating Indian women toward education and the data was collected in Likert scale. The scale was ‘Very Effective’, ‘Effective’, ‘Moderately effective’ and ‘Ineffective’.

Table 1.11: Opinion Regarding Effectiveness of Leadership Style in Motivating Indian Women Toward Education

Opinion	No of Respondents	Percentage
Very Effective	210	35
Effective	180	30
Moderately Effective	150	25
Ineffective	60	10
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 35 percent respondents strongly said that the leadership style of Sister Nivedita was ‘Very Effective’, 30 percent said ‘Effective’, 25 percent said ‘Moderately Effective’ and 10 percent said ‘Ineffective’.

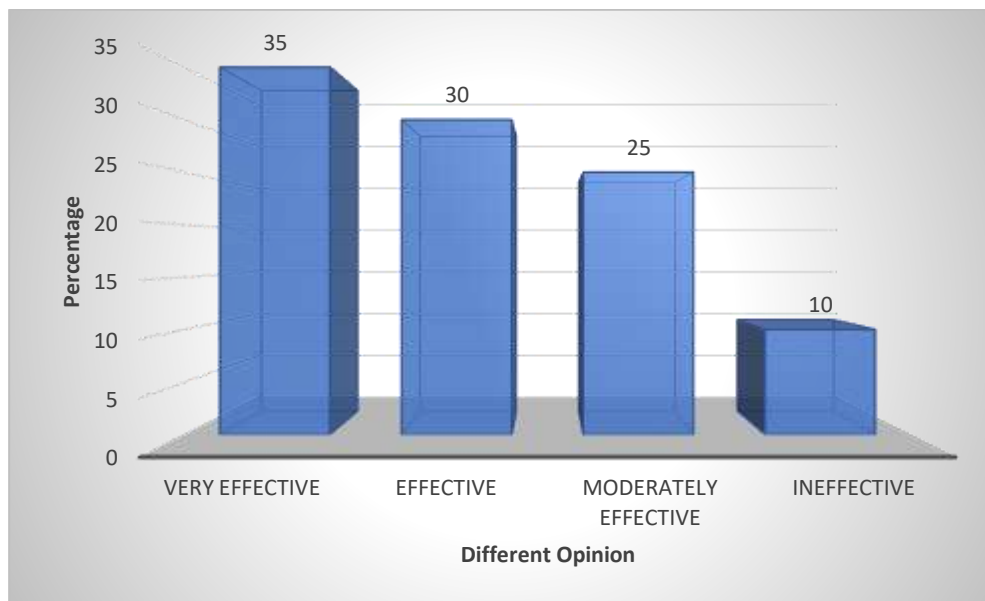


Fig 1.11: Bar Graph Showing Opinion Regarding Effectiveness of Leadership Style in Motivating Indian Women Toward Education

D. Impact on Women's Education

12. Role of Sister Nivedita in Promoting Girls' Education in Colonial India

The data was collected from the respondents in Likert scale regarding role of Sister Nivedita in promoting girls' education in colonial India. The data was tabulated as follows:

Table 1.12: Opinion Regarding Role of Sister Nivedita in Promoting Girls' Education in Colonial India

Opinion	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	240	40
Agree	90	15
Neutral	90	15
Disagree	120	20
Strongly Disagree	60	10
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows 40 percent of the respondents strongly agree that role of Sister Nivedita in promoting girls' education in colonial India, 15 percent of the respondents agree to it, 15 percent of the respondents stayed neutral, 20 percent of the respondents disagree to it and 10 percent of the respondents strongly disagreed to it.

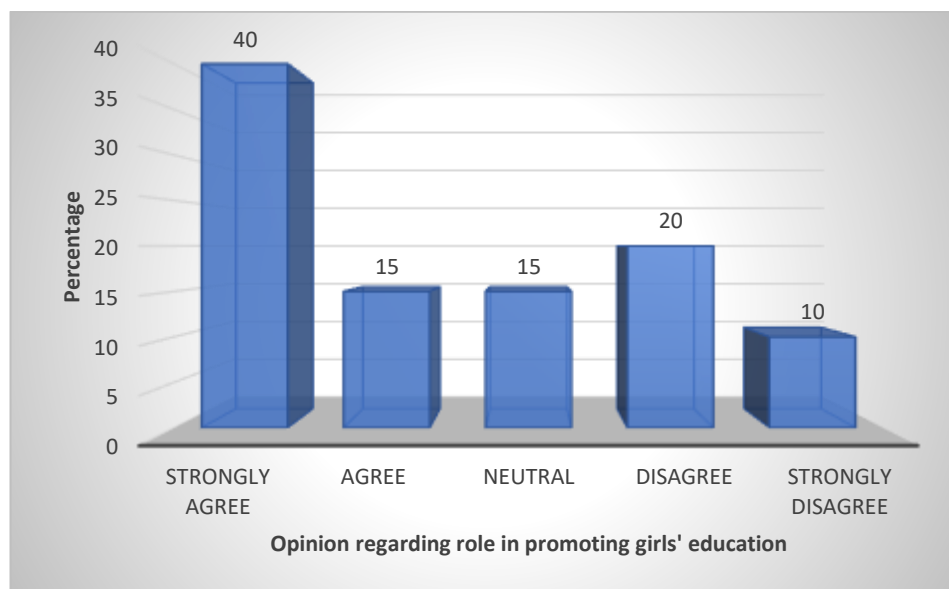


Fig 1.12: Bar Graph Showing Opinion Regarding Role of Sister Nivedita in Promoting Girls' Education in Colonial India

1. Sister Nivedita Initiatives Helped Challenge Social Restrictions on Women's Education

The data was collected regarding opinion from the respondents regarding Sister Nivedita initiatives helped challenge social restrictions on women's education. The data was collected in Likert scale and the data was tabulated as follows:

Table 1.13: Opinion Regarding Sister Nivedita Initiatives Helped Challenge Social Restrictions on Women's Education

Opinion	No of Respondents	Percentage
Strongly Agree	210	35
Agree	180	30
Neutral	150	25
Disagree	60	10
Strongly Disagree	-	-
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 35 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that Sister Nivedita initiatives helped challenge social restrictions on women's education, 30 percent agreed to it, 25 percent was neutral to it, 10 percent disagreed to it and no body strongly disagree.

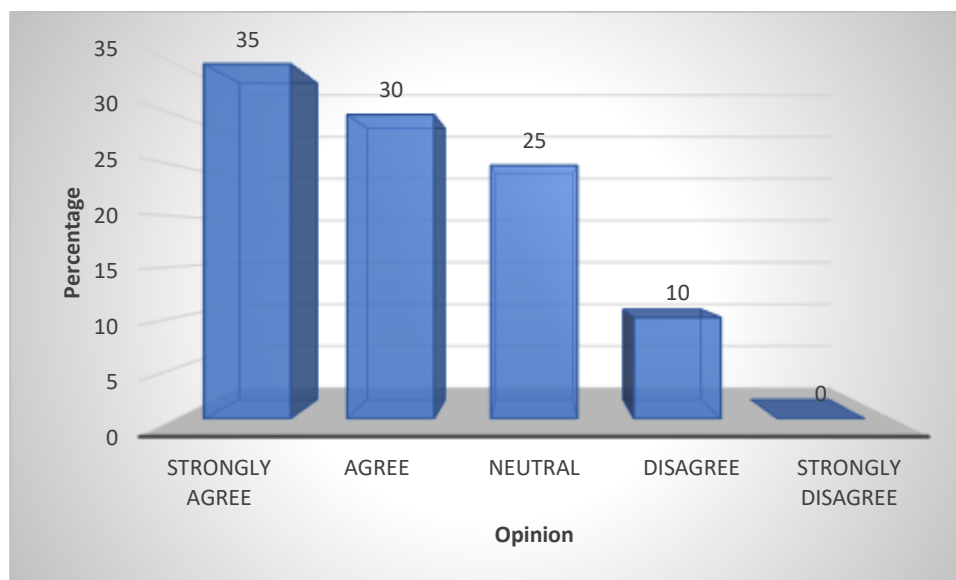


Fig 1.13: Bar Graph Showing Opinion Regarding Sister Nivedita Initiatives Helped Challenge Social Restrictions on Women's Education

2. Area of Impact Which Contributes Mainly

The data was collected from respondents regarding Sister Nivedita's contribution and the impact area. The options were given in four categories mainly girls' schooling, teacher training, nationalist education and social reform.

Table 1.14: Table Showing Area of Contribution by Sister Nivedita initiatives

Area of Contribution	No of Respondents	Percentage
Girls' Schooling	240	40
Teacher Training	120	20
Nationalist Education	180	30
Social Reform	60	10
Total	600	100

Source: Primary data

The data shows that 40 percent of the respondents said girls' schooling area contributed by Sister Nivedita, 20 percent said teacher training contributed mainly by Sister Nivedita, 30 percent of the respondents said she contributed in nationalist education and 10 percent of the respondents believed that Sister Nivedita contributed in social reform. The majority believed that Sister Nivedita contributed in girls' schooling the most.

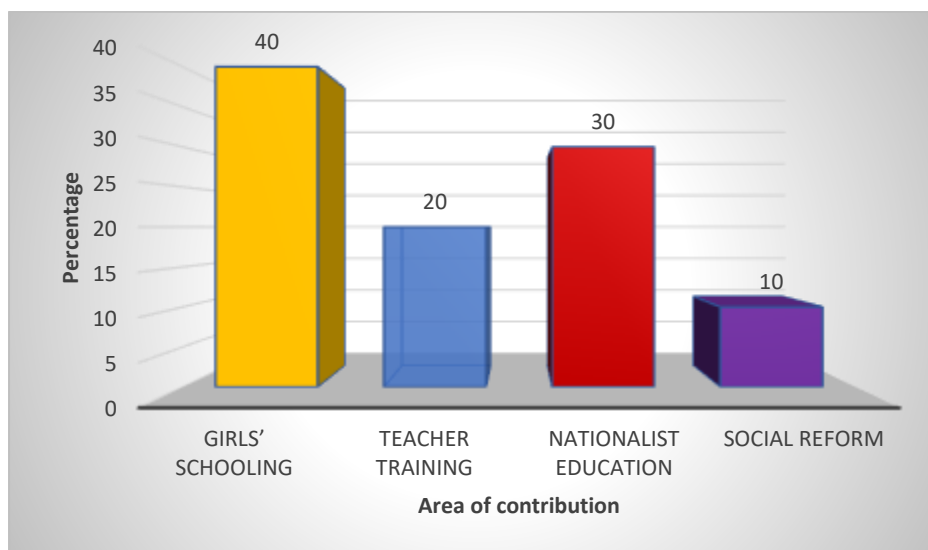


Fig 1.14: Bar Graph Showing Area of Contribution by Sister Nivedita initiatives

CONCLUSION

In the history of contemporary India, Sister Nivedita's contribution to women's education holds a prominent position. Her educational perspective focused on the holistic development of women via intellectual, moral, cultural, and spiritual enlightenment, going beyond the simple distribution of literacy. Sister Nivedita emerged as a trailblazing reformer who promoted education as a potent tool of women's empowerment and national regeneration during a period when social prejudices, orthodox customs, and limited possibilities restricted women's education in India. She developed an educational paradigm that blended contemporary knowledge with Indian traditional values by starting a ladies' school in Kolkata and actively interacting with women from various social backgrounds. She thought educated women would build a powerful and forward-thinking country. Her emphasis on independence, character development, patriotism, and social responsibility had a big impact on how women's education developed in India and served as an inspiration for a number of later social and educational reform organisations.

A comprehensive analysis of her achievements shows that, despite the geographical limitations and social constraints of her era, her endeavours had a significant and long-lasting ideological impact. Her ideas opposed colonial educational practices and promoted the development of an indigenous educational system that embraced modernity while honouring Indian customs. In talks about gender equality and educational reform today, the values she promoted—women's empowerment, inclusive education, national consciousness, and social service—remain pertinent. In summary, Sister Nivedita made a transformative rather than merely institutional contribution to Indian women's education. She was instrumental in influencing the conversation about women's empowerment in contemporary India and established the groundwork for a new awareness of education among Indian women. She is one of the most significant individuals in the history of Indian women's education because her legacy continues to motivate educators, legislators, and social reformers.

REFERENCES

1. Aich Mukherjee, P. (2017). Sister Nivedita's Vision on education in India. *Kanpur Historiographers*, 4(1): pp-1-26.
2. Anup Baugh (2017) Sister Nivedita as a Great Leader of Women Education, An International, Open Access, Peer Reviewed, Refereed, E- Journal in English, Vol. II & Issue V (December-2017), pp-190-195
3. Banerjee, P. (2017). Sister Nivedita and Indian Freedom Struggle. *International Journal of Management and Social Science Research Review*, 1(37), 25-28.
4. Barua, A. (2020). The Hindu Cosmopolitanism of Sister Nivedita (Margaret Elizabeth Noble): An Irish Self in Imperial Currents. *Harvard Theological Review*, 113(1), 1-23.
5. Ganguly, A. (2015). A Tribute to Sister Nivedita. *Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee Research Foundation*, 1, 10-28.
6. Giri, P. (2021). Political Involvement of Sister Nivedita and its Educational Importance in Present Indian Society. *International Journal of Research Culture Society*, 5(1), 59-62.
7. Iqbal Jayed (2024) The Educational Thought of Sister Nivedita: A Feminist Perspective on Women's Empowerment Through Education, Volume 12, Issue 2 February 2024, pp-b739-b749
8. Sengupta, R., Bhattacharya, S.K., Sangwan, D. (2022). From Margaret Noble to Sister Nivedita: Mapping a Colonial Woman's Journey to India in Search of a 'Home'. *Hyper Cultura*, 11, 1-13.
9. Squadron Leader Toolika Rani (2020), Sister Nivedita: The Embracer of India, RJPSS Sept. 2020 Vol. XLV No.2, pp- 2454-3403
10. Sunita. (2025). The Role of Sister Nivedita (Margaret E. Noble) In Women's Education in India. 1. 78-83. 10.5281/Zenodo.17262587.
11. Taraphdar, T. (2016). The Discovery of India' By Sister Nivedita: A Guidance for Value Education, Conference: Value Education & Sister Nivedita. *Science Education & Culture, Kolkata*, 1, 1-16.