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Multidimensional Personality of

Swami Vivekananda



Chief-Editor
Dr. Bonani Sinha

Co-Editor
Abhishek Choudhury

LIST OF CONTRIBUTORS

- 1. Professor Raghunath Ghosh,**
Former Emeritus Professor and Professor of Philosophy,
University of North Bengal,
Dist. Darjeeling-734013, W.B.
E-Mail: ghoshraghunath3@gmail.com
- 2. Professor Kanti Lal Das**
Department of Philosophy
North Bengal University
Email: kanti_lal_das@yahoo.com
(M) 7908040219
- 3. Dr. Monoranjan Das**
Associate Professor, Department of Philosophy
Govt. Degree College, Kanchanpur, Tripura
Email: drmonoranjan.bbmc@gmail.com
- 4. Dr. Nirmal Kumar Roy**
Associate Professor of Philosophy
University of North Bengal
Email: nkr.anirban@nbu.ac.in
- 5. Ramu Kumar Das**
(Research Fellow, C.U)
Email: rkd.caluniv@gmail.com
Mob-9143494707
- 6. Dr. Sukumar Chandra Roy**
Associate Professor of Philosophy
University of Gour Banga.
Email; sukumarchroy14@gmail.com
- 7. Dr. Sadek Ali**
Assistant Professor of Philosophy
University of Gour Banga, Malda
Email: sadek.ali23@rediffmail.com

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True Buddhism in the Eye of Swami Vivekananda

Dr. Nirmal Kumar Roy

Swami Vivekananda has made a remarkable observation regarding Buddhism. He says that so far as the popular notion goes, Buddhism is a new religion. It is entirely independent of and different from Hinduism. But Swamiji observes that true Buddhism is not a new religion. This religion takes its birth from Hinduism. Buddhism is nothing but another name for reformed Hinduism. In this context, Vivekananda says, "In order to understand Buddhism fully, we must go back to the mother religion from which it came."¹ He further states, "He was, in the first place, not the founding of a new religion, but a movement of reformation."² Hinduism, Swamiji holds, at the time of Gautama Buddha, was deviated from its true spirit and had been the subject of blind faith and superstition. Its true spirit was replaced by the caste system, untouchability, inequality and so-called unnecessary ceremonies. Hinduism turned to be instrumental for the fulfilment of the vested interest of the *Brāhmin*-s. People used to spend their valuable time just by unnecessary talking regarding the nature of the soul, God, heaven, and so on, without doing anything positive for society's well-being.

Quite naturally, the soft-hearted benevolent Buddha feels an urgent need for the necessary reformation of Hinduism in order to bring it in its original and pure state. Swami Vivekananda quotes, "When there is too much doctrine, too much belief in my father's religion, too much rational superstition, a change is needed. Such doctrine produces evil, and a reformation is necessary."¹ Vivekananda again says, "Buddhism, which is the religion of more than two-thirds of the human family, was not founded as an entirely new religion, but rather as a reformation which carried off the corruption of the times."³ Swamiji says that Gautama Buddha

Gautama Buddha, Hinduism lost its purity due to various types of superstition, caste system, untouchability, the sacrifice of animals and so on. Consequently, religion turned as instrumental to satisfy a section of people's vested interest, particularly the Brahmins. Ordinary common people were humiliated and cheated by them in different ways. This would give birth to inequality among the people. Society would lose its harmony and balance. Quite naturally, the soft-hearted, generous Gautama was highly shocked by society's pitiable situation. He took the initiative to save society just through a necessary reformation. In his religion, inhumanity, inequality, humiliation, superstition, selfishness, God, useless and dry discussion are replaced by proper humanity, equality, love, reason, unselfishness, man, disinterested action, respectively. But it is important to note that Vivekananda was greatly moved and attracted mainly by the broadness of the heart of Gautama Buddha, the sacrificing attitude he showed towards society and the disinterested action he performed throughout his life for establishing the wellbeing all over the globe. In his own words, "I wish I had one infinitesimal part of Buddha's heart. Buddha may or may not have believed in God; that does not matter to me. He preached the same state of perfection to which others come by *Bhakti*- or love of God-*Yoga* or *jñāna*. Perfection does not come from belief or faith. Talk does not count for anything. Parrots can do that. Perfection comes through the disinterested performances of action."¹⁹