When we go through the life of Buddha and Śaṅkara we find that both renounced the world in quest of the realisation of truth and significance of life. Gautama Buddha renounced world to find the light that solves the problems of life. He found in Nirvāṇa the cessation of human suffering that entails birth and existence. In other words, Nirvāṇa is the ultimate end of life. Buddha realised this truth through his deep and long meditation. He became enlightened. Śaṅkara also renounced the world at an early age with a view to finding out the significance and ultimate reality of life. But unlike Buddha his way lay more through intellectual pursuit - the study of the Upaniṣads, the Brahma Sūtra and the Bhagavadgītā than in introspection and meditation. His (Śaṅkara's) success came through the realisation of identity of individual self-consciousness with the universal soul-consciousness, Ātma-jñāna as Brahma-jñāna. Then art that, Tat Twam asi was Śaṅkara's greatest revelation of the Upaniṣadic truth. The ultimate aim of life, according to
both Buddha and Śaṅkara is not to find God but to attain Nirvāṇa or Mokṣa.

Both Buddhism and Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara owe their origin to Upaniṣadic philosophy. The philosophy of monism, truth, nirvāṇa, bliss etc. in the teaching of Buddha is very much influenced by the Upaniṣadic conception of satyam, jnanam, anantam, anandam, mokṣam, brahman and so on. This would be clear from the fact that Buddha was born in India and he made a successful effort to attain nirvāṇa which is the goal of human life. We may very well infer that Buddha might have been influenced by Upaniṣadic teaching which had its origin in Indian soil and early Upaniṣads like Brhad-arāyaka and Chāndogya Upaniṣads were composed a few hundred years before the birth of Buddha. Destruction of the separate ego sense, cessation of rebirth, attainment of perfect purity and insight - this is spiritual emancipation according to both the Upaniṣads and Bhagavan Buddha. Both term it mukti or nirvāṇa, a state which ensues when avidyā, spiritual blindness along with all its effects is completely destroyed.

Śaṅkara as an exponent of Upaniṣadic thought infused in his study a personal realisation of his own which made all the difference between him and Buddha in their approach to life. While Śaṅkara has the Buddhist's love of free thought,
he had much respect for tradition. Philosophically he became convinced that no movement could thrive on a spirit of negation, and so he asserted the reality of Brahman on the basis of śruti. "The Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara has absorbed all the essential elements of Buddhist thought. It is becoming increasingly clear that if Buddha's teaching are to be provided with a metaphysical support, we have to search for it in Śaṅkara's Advaita. In the Buddhist philosophy (as presented to us in the Buddhist scriptures), we have, in the words of Dr. Oldenberg, only 'a fragment of a circle, to complete which and to find the centre of which is forbidden, for it would involve an enquiry after things which donot contribute to deliverance and happiness'. (quoted by Edmund Holmes, The Creed of Buddha, p.64). If Buddhism had continued in the spirit in which Buddha had meant it to proceed, if it had not indulged in metaphysical speculations, but propagated only the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path, Śaṅkara need not have appeared. But when against the exhortations of the Master, and without his guidance, metaphysical attempts to 'complete the circle' miscarried, resulting in intellectual confusion and spiritual anarchy, Śaṅkara appeared and gave to humanity the priceless thought of Advaita Vedānta".  

Sankara has identified self with Brahman and as he has asserted, the realisation of the true nature of Self is the realisation of Brahman which remains the one and the only Reality. Sankara has described the nature of the Self in the following passages -

Svayin brahmā svayin visnu
svayāmindraḥ svayin śivaḥ
svayin viśvamidaṁ sārvāṁ
svasmādanyānaṁ kincana.²

The Self is Brahman, the Self is Visnu, the Self is Indra, the Self is Śiva; the Self is all this universe. Nothing exists except the Self.

In the Buddha we come across a thoroughgoing agnostic and iconoclast. He did not want to discuss ultimate questions as to the existence of God and soul, the origin of the universe, and so on. As he found ritualism and priestcraft revolting, and a moral life feasible without any belief in God, he rejected the Vedas. He reasoned fearlessly and taught in a style which was rigorously logical and absolutely convincing.

Buddha was firmly convinced that no priestly religion of dogmatic faith existing at his time could solve the problems of life. So he was out to discover the ethics of life for the

² Vivekachūḍāmani, 388.
Eradication of human suffering. Goodness is the name of godliness in Buddhism. Inspired by the practical motive of ameliorating human suffering and sorrow, Buddha completely ignores the fact whether God exists or not, and showed the path by following which man can be free from the wheel of Karma and rebirth.

Śaṅkara emphatically declares that it is knowledge and knowledge alone which is the means of liberation. Both Śaṅkara and Mahāyāna Buddhism hold that liberation consists in removing the ignorance and attaining the right knowledge. "There is no conflict between the liberation and the embodiment. They believe in the conception of jivan-mukti. Mahayana goes a step forward and elaborates the ideal of Bodhisattva. A Bodhisattva does not want to enter into Nirvāṇa, though fully qualified for it, as long as all living beings have not attained it. The Mahayana ideal of Bodhisattva and Sarva-mukti is unique in the history of the world-thought. The ideal of Sarva-mukti still, remains to be adopted by the followers of Śaṅkara. Prof. S.S.S. Shastri suggests, "If Advaita is to be a live force, it must be by the open espousal of this doctrine together with its necessary corollary of service to society."

Both Śaṅkara and Buddha established their viewpoint on reason. They dispensed with authority, tradition and superstition.

3 A.K. Lad : A comparative study of the concept of Liberation in Indian philosophy, p.133.
Śaṅkara attaches supreme importance to the revealed truths of the Vedas which are regarded as the 'breath of God'. But it is only jñānakanda that is stressed, not Karmakanda. He who condemns Śaṅkara as a mere theologian, as one whose faith is pinned to the Vedas, must be either hopelessly ignorant of Śaṅkara-Vedānta or be himself nothing less than a prejudiced dogmatist. Śaṅkara never accepts the Śruti blindly. It is only because he fully knows that the Śruti is the result of the highest realisation of the ancient sages, that it is the most valuable pearl that the ocean of human experience can ever boast of, to yield after having been churned by the rod of the intellect, in short, it is only because Śaṅkara is fully conscious of the fact that the Śruti is the shining pure gold tested at the touch-stone of reason and experience, that he builds his many storeyed magnificent place of the Advaita in the firm foundation of the Śruti.

The greatness of Śaṅkara's metaphysical achievement rests on the intensity and spendour of thought with which the search for reality is conducted, on the high idealism of spirit with which he grapples the difficult problems of life on the vision of a consummation which places a divine glory on human life.

Buddha's three rules of discipline namely, conduct,
insight and meditation for the attainment of nirvāṇa are similar to Śaṅkara's form Vedāntic principles of discrimination between the (1) eternal and the non-eternal, nityanityavastu-viveka, (2) detachment from the pleasure of the non-eternal, ihamutraphalavigaga, (3) attachment of tranquillity, self-control, renunciation, patience, concentration and faith, sama-damaśādhanasampat and desire for liberation or mokṣa mumuksutva.

While Śaṅkara is against the Karma-Kanda or ceremonialism of the Vedas, likewise Buddha is opposed to the ceremonialism, of the Vedas. Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara is the knowledge portion or jñāna-kanda of the Upaniṣads which is more philosophical than ceremonial. This would be evident from the teachings of the Upaniṣadic seers like Yajñavalka, Bharadvaja, Janaka, Sadilya. Their discussion on Upaniṣadic teaching was confined more to life eternal than the pleasures temporal.

Notwithstanding their similarity in some respects they differ widely in vital points. Buddhism and Divergence of Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara from Buddhism belong to two distinct worlds of philosophic thoughts. Buddhism came out of Dialectical process, as an antithesis of Veda and Brahmana, and the ritualistic aspects of ancient philosophic and religious thoughts. Its main stress lay in the reality of life though the vision of ideal was not obscured. Its central
idea lay in assimilating the ills and sufferings of mankind through a process of thought-pattern and a chain of actions - right knowledge, right association, right action etc. Buddha did not treat upon the thorny path of metaphysical speculation inquiring into the existence of God, or soul or indestructibility of soul; because he could not prove or disprove these. He was not prepared to accept the authority of others. In his own life also he could not have realisation of these things. In other words, spiritualism was not his. Yet he was not a materialist in the commonsense view of it. Because his ideal was to find emancipation of man from the cycle of birth existing in Upaniṣadic works or the Bhagavad Gītā, yet was not disposed to accept squarely the concept of soul or 'indestructibility of soul'.

Here is a pointed and vital contradiction between Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara and Buddhism. Buddha lands himself in speculative wilderness of life, reincarnation or cycle of birth. He entangles himself in the cobweb of speculative disquisition. He could hardly provide any rational background of creation and ultimate dissolution and extinction of life, - 'what the source of life is'; 'what the aim of life is'; 'how the total extinction of life - or Nirvāṇa is wrought'. Something (that is life) cannot come out of nothing, neither can there be total destruction of anything - matter being indestructible -
Matter merely transforms itself.

These are central inquiry which Buddhism fails to answer convincingly. There must be a 'Prima Causa', or a First Cause – be it Godhead or Eternal Soul, from which individual soul or individual being on earth issues out. There must be an ultimate destiny or destination of soul, merging itself in the Eternal Soul, and not ending in Nothing.

Concept of cycle of birth connotes recreation. There is 'life force' or 'creative energy' working through the organism, which longs for recreating itself, 'ad infinitum'. Yet Buddha seems not to accept this never-ending process of birth and death and rebirth. There must be cessation of the operation. But then, where does that creative energy or agency go? Can it end in nothing? This 'nihilistic' idea of Buddha is bane thereof.

Śaṅkara descended heavily upon Buddhism on this score. Geitbeesillogic or anomaly in Buddhistic cosmic conception was too bewildering for the essential sanity of Śaṅkara's philosophic mind. So he inducted the concept of 'Eternal Soul' from the Upaniṣadic writings. He could very easily outwit the Buddhistic scholars. He used this bacuna as fulcrum and toppled Buddhism as a philosophic theory. Thus he re-instated Hinduism or reformed Hinduism or Advaita Vedānta dispelling all mists.
Great Śaṅkara with his subtle brain and high metaphysics made headway through this vacuity and tenuousness of Buddha's scheme of 'life.' Floodgate of arguments were let loose through the gap.

The concept of complete inability or nothingness at the beginning and vision of the ultimate or culmination of life in total extinction or annihilation of birth has for an enchantment for those who found the forest of speculative thought about creation too dense to find a way out. Life in this world is real. It is a world of everyday experience even for a meanest of human creature. The positive approach to life, namely, right knowledge, right association and right action was within the grasp of ordinary mortals. Emancipation (not of soul) but emancipation from the shackle of life was very much appealing to them beset as they were with life's manifold sufferings.

But for the logicians, the metaphysical speculators and scientific investigators, the mere evocation of the origin of creation and ultimate condition of life appeared to be too shallow and bizarre to be appreciated.

Swami Vivekananda embraced this metaphysical vision of Śaṅkara with all his heart. He entered the arena of controversy with Buddha in this basic weakness of Buddha's thought.
Buddha denied Soul any place in his scheme of thought. Swamiji became furious and fulminated against Buddha - called him 'Gayasura' 4.

Notwithstanding all these hiatus in Buddha's theory, Buddha's ideals and ideology generated a tremendous impact upon the social and spiritual world. It is steeped in eternal moral values. Indeed Buddha remains one of the greatest and finest humanist of the world and the foremost humanitarian that the world has ever seen. His name will be ever written in letters of gold in the history of cultural and religious thoughts of the world. This brightest star of the firmament of Indian thought and culture will ever shine in the darkest cloud that often envelops the human minds through generations and down the ages.

Swamiji's heart was thrilled and vibrated with delight coming in contact with Buddha's humanitarian thought. He poured out his heart's overwhelming admiration on Buddha. Buddha's acceptance of the life of reality with its glory with all its imperfection swayed Swamiji. Buddha, 'the Light of Asia' flashed the message of action against a new vista of 'life'. 'Karma-Yoga' selfless action - with its trident of Right Knowledge, Right

conduct and Right action opened up a new horizon of life with glimmerings of silver light. Though 'Nirvāṇa' is the goal, the path lay through abnegation of self, and removing of sorrows and sufferings of creatures. If there is heaven, heaven is here.

Of course the basic concept of 'Nishkama Karma' is not anything new in the religious books of the Hindus. But Buddha put a new emphasis on this concept. A new dimension was given to it without the complexion of the concepts of soul and God.

The man whose mind is absorbed through Yoga and who sees the same (Brahman) everywhere, sees the Self in all beings and all beings in the Self (29 - 6th Chapter, Gītā). *

Me who sees Me everywhere and sees all things in Me, does not lose sight of Me, nor do I of him. (30 - 6th Chapter, Gītā). *

He who worships Me residing in all beings in a spirit of unity, becomes a Yogi and whatever his mode of life lives in Me. (31 - 6th Chapter, Gītā). *

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*মর্ত্যসুমাসমাং মহেকুতি চারামি
 ইত্যাদি মুখ্যভাষ্যান্তর মথারন্তু। ॥ ২৬ ধর্ম অধ্যাত্ম ॥
* মে মে মে পশ্চাদিনি সত্য মে মে মে পশ্চাদিনি ।
 ইত্যাদি ন প্রার্থনে এ ন প্রার্থনে এ ৩০ ধর্ম অধ্যাত্ম ॥
* মার্ম্যাদিৈত্যে মে মে এতব্যস্থোত্তবী মে ।
 ইত্যাদি পরামর্শার্থি মে মে এতব্যস্থোত্তবী ॥ ৩১ ধর্ম অধ্যাত্ম ॥
Fix your mind on Me, be devoted to Me, worship Me, and bow down to Me; then you shall come to Me. Truly do I promise to you, for you are dear to Me.

(65 – 18th chapter, Gitā)*

In the heart of all beings, O Arjuna, resides the Lord, whirling all of them by His Maya as if they were mounted on a machine.

(61 – 18th Chapter, Gitā)*

But the knowledge by which one sees as distinct, in all beings, different entities of various kinds, should be known as Rajasika

(21 – 18th Chapter, Gitā)*

An action that is ordained, performed without attachment, free from attraction or repulsion, by one not coveting its fruit is declared to be Sattvika.

(23 – 18th Chapter, Gitā)*
All these are beyond Buddha's sphere of thought. He did not bother about these - soul, God - or different categories of 'Karma'. What dominated his mind was how to get rid of cycle of birth - to annihilate birth which is Nirvana - the candle without the oil of life. It is the extinction of candle fire and the fuel (oil) of life. Hence Buddha's concept of Karma lies wide apart from the concept of Karma propounded in the Gîtâ or the Upaniṣads. This concept is deeply entrenched in the scheme of earthly life - 'Karma' shall be aimed at eliminating sorrow and sufferings of creatures. The source of inspiration for such activities is the heart, not the 'Soul'. He was the greatest humanist and the humanitarian who felt the suffering of men through his blood - a complete identification of oneself with the external world of beings. But is this selfless sacrifice or is there any ulterior end of view? It is selfless in so far as the material gain is concerned: It does not aim at finding happiness or sorrow or reward in terms of mundane existence. But it is not vainless. The greatest aim is to end the process of birth and death. Thus Buddha accepts life yet does not long for life. Life's duty shall be performed with rigid obedience to ethics and practising non-violence. It is not running away from life but holding life tight in hand grip - not for enjoyment of it, but to play one's individual part in it.
This creed of service to humanity through disciplined action - right conduct, right thought and right association - produced huge upsurge in the vast ocean - like expanse of Swamiji's soul.

Here is the mingling of the great soul of Vivekananda with the boundless oceanic heart of Buddha. They acted and reacted upon each other till a terrific tumult is generated, a titanic wave bursts upon the social, ethical and philosophic share of Indian thought and culture.

But then, did Śaṅkara lack in human virtues like love of humanity? Far from it. Yet Śaṅkara was pre-eminently a spiritualist, who believed in soul or in an Impersonal God or Brahman. He enunciated his doctrine of the phenomenon world in line with the revelation of Great Rishis, of the Upaniṣads and, seers of the Vedas.

Śaṅkara undoubtedly laid more stress upon one ultimate Reality who is Brahman. But the mundane world of existence was not repudiated by him from the vyyaharika standpoint. He however attached relative value to material world of reality. Its importance lay in refining individual soul. Through the process of performing assigned duty earthly man shall sharpen and elevate his soul. Soul's course lay through this evolution of earthly existence. It is gradually becoming refiner at
every birth through the right performance of earthly duty. This refinement is not possible if the soul longs for earthly joy and enjoyment of carnal desires for the substance. Life through life to find 'life', that is, higher soul, is to be merged with eternal soul, or all-pervading and all-pervasive soul.

Through the realisation of this great truth emancipation or moksha or culmination with Eternal Soul is possible. This realisation is the supreme status of the earthly soul. And after cessation of earthly life this supra-conscious soul becomes unified with the Eternal Soul, or loses its separate identity. Thus moksha is attained.

"Awake, arise, lift up thy soul,
That path is as precipitate as edge of a razor
And its range is as far away as it is
dense and full of throns"

Individual soul has a great spark of the 'Great Soul' and it is striving through each generation to improve upon itself, to find final unification with or culmination in the 'Eternal Soul' or 'Spirit'. But how to sharpen it, how to

* উদিনি: সারস প্রসন্নতান নিষেধ;
শীঘ্র হিন্দু নিষিদ্ধ স্থানে;
নবম পাইকির কবরে পাইমি।
blaze that Spirit? That is the crux of the problem. Buddha brought in the whole gamut of his pragmatic code of action tinctured with infinite love for humanity, imbued with high moral grist, nourished and nurtured with selfless service, dedication - Niskama Karma. But it is not 'Niskama Karma' in absolute term. The aspiration or fulfilment lay elsewhere in the cessation of birth - in 'Nirvāṇa'. This is the aim of individual life, this is the purpose of life. Buddha's call of action had an electrifying effect. His clarion-call reverberated through the world. It was as resonant, loud and soul-stirring as musical and enchanting as the spirit embedded in the sloka from the Upaniṣads quoted above. Naturally it finds in the infinite heart of another Great Soul of India an echoing spirit. Swamiji was thrilled with ecstasy of joy. His heart was vibrated with emotion.

As has been stated above, Śaṅkara did not fail to see the importance of this earthly world. 'Perform life's duty'; he said, "look upon humanity bearing the image of God". Humanity bears the spark of Eternal Soul. But don't take the part for the whole, the shadow for the substance. Recognise 'shadow' for its relative reality as the reflection of the Substance.

This theoretical exposition of the cosmic work of Śaṅkara however is invulnerable and irrefutable. Swamiji's
basic rational mind will not be satisfied by anyone short of subtle texture of logic however enthralled his heart was by the humanitarian spirit in Buddha. So while he could hold the sphere of Buddhistic thought in one hand, in another hand he stretched towards Śaṅkara, the perennial source of eternal spirit. Without that he would be sapless and die of spiritual atrophy. Thus while Vivekananda could accept the humanism and humanitarianism of Buddha with the warmth of feeling of heart, he could only find kinship of soul with the spiritual and metaphysical thought of Advaita Vedānta of Śaṅkara. His heart was with Buddha and his heart reared up in heaven and was crowned with the spirit of Advaita Vedānta. Vivekananda is the Great Colossus that stands astride the two worlds - of Buddha and Śaṅkara.

In Vivekananda's life, and in his achievements, and in the mission that he sought to fulfil, we find a close parallel to the two preceding great religions exponents (Buddha and Śaṅkara). Pleading passionately for a glorious combination of Śaṅkara's head with the Buddha's heart, Swami Vivekananda had both of them in his person and re-oriented the Vedāntic way to suit the demands of modern times. Like Buddha, Swami Vivekananda too was appalled by the dirt and squalor, the poverty and privation, the sorrow and suffering which he saw
around him in his native land. Like Sri Śaṅkara he insisted on Ātmajñāna, on our acquiring the habit of Atma-Vidya, of seeing all beings as one Self. The Upaniṣads had taught him the identity of all jivas as they were aspects of the Paramatman. Initiated by his Guru and instructed by his own deep and extensive reading of the scriptures, he had a true insight into the real nature of man. Atmavidya and other finer aspects of life were so wonderfully blended in him that he had been able to galvanize his followers to a dedicated life of supreme sacrifice and service calculated to bring about personal salvation on the one hand and general well-being on the other. Ritual is not the essence of religion, said the Buddha. Ritual does not exhaust religion, said Sri Śaṅkara. Ritual must not be a denial of religion, said Swami Vivekananda who learned his religion from a perfected soul whose realisation affirmed itself through the practice of that ritual. Thus the life-stories of these three personages provide a vision of a splendid harmony where the past, the present and the future mingle and blend in a grand aspiration of all races, all creeds, and all ages.

It has been pointed out in the concluding portion of the first chapter that Śaṅkara's tremendous intellectual power appealed Swamiji most. In Buddha on the other hand, he
visualised a heart as wide as the ocean. Swami Vivekananda opines that Śaṅkara could not deny the claims of the heart in his practical life, though he would not recognise them in his philosophical theory. Nor could Buddha avoid all metaphysical discussion and knowledge in spite of his all-absorbing interest in the practical problem of life—the problem how to end misery. But though Śaṅkara could not deny the claims of the heart, he could not show great universal heart of Buddha in practice. This would be clear when we analyse the Principle of Adhikaribheda as found in the Upaniṣads. The Upaniṣads do not teach throughout any particular doctrine. They contain various doctrines which are meant for people at different stages of spiritual evolution. They are not contradictory, but rather they are based on the principle of Adhikaribheda, as all are not capable of apprehending the same truth.

This grand principle of Adhikaribheda is the foundation on which the teachings of the Upaniṣads, the Brahma-Sūtra and the Gitā are based and that is the reason why they have been universally accepted by the Hindus of all classes and denominations. From this point of view we are inclined to think that of all the commentaries, Śaṅkara has done the greatest justice to the Sutrakara by his two-fold doctrine of the absolute and phenomenal reality. In other word, The ancient
thinkers realised that there are variations among individuals with respect to intelligence, memory, artistic talents, etc. But the error they committed was in linking these individual differences with caste. They assumed that persons belonging to the lower castes and classes lack in ability and talents by reason of birth whereas those of the higher castes and classes are gifted. As a matter of fact, experience belies these assumptions. Still the prejudice prevail. Vedic stories illustrate how persons of lower castes are authors of Aitareya, Brahmana, Jabalopanishad, Brahma Sutra etc. In the medieval period most of the authors of Bhakti literature were from the lower castes. But one of the profoundest facts of human behaviour is that experiences do not affect prejudice. Even in the application of the principle of Adhikaribheda in practice, the Great Sankara who propounded the doctrine of Advaita, made a distinction between man and man and refused to allow a man to enter into the temple simply because he was a Sudra by birth. In other words, Buddha's great universal heart was found to be lacking in Sankara. To quote Swami, "Sankara with his great intellect, I am afraid, had not as great a heart. Ramanuja's heart was greater. He felt for the down-traded, he sympathised with them ......... You may mark one characteristic since the time of Ramanuja - the opening of the door of spirituality to everyone. That has been the watchword of all prophets.
succeeding Rāmānuja ............ There is not a man who follows Śaṅkara, who will say that all the different sects of India are really different. At the same time he was a tremendous upholder of exclusiveness as regards caste. In comparison to Śaṅkara Swamiji finds in Buddha a heart as wide as the ocean. In his words, "He (Buddha) preached the most tremendous truths. He taught the very gist of the philosophy of the Vedas to one and all without distinction, he taught it to the world at large, because one of his great messages was the equality of man. Men are all equal. No concession thereto anybody! Buddha was the great preacher of equality. Every man and woman has the same right to attain spirituality - that was his teaching. The difference between the prīstis and the other castes he abolished. Even the lowest were entitled to the highest attainments; he opened the door of Nirvāna to one and all."

Buddha's ethical teaching was meant for all grades of people with a view to enlightening them spiritually and morally. As he taught the universal truth, so it has got a universal appeal.

Swami Vivekananda has accepted the philosophical argument and ratiocination of Śaṅkara to frame his own philosophy

of life. But then he found enough of substance in Buddhism in the pragmatic approach to life. Philosophically looked at, Buddha's concept of life, has lacuna. Because of this lacuna Śāṅkara could topple Buddhism from Indian social structure and framework. Swamiji realised in his heart of hearts that if Buddha's teachings are to be provided with a metaphysical support, we have to search for it in Śāṅkara's Advaita.

The confluence of the Ganga and the Jamuna of Indian philosophy was effect in Vivekananda. Yet the great current that came out of this confluence is a new flow - which is not the Ganga flow nor flow of the Jamuna.

Edifice of Indian philosophy is not monolithic. It has at least three massive pillars - Advaita Vedānta, Buddhism and the philosophy of Vivekananda. These trio hold fast in the big mansion of Indian philosophy. Yet Vivekananda is not a supporting pillar. It is the keystone of the arch, to use a different imagery. It sustains the whole structure.

Indian philosophy is three dimensional. The third
dimension is given by Vivekananda. What is the source and nature of that third dimension? It came through Sri Ramakrishna. He is the fountainhead of Vivekananda's philosophic thought. In the next chapter, we shall see the nature of Sri Ramakrishna's thought through his preaching and discourses - their influence in Vivekananda, and he was transformed and remoulded. Vivekananda's speeches and writings provided the third dimension in Indian philosophy. Vivekananda completes the arch of Indian philosophy which had its beginning in the Veda, the Upaniṣads, Buddha and Śaṅkara.
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