In the preceding chapters an attempt has been made to present a systematic account of the nature of the doctrine of the self as discussed in Buddhist philosophy, and in particular in early Buddhism. In the historical account of the development of the doctrine of the self, three main phases have been distinguished:

(a) The doctrine as formulated by the Buddha and developed in his dialogues which form a part of the canonical texts.

(b) The doctrine as developed in the semi-canonical texts and in particular in the *Milindapañha*, and

(c) The development of the doctrine in Mahāyāna schools of Vijñānavāda and Śūnyavāda.

Although the emphasis in this dissertation has been mainly laid on early Buddhism, the brief account of the doctrine of the self in later Buddhism has also been given in order to maintain historical continuity in the discussion of this problem. In general, it may be said that no problem of philosophy and no school of philosophy can be treated in isolation from the other. But a study of this type has necessarily to be delimited
in its scope lest it may become too cumbersome. Hence in the early parts of this work a gist of the main canonical and semi-canonical sources, from which some account of the doctrine of the self can consistently be given, is presented. In the canonical texts, particular references have been made to the Nikāyas, the Dhammapada, the Suttanipāta and the Kathāvatthu. With regard to the semi-canonical texts, the Milindapañha has been the centre of our discussion, though references have also been made to other works like Visuddhimagga and Abhidhammatthasaṅgaha. Thus a description of the sources prepares a favourable ground for the elucidation of the doctrine of the self.

It may be remarked here that the exposition of the doctrine of the self in various texts of Buddhism has been very consistent and presents no difficulty to the interpreter as the Vedāntic texts do. Whatever inconsistencies may have been detected are only of minor nature and do not deflect from the conclusion which we can derive from the texts, regarding the nature of the self.

As mentioned earlier, the problem of the self in early Buddhist texts constitutes the major field of enquiry

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of this dissertation. In the Tripitakas, the original teachings of the Buddha regarding the transient and sorrowful nature of the world have been utilised to prove the unreality of the self. The doctrine of momentariness (anityavāda or kṣaṇikavāda) forms a backbone of the system of Buddhist philosophy, and the doctrine of the unreality of the self (anātma-vāda or nairatmyavāda) is only to be derived from the main theme.

Although the Buddha remained silent on many basic questions, including that of the self, textual references from the canonical literature, particularly from the Nikāyas (which have been quoted profusely in the earlier parts of this work) provide evidence to prove that the Buddha denied the reality of the self. To him it was an aggregate of five fleeting skandhas and nothing more. The self has no existence of its own. No doubt the conception of Nirvāṇa as formulated by the Buddha presents a positive obstacle to the total denial of the self, because if the reality of the self is doubted the pursuit of moral ideals and of liberation would become meaningless. Self-realisation, in other words, would not be possible if the self itself is denied. The question of Nirvāṇa, which we have discussed (as an appendix to chapter II above) is indeed one of the most unintelligible portions of Buddhist thought. Neither has Nirvāṇa been defined properly (except through metaphors), nor have the moral
ideals of Buddhism been reconciled with the metaphysical doctrines in Buddhism. This is one of the most serious difficulties of Buddhist thought in general. Perhaps Buddha gave less importance to the metaphysical doctrines than the ethical ones, as the former lead us into ever insoluble puzzles encountering the intellect, as in the Vedānta. Hence it may be correct to surmise that Buddhism is sceptical about the utility and solubility of metaphysical problems.

In an attempt at a critical exposition of the development of the doctrine of the self in a metaphysical but categorical manner, the denial of the reality of the self by the canonical texts is perhaps not so direct and not so dialectically acute as in the *Milindapañha*. The latter text denies the reality of the self like the former. The self is merely an 'epithet', 'name' or 'designation' for the groups of skandhas or dhammas; it has been reduced to the position of ever-changing series of mental states. What may be called a self is nothing but the changing stream of mental phenomena. There is no real self behind this 'stream'. There is no permanent entity behind this changing process of consciousness. The analogy of the stream here, no doubt, brings to our mind the philosophy of Heracleitus, but in the case of the latter the stream itself has ontological objective states in reality, whereas in Buddhist thought the states are subjective in
character. Considering the acuteness with which the Milindapañha develops its doctrine, one cannot but be amazed at the philosophical depths of a system that has its origin about 2000 years ago. The Milindapañha together with the early dialogues of the Buddha lay the foundation for the later Mahāyāna schools — the Yogācāra and the Mādhyamika.

The Yogācāra and the Mādhyamika are certainly an advancement on early Buddhist thought and on the inchoate doctrine of anatā of early Buddhism. There is systematisation and refinement of the doctrine in these schools, and there is no departure from the original doctrine of anatmavāda. For the Vijnānavādins, the self is not a reality, but only vijnāna or consciousness. It is wrong to associate it with the doctrine of Berkeley because the latter hypostatized the self, whereas the ālayavijnāna of the Yogācāra school is no fixed reality. To the Mādhyamika school even this is not acceptable. If there is any ultimate reality, we cannot assert or describe it in empirical terms. The transcendental reality is Śūnya or void. Hence, any metaphysical view which asserts the reality of the self (e.g. the Vedānta which developed about five hundred years after Nāgārjuna) would be unacceptable to the Mādhyamikavādins, who denied not only the reality of the self, but also of the dharmas or the constituent discrete elements of the self i.e. they
emphasised both pudgalanairatmya as well as dharmanairatmya. Atman is neither existent nor non-existent, nor both, nor neither. The Mādhyamika as the name indicates, avoids both the extremes of affirmation and negation. Hence one cannot say that from the standpoint of the Mādhyamika, there is a self or even that there is no self. Both the statements would be false from the transcendental standpoint, which is Śūnya.

It can now be categorically stated on the basis of our enquiry and discussion in the preceding pages that there is a complete denial of the reality of the self in early Buddhism and in its Mahāyāna elaborations of the doctrine of the Buddha. The denial is uncompromising, and is in contrast to other schools of Indian and Western thought. Such outright scepticism is not to be found in any other school of Indian thought (except in the Cārvāka, which cannot be called a school) and in the West, one finds almost similar interpretations in the views of thinkers like Hume and Bradley. An uninterrupted and unbroken series of psychical states is all that early Buddhism believes in. These states are called dharmas — constituent elements of an experience, which from the standpoint of day to day life, are regarded as existent reality. In later Buddhism even these dharmas or constituent elements of experience are declared as having no reality. This is one of the main topics of
controversy starting from the Tripitakas themselves and culminating in the schools of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

Perhaps it would be interesting in this context to find which of the Western philosophers hold a view similar to the Buddhists. It may help us in understanding the Buddhist doctrine of the self more clearly if we present a comparative account here. Generally speaking, the emphasis on the doctrine of the self in the West is to be found only in Cartesian and post-Cartesian philosophy; Greek philosophy having been interested more in the ontological and medieval philosophy more in theological problems. Such emphasis on theology and metaphysics could also be found in certain phases of Indian thought. But in European philosophy all philosophers between Descartes and Hume were 'dogmatic' (as Kant characterises them). They regarded the self in various ways, as a substance, as the 'I' or the ego, as a subject, as a moral agent and so on. For instance, for Descartes the self is not an attribute but a substance i.e. an entity which exists without requiring any other entity for its reality. Descartes calls it res cogitans or a rational being. But for Spinoza, thought is an attribute of an ultimate substance in the various selves, which were just modes of that ultimate substance combining in themselves the twin attributes of thought and extension. Rational psychology, as is well-known, has been subjected
to a good deal of criticism by Kant who overthrows the very conception of substance. The empiricist thought, which appeared before Kant, first started as a realism in the philosophies of Hobbes and Locke, but when the reality of the objective world was overthrown by Berkeley's mentalism, the former came to be identified with idealism. Berkeley rejects Locke's view of a passive self — a *tabula rasa* and impressions from without were regarded as acting upon it. An adherence to such a view of the self is dogmatic and it has been very aptly described by historians of philosophy, as to how Hume reacted to this view and how he also roused Kant from 'dogmatic slumber'?

David Hume's view merits a somewhat detailed discussion because of the amazing similarities between his and the Buddhist view. Like the Buddhists, Hume also rejects the idea of the self denying any permanent reality. By his acute psychological analysis he rejected the traditional view of eternal soul-substance having divine nature. He reduced the traditional absolute soul to the position of an endless chain of sensations and perceptions. The reality of the self as an entity apart from mental states is rejected by Hume like the Buddhists. Hume is an empiricist like the Buddhists; all thought-processes are perceptual states. He says:

"All the perceptions of the human mind resolve themselves into two distinct kinds, which I
shall call impressions and ideas."²
To him ideas are the "faint images of impressions in
thinking and reasoning."³ Elsewhere Hume defines them as:
"... all ideas are derived from impressions,
and are nothing but copies and representations
of them,..."⁴
In Hume's opinion these impressions are the source of
human knowledge, we do not have any impressions of the
objects of any evidence, we cannot regard these objects
as real and true. The same is true of the self also.⁵
In his view there are simply perceptions like pleasure,
pain, grief, joy etc. There is no self which can be
called permanent and abiding. In one of his most famous
and important passages, Hume says:
"For my part, when I enter most intimately
into what I call myself, I always stumble
on some particular perception or other, of
heat or cold, light or shade, love or hatred,

³Ibid., p. 11.
⁴Ibid., p. 27.
⁵In Hume's opinion there is 'no impression of
self and no idea of self'. Ibid., p. 238.
pain or pleasure. I never can catch myself at any time without a perception, and never can observe anything but the perception."  

It is almost like the Buddhist view, which states that the unifying impression of the self is never received, but only individual impressions having a duration for a short while. Hume continues:

"But self or person is not any one impression, but that to which our several impressions and ideas are supposed to have a reference. If any impression gives rise to the idea of self, that impression must continue invariably the same, through the whole course of our lives; since self is supposed to exist after that manner. But there is no impression constant and invariable."  

Rejecting the views of some philosophers and metaphysicians, Hume emphatically remarks during the course of another of his famous observations:

"But setting aside some metaphysicians of this kind, I may venture to affirm of the rest of mankind, that they are nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which

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6 Ibid., p. 239.
7 Ibid., p. 238.
succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement.8

Hence the doctrine of the self as a mere 'bundle' of perceptions has been subjected to a great deal of criticism,9 because in perceptions of what Hume calls a 'bundle', there is some kind of a close relationship, which Hume himself would recognise. For instance, the relationship is necessary and successive as in perceptions of causal images. The Buddhists, on the other hand, reject even this relationship; causality for them consists of relations which are false (asatkāryavāda). Each entity or dharma is real by itself; the group of the skandhas is merely an aggregate of sense perceptions. Hume's rejection of the traditional notion of the self in terms of Absolute soul-substance of the rationalists may be said to be similar to the Buddhist rejection of the Upaniṣadic theory of the self. The anātmavāda is the radical opposite of the ātmavāda of the Upaniṣads. The negativistic attitudes of both the Buddhists and Hume reject the dogmatism of their predecessors.

8Ibid., p. 239.

Kant is the second thinker whom we may take up for comparison here with the Buddhist schools regarding the doctrine of the self. In traditional European philosophy these two thinkers — Hume and Kant may be said to display a negative attitude towards the self. Kant's system is often regarded as a reconciliation of the Cartesian rationalism which is 'dogmatic' and 'naive' with Humean empiricism (which is sceptical). Kant rises above both the dogmatic and sceptical tendencies by avoiding the positions of both rationalism and empiricism. Kant's attitude to empiricism is not only unlike that of the Advaita Vedānta but empirical knowledge including knowledge of the empirical self, cannot also be called knowledge of reality. Paton interprets Kant:

"Hence my existence cannot be determined other than sensuously; and this means that it is determinable only as the existence of an appearance in time."\(^\text{10}\)

His exposition of the doctrine of the self in the First Critique as described by Cassirer is somewhat 'anti-metaphysical', because it denies the possibility of knowledge of the real self. It becomes a little less 'rigid' in the Second Critique, where Kant talks about the possibility of getting some idea of the self in the

moral situation.\textsuperscript{11} Mere theory cannot give us any idea of ultimate reality, in a sense, therefore, the moral is superior to the metaphysical,\textsuperscript{12} while rational psychology regards the 'I' in the 'I think' as real and identifies it with the self. Rational metaphysics gives an identity to the different perceptions in space and time. Kant's schematization is not only applied to his analysis of our knowledge of external world but also to the knowledge of the self. The table of categories serves as a condition of the possibility of experience. That is why the data of experience which is emphasized as synthetic unity of the perceptions on the objective side should be regarded as reciprocal with synthetic unity of consciousness on the subjective side. The soul-substance like the material substance is never direct. But while Kant talks of 'noumenal' reality, the Buddhists do not regard the spatio-temporal world of experience as unreal in the same way as Kant does. However, the Mādhyamika system in differentiating between saṁvṛti and paramārtha reminds us of the Kantian distinction between the empirical and

\textsuperscript{11}Cf. "Not only does he believe that the moral self must be assigned to an intelligible sphere, but he even suggests in certain places that consciousness of moral obligation involves, in some sort of way, the notion of indestructible selfhood." H.W. Cassirer, \textit{Kant's First Critique} (London, 1954), p. 258.

\textsuperscript{12}Cf. "... in his ethics, Kant attributes to the moral self a noumenal or non-sensible character,..." Ibid., p. 256.
the transcendental. But in Kantian system analysis of the nature of the self is as acute as in Buddhist thought. In the **Critique of Pure Reason**, the self which Kant is taking to be the 'thinking self' or the 'intelligible self' is an object and an experience. Kant describes the nature of the self in the **First Critique** as follows:

"The proposition, 'I think' or 'I exist thinking', is an empirical proposition. Such a proposition, however, is conditioned by empirical intuition, and is therefore also conditioned by the object (that is, the self) which is thought (in its aspect) as appearance. It would consequently seem that on our theory the soul, even in thought, is completely transformed into appearance, and that in this way our consciousness itself, as being a mere illusion, must refer in fact to nothing."\(^{13}\)

Kant's **Second Critique** transfers the problem from the metaphysical to the ethical, while the 'thinking self' nowhere in experience, can be regarded as 'intelligible', the moral self is revealed to us through the volitional acts of man and through moral responsibility. While in Buddhism the transition is from the ethical to the

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metaphysical, in Kant it is just the opposite. Kant tries to save himself from scepticism by postulating the ethical. Buddhism, however, never liberates itself from the sceptical position, even the ethical leads itself to self-contradiction because of the unbridgeable gap between the act and the consequence.

A theory which comes very near to the Buddhist theory of the self is that of the English philosopher F.H. Bradley. Bradley is an idealist belonging to the neo-Hegelian school in England, but he is also sometimes regarded rightly as influenced by the empiricist tradition of his predecessors. His view is that reality in experience and a criterion of truth of experience, which he puts forward is that of non-contradiction and like the other Hegelians in England and elsewhere, who regard reality as constituted by reason, or by the rational. Bradley's own type of idealism regards absolute reality as constituted by all coherent experience. He takes up different entities as possible representations of reality and rejects them all one by one as internally self-contradictory in various degrees, the self is one of them. Bradley regards the self as coming nearer to reality than any other entity, yet not identical with it.

Bradley first of all tries to analyse the nature of the self with regard to its various meanings and taking them up one by one, realises their futility and inadequacy
in identifying them with reality.

"In whatever way the self is taken, it will prove to be appearance."\(^\text{14}\)

All these various senses are regarded as 'appearances' having no permanent reality. First of all 'identification of the self with the body' is rejected.\(^\text{15}\) Then the 'self as total contents of experience at one moment' is also rejected, since an individual at a given time is a mass of feelings, thoughts and sensations.\(^\text{16}\) To accept the 'self as average contents of experience' is to equate it with 'personal identity' and to confine it to a "confused bundle of conflicting ideas".\(^\text{17}\) The view identifying the self with "monad or supposed simple being" is also refuted.\(^\text{18}\) In a distinction between the self and the not-self, Bradley tries to prove that the self does not possess any fixed contents which may characterise it as a self.\(^\text{19}\) Finally, the sense of 'mere self' or the 'simply subjective' is


\(^{15}\)Ibid., pp. 65-66.

\(^{16}\)Ibid., p. 66.

\(^{17}\)Ibid., pp. 66-73, 87.

\(^{18}\)Ibid., pp. 74 f.

\(^{19}\)Ibid., pp. 77-81.
called unsatisfactory because it has also been placed on the level of 'psychical contents'. Bradley's explanation of the 'mere self' is:

"In this sense self is the unused residue, defined negatively by want of use, and positively by feeling in the sense of mere psychical existence."

It is interesting to note that Bradley interprets the different senses of the self in terms of 'psychical contents' and that no fixed or abiding element can be located in psychical contents. If the self is so identified with the sum-total of psychical phenomena, then it becomes loose indeed, having no permanent or definite character. It is remarkable that Bradley's dialectic comes so very close to Nāgārjuna's Mādhyamika dialectic. The matter, at any rate, of taking up entity one by one and rejecting them all as not constituting the reality is common to both Nāgārjuna and Bradley. Indian students of philosophy very often compare Bradley with Śaṅkara, when the similarity can be noticed to a far greater extent between Bradley and Nāgārjuna. The conclusions of both Nāgārjuna and Bradley are sceptical.

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20 Ibid., p. 86.

21 Ibid., p. 88.

22 For example, S.N.L. Shrivastva, Śaṅkara and Bradley (Delhi, 1968).
Obviously, no one doubts the reality of the empirical self in every day life.

"Naturally the self is a fact, to some extent and in some sense; and this, of course, is not the issue. The question is whether the self in any of its meanings can, as such, be real."\textsuperscript{23}

The ordinary sense in which we talk of the body and soul is not objected to, but only their reality from the point of view of the absolute standard, while it is wrong to place and interpret the self on psychological grounds; it is also necessary to accept the reality of body and soul on pragmatic grounds. Bradley remarks:

"... the soul is clearly no more self subsistent than the body. It is, on its side also, a purely phenomenal existence, an appearance incomplete and inconsistent, and with no power to maintain itself as an independent 'thing'."\textsuperscript{24}

Bradley's conclusion is that the self is not a reality but an appearance.\textsuperscript{25} The self as a psychical series cannot be identified with reality.

\textsuperscript{23}F.H. Bradley, op. cit., p. 39.

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., p. 263.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., p. 104.
It follows from Bradley's doctrine of 'Degrees of Truth and Reality', that all appearances possess in different degrees some truth and therefore, some reality also (Bradley identifies the two with the Absolute). The self occupies a higher place in the structure of appearances because it is the least self-contradictory of all appearances. It comes nearer reality but is not absolute reality. In this context it is interesting to note how Bradley defines and explains appearance:

"To appear, we may be told, is not possible except to a percipient, and an appearance also implies both judgement and rejection."  

He continues:

"... any thing which comes short when compared with Reality, gets the name of appearance. But we do not suggest that the thing always itself is an appearance. We mean its character is such that it becomes one, as soon as we judge it."  

This character, he tells us is 'ideality'. The Absolute

26Ibid., pp. 318 ff.  
27Ibid., p. 429.  
28Ibid., p. 430.  
29Ibid., p. 430.
is defined by him as follows:

"The Absolute is its appearances, it really is all and every one of them."\(^{30}\)

This statement implies that appearance is not a contradiction to the Absolute, but that the Absolute expresses itself in and through the appearances, though incompletely. All appearances are states in reality, though in different degrees. Everything is a partial expression of reality, i.e. every experience is approximation, though only an approximation to truth. To quote Bradley:

"We can find no province of the world so low but the Absolute inhabits it.... There is truth in every idea however false, there is reality in every existence however slight; and, where we can point to reality or truth, there is the one undivided life of the Absolute. Appearance without reality would be impossible, for what then could appear? And reality without appearance would be nothing, for there certainly is nothing outside appearances."\(^{31}\)

This is how Bradley explains the relation of appearances to Absolute. Elsewhere he remarks:

\(^{30}\)Ibid., p. 431. Cf. "The Absolute is each appearance, and is all, but it is not any one as such." Ibid., p. 431.

\(^{31}\)Ibid., pp. 431-32.
"There is no reality at all anywhere except in appearance, and in our appearance we can discover the main nature of reality."\textsuperscript{32}

The absolutist doctrine of Bradley comes nearer to the Buddhist scepticism except that the Buddhists deny such a thing as the absolute. The structure of experience is such that it has no permanence. It is true that in Bradley the Absolute is only a theoretical standard — an ideal of truth, with reference to which we judge all our experiences. The later Buddhism is so sceptical that it does not speak even of this absolute standard, though Nāgārjuna admits of a transcendental sphere with reference to which all phenomena are put to test. Under this transcendental standard the self is unreal — is regarded as just a fleeting 'psychic-continuum' (the phrase is Bradley's). The 'psychic-continuum' of Bradley is approximately the same as the fleeting skandhas or the ever-changing mental states according to the Buddhists.

Sometimes comparison of ideas can be quite useful in understanding the philosophical systems more thoroughly and critically. Very often the Buddhist doctrine of the self is compared to that of the thinkers which we have cited above. It is also common to compare Buddhism with the Vedānta and with the Sāmkhya. The Sāmkhya system is a

\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., p. 487.
more positive system which is explained as a dualistic realism since it advocates the existence of prakṛti (nature) and puruṣa (the self) as the two ultimate realities. Both realities are absolute and eternal but independent of each other with regard to their existence. Prakṛti which is material, passive non-sentient (acetana) and ignorant is given some energy and activity by its contact with puruṣa. Prakṛti possesses three modes (gunaś) but the soul is devoid of them. 33 These three gunaś determine the character of the phenomenal world in accordance with the quantity most dominant in the part of prakṛti. Thus by the contact of prakṛti and puruṣa with each other the evolution takes place. The world as effect is already contained in the cause — this doctrine of causality is called Satkāryavāda, which is the exact opposite of Asatkāryavāda where causes and effects are independent of one another.

The Buddhist theory of causation comes nearer to Asatkāryavāda as the Buddhists also deny any kind of identity and relation to the various events of the universe. The Sāmkhya theory is dogmatic so far as it believes emphatically in ultimate substances — prakṛti and puruṣa. In the belief in puruṣa also, the Sāmkhya theory is somewhat dogmatic and is the opposite of the Mahāyāna

33 John Davies (tr.), The Sāmkhya Kārikā of Īśwara Krishna (Calcutta, 1957), Kārikās 12-13, p. 22.
Buddhism. The puruṣa is all pervading, absolute, ever free, without quality, and unoriginated. It is a supreme observer, an impartial spectator of events. But it is not like the self of the Advaita which is identified with sat, cit and ānanda (truth, consciousness and bliss). Moreover, unlike the Advaitins and like the Jainas and the Mīmāṃsakas, Śāmkhya establishes the plurality of selves. They are identical in nature, but numerically different. In Śāmkhya Kārikā one can find a statement of the proofs of the existence of plurality of selves:

"From the separate allotment of birth, death, and the organs; from the diversity of occupations at the same time and also from the different conditions (or modifications) of the three modes, it is proved that there is a plurality of souls."  

This work declares categorically that the non-existence of the self cannot be proved, because one cannot

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34 James R. Ballantyne (tr.), The Śāmkhya Aphorisms of Kapila (Varanasi, 1963), Chap. I, Aphorism 15, p. 16.
36 Ibid., I, 146, p. 164.
37 Henry Thomas Colebrooke (tr.), The Śāmkhya Kārikā or Memorial Verses on the Śāmkhya Philosophy (Oxford, 1837), Kārikā III, p. 16.
38 Ibid., Kārikā XIX, p. 72.
39 John Davies (tr.), The Śāmkhya Kārikā of Iśwara Krishna (Calcutta, 1957), Kārikā — 18, p. 32.
deny the 'I' which is the rational thinking being. Other proofs are also offered for the existence of the self. Other proofs are also offered for the existence of the self. It is enough to see that the Sāmkhya doctrine is just the opposite of the Buddhist doctrine of the self.

The roots of all the orthodox systems of Indian philosophy can be traced to the Vedas, but some trends do not agree with the others. Śaṁkara, for instance, criticises the doctrines of other schools of Indian philosophy vehemently. His doctrine of the self comes nearer to the doctrine of early Buddhism, although he criticises Buddhism, in general, and the Mādhyamika school in particular. He thinks that Śūnyavāda does not deserve any mention because it is nihilistic. The difference between Śaṁkara's

40. "Because an assemblage (of things) is for the sake of another, because the opposite of the three modes and the rest (their modifications) must exist; because there must be a superintending power; because there must be a nature that enjoys; and because of (the existence of) active exertion for the sake of abstraction or isolation (from material contact), therefore soul exists." Ibid., Karikā 17, p. 30.

41. Cf. "According to Īśvarakṛṣṇa there exists a multiplicity of individual souls denominated by the term puruṣa, which, though bearers of the individual personality, are divested of almost all the characteristics which are usually thought of as constituting human personality. The personal functions of the individual are attributed instead to a subtle body, the linga, which contains all the physical principles except the material ones which compose the mortal body in each existence; it accompanies the soul during its course through the cycle of transmigration, the saṁsāra, and only abandons it when the goal of salvation is reached." E.H. Johnston, Early Sāmkhya (London, 1937), p. 43.
doctrine of the self and that of the Buddhists must be elaborated further, in view of the former's criticism of the latter.

The anatmavāda (no-self theory) is common to almost all the important schools of Buddhism (with the exception of the Hīnayāna Sarvāstivāda), the affirmation of the self is again common to all the schools of the Vedānta, but Śaṅkara's doctrine of the self in which he affirms the reality of the transcendental self (the ātman or Brahman) and denies the reality of the empirical self (jīva) is unique. The distinction between the transcendental and the empirical self reminds us of such distinctions in Nāgārjuna also. The later Vedānta denounces Śaṅkara as a Buddhist for this very reason that he denies the reality of the empirical self, but there are some important differences, which the critics of Śaṅkara ignore. First, the Buddhist doctrine is out and out empiricist, whereas the doctrine of Śaṅkara goes beyond reason and experience to anubhava (or intuitive experience). Jñāna in Śaṅkara is not ordinary empirical knowledge, but is identified with intuitive experience. Secondly, the Mādhyamika Buddhists deny any absolute truth or at least say that it is Śunya. Early Buddhism believes neither in God nor in the self, nor in the reality of the external world. It is possible that they believed in absolute reality but regarded it as inexpressible, though it is
difficult to say this categorically. Thirdly, the Advaita interpretation of the absolute self has no counterpart in Buddhism, there is only becoming or change in Buddhism; there is no eternal being like ātman. Fourthly, as a logical system, Śaṅkara has developed a very self-consistent system of philosophy, whereas in Buddhism there are still many contradictions which are complicated by the silence of the Buddha. For instance, how can the denial of the self be reconciled with liberation of the self — with Nirvāṇa? If there is no self, what is it that is liberated? Further, how can we talk of morality unless we assume a moral agent? The Buddhist answer to the last point is that one should have faith in the moral law, but not in metaphysical theories as the latter lead to disturbing questions. Fifthly, the denial of God by Buddhism is not the same as according a lower status to God in Advaita Vedānta. Īśwara, according to Śaṅkara is only a lower form or manifestation of Brahman. Sixthly, although the Buddhists have developed a dialectic as acute as the Advaitins, still the Buddhist outlook remains empiricist. Lastly, to find any similarity between the Mādhyamika doctrine of Śūnya and Śaṅkara’s doctrine of Māyā is only to confuse the bases of the two systems. Śaṅkara posits the doctrine of Māyā to explain the nature of the physical world in relation to the Absolute, whereas Śūnya expresses the character of reality itself.
In short, Buddhism leads to complete scepticism because of its exclusively empiricist position, whereas the Advaita by denying the reality of the empirical world succeeds because of its faith in rational and intuitive instruments of knowledge, in reconstructing a metaphysical system.

Rationalism cannot lead to scepticism nor thus a system like the Advaita, because it does not insist on direct or empirical proof and would regard all ideas as having some a priori status in reality. But on the other hand, empiricism is bound to lead to scepticism if carried too far. The first step in the sceptical argument is the denial of all objective reality (as in Berkeley and in the Yogācāra system), the second step is a denial of the connection between perceived data, and here reality would be reduced to discrete elements with no justifiable connection between them. This leads finally to the denial of the subjective element in experience. The most famous sceptics in Western philosophy are Hume and George Santayana who take the sceptical plunge by following the above steps and taking scepticism to its logical conclusion.

Scepticism doubts the validity of all beliefs — in objective universe, in truth, self and God. All scepticism including Buddhist scepticism rejects metaphysical arguments as subtle and futile. But every
philosopher must be sceptical in various degrees, because philosophy cannot grow in an atmosphere of dogmatism. Its significance consists in continuous questioning. Buddhism has an important contribution to make to the freedom of thought in as much as its attack is mainly directed against the dogmatism of the orthodox Vedic tradition. But scepticism does not reject practical experience in every day life. Thus it is a method of philosophizing, but it does not offer any guidance in practical life. It evolves a new methodology of questioning (though the Upanisads had employed this method earlier to a limited extent), and the dialogues came into vogue. In Western philosophy Platonic dialogues are fine examples of questioning. Plato questions the reality of sense perception, but falls back on rationalism to explain reality in terms of forms or archetypes of thought.

Hume does not employ the dialogues in his Treatise and in "Enquiries" but only in his Dialogues on Natural Theology and is very successful in the latter. The scepticism of the Buddhists finds an appropriate instrument in the Dialogues of the Buddha, The Questions of King Milinda and the Kathāvatthu. Philosophical conclusions of an earlier epoch were not accepted, until and unless the investigator satisfied himself by an answer evolved by continuous questioning. The Buddhist argument in
denying the reality of the self, however, gives no final answer; it only tries to prove the futility of all metaphysical arguments and emphasises the need for leading a clean practical life without bothering about philosophical enigmas. All the same, the Buddhist dialogues opened a vast field for philosophical speculation.