CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

Taber discusses transformative philosophy to establish it as a distinct type of philosophy and show that the transformation ushered in an individual’s life through the intuitive experience of truth is a characteristic not only of religious philosophy, but also of the really philosophical as well. To justify this in the case of Advaita is the aim of the thesis.

In Chapter I, which is a brief backdrop of the thesis, we saw the meaning and significance of the transformative experience in the life of an individual. Chapter II showed that transformative experience is mystical in nature, and subjective in scope. The mystical or intuitive nature of transformative experience does not divest it of its philosophical worth, or invest it with unintelligibility, and delegate it to the domain of the occult; nor does its subjective scope depreciate its objective significance and equate it with the whimsical and nonsensical convulsions of a fanciful mind. Transformative experience has pragmatic value (arth- kriya-kārītva) in that it radically transforms the life of the mystic (jñānān) to whom it is as real and as authentic as
ordinary sense-experience is to the common man. In fact, to the mystic the authenticity of the intuitive experience of reality alone is the certainty of all certainties, and sense-experience is unreal. But the verdict of mystic experience is not binding upon a non-mystic (ajñānī) who is disinclined to accept its validity unquestioningly. Mystic experience is subjective in scope, because it is the fruit of rigorous mental-training and self-perfection (ātma-nigraha) practised by a seeker (sādhaka). The intelligibility of transformative philosophy demands a trained spiritual faculty. Therefore, it is unintelligible to the ordinary man or an upstart who is lacking in this prerequisite.

Chapter III was concerned with the criticism and defence of metaphysics. In it two approaches were adopted—an indirect method and a direct method—to defend metaphysics and establish its possibility. The indirect method showed that anti-metaphysics is ill-founded, and covertly metaphysical, in that nothing can be said about metaphysics without a metaphysics. This paved the way for a direct method of defending metaphysics. It showed that metaphysics is the outcome of a philosopher's
effort to interpret one's experience and vision of reality. Differences in philosophy, or the uniqueness of each metaphysical interpretation (responsible for the variety and lack of unanimity in philosophy) which is cited by the anti-metaphysicians for banishing metaphysics is due to differences in the principles of interpretation employed to interpret experience and reality. While evaluating the claims of philosophy, it is always essential to remember that understanding a philosopher empathetically and endorsing his/her views are two different issues, in which understanding a philosopher is prior to disagreeing or agreeing with the philosopher concerned. Philosophy seeks to give us a unitary account of all phenomena, and not mislead us with "news from nowhere." Hence it is possible for us to practise metaphysics, and yet transact the business of daily life in the spatio-temporal world of "concrete facts".

The above view took us on to Chapter IV, which contained a brief discussion about different kinds of philosophy—transcendent and immanent metaphysics of Walsh, revisionary and descriptive metaphysics of Strawson, edifying and systematic metaphysics of Rorty and transformative metaphysics of Taber. Advaita was
discussed as a model of transformative philosophy. The Chapter showed that the aim of a philosopher, and the factors which impel one to enunciate one's system of metaphysics and draft its scope are determined by the philosopher's socio-religious values and personal outlook. These factors determine the philosopher's conception of the categories for philosophical investigation, their nature, the means to their knowledge, and the inter-relation between the categories of one's metaphysics. Differences in these areas give rise to different schools of speculative philosophy. For transformative philosophers, philosophy is a search for higher states of consciousness. These philosophers, e.g. Śāṅkara, Fichte, regard the world as illusory, and an appearance of the real. They exhort us to awake from the dream of ignorance, and intuit truth to effect a transition from the ordinary to a new and resplendent higher state of consciousness. Transformative philosophers evince great interest in enacting a holistic and edifying transformation in consciousness, and revolutionising the relation between the individual and the world around him/her, and also in one's own emotions and perception. Transformation involves a total restructuring of consciousness through transcendence.
of the plurality, and parviscience pervading ordinary consciousness. It is an irrevocable change in the life of the individual and a union with the Absolute.

Chapter V showed the importance of mental-purity (citta-suddhi), the ways of achieving it, and the role it plays in attaining the immediate knowledge (aparoksha-jñana) of Brahman. According to Advaita, purity of the mind is indispensable for the intelligibility of its philosophy, since it is a prelude to the transformative experience.

Chapter VI explained the practice and theory of transformation. Transformative experience demands a trained "mental-set" which is to be cultivated by fulfilling the stipulated fourfold qualification (sādhana-catustaya) of the preliminary discipline. This qualifies a seeker to undertake the trifold final discipline consisting of study (śravaṇa) of the texts, rational reflection (manana) on them, and contemplation (nididhyāsana) on their import (tātparya). The preliminary and final disciplines psychologically attune the seeker to intuit the subtle, transcendental truth which is immanent in the subjective or private particulars, and the objective or public particulars of the phenomenal universe.
The real which is camouflaged in the non-real has to be unmasked through discrimination (viveka). Therefore, the individual inquiries into, and analyses: (a) the five great elements (pañca-mahābhūtās) and their evolutes (bhautika) constituting the existents of the objective world (vyāvahārika-prapañca), (b) the five sheaths (pañca-kosaś), or (c) the three bodies (deha-traya), and (d) the three states of experience (avastha-traya) of the subjective sphere, to eliminate the illusory (mithyā).

Chapter VII analysed the steps involved in the elicitation of the purport (tātparyā) of the soul's identity with Brahman (jīva-brahma-aikya) from the major texts (mahāvākyas) of scripture. This mediate knowledge (parokṣa-jñāna) becomes immediate experience of truth through the sub-conscious incubation of the knowledge of the soul's oneness with Brahman. The immediate experience of truth destabilises the edifice of the pseudo-personality (jīvatva, jīva-bhāva), and exorcises the ghosts of pseudo-plurality from the mind of the individual by revealing the ineffable Self. The insight enables the individual to apprehend the inner unity pervading the entire phenomena, objective and
subjective, and transforms a person radically. Perceiving the "snake", experiencing fear, and being reassured on knowing that it is only a rope, take place only in the mind of an individual, and not in the rope. Likewise, all change or transformation takes place only in the mind of the seeker, and not in the Absolute. Therefore, transformation is real at the level of the mind, and unreal at the level of Brahman. The knower awakes from ignorance and beholds the effulgent Self (Ātman) of the nature of pure consciousness. The mystic transcends the miseries of the deluding phenomenal world by eliminating the not-Self (anātman)—name (nāma) and form (rūpa)—responsible for the intentionality or duality (dvaita) of ordinary consciousness, and subsequent bondage (bandha). The knower then really sees truth, and revels ever after in the discovery of one's real nature (svarūpa).

The mystic thereby accomplishes that beyond which there is nothing else to be accomplished, and delights in the bliss (ānanda) of having attained that beyond which there is nothing else to be attained, for the Self is one only without a second (ekaṁ eva advitiyam).

According to Advaita, when the illusory name and form are negated, liberation (mokṣa) is attained through the intuitive knowledge of Brahman. Since all phenomena
are essentially Brahman, the immediate knowledge of the One (eka-vijñāna) confers the knowledge of all (sarva-vijñāna). The mystic realises that Brahman alone is real; the world (jagat), creation (ārati), destruction (laya), bondage, liberation, etc. are illusory; and that the soul is identical with Brahman—

“brahma satyam jagat mithyā, jīvo brahmaiva na aparah.”

Therefore, while understanding the metaphysics of Advaita, one has to be very careful about understanding the standpoints from which the proclamations of Advaita are made to avoid the error of category mistake. Advaita does not deny that the world of difference, soul, bondage, world, ethics (dharma), liberation, God (Īśvara), etc. are unreal at the pre-transformative, or empirical, or cosmic (sa-prapāṇca) level. It only declares that these are illusory at the post-transformative, or noumenal, or acosmic (nīsa-prapāṇca) level of the transcendental Brahman. That something is illusory becomes significant only in relation to another higher reality, and not in itself.

When Advaita proclaims that the world is illusory, it means that the world is relatively less real than the highest truth, Brahman. That the world is illusory does not mean that the empirical objects are lacking in pragmatic value, for Advaita acknowledges their significance as aids (sādhanas) to liberation. It only means that
they are non-eternal and that their apparent reality is sublated in Self-realisation. The sublation of the world on attaining the knowledge of Brahman does not mean that objects cease to exist in the spatio-temporal world for the mystic. Just as the wave, foam, and bubble lose their difference, individuality and finitude in the expense of the ocean, so also all name and form of all the existents in the universe recede into, and get subsumerged in, their infinite substrate (adhiṣṭhāna), Brahman. In this way, when name and form are transcended, the self-luminous (avrakāśa) Brahman reveals itself.

The argument from respectability upholds that a time honoured system of thought cannot be nonsensical. We must be willing to experiment with reality, and verify truth in our own lives, through the practice of spiritual codes recommended by seers, because truth reveals itself only to one who seeks it conscientiously. Just as a scientist places faith in the discoveries of one's predecessors, so also a seeker must repose faith in scriptures which are accounts of the mystics' direct experience of reality. Experiments in science yield the claimed results only when all the experimental conditions are satisfied; so also in the realm of religion or philosophy, truth can be understood and experienced only when
the individual is sufficiently trained and equipped with all the stipulated spiritual prerequisites to apprehend truth and enact the transformation. Hence the emphasis on the indispensable mental purity for the intelligibility of Advaita and the apprehension of its subtle purport. The fourfold preliminary discipline, which is unique to Advaita prepares the individual's psyche to intuit truth—the Self of the nature of pure consciousness—which is immanent in, and basic to, all experience, secular and sacred. The Self is isolated through discrimination by negating the not-Self superimposed on it, and overcoming the wrong identification (adhyāsa) with the not-Self responsible for bondage. The importance of discriminative knowledge (viveka-jñāna) in ensuring liberation is highlighted by both Śāṅkhyā and Advaita. In Śāṅkhyā, liberation results from the knowledge of the difference (bheda-jñāna) between the puruṣa or jīva and prakṛti, whereas in Advaita, liberation is the consummation of the knowledge of oneness (aikya-jñāna) of the jīva with Brahman.

The behaviour and adaptability of a microbe are studied by culturing it on different media under different conditions. Likewise we must also explore experience to discover our true Self by living life in new ways. The
intellectual exercises and spiritual programmes recommended by the seers in scripture are new ways of producing happiness. They are delineated to initiate a change in the individual's relation with the gross external physical, objective world of public particulars, and the subtle internal psychical, subjective world of private particulars. Advaita declares that the climax of this revised psychological approach to phenomena is a sublime transformation of the personality. Misery and bondage resulting from a forgetfulness of, and self-alienation from, one's true Self get terminated forever, and the blissful nature of one's Self is recognised and "re-attained", here and now, even when one is alive.

Whether we affirm and agree with the above view or denounce and differ from it, the enquiring faith, and the ennobling eternal philosophy of Advaita will not leave us where we were, for it is truly elevating and edifying. In the words of Radhakrishnan:

Its austere intellectualism, its remorseless logic which marches on indifferent to the hopes and beliefs of man, its relative freedom from theological obsessions, make it a great example of a purely philosophical scheme.¹