PREFACE

The present work is concerned with comparative and critical study of the nature and status of appearance and reality in the philosophy of Śaṅkarācārya (788-820) and Immanuel Kant (1724-1804). Appearance and reality are one of the most fundamental concepts in philosophy. Śaṅkara and Kant, with respect to their specific philosophical system, have made significant contributions in developing the notions of appearance and reality. The basic questions are: What is genuinely real? What is mere appearance and not reality? Is there any connection between appearance and reality? Is there any realm which is Ultimate Reality? Is the phenomenal world merely appearance? If the objects are merely appearances, how do we bring them into reality? What are the means through which we move from appearances to the reality? Śaṅkara and Kant have answered these questions in their own philosophical systems. Whereas, Śaṅkara, while resolving the dualism of appearance and reality, establishes his Advaita Vedānta philosophical system in which there is no distinction, no duality, no dichotomy, no plurality at all, Kant represents his critical philosophy in which there is a dichotomy between phenomenon and noumenon, knowledge and faith, known and unknown and his philosophy ends in agnosticism.

As far as appearance and reality are concerned, appearance, in Śaṅkara, is not only appearance but it is reality also. From the imaginary and empirical point of view, it is called reality but from the Absolute point of view, it is taken as appearance. Every appearance consists the element of reality but it is regarded as reality of lower level. As there is no separation between vyāvahāra and Paramārtha, likewise, there is no separation between appearance and reality. But, there is a difference of degrees of reality between them. Vyāvahāra or appearance, in reference to reality, is more element of appearance and less element of reality, whereas, Paramārtha or reality, in reference to appearance,
is more of real and less element of appearance. Appearance, in Śaṅkara’s philosophy of Advaita Vedānta, has been used for the phrases ābhāsa, mithyā, bhrama, māyā, avidyā, ajñāna, adhyāsa, vivāra, vikāra, anya, prapaṅca, jagat, prātibhāsa, vyāvahāra, pratyakṣa, anumāna, śabda, bhāvabhāvavilakṣana, sadasadanirvacanīya and so on. And Reality contains Satya, Vāstava, Yathārtha, Paramārtha, Param Purūṣārtha, Cit, Ānanda, Jñāna, Anant, Bhūmā, Brahma, Ātman, Sākṣin, Mokṣa, Tattva, Turīya, Ananya, Nitya and so on.

As for as appearance and reality is concerned in Kant’s critical philosophy, appearance, for him, is the manifold of sensible intuitions, in so far as they are not determined by the categories of understanding. But when appearances, so far as they are thought as objects according to the unity of the categories, are called phenomenon. Noumenon is the postulation of Kant which can never be given to sensible intuition. It is neither the ground nor the cause of the appearances, because it can never affect our senses and nor be conceived in terms of existence. Appearances are the representations of things-in-themselves. Thing-in-itself is the ground and cause of the appearances. It affects our senses and thereby furnishes the material element in our cognition. Reality, for Kant, is a concept under the category of Quality which makes an affirmative judgement, e.g., “All men are mortal”. Kant deduces the concept of reality from the affirmative judgement in which the concept of subject has a positive predicate.

In my attempt to compare and contrast Śaṅkara with Kant, I wish to develop the positions of appearance and reality which would be more inclusive, objective, comprehensive and elaborate. I am not simply going to develop a comparison and contrast between Śaṅkara and Kant by cataloguing their resemblances, my attempt will be to show that the argument of Śaṅkara and Kant regarding appearance and reality are supplemented by each other. This is going to help the growth of philosophical heritage.