CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION
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We may now sum up the main issues which we have discussed in the various preceding chapters of the present thesis, which attempts to give a comprehensive and faithful exposition of Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṅgraha, an important classic of Advaita Vedānta by Vidyāranya. The Advaitic view as enunciated by the illustrious founder of the school, namely Śaṅkara, has been brought out in general and its importance among the various systems of Indian philosophy also has been envisaged and emphasized. But it still remains an unfulfilled task to set forth the salient features of differences worked out by the subsequent interpreters and followers of Śaṅkara. Without their valuable works, who expounded Śaṅkara's thought in various ways, the Advaita system would not have occupied the important place, which it does now.

Therefore, what we more particularly need at present is the critical exposition of the fundamental doctrines of Advaita Vedānta as propounded in the works of prominent post-Śaṅkara Advaitins.

I have tried to expound the fundamental doctrines of Vivaraṇa-prameya-saṅgraha in a systematic and coherent manner under eight broad headings.

In view of the importance attached to Śaṅkara's Adhyāsavāda, which establishes the phenomenal reality of the world and as such is the first step towards Advaitavāda,
Vidyārāṇya has devoted a large portion of his work to a discussion of Adhyāsa. Śaṅkara’s adhyāsa vāda is an original contribution of a master mind which, though grounded on the soil of Sāṅkhya, maintains its freshness in the light of the absolute Monism as against the halting dualism of Sāṅkhya.

Chapters II - VI demonstrate that the world of manifoldness is a falsity of appearance having its root cause in ignorance which is innate in us. This ignorance, from the cosmological standpoint is spoken of as the force primus, the power of Brahman to evolve the world of becoming, but ontologically regarded, Brahman is transcendent; the world, an illusory concept a false appearance due to ignorance vanishing away with the attainment of the knowledge of identity. Popularly in whatever way we may conceive the world of experience, it is, indeed an appearance just like other appearances, which seem to have their hold upon us temporarily. The difference is only in point of time - one is somewhat more durable, the other less durable. But both are grounded upon ignorance.

Since in every case of false perception we have an illusory existence before us, implying the ignorance of its substratum, a law can inductively be established that whenever we have a false perception, the supposed or apparent
reality must have the same basis with the thing-in-itself. This confusion due to ignorance is again, either Swarūpa or Samsarga, in as much as it is mistaken identity of a thing with another thing or of a thing with an attribute. The rope serpent illustrates the first, the crystal-redness, the second.

Of these illusory modes of existence two forms are generally distinguished: (1) Vyavahārika, and (2) Pratibhāsika. The former is a form of empirical existence full of meaning and purpose to life and the latter is purely an appearance. It merely appears and exists so long as we do not find the underlying substratum. It has no interest whatever for practical purpose. Both of them are appearances and illusory concepts misconceived for realities. But we cannot identify a mistaken percept with a real percept, though to the Vedāntins, both of them are false for none have permanent existence. Still it would be the height of philosophic indiscretion to fail to take into account the apparent distinction of illusory appearances as Vyavahārika and Pratibhāsika. The one has importance for life and its adaptation and the other has none. The former has an amount of truth in so far as it fulfills some claim. Its importance lies in its pragmatic effects, which the latter does not possess. Of course between them there is no difference of an essential nature. One may be said to be an appearance of Reality, the other may be rightly called 'an appearance of an
There have been attempts in the course of the development of Vedantic thought to do away with this distinction and classify all forms of appearance as empirical and distinguish them from Brahman - the Absolute. Every mode of existence, in some sense real or merely empirical is due to Nescience and every form of them exists in appearance. The manifoldness is either real or unreal; if unreal, how can we speak of two forms of unreality or of superficial reality? How can we distinguish them? Really the world of things has as much reality as the rope-serpent. Between them as appearances, we cannot see any difference.

Hence, we are led to the conclusion that the entire mass of concrete existence is real only to such extent as the rope-serpent is real. But, even in the empirical order of existence we notice differences which cannot be ignored. The being of every empirical fact of existence is real, because it is felt, but still yonder tree cannot be said to possess the same amount of being as the rope-serpent. Both of them, no doubt, appear and have their existence in ignorance. In this sense, their origin is similar. But there is this difference - that an appearance like a rope-serpent, for instance, is obliterated by a determinate consciousness. But the appearance of the manifold existence is set aside by an indeterminate
consciousness. Surely, none can overlook this difference, and this leads us to speak of the rope-serpent as an appearance upon appearance. No doubt, empirical existence has a meaning only in so far as it is perceived but the esse of concrete things is not the percipi of the individual. They exist only because they form part of a system and the system as a whole, from the Vedāntic standpoint, is founded on the cosmic Nescience which has its basis and support in Brahman. One point must be noticed here that the illusory appearance of the rope-serpent is the object of a concrete mode of ignorance, whereas the entirety of beings has its existence in the primal unmodified ignorance. These two forms of appearance necessitate a hypothesis of two forms of Nescience: the primary, concealing Brahman or identity and giving rise to concrete modes of existences; and the secondary, concealing the concrete things giving rise to false appearances.

The treatment of Action in chapter VII shows why Vedānta considers that karma is unable to uproot ignorance. Despite the contradistinction between action and knowledge, the genial flexibility of Vidyāranya accommodates itself to the relative sufficiency of action for promoting and sustaining spiritual good.

In the last chapter on Liberation, we have made a detailed analysis regarding the bearing of Śabda upon
knowledge - the doctrine of immediate and mediate knowledge by Šabda. In this connection we are led to the conclusion that Šabda for the first time cannot give us immediate knowledge. It can give us only indirect knowledge and lead us to think of and meditate upon it constantly. When the mind has a course of discipline and culture, then, again, it stands in need of being instructed 'thou art that' - to get direct knowledge.

During the course of our thesis, we have also taken note of some differences of opinion regarding definitions of Māyā and Avidyā, locus and object of Māyā or ajñāna, cause of the universe, status of mukti or mokṣa etc. between the propounders of the Vivaraṇa school and the Bhāmatī school. But these differences add to the strength of the Advaita philosophy and they in no way detract from it. In order to suit different tastes and temperaments, teachers of Advaita adopt different methods of setting forth their doctrine. They have taken liberties with regard to minor details. As Appayya Dīksita says in the invocatory verse of the Siddhāntaleśa: the Sūtrañhāṣya, having for its sole purport the non-dual Brahmā, issued from the blessed lotus face of the Bhagavat-pāda (Śaṅkara) and got diversified a thousand fold on reaching the preceptors who expounded it after him, in the same way as the Ganges, which originating from the foot of Vishṇu, get
variegated on reaching different lands. Manifold are the ways disclosed by the post-Saṅkara Advaitins, but all of them are intent on establishing the unity of the Self. They never lose sight of the central doctrine of Advaita that Brahman is real and the world is ultimately false and the so-called Jīva is non-different from the Absolute.