CHAPTER-V

Conclusion

I, in this chapter shall bring out the findings of the present study from the comparative and the critical perspective that we have adopted. There are various similarities and differences between Śankara and Hegel regarding their position on consciousness. We have attempted to classify those similarities and differences in metaphysical, ontological, psychological, epistemological, and ethical aspects.

Both tried to discover a way of realizing or knowing the truth of the problem of Ultimate reality in its own way of philosophical thinking. The aim of both the philosophers is to give a clear picture of the problem of Ultimate reality in different situations. Śankara adopted a spiritual and divine method, while Hegel adopted dialectics and reason for the analysis. As the approach of both the philosophers is different in analyzing or interpreting the philosophical concepts of human life, so it is not necessary whether they agree or disagree, but they hold certain philosophical presuppositions before undertaking the task of philosophical enquiry. Śankara’s doctrine of Ātman and Hegel’s doctrine of Spirit is a kind of analogy that proposes the fact of Self as consciousness and then recognizes in Self-consciousness as an absolute. Śankara’s doctrine of Ātman is following the Vedic tradition in analyzing
the true nature of Self. The validity of Self lies in the teachings of scriptures, which did not require any check of reliability, because they are considered as infallible. Śankara’s doctrine of Ātman reveals the truth of Self by removing adjuncts of mind to realize the true nature of Self as Brahman, which is a highest state of serenity. The approach to the problem is spiritual or divine. But the empirical world is real as long as reality is not realized as non-duality, which is a true nature of Self. Comparatively, the dialectic method of Hegel exposes the autonomy of philosophical concepts to establish a correlation among them. The triadic nature of notions is the fundamental feature of Hegelian dialectic viz., Logic - Nature - Spirit. The identity of opposites in dialectics is used to establish an inter-relationship between the concepts as the truth of universe. The dialectic is a kind of logical reasoning that discovers the forms of factual knowledge by philosophical notions rather than the experimental proof of the positive sciences. The Spirit is conceived by Hegel as an activity that present in all the forms of knowledge in subjectivity, which is realized by putting reflection on an objective consciousness. So, Hegel’s doctrine of Spirit is a progressive process that realizes the Self - knowledge of Spirit as an absolute. Thus, Hegel considers the phenomenal world as real, because it is subject to knowledge that unfolds the mystery of universe in form of Self-conscious reality by applying rationality. According to him an inner subjective
feeling of Self-consciousness denotes through an outer objectivity. Therefore, transcending the Self as Self-knowing and Self-identical Spirit is the true nature of all pervading soul as an absolute. Hegel's philosophy as a whole is an intellectual excursion of developing notions and facts that experience the reality in form of Self conscious Spirit as an idea of absolute by sublating all other notions involved in the process of knowledge.

The comparison of two systems on different aspects of philosophy reveals the progressive conclusions for both the systems. Ontologically, both Śankara and Hegel did not deny the existence of phenomenal world in the initial stage of knowledge and appearance. It reaches to detect a similarity between two tradition is that the Ātman in form of consciousness always be there in action but needed to realize as absolute (Brahman). It is evident by Mahāvākya as, 'aham Brahmāsmi' Yajur-Veda (Br. U. I. 4. 10), I am Brahman. Like Śankara, Hegel also depicts that the Spirit is present in both subjective and objective forms, which is transcended to the absolute Spirit. It verifies from his dialectical progression: Idea-Nature-Spirit. In contrast to it, there is a difference in the approach to the problem; Śankara always tries to distinguishes rationality from spirituality and leaves rationality far behind in search of reality, while Hegel conceptualizes absolute reality through rationality, which can only be experienced in practicability. It means culmination of thought process
in the absolute knowledge emerges as the Spirit in and itself, which is a rational knowledge derived through systematic approach at the preceded stages of knowledge. Epistemologically, in the tradition of Śankara and Hegel the process of knowledge is analyzed through the certain stages of consciousness. Śankara broadly divided knowledge into empirical and trans-empirical or transcendental following the basic distinction between Self and the not-self. In context to Hegel, the process of knowledge passes through sense-certainty, perception, understanding, and reason by sublating the preceding knowledge for establishing the next category.

In this way, Hegel’s account of the transcendence of finitude through the process of negation (Aufhebung) seems to be quite similar to the Advaitic conception of the process of cancellation (bādha). Due to similarity between the Hegelian and Advaitic conceptions of the experience of contradiction have prompted scholars to translate both Aufhebung and bādha as “sublation.” But there is difference in proposing the conception of cancellation (bādha) by Śankara and the process of negation (Aufhebung) by Hegel. Śankara develops the concept of absolute as eternally perfect and complete in itself and there is elimination of phenomena when he talks about its sublation in Brahman knowledge. Hegel on the other hand, uses the method of sublation to guarantee the continuity between each level of consciousness and justify his claim that Spirit does indeed develop, by insisting that Aufhebung “has a twofold
meaning in language, in that it means to preserve, to maintain, and at the same time to make cease, to put an end to.”1 With this, the culmination of developmental process of knowledge that is the absolute knowledge, which emerges in history with Hegel’s Spirit in and for itself includes detail and systematic, i.e., rational knowledge of all the stages that preceded it. Hence, fully developed consciousness of Hegel unites all the opposition, e.g., between finite and infinite, action and knowledge by reconciling or harmonizing them in Reason, while unchanging absolute consciousness in Śankara entails not only the total elimination of all opposition but a realization which is eternally distinct from all activity, conceptualization and developments within phenomenal consciousness as well. It reflects that Hegel’s reality is fully rational and Śankara distinguishes rationality from spirituality.

The stages of consciousness are nearly the same, because initially both the systems believe in the immediacy of sense-objects. In contrast, there may be different ways to experience the objects in both the systems either in form of *pramāṇas* or in form of sense-certainty, perception, understanding and reason. But all these categories of knowledge give only the knowledge of an empirical existence. These ways of knowledge are instrumental to the knowledge of reality. It suggests that both the

---

1 Sarlemijn, Andries. *Hegel’s Dialectic* translated by Peter Kirschenmann, Dordrecht, Reidel, 1975, p.84
system shares a rational approach to the problem of consciousness, but Hegel's theory of knowledge realize the reality in rationality in itself, while Śankara's theory of knowledge utilize the category of reason to upgrade the Self to that extent so as it get merge in the supreme being to realize the true nature of Self as Brahman. One try to realize highest degree of knowledge in terms of an absolute in the phenomenal world itself, while other utilize knowledge as an instrument to go beyond the phenomenal reality so as to experience the divine consciousness. The theory of knowledge of Hegel is an intellectual excursion to discover and sums up the facts of knowledge so as to experience the reality in itself. Śankara took knowledge as a means to awareness of super-sensuous truth that step in to realize the true non-dualistic nature of Self as Brahman.

Psychologically, the different levels of consciousness are categorized by Śankara as waking (jāgrat), dreaming (swapna), and sleeping (sūsupti). The corresponding one-one mental function of soul in Spirit is categorized by Hegel in waking (conscious), sleeping or dreaming (semi-conscious), and Self-consciousness. It indicates that the psychological parameters are same in both the systems in order to deduce the mental process involved in attaining knowledge, so as to realize the reality or the Supreme Being in relation to Self. The comparison depicts different avenues for the same psychological state of consciousness or mind in both the systems. Like, the state of waking is an entrance of soul in the
opposition of universal "Being" for Hegel and for Śankara, it is a nineteen mouth entrances, which keeps up the life process and through it experiences the gross objects of phenomenal world. So, both the systems talking about same psychological state with different set of words. The difference appears in the fourth state of mind i.e. turīya, which is a spiritual stage of the highest serenity in Śankara, while Hegel did not consider as such a state of mind. He only admits the experience of external objects without the mediation of sense-organs to whom he termed as diviners, but it is not similar to the state of turīya. Therefore, both the system shares and acknowledges a stream of consciousness at different states of mind, which transit from one state to other, but the soul or Self remains throughout in all the states of mind. It means soul has different states of consciousness in accordance to inner feeling subjectivity, which is recognized in different psychological activities in relation to an internal or external world. Hence, both the systems admit the presence of consciousness in all the psychological states of mind.

Ethically, both the system shares an entirely different approach to formulate the moral process of existent consciousness. Śankara's concept of value is constituted of rights and duties (dharma) as abhyudaya, and freedom as nihşreyasa; former is characterized as empirical well-being, and latter as an absolute well-being. The absolute well-being is the highest good, because it provides freedom to the Self by breaking
shackles of empirical world in form of performing detached action i.e. unintentionally, while Hegel tries to realize ethical substance in form of Self-conscious actuality through objective will in terms of rights as an absolute spirit. Hegel follows the conformity of both human and divine laws in performing moral action, but these laws did not express the vested rational interest. So, ethical life involves all the rational interest, when performing in the conformity with laws, mores, and customs to experience the freedom. Freedom is realized in different forms of ethical life by avoiding or canceling the negativity of faith and culture as these are elements of ignorance and superstition involved in it and alienated as pure insight conceived in enlightenment. Faith is consciousness and enlightenment is Self-consciousness. Therefore, when actuality lost its substantiality and nothing left in it as intrinsic being; both the realm of faith and actual world is overthrown. This insight gives rise to absolute freedom. Resultantly, in both Śankara and Hegel the actuality lost its substantiality and develops a pure insight so as to experience the absolute as freedom.

The whole study of Śankara and Hegel’s philosophy is revealing the facts, which could help in exchanging ideas and developing an insight in relation to doctrine of consciousness. As both the systems having different cultural and social background then also shares certain kind of similarity in the essence of concepts with the difference in formulating
the notions. Śankara belongs to the spiritual land, while Hegel belongs to the land of revolutions and war. It may be the reason behind the difference in approach to explore the philosophical ideas. But both the systems believe in Self as consciousness, which is realized as an absolute Spirit in Hegel and Ātman in Śankara. Both lays stress on Self-knowledge to experience reality. Reason is the key that unlocks the scriptural knowledge in Śankara and freedom in Hegel as an absolute. Both the philosophers while describing the ontological, epistemological, psychological, and ethical conditions of Ultimate reality developed a view of metaphysics.

After studying Hegel it could be maintained that there are two Hegel’s "one who was a critic laying his finger on the weak points of previous philosophical problems and the other, who builds up his own philosophy."\(^2\) This viewpoint holds that in what way and to what extent Hegel rightly laid stress on certain crucial points so that not only he is bridging the gaps left behind by different philosophers in proposing their ideas, but also developing his own philosophy by formulating new concepts, which can be utilized for solving perennial philosophical problems.

---

There are certain philosophical problems that have been indicated by Śankara in East and Hegel in West. To which J.H. Muirhead compliments Hegel by saying, “Such we believe to be the secret origin and constitute on of the system of Hegel. We do say Hegel does not say that it is complete and that no joining gaps. On the contrary, in the execution of the details, there will be much that will give pause. Still, in this execution, we may say as much as this on our own account—all the great interests of mankind have been kindled into new lights by the touch of this master hand, and surely the general idea is one of the hugest that ever curdled in the thought of man. Hegel, indeed, so far as abstract thought is concerned, and so far as one can see at this moment, seems to have closed an era, and has named the all of things in such terms of thought as will perhaps remain essentially the same for the next thousand years. To all present appearances at least, what Aristotle was to ancient Greece Hegel is to modern Europe.”³ We have seen in preceding chapter how Hegel has evolved his philosophy as a further development of concepts against the criticism of Kant. Hegel questioned Spinoza’s doctrine of reality as undetermined substance and replaced it by that of subject; in the same manner replacing Śankara’s doctrine of Nirviśesa Brahman reminds us of a similar logic applied for proving both the cases for the truth of a

doctrine of Ultimate reality as a problem. The substance of Spinoza is not identical with that of Nirviśesa Brahman of Śankara, but the manner in which Śankara carve the notion of absolute out of all determinations suggests that it is in itself devoid of all attributes and try to understand the nature of Brahman without considering the plurality and difference in world, which is directly in contrast with the world we are observing. Hegel says against Spinoza that the universe should be taken as the manifestation or expression of the Self-conscious life of the absolute. The world of finite things and beings has no meaning or significance in the point of view of Śankara; he reduces it to a species of illusion. But for Hegel nature and history are real and his doctrine of absolute is also a defence of the immanence of god in the universe. In the manner Hegel argues leads us to think that God, world, and Self are all real as an ontological fact.

On the other hand, if we examine the doctrine of Being then it can be interpreted as, “Being does not arise from Non-being or Nothing. But nothing can be said about Being. Hegel, therefore, thought that the category of Being is, as it were the same as Nothing. As nothing can be said about Being, there is a tendency to commit the "fallacy of superimposition" about Being. It seems that the only way to avoid the "fallacy of superimposition" is by the use of negative prediction, neti, neti, "not this", "not this." Or the alternative is a tautology in which we
predicate existence of what exists. But existence is not a predicate; this is the defect of the ontological argument. Therefore, Socrates who was a philosopher of Being, it seems was "afraid" to say "It is"; so says Walter Pater in his Plato and Platonism." So, it depicts the problem of considering the doctrine of Being as Nothing and use of negative prediction for it also causes the defect in ontological argument. The drawback of Hegel's doctrine of Being is resolved in the fundamental propositions or Mahāvākyas of the Upanishads. In Upanishads, "Being is not Nothing. Being does not arise and also not a tautology, which predicates existence of existence. It is not a postulated identity between two variables $X=Y$. Therefore, Being is not symbolized in terms of demonstrative symbols, "This" "That"; there is the equation \textit{etad vai tat}, "This, verily, is that", which is a postulated identity, which occurs eleven times in the Kathopanishad. But \textit{etad vai tat} is not a Mahāvākyā. If so, then what is a Mahāvākyā? There is no Mahāvākyā in Upanishads without a Self - referential symbol, "I" or "Thou." Therefore, Being is Self-awareness of Being. Otherwise, there is no Mahāvākyā. And the Mahāvākyā, for instance, "I am He" and "I am Brahman" is not a postulated but a realized identity." In this way the difficulties experienced in Hegel's doctrine of Being has solution in the philosophical

\footnote{Nikam, N.A. \textit{Ten Principle Upanishads}, New Delhi, Somya Publications, 1974, p.42}

\footnote{Ibid.}
thoughts of scriptures by taking Being as the Self-awareness of one own Being, which is a state of realized identity by removing all the differences. Thus, Mahāvākya of Upanishads denotes the Being as Self-referential by symbolizing it as “I” or “Thou.”

Successively, at certain instances Hegel contradicts himself when he said that a logical necessity impels the evolution of the Absolute. With this, according to him in the absence of object consciousness also disappear; while Śankara thought consciousness remain in all these states.

The epistemological point made by Śankara and Hegel consider knowledge as the product of subject-object interrelationship. In Śankara consciousness is emphatic till it experiences the empirical world, and when the objectivity get reduced to subjectivity then it realize the truth as Self. It means there is no possibility of existence without subject, which is Self-consciousness itself. In Hegel’s views consciousness in all its states is the consciousness of a subject in relation to an object. There is no knowledge without the point of conscious being as the locus of it and an object to which it points. The opposition between subject and object seems to be superficial, because for Hegel they are both different and identical.

In terms of religion, the transcendence of god is real so far as reality is perceived from empirical viewpoint in Śankara, while in Hegel the absolute is such that the world is nothing but god as temporal process or
god as history. Hegel assimilates religion to philosophy because he
downgraded the religion by relegating to mythological level and by
considering as pictorial form of thinking that amounts inferior to
philosophy. It shows that Hegel does not rise above the limitations of the
method of intellect in philosophy and religion. He claims the identity of
philosophical and religious interests by assimilating religion to
philosophy, but does not follow that philosophy and religion are the two
aspects of the same spiritual view of existence. It has been represented by
Radhakrishnan in the words as, “to be spiritual is not to reject reason but
to go beyond it. It is to think so hard that thinking becomes knowing and
viewing what we might call creative thinking. Philosophy and religion are
two aspects of a single movement.”6 But in Śankara religion and
philosophy do not have same status; because religion exists with the
existence of empirical world, otherwise it has no significance apart from
it.

It is alleged by many that there is in Hegel confusion between time and
eternity, the divine and the human and that Hegel’s idealism is
anthropology and cosmology rather than theology and metaphysics. This

6 Radhakrishnan, S. Eastern Religion And Western Thought, London, Oxford
University Press, 1940, p.25
pantheistic identification of the deity and the world and the infinite in the finite is the common element between Hegel and Śankara.7

Finally, the philosophical pursuit lies in diagnosing the philosophical problem rather than solving the problem as answer to a particular question. The art of philosophizing lies in exploring, framing and understanding the problem in its actuality. It leads to a basic question that what we have gained in studying the problem of Ultimate reality by estimating it from different aspects of philosophical pursuit in both the systems of Śankara and Hegel? The answer lies in discussion of the concepts involved in the enquiry of knowledge in both the systems of Śankara and Hegel. But it is not necessary that by the views of both the philosophers about the nature and function of mind in relation to world in an identity and difference should reach to some consensus, because the greatness of a philosopher lies in outline the involved problem and in the way he is presenting and in critical discussion of it. In this sense philosophical thoughts of both Śankara and Hegel are incredibly make difference in the history and growth of philosophy by re-examining the notions, bridging the gaps, and in formulating the new philosophical ideas. Thus, achievement of philosophical pursuit does not lie in accepting and rejecting one philosophical system but lies in clear

7 Prasad, Rama. Ramunja And Hegel, etc., p.194
understanding of problem, concepts, and suggestions which helps in developing the advanced ideas for complimenting and supplementing the arguments from one system to other. So, our study in this sense definitely helped us in clearly understanding the problems and conditions of knowledge, nature, and status of mind in relation with the body by establishing the consciousness as the Ultimate reality. Conclusively, it can be considered that consciousness is an underlying and unifying element between both the systems of Śankara and Hegel, because nature and status of consciousness is same in both the philosophies with certain contradictions, though they are representing it in form of the doctrine of Ātman and doctrine of Spirit (Geist) in their own fashion of tradition.