PART III

( CHAPTER - 5 to 7 )

RĀMĀNUJA AND HEGEL

ON PROBLEM OF ONE AND MANY
CHAPTER 5

Rāmānuja and Hegel on concept of One reality:

I Introduction:
Here we have taken Rāmānuja and Hegel together because of their apparent similarity. Someway their line of interpretation is same.

Now we will try to compare their conception of One reality.

II Nature of ultimate Reality

(a) Ultimate Reality as One:

Both Rāmānuja and Hegel consider ultimate reality as only One.

Rāmānuja calls this One reality as Bhagvan Visnu or Srimān Narayan. Here it is well to remember that Rāmānuja has not made any distinction between ultimate and lower points of view or Brahman and God. For him God which has viewed as lower Brahman is the only Brahman. Here we can say that His is indeed an attempt to unite personal theism with the philosophy of the Absolute.

Again for him One is not abstract one but it contains many "There is unity in plurality in
Him, there is plurality in unity in him.² Brahman holds together the dependent matter and individual soul as the body in unity. It is One entity qualified by or possessed of two modes cit and acit, Jivas and Prakṛti.³

Hegel also like Rāmānuja believes that there is only one reality. If there were more than one Realities then each would be limited by the rest and limited reality cannot be eternal, self dependent and all-inclusive. The other thing is that according to Hegel this One reality is an all inclusive and self consistent whole. If there would have been more than one realities as in the system of Leibniz, then one will have to post same supreme reality that will unify combine and harmonize all realities into One. Thus it is clear from above discussion that according to Hegel there is One ultimate Reality.⁴ It is his Absolute God, Mind or Spirit (Geist). Idea or Absolute Idea are the names given to the self-same reality.

Hence Rāmānuja's Brahman and Hegel's Absolute, however are not undifferentiated simple unity or an inarticulated entity, a pure being.
Both unity and opposition are integral to it. It is supra-articulated system, a unity in diversity to borrow Mr. Bradley's phrase. His One is not a bare abstract one but is a concrete whole. "The unity which realizes itself in the difference and not a unity in which all difference are lost." Thus unity of the spiritual principle is not an abstract unity but unity in plurality. And for Hegel this concrete reality is reason or thought. Because he has accepted what is rational is Real and what is Real is rational as the criterion of the Reality. This means that according to Hegel reality must be rational. Thilly has rightly noted that "To Hegel thought and being are identical." Hence for Hegel Reality is as rational as thought itself. Now question is that How thought expresses the nature of Reality? Philosophy from Hume through Kant (and earlier) held that the agreement of thought with reality is the criterion of truth. But Hegel has claimed that thought alone brings to light the nature of things and realities being in agreement. Like all idealists, Hegel has maintained that since reality is known by means of idea and since the only thing that can agree with an idea is something like an
idea, so reality must be mind like. Thus for Hegel Reality and rationality are interchangeable.  

Here we must note that Rāmānuja does not believe like Hegel that Reality is rational. Rāmānuja has not emphasized only on the thought aspect of One. For Rāmānuja in Reality-Brahman thinking, feeling and willing harmoniously are blended together.

Again if Hegel says that Reason is ultimate reality then question is, why he believes that reality should be reason?

Why Reality should be reason:

In his own words, as W.T. Stace has noted in his book, "All the same we pre-suppose and assume everything which is or which happens is reasonable and that reason is in our world, the prime-matter and the real of all being." If thought reason is the constituent substance of external things, it is also the universal substance of what is spiritual." In all human perceptions thought is present, so thought is the universal in all the acts of conception and recollection. In short in every mental activity, willing, wishing etc.
faculties are only further specialisations of thought. Thus when it is seen to be the true universal of all that nature and mind containing it extends its scope for beyond all these and becomes the basis of everything. Hence for him Reason is ultimate principle of world.

Here some may argue why Reason and not cause is the ultimate principle of the world?

For Hegel cause can not be the first principle of the world, of which world is effect. Again he says that if the universe could be said to have a cause, is then either that cause is the effect of a prior cause or it is not. Either the chain of causes extends back in an infinite series or there is some where a 'First cause' which is not the effect of any prior cause. If the series is infinite, then no final and ultimate explanation is to be found. If there is first cause then this first cause is itself unexplained fact. To explain the universe by something which is itself an ultimate mystery, is surely no
Thus according to Hegel first principle of the world is not cause. But reason is the first principle of the world of which world is consequence.

If we compare the sequence of Reason and consequent with the sequence of cause and effect we shall find that it does not possess the disadvantages which attach to the later. We could not see why any particular cause should be followed by any particular effect. But this is just what is not true of a reason and consequence. We can see why the consequent follows the reason. The reason itself gives us the reason. In any series of valid reasoning the conclusion must follow from the premises and we see why a reason must be followed by its consequent. It is a logical necessity and we understand this necessity. The idea of the reason does involve the idea of the consequent so we do deduce the consequent from its reason.

Thus reason must be first principle and that the world all it contains must be its logical consequence. Hence a philosophy which would genuinely explain the world will take as its
principle not a cause but a reason. From this first reason it will proceed to deduce the world, not an effect but as a logical consequent. Thus the Reason is the fundamental Hegelian idea of explanation.

In short we can say that for Hegel ultimate principle of world is One which is reason. Of course Ramanuja also accepts Reality as only ultimate being but he never says that it is only reasonable or it is reason reality.

(b) Ultimate Reality as the abode of all auspicious qualities:

Ramanuja does not believe like Sāṁkṣāra that Brahman is nirgūṇa. For him One is sagūṇa that means endowed with many auspicious qualities. As to the upanishadic denial of attributes or characters of Brahman, Rāmānuja has maintained that it pertains to the denial of bad qualities only.15 śṛuti16 is unequivocally in agreement with Rāmānuja. The Viṣṇu purāṇa17 declares the same thing. 'He has all the blessed qualities like energy, strength, might wisdom and valour, and
there are no imperfections — gain — and other in Him. Freedom from blemishes and possession of blessed qualities are not incompatible with the nature of God who is simultaneously both nirguna and saguna, nirguna in the sense that sattva, rajas, tamas do not exist in His essence (svarūpa) and saguna in the sense that all the blessed qualities are His essential attributes. Now question arises that which are the auspicious qualities that One possesses?

Rāmānuja has classified all auspicious qualities under two headings which we might respectively call the absolute, the relative. Truth, consciousness, bliss, purity, infinity are fundamental qualities while compassion are relative ones. Can we call Hegel's One Absolute as the abode of all auspicious qualities which Rāmānuja has maintained? Hegel has not explicitly discussed this. He has not discussed this point in Rāmānuja's manner yet we know that he considers Absolute as absolutely perfect, infinite. And if it is perfect then one must say that it must be abode of all auspicious qualities. Thus we can say that Absolute of Hegel like Brahman of Rāmānuja possesses
(c) **Ultimate Reality as supra-Personal**

Since *viśiṣṭādvaita* is a monotheistic philosophy it does not believe in the existence of a formless impersonal as the supreme category. God is here supposed to possess supar-personality, coupled with a supernatural form. The different Śruti texts too lend support to this theory 'Na tasya prakṛta mūrtih'. 'Vedāhanetāṁ purussām mahāntāṁ adityava rṇani tamasah parastāt' etc. The supernatural form and beauty of God cannot be seen through our external sense organs. It is only the mind in its pure state that can have a direct visualization of this exquisite beauty. The apparently contradictory statements of the *upanīṣads*, describing the highest Reality in one breath as 'adrisya' etc. can be reconciled from *viśiṣṭādvaita* points of view. The texts describing Brahman as adrisya, agrahya etc lay stress on the fact that the divine form cannot be perceived in the ordinary manner while the texts describing Brahman as draśṭavya - mantavya etc. simply lay stress on the fact that a pure mind and the eyes of wisdom alone are capable of comprehending this supreme Reality.
The Divine Personality assumes different forms or manifests Himself in different ways to carry on successfully the creation, sustenance and dissolution of this empirical world. These different manifestations of God which are divine in nature are known as vyūhas and these are four in number, vasudeva, sambars and pradyumna and aniruddha.

Whereas Hegel's Absolute cannot be personal. Absolute is by its nature impersonal. It is not my exclusive Spirit or your exclusive Spirit, but something which by its nature transcends the distinction of person. As Dr. MacTaggart says, "...... the Absolute as demonstrated by Hegel, must not be considered as personal, and is more appropriately called 'it' than 'he'." Again He does not believe like Rāmānuja that Absolute assumes different forms.

(d) Ultimate Reality as possessing internal difference:

For Rāmānuja God is free from all external differences homogenous (sajātya) as well as heterogeneous (vijātya) since there is nothing
either similar or disimilar which is external to 
or other than Him. But he possesses internal 
differences as His organic body 
is made of real and diverse elements like matter 
and soul.

Like Ramanuja's One Hegel's One is also 
possessing internal differences. Many are essential 
elements of the Absolute and so it has internal 
differences.

Here it is notable that though both Ramanuja 
and Hegel accept One as possessing internal 
difference yet difference between them is worth 
to note. Ramanuja never says like Hegel that God 
partially present in cit and acit. Its one aspect 
is present in cit, other in acit. For Ramanuja 
Brahman as a whole present in cit and acit simul-
taneously. While for Hegel Absolute is partially 
present in many. Its one aspect is present in 
matter (whom we call matter) other in mind and 
other in life. Thus we find division even in his 
manifestation. He never manifestes wholly. Thus 
His Absolute is not individual whole whereas 
Brahman as Brahman is individual whole.
Hence both’s One possesses internal difference but Ramanuja’s God is individual whole. It is not whole of parts, whereas Hegel’s Absolute is composed of parts and cannot be individual whole.

(e) **Ultimate-Reality as Immanent and Transcendental being**:

For Ramanuja Brahman is immanent as well as transcendental ground of the world. It is immanent in the whole world as its inner controller (anataryami) but that does not mean that it is as a immanent being affected by joys and sorrows of many. It is devoid of merits and demerits of many. In His essence it transcends the world. According to Ramanuja God pervades the world and yet is other than the world.

Thus Ramanuja’s God is not an external architect of the cosmic structure, manipulating an external machine. He is the inner soul and core of the cosmos. It is not that acts upon the world but that He acts within it.
Yet he is not wholly immanent being. It has transcended. Brahman transcends physical nature and finite selves. 27

Hegel also considers One as immanent being. For him God or Geist cannot exist separately from the universe which he sustains and in which he manifests himself. On the contrary this universe is his embodiment, without which he would not be any more, than I would be without mine 28 From this it follows that for Hegel Supreme Spirit is not transcendent Reality beyond the universe. If spirit is ultimate-reality then It is in the universe, It embodying itself in all self-consciousness 29 Again he says "God is the integral unity of you and me and the rest, you and I have no reality nor meaning apart from God, but neither does God even in His thought, have any aspect not to be found in the finite beings integrated in Him, you and I and therest." 30

Thus God, in Hegel's strict views as a philosopher, is not a transcendent Being apart from the world, but 'Reason immanent
in it”, an impersonal system of objective thoughts which actualizes itself at different levels in nature which is a ‘system of unconscious thought’ and mind. This is an immanent doctrine, for the world is the manifestation of the absolute system of thought determinations which have no existence except as the ground of nature and infinite minds who think them.

Thus we can say that Hegel’s One is wholly immanent in many. It has no transcendental aspect beyond world universe. Hegel does not believe in the true transcendent nature of One. For him if supreme spirit is Supreme Reality then it is all pervading and embodiment in all finite conscious.

Hence here we find difference between Rāmānuja and Hegel. Rāmānuja considers God as both immanent, transcendent while for Hegel Absolute is totally immanent being. It has no transcendence.

In addition to this we can say that
Hegel's Absolute is composed of parts, whole of parts. This whole has not separate wholeness apart from parts thus it has no transcendence aspect apart from parts.

Whereas we cannot think Ramanuja's Brahman apart from cit and acit still his Brahman is not composed of cit and acit. His God as God is immanent in cit and acit, not God as having cit and acit is immanent in cit and acit. Thus Ramanuja's Brahman has some type of transcendence while Hegel has never stated about the real transcendence of the Absolute. His Absolute always realizes itself in many.

Here it is worth notable that Hegel's some assertions 'In the course of its process, the Idea creates that illusion by setting an antithesis to confront itself, and its action consists in getting rid of the illusion which it has created' shows that Absolute is only reality and many are appearance or illusions. That means Absolute is totally transcendent being, it is not immanent because there are
Thus if we accept his former thought then it follows that Absolute is totally immanent and if we accept his later thought then his Absolute remains as totally transcendent. Thus in any manner it can not be both immanent and transcendent.

(f) Ultimate Reality as efficient and material cause of the world:

According to Rāmānuja Brahman is the only cause of the world. It is efficient as well as material cause of the world. In addition it is also assisting cause of the world. According to Rāmānuja, the substance that undergoes changes of states in the form of effect is called upādhāna, that which causes the upadhana undergo to change is the efficient cause and that which acts assisting factor is called sahakāri kārana. God in association with cit and acit in subtle forms, is the upādānakārana of the world, God with the ressolution of "I shall be many" is the efficient cause, God endowed with qualities of
knowledge, power etc. is the assisting cause. Hence it is no exaggeration to hold that God is sole and sufficient cause of the world.

Now question is that can we call Hegel's Absolute as the only cause of the world? We can conceive Hegel's One as efficient and material cause of the world. Because for Hegel Absolute is only ultimate reality. There are no other ultimate realities except Absolute. So it must be only cause of the world, efficient as well as material cause. His Absolute manifests as many out of itself and manifests by its will so it is both.

(g) Ultimate Reality as universal:

When Hegel says that ultimate reality is One and it is Idea of that time Hegel does not mean that Idea is idea of something. The Idea itself is not to be taken as an idea of something or other, any more than the notion is to be taken as merely a specific notion. The Absolute is the universal and one idea, which by an act of judgement particularises itself to the system of specific idea which after all are constrained by their nature to come back to the One idea where
their truth lies The Idea in the first place only the universal substance but its developed and genuine actuality is to be as subjected in that way as mind

Hence for Hegel as W.T. Stace has noted that first principle cannot be itself an individual thing for it is the reason of individual things. First cause would itself be a thing. But a reason is not a thing. Suppose we were to say, as Plato did, that the reason of everything is the Good, that everything is as it is because it is good that it should be so. The Good in such a view, is not a thing. Individual things are no doubt good. But goodness itself is not this or that individual good thing. In the same way the reason why a triangle is equiangular may be because it is equilateral. But equiangularness is not a thing which exists on its account independently of triangles. Every individual thing exists in time or space, but reason are not things floating about in space. They cannot be found by telescopes or microscopes. Nor do they exist in time as psychic entities in minds.
A Season is thus not a thing having a separate existence of its own. It is an abstraction. Goodness is an abstraction from good things, equilaterialness an abstraction from equilateral figures. But an abstraction is a universal. Therefore reason of the world is in general the universal. The first principle of the world, the Absolute the source from which all things flow, is the universal.

Whereas Rāmānuja has not discussed like Hegel that Brahman is individual or universal. But we can not say that it is universal. Brahman cannot be universal being but it is individual.

(h) Ultimate Reality as essentially concrete:

Hegel considers reality as concrete being. Here question is what he means by concrete? Hegel distinguishes between abstract understanding and concrete reason, while the former deals with identity alone or difference alone. The latter removes these abstractions and deals with the concrete unity of opposite or contraries in which both identity and difference as one and many are equally real and essential factors. These two
are opposite yet allied. For Hegel ultimate reality is not bare unity but unity which includes multiplicity so his reality is essentially concrete. 41

Here we can say that Ramanuja's reality is also concrete in the sense of Hegel's term. Because it is also not only identity but identity in difference. It also involves cit and scit as the internal parts.

In this context we can say that their philosophy are type of panentheism. Panentheism means all is in God (Pan - all, en - in, theos - God) All that is the world of things and minds instead of being absorbed in the all inclusive reality of God, enjoys relative reality, discharges its function and realise its values within the concrete reality of God. Hegel and Ramanuja both's concept of Reality is exactly as same as panentheism so their philosophy is type of panentheism.

(i) **Absolute as self-determined**:

For Hegel a being which is ultimate or first principle of the world must be self-explanatory.
If we suppose that Absolute is unexplained then it is an ultimate mystery. If it is explained by something other than itself, then it is not the first principle. For in that case the other something which explains it would be a more ultimate principle of explanation. Therefore the ultimate Reality which is Absolute. Reason must be its own explanation or self explanatory principle and self determined. 42

We can say that Ramanuja's Brahman is also self-determined; self-dependent being. Brahman is not dependent upon anything other than itself for its explanation.

(j) Ultimate-Reality as substance as well as subject:

With regard to the nature of the Absolute or the 'true' as he conceive it, Hegel says 'we comprehend the true not merely as substance, but just as much as subject .... The living substance is...... that being, which is in truth subject'. 43

As Kaufmann observes, there is an illusion to Spinoza with his conception of the Absolute as substance and Fichte with his conception of the Absolute as ego or subject. Spinoza emphasizes of substance aspect of the Absolute and Fichte emphasizes
on subject aspect while Hegel wants to affirm both sides of the Absolute, absolute as something with an unchanging determinate character, absolute as pure activity or dynamic agency. In Hegel's view each conception, taken by itself is inadequate to the true nature of the ultimate principle of reality which is the Absolute, although each conception does bring out an important aspect of the Absolute. Retaining the traditional terminology, Hegel maintains that the Absolute is to be conceived as both substance and subject that is both as having a determinate nature and as being active. Its substantial aspect, he holds, consists of the 'system of pure reason the system of thought forms which constitute the Begriff or concept. And its subject aspect consists of its dynamic, self realizing impulse which accounts both for the unfolding of the Begriff in itself and also for the emergence of concretely existing consciousness in which it is concretely embodied.

Can we say that Rāmānuja's Brahman is both substance and subject? In ordinary sense we can say that Brahman is substance because it is only
ultimate Absolute reality and it is subject because it is knower.

Again for Hegel Absolute is not only subject but also object because manyness of the world is its other and by its manifestation as its other, it tries to become self-conscious of itself. Manyness is not different from the Absolute but they are Absolute only in different forms.

In this context we can say that Rāmānuja's Brahman is also object because for him too cit and acit are not different from itself but its own body, of course he has not said like Hegel that Brahman by its body becomes self-conscious of itself.

(k) One as infinite Being

The nature of Spirit as the self-active universal makes it reasonable for Hegel to call it 'infinite'. He calls it this, not as being capable of indefinite extension to be thus it is to be infinite in a 'false' or 'bad' manner — but in the special Hegelian sense of being self-contained and complete, and 'at home with itself
(beisch) in its other. It has this infinity because it can deal with nothing without eliciting a universal or pattern from it, i.e. without assimilating it to itself. It has also this infinity because it can come into contact with nothing that is not a condition of its own activity and of its own self-awareness. 45

Further Spirit is infinite but it must pretend to itself to be finite in order to overcome this pretence, to distinguish itself from everything finite, to become fully aware of its own infinity. 46

Rāmānuja also believes that Brahman is infinite being.

(1) **Ultimate Reality as developing reality.**

Hegel's One is not static reality but is a active principle. Hegel's reality is, undoubtedly a living, developing process, 'a spiritual process' a logical process of evolution, 47 a dynamic being which is ever expressing itself in the form of inorganic, organic and mental or souls at different stages of its eternal process.
The Absolute Idea with Hegel is an active dynamic spiritual principle as it is with Fichte, and as such, it must act, grow and develop. Absolute is not immovable, but active it is itself successively nature and mind. This successions this process, this perpetual generation of things is the Absolute itself. The Absolute is the process itself, it is movement and life. Now question is what is the nature of One's development? We can say that for Hegel the nature of spirits or ultimate reality's development is a process of self-negation and self-transcendence leading to self-realization and self-expansion. "When we consider how a spiritual being grows and realizes itself, we see that it is by a perpetual process of self-denial. Intellectually it can develop its power only by going out of itself, by yielding to impressions from without, by persistently occupying itself with the not-self, the world of objects and without such occupation with the external, it could not even be conscious of itself."

The process of change and development which are found in a spirit is then one of self enrichment through self-abnegation, self-realisation through
self-transcendence. But how it is possible, it
is often asked, for the self to go out of
itself, transcend itself or abnegate itself?

The reply to this question from the Hegel's
point of view is that the Absolute which goes out
as object is only its other, it is not really a
foreign being. This 'other' is nothing but an
externalisation and expansion of the self itself.
Self-transcendence does not then really means going
beyond the self, but only discovery of a hitherto
unknown domain which really belonged to the
Absolute, but was not previously recognised as
such. Similarly, when a man sacrifices his own
interest for the family or society, he goes beyond
himself, abnegates himself, only in the narrow or
superficial sense of the self, the family and
society are also included within its potential
domain and this identity of the self with the
family or society is proved by the self's capacity
to identify itself with the interest of the family
or society, even at the cost or sacrifice of the
interest of the little ego. In loving society the
self only realise what it was potentially identical
with, it is also, therefore, an act of self-
realisation through expansion of the self by breaking through the limits of what is superfi-
cially regarded as self. It is possible, then for the Absolute self to transcend or abnegate itself, because the self can leave its actual state to realise a potential state. The potential implicit abstract can become actual, explicit and concrete.

Thus we notice that there is development through negation. The principle of negation takes, therefore an important place in the Hegel's explanation of the universe - in deduction of the categories of reality.

But Hegel's notion of negation must be distinguished from the ordinary one. Negation he asserts, is meaningless it is takes only as such. Negation is based on some implicit affirmation. Spinoza points out all 'determination is negation' while Hegel points out that the converse of this doctrine is also true, and far more important. Negation is also determination or affirmation of some positive character. Thus for Hegel self-
negation involves self-completion, self-perfection and not mere denial of the self,
In evolution through negation we notice, again, the triple rhythm of thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis which constitutes what is known as the dialectical movement of reason or spirit. The spirit starts from its present condition (thesis) goes beyond itself to its other, the object (anti-thesis) but returns to itself after encompassing in one grasp its former self and the object of knowledge (synthesis). Thus whole sphere, which may contain many thesis, anti-thesis and synthesis, is itself regarded as a single thesis. Its anti-thesis and synthesis will themselves be spheres of categories or notions which contains smaller traid within them. The entire system, while reality constitutes a single traid Idea, Nature and Spirit.

Hence, we can conclude that Reality is an organic system of thoughts which can be arranged in traid are so related that we pass from one idea to another, and from one traid to others logically. This logical process is known as the Dialectic Method.

Whereas we can say that Ramanuja has not accepted ultimate reality as self-developing reality. But that does not mean that It is static i.e. Brahman as the efficient cause of the world is active. But it is not self-developing
as the Absolute of Hegel.

Here it is also notable that though Hegel accepts ultimate Reality as developing yet sometime he states that reality is perfect and self-complete.

(m) Absolute as the identical with God of Religion

Hegel identifies the Absolute of his philosophy with the God of religion. For him only different between the Absolute and God is that the former is ultimate reality interpreted in terms of pure thought whereas the latter is the same reality represented pictorially i.e., in terms of imagination and emotion.

With respect to Rāmānuja's conception, we can say that he has not distinguished Absolute from God. There is no distinction between Nirguna Brahma and Saguna Brahma.

Thus both Hegel and Rāmānuja believe that God and Absolute are not different realities.

But different between them is that Ramanuja
does not say like Hegel that from one point of view Reality is God and from another point of view it is Absolute. For Rāmānuja from every point of view God and Absolute are same. God and Absolute are not two aspects of One reality.