10 Conclusion

This book has analysed only a tiny fragment of the *Nyāyāmṛta* and its commentaries. The literature generated by Vyāsatīrtha's work sprawled over three centuries, and its philosophical contents and historical influence are only just beginning to be appreciated by modern scholarship. Only a small amount of this literature has been published, and barely a fraction of it has been translated into a modern language. Nevertheless, the new interest among modern scholars in the early-modern period in India in which Vyāsatīrtha wrote and the history of the Vijayanagara Empire itself have ensured that Vyāsatīrtha's work has increasingly become a subject of research in the last years.

The *Nyāyāmṛta* and its literature touch upon virtually every topic discussed by Indian philosophers, but in the opening chapters of the text the discussion repeatedly comes back to issues surrounding the nature of existence/nonexistence and empty terms. While these topics had already been discussed extensively by the Naiyāyikas in their debates with Buddhist philosophers, the Advaitins' doctrine of indeterminacy brought them to the forefront of philosophical discussion among Vedānta traditions in the early modern period. The Mādhva theory of nonexistence/empty terms, which has been discussed extensively in this book, is one of their most controversial philosophical positions. In "seizing the hare by the horns" and concluding that the objects we seem to see in perceptual errors simply do not exist, Vyāsatīrtha went against the grain of Indian philosophical thought. The Advaitins' arguments for indeterminacy trade on a deep scepticism about the idea of object-free cognitions among Indian philosophers, who widely assumed that such cognitions could not arise at all, or at least found it impossible to account for how they could have the character of perceptual awarenesses. Traditions like the Naiyāyikas and the Prābhākaras thus argued that we must somehow correlate all the contents of erroneous cognitions with parts of the real world, a move which was also designed to neutralise the challenge that such episodes seem to pose to their realist metaphysical positions.

Vyāsatīrtha sees little advantage, in the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion, in attempting to ascribe to the silver component of the illusion any sort of object-correlate in the real world. Nevertheless, on inspection his explanation of how the illusion occurs is not that different from the Naiyāyikas'. As Vyāsatīrtha makes clear in the *Nyāyāmṛta*, while he accepts that cognitions can lack an object, this does not mean he believes that they can arise in the absence of objects altogether. His explanation of the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion still requires that our faculties are connected with external objects, either directly or by means of memory impressions. The perceptual character of the "silver" part of the cognition can only

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be explained by postulating that the judgment is partly produced by contact with an object that actually exists in the immediate objective situation that gives rise to the illusion, i.e. the mother-of-pearl. Similarly, the "silver" part of the judgment can only be explained by reference to a memory impression of a piece of silver existing in some other part of the world that serves as the "prototype" inspiring the fake silver fused into the erroneous perception. So, for Vyāsatīrtha, while our cognition of "silver" strictly lacks an object, it certainly does not present an example of an awareness that arises in the absence of objects altogether.

Vyāsatīrtha thus argues that it is his Mādhva explanation that strikes the best balance in explaining the mother-of-pearl/silver confusion. On the one hand, it captures what Vyāsatīrtha takes to be our intuition that the "silver" simply does not exist; on the other hand, it explains how such perception-like cognitions can arise from a synthesis of our previous experiences with perceptual processes, ruling out the possibility that cognitions can arise without the influence of objects. From Vyāsatīrtha's perspective, his theory thus presents an intuitive but powerful explanation of perceptual error which can give a satisfactory answer to the Advaitins' claims that perceptual illusions are inexplicable without opening the back door to the dreaded nihilist/*śūnyavādin*.

In the *Refutation of the First Definition of Illusoriness*, Vyāsatīrtha breathes new life into the old charge that indeterminacy is actually a disguised contradiction. His main contribution to this issue is to explain this objection to indeterminacy by grounding it in his definitions of existence and nonexistence themselves. Vyāsatīrtha's definitions, which explain existence/nonexistence in terms of spatio-temporal instantiation, render them jointly-exhaustive states and thus provide a substantial basis to the claim of earlier philosophers that denying them both of the same thing leads to a contradiction. His arguments prompted Madhusūdana to reappraise the classical Advaitins' defence of indeterminacy against this charge. According to Madhusūdana, there is no contradiction in indeterminacy, because existence and nonexistence are simply not jointly exhaustive states. Contrary to Vyāsatīrtha, Madhusūdana claims that existence is simply the quality of not being liable to sublation, and nonexistence is nothing more than the incapacity to be mistaken for an existent object. So claiming that the silver—which is both liable to future sublation and appears to us as existent—lacks these properties does not lead to a contradiction.

Yet again, the Mādhva response to these arguments of Madhusūdana turns on how "nonexistence" should be understood. In the Mādhva literature after Vyāsatīrtha, we can trace two lines of attack against Madhusūdana's position on contradiction. The first is that his definition of nonexistence is incompatible with key aspects of Advaita philosophy. In the first place, Madhusūdana's case seems to reduce part of the argument for indeterminacy from circumstantial implication ("If the silver

were nonexistent, we could not experience it") to a mere tautology. Secondly, it is not clear in that case whether or not the argument truly articulates a difference of the Advaitins with the nihilistic Buddhists, who were taken by Brahmanical philosophers to claim that the world is "nonexistent" in the sense that it is altogether lacking in essence (*niḥsvarūpa*). Mādhva philosophers also argued that Madhusūdana's case is simply an inadequate definition of nonexistence. At least certain things that would usually be labelled "nonexistent" do seem to be falsely taken to exist. Why should not a naive child, for instance, be duped into believing that hares really have horns? One solution for the Advaitin would be to classify such terms as indeterminate in that case, but they then risk collapsing the seemingly rigid line they draw between the states of indeterminacy and nonexistence.

As this volume has shown, these debates about nonexistent entities/empty terms were further bound up closely with questions about the nature and limits of inferential knowledge. In the *Tarkatāṇḍava*, Vyāsatīrtha presents a detailed challenge to the Naiyāyikas' belief that we need to exclude empty terms from formal inferences. He argues that we can correctly ascribe qualities to nonexistent things, and that we can even make certain valid inferences about them. His argument for this in the *Tarkatāṇḍava* is not only that such judgments/inferences are intuitively true, but that it is impossible to coherently argue that we are unable to make them. How could one argue in favour of the stance that empty terms cannot have properties, for instance, without oneself making a kind of inference that ascribes properties to them? Just like the Advaitins, who are apparently forced to speak of nonexistent things even as they denied we can experience them, Vyāsatīrtha argues that the Naiyāyikas are drawn ineluctably into making inferences about nonexistent things that contradict the very thesis they are trying to prove. According to Vyāsatīrtha, if we are to explain such judgments and inferences, we are forced to accept that there are "location-free qualities" which, unlike colours, universals, and so on, do not require an existent locus. While the silver or the sky-flower may be a fabrication of our sense faculties, the qualities of nonexistence, "counterpositiveness", and so on, which we correctly ascribe to them, are qualities that exist as part of the real world.

These questions about perception, existence, and nonexistence continued to be debated in the centuries following Vyāsatīrtha's death by leading thinkers from the Mādhva and Advaita traditions. The *Nyāyāmṛta* literature was clearly Vyāsatīrtha's most enduring influence over the Advaita tradition and his work shaped the contours of a debate which came to dominate interactions between the two traditions for the next three hundred years. The recent work of scholars like McCrea and Duquette, which has largely been driven by interest in Vyāsatīrtha's influence over the Advaitins, has shown how he tacitly came to influence their thought for centuries

after his death, even as leading Advaitin philosophers publicly poured scorn on his school.

This volume has given glimpses into the impact that Vyāsatīrtha had on Madhusūdana and his commentators in particular. One of the obvious effects of Madhusūdana's encounter with Vyāsatīrtha's work was to help draw Madhusūdana into the world of Navya-Nyāya learning. Vyāsatīrtha's engagement with Gaṅgeśa's thought was probably one of the factors that made his work attractive and challenging to philosophers like Madhusūdana and Appayya in the first place. While Madhusūdana seems to have studied Navya-Nyāya independently at Navadvipa, it is clear that Vyāsatīrtha's work helped shape his intellectual engagement with Navya-Nyāya since it challenged him to articulate the philosophy of the classical Advaitins using the new ideas and terminology of the Navya-Naiyāyikas. It is clear from the passages of the *Advaitasiddhi* discussed in this volume that Vyāsatīrtha's arguments prompted a reappraisal of the work of the classical Advaitins on the part of Madhusūdana and his commentators. The *Refutation of the First Definition of Illusoriness* itself shows how Vyāsatīrtha's work prompted Madhusūdana to rethink his defence of Ānandabodha's inferences as he followed Vyāsatīrtha in using Gaṅgeśa's work on universal-negative inference in particular to defend their validity. Vyāsatīrtha's arguments also clearly led Madhusūdana to rethink the Advaitins' solution to the charge of contradiction, prompting him to re-frame the philosophical questions surrounding existence in the language of Navya-Nyāya and Vyāsatīrtha's work.

A central theme of this volume has been the complex influence that Gaṅgeśa exerted over Vyāsatīrtha's work itself. Besides being influenced by the style and technical vocabulary of Gaṅgeśa's writing, he was also influenced by Gaṅgeśa's intricate defence of the Nyāya theory of inference in the *Tattvacintāmaṇi*. By carefully applying Gaṅgeśa's work on universal-negative inference in the *Refutation of the First Definition of Illusoriness*, Vyāsatīrtha intended to show with legalistic precision that Madhva and Jayatīrtha's arguments against Ānandabodha's inferences were still valid in the light of Gaṅgeśa's new arguments.

Yet Gaṅgeśa's work also presented a direct challenge to the Mādhva philosophy that Vyāsatīrtha was committed to defending. Despite the disinterest in responding to Vyāsatīrtha's work on the part of the Naiyāyikas, the *Tarkatāṇḍava* presents one of the most thoroughgoing critiques of Navya-Nyāya written by a philosopher outside the tradition. Indeed, the philosophical debate between the Mādhvas and the Naiyāyikas was perhaps one of the greatest philosophical showdowns that never took place in India's intellectual history. The recent publications of the Dvaita Vedānta Saṃśodhana Mandiram show that Mādhva commentators on the *Nyāyāmṛta* continued to study and respond to Navya-Nyāya works well into eighteenth century. These works, which were often deeply influenced by the thought of Raghunātha and Gadādhara Bhaṭṭa (*fl.* 1660), allow us to trace the con-

tinuing engagement of the Mādhvas with the Navya-Nyāya tradition during this period. The works of Vyāsatīrtha and his commentators from Puntamba, as well as Satyanātha, Rāghavendra, and Mannāri Kṛṣṇācārya provide an extensive cache of quotes from Navya-Nyāya works of the Mithila and Bengal schools which could aid the philological study of Navya-Nyāya texts.

In contrast to those who have dismissed this period as one where old ideas were dressed in new garb, these texts were intellectually creative and sometimes radical in their reappraisals of established philosophical doctrines. Satyanātha's *Abhinavatāṇḍava* is perhaps the most outstanding work in the Mādhva tradition in this regard. In contrast to Vyāsatīrtha, who generally plays down the innovative character of his work, Satyanātha was a self-consciously original and iconoclastic thinker who was as unafraid to rethink Mādhva philosophy as he was to challenge the luminaries of the Navya-Nyāya tradition. The use of the word *abhinava* ("neo-") in the title of Satyanātha's work itself echoes the language of the Bengali Navya-Nyāya tradition, suggesting an inclination to innovation and original thought. Moreover, Satyanātha frames his work as a direct commentary on the *Brahmatarka*, a work ascribed by the Mādhvas to Viṣṇu incarnated as Veda-Vyāsa himself. The majority of Mādhva texts from this period remain unpublished, including particularly the remaining commentaries on the *Tarkatāṇḍava*, especially that of Kṛṣṇācārya, and the volumes of works on the *Nyāyāmṛta*. Some of these manuscripts have been documented by Western scholarship, yet many remain unknown, preserved only in private Mādhva collections. These new philosophical avenues can thus only be explored through careful philological work and cooperation with traditional scholars.