



## The Philosophical Structure Of Bengal Vaishnavism

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### Abstract

Is this world rejectable in terms its temporary pain and pleasure? Or it should be perceived as complete surrender to the ultimate reality where consciousness is playing with its beauty, love and bliss. In this realm we are going to explore an unquestionable school of thought; Bengal Vaishnavism which is popularly known as Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava. The term 'Gaudīya' means the thoughts and practices sprang up from Gaudadeśa, so it has been named after its origination. Here the word 'gauda' has come as the adjective of the noun-word 'guda' or molasses. That's why the land seems to be named 'Gauda' which actually connotes the land of sweetness or madhurarasa and fortunately it represents Bengal. By revisiting the basic philosophical structure of this school, we will enjoy the deep meaning of delicacy; technically said as 'asvādana of mādhyura', or tasting the essence of spiritual love. Broadly, this school of thought has shown that following the path of Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava, a worshiper can taste the sweetness of spiritual love between Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa, to attain the path of liberation. Most interestingly their doctrine claims that the supreme and His power or energy both are one in essence just like two sides of a same coin. Though their characteristics seems to be different in their ways of their activities and glories. If the supreme is said to be 'conscious' then very word 'ness' stands as his energy. Altogether the supreme is addressed as consciousness. Technically this concomitant relationship or the eternal relationship between śakti and śaktimāna – is worshiped by a worshiper day by day. The big question arises here that how one may say that energy and its locus are different in one? Here comes the grand narration of inexplicable-identity-in-difference which negates the dilemma of duality and glorifies the philosophical values of a realized thought. This article is significant for exploring this phenomenon which adherers the such indiscernibility of both identity and difference.

**Keywords:** Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava, mādhyura, śakti, śaktimāna, indescribability, identity-in-difference.

This paper is an attempt to revisit the philosophical basis of the Bengal Vaishnavism (Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava) which is mainly famous for its unquestioned adherence to bhaktimarga. All philosophical schools mention the tattva-s or the fundamental categories of their systems, and the philosophy of Bengal Vaishnavism is no exception. We must know that school of Bengal Vaishnavism is popularly known as Gaudīya Vaiṣṇava school of thought, apprehended by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He did not present his views in the form of a philosophical system as it was done by the earlier Vaishnava philosophers like Madhvācārya, Rāmānujācārya, Śrī Nimbārka and Śrī Viṣṇusvami. The Bengal Vaishnavas share with a philosophical vision that is mostly common to all Vaishnava schools but they differ from other Vaishnava schools in case of putting forward the tattva-s or fundamental doctrines of their own system. Generally, it appears that Bengal Vaishnavas has admitted nine tattva-s, proposed by Śrī Madhvācārya, the famous dualist Vaishnava philosopher, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana accepted these nine tattva-s in his Prameya Ratnāvalī. Though they have presupposed the nine theses accepted by Madhvācārya but very significantly in the text, Daśamūla-Śikṣam, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda

Thākura, a renowned scholar of later Bengal School, has presented exclusively ten tattva s of the Bengal School, taught by Mahāprabhu and carried forward by six Gosvāmins namely Rūpa Gosvamin, Sanatana Gosvamin, Jiva Gosvamin, Raghunatha Gosvamin, and Śrī Gopāla Bhatta.

To recollect the philosophical structure of this very deep mystical practices we can follow the text Dasamūla Sikṣām where Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura has vividly discussed the ten tattva - s to reframe Bengal Vaishnavism. Let us explore-

āmnāyah prāha tattvam harimiha paramam sarva-śaktim rasābdhim/  
tad bibhiinnāmśās ca jīvān prakṛti-kavalitānś tad-vimuktāmś ca bhāvat/  
bhedābheda-prakāśam sakalamapi hareh sādhanam śudhha-bhaktim/  
sādhyam yat prītim-evety-upadiśati harau gouracandram bhaje tam/<sup>1</sup>

1. Āmnāya is the first tattva which means; along with other revealed text mainly Śrī Bhāgavatam is the ultimate Pramāṇa;
2. Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the supreme absolute reality.
3. Kṛṣṇa is endowed with power.
4. Kṛṣṇa is the ocean of rasa.
5. The jīva-s are all separate parts of the Lord.
6. Māyābadhha jīva (the bounded or the conditioned soul).
7. Māyāmukta jīva (the liberated Soul).
8. Acintyabhedābheda or the inexplicable difference-in-non-difference between jīva and the world with the Lord.
9. Pure Bhakti as Sādhana practice or the means to achieve the highest end.
10. Love for Kṛṣṇa, or Kṛṣṇa -prema prayojona, the ultimate goal.

## Section- I

### The fundamental epistemology of Bengal Vaishnavism

These ten tattva-s are explained in terms of sambandha, abhidheya, and prayojona. In this system ‘āmnaya’ is regarded as the ultimate pramāṇa, and the school has accepted threefold division of revealed knowledge viz, śāstra, sādhu, and guru from second tattva to eighth the sambandha tattva has been mentioned, i.e. to convey the relationship between the Ultimate Reality, with His power, with the jīvas and the material world; the ninth principle mentioned above presents the abhidheya, the method of attaining the highest goal, or the proper course of action in accordance with the abovementioned understanding, i.e. bhakti as sādhana. And finally, the prayojana means the ultimate goal and purpose of the living entity in relation with the Supreme<sup>2</sup>. In this article we’ll try to address all ten tattvas in a nut shell.

All Indian schools of thought have depicted their realisation through analysing the scriptures and the revealed text for ascertainment of the nature of the Ultimate Reality and the character of Truth. Philosophical schools have categorised the valid cognition into eight types – perception (pratyakṣa), inference (anumāna), comparison (upamāna), testimony (śabda), population (arthapatti), non-cognition (anupalabधि), quantitative reasoning (sambhava), tradition (aitihya). Jīva Gosvāmin has established the supremacy of testimony in his most acceded text; Tattvasandarbhā<sup>3</sup>.

To explain valid cognition, Jīva Gosvāmins has divided perception into valid (vaiduṣa) and invalid (avaiduṣa) perception. In case of valid perception, i.e. which is truly learned, being free from all the error of ordinary perceptions. Now valid perception does not stand as ordinary sense at all, but the term ‘vaiduṣa’ or validity particularly means the unerring perception of the great seers that is supremely authentic. Thus, for Jīva Gosvāmins valid perception is applicable only in śabdapramāṇa or testimony, is granted as the valid source of knowledge. Therefore, perception should not be taken as mere ordinary perception by our sense organs.

Secondly, to explain the validity of inference, Jīva Gosvāmin has explained though inference is the best source of probable knowledge, but because of its probability there remains a chance of error. The most popular example of inference, i.e. 'if there is smoke then there is fire' - can be refuted for its uncertainty, because the smoke is often found to last some time even after the extinction of the fire. Though he does not negate the validity of inference but he emphasises that the validity of inference also depends on testimony. For example; if a truly learned person tells 'my dear travellers don't expect the fire on the mountain, despite the smoke you observe, I just saw the rain extinguish the fire there' in such testimony-based case the learner should depend on the words. In case of inference for others (pararthānumana) the testimonial knowledge works as the very basis of the inference. In case of self-inference (svarthānumāna) also there is always scope for doubt too if one does not utter the name of Kṛṣṇa; the ultimate reality. Because here the name and named relation is one and same.

So, Jīva Gosvāmin differentiates actually between the words 'certainty' and 'probability'. All kind of human cognitions including scientific dogmas those are prone to error. But the Vedas are self-luminous, for the certainty of the Vedas depends upon nothing but the Vedas themselves. Interestingly the uniqueness of Bengal Vaishnavism, spatially narrated by Jīva Goswamin, highlights the impossibility of the independent existence of any cognition except testimony. Thus, rest of the cognitions i.e. comparison, postulation, non-cognition, equivalence and tradition are not regarded as the separate sources of valid knowledge, rather all these are included into testimonial cognition.

The śabda or scriptural testimony is free from all four defects illusion (bhrama), error caused by heedlessness (pramada), error due to the wish to deceive (vipralipsa) and error on account the insufficiency of the senses (kranapatava), from which other cognition suffer. If the speaker is truly learned by the immediate realisation of the Ultimate Reality, he is regarded as āpta. For Bengal schools Vaishnavism, a sadhu is regarded as true realizer or āpta. Therefore, this school has accepted threefold division of revealed knowledge, namely śāstra, sādhu, and guru. Since the Vedas have no author, the Vedas are self-existent (apouruṣeya) and free from all flaws. Among all schools of Indian philosophy only the Nyayayika school advocates, the infallibility of the Vedas as because it has been produced by God who is omnipotent and omniscient. But like other Vedic schools Jīva Gosvāmin has accepted the Vedas with its authenticity but uniquely has accepted the smṛtis and pūraṇas as authentic as Veda. Here it is important to be mentioned that though the Vaishnavas accepts the Vedas as the ultimate source of the Ultimate Reality, but they say in Kaliyug it is so difficult for the people to recover Vedic teachings, and only the itihāsa and pūraṇa can uphold Vedic teachings. These texts are complemented with the same authenticity. This School claims and argues that the great sage; Vyāsa, by himself composed the Bhāgavat Pūraṇa, which is the best commentary on the Vedas. The Pūraṇa elaborated all the ākhyanas, upākhyanas, gātha and kalpa mentioned in four Vedas. And pūraṇas are accessible by everyone, where no caste, gender divisions matter as in case of reading Veda, which could be learned only by twice born person with some required qualities. Broadly speaking the self-validity of Bhāgavatam necessarily follows from the self-validity of Vedas.

From the Supreme Person's breath came the four Vedas, the itihāsas, the pūraṇas, the upaniṣads, the verses and the sutras and all the commentaries (anuvyākhyas). The term 'ithasa' refers to the great Indian epics; Rāmāyana and Mahābhārata. The pūraṇas indicates eighteen major pūraṇas among which Śrīmad Bhāgavatam is the supreme and also eighteen others. The term Upaniṣad refers to major eleven upanisads, i.e. īśa, katha, keṇa etc. The, sūtras refer to the concise-verses written by Vyāsa namely Brahmasūtra, while the brief spiritual notes (anuvakyas) refers to the commentaries on the sūtra by the great philosophers. All these are called āmnāya, which is learned by passing down. The primary meaning of āmnāya is Vedas. Thus, for Bengal Vaishnavism, all these are highly valued, and they elaborate the term āmnāya more than other philosophical schools.

## Section II

### The metaphysical construction of Bengal Vaishnavism

The basic tattva-s and their relations those are known by valid cognition; technically known as prameyas in Bengal Vaishnavism would be discussed in this section.

### • Śrī Kṛṣṇa- The ultimate reality

Bhagavāna is the name of the reality with its fullest manifestation while the other two terms 'Paramātman' and 'Brahman' represent His two imperfect manifestations. It is stated in Caitanya Caritāmṛtam–

brahman aṅgakānti tānr nirviśeṣe prakāse/  
sūrya yena carmacakṣe jyotirmaya bhāse/  
tānhar anger śudhha kiranmandal/  
upanisad kahe tānre brahman sunirmal//<sup>4</sup>

Brahman is the reality, 'that like which there is no second reality', but unlike the Advaitins, this school conveys Brahman is non-dual but śakti is always one with Self, however in unmanifest-form. Thus, ātman is generally self-luminous (sāmānyata svaprakāśa), ātman is particularly or especially jīvas and as-sum-total of all the particulars (sarva- viśeṣas) it is called 'paramātman' or 'Īsvara' (super-soul). Bhagavāna Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the existence, consciousness and fulfilment of all these three. He is Saccidānandaghana-bigraha<sup>5</sup>. Etymologically the word 'bhagavatam' means one who is complete with the six enigmas; i.e. majesty (aiśvarya), strength (vīrya), glory (yasa), beauty (śrī), intelligence (jñāna) and detachment (vairāgya) called 'bhaga'. When, a seeker is sanctified with the vision of the highest and most perfect manifestation, he can attain the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavāna, and then only Brahman appears as the halo or tanubhā to him and paramātman appears as a part<sup>6</sup>. One might ask; what do the Bengal Vaishnava school of thought mean by the term 'tanubha'? Is Bhagavāna same as 'saguṇa brahman' or nirguṇa brahman?

In the discourse of Bengal Vaishnavism 'Bhagavāna' does not follow the concept of a qualified soul by extra qualifiers, i.e. 'saguṇa brahman'. For this school Brahman is the light knowledge; etymologically said as 'jyotisvarūpa and citsvarūpa' of the ultimate. The term 'saguṇa brahman' etymologically stands as Brahman with its enormous qualities or guṇa. But the Bengal school of thought does not propagate the concept of Bhagavāna being associated with 'guṇas', like other Vaishnava school of thought. The unique and significant point is the concept of Bhagavāna should not be seen as someone who is qualified. The philosophy of qualifier and qualified always accepted duality, but this school does not commit such thesis. Actually, the concept of 'relation' or 'association' always has been interpreted that which obtain two distinct entities, those are connected with each other. The qualifiers (or guṇa-s) are not a separate entity at all, but belong in manifested or unmanifested forms into the energies of the ultimate reality. Thus, in Bengal Vaishnavism, the terminology Bhagavāna is not at all identical with qualified truth (saguṇa brahman) because the concept of the ultimate reality stances as a sum-total of all kinds of manifested and unmanifested forms. Here, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is embodied with His energies. Theoretically, the concept 'tanubhā' adhere such concept that Bhagavatam is glorified with its all his energies or in Sanskrit sarva-śakti-samaṇvitam. It can be significantly stated following the explanation of karikā of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura --

deha-dehi veda nāsti dharma-dharmī bhidā tathā/  
śrī kṛṣṇa svarūpe purṇo'dvyava-jñātmake kila//<sup>7</sup>

Kṛṣṇa has no difference between himself and his body, between himself and his qualities. In the spiritual form his body and qualities are nothing but Himself, the Ultimate reality is advaya, that like which there is no second.

### • Śakti – The enigmatic power of the ultimate

Following the tantric tradition of Bengal this school of thought has admired and established the philosophical importance of energy or śakti. The explanation of śaktitattva is the most important stand of all śaktivādins and following the tradition of the text Pancarātra Samhita and the previous Vaishnava sects, Bengal Vaishnavism has established Kṛṣṇa-Śakti Tattva too, but the Bengal Vaishnava school uniquely has stated the Rādhātattvā as the prime. In Caitanya Caritāmṛta, it is stated –

saccidānanda haya isvārasvarūpa/  
tin angse citsakti hay tinarūpa/  
anandaṅse hlādinī, sadaṅse sandhinī/  
cidamśe samvit yare krsnajnana mani//  
antarangā citsakti, tatastha jivasakti/  
bahirangā māyā tine kare premabhakti//<sup>8</sup>

The verse states clearly that Lord Kṛṣṇa enjoys his existence, his consciousness and bliss only through His ultimate-energy or His powerfulness. Energy; terminologically said as śakti is not something apart from His own existence but just like another side of the same coin. Based on this ground the supremacy of śakti is largely accepted by this school thought. Terminologically, it has been discussed below.

Firstly, there are three special energies to enjoy the creative worldly existence of His lordship through various creation, manifestation and erosion, terminologically said as vibhābas (viśeṣa bhāvas), namely citśakti, jivāśakti and māyā śakti. Secondly, there are three extrinsic power to enjoy the creation named as prabhābavas (prakṛsta bhāvas) – those are the power of inclination, creation and knowledge terminologically said as ichā śakti, kṛya śakti, and jñāna śakti. Finally, He eternally belongs to a continuous power play with His innermost energies technically namely as anubhābas, namely sandhini, samvit and hlādinī. This area is so important to narrate the importance of energies or parāśakti or svarūpa śakti in śaktimāna or Kṛṣṇa identifies Himself.

The Bengal Vaishnava School has realised that Kṛṣṇa is saccidānandasvarūpa that means sat(existence), cit(consciousness) and ānada(bliss) are not external attributes (guṇa-s) of Kṛṣṇa. Advaitins uphold the thesis that Brahman is essentially sat, cit, ānanda, whereas the other Vaishnava sects have admitted these as guṇas of Brahman. But unlike the other Vaishnava schools and like the Advaitins, the Bengal Vaishnavas have admitted that being, consciousness and bliss are essential to Kṛṣṇa, which is the Ultimate Reality. The power or śakti of the ultimate reality is not an attribute of the ultimate rather another side of the same coin.

The Ultimate Reality is one that like which there is no second and guṇas or his attributes do not denote some different categories rather his own nature. In Bengal Vaishnavism sat, cit, ānada svarūpa-s are technically known as Sandhini, Samvit and Hlādinī.

- It is by sandhiniśakti of His intrinsic power, He upholds all existence including Himself.
- The function of samvitśakti, consists in enabling Him to know Himself and make other to know themselves.
- While hlādinī enables to enjoy the bliss and make others enjoy the same.

Among all other aspects of power this school has given the importance to hlādinī śakti, named as Rādhāthakurāni who is infinite and dynamic, and it is mirrored in His hlādinī śakti, Brahman is regarded as the Ultimate Reality in its most perfect form and worshiped as śrī Bhagavāna by the devotees.

#### • **Rasatattva – The purity of love**

Sri Kṛṣṇa is the reservoir of rasa or ecstasy. Now the thesis of rasa is a great, elaborated, and profound tattva to be discussed, in this system. Taittiriya Śruti states, ‘rasa vai sah’(2/7), which states that Kṛṣṇa is endowed with sixty four transcendental qualities, and is the perfect embodiment of rasa. Now the question arises what is the concept of rasa? Philosophically, the concept of rasa signifies a transcendental erotic experience to enjoy the true existence of one’s own selves beyond worldly affairs. There belongs a big narrative of spiritual eroticism. But in a nutshell here we address some of them. Among them fifty qualities are present in a small amount among us or the jīva-s, adding fifty with ten other guṇa-s exist in other avatar-s. And all the sixty qualities with additional four more qualities present in Bhagavāna. Among all of them mainly five rasa-s those are sāntya, dāsya, sakhya, vātsalya and madhura, embodied in Kṛṣṇa. Among them it is by madhura rasa, the practitioners attain to enjoy the eternal play between Kṛṣṇa with gopis, especially with Radha the hlādinīśakti. Here lies the whole conception of ‘Vṛndavāna’ which does not stand merely as a local place of India rather a spiritual playground of transcendental love between the Supreme and His energy, theoretically named as aprākṛta vṛndāvāna.

#### • **Jīvatattva- The thesis of bounded and liberated state of the individuals**

Sri Kṛṣṇa expands his infiniteness into finite. The infinitesimal particles of cit śakti, in the form of separate parts, are the jīva-s. Now jīvas are the combination of māyā śakti and cit śakti, which is called taṣastha śakti or jīva-śakti. The taṣastha śakti represents His (Kṛṣṇa’s) power of self-multiplication, and bahirangā śakti which is known as māyā śakti displays His self-alienation into the insentient material world. Through this power

Bhagavāna limits Himself and appears as the 'Paramātman' who stands as a direct displayer of māyā śakti and jīva śakti, which bring about creation, rebirth and bondage. The māyā śakti, which is categorised in Viṣṇupuraṇa as aparā (one of the three śaktis called para, aparā, and khetrajña) is actually considered as the shadow of the parā śakti, called chayāśakti, and this chayāśakti expands the material world which is designated as 'mithya' or false, as said by Advaitins and supported by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thākura's too. According to the philosopher Jīva Gosvāmin, the theory of māyā śakti is categorized as jīvamāyā or nimittamāyā which has a reference to jīvas or individual soul. Secondly, as the guṇa māyā or upādāna māyā, this māyāśakti transforms as the jara-prakṛti or the material world. Here the jīva māyā or nimitta māyā is classified as vidya (science) and avidya (nonscience). Both of these energies stand as the cause of bondage and emancipation of individual soul or the jīvas. Thus, māyāśakti when designated as avidyamāyā it has twofold functions, namely concealment (avarāṇa) and distortion (vikṣepa). The first conceals the true nature of a individuals i.e. being an undying worshiper or bhakta. Secondly, vikṣepaśakti causes the distraction through the display of the empirical consciousness of the body and the senses<sup>9</sup>.

Thus, māyāśakti plays and expands as the world. For that reason, the status of the world becomes so important to the practitioners, because only by perceiving the world as the dalliance plays of the ultimate or bhagavat-līlā, one can go beyond the worldly pain-pleasure circularity.

Now taṭasthaśakti that belongs to the jīvas being both connected with the internal energies (i.e. the antarāṅgā śakti or svarūpa śakti which is designated as cit śakti) and external energies (i.e. or bahirāṅgā śakti that occupies an intermediate position between them who can see the spiritual and material world both). The marginal power is stated as taṭasthāśakti. The very word taṭastha is derived from the word 'taṭa' which signifies the sandbank that holds the middle position between the ocean and the lands. Allegorically, here the ocean stands spiritual knowledge or cit śakti, while worldly knowledge or māyāśakti stands as the material land. Interestingly, the individuals or the jīvas are called 'taṭastha' as because he or she is standing in the middle like someone who is standing at the sandbank. Accordingly, when the jīvas become liberated it means the sandbank is completely covered by the sea-waves and then the individual found him or her true selves, technically said the jīvas become cinmaya and still enjoys his or her material existence or jaivattva. As because a practitioner loves to enjoy his or her individuality as a taster of the truth and never becomes one with the ocean. Hence bhakti is regarded as the highest puruṣārtha by this school of thought, our mind only becomes purified by perceiving the world as a continuous divine sport of the ultimate. Then only the individuals could identify himself or herself as the eternal servant of Lord Kṛṣṇa.

#### • Acintyabhedābheda-vāda – The thesis of inexplicable duality in non-duality

After some deep investigation and realization of the aforesaid tattva-s in satsaṅga (association of devotional people), the aspirant seeks the seventh and most important tattva. The person asks three questions (a) Who am I? (b) To whom I belong? (iii) What is the relation between me and the world? The thesis of acintyabhedābheda tattva explains all of them clearly.

Regarding the relationship between the ultimate and the individuals, there are many different theses continuing from the ancient time. Sage Āsmaratnya proclaimed that difference and non-difference both exist between the jīvas and Brahman; technically stand this school of thought is acclaimed as bheda-bheda-vādin. Their philosophy adheres the essential commonness and categorical difference between the individuals and the ultimate, like the fire and the spark when it is flung off. Thus, the spark cannot be said as one with its source but still remains essentially same. Another point of view has been propagated by the sage, Audulomi, admits the essential difference between the individuals and the ultimate in a complete dualistic format that states the both the essential and categorical difference between the individuals and the ultimate. This school of thought has influenced Madhvacharya's doctrine of dualism. While, the sage named Kāśakṛṣṇa commits a non-dual structure between the individuals and the ultimate both essentially and categorically that has been modified by the great scholar Śankarācārya later on. Śankarācārya has vividly explained and established the advaitavāda following this thesis where the individuals or the jīvas and the ultimate reality or Brahman both are same; existence, consciousness and bliss.

Interestingly, the Bengal school thought has admitted the ultimate reality as one; terminologically 'advaya' means who is conscious and self-luminous (svaprakāśa), but they do not interpret the term advaya as Śankarācārya did. Advaitins interpreted the word 'advaya' as 'one without second'. While according to Bengal bhaktivāda school the term 'advaya' has been interpreted as 'that like which there

is no second reality'. It indicates the exposition that the world and individuals are real, but not as real as the ultimate reality, Śrī Kṛṣṇa. As because a religious person or a practitioner follows the pathway of bhakti they relish their existence as an worshipper. Jīva Gosvāmin, the great scholar of Bengal Vaishnava school of thought, has argued that the ultimate reality is indivisible, devoid of all internal and external distinctions, homogeneous or heterogeneous.

According to Mādhvacārya's dualistic school of thought, duality is real, This School has accepted five kinds of distinctions (bheda) namely, i) the distinctions between the ultimate and the individuals or Brahman and the jīvas ( all the Vaishnava schools regard jīva as nitya and aṇu parimāna,) ii) the variances in-between all individuals or the jīvas, iii) the differences in-between Brahman and this material world, iv) dissimilarities among all the material objects and v) the differentiations between the individuals and the world. Bengal Vaishnava school of thought does not oppose the existence of these five elements but they have denied the complete distinction in between. The very question often raised against the philosophy of Bengal Vaishnavism that how they would explain those Vedic words, where the Vedas literally establish the identity between Brahman and the jīvas, such as in 'tattvamasi'; i.e. 'you are that Brahman'. Mādhvacārya's dualistic school interprets this great line as 'sa atma atat tvamasi' that means 'that soul thou art not'. Thus, individuals or jīva-s are eternal and small fragments of the ultimate, and individuals never become one with the Lord. Only at the time of liberation the individual-beings become completely pure, and can attain brahmaloka, or heaven though remains with their individuality. The Bengals though follow the Mādhva School of thought but do not admit the absolute duality between Brahman and the jīvas, rather they do not interpret the Vedic statement 'tattvamasi', as 'atattvamasi', 'thou art not', and truly interprets the words of the Vedas they understood the meaning by abhidhā vṛtti, or literal sense and never deny the essential identity between Brahman and the jīvas.

The Rāmānuja's school of thought has also accepted the doctrine of non-duality where Brahman is devoid of homogeneous and heterogeneous distinctions but possesses of internal distinctions, as because there are two entities; spiritual or cit and material or acit and both have its place within Brahman. Rāmānuja regards Brahman as the substantive reality or subject or viśeṣya where cit and acit both belong as viśeṣaṇas. Consequently, the relationship between Brahman and individuals is narrated in terms of identity-in-difference, as because the individuals are eternally pervaded by Brahman, but never exist just as a subdivision in a big the whole. Now, the scholar Jīva Gosvāmin and others Bengal Vaishnava scholars have chiefly denied Rāmānuja's position that cit and acit are two separate entities. The Bengal school proclaims the cit and acit are nothing but the power play of energy or śakti; as the intrinsic power and extrinsic power. The individuals or the jīvas are monadic fragments (citkanas) of Bhagavāna. The individuals are essentially same with Brahman (citsvarupa) but like the spark it never becomes same with the completely manifested fire (pūrṇa-vikāśita Bhagavān). The philosophy is supra- logical because logically the materialistic worldview neither apprehend such dual position can appear together nor become able to establish that difference and non-difference can exist in the same locus. Therefore, this relation has been explained as acintya or unspeakable or inexplicable by the Bengal Vaishnavism. With the reference of main scriptures, the Bengal schools have shown their unique position of inexplicable difference in difference in non-difference<sup>10</sup>.

The thesis of Vallabhācārya's school of thought is also important to be discussed on this ground namely purṇādvaitavāda or pure non-dualistic theory that holds the finite soul and the inanimate world are essentially one with Brahman and have no separate existences at all. Brahman creates the world by the mere force of will. Vallabha agrees with Rāmānuja that Brahman is the whole and the jīva-s are the parts of Brahman but he disagrees with Rāmānuja with respect to the thesis that Brahman and the jīva-s are essentially same. The Bengal Vaishnava school, especially the scholar Jīva Gosvāmin has agreed with Vallabha in maintaining that the jīvas are monadic fragments of the complete, but especially refuses to accept complete non-difference between the jivas and Brahman. Jīva Gosvāmin's has shown that the scriptures have established the difference in non-difference. Now Nimabārka's doctrine is mostly common to Bengal's thought. But the difference between all other schools and Vaishnava thought of Bengals consists in adopting different approaches. The Bengal school is not at all concerned with the ultimate liberation; in the sense all the known philosophical schools think. But the Bengal school would like to attain the path of bhakti or complete devotion is regarded as fifth puruṣārtha more precious than any other. The earlier Vaishnavas also accept bhakti but not as Bengal's Vaishnava philosophers did. If and only if the path of the ultimate goal; Kṛṣṇaprema, is bhakti, then only the eternal relation of difference-in-non-difference between the individuals and the supreme can be attained by a whole heartedly by a worshipper or bhakta. This relation is philosophically and logically inexplicable.

The word ‘acintya’ or unthinkability should not be confused with the concept of anirvacya or ‘unspeakable’; that adheres by the Advaitins who has considered the world neither as real nor unreal from the point of their world view. Interestingly the contemporary philosopher Dr. Sudhindra Chandra Chakravarti has shown the logical similarity between Bengal Vaishnava school of thought about the concept ‘acintya’ and Jaina’s thesis of ‘saptabhanginyaya’. That reaffirms philosophical wisdoms consist in realising the limitations of reason. Significantly the term ‘acintya’ means supra-logical’ i.e; the nature of the ultimate reality, the relation between śakti and śaktimāna, and the reality with the world and the individuals are not attainable by mere human reasons or by any non-testimonial source of knowledge. Only attainable through the self-realisation of the Vedic words. In this case Jīva Gosvamin’s concept of true cognition or vaiduṣa pratyakṣa or aparakṣānubhava is referable.

In this context we need to discuss the relation between the ultimate reality and the world should. In this occasion two broadcast has been shown by the philosophical schools; parinama-vada and vivarta-vada. The advocates of Bengal School of course, admit the validity of parinama vada. The world is created as the expansions of energy (vikāsa of śakti). The supreme has energized the His materialistic charm or guṇa māyā (jadāprakṛti) to enlarge a creative seed into its destined growth in its fullest manifestation. But essentially remains same. In Caitanya Caritāmṛta it is stated-

abichintyaśaktiyukta sṛībhagavan/  
icchay jagadrūpe paye pariṇam//  
tathāpi acintyaśakti haye adhikārī/  
prākṛta cintāmani tahe dṛṣṭānta dhari//  
nanaratnarāsi haye cintāmani haite/  
tathāpi mani rahe svarūpe abikṛte//<sup>11</sup>

The acceptance of parinamavāda entails the thesis of the ‘reality of the world’, addressed by all the earlier Vaishnavas, especially by Madhvācya. The great interpreter of this school, Baladeva Vidyābhusaṇa explains in his Prameya Ratnavali, where he refers a great statement of Mahabhārata –

Brahma satyam tapaḥ satyam satyam caiva prajāpatiḥ/  
satyad-bhutāni jātāni satyam bhutāmayam jagad//<sup>12</sup>

Brahman is real, tapah is real, prajapati brahma is real, from the ultimate reality the world is created, thus the whole world is real should be taken as real not as false.

#### • Sādhana and Prayojana – The uniformity of the means and its goal

There are two paths of bhakti in practice – first, the vaidhi-bhakti which means devotional practice of rules and regulations and secondly, ragānugā-bhakti, the devotional practice in search of the loving attraction. These two paths lead the aspirants to two different goals in the spiritual world. The practice of vaidhi-bhakti leads the aspirant to Vaikuntha, where a sense of awe and reverence towards the Lord prevails, whereas ragānugā-bhakti leads the aspirant to Vraja, where the natural loving feelings are prominent. After that prayojana or the final goal shows the final surrender to the lotus feet of Kṛṣṇa through kṛṣṇaprema.

#### Conclusion

The present discussion can be concluded by saying a few words about it. The definition of puruṣārtha is ‘yena prajukta puruṣaḥ pravartate sa puruṣārtha’, i.e. that motivates a person to act is puruṣārtha. In this system bhakti is the only means to attain Kṛṣṇaprema or the love for Kṛṣṇa. There is no doubt that almost all the schools of Indian Philosophy have largely accepted the importance of God as the controller of unseen fate (adṛṣṭa) of the persons; which plays the role of a mediator between an action and its result (karma and karmaphala). So, the liberation is only an effect of action or karma of the individuals and it is nothing but a sanction. Only the supreme has the prerogative of sanctioning that. It is accepted by Śankācārya in his Śārīrakabhāṣyam ‘tadānugraha-hetukena eva ca vijñānena mokṣasidhiḥ bhavitum arhati/ kutah? /tat-śrute/. Īsvarat tadānujñaya katṛitva-bhakṛtva-lakṣanasya saṁsārasya sidhiḥ’.<sup>13</sup> So, only by the bliss (anujna) is the reason (hetu) of samsara, only by His blessing is the only reason of attaining liberation and liberation is nothing but will power of the ultimate or Īsvarecha. Significantly the Bengal Vaishnava philosophy finds no other way except praising



the supreme from the bottom of one's heart. Therefore, a bhakta's attainable objective should be oriented to be 'getting bhagavanugraha or kṛpā which is not in his or her hand and all he or she can do here is to give their love to please the supreme. The text Naradīya Bhaktiśūtra has defined bhakti as 'sa tasmin premarūpa'<sup>14</sup> that clearly shows that bhakti and bhagabatprema are the one and the same. So, the sādhya or attainable goal and sādhana or the means to attain, also become one.

## References

<sup>1</sup> Dasamūla Śikṣām, p-1

<sup>2</sup> veda śāstre kahe sambandha abhidheya proyojona/Kṛṣṇa, Kṛṣṇa-prema, prema-tina mahādhana// mukhya gouna vṛtti kimva anyyaya vyatireke/ vedera pratijñā kevala kahaye Kṛṣṇake/- Caitanya Caritāmṛtam, ādilīlā, 2/13, p-22

<sup>3</sup> athaivam sucitanam śrīkṛṣṇa-vācya-vācakatā-lakṣaṇa sambandha tad-bhajana-lakṣaṇa-vidheya-tat-prema-lakṣaṇa-prayojonākhyānām arthānām nirṇayāya pramāṇam tāvad vinirṇīyate tatra puruṣasya bhramādi-doṣa-catuṣṭayatvāt sutarām acintyālaukika-vastu-sparśāyogyatvāc ca tat-prtyakṣādinyāpi sadoṣani tatas tāni pramāṇānīty anādi-siddha-sarva-puruṣa-paramparāsu sarva-laukikālaukika-jñāna-nidānatvād-aprakṛta-vacana-lakṣaṇo veda evāsmākam sarvātīta-sarvaśraya-sarvacintyāścārya-svabhāvam vastu vividiṣatām pramāṇam. – Jīva Gosvāmin, Tattvasandarbhā, p- 60

<sup>4</sup> Caitanya Caritāmṛtam, ādilīlā 2/13, p-22

<sup>5</sup> 'There are scriptural texts that describe Bhṛgavāna as 'cidghana', 'ānandaghana' and 'rasaghana' etc. it implies 'ghana' means following the dictum of Pāṇini, possesses a blessed form. Thus 'ghana' is used to convey the idea of mūrti. The body of the Bhāgavatam, being due to his svarūpa-śakti, is not phenomenal and human beings which are due to the jivaśakti only, but us non-phenomenal and spiritual and consists of pure being, consciousness, and bliss Saccidānanda, Caitanya Caritāmṛtam, p-67

<sup>6</sup> 'tadekmebākhāṇandanandasvarūpam tattvam thuskṛtapārameṣyadīkanandasamudayanam pamahansānām sadhanaśat tadatmyāpāne satyamāpi tadīyasvarūpaśakti-vaicitryam tadgrahaṇāsamarthyē cetasi yathā sāmānyato lakṣitam tathaiṣa sphurad ba tadvadevabibiktaśaktiśaktimattābhedaṭayā pratipadyamānā ba brahmeti sabdyate/ atha tadekam tattvam svarūpabhūtaiva śaktya kamāpi viśeṣem dhatṛ parasamāpi saktinam mūlaśrayarūpam tadanubhabānandasandohantarbhābitatādṛśabrahmānandanam bhāgavatparamhansanam tathanubhabaiksādhakatam-tadīyasvarūpānandaśaktiviśeṣatmaka-bhaktibhābiṣu-antarbahirapīndriyeṣu parisphurad ba tadabdeba bibiktatādṛśa-śaktiśaktimattābhedenā pratipadyamānā ba bhagabāniti śabdyate/' -Jīva Gosvāmin in Bhāgavat sandarbha, referred in Śrīrādhār Kramabikāś, p-22

<sup>7</sup> Dasamūlam, p-14

<sup>8</sup> Caitanya Caritāmṛtam, madhyalīlā, 6/158-160, p-414

<sup>9</sup> jīvera svarūpa haya kṛṣṇera nityadāsa/ kṛṣṇera taṭastha śakti bhedaḥbheda prakāśa// –Caitanya Caritāmṛta , madhyalīlā, 20/108-109, p-736

<sup>10</sup> dva suparṇā sayujā sakhayā samānam bṛkṣam pariyaśasvājate tayor-anayah pippalam svādvatti anaśnam anayo avicākaśiti/ samāne vṛkṣe puruṣo nimagna-anīśayā śocati muhyamānah yustam yadapaśyatyanīmasya mahīmanameti vitaśokah// – Svetasvetara Śruti. Śruti accepts the difference between Īsvara and jīva. Śruti establishes the non-difference between Brahman and the jīvas. – Prameya Ratnāvalī, p-48

<sup>11</sup> Caitanya Caritāmṛtam, p-174

<sup>12</sup> Prameya Ratnāvalī, p-10

<sup>13</sup> Brahmasūtra, śrīrakabhāṣya, p-680

<sup>14</sup> Śrīrakabhāṣya, p. 680

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