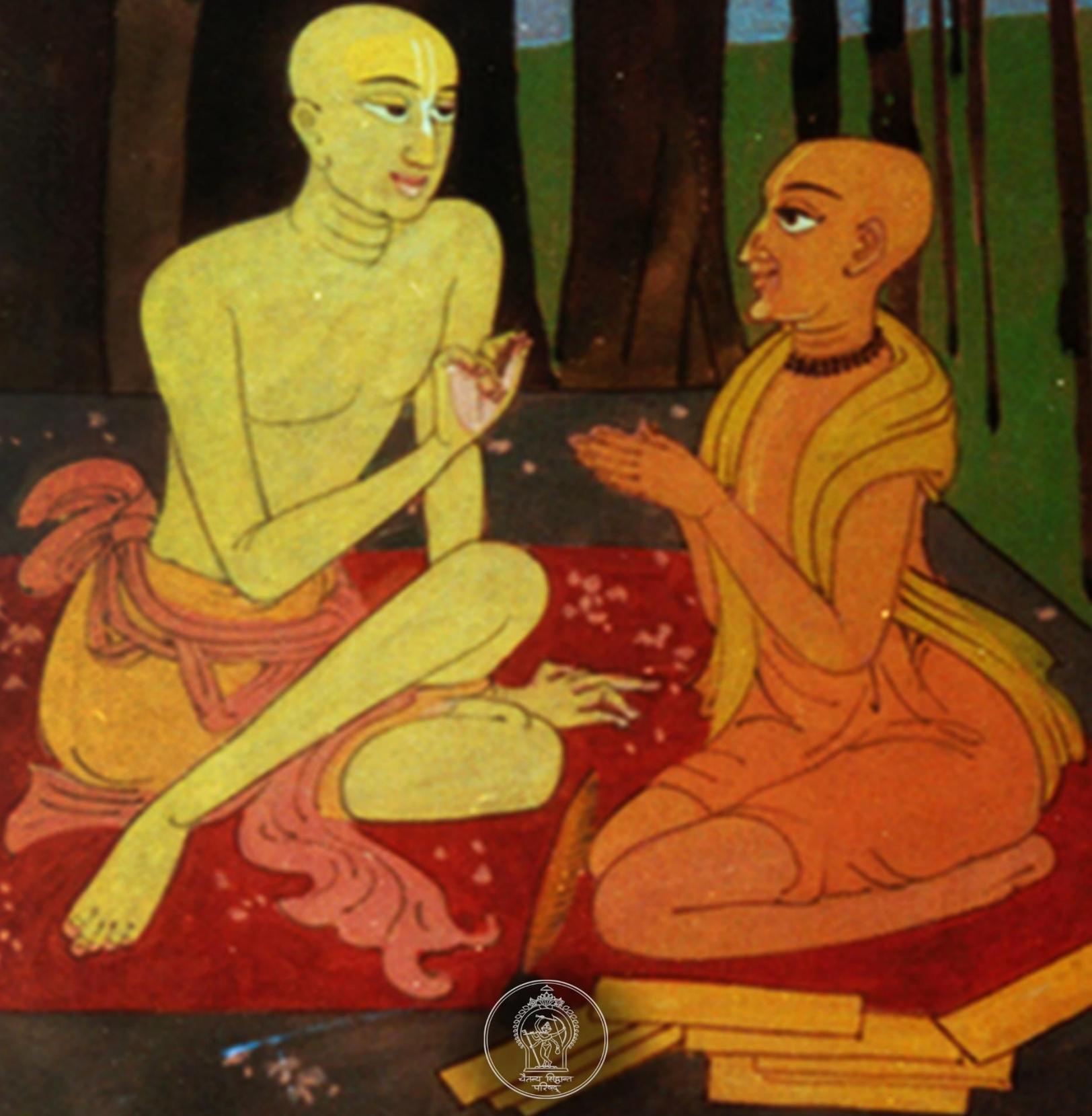


Caitanya Sampradāya's Acintya Bhedābheda Siddhānta



Caitanya Sampradāya's Acintya Bhedābheda Siddhanta

Based on the writings of
Dr. Radhagovindnath



Chaitanya Siddhanta Parishad

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About Chaitanya Siddhanta Parishad

Chaitanya Siddhant Parishad was established by a group of followers and students of Chaitanya Vaishnavism intended to spread the true knowledge of Chaitanya Philosophy through modern means. It intends to provide a platform for scholars of tradition and also outside the tradition to engage and work on the development of Chaitanya Vaishnav philosophy.

Rohit Lad
editorial manager
Chaitanya Siddhanta Parishad

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Chapter 1:

Reality of oneness 1

Chapter 2:

Advaya Tattva: One or Different? 5

Chapter 3:

Concept of Bhedābheda 8

Chapter 4:

Beyond Logic! 16

Chapter 5:

Acintya Bhedābheda 20

Chapter 6:

Advayatā of Brahman 29

Introduction

Caitanya Vaishnavism is a school of philosophy established by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and his followers, mainly six Goswāmīs of Vṛndāvan, in the 16th century. It is a Vedāntic school of thought based on the teachings of Lord Vyāsa in his work vedānta sūtras which is based on the upaniśadic teachings of the vedās. Caitanya Vaiśṇavism is a unique school of vedānta because instead of directly interpreting the vedānta sūtras it focuses mainly on the Śrīmad Bhāgavatam as the main source of philosophy. To explain Śrīmad Bhāgavatam, one of the main propounder of Caitanya Vaiśṇavism, Śrī Jīva Goswāmi composed Śrī Bhagvat Sandarbha also known as Śaṭ Sandarbhas and an auto commentary on it known as Sarva Samvādinī. In this work, he explained all aspects of philosophy, mainly epistemology, metaphysics, theology, soteriology, aesthetics, ethics, etc. Accepting Śrīmad Bhāgavatam as the main text doesn't mean that all other vedic scriptures are rejected but instead, it has been established that those texts should be interpreted in the light of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam including Vedas. In the first section of the tattva sandarbha he discusses how Śrīmad Bhāgavatam contains the original message of vedānta sūtras and there is no need for man-made commentaries on Vedānta sūtras, instead there is an inherent connection between these two texts which he himself shows for the first five sutras and later other ācāryas have also shown that connection for the entire Vedānta sūtras.

The entire Caitanya Philosophy is divided majorly into three sections namely sambandha, abhideya and prayojan. Sambandha means the relationship that is of absolute truth with the world, living beings etc. Abhideya means the path by which knowledge of that relationship can be realized. Prayojan means the experience after attaining that realization. So, while explaining the concept of Sambandha, propounders of Caitanya Vaiśṇavism like Sanātana Goswāmi and Jīva Goswāmi say that the absolute reality is non-

dual yet due to its inexplicable potency it manifests a real perception of duality in the form of Śakti and Śaktimat. This relationship of Śakti and Śaktimat is known as Acintyabhedābheda. In a gist, sambandha refers to acintya-bhedābheda, abhideya refers to uttama bhakti and prayojana refers to prema for the Caitanya School.

Another doubt raised by many are that this term of Acintya Bhedābheda is proposed by Śrī Jīva Goswāmi and is not given by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. But this is not the case as we find many references to this Bhedābheda Siddhānta in many of granthas of our Goswāmis, who are directly instructed by Śrīman Mahāprabhu, like Hari Bhakti Vilāsa by Śrī Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Goswāmi and Śrī Sanātana Goswāmi, Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta by Śrī Sanātana Goswāmi, etc. This is also indicated by Śrīdhara Swāmi in his ṭikā on Śrī Viṣṇu purāṇa who is accepted as an authority by Śrīman Mahāprabhu. Also, similar explanation of inexplicable bhedābheda between Śakti and Śaktimān is also instructed in Ahirbudhnya Samhitā of Pāñcarātra Āgama.

In this booklet, there is a discussion of the philosophy of Acintyabhedābheda in contrast to other Vedāntic philosophies and its interpretation of different Vedāntic texts. The objective of this booklet is to give a brief overview of Acintyabhedābheda philosophy. This is helpful for both Scholars and curious practitioners of the text. The content of the text is based on the writings of Dr Radhagovindnath a stalwart scholar of Caitanya Vaiṣṇavism from the 20th century whose works serve as a perfect guide for multiple scholars of tradition and outside tradition. His exposition of Caitanya Philosophy is most authentic in the modern era.

Life of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu (1486-1533 AD) appeared in the town of Nadia, West Bengal in the house of Jagannāth Miśra. He was born in a traditional Brāhmin family and underwent rigorous training in Indian Knowledge systems in a traditional setup. On a pilgrimage to Gaya, he met his spiritual master Ísvara Puri and accepted the Vaiśṇava philosophy established by Mādhavendra Puri. He later along with his associates practiced and preached this philosophy revealed by Mādhavendra Puri in the town of Nadia. He also organized a resistance movement against the ruling Muslim power of the area that were creating the disturbance in the practicing of spiritual pursuits of the local population. To expand his spiritual missions, he took a renounced order of life and settled in the temple town of Puri, Orissa. There he met the great Indian philosopher and logician Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya and had deep philosophical conversations with him. He convinced Sārvabhauma to accept the philosophical school of Mādhvendra Puri which would be later called Acintyabhedābhed. He also travelled to South India and had discussions with various scholars on a diverse range of topics. The main discussion is with Rāya Rāmānanda the royal governor serving under the rule of gajapatis of Kalinga. Similarly, he travelled to Kashi, and Prayag and had discussions with various scholars and proved the supremacy of his philosophy over others. The life of Śrī Caitanya is not that of a scholar who wants to establish his philosophy rather it is a journey of compassion filled with the highest forms of expression of love. He believes in an all-encompassing society for all beings irrespective of any kind of differences natural or man-made. He accepts that pure devotion towards Śrī Kṛṣṇa is the only way to achieve the highest standards of ethics and morality that can lead to a perfect society free from all kinds of evils. On his trips, he met his main followers that are the Six Goswāmis of Vṛndāvan which includes Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Sanātan, Śrī Gopāl Bhaṭṭa, Śrī Raghunātha Bhaṭṭa, Śrī Raghunātha Dās and Śrī Jīva. Śrī Caitanya never wrote any works

like other propounders but instructed his Six Goswāmi to compose comprehensive texts based on his teachings. Some of his direct words are recorded by Śrī Rupa Goswāmi in his work padyāvali which are later compiled in the form of Śikṣāṣṭakam. In this, he has propounded the pure devotion of Kṛṣṇa and the highest goal of it which is love for Kṛṣṇa. His life is recorded in many works by his followers like Caitanya Bhāgavat of Vṛndāvan Dās and Caitanya Caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadās Kavirāj.

1. Reality of oneness

There are variety of opinions regarding the topic of relation between Jīvas and Brahman. Some say that Jīvas and Brahman are absolutely non-different, such as Śaṅkarācārya while others say that Jīvas and Brahman are absolutely different, such as Madhvācārya. Gautama, Kaṇāda, Kapila, Patanjali, etc. share a similar opinion and are bhedavādīs. Others like Pauraṇikas, (certain) Śaivas and Bhāskarācārya are Bhedābhedavādīs. (Sarvasamvādinī, pg.149)

Śrīpad Śaṅkarācārya aiming to prove radical non-difference between Jīva and Brahman has denied real existence of Śakti in Brahman and despite the presence of sangati for mukhyārtha has neglected that and accepted lakṣaṇa vṛtti of Śruti statements like Tat tvam asi.

He says that Brahman is advaya tattva; Advaya tattva is a tattva that is devoid of all kinds of bhedas. If Śakti is accepted, then the kriyā of Śakti resulting in bhedas will also have to be accepted. This will result in harm to the concept of Brahman's advayatā.

There are some who say this: “In what manner could bheda be denied? We are observing bheda with our very eyes, the universe full of innumerable variety! This includes crores and crores of endless jīvas and these are all effects of Brahman as well-known through dictums of Upaniśads and Vedānta. Bheda is a fact proven by perception. How could all this be denied?”

To them Śrī Śankara replies: “That which you are perceiving as innumerable variegated universe that is actually just an illusion. Some mistake a rope as a snake in the dark. In reality, there is no such thing as snake in that place. Similarly, what you think you perceive as the world, that world has no real existence. It is just an

illusion that you are perceiving owing to the effect of Māyā. As the effect/influence of Māyā diminishes, you will realize that there is no such thing as the world but Brahman alone exists in its place. And what you speak of as “jīva”, even that is an illusion in a similar manner. This illusion of jīvas is also a product of Māyā.

When Māyā’s effect is no longer felt, then every so-called Jīva will be perceived as only Brahman. Essentially, there is no substance called Jīva. Only one Brahman devoid of qualifiers and Śaktis exists.

In this manner, showing the falsify of jagat and jīva, Śankara, has practically brought them to the platform of śunyatā to show the advayatā of his Brahman. But that it has really proved advayatā of Brahman, cannot really be said! Because, as he has taken jīva and jagat to the level of śunyatā, he has accepted the prabhāva (influence) of Māyā but he has not been able to find a solution to the existence of Māyā. Though, Śruti and smriti has declared- Māyā is Brahman’s Śakti, Śaṅkarācārya has not accepted this in toto. If he would accept this, then Brahman cannot be called devoid of Śakti. And if the Māyā Śakti is accepted then advayatā of Brahman cannot be accepted in the manner he is trying to prove it. Conversely, if Māyā is not accepted then Jagat cannot be proved false.

But what exactly is Māyā? He has not specified it clearly. He only says: “Māyā is neither Sat nor Asat”: That ‘Māyā exists’-This cannot be said (if this is said, then there is acceptance of a second tattva). Nor can ‘Māyā doesn’t exist’ be said (for if it didn’t, then what he has said about Jagat being mithyā resulting from the function of Māyā, even this statement has to be termed mithyā).

Hence his opinion is:” Māyā is ineffable (anirvacanīya)”

But just like something being “vācya” is a vastu, similarly whatever is “anirvācya” should similarly be a vastu. By accepting Māyā, he

has practically accepted the existence of a vastu other than Brahman.

He has called this Māyā as ajñāna, while Brahman is jñāna-svarūpa. This means, Māyā is a vijātiya vastu to Brahman. By accepting Māyā which is something other than Brahman he has undoubtedly accepted a vijātiya bheda to Brahman. So, Brahman cannot be declared devoid of all bhedas and by implication: Advaya tattva.

Again, to prove Brahman as Advaya, he has declared Brahman to be devoid of Śakti's (निःशक्तिः). Factually, Brahman cannot be devoid of Śakti's because if existence of Brahman is accepted, then at least two Śakti's must be accepted in Brahman:

1. Śakti of अस्तित्वरक्षा [maintenance of Its own existence]
2. Śakti of ब्रह्मतारक्षा, i.e. सर्वबृहत्त्वा and सर्वव्यापकता [maintenance of Its status as Brahman (Attribute of ultimate greatness and Attribute of pervading everything)]

There can be no conceivable substance which is devoid of अस्तित्वरक्षा and even if conceived, there is an impossibility of such a substance having existence as well. शक्तिहीन vastu cannot be a bhāva-vastu (existence) but can indeed be an abhāva-vastu (non-existence), i.e., śūnya.

Therefore, by not accepting Śakti in Brahman, Śrī Śankara has not only brought Jīva and Jagat to the level of śūnya but also has done the same to Brahman. Perhaps, that's why some have declared: मायावादमसच्छास्त्रं प्रच्छन्नबौद्धमुच्यते.

The natural conclusion is- It cannot be said that the endeavor of not accepting Śakti in Brahman for the purpose of declaring Brahman as advaya was really a success.

Now, the question is how could advayatā of Brahman is established by accepting Śaktis in Brahman? This is shown by the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas and will be discussed in next Chapter.

2. Advaya Tattva: One or Different?

After taking a look at Śaṅkarācārya's ātyāntika abhedavāda, let's take a look at Madhvācārya's Bhedavāda. According to him, Jīva and Brahman are two completely distinct tattvas and two distinct vastus altogether. However, just as Brahman is cid-vastu, jīva too is cid vastu. In this sense, Jīva is samāna-jātīya dvītīya vastu to Brahman, hence he has accepted sajātīya bheda to Brahman.

Śrī Madhva is not concerned with establishing the Advayatā of Brahman (in the manner Śrī Śankara is). However, he is also an advaya-vādī. SB 1.2.11 is also fundamental to his followers. This śloka declares that Paratattva vastu is Advaya-jñāna-tattva vastu (Nondual consciousness)

But Śrī Madhva's Advaya tattva and that of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇava acāryas is also not identical.

Śrī Rāmānujācārya is also an advayavādī. His doctrine is called Viśiṣṭādvaitavāda. But his Advayatā and the Advayatā accepted by the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas is also not exactly similar.

Śrī Rāmānujā says: "Cit and Acit are two vastus that are other than the Svarūpa (Svarūpātirikta). Cit are Jīvas and Acit are things like Prakṛti, Śuddhasattva, etc."

According to Rāmānujācārya, these two are distinct from Svarūpa but nevertheless dependent upon Svarūpa (Svarūpāśrīta)- hence they are completely different entities/substances altogether.

He says: "Ishvara is the Svarūpa that is qualified by Cit and Acit". An example to understand this: He who has a "śikhā"(tuft) is called "śikhi"(one qualified by a tuft). "Śikhi" refers to the vastu qualified

by a “śikha”. If the śikhā is cut off, then he can no longer be called a “śikhi” or rather a “śikhā viśiṣṭa vastu”.

Similarly, if the Svarūpa is not qualified by Cit and Acit, i.e., if Svarūpa is not “cit-acit viśiṣṭa”, then it can no longer be called ‘Īśvara’. It would then be called pure or Kevala Svarūpa.

Śrī Rāmānuja says- Śāstra doesn’t speak of Svarūpa alone- i.e., Svarūpa devoid of Cit and Acit viśeṣaṇas. Only “cit-acit viśiṣṭa svarūpa” is described in Śāstra and that is none other than Īśvara.

The distinction of this conception from that of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavās is that Śrī Rāmānuja says “cit and acit, that are āśrita on the Svarūpa are two different vastus”; but Caitanya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas say- “Cit and acit are the Śaktis of the Svarūpa, so they are not other than the Svarūpa (i.e., not Svarūpātirikta).

Śrī Jīva Goswāmi says- In Brahman, “Ānanda/Bliss” alone is the Viśeṣya (qualificandum) and its Śaktis are the viśeṣaṇas (qualifiers) of this “Ananda/Bliss”.

समस्तशक्तिरूप-विशेषण-विशिष्ट आनन्द (Bliss qualified by the entirety of its Śaktis) is भगवान् (Bhagavān)

आनन्दमात्रं विशेष्यम् । समस्ताः शक्तयः विशेषणानि । विशिष्टो भगवान् इति आयातम्
(Tīkā on SB 1.2.11)

Regarding the essential meaning of viśiṣṭatva, there does not seem to be much difference in the views of Śrī Rāmānuja and Śrī Jīva Goswāmi. Difference between them is seen regarding these few points:

1. Rāmānuja says-Cit and Acit are distinct vastus. However, in Śrī Jīva’s opinion, since both are Śakti, it is not necessary to call them two distinct vastus; In so far, as they are Śaktis, they are one in that sense. A rough example would be “An anklet

and a ring, both being intrinsically gold are one ,as far as the Vastu is one Gold alone”

2. Śrī Jīva’s doctrine is rather very comprehensive (vyāpaka). He says that all Śaktis are Brahman’s viśeṣaṇas. While in Śrī Rāmānuja’s school, Cit (jīvas) and acit (of prākṛta and aprākṛta varieties) vastus are Brahman’s viśeṣaṇas.
3. Śrī Rāmānuja accepts bheda alone between Śakti and Śaktimān. श्रीरामानुजीयास्तु शक्तिशक्तिमतोर्भेदमेव वर्णयति (Sarvasamvādinī pg.39). But Caitanya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas don’t accept only bheda between Śakti and Śaktimān.
4. Śrī Rāmānuja accepts svagata-bheda within Brahman. In his view, Cit and Acit are Svagata bhedas of Brahman. Śrī Jīva doesn’t accept any of the three bhedas within Brahman.

3. Concept of Bhedābheda

Caitanya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas are neither bhedavādīs nor abhedavādīs. They are Bhedābhedavādīs but their Bhedābhedavāda is unlike that of Gautama, Kaṇāda, etc. but is much more comprehensive.

Prior to this, in the discussion of Jīvatattva, a (general) Bhedābheda sambandha between Brahman and Jīva was depicted. But in that place, two reasons for Bhedābheda were given:

1. Jīva is Brahman's part and Brahman is the whole inclusive of parts. As there is bhedābheda sambandha between amśa and amśi, so there is bhedābheda between Jīva and Brahman.
2. Bheda-vācaka and Abheda-vācaka statements are both seen in Śruti. But there is an internal contradiction between them. Hence bhedābheda sambandha between Jīva and Brahman is to be accepted.

But why would there be Bhedābheda sambandha and why do Śruti proclaim either bheda-vācaka statements or abheda-vācaka statements between Jīvas and Brahman at all? No inspection of that had been done till now.

The Bhedābhedavāda of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas has been established in a most comprehensive platform. From that platform, it may be observed that, the very reason for which there is bhedābheda sambandha between amśas and amśi, for that precise reason alone, it is observed that there is mutual difference in the statements made by the Śrutis. The reason for both of them is the same and due to that very reason the Bhedābheda of the Vaiṣṇavas is the most comprehensive (in its application). This Bhedābheda sambandha is not just between Jīva and Brahman but also of

Brahman with every other entity. By this, all such problems could be solved. This verily is an exceptional specialty of the Caitanya Vaiṣṇavas. This Bhedābheda is called “Acintya bhedābheda tattva”. This tattva will be discussed henceforth.

Achintya bhedābheda of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava ācāryas is based upon the concept of utter inseparability of Śakti and Śaktimān. Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas have accepted the existence of Śakti in Brahman. This acceptance is based on Śruti.

They say that among Brahman’s infinite Śaktis, three are principal: Svarūpa-Śakti, Māyā-Śakti and Jīva-Śakti.

The evidence of Svarūpa Śakti is found in Śvetaśvatara Upaniśad:

परास्य शक्तिर्विविधैव श्रूयते । स्वाभाविकी ज्ञान बल क्रिया च ॥

In this statement, the word “Parā” describes this particular Śakti as “cit-svarūpa” (of the nature of consciousness) and the existence of this Śakti is natural within the “Svarūpa”.

The evidence of Māyā-Śakti is found in the Bhagavad-Gītā, the essence of all Upaniśads:

भूमिरापोऽनलो वायुः खं मनो बुद्धिरेव च ।

अहंकार इतीयं मे भिन्ना प्रकृतिरष्टधा ॥

and

दैवी ह्येषा गुणमयी मम माया दुरत्यया ॥

Śvetaśvatara Upaniśad (4.10) says:

मायान्तु प्रकृतिं विद्यान्मायिनञ्च महेश्वरम् ।

In other Upaniśads as well, the mention of Trigunātmikā Māyā is found:

अजामेकां लोहित शुक्ल कृष्णां बह्वीः प्रजाः सृज्यमानं स्वरूपाः ।

The Jīva-Śakti is also described in the Bhagavad-Gītā(7.5):

अपरेयमितस्त्वन्यां प्रकृतिं विद्धि मे पराम् ।

जीवभूता महाबाहो ययेदं धार्यते जगत् ॥

Vishnu Purana (6.7.61) mentions existence of the three kinds of Śaktis:

विष्णुशक्तिः परा प्रोक्ता क्षेत्रज्ञाख्या तथापरा ।

अविद्याकर्म संज्ञान्या तृतीया शक्तिरिष्यते ॥

All these Śaktis are natural (svābhāvikī) to Brahman, meaning that they are utterly inseparable from Brahman.

They are situated within Brahman, or rather in a state of eternal conflux (संभव) and are as a result ever present utterly inseparable from it.

Śaktis are not accidental (आगन्तुक) like the presence of burning potential (dāhikā-Śakti) within iron as a result of it attaining oneness of essential nature with fire due to prolonged contact with it (अग्नि तादात्म्य प्राप्त लौहम्).

In reality, the periodic projection of a particular potential (Śakti) into another substance, does not qualify that potential to be called Śakti of that substance.

In the “अग्नि तादात्म्य प्राप्त लौहम्” example cited above, there is periodic/temporal presence of the Burning potential in iron which is accidental and it cannot be called “the iron’s inherent burning potential” (दाहिका शक्ति) proper.

The substratum of the ‘burning potential’ (i.e. Śaktimān) is Fire alone because the ‘burning potential’ has the relation of utter inseparability with the Fire alone.

This “relation of utter inseparability” is indeed the identity of a Śaktimān’s Śakti. And this is not just true for Brahman and its Śaktis but rather it applies to all Śaktis and their Śaktimān.

In Śrī Caitanya Caritāmṛta (1.4.84), Śrīpad Kavirāja Goswāmi has given the examples of two substances to attempt to explain this relation of utter inseparability of Śaktis and Śaktimān:

মৃদমদ তার গন্ধ য়ছে অবচ্ছদে |
অগ্নিজ্বালাতে য়ছে নাই কভু ভদে | |
mṛgamada, tāra gandha yaiche aviccheda
agni, jvālāte yaiche kabhu nāhi bheda

Just like fragrance cannot be separated from musk and just like the Burning power or Heat cannot be separated from Fire, similarly, Śakti cannot be separated from Śaktimān.

Burning potential of fire is utterly inseparable from Fire itself, even if someone tries to do it for crores of times.

However, in some places, there is talk of “Agni-stambhana”. Some Mahauśadhis (special combination of herbs) when put into fire, can obstruct the actualization/materialization of the fire’s burning potential despite no change in the fire’s appearance in terms of its attributes like Brightness, etc. When one puts one’s palm into such a fire which is in that state, then his hand does not burn.

The dāhikā-Śakti of fire appears to have been destroyed by the effect of the Mahauśadhi. So, one could conclude that the dāhikā-Śakti has really become separated from the fire and having being separated from it, has been destroyed. But drawing such an inference is improper.

Rather, the correct conclusion is that by the influence of the Mahauśadhi, the dāhikā-Śakti's expression has been halted (Śakti-stambhana) and it cannot manifest its effect in the form of the phenomenon of burning. But it should not be thought of as having being destroyed completely.

Coming back to the main discussion, since Śakti cannot be utterly separated from Śaktimān, both together are said to constitute a single Vastu.

Vastu is the Qualificand (viśeśya) and its Śaktis is the Qualifier (viśeṣaṇa). Hence, Qualificand and Qualifier both constitute a single Vastu.

In Brahman, "Ānanda" (Bliss) is Qualificand and Śaktis are its Qualifiers.

Hence, Brahman is "Ānanda, inclusive of (or qualified by) Śaktis"

The Qualificand is in an utterly inseparable relation with its Qualifier.

Hence Qualificand (viśeśya) inclusive of Qualifier (viśeṣaṇa) is the Substance (Vastu).

In this regard, some raise an objection:

If Qualificand and Qualifier are inherent in it, are together to be called "Vastu", and if such Qualifiers or Śaktis are utterly inseparable from the Qualificand or Śaktimān, then what is even the purpose of accepting something called "Śakti" in the first place? Wouldn't it suffice to only accept the term "Vastu"?

“वस्तुतोऽत्यन्तव्यतिरेकेण तस्य निरूप्यत्वाभा वान्न ततः पृथक्त्वमस्तीत्यभिप्रायेणैव तथोक्तमिति ज्ञेयम् । वस्तुतस्तु – का तत्र शक्तिर्नाम?” (Sarvasamvādinī pg. 36)

Śrī Jīva answers this objection as follows:

“इति मतस्तु न वेदान्तिनां मतम् ।; सत्यपि वस्तुनि मन्त्रादिना शक्ति स्तम्भादि दर्शनात् युक्ति विरुद्धञ्चैतत् ।” (Sarvasamvādinī pg. 36)

This is not the opinion of Vedāntins. By the influence of mantras (and also particular stones and herbs), there is an experience of obstruction in the actualization of the effect of a Śakti inherent in a substance sometimes (in the absence of which, it seems that there is non-existence of such a Śakti in it) but the Substance continues to exist. Just like, in the case of obstruction of the actualization of the Burning potential of the Fire, the Fire itself continues to exist.

Thus, denial of a separate term for Śakti (like in the example of the Burning potential of Fire) is illogical.

In the case of Agni-stambhanam (mentioned previously), it was seen that even in the absence of the perception of its Śakti, the Śaktimān is nonetheless, perceived to exist. Even though one's hand does not burn when put into such a fire, the fire itself is still perceived. Thus, using two separate expressions like “Fire” and “Burning potential (dāhikā śakti)” is not useless and it is legitimate.

Now let's discuss whether the relation between Śakti and Śaktimān could be termed “Bheda” or “Abheda”, taking into account the perception of them as being utterly inseparable.

Taking again the example of musk (kasturi), let's discuss this. When the fragrance of musk cannot be separated from the musk itself, then there seems to be an absence of any difference between the two. But when trying to describe this inseparability of the two as exclusively “abheda”, we encounter a problem in this regard.

We experience the musk's smell even when there is absence of the visual perception of the musk. Even in cases where the musk is situated at some distance, the fragrance of musk is still perceived.

Let's look at another example. When a bunch of Jasmine flowers are kept at one part of the house, their fragrance spreads over and can

be perceived even outside the house. In a similar manner, when the “fragrance of musk” is perceived outside the “musk” itself, then, they cannot be expressed as “absolutely identical”.

Once again, taking the example of “fragrance” issuing forth even outside “physical manifestation of the musk”, logically there should be “absolute difference” between the two. But this also cannot be stated, as this would also lead to another problem being encountered:

If “musk” and “its fragrance” are taken to be absolutely distinct, then they must be considered to be two “separate entities (vastus)” just like water is composed of two absolutely separate entities like oxygen atoms and hydrogen atoms.

If “musk” and “its fragrance” are thought of as two distinct substances like oxygen and hydrogen atoms, then they would have to be taken as two separate materials which aggregate to constitute the entity (vastu) known as “fragrant musk”.

It they are thought of as two separate constituting materials, then the issuing forth of “fragrance” from the “musk” would logically lead to decrease in mass of the entity called “fragrant musk”.

Thus “musk” and “it’s fragrance” are not two separate entities (vastus) and “bheda” between them also cannot be accepted.

Observing it in this manner, just like “abheda” alone is untenable between musk and its fragrance, “bheda” alone is also untenable. Thus, just like “existence of bheda” is perceptible to us, similarly, “existence of abheda” is also perceptible.

On this issue, Śrī Jīva has spoken regarding this “untenability”. Since there is inability to conceive of “Śakti” as utterly identical to the “Svarūpa”, there is perception of “Bheda”. Similarly, since there is inability to conceive “Śakti” as utterly distinct from the “Svarūpa”, there is perception of “Abheda”.

Hence, there is no recourse but to accept presence of both “Bheda” and “Abheda” parallelly between “Śakti” and “Śaktimān” and even the nature of such a “Bhedābheda” has to be accepted as “Acintya”.

“तस्मात् स्वरूपादभिन्नत्वेन चिन्तयितुमशक्यत्वाद् भेदः, भिन्नत्वेन चिन्तयितुमशक्यत्वाद् अभेदश्च प्रतीयत इति शक्तिशक्तिमतोर्भेदाभेदवेवाङ्गीकृतौ । तौ च अचिन्त्यौ इति ।”
(Sarvasamvādinī pg. 36-37).

4. Beyond Logic!

Śrī Jīva has also explained why conception of either “Kevala-bheda” (absolute distinction) and “Kevala-abheda” (absolute identity) between Śakti and Śaktimān is untenable.

FAULT IN KEVALA-ABHEDA

First of all, the fault/difficulty that arises in accepting “Kevala-abheda”, he has explained by citing and discussing a shloka from Vishnu Purana (6.8.7):

ज्ञातश्चतुर्विधो राशिः शक्तिश्च त्रिविधा गुरो ।

विज्ञाता चापि कात्सर्येन त्रिविधा भावभावना ।।

In this shloka, Maitreya after being taught by Paraśara, is telling the latter about what he has recently learnt from him. He says: “Ācārya, you have taught me regarding the four-fold manifestations of the Absolute Truth..”; the four-fold manifestations here refer to: Brahman, Īshvara, Virāṭ-rūpa and Līlā-mūrti. This verse mentioning the four-fold manifestations (caturvidha-rāshi) pertains to the Svarūpa of the Absolute Truth (as immediately after this, Maitreya says that he also has also been taught about the three-fold Śaktis of the Absolute Truth).

By the influence of its inherent Śaktis alone, the Substance-Absolute Truth (Para-tattva-vastu) manifests variety (vaicitrya) as the four-fold manifestations.

If Śakti is assumed to be absolutely identical to Śaktimān, then the previously mentioned “Four-fold manifestation” would also have to

be assumed as mutually absolutely identical manifestations, and if that is the case, then these “Four-fold manifestations” would automatically be assumed to have an identical meaning as well. If that is the intention of Maitreya, then there is no requirement in using four distinct terms/names as this would invariably lead to the “Fault of Repetition” (punarokti-dosha). But such a fault cannot be attributed to Śāstra.

After this, Śrī Jīva cites a Śruti-vākya and discusses it. “विज्ञानम् आनन्दं ब्रह्म” (Brihadāraṇyaka Upaniśad 3.9.28) “Brahman is Consciousness and Bliss”.

By the word “vijñāna” (Consciousness), the counter-correlative of inertness (jaḍa-virodhitva) is meant; while by the word “ānanda” (Bliss), the counter-correlative of sorrow (duḥkha-virodhitva) is understood.

The purport of this Śruti-vākya is: Brahman is vijñāna (jaḍa-virodhī, i.e., ajaḍa or cinMāyā) and ānanda or sukha-svarūpa (duḥkha-virodhī, i.e., it does not even have a speck or shadow of duḥkha). Both of these are the dharmas (attributes) of Brahman’s svarūpa and arise as the outcome of the actualization of the Svarūpa-Śakti inherent in Brahman.

If absolute identity (atyāntika-abheda) between Śakti and Śaktimān is accepted, then the two distinct words (vijñāna and ānanda) would have to be taken as conveying the same or identical meaning. That would again invariably lead to the “Fault of Repetition” (punarokti dosha). But such a fault cannot be accepted in Śruti.

In this way, Śrī Jīva has shown that acceptance of absolute identity (kevala-abheda), there will be an unavoidable difficulty presenting before us.

FAULT IN KEVALA-BHEDA

Śrī Jīva also says that if “Kevala-bheda” is accepted, even then there would be unavoidable faults/difficulties presenting before us.

Here, he again refers to the previously quoted Śruti-vākya: “विज्ञानम् आनन्दं ब्रह्म” and discusses it further. In this statement, if “vijñāna” and “ānanda” are taken to have identical meanings then they would lead to “Punarokti-dosha” as previously described.

Now, if they are taken to have two distinct meanings, then we would have to accept “Svagata-bheda” (internal differences) within Brahman. But, even that is a fault/difficulty since Brahman is one non-dual tattva devoid of all kinds of distinctions” (सर्वविधभेदरहित अद्वयतत्त्व).

“किमिह विज्ञानानन्दशब्दौ एकार्थौ वा? नाद्यः – पौनरुक्त्यात् । अन्त्यश्चेत् विज्ञानत्वमानन्दत्वञ्च तत्रैकस्मिन्नेव इति तादृश स्वगतभेदापत्तिः॥”
(Sarvasamvādinī, pg. 38)

ACINTYA BHEDĀBHEDA ACCORDING TO OTHERS

Śrī Jīva Goswāmi has done an elaborate logical discussion on Bheda and Abheda. In its conclusion, he gives this siddhānta-” There are innumerable faults arising in case one considers kevala-bheda between Śakti and Śaktimān; similarly, innumerable faults arise if one considers kevala-abheda between them”. By argumentation (tarka) alone, one cannot reach a faultless conclusion. That’s why, just as it is difficult to describe Śakti and Śaktimān purely in terms of bheda, similarly, it is difficult to describe Śakti and Śaktimān purely as Abheda.

This is the reason, some other people, failing to logically think of Śakti-Śaktimān purely in terms of either bheda or abheda, have no

other choice but to accept “Acintya (in this particular case, meaning, logically irreconcilable) Bhedābheda”.

“अपरे तु तर्कप्रतिष्ठानात् (ब्र० सू० २.१.१) भेदेऽप्यभेदेऽपि निर्मर्याददोष सन्तति दर्शनेन भिन्नतया चिन्तयितुमशक्यत्वादभेदं साधयन्तः तद्वदभिन्नतयापि चिन्तयितुम् अशक्यत्वाद् भेदमपि साधयन्तोऽचिन्त्य भेदाभेदवाद स्वीकुर्वन्ति ।” (Sarvasamvādinī pg.149)

5. Acintya Bhedābheda

It is pertinent to consider here, what Śrī Jīva Goswāmi has to say about the mutual Abheda and Bheda between Śakti(s) and Śaktimān. Śrī Jīva says, in Sarvasamvādinī:

“अत्र प्रागुक्तं स्वरूपम् एव कार्योन्मुखं शक्ति-शब्देनोक्तम्”, “अतः स्वरूपस्य कार्योन्मुखत्वेनैव शक्तित्वं, न स्वत इत्यायातम् ।”, “ततश्च विशेष्य-रूपं तदेव स्वयं शक्तिमद्-विशेषण-रूपं, कार्योन्मुखत्वं तु शक्तिः, जगच्च कार्य-क्षमत्व-मूलम् इति । तत्-क्षमत्वादि-रूपा नित्यैव सा शक्तिरिति अवगम्यते।”.

He says that the kāryonmukha dravya/svarūpa itself is that dravya’s Śakti. Thus, there is no vastugata-bheda between a dravya and a dravya’s Śakti. But accepting kevala/atyāntika bheda between them gives rise to faults, since, although there is just abheda as far as, they being one vastu is concerned, they still are not utterly identical in all respects-since kāryonmukhatva is seen in Śakti(s) but it is not seen in the Dravya. In this respect, there is bheda between the two. But this kind of bheda cannot be considered atyāntika because that would lead to denial of the vastugata-abheda between the two.

In a previous discussion, it was observed that to think of Śakti and Śaktimān, by purely logical means, through the lens of ‘Abheda’ alone gives rise to problems which don’t have any solution. Similarly, to think of Śakti-Śaktimān, purely by logical means, through the lens of ‘Bheda’ alone gives rise to yet other problems which similarly, have no solution.

So, finding no recourse, a logician has to accept the presence of ‘Bheda’ and ‘Abheda’ simultaneously. But this acceptance is borne out of helplessness due to the inability to logically reconcile them.

Other than this, there is no other reason to justify it. But can we actually arrive at a firm philosophical conclusion, in this regard?

The answer to this question comes from the Viṣṇu-purāṇa.

शक्तयः सर्वभावानामचिन्त्यज्ञानगोचराः (Viṣṇu-purāṇa 1.3.2)

“Every existent entity has Śaktis that are ‘acintya-jñāna-gocara”.

That knowledge (jñāna) which cannot be established by reasoning (yukti) and argumentation (tarka) alone or independently, but also cannot be rejected as false because it is established by being directly experienced by perception, is indeed to be known as “acintya-jñāna”. This is also called “arthāpatti-jñāna”.

Let’s look at some common examples: “Sugar is sweet”; But why is it sweet?

“Yavakṣāra (an alkali preparation made of barley) is bitter”; But why is it bitter?

“Poison intake kills” while “Milk intake does not kill”. But why? There is no definite and conclusive answer to these. In other words, there is no definite solution to such problems. But even if there is no answer or solution, i.e., there being no way to prove these statements merely by reasoning and argumentation alone, we still are unable to deny them as truth since, there is no doubt about the fact that they are experienced as such.

In this manner, “The knowledge of sweetness of sugar” or “the knowledge of bitterness of Yavakṣāra”, and other similar types of knowledge is referred to as “acintya-jñāna” or “arthāpatti-jñāna”.

“Sweetness (or the ability to produce the sensation of sweetness) is a Śakti of Sugar”, “Bitterness (or the ability to produce the sensation of bitterness) is a Śakti of Yavakṣāra”. This implies that the

knowledge of Śaktis of Sugar and other existent entities is “Acintya-jñāna”.

Viṣṇu-purāṇa says that the “knowledge of Śaktis of all existent entities” is indeed “acintya”; hence such knowledge is to be included in “acintya-jñāna”, which in turn means that Śaktis are to be known by “acintya jñāna” alone (acintya-jñāna-gocara).

We could only know such things like “Heat is present in Fire” and “Fragrance is present in Musk” but cannot conclusively prove why they exist in that manner to others by using reasoning and argumentation alone.

Modern Science also cannot point to the exact reason for the existence of such specific “Śaktis” in substances. At best, it can only discover the presence of new attributes or Śaktis in Substances. It can definitely answer questions like: “Which substance is harmful in the form of poison?”; but it cannot answer the reason for such a nature. Science can explain that “Hydrogen and Oxygen combine to form water”, but cannot explain the reason for this phenomenon. It can explain that “Two parts of Hydrogen combines with one part of Oxygen to form water” but cannot explain why any other combination of Hydrogen and Oxygen cannot form water. Hence, it is unable to explain why this phenomenon occurs in this precise manner and not in any other way.

Whatever phenomena occurs, can be directly experienced by perception, which cannot be rejected. Even Science cannot reject the knowledge derived through perception during experimentation.

In this way, we can say that “Acintya-jñāna”, refers to that knowledge which, we have no recourse but to accept.

The relation of “Bhedābheda” between Śaktis and Śaktimān is similarly “Acintya”. There is experience of both “Bheda” and “Abheda” in concurrence, so there is no recourse but to accept them as such.

So, ultimately, any form of reasoning and argumentation cannot be used to prove the exact reason for such an experience. That's why the relationship between Śakti and Śaktimān is "Acintya bhedābheda".

That this Acintya bhedābheda is also the preferred opinion of the paramparā of Śrī Jīva Goswāmi and he has himself spoken of this:

“स्वमते तु अचिन्त्य भेदाभेदावेव अचिन्त्य शक्तिमयत्वादिति । “(Sarvasamvādinī pg. 149)

Here he has paid special attention to the term “Acintya”, which he interprets in relation to the previously quoted shloka from Vishnu Purana which he also quotes in his commentary to the verse: “सत्त्वं रजस्तम इति त्रिवृदेकमादौ...”(SB 1.3.37) of Śrīmad Bhāgavatam.

In his Krama-sandarbhā, while commenting on this verse, Śrī Jīva has quoted this verse from Vishnu Purana in question: “शक्तयः सर्वभावानामचिन्त्यज्ञानगोचराः” and has explained it in this manner: “लोके सर्वेषां भावानां पावकस्य उष्णताशक्तिवदचिन्त्यज्ञानगोचराः शक्तयः सन्त्येव । अचिन्त्या भिन्नाभिन्नत्वादिविकल्पैः चिन्तयितुमशक्याः केवलम् अर्थापत्तिज्ञानगोचराः ।”

Just like “Heat” in “Fire”, all existent entities in the world have Śakti that can be known only by “acintya-jñāna”. ‘Inability to conceive of Śaktis as either only distinct from Śaktimān or only identical with Śaktimān’ is the meaning of the term “Acintya”. Śaktis can be conceived of only through “Arthāpatti-jñāna”.

In Sarvasamvādinī also, Śrī Jīva Goswāmi has quoted the same verse of Vishnu Purana and explained it at the end in this manner:

“ब्रह्मणः पुनस्ताः स्वभावभूताः स्वरूपादभिन्नाः शक्तयः, ‘परास्य शक्तिर्विविधैव श्रूयते, स्वाभाविकी ज्ञानबलक्रिया च’(श्वे० ४.१०) इत्यादि श्रुते।” (Sarvasamvādinī pg. 59)

“The Śaktis of Brahman are included in Its own nature, and are not distinct from its svarūpa, as is declared in the following passage: ‘The Parā-Śakti of this one Supreme Being is heard of as multifarious, which are of Its own nature, like knowledge, strength, action, etc.’(Śvetāśvatara Up. 4.10)”

In this manner, here, by citing Śruti, Śrī Jīva has shown that there is Acintya bhedābheda sambandha between Brahman and It’s Śaktis.

In Pañcarātra’s Ahirbudhnya samhita (3.2-3) also, Acintya bhedābheda of Śakti and Śaktimān is indicated clearly:

शक्तयः सर्वभावानामचिन्त्या अपृथक्स्थिता। स्वरूपे नैव दृश्यन्ते दृश्यन्ते कार्यतस्तु ताः ॥
सूक्ष्मावस्था हि सा तेषां सर्वभावानुगामिनी । इदंतया विधातुं सा न निषेद्धुं च शक्यते ॥

अहिर्बुध्न्य ने कहा – सभी भावों (वस्तुओं) की शक्तियाँ उससे पृथक् स्थित न होकर (उसी में रह कर) अचिन्त्य हैं, वह शक्ति स्वरूपतः दिखाई नहीं पड़ती , कार्य से दिखाई पड़ती है । सम्पूर्ण पदार्थों में रहने वाली वह शक्ति उन -उन वस्तुओं की सूक्ष्मावस्था ही है । उसे इदंतया (इस प्रकार) बताया नहीं जा सकता और न इदंतया (इस प्रकार) निषिद्ध ही किया जा सकता है ॥

(Hindi translation by Sudhakar Malaviya – translated into English)

“Ahirbudhnya said: “The Śaktis of all things are inseparably associated with them, are ‘Acintya’, and not visible (as separate entities) in their nature, but visible (perceptible) in their action. ‘The Śaktis that reside in all things is the subtle state of those things.’- it (this statement) can neither be (exactly) affirmed in this manner, nor can it be denied in this way.”

Śrī Jīva’s Acintya Bhedābheda is very comprehensive. It extends to both Prākṛta and Aprākṛta realms. In both cases, this Acintya Bhedābheda relation between Śakti and Śaktimān applies.

Jīva, Māyā, Kāla and Karma- all these supported by Brahman's Śrī Śakti, gives rise to the world.

Jīva, Māyā, Kāla and Karma-all of them are Brahman's Śaktis. This implies that the entire cosmos which are a product of all these, is also Brahman's Śakti.

Jīva is also Brahman's Śakti as explained in the topic of Jīva tattva, earlier (a different topic by RadhaGovinda Nath).

All abodes (dhāmas) of Bhagavan like Vaikuntha, etc. are also actualization of Brahman's Svarūpa-Śaktis, and by their very nature, are included in the very nature of Brahman.

All Līlā-parikaras (Associates of Bhagavān's nitya līlā) are also the personified forms of the different vṛttis of Bhagavān's svarūpa-Śakti.

From this, we can understand that beginning with the visible cosmos made of Māyā, Jīvas, Bhagavan's dhāmas, His Nitya-parikaras, etc. are all Brahman's Śaktis and hence the Acintya-bhedābheda sambandha applies not only to the relation between Jīvas and Brahman, but also to Brahman's relation with all of the above.

Now, one doubt arises: "Is the Cosmos etc. purely Brahman's Śakti, severed from the Svarūpa of Brahman? If that is the case, how can you justify your position there is utter inseparability of Śakti and Śaktimān? Conversely, if there is an absence of such an inseparability, then how can you establish this doctrine of Acintya-bhedābheda-tattva?"

The Answer is as follows- The Cosmos and all other existent things are not just purely Śaktis, utterly separate from the Śaktimān. Shlokas like "परस्परानुप्रवेशात् तत्त्वानां पुरुषर्षभ" (SB 11.22.7) in Śrīmad Bhāgavatam cited by Śrī Jīva Goswāmi in Paramātmā-sandarbhā proves that Śakti and Śaktimān are utterly inseparable because

there is mutual inter-penetration of Śakti and Śaktimān
(शक्तिशक्तिमतोः परस्परानुप्रवेशात्) [Paramātmā-sandarbhā 37].

According to this statement, it is then to be understood that each and every one of Brahman's Śaktis: Svarūpa-Śakti, Māyā-Śakti and Jīva-Śakti—have mutual inter-penetration (परस्पर अनुप्रवेश) with Brahman (Śaktimān).

So, in every case, Śakti and Śaktimān are present (almost interwoven) in an utterly inseparable manner as evidenced from the following:

कस्मिन्नु खलु ब्रह्मलोका ओताश्च प्रोताश्चेति (Brhadāranyaka Upaniśad 3.6.1)

नैतच्चित्रं भगवति ह्यनन्ते जगदीश्वरे । ओतप्रोतमिदं यस्मिंस्तन्तुष्वङ्ग यथा पटः ॥ (SB 10.15.35).

एतौ हि विश्वस्य च बीजयोनी रामो मुकुन्दः पुरुषः प्रधानम् । अन्वीय भूतेषु विलक्षणस्य ज्ञानस्य चेशात् इमौ पुराणौ ॥ (SB 10.46.31)

अथवा बहुनैतेन किं ज्ञातेन तवार्जुन । विष्टभ्याहमिदं कृत्स्नमेकांशेन स्थितो जगत् ॥ (Gītā 10.42)

From these pramānas, Brahman's eternal penetration into its māyā śakti, can be understood.

Conversely, we have pramāṇas like:

एतदीशनमीशस्य प्रकृतिस्थोऽपि तद्गुणैः । न युज्यते सदात्मस्थैर्यथा बुद्धिस्तदाश्रया ॥ (SB 1.11.38)

From this, it is to be understood that even though Brahman penetrates Its Māyā-Śakti, Brahman is yet, untouched and unaffected by Māyā.

Regarding the Jīvas, it was shown earlier, in the discussion of Jīva-tattva (at another place) that: “Brahman’s part, penetrated/permeated by the Jīva-Śakti is indeed called “jīvas”.

Furthermore, the Svarūpa of Brahman, viz., “Ānanda” and Brahman’s “Svarūpa-Śakti” mutually interpenetrating each other, indeed manifests in the form of the infinite abodes of Bhagavān, the Līlā-parikaras(eternal associates), the innumerable Bhagavad-rūpas, the attribute less “Siddhaloka”(where Siddhas of Jñāna-mārga and asūras killed by Kṛṣṇa, enjoy Brahmānanda, being “merged” in Brahman), the attribute less Brahman, Kāraṇārṇava etc.

Bhagavān’s infinite attributes are also manifestation of His Svarūpa-Śakti. Thus, everything in existence is Brahman’s Śakti.

In this way, it has been shown that starting from the visible cosmos, Prākṛita and Aprākṛita realms and even Brahman’s attributes and forms-everything has Acintya Bhedābheda sambandha with Brahman’s svarūpa.

For this reason, it was earlier said that the Acintya bhedābhedavāda of Caitanya Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas is very comprehensive. Few philosophers, if any have given such a vastly comprehensive theory.

Another specialty of this theory is that the maryādā of all Śruti-vākyas have been maintained and respected here. One type of Śruti-statement has not been declared less important to other statements. True entities like Jīvas and Jagat have not been declared as false. The reality of Brahman’s Śakti has not been denied, and Brahman has not been brought to the platform of Voidness (Shunyatā).

The concept of Māyā has also been explained satisfactorily in the light of Śrutis and Smṛtis.

Mukhya-vṛtti has not been abandoned for Lakshana-vṛtti without any legitimate reason in the interpretation of Śrutis.

Apparent mutually contradictory Bheda-vācaka and Abheda-vācaka statements about Jīva and Brahman have been reconciled beautifully by this Acintya bhedābheda tattva.

Since there is Acintya bhedābheda sambandha between Jīva/Jagat and Brahman, “Bheda-vācaka Śrutis” reflect the realization of those Tattvajñas who perceived the Advaya-Tattva with the predominance of perception of the exuberance of numerous Śaktis in the Tattva (शक्तिनां-प्रकाश-अतिशय-उपलब्धि-प्राचुर्यम्); whereas “Abheda-vācaka Śrutis” reflect the realization of those Tattvajñas who perceived the Advaya-Tattva with the predominance of the non-perception of the exuberance of Its Śaktis (तद्-अनुपलब्धि-प्राचुर्यम्).

Also, since Jīvas are Brahman’s amśa in the form of Śakti, thus, by Amśa-amśi sambandha, there is Bhedābheda in them.

6. Advayatā of Brahman

Now the question that arises is: “If you accept the existence of Śakti in Brahman, then how can you justify your proposition that you (also) accept that there is Advayatā (Non-duality) of Brahman? Acceptance of Śakti implies acceptance of “Bheda”. If you accept “Bheda”, then there is no longer any “Advayatā” possible.”

Let’s first consider what is meant by “Bheda”. Suppose there is a lump of sugar whose upper portion is somehow identified with some mark. In such a case, the ‘marked upper portion’ of the lump of sugar cannot be considered different (bhinna) from the ‘lump of sugar’, since the former is included in the latter and it has apekṣā of (ontological dependence on) the ‘lump of sugar’. This means that the ‘marked portion’ exists only due to the prior existence of the ‘lump of sugar’ and it would cease to exist if the ‘lump of sugar’ was non-existent.

The “marked portion” is not “anya-nirapekṣa” (i.e., it is not ontologically independent of another), because it has the “apekṣā” of the “lump of sugar” (i.e., the “marked portion” is ontologically dependent upon the entirety of the “lump of sugar”), hence, it is not distinct from the entire “lump of sugar”. Thus, the lump of sugar, does not have “Bheda” with the marked portion.

In the same way, a tree is not distinct from its branches and leaves since the branches and leaves have “apekṣā” of the tree.

In this way, it may be concluded that when an entity has “apekṣā” of a substance, that entity cannot be considered distinct from that specific substance.

Now, let’s consider the example of a mango tree and a car. The “bheda” or distinction between them is perceptible to everyone. The

tree and car are perceived as mutually ‘nirapekṣa’ (ontologically independent in relation to one another). In the absence of the car, the tree continues to exist, and conversely, in the absence of the tree, the car continues to exist. Since, both these entities are mutually ‘nirapekṣa’, there is “bheda” between these two entities.

In this manner, it can be observed that, for, two entities that are mutually ‘nirapekṣa’, they can rightly be considered distinct from each other (i.e., there is “bheda” between them). But that entity which has “apekṣā” of another, that particular entity cannot be considered “bheda” of the latter and neither can it be termed so.

If this is the case, then if the cosmos and everything else that exists, were actually Brahma-nirapekṣa (i.e., ontologically independent of Brahman), i.e., if they were independent of Brahman in every manner, in consideration of their existence etc., i.e. if they did not have any ‘apekṣā’ of/ontological dependence on Brahman, then, they can be considered to have “bheda” with Brahman.

If, however, they have ‘apekṣā’ of (i.e., they are ontologically dependent on) Brahman with regards to their production (sṛṣṭi), maintenance (sthiti) and annihilation (laya), etc., without which these things become impossible, then they cannot be considered to have “Bheda” with Brahman.

That entity, which does not have any ontological dependence on (apekṣā of) another entity and, which, through its own potency, is capable of doing any action to fulfil its requirement; only that entity can be called: “Anya-nirapekṣa” and “Svayam-siddha” [आत्मनैव सिद्धं खलु स्वयंसिद्धमुच्यते (Śrī Baladeva’s tika on Tattva sandarbha)].

Brahman alone is “Svayam-siddha” and “Anya-nirapekṣa” in an absolute manner.

Hypothetically, if there is an entity (vastu) other than Brahman, that does not require Brahman for its utpatti, sthiti, etc. which means that this particular hypothetical entity doesnot have an ontological dependence on (i.e., apekṣā of) Brahman in any way, then that entity will be considered to be a “Svayam-siddha” vastu and only then, that entity can be considered to have “Bheda” with Brahman.

Bheda is of three types: Sajātīya, Vijātīya and Svagata.

Two entities belonging to the same class (jātī), for example, a Mango tree and a Jackfruit tree belong to the same class as trees. Therefore, they are sama-jātīya or sajātīya. But they nevertheless have distinction (bheda) though belonging to the same class-the Mango tree is not a Jackfruit tree and the Jackfruit tree is not a Mango tree. So, they have a mutual sajātīya bheda among themselves.

In the same way, there is mutual distinction of separate classes (“Vijātīya bheda”), for e.g. between a man and gold.

Śrī Jīva says: “In Brahman, there is absence of both ‘Svayam-siddha sajātīya-bheda’ and ‘Svayam-siddha vijātīya-bheda’. [अद्वयञ्चास्य स्वयंसिद्ध तादृशातादृशतत्त्वान्तराभावात् स्वशक्त्येकसहायत्वात् (Tattva sandarbha 51)].

Brahman as a substance is pure consciousness (cid-vastu). Jīvas are also “cid-vastu”. Abodes of Bhagavān, Associates of Bhagavān and infinite forms of Bhagavān are all “cid-vastu”.

So, it may be assumed that all those entities are similar due to belonging to the same class (sajātīya). But all these are also not ‘svayam-siddha’ vastus (entities that sustain their own existence and do not depend on another for it). All these entities have the “apekṣā” of Brahman for their existence. Due to the existence of Brahman alone, they are perceived to exist. In the absence of Brahman, their existence cannot be sustained.

Since the Jīvas are “Brahman’s part qualified by Its Jīva-Śakti” and Bhagavān’s abode (Dhāma), Bhagavan’s forms (Bhagavad vigrahas), etc. are all “Brahman’s part qualified by Its “Svarūpa-Śakti”; all these are not Svayam-siddha and hence, they do not have Sajātīya-bheda with Brahman. Thus, Brahman is devoid of Sajātīya bheda.

The Cosmos is apparently replete with sorrow and is inert and hence, is the counter-correlative of consciousness. So, it may be assumed that the Cosmos has Vijātīya bheda with the Conscious Brahman. But that is not true since the Cosmos is also not ‘Svayam-siddha’.

The Cosmos is modification (Pariṇāma) of Brahman qualified by Its Māyā-Śakti. Māyā is nothing but Brahman’s natural Śakti. This is why Vijātīya bheda is absent in Brahman.

तत्स्वरूपवस्त्वन्तराणां च तच्छक्ति रूपत्वान्न तैः सजातीयोऽपि भेदः । न चाव्यक्तगत
जाड्य दुःखादिभिर्विजातीयो भेदः अव्यक्तस्यापि तच्छक्तिरूपत्वात् ।
(Sarvasamvādini pg. 56).

Brahman also does not possess Svagata-bheda within it. “Svagata” means “within itself”. By the term “Svagata-bheda”, “Abhyantarīṇa bheda” (Internal distinctions) is understood.

That entity which has more than one upādānas (i.e., it is made up of more than a single substance/material), then due to such ‘upādāna-bheda’, there will be ‘Svagata-bheda’ in such an entity.

Let’s take the example of a “concrete floor” to understand this. The floor is made up of a combination of bricks, limestone, iron, wood, sand, etc. The aggregate of all these ingredients that make up the floor, are mutually distinct and independent entities by themselves. All these ingredients comprise the “Svagata-bheda” within the floor. Again, due to a great variety of ingredients (upādānas) that aggregate to form the floor, the effect of the manifestation of

individual Śaktis of these ingredients will themselves be different in different parts of the floor.

This distinction and gradation in the actualization of the inherent Śakti of an entity along with the basis for such a distinction is also a kind of “Svagata-bheda” in the concrete floor.

But in Brahman, Svagata-bheda of this kind cannot be present because Brahman is a substance which is “Pure concentrated Consciousness” (cid-ghana) or “Pure concentrated Bliss” (ānanda-ghana).

In Brahman, there is no “material” (upādāna) other than “Consciousness” or “Bliss”. This “material” which is Consciousness or Bliss alone is ‘spread out’ uniformly everywhere throughout Brahman.

Due to there being an absence of any distinction regarding the “constituent material” (if this term could indeed be used) of Brahman (i.e., there being an absence of “upādāna-gata bheda” in Brahman), any Śakti of Brahman can be cognized as being actualized in any hypothetical part/portion of Brahman.

The material body of the Jīvas are composed of the five elements (pañca-mahābhūtas) and the proportion of these five elements also lack uniformity throughout the body.

In the organ of vision (cakṣu), the proportion of the Fire-element (Tejas) is more, which is the cause of the ability of vision in the eye but the ability of aural-reception is absent in it.

Conversely, in the organ of aural reception (Śrotra), the proportion of the Space-element (Ākāśa) is more, which is the cause of its ability of aural-reception, but the ability of vision is absent in it and this is the same case also for other jñānendriyas and karmendriyas.

All these are examples of Svagata-bheda within the material bodies of Jīvas.

But Brahman-substance (Brahma-vastu) being solely of the form of Consciousness (cid-eka-rūpa), there is absence of multiplicity of ingredients that could hypothetically aggregate to make the entity called Brahman. Thus, such type of distinction within Brahman is impossible.

For this reason, it is said in the Brahma-samhitā: अङ्गानि यस्य सकलेन्द्रिय वृत्तिमस्ति ।: “Each limb of that Supreme Entity possesses the ability inherent in every (other) sense-organ (of His)”.

This is the proof for the absence of Svagata-bheda in Brahman.

Let’s consider the example of a “doll made up of sugar”; it is seen that it has hands, feet, nose, ears etc. There is an apparent perception of internal distinction (svagata-bheda) in the “sugar-doll”. But in every part and limb of such a doll, there is indeed an experience of “Sweetness” as it is composed of a single constitutive material, i.e., Sugar. In reality, thus, there is absence of “Svagata-bheda”.

Differences/distinctions in the perception of the actualization of an entity’s inherent functional capacity is also a function of “Bheda”. But the “sugar-doll” expresses its functional capacity only in the form of the experience of “Sweetness”, which is the actualization of its inherent potency.

Referring back to the previous statement from Brahma-samhitā, we also come to know that there is essential identity/unity in all the different functional capacities of Brahman (sarvatra kriyā sāmya). Thus, the presence of Svagata-bheda is denied in Brahman. This is one aspect regarding the “absence of Svagata-bheda within Brahman”.

Let's discuss about other aspects in this regard. An objection may arise in this regard that it is heard (in śāstras) that Brahman has various forms. If that be the case, then Svarūpa-bheda cannot be denied. To this objection, Śrī Jīva (in Sarvasamvādinī) replies by quoting Brahma-sūtra 3.2.12: “न भेदादिति चेन्न प्रत्येकमेतद्वचनात्”.

In Govinda-bhāṣya, this Sutra has been commented as follows: “इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरूप ईयते युक्ता ह्यस्य हरयः शतादशेत्ययं वै हरयः, अयं वै दश च सहस्राणि च बहूनि चानन्तानि च तदेतद् ब्रह्म अपूर्वम् अनपरम् अनन्तरम् अबाह्यम् आत्मा सर्वानुभूतिरित्यनुशासनमिति बृहदारण्यके सर्वेषां रूपाणामैक्योक्तेरित्यर्थः।”

“Parameśvara (Indra), through association of His Māyā-s (Parā-Śakti, consisting of three vṛttis: Sandhinī, Samvit and Hlādinī), manifests Himself as a hundred and ten Hari-s (prakāśa forms). This Īśvara alone is variously manifest as ten Hari-s (like Matsya, Kūrma and other avatāras) and as thousand Hari-s (like the Prakāśa forms doing līlās with each of the Dvāraka Queens individually). This Brahman (in all such innumerable forms) is without a cause/birth (apūrvam), without a second (an-aparam), without any distinction (an-antaram), without the presence of any entity external to itself (a-bāhyam); It is the Self of all (i.e., it pervades all), and It is the very form (or basis) of intuition for all (sarvānubhūti).” This statement of the Brhadāraṇyaka-Śruti (2.5.9), explains the essential oneness of the plurality of forms/expressions of Brahman.

In the discussion of this Sūtra, Śrī Jīva also quotes the Sutra immediately succeeding it, viz. Brahma-sūtra 3.2.13: “अपि चैवमेके”. Govinda-bhāṣya to this sutra explains it as follows: ‘regarding this, the students of some śākhās of the Veda, say: “अमात्रोऽनन्तमात्रश्च द्वैतस्योपशमः शिवः। ओङ्कारो विदितो येन स मुनिर्नेतरो जनः॥” [Māṇḍukya Upaniṣad, Āgama-kārikā 26-29]. The meaning is as follows: “He who has known the One, who is denoted by the syllable Om (Brahman), which is ‘amātra’ and also ‘ananta-mātra’ and which is ever-auspicious on account of the negation of duality is the (real)

sage and none other.” In their opinion, Brahman is devoid of distinctions (abhinna) and at the same time, inclusive of infinite forms (ananta-rūpa). “Amātra” means- “devoid of distinctions among self-same parts” (स्वांश-भेदशून्य) and “Ananta-mātra” means- “inclusive of infinite self-same parts” (असंख्येय स्वांशः).

The meaning is this- “There is no distinction of essential nature among Brahman’s self-same parts, nor is there a limit to the innumerability of these self-same parts”.

Such statements seem contradictory but their reconciliation is as follows- The Smṛiti says: “One Parameśvara Viṣṇu, is indeed present everywhere and there is no doubt regarding this. By the influence of His own majesty (Śakti), He though remaining one, shines everywhere just like the Sun”. And the Śruti also says: एकोऽपि सन् यो बहुधा विभाति।

This is similar to how a Vaidurya gem, due to the difference in the perceptions of its beholders, it appears in different ways to them. An actor, though playing various roles, still exists as one person; in a similar way, Brahman, due to differences in the meditations (bhakti) of different kinds of worshippers, appears in various forms to them, but still does not abandon the Oneness of His svarūpa.

Caitanya-caritāmṛta (2.9.155) similarly says:

একই ঈশ্বর ভক্তরে ধ্যান অনুরূপ ।
একই বগ্নিহ ধরে নানাকার রূপ ॥

eka-i īśvara bhaktera dhyāna-anurūpa
eka-i vighrahe kare nānākāra rūpa

“The one God appears in various forms, according to the meditation of the devotee. He assumes diverse forms while remaining the same entity.”

From the above explanation of the two Brahma-sūtras, we understand that though Brahman eternally exists in its innumerable self-same forms, the Oneness of its svarūpa is not abandoned. He, as the Bhāgavatam(10.40.7) says, is indeed बहुमूर्त्येकमूर्तिकम् . Brahman never abandons the Oneness of its essential nature, despite manifesting itself in infinite forms. Thus there is absence of Svagata-bheda in Brahman.

Śrī Jīva concludes this discussion in this manner: If there is no inclusion of another foreign substance (vastvantara) into an entity, there is no destruction of that particular entity's oneness of essential nature (advayatā), which is the reason why there is absence of Svagata-bheda in the entity.

When gold takes the form of earring, then it may be thought that there is an apparent Svagata-bheda in it (due to inclusion of varieties like designs, structure etc.). But since there is absence of inclusion of a foreign substance in it, the gold remains gold without any alteration to its essential nature. Thus, any Svagata-bheda cannot be said to be present in the Golden earring.

“तदेवं स्वगतभेदे त्वपरिहार्ये स्वर्णरत्नादिघटितैक कुण्डलवद् वस्त्वन्तर प्रवेशनैव स प्रतिषेध्यत इति स्थितम् ।” (Sarvasamvādinī, pg. 56).

By this example, it can be understood that in Brahman, there can be no inclusion of anything other than “Consciousness” as its constitution; thus, Śrī Jīva Goswāmi says that Brahman is indeed devoid of Svagata bheda.

Let's digress a bit from this issue for a moment. We see that Brahman, despite maintaining the oneness of its Svarūpa, expresses itself in various forms. All such forms are indeed various “Bhagavat-svaūpas” (transcendental forms of Bhagavān).

All these forms are not distinct entities and lack independent existence from Brahman because Parabrahman alone expresses

Himself in all these forms. Or alternatively, Parabrahman eternally manifests all these forms directly in His divine body.

This has been said by Śrīman Mahaprabhu Himself:

একই ঈশ্বর ভক্তরে ধ্যান অনুরূপ । একই বগ্রহ ধরে নানাকার রূপ ॥
eka-i īśvara bhaktera dhyāna-anurūpa
eka-i vighrahe kare nānākāra rūpa (Caitanya-caritāmṛta 2.9.155).

The Śruti also similarly says the same thing: एकोऽपि सन् यो बहुधा
विभाति; the previously quoted Brahmasūtras (3.2.12 and 3.2.13) also
inform us of the same thing. Also Jayākhyasaṃhitā 12.27 mentions
the same thing:

मणिर्यथा विभागेन नीलपीतादिभिर्युतः । रूपभेदमवाप्नोति ध्यानभेदात्तथा विभुः ॥

(Also quoted in Bhagavat-sandarbha 40, Caitanya Caritāmṛta
2.9.156)

“Just as a gem, through distinctions, is endowed with colours like
blue and yellow, and obtains a variety of forms (rūpabheda), so too
does the all-pervading one [obtain a variety of forms] through
distinctions in meditation (dhyānabheda)”

Even though these forms are not considered Svayam-siddha (due to
not being independent tattvas apart from Brahman) and nor are
they distinct (from Brahman), but they are still considered to be
different/various forms of Brahman alone, though with unique
particulars that differentiate one from another.

Arjuna witnessed the Universal Form (Viśvarūpa) within the form
of Kṛṣṇa but he did not ultimately consider the Viśvarūpa as exactly
identical to the human-like form of Kṛṣṇa. Thus, He requests
Bhagavan to unmanifest the fierce Universal form and remanifest
the Four-armed form with human-like temperament that was so

dear to Arjuna and he was acquainted with for a long time and Kṛṣṇa readily does so in that very form.

Devakī and Vasudeva had first seen Kṛṣṇa within Kamsa's jail as Four-armed fully grown youth holding the weapons like Conch, Wheel, Mace and Lotus and later on at their request, he manifests as a Two-armed human-like infant after unmanifesting the previous form within the same body.

Both of these forms were realized by them as two distinct forms of the same personality who did not need to discard one form to accept another unlike us but simply manifests and unmanifest them in His very body. Śrīman Mahāprabhu also in the very form of Nīmai-Pāṇḍita had given the vision of himself as Kṛṣṇa, Rāma, Nṛsiṃha, Varāha, Maheśa and other forms to the devotees in Navadvīpa.

In this way, there are those who believe that these different Bhagavat-svarūpas are nothing but Parabrahman Śrī Kṛṣṇa's own various forms. Thus, even if they consider all these forms to have apparent Sajātīya bheda with the form of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and each other, these forms still are not Svayam-siddha-sajātīya-bhedas. Thus, they (different forms of Brahman) are not sajātīya bhedas of Brahman. This has already been discussed before.

Again, there are others, who never consider all these forms as distinct from Brahman at all, they still cannot deny that all these forms are indeed varieties of experiences (vaicitrī) and attributes (dharmas) of Brahman. But, if that is so, then Svagata-bheda (in the manner of a Tree with its leaves) cannot be denied.

We had previously discussed the Śruti: “विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्म”, in which the two terms: ‘विज्ञान’ and ‘आनन्द’, apparently express two distinct meanings. Accepting this, in Śrī Jīva's opinion would invariably lead to “Svagata-bheda”. Similarly, in this way, the acceptance of the presence of various forms within one Svarūpa, would also invariably lead to Svagata-bheda. The same thing could be said

about the ‘infinite auspicious qualities (ananta-kalyāṇa-guṇas) of Brahman. If that be so, then what is the solution for this predicament?

Why does Śrī Jīva, then, proclaim that there is absence of Svagata-bheda in Brahman (Svagata-bheda-śūnyam)?

To answer this question, it is pertinent that we discuss some other issues. These are as follows:

By accepting Śakti, acceptance of Bheda becomes pertinent. That Brahman naturally possesses Śaktis that are inseparable from it—this is known from Śrutis. We also know the existence of various bhedas in the form of Jīvas, Jagat, etc., also from Śrutis. But regardless of all that, Śruti still has statements like “एकमेवाद्वीतियम्” (Brahman is one alone, without differentiation), which proclaims that Brahman is non-dual (advaya) and devoid of differentiation (bheda-rahita). What is the reason for this?

We have to understand that despite the apparent presence of Bheda in the form of Jīvas, Jagat, etc. which are really perceptible, have functionality and actually exist; Brahman, still is Advaya-tattva—this alone is the intention of the Śrutis. But how is that possible?

Śrī Jīva has resolved this by the application of the word “Svayam-siddha”. In truth, if an entity lacks the attribute of “Svayam-siddhatva” (that, whose existence is solely dependent on itself and does not have the apekṣā of another), that entity cannot be considered distinct from another entity, who is actually “Svayam-siddha”. This has already been shown previously.

Śrī Jīva says that even though Jīvas, who are entities that possess consciousness as their very constitution and nature, and even though they apparently seem to possess Sajātīya-bheda with Brahman, it is not truly Sajātīya-bheda, since Jīvas are neither Svayam-siddha nor Brahma-nirapekṣa. In the same way, the Jagat

also is not Svayam-siddha and Brahma-nirapekṣa, so it also cannot be said to have Vijātīya-bheda with Brahman. All these entities are seen to have absence of “Svayam-siddhatva”.

In this way, Śrī Jīva proves that Brahman has absence of Sajātīya and Vijātīya bhedas (sajātīya-vijātīya-bheda-rāhityam).

Returning back to the topic of Svagata-bheda, in statements like “एकोऽपि सन् यो बहुधा विभाति”, “विज्ञानमानन्दं ब्रह्म”, etc., why does the Śruti, after accepting the existence of apparent Svagata-bhedas within Brahman, then again talk of Brahman as Advaya-tattva? The reason is simply because, by these statements, the Śrutis want to teach that though there is presence of apparent Svagata-bheda in Brahman; Brahman, still is a non-dual substance (Advaya-tattva).

In the previously quoted Brahma sutras 3.1.12 and 3.1.13, and knowing their meaning, we see that such an apparent svagata-bheda has been accepted in Brahman. Śrī Jīva also refers to these sutras in his discussion about the absence of Svagata-bheda and has shown that even in the perception of apparent Svagata-bheda, there is actually absence of it in Brahman. To show that, Śrī Jīva cites the example of an earring made of gold or jewels.

When a lump of gold or a jewel is modified into the form of an earring; then it indeed appears different from its previous state. But even in the new form, there is absence of inclusion of a distinct foreign material in its constitution. In the new form, there is absence of anything else, other than the lump of gold or the jewel that existed in the former state. This means that:

1. The earring has no constitutive material that is Svarṇa-nirapekṣa (ontologically independent of the lump of gold) or Ratna-nirapekṣa (ontologically independent of the jewel).
2. The new form of the earring is established upon the previously existing gold (or the jewel) as its substratum. This earring is nothing other than a form of the gold (or the jewel).

3. This earring only has apekṣā of the gold (or the jewel) alone and does not have apekṣā of (ontological dependence on) any other substance.
4. The existence of the earring would not have been possible without it having apekṣā of (ontological dependence on) the gold (or the jewel).
5. All this means that the form of the earring is not Svarṇa-nirapekṣa (ontologically independent of the lump of Gold) or Ratna-nirapekṣa (ontologically independent of the Jewel).

Hence, the earring is not Svayam-siddha (i.e., it is not independently existent, due to having no independent nature as purely just an earring). Thus, apparent Svagata-bheda of Gold (or Jewel) in the form of earring, etc. is unacceptable.

In the same way, the various expressions of Brahman in various transcendental forms, or the infinite Kalyāṇa-guṇas (auspicious qualities) of Bhagavān, etc. are similarly, not Brahma-nirapekṣa (i.e., they are not ontologically independent of Brahman).

In addition to this, other than Brahman or Brahman's Svarūpa-Śakti, the manifestation of these various forms or the various auspicious qualities, do not require the support of another substance. Thus, they are not Svayam-siddha, which means, though they are apparently perceived as Svagata-bheda within Brahman; in reality, however, this is not the case.

In the famous shloka of Śrīmad Bhagavatam 1.2.11, it is said:

वदन्ति तत्तत्त्वविदस्तत्त्वं यज्ज्ञानमद्वयम् ।

ब्रह्मेति परमात्मेति भगवानिति शब्द्यते ॥

This seems to show that the Advaya-tattva has three svagata-bhedas- Brahman, Paramātman and Bhagavān. But none among these three are “Advaya-tattva-nirapekṣa” or individually “Svayam-siddha”. So, in reality, there is no Svagata-bheda.

In this way, just like Sajātīya and Vijātīya-bhedas, even in the discussion of “Svagata-bheda”, Śrī Jīva Goswāmi has given emphasis on the concept of “Svayam-siddhatva”. With this, he has succeeded in preserving the compatibility of all kinds of Śruti-vākya and established Brahman’s advayatā(non-dual-ness).

In the interpretation of any Śruti-vākya, he has not succumbed to the use of lakṣaṇā-vṛtti nor has he declared any type of Śruti (Upaniśadic) statement as prātītika or vyavahārika.

If that is the case, then in Śrī Jīva’s doctrine: Brahman is devoid of ‘Svayam-siddha-sajātīya bheda’, ‘Svayam-siddha-vijātīya bheda’, and ‘Svayam-siddha-svagata bheda’. Hence, Brahman indeed is ‘Advaya-tattva’ in his analysis.

The absence of the three kinds of bheda in Brahman is also mentioned by Śrīpād Śankara but his method of showing this is different. He has denied the actual (paramārthika/vāstavika) existence of Śakti(s) in Brahman. If the very existence of Śakti is denied, then, there is no question of any Bheda. But due to his denial of the actual existence of Śakti(s) in Brahman, he has neglected the need of preserving the equal authoritativeness of all the Śruti statements. This is why he had to declare numerous statements of the Śruti as Vyavahārika or Prātītika and consequently had to declare things like the Perceptible world (which has causal efficiency) as “mithyā” and even after doing so, he had to resort to lakṣaṇā-vṛtti to interpret other Śruti-statement that he considers are about Pāramārthika-satya.

Śrī Jīva, not only uses Śruti-vākya but also reasoning to prove that Brahman cannot be devoid of Śakti(s) and attributes [निःशक्तिक or निर्विशेष]. By using those very arguments and examples, which Śrī Śankara had used to try to prove Brahman as निःशक्तिक or निर्विशेष, in his Sarvasamvādinī, Śrī Jīva has shown that Śrī Śankara had invertedly accepted “Śakti” in Brahman.

An example of that will be shown here: Śrīpād Śankara says: “Just as there is illusion of the perception of a snake in a rope; and just as there is illusion of perception of silver in nacre due to ajñāna (nescience). In a similar way, there is illusion of perception of the Jagat in Brahman”. This indeed is the Vivartavāda/Brahmavāda, propounded by Śrī Śankara.

Śrī Jīva notes that, as said by Śrī Śankara, for such an illusion to occur, there is requirement of a rope/nacre as the substratum of the illusion along with ajñāna. But what is the primary cause for the creation of such an illusion?

If there was absence of any dependence (apekṣā) of the illusion on the nature of (which is an actualization of Śakti inherent in) the substratum where the phenomenon is occurring; and the experience of illusion is an outcome of ajñāna alone, without any additional dependence at all, on the inherent nature of the substratum where it occurs; then in such a scenario, there would be experience of any and every kind of illusion in any and every object (which will act as a substratum). For example, there would be illusion of the perception of a snake in nacre; and conversely, there would be illusion of perception of silver in a rope. But that is nowhere to be seen.

From this, we can conclude that a specific illusion is not independent of the specific nature inherent (Śakti) in its substratum, which alone lends favorability for that specific kind of illusion to be expressed. Seeds require rain for their germination but what specific plant will emerge from a seed depends on the inherent nature of the seed. The seed of a rice plant, for example, cannot give rise to a mango tree, though both kinds of seeds require rain for their germination. Every seed possesses a specific inherent potency, due to which a specific seed only produces a specific plant and not any/every other type of plants.

In a similar manner, a Rope, alone possesses the specific potency, reflected in its nature, which is required for the illusion of a Snake to be perceived in it, and not the illusion of Silver. Conversely, Nacre, alone possesses the specific potency, reflected in its nature, due to which the illusion of Silver is perceived in it.

Ajñāna (nescience) is just an incidental reason for the specific inherent potencies, already present in substances like Rope or Nacre to express themselves, due to which the respective illusions of Snake and Silver occur in them.

In a similar manner, Brahman should also possess a special potency, inherent in its nature that is supportive for the phenomenon of illusion of Jagat to be perceived in it. Without the existence of such a potency (Śakti) in Brahman, Ajñāna, by itself would not be able to produce the illusion of the Jagat in Brahman.

In this way, even by the examples of illusion of Rope and Nacre, Śrīpad Shankara has inadvertently accepted the presence of Śakti in Brahman.

BRAHMAN AS ANANDA IS INDICATIVE OF EXISTENCE OF ŚAKTI

In reality, just by declaring Brahman as “Ānanda” (Bliss) or “ĀnandaMāyā” (full of Bliss), the fact that existence of Śakti is inherent in Brahman, can be understood. “Ānanda” with absence of “Śakti” has no meaning: Activity, dynamism and attractiveness are always inseparably associated with “Ānanda” even in worldly experiences.

A little child out of the exuberance (ucchvāsa) of his bliss laughs, dances, sings and runs about. As the proportion of bliss increases, there is proportional increase in the dynamic activity performed out of such bliss. In the material world, pure bliss is not experienced. There is only a semblance of bliss and even in only a semblance of bliss, the above stated effects are observed.

In Brahman, there exists pure, unadulterated and complete bliss, which is of the nature of Consciousness. The effect of this bliss cannot be put into words. This Bliss, alone is indicated in the Brahma-sūtra as Paripūrṇa (utmost complete), dynamic, incomparable, and exceedingly expansive and exuberant, in the Sūtra:” लोकवत्तु लीलाकैवल्यम् “.

That Entity which is called “Ānanda” or “ĀnandaMāyā”, can never be motionless (निश्चल) or devoid of activity (निष्क्रिय).

In Brahman, who is Sat-Cit-Ānanda svarūpa, His Sat-svarūpatā (nature as embodiment of pure existence), Cit-svarūpa (nature as embodiment of Cognition) and Ānanda-svarūpa (nature as embodiment of Delight)—everything is of the nature of exuberance (ucchvāsaMāyā).

Brahman’s Sat-svarūpatā is not just restricted or limited to its own svarūpa but extends to, pervades and is the very basis of the existence of all others.

Brahman’s Cit-svarūpatā, also is not limited to Its own svarūpa-i.e., it not only takes the form of Brahman’s experience of itself as the embodiment of Cognition but it is also the basis for cognitive capacity of every other conscious entity as well.

Brahman’s Ānanda-svarūpatā, also is not limited to Its own svarūpa-i.e., it not only takes the form of Brahman’s experience of Itself as the embodiment of Delight but it is also the basis for (and extends to)the experience of this delight(in the form of Bhakti) for others(Bhaktas) who have taken the shelter of Its Svarūpa.

This verily, is the significance of Bhagavān’s three-fold Svarūpa-Śakti—in the form of Sandhinī (which corresponds to Brahman’s Sat-svarūpa), Samvit (which corresponds to Brahman’s Cit-svarūpa) and Hlādinī (which corresponds to Brahman’s Ānanda-svarūpa).

This dynamism in the form of exuberance of bliss (Ānanda-ucchvāsātā) is not due to any incompleteness/deficiency/absence in Brahman, but rather a manifestation of Its Completeness (Pūrṇatā).

A vessel that is completely filled with milk, due to the influence of the heat, during the process of boiling, spills over out of the mouth of the vessel and spreads over to things/surfaces outside the vessel. Similarly, the Absolute and Complete Bliss (paripūrṇa-ānanda) of Brahman due to the influence of Its Svarūpa-Śakti (comparable to heat due to boiling) exuberates and extends to (comparable to milk spilling over) beyond Its Svarūpa and similarly leads to such exuberance of it in others as well by pervading them.

Such ucchvāsātā (exuberance) of Bliss verily is the reason for Brahman being Rasa-svarūpa. If Brahman did not have such ucchvāsa of Bliss, then its being Rasa-svarūpa would not have been possible, nor would Brahman be an object of supreme attraction/desire, and hence it would not be a subject of contemplation, worship and meditation.

Wherever there is ‘Rasa’, there is experience of variety in the form of the “enjoyer/taster of Rasa” (अस्वादक) and “the object to be enjoyed as the embodiment of Rasa” (अस्वाद्य). Without the presence of these two, there is no meaning of Rasa-ucchvāsātā.

Due to this exuberance of Ānanda or Rasa, although Brahman is “one”, It truly manifests as “many” and His Sat-svarūpatā, Chid-rūpatā and Ānanda-rūpatā” exuberates, pervades and extends to the “many”.

This same Brahman as Ānanda-tattva, due to the influence of Its Svarūpa-Śakti, becomes exuberant and attains the apparent state of variety (bheda) that is apparent during perception. However, in none of these states of bheda, is there any inclusion of a Tattva other than Brahman because there is no Tattva other than Brahman, in the first place.

In one specific “Bheda” (variety of manifestation) of that Tattva, called Nirviśeṣa-Brahman in common parlance, there is minimum apprehension of Ānanda-ucchvāsātā experienced because Brahman/Bhagavān’s Śakti remains avyakta (unmanifest) to the perceivers of this manifestation. This particular manifestation alone is called निश्चल, निष्कल, निष्क्रिय, in comparison to the manifestation called Bhagavān. But even in this expression of Brahman, there is no inclusion of any hypothetical foreign substance as its constitution, which is something other than Brahman.

Thus, despite the Tattva called Brahman, manifests in innumerable varieties (called Bheda), it remains One (Abhinna) and Non-dual substance (Advaya-tattva).

This has indeed been convincingly shown by Vaiṣṇavācārya Śrī Jīva Goswāmī.