GAUDIYA VAISHNAVISM

After the disappearance of Sri Chaitanya at Puri, Orissa, at the age of fortytwo, disciples of his order i.e. Srisa RupaGoswami, his elder brother SanatanaGoswami, Srila Jiva Goswami, Raghunath Das and Raghunath Bhatta, Gopal Bhatta etc. carried on the Bhakti movement started by him. As Sri Chaitanya was born in Bengal otherwise known as Gouda Desha, they gave a name to this; Gaudiya Vaishnasism.

Vaishnavism opposes the interpretation of Brahma the God as attributeless, impersonal reality; and the introduction of illusion or maya as the cause for the illusory appearance of the world of plurality on the substratum of Brahma. Vaishnavism also opposes Sankar’s doctrine of absolute identity of human soul or Jiva with the Universal Soul (the paramatma ); the finite with the infinite the imperfect with the perfect. But to this extent Vaishnavism of Sri Chaitanya is similar to Vaishnavism of South India. But there are certain other elements apart from non-dualism vs dualism in Sri Chaitanya’s Vaishnavism, which are very vital and important.

Relying on Vedas, all the schools of Vedantism agree that perception inference and other types of knowledge are useful in only so far as they expound the nature of Ultimate Reality. Vaishnavism as a whole accepts this conclusion. But Sri Chaitanya included Bhagbat purana, also within the scope of revealed scriptures and accepted the same as a genuine treatise on the Brahmasutras . Following the teachings of the Upanishads, SriChaitanya’s school accepts that Brahma is One without secod – the Ultimate Reality, the real source and ground of the universe. An insight in to the etymological meaning of the word Brahma conveys that Brahma himself is great and he can make others great. He is not attributeless or impersonal as Sankara supposed, but is endowed with superabundant attributes, inconceivable powers, supernormal activities and divine personality. Since Brahma is infinite and all perfect, no limit can be conceived with regard to His power, attributes and personality. There is none equal to Him, none superior to Him. All these attributes are accepted by all Vishnava sects. But Sri Chaitanya, added further attributes. He said that God is absolute majesty; (Aisurya) and absolute sweetness (madhurya), Much emphasis is laid on His absolute sweetness, So Radha came in the Bhagvat purana as the consort of Krishna, apart from his many wives. Radha and Krishna are in eternal embrace of Divine Love.
Out of the numerous powers of Brahma, importance is given to three, (i) the power relating to the creation of the world, (ii) the power that manifests the souls, (iii) the power constituting His intrinsic nature. On the authority of Vishnu purana the power constituting the intrinsic nature is said to be the parasakti, i.e., the highest power. The power that manifests the souls is the Jivasakti and the power that lies at the root of the world process is called Avidyasakti or nescience. The scriptural discription of Brahma is Sachidananda which is the combination of real existence or Being, (sat) chitt consciousness (chitt) and bliss (ananda), Brahma is essentially being of absolute consciousness and bliss, the three of His sakties or potencies are known respectively as (i) Sandhini, (ii) Samviti and (iii) Hladini. It is by sandhini aspect that He upholds all existence, the function of Samviti aspect consists in enabling Him to know and make others know, while by Hladini. He enjoys the bliss and makes others enjoy the same. unlike Avidya-sakti otherwise known as Maya-sakti and Jiva-sakti otherwise known as Tatthasakti, Swarupa-sakti being inherently spiritual stands to Brahma in the closest relation of self-link; swarupa-sama-vadhya. It is the locus of Jiva-sakti which manifests itself in the form of innumerable limited spirits and the Jiva-sakti in its turn is the locus of Maya-Sakti which finds its expression in the inanimate, material world. Swarupa sakti is the source of Jiva Sakti, and Maya-sakti. So they ie Jiva sakti and Maya-sakti can not be called unreal, because they are below the swarupa Sakti and are incompetent to reveal the attributes of Brahma fully, On the other hand Samvit-sakti which is also one aspect of the root Swarupa-Sakti reveals, Him on the all-inclusive spiritual unity. The highest and most perfect aspect of all the Saktis is ananda or bliss or the Hladini Sakti which is by nature infinite and dynamic. This is regarded as the ultimate reality in its most perfect form and termed as Bhahgbat whom the devotees try to inculcate in their hearts.

Thus partly on spiritual experience, and partly on logical principles they tried to convince all people with regard to the inadequacy and unsoundness of the conception of impersonal Brahma advocated by Sankara. Sankaracharya in his Adaitva concept was trying to bring back the people from the influence of Budhism, was justified in holding that the highest spiritual plane can not be reached without transcending the limitations of space and time, body and mind selfishness and greed, He was also justified in holding that so long as the soul is dominated by ego, the realization of ultimate reality will be partial and relative. But Sankaracharya's conclusion was that in order to attain the Ultimate Reality one must completely merge one's ego-consciousness with the Ultimate Ego would mean that he would not be able to experience the Ultimate Reality-the Supreme Self, because for experiencing the bliss the self is no longer there.
The Goudiya Vaishnavas accepted that the Ultimate Reality is omnipotent and infinite who creates, sustains, controls, develops and destroys the evils of the world. The Ultimate Reality being all powerful would provide the capacity to the realized soul to retain the spiritual individuality to experience the sweetness of the Ultimate Reality. Sri Chaitanya's sect claim that having gone beyond the plane of ordinary experience in the state of beatific trance or Samadhi the devotee loses his individuality in the overwhelming effulgence of one homogeneous, differenceless consciousness and on his return to the plane of reason or Budhi regards this as the true character of Ultimate Reality. The concept of Ultimate Reality reached thus, though not altogether false is partial and may be far short of the Highest Reality. Though the Ultimate Reality is formless, infinite etc it has a personality or Vigraha which manifests itself differently as Brahma, Paramatman and Bhagavan according to the capacity of the aspirant who seeks to realize it.

Further the Gaudiya Vaishnavas do not agree with Sankara that the realities of lower planes of experience are only illusions of Brahma like those of snake and rope, sun in water, blueness in the sky. They hold that the points of difference between Brahma and the things of the world are far more numerous and important than these illusory resemblance between them. The hypothesis of illusion- the Gaudiya Vaishnavas maintain - can hardly be reconciled with that of the sole reality of differenceless impersonal Brahma because illusion presupposes the presence of the real thing in form and existence of those who are in the net of illusion. Since Brahma is the only reality according to the teachings of the Upanishads and since the existence of the visible world is undeniable Sankar admitted that the Brahma has the power to manifest - which is known as maya or sakt.

The Goudiya Vaishnavas hold that Brahma is the possessor of the maya - the sakti by which He endlessly expresses Himself as the world of finite souls and material objects, and at the same time enjoying the infinite glories by self created limitations. Sri Chaitanya calls the world real, as a house of spiritual training for the finite souls. This standpoint of Sri Chaitanya is called Avikrtaparinanambad. Since power of Brahma to create which is known as Sakti, the transformation of the former in to finite souls and material objects does not affect the nature of Brahma, or the fullness of Brahma, this sakti aspect of Brahma has been named as difference-in nondifference. The finite souls being manifestation of the Jiva-sakti are at the same time different as well as non-different from Brahma, in the manner that the sunray is not the Sun. The transformation of the former in to finite souls and the material world, does not affect the Essence of Brahma, and since, sakti is an outcome of Brahma the finite souls and material world are created by Brahma. This peculiarity of difference and non difference has been named as inconceivable difference-in-non difference or achintya Vedaveda.
One important function of Maya is to allure the finite souls for worldly enjoyments. But finite souls as they are basically from Brahma never lose their power of extricating themselves from the clutches of Maya. The miseries and failures repeatedly experienced by the finite souls - in spite of at random good time of enjoyment, - serve to convince them as to the worthlessness of their attachment to the objects of the material world and the demands of the ego. The frustration experienced in the world awakes them up to the divine way of life. This marks the beginning of Bhakti-or Love-devotion towards the Spiritual Whole. Slowly the finite will is attracted to the Will of the Infinite Whole. This is the true nature of the human self: This type of attraction through love-worship is known as Ragatmika-bhakti as against the attachment practiced out of spiritual injections, and performance of rituals-which is called Vaidhi Bhakti. Vaidhi Bhakti is mechanical allegiance lacking emotional fervor. Gaudiya school strongly believes that the highest form of Ragatmika-bhakti as represented by Radha’s love for Krishna, which can take one to realise Supreme Reality.

The highest form of love in which the Ultimate Reality is truly and fully reflected is considered as the essential aspect of Swarupssakti. Radha has been identified with Hladini-sakti (delighting power) of Krishna and the Ultimate Reality has been conceived as not Krishna alone but Radha and Krishna, as inseparable. The scriptural description of Brahma as Ananda (bliss) has been interpreted to mean the unity in duality of the Ultimate Reality. Rasa means enjoyment Supreme. Reality is eternally engaged in relishing bliss either in the form of bliss of His own self (Swarupananda) or with Sakti or creation which is Saktyananda. Swarupanda, becomes much more relishable to Him when reflected in the hearts of His devotees – in the form of Saktyananda. Thrown in to the hearts of the devotees, Swarupananda gets transformed into intense love known as Bhakti or Prema which is eagerly sought to be enjoyed by Krishna Himself. This type of Saktyananda, it is claimed-, is more dear to Krishna than Swarupananda or His own generated bliss. Thus being the object of intense love Krishna appears as all beauty and all-sweetness. On the other hand His devotees being governed by sense of Krishna-centered egoism as distinguished from the citizens of highest plane of spiritual experience known as Vraja, display four different varieties of love simultaneously. They are (i)Dasya-faithful attendant of the Maser, (ii) Sakhya-comradeship (iii)Vatsalya- a parent’s love for the child (iv)Kanta –the intense love of the lady for her paramour . It is said that Kanta attitude or mad love like that of a girl for her lover is the best. Love being essentially dynamic, it’s progresses through different stages like sneha (affection), mana or getting hurt by slight negligence, raga and anuraga (union after separation due to mana), then bhava (understanding) and finally mahabhava or supreme understanding of unison. This is the love shown by the Gopis – among whom Radha was the foremost, towards Krishna. Radha is identified with mahabhava. Radha is the highest
ideal of perfect love and Krishna is the highest form of beauty and Sweetness at whom perfect love aims. Sweetness wants some one to experience it and the eagerness to experience the sweetness fulfils itself by that attraction. So according to Gaudiyas the love of Radha – Krishna is the love of the finite soul for the infinite, Supreme soul – unity in duality and duality in unity.

Thus the Brahma enunciated by the votaries of Advaita who follow the path of knowledge and the paramatman of the yogis represent more or less partial manifestation of the Ultimate Reality, which can be fully experienced through the intense love of a devotee otherwise known as Prem-Bhakti, This is the essence of the practice developed by Gaudiya Vaishnavas.

Gaudiya Vaishnavism regard Lord Chaitanya as Lord Krishna Himself and they chant the Divine Name which is known as mahamantra or the greatest of all mantras.

Hare Krishna Hare Krishna, Krishna Krishna Hare Hare
Hare Rama, Hare Rama, Ram Ram Hare Hare.

According to Sri Chaitanya the Vedas teach nine principal doctrines as follows.

(1) Hari or Krishna (incarnation of Vishnu) is One without a second. Vedic Literature has described three aspect of the Supreme Being ie Brahma, paramatma and Bhagavan. This is similar to the Holy Trinity found in the Christian Church. Brahma is formless. In paramatma His full form is partially manifested, but Bhagavan or Krishna-Bhagavan is revelation in, complete, with spiral-whole as described in Brahma SSmhita. (5. 29-30)

"Chintamani-prakar-sadmsu kalpa –vrksha
Laksavretusu surabhir abhipalyantam
Laxmi-sahasra-sata-smbhrama-sevyamanam
Govindam adi-purusam tam aham bhajami
Venum Kvanatam arvinda-dalayataksam
Barhavatamsam asitam buda-sundarangam
Kandarpa-koti kamaniva –visesha-sobham
Govindam adipurusham twam aham bhajami”

(I Worship Govinda, (Krishna) the primeval Lord, the first progenitor who is tending the cows, yielding all desire, in abodes built with spiritual gems, surrounded by millions of purpose trees, always served with great reverence and affection by hundreds and thousands of Laxmis or gopis. I worship Govinda the primeval Lord, who is adept in playing on His flute, with blooming eyes like
lotus petals with head decked with peacock’s feather, with the figure of beauty tinged with the hue and blue clouds, and His unique loveliness charming millions of Cupids.)

Thus the distance between the finite soul and the Supreme Being is not on the basis of time-space concept but intensity of concentration so that the forgetfulness is totally wiped out and the finite soul is graced with a continuous memory of his previous birth. The disease of the mind is forgetfulness. Vaishnavas of Gaudiya order claim that by arousing the Hladini Sakti the memories of the past can be revived and the chain of past lives can be experienced.

(2). This is possible because Krishna is vested with unlimited power. He being absolute not and being bound by the laws which govern His creation He (the Divine person) and His NAME (the Divine Name) are to be always remembered. The Divin Person and the Divin Name are two sides of a coin. When we utter the Divine Name, we think of the Divine Person. It is said that Krishna’s infinite potency is wholly pressed in His Name. In Bhagvat Gita Lord Krishna says, 

\[ \text{giram asmy ekam aksaram Yajnanam} \]
\[ \text{Japa-yojnosmi} \] (of vibrations I am the transcendal Om. Of sacrifices I am the chanting of the Holy Name. (Bhagavat Gita 10:25)

(3). In ancient Sanskrit language, different attitudes that a devotee develops for the Supreme Being is known as rasa. There are five main rasas, namely (i) neutrality (santa) (ii) serving attitude (Dasya) (iii) friendly attitude (sakhya), (iv) parental affection (Vatsalya) (v) Love (madhurya). Remaining in the world one chooses one of these attitudes and develops his devotion towards Lord Krishna, Lord Krishna says that various types of happiness available in this world in the form of wealth, fame, family, wife, children etc can not give enduring happiness. The happiness they give is temporary. The final object of relationship or rasa is God. Krishna is known as \text{akhila rasamrita sindhu} – ocean of nectar of the entire body of rasas. This aspect has been elaborately described by the famous Vaishnava scholar Srila RupaGoswami in his book Bhakti-rasamritasindhu.

(4) When the soul leaves the human body, one is dead. In Sanskrit soul is known as \text{atma}. \text{Atma} is minute particle of spiritual energy. Often it is compared with the light coming from the Sun. The soul, the Vaishnavas believe, is not bound by time and space. It is present in all living beings. In the Bhagavatgita (15, 8-9) it is narrated that the living entity in the material world carries his different conceptions of life from one body to another as the air carries aromas. Thus it takes one kind of body and again quits it to take another. The living entity gets another gross body as conceived in the mind. He thus enjoys particular sets of sense objects.
The human soul is the most developed soul on earth. An animal or plant does not think beyond eating, sleeping, mating and defending. But a human being has the ability to use his capacity for knowing the spiritual truth leading to service of God. It is said that human form is achieved after traveling through 84,000,000 (eight four lakhs) species of life. Thus human life is a rare gift. A highly evolved soul before getting united with the Supreme Soul gets the experience of the Supreme Soul.

(5) Ego comes in the way of developing continuous attachment of the soul with the Supreme Being. Engrossed with worldly desires he forgets the Purpose of his life. This involvement is due to the illusion – or maya. Man thinks that he is the controller of things around him and this is how he is trapped in the world of matter. He does not realize that atma is sat or eternal, and matter is not eternal, that atma is chit (knowledge) where as matter is ignorance, and atma is ananda or bliss, while the matter is illusory. Thus atma and matter according to Vaishnavism are not compatible. The body, which surrounds the jivatma is composed of five elements, ie earth, water, fire, ether, (mind, and intellect) and ego. In Sanskrit ego is called ahamkaha – or false ego. Ego has a tendency to become false ego when it hankers after matter. This mis-hankering gives rise to three types of suffering – adi-atmika (afflictions caused by own body), adi-bhautika (afflictions caused by other living beings) and adi-daivika (afflictions caused by natural disasters). The hankering after material things is compared with a thirsty man’s running for water by seeing the mirage and his running brings him ruin. That is why Vaishnavas are particular in using this human life for getting the real water instead of the mirage. So one should use his time for the intended purpose running after loving and serving God. Lord Chitanya stated that for loving and serving God, one has to surrender his ego, to the God through His incarnation; Lord Krishna.

(6) Thus Krishnasarana is the only means to cross over the ocean of birth and death. It is said that a virtuous life of performing ones duty properly, development of physical and mental powers and abilities, acquisition of and detachment from material things, or even the knowledge about the Spiritual Being, can not bring God-realization. God-realisation is proportionate to the degree of bhakti or love of God in one’s heart. In Bhagavatgita Lord Krishna says. One can understand Me, as I am as the Supreme Personality of Godhead only by devotional service. And when one is fully conscious of me by such devotion, he can enter in to the kingdom of God. (18.55)
A Vaishnava is a lover of God. He develops this love due to his sukruiti or past spiritual culture. The past spiritual culture gets manifest when one comes in contact with a true lover of God. In Srimad Bhagavata, nine types of discipline or processes are prescribed for developing love for the Supreme Self. They are (1) Hearing and chanting of Holy Name (2) Remembering with devotion the qualities, pastimes and activities of Lord Krishna by (3) Serving the lotus feet of Lord Krishna (4) offering prayers to Him. (5) becoming His servant (6) considering Him as best friend (6) surrendering the body to Him (6) surrendering of the mind to Him (7) surrendering of all knowledge to Him (8) offering worship consisting of sixteen type of rituals (9) leaving oneself at the mercy of the Lord.

(7) Everything emanates from Hari, the Supreme Being; Lord Krishna is the store house of three potencies or Saktis. They are (i) the Hladini sakti (spiritual-love potency)(ii)Jiva-sakti (creative potency) (iii) Maya sakti (the deluding potency in the world of matter). Krishna's energies are the same like Krishna Himself, but simultaneously they are also different from Him, This is known as achintya–vedaveda-tattwa (inconceivable simultaneous distinction-non distinction). This is mentioned in the Isopanishad in a lucid meaner

Om purnam adah purnam idam
Purnat purnam udachyate
purnasya purnam adaya
Purnam eva vasisyate

(The personality of Godhead is perfect and complete and because He is perfectly complete, all emanations from Him such as this phenomenal world, are perfectly equipped wholes as complete, whatever is produced out of the complete is also complete in itself. Because He is the complete whole even though so many complete units emanate from Him, He remains the complete balance).

Here formless ‘infinite’ creates forms. The concept of formless, and forms are due to the Supreme Will or Krishna’s will and His will alone. Krishna is present in all things yet simultaneously, he exists as a separate entity. He is not influenced by His deluding potency or maya. He is always Iswar or the controller of potency.

(8) Vaishnavas of Gaudiya order firmly believe that devotion to Krishna,- or Krishna-bhakti, is the only means of attaining the final goal of spiritual realization. Bhakti means performing such acts which are directed towards God without expectation of any benefit to oneself. Thus good works just performed will not help. They may boost the ego and become anti-
productive from the point of view of spiritual realization. Good work should be done with the motive of serving the God or the Love-Lord. Like wise knowledge by itself will not reveal God unless it is accompanied by a desire to serve God. So this understanding is true in the case of all religions- Hinduism, Islam, Christianity etc. So this is known as sanatana-dharma or eternal dharma.

(9) Lord Chaitanya taught love; spiritual love, or Prema-Bhakti as the deal path for spiritual realization. Krishna-Prema is love without expectation. Loving God to fulfill Love is a very difficult proposition when it is acted upon. Because in the mundane, world we understand love as give and take; mutuality is the basis of worldly love. That is why while starting to love God, one immediately wants certain fulfillments of desires. Lord Chaitanya says that this type of love with expectation is not pure love and comes in the way of spiritual progress. So the devotee should always feel whatever he gets in his life as a gift from God. Vaishnavas believe that the human souls are taking birth to clear off the debts of their earlier births. Debts may be of various kinds. The free soul has come to this world, which is compared with a of prison house - of material illusion. To get back his freedom and to cross over the ocean of births and deaths Krishna-bhakti or Krishna-prema is the only solution

In Vaishnavism the Supreme Being is not form-less, but with form, Form is not idol. Idol is created out of imagination without authenticity of scriptures by people of limited intelligence. While Form is the image of the Super-personality who lived on this earth once upon a time. Throughout history such forms of Supreme Personality of God-head are adored and worshiped. Vishnu (Krishna) means all pervading. A Great Vaishnava scholar Srila Bhaktivinode, Thakur says, that world attracts you through your senses, and as long as you do not see God in the object of your senses, you live in an awkward position which scarcely helps you in procuring your spiritual elevation. He further states, that words can create an impression upon your thoughts and a watch can indicate time then why not a picture or figure inspire association of higher thoughts and feelings with regard to the transcendental beauty of the Divine Personage.

To love Krishna, one has to surrender before Him in totality. Surrender in this contest should not be interpreted as surrender of a culprit before the police or in the court of law, or surrender of the defeated before the victor. Surrender here means that one should develop an attitude of complete faith and dependence.
on the Supreme Self to guide him, enlighten him, and bring perfection in him. In
the Bhagvatgita Lord Krishna advises Arujuna the great warrior personality:
Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer or give away, and
whatever austerities you perform- do that O Arjuna as an offering to me
(Bhagatgita – 9. 27)

For a Vaishnava, congregational chanting of the Holy Name and
repetition of the Holy Name by a rosary of one hundred and eight beads made
of Tulasi wood are most important. In the Brhan-nardiya purana it is mentioned
that in the age of kali, there is no alternative, there is no alternative for spiritual
progress other than the Holy Name, the Holy Name, the Holy Name of the Lord.

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