CONCLUSION:

The Gauḍīya conception of the Ultimate Reality is based on a single text of the Bhāgavata-Purāṇa which declares that the Reality (Paratattva) is Advaya-jñāna, or non-dual consciousness capable of being viewed either as Brahman, or as Paramātman, or as Bhagavat.

While according to the Śaṅkarites the Ultimate Reality is homogeneous one devoid of any kind of bheda or difference - homogeneous (svajāṭīya), heterogeneous (vijāṭīya) and internal (svagata), the Ultimate Reality according to the Gauḍīyas is advaya or non-dual in the sense that there is nothing else in the Ultimate Reality which is svayaṃśiddha or independent. All the different principles like the powers or their modifications abiding in the Reality are entirely dependent on Bhagavat the supreme central aspect of the Reality. This absence of independent duals or differences in the Reality is what is meant by advaya by the Gauḍīyas. This conception of advaya stands in contrast with Kevalādvaita or pure monism of the Śaṅkarites.

Again, since the Reality in its essential aspect is constituted mainly by jñāna or consciousness, the Reality is termed as Advaya-jñāna.

The jīvas, and the divine manifestations of Rāma, Nārāyaṇa, etc. have got difference with the Reality. But though different, they are entirely dependent on Bhagavat. There is also difference of the material world or its stuff māyā-śakti in the Ultimate Reality,
but they are also similarly dependent on Bhagavat. There are also internal differences between the substantive and the adjectives which being also entirely dependent on Bhagavat, do not disturb the non-dualism of the Ultimate Reality.

This conception of the Ultimate Reality as Advaya-jñāna the Gauḍīyas derived from the authority of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. The advocates of the Gauḍīya school of Vaiṣṇavism agree with other schools of Vedānta, both non-dualistic and theistic in accepting the authority of the three prasthānas, viz. the Upaniṣads, the Bhāgavad-Gītā, and the Brahma-sūtras. In their opinion the Bhāgavata Purāṇa is the most reliable commentary on the Brahma-sūtras. Jīva Gosvāmin, the chief exponent of the Gauḍīya school of Vaiṣṇavism, has based his metaphysics on the Bhāgavata-conception of the three graded manifestations of the Ultimate Reality.

Although the Reality is one without a second, yet it appears in three different forms in accordance with the capacity of the aspirants or sādhakas who seek to realise It. The powers of the Ultimate Reality are not fully revealed to all aspirants or sādhakas. In Its fullest manifestation the Reality is a personal God possessed of intrinsic divine powers. But, those who seek to realise Him through jñāna alone do not regard and perceive Him as endowed with powers. To them the Reality appears as Brahman, or consciousness devoid of all powers and attributes.

Again, those who seek to realise Him through yoga, regard and perceive Him as the ground of jīva-śakti and māyā-śakti. To them,
He appears as Paramātman. Thus, in Paramātman there is partial manifestation of powers. But, Brahman also is not devoid of śakti or powers, though regarded and perceived by jñānis to be pure consciousness devoid of all powers. The powers remain absolutely dormant and undifferentiated in Brahman.

Those who seek complete realisation of the Reality through śuddha bhakti or pure devotion call Him as Bhagavat, and regard Him as the Supreme person endowed with numerous divine powers known as svarūpa-śakti, jīva-śakti, and māyāśakti. While the svarūpa-śakti is in its fullest play in Bhagavat, it is partially manifested in Paramātman only to retain His divinity as the all-pervading indwelling controller. Paramātman projects the world and the individual souls by His māyāśakti and jīvaśakti respectively, and is thus the creator and the cause of the universe. He is both the efficient and the material cause. It is to be understood that the divine manifestations known as Avatāras like Viṣṇu, Rāma, etc. are of Paramātman and not of Bhagavat. These jīvaśakti and māyāśakti belong to Bhagavat also though not directly, but through His manifestation Paramātman. The svarūpaśakti or the intrinsic power of Bhagavat which is constituted of hāda, sandhinī and samvit, is identical with Him as is evident from the term svarūpaśakti. It stands in the relation of bhedābheda or identity-cum-difference which is of course acintya or supralogical.

Though acintyabhedābheda or supralogical identity-cum-difference is in general the relation of śakti with śaktimāt, the relation in case of svarūpa-śakti with Bhagavat implies more of identity than of
difference. In this way, the relation of jīva-ākāta and māya-ākāta with Paramātman, or with Bhagavat through Paramātman, implies more and more of difference than of identity. The jīva-ākāta with its modifications as the jīva is rather marginal or tatastha, while māya-ākāta with its modification as the world is extraneous or vahiraṅga which implies greater difference.

The jīva as the modification of tatastha śakti is also marginal in the sense that it stands between divinity and worldliness. The jīva is not worldly by nature being of the nature of eternally free consciousness. On the other hand, it cannot be included in the Divinity because of being monadic, and liable to be dragged into worldliness due to the ignorance of His true nature. The jīva is not only free consciousness by nature, but is also eternally subservient to the Lord being the modification of His śakti.

Though jīva is by nature free monadic consciousness, it possesses consciousness as well which imparts to the jīva real knowerhood. It also possesses a real ahamtā or ego associated with real kārtṛtva or agency. These characteristics of the jīva persist even during the liberated state. Its relation of identity-cum-difference with the Lord also persists at the state. The jīva is regarded as amśa or part of the Lord being actually a part of the tatastha śakti. Being of the nature of self-luminous consciousness the jīva is self-conscious, i.e. it is revealed to itself by itself (svaṃsvaṃ svayaṃ prakāsa).

Though the jīva knows other objects and its own self, it cannot generally know the Lord due to the veiling power of māya-śakti.
The material world is the modification of guna-māyā. Because of being the modification of such extraneous power the world remains at a distance from Paramātman, and more so from Bhagavat.

The gunamāyā being nothing but prakṛti or pradhāna is constituted of sattva, rajas and tamas, and therefore, its modification the world is also permeated by the three guṇas. This guṇamāyā produces the mind, senses, and the bodies with which the jīva falsely identifies itself through the fascination of jīvamāyā - the other aspect of the māyāsakti.

The jīvamāyā includes kāla, karma, and saṃskāra or time, action-residues, and knowledge-impressions. These combined set up a stir in prakṛti or guṇamāyā and impel it to modify in the form of different material principles and elements. Of course, all these occur by the supreme power of will and activity of the Lord.

Those jīvas, who are averse to God from the very beginning due to ignorance, are fascinated by jīvamāyā and dragged into the worldly life beset with various evils, bondage and misery. When again, through prescribed means and grace of God the jīva attains realisation of his true nature as subservient to God, his ignorance is removed. The jīva becomes liberated even in this life through Bhagavat-sākṣātkāra or God-realisation. After death also he attains liberation which may be of five kinds of which sāmīpya-mukti is the best one, since it offers the liberated devotee the opportunity to live near and serve his beloved Lord. The chief sādhanā or means of liberation, according to the Gauḍīyas is bhakti or devotion.
Bhakti, in both its forms—sādhana-bhakti and sadhya-bhakti, is a modification of svarūpa-śakti or hladinī śakti of the Lord. The Lord casts a part of his hladinī into the hearts of the devotees which manifests as devotion and abides in the hearts of the devotees for ever. When sādhana-bhakti or preliminary devotion in the form of rāgānugā (imitating the rāgabhakti of the associates of ŚrīKṛṣṇa) deepens into sādyabhakti or resultant devotion, and the sense of distance and fear disappears, it becomes prīti or supreme love which is regarded as the highest end or goal by the true devotees. Therefore, prīti is called as prayojana or the final end.

Ehagavat the supreme Lord, is not only supreme bliss, but He is self-conscious bliss or relished bliss (asvādyamāna ānānda) which is called rasa. The Upaniṣadic dictum "Raso vai saḥ" indicates this aspect of the Lord, and indicates that the supreme bliss may be relished also by the jīvas through prīti or supreme love. Śrī Jīva along with other Gauḍīyas describes different grades of prīti or devotional love according to the grade of manifestation of the Lord in the consciousness of the devotee.

Not only the Lord, but the devotional love asprīti for Him is also rasa or relished bliss, because, it attains the nature of supermundane (lokottara) wonderful (camatkāri) bliss when it realises the supreme Lord as rasa. According to the Gauḍīyas, bhaktirasa or prīti-rasa is the only true rasa being entirely supermundane and extremely blissful.

The ordinary rasas admitted in alaṅkāra (poetics) are
supermundane and blissful only in a very limited sense. Moreover, while the ordinary rasas are relished only by the sympathetic readers and spectators of poems and dramas (kāvyā and nāṭya), bhakti-rasa is relished not only by the readers and spectators of devotional poems and dramas, but also by the mūlanāyakas or the original characters, and by the nātas, or the drammatists. This also accounts for the supremacy of bhakti-rasa. Moreover, bhakti-rasa may be relished by true lovers of God only through His remembrance even without the medium of kāvyā or nāṭya.

One of the most significant contributions of Śrī Jīva and other Gauḍīyas is the conception of the relation of acintyabhedabheda or supralogical identity-cum-difference between the substrate of the Ultimate Reality and the powers, or between Bhagavat and His powers. Since the individual souls and the world are also modifications of those powers, the relation between the Reality and the individual souls, or between the Reality and the world is also the same acintyabhedabheda. This conception of the relation marks a distinct development in the conception of the relation of the Ultimate Reality with soul and world. It stands in contrast with the relation of abheda or identity propounded by Śaṅkara, and with the relation of bheda or difference advocated by Madhva and others, and also in contrast with svābhāvika and aupādhika bhedabheda or the relation of natural and conditional difference-in-identity propounded by Bhāskara, Nimbārka, and others.

Śaṅkara advocates the relation of abheda or absolute non-difference between Brahman and jīva, and also between Brahman and the
world in order to establish his doctrine of pure non-dualism and falsity of the world. But such a philosophy is a great blow to theism, because, according to it, individuality of the soul, personal God, and devotion to Him are only empirically true. Again, in the case of bheda or absolute difference as advocated by Madhava, the gulf between the Lord and the individual soul is incapable of being bridged over so as to make the Lord near and dear as the object of supreme love.

To get rid of these difficulties Nimbārka, Bhāskara, and others have upheld the relation of bhedabheda or difference-in-non-difference as the mean between those conflicting doctrines of absolute non-difference (ātyantikābheda) and absolute difference (ātyantikābheda). Though the advocates of bhedābheda have tried their best to make their doctrines logical, Rāmānuja, and others have refuted both the doctrines of svābhāvika-bhedābheda (natural difference-in-non-difference), and aupādhika bhedābheda (conditional difference-in-non-difference) as illogical and untenable.

With all these data at his disposal Śrī Jīva and other Gauḍīyas propounded as the most satisfactory solution of the problem the relation of acintyabheda or supralogical identity-cum-difference between saktimat and śakti, or between Brahman and universe.

Though it is true that such relation of identity-cum-difference is untenable from the standpoint of logic, but such common logic does not hold good in the case of the infinite Ultimate Reality which Itself is a supralogical principle. Śakti is identical with its substrate (śaktimat) because it has no existence apart from the
substrate, and it is different as well from the substrate, because, unlike the substrate it admits of modification.

Therefore, the supralogical relation of acintyabhedabheda is also the relation between Paramātman and the jīva which is the modification of the tātasthā śakti abiding directly in Paramātman. Since Paramātman is a partial manifestation (svāmśa) of the Lord Bhagavat, the exact relation of Bhagavat with the jīva is svāmśa-śaktyamśa-paripāma, i.e. the jīva is the modification of the part of tātastha-śakti of Paramātman who is again a partial manifestation of Bhagavat.

Śrī Jīva's conception of the Divinity comprises perhaps all the conception of Divinity upheld by all other theistic schools of the world. The conception of nirguna Brahman or a pure Absolute, the conception of Īśvara or God as the cause and creator of the world, and the conception of a more excelling aspect of God-head are all included in his conception of the Ultimate Reality.

If Śaṅkara is original in his conception of Brahman, and his conception of māyā to maintain Its transcendent nature, it may be asserted without hesitation that Śrī Jīva is original in his conception of Bhagavat with his svarūpa-śakti by virtue of which the transcendent nature of the Ultimate Reality is maintained. It is through the inconceivable nature of svarūpa-śakti that the divine integrity and excellence of Bhagavat is maintained without any distortion in spite of the various powers abiding in Him— with their various modifications as the worldly jīvas and the material world.
Sandhinî, samvit, and hladini the divine constituents of this svarûpa-âkâti account for His essential nature as sat, cit and ānanda. Again, it is through these sandhinî, samvit, and hladini that the Lord Himself possesses existence, knowledge and bliss, and also imparts existence, consciousness and bliss to all other creatures of the world.

Again, Śrī Śrīva’s conception of the highest divinity as svayam Bhagvat Śrīkṛṣṇa - the embodiment of divine bliss, love, beauty and sweetness, may be claimed to surpass all extant conceptions of personal God. The mādhurya aspect or the sweetness aspect of God-head with its corresponding means of realisation as prîti or self-less love which is also the final end of that realisation, occupies the most important place in Śrī Śrīva’s philosophy.

The more a devotee realises the blissfulness and sweetness of the Lord, deeper becomes his prîti for the sweet Lord, and reciprocally deeper becomes his realisation of the Lord with the increase of his love. In this way his love for the sweet Lord grows more and more, ever new and ever fresh. Such a realisation of the Ultimate Reality as dynamic bliss and sweetness is what a true lover of God aspires after. So, it may be said that Śrī Śrīva’s philosophy satisfies to the greatest extent the claims and aspirations of the heart which is totally ignored in Śaṅkara’s philosophy. Again, the sweet Lord is also the embodiment of all rasâr or relish of blissful wonder. The devotee who realises and loves Him also attains that perfect relish of blissful wonder. Entering into the
greater depth of His blissfulness and sweetness, the devotee finds the divine Lord Śrīkṛṣṇa in His exquisite beauty shining in eternal embrace with His hladini - the essence of His svarūpa-ākāti known as Śrī Rādhā. This realisation of the supremely exalted manifestation of the Ultimate Reality is also a unique contribution of Śrī Jīva and other Gauḍīya philosophers.

Lastly, it may be said that Śrī Jīva's philosophy is a type of theistic realism with God, individual souls, and the material world - all existent and real. They are not superimposed or false appearances. Māyā, to Śrī Jīva, is not a false principle or indra-jāla, but it is a real power of the Lord though extraneous. The world which is a modification of such māyā-ākāti is also real and stands in relation of supralogical identity-in-difference with the Lord though it stands at a great distance from Him. Jīva-ākāti or tatastha-ākāti which is marginal because of standing between antarāṅgā svarūpa-ākāti and vahiraṅgā māyā-ākāti is also an equally real power of the Lord. Its modification as the jīva is endowed with a real ego and individuality which persists even at the time of dissolution and liberation. The jīva is also granted some freedom of will through the grace of the Lord which the jīva can utilise to achieve his ends (puruṣārtha). It is by misusing this freedom for worldly interests that the jīva suffers forgetting his free nature as eternal servant of the Lord. Again, through the grace of God the jīva turns towards Him after various sufferings and frustrations of worldly life. He gradually acquires, through the association and service of saints and devotees, devotion towards the Lord which
culminates in the realisation of Bhagavat – the supreme God-Head.
In this way the summum bonum of human life is achieved both in life and after.