INTRODUCTION:

During my post graduate studies in Philosophy in the University I read with absorbing interest, considerable portions of the systems of Śaṅkara and Rāmānuja. The former laid stress on jñāna and the latter on bhakti to arrive at the highest truth. I clearly perceived that the difference was only in perspective and one blends into the other in the process of simultaneous and harmonious development of the powers of intellect and spiritual elevation of the heart. Subsequently, the detailed report of an illuminating religious discourse held at Benaras sometime in 1932 between the late Mohāmahopādhyāy Dr. Pramathanath Tarāphusān, the eminent (scholar &) vedantist Pandit, and the late Gourgovindānanda Bhāgavatsvāmi the erudite Vaiśavasānūk highly esteemed in scholastic circle, very much impressed me.

In reply to a pertinent question raised in the meeting the learned doctor held among other things that should it be accepted that the intellect and metaphysical speculation were the processes to determine the nature of the ultimate Reality then Śaṅkara’s philosophy was the best; on the other hand, proceeding on the assumption that the heart with its devotional aspirations constituted a necessary means to determine the nature of Ultimate Reality and helped also to realise it, one would be led to the inevitable conclusion that Śrī Jīva’s philosophy, largely satisfying the claims of the heart, stood supreme and was unassailable.
The clear rational and categorical reply 'stimulated my understanding' and I felt an inner urge to go in for a comparative study of these two important schools of thought each considered irrefutable on its own ground. In 1962, I eagerly availed myself of an opportunity to work as a research student in the Institute of Oriental Philosophy at Vrindāvana — all through the kindness of H.H.Bon, the Rector of the Institute.

Here I studied Śrī Jīva's philosophy with Vaiṣṇava schools for a considerable period and assiduously devoted myself to an analytical survey of the tenets and doctrines of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. This over, I placed myself under the guidance of the late Dr. Sushil Kumar Maitra the great scholar and educationist there. He was good enough to patiently go through the progress I made in my research work, and encouraged me with the inspiring suggestion of the present subject of thesis "The concept of Reality in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism" as presented in the philosophy of Śrī Jīva Gosvāmin.

In fact, the problem of the Ultimate Reality constitutes the central point, the final objective of all philosophical quest. When in calm moments of life our mind becomes conscious of the vanities and transitoriness of our external life, and strives to penetrate into the mysteries of the universe, it naturally seeks to find out the abiding permanent reality behind
this everchanging and passing phenomenon of the external world. For this reason, I was also drawn to selecting the problem of the ultimate Reality, as the subject of my thesis of course from the particular standpoint of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism.

Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism has long been viewed in the light of a religious creed, and volumes have been written from this standpoint; but books dealing with the subject against its philosophical background have not been many. The learned treatises of devout and famous Vaiṣṇavas like Sanātana Gosvāmin, Rūpa Gosvāmin, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kaviraja, Viśvanath Chakravarty, and Valadeva Vidyābhūṣāna substantially contributing to the propagation of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism in its diverse aspects, have not of course been negligible. The fact, however, remains that Jīva Gosvāmin stands out as the first prominent thinker to furnish a metaphysical foundation of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism. In tackling the subject of my thesis my particular aim and endeavour has been to present a clear exposition of Śrī Jīva's metaphysics in all its important aspects by analysing and systematising the trends of his reasoning.

Most of the works attempted on this subject have treated the subject as a religious faith, or have devoted themselves to stress its growth in historical sequence. I have proceeded to develop the subject with an original outlook emphasising the
metaphysical aspect of Śrī Jīva's doctrines. For the sake of clarification and penetration I have given a metaphysical explanation of the difficult and exclusive terms used in his philosophy. I have also placed the theories propounded by him side by side with those of other schools of Indian philosophy, commenting on their points of agreement and difference. With a critical outlook I have attempted to cover all the points of Śrī Jīva's metaphysical reasoning keeping, at the same time, my eye sharp on a faithful representation of his views. In fine, I have gone in to find out the rationale in Śrī Jīva's mind underlying his philosophy.

As an introduction to my work, a brief summary of each chapter in my thesis has been presented which may be helpful in forming a general idea of its contents as also of the progressive trend of my thoughts in the pursuit of my subject.

In the first chapter the Upaniṣadic conception of the Ultimate Reality has been discussed to show that the Upaniṣads contain the earliest records of metaphysical query into the root-cause of the world. The Reality has been presented by the Upaniṣads sometimes as the ultimate cause, sometimes as the ground of the universe, sometimes as the ultimate illumining principle, sometimes as the governor and controller of all its creations.
Sometimes again, the Reality is spoken of as beyond time, space and causation. When the Reality is found out or realised within the individual as soul it has been called as Ātman. Again, when it is realised in the world as its cause or ground it is declared as Brahman. This Ātman or Brahman is cosmic including the manifold universe in Him; He is acosmic as well being devoid of all creations and attributes.

The second chapter contains Śaṅkara's advaita or non-dualistic interpretation of the Upaniṣads laying special emphasis on the transcendent acosmic nature of Brahman. According to him all the texts describing creations, attributes and activities of Brahman are there not to mean real creation or attributes in the Reality, but they are mentioned either for the sake of meditation, or for the sake of providing negations of the negations like 'neti' 'neti', of 'not this' 'not this', describing the ultimate nature of the Reality. There is no essential difference between Brahman and souls, or between Brahman and the world, or between soul and soul.

Therefore, the ultimate Reality, according to Śaṅkara, is pure non-dual consciousness devoid of all attributes and of all differences known as svajātiya, vijātiya and svagata, or, from the similar, dissimilar, and internal differences.

In the third chapter entitled as "the sources of knowledge"
I have discussed the pramanās according to the Gauḍīya conception. Indian Philosophers reasonably divide their discussions into two sections, viz. pramāna and prameya i.e. the sources of knowledge, and the categories known through them. I have chosen the topic of pramāna to be discussed before prameya as generally all Indian philosophers reasonably do. Orthodox philosophers lay special emphasis on the authority of the scriptures like the Vedas, etc. on the ground that all other sources of knowledge like perception, inference, etc. are liable to be erroneous due to the human defects of the organs and the intellect. Śrī Jīva also regards the Vedas specially the Upaniṣads as the greatest authority with regard to spiritual matters.

But, he regards the Bhāgavata as the best commentary on the Upaniṣads, and, therefore, bases his philosophy mainly on the Bhāgavata.

In the next chapter on the Śrī Jīva's conception of the Ultimate Reality it is shown that he bases his conception of the Ultimate Reality on a single verse of the Bhāgavata, and designates the Reality as 'Advaya-jñāna' or non-dual consciousness. This 'Advaya-jñāna' is quite different from Śaṅkara's 'Advaya-jñāna' or 'advaya-Brahman', because it contains three real graded manifestations endowed with various powers, while Śaṅkara's advaya-Brahman is undifferentiated pure consciousness. Still, the Reality is advaya or non-dual because all the manifestations
and the powers are entirely dependent on the central supreme person of Bhagavat.

According to Śrī Jīva, the substantive of those three manifestations is the same principle of existence, consciousness and bliss, the difference of the three being only due to non-manifestation, less manifestation, and the fullest manifestation of powers as adjectives. But when we speak of powers in the Reality constituting different manifestations in the Reality, we must discuss and ascertain the nature of the powers or Śakti.

Therefore, in the fifth Chapter on "Śakti and Śaktimat" the nature of Śakti and its relation to Śaktimat the substrate have been ascertained. Śakti or potency in phenomenal objects is inferred or postulated by observing their effects. According to Śrī Jīva potency in phenomenal objects, as well as in the Ultimate Reality are to be apprehended only through arthāpatti or postulation which is considered to be 'tarkāsaha' or beyond the range of inference. The powers (or Śakti) have been described as acintya or inconceivable due to their supralogical nature, and also due to their capability of producing wonderful effects (durghata-kārītva).

Śrī Jīva has also displayed great skill and originality in determining the relation of Śakti and Śaktimat, or, of powers with their substrate as acintya-bhedābheda or supralogical identity-in-difference.
The next sixth chapter is devoted to the discussion of the nature of Brahman who is regarded as the lowest aspect or grade of the three manifestations due to complete non-manifestation of the powers which remain entirely dormant and indiscrete in Brahman. But the Jnānayogins who consider Brahman to be really devoid of attributes and powers err with regard to the adjectives of the Reality, though they are not erroneous with regard to the substantive. When the scriptures describe Brahman as nirguṇa or attributeless, they mean, according to Śrī Jīva, this indiscrete aspect of the Reality in which the powers and attributes are dormant.

The seventh chapter depicts the nature of Paramātman who is a superior manifestation than Brahman because of possessing some of the divine powers manifested in Him which enables Him to create, sustain, and dissolve the world, and to pervade all his creations as the indwelling controller. In Him a part of svarūpa-śakti—the intrinsic supreme power of the Lord, Īśvara-śakti—the marginal power, and māya-śakti—the extraneous power are manifested to make Him what He is.

But the most exalted manifestation of the Ultimate Reality as the divine person of Bhagavat has been delineated in the eighth chapter. In Bhagavat His supreme power of svarūpa-śakti is in full display making him the most graceful and blissful divinity which is beyond time, space and causation. The powers of creation,
controlling, etc. pertain to Him not directly but through Paramātman - His partial manifestation. His intrinsic power or svarūpaśakti constituted of sandhini, samvit, and hladini maintains His divinity completely unaffected by the tinges of the three guṇas sattva, rajas, and tamas, and also accounts for His eternal sportive activities, endowed with supreme sweetness or mādhurya.

In the ninth Chapter a comparative study has been made between the Reality of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas containing the three persons as Brahman, Paramātman and Bhagavat, and the Christian conception of Reality constituted of the trinity or the three persons, viz. the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. Though there is nothing to draw parallel in these two conceptions of trinity, the comparative study of the persons will help our clear understanding of Śrī Jīva's conception. While in the Christian Trinity the relations of paternity, filiation and procession constitute the difference of persons, in Śrī Jīva's conception difference of manifestation of powers constitute the difference of the three manifestations or persons.

In the tenth Chapter the status of the world has been discussed by tracing its origin and evolution. The world is the modification of guṇamāyā or Upādānamāyā an aspect of māyāśakti. Guṇamāyā, or Upādānamāyā is nothing but pradhāna or prakṛti constituted of three guṇas - sattva, rajas, and tamas. At the time
of dissolution the three gunas remain in a state of equilibrium in which a stir (क्षोभ) is produced in time by the action-residues (कर्म) and desires of the jivas. The principles of mahat or cosmic intellect, ahāmkāra or ego, and gradually the five subtle and gross elements are produced by the modification of guṇamāyā.

The eleventh Chapter is devoted to the nature of jīva or individual souls. The souls according to Śrī Jīva are the manifestations of the marginal power or taṭastha-sakti of Paramātman. They are of atomic measurement and eternal. Being manifestations of His sakti the souls are regarded also as parts of Paramātman. Jīva Gosvāmin has followed the views of Jāmātṛmuni with regard to the nature of the jīva. The nature of the jīva with a real ego, and real knowerhood and agency stands in great contrast with Śaṅkara’s conception of the nature of the jīva. Śrī Jīva has shown great skill in interpreting the self-luminosity of the jīva which has been described by Jāmātṛmuni as "śvasmai svaprakāśa".

In the twelfth Chapter, 'bondage and liberation' of the jīva have been discussed. Though, by nature the souls are eternally free as parts of the Lord’s marginal power, they are dragged into worldliness by jīvamāyā another aspect of māyāsakti of Paramātman which is His extraneous power.

Thus, aversion to God and worldliness of the jīvas are brought about by jīvamāyā or rather the avidyā aspect of jīvamāyā.
which makes the jīvas forget their true nature, and falsely identify themselves with the material bodies, sense-organs, etc. This avidya or ignorance can be removed by vidya or self-realisation which is also an aspect of jīva-maya. But this vidya or realisation being a modification of māyāsakti is not the supreme final realisation which is modification of svarūpa-sakti or cit-sakti, and is termed as Yogamaya. Still this vidya is a door to attain to that supreme realisation. This process of life of the souls in bondage is a process of correction through sufferings, and when through mature condition of his meritorious actions and through grace of God a jīva comes in contact with a devotee saint, he imbibes devotion through the company and service of that devotee. This devotion, if true, is always a modification of svarūpa-sakti of the Lord, and therefore gradually draws the jīva nearer and nearer to the Lord until he attains supreme realisation of, and supreme love for the supreme Lord Bhagavat. This is the summum bonum - the highest attainment of the jīva. The five kinds of liberation have also been discussed in this connection of which sāmīpya-mukti is considered as the best.

The supreme Lord Bhagavat being of the nature of the most exalted wonderful bliss is also described as 'rasa' or relished bliss, because being self-conscious His supreme bliss is relished by Himself. He is also relished as 'rasa' by the devotees.
through priti or supreme love. This 'rasa' aspect of the supreme Lord accounts for the madhurya or sweetness of the Lord on which Śrī Jīva and other Gauḍīyas have laid so much emphasis.

Again, the supreme love of the devotees is also admitted as 'rasa' specially by the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, because of being itself of the nature of supermundane (lokottara) excelling bliss, which is upheld as the criterion of 'rasa'. Perhaps for this reason bhakti or devotion in its supreme form priti, is regarded as the final end or prayojana in Śrī Jīva's philosophy.

The thirteenth Chapter is devoted to the discussion of the relation of acintyabhedabheda propounded by Śrī Jīva which is definitely his original contribution and development. The relation of the world and souls with the Ultimate Reality has been one of the main problems in philosophical quest. The innovation of the relation as acintyabhedabheda or supralogical identity-in-difference in contrast with the relation of abheda, bheda, and bhedabheda accounts for the name of acintyabhedabheda-vāda ascribed to Śrī Jīva's philosophy.

In the concluding chapter I have given a summary of Śrī Jīva's philosophy with special reference to the salient points and his original contributions.

Amongst the chief sources which I have utilised in preparing this thesis, mention must be made of such original works of Śrī Jīva like the Tattva-sandarbha, Bhagavat-sandarbha, Paramātma-
sandarbha, Bhakti-sandarbha, Priti-sandarbha, Sr̥kiñc̥na-sandarbha, Sarvasambodīn, Kramasandarbha, and his commentary on Brahma-samhita. I have also consulted Caitanya-caritāmṛta of Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja for the purpose.

In many of my discussions I have relied chiefly on the teachings of the Upaniṣads, Śrīmad-Bhāgavat, Śrībhāṣya of Rāmānuja, Govindabhāṣya, Siddhāntaratna of Baladeva, Brahma-sūtra-bhāṣya of Śaṅkara, Vedānta-sūtra, Nyāyasaṁdhiṣṭānta-muktāvalī, Mānameydaya, Sāmkhya-kārika, Saṁscepa-sārīraka and some other original texts.

I have also consulted books and papers on Gauḍīya vaiṣṇavism in English and Bengali. The chief among the English works I have consulted are the "Vaiṣṇava faith and movement" by S.K. De, "The caitanya movement" by Kennedy, 'Indian Philosophy' by Dr.S.Radhakṛṣṇan, 'History of Indian Philosophy' by Dr.S.N. Das Gupta, 'History of Philosophy: Eastern and Western' edited by Dr.S.Radhakṛṣṇan, Basic writings of Saint Thomas Aquinos, Cultural Heritage of India Vol.III, and 'Bengal Vaisnavism' by B.Paul.

Articles in English consulted are Caitanya (acintya-bhedabheda) by Dr.S.K. Maitra, and "The Ultimate Reality in Śrī Jīva's philosophy", "The author of Sat-Sandarbha" both by Dr.S.C.Chakravarty.

Among others, the books and papers in Bengali consulted by me are "The Banglar Vaisnav Darśan" by Pramathanāth Tarkabhusan,
I must acknowledge my indebtedness to all the authors of the works and the papers for the clarification and confirmation of my understanding of Śrī Jīva's philosophy which I primarily acquired through the study of the original Sanskrit texts conducted under the guidance and coaching of learned pandits.

My deep and sincere indebtedness goes to the late lamented Dr. S.K. Maitra my first guide and teacher in preparing this thesis. He inspired me most in my work, initiated me into the intricacies of the different branches of philosophy having a bearing on my subject.

I owe deep gratitude also to Kṛṣṇadas Bhakti-tīrtha with whom I studied the original texts of Tattva-sandarbha, and Bhagavat-sandarbha at Vṛndāvana. From him I acquired the fundamental idea of Śrī Jīva's philosophy that helped me greatly in the progress of my research work. I remember with gratitude my close contact with Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Gopināth Kavirāj. His directions and suggestions sustained me greatly in my arduous research work.

On the lamented death in April 1965 of my first guide Dr. S.K. Maitra, according to the suggestion of the authorities of the University of Calcutta, I sought guidance from Dr. S.C. Chakravarty Dārsanāchārya of Viśvabhārati, the distinguished
scholar and educationist, and worthy disciple of the late Dr. S.K. Maitra. Kindly accepting me as his student he has been rendering all possible help and guidance. His suggestions of some changes in my plan of work and arrangement of my discussions as he considered necessary have been appropriate and wise. For this I am grateful to him.

Before closing, I acknowledge my indebtedness to Prof. Dinesh Chandra Sastri of Sanskrit College, Calcutta. I read with him the original texts of most of the Sat-sandarbhas and other treatises of different schools, all in sanskrit, necessary to develop my subject. His vast erudition and his fluent and facile elucidation of the different branches of Indian philosophy, and, above all, the interest he evinced and ready co-operation he extended to me in every stage of my research work have proved to be of inestimable value.