CHAPTER 2

THE CONCEPT OF THE INDIVIDUAL SELF

According to both Śaṅkara and Śrī Caitanya, the individual self in its real nature is existence, consciousness and bliss. It is eternal and devoid of birth and death. As to the empirical nature of the self, however, these two thinkers differ from each other. Thus, according to Śaṅkara, the empirical self is subjected to maya or ajñāna and is endowed with birth and death, though in its real nature it is identical with the Brahman. In the view of Śrī Caitanya, the individual self is an atom of consciousness or citkāṇa and a part of the Absolute and accordingly it is not identical with the Absolute.

Śaṅkara's view

THE NATURE OF THE INDIVIDUAL SELF

In the view of Advaita Vedāntins, the individual self or jīva is identical with Brahman, the Absolute under all circumstances both in bondage and in Liberation. Accordingly, the Advaita Vedāntins hold that the individual self is in essence saccidananda-prapa, i.e., existence, consciousness and bliss. Identity between the individual self and Brahman has been declared by all the Upaniṣads and Scriptures. Different Upaniṣadic statements are cited by
the Advaita Vedantins in support of their view, tat-tvam-asi i.e. You (the self) are that (Brahman), ‘aham brahmāsmi’ i.e. ‘I am Brahman’, ‘ayam ātmā brahma’ i.e. ‘This self is Brahman’ ‘brahmaṇy ekātmātaṁ yat’ i.e. ‘The self becomes one with Brahman’, etc. These Upaniṣadic texts bear the sense of identity through jahad-ajahad-laksana or implication which retains a part of the direct meaning and rejects another part of the same. Like Brahman, the Absolute, the individual self or jīva is also eternal, pure, conscious and ever free. The individual self is external and exists in all the three points of time- past, present or future. It is unchangeable and exists in the same nature forever. In its essence, it is not subjected to bondage and sufferings, since it is of the nature of pure consciousness and bliss. The individual self or jīva is not conditioned by time and space. It is neither atomic nor intermediary in size. It does not undergo births and deaths. It is not subject to origination and destruction, since the scriptures declare it to be eternal. If the individual self be considered as produced, then we shall have to accept the destruction of the fruits of actions previously done and the enjoyment of the fruits of action not previously done. Thus, it is said in Śruti, “That great unborn self is undecaying, immortal undying, fearless Brahman.” “The knowing self is not born, it does not die...It is birth less, eternal, everlasting and without any beginning.” etc.
THE EMPIRICAL SELF

The real nature of the individual self or jīva is not revealed in the empirical state. In this state, the individual self reveals as limited in nature. The self conditioned either by avidyā or by the internal organ is appeared as empirical self. This empirical self reveals as possessing limited existence, limited consciousness and limited bliss. The existence of the empirical self is limited by time, space and matter or mind-body complex. It is this empirical self that performs actions enjoys their fruits and undergoes birth and death. The empirical self cannot be regarded as eternal, because it undergoes births and deaths. Again, it is not pure, since it is subject to desire, hatred etc. It is bound also, since it does not perceive its real nature and strives for liberation.

In its empirical stage, the jīva comes to be called doer (kartā) enjoyer (bhoktā) as conditioned by adjuncts such as intellect etc. It acquires merits and demerits according to its good and bad deeds, and experiences their fruits. Accordingly, it is subject to transmigration and bondage. It is only due to the limiting adjuncts of body; mind etc. that jīva appears to be different from Brahman. But when the wrong identification ceases through the acquisition of real nature, the jīva attains liberation.
Vācaspati Miśra, also, says that though the self is pure, consciousness and bliss and is devoid of agency and enjoyment. It is due to beginning less avidya, the self appears to be an agent and an enjoyer of pleasure, pain grief and delusion. It is due to its limitation by the internal organ and egoism and an object of ‘I’ consciousness.

The empirical ātma is said to have three sarīras or bodies, namely, sthula-śarīra or gross body, sūkṣma-śarīra or subtle body and kāraṇa-śarīra or causal body.

The gross body of the ātma means the gross material body comprising seven substances, marrow, bones, fat, flesh, blood, skin and cuticle. The gross body is perishable. Birth and death relate to the physical body. It is replaced at every birth and it is reduced to ashes at death. The gross body, which plays its major role in waking state and disappears in dream. It is created by the ātmas past actions and it is made up of gross elements, which are the production of the quintupling process.

The subtle body is made up of fine particles of the elements. The five
sense-organs, five motor-organs, five vital-airs, mind and the intellect form the subtle body. These furnish the nuclei for the rise of another gross body. It is also known as liṅgaśarīra. It is more or less permanent, annex of the jīva and continues to be associated with it throughout its transmigratory career. The subtle body of the jīva is the instrument of the self's experience.\footnote{7}

Ajñāna or nescience is kāraṇa-śarīra or the causal body of the empirical self. The causal body is identified with the state of deep-sleep.

These three bodies are further identified with the five kośas or sheaths mentioned in the Taittiriya Upaniṣad. These five kośas are the annamaya kośa or the sheath of food, the prāṇamaya-kośa or the vital sheath, the manomaya-kośa or the mental sheath, the vijnānānandamaya-kośa or the sheath of self-consciousness and the ānandamaya-kośa or the sheath of bliss. The gross body is identified with the sheath of food, the subtle body with the sheath of vital airs, the mind and self-consciousness and the causal body with the sheath of bliss.

THREE STATES OF THE EMPIRICAL SELF OR JĪVA

In the empirical level, jīva has three states of experience, namely, jāgrat or waking, svapna or dream and susupti or deep sleep.\footnote{9}
1. **Jāgrat or waking**: In this state, the empirical self is well aware of the external objects and enjoys the worldly things and objects. Again, he thinks itself to be identical with the gross body as well as external and internal organs.

2. **Svapna or dream**: In this state, the jīva has experience, but it is incoherent, because the jīva’s sense organs remain inactive in this state and jīva loses touch with the external world. But the mind is active in the state of dream and, as a result the jīva perceives different objects in the dream state in the same manner in which he perceives them in the waking condition. The subject-object relationship is there on account of the functioning of the mind, though the stuff of the dream is drawn from the waking experience. In this state, the mind being prompted by ajñāna, desire etc. functions as it does in the waking condition, even in the absence of such objects.

3. **Suṣupti or deep sleep**: In this state, both the mind and senses are at rest. The state of deep sleep that in which the empirical self neither perceives the external world through sense organs, nor reproduces its wakeful experience by the mind. It is a mode of nescience, which apprehends the nescience. In this state, the internal organ is merged in the nescience, and
so it has no mode; but the nescience has a mode which apprehends it. In deep sleep, the empirical self does not have any dreams at all. Even the mind does not function. The absence of the stream of experience does not mean the extinction of consciousness. On the other hand, it continues to shine and to show that nothing is presented to it. That’s why the jīva is able to recall the experience of sound sleep and exclaims the next morning that “I slept well; I didn’t see anything”.

Gauḍapāda, in his ‘Māndukya-kārika’, has nicely dealt with these three states and also adds the fourth state, called turiya. In this state, the empirical self or jīva is dissociated from even the trace of matter and the spiritual element in it comes to its own. Turīya is the non-dual reality, for in turīya there is neither dream nor sleep.

**NUMBER OF THE JĪVA**

As regards the question whether the jīva is one or many, there are differences of opinion among the Advaita Vedāntins. According to some, there is only one jīva, while others hold that the jīva is many. Accordingly two theories have come into existence- one is ekajīvavāda, the other anekajīvavāda.
(a) Ekajīvavāda:

Some followers of Śaṅkara believe in ekajīvavāda. According to this theory, there is only one jīva. Again, there are differences of views among these ekajīvavādins.

(i) Eka śarīraika-jīva-vāda: A section of Eka-jīva-vādins holds that there is only one jīva animating one body, the other bodies being non-animated and false just like the bodies seen in dream-land, just as all the objects of dream are but imagination of the jīva, so as all objects of empirical level including other jīvas are imagined by the jīva through avidyā and thus, they exist so long as avidyā exists. Thus, the entire universe along with all other objects as well as other jīvas, are illusory. Suresvaračārya, who upholds the theory of ‘perception-is-creation’ or drṣṭi-srṣṭi-vāda, says that the entire world is like a dream-land created by the imagination of the jīva. Even the other jīvas are regarded by this thinker as false condition of the apprehending jīva. In other words, only the perceiver is real, while all other objects along with other jīvas are illusory. In the view of Suresvaračārya, therefore, the jīva is not many, but one; other jīvas as well as their bondage and liberation are regarded as illusory. This view is known as Eka-jīva-
vada or the theory of single jiva. Appaya Dikṣit has styled this theory as eka-śarīraika-jīva-vāda or the theory of one jīva animating one body.

(ii) Aneka-śarīraika-jīva-vāda: Another group of Eka-jīva-vādins maintains that there is one principal jīva, namely, Hiraṇyagarbha, who is a reflection of Brahman, and all other jīvas are mere semblances of jīva, reflections of Hiraṇyagarbha. This view is known as saviśeṣaneka-śarīraika-jīva-vāda or the theory of single jīva with many distinct bodies.

(iii) Aviśeṣaneka-śarīraika-jīva-vāda: Another section of the Eka-jīva-vādins holds that, there are many Hiraṇyagarbhas related to different creations, and such as, it is not possible to determine which Hiraṇyagarbha is the principal jīva. According to these thinkers, there is only one jīva residing in each of the many bodies without any distinction. This view is known as aviśeṣaneka-śarīraika-jīva-vāda or the theory of single jīva with many distinction less bodies.

(b) Anekajīva-vāda:

Anekajīvavādins hold that the jīva is not one but many. They do not
accept the theory of single jīva, because this theory will make it impossible to distinguish between the bounded and liberated jīvas. Thus, they maintain the theory of many jīvas. According to their view, the jīvas are as many as there are many antahkaraṇas. These upādhis constitute the difference between the bound and the liberated jīvas. Thus, jīvas, according to Śaṅkara are many each inhabiting a body of its own. Śaṅkara never says that jīva limited by ajñāna is one for in that case on liberation of one jīva, all would have been liberated and mundane existence would have come to end. Brahman limited by different psychological organism like body, sense organ, mind, antahkaraṇa born of avidyā becomes divided into many individual self. The theory of single jīva cannot explain the distinguish between the self aspiring liberation and self incurring bondage. No doubt, from the ontological point of view plurality is not real existence of jīva. Jīva is an empirical fact; a mundane existence so is the existence of many jīvas. The Upaniṣadic passages too say that the particular individual attains liberation.

JĪVA AND SĀKṢĪN

The later Vedāntins accept an intermediate stage called sākṣīn or witness-self in between the jīva or empirical self and the ātman or the transcendental self. This sākṣīn or witness-self is different from both the jīva
and ātman. Different preceptors of Advaita School give different views regarding the nature of this sākṣīn.

Vidyāraṇya defines the sākṣīn as the nature of unchanging, immutable consciousness (kūṭastha Caitanya), the substratum of the subtle and gross bodies. It controls both the bodies without being affected by them. It is the immediate knower. The witness-self does not act, but remains witness to the acts of jīva. Vidyāraṇya holds that the witness-self cannot be identified with the jīva which participates in life affairs. He compares the sākṣīn to the lamp on the stage of a theatre, which equally illumines all the stage manager, the actress, the audience, and shines by itself even in their absence. The witness-self illuminates equally the body, manas, buddhi, ahaṅkāra etc, and shines by itself even when these elements cease to function, as in deep sleep. It is the substratum of the illusion of the empirical self or jīva, which is the ego invested with the reflection of the universal consciousness.

The author of Tattvapradīpikā defines the witness-self as the pure Brahman, which is the substratum of all jīvas and which wrongly identified with all jīvas.
In the view of Dharmarājādhvarīndra, the witness-self is the eternal consciousness conditioned by the internal organ (antahkaraṇa) as an adjunct of upādhi only. On the other hand, the eternal consciousness limited by the internal organ is the empirical self or jīva. The internal organ is here as višeṣana or qualification.

According to Panini-sūtra, the term sākṣin means direct percipient; spectator. It witnesses all objects and experiences, but is itself witnessed by none. It is the unobjectifiable permanent subject of all knowledge and shines forth by its own light. Vācaspati holds that the atman conditioned by the mind body aggregate as the jīva and the pure atman as its witness. Thus this transcendental atman is the witness-self, which is the ontological reality in the empirical. Śaṅkara does not make distinction between the ātman and the sākṣin or witness-self. He regards the universal self immanent in the jīva as the sākṣin. Vācaspati Mīśra and other also maintain the same view. Hence, there is practically no difference between ātman and sākṣin. It is only the later Advaita Vedānta that the true self is distinguished from the sākṣin or the witness-self as well as the empirical self or jīva.

THE RELATION BETWEEN THE SELF AND BRAHMAN

In the view of Advaita Vedāntins, the relation between the individual
self or the jīva and Brahma is one of identity or non-difference, i.e. the individual self is identical with Brahman under all circumstances—both in bondage and in liberation. The Advaita Vedāntins hold that the individual self in its essential nature as pure consciousness and bliss is identical with Brahman, which is also nature of pure consciousness and bliss. Identity between the self and Brahman has been declared by all the Upaniṣads and scriptures. In support of this view, these thinkers refer to the Śruti passages like tat-tvam-asi or 'that thou art', 'aham brahmāsmi' i.e. 'I am Brahman', 'ayam ātmā brahma' i.e. 'This self is Brahman', 'brahmany ekatmatam yāt', i.e. 'the self becomes one with Brahma' etc. These passages bear the sense of the identity through jahadajahallakṣaṇā or implication which retains a part of the direct meaning and rejects another part of the same. According to Advaita Vedāntins, Brahman, the Absolute appears as the individual self because of the indefinable entity called maya. Accordingly, the individual self or jīva is an empirical reality; and not an ultimate fact.

It may here be argued that how can the pure and unlimited Brahman become the impure and limited individual self? To this, Śaṅkara replies that Brahman does not actually become the individual self but simply appears to be so. The individual self has no intrinsic basis, it is only an appearance. In the view of Śaṅkara, it is Avidyā or ignorance, which is without any
beginning, which is responsible for this false appearance.

Śaṅkara takes the help of two sets of images to explain the relation between the individual self and Brahman. He describes the individual self or jīva sometimes as a limitation of Brahman by the antaḥkaraṇa or internal organ, just as the space or ākāśa limited by a jar or a house, and sometimes as reflection of Brahman in nescience, like the reflection of the sun or the moon appears many on account of the reflection in the different waves of water. By these two images Śaṅkara means to say that the individual self is merely an appearance and that, in essence, there is no difference between the individual self and Brahman. The later Advaitins are, however divided in two groups-- one following the theory of limitation or avaccheda-vāda, and the other following the theory of reflection or pratibimba-vāda.

The theory of limitation or avacchheda-vāda is upheld by Vacaspati Miśra. According to this theory, Brahman conditioned by the adjunct of maya, is Īśvara, while Brahman limited by the adjunct of antaḥkaraṇa or the internal organ is called the jīva. In this view the relation between the jīva and Brahman is like that between pots defined space (ghatākāśa) and space itself (mahākāśa). Just like the infinite and indivisible ākāśa or space limited by pot etc. is termed as ghatākāśa etc., so also indivisible Brahman conditioned by the adjunct of antaḥkaraṇa or internal organ is called the jīva. Now ākāśa,
being all pervasive, can not be limited by anything, yet it seems to be limited by such adjuncts as the pot, the house etc. so long as the pot exists, the ākāśa or the space confined by the different from the ākāśa confined by the house. When all these limitations are destroyed, this limited ākāśa becomes identical with the infinite and individual ākāśa. In the same way, when the antaḥkaraṇa - a product of avidyā is destroyed with the rise of true knowledge, the jīva becomes identical with Brahman.

The theory of reflection or pratibimba-vāda is upheld by the followers of the Vivaraṇa School. Prakāśātman is the most important exponent of this theory. According to this theory, the jīva is a pratibimba or reflection of Brahman in antaḥkaraṇa or the internal organ or in avidyā. And, as there is no difference between bimba or prototype and the pratibimba or reflection, the jīva is non different from Brahman, just as the face reflected in the mirror is not different from the prototype i.e. the face. The reflection is real like the prototype. The fact that the reflection vanishes when the mirror is taken away should not be taken to mean that the reflection is false. The upholders of this theory say that Śaṅkara also regards the jīva to be a reflection of Brahman as is clear from the example of the reflection of the sun in water. In support of their view, these thinkers refer to such scriptural texts like ‘it is seen as one and many like the moon in water’ etc.
Suresvara, a follower of Śaṅkara, takes the theory of reflection to its extreme and holds that the jīva is merely an ābhāsa or appearance, i.e. it is ultimately false, just like the reflection of the face in the mirror. The reflection in a mirror is only a ābhāsa or semblance of the face and is false. In the same way, the jīva being a semblance of Brahman, is regarded as false. This view is known as ābhāsa-vāda. In other words, Suresvara means to say that the jīva is neither a limitation nor a reflection, rather it is a false appearance of Brahman itself, just as Karṇa’s identity as the son of Rādhā is false, as in reality he is the son of Kuntī, so also the idea of the jīva is false, as in reality it is identical with Brahman. The followers of the Vivaraṇa School hold that the reflection is real and is identical with the prototype; on the other hand, Suresvara looks upon it as wholly illusory. Here, it may be asked: If the jīva is wholly illusory, how can there be identity between the jīva and Brahman is established by negating the jīva.

Hence, a proper analysis of the Vedāntic view shows that the empirical self is a creation of nescience. When the nescience is destroyed with the rise of true knowledge, the jīva is revealed as identical with Brahman.

ŚRĪ CAITANYA’S VIEW ON THE CONCEPT OF THE INDIVIDUAL SELF

In the view of Śrī Caitanya, the jīva or the living being is a mani-
festation of the jīva-śakti of Bhagavat, the Absolute. The jīva-śakti has also been termed the tātastha-śakti also, because it occupies a tātastha or marginal position between the māyā-śakti, the source of the material world and the svarūpa-śakti, the essential power of the Lord which maintains the integrity of the essence of the Absolute. It is from this jīva-śakti that the jīvas emanate. The jīvas thus emanated, are subject to the influence of both the māyā-śakti and the svarūpa-śakti. Being influenced by the māyā-śakti, the jīva or selves continue to remain in bondage; but on account of their close affinity with the svarūpa-śakti of Bhagavat, they even while in bondage, have the innate capacity to liberate themselves from the grip of māyā-śakti. This liberation of the jīva is possible, only when the jīva is capable of relating itself to the svarūpa-śakti through bhakti or devotion and becomes free from the influence of the māyā-śakti for all times.

The jīva being the manifestation of the jīva-śakti of Bhagavat, occupies a tātastha or marginal position between the māyā-śakti and the svarūpa-śakti. The jīva-śakti is distinct from both svarūpa-śakti and māyā-śakti, but is closely connected with them both like the 'tāta' or river-bank which is distinct from both land and river, but is connected with them both.

The eternal function of individual self or jīva is to serve Bhagavat. But
on account of peculiar relationship with both the māyā-śakti and the svarūpa-śakti, the jīva has the option to serve Bhagavat, by submitting to His svarūpa-śakti or to enjoy prakṛti and its products, while remaining inclined to his māyā-śakti. This gives rise to distinction between the jīvas. Those who prefer to serve Bhagavat, have been placed as mukta or released selves. On the other hand, those who do not prefer to serve Bhagavat, have been classed as baddha or bound selves. However, the jīvas who have the desire to serve Bhagavat, are placed eternally beyond the influence of māyā-śakti and are called as nitya-mukta. The nitya-muktas attains the status of His parikara or companion and dwell with the Lord in His dhāman or adobe and also enjoy the bliss of bhakti or devotion. On the other hand, the baddha jīva having no such desire to serve Bhagavat, are eternally under the influence of māyā and suffer pain. The nitya-baddhas are confined to the world, the product of māyā and undergo all sorts of suffering and pain.

The individual self or jīva is different from the body, the senses, the mind and so on, yet owing to the influence of māyā-śakti, it wrongly identifies itself with the body and undergoes all sorts of bodily sufferings. The self is represented by the word 'I' and signifies the ego i.e. aham-arthaḥ. But this aham-arthaḥ or the ego is to be distinguished from the prākṛta ahaṁkāra or empirical ego which is a product of prakṛti. Being the product
of prakṛti. the empirical ego is subject to impermanence, impurity and suffering. But the real ego or self, which is not influenced by prakṛti, is nitya or eternal, nitya-nirmalaḥ or eternally pure, cidānandātmakaḥ or blissful, eka-rūpaḥ or uniform and remains identical with itself, i.e. svarūpa-vāk. In reality, the jīva transcends the body and enjoys eternal bliss, having ultimate affinity with the svarūpa-śakti of Bhagavat.

According to Jīva Gosvāmi, the individual self or the jīva is an entity possessing consciousness and, therefore, it is said to be svayam-prakāśaḥ i.e. self luminous. Further, it also the attributes of svayam eva prakāśate, anyān api prakāśayati, i.e. it reveals itself, as well as it has the capacity of revealing others. Again, Śrī Jīva says that the Paramātman being the only self-luminous in the real sense, the finite self derives its luminousity from Him. The individual self or the jīva is known as self luminous only in relation to the material objects, which neither reveals themselves nor anything else.

The self is an integral centre of life. Its integrity consists in the unity of will to be, will to know and will to enjoy. The individual self or the jīva is connected with the hādāmī-śakti or bliss aspect of the Lord; it has bliss as its inherent attribute. Accordingly, the jīva is full of bliss and love. Since the essential nature of individual self is love, it must possess freedom of will.
As intelligence or consciousness is essential to the very essence of the individual self or the jīva so is existence also. Its existence is inherent in the very nature of the world because its essence is consciousness which is the ultimate substance. Under all circumstances the individual self or the jīva retains its identity that is eka-rūpa-svarūpa-vāk. It follows from this that the self cannot disappear. Again, since the essence of the jīva is the same as the ultimate stuff of the world, i.e. consciousness, there can be no means by which it could be destroyed. Hence, the individual self is not subject to creation and destruction. Accordingly, the individual self or jīva is eternal.

He does not undergo any change in his essential nature.

Here, it may be asked: if the Bhagavat is all existence and is the only ultimate cause, then, the individual self or the jīva must be ‘effect’ and have origin. How can, then, the jīva be eternal and immortal? In reply, Baladeva says that the individual self or the jīva is, of course, an effect, but the word ‘effect’ here means ‘only another manifestation of the same absolute consciousness’. In this sense, the jīva is not a new creation. When the jīva is latent in the absolute consciousness, it is said to be non-existent; it requires only to be manifested. Hence, the individual self or the jīva is both effect and an eternal entity. Accordingly, the eternity and simplicity of the jīva can in no sense be in contradiction with the statement that Bhagavat is all-
existence and is the only ultimate cause.

The individual self or the jīva is atomic in size. In the view of Śvetāsvatara Upaniṣad, the size of the jīva is equal to the one hundredth part of the one hundredth part of the edge of a hair. Though the size of the jīva is anu or atomic, it may pervade the physical body in which it is temporarily residing. The jīva can pervade the whole body through its attribute of consciousness, just like a lamp pervades a room through its light.

The individual self or the jīva is an active free agent. Activity is an essential attribute of the jīva. In the empirical level, the jīva performs actions and reaps their fruits. Further, in the transcendental level, its activity does not cease, since it is an eternal sport with the Lord. Activity in the transcendental level is, of course, divine and is confined to the pure sattva quality. The jīva’s actions and enjoyments depend upon Bhagavat, the ground.

The individual self or the jīva is not one but many. Again, though all the jīvas are same in nature, yet there are differences among them according to their past and present karmans or actions. Whether in the level of bondage or in the level of liberation, the jīvas are both related to and different from one another. Further, the jīvas are identical with each other and they possess the
divine attributes of sat, cit and ānanda—existence, consciousness and bliss which belong to Bhagavat, the ground or ultimate source. It is further said that even after having attained the position of parikara or companion of Bhagavat through devotion, the jīvas are said to be mutually different in the spiritual sense owing to their various devotional attributes. In the empirical states, the plurality of the jīva is accepted by all on the ground of the distinction of mind, body, birth and death etc. of every individual. In the view of Śrī Caitanya, however, even in the transcendental state, the jīvas are many.

Each self is a Bhagavat in miniature. Bhagavat is one and self-complete, while the jīvas are many and partial. Further, it may be said, that the divine qualities of existence, consciousness and bliss which are shared by the jīvas are limited in the case of jīvas, while in the case of Bhagavat they remain unlimited. The jīvas being atomic, their consciousness also remain atomic. Since Bhagavat is infinite, His consciousness is also infinite. In other words, Bhagavat is all existence, all consciousness and all bliss, while the jīva is atomic-existence, atomic-consciousness and atomic-bliss. But both Bhagavat and the jīva are integral being. Being atomic parts of bhagavat, the jīvas are always dependent on Him and share with Him the divine attributes of existence, consciousness and bliss. But the Jīvas being
atomic part of Bhagavat, they do not share full-consciousness and full-bliss; they share only a small particle of consciousness and bliss. Accordingly, the relation between Bhagavat and the jīva is unthinkable difference-cum-non-difference, i.e. acintya-bhedabheda, because, the individual selves or jīvas are nothing but the manifestation of the jīva-śakti of Bhagavat, the Absolute.²

RELATION BETWEEN THE SELF AND THE ABSOLUTE

In the view of Vaiṣṇavism, the individual self or jīva is an arūḍha or part of the Absolute transfused with his jīva-śakti. Hence the relation which the Absolute bears with the self is like one between śaktimat or the powerful and śakti or power. That implies that the selves are nothing but the manifestations of the tattvānām-śakti or jīva-śakti of the Absolute. And since the relation between the Absolute and its śakti is acintya-bhedabheda or unthinkable difference-cum-non-difference, that between the Absolute and the selves also of the same nature.

Śrī Jīva maintains that śakti or power and śaktimat or powerful must be regarded as different from each other, since they can not be imagined as identical with each other. On the other hand, they must be regarded as identical with each other, because they cannot be imagined as different. and
since simultaneous existence of identity and difference is contradictory, the relation is to be said as 'acintya' or unthinkable. It is, therefore, held that the relation between the self and the Absolute is difference-cum-non-difference, and is, at the same time, unthinkable. Accordingly this theory is known as achintya-bhedabheda-vāda or the philosophy of unthinkable difference-cum-non-difference. Śrī Jīva explains the relation of unthinkable difference-cum-non-difference by referring to fire and its power. Here, 'fire' and the 'power of burning' cannot be imagined as quite distinct from each other, because one cannot exist without each other. Again, both are not identical, for in that case both the words 'fire' and 'burns' meaning the same thing, it will needless to say that 'fire burns'. Further if there were identical between fire and its power, i.e. burning, it would not be possible to neutralise the power of burning in fire by means of medicine or mantra. Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa also maintains the same view and says that without the idea of 'unthinkability' the relation of identity and difference between the quality and the qualified cannot be explained. In the same way, the relation between the Absolute and its ṣakti is neither Absolute identity or nor Absolute difference but unthinkable difference-cum-identity. And since the self is nothing but the manifestation of the ṣakti of the Absolute, the relation which the Absolute bears with the self is also one of unthinkable difference-cum-non-difference.
Further, if the Absolute and his sakti are regarded as absolutely different, that will give rise to dualism and in that case the principle of nonduality of the Absolute declared by the sāstras will be contradicted. Hence, this relation is called acintya bhedābheda, because it involves both bheda or difference and abheda or non-difference, while it is beyond our comprehension as to how these two opposites are reconciled.

References

1. brahma satyam jagan mithyā jivo brahmaiva nāparaḥ-Brahmajñānāvali-20.
2. Ch.Up.6.8.7.
4. Ma.Up.2;Br.Up.4.4.5.
5. JS,3.2.2.
6. puruṣa hi vināśā hetvabhāvāt víkriyāḥ hetvabhāvāc ca kūtastha nitya ata eva nitya-suddha-buddha-muktasvabhāvah-BSS,1.1.4.
7. Bhāmatī on BSS,2.2.34; BSS,2.3.19 and AS,pp.851-854.
8. BSS,2.2.42.
9. sa vā eṣa mahānaya ātmā ajaro'maro'mṛto'bhay brahma-Br.Up.4.4.25.
10. na jāyate mṛyate vā vipasācit ajo nityāḥ sāsvato'yaṃ purīṇah-Kath.Up.1.2.18.
11. BSS,2.3.40.
12. cf. Bhāmatī on BSS,1.1.1.
14. cf.VC,p.154, also JMV,p.190.
15. tyanaṁśasa-rudhira-snāyu-medomajjāsthisamkulam, .....sthulam... vapuh... bhogāyatanam ātmanah-VC, pp.87-88.
16. VS, p.62.
17. pañca-prāṇa-mano-buddhi daśendriyasamanvitam. 
apaṇciktra-bhūtottaham sūkṣmāṇīgam bhūgasādhanam- Ātmobodha,12; sūkṣma sārīrāṇi saptadaśāvayavāni līṅga ārāmāṇi- VS, p.102.
18. avyaktam etat trīguṇair niruktam tat kāraṇam nama ārām ātmanah-VC, 120.
19. tisrāstāvadavasthāḥ sārīrāsthasya jīvasya prasiddhā jāgaritam svapnah suṣuptamīti-BS, 3.2.10.
20. tatra jāgradavasthāḥ nāma indriyajanyajnānāvasthā- VP, p.183.
21. cf. VP, p.58.
22. cf. Vakyasudhā of Śaṅkara, verse, 10-12.
23. cf. tāmanah...bāhyasādhananāpeṣām avidyākāma karmabhīḥ preryamāṇām jāgradvad avabhāsate- SB on Ma.Up.4.

24. suṣuptīṃnāmavidyāgocarāvidyā vrityavasthā-VP, p.192; also SB on Ma.Up.4.
25. eka jivastena ca ekameva śāriṃram sajivam anyāni 
svapnadaṃśta śārīrāṇi eva nirjavāni tadajñāna kalpitum 
sarvācā jagat-SLS, p.160.
26. Citsukhī, pp.590-597; ekasya eva jīvatvāt itaresām 
taddṛṣṭīvijntbhitatvena tataḥ anatirekāt-Vidvan-maṭjarī on VS, 36.
27. SLS, p.162.
28. eka eva jīvo'viṣāṇesa sarvācā śāriṃram adhitisthati- 
SLS, pp.163-164.
29. iti aviṣāṇesānekāśāriṛaika jīvavādam roca ya-ibid, p.165.
30. ibid, p.167.
32. Pañcadaśī, 8.48 and 56.
33. nṛtyasāśāsthito dipāḥ prabhūm sabhyāṁśa nartakim. 
dīpayed aviṣēṣena tadabhāve'pi dīpyate-ibid, 10.11.
34. kūṭastha - caitanyam - sākṣād Ikṣaṇān nirvakāratvāc ca sākṣātyucyate - SLS, p.234.
35. parameśvarasya eva rūpa-bhedāḥ kaścit .... savayam 
udāśīnāḥ sākṣi nāma - ibid, pp.245, 249.
36. jīvo nāmāntālakaraṇāvacchinnām caitanyam , tatśakṣi tu
37. sāksād draṣṭāra sanjjñayāṃ – Pāṇini śūtra, 5.2.91.
38. sarveśāṃ hūtānām sākṣi sarvadraṣṭā – ŚB on Śvet.Up. 6.2.
40. kecītta avidyopādhīko jīva eva sāksād draṣṭītvāt sākṣi – SLS, p.249.
41. jīva brahmaiva nāparaḥ – Brahmajñānāvali, 20.
42. Ch. Up. 6.8.7.
44. Mā. Up. 2; Br. Up. 4.4.5.
45. JS – 3.22.
46. ibid, 2.3.50; 3.2.18, 19; 2.3.46.
47. tasmād ghaṭākāśāvad antāḥkaraṇavacchinnam caitanyam jīvah – SLS, 1.6.3.
48. avidyabhi dhāresu cit-pratibimbo jīvah – SLS, 1.6.2; avidya – pratibimbo jīvah – ibid; antāḥkaraṇe cit – pratibimbo jīvah – ibid, tatrāpi pratibimbo jīvah – ibid.
49. cf. PPV, p.290.
50. cf. ābhāsa eva caisa jīvah parasya ātmaṇo jalasūryakādivat pratipattavyah – BSŚ-2.3.50.
52. vide, Siddhānta – bindu, pp.112-113.
53. apare tu na pratibimbo nāpyavacchendo jīvah kintu kaunteyaṣyaiva rādheyatvavat avikṛtasya brahmaṇaḥ evāvidya yā jīva bhāvaḥ – SLS, 1.6.4.
54. SLS, p. 159.
55. see CC, Madhya, 20.
56. see Caitanya-Bhāgavat, Antya-3.
57. nityamukta nitya kṛṣṇa carane unmukh kṛṣṇapariṣad nam bhurje sevāsukh-CC, Madhya, 22.
58. nityabaddha kṛṣṇa haite nitya bahirmukh. Nityasamāsāri bhunje narakādi dukh-ibid, 22.
60. see PS, pp.23, 21; jñā eva ātmā jñāna rūpatve sati jñātr-svarūpa eva-BSG, 2.3.17.
62. brahmaiva avasthāntar-āpannah kāryam nāma śrutayaścāḥ ījasyam bhuñijīram-BSG,2.3.16; Brahmaçari,op cit,p.138.

63. Ibid, 2.3.18-30.

64. PS, p.25; CC,Madhya,19; Sve,Up.5.9.

65. cid guṣṇa nikhila-deha-vyāpi syāt ālokavat-BSG,2.3.24.

66. jīva eva kartā-BSG,2.3.31.; see Vedānta – syamantaka,p.36.


68. BSG,2.3.42; CC,Madhya,14.

69. Ibid,2.3.49.

70. CC,Madhya,2.19.


73. BhS,p.16 and SS on it.

74. SS on BhS,p.15.

75. Baladeva’s comt. on SR,1.21.

76. vide SS on BhS,pp.11-12.