
Brahmavad and Bhakti

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BRAHMAVAD AND BHAKTI

Sankhya considers the coming together of Purusha and Prakriti for creation to come into existence and as an example refers to how the lame (which is the Purusha) and the blind (which is Prakriti) complement each other. Blind can walk but not see. Lame can see but may not be able to walk properly. Jagat ('World'/'Creation') comes into existence with the coming together of Prakriti (Jad – Matter) and Purusha (Chetana – Consciousness). Similar is the relation of Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya's "*Sakar Brahmavada*" and *Pushti Bhakti*.

Jivatama can reach Parmatma by walking on the path of Pushti Bhakti Marg. However where is Parmatma? To reach Parmatma one has to know where he is and the direction he has to take. Sakar Brahmavada gives us that direction and thus "*Sakar Brahmavada*" and *Pushti Bhakti Marg* complement each other.

Brahman is a universally accepted factor by all systems of Vedanta. However, there are different views as to origination, existence and relation of Jagat, Jiva etc. with respect to Brahman.

Sakar Brahmavada

In Tattvartha Dip Nibandh ("Nibandh") Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya ('Mahaprabhuji') defines Bhakti as:

*Mahatmyajnana-purvastu, sudrdhah sarvatodhikah;
sneho bhaktiriti proktah, taya muktirna canyatha.*

There are two aspects of devotion

- Mahatmya jnana (Knowledge / Understanding)
- Sneha (Affection)

Mahatmya is explained by Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya by his philosophy of "*Sakar Brahmavada*". In Sarvottam Stotra Mahaprabhuji is praised as: 'Sakara-brahmavadaika-sthapakah'. Mahaprabhuji is the sthapak of the philosophy of Sakar brahmavad and the insight of the same he got from the Vedas. How does one understand the mahatmya of Brahman? The all-encompassing phenomena where there is nothing excluded or opposite. Mahaprabhuji explains in the Nibandh:

“All the mundane phenomena are the transcendental supreme self. He, the Supreme Being, is the creator and he creates himself only. He the Supreme Self, is the sustainers and he sustains himself only. He, the Supreme Lord, is the destroyer and He destroys himself only.”

“Whenever, however, wherever, by or through whatever, out of whatever, for whatever, of whatever, to whatever; in the material form or conscious form or divine form, whatever happens-it is all in all the Lord Himself.”

If everything in in Brahman then how can he have any form is he nirakar i.e without a form? If you see a form is it imaginary or artificial? According to Mahaprabhuji the form that is seen is as per Brahman's own desire and is through the process of self-multiplication and because Brahman has that potentiality. He is infinite as well as finite. This contradiction according to Mahaprabhuji is *Virrudha dharmasaya*. *Anor anyan mahato mahiyan* (Katha Upanishad). Greater than the space and smaller than atom. Smaller than the smallest atom and greater than the greatest.

Shri Vallabhacharya explains in the Nibandh. "The atomic Brahman can also be all pervasive. Krishna sits in his mother Yashoda's lap and founds the entire creation." (अण्वपि ब्रह्म व्यापकं भवति कृष्ण यशोदाकरोडे स्थितोऽपि सकल जगदाधारो भवति).

Brahma's sakar brahmata is his primary mahatmya. There are many other mahatmya and include - Brahman is the karan and karaya of this creation (Jagat). Brahman is sadhan and phal, he can be known and understood as he wants to e.g Narsimha avtar – he is everywhere, however can be seen only when he wants to reveal himself not necessarily out of our efforts. As the Upanishad says Brahman manifest himself to the one he chooses and not by expert explanations, intelligence etc.

*nāyamātmā pravacanena labhyo na medhayā na bahunā śrutena |
yamevaiṣa vṛṇute tena labhyastasyaiṣa ātmā vivṛṇute tanūm svām*

Upanishad also states that all Naam (Concept), Rupa (Percept – Form) and Karma (Function) are in Brahman. These are three different aspects; however as “*Atma*” they are one.

*Brahma etat hi sarvani namani bibharti:
Brahma etat hi sarvani rupani bibharti:
Brahma etat hi sarvani karmani bibharti:
Tad etat trayam sat ekam ayam atma,
Ayam atma ekah sann etat trayam.*

Thus 3=1 and 1=3. Mahaprabhuji considers Brahman as a supra-rational phenomenon i.e. neither rational nor irrational. The contradictory attributes in Brahman are considered as *Virrudha dharmasaya*.

Bhagvad Gita – “*tad dhama paramam mama*” (I reside in infinity – infinite being, infinite consciousness and infinite name and form and function)

Upanishad says – “*dve vāva brahmaṇo rūpe—mūrtaṃ caivāmūrtaṃ ca, martyaṃ cāmṛtaṃ ca, sthitaṃ ca yacca, sacca, tyacca*”. Brahman has two forms—gross and subtle, mortal and immortal, limited and unlimited, defined and undefined.

Upanishad says – “*Yato va imani bhutani jayante yena jatani jivanti yat prayanti abhisamvisanti tad brahma tad vijijnasasva tad brahma*” . That from which the whole universe arises, by which it is sustained and into which it goes back is Brahman.

Sruti says “*Sarve veda yat padamamananti*” all the vedas have one purpose to teach the nature of “Brahman”. Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya interprets the Sastras (scriptures) explaining the vedas never questioning the vedas.

Shuddha – Advaita

Sri Vallabhāchārya’s stand is Brahman’s eternity is not compromised by multiplicities since there is a relation of identity between Brahman and the Universe. Brahman becomes the substantial and the efficient cause of the Universe without losing its eternity. The examples quoted in the scriptures are also given to emphasize on this fact i.e. Gold-Ornament, clay-pot etc. Just as in these examples, the cause does not get degenerated when transformed into the effect, so is with the Brahman when it gets transformed into the Universal Multiplicities due to his own desire to relish his own self (Lila). Thus, in Shuddha-advaita, all the dualities (functional, formal and qualitative) are considered real and generated out of the Supreme Being’s desire to perform that divine play (Lokvat tu leela kavalyam–Brahmasutra) while maintaining substantial identity all the time.

Creation is manifestation of Brahman. The universe is the effect of Brahman. All perceivable thing and beings are the forms taken by the Lord. The Lord becomes everything and also remains incomparable. Mahaprabhuji says in Siddhanta Muktavali – Brahman has two aspects “as all” and “as one”.

Shuddha-advaita is a name of the philosophical system advocated by Mahaprabhuji Sri Vallabhacharya as an essence of all Hindu scriptures. It says that Brahman, the supreme reality, Himself has taken the form of universe for the divine play, Lila. Therefore, the plurality i.e. Dvaita which is found in the form of sentient object and insentient being in this universe is also Brahman. If we see the universe from the metaphysical viewpoint, everything is essentially Brahman.

Absolute duality and absolute non-duality do not exist. There is duality in non-duality. Where Praman is also Pramay that is Suddha Advaita. Based on the following quotes from *Shruti*. “*Ekam evadvitiam brahma*” and *eko ham bahusyam prajayeya* , Brahman’s svarup is

Svabhavik advaita + naam – rupa – karma- jivanatma rupa aichik dvaita. This can be understood as follows:

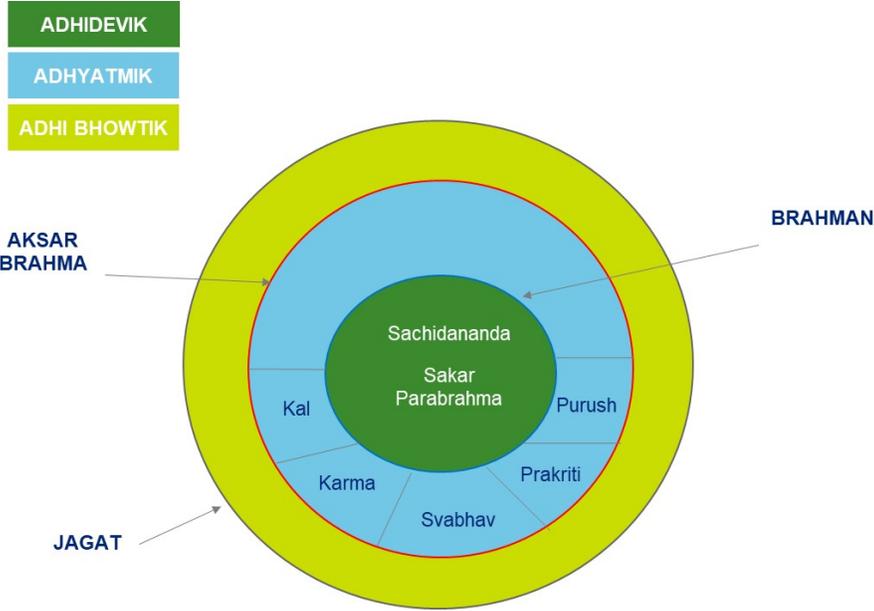


In case of Mahaprabhui’s system of thought, the model of framework does not require rejection of either duality or non-duality. At the same time he thoroughly keeps non-dualism as the general thought of theoretical basis while most of the practical advantage is of the dualism in favour of devotion are never lost.

Satyam jnanamanantam brahman - Brahman is truth, knowledge, infinite. Taitariya Upanishad, while defining the essential nature of the Supreme Being (Brahman) as - “The Complex Homogeneous Blissful Infinite Conscious Being” states various essential qualities of that Brahman (Of being real, being conscious and being limitless).

Brahman is all pervasive. It is "Saakar", having a Divine form . It is Immanent and at the same time Transcendental. The world (Jagat) and the souls are emanations from the Being and Conciousness aspects of Brahman. The world represents only Being without Conciousness and Bliss, the souls, Being and Conciousness and without Bliss. Aksara has Being, Conciousness and Bliss (i.e. being-sat, conciousness-chitt, and bliss-anand) but has only a limited Measure.

According to Mahaprabhuii, Brahman has three forms: 1) Svarup - Original form, 2) Karana-- as a cause, and 3) Karya -- as an effect. There are various aspects and dimensions of Brahman as follows:



Jagat is the adhibhowtik aspect of the Brahman, Aksar brahma the adhiyatmik and Parabrahma the adhidevik.

Para brahma and Aksar brahma are the two sides of the same coin. Brahman is the system provider and jiva is the system user. Aksar brahma has five aspects – kal (Time), karma (kinetic energy / action), svabhav (static energy), prakriti (matter /mass) and purush (consciousness). This makes a system.

The complete cosmic manifestation coexisting blissfully and harmoniously while relishing the divine Rasa

Bhagvad Gita - The Supreme Lord is situated in everyone's heart.

īśvaraḥ sarva-bhūtānām
 hṛd-deśe 'rjuna tiṣṭhati
 bhrāmāyan sarva-bhūtāni
 yantrārūḍhāni māyayā

“Mamaivamso jivaloke jivabhutah sanatanah” - Those that have come in this world becoming the individual-souls are all my own particles, “amso nanavyapadesat” Jiva is a part of Brahman itself.

Mahaprabhuji says in Siddhanata Muktavali:

*Atmani brahmarupe hi chidra vyominva cetanah |
Upadhinase vijnane brahmatmatvavabodhane |*

The self is an aspect of the Brahman, but our souls are like holes (in a sieve that is held up) against the sky. At the dawning of the knowledge that destroys the limiting factor, we awake to the fact that our self is also Brahman.

In Brahmvada the Brahman is regarded as abhinna – nimittopadana karana of jagat. There is no material difference between the cause and the effect. If the cause (the Brahman) is real, its effect (the jagat) is real. The jagat is the play (leela) of Krsna wherein he assumes names and form.

“Namo bhagavate tasmai, Krishnayadbhuta-karmane Rupa-nama-vibhedena, Jagatkridati yo yatah”.

Sakar Brahmvada - Brahman, Parmatma and Bhagvan

What is the relation between Brahman, Parmatma, Bhagwan and Krsna? Sri Vallabhacharya says in Nibandh:

*Vedante Ch Smrutao Bramhalinga Bhagwate Tatha |
Bramhoti Parmatmaeti Bhagwaniti Shabdayate ||*

The same Brahman is called "Brahman" in Vedanta in Smriti (Gita) he is called Parmatma and in the Bhagvat he is called as Bhagwan. God in Upanishads is known as Brahman, in the Gitaji as Sri Krsna-Vaasudeo-Isvara and in the Puranas as Parmeshwar or Parmatman. Although known by these different names it signifies the same Supreme God or Brahman.

Mahaprabhuji established that Krsna was the supreme form of God, and that the soul is not merely a part of God's energy, but is qualitatively the same as God, but small in potency. Shri Vallabhacharya says: “Param Bramha Tu Krushno Hi” (Siddhanata Muktavali). Sri Krsna is the Supreme Brahma and, therefore, He is the greatest of all.

Sri Krsna says in Gita

*“Purushah sa prah Parth!
bhaktya labhyas tvananyaya”*

One who is greater than even, Akshara-Brahma, that Supreme Being (Shri Krishna) is obtainable only through devotion.

Sri Vallahacharya writes in “Subodhini”

*“Guptanandah yato jivah
Niranandam jagad yatah
Purnanando hari tasmāt
Sevyah sarvaih sukharthibhih”*

Bliss remains concealed in beings. Sri Krsna has created the universe and beings out of his own divine self but Bhagvan has concealed his attribute of bliss in beings. Hence the perfect bliss can nowhere be found except in Bhagvan Sri Krsna. Prapanch (Jagat/World) is Niranand, Jeeva is Guptanand and Krishna is Purnanand.

If everything is brahman, the murti (idol) that a devotee worships is also brahman. Aakar + brahma = Sakhar Brahman. In Krsna murti you have aakar and a worshipable form. In the Nibandh Sri Vallahacharya also says: “Brahman is sakara i.e with form and at the same time Brahman is vyapak i.e without any limitation in time, space and object. Moreover he resides as “Antaryami i.e soul of every soul. So the Sevyā Svarupa in the house of a devotee is God himself. Therefore, the Seva and worship that a devotee does is of Sri Krsna. If the devotee thinks otherwise he would be guilty of great offense”

Mahaprabhuji says in the grantha Nirodhalaksanam “*Harimurthi sada dhyeya sankalpadapi tatra hi*”. The murti of hari that a devotee worships is “*Para brahma*”. The devotee has a mindset that he wants to worship Hari in a particular form and Hari also has a mindset of selecting a particular devotee. If everything is Brahman then what is so special about the form of hari that you worship? When a devotee selects a svarup for his seva, hari also selects the devotee with sankalpa that I want his devotee to do my seva.

Though everything is brahman everything is not in the form of a Sevyā Svarup. Thus, both Thakorji (Sevyā Svarup) and the devotee do a Sankalp of each other as mentioned in the referred shloka. “Everything is Brahman (omnipresent by its nature), but in the case of Sevyā Svarupa there is something special. Sri Krsna incarnates in the house of the devotee in the form of Sevyā Svarupa”

The above is also reflected in Srimad Bhagvatam :

*tvam bhav -yoga-paribhāvita-hṛt-saroja
āsse śrutekṣita-patho nanu nātha puṁsām
yad-yad-dhiyā ta urugāya vibhāvayanti
tat-tad-vapuḥ praṇayase sad-anugrahāya*

The Lord manifests Himself before the devotee in the form in which the devotee likes to worship Him. It is said in the Bhagvat Purana: “By your extreme grace you manifest all the forms that your devotees contemplate with their devout sentiment”

Mahaprabhu Sri Vallabhacharya says in Siddhantamuktavali “*Atastu brahmavadena krsne buddhirviyatam*”. Our mind should be fixed on Krsna in accordance with Brahmavada. Fixing our mind on Krsna will lead to bhakti and when it is in accordance with brahmavada it will lead to understanding his mahatmya. Akhanda Krsnavat Sarvam. See Krsna in you, your inner core of being is krsna.

As has also been seen in a shloka of Ramunuja sampradaya - May my mind be filled with devotional knowledge of the Brahman who shines in the Upanishads.

“Akhila-bhuvana-janma-sthema-bhangadi-lile, vinata-vividha-bhuta-vrata-rakshaika-dikshe sruti-sirasi vidipte Brahmani Srinivase bhavatu mama parasmim semushi bhakti-rupa.”

The question is that how to fix our mind on Krsna with Brahmavad? For this Mahaprabhuji has developed a program of sadhana – sharnagati, samarpan seva and bhakti. Sharnagati and Samarpan are our internal response when we understand the mahatmya of Krsna. Seva and bhakti result in increasing our Sneha in Krsna.

According to Mahaprabhuji understanding that this creation (Jagat) as Mahatmya of Brahman will lead to understanding of the Whole (amsi) and the individual the Part (amsa). There cannot be a whole without a part and there cannot be a part without a whole. Therefore, the basic relationship between a soul and supreme soul is of whole and part. This “Tadatmya” being a part of him and belonging to him is the root of the path of devotion (bhakti) and is also the foundation on which the main pillars of Sharnagati, Samarpan and Seva are based.

There is relation of identity with Brahman. **Sharanagati** – Sharandata (Rakshak) and sharanarathi (the one who wants sharan – refuge) though appear to be two different entities are identical. God exists and we also exist. **Seva** - Sevyā, Sevak and Seva kriya are identical. **Bhakti** - Bhakta and Bhagwan are identical. **Samarpan** – The one to whom you are doing samarpan, that which is a part of samarpan and the one who is doing samarpan are identical. Our soul is the sense organ of god through which he enjoys the whole world. Our atma is the indriya of god. This sentiment is also reflected in the following shloka of Sri Yamunacarya :

*avabodhitavan imam yatha
mayi nityam bhavadiyatam svayam
kripayaivam ananya-bhogyatam
bhagavan bhaktim api prayaccha me*

I know that I am eternally your property. O Lord, please kindly give me pure devotional service.

In order to let the devotional spirit comprising of his knowledge and love grow, a program involving daily activity of dedication = Samarpana, popularly known as Seva, has been prescribed by Mahaprabhuji.

Mahaprabhuji says that in Atmanivedana we declare all our belongings but not each. So if an item or two are left out from utilization for Seva, it does not make it a matter of concern. Though we should make sincere first attempts to utilize each belonging for Seva, we should not insist too much & start worrying instead of enjoying Seva in case it can't be utilized. Like a newly married housewife, we should wait for an opportunity to utilize our talents & belongings. Even if we are sure we won't be able to utilize some of our belonging for the lifetime, we should retain it, like a patient retaining his ill body - Shri Harirayji says. We can't escape from our family, social or national duties if we are residing right there. We need to tolerate them, at the same time keeping safe distance from them, like a lotus in mud.

At the same time we should have faith in our almighty Lord, capable of using our belonging on His own as & when He desires so. Most importantly we should retain our mood of devotion in spite of facing uncomfortable situations.

“padma-patram ivambhasa” (Bhagvad Gita) - as the lotus leaf is untouched by water. Even one's material body, being a gift of the Lord can be engaged in Krsna consciousness.

Bhakti svarupa has been explained as “Sneho bhaktih”. When one understands that Bhagvan is the soul, sneha takes place. Bhakti means sneha in Sri Krsna. *“Para brahma Sri Krsna snehatvam”*. The meaning of Bhakti is, all exceeding unflinching love for the God following the awareness of his greatness. This divine awareness-cum-affection is the true definition of the devotion for God. An ideal devotee has to relish Brahman as Krsna and realize Krsna as Brahman. The relishment is of – Aishwarya, Virya, Yash, Shree, Gyan, Vairagya the guna;s . This is possible through the process of samarpan by extending one's ahanta and mamta and sharing the same with Brahman through the program of sadhana as established by Mahaprabhuji.

“Akhandam krishnavat sarvam yatha taktum nirupitam If he is everything then everything is his what is that we can give him?

*mama nātha yad asti yo 'smyaham sakalam taddhī tavaiva mādhava
niyata-svam iti prabuddha-dhāir atha vā kim nu samarpayāmi te*

Though everything is his, that what we considered ours, our ego, possessiveness, ahankar , this sansar we have to share with him as our devotion to him. When you see him as nath you should not forget that he is brahman.

Isnt that why Brahman takes a form and comes to this world. He can create the world without coming to this world and do whatever he wants without coming to this world? True bhakta are not satisfied without seeing him therefore he has to come to this Jagat. To reciprocate to bhakti god takes a form in this world. Srimad Bhagvatam :

*Bhakti-yoga-vidhānārtham
katham paśyema hi striyaḥ*

Our bhakti is not created by god, our bhakti creates god for us. Bhakti is god generating devotion.

Mahaprabuhji says in Nirodha Lakshanam – The lucky ones tied to Him by love remain blissful forever while the unlucky ones left alone by Him in the world get drowned or sink there.

“Harina ye vinirmukta te magna bhavasagare
Ye niruddha te eva atra modam ayanti aharnisham”

Summary

In the absence of Sakar Brahmavada there are chances that Pushti bhakti becomes blind faith and without Pushti bhakti Sakar Brahmavada could become lame. Therefore, the requirement is that we have the sight and vision of Sakar Brahmavad on the path of Pushti bhakti marg.

Mabaprabhu’s sole interest in this framework of philosophical system lies in its usefulness to meet the demand of devotion par excellence for the Lord Krsna. According to Mahaprabhu, this devotion is neither merely a divine relishment of the godhood Krsna nor is it merely a realisation of the all-pervasive powers or attributes of the Brahman. For Mahaprabhu, Krsna is both a divine person as well as an omnificient-omnipresentomnicient and omnipotent power. Therefore. according to Mahaprabhu, an ideal devotee has to relish Brahman as Krsna and realise Krsna as Brahman

If you worship krsna without understanding brahmavad possible that you are not worshipping krsna in totality you are worshipping some image.

After Krsna stole the butter, His mother, Yashoda, could only tie Him up once He allowed her to do so. Although Brahman cannot be confined, Sri Krsna allows Himself to be bound by His devotees' cords of love. Shri Krishna responds to devotion.

We souls are his parts; he is the whole. So, it is duty of the parts to worship whole; just like leaves of a tree serve the tree. If a soul fails to do so, its creation is of no use for the whole. This implies that devotion should be Nirguna and Nirupadhika; rather than Saguna & Sopadhika. It means it is not to seek any favour from Him, but is a natural act, at the level of soul rather than intellect or mind. Sri Bhagvat Puranam compares it with the flow of water of river Ganga towards Ocean; absolutely purposeless. Suddhadvaita Brahmvada helps us in this understanding.

As His world is full of variety, so are His revelations. He is omniversal, inside as well as outside us. He resides in hearts as well as houses of His devotees. In Pushtibhakti , love is expression of His bliss i.e. Anand. So when we experience His love, we are experiencing Him. Whether He is there right in front of us or is hiding around or sitting in our heart, we experience Him. As the Upanishad says -
tam eva bhantam anubhati sarvam
tasya bhasa sarvam idam vibhati
ek aiva usha anubhati sarvam

Scriptures describe the Supreme reality in accordance with the different approaches and eligibilities of different persons. None of such description can ever be totally wrong. Every piece of description proves to be partially true, if read, alongwith the other descriptions. With only such approach we can arrive at the broader view of the Supreme Reality. The Lord always reveals Himself to all within the frame of different capacities of understanding. Therefore Naiyayikas consider Him as only the creator, Mimansakas as only action, Vedantis as only Supreme self, Sankhyas as instrument, some other Sankhyas as merely a knowledge or a knower, or as a foundation of knowledge. These are all partial facets of the One Supreme Reality revealed to the different thinkers or seers. All of them might have pondered or experienced according to the respective aspects that God has revealed before them. Hence differences in their narration is a natural consequence akin to that of blind men and an elephant. (Subodhini)

As Dr. G.H.Bhatt summarizes in History of Philosophy Eastern and Western :

“ The doctrine of non – dualism , the conception of God as full of rasa and joy, co-existence of contradictory attributes in Brahman, the idea of Aksara Brahma, the theory of the creation of the world from the very form (Svarupa) of Brahman, the transformation of the Brahman into the world without suffering any change, self-dedication to the Lord, emphasis on God’s grace and the aesthetic and emotional form of devotion, are the special feature of Vallabha’s teaching”s.

|| Natva harim sadanandam ||

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