

The Language of Transcendence — Key Terms and Concepts

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IN THE WORK OF TRANSLATING THE SANDARBHAS, careful attention has been given to the language used to convey specific terms and concepts. The emphasis has been on maintaining consistency with the overall theme of the work and, in particular, with the specific vision developed by Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī. The *Ṣaṭ Sandarbha*, also known as *Bhāgavata Sandarbha*, is no ordinary exposition of theism, for it defines Bhagavān in terms of nondual consciousness (*advaya-jñāna*). By so doing, it opens the field of investigation of nondual reality to new insights, and so creates a basis for interface with other wisdom schools, as well as with the fields of transpersonal psychology, transcendental phenomenology, and the leading edge of quantum physics, cosmology and consciousness studies. Jīva Gosvāmī's treatise certainly took into account the most important philosophical views of his day, and there is much in his writing that can be of great value to modern fields of knowledge as well. So the language used in translating his work has been chosen to facilitate such correspondence.

To assist the reader we have supplied below an explanation of key terms that appear throughout the text so that the underlying meaning that has informed them can be clearly understood. In this regard, three terms in particular require special attention so that their sense may be correctly understood by the reader: “nondual devotion” as a translation (in select passages) for *uttama-bhakti*, the “Nondual Personal Absolute” and the “Complete Whole” as translations for

Bhagavān, and “Radical Nondualism” for the Absolute Idealism of Śaṅkara’s Advaita Vedānta.

In going through this vital introduction to the language of the *Sandarbhas*, we hope you will discover that this is not merely a glossary of terms, but an interconnected framework of revelatory concepts. With this in mind, the selection begins with *acintya*, the trans-rational, because it contains a discussion of *śabdyate*, how the Absolute is describable in words.

ACINTYA (TRANS-RATIONAL) This term refers to that which is beyond conventional logic or reason, yet not altogether inexpressible through language and thought. The Nondual Absolute is not altogether inconceivable because it can be conceived, but only through trans-rational logic. Śrīdhara Svāmī as well as Jīva Gosvāmī define it as *tarka-asaham* — beyond the range of conventional or linear logic. Just as there exist higher order laws operating within the quantum domain that don’t conform to mechanistic science, so also there are higher order dynamics existing within the transpersonal domain that surpass conventional logic. It is these trans-rational dynamics that make possible transcendent variety and distinction within the nondual whole while still preserving perfectly intact its nondual nature. So although *acintya* literally means beyond thought or inconceivable, it actually points to the realm of trans-conventional being, which is nonetheless describable in words.

The transpersonal reality is, of course, beyond mind and thought and is incapable of being grasped merely by mental striving; yet being of the nature of self-luminosity, or self-revelation, it can nonetheless disclose itself even through thought and language. So *acintya*, rendered as inconceivable, does not imply incapability of being expressed in words. Bearing this in mind, *acintya* should not be equated with Śaṅkara’s notion of *anirvacanīya*, or inexpressibility through words. If Brahman is no more than unqualified being, devoid of characteristics or potencies, then nothing more can be said about it, because any description would ultimately be an imposition of a thought construct upon inscrutable reality.

If, however, as the *Bhāgavata* maintains, the Absolute is replete with unlimited potency, then unlimited words, which are themselves

potencies emanating from that source, can appropriately describe that Reality. This is exactly the point that Jīva Gosvāmī makes in *Bhāgavat Sandarbha* (*Anuccheda* 87). The Vedas are transhuman words emanating from the divine source that accurately depict its true inherent nature, because the Vedas are infused with the self-revelatory power of the intrinsic potency. Jīva goes a step further by saying that even human speech that is similarly infused with the intrinsic potency and thus in correspondence with the divine source can also describe the Absolute. This is the final purpose for which the intellect, mind and senses were created in the first place. In the words of the *Bhāgavata* (10.87.2), these material instruments were created “ultimately to transcend the act of filtering experience through the screen of prior assumptions (*akalpanāya*), or in other words, for liberation.” So in answer to the question, “how can thought and language describe the Absolute?” it can simply be said, “because they were created specifically to do so.”

Hence, the word *śabdya*, “describable in words,” is used in reference to the Nondual Absolute, mentioned in the *Bhāgavata*’s seminal verse (1.2.11). It is for this reason that the knowers of truth (*tattva-vit*) refer to it as Brahman, Paramātmā and Bhagavān. It is in this light too that Śrī Jīva defines *acintya* as *śāstraika-gamyatvam* — that which is knowable only through the revealed word of God or of realized devotees. He did not conclude it to be ineffable.

BRAHMAN (THE UNQUALIFIED ABSOLUTE) This refers to the Nondual Absolute (*advaya-jñāna*), devoid of all distinctions, such as names, forms, qualities and action, and hence devoid of inherent potency (*svarūpa-śakti*). Such distinctions (*bheda*) are perceived through conventional logic to be limiting adjuncts (*upādhis*) that would confine the Absolute, leading to the inevitable dualism of subject and object (i.e., the name is different from the named and potency different from ‘the potent’). Thus Brahman is sometimes conceived as that which remains upon negation of the sum total of the phenomenal.

Such conventional logic, of course, presupposes all distinction as ‘phenomenal distinction.’ It cannot at all account even for the possibility of trans-phenomenal distinction (*acintya bheda*) because

that is necessarily beyond the predetermined range of its own investigative validity. It cannot make any claims whatsoever in regard to possibilities lying beyond this limit. So, in effect, all that can be definitely concluded by this method is that for the Absolute to be nondual, it cannot have material names, material forms and so on. If there are such things as trans-phenomenal names, forms, qualities, action and personhood that are inherently nondual, or that exist as inherent potencies of the Nondual Absolute, an altogether different method and logic, trans-rational in nature, is required to apprehend them. Hence, to be precise Brahman is not so much the Absolute devoid of all distinction as the indistinct vision of the Absolute. In other words, it is the indistinct view of Reality as disclosed by the path of *jñāna*. It is not the distinct view of Reality inclusive of a trans-phenomenal interiority, as disclosed by the path of nondual devotion (see *uttama bhakti* and *svarūpa-śakti* below).

PARAMĀTMĀ (THE SUPREME INDWELLING SELF OR, SIMPLY, THE SUPREME SELF) This refers to the immanent feature of the Absolute, pervading the cosmos and the individual living beings as the Supreme witness, internal guide and regulator. Paramātmā is the Supreme Self of all individual selves (*ātma*), and so He may also be referred to as the Supreme Immanent or the Supreme Immanent Self. Though Paramātmā remains uninvolved with prakṛti and the living beings as impartial witness, He is, nonetheless, their originator and the facilitator of their operations. As such He is Īśvara, the Supreme Controller, Master, Source and Foundation. Yet Paramātmā should not be equated with ‘the Creator God’ because primordial nature and the living beings are His eternal potencies. Hence, Paramātmā is the Nondual Absolute in His feature of immanence.

In contrast with Brahman, Paramātmā is replete with trans-phenomenal distinction, including name, form, qualities, action and personhood, all of which are inherent in Him. While yet non-different from Bhagavān, He is but a portion of a portion of the original Complete Person (*Svayaṁ Bhagavān*). So while He Himself in His own self-effulgent nature is fully transcendent, His sphere of influence is tied to the perpetual play of creation, known as *ṣṛṣṭi-līlā*. Thus He does not manifest the full extension of transcendental

variegatedness as in the case of Bhagavān. So Paramātmā is Bhagavān with the limited role of sheltering the modifications of *prakṛti* and the *jīvas* who are involved with her.

BHAGAVĀN (THE NONDUAL PERSONAL ABSOLUTE) Etymologically, the word *bhagavān* is composed of *bhaga* + *vat*, endowed with or encompassing all opulence (*bhaga*). That which encompasses everything is the Complete Whole, implying that it includes and yet transcends everything. Bhagavān may also be rendered as the Complete Person (Pūrṇa Puruṣa) when emphasizing that the Complete Whole is inherently personal in nature. The former term may be more appropriate, or universally applicable, when stressing simply Bhagavān's general characteristic of all-inclusivity. In the most generic sense Bhagavān may be referred to simply as the Supreme Person or the Supreme Being.

When speaking of the Absolute as nondual awareness (*advaya-jñāna*) and Bhagavān as the complete distinct vision of nondual awareness, it may be appropriate to refer to Bhagavān as the Nondual Personal Absolute in keeping with the context. In contrast with Brahman, Bhagavān is the distinct vision of the Nondual Absolute, inherently self-endowed with intrinsic potency (*svarūpa-śakti*), and hence eternally replete with transcendental name, form, qualities, action and personhood. As discussed above, though all of these distinct characteristics inhere in Him, He is yet one and nondual in nature, which is made possible through His unprecedented transcendental power (*acintya-śakti*). So the metaphysical system that depicts this state of being is known as *acintya-bheda-abheda*. In contrast with Paramātmā, who is but a portion of the Complete Whole, Bhagavān's variegatedness is entirely beyond the realm of creation, being exclusively the play of divinity, known as *divya-līlā*. Hence, Bhagavān may be understood as the Nondual Absolute in His feature of supreme transcendence.

The Nondual Personal Absolute, Bhagavān, is not just the Complete Whole, but an integrated whole. He is not whole because of being devoid of distinct parts that might otherwise contradict His undifferentiated unity. Rather, He is inherently inclusive of varieties of distinct energies as their supreme source and refuge.

These energies have no existence apart from Bhagavān and thus in this sense are nondifferent from Him. Yet, while these energies exist as distinct aspects of His inherent nature, He is more than the sum total of them. He thus includes and yet transcends them. He is therefore an integrated whole having individual parts that are distinct from, and yet one with, Him. There is nothing which exists independent of Bhagavān.

THE JĪVA (THE INDIVIDUAL LIVING BEING) This refers to the conscious self (*ātmā*) as qualified by the intellect (*buddhi*), ego (*ahaṅkāra*), the mind (*manas*), the senses and the physical body. In this sense the *jīva* is known as the embodied self or the empirical self. Yet, the *jīva*'s individual selfhood (i.e., its supra-empirical selfhood rooted in the very identity of the *ātmā*) is not a product of mere illusion that vanishes on the awakening of its identity with Brahman. Though the *jīva* is one in identity with Brahman, this does not signify absolute non-distinction as advocated by Śāṅkara. The *jīva* is in fact a conscious part of Paramātmā. By this it is not meant that the *jīva* is a broken-off part but an integrated part of the Complete Whole.

The *jīva* eternally partakes of identity with Paramātmā and can never be ontologically separated from Paramātmā, even in the so-called state of bondage. The *jīva*, as conscious or integrated part (*cid-aṁśa*), is never truly bound. The *jīva*, however, is sometimes referred to as *vibhinnāṁśa*, a separated part. This separation is purely psychological, owing to beginningless ignorance. Even in this state of psychological or self-imposed bondage, the *jīva* is no other than an integrated part of the integrated whole. This is due to the fact that the *jīva* is an eternal distinct potency of Paramātmā known as *taṭastha-śakti*, the intermediary potency. It is so-called because it belongs neither to the intrinsic spiritual potency (*svarūpa-śakti*) nor to the extrinsic material potency (*māyā-śakti*), but can be influenced by both. So the *jīva* is eternally distinct from and yet one with Paramātmā, by virtue of the trans-rational potency (*acintya-śakti*) of the one Nondual Absolute.

UTTAMA BHAKTI (PURE OR UNALLOYED DEVOTION) First of all, because the entire discussion of *Bhāgavata Sandarbha* proceeds on the basis of the definition of Ultimate Reality as nondual

consciousness (*advaya-jñāna*), and because Bhagavān is shown to be nondual consciousness in its highest completion, it seems only appropriate to consider *bhakti*, which is the means of realizing the Nondual Personal Whole, Bhagavān, as being of the nature of nonduality. In light of this consideration, nondual devotion does not refer to devotion merely as a means of realizing the unqualified Nondual Absolute (i.e., Brahman). Such a notion would be more appropriately rendered as devotional nonduality, wherein nonduality is the subject and devotion merely a qualifier. Rather, nondual devotion is meant in the sense of the inherent potency of the complete Nondual Absolute, Bhagavān, which reveals Him as the unity that upholds all distinction. It is the devotion opened to when all separative and dualistic self-concepts operating under the influence of the *guṇas* have been transcended. The purity of *uttama bhakti* signifies that it is altogether beyond the influence of the *guṇas* of primordial nature, and thus it is also known as *nirguṇa bhakti* (see the discussion that follows below).

DEVOTION MIXED WITH THE GUṆAS (DUALISTIC DEVOTION)

Correspondingly, if nondual devotion is the means that discloses the Nondual Absolute as Bhagavān, then devotion mixed with the *guṇas* must necessarily be dualistic in nature. This is exactly what Kapiladeva states in the *Bhāgavata* (3.29.8-10). He uses the terms *bhinna-dṛg-bhāva* (of separatist vision) and *prthak-bhāva* (a separatist) to describe the performers of devotion mixed with any one of the three *guṇas*. In *Bhakti Sandarbha*, after the description of *āropa-siddha bhakti* (attributive devotion) and *saṅga-siddha bhakti* (associative devotion), there follows the explanation of *uttama bhakti* (i.e., *svarūpa-siddha bhakti*). But the delineation of *uttama bhakti* proper is preceded by a discussion of *bhakti* in the *guṇas*, which is marked by these three types of separatist or dualistic visions. The key point is that the performer is still rooted in dualism, considering him or herself separate from Bhagavān. *Sādhana* is thus performed with this dualistic mentality, as a means only to an end and therefore causal in nature, rather than as an end unto itself, acausal in nature, as immediate and present connection with Bhagavān, here and now.

NIRGUṆA BHAKTI (DEVOTION FREE FROM THE GUṆAS) By contrast with mixed devotion, devotion free from the *guṇas* is compared (SB 3.29.11) to the natural, continuous, unobstructed flow of the Gaṅgā to the sea, because the Gaṅgā, while distinct from the ocean, is nonetheless in no way disconnected from the ocean, which is its final refuge. Jīva Gosvāmī states in *Tattva Sandarbha* that the oneness of the *jīva* and Brahman is in terms of identity of being, yet he clarifies that this oneness in no way implies absolute non-distinction. It could also be stated the other way, that the distinction between the *jīva* and Paramātmā in no way implies absolute or categorical separation. In fact, as an integrated part of the Complete Whole, the *jīva* can never be separated from Paramātmā, even in the state of bondage. The sense of separation is merely psychological, having no ontological reality whatsoever. Hence, devotion in which the performer holds to the egoistic position of being a doer or subject separate from the ultimate 'object' (Bhagavān) is most appropriately referred to as dualistic devotion.

By placing this discussion as a preface to *uttama bhakti*, Jīva Gosvāmī clearly recognizes this mentality as a significant and prominent pitfall among those who presume themselves to be on the path of pure devotion. So the terms nondual devotion and dualistic devotion are helpful in clarifying this most important distinction. And what does this distinction imply in practical terms for the practitioner? It is not we who perform devotion, rather it is devotion that performs us. That is to say that devotion enacts itself through its own power of self-revelation, and in so doing it reveals the living being in its true identity, lending its inherent nature of awareness and bliss to the instrument of its manifestation.

Beginning from the sense organs, the tongue, ears, eyes, hands, and so on, it works its ways inward, pervading the internal organs, the vital system, the emotions and the mental quantum of mind, ego, and intellect, till it reaches at last to the *ātmā*, making the *ātmā* one with its essential nature. In what sense then can the practitioner truly be said to be a practitioner or a performer of devotion? One who holds to the egoistic and separatist conception of being a performer of devotion, a chanter of the name, a doer of acts of

good to others and God and so on, is caught in dualistic devotion, impeding this transcendental flow. When we abandon this separatist identity, we become but instruments through which devotion itself flows unimpeded, the interactive screen upon which the divine name arises, the playground in which the drama of worship unfolds.

KARMA (DUALISTIC ACTION) In the same light, *karma*, even in its *niṣkāma* form in which the desire for the fruit of action is relinquished, is necessarily dualistic because the performer holds to the notion of being separate from the object and the result of action. It is for this reason that Jīva Gosvāmī as well as Sanātana Gosvāmī disagree with Śrīdhara Svāmī in not accepting *karma* offered to Bhagavān as *bhakti*. Even when the desire for fruit is given up, the sense of doership remains. So, when the discussion again carries reference to the Absolute as nondual awareness, *karma* is appropriately referred to as dualistic action. In a more general context, it may be rendered as goal-oriented or result-oriented action. This is just another way of saying the same thing because all dualistic action is carried out by a performer seeking some particular result that is separated both from the performer and the act itself in time and place and is therefore causal in nature.

ŚAṆKARA'S ADVAITA VEDĀNTA (RADICAL NONDUALISM) This is but one school of Vedānta and hence but one school of nondualism. From the *Bhāgavata* (1.2.11) and from Jīva Gosvāmī's analysis throughout the *Ṣaṭ Sandarbha*, it is clear that there is also theistic or devotional nondualism. In fact, Jīva Gosvāmī's entire vision develops from his understanding of the Absolute as nondual awareness, and from his recognition of nonduality as the common ground and the lowest common denominator from which a discussion of the Absolute can proceed. Thus the *Bhāgavata*'s vision of nonduality, which Jīva seeks to bring forth, is a unique one, far exceeding the generic oneness of Śaṅkara.

So it is essential to speak of different schools of nonduality with different emphasis. It is in this light that we refer to Śaṅkara's view as Radical Nondualism, from the Latin *radix*, or connected to the root, implying that his view denies all distinction to the very core. It is absolute in its denial of distinction.

Śaṅkara's doctrine claims to represent the quintessence of the Upaniṣads. Yet in the Upaniṣads we find two types of statements, i.e., those that accommodate trans-phenomenal variety within unity and those that emphasize oneness and non-distinction. Examples of the first type are *svābhāvīkī jñāna bala kriyā ca*, "The Supreme Person has multifarious potencies that are intrinsic to His being, including knowledge, will power and action" (*Śvetāśvatara Upaniṣad* 6.8), and, *nityo nityānām cetanaś cetanānām eko*, "There is one supreme eternal amongst all the eternal living beings and one supreme conscious source amongst the multitude of conscious entities" (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.2.13). Examples of the second type are *sarvaṁ khalv idaṁ brahma*, "All this is indeed Brahman" (*Chāndogya Upaniṣad* 3.14.1), and, *neha nānā 'sti kiñcana*, "There is no diversity here whatsoever" (*Kaṭha Upaniṣad* 2.1.11). Śaṅkara has given importance only to those statements that emphasize oneness alone and treated the statements advocating unity in variety as secondary, denying primary meaning to them without giving any satisfactory explanation or reason.

The question may be asked, how can nondualism be put forth as the most valid description of reality when it is practically observed that there is a distinction between subject and object, between Spirit (Brahman) and the world (*jagat* or *prakṛti*), between conscious beings (*jīvas*) and insentient matter? Śaṅkara's solution is to advocate nondualism (lit. not two) by denial of the object: *brahma satyaṁ jagan mithyā* (the world is unreal, only Brahman is real), so that in effect there is only Brahman, there is only the subject and no object, there is only one. So because Śaṅkara's nondualism denies the object to the very root (*radix*), it may be referred to as Radical Nondualism. That is to say that it can account for oneness only (*abheda*) and not for distinction. Distinction is admitted only in an empirical sense (as *mithyā*) but without fundamental ontological existence. He can in no way accommodate trans-phenomenal distinction (*acintya-bheda*) because he cannot accommodate inherent potency (*svarūpa-śakti*) within the nondual whole.

An alternate meaning of radical is "that which is a departure from tradition." Śaṅkara's Vedānta or Nondualism is radical in this sense too because it is a departure from the traditional or

mainstream Vedāntic view that acknowledges the ontological reality of *prakṛti*, Īśvara and the living being. Śaṅkara may have thought it necessary to reinterpret this view in order to legitimize and stress the nondual nature of the Absolute, but in doing so, he introduced a strategic error that ultimately undermined his own system, that of Brahman's becoming overwhelmed by *māyā*. It is for this reason that his doctrine is sometimes rightly referred to as Māyāvāda, because *māyā*, which is said by him to be devoid of ontological reality, is yet able to overcome Brahman, the one and only real. Because of this mutation of mainstream Vedāntic thought, his system may appropriately be referred to as "Radical Nondualism."

Again, Śaṅkara's attempt to establish nonduality by denial of the object proves to be inadequate and unsatisfactory. His contribution is significant in what it attempts to accomplish, but it begs a more comprehensive and far-reaching understanding of nonduality. In a way, Śaṅkara's view can be seen as a reaction to, and the counterpart of, the Buddhist doctrine of *anātta* (or *anātma*), which by contrast establishes nonduality by denial of the subject. Both of these views, though establishing nondualism from opposite starting points, stop short of a truly authentic trans-rational metaphysics, resorting to conventional logic to establish a limited and hence morphed nonduality. Still both are useful in urging conventional devotion out of its tendency to get stuck in dualism. It is finally the *acintya-bheda-abheda* metaphysics of the *Bhāgavata* and Jīva Gosvāmī that completes and surpasses the limited nondualistic views of Śaṅkara and the Buddha.

NONDUALITY OF THE BHĀGAVATA (THEISTIC NONDUALISM)

By comparison, the nonduality of the *Bhāgavata* may be referred to as theistic nondualism, which finds its most complete expression in the visionary view known as *acintya-bheda-abheda*, the trans-rational inherence of distinction within the integral Nondual Whole. In this view, like that of Śaṅkara, there is only one *vāstava vastu*, or ontological existent that is nondual in nature, yet unlike Śaṅkara, it is admitted that unlimited potency of different categories inheres in this one existent. Though the inherence of distinction apparently contradicts its nonduality from the point of view of conventional

reason or logic, from the trans-rational perspective (*acintya*), it is perfectly in keeping with the higher internal laws (or constituting nature) that govern the trans-phenomenal reality. To take it a step further, nondualism that can accommodate oneness only and not distinction remains impoverished and hence can hardly be admitted as the Complete Whole.

Therefore, theistic nondualism extends far beyond Śaṅkara's view. Yet if Bhagavān is wrongly interpreted merely as the creator or regulator God, then this would seem to advocate dualism. This is a gross error that has allowed nondual devotion to be reduced to dualistic worship. Theism in general is almost automatically equated with dualism and is thus conceived to be inferior by the schools of nondualism that advocate either Brahman or *nirvāṇa* as ultimate. The highest state of the transpersonal is concluded through conventional logic to be non-personal. But this is exactly the point at which conventional logic breaks down. The logic that exhausts itself at the doorway of Brahman or *nirvāṇa* becomes the barrier to the hidden interior of nondual awareness, an expanded nonduality that accommodates distinction in oneness.

This is why it is imperative to begin the discussion of reality at the point of *advaya-jñāna* and to correspondingly understand Bhagavān as the Nondual Personal Absolute. In this way we eliminate the possibility of the misplaced reduction and force the investigation of reality to proceed beyond its general limit, that of unqualified, indistinct, monolithic Brahman. That is the real purpose of the *Bhāgavata* and Jīva Gosvāmī's presentation of the *Bhāgavata Sandarbha* — to lead the discussion into the interiority of nondual awareness.

SVARŪPA-ŚAKTI (THE INTERIORITY OF NONDUAL AWARENESS)

This refers to the inherent potency with which the Nondual Absolute is eternally self-endowed. When the Nondual Absolute is conceived as unqualified and devoid of potency, it is known as Brahman. When the same Nondual Absolute is conceived as inherently self-endowed with all potency, it is known as Bhagavān. The ontological entity is one and the same, yet a higher order, or, in other words, trans-rational, logic is required to understand how distinction (*bheda*) can be possible without violating the basic nature of

nonduality (*abheda*). This is worked out in detail in the *Bhāgavata* and the *Ṣaṭ Sandarbha*. In short, the inherent nature of the Nondual Absolute cannot be other than nondual. And it is the inherent nature or intrinsic potency of the Nondual Absolute that discloses its interiority, that discloses its variegated display of transcendent being, awareness and bliss. So it is the intrinsic potency (*svarūpa-śakti*), particularly in the form of nondual devotion (*uttama bhakti*), that discloses the interiority of nondual awareness.

EKAPĀDA & TRIPĀDA VIBHŪTI (ONEFOLD AND THREEFOLD DIMENSIONALITY OF BEING) These terms are commonly rendered as “the one-quarter manifestation of Reality” (i.e., the material realm) and “the three-quarter manifestation of Reality” (i.e., the spiritual realm). Strictly speaking, however, this has nothing to do with any sort of mathematical ratio between the material and spiritual domains. If the spiritual realm is infinite, should it not be infinitely more vast than the material world? (In fact, even the material realm is infinite, and conventional mathematics fails at the level of infinity, infinity being trans-rational.) Moreover, if the 3:1 ratio is merely symbolic to indicate the magnitude of Spirit in relation to matter, why then express it by such a paltry ratio as 3:1 instead of, say, a million to one? After all, we are speaking about infinity and 3:1 just doesn’t seem to cut it.

As Jīva Gosvāmī demonstrates in *Bhagavat Sandarbha* (*Anuccheda* 67), 3:1 refers to something quite specific. *Tripād vibhūti*, which is another name for the spiritual realm, refers to three qualities or dimensions of transcendental being, namely immortality (*amṛtatva*), fearlessness (*abhaya*), and auspiciousness (*kṣema*). These are three qualities woven into the fabric of transcendence. *Ekapāda vibhūti*, on the other hand, which is a name for the material world, refers to mortality alone. Thus, in the material world, ‘being’ culminates moment to moment in death alone. Fear and inauspiciousness, which are the material counterparts of the other two spiritual characteristics, are subsumed within the simple inescapable fact of mortality. So it is clear from this analysis that we are speaking about dimensions or aspects of being and not about mathematical ratios.

Further, a parallel can be drawn between the three qualitative dimensions of transcendental being and the well-known description of Spirit as *sat-cit-ānanda*. Immortality can be equated with *sat* because it signifies eternal existence. Fearlessness can be equated with *cit* because it is a state of awareness, and auspiciousness can be equated with *ānanda* because it is a state of beatitude and hence bliss. Jīva Gosvāmī goes on to explain that *kṣema*, or auspiciousness, specifically refers to all-auspicious devotion, which culminates in *prema* (i.e., *ānanda*).

