

The following is an excerpt from the commentary on Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's *Tattva Sandarbha*, *Anuccheda* 32. The subject is the individual self (the *jīva*), which is distinct, conscious and subject to ignorance, and its involvement with Bhagavān's deluding potency, *māyā*.

## Beginningless Bondage

According to Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, *māyā*'s conditioning of the *jīva* has no beginning; it is *anādi*. Although statements such as, “she covers the real nature of the *jīva*” seemingly imply a beginning, in fact there is no beginning to the *jīva*'s bondage. Śrī Kṛṣṇa confirms this:

*prakṛtiṁ puruṣaṁ caiva viddhy anādi ubhav api*  
*vikaramś ca guṇānś caiva viddhi prakṛti-sambhavān*

**Primordial nature and the living beings should both be understood to be beginningless. Their transformations and the *guṇas* of nature are phenomenal arisings out of primordial nature. (Gītā 13.20)**

Commenting on this verse, both Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa confirm that the conditioning of the *jīva* is beginningless. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states: *māya-jīvayor api mac-chaktitvena anāditvāt tayoh saṁśleṣo'py anādir iti bhāvaḥ* -(Śrī Bhagavān says), “Because both *māyā* and the *jīva* are My potencies, they both are beginningless. Thus their conjunction is also without beginning.’ This is the sense of Śrī Kṛṣṇa’s words.” Here Viśvanātha is employing the *nyāya* principle that the qualities or potencies of *anādi* substances are also *anādi*. Naturally, a beginningless substance or entity cannot have a prior state of existence, for it could not be said to be beginningless. In this case the subjects—primordial nature and the *jīvas*—are understood as *anādi*, and thus their shared quality of apparent separation from Kṛṣṇa, is also *anādi*.

In fact, in the beginning of his comment on the *Gītā* verse, Visvanātha says, “In this verse, Śrī Kṛṣṇa is answering two questions—why or how did the conjunction of the *jīva* and *māyā* occur? And when did it occur?” He says that both of these are answered by the word *anādi*. In regard to the first question, *anādi* implies *na vidyate ādi kāraṇam yayoḥ*, “the conjunction of *māyā* and the *jīva* is without prior cause” [and hence there is in fact no “why” as to how it occurred]. The answer to the second question – when? – is also *anādi*: it has no beginning and hence it did not occur at *any* moment in time.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa, commenting on this same verse writes, *evam mitho vivikta-svabhāvayor anādyoḥ prakṛti-jīvayoḥ saṁsargasyānādi-kālikatvam*: “In this way, the conjunction between primordial nature and the living being, who have distinct natures and are both beginningless, relates to a period of time that is without beginning.” He uses the adjectival compound *anādikālikatvam*, “a period of time without beginning”, to qualify the phrase *prakṛti-jīvayoḥ saṁsargas*, the conjunction of the *jīva* with *prakṛti*.

From this we understand that the *jīvas* and primordial nature are both eternal, although sometimes manifest and sometimes wound up within Mahāviṣṇu. Being eternal they are beginningless, and the nature of their conjunction is also beginningless. Just as there was no prior state of existence

for material nature, there was also no prior condition of existence for the bound *jīvas*. The common example given is that of a spider, which expands its energy in the form of its web and sometimes withdraws the web back into its body. Similarly, primordial nature and the bound *jīvas* are manifested and unmanifested in a cycle that is *anādi*, beginningless. Beginningless karmic imprinting and patterning is the nature of the bondage of the beginningless *jīva*.

## Surpassing the Bounds of Logic

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī will explain all this in greater detail in the *Paramātma Sandarbha* (*Anuccheda* 47). He will show that, according to the precise criteria pertaining to definitions in the *nyāya* system of logic, the word *anādi* is to be taken literally. We should note, however, that the subject at hand transcends conventional logical faculties. *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam* (3.7.9) confirms:

*seyam bhagavato māyā yan nayena virudhyate  
īśvarasya vimuktasya kārpaṇyam uta bandhanam*

The living entity, who is transcendental and liberated, is yet subject to misery and bondage. Such indeed is Bhagavān's extrinsic potency (*māyā*), which defies logic.

We are advised not to employ empirical logic to comprehend the beginningless bondage of the *jīva*. Rather, through open receptivity to the verdict of *śāstra*, accompanied by profound contemplation on the truth therein disclosed, there arises immediate intuitive insight of this enigma. This is the way of the self-disclosure of *śāstric* truth, and it is, therefore, the means to resolve this riddle of beginningless bondage. To not avail of this trans-empirical mode of knowing is to risk failure in completing life's essential purpose. *Gītā* (16.23) confirms:

*na sa siddhim avāpnoti na sukhaṁ na parāṁ gatim*

One who rejects *śāstra* attains neither completion, nor contentment, nor the supreme destination.

## Eternal Potential for Enlightenment

Although the *jīva* is beginninglessly deluded, it eternally retains the inherent capacity to know Bhagavān. This capacity is an unactualized potential, comparable to the illuminating power of an unused light bulb. Even when unused, a light bulb retains the capacity to illuminate, but cannot do so until connected to a power source. Similarly, the conditioned *jīva*'s capacity to know Bhagavān is unactualized, but is ever present as an inherent potential of consciousness itself. When consciousness is attuned to its Source, the inherent capacity to know Bhagavān is made possible, like the illumination that is enabled when a light bulb is connected to a power source.

This is why the *jīva* is described as an eternal servant of Kṛṣṇa, “*nitya kṛṣṇa-dāsa*.” When conditioned, the *jīva*'s constitutional eternal servitorship (*dāsatva*) remains in a potential state.

This potential is actualized when Kṛṣṇa's intrinsic potency descends to the *jīva*, dissolving the empirical conditioning through unconditional devotion.

In the conditioned state, however, the *jīva* misdirects root attention into phenomenal identity and appearance. Thus, the self's instruments of knowing — the mind and senses — are misapplied in service of a separative ego point of reference. In this condition, the self's inherent potential of consciousness to be devotionally whole-bodily attuned to its Source remains undiscovered, causing the *jīva* to suffer. Awareness is not simply a mental act. There is physical awareness, vital awareness, emotional awareness, mental awareness and intellectual awareness, all rooted in the self's inherent capacity of consciousness itself. So to be “devotionally whole-bodily attuned to the Source” implies a devotional turning of consciousness that is inclusive of all these modes of awareness. It is a complete turning toward Bhagavān with the body, the vital force, the mind, feeling, and intellect, all grounded in the self's own root submission.

So, when the *jīva* redirects the mind and senses to repose in their conscious Source, effected through the trans-mutational power of *sādhana-bhakti*, then through the descent or pervasion of divine power, the self's true potential becomes actualized. If one perseveres on the path of *bhakti*, he becomes aware of his original identity and is established in the unending bliss of *prema-bhakti*.

In *Paramātmā Sandarbha* (*Anucchedas* 19-47), Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī discusses this and other aspects of the *jīva*'s nature in greater detail.