

Sukha and Priyatā

(Letter from Svāmī Sadānanda Dāsa
8.9.60 and dictation 14.10.61)

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Dear Vāmandās, Hella and all friends,

In answer to Hella's question about the word “*priyatā*” in Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛtam I.1.2 I give here a reference to the concept of “*prīti*”, according to Jīva Gosvāmī's Pṛītisandarbhā §61. This word has a double meaning (paryāya):

- 1) *Sukha*. Synonyms (paryāya): mud, pramoda, harṣa, ānanda, *joy*, *happiness*; antonym or pratiyogi: duḥkha, *sorrow*, *suffering*.
Sukha is “ullāsa-ātmaka jñāna-viśeṣa”, i.e. a special kind (viśeṣa) of knowing, knowledge or state of mind (jñāna), distinguished by (ātmaka) joy (ullāsa).
- 2) *Priyatā*. Synonyms (paryāya): bhāva, hārda, sauhṛd, “love”; antonym or pratiyogi: dveṣa or *hate*. Hate wants what is unfavourable to the object.

Its *svarūpalakṣaṇa* or intrinsic nature:

- a) viṣaya-ānukulya-ātmaka = to its nature (ātmaka) love (priyatā) is favourable (ānukulya) to its object (viṣaya); it wants what is favourable to *the object of love*. – Consequently an “attitude”.
- b) tad (viṣaya)-ānukulya-tat-tat-sprhā = desire (sprhā) for that (tat) which is favourable, dear (ānukulya) to the object (tat = viṣaya = object), that which the object of love, from its point of view considers to be favourable. If one wants to serve God, first one has to know what is dear to *HIM*. – Consequently a dynamic will.
- c) tad-anubhava-hetuka-ullāsa-maya-jñāna-viśeṣa = a special kind (viśeṣa) of content of consciousness, knowing, state of mind (jñāna) full of enthusiasm (ullāsa-maya) due to (hetuka) the knowledge, experience (anubhava) that (tat) the efforts of love actually resulted in the joy of the object. To its nature, it is joy, which is due to its experience and knowledge that its display contributes to the joy of the object, because, in utmost sincerity, it does not wish for anything else than what the object wishes for and that grants *it* joy.

Its *taṣṭhalakṣaṇa* or external distinctive marks, of which one can recognize the essence of this love (priyatā): agility of the citta and horripilation etc.

Accordingly, both sukha and priyatā are ullāsātmaka-jñānaviśeṣa, a state of mind distinguished by joy, but a) – c) are the specific characteristics that distinguish priyatā from sukha.

Thus, sukha (1) has a subject, *āśraya*, i.e. a person in whom the joy is experienced, but it has no object, *viṣaya*, i.e. in the experience of the feeling of joy there is no need for an object of love.

Priyatā (2), on the other hand, has both *āśraya*, a subject, *priyamāna* = the loving one, the one who cherishes this love, *and* an object, *viṣaya* = the precious one, the beloved, *priya*, for the joy of which the love endeavours; and as it experiences that it has given joy to its beloved one, it is knowledge, full of joy.

Then, what is the difference between *sukha* and *priyatā*? *Ullāsa* or joy is in both. But in *sukha* or *ānanda* it is *ullāsa* or *joy as such*, joy in itself, whereas in *priyatā* it is *ullāsa* following (*anugata*) the joy given to the *object* of love. Therefore, *prīti* in the sense of *sukha* is reflexive, so to say, related to itself, whereas *prīti* in the sense of *priyatā* is related to an object, and what shines forth of joy in the *prīti* originates in the joy the love gave the object that experienced this love. Therefore, its joy is not independent but dependent on the joy experienced by the beloved.

Note that in Sanskrit *love* is associated with *locative*, i.e. love *for*, *in* Kṛṣṇa, *Kṛṣṇe*; and that which is its joy originates in Him, in His joy. Jīva points to the fact that this *priyatā* is knowledge, *jñāna*, as well, and by no means an *activity* that wants to do something with the object of love, as *dveṣa* or *hate* that would like to kill the enemy or adversary as the object of hate; hate has its object *in the accusative*, not in the *locative*.

The feeling of joy in *prīti* as *priyatā* *does not* originate in the experience of the character, the beauty etc. of the object of love, nor in the experience of the happiness the beloved gives the loving one, but in the experience of the knowledge that what the loving one did or does for the beloved, gives or gave joy to *the beloved* (*viṣayamādhurya-anubha-varat bhagavatmādhurya-anubhavastu tato'nyaḥ*).

Furthermore, Jīva points to the fact that *prīti* in the sense of *priyatā* is synonymous with *bhakti*. The *premabhakta* by no means expects happiness or joy as a by-product of his *sevā*. *Priyatā* originates in *the beloved* and *not* in the loving one, and it is the knowledge that the love gives and gave joy to the beloved one, which the person concerned experiences as happiness; this experience of happiness, however, is by no means of primary concern; in this *priyatā* it is Kṛṣṇa's experience of happiness which the *premabhakta* has very much at heart. [...]

I am sorry, this is too well-known for You, yet I give it once more in order to make the meaning of “*priyatā*” shine forth properly. [...]

Always Sada