

Priti - (Love)

by Śrīla
Saccidānanda Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

The sweetness of the word “love”

Love is a very sweet word. When it is spoken, a very sweet mood arises in the hearts of both the speaker and the listeners. Though few are able to understand its true meaning, everyone still likes to hear the word. All beings are controlled by love. Many will even give up their lives for it.

All beings are controlled by love

To love is the sole purpose of human life. Many think that the fulfilment of their selfish desires is the primary purpose of their existence, but that is wrong. For love, man can sacrifice all of his own interests.

Selfishness causes man to strive only for his own happiness and autonomy, but love causes him to sacrifice all of his own interests for the sake of that thing or person that is dear to him. Whenever there is a clash between selfishness and love, love is victorious. In particular, even when selfishness is very intense it still remains subordinate to love. What is selfishness? Selfishness is to endeavour for that which is dear to oneself. Therefore, it is not unreasonable to say that human life is directed by love. Love becomes the primary purpose of man's life, even when he strives to fulfil his selfish desires.

Materialists and liberationists strive for enjoyment and liberation, out of love for them

Love is pre-eminent on the path of transcendentalism also. Those who seek spiritual pleasure, considering worldly pleasure to be temporary, are of two kinds: those overcome by an urge to enjoy and those driven by a desire to be liberated. Those overcome by an urge to enjoy are presently either preoccupied with their search for wealth, kingdom, wife or children, or encumbered with a desire for the position of Indra or any other demigod in Svarga or for happiness in the higher planets such as Brahmaloaka. Because they have a love for those things, they constantly endeavour to have them.

Those who crave liberation have no love for such worldly enjoyments, but cherish instead the desire to be liberated from worldly affairs. Hence, because

they have a love for liberation, they strive for it. Love is what the materialist seeks from his enjoyment and the liberationist from liberation. Hence, to attain love is the final object for both kinds of people. Love is the single aim of all spiritual endeavour.

What Caṇḍī dāsa says about love

In regard to love, the Vaiṣṇava poet Caṇḍī dāsa says:

*pirīti baliyā, e tina ākhara,
e tina bhuvana-sāra
ei mora mane, haya rāti-dine,
ihā vai nāhi āra (1)*

*vidhi eka cite, bhāvite bhāvite,
niramāṇa kaila “pi”
rasera sāgara, manthana karite,
tāhe upajila “rī” (2)*

*punaḥ je mathiyā, amiyā haila,
tāhe bhiyāila “ti”
sakala sukhera, e tina ākhara,
tulanā diba se ki (3)*

*jāhāra marame, paśila yatane,
e tina ākhara sāra
dharama karama, sarama bharama,
kivā jāti kula tāra (4)*

*e hena pirīti, nā jāni ki rīti,
pariṇāme kivā haya
pirīti-bandhana, baḍa-i viṣama,
dvija caṇḍīdāse kaya (5)*

The three syllables *pi-rī-ti* (love) are the essence of the three planetary systems. They remain in my mind day and night. I think of nothing but them. (1)

Concentrating deeply, Brahmā created the syllable *pi*. Then when the ocean of *rasa* was churned, the syllable *rī* emerged. (2)

the ocean was churned a second time, nectar emerged, which was prepared into the syllable *ti*. How can I compare anything to these three syllables,

which are the abode of all happiness? (3)

That person in whose heart the essence of these three syllables has forcibly entered finds *dharma*, *karma*, shyness, commonsense, caste and family tradition useless. (4)

I do not know what the nature of that love is or what its result will be. The twice-born Caṇḍī dāsa says, “The bondage of love is truly terrible.” (5)

Insentient objects are shadows of sentient objects

Objects are of two kinds: sentient objects and insentient objects. Sentient objects are original, whereas insentient objects are perversions of sentient ones. They can be called the shadows or reflections of sentient objects. Whatever is present in an object is also present in some way in its shadows. Hence, whatever is present within the original, sentient objects must also be present in their insentient counterparts.

To love is the nature of sentient objects, and love's perversion is found in insentient objects

If we examine the nature of sentient objects, we find that to love is their sole nature. This nature must also exist in some way as a reflection within insentient objects. Just as insentient objects are perversions of sentient ones, attraction and motion are perversions of love. They make up the nature of insentient objects and are present in every insentient atom. Let us now examine the nature of love.

The nature of love

Attraction and motion are present in their pure form within sentient objects as love. The soul is a sentient object. Here, “soul” refers to both the supreme sentient being, the Supersoul, and the minute sentient being, the soul. Their nature is to love. Pure love is found only within the soul. Only a perversion of that pure nature, not the pure nature itself, is to be found within the soul's reflection - that is, within insentient objects. Hence, pure love is not to be found in any material object of this world. Rather, its perversion, which is mere attraction and motion, is to be found in them.

By the forces of attraction and motion, atoms assemble to form objects. Through attraction, objects are drawn towards each other. Also, on account of their independent motion, the planets revolve around the sun. Anything that

is present in a perverted object or perverted nature is also present in the original object in its untainted form.

The independence, attraction and repulsion of the soul

Independence and attraction to other objects are also always found within the soul. The soul exists in a state of bondage in this world. There are unlimited, minute souls, each possessing the nature to love. This can be seen in the attraction all souls exert upon each other. Furthermore, because of their independence, each soul wants to remain separate from the others.

In this material world, every object draws other objects towards it; and these other objects in turn, by virtue of their independent motion, try to remain separate from that object. Big objects draw small objects towards them. The sun is big, attracting the planets and their satellites towards it. But owing to their own independent motion, those planets and satellites remain at a distance from the sun and, attracted by its gravitational force, orbit it. Moreover, the planets' attraction and motion also assist them in their orbit. What we see in this world is also found in the spiritual world in its unadulterated form.

The difference between the material sun and the transcendental sun

The *Chāndogya Upaniṣad* (8.1.13) states:

*sa brūyād yāvān vā ayam ākāśas tāvān eṣo
'ntar hṛdaya ākāśa ubhe asmin dyāvāpṛthivī
antar eva samāhite ubhāv agniś ca vāyus ca
sūrya-candramasāv ubhau vidyut nakṣatrāṇi
yac cāsyehāsti yac ca nāsti sarvaṁ tasmin
samāhitam iti*

In the reflected creation, there are five elements, as well as the moon, the sun, lightning and the stars. All of these are present in their original form in Brahma-pura, the spiritual world. The difference between the two worlds is that in the spiritual world all the variegated affairs are pure, blissful and perfect, whereas in the material world everything is flawed, incomplete and the cause of happiness and distress.

To love is the fundamental nature of all beings in the spiritual world. Therefore, the poet Caṇḍī dāsa says:

*brahmāṇḍa vy āpiyā, āchaye je jana,
keha na dekhaye tāre
premera pirīti, je jana jānaye,*

*sei se pāite pare
pirīti pirīti tīnaṭī ākhara
pi rī ti trividha mata
bhajite bhajite nigūḍha haile
haibe eka-i mata*

No one has seen that person who pervades the universe.
Only one who knows what love is can attain
Him. *Pirīti* (love) has three letters and is of three
kinds, but when it becomes condensed as a result of
continuous *bhajana*, it will be of only one kind.

The transcendental sun, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, attracts the jīvas to orbit Him, and this is eternal rāsa

The transcendental enjoyer of Vṛndāvana, Śrī Kṛṣṇa, is the sun of the spiritual world. The souls there are His associates in His pastimes. Through the force of the attraction of His love, Kṛṣṇa draws them towards Him. But, on account of their own independent motion, they try to remain distinct from Him. Hence, while the strong force of attraction drawing those souls near to that sun-like Kṛṣṇa defeats their motion, that force nonetheless makes them orbit Him. This is Kṛṣṇa's eternal *rāsa*.

In that *rāsa*, His girlfriends who are part of His internal potency are very near to Him, and those who have attained perfection through their spiritual practice are somewhat further away. Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes reveal the true nature of love.

Liberated souls are greatly attracted to Kṛṣṇa

Does Kṛṣṇa attract all souls? If so, why are all souls not favourably inclined towards Him?

Kṛṣṇa does attract all souls. However, souls are of two kinds: the bound and the liberated. Because liberated souls experience their love clearly and keep it alive. Kṛṣṇa's force of attraction naturally acts more effectively upon them.

The reason why bound souls are not attracted to Kṛṣṇa.

Souls in bondage are of two types. The pure love of those who are completely oblivious to kṛṣṇa is extremely distorted due to their association with matter. They know nothing but love for objects of enjoyment, and therefore engage in sense gratification day and night. Forgetting themselves, they remain engrossed in seeking mundane pleasures.

Moreover, on account of their esteem for mundane science, which promotes mundane enjoyment they remain absorbed in mundane worship. They continuously cheat themselves with statements like “the soul does not exist”, “deliberating upon the soul is illusory”, and “any attempt to develop the self is nothing but mental agony”. Some cheat themselves of the pleasure of the plane of the soul by engaging in various pious activities with the aim of attaining the happiness of Svarga.

When the bound souls develop discrimination, renunciation and faith, they become attracted to Kṛṣṇa. Among the souls in bondage, some develop discrimination and renunciation, and attain faith in the soul. On the strength of this faith, they experience to some degree the pure attractiveness of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the sun of the spiritual world, and are also drawn towards Him. Although they are engaged in various mundane, scientific or pious activities, they enjoy Kṛṣṇa's association. Śrī Caṇḍī dāsa describes their moods:

*kānu je jīvana, jāti prāṇadhana,
e duṭi nayanera tārā
hiyāra mājhāre, parāṇa putali,
nimikhe nimikha hārā (1)*

*torā kulavatī, bhaja nija pati,
jāra mane jevā laya
bhāviyā dekhinu, śyāma-bandhu bine,
āra keha mora naya (2)*

*.ki āra bujhāo, dharama-karama,
mana svatantrī naya
kulavati haiñā, pirīti-ārati,
āra kāra jāni haya (3)*

*je mora karama, kapāle āchilā,
vidhi milāila tāya
torā kulavatī, bhaja nija pati,
thāka ghare kula lai (4)*

*guru durajana, bale kuvacana,
se mora candana-cuyā
śyāma anurāge, e tanu becinu,
tila-tulasī diyā (5)*

*paḍasī durjana, bale kuvacana,
nā jāba se loka pāḍā
caṇḍīdāse kaya, kānura pirīti,
jāti-kula śīla chāḍā (6)*

Kānu is my life, my caste, my treasure and the pupils of my eyes. He is the beloved within my heart who, in the blink of an eye, is lost to my vision. (1)

You are women of respectable family. Serve your husbands. Do as you please. After some thought I see that I have no one but my lover Śyāma. (2)

What more can you tell me about *dharma* and *karma*? My mind is not independent. If I am indeed a virtuous woman, then who is that person I long to love? (3)

Brahmā has made arrangements according to my *karma* and destiny. O virtuous women, serve your husbands and stay at home with your family. (4)

My wicked elders criticise me, but to me their criticism is like scented sandalwood paste. Out of my love for Śyāma, I have sold this body placing sesame seeds and a *tulasī* leaf on it. (5)

My wicked neighbours criticise me, but I will not go to their neighbourhood. Caṇḍī dāsa says, “Love for Kānu rejects caste, family and character.” (6)

The nature of the souls who are unaware of their identity

The soul in this world has forgotten his own identity because he identifies with matter. He forms various relationships with various people and behaves towards them in various ways. He identifies himself with his subtle body, and has imagined a new body consisting of mind, intelligence and ego. Because of that relationship with his subtle body, he values psychology and material science, considering them his wealth, and consequently becomes deluded.

Moreover, on account of identifying himself with his gross body, consisting of the five elements, he thinks “I am a Bhaṭṭācārya” or “I am a gentleman”, and thus he lives a life of abandon. He is sometimes born and he sometimes dies. Sometimes he is unable to contain his joy, and sometimes he is stricken with grief. Glory to this transformation and glory to Māyā's games!

Sometimes the soul is born as a man and marries a woman, and sometimes he is born as a woman and marries a man and establishes for himself a large cycle of worldly concerns. When he enters that cycle he honours his superiors and

takes care of his dependants. He fears the ruler, and he hates his enemies. He fears disgrace and criticism when he is born as a woman in a respectable family. He remains far from his true identity when he establishes these false relationships in this world. What a horrible condition the soul endures in such a self-imposed life! Considering the various established rules of this world as his master, he has completely forgotten his eternal master, Kṛṣṇa.

Prior attraction, tryst and union with Kṛṣṇa

At this point a particular mood may arise in relation to Kṛṣṇa, expressed by Śrīman Mahāprabhu in the following verse:

*para-vyasaninī nārī vyagrāpi gr̥ha-karmaṣu
tam evāsvādayaty antar nava-saṅga-rasāyanam*

Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Madhya-līlā 1.211)

An unchaste wife internally relishes newer and newer meetings with her lover even while engaged in her household chores.

This kind of prior attraction (*pūrva-rāga*) develops in a soul bound to the rules of this world before pure love for Kṛṣṇa awakens in him. Eventually this soul will go for a rendezvous and meet Kṛṣṇa. Prior attraction appears by hearing about Kṛṣṇa's nature and qualities, seeing a picture of His transcendental form, remembering His attractiveness and hearing the sound of His flute. One in whom this prior attraction has appeared meets Kṛṣṇa by the help of likeminded girlfriends. Gradually the mutual love between this soul and the supreme enjoyer Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who is the embodiment of eternity, knowledge and bliss, becomes deep.

Pure and impure love

Kṛṣṇa's transcendental pastimes in the spiritual world, Vraja, are eternal. The soul is a minute sentient particle, and is therefore eligible to participate in those pastimes. When the soul is in bondage, his transcendental identity appears in an illusory form as his subtle and gross bodies. Similarly, the pure love for Kṛṣṇa that is found within that transcendental identity appears in an illusory form as love for mundane science or mundane objects. Therefore, bodily love or mental love are simply distortions of pure love for Bhagavān. They are not true love. But because the soul has mistaken his own identity he considers them to be real love. Actual love, however, is the love that exists between two souls.

True love

The *Bṛhad-āraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (4.5.6) states:

*na vā are patyuh kāmāya patiḥ priyo bhavati
ātmanastu kāmāya patiḥ priyo bhavati. (ityupakramya)
na vā are sarvasya kāmāya sarvaṁ
priyaṁ bhavati ātmānastu kāmāya sarvaṁ
priyaṁ bhavati. ātmā vā are draṣṭavyaḥ śrotavyo
mantavyo nididhyāsītavyo maitraiyyātmani
khalu are dr̥ṣṭe śrute mate vijñāta idaṁ sarvaṁ
viditam iti.*

When Yājñavalkya's wife Maitreyī became detached from both the gross and the subtle planes, she approached her husband and requested him to give her some instruction.

Yājñavalkya replied: “O Maitreyī, a wife does not in fact love her husband for his sake. Rather, in every instance she does so for her own sake. Similarly, a husband loves his wife only for his own interests. This so-called love for husband, son, wealth and so on, is simply deceit. By completely rejecting this dishonesty you should worship Bhagavān, the eternal object of love and the soul of all souls, and love Him solely for love's own sake. Therefore, one who has become detached from the material world and the subtle body should look at, think of and inquire about that Soul who is the most beloved of the *jīvas*. By that he will come to know everything.”

The import of this highly authoritative statement of the Vedas is that there is no love on the gross and subtle planes. Whatever semblance of love is found here is experienced only in relation to the soul. The pure soul is transcendental, and the love that exists between souls is pure love. Only that love is worthy of being searched after. Worldly love, or the love that exists between humans, is but a distortion of the soul's love. The love that exists between souls is the only true love.

“Love Kṛṣṇa” is the ultimate instruction

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* (10.14.55) it is stated:

*kṛṣṇam enam avehi tvam
ātmānam akhilātmanām*

Śrī Kṛṣṇa, who possesses sixty-four excellent attributes, is the soul of all souls. The love that all souls have for Kṛṣṇa is free from mundane designations and is superlative. Those who have written about psychology and the intricacies of

love without knowing love's true nature have simply wasted their time, despite all their reasoning, as if mixing ghee into ashes. Out of pride, such persons have simply endeavoured for fame. Rather than benefit the world, they have brought it great misfortune. Brothers! Stop listening to those people's grandiloquent talk and develop pure attachment for the soul, thus making your soul's nature shine by experiencing that love which is free from designations.

* The original word used is *prīti*, translated as “love”.

Translated from *Sri
Gaudiya Patrika*, Year 11, Issue 3
by the *Rays of The Harmonist* team.
Published in English for the first time
in *Rays of The Harmonist* No. 13 Karttika 2003