

**Satsang with Swami Viditatmananda Saraswati
Arsha Vidya Gurukulam**

Asti Bhāti Priyam

Question

Can you please elaborate on *asti bhāti priyam*?

Answer

In the *prakaraṇa* text *Dṛk-Dṛśya Vivekaḥ*, a verse is used to teach *viveka* or discrimination between *dṛk* the subject and *dṛśya*, the object:

*asti bhāti priyaṃ rūpaṃ nāma cetyaṃśapañcakam
ādyatrayam brahmarūpaṃ jagadrūpam tato dvayam*

The group of five constituents, “Exists, shines, attractive, form and name” pertain to all dealings in the world. The triad of first three is the nature of Brahman and the pair of remaining two is that of world. [*Dṛk-Dṛśya Vivekaḥ*, 20]

In our lives, there is mixing up of the subject and the object. The text teaches us how we need to recognize an object as an object and a subject as a subject. While talking about the truth of the universe, the author draws our attention to the fact that everything in the universe has five aspects. Everything has a name (*nāma*) and there is a form (*rūpa*) corresponding to the name. The thing is. It exists (*asti*). Why do I say that it is or it exists? I know it because it is an object of my awareness (*bhāti*). If it were not an object of my awareness, I would not know that it exists. If I ask you whether I have horns on my head you will say that I don't, because you do not see them or because you are not aware of them. Thus existence and awareness (*asti* and *bhāti*) go together. The author also adds that everything in this universe loves itself (*priyam*). There is love for existence and there is love for being and, therefore, there is love everywhere. Or let us say that everything has the capacity to love. Love and joy always go together. I love that which is a source of joy. Naturally I dislike that which is a source of unhappiness or pain. So both love and joy go together, which means that there is joy or happiness everywhere. Therefore, we have *asti bhāti priyam*.

“But Swamiji, I do not see happiness everywhere. I see happiness in a few things but not in other things”. I do not see happiness somewhere, either because it is not there or because I have not tuned up the instrument required to see that it is there. I may have pronounced *rāga-dveṣas* (likes and dislikes) in my mind about what happiness is. I may have a pre-conceived notion that this alone can be called happiness and that something else cannot be called happiness. If all these pre-conceived notions are dropped, and if my mind is open and free of any demand as to how a thing should be, there will be no difficulty in appreciating happiness everywhere. As the *Taittirīya Upanishad* says:

*ānando brahmeti vyajānāt ānandāt eva khalvimāni bhūtāni
jāyante ānandena jātāni jīvanti ānandam prayanti
abhisamviśantīti*

He knew ānanda as Brahman; for from ānanda, indeed, all these beings originate; having been born, they are sustained by ānanda; they move towards and merge in ānanda. [Taittirīya Upanishad, 3-6]

This *mantra* says that all beings are born of *ānanda*, are sustained by *ānanda* and ultimately merge back into *ānanda* to become one with it. This is like saying that all pots are born of clay, are sustained by clay and go back to become one with clay. All pots are nothing but clay. Similarly, when it is said that everything is born of *ānanda*, is sustained by *ānanda* and goes back to become one with *ānanda*, it means that even now, everything is *ānanda*. Thus from what the *Taittirīya Upanishad* says, everything is nothing but the manifestation of *ānanda*.

How is it that I do not see it? Is it because it is not there? Some people insist that they can accept something only when they see it. Just because we do not see something, it does not mean it is not there. I may have a problem with my eyes or some defect in my eyes, and therefore I do not see it. So even if something is there, I may not see it. Perhaps the instrument of perception needs to be tuned up. If I remove that defect then I can see. Similarly, the mind is the instrument with which we experience happiness, and if we do not experience happiness it may not necessarily be because it is not there. Maybe my mind needs some tuning up. There is some problem and it needs to be removed. The problem is the presence of all my likes and dislikes, the *rāga-dveṣas*, attachments and demands. When they are removed my mind becomes totally accepting and totally non-demanding. When I am non-demanding with reference to a person, I am

comfortable with that person. Whenever I am non-demanding and am able to respect and accept everything as it is, I find that I enjoy it, whether it is a flower, a tree, a river, a lake, a dog or a person or anything. If I make a demand, I cannot enjoy it.

Asti means that a thing is. *Bhāti* means that it shines in my knowledge. *Priyam* means attractiveness. This is the truth that prevails in every name and form. The attractiveness part is not clear to us. It is not experienced. That ‘it is’, is an experience. That ‘it shines’, is an experience. But to experience the attractiveness, I must give up my demand of what ‘attractiveness’ is. If I can see attractiveness only in a certain kind of a nose or a certain kind of eyes, I can see it only there and not elsewhere. But if I drop all my definitions of what attractiveness is, I can see it everywhere because it is everywhere. This happiness or love is everywhere. In short everything has a potential capacity to make me happy. What I need to do is to invoke or explore that potential.

Every name and form is associated with *asti bhāti priyam*. It is, it shines, it is attractive, it is dear and it is a source of happiness. Every object is unique in that it has its own name and form. This means that every name and form is different from every other, but every object also has universality, in that everything is *asti bhāti priyam*. Let us look again, into the example of the pot. There is something that distinguishes one pot from the other, which is its unique name and form or shape. But there is something universal in all the pots, namely clay. Similarly, in this world, there is something that separates each object or being from another and this is, its particular name and form. On the other hand, there is also something that is universal, and this is *asti bhāti priyam*.

What is the relationship between the clay and the pot? The clay is the truth of the pot. In fact what we call pot, is nothing but the clay. The pot has no existence apart from the clay and therefore the pot is nothing but clay. Similarly, if *asti bhāti priyam* is the universal aspect of all objects, what does it mean? It means that the truth of all objects is nothing but *asti bhāti priyam*! This means that even when I perceive the object as a particular name and form, its underlying reality is *asti bhāti priyam*.

Everything is *priyam*; *ānanda*; wholeness; fullness or Brahman. This is what it is. If I try to determine the truth of an object by progressively sub-dividing it into its building blocks, nothing will remain. But then we say that something still remains. What

is it? It is the one who divides, who remains! Similarly, where is the *asti bhāti priyam*, which is associated with every name and form? Is it out there? Where is it? It is the nature of the very subject who asks! With reference to the subject, the *asti bhāti priyam*, which is in the third person, will get transformed into the first person. It will be *asmi bhāmi priyam* instead. We have changed the case. As Pujya Swamiji would say, that “Brahma is” is called the *parokṣa jñānam* or indirect knowledge. It gets transformed into “I am Brahman”, which is *aparokṣa jñānam* or direct knowledge. To begin with, we recognize that the essence of everything is *asti bhāti priyam* or *saccidānanda*. Then we recognize that this *saccidānanda* is myself. A text called the *Advaita Makaranda*, opens with the verse:

*ahamasmi sadā bhāmi kadācinnāhamapriyaḥ
brahmaivāhamataḥ siddhaṃ saccidānanda lakṣaṇam*

Always I am. Always I shine. Never am I an object of dislike to myself. Therefore it is established that I am the Brahman which is of the nature of existence, awareness, and fullness. [*Advaita Makaranda*, 2]

Ahamasmi, I am always. *Sadā bhāmi*, I always shine in my consciousness. *Kadācinnāhamapriyaḥ*, I never dislike myself. I may dislike other things but as far as my love for myself is concerned, it is an unconditional love. My love for other things is always conditional. But I never hate myself. I always love myself regardless of where I am or how I am, whether I am good or bad, rejected or accepted. Therefore where is this *asti bhāti priyam*? It is in fact nothing but my own self. What does it mean? What am I seeing? If *asti bhāti priyam* is my nature and we say that all that there is, is *asti bhāti priyam*, what am I looking at? My own self! What, then, is this creation? It is nothing but a projection of my own self.

pūrnamadaha pūrnamidam pūrṇāt pūrnam udacyate

That creation is complete, and this self is also complete because this arises from that completeness. [*Shanti mantra* from *Yajur Veda*]

Adah, the self, is *pūrṇam* or complete. *Idam*, this creation, is also *pūrṇam* because *pūrṇāt pūrṇam udacyate*, or from *pūrṇam* arises *pūrṇam*. This creation, which is *pūrṇam*, has emerged from the self. Therefore, recognize this *pūrṇatvam*, the completeness. Recognize that every name and form is in reality *asti bhāti priyam* and

that *asti bhāti priyam* is the very nature of my self. *Pūrṇam eva avaśisyate*, whatever remains is also *pūrṇam*. There is no duality. *Ekam eva advitīyam*, [Chāndōgyōpanishad, 6-2-1] everything is one and without a second. *Asti bhāti priyam* is all that remains.
