

PART TWO - THE PRIYA-NARMA-SAKHAS are NOT in MADHURA-RASA

Sri Sri Guru Gaurangau jayatah!

The purpose of this discussion is nothing, if not to increase our appreciation for the divine couple, Sri Sri Radha-Shyamasundara and all their dear associates. So I humbly request our respected readers to accept the offering of this article as it was intended, in a joyful mood of service, rather than one of contentiousness.

vanca kalpa tarubhyas ca krpa sindhubhya eva ca
patitanam pavanebhyo vaisnavebhyo namo namah

THE PRIYA-NARMA-SAKHAS are NOT in MADHURA-RASA (part2)

In part one, it was established that although the mood of the priya-narma-sakhas has been referred to as “sakhi-bhava”, this does not indicate that they are in madhura-rasa. The phrase “sakhi-bhava” simply means “tad-anumodana”, the mood of sympathetic joy or the happiness of approving of Sri Krsna’s amorous affairs. The term “tad-anumodana” is not widely understood and some people vaguely conceive of the priya-narma-sakhas’ “sakhi-bhava” as some sort of oscillation of gender identity.

Now, in part two, we will explore the actual nature of the priya-narma-sakhas’ sakhya-rasa and its relationship to madhura-rasa by citing the precise descriptions of tad-anumodanatmaka-bhava presented by Srila Rupa Gosvami in Sri Bhaktirasamrta-sindhu and Srila Jiva Gosvami in his Sri Priti Sandarbha.

The main reason the priya-narma-sakhas cannot be in madhura-rasa is that the sthaya-bhava of madhura-rasa must be madhura-rati, which only occurs in female associates. In Sri Bhaktirasamrta-sindhu, Srila Rupa Gosvami states:

mitho harer mägākñyāç ca sambhogasyādi-kāraëam |
madhurāpara-paryāyā priyatākhyoditā ratiù |

“That rati, which is the primary cause of the various types union (sambhoga) between Hari and the doe-eyed women, is called "amorous love" (priyata); it is also known as "madhura-rati ". (BRS 2.5.36)

atha tasya preyasyaù—
nava-nava-vara-mādhurédhuréëäù
praëaya-taraiga-karambitäs taraigäù |
nija-ramaëatayä harià bhajantiù
praëamata täù paramādbhutäù kiçoréù ||

“Hari's Beloved Women: All of you should bow to those extremely wonderful young women who are charged with ever-new and excellent sweetness, whose hearts are filled with waves of love, and who worship Hari as their own lover.” (BRS 3.5.6)

From these two verses it is understood that female associates are the only possible shelter (asraya-alambana) of madhura-rati and therefore of madhura-rasa. Srila Bhaktivinoda Thakura concurs with this in Sri Jaiva Dharma:

“Of these five, dāsya, sakhya, vātsalya and mādhyura are found in the residents of Vraja. Dāsya, sakhya, and vātsalya with fatherly instincts are male bhāvas, and those who are so inclined serve Kāñëa in male spiritual forms. The two rasas in which the female bhāva is intrinsic are vātsalya with motherly instincts, and çāigāra-rasa or mādhyura-rasa (the mellow of amorous love), and those who are of this nature engage in Kāñëa’s service as females.” (Jaiva Dharma Chapter 21)

Furthermore, since madhura-rati is the primary cause of sambhoga (sambhogasyādi-kāraëam), if any male person were to be the shelter of madhura-rati, by definition, it would have to lead to amorous activities, which would of course be rasabhasa.

If someone raises the point, “I agree that the priya-narma-sakhas are not IN madhura-rasa, but their rasa is MIXED with madhura-rasa,” then we have to reply, “No. This opinion is certainly wrong because their sthayi-bhava would have to be mixed with madhura-rati to form the basis of a mixed rasa.”

There are two types of sthayi-bhava, namely kevala (pure) and sankula (mixed). Now kindly consider, among the four types of sakhas, the sthayi-bhava of the “suhrt-sakhas” has been described as “vātsalya-gandhi-sakhyā”, friendship scented with a touch of parental love (BRS 3.3.22). The sthayi-bhava of the category called “sakhas” has been described as “sambandhāu prēti-gandhinā”, friendship scented with a touch of servitude (BRS 3.3.30). In comparison, in BRS 3.3.36 Srila Rupa Gosvami describes the sthayi-bhava of the priya-sakhas and priya-narma-sakhas such as Dama, Sudama, Vasudama, and Kinkini as “sakhyam-kevalam”, unadulterated friendship not mixed with any of the other primary ratis.

vayas-tulyāu priya-sakhā sakhyā kevalam āciritāu |
crédāmā ca sudāmā ca dāmā ca vasudāmakaū (BRS 3.3.36)

Thus, it must be concluded that not only are the priya-narma-sakhas not in madhura-rasa, but also that their rasa is not mixed with madhura-rasa. Just because someone can experience another rasa does not mean that they are “in” that rasa or even that their rasa is “mixed” with that rasa. To say that any associate’s rasa is mixed would imply that the mixture is intrinsic to that associate and that their sthayi-bhava is sankula-rati (mixed).

Furthermore, sankula-rati is only possible between combinations of up to three moods, priti (dasya), sakhya and vatsalya. Nowhere has madhura-rati been allowed to be a component of a sankula-rati in the aesthetic system of Srila Rupa Gosvami.

As stated in BRS 2.5.26:

eñā dvayos trayāēā vā sannipātas tu saikulā |
udbhavādaū ca bhémādaū mukharādaū krameēā sā |

“A mixed love is a combination of two or three types of love and is exemplified respectively in such characters as Uddhava, Bhima, and Mukhara. The particular name is determined according to which love is dominant.” (BRS 3.5.26)

Any associate of Sri Kṛṣṇa may experience another rasa provided it is compatible with his own rasa. However, to say that the intrinsic rasa of the priya-narma-sakhas is mixed is inaccurate because their sthayi-bhava is kevala (unadulterated) friendship. And more importantly, sankula-rati prohibits the inclusion of madhura-rati as a component.

So do the priya-narma-sakhas have no connection with madhura-rasa at all? No. Nothing could be further from the truth. The priya-narma sakhas serve Sri Kṛṣṇa in His pastimes of madhura-rasa, and by so doing experience what our Gosvamis have termed “tad-anumodanatmaka-bhava”.

This tad-anumodanatmaka-bhava is capable of becoming the sthayi-bhava of a supporting rasa even for those whose principal rasa is not madhura-rasa. The principal rasa of a devotee is called angi-rasa. Other rasas that are compatible with the principal rasa and nourish the principal rasa are called anga-rasa. Thus they are related as angi and anga, principal and subordinate. The implication is that when madhura-rasa is not the angi-rasa of a particular associate, still, under certain circumstances, madhura-rasa can play the supporting role of anga-rasa to nourish his principal rasa. We will now illustrate this with relevant citations.

In the first part of this essay it was shown that the term “sakhi-bhava” used in relation to the priya-narma-sakhas does not mean “madhura-bhava”, but rather “anumodanatmaka-bhava”

tad-anumodanam eva na tu tat sphrha sakhibhavad eva

“Here ‘sakhi-bhava’ means ‘the desire for Sri Kṛṣṇa and his beloved to meet.’ The cause of this ‘sakhi-bhava’ is only approval of, or sympathy for, the gopis’ sentiments. It is not that the priya-narma-sakhas personally desire such sentiments for themselves.” (Srila Jiva Gosvami’s Locana-

rocini commentary on Sri Ujjvala-nilamani 2.13.15)

In the above quotation, tad-anumodanatmaka-bhava has been mentioned, but the precise roles played by sakhya-rasa and madhura-rasa in relationship to each other has not been specifically defined. This is because those particular details had already been explained earlier in the following verse of Sri Bhaktirasamrta-sindhu:

atha preyasi sucer, yatha—

dhanyanam kila murdhanyah subalamur vrajabalah |
adharam pincha-cudasya calas culukayanti yah ||

“This is an illustration of sakhya-rasa as principal (angi) and madhura-rasa as subordinate (anga): ‘O Subala, the women of Vraja are the most fortunate of all since they enjoy the nectar from the lips of Krsna, who sports a peacock-feather crown.’” (BRS 4.8.26)

It is clearly stated in this verse that the priya-narma-sakhas such as Subala have sakhya-rasa as their principal rasa. Their approval (anumodana) of Sri Krsna’s lila in madhura-rasa plays the role of nourishing their friendship with Him. Anticipating that this point might be misunderstood, Srila Jiva Gosvami proactively seeks to clarify it in his commentary:

sri-jivah : dhanyānām ity anumodanātmikaiveyā çuci-bhāvanā, na tu sambhogecchā-mayātmikā, teñāā sva-svarūpa eva nitya-sthiteu (4.8.26)

“In this verse beginning ‘dhanyanam’, the sentiment of amorous love is certainly anumodanatmika, one of sympathetic joy or approval. It does not indicate any desire to personally unite with Sri Krsna because the priya-narma-sakhas such as Subala are eternally fixed in their own nature as cowherd-boys in sakhya-rasa.”

Thus, this verse and commentary (BRS 4.8.26) show that the priya-narma-sakhas’ principal rasa (angi) is sakhya-rasa and Srila Jiva Gosvami adds that it is their “nitya-sthiti”, eternally fixed nature. Approval of madhura-rasa plays the subordinate role of anga-rasa.

The eternally fixed nature of a devotee’s principal rasa in relation to the subordinate rasas has been clarified by Srila Rupa Gosvami here:

yasya mukhyasya yo bhakto bhaven nitya-nijāçrayau |
aigé sa eva tatra syān mukhyo’py anyo’igatāā vrajet ||
kim ca—

āsvādodreka-hetutvam aigasyāigatvam aigini |
tad vinā tasya sampāto vaiphalyāyaiva kalpate ||

“When a devotee becomes an ‘eternal vessel’ of a particular primary rasa, that rasa is principal (angi) and all other rasas, including other primary rasas, become subordinate (anga). However, the function of the subordinate rasa is to enhance the principal rasa. If it does not do this, then it is considered a worthless addition.” (BRS 4.8.50-51)

Furthermore, although Subala may experience the approval of madhura-rasa in a subordinate role, nourishing his principle rasa of sakhya, even this type of madhura-rasa is not necessarily always present. For example:

tatraiva hasasya, yatha—

drsos taralitair alam vraja nivrtya mugdhe vrajam
vitarkayasi mam yatha na hi tathasmi kim bhurina |
itirayati madhave nava-vilasinim chadmana
dadaraa subalo valad-vikaca-drstir asyananam ||

“An illustration of sakhya-rasa as principal and the hasya-rasa as subordinate: ‘Hey Beautiful Woman, stop that trembling in your eyes and go back to Vraja! I am not what you think! What more is there to say?’ Hearing Madhava speak these deceptive words to an attractive young woman, Subala looked at Madhava’s face with eyes wide open with delight.” (BRS 4.8.27)

Note that in this verse Subala experiences sakhya-rasa nourished by hasya-rasa, yet madhura-rasa does not appear even in a subordinate capacity. This example also proves that the priya-narma-sakhas' are neither in madhura-rasa nor mixed with madhura-rasa, since for Subala, madhura-rasa is entirely absent at this moment.

Some devotees have proposed that Subala is in madhura-rasa when he disguises himself as Srimati Radhika. Srila Rupa Gosvami disagrees:

tatraiva sucihasyayor, yatha—
mihira-duhitur udyad-vanjulam manju-tiram
pravisati subalo'yam radhika-vesa-gudhah |
sa-rabhasam abhipasyan krsnam abhyutthitam yah
smita-vikasita-gandam sviyam asyam vrnoti ||

“An illustration of sakhya-rasa as principal and madhura and hasya-rasas as subordinate: ‘Subala disguised himself as Radhika and went to a beautiful grove of trees located on the bank of the Yamuna River. As soon as Krsna saw him approaching, He quickly got up and came running. A smile then broke out on Subala's face, so that he had to cover his mouth.’” (BRS 4.8.28)

What is particularly interesting about this example is that Srila Rupa Gosvami unequivocally states that even when Subala is dressed as Srimati Radharani, he remains in sakhya-rasa. His principal rasa is simply nourished by hasya-rasa and his approval of madhura-rasa.

Further clarification of the anumodanatmaka nature of the priya-narma-sakhas' relation with madhura-rasa can be found in Sri Priti Sandarbha:

gopā ity ante nirdeṣas tu keñāicit priya-narma-sakhādénāà tad-anumodana-kāritve'pi puruñatvāt
tatrāyogyatā-vivakñayā

“The cowherd boys have been mentioned last (in Bhag.10.83.43) to indicate that although the ecstatic love of the gopis is certainly a cause of sympathetic joy (tad-anumodana) for some of them, namely the priya-narma-sakhas, because they are male associates they are personally ineligible to attain it.” (Priti Sandarbha - Anuccheda 108)

One may argue that the gopis who are sakhis experience anumodanatmaka-bhava and the priya-narma-sakhas also experience anumodanatmaka-bhava. Therefore, the experience of the sakhis and the priya-narma-sakhas is the same.

To this we reply, “No. It is not so because there are two distinct types of anumodanatmaka-bhava, partial and direct.

1) leṣa-anumodanātmaka – partial sympathetic joy is experienced by those associates whose sthaya-bhava is not madhura-rati.

2) sākñāt tad-anumodanātmaka – direct sympathetic joy is experienced by those female associates who are directly situated in madhura-rasa.

The fact that sympathetic joy is partially experienced by those who are not situated in madhura-rasa is given in Priti Sandarbha 368:

athānumodanātmake kanta-bhāve sādhye tat-sambhāvanārthaà tadéya-leṣānumodana-
mātrasyodāharaēāà yathā — (10.53.37-39)

atra nānā-vāsana-janānām eñāà hādi tat-tan-nānā-vilāsa-mayasya kanta-bhāvasya pūrēa-svarūpa-
sparṣāyogyatvāt kathaicit tad-dāmpatya-sthiti-mātra-lakñāēasya tadéya-
sāmānyāāṣyaivānumodana-mātraà jātam | (Priti Sandarbha 368)

“Now an example is presented from Çrémad-Bhāgavatam 10.53.37-39 wherein devotees feel partial sympathetic joy (leṣa-anumodana) in regard to another devotee's attainment of love for Sri Kāñēa in madhura-rasa. In this example it is seen that although the residents of Vidarbha are possessed of a variety of temperaments (vāsānās), and do not have even the slightest touch of eligibility to enjoy the various pastimes of madhura-rasa with Sri Kāñēa as their beloved, they still experience a partial sympathetic joy in their hearts over the prospect of Sri Kāñēa's marriage to Rukmiēé.” (Priti

Sandarbha 368-369)

The fact that direct sympathetic joy (sākñāt tad-anumodanātmaka) is experienced by those who are in madhura-rasa is mentioned here in Priti Sandarbha 369:

atha sākñāt tad-anumodanātmaka-pürēa-kānta-bhāvasyodāharaēam āha— [bhā.pu. 10.30.11-12]
çré-rādhā-sakhyau

“An example of the direct sympathetic joy of associates who are fully situated in madhura-rasa is stated in verses 10.30.11 and 12 of Çrémad-Bhāgavatam. These verses were spoken by the female companions of Çré Rādhā.” (Priti Sandarbha 369)

Some persons have suggested that because the sthayi-bhava of some of the priya-narma-sakhas extends up to rudha-bhava, a position shared only with the gopis, they must be possessed of some vague and undefinable element of madhura-rasa. This position is untenable because several rasas share the sthayi-bhavas of prema, sneha, pranaya, etc., yet no one would suggest that they are somehow similar simply on the basis of a similar level of intensity of the sthayi-bhava. Sthayi-bhava is one, but it manifests differently in accordance with the nature of the receptacle. Srila Rupa Gosvami makes this point clearly in Sri Bhaktirasamrta-sindhu 2.5.7:

vaiçiñōyāā pätra-vaiçiñōyād ratir eñopagacchati |
yathārkaū pratibimbātmā sphaōikādiñu vastuñu ||7||

“The particular form that the sthayi-bhava takes is determined by the specific nature of the individual experiencing it, just as a reflected image of the sun is determined by the nature of the jewel through which it is being reflected.” (BRS 2.5.7)

Thus, the commonality of the gopis’ and the priya-narma-sakhas’ attainment of rudha-bhava does not in any way suggest a commonality of rasa.

Others opine that Srila Rupa Gosvami has described the love of the priya-narma-sakhas as “madhura-bhava” in his Çré Rādhā-kāñēa-gaēoddeça-dēpikā. Here is the relevant passage:

subalasya gaura-kāntir néla-vastra-manoharau nānā-ratna-bhūñitāigo nānā-puñpa-vibhūñitau (44)
sārdha-dvādaça-varñēyau kaiçora-vayasojjalaū sakhi-bhāvaā samāçritya nānā-sevā-pariplutau (45)

dvayor milana-naipuēyo madhuro bhāva-bhāvitaū nānā-guēa-sukhopetaū kāñēa-priyatamo bhavet (46)

“Subala is fair-complexioned. He wears enchanting blue attire. His body decorated with various jewels and flowers. He is a blooming youth of twelve-and-a-half years. He is immersed in serving Çré Kāñēa in various ways as His friend. He is most expert in arranging meetings between Çré Rādhā and Çré Kāñēa. He charming, absorbed in ecstatic moods, and endowed with various good qualities that bring joy to Çré Kāñēa. Subala is extremely dear to Çré Kāñēa for all these reasons.” (44–46)

In verse 46, the phrase some have attempted to interpret as “madhura-bhava” actually reads madhuro bhāva-bhāvitaū. The word ‘madhura’ has become ‘madhuro’ due to the rules of phonetic combination. This indicates that the word is not in a compound (samasa) with the next word ‘bhāva-bhāvitaū’. Thus, ‘madhuro’ and ‘bhāva-bhāvitaū’ are two separate items in the long list of qualities. Subala is madhura, “charming”, and bhāva-bhāvitaū, “absorbed in ecstatic moods”. Since there are no commas in Sanskrit, the general practice is to group words that go together into compounds and separate the items in the list from each other by use of the appropriate grammatical inflections. You can see that Srila Rupa Gosvami has done this consistently throughout the list of Subala’s wonderful qualities. Therefore, to claim that madhuro bhāva-bhāvitaū means “absorbed in madhura-bhava” projects the defect of inconsistency upon Srila Rupa Gosvami. In this article we have pointed out dozens of references from Sri Bhaktirasamrta-sindhu defining the angi-rasa of the priya-narma-sakhas as sakhya-rasa. So it is impossible that Srila Rupa Gosvami would dash his head against the edifice of his own philosophy by later claiming that Subala was in madhura-bhava in Çré Rādhā-kāñēa-gaēoddeça-dēpikā.

By now some of the differences between the “sakhi-bhava” of the priya-narma-sakhas in sakhya-rasa and the “sakhi-bhava” of the gopis in madhura-rasa should be clear to all the readers. Still, if one were to insist that the priya-narma-sakhas are in madhura-rasa, many intractable theological problems would arise. For example, madhura-rasa is of two types – svakiya and parakiya – love in wedlock and paramour love. Of these two, which one of them would apply to the priya-narma-sakhas? Obviously, both variants are impossible.

Srila Rupa Gosvami refers to meeting and separation in the rasa of friendship as yoga and ayoga. Whereas, in madhura-rasa, meeting and separation have a distinct nomenclature - sambhoga and vipralambha - because both manifest in ways unique to that particular rasa. For the gopis, vipralambha-rasa has its own uncommon characteristics. Their separation begins with purva-raga, the love experienced prior to attaining the opportunity for an intimate meeting with Sri Krsna. Their meeting is complicated by many internal and external obstructions such as shyness and the codes of dharma. Obviously such feelings are impossible for priya-narma-sakhas who can freely meet with Sri Krsna from the beginning of their childhood.

Srila Rupa Gosvami has described that the sthaya-bhava of sakhya-rasa undergoes five levels of development:

eñā sakhya-ratir vāddhiā gacchanté praēayaù kramāt |
premā snehas tathā rāga iti pañca-bhidoditā

“This sthaya-bhava advances through five increasingly higher stages: from sakhya-rati, to pranaya, to prema, to sneha, and finally rāga.” (BRS3.3.106)

Of course, the extraordinary love of the priya-narma-sakhas may extend further up to rudha-bhava. But what is particularly interesting here is the complete absence of māna. The gopis fascinate Sri Krsna and intensify his longing with the emotional weapon of their contrary moods and behaviour. What would madhura-rasa be without māna? Such sentiments are completely absent among Sri Krsna’s cowherd boys, so what is the question of their being in madhura-rasa?

After this rather lengthy and complicated discussion, the conclusion is really quite simple. There is no need to conflate the moods of the priya-narma-sakhas with the moods of the gopis. As the popular saying goes, “Boys will be boys,” but also “Thank heaven for little girls.”

Sri hari guru vaisnava kṛpā leśha prarthi,

Prem Prayojan das