

## Ānanda – the word does not mean “BLISS”

---

It is quite common in spiritual writings to translate the word *ānanda* when referring to *ātma* as ‘Bliss’. Pujya Swamiji would not translate the word *ānanda* as ‘Bliss’. Why? What is wrong if it is translated as bliss? The following is an article based on a talk by Pujya Swamiji on the above topic.

---

Vedanta is addressing the confusion regarding the identity of *Jīva* and *Īśvara*. A common confusion is that *Īśvara* is away from me. *Jagat* is there, but there is no *Īśvara*. Vedanta teaches that *jagat* is non-separate from *Īśvara*. Then there are only two entities now – *Jīva* and *Īśvara* - *vyaṣṭi* and *samaṣṭi*. Then the *jagat* is reduced further to *mithya*, because *Īśvara*-*sṛṣṭi* is also *mithya*. *Vastu* is only one non-dual whole. It is knowledge all the way - knowing. Knowing means communication – one should be able to communicate. There is no mysticism.

If you say *Ananta* is *ātma*, there is nothing mystic about it. If you say ‘Bliss’, it becomes mystical, because it is now open to the question - what kind of bliss? People have words. They say ‘ineffable’ bliss. Is it like grilled cheese – when you put cheese between bread slices and grill it, the melted cheese come out. Will bliss come out like that? If *ātma* is ‘ineffable’, why talk? It does not make sense.

You put the people on a big trip. *Ānanda* has to be *Ananta*. “*Satyam-jñānam-anantam brahma*” is the beginning, the opening in the *Taittirēya Brahmānandavalli*, which ends with *ānanda* being equated to *ātma* in the section “*ānanda ātmā, brahma pucchaṁ pratiṣṭhā*”. It is *svarūpa-ānanda* and not *vrtti-gata- ānanda*. *Saccit* has nothing to do with *vritti*. That *Saccit* is the only thing which exists, therefore it is *Ananta*, limitless.

Suppose you say Bliss – how do you ever know what is “*ātma* bliss”? How is it different from “Ice-cream Bliss” or “Hawaii Bliss”? One person says, “Yesterday in meditation, I experienced Bliss”. How to know? You have to go to a Guru. It is a matter of knowing I am *Saccidananda*. One fellow puts B in uppercase, another puts all letters in the word Bliss in uppercase - BLISS.

That is why, I say *Ānanda* is limitlessness - it has the same meaning of *Ananta*, limitlessness, wholeness, *pūrṇatvam*. It cannot be imagined or conceived but it can be communicated, clearly, by negating time-wise, space-wise and object-wise limitations, because it happens to be the self-evident you.

Limitlessness, wholeness is different from bliss. Bliss is *vrtti-gata ānanda*, an experiential joy, known through a thought modification. After translating bliss you have to negate it and say “it is not this bliss or that bliss” and say it is “Ineffable bliss”. You have to say, it is not experienced bliss – then what bliss is it?

“Not experienced bliss” - how could you ever say that? Then why does śāstra use the word *Ānanda*? Because the *jiva* is not after *sat* or *cit*, but after *ānanda*. Everyone wants *ānanda*. What you seek is yourself. Every experience of empirical *ānanda* enjoys the presence of *svarupānanda*. Without *svarupānanda*, you cannot have any degree of *ānanda*. “*Tasya priyamēva śiraḥ mōdō dakṣiṇaḥ pakṣaḥ*” - in all of them, the *svarupa-ānanda* is present. That is what you are seeking. That is *sat-cit*, that is *ānanda*, which is you.

