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Can a Female Devotee be a Dīkṣā-guru?

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Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada Pañcarātra

Can a Female Devotee be a Dīkṣā-guru?

Dāmodara Dāsa (BVKS)

Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Dāsa (BVKS)



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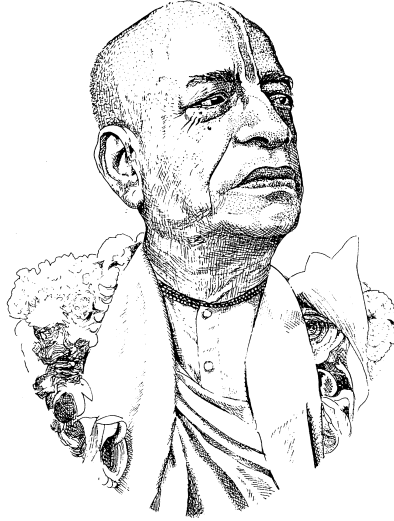
The authors of this book can be contacted at:

Dāmodara Dāsa (BVKS): damodara.bvks@gmail.com

Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Dāsa (BVKS): krishnakirti@gmail.com

The words *Conversation*, *Lecture*, *Letter*, and *purport* indicate quotations taken from published editions by or involving Śrīla Prabhupāda. *Conversation* subsumes all types of discussions with Śrīla Prabhupāda, variously classified by the Bhaktivedanta Archives as Morning Walks, Press Conferences, Room Conversations, etc. All such quotations are copyrighted by The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust International, Inc.

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Dedicated to

His Divine Grace

A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda

(Founder-*Ācārya* of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness)

and all his followers who continue to serve his mission
within this difficult world.

May he bless us all with proper understanding of how best to do so.

*siddhānta baliyā citte nā kara alasa
ihā ha-ite kṛṣṇe lāge sudṛḍha mānasa*

A sincere student should not neglect the discussion of such (scriptural) conclusions, considering them controversial, for such discussions strengthen the mind. Thus one's mind becomes attached to Śrī Kṛṣṇa.

(*Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Ādi-līlā 2.117*)

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Abbreviations

Bg	<i>Bhagavad-gītā</i>
BS	<i>Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā</i>
Cc	<i>Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta</i> , by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī
FDG	Female <i>dīkṣā-guru</i>
GBC	Governing Body Commission (of ISKCON)
ISKCON	International Society for Krishna Consciousness
NOI	<i>Nectar of Instruction</i> , a commentary by His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda on Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī's <i>Upadeśāmṛta</i>
SAC	Śāstric Advisory Council
SB	<i>Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam</i>

Executive Summary

Part One

Pāñcarātrika-vidhi and the Proposal of ISKCON's GBC for Instituting Female Dikṣā-gurus

- The GBC subcommittee on Vaiṣṇavī Initiating Gurus was convened for the sake of creating recommendations for the implementation and practical functioning of female *dikṣā-gurus*. **ix**
- Questionable recommendation: female *dikṣā-gurus* give first initiation only but males give second initiation to the first-initiated disciples of female *dikṣā-gurus*. **ix**
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- Evidence from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura further shows that second initiation as practiced in ISKCON covers the last two *saṁskāras* (*mantra, yāga*) from *pañca-saṁskāra*, where the disciple receives *mantras* used in Deity worship..... **3**
- *Harināma-dikṣā* in ISKCON is a type of *pāñcarātrika* initiation, or *dikṣā*..... **4**

- ISKCON second initiation (*mantra-dīkṣā*) is also a type of *pāñcarātrika* initiation, or *dīkṣā*.....3
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- According to Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, the perfectional stage of *bhakti* begins at the level of *bhāva*.8
- *Nārada Pañcarātra* allows women who are *siddha*, who are at the perfectional stage of *bhakti* (*pratyakṣitātma-nātha*), who have completely spiritual bodies, to become *dīkṣā-gurus*.... 8
- But women who are *not siddha* are prohibited from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*..... 10
- *Without any need for speculation*, *Nārada Pañcarātra* fully harmonizes Śrīla Prabhupāda’s differing statements on female *dīkṣā-gurus*..... 12
- The system of initiations in ISKCON is 100% based on the *ācāryas* and *Nārada Pañcarātra*. 15

Part Two

Śrī Nārada Pañcarātra / Śrī Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā on Female Dīkṣā-gurus

This part presents *pramāṇas* from *pañcarātri*ka literature that deal with the qualifications required for women and others to be eligible for the post of *dīkṣā-guru*. Here are the major points and implications of the paper:

- The *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (BS) is a part of the *Nārada Pañcarātra*. (See Appendix I for authority of BS.) **69**
- BS gives criteria by which both *sādhakas* and *siddhas* can be judged eligible to become *dīkṣā-guru*. **19**
- *Siddhas* of any gender or from any family, heredity, social status or *varṇa* may become *dīkṣā-guru*. **19**
- *Sādhakas* who are men of *brāhmaṇa*-, *kṣatriya*-, or *vaiśya-varṇa* (by quality) can become *dīkṣā-guru*. **20**
- *Sādhakas* who are women, *śūdras* or *antyajas* (lower than *śūdras*) are forbidden to act as *dīkṣā-guru*. **23**
- Women and those otherwise prohibited from acting as *dīkṣā-guru* can still give *śikṣā*. **23**
- But women who are *siddhas* can become *dīkṣā-guru*. **25**
- *Siddha* devotees are extremely rare, as compared with *sādhakas*. **20**
- Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements that female *dīkṣā-gurus* (FDGs) are “not so many” or “very special case” are explained by BS’s restriction of FDGs to *siddhas*. **21**

- The GBC Śāstric Advisory Council made a major error in its 2013 paper by declaring that for becoming a *dīkṣā-guru* there are no differences in qualification due to gender to be found in *pāñcarātri* literature (see Appendix V). 77

Part Three

FAQs and Opposing Arguments Answered

1. In your attempts to follow *śāstra*, are you not disregarding Prabhupāda's explicit instruction that all of his female disciples may initiate disciples, as he gave it in a letter to Hamsadūta, Jan 1969? 27
2. How can you decide which woman is a *siddha*? This is not institutionally verifiable and thus cannot help ISKCON in framing rules for Vaiṣṇavīs to become *dīkṣā-gurus*. 30
3. Female *dīkṣā-gurus* are needed because there is a lack of male *dīkṣā-gurus* for preaching and making disciples. 32
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5. If women are prohibited from becoming *dīkṣā-guru*, then so are *sūdras*; then almost all ISKCON gurus are not bona fide. 35
6. If a woman can also become *brāhmaṇa* by quality, then why can't she become *dīkṣā-guru*? 35
7. But there are so many Vaiṣṇavī gurus in the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*. What about that? 37
8. But in today's ISKCON, if a woman has been preaching for the last 30 years and has a substantial number of followers

already taking guidance from her, and they want to be initiated by her, why not let her give them *dīkṣā*? 40

9. The women who are prohibited in *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* from becoming *dīkṣā-guru* are non-initiated women; they are not Vaiṣṇavīs. No such rules are mentioned for Vaiṣṇavīs.... 41

10. *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* doesn't differentiate between normal women and Vaiṣṇavīs. Thus, its prescriptions and proscriptions are not applicable for initiated Vaiṣṇavīs..... 42

11. Śrīla Prabhupāda had female disciples like Śāradīyā give brahminical initiation and Gāyatrī *mantras* to her husband and others. So, why should we stop women from becoming *dīkṣā-guru*? 45

12. Let us institute Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus* for now, and then, if there are some problems, we can always retract them. What is the harm?..... 46

13. In Vedic times women were not initiated, so they could not become *dīkṣā-gurus*. But because the *Pañcarātras* allow women to receive *pāñcarātrika* mantras, they can also give them to others, acting as *dīkṣā-gurus*. 47

14. The standard *smṛti-śāstra* (law codes) to be followed by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas is *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, not *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*. *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* doesn't prohibit Vaiṣṇavīs from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*. So why to bring *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* into the picture and transgress *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*? 50

15. Śrīla Prabhupāda made many adjustments in order to expand the preaching of ISKCON. So, would it not be *niyamāgraha* if we stubbornly stick to this age-old tradition of not allowing women to initiate, thus resulting in hampered preaching of ISKCON? 52

16. According to your research, a *dīkṣā-guru* needs to be *brāhmaṇa*. But seeing a Vaiṣṇava according to his (or her) material qualities creates the offense of *vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhi*. **56**
17. But Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly wanted Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus*. Why bring *śāstras* against Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions? Do we understand *śāstras* better than Śrīla Prabhupāda? **62**

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-
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Introduction

For three decades ISKCON has struggled with the fact that no woman has been made an initiating spiritual master, or *dīkṣā-guru*. This is because Śrīla Prabhupāda, the previous *ācāryas*, and the *śāstras* all give numerous warnings and prohibitions against associating with women and giving them independence. Foundational scriptures like *Nārada Pañcarātra* even give specific rules against appointing women as *dīkṣā-gurus*, with exceptions made only for the most spiritually advanced among them.¹ Hence, with very few exceptions in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava history, women never became initiating spiritual masters.

This, however, could be about to change. As of the end of 2018, members of the GBC subcommittee on Vaiṣṇavī Initiating Gurus have come to an agreement on recommended guidelines for ISKCON’s first female *dīkṣā-gurus*. And in some form or another, the GBC may soon approve some or all of their recommendations.² Their recommendations, however, have little if any basis in *guru*, *sādhu*, or *śāstra*—ISKCON’s traditional and highest lines of authority.

For example, the subcommittee recommends that a female *dīkṣā-guru* should give *harināma* initiation only, and that a male *dīkṣā-guru* can give second initiation to her first-initiated disciples.

We recommend that Vaisnavis give only *hari-nama* initiation and not *mantra-diksa*.... A Vaisnavi guru can discuss with her

1. See *Nārada Pañcarātra*, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, 1.42–44 in Appendix VI.

2. The copy available to us was last edited on 5 Dec 2018 according to meta-information in the document. The full text of the subcommittee’s recommendations can be obtained from this URL:

http://akincana.net/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/gbc_vig_subcommittee_report_20181205.pdf

disciples their choice of a male *diksa-guru*. That Vaisnava can then perform the fire sacrifice, offer the Gayatri mantras, and for male disciples, offer the sacred thread.

This procedure is nowhere supported by *śāstra* or by the *ācāryas*. Nor is it supported by anything Śrīla Prabhupāda has said. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself affirms that the guru who gives the first initiation (*harināma*) is *the dīkṣā-guru*,³ not just another *dīkṣā-guru* in a disciple's life. He also points out that the *śāstras* forbid having two or more *dīkṣā-gurus*—it is never allowed.⁴ The subcommittee says that they “did not feel that we, or ISKCON, had the mandate to go beyond Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements,” but in this instance they did exactly that.

Because this recommendation and other questionable ones made by the subcommittee are not in line with *guru*, *sādhu*, and *śāstra*, their very authority is uncertain. If accepted, a critical lack of authority in such decisions unnecessarily sustains controversy and keeps alive doubts about the authority of ISKCON's top decision-makers. This checks ISKCON's progress and puts its existence at risk.

Dr. Thomas Hopkins, a scholar on the history of religions, describes the problem in this way.

Many of the disagreements within ISKCON... involve claims that “Prabhupad said this” versus claims that “Prabhupad said that.” This is the kind of literalist proof-texting that characterizes Christian and Muslim fundamentalists, and it basically settles

3. In a letter to Satsvarūpa, Vrindavana, Aug 7, 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda states, “The spiritual master accepts the disciple's sinful reactions upon giving first initiation.” Accepting the sins of the disciple is a characteristic of *pāñcarātriḱa-dīkṣā*.

4. “A devotee must have only one initiating spiritual master because in the scriptures acceptance of more than one is always forbidden.” (Cc Adi 1.35, purport).

nothing because the “proof” presented on both sides is all on the same level – i.e. it is one quote versus another, with no systematically applied exegetical principles to determine their relative authority.

The situation is if anything even worse in ISKCON than in these other traditions, because the volume of Prabhupād’s statements and writings over the years is so great, and they have been so carefully recorded and made available, that a careful search of the cumulative records—an activity at which ISKCON’s various factions have become very adept—can usually turn up something to prove almost any point. This makes it even more important to have an exegetical system that can help determine the relative importance of various statements in different contexts and circumstances. Without this, there is a tendency to treat every statement as if it had *ex cathedra* authority, which is a claim that is not even made about the Pope.

Important here is Dr. Hopkins’s observation that one can turn up virtually any statement of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s to support whatever position one wants to. This indicates the absence of applied “exegetical principles,” or principles that are acknowledged to produce a correct understanding of statements from *guru*, *sādhu*, and *śāstra*. In their absence, ISKCON is liable to become increasingly fractured over seemingly irresolvable issues.

This presentation is therefore an attempt to move the different sides of this controversy over female *dīkṣā-gurus* towards employing more formal, exegetical principles in establishing their own positions. In the Vedic context, these principles are generally referred to as *pramāṇa*.

Pramāṇa as presented by Śrīla Prabhupāda

Throughout his teachings, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives indications as to how *pramāṇa* should be practiced (emphasis added).

Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says, *sādhu-śāstra-guru-vākya, cittete kariyā aikya*. One should accept a thing as genuine by studying the words of saintly people, the spiritual master and the *śāstra*. **The actual center is the *śāstra*, the revealed scripture.** If a spiritual master does not speak according to the revealed scripture, he is not to be accepted. Similarly, if a saintly person does not speak according to the *śāstra*, he is not a saintly person. **The *śāstra* is the center for all.** (Cc Madhya 20.352 purport)

Notice here that the “center” is *śāstra*, but what is meant by “center”? In other contexts, Śrīla Prabhupāda uses “center” in the sense of a constraint or boundary (emphasis added).

Prabhupāda: *Medha*. **This is called *medha*, this rod, central. So the, the bull is bound up with it, and he goes round, goes round, all day. So *grhamedhī* means center is home, and he goes round, throughout the whole life.** They are called *grhamedhīs*.

Hṛdayānanda: This is called *medha*.

Prabhupāda: *Medha*, yes. Another *medha* means killing. So one who keeps himself in household life, he kills himself. Killing. *Grhamedhī*. And that is little long-term meaning. But this is the direct meaning. The *medha* rod is there, and he simply... He’s very busy. Busy means within few feet. But he’s thinking he’s very busy. Anyone got..., he has got home, and he’s simply rounding about. **Anywhere you go, the center is that.** And what is that *grha*? [aside:] Where? Which way?

Bhavānanda: This way, Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Prabhupāda: *Na grham grham ity āhur grhiṇī grham ucyate* [Cc. Ādi 15.27]. The *grham*, house, is not actually *grha*. *Grha* means the wife. *Grhiṇī grham ucyate na grham grham ity āhuḥ*. *Grhiṇī grham ucyate*. So to become householder means one must have a wife. **So actually round the wife. *Grhamedhī*:**

round the wife. And what is wife means, everyone knows. **It means round that thing.** Is that good analysis?

Devotees: Jaya.

Śrīla Prabhupāda uses the word “center” in the same sense when he applies it to *śāstra*. For example, one of his innovations for preaching in the West is the *brahmacārīṇi āśrama*. Did he want it to be permanent, or did he think it should be temporary?

That the Brahmacārīṇi *āśrama* is a good success is very good news. But the best thing will be if the grown-up Brahmacārīṇis get married. According to Vedic culture, woman is never to remain independent. I shall be glad if the Brahmacārīṇis can have nice husbands, and live as Gṛhasthas. But if they cannot find out good husbands, it is better to remain a Brahmacārīṇi all the life, even though it is little difficult.⁵

Without *śāstra* being the center, one might think he wanted the adjustment to be permanent. But from this it is clear that it was supposed to be temporary. The permanent standard is according to *śāstra*, that women always remain under the protection of a man. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s reference to *Manu-saṁhitā* (9.3) as the *śāstric* authority is clearly indicated, and his insistence that his disciples move towards this standard is also indicated. Hence, *śāstra* being the center means that the rules given by *śāstra* are supposed to be followed, even if for the time being there is some *asāmarthyam*, or inability to follow them.

Another sign of *śāstra*’s centrality is that even the principle of “time, place, and circumstance” is governed by *śāstra* (emphasis added).

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: So there’s no question then, as he says, of bringing new *smṛtis* which would come into being if someone would give them sanction and authority. The position as you...

5. Letter to Satsvarūpa, 8 Aug 1968.

Prabhupāda: But there cannot be new *smṛtis*. We are giving the sanction to Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* because it is already there in the *śruti*. But for this time it is suitable. I am taking a certain type of medicine in the evening, it is already recommended by the physician. I am not doing it whimsically. So whimsically you cannot change. **It must have reference to the *śruti-smṛti-purāṇadi*** [BRS 1.2.101].

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: Can anyone change...

Prabhupāda: No!

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: ...the rules of conduct as regarded in the *smṛtis*?

Prabhupāda: Nobody can change. Nobody can change. **But rules and regulation for different times, different circumstances are there in the *śruti-smṛti*. We have to take it. You cannot change.**

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: And who will sanction that application?

Prabhupāda: Yes. Just like Caitanya Mahāprabhu. He said. He's authority. He's *ācārya*.

Puṣṭa Kṛṣṇa: The *ācārya* must sanction for the particular time and place.

Prabhupāda: Yes. We are following the footprints of Caitanya Mahāprabhu. It is not whimsical. You have to follow the authority in all circumstances. You cannot avoid. That is illegal. It will have no power. Just like all of a sudden you make a low class man a *harijana*. It will not stay. But you can make *harijana* any class of man provided you adopt the proper means.⁶

Keeping *śāstra* "in the center" therefore means to accept other evidences only within the boundaries of *śāstric* teachings. Adjustment according to the principle of time, place, and

6. Answers to a questionnaire from *Bhavan's Journal*, Vrindavan, Jun 28, 1976.

circumstance needs to be corroborated with *śāstra*. It cannot be done apart from it.

Finally, the role of the *ācārya* needs to be considered. In this regard, the *ācārya* is someone who is considered a great authority and liberated being, not a *baddha-jīva*, or conditioned soul (emphasis added).

The *paramparā* system does not allow one to deviate from the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas*. By depending upon the previous *ācāryas*, one can write beautiful commentaries. **However, one cannot defy the previous *ācāryas*. The false pride that makes one think that he can write better than the previous *ācāryas* will make one's comments faulty.** At the present moment it has become fashionable for everyone to write in his own way, but such writing is never accepted by serious devotees.⁷

The authority of any particular rule or system practiced by devotees must also have the sanction of the *ācāryas*. Otherwise, the adjustment will be faulty.

Śrīla Prabhupāda describes this system of *guru*, *sādhu*, and *śāstra* as a track with three rails. By following all three closely, one is assured of being on the right path.

Just like in the railway line you see two parallel lines. If they are in order, the railway carriages are carried very smoothly to the destination. Here also, there are three parallel lines—*sādhu*, *śāstra*, *guru*: saintly person, association of saintly person, acceptance of bona fide spiritual master, and faith in the scriptures. That's all. Then your carriage will be going nicely, without any disturbance. *Sādhu śāstra guru vākya, tinete kariyā aikya*.⁸

7. Cc Antya 7.134, purport.

8. Lecture, 18 Oct 1968, Seattle.

Therefore, in addition to having support from Śrīla Prabhupāda's own statements, any proposed adjustment to our spiritual practices must also be supported by *śāstra* and by our previous *ācāryas*. Otherwise, the proposal should not be accepted.

The Purpose of This Book

In order to settle all questions as to the circumstances under which women may act as initiating spiritual masters, or *dīkṣā-gurus*, we have presented here an authorized description of the system of initiations that Śrīla Prabhupāda and our *ācāryas* have prescribed. The authority for this presentation is that it is extensively grounded not only in Śrīla Prabhupāda's own statements but in the authorized statements of the *śāstras* and our *ācāryas*. As such, this is the first authorized account of the process of initiations followed in ISKCON today.

This book is divided into three parts. In Part One, we present the system of *pāñcarātri*ka initiations known as *pañca-saṁskāra*, as explained by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. It is also shown how this system of initiations is connected with *bhajana-kriyā* and *anartha-nivṛtti*.

We have also translated into English for the first time the sections of *Nārada Pañcarātra* that detail the *pañca-saṁskāra* process. These sections show that ISKCON closely follows this process. Using evidence from these sections and the statements of our *ācāryas*, we show that the process of first initiation, or giving *harināma*, is administered according to the *nāma-saṁskāra* process from *pañca-saṁskāra*. It is thus shown that in order to be qualified to administer *harināma* as an initiation, one must be qualified to be a *dīkṣā-guru* according to *pāñcarātri*ka-*vidhi*, the rules and regulations of the *pañcarātra śāstras*.

Part One also discusses the special qualifications that *Nārada Pañcarātra* requires of women if they are to be considered able to act as *dīkṣā-gurus*. A more in-depth discussion of this is given in Part Two. Also included in Part One are discussions on the rarity of female gurus and why it is necessary for women to be spiritually advanced at the stage of *bhāva* in order to be considered eligible.

Part Two provides an in-depth focus on reconciling all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements about women as *dīkṣā-gurus* by introducing the authoritative statements of *Nārada Pañcarātra*. It is in this section that statements dealing with the qualifications of a *dīkṣā-guru* are presented, along with specific instructions pertaining to women. Why a female *dīkṣā-guru* needs to be a *siddha* instead of a *sādhaka* is also discussed.

Part Three systematically answers many frequently asked questions (FAQs) and some objections that were raised by devotees after reading the initial arguments on which this book is based.

The remaining part consists of supporting appendices, which include:

- **Appendix I:** Authority of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (*Nārada Pañcarātra*).
- **Appendix II:** Qualifications to receive *mantras* and give them are different.
- **Appendix III:** Image of the original transcript of Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.12.32.
- **Appendix IV:** *Śāstra pramāṇas* which prove that *dīkṣā-gurus* authorized through *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* are eligible

to bestow the *Brahma-gāyatrī mantra* and other Vedic *mantras* on suitable disciples.

- **Appendix V:** Two previous efforts sponsored by the GBC to research female *dīkṣā-gurus* and why neither effort produced conclusive results.
- **Appendix VI:** Index of verses quoted from *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*.
- **Appendix VII:** English translation of the first fifty-six *ślokas* from the second chapter (of the *pariśiṣṭa*) of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*. **This is the first time these verses have been translated into English.**
- **Appendix VIII:** The only four quotes of Śrīla Prabhupāda that directly speak about FDG.

Om Tat Sat

Your servants,

Dāmodara Dāsa (BVKS), Nandagrāma, Gujarat

Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Dāsa (BVKS), New Delhi



PART ONE

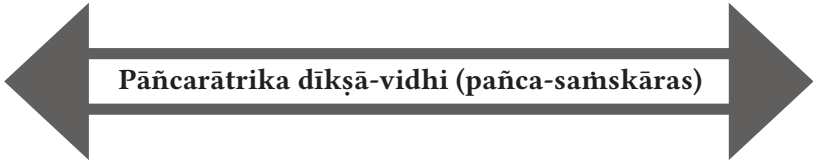
Pāñcarātrika-vidhi and the Proposal of ISKCON's GBC for Instituting Female Dīkṣā-gurus

A Critique

Harināma-dīkṣā is Pāñcarātrikī

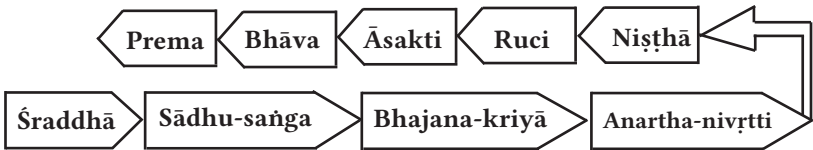
(from the teachings of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura)

<i>tāpa-->punḍra-->nāma</i> Harināma-dīkṣā (First Initiation)	<i>mantra --> yāga</i> Second Initiation	Brahma- gāyatrī
	Brahminical Initiation	



Sources: *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* 1885: vol. 2/1 & 1892: vol. 4/1; *Brāhmaṇa and Vaiṣṇava, Harijana-kāṇḍa*

Pañca-saṁskāras form a part of ***bhajana-kriyā*** in the sequence of developing *prema*:



Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in *Brāhmaṇa and Vaiṣṇava, Harijana-kāṇḍa*, writes:

According to the *pāñcarātrika* teachings,

*tāpaḥ punḍraṁ tathā nāma mantrō yāgaś ca pañcamah
amī hi pañca-saṁskārāḥ paramaikānti-hetavaḥ*

“These five *saṁskāras*—namely, (1) *tāpa*, (2) *puṇḍra*, (3) *nāma*, (4) *mantra*, and (5) *yāga*—are the causes for attaining the highest stage of unalloyed devotion to the Supreme Lord.”¹

He quotes this verse from the teachings of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, who quotes it from Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s *Prameya-ratnāvalī* (8.6)² which also quotes it from the *Padma Purāṇa*.

Additionally, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura has written an article on *pañca-saṁskāras*³ in the *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, where, after quoting the above same verse, he writes:

When a faithful person learns about *pañca-saṁskāra*, he approaches a spiritual master and humbly requests him for initiation, or *dīkṣā*. After considering the student’s sincerity, the spiritual master mercifully gives *tāpa* and *puṇḍra* to the student in order to sanctify his body. (...)

Nāma or name is the third *saṁskāra*. Mercifully the spiritual master utters the name of Hari into the ear of the faithful student. This name is to be recited daily by the student.⁴

Receiving *nāma* means that one understands one’s self to be a servant of Hari. During initiation the teacher also gives a personal name to the student which indicates devotion to Hari. In the Śrī *sampradāya* of Rāmānuja, names like Rāma Kṛṣṇa Dāsa, Nārāyaṇa Dāsa, Rāmānuja Dāsa etc. are given. In the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* names such as Śrī Govinda Dāsa,

1. Original translation into English was done by a team of devotees—see Acknowledgements. A translation was not given in the original Bengali article. Also see Appendix VII, text 2, for the same *śloka*.

2. This work philosophically connects the Gauḍīya *sampradāya* to the Mādhva *sampradāya*.

3. For the full article go to <http://www.bvml.org/SBTP/pstpoi.html> (edited slightly).

4. *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* 1885: vol. 2/1.

Śrī Nityānanda Dāsa, Śrī Caitanya Dāsa etc. are used. Since the time of Śrīmān Mahāprabhu names like Ratnabāhu, Kavi Karṇapūra, Premanidhi etc. have been used. Subsequently even names such as Bhāgavata-bhūṣaṇa, Gītā-bhūṣaṇa, Bhakti-bhūṣaṇa etc. are employed.⁵

As described above, *harināma-dīkṣā* is given when the disciple attains the level of the third *saṁskāra* called *nāma* (i.e. *tāpa*, *punḍra*, *nāma*), among the five *saṁskāras*. Thus, as *pañca-saṁskāras* are part of *pāñcarātrika vidhi*, *harināma-dīkṣā* is also a part of *pāñcarātrika vidhi*.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura continues:

The fourth *saṁskāra* is *mantra*. Out of his mercy the teacher gives an 18-syllable mantra to his beloved student. The fifth and final *saṁskāra* is *yāga* or Deity worship. Using the *mantra* which he has received from his teacher, the student begins the worship of *śālagrāma-sīlā* or *śrī-murti*, the Deity of Viṣṇu. This is known as *yāga*. By receiving *pañca-saṁskāra*, the five sacraments, a faithful person enters into *bhajana-kriyā* or the personal worship of God, which eventually leads to pure love for Śrī Hari.⁶

In ISKCON the fourth and fifth *saṁskāra* are given separately from *harināma-dīkṣā* and together with bestowal of the Brahma-gāyatrī *mantra*; the combined procedure is known as “second initiation” or “brahminical initiation.”⁷

Pañca-saṁskāra is a part of *bhajana-kriyā* in the step-by-step advancement sequence—*śraddhā*, *sādhu-saṅga*, *bhajana-kriyā*, *anartha-nivṛtti*, etc., as explained in *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu*.

5. *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* 1892: vol. 4/1.

6. *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* 1885: vol. 2/1.

7. Some scholars object to *Brahma-gāyatrī* being offered with *pāñcarātrikī dīkṣā*, See Appendix IV for explanation.

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura continues:

When we analyze the stages that lead to love of God, we understand that faith or *śraddhā* is the first stage. Without *śraddhā*, there is no way to obtain love of God. From faith, one seeks saintly association which is called *sādhū-saṅga*. This leads to shelter at the feet of a spiritual master. Thereafter, *pañca-saṁskāra* or initiation follows. *Pañca-saṁskāra* gives rise to *bhajana-kriyā* or the personal worship of God. *Bhajana-kriyā* leads to *anartha-nivṛtti*, which is the stage where one clears up unwanted things from his heart. After *anartha-nivṛtti* one's faith can develop and one enters the stage called *niṣṭhā* or mature faith. From *niṣṭhā*, taste or *ruci* develops. This leads to the stage called *āsakti* or deep attachment. From *āsakti* spiritual emotions called *bhāva* spring forth. This eventually ripens into the stage called love of God, *prema*. Therefore, everyone should seek shelter at the feet of a spiritual master and receive *pañca-saṁskāra*, which is the source of *bhajana*. Without *pañca-saṁskāra*, *bhajana* is not spontaneous. Instead, it is performed with difficulty.⁸

Supported by Śrīla Prabhupāda

*divyaṁ jñānaṁ yato dadyāt kuryāt pāpasya saṅkṣayam
tasmād dīkṣeti sā proktā deśikais tattva-kovidaiḥ*

“*Dīkṣā* is the process by which one can awaken his transcendental knowledge and vanquish all reactions caused by sinful activity. A person expert in the study of the revealed scriptures knows this process as *dīkṣā*.”

This famous verse is quoted with regard to *pāñcarātrikī dīkṣā* in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, (2.9), and comes from a *pañcarātra tantra* known as the *Viṣṇu-yāmala*. Śrīla Prabhupāda also quotes it with regard to *pāñcarātrika* initiation in his purport

8. *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* 1885: vol. 2/1.

to *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Madhya-līlā* (15.108). In a letter to Satsvarūpa, Vrindavana, Aug 7, 1977, Śrīla Prabhupāda states, “The spiritual master accepts the disciple’s sinful reactions upon giving first initiation.” Thus, the “*harināma-dīkṣā*” that Śrīla Prabhupāda established eradicates sins, which is a characteristic of *pāñcarātrikī dīkṣā*. And he often quoted this verse for his lectures on first initiations (for example, see Initiation of Bali-mardana Dāsa, Montreal, Jul 29, 1968). Thus *harināma-dīkṣā* is *pāñcarātrika* according to Śrīla Prabhupāda himself.

Based on Nārada Pañcarātra

The second chapter of the *pariśiṣṭa* (appendix) of the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, of *Nārada Pañcarātra*, describes the process of initiation that ISKCON has followed to this day. The process is *pañca-saṁskāra*, and the chapter begins with the verse quoted above by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in *Brāhmaṇa and Vaiṣṇava, Harijana-kāṇḍa*:

*tāpaḥ puṇḍraṁ tathā nāma mantra yāgaś ca pañcamah
amī hi pañca-saṁskārāḥ paramaikāntya-hetavaḥ*

The rest of the chapter shows that the initiation process that ISKCON follows is fully based on the *pāñcarātras*, as declared by our *ācāryas*.

A synopsis of the chapter is given here (full translation can be found in Appendix VII):

- After serving the guru for one year, one should approach him for getting initiated by the procedure of *pañca-saṁskāra*, which are conducive to developing unalloyed devotion to the Lord (2.1).
- These five *saṁskāras* are *tāpa*, *puṇḍra*, *nāma*, *mantra*, and *yāga* (2.2).

- The guru should first give *tāpa-saṁskāra* on an auspicious day. A procedure is given that includes a *yajña* and at the end feeding the Vaiṣṇavas (2.3–15).⁹
- Then, choosing an auspicious day, the *guru* should give *punḍra-saṁskāra* by making his disciple wear *ūrdhva-punḍra* (Vaiṣṇava *tilaka*) at different places on the body according to the proper procedure. (2.16–27)
- Then, choosing an auspicious day, the guru should give his disciple *nāma-saṁskāra*. In this *saṁskāra*:
 - The guru should make the disciple hear his new name, which starts with the Lord's name or a Vaiṣṇava's name, and ends with words like *dāsa*, which represents the mood of surrender or of servitorship. (2.32)
 - The full procedure is given. (2.28–33)
- After the spiritual master has already bestowed the first three *saṁskāras* upon his disciples, he may take time to evaluate their progress and their qualifications for receiving the fourth and the fifth *saṁskāras*. The text indicates that not everyone among the already initiated disciples necessarily receives the last two *saṁskāras*, namely the *mantra-* and the *yāga-saṁskāra*. (2.34)
- Then, choosing an auspicious day, the guru should give *mantra-saṁskāra*. (2.35–47)
- Then, choosing an auspicious day, the guru should give *yāga-saṁskāra* to engage his disciple in *arcana-vidhi*. (2.48–53)
- It is not necessary to give all the five *saṁskāras* together on the same day. Nor is it necessary to give them on separate days. One can, according to convenience and need, club

9. The procedure for the *yajña*, feeding the Vaiṣṇavas, and some other details are similar for all *saṁskāras*.

together these different *saṁskāras* to be given on a particular auspicious day. For instance, one can club together the first three *saṁskāras* on one day and give the remaining two *saṁskāras* on some other day. (2.53–56)

The last point, explicitly stated in *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, fully justifies clubbing of *pañca-saṁskāras* in two installments of first- and second-initiations given by our *ācāryas*, which we follow in ISKCON to this day.

Thus, without doubt, the process of initiation as established by our ācāryas and followed by Śrīla Prabhupāda is strictly based on Nārada Pañcarātra. The ācāryas have not innovated anything in the matter of initiations. And because ISKCON's initiations are based on this śāstra, its injunctions about who may or may not become guru apply in deciding the eligibility of female candidates for dīkṣā-guru.

Nārada Pañcarātra on the Eligibility of Women Giving Dīkṣā

In our paper *Nārada Pañcarātra on Female Dīkṣā-gurus*¹⁰ it is conclusively established with evidence from the *śāstras* and our *ācāryas* that women who are not *siddha* are prohibited from becoming *dīkṣā-guru* and that women who are *siddha* are the exception.

Qualities of Siddhas

What is meant by *siddha* is explained in the paper as follows:

The word *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* [referring to *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.44] denotes a person who has perfected the process

10. See the paper here https://siddhanta.com/wordpress/?page_id=826.

of *bhakti* (*sākṣāt-kṛta-bhagavat-tattva*) and means that he is a pure *siddha* devotee beyond the modes of nature. Such a condition arises in three ways: (1) a *nitya-siddha* devotee like Prabhupāda, (2) one who has perfected *bhakti* by *sādhana* (*sādhana-siddha*), and (3) one who has attained perfection in *bhakti* due to receiving the causeless mercy of a pure devotee or of the Lord directly (*kṛpā-siddha*). In such cases anyone from any condition, including women, can become *dīkṣā-guru*, and there will be no *adharmā* or adverse effects. The body of such a man or a woman is not at all material but spiritual, there can be no inauspiciousness arising from such instances.¹¹

In further clarification of the use of the term *siddha*, as it pertains to the qualification to become a *dīkṣā-guru*, the characteristics of the perfectional stage of *bhakti* as described in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, (15), are relevant:

One can reach *āpana-daśā* either from *rāgānuga-sādhana*, where scriptural rules are minimal, or through *vaidhi-sādhana*, where relying on suitable rules from scripture is predominant. If one progresses through the stages of faith, practice, purification, steadiness, taste and attachment, in either *vaidhi* or *rāgānuga-sādhana*, one then comes to the stage of *bhāva*, preliminary *prema*. It is at this point that one attains *āpana-daśā*. At this stage, beyond the category of *sādhana-bhakti*, when scriptural rules will be discarded as troublesome to one's service, conceptions of *rāgānuga* and *vaidhi* will both be discarded.

Here, one's identification with the material body will vanish and identification with one's spiritual body will predominate. In that spiritual body (*svarūpa-siddhi*) one will always see Vṛndāvana and serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This final stage is called *sampatti-daśā*.

11. Dāmodara Dāsa, Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Dāsa, *Nārada Pañcarātra on Female Dīkṣā-gurus*, 11 Sep 2017 (Updated 17 Dec 2018), page 3.

In other words, a female who is qualified to act as *dīkṣā-guru*, and has therefore perfected her devotional service (*pratyakṣitātma-nātha*), and her identification with the material body having completely vanished, must have at least attained the stage of *bhāva*. At this stage, her *svarūpa-siddhi* becomes manifest.

The Rarity of Siddhas

The *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.1.17) accounts for the rarity of *bhāva-bhakti*:

*kleśa-ghnī śubhadā mokṣa- laghutā-kṛt sudurlabhā
sāndrānanda-viśeṣātmā śrī-kṛṣṇākarṣiṇī ca sā*

The six characteristics of pure devotional service enumerated in the above verse are listed in the *Nectar of Devotion* (chapter 1): (1) Pure devotional service brings immediate relief from all kinds of material distress. (2) Pure devotional service is the beginning of all auspiciousness. (3) Those in pure devotional service deride even the conception of liberation. (4) Pure devotional service is rarely achieved. (5) Pure devotional service automatically puts one in transcendental pleasure. (6) Pure devotional service is the only means to attract Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states in his commentary to the above verse:

bhāva-bhaktir mokṣa-laghutā-kṛd-rūpā sudurlabhā-rūpā ca

The two characteristics, *mokṣa-laghutā-kṛt* and *sudurlabhā*, are manifested at the stage of *bhāva-bhakti*; i.e. *bhāva-bhakti* is very rarely attainable and is beyond liberation.

In addition to the rarity of *bhāva-bhakti* itself, those at this stage of devotional service nevertheless tend to follow the rules

and regulations of the *śāstras* prescribed for ordinary people. Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself (*Bhagavad-gītā* 3.17 – 3.35) indicates that liberated souls, who have no prescribed duties in the *varṇāśrama* system to perform, are nonetheless encouraged to perform them in order to set an example for the conditioned souls. The scriptures amply describe how great, liberated women like Kuntī, Devahūti, Sītādevī, who is Lakṣmīdevī herself, etc. nevertheless performed their *varṇāśrama* duties.

Hence, because *bhāva-bhakti* itself is very rare, and because many among these who reach this stage continue to follow *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*, female *dīkṣā-gurus* would be *extremely rare*. This comports with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements about female *ācāryas*: “not so many,” and “in very special case.”

Further Analysis from the Nārada Pañcarātra on the Eligibility of Female Ācāryas

The paper *Nārada Pañcarātra on Female Dīkṣā-gurus* provides further considerations from *Nārada Pañcarātra (Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā)* on the eligibility of women to be *dīkṣā-guru*.

- Women who are not *siddha* cannot become *dīkṣā-gurus*.

*na jātu mantra-dā nārī*¹² — Women cannot become *dīkṣā-guru*.

*nārhantya ācāryatām kvacit*¹³ — Women should never take the position of an *ācārya*.

- But they can become *śikṣā-guru*.

*striyaḥ śūdrādayaś caiva bodhayeyur hitāhitam*¹⁴ — Women, *śūdras*, etc. can instruct about what is good and bad.

12. *Nārada Pañcarātra, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, 1.42.

13. *Nārada Pañcarātra, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, 1.43.

14. *Nārada Pañcarātra, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, 1.43.

- Women who are *siddha* can become *dīkṣā-guru*.

*pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām naiṣāṁ cintyam kulādikam*¹⁵— For those who are liberated, self-realized souls, seeing God face-to-face, there need be no consideration of *varṇa*, *kula*, or gender in their becoming *dīkṣā-guru*.

- Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements that are to be synchronized with *sādhu* and *śāstra*.

- The *pāñcarātra śāstras* prohibit women who are not *siddhas* from becoming *dīkṣā-guru*.

- The *varṇāśrama* tradition also prohibits women from becoming *dīkṣā-guru*.

- Śrīla Prabhupāda himself mentions that women cannot become *dīkṣā-guru*:

Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dīkṣā-guru*.¹⁶ [**edited version**]

Suniti, however, being in family relationship with Dhruva, his mother, and also a woman, could not become the diksa guru of Dhruva Maharaja. [**unedited transcription from manuscript**, see Appendix III]

- But Śrīla Prabhupāda says at other times that women can become *dīkṣā-guru*.

- Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda also says that female *dīkṣā-gurus* should be “not so many” or in “very special case”:

Prof. O’Connell: Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a guru in the line of disciplic succession?

15. *Nārada Pañcarātra, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, 1.44.

16. SB 4.12.32, purport.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Jāhnavā devī was—Nityānanda’s wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? **But, not so many.** Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection.... *yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya* (Cc. 2.8.128). The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa. Then he or she can become guru.¹⁷

Ātreya Ṛṣi: Lord Nityānanda?

Prabhupāda: Wife. Jāhnavā-devī. She was controlling the whole Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: Do you have references about that in any of your books, Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Prabhupāda: I don’t think. But there are many *ācāryas*. Maybe somewhere I might have mentioned. It is not that woman cannot be *ācārya*. **Generally, they do not become. In very special case.** But Jāhnavā-devī was accepted as, but she did not declare.¹⁸

• Synchronization without speculation

Nārada Pañcarātra, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.42–44) synchronizes all these statements by allowing women who are *siddha* to become *dīkṣā-guru*—this is “the special case.” And according to *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* (1.35), such souls are “very rare,” and “not so many.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda stated that Sunīti was Dhruva’s *śikṣā-guru* but could not become his *dīkṣā-guru* due to her being a woman (SB 4.12.32, purport). Exactly the same is stated in the *Nārada Pañcarātra*:

17. Interview with Prof. O’Connell, Toronto, Jun 18, 1976.

18. Conversation, San Diego, Jun 29, 1972.

*striyaḥ śūdrādayaś caiva bodhayeyur hitāhitam
yathārham mānanīyāś ca nārhanṭy ācāryatām kvacit*

Women, *śūdras*, etc. can give ethical and moral instructions and are also worthy of respect as per their qualifications and conditions but are not entitled to get the position of *ācārya*. (*Nārada Pañcarātra, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.43)

But *Nārada Pañcarātra* also says women *can* be *dīkṣā-guru*, and it stipulates the condition under which this is allowed.

*kim apy atrābhijāyante yoginaḥ sarva-yoniṣu
pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām naiṣām cintyaṁ kulādīkam*

But, because perfect yogis (or *nitya-siddha* devotees) who are on the stage of *yoga-pratyakṣa* (i.e. are self-realized—seeing God face-to-face), *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas*, may take birth in any family tradition, in such cases no consideration of *kula*, gender, etc. as mentioned earlier apply (they can become *ācāryas*). (*Nārada Pañcarātra, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.44)

This dual set of qualifications for being guru, one set for those who are not yet *siddha* and another for those who are, is seen in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s other writings.

For example, in an early letter to Janārdana, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives a hint about these different standards, “A person who is liberated *acārya* and *guru* cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as *guru* and *acārya* by strictly following the disciplic succession.”¹⁹

The topmost devotees follow one set of standards to become *ācārya* whereas the “less qualified or not liberated” must

19. Letter to Janārdana, 26 April 1968.

follow others. Both standards are given here in *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, of the *Nārada Pañcarātra*. Therefore, these authoritative statements from *śāstra* resolve, or synchronize, all the paradoxical statements Śrīla Prabhupāda has made at one time or another on the eligibility of women to become *dīkṣā-guru*.

According to the above synopsis, *śloka* 1.44 from *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* reconciles all of Śrīla Prabhupāda's different statements made at different times about the eligibility of women to become *ācārya*, or *dīkṣā-guru*.

Once again, the conflicting statements include:

- **Affirmations:** “spiritual sons and daughters... be allowed to initiate disciples” (Letter to Hamsadūta, 3 Jan 1969; Conversation with Professor O’Connell 18 Jun 1976 Toronto, etc.)
- **Prohibitions:** “Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dīkṣā-guru*.” (*Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.12.32, purport)
- **Restrictions:** “not so many,” “Generally they do not become,” “In very special case.” (Conversation with Prof. O’Connell; Conversation 29 Jun 1972)

Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā synchronizes all of these different evidences for female *dīkṣā-gurus*, against them, and restrictions on them *without need to interpret any of them indirectly*. That is, all of them retain their *mukhya-vṛtti*, or direct meaning, because they are shown to be applicable to different persons at different stages of spiritual advancement. In other words, with the discovery of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.44), all these statements can be understood without the need to interpret them indirectly or nullify or dismiss them.

Conclusion

Since the time of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, initiations in our *sampradāya* have been conducted according to *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*. The authoritative *śāstras* for this include *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and *Nārada Pañcarātra*, which Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī quotes widely in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. *Ācāryas* Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura substantiate that the initiation procedures we currently follow in ISKCON are based on *Nārada Pañcarātra*. This establishes the authority of the *vidhis*, or rules, of this *śāstra* over initiations within our disciplic succession.

According to these *vidhis* and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s own statements, “*harināma-dīkṣā*,” or “first initiation” is also conducted according to *nāma-saṁskāra*, which is the third of five *saṁskāras* or *pañca-saṁskāra*. Although the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* itself requires no special rules to be chanted, it is nonetheless bestowed upon the disciple by his *dīkṣā-guru* according to *pāñcarātrika* regulations. Thus, women who are being considered as candidates to formally initiate others according to *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* must also be qualified according to *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*.

According to the injunctions of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, which is a part of *Nārada Pañcarātra*, women who are *siddha*, or on the stage of *bhāva-bhakti*, are eligible to become *ācārya*, or *dīkṣā-guru*. Because by definition *bhāva-bhakti* is rare, female *dīkṣā-gurus* are also rare. Those women who are not yet at the stage of *bhāva* are not permitted to be *dīkṣā-guru*. Therefore Śrīla Prabhupāda said that women can be *ācāryas* “but, not so many,” or “in very special case.” Hence, all of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s seemingly conflicting statements on the matter are resolved when the authoritative *śāstras* and *ācāryas* are consulted.

Final Words

The motivation for undertaking the research for this paper came about when it became known that the GBC subcommittee for Vaiṣṇavī Initiating Gurus was going to recommend that women could give first initiation but not second initiation and that their disciples would receive second initiation from a male *dīkṣā-guru*. From documentation obtained from the committee, it was ascertained that this unauthorized change that the GBC is recommending is based on the mistaken belief that bestowing the Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra* through initiation is not regulated by *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*. Therefore, it was necessary to research this in order to ascertain whether the recommendation was bona fide, or if not, why not.

In addition to this, it was also necessary to (a) establish by *guru*, *sādhu*, and *śāstra* what is the actual system of initiations conducted in ISKCON so that (b) we could understand clearly what qualifications are required of that system generally for one to be allowed to be a *dīkṣā-guru*, and (c) whether there are in fact any special requirements imposed on women to function as *mantra-guru*, or *dīkṣā-guru*. From the research, it turns out that there are indeed special considerations for women. Before, it was mistakenly assumed that there were none.

Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī in his *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* has therefore given the following warning:

*śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi- pañcarātra-vidhiṁ vinā
aikāntikī harer bhaktir utpātāyaiva kalpate*

Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇas* and *Nārada Pañcarātra* is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society.

If we do not heed this warning, we will end up like the sons of Śrī Advaita Ācārya who considered Lord Advaita Ācārya Himself to be the trunk of the desire tree of devotional service, but due to *māyā* did not accept Lord Caitanya as the true trunk. Due to their misunderstanding, they “thus neglected or disobeyed the instructions of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, deprived themselves of the effect of being watered and thus dried up and died.”²⁰

In the same way, if our leaders in their extensive deliberations on Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements do not try to understand spiritual topics the way he told us to understand them, which is to make *śāstra* the center, as per Cc Madhya (20.352), and then adjust the understanding of *guru* and *sādhu* to *śāstra*, then they cannot expect ISKCON to prosper. Instead, it will die off, or become insignificant.

“So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, the initiation ceremony, the marriage ceremony, the sacred thread ceremony, whatever we observe, they are strictly according to the *śāstra*. That is our point.”²¹



20. Cc Adi. 12.73, purport.

21. Wedding lecture, New Delhi, Nov 17, 1971.

PART TWO

**Nārada Pañcarātra /
Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā on
Female Dīkṣā-gurus**

Nārada Pañcarātra / Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā

This part begins with an answer to the controversy of Vaiṣṇavīs giving *dikṣā*. Verse 44 from the first chapter of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* states when a Vaiṣṇavī or any other class ordinarily not allowed to act as a *dikṣā-guru* can do so. When she is a *siddha*, then she may be allowed to act as a *dikṣā-guru*, and the specific characteristics of the perfectional stage for which this is allowed are also stated in this verse. Then the verses preceding this one in *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* are presented, and they give the criteria and restrictions on *sādhaka* Vaiṣṇavas as initiators.

kim apy atrābhijāyante yoginaḥ sarva-yoniṣu |
pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām naiṣāṁ cintyam kulādikam ||44||

“But, because perfect yogis (or *nitya-siddha* devotees) who are on the stage of *yoga-pratyakṣa* (i.e. are self-realized—seeing God face-to-face), *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas*, may take birth in any family tradition, in such cases no consideration of *kula*, gender, etc. as mentioned earlier apply (they can become *ācāryas*).”

Comment: The word *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* denotes a person who has perfected the process of *bhakti* (*sākṣāt-kṛta-bhagavat-tattvānām*) and means that he is a pure *siddha* devotee beyond the modes of nature. Such a condition arises in three ways: 1) a *nitya-siddha* devotee like Prabhupāda, 2) one who has perfected *bhakti* by *sādhana* (*sādhana-siddha*), and 3) one who has attained perfection in *bhakti* due to receiving the causeless mercy of a pure devotee or of the Lord directly (*kṛpā-siddha*). In such cases anyone from any condition, including women, can become *dikṣā-guru*, and there will be no *adharmā*.

Can devotees who are not yet perfected, or *sādhaka-bhaktas*, become guru? The answer is “yes,” and the following set of verses, which in serial order come before this one, describe

such *sādhaka* devotees who can also become gurus. Such is the case in any society, as *siddha-bhaktas* are always very rare.

***prapitsur mantra-nirataṁ prājñāṁ hita-param śucim |
praśāntaṁ niyataṁ vṛttau bhajed dvija-varam gurum ||38||***

“Thus, one who is desirous of surrendering with faith should take shelter of a guru who is always engaged in chanting the mantra and is a knower of *bhakti-siddhānta* (*prājñam*), is always engaged, without any desire for personal benefit, in showering mercy on fallen souls (*hita-param*), who is always pure in heart or free of sins, peaceful, and always committed to his prescribed duties (ordained by his guru or by *varṇāśrama*). Such a guru should be the best of the twice-born (*dvija-varam* meaning *brāhmaṇa*).”

***sapta-pūruṣa-vijñeye santataikānti-nirmale |
kule jāto guṇair yukto vipro śreṣṭhatamo guruḥ ||39||***

“The best guru of all is a learned *brāhmaṇa* endowed with good qualities who has taken birth in a sinless lineage of devotee ancestors, traceable up to seven generations.”

Comment: Here being endowed with good qualities (*guṇaiḥ yuktaḥ*) is the principal qualification for being an *ācārya*.¹ Besides these, every conditioned soul has his *prārabdha-karma* attached by previous birth and cultural training received from

1. The word *ācārya* is freely used in *śāstras* to refer to the initiating guru; it is not just reserved for great *ācāryas* like Rāmānujācārya, Prabhupāda, etc. In the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, verse 38 uses the word guru and verses 40 and 41 use the word *ācārya* for the same person. Another instance is from SB 11.17.27, *ācāryam mām vijānīyān*, where *ācārya* is used for the *gurukula* teacher. *Manu-saṁhitā* (2.140, qtd. in Cc Ādi 1.46 purport) uses *ācārya* for someone who initiates and who imparts to his disciples knowledge of the *Vedas* and *Vedāṅgas*. In ISKCON we usually reserve the word *ācārya* for *nitya-siddha* devotees. However, while reading *śāstras*, we need to broaden the meaning of this word to match that of the *śāstras*.

his family tradition. As one's understanding about much in the world (including *dharma*) comes through family tradition (*kula-dharma*), Arjuna was very much worried about it being destroyed (Bg 1.37-43) and thus it is undeniably an important aspect in one's life. But in spite of all the good advantages that otherwise come from a high birth, if the candidate for becoming guru fails to achieve the required qualities he cannot become guru, as will be clarified in the coming verses.

But in case he has all the required qualities, plus he has the fortune to be born in such a great family tradition, he certainly has an advantage. Śrīla Prabhupāda in his commentary on *Bhagavad-gītā* 6.42 says, "Birth in a family of *yogīs* or transcendentalists—those with great wisdom—is praised herein because the child born in such a family receives a spiritual impetus from the very beginning of his life." He further notes that "such families are very learned and devoted by tradition and training, and thus they become spiritual masters." Hence, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* designates such a guru with the advantage of birth in an unbroken and sinless family tradition as *śreṣṭhatama*, or the best of all.

This advantage, however, is not meant to negate the need of personal qualities of *bhakti*. This cannot be contradicted with the verse *viprād dviṣaḍ-guṇa-yutādaravindanābhāpadāravinda-vimukhāt*. (SB 7.9.10)² as there the qualified *brāhmaṇa* mentioned is not a *bhakta*. But the *brāhmaṇa* described in this verse is necessarily a *viṣṇu-bhakta*.

 2. "If a *brāhmaṇa* has all twelve of the brahminical qualifications [as they are stated in the book called *Sanat-sujāta*] but is not a devotee and is averse to the lotus feet of the Lord, he is certainly lower than a devotee who is a dog-eater but who has dedicated everything—mind, words, activities, wealth and life—to the Supreme Lord. Such a devotee is better than such a *brāhmaṇa* because the devotee can purify his whole family, whereas the so-called *brāhmaṇa* in a position of false prestige cannot purify even himself."

**svayaṁ vā bhakti-sampanno jñāna-vairāgya-bhūṣitaḥ |
sva-karma-nirato nityam arhaty ācāryatām dvijaḥ ||40||**

“Even if a twice-born *brāhmaṇa* (*dvija*) happens to have some non-devotees in his family line, or has not been fortunate to take birth in a renowned family of devotees, he nevertheless always deserves to be an *ācārya* if he is endowed with all good qualities like knowledge and renunciation, is engaged in his prescribed duties (*sva-karma*), and is steeped in loving devotion to the Lord.”

**nācāryaḥ kula-jāto ’pi jñāna-bhakti-ādi-varjitaḥ |
na ca hina-vayo-jātiḥ prakṛṣṭānām anāpadi ||41||**

“On the other hand, one cannot become an *ācārya* even if one is born in a great family line (as mentioned before) but is devoid of *jñāna*, *bhakti*, good qualities, etc. Also, unless there is an emergency, an *ācārya* from a lower birth or age should not initiate a person from a higher birth or age.”

Comment: This is a consideration of *anuloma* and *pratiloma*, and it is a general prescription found in all *smṛtis* and *pañcarātras*. If a *kṣatriya* becomes an *ācārya* he can initiate a *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*, or *śūdra* (this is *anuloma*) but not a *brāhmaṇa* (as it becomes *pratiloma*) unless there is an emergency.

Although *jāti* is mentioned, in order to understand these statements, it is imperative to not ascribe hereditary considerations to these instructions. *Jāti* as mentioned here is meant only to indicate the quality of that particular *varṇa*. Thus, the implied meaning is that a man having *kṣatriya-varṇa* in terms of actual qualification should not initiate one having *brāhmaṇa-varṇa* in terms of qualification. If birth consideration is assumed here, then these statements are of no use as *saṁskāras* are not in place. (According to SB 7.11.13, *jāti* taken as qualification is valid only when *saṁskāras* are in place.)

na jātu mantra-dā nārī na śūdro nāntarodbhavaḥ |
nābhiśasto na patitaḥ kāma-kāmo 'py akāmināḥ ||42||

“Even then, a woman, a *śūdra* and an *antyaja* can never act as an initiating guru, nor can anyone who is accused of a great sin or is fallen. And an aspiring disciple who is already accomplished in detachment (*akāmī*) should never accept a guru who is infected with material desires.”

striyaḥ śūdrādayaś caiva bodhayeyur hitāhitam |
yathārham mānanīyaś ca nārhanṭy ācāryatām kvacit ||43||

“Women, *śūdras*, etc., can give ethical and moral instructions and are also worthy of respect as per their qualifications and conditions but are not entitled to get the position of *ācārya*.”

Comment: Here women are clearly prohibited from accepting the post of *dīkṣā-guru*. However, a question arises that if *śūdras* are also prohibited, as this verse apparently suggests, then does this not directly conflict with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s statement *kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya/ yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei ‘guru’ haya* (Cc Madhya 8.128), which affirms that a *śūdra* can become *ācārya* if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa? Does this not conflict with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s constant insistence that *śūdras* and others of low birth deserve to become guru (that too not just *śikṣā-guru* but *dīkṣā-guru*) if they know *kṛṣṇa-tattva*? The conclusion is that if someone actually knows Kṛṣṇa in truth, then one is qualified to become a spiritual master, including *dīkṣā-guru*, even if one is a *śūdra* or a woman.

But what if one who is advanced in Kṛṣṇa consciousness is not yet a *siddha*? Are there practical differences between someone who is actually *siddha* (perfect) and one who is still a *sādhaka*? Are there different qualifications for these two classes of devotees?

The apparent conflict between the *kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī śloka* in Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta and verses 38–43 of *Bhāradvāja-*

saṁhitā is resolved in verse 44, which uses the term *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām*, seeing God by direct perception (face-to-face) to describe the qualification for being *ācārya*. Verse 44 indicates that this is an exception to the qualifications and prohibitions given in verses 38–43. For *sādhakas* and *siddhas*, the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* thus gives different sets of qualifications to accept the post of *ācārya*.

In this regard, Śrīla Prabhupāda once corrected a disciple who offered a reporter a partially correct account for spiritual insight. “No, not necessarily, Krishna will tell directly. A devotee always consults Krishna and Krishna tells him, ‘Do like this.’ Not figuratively... That is, therefore the minor devotees, they consult the spiritual master. That is our process. *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ...*”³ And in an early letter, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives a hint about these different standards, “A person who is liberated *acārya* and *guru* cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as *guru* and *acārya* by strictly following the disciplic succession.”⁴ The topmost devotees follow one set of standards to become *ācārya* whereas the “minor devotees” or “less qualified or not liberated” must follow others. Both standards are given here in the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*.

Taken together, these verses from the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* demonstrate why women acting as *dīkṣā-gurus* have historically been rare—“not so many” and only in “very special case” as Śrīla Prabhupāda sometimes qualified. Simply put, *sādhakas* will always be much more numerous than *siddhas*, and *pāñcarātrikī vidhi* proscribes women who are *sādhakas* from acting as *dīkṣā-gurus*. That explains why we see in our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava disciplic succession that the women who

3. Conversation. 14 July 1976. Quoting Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s *Śrī Śrī Gurvaṣṭaka*, verse 8.

4. Letter to Janārdana, 26 April 1968.

have been confirmed as authentic *dīkṣā-gurus* have all been topmost devotees. These were indeed, as Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “very special case.”



PART THREE

Frequently Asked Questions and Opposing Arguments Answered

FAQs and Opposing Arguments Answered

1. In your attempts to follow śāstra, are you not disregarding Prabhupāda's explicit instruction that all of his female disciples may initiate disciples, as he gave it in a letter to Hamsadūta, Jan 1969?

I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedānta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedānta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. That is my program (Letter to Hamsadūta—Los Angeles 3 January, 1969).

The simple answer to this is that Śrīla Prabhupāda also wanted his disciples to become *siddha*. He wanted them to be on the topmost levels of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, just like he was. Whenever he talks about the bona fide guru, he is almost always talking about this guru, who is also a liberated, perfected devotee who has achieved the goal of life, *kṛṣṇa-prema*.

This is shown in this letter to Mukunda, 10 June 1969, New Vrindavan (emphasis ours):

The answer to your Istagosthi questions are as follows: **Unless one is a resident of Krishna Loka, one cannot be a Spiritual Master. That is the first proposition.** A layman cannot be a Spiritual Master, and if he becomes so then he will simply create disturbance. **And who is a liberated person? One who knows Krishna.** It is stated in Bg, fourth chapter, anyone who knows Krishna in truth is immediately liberated, and after quitting the present

body, he immediately goes to Krishna. That means he becomes a resident of Krishna Loka. **As soon as one is liberated he is immediately a resident of Krishna Loka, and anyone who knows the truth of Krishna can become Spiritual Master.** That is the version of Lord Caitanya. So to summarize the whole thing, **it is to be understood that a bona fide Spiritual Master is a resident of Krishna Loka.**

Your next question, whether the Spiritual Master was formerly a conditioned soul, **actually a bona fide Spiritual Master is never a conditioned soul.** There are three kinds of liberated persons. They are called 1) sadhan siddha, 2) kripa siddha, and 3) nitya siddha. Sadhan siddha means one who has attained perfection by executing the regulative principles of devotional service. Kripa siddha means one who has attained perfection by the special mercy of Krishna and the Spiritual Master, and nitya siddha means one who was never contaminated. The symptoms of nitya siddha is that from the beginning of his life he is attached to Krishna, and he is never tired of rendering service to Krishna. So we have to know what is what by these symptoms. But when one is actually on the siddha platform there is no such distinction as to who is sadhan, kripa, or nitya siddha. When one is siddha, there is no distinction what is what.

These statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda are fully compatible with the evidence we have presented from *Nārada Pañcarātra (Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā)*. According to *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.44, if one is on the level of seeing Kṛṣṇa face-to-face, then one may be a spiritual master. **It is *this* standard of *dīkṣā-guru* that Śrīla Prabhupāda had in mind when he wrote the letter to Haṁsadūta saying both his male and female disciples could accept disciples.** Also note that there is only a six-month difference between the dates of the two letters.

Now, the problem is how do you act as a bona fide spiritual master when you aren't a *siddha*? What if you are not yet a resident of Goloka Vṛndāvana?

The answer to this is by strictly following the disciplic succession. In his 26 April 1968 letter to Janārdana, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes,

A person who is liberated acharya and guru cannot commit any mistake, but there are persons who are less qualified or not liberated, but still can act as guru and acharya by strictly following the disciplic succession.

This means one must follow the *śrutis*, *smṛtis*, *Purāṇas*, *Pañcarātras*, etc., in order to act as a bona fide guru *while not yet a resident of Goloka Vṛndāvana*.

*śruti-smṛti-purāṇādi-pañcarātra-vidhiṃ vinā
aikāntikī harer bhaktir utpātāyaiva kalpate*

Devotional service of the Lord that ignores the authorized Vedic literatures like the *Upaniṣads*, *Purāṇas* and *Nārada Pañcarātra* is simply an unnecessary disturbance in society.¹

It is interesting that in this particular translation given by Śrīla Prabhupāda that *Nārada Pañcarātra* is given. And according to this *pañcarātra śāstra*, women are not allowed to be *dīkṣā-guru* until they are *siddha*, and residents of Goloka Vṛndāvana.

This less-qualified category of guru is one that Śrīla Prabhupāda spoke infrequently about. However, in ISKCON today it is the general case, not the exception. Therefore, in order to understand how this category of guru is qualified and allowed

1. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.2.101, as quoted in *Bhagavad-gītā, As It Is*, 7.3 purport.

to act, we also have to consult the *ācāryas* and *śāstras*. Thus, we have presented here the authoritative statements of *Nārada Pañcarātra* so that we may be correctly guided.

2. How can you decide which woman is a *siddha*? This is not institutionally verifiable and thus cannot help ISKCON in framing rules for *Vaiṣṇavīs* to become *dīkṣā-gurus*.

For normal cases (non-*siddha* candidates for the position of *dīkṣā-guru*) the qualifying rules are already mentioned in *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.38–43. But it is also mentioned in *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.44 that *siddhas* are an exception to this rule. This means that if needed, a *dīkṣā-guru* can be appointed even from a prohibited category, provided that he or she is a *siddha*. This is a necessary condition for women. The norm is that women generally cannot become *dīkṣā-guru*.

The exception is that if she is *siddha*, she may be allowed. But exceptions should not be institutionalized. The exception supports the norm. But if the norm is not in place, then the exception becomes an option, not an exception. Śrīla Prabhupāda said “not so many” and “very special case.” The norm must first be in place. Otherwise, the exception will itself become a part of the norm in lieu of any other example.

Moreover, we also find that the majority of *nitya-siddha* women did not become *dīkṣā-guru*. Women like Kuntī, Devahūti, Rukmiṇī, Yaśodā, and many others were not *dīkṣā-gurus* although they were far more advanced than we are. What could have stopped them from taking the position of *dīkṣā-guru*? Nothing. They did not become.

And *Bhagavad-gītā* 3.17–25 explains why they did not become. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains that even if one is a *siddha* and therefore eligible to transgress the rules of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, one

should still go on following one's prescribed duties, which also means not following others' prescribed duties, in order to guide others who are less advanced.

Lord Kṛṣṇa adds that even He Himself, who is beyond doubt always liberated, nonetheless follows duties prescribed according to *varṇāśrama-dharma*. He further adds that if He does not follow them, then He will be the reason for the destruction of the whole society. And that is because everyone will follow His example.

Great liberated *nitya-siddha* ladies like Kuntī were aware of this instruction of Lord Kṛṣṇa, and thus they did not artificially try to become *dīkṣā-guru*—even though they were eligible from all angles, even according to the *śāstras*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself supports this point. He says that in order to preach, a *nitya-siddha mahābhāgavata uttama-adhikārī* has to act on the platform of *madhyama-adhikārī*.

Uttama adhikārī may be without *kaṅṭhī*, without *śikhā*, without Vaiṣṇava symptoms. He's *paramahansa*. But when he comes to the preaching platform he must become a *madhyama adhikārī*, not to imitate *uttama adhikārī*, because he has to teach. He cannot deviate from the teaching principles. So what you are speaking, that “Without *śikhā* without *kaṅṭhī*, one can become guru,” that is fact for the *paramahansa*, not for the preacher. Preacher must behave very nicely.²

In ISKCON, a guru must preach. Therefore, a guru “must behave nicely,” following all rules and regulations for non-*siddhas*, thereby setting an example to be followed by others. The very word *ācārya* means “to lead by an example.” This is another

2. Lecture on Cc Madhya 8.128, Bhubaneswar, 24 Jan 1977.

reason for the Vaiṣṇavīs to not become *dīkṣā-gurus* and follow the examples of predecessor Vaiṣṇavīs like Kuntī and Devahūti.

3. Female dīkṣā-gurus are needed because there is a lack of male dīkṣā-gurus for preaching and making disciples.

But if this were true, then why was it not also true for temple presidents and GBC members during Śrīla Prabhupāda’s time? Out of the 108 temples and farm communities established by Śrīla Prabhupāda, none were run by women. All of the presidents of these centers were men. Same with the GBC. During Śrīla Prabhupāda’s time, all the GBC members were men, and Śrīla Prabhupāda himself picked them. Toward the time of his disappearance, Śrīla Prabhupāda appointed eleven disciples who would act as his representatives and initiate others on his behalf. Again, all of them were men. Moreover, none of them were *siddha*, they were all on the *sādhaka* platform—they were candidates for liberation but were not yet liberated.

Why were none of them women? Some say that some of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s *sannyāsa* disciples pressured him to discriminate against them, but there is a better explanation: his actions were according to *śāstra*.

According to *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, the following verses are given for our guidance:

*yoṣīto nāvamanyeta na cāsām viśvaved budhaḥ |
na caiverṣyur bhavet tāsū nādhikuryāt kadācana* ||11.708||

A wise man should never insult women, nor should he trust them. He should never become jealous of women, nor should he ever appoint them.

strībhyo'dhikāraṁ na dadyād ity arthaḥ |

One should not give authority to women (from commentary of Sanātana Gosvāmī on 11.708).

So, we can see that Śrīla Prabhupāda's decision not to appoint any women as temple president, GBC, or representative of the *ācārya*, was in line with *śāstra*.

4. How do you translate *pratyakṣitātmanāthānām* as those who are *siddha*, who can see God face-to-face?

This is the verse 1.44 from *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (BS) of *Nārada Pañcarātra*:

kim apy atrābhijāyante yoginaḥ sarva-yoniṣu |
pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām naiṣāṁ cintyaṁ kulādikam ||44||

But, because perfect yogis (or *nitya-siddha devotees*) who are on the stage of *yoga-pratyakṣa* (i.e. are self-realized – seeing God face-to-face), *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām*, may take birth in any family tradition, in such cases no consideration of *kula*, gender, etc. as mentioned earlier apply (they can become *ācāryas*).

The original word in the verse is *pratyakṣitātmanāthānām*, which we translate as *siddha*. It means:

pratyakṣita ātmanaḥ nāthaḥ yaiḥ teṣāṁ

pratyakṣita—directly perceiving; *ātmanaḥ*—of the soul; *nāthaḥ*—Lord or master; *yaiḥ*—by whom; *teṣāṁ*—of those

Translation: Of those who are directly perceiving the Lord of the souls.

“Seeing God face-to-face” is a term used to generally express such notions. It doesn't mean just seeing, it includes *all*

perceptions. Śrīla Prabhupāda uses this term in Bg 15.7 purport (emphasis ours),

The following information is there in the *Mādhyandināyana-śruti: sa vā eṣa brahma-niṣṭha idaṁ śarīraṁ martyam atisrjya brahmābhisampadya brahmaṇā paśyati brahmaṇā śrṇoti brahmaṇaivedaṁ sarvam anubhavati*. It is stated here that when a living entity gives up this material embodiment and enters into the spiritual world, he revives his spiritual body, and in his spiritual body he can see **the Supreme Personality of Godhead face to face**. He can hear and speak to Him face to face, and he can understand the Supreme Personality as He is.

As the Lord cannot be seen by material senses, the devotee that is mentioned in BS 1.44 is on the level of *svarūpa-siddhi*, that is, he is on the *bhāva-bhakti* platform, where one starts seeing (or perceiving) the Lord.

When the devotion of the neophyte reaches the stage of *bhāva-bhakti* the pure eye of that devotee is tinged with the salve of love by the grace of Kṛṣṇa, which enables him to see Kṛṣṇa face-to-face.³

If one progresses through the stages of faith, practice, purification, steadiness, taste and attachment, in either *vaidhi* or *rāgānuga-sādhana*, **one then comes to the stage of *bhāva***, preliminary *prema*. It is at this point that one attains *āpana-daśā*. At this stage, beyond the category of *sādhana-bhakti*, when scriptural rules will be discarded as troublesome to one's service, conceptions of *rāgānuga* and *vaidhi* will both be discarded.

Here, one's identification with the material body will vanish and identification with one's spiritual body will

3. Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā 5.38, Purport.

predominate. In that spiritual body (*svarūpa-siddhi*) one will always see Vṛndāvana and serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa. This final stage is called *sampatti-daśā*.⁴

5. If women are prohibited from becoming dīkṣā-guru, then so are śūdras; then almost all ISKCON gurus are not bona fide.

In addition to women, *Nārada Pañcarātra* (*Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.42–43) also prohibits *śūdras* or those even lower from becoming *dīkṣā-guru*. This means that almost all gurus in ISKCON are not bona fide according to *Nārada Pañcarātra*. But Śrīla Prabhupāda never taught this. He always rejected caste considerations, quoting the *kibā-vīpra kibā-nyāsī* verse (Cc Madhya 8.128). The conclusion is that ISKCON gurus are not *śūdras*, even if they have been born in *śūdra* or *mleccha* families.

We all know that it is a mistake to think one is a *brāhmaṇa* merely because he has taken birth in a family of *brāhmaṇas*. Similarly, it is a mistake to think that one born in a family of *śūdras* or *mlecchas* is a *śūdra* or *mleccha*. *Varṇa* is to be judged by the qualities one possesses, not by family lineage or heredity. Śrīla Prabhupāda taught us this on numerous occasions, establishing this fact from *guru-sādhu-śāstra*. Thus, when it is said that a *śūdra* is prohibited from becoming a *dīkṣā-guru*, it means a person who is a *śūdra* by quality (*guṇa*) and *karma* (work). Someone who is actually qualified as a guru is never a *śūdra*.

6. If a woman can also become brāhmaṇa by quality, then why can't she become dīkṣā-guru?

In Kṛṣṇa's Vedic culture there were *brāhmaṇīs* (wives of *brāhmaṇas*), but they never took the position of *dīkṣā-guru*. Strictly speaking, women have no *varṇa*.

4. *Harināma-cintāmaṇi*, 15, by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says that “even born in a *brāhmaṇa* family, a woman is taken as woman, not as *brāhmaṇa*.” He gives the reason: “because a girl has to follow her husband. So, if her husband is *brāhmaṇa*, automatically she becomes *brāhmaṇa*. There is no need of separate reformation. And by chance she may be married with a person who is not a *brāhmaṇa*, then what is the use of making her a *brāhmaṇa*?”⁵

This is because one’s *varṇa* is based on two things—*guṇa* and *karma* (*cāturvarṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam guṇa-karma-vibhāgaśaḥ*, Bg 4.13). Besides having *guṇa* or qualities, one must have the prescribed duties of a particular *varṇa* in order to be of that *varṇa*.

In the case of women, although they may have a particular *guṇa*, or quality, the *śāstras* do not prescribe any duty to women based on that quality or *guṇa*. For instance, in the *śāstras* we do not find prescribed duties mentioned specifically for *brāhmaṇīs* (wives of *brāhmaṇas*), *kṣatriyāṇīs* (wives of *kṣatriyas*), etc., although we find them prescribed in the case of males. The only duty for women prescribed in the *śāstras* (irrespective *guṇa*) is to serve and follow their husbands.⁶

Hearing this, Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, “My dear Vallabha Bhaṭṭa, you do not know religious principles. Actually, the first duty of a chaste woman is to carry out the order of her husband.”⁷

Thus, the *śāstras* prescribe duties for women based on their gender. A woman may be *sāttvika*, but she cannot become *dīkṣā-guru*. Instead, it is prescribed that she marries a *brāhmaṇa* and then, because her husband is a guru, she automatically

5. Śrī Śrī Rukmini Dvārakānātha Deity Installation, Los Angeles, July 16, 1969 (emphasis ours)

6. For details of duties of women, see SB 7.11.25–29

7. Cc Antya 7.106

becomes *guru-patni* (wife of the guru), who is respected on an equal level.

Conclusion:

- One who is *śūdra*, *antyaja*, etc. by quality, cannot become *dikṣā-guru*.
- Even if *sāttvika* by quality, a woman still cannot become *dikṣā-guru*, as she is of the female gender. This is according to the *pañcarātra śāstras*, especially *Nārada Pañcarātra*, which prohibits non-*siddha* women from becoming *dikṣā-guru*.
- *Brāhmaṇīs* (wives of *brāhmaṇas*) never took the position of *dikṣā-guru* in Vedic culture.
- The duties of women are prescribed by the *śāstras* according to their gender.

7. But there are so many Vaiṣṇavī gurus in the Gauḍīya sampradāya. What about that?

In an interview, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s godbrother B.R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja said that female *ācāryas*, *dikṣā-gurus*, are “very rare.” Mahārāja further added, “The number can be counted on fingers, lady *ācāryas*.”⁸ Indeed, the few examples of lady *ācāryas* in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism are of *siddha* women. Jāhnavā Devī was none other than Nityānanda Prabhu’s wife, the internal potency of the Lord Himself. Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāmīṇī showed the symptoms of a liberated soul from the beginning of her life. She did not want to marry any mortal man. And later on, Lord Jagannatha Himself ordered her to initiate disciples.⁹ They form the exceptions mentioned in the *śāstras*, and in no

8. 1981 Conversation with Śrīpāda B.R. Śrīdhara Mahārāja, quoted in SAC 2005.

9. *Associates of Śrī Caitanya* 2.22, Gaṅgāmātā Gosvāmīṇī.

way do they contradict the norm of non-*siddha* women being prohibited from becoming *dīkṣā-guru*. Instead, as exceptions, they support it.

To try to prove that Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus* are not rare in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism is directly trying to prove the Śrīla Prabhupāda’s stance on this subject is faulty. It creates the offense of considering the guru to be an ordinary man.

Nevertheless, the Śāstric Advisory Committee in its paper *FDG: Prudent Questions, Sastric Answers* (2013) put forward as counter-examples some Gauḍīya disciplic lineages that have female *ācāryas*. In one lineage, six of their twelve *ācāryas* were women, and in other, nine out of eleven were women. According to the SAC, “it is virtually impossible to provide a solid proof for the claim that FDGs were rare” and they further say that “historically, the claimed rarity of FDGs in the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* is difficult to substantiate.”¹⁰ This reasoning is improper because it tries to contradict the words (*śabda*) of a liberated *ācārya* such as Śrīla Prabhupāda with the lower-level evidence of observation (*pratyakṣa*).

But even if we were to accept the argument offered by the SAC, they have provided no evidence that the ladies who came after Jāhnavā Devī and some others in the lineages they cite were also *siddha*. The SAC uncritically assumes they were.

But their assumption is unwarranted. By the time of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, almost the whole Gauḍīya *sampradāya* was lost or transformed into *apasampradāyas*.

Say, after the disappearance of the Gosvāmīns, about 250 years after, the things became most ridiculous. The so-called devotees... Their representatives still are continuing. They are called *prākṛta-sahajiyā*.

10. Page 12.

Prākṛta-sahajiyā means taking things very easily. They thought that Rādhā-Kṛṣṇa is just like a boy and girl's lusty affairs. And in this way they took it that sex life as religion. Even Vivekananda, he also criticized, "Vaiṣṇavism is sex religion." So the things deteriorated in such a way that... And similarly, as Advaita Prabhu was afflicted, similarly, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura... He was at that time a householder, government officer and magistrate. He felt very much: "Oh, Lord Caitanya's movement is so... People... As soon as one will see that he belongs to the Caitanya sampradāya, he'll deride, 'Oh, these are all rascals, simply taking sex pleasures. That's all.'"¹¹

Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is therefore addressed as *rūpānuga-vara* or the best of the followers of Rūpa Gosvāmī. He is the one who revived the Gauḍīya *sampradāya*'s real teachings. Thus, some doubt is warranted as to the authenticity of the Gauḍīya lineages presented by the SAC.

In absence of any evidence higher than our observation of the SAC's lists of Vaiṣṇavīs who became *dikṣā-gurus*, it is best to stick to Śrīla Prabhupāda's analysis that Vaiṣṇavī *dikṣā-gurus* were "not so many" and are always to be "very special cases." Those who are dissatisfied with this are invited to present their lists of Vaiṣṇavī *dikṣā-gurus* in different Gauḍīya lines, along with their bona fide biographies and teachings so that everyone can really see the evidence.

 11. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī Appearance Day Lecture, 7 Feb 1969, Los Angeles.

8. But in today’s ISKCON, if a woman has been preaching for the last 30 years and has a substantial number of followers already taking guidance from her, and they want to be initiated by her, why not let her give them *dīkṣā*?

In *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.12.32, purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda says (emphasis ours)—

Dhruva Mahārāja’s mother, Sunīti, was his *patha-pradarśaka-guru* ... sometimes called *śikṣā-guru*

It is the duty of the *śikṣā-guru* or *dīkṣā-guru* to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to *śāstric* injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*, and generally the *śikṣā-guru* later on becomes the *dīkṣā-guru*. Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dīkṣā-guru*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says “generally the *śikṣā-guru* later on becomes the *dīkṣā-guru*.” And this has been the common experience within ISKCON. “However,” Śrīla Prabhupāda adds, “Sunīti, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Maharaja’s *dīkṣā-guru*.” Here it is seen that Śrīla Prabhupāda is applying this restriction in case of women who are preaching and having followers. Although men generally can become *dīkṣā-gurus*, women generally cannot.

But if we do it anyway, what difference it will make? It means we will have transgressed the orders of *guru-sādhu-śāstra*, and we will not achieve *kṛṣṇa-prema*. That is the unavoidable consequence of defying *śabda-pramāṇa*.

We should not be so dependent on our own *pratyakṣa* (direct perception, experience) and *anumāna* (inference) that we dare

use them to test the authenticity of the words of liberated *ācāryas*. Through our own experience and power of reasoning alone, we will not be able to clearly understand how any given idea or act will affect ISKCON. But we should have full faith that by sticking to the instructions of *guru*, *sādhu*, and *śāstra* that the eventual outcome will be auspicious.

9. The women who are prohibited in Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā from becoming dīkṣā-guru are non-initiated women; they are not Vaiṣṇavīs. No such rules are mentioned for Vaiṣṇavīs.

That is not the truth. Below is the verse under discussion—

*na jātu mantra-dā nārī na śūdro nāntarodbhavaḥ |
nābhiśasto na patitaḥ kāma-kāmo 'py akāminah ||42||*

“Even then, a woman, a *śūdra* and an *antyaja* can never act as an initiating guru, nor can anyone who is accused of a great sin or is fallen. And an aspiring disciple who is already accomplished in detachment (*akāmī*) should never accept a guru who is infected with material desires.”

The specific word used here is *mantra-dā*, which means *mantram dadāti sā mantra-dā*, or a woman who gives *mantra* is called *mantra-dā*.

If a woman is not an initiated Vaiṣṇava, then she has not received any *mantra* and thus there is no question of giving the *mantra* to others. Thus, it becomes useless to mention that she cannot become *mantra-dā*.

Besides that, in the verse 1.37, where the description of the qualifications for who can be guru starts, it is mentioned that only a Vaiṣṇava can be guru and thus the context is set that

whatever personalities are being discussed are duly initiated Vaiṣṇavas. Below is the verse—

*nyāse vāpyarcane vāpi mantramekāntinaḥ śrayet |
avaīṣṇavopadiṣṭena mantreṇa na parā gatiḥ ||37||*

In the matter of surrendering, either performing *nyāsaḥ* (*tilaka*, body marks etc.) or performing *arcana* (deity worship), the initiation must be received from a guru who is fully surrendered to no one else than Lord Viṣṇu. By the *mantras* received from an *avaīṣṇava* guru, one can never reach the highest perfection.

Thus, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* is prohibiting initiated Vaiṣṇavīs from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*. This is also supported by the history of great Vaiṣṇava ladies like Devahūti, Kuntī, Yaśodā, Rukmiṇī, and many others, who never took the position of *dīkṣā-guru*. They were not just Vaiṣṇavīs, they were *nitya-siddha-vaiṣṇavīs*. They were very special. Thus, we should seriously consider whether we are following in the footsteps of great devotees if we are proposing to normalize the creation of Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus*.

10. Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā doesn't differentiate between normal women and Vaiṣṇavīs. Thus, its prescriptions and proscriptions are not applicable for initiated Vaiṣṇavīs.

It is a mistake to think that *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* does not differentiate between normal women and Vaiṣṇavīs. Here it will be shown that the injunctions of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* are solely intended for Vaiṣṇavas.

First of all, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* is a treatise on *śaraṇāgati* (surrender), and it elaborates upon the verse *ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ...*, which describes the six limbs of surrender. This

verse is often quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda,¹² and it appears in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (11.676) by Sanātana Gosvāmī. *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* explains this verse,¹³ expanding it into 8 chapters and guides about how to practically implement it in daily life, living in a society of devotees. It explains each and every limb of surrender in utmost detail.

Right from the beginning up to the end, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* speaks about Vaiṣṇavas only. For example, verses, 1.13–15 —

***prāptum icchan parām siddhiṁ janaḥ sarvo 'py akiñcanaḥ |
śraddhayā parayā yukto hariṁ śaraṇam āsrayet ||13||***

One who desires to achieve ultimate benefit (*parā siddhi*) and who is without desire for proprietorship (*akiñcana*) must take shelter of Lord Hari with transcendental faith.

***na jāti-bhedam na kulaṁ na liṅgam na guṇa-kriyāḥ |
na deśa-kālau nāvasthām yogo hy ayam apekṣate ||14||***

There is no consideration of birth, family, gender, or quality, work, etc., nor is there consideration of time, place, and circumstance in accepting this yoga process (*pāñcarātrika-vidhi*).

***brahma-kṣatra-viśaḥ śūdrāḥ striyās cāntarajās tathā |
sarva eva prapadyeran sarva-dhātāram acyutam ||15||***

Anyone, whether they be *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *śūdras*, *women*, *antyajas*, or anyone else, should, with full faith, take shelter of Lord Acyuta, who is the master of all living entities, through the medium of this yoga.

12. See Bg 18.66, Purport.

13. Verse appears in *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, 1.17–18.

Is this not a special consideration for Vaiṣṇavas, that anyone from any caste, creed, gender, family, work, etc. can surrender to Lord Hari? It nicely matches with the teachings of our *sampradāya*.

Then *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.37) says:

*nyāse vāpyarcane vāpi mantramekāntinaḥ śrayet |
avaiṣṇavopadiṣṭena mantreṇa na parā gatiḥ ||37||*

In the matter of surrendering, either performing *nyāsaḥ* (tilaka, body marks etc.) or performing *arcana* (deity worship), the initiation must be received from a guru who is fully surrendered to no one else than Lord Viṣṇu. By the *mantras* received from an *avaiṣṇava* guru one can never reach the highest perfection.

Note the words *avaiṣṇavopadiṣṭena*. This means that *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* says that the guru must be a Vaiṣṇava and not a *non-Vaiṣṇava*. It differentiates between a Vaiṣṇava and a *non-Vaiṣṇava* guru.

When it is said that women are allowed to take *dīkṣā*, it means they are allowed to take *pañca-saṁskāras* (detailed in Chapter 2 of the *pariśiṣṭa* of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*). *Yāga*, the last of the *pañca-saṁskāras*, makes them eligible to worship Deities. This consideration is the same as given in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*.

Conclusion:

- *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* is a scripture for Vaiṣṇavas and follows Vaiṣṇava principles.
- Gopāla Bhatta Gosvāmī quotes verses from *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* in his *Sat-kriyā-sāra Dīpikā*.

- Srila Prabhupada mentions *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (in his purport to SB 4.31.10) in connection to eligibility for initiations.
- Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura quotes a verse from *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* in his commentary to *Caitanya Bhāgavata*, Adi 8.7, purport.
- Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura mentions *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* as a Vaiṣṇava *saṁhitā* in line with *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*.
- From these evidences, there should be no doubt about the authority of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*.¹⁴

11. Śrīla Prabhupāda had female disciples like Śāradīyā give brahminical initiation and Gāyatrī-mantras to her husband and others. So, why should we stop women from becoming dikṣā-guru?

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes—

Even though you have had no Gāyatrī-*mantra*, still you are more than *brāhmaṇa*. I am enclosing herewith your sacred thread, duly chanted on by me. Gāyatrī-*mantra* is as follows: [taken out] Ask your wife to chant this *mantra* and you hear it and if possible hold a fire ceremony as you have seen during your marriage and get this sacred thread on your body. Śāradīyā, or any twice-initiated devotee, may perform the ceremony.¹⁵

In the very early days of ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda was always present, performed the initiation ceremony, and gave

14. For more details about the authority of the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, see Appendix I.

15. Letter to Vaikuṅṭhanātha and Śāradīyā, April 4, 1971.

the *mantras* himself. As the movement began to spread, Śrīla Prabhupāda faced the practical problem of how to perform initiations from a distance when he was not present. This letter to Vaikuṅṭhanātha and Śārādīyā is such a case. Śrīla Prabhupāda solves the problem by giving his “power of attorney” to Śārādīyā, and he instructs her what to do on his behalf. Śārādīyā’s husband remained the disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda only, and thus she was not made *dīkṣā-guru*.

It is important to note that this was not the final solution for this problem. Future long-distance initiations were conducted only by men, who performed the *homa*, and the *mantra* was given via a recording on a \$1.00 cassette tape. But while Śrīla Prabhupāda was manifest in this world, this recording was imbued with his spiritual “power of attorney,” and anyone who was accepted by Śrīla Prabhupāda and heard that recording was duly initiated.

This recording still exists, but after Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance it no longer has the potency to initiate anyone. Only Ṛtviks believe otherwise.

12. Let us institute Vaiṣṇavī dīkṣā-gurus for now, and then, if there are some problems, we can always retract them. What is the harm?

The problem is that those who are initiated by such non-*siddha* Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus* will actually remain uninitiated (even though they take shelter with all sincerity) and thus won’t be able to go “Back to Godhead.” Moreover, such so-called Vaiṣṇavīs who have become guru will also have to fall down. Please see the evidence below—

*atha strīśūdrasaṅkīrṇānirmalāpatitādiṣu |
ananyenānyadrṣṭauca kṛtāpi na kṛtā bhavet ||59||*

If one surrenders to a woman, *śūdra*, *saṅkīrṇa* (one of mixed birth), one who has not accepted an *ācārya*, or a sinful and fallen person, his initiation is useless or as if not done. This is so even if he takes shelter with unalloyed attitude.

*ato'nyatrāsu vidhivatkartavyā śaraṇāgatiḥ |
upadeṣṭā tu mantrasya mūḍhaḥ pracyavate hyadhaḥ ||60||*

Such a disciple should quickly take shelter of another spiritual master who is bona fide according to rules and regulations. A foolish person (as described in 59th verse), who becomes spiritual master by giving mantras, falls down.¹⁶

We are obliged to follow this. The Lord Himself says this in the *Ahīrbudhnyā-saṁhitā*, another *pañcarātra* quoted by almost all *ācāryas* in their commentaries on *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 11.20.9—

*śruti-smṛtī mamaivājñe yas te ullaṅghya vartate
ājñā-cchedī mama dveṣi mad-bhaktō 'pi na vaiṣṇavaḥ*

The *śruti* and *smṛti* literatures are to be understood as My injunctions, and one who violates such codes is to be understood as violating My will and thus opposing Me. Although such a person may claim to be My devotee, he is not actually a Vaiṣṇava.

13. In Vedic times women were not initiated, so they could not become dīkṣā-gurus. But because the Pañcarātras allow women to receive pañcarātriḥ mantras, they can also give them to others, acting as dīkṣā-gurus.

To become *dīkṣā-guru*, getting initiated into the *mantras* is not the only qualification. It is a necessary condition,

16. *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.59–60.

not a sufficient one. In Vedic culture, all the three *varṇas*—*brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, and *vaiśyas*—received *mantras* at the time of initiation. But only *brāhmaṇas* were allowed to give *mantras* and be *dīkṣā-gurus*. Similarly, when *pañcarātrika-vidhi* allows women to receive *mantras* in initiation, they do not automatically become eligible also to give *mantras* and be *dīkṣā-guru*.

Moreover, *Nārada Pañcarātra* states that women should not become *dīkṣā-guru*. *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (*Nārada Pañcarātra*) clearly states that women are eligible to receive initiation (1.14–15) but are not eligible to give initiation and be *dīkṣā-guru* (1.42–43). This also matches with *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.12.32, purport, wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dīkṣā-guru*.”¹⁷

Those who believe that because the *pañcarātras* allow women to get initiated they can also give *mantras* and be *dīkṣā-gurus* base their argument on the set of verses from *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (1.194–198) mentioned below. However, it is to be noted that these verses clearly mention that the allowance given to women is for receiving initiation and thus chanting *mantras* and worshipping the Deities of the Lord. It nowhere mentions that women are allowed to give *mantras* and become *dīkṣā-guru*.

athādhikāra-nirṇayaḥ

*tāntrikeṣu ca mantreṣu dīkṣāyām yoṣitām api
sādhvīnām adhikāro ‘sti śūdrādīnām ca sad-dhiyām*

Now begins the discussion of who is eligible—

17. Please see Appendix VI for the verses and translations as well as exceptions.

Chaste and saintly women, and saintly-hearted *śūdras*, and so on are qualified to be initiated in the chanting of *mantras* from the Tantras.

tathā ca smṛty-artha-sāre pādme ca vaiśākha-māhātmye śrī-nāradāambarīṣa-samvāde

*āgamoktena mārgeṇa stri-śūdrais caiva pūjanam
kartavyam śraddhayā viṣṇoś cintayitvā patiṃ hṛdi*

In the *Smṛty-artha-sāra*, as well as in the *Padma Purāṇa*, *Vaiśākha-māhātmya*, in a conversation of Śrī Nārada and Śrī Ambarīṣa it is said:

“Following the path described in the Āgamas, women and *śūdras* may faithfully worship Lord Viṣṇu and meditate on Him as the Lord in the heart.

*śūdrāṇām caiva bhavati nāmnā vai devatārcaṇam
sarve cāgama-mārgeṇa kuryur vedānusāriṇā*

“Following the path of the Āgamas, which themselves follow the path of the Vedas, women and *śūdras* may worship the Supreme Lord by chanting His holy names.

*strīṇām āpy adhikāro ‘sti viṣṇor ārādhānādiṣu
pati-priya-hitānām ca śrutir eṣā sanātani*

“Women who desire the welfare of their husbands are also entitled to worship Lord Viṣṇu. That is the conclusion of the eternal Vedas.”

agastya-samhitāyām, śrī-rāma-mantra-rājam uddiśya

*śuci-vrata-tamaḥ śūdrā dhārmikā dvija-sevakāḥ
striyaḥ pati-vratās cānye pratilomānuloma-jāḥ
lokās cāṇḍāla-paryantāḥ sarve ‘py atrādhikāriṇaḥ*

In the *Agastya-saṁhitā*, in relation to the king of all *mantras*, the *Rāma-mantra*, it is said:

“Religious and pure *śūdras*, who are servants of the *brāhmaṇas*, as well as chaste women, those born in *pratiloma* and *anuloma* families, and everyone else, down even to the *cāṇḍālas*, are qualified to worship Lord Viṣṇu in this way.”

Conclusion:

- The *pāñcarātras* allow women to get initiated.
- The right to get initiated does not imply the right to initiate.
- The *pañcarātras* prohibit women from becoming initiators or *dīkṣā-gurus* unless *siddha*.

14. The standard *smṛti-śāstra* (law codes) to be followed by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas is *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, not *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*. *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* doesn’t prohibit Vaiṣṇavīs from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*. So why to bring *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* into the picture and transgress *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*?

Although *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* is specifically meant for Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas, it doesn’t address the matter of Vaiṣṇavīs’ becoming *dīkṣā-guru*. Thus, we need to resort to other *śāstras* for this matter.

Whenever Śrīla Prabhupāda talked about matters related to women’s role and activities, he usually quoted from *Manu-saṁhitā*. He has hardly quoted anything from *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* for matters specifically related to women. In fact, it is a famous rule of *pramāṇa-śāstra—anuktaṁ anyato grāhyam—* that which is not clarified in our scripture should be imported

from another scripture; but—*paroktam avirodhī ca*¹⁸—only those instructions which are not opposite to our scripture. Śrīla Prabhupāda himself followed this rule, and thus it is not prohibited to resort to other *śāstras* for matters not clearly discussed in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*.

None of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements on the matter of women acting as *dīkṣā-guru* can be supported by *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. It just doesn’t deal with this matter. But all of his statements are supported by *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*. Thus, resorting to *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* in fact *enhances* the position of Śrīla Prabhupāda as a staunch representative of the *śāstras*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself said (emphasis added):

As stated by Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura, *sādhu-śāstra-guru*: one has to test all spiritual matters according to the instructions of saintly persons, scriptures and the spiritual master. The spiritual master is one who follows the instructions of his predecessors, namely the *sādhus*, or saintly persons. A bona fide spiritual master does not mention anything not mentioned in the authorized scriptures. Ordinary people have to follow the instructions of *sādhu*, *śāstra* and guru. Those statements made in the *śāstras* and those made by the bona fide *sādhu* or guru cannot differ from one another¹⁹.

However, *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* does say one thing about women:

***yoṣīto nāvamanyeta na cāsāṁ viśvased budhaḥ |
na caiversyur bhavet tāsū nādhikuryāt kadācana*** ||11.708||

A wise man should never insult women, nor should he trust them. He should never become jealous of women, nor should he ever appoint them.

18. *Kātyāyana* 3.3.

19. SB 4.16.1, purport (emphasis ours).

strībhyo'dhikāraṁ na dadyād ity arthaḥ |

One should not give authority to women (from commentary of Sanātana Gosvāmī on 11.708).

After Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, the appointment of women to positions of authority in ISKCON like temple president and GBC—something that Śrīla Prabhupāda never did—appears to be a violation of these injunctions.

15. Śrīla Prabhupāda made many adjustments in order to expand the preaching of ISKCON. So, would it not be niyamāgraha if we stubbornly stick to this age-old tradition of not allowing women to initiate, thus resulting in hampered preaching of ISKCON?

In this regard, there are some points to observe:

- In ISKCON's early days, Śrīla Prabhupāda gave *sannyāsa-dīkṣā* very liberally and to very young devotees. But today the rules for giving *sannyāsa* are stricter; today even age is a consideration.
- In the beginning, he instituted very simple worship of the Deities of Lord Jagannātha, Baladeva and Subhadrā Devī, even by non-*brāhmaṇa* initiated devotees. Later he mandated that only *brāhmaṇa*-initiated devotees worship the Deities.
- He also let women stay in his Western temples and instituted a *brahmacāriṇī āśrama*.
- And there are many other examples.

For the establishment of ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda had to make many adjustments. But he wanted that we should eventually revert back to the norms given by our *śāstras* and *ācāryas*.

But there are also many adjustments he *did not* make. One of many such counter-examples is the fourth regulative principle (no illicit sex). Śrīla Prabhupāda did not compromise on it, although some have suggested that it be made more lenient in order to propagate the movement more widely. But he refused to compromise.

Given that Śrīla Prabhupāda made adjustments to some principles and would not make adjustments to others, we should ask, “when can we apply time, place, and circumstance adjustments, and when can we not?” The answer is that the *śāstras* and *ācāryas* also provide methods that help us make this determination. This science is called *pramāṇa-śāstra*. In English we may call it Vedic Hermeneutics, although this is not an exact translation.

When applying the methods of *pramāṇa-śāstra* to harmonize the actions and instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda with the words of the *sādhus* and the *śāstras*, it is sometimes surprising to see how nicely the instructions and actions of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the *ācāryas* are fully rooted in *guru*, *sādhu*, and *śāstra*. *Pramāṇa-śāstra* enables us to understand what is the scope of an adjustment, its duration, and why it had to be made.

For example, according to the *śāstras*, there are compulsory duties technically called *nitya-karma*. The nature of such duties is that if you fail to execute them, you incur sin or become degraded. But sometimes one may be factually incapable of performing such duties (*asāmarthya*). In such cases, the details of the activities can be adjusted to the level one is capable of performing. However, if we have the capability, or *sāmarthya*, but we still adjust the details, we become degraded.²⁰

Thus, by seeing the words “one cannot suddenly change a community’s social customs” in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s famous

20. *Mīmāṃsā-sūtra* 6.3.2–3, 8–10.

purport to *Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Adī-līlā*, 7.31–32, in which he defended his adjustment to allow women to preach alongside of men, it can be seen that it was a case of *asāmarthya* on the part of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Western disciples. Being from a society that encourages free mixing of the sexes, they were not immediately capable of strictly following Vedic rules prescribed by our *ācāryas* for keeping men and women strictly separate.

But we also see that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to revert back to the Vedic norm as soon as possible. He writes—

That the Brahmācarini ashram is a good success is very good news. But the best thing will be if the grown-up Brahmācarinis get married.

According to Vedic culture, woman is never to remain independent. I shall be glad if the Brahmācarinis can have nice husbands, and live as Grhasthas.²¹

Later, he wanted to reduce the pace of preaching and “boil the milk.” He writes—

Now we have got so many students and so many temples but I am fearful that if we expand too much in this way that we shall become weakened and gradually the whole thing will become lost. Just like milk. We may thin it more and more with water for cheating the customer, but in the end it will cease to be any longer milk. Better to boil the milk now very vigorously and make it thick and sweet, that is the best process. So let us concentrate on training our devotees very thoroughly in the knowledge of Krishna Consciousness from our books, from tapes, by discussing always, and in so many ways instruct them in the right propositions.²²

21. Letter to Satsvarūpa, Montreal, Aug 8, 1968.

22. Letter to Haṁsadūta, LA, June 22, 1972.

So, we can see from these examples that when there is some *asāmarthya*, or incapability, in the matter of following rules that must be followed (or degradation happens), then some adjustment is made. But once there is no longer an irregular or emergency situation that requires the adjustment, then the norm specified in the *śāstras* must be resumed.

With this same rule from *pramāṇa-śāstra*, we can consider these two cases side-by-side: one is getting initiated, and the other is becoming *dīkṣā-guru*. Getting initiated is a compulsory act, because if one is not initiated, he will degrade himself to animal life after death.²³ Thus, according to the mentioned rule of *pramāṇa-śāstra*, subsidiary procedures that constitute the *dīkṣā* ceremony may be adjusted to the level one is capable to follow. As our *dīkṣā* process is *pāñcarātrikī*, it has the fire sacrifice as one of its subsidiary acts that are to be executed in order to complete it. But due to *asāmarthya*, a fire sacrifice in *dīkṣā* ceremonies may sometimes be compromised with or even dispensed with.

But becoming *dīkṣā-guru* is not a compulsory act (you don't degrade if you don't become *dīkṣā-guru*). Thus, if someone needs to become *dīkṣā-guru*, then the procedures as mentioned in *guru*, *sādhu*, and *śāstra* must be followed without adjustment. In this case, the rules of the *pāñcarātrika* scriptures prohibit non-*siddha* women from becoming *dīkṣā-guru*. Not making an adjustment is not considered *niyamāgraha*, because *pramāṇa-śāstra* tells us that adjustment is not permitted for becoming *dīkṣā-guru*. The *śāstra* has to be followed strictly.

23. *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* 2.6 (quoted from *Skanda Purāṇa*, in discussion between Rukmāṅgada-mohini; also from *Viṣṇu-yāmala*).

16. According to your research, a dikṣā-guru needs to be brāhmaṇa. But seeing a Vaiṣṇava according to his (or her) material qualities creates the offense of vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhi.

Vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhi means to see a Vaiṣṇava by his lineage, namely *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, etc. (*Jāti* means birth lineage.) But since we are not seeing Vaiṣṇavas' material aspect (or *varṇa*) by lineage but by qualities, it doesn't create the offense of *vaiṣṇave-jāti-buddhi*.

However, there is another Vaiṣṇava offense described in *Nectar of Instruction*, 6—

*drṣṭaiḥ svabhāva-janitair vapuṣaś ca doṣair
na prākṛtatvam iha bhakta janasya paśyēt
gaṅgāmbhasām na khalu budbuda-phena-pañkair
brahma-dravatvam apagacchati nīra-dharmaiḥ*

Being situated in his original Kṛṣṇa conscious position, a pure devotee does not identify with the body. Such a devotee should not be seen from a materialistic point of view. Indeed, one should overlook a devotee's having a body born in a low family, a body with a bad complexion, a deformed body, or a diseased or infirm body. According to ordinary vision, such imperfections may seem prominent in the body of a pure devotee, but despite such seeming defects, the body of a pure devotee cannot be polluted. It is exactly like the waters of the Ganges, which sometimes during the rainy season are full of bubbles, foam and mud. The Ganges waters do not become polluted. Those who are advanced in spiritual understanding will bathe in the Ganges without considering the condition of the water.

The word “pure devotee” mentioned in this verse should be carefully noted. Śrīla Prabhupāda has used it in many contexts in many places. Sometimes it means any *sādhaka* sincerely following the *guru-paramparā* while at other times it means a *siddha* devotee situated on the highest platform of devotional service.

But what does Śrīla Prabhupāda mean by the word “pure devotee” in this particular verse and purport? For clarification, we need to resort to the commentary of his Guru Mahārāja, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura on this same verse. He writes—

*jāta-ruci-siddha-mahātmā-gaṇer ācaraṇa
na bujhiyā tānhādike patita mane karile
vaiṣṇavāparādha haya. ...*

*ajāta-rati sādḥaka o siddha-bhakte bheda ācche
jāniyā eka vyaktike śiṣya o apara vyaktike guru
jānite haibe.*

Those who do not understand the behavior of *jāta-ruci-siddha-mahātmās* and who considers them fallen, commit Vaiṣṇava-*aparādha*. ...

One should consider that there is difference between a *sādhaka*, who is not on the stage of *jāta-rati*, and a *siddha* devotee and thus *siddha* should be considered a guru and *sādhaka* should become a disciple²⁴.

This *jāta-rati* is at the stage of *bhāva*—

*bhāvera aṅkura ho'le vidhi āra thāke nā |
rāgānugā śraddhā māt্রে jāta-rati haya nā ||*

When *bhāva*, the ecstatic mood of divine love actually sprouts, then the need for following

24. *Upadeśāmṛta*, 6, *Anuvṛtti* commentary of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī.

scriptural rules (*vidhi*) does not remain. Mere faith in spontaneous devotional service, however, does not produce the actual awakening of transcendental loving attachment (*jāta-rati*).²⁵

jīvasya svarūpāvasthānāt pūrvam yāvad-anartho vidyate, tadā paramārtha-pratīter-anāvilatā nāsti | sambandha-jñānodgamena prema-nāma-saṅkīrtana-yogyatā jāyate, tadā sa jāta-ratir-abhidhīyate | ajāta-rati-sādhaka-jāta-rati-bhāvukayornāma-saṅkīrtane prabhedo vartate | kāpaṭyena niyatakālāt prāgeva jāta-rati-bhaktasya veśa-kalpanam nāsmākaṁ samucitam | anarthanivṛttau nairantaryam tataḥ svecchā-pūrvikā tataśca svārasikīti daśā-trayam, tadūrdhvaṅca premabhūmir-iti ||5||

Before being fully situated in one's constitutional position (*svarūpa*), till there exists contamination (*anarthas*), his ultimate perfection and goal remains hidden by these slight impurities. By fully realizing *sambandha-jñāna* (or *sambandha-jñāna*'s becoming manifest) there arises eligibility to perform *nāma-saṅkīrtana* with pure love of Godhead. Then one is known as *jāta-rati*.

There is a difference between the chanting of an *ajāta rati sādḥaka* (one in whom *rati* is not manifest) and a *jāta rati bhāvuka bhakta*. To deceitfully present oneself as a *jāta rati bhakta* before having attained to such a stage is completely inappropriate. After *anartha nivṛtti*, one becomes situated in *naivantarya*, or uninterrupted steadiness in the practice of *sādhana* (*śravaṇa, kīrtana, etc.*). Next, one attains 'svecchā-pūrvikā' which means meditation on the pastimes of the Lord by one's own will. This is an advanced stage of remembrance of the Lord which

25. *Prākṛta-rasa śata-dūṣiṇī*, 17.

comes in the stage of *āsakti*. This is followed by the condition known as ‘*svārasikī*’ when the pastimes of the Lord automatically manifest in one’s heart as an uninterrupted flow (this comes in the stage of *bhāva* after *śuddha sattva* manifests in the heart).²⁶

*sādhusaṅgata eva bhagavati manoratiṃ vahatīty-atra kramam-āha, satām-iti | saṅgaḥ prārthya iti pūrvokteḥ prathamam śraddhā tataḥ satām prakṛṣṭāt saṅgān-mama kathā bhavantīty-ādāv-aprakṛṣṭāt saṅgād-bhajana-kriyā-mātram na tu kathāḥ, tataḥ prakṛṣṭāt saṅgād-anartha-nivṛttikā kathā bhavanti, tatas-tā eva kathā niṣṭhām-utpādyantyo mama vīryasya man-māhātmyasya samvit samyag-vedanam yatas-tathā-bhūtā bhavanti, tato rucim-utpādayantyo hr̥t-karṇa-rasāyanā bhavanti, tatas-tāsām kathānām joṣaṇāt prītyā āsvādanāt apavargo vartmany-eva yaysa tasmin bhagavati śraddhā āsaktiḥ, **ratir-bhāvaḥ bhaktiḥ** premā anukramiṣyati anukrameṇa bhaviṣyati | samprati mayā pravartyamānā bhaktir- evam-anukrameṇa loke pracariṣyatīty-arthaḥ ||*

“Only by the association of *sādhus* one’s mind’s attachment flows with full force into the Lord. To this effect here the sequence of advancement is described. In the previous verse it is said that one should desire for the association of devotees. So first one must have *śraddhā* then there should be special association of *sādhus* then only the *kathā* which one hears will become the cause of *anartha-nivṛtti*; general association of *sādhus* will cause *bhajana-kriyā* but not *kathā*. Then, by special association of *sādhus* and thus *anartha-nivṛtti*, that *kathā* will produce *niṣṭhā* in hearing *kathā* of my heroic

26. *Śrī Caitanya Śikṣaṣṭaka*, 5, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, (Please refer *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* 15, for details of these stages) (*Kṛṣṇa-sandarbhā* 154 for *svārasikī*).

activities and my glories from those who perfectly know them, then that *kathā* will produce *ruci* by which the *kathā* becomes *hṛt-karṇa-rasāyana* or nectar for heart and ears. Then by relishing that *kathā* with love it develops *āsakti* or intense attachment to the Lord, who is Himself the path to liberation. Here *āsakti* stage is referred to as *śraddhā*. Then *rati* or *bhāva-bhakti*, and then *bhakti* or *prema* will follow sequentially.”²⁷

Thus, to differentiate between *siddha* and *sādhaka* and to see different *sādhakas* according to their levels is not an offense, as mentioned in this verse.

However, if we think that any practicing devotee is not influenced by the three modes of material nature, then we cannot distinguish between the *kanistha*-, *madhyama*-, and *uttama-adhikaris*, and thus we transgress the verse before this one (*Nectar of Instruction*, text 5). Then we become *sahajiyā*.

We should differentiate between *varṇas* of practicing devotees in order to allocate them responsibilities according to their psycho-physical nature. This point is explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda, who said that *varṇāśrama* should be re-established starting from ISKCON:

It is not so easy to become Vaiṣṇava...

...if they do not remain in the sthāna, then the sahajiyā's chanting will come....

Therefore varṇāśrama-dharma is required.

Simply show-bottle will not do.

So the ***varṇāśrama-dharma should be introduced*** all over the world, and...

27. SB 3.25.25, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura.

Satsvarūpa: Introduced *starting with ISKCON community?*

Prabhupāda: **Yes. Yes.** Brāhmaṇa, kṣatriyas. There must be regular education²⁸

Prabhupāda: *Vaiṣṇava is not so easy. The varṇāśrama-dharma should be established to become a Vaiṣṇava. It is not so easy to become Vaiṣṇava.*

Hari-śauri: No, it's not a cheap thing.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Therefore this should be made. Vaiṣṇava, to become Vaiṣṇava, is not so easy. *If Vaiṣṇava, to become Vaiṣṇava is so easy, why so many fall down, fall down?* It is not easy. The *sannyāsa is for the highest qualified brāhmaṇa. And simply by dressing like a Vaiṣṇava, that is... fall down*²⁹

However, seeing Vaiṣṇavas by their material qualities doesn't mean that their spiritual advancement should be measured by these qualities. If we think that the material qualities of a devotee indicate his spiritual advancement, then we commit offense. It is the duty a devotee needs to perform that should be according to his material quality.

Thus, a duly initiated *śūdra* or woman should not be seen as impure and sinful by virtue of their *guṇa* and *karma*. They should be seen as devotees of the Lord. In *varṇāśrama* society, a *brāhmaṇa* becomes impure if he touches or even sees a *śūdra*. If he touches a *śūdra*, he must take bath. And if he sees a *śūdra*, he should see the Sun and perform *ācamana*. But another

28. Conversation, Mayapur, Feb. 14, 1977 (emphasis ours).

29. Conversation, Mayapur, Feb. 14, 1977 (emphasis ours).

injunction is that if such a *śūdra* or woman is a duly initiated Vaiṣṇava devotee, then the *brāhmaṇa* should not consider that he has become impure by seeing or touching them. If he takes a bath or tries to purify himself in such a case, then he commits an offense against a Vaiṣṇava.

17. But Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly wanted Vaiṣṇavī dikṣā-gurus. Why bring śāstras against Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions? Do we understand śāstras better than Śrīla Prabhupāda?

To claim that “Śrīla Prabhupāda clearly wanted Vaiṣṇavī *dikṣā-gurus*” is misleading.

First of all, if it had been so clear from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements then, this debate would not have been going on for last 20 years. The fact that there are two strong opinions on both sides, shows that there are statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda supporting both the sides.

Second of all, there are a total of four statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda that directly deal with the issue of females being *dikṣā-guru*. There are no other direct statements of his besides these four. Anyone claiming that there are volumes of statements from Śrīla Prabhupāda supporting Vaiṣṇavī *dikṣā-gurus* is misleading.³⁰

Let us analyze the points from these statements, as mentioned below:

(Note: Numbers 1, 2, 3, and 4, in the square brackets at the end of each point, connects them to a particular result statement derived from *śāstras*, list of which is mentioned at the end of explanation)

30. To see all of four statements, see Appendix VIII.

Statement A: *SB 4.12.32, Purport*

- “Dhruva Mahārāja’s mother, Sunīti, was his *patha-pradarśaka-guru*” which “is sometimes called *śikṣā-guru*” -- [3]
- “generally the *śikṣā-guru* later on becomes the *dīkṣā-guru*” (neutral statement, does not specifically pertain to women).
- Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dīkṣā-guru* -- [2]

Statement B: *Interview with Prof. O’ Connell, Toronto, June 18, 1976*

- “Jāhnavā Devī was—Nityānanda’s wife. She became (guru)” -- [1]
- “Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru” be he “man or woman” -- [1]
- “But, not so many” -- [1 & 4]
- “The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa. Then he or she can become guru. *Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei guru haya*” -- [1]
- “So similarly, if the woman understands Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly, she can become guru” -- [1]

Statement C: *Room Conversation, San Diego, June 29, 1972*

- “If a woman is perfect in Kṛṣṇa consciousness... Just like Jāhnavā Devī, Lord Nityānanda’s wife, she was *ācārya*... controlling the whole Vaiṣṇava community.” -- [1]

- “It is not that woman cannot be *ācārya*” -- [1]
- “Generally, they do not become. In very special case.” -- [1 & 4]
- “Kṛṣṇa does not make any discrimination (between man and woman)” -- [1]
- “Whatever difference is there, it is bodily difference” -- [1]
- “So when one is above the bodily concept of life, there is no difference” -- [1]
- “Why woman? Even cats and dogs, they have got the same spirit soul.” -- [1]

Statement D: *Letter to Hamsadūta, Los Angeles, Jan 3, 1969*

- “I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedānta” -- [1]
- “Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedānta will be allowed to initiate disciples” (neutral statement)
- “Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate” -- [1]

From the above statements, it is clear that Śrīla Prabhupāda has supported both the Pro- and Anti-FDG sides. For the last two decades, devotees on both sides have tried to interpret one or another of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements in order to support their own beliefs.

For example, the Pro-FDG side tried to harmonize by taking statement D as the final judgement (Śrīla Prabhupāda’s real intention) along with statements B & C as supporting evidences, and interpreting statement A (by their own logic).

In statements B & C also, the points “but not so many” and “very special case” were interpreted to fit the final judgement of statement D.

But the Anti-FDG side tried to harmonize by taking statement A as the final judgement and statements B & C’s “but not so many” and “in very special case” as supporting evidence, and interpreting statement D (by their own logic). In statements B & C, the point that “she can become guru” was interpreted to fit the final judgement statement A.

However, no solution has come; the controversy has endured for decades. The reason is that the basis of harmonization was the experience and the logic of the devotees harmonizing these statements. And this kind of evidence is subject to the four defects of the materially conditioned souls. **Hence, both Pro- and Anti-FDG sides have reached wrong conclusions.**

When the basis of harmonization is the logic of devotees involved in the process, there is a theoretical impossibility of reaching to any solution. This is because a higher level of authority is needed to settle the matter. In absence of clear guidance from higher-level evidence (*guru-sādhu-sāstra*) it is the preconception of the devotee involved in harmonization that will decide which statements are to be interpreted and which are to be taken as final judgement. Now, the question arises, why should your preconception be accepted as better than my preconception? Thus, there is no solution.

Hence, there is an absolute need for correct guidance from a higher-level evidence in this matter. This is what we tried to follow in the first two sections of this book. *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* is not a book written by any member of the Pro-FDG or Anti-FDG factions. It is extant from time immemorial and is a bona fide *Nārada Pañcarātra śāstra*. Statements from this

book in the matter of who can become guru and who cannot, automatically harmonize all the four statements (A to D) of Śrīla Prabhupāda without any need for applying the twisted and clumsy logic employed by members of the Pro-FDG or Anti-FDG factions. Thus, the results of this harmonization authoritatively stand above theirs.

As mentioned above, when the higher-level of evidence from *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* is considered, the final authoritative results derived are as follows—

1. Women who are *siddha*, on the stage of perceiving God face to face, can become *dīkṣā-guru*.³¹
2. Women who are still on the *sādhana* stage cannot become *dīkṣā-guru*.³²
3. Women can become *śikṣā-guru*.³³
4. *Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu* 1.1.17, states that *siddhas* are very rare, “not so many,” and “very special case.”

Now, please refer back to the statements A, B, C, and D as described in the beginning. At the end of each point in these statements is labeled 1, 2, 3, or 4 within square brackets. These points are connected to the results 1, 2, 3, or 4 listed above.

What this shows is that the natural explanation for the differing quotes becomes self-evident when the authority of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* is considered. None of the statements then conflict with each other, and the direct meaning of each

31. *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.44 (see Appendix VI for verse and translation).

32. *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.42–43 (see Appendix VI for verse and translation).

33. *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* 1.43 (see Appendix VI for verse and translation).

statement is preserved. There is no need to resort to indirect meanings or interpretation to understand Śrīla Prabhupāda's different statements.



APPENDICES

Appendix I

Authority of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā

The scriptures known as the *Pañcarātra-sāstras* are recognized Vedic scriptures that have been accepted by the great *ācāryas*. These scriptures are not products of the modes of passion and ignorance. Learned scholars and *brāhmaṇas* therefore always refer to them as *sātvata-saṁhitās*. The original speaker of these scriptures is Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. This is especially mentioned in the *Mokṣa-dharma* (349.68), which is part of the *Śānti-parva* of the *Mahābhārata*. **Liberated sages like Nārada and Vyāsa, who are free from the four defects of conditioned souls, are the propagators of these scriptures.** Śrī Nārada Muni is the original speaker of the *Pañcarātra-sāstra*.

Cc 1.5.41, Purport (emphasis ours)

This shows that *Pañcarātra-sāstras* are propagated by different sages. Lord spoke it to Nārada-muni and different sages hearing from his line propagated it. Bhāradvāja-muni heard it from Nārada-muni and propagated it as *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* which is thus also known as *Nārada-pañcarātra*.

When there is reference to *pāñcarātrikī vidhi*, the *Nārada Pañcarātra* is perhaps the most important *pañcarātra*. “And still, we are also following Nārada Muni’s path, *Nārada Pañcarātra*,” says Śrīla Prabhupāda. “Our method is *Nārada Pañcarātra*.”¹ And the famous *saṁhitā* of *Nārada Pañcarātra* is the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*.

In his purport to *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 4.31.10, Śrīla Prabhupāda mentions the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*. An article in the *Gauḍīya* magazine (published in Bengali by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta

1. Lecture, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.24—August 5, 1974, Vṛndāvana.

Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and his disciples) entitled “Smārtavāda” mentions *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* among the spiritual devotional *smṛti* texts (*sātvata-smṛti-śāstra*) along with *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and *Sadācāra-smṛti* (by Madhvācārya), etc.² Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī’s commentaries to *Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata* and *Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā* of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī also quote it, and the verses quoted are matching with the version of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* we have used in this paper.³

 2. The *Gauḍīya* magazine, 1927, vol. 6, no. 18, pp. 283–7: “Smārtavāda.” This article lists two kinds of *smṛti-śāstras*: “1) spiritual, or *sātvata-smṛtis*; 2) materialistic, moral or fruitive *smṛtis*. The most prominent among the *sātvata-smṛti-śāstras* are: *Śrī Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* [included in *Nārada Pañcarātra*], *Brhat-saṁhitā*, *Viṣṇu-samuccaya*, *Vaikhānasa-saṁhitā*, *Āgama-prāmāṇya* by Ālabandāru Ṛṣi, *Sadācāra-smṛti* by Pūrṇaprajña (Madhvācārya), *Kṛṣṇāmṛta-mahārṇava*, *Smṛty-artha-sāgara* by Chalāri Nṛsimhācārya, *Prameya-mālā*, *Prayoga-candrikā*, *Vaiṣṇava-dharma-sura-druma-mañjarī* by Saṅkarṣaṇa Śaraṇadeva, *Smṛti-ratnākāra* by Viṭṭhalācārya, *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and *Śrī Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā* by Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī Prabhu, and *Samśkāra-candrikā-paddhati* by Śrī Dhyānacandra.”

The similarity of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* with other Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava literatures may also be noted. For example, the verse *ānukulyasya saṅkalpaḥ...* is fully explained in two of its chapters, taking up each item. Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas call it *śaraṇāgati*, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* calls it *prapatti*. The rest is the same.

3. *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, Ādi 8.7, purport:

In the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* of the *Nārada Pañcarātra* (2.34) it is stated:

*svayaṁ brahmaṇi niksīptān jātān eva hi mantrataḥ
vinitān atha putrādīn aṁskṛtya pratibodhayet*

Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī:

In the *Nārada Pañcarātra*, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (3.22–25), the process of spiritual atonement for a Vaiṣṇava is described:

The *Nārada Pañcarātra* also includes the *Jayākhyā-saṁhitā* and the *Jñānāmṛtasāra-saṁhitā*. *Jayākhyā-saṁhitā* is mentioned as *Nārada Pañcarātra* in the *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*. Secular scholars have designated *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* as *Nārada Pañcarātra*, as can be seen from the 1962 publication (Sarayū Prasāda Miśra's commentary, see Bibliography). That this is a separate *pañcarātra* text is accepted by Vedāntadeśika also in his *Pañcarātra-rakṣā*. He accepts it among *pañcarātras* in *sattva-guṇa*, which alone are meant for attaining liberation. Also, the *Āgama Encyclopoedia*, Vol.4, of Prof. S.K. Ramacandra Rao mentions the same thing from different sources.



prāyaścittam tu paramam prapattis tasya kevalam
kuryāt karmātmakam vāpi vāsudevam anusmaran
viśuddhyed viṣṇu-bhaktasya drṣṭyā sparśena sevayā
smaraṇenānna-pānādyair girā pāda-rajo-'mbubhiḥ
viṣṇor niveditānnādyais tathā tat-kīrtanādibhiḥ
abhāgavata-drṣṭyādeḥ śuddhir eṣā viśeṣataḥ
kṛtā yajñāḥ samastās ca dānāni ca tapāmsi ca
prāyaścittam aśeṣeṇa nityam arcayatā harim

Appendix II

Qualifications to receive mantras and give them are different

Discussion: In the same chapter as the verses quoted above, the qualifications for taking up the process of *sādhana-bhakti* are also given.

prāptum icchan parām siddhiṁ janaḥ sarvo 'py akiñcanaḥ |
śraddhayā parayā yukto hariṁ śaraṇam āsrayet ||13||

“One who desires to achieve ultimate benefit (*parā siddhi*) and who is without desire for proprietorship (*akiñcana*) must take shelter of Lord Hari with transcendental faith.”

na jāti-bhedaṁ na kulaṁ na liṅgaṁ na guṇa-kriyāḥ |
na deśa-kālau nāvasthāṁ yogo hy ayam apekṣate ||14||

“There is no consideration of birth, family, gender, or quality, work, etc., nor is there consideration of time, place, and circumstance in accepting this yoga process (*pāñcarātrikī vidhi*).”

brahma-kṣatra-viśaḥ sūdrāḥ striyās cāntarajās tathā |
sarva eva prapadyeran sarva-dhātāram acyutam ||15||

“Anyone, whether they be *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *sūdras*, women, *antyajas*, or anyone else, should, with full faith, take shelter of Lord Acyuta, who is the master of all living entities, through the medium of this yoga.”

These verses occur earlier in the same chapter of the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, and they specify who is eligible to take up this process of *bhakti* according to *pāñcarātrikī vidhi*. According to these verses, everyone is potentially eligible and

may gradually become *siddha*, or perfect. From this, it is seen that everyone from nearly every status may become qualified for initiation and receive the mantras. But in later verses 42–43, we find that women are prohibited from becoming *mantra-dā* (initiating guru) unless their Kṛṣṇa consciousness has reached the perfectional stage, as stated in verse 44.

It is also important to note that the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* specifies distinct classes of people who are eligible. Here the allowance for women to take *dīkṣā* by *pāñcarātrikī vidhi* is specifically mentioned. *Brāhmaṇas* and other classes are also mentioned here separately. This is important because if women are included in the description of *brāhmaṇas*, etc., then a separate mention of them cannot be justified here. Thus when *brāhmaṇas* and others are being described henceforth, it is to be understood as describing only males.



Appendix III

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.32, Original Transcript

Tape 7 x (18)

Srimad-bhagavatam (4.12.32)

2

Dhruva had
PURPORT
This was a feeling of obligation to his mother, Suniti.
~~It was who~~
Suniti gave him the clue by which, ~~he was now~~ *had enabled*
~~him to now be carried personally about~~ *carried* ~~to~~ *the* Vaikuntha ~~planet~~ *planet*,
~~personally carried by the associates of Lord Visnu.~~ *now in the*
~~now remembered her and wanted to~~ *take her* ~~take her~~ *mother* along with
him. Actually, Dhruva Maharaja's mother, Suniti, was ~~the~~ *his* patha-
pradarsaka guru. Patha-pradarsaka guru means the guru or the
spiritual master who shows the way. Such a guru is sometimes called
siksa guru. Although Narada Muni was his diksa guru, (initiating
spiritual master), Suniti, ~~the~~ *his* mother of Dhruva Maharaja, was the
first who gave him instruction how to achieve the favor of the
Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the duty of the siksa guru
or diksa guru to instruct the disciple *in* the right way, and it depends
on the disciple to execute the process. According to sastraic in-
junctions, there is no difference between siksa guru and diksa
guru, and generally the siksa guru ~~becomes~~ *becomes the* diksa guru.
Suniti, however, being ~~in~~ *a woman; and specifically* family relationship with Dhruva, his
mother, ~~and~~ *as a woman* ~~could not become~~ *Dhruva Maharaja's* diksa guru of ~~the~~ *the*
~~Dhruva Maharaja~~. Still, he was not less obliged to Suniti. There
was no question of ~~carrying~~ *carrying* Narada Muni to ~~the~~ Vaikunthaloka,
but Dhruva Maharaja thought of his mother, ~~for~~ *for* ~~carrying her to the~~
~~Vaikunthaloka~~. ~~this was simply a contemplation of Dhruva Maharaja.~~
whatever The Supreme Personality of Godhead, ~~whatever~~ *whatever* He contemplates, im-
mediately ~~it~~ *it* becomes fructified. Similarly, ~~even~~ *even* a devotee ~~who~~ *who*
is completely dependent on the Supreme Personality of Godhead,
can also fulfill his contemplations by the grace of the Lord. The

Appendix IV

The Process of Giving Brahma-gāyatrī with Second Initiation is Bona Fide

In *vaidika-vidhi* there were three births: First by father and mother, second by the *Vedas* and the guru i.e. *upanayana* (when the disciple gets *brahma-gāyatrī*) and third the *yājñika-dikṣā* after which a disciple becomes qualified to worship the Deities.⁴ For receiving the *upanayana*, purified birth is needed, and then also, if a *brāhmaṇa*'s son passes the age of 16 without receiving *upanayana* he is called *vrātya* and he needs to be purified by *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*.⁵ So what is the process followed for such a case?

He will get the *pāñcarātrika saṁskāras* as mentioned above and after getting purified he will be given the *upanayana*. Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura have established the same process because in today's age everyone is *vrātya* and lower.

Śrīla Prabhupāda wrote (emphasis ours):

Why do you believe in rumors, that first initiation is not so important as second? I have already said that it is equally important, but you say rumor. Actually first initiation is more important. You can go without second initiation; if the first initiation is executed very thoroughly that is sufficient. First initiation stands strong. The spiritual master accepts

4. SB 10.23.40.

5. *Viṣṇu-yāmala* quoted in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* (5.5) and *Caitanya-bhāgavata* (1.8.7, purport).

aśuddhāḥ śūdra-kalpā hi brāhmaṇāḥ kali-sambhavāḥ / teṣāṁ āgama-mārgeṇa śuddhir na śrota-vartmanā.

the disciple's sinful reactions upon giving first initiation. ***The Vedic system was to give the sacred thread at the first initiation.*** We are following *pāñcarātrikī*. Vedic initiation was given to a person born to a *brāhmaṇa*. That is not possible in this age. ***Therefore he has to be prepared by Harināma initiation and then second initiation.*** He is given a chance. Therefore others protest that I am giving initiation: He is not born of a *brāhmaṇa*, how can he be initiated?⁶

Additionally, according to *Nārada Pañcarātra, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.50, 53–56), by *pāñcarātrika vidhi* a guru can give *vaidika mantras* also. Thus, it is bona fide for a guru who is qualified according to *pāñcarātrika vidhi* to bestow the *Brahma-gāyatrī mantra* on a disciple qualified to receive it.



6. From a letter by Śrīla Prabhupāda's secretary to Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami, Vrindavana, Aug 7, 1977.

Appendix V

Previous GBC-sponsored Research

Some words are in order about two other, previous, official attempts made by ISKCON's GBC to research the issue, and why the results of those efforts ultimately turned out to be unauthoritative.

The GBC's Śāstric Advisory Council produced two papers over an eight-year span—one in 2005 and the other in 2013. The authors of both papers seemed to be unaware of the extent of the authority of *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* over the system of initiations as conducted within ISKCON. Hence, they were unable to resolve apparent contradictions between various statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda's without either resorting to extensive speculation, suppression of some of his statements in favor of others, or outright contradiction.

For example, the 2013 paper makes the following statement, which turns out to be untrue.

It is noted that while Vedic *smṛti-śāstras* restrict women from position of spiritual leadership, this limitation might be merely subsequent to the *smṛti* restriction on women accepting *dīkṣā*—a restriction obviously overridden by the *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* followed by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas...The overall conclusion is that there are not different sets of qualifications to be a guru for various classes of people, including women.

As revealed by the verses from *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (1.42–44), which are part of *Nārada Pañcarātra*, there are in fact different sets of qualifications for different classes of people. *Daiva-varṇāśrama* considerations apply unless one is at the topmost level of spiritual advancement. Moreover, they assumed that the fact that one has received a mantra gives one the authority to bestow it. This is also untrue, as shown in these *ślokas*. The

2005 paper also suffered from the same lack of information about *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*.

Another fault in both papers is they both tried to suppress evidence that did not comport with the conclusions they were trying to reach. The 2005 paper tried to dismiss Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement about Sunīti not being able to be Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dīkṣā-guru* (because she was a woman) by burying it under a greater amount of “positive evidence.”

They say,

This is the strongest statement against the possibility of female *dīkṣā-gurus*. However, in itself, this statement is not conclusive, as we will see when we examine the positive evidence.

But in this case, we see that *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* supports this statement. Sunīti could not be *dīkṣā-guru* because besides being a woman, she was not a *siddha*.

The problem in the 2005 paper is that even accepting there is some greater quantity of conflicting evidence, it still does not nullify or overpower the authority of the conflicting *pramāṇa*—especially if the source is liberated.

For example, throughout Vedic literature, statements that one needs to be qualified by birth to be a *brāhmaṇa* are more numerous than statements that one needs simply to acquire the necessary qualification. So, if quantity is fundamental to truth, then birth should win out over qualification. Instead, those two categories of statements need to be synchronized or reconciled regardless of how frequent one is over the other.

The ethical way for the authors to proceed would have been to report that they needed to do more research. But instead, they rushed to a conclusion that was not supported by the *guru-paramparā*.

There is one final example worth mentioning, and that is that the 2013 paper tried to nullify Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements on the rarity of female *dikṣā-gurus* by contradicting him.

They say,

Given the absence of an uninterrupted and exhaustive hagiography of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line with its many sub-branches, it is virtually impossible to provide a solid proof for the claim that FDGs were rare, as well as a mathematically accurate estimate of how rare they were.

This is an offense, because it shows that they don’t accept his word. Given that Śrīla Prabhupāda is universally regarded as a liberated soul on the level of *kṛṣṇa-prema*, they have chosen *pratyakṣa*, or direct perception, over the verbal testimony of a liberated being. They have contradicted *guru-vākya*, and one who is a liberated *ācārya* at that. This is very inauspicious.

On top of that, the 2013 SAC paper then lists other Gauḍīya *sampradāyas*, some with a majority of female *ācāryas*. In one of them there are nine ladies and two men in disciplic succession from Jāhnavā Ṭhākuraṇī and Nārāyaṇī Devī. In another, the disciplic succession through Bipin Bihari Goswami, Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *dikṣā-guru*, is mentioned as having four women out of the twelve *ācāryas* in his lineage. No attempt to assess the legitimacy of any of these lines was made.

However, even if we accept that they are legitimate and authorized disciplic successions, trying to contradict your own *ācārya* with this evidence is still an offense. It is improper, and such so-called research necessarily leads to a faulty conclusion.

And even aside from this, there is still the fact that Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura accepted the process of *pāñcarātrikī-dikṣā*. This fact means we are obliged to assess

what is permissible for us according to the *vidhis*, or rules, established by our *ācāryas*, not according to some other *sampradāya*'s rules if they differ from ours. Trying to do otherwise is an offense against the *ācāryas* of our disciplic succession.

Whatever the motivations the differing sets of authors had in undertaking their work, the end result in both was highly questionable. Neither effort settled the issue decisively, which underscores both reports' lack of authority.



Appendix VI

Index of Verses Quoted from Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā

These verses are presented in serial order, as presented in the *saṁhitā*.

prāptum icchan parām siddhim janaḥ sarvo 'py akiñcanaḥ |
śraddhayā parayā yukto hariṁ śaraṇam āsrayet ||13||

“One who desires to achieve ultimate benefit (*parā siddhi*) and who is without desire for proprietorship (*akiñcana*) must take shelter of Lord Hari with transcendental faith.”

na jāti-bhedam na kulaṁ na liṅgam na guṇa-kriyāḥ |
na deśa-kālau nāvasthāṁ yogo hy ayam apekṣate ||14||

“There is no consideration of birth, family, gender, or quality, work, etc., nor is there consideration of time, place, and circumstance in accepting this yoga process (*pāñcarātrikī vidhi*).”

brahma-kṣatra-viśaḥ sūdrāḥ striyāś cāntarajās tathā |
sarva eva prapadyeran sarva-dhātāram acyutam ||15||

“Anyone, whether they be *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, *sūdras*, women, *antyajas*, or anyone else, should, with full faith, take shelter of Lord Acyuta, who is the master of all living entities, through the medium of this yoga.”

prapitsur mantra-nirataṁ prājñam hita-param śucim |
praśāntam niyataṁ vṛttau bhajed dvija-varaṁ gurum ||38||

“Thus, one who is desirous of surrendering with faith, should take shelter of a guru who is always engaged in chanting the mantra and is a knower of *bhakti-siddhānta* (*prājñam*), is

always engaged, without any desire for personal benefit, in showering mercy on fallen souls (*hita-param*), who is always pure in heart or free of sins, peaceful, and always committed to his prescribed duties (ordained by his guru or by *varṇāśrama*). Such a guru should be the best of the twice-born (*dvija-varam* meaning *brāhmaṇa*)”

sapta-pūruṣa-vijñeeye santataikānti-nirmale |
kule jāto guṇair yukto vipro śreṣṭhatamo guruḥ ||39||

“The best guru of all is a learned *brāhmaṇa* endowed with good qualities who has taken birth in a sinless lineage of devotee ancestors, traceable up to seven generations.”

svayaṁ vā bhakti-sampanno jñāna-vairāgya-bhūṣitaḥ |
sva-karma-nirato nityam arhaty ācāryatām dvijaḥ ||40||

“Even if a twice-born *brāhmaṇa* (*dvija*) happens to have some non-devotees in his family line, or has not been fortunate to take birth in a renowned family of pure devotees, he nevertheless always deserves to be an *ācārya* if he is endowed with all good qualities like knowledge and renunciation, is engaged in his prescribed duties (*sva-karma*), and is steeped in loving devotion to the Lord.”

nācāryaḥ kula-jāto 'pi jñāna-bhakti-ādi-varjitaḥ |
na ca hīna-vayo-jātiḥ prakṛṣṭānām anāpadi ||41||

“On the other hand, one cannot become an *ācārya* even if one is born in a great family line (as mentioned before) but is devoid of *jñāna*, *bhakti*, good qualities, etc. Also, unless there is an emergency, an *ācārya* from a lower birth or age should not initiate a person from a higher birth or age.”

na jātu mantra-dā nārī na śūdro nāntarodbhavaḥ |
nābhiśasto na patitaḥ kāma-kāmo 'py akāminaḥ ||42||

“Even then, a woman, a *śūdra* and an *antyaja* can never act as initiating gurus, nor can anyone who is accused of a great sin or is fallen. And an aspiring disciple who is already accomplished in detachment (*akāmī*) should never accept a guru who is infected with material desires.”

striyaḥ śūdrādayas caiva bodhayeyur hitāhitam |
yathārham mānanīyās ca nārhanṭy ācāryatām kvacit ||43||

“Women, *śūdras*, etc., can give ethical and moral instructions and are also worthy of respect as per their qualifications and conditions but are not entitled to get the position of *ācārya*.”

kim apy atrābhijāyante yoginaḥ sarva-yoniṣu |
pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām naiṣām cintyaṁ kulādikam ||44||

“But, because perfect yogis (or *nitya-siddha* devotees) who are on the stage of *yoga-pratyakṣa* (i.e. are self-realized—seeing God face-to-face), *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām*, may take birth in any family tradition, in such cases no consideration of *kula*, gender, etc. as mentioned earlier apply (they can become *ācāryas*).”



Appendix VII

The Process of Initiation and the Five Saṁskāras

From the *Nārada Pañcarātra, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā,*
pariśiṣṭa, chapter 2, verses 1-56

TEXT 1

upāsita-guror varṣam
viṣṇor dāsyam abhīpsataḥ
vihitāḥ pañca-saṁskārā
yuktasyaikāntya-hetavaḥ

A prospective disciple who is eager to become a servant of Lord Viṣṇu should worship and serve his bona fide spiritual master for a year, to qualify himself for receiving the five recommended saṁskāras which are the causes for attaining unalloyed devotional service to Lord Viṣṇu.⁷

TEXT 2

tāpaḥ puṇḍram tathā nāma
mantra yāgaś ca pañcamaḥ
amī hi pañca-saṁskārāḥ
pāramaikāntya-hetavaḥ

These five saṁskāras—namely, (1) tāpa, (2) puṇḍra, (3) nāma, (4) mantra, and (5) yāga—are the causes for attaining the highest stage of unalloyed devotion to the Supreme Lord.

7. The Sanskrit text speaks of male gurus and disciples, and this is reflected in the English translation.

Tāpa-saṁskāra

TEXTS 3-4

*tāpayiṣyan guruḥ śiṣyam
cakrādyair hetibhir hareḥ
puṇye 'hni niyataḥ snātvā
snātaṁ mantra-jalāplutam*

*ṛcā dakṣiṇataḥ kuryād
vaiṣṇavyā baddha-kautukam
tataḥ samarçayed devaṁ
svārcāyām sthaṇḍile 'pi vā*

Selecting an auspicious day for performing the tāpa-saṁskāra, i.e. impressing the symbols of Lord Hari such as the Sudarśana cakra on the body of his disciple, the spiritual master should bathe and perform mantra-ācamana, leading his disciple to do the same. The ācārya should then tie an auspicious thread on the right wrist of his disciple while reciting Vedic hymns glorifying Lord Viṣṇu [beginning with “viṣṇor nukam vīryāṇi” from the Śukla Yajur Veda].⁸ Then he should worship the Supreme Lord either in the form of his own worshipable Deity [arcā-vigraha] or by invoking His presence in a sthaṇḍila [a sanctified square area of leveled sand, prepared for worship].⁹

8. *Baddha-kautukam*: the guru ties an auspicious thread around the disciple's wrist. This thread is supposed to protect the disciple from impurities. In South India this thread is prepared by dipping it into turmeric paste while reciting these same mantras.

9. In South India *brāhmaṇas* put rice grains and in North India wheat grains into the *sthaṇḍila* to make a slightly raised platform for Deities and *kalaśas*, sometimes also marked by *rangoli* powder, wheat or rice flour (according to one's means).

TEXTS 5–6

*paścime svena mantreṇa
 kṛtvāgneḥ sthāpanādikam
 mūla-mantreṇa hutvājyam
 tataḥ pratyakṣarāhutīḥ*

*ekāṁ punaś ca sarveṇa
 pauruṣībhiś ca ṣoḍaśa
 hutvā trīn viṣṇu-gāyatrīyā
 vaiṣṇavyā cātha hetibhiḥ*

Thereafter, the spiritual master should face the west [being seated in front of Lord Viṣṇu who faces the east] and should perform the procedure for establishing the sacred fire, using the mantras received in his own tradition.¹⁰ Then he should offer oblations of clarified butter into the fire, first with the mūla-mantra [the aṣṭākṣara-mantra or the eight-syllable mantra: om namo nārāyaṇāya], then separately with each syllable of this mantra¹¹ and once again with the entire mūla-mantra.¹² Then he should offer sixteen oblations with the sixteen mantras of the Puruṣa-sūkta of the Ṛg Veda, three oblations with the Viṣṇu-gāyatrī [beginning with “nārāyaṇāya vidmahe”] and then five separate oblations with the pañcāyudha-mantras to honor Lord Viṣṇu’s principal weapons [mace, disc, sword, bow and conch].

 10. *Svena mantreṇa*: There are different mantras for establishing the sacred fire according to one’s particular lineage or *sampradāya*.

11. As follows: 1. *om om namaḥ svāhā*, 2. *om nam namaḥ svāhā*, 3. *om moṁ namaḥ svāhā*, 4. *om nām namaḥ svāhā*, 5. *om rām namaḥ svāhā*, 6. *om yam namaḥ svāhā*, 7. *om nām namaḥ svāhā*, 8. *om yam namaḥ svāhā*.

12. That is, *om namo nārāyaṇāya svāhā*.

TEXTS 7-11

*havir nivedya devāya
tac-cheṣeṣa tathāhutīḥ
athopasanne haimāni
tāmrāṇi rājatāni vā*

*prakṣālya pañca-gavyena
mantra-toyāplutāni ca
bimbāni pūrva-hetīnām
svabhāga-nihitāni vai*

*nidhāya vahnau pratyekam
tatrāvāhya sva-mantrataḥ
arghyam pādyam tathācamyam
gandham puṣpam ca dhūpakam*

*dīpam ca dattvāthābhyarcya
praṇamyāgni-sama-prabham
ācāryaḥ svayam ādāya
niyukto vātha mantravit*

*prāṇmukhopaviṣṭasya
nyased bāhau ca dakṣiṇe
sudarśanam tathā vāme
pañcajanyaṁ sva-mantrataḥ*

Next, eatables like cooked food [haviṣya] should be offered to the Lord's Deity form, and the remaining portion of the food should be poured as oblations into the sacred fire in the same manner as clarified butter and in the same sequence as previously described.¹³ Thereafter, the metal stamps [mudrās]

13. In texts 5 and 6.

of the disc and the conch, made of either gold, copper or silver, should be sprinkled with pañca-gavya and with water sanctified with mantras. Upon heating the stamps in the fire, the spiritual master should invoke in each stamp the presence of each particular weapon of Lord Viṣṇu with its appropriate mantra.¹⁴ The red-hot stamps, effulgent like fire, should then be worshiped with pādya, arghya, ācamānīya, scents, flowers, incense, lamps, and naivedya [food offerings]. After the formal worship, the ācārya offers obeisances to these symbols of Lord Hari. Either he himself or his assistant conversant with the appropriate mantras to be employed then impresses these symbols on the upper arms of the disciple who should sit facing east. The symbol of the Sudarśana cakra [disc] should be imprinted on the right upper arm and the Pāñcajanya [conch] on the left upper arm since this is their actual position in the hands of Lord Viṣṇu. At the same time, the appropriate mantra for each weapon should be recited by the spiritual master [or his assistant].¹⁵

TEXT 12

*evam gadām dhanuḥ khadgam
lalāṭe mūrdhni vakṣasi
cakram vā śaṅkha-cakre vā
dhārayet sarvam eva vā*

In the same way, the spiritual master may impress heated stamps of the symbols of Lord Viṣṇu's mace, bow, and sword

14. I.e. one of the *pañcāyudha-mantras*.

15. Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura states in his article on the *pañca-saṁskāras* (*Sajjana-toṣaṇī* vol. 2, issue 1, 1885):

In the Śrī *sampradāya* of Rāmānuja *tāpa* is given by branding the body with the symbols of conch and disc, but Śrī Caitanyadeva has instructed that we mark the body with *harināma* using sandal paste etc. instead of brands. This rule is a blessing for the souls of Kali-yuga.

respectively on the forehead, head, and chest of the disciple, reciting their appropriate mantras. One may opt only for the imprint of the disc, or both conch and disc, or all the five symbols.

TEXT 13

*tantram samāpya deveśam
saha-śiṣyaḥ pradakṣiṇām
kṛtvā praṇamya sānnidhyam
prārthya śeṣam samāpayet*

Thereafter, the ācārya concludes the homa [fire sacrifice] and circumambulates the Supreme Lord along with his disciple. Praying for the Lord's kind presence and mercy, he brings the ceremony to a close.

TEXTS 14–15

*kuryāt sarvatra karmānte
dvijaiḥ puṇyāha-vācanam
ācāryasyārcanam caiva
vāsaḥ-srag-bhūṣaṇādibhiḥ*

*sarva-maṅgala-saṃyuktam
iti cihnāni śārṅgiṇaḥ
dhārayitvā yathotsāham
vaiṣṇavān abhitarpayet*

The tāpa-saṃskāra should be completed by engaging the brāhmaṇas in reciting the puṇyāha-vācanam [auspicious recitations done at the conclusion of a ceremony].¹⁶ The disciple

16. The svasti-vācanam is recited in the beginning while the puṇyāha-vācanam is recited at the end.

should then worship and honor his spiritual master with presents of clothes, garlands, ornaments, etc. In this way, the disciple should enthusiastically accept these all-auspicious symbols of Lord Viṣṇu [Śārṅgī] and satisfy the Vaiṣṇavas present [by serving them prasāda, offering gifts and so on].

Puṇḍra-saṁskāra

TEXTS 16–17

*dhārayiṣyāms tataḥ śiṣyam
ūrdhva-puṇḍrān yathā-vidhi
puṇye ’hni niyataḥ snātvā
pūrvavad baddha-kautukam*

*upaveśyātha deveśam
bhogair dīpāntam arcayet
sthaṇḍilam kalpayet pāścāt
puruṣasya pramāṇataḥ*

Selecting an auspicious day, the ācārya should perform the puṇḍra-saṁskāra, the ceremony of applying the ūrdhva-puṇḍras, according to the prescribed procedure. As before, both the guru and the disciple should bathe and perform the preliminary purificatory rites. The spiritual master should tie an auspicious thread around the right wrist of the disciple. With the disciple seated next to him, the ācārya should worship the Supreme Lord with offerings of foodstuffs and other standard upacāras till the point of offering a lamp. He should then prepare a suitable sthaṇḍila measuring one hasta [the length of one’s forearm].

TEXTS 18–20

*sthānāni saikatāny atra
varṇa-cūrṇa-mayāni vā
kuryād dvādaśa pūrvādi-
catur-dikṣu samāntaram*

*tathā madhye 'sya catvāri
teṣv abhyarcāsanam pṛthak
keśavādīms tatra tatra
vāsudevādikāms tathā*

*pratyekam ca yathā-rūpam
dhyātvā nāmabhir āvahet
hvir-antais tathārghyādyair
arcayet tāny athākramam*

Within the sthaṇḍila, the spiritual master should draw twelve ūrdhva-puṇḍra marks, using either sand or colored powder, beginning from the east and maintaining equal distance between each adjacent ūrdhva-puṇḍra. In the middle portion of the sthaṇḍila he should draw four additional marks in the four cardinal directions. He should worship each of these sixteen marks with the standard sixteen upacāras. Meditating on the twelve forms of the Lord beginning with Keśava, the spiritual master should invite each of Them to appear in Their respective places within the sthaṇḍila. He should then meditate on the four members of the catur-vyūha [Vāsudeva, Saṅkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha] and invite Them to Their respective places as well by uttering Their names. He should worship Them with the standard upacāras beginning with arghya and ending with haviḥ.

TEXTS 21–23

*parītya saha-śiṣyeṇa
sarvāms tān praṇipatya ca
upaviśyātha śiṣyāya
praṇipatyopasīdate*

*eṣāṃ nāmāni rūpāṇi
yathāvad upadarśayet
śiṣyo hr̥di samāveśya
tān sarvān krama-yogataḥ*

*nirghṛṣya mṛtsnāṃ vidhivan
mūla-mantrābhimantritām
ādāyāṅgulibhir dadyāl
lalāṭādy-ūrdhva-puṇḍrakān*

Along with his disciple, the spiritual master should circumambulate the sthaṇḍila and offer obeisances to all the forms of Lord Viṣṇu invoked in it. As they are both seated in front of the sthaṇḍila, the guru should instruct his disciple authoritatively about all these different names and forms of Lord Viṣṇu in sequence beginning with Keśava, so that the disciple is able to remember Them within his heart. The disciple should then take a piece of clay fit for tilaka [such as gopī-candana] and rub it into paste with water while reciting the prescribed mūla-mantras.¹⁷ He should use his fingers to draw tilaka markings [or ūrdhva-puṇḍras] on his body, beginning with the forehead.

17. The Hindi translation of the *Bhāradvāja-saṃhitā* by Ācārya Śivaprasāda Dvivedī quotes from a scripture called *Brahma-śāstra* which gives detailed injunctions about applying *tilaka* markings.

TEXTS 24-27

*trayodaśa dvādaśa vā
 caturo caikam eva vā
 namo'-ntair nāmabhir dhyātvā
 sthāpayet tatra tatra ca*

*keśavādīn dvādaśasu
 vāsudevaṁ trayodaśe
 keśavaṁ vāsudevaṁ vā
 lalāṭe kevalaṁ nyaset*

*vyūhāṁś caturṣu tān natvā
 sadā sānnidhyam arthayet
 ato hi vaiṣṇavasyāṅgaṁ
 viṣṇor āyatanam viduḥ*

*havir nivedya devāya
 guruḥ śeṣaṁ samāpayet
 tatra tv ācāryam abhyarcya
 bhojayed vaiṣṇavān api*

The disciple may draw either twelve or thirteen tilaka markings on his body, or only four or even only one. The ūrdhva-puṇḍra should be applied while meditating on the forms of Lord Viṣṇu, uttering Their names and adding the word “namah.” The twelve ūrdhva-puṇḍras are drawn while remembering the twelve standard forms of Lord Viṣṇu beginning with Keśava,¹⁸ and if thirteen are drawn Lord Vāsudeva is included. If one wishes to apply only one ūrdhva-puṇḍra it should be drawn on the

18. The sequence of the twelve forms of Lord Viṣṇu: Keśava, Nārāyaṇa, Mādhava, Govinda, Viṣṇu, Madhusūdana, Trivikrama, Vāmana, Śrīdhara, Hṛṣīkeśa, Padmanābha, Dāmodara.

forehead and either Keśava or Vāsudeva are to be invoked.¹⁹ If one wishes to apply four ūrdhva-puṇḍras then the four members of the catur-vyūha should be invoked. In this way, offering obeisances to these different forms of the Lord, the disciple should pray for Their eternal residence in particular parts of his body. Therefore the body of a Vaiṣṇava is considered to be the abode or a temple of Lord Viṣṇu. The spiritual master should conclude the ceremony by pouring oblations into the sacred fire, consisting of the remaining portions of the various offerings that have been presented to the Lord, especially eatables like cooked food [haviṣya]. Thereafter, the disciple should worship his ācārya and at last satisfy the Vaiṣṇavas by feeding them a prasāda meal.

Nāma-saṁskāra

TEXTS 28–29

*kariṣyan vaiṣṇavaṁ nāma
vaiṣṇavāśrayam eva vā
puṇye 'hani guruḥ snātvā
pūjayitvā jagad-gurum*

*pūrvavat sthaṇḍilam kṛtvā
pūrvavat sikatā-maye
ṣoḍaśe pīṭham abhyarcyā-
vāhayen nāma-devatām*

19. The Sanskrit commentary by Paṇḍita Sarayū Prasāda Miśra, however, states that in the case of applying only one *tilaka* marking, Keśava is to be invoked on the forehead and Vāsudeva on the neck. There is no information about where Vāsudeva is to be invoked when He is listed as the thirteenth form of Lord Viṣṇu.

*bhagavad-rūpiṇaṁ dhyātvā
havir-antam athārcayet*

The spiritual master should select an auspicious day for performing the nāma-saṁskāra with the aim of bestowing upon his disciple a name of Lord Viṣṇu or a name indicating surrender to Lord Viṣṇu.²⁰ As in the previous saṁskāras, both the ācārya and his disciple should take bath and purify themselves. The spiritual master should first worship Lord Nārāyaṇa, the jagad-guru. Then, following the procedure already described, he should prepare a sthaṇḍila on a piece of open land and use sand to draw sixteen marks within it. He should invite the sixteen previously mentioned forms of Lord Viṣṇu to appear in Their respective designated places, and worship Them. He should then invoke the presence of the personality which bears the name chosen to be given to the disciple [the nāma-devatā]. The spiritual master should worship the nāma-devatā with the standard upacāras up to naivedya [the offering of cooked food] considering Him non-different from Lord Viṣṇu Himself.

TEXT 30–32

*upapanne tataḥ śiṣye
kaupīnaṁ kaṭi-bandhanam
nivedya vastre ca nave
tasmai taṁ grāhayed guruḥ*

*tac-cheṣaṁ gandha-mālyādi
tathā cānnaṁ niveditam*

*nāma dāsādi-śabdāntaṁ
śrāvayet kevalaṁ tu vā*

20. Possible additional meaning: names of Vaiṣṇavas or names indicating surrender to Vaiṣṇavas.

*parītya praṇato 'bhyarcya
devatām hr̥di nikṣipet*

The disciple brings to his spiritual master a set of new clothes [the lower and upper cloth] which are then offered to the Lord and returned to the disciple. The disciple should now wear a new kaupīna [loin cloth] and kaṭi-bandhana [piece of cloth girdled around the waist] and dress in the new clothes received from the spiritual master. The disciple is then given prasāda remnants, scents, garlands etc. from the worship of the nāma-devatā. The ācārya then bestows upon him his new name that ends with a word like dāsa [which indicates servitorship to the Lord], or simply one of the names of Lord Hari. Then they both circumambulate the nāma-devatā invoked in the sthaṇḍila, offer obeisances, worship Him and request Him to be present in the heart of the disciple.

TEXT 33

*haviṛ nivedya devāya
tantra-śeṣaṁ samāpayet
śiṣyo deśikam abhyarcya
vaiṣṇavān paritoṣayet*

Eatables like cooked food [haviṣya] should be offered to the Lord and then the fire sacrifice should be completed with the concluding oblations. The disciple should then worship his dīkṣā-guru and please the assembled Vaiṣṇavas [by feeding them prasāda].

Mantra-saṁskāra

TEXT 34

*svayaṁ brahmaṇi nikṣiptān
jātān eva ca mantrataḥ
vinītān atha putrādīn
saṁskṛtya pratibodhayet*

After having performed the nāma-saṁskāra for his sons and other subordinates, the spiritual master personally evaluates them to select those who are dedicated to the service of the Lord [brahmaṇi nikṣiptān], who have been purified by mantras, and who are obedient and submissive by nature. For such disciples he performs the mantra-saṁskāra and reveals to them the meaning of the given mantras.

TEXTS 35–36

*anukūle 'hani śubhe
guruḥ snātvā samāhitaḥ
hutāgniḥ pūrvavac chiṣyaṁ
niṣpādya kṛta-kautukam*

*tataḥ saṁpūjya deveśam
paścād agniṁ nidhāya vai
svena tantreṇa tatrātha
hutvā pūrvavad āhutīḥ*

The spiritual master should select an auspicious day²¹ favorable for the mantra-saṁskāra ceremony. Before the ceremony, the

21. The Sanskrit commentary of Paṇḍita Sarayū Prasāda Mīśra interprets this to mean choosing the exact *muhūrta*, planet, star of the *tithi* etc. which should all be auspicious and favorable.

spiritual master and the disciple should bathe and perform the preliminary purification. After attending to his daily obligatory rites²² with concentration, the ācārya should make his disciple sit at a proper place and tie an auspicious thread around his right wrist, as previously described. Thereafter, the ācārya should perform elaborate worship of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Nārāyaṇa, and then establish the sacred fire. Then, as described before,²³ he should offer oblations into the fire according to the injunctions of the scriptures accepted in his lineage.

TEXTS 37–39

*sthāne hety-āhutīnām ca
mūla-mantrāhutīḥ punaḥ
havir nivedya devāya
tac-cheṣeṇa tathāhutīḥ*

*sa-śiṣyo 'tha guruḥ kṛtvā
sāgniṁ devaṁ pradakṣiṇām
praṇamya punar āsīnaḥ
praṇipatyopaseduṣaḥ*

*saṁhārādi-kramaṁ kuryād
vidhivac choṣaṇādikam
astra-mantreṇa rakṣāṁ ca
praṇamayya guruṁs tataḥ*

Instead of the pañcāyudha-mantras, oblations should be offered

22. *Hutāgniḥ* is explained as “one who has performed his obligatory daily fire sacrifice.” (Sanskrit gloss by Paṇḍita Sarayū Prasāda Mīśra)

23. In texts 5 and 6 within the *tāpa-saṁskāra* section.

with the *mūla-mantra*.²⁴ The Supreme Lord should be offered eatables like cooked food [*haviḥ*], and the remaining portion of the food should be poured into the fire as oblations. The *homa* is then completed. The *ācārya*, along with his disciple, should circumambulate both the sacrificial fire and the Lord invoked in the *sthaṇḍila*, and offer obeisances. The spiritual master should then make his disciple sit near him and lead him to perform the *saṁhāra-nyāsa* and other kinds of purification²⁵ according to proper procedures. He should then perform *śoṣaṇa-karma* and *rakṣaṇa-karma* with *astra-mantras* for the protection of the disciple. He should then instruct the disciple to pay obeisances to him, his spiritual master.

TEXTS 40–42

*nyāsākhyam paramam mantram
vācayivātha bodhayet
śrīman nārāyaṇaḥ svāmī
dāsas tvam asi tasya vai*

*param īpsus tam evārtham
anukūlo visarjayet
prātikūlyam suvisrabdhaḥ
samprārthya śaraṇam harim*

*vraja tasyaiva caraṇau
tatraivātmānam arpayā
iti sambodhitas tv evam
mantreṇātmānam arpayet*

24. Here the procedure is the same as that during the *tāpa-saṁskāra* with the exception of offering oblations with *pañcāyudha-mantras* to Lord Śrī Viṣṇu's weapons.

25. Mentioned in SB 6.8.6, translation.

The spiritual master should bestow upon the disciple the ultimate mantra known as the nyāsa-mantra [the mantra of surrender]²⁶ and explain to him its meaning as follows: “The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Nārāyaṇa, with His divine consort Lakṣmī, the goddess of fortune, is the master of everyone and you are His eternal servant. Be eager to engage in devotional service to Him and therefore always accept that which is favorable for it and always reject that which is detrimental. Thus, be confident of Lord Hari’s protection, always take shelter of His lotus feet and dedicate yourself to Him exclusively.” Thus instructed by his spiritual master, the disciple should surrender himself to Lord Hari while uttering the nyāsa-mantra.

TEXT 43

*tataś ca vyāpakān mantrān
anyāṁś cāṅgaiḥ samanvitān
dattvāsmāi punar evaivaṁ
grhītvā vṛttim ādiśet*

After thus revealing to the disciple the vyāpaka-mantras [the sixteen-syllable, twelve-syllable, and eight-syllable mantras related to Lord Viṣṇu] and other mantras such as those used in aṅga-nyāsa, the spiritual master should formally accept the disciple and instruct him about his spiritual duties and proper behavior [vṛtti], as outlined below.

TEXT 44

*nityaṁ viṣṇu-param karmā
kuru nindyāni mā kṛthāḥ*

26. The term *nyāsa* is equivalent to *saraṇāgati*.

*sadātmānaṁ vibudhyasva
mā kāmeṣu manaḥ kṛthāḥ*

“Always work only for the sake of Lord Viṣṇu and never engage in abominable activities. Always remain on the spiritual platform and do not let your mind succumb to material desires.”

TEXT 46

*yajasva nityam ātmeśaṁ
mā naṁsīr anya-devatāḥ
lakṣyasva lakṣaṇair bhartur
lakṣiṣṭhā mānya-lakṣaṇaiḥ*

“Always worship the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Lord Nārāyaṇa, the controller of everyone, and never worship the demigods. Ornament your body with the signs of your Lord and master and not those of the demigods.”

TEXT 47

*upāsva vaiṣṇavān nityam
asato mopasīsaraḥ
guruṁ praṇamyom ity uktvā
hy ātmānaṁ ca nivedayet*

“Always serve the Vaiṣṇavas and stay away from those who are not in line with the principles of unalloyed surrender.” Thus instructed, the disciple should offer obeisances to his spiritual master and should offer himself to him [ātma-nivedana or self-surrender] while uttering the sacred syllable ‘om.’

TEXT 48

*tataḥ samāpite śeṣe
 devam ātmani nikṣipet
 gurum vidhivad abhyarcya
 vaiṣṇavān paritoṣayet*

After the ceremony has been completed and the disciple has been taught the meaning of surrender, he should endeavor to keep Lord Nārāyaṇa in his heart. Following the established rules and regulations, the disciple should now worship his ācārya and please the Vaiṣṇavas present [by serving them a prasāda meal].

Yāga-saṁskāra**TEXTS 48–50**

*yojayiṣyan guruḥ śiṣyaṁ
 nityārcana-vidhau hareḥ
 śobhane 'hani nakṣatre
 devam abhyarcya pūrvavat*

*mantravat tu hutam hutvā
 niṣṭhayāthopasāditam
 yathokta-vidhinā pūrvam
 sthāpitaṁ śubha-vigraham*

*śrī-bhūmi-līlā-sahitam
 parivāraiḥ samanvitam
 avyakta-parivāraṁ vā
 devam saṅgrāhya yājayet*

To engage his disciple in daily worship of the Deity form of Lord Hari, the ācārya should perform the yāga-saṁskāra after selecting a day and a nakṣatra which are both auspicious. On the chosen day, as described before, the spiritual master should worship Lord Nārāyaṇa and perform a fire sacrifice, offering the oblations of clarified butter and haviṣya into the sacred fire as described in the procedure for the mantra-saṁskāra. Then the spiritual master should arrange for the worship of an already formally installed arcā-vigraha of Lord Viṣṇu, along with vigrahas of Śrī-devī, Bhūmi-devī, Līlā-devī, and the Lord's family [such as His eternal weapons and ornaments in personified forms, His eternal servants and associates]. The Lord's entourage and paraphernalia may also be present as avyakta-vigrahas [to be worshiped mentally]. The ācārya should then perform the fire sacrifice.

TEXT 51–52

*śrauta-divyārṣa-kalpānām
iṣṭenānyatamena ca
sthāpanam yajanam vāpi
mīsrā hy atrādhikāriṇaḥ*

*tataḥ pariḡrhitena
gurubhir yena kenacit
vidhinā yājayitvaivam
atha śeṣam samāpayet*

The kalpa-sūtras [manuals of Vedic rituals] describe three different procedures of worship, namely śrauta, divya, and ārṣa. Brāhmaṇas who are called mīsrā worshipers²⁷ are

27. This may refer to their performance of both *niṣkāma* and *sakāma* rites, or the fact that they follow both the Vedic and the *pāñcarātri*ka system of worship simultaneously (*vaidika* and *tāntrika*).

eligible to take up this kind of worship. The spiritual master chooses the procedure which is preferred by the predecessors in his own lineage and teaches the disciple the process of Deity installation and subsequent worship²⁸ as detailed in the scriptures. The ācārya should then conclude the ceremony of the yāga-saṁskāra.

TEXT 53

*tataḥ sva-kāle svādhyāyaṁ
tato yogam ca kārayet
ijyānte guru-pūjāṁ ca
vaiṣṇavānām ca tarpaṇam*

The spiritual master should then encourage his disciple to undertake svādhyāya [study of the sacred scriptures] and yoga at their prescribed proper times of the day. As the entire ceremony of the yāga-saṁskāra is concluded, the disciple should offer formal worship to his spiritual master and satisfy the Vaiṣṇavas [by offering them prasāda and other presents].

Thus ends the section detailing the procedures in receiving the pañca-saṁskāras.

TEXT 54

*kecic caturṇām pūrveṣām
kramaṁ necchanti karmaṇām
sahaika-divase vā dve
trīṇi catvāri pañca vā*

28. Alternatively, the terms *sthāpana* and *yajana* could refer to procedures for establishing the sacrificial fire and performing the fire sacrifice. Nevertheless, all the available editions of the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* with Hindi translations seem to opt for the more common understanding that these two terms here refer to Deity worship.

Some ācāryas do not wish to perform these saṁskāras in the previously mentioned sequence [each one of them on a separate day]. One, two, three, four or even five saṁskāras can be performed together on the same day.

TEXT 55

*tadānyatama-homānte
kṛtvāgny-ādy-upasammukham
samāpayet pradhānam ca
na mantrasyānya-śeṣatā*

If more than one saṁskāra is to be performed on a single day, the sacrificial fire for the mantra-saṁskāra should be the principal while the other homas should be subordinate. The main homa should be completed after concluding the subordinate homas.

TEXT 56

*yady eka-divase pañca
tathā mantrāhuteḥ param
kṛtvā yāgāntam akhilaṁ
tantra-śeṣaṁ samāpayet*

If all the five saṁskāras are to be performed on a single day, the mantra-āhuti should be offered in a single fire sacrifice and the remaining karmas of all the saṁskāras should be performed one after another to complete the ceremony.



Appendix VIII

The Only Four Quotes from Śrīla Prabhupāda that Directly Speak About Female Dīkṣā-gurus

Actually, Dhruva Mahārāja's mother, Sunīti, was his *patha-pradarśaka-guru*. *Patha-pradarśaka-guru* means “the guru, or the spiritual master, who shows the way.” Such a guru is sometimes called *śikṣā-guru*. Although Nārada Muni was his *dīkṣā-guru* (initiating spiritual master), Sunīti, his mother, was the first who gave him instruction on how to achieve the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the duty of the *śikṣā-guru* or *dīkṣā-guru* to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to śāstric injunctions, there is no difference between *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*, and generally the *śikṣā-guru* later on becomes the *dīkṣā-guru*. Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's *dīkṣā-guru*.

>> **SB 4.12.32, Purport [Published version]**

Actually, Dhruva Maharaja's mother, Suniti, was the patha-pradarsaka-guru. Patha-pradarsaka-guru means the guru or the spiritual master who shows the way. Such guru is sometimes called siksa-guru. Although, Narada-muni was his diksa-guru, initiating spiritual master, Suniti, the mother of Dhruva Maharaja, was the first who gave him instruction how to achieve the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the duty of the siksa-guru or diksa-guru to instruct the disciple the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to sastric injunctions, there is no difference between siksa-guru and diksa-guru, and generally the siksa-guru becomes later on diksa-guru. Suniti, however, being in

family relationship with Dhruva, his mother, and also woman, could not become the diksa-guru of Dhruva Maharaja.

>> SB 4.12.32, Purport [Original Transcript]

Prof. O’Connell: Is it possible, Swamiji, for a woman to be a guru in the line of disciplic succession?

Prabhupāda: Yes. Jāhnavā devī was—Nityānanda’s wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? But, not so many. Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection... *Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya*. The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa. Then he or she can become guru. *Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei guru haya*. [break] In our material world, is it any prohibition that woman cannot become professor? If she is qualified, she can become professor. What is the wrong there? She must be qualified. That is the position. So similarly, if the woman understands Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly, she can become guru.

>> Interview with Prof. O’Connell, June 18, 1976, Toronto

Prabhupāda: If a woman is perfect in Kṛṣṇa consciousness... Just like Jāhnavā-devī, Lord Nityānanda’s wife, she was *ācārya*. She was *ācārya*. She was controlling the whole Vaiṣṇava community.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: Lord Nityānanda?

Prabhupāda: Wife. Jāhnavā-devī. She was controlling the whole Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava community.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: Do you have references about that in any of your books, Śrīla Prabhupāda?

Prabhupāda: I don't think. But there are many *ācāryas*. Maybe somewhere I might have mentioned. It is not that woman cannot be *ācārya*. Generally, they do not become. In very special case. But Jāhnavā-devī was accepted as, but she did not declare.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: Women today... There is a very popular topic amongst women: they speak of liberation. And their desire..., their desire to be liberated is sane, but they do not understand. And they object very strongly... I've spoken to some of these so-called liberated women, and they object strongly to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, because they think we discriminate against women. So I have been taking advantage of opportunities to describe to them that the only means to liberation for men and woman is through Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

Prabhupāda: Kṛṣṇa does not make any discrimination. Kṛṣṇa does not make. Whatever difference is there, it is bodily difference. But as soul, their equal. So whatever difference we make, that is bodily difference. So when one is above the bodily concept of life, there is no difference.

Why woman? Even cats and dogs. Woman is human being. Even cats and dogs, they have got the same spirit soul. So a learned scholar will see from the spiritual platform. Then there is equality.

>> Room Conversation, June 29, 1972, San Diego

Next January there will be an examination on this Bhagavad-gita. Papers will be sent by me to all centers, and those securing the minimum passing grade will be given the title as Bhakti-sastri. Similarly, another examination will be held on Lord Caitanya's Appearance Day in February, 1970 and it will be upon Srimad-Bhagavatam and Bhagavad-gita. Those passing will get the title of Bhakti-vaibhava. Another examination will

be held sometimes in 1971 on the four books, Bhagavad-gita, Srimad-Bhagavatam, Teachings of Lord Caitanya, and Nectar of Devotion. One who will pass this examination will be awarded with the title of Bhaktivedanta. I want that all of my spiritual sons and daughters will inherit this title of Bhaktivedanta, so that the family transcendental diploma will continue through the generations. Those possessing the title of Bhaktivedanta will be allowed to initiate disciples. Maybe by 1975, all of my disciples will be allowed to initiate and increase the numbers of the generations. That is my program. So we should not simply publish these books for reading by outsiders, but our students must be well versed in all of our books so that we can be prepared to defeat all opposing parties in the matter of self-realization.

>> Letter to Hamsaduta, Los Angeles, Jan 3, 1969



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