

*In Defense of Vaiṣṇava-
dīkṣā according to
Nārada-Pañcarātra*

AN INITIAL RESPONSE TO ŚRĪMAN MADAN MOHAN DASA
KRISHNA-KIRTI DASA, DAMODARA DASA

Contents

Executive Summary.....	1
Introduction	3
Siddha Pranali and Caste Goswamis	4
The Sunīti Verse and Purport	6
Jāti – qualification by birth.....	8
MM’s “Not So Many” Jugglery.....	10
Accusing Śrīla Prabhupāda of being inconsistent?	11
Are we calling ourselves ācāryas?.....	12
Appendix I: Bengali for “om viṣṇupāda śrī jagannātha”	12
Appendix II: References for <i>varṇa</i> by qualification despite referring to birth.....	13

Executive Summary

1. FDGs in Bhaktivinoda Thakura's (BVT's) diksa-line, siddha-pranali and Caste Gosvamis

- BVT made a chart of his own diksa-line coming through Bipin Bihari Gosvami and mentions it is *siddha-pranali*
- In NoD 16, **SP rejects *siddha-pranali* as a concoction¹**
- However, even if *siddha-pranali* is bona fide, it is not meant for ISKCON because:
 - It is not established and propagated by BVT, SBSST, and SP
 - Siddha-pranali is for *raganuga sadhakas* while candidates for initiation in ISKCON are on the *vaidhi bhakti* platform; giving them *siddha-pranali* will create havoc
 - Thus, ISKCON's initiation process is pancaratrīki not siddha-pranali
 - ISKCON's initiation process (as established by BVT, SBSST, & SP) is sufficient to take one from sradha level to prema level; artificial svarupa-siddhi and meditation not needed; Holy Name form etc. automatically reveals when time comes
 - FDGs in BVT's diksa-line may be justified because a guru in siddha-pranali (if bona fide) needs to be on prema platform; he has to realize *siddha-svarupa* even of his disciple to tell him about it.
- Articles in *Gaudiya* suggest that BVT rejected his diksa-line. For instance Gaudiya 4.1, 15 Aug 1925, p.27²

2. SB 4.12.32, The Suniti verse and Purport

- MM contends that SP's statement as to why Suniti not become a diksa-guru is ambiguous. Thus it is descriptive, not prescriptive, (i.e. it doesn't say "no women can initiate.")
- The primary meaning of SP's statement for Suniti not being diksa-guru is: "being a woman" and "specifically his mother." There is no doubt that Suniti's being a woman is not ambiguous.
- "Sastric injunctions" are the source of reasons SP mentions. Sastras enjoin two vidhis: Vaidika & Pancaratrīka
 - According to Vaidika vidhi women cannot become diksa-guru (SB 1.4.25)
 - According to Pancaratrīka-vidhi women cannot become diksa-guru (BS 1.42-43)
 - Thus, according to any vidhi, women could not become diksa-guru
 - Thus, Suniti could not become Dhruva Maharaja's diksa-guru.
- Thus, you don't need to speculate that there are any other reasons.
- Still if you say that the description of Suniti's not becoming diksa-guru is not prescription that "no women can initiate," this is an argument of the *karma-mimamsakas*, whose argument was defeated by Baladeva Vidyabhusana (Govinda Bhasya, 1.1.1.3).
 - Baladeva's Argument: if a poor man is told of a hidden treasure in his house and its location, he is greatly benefited by that description alone. The description itself is motivation for action.

3. Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā (BS) 1.42 prohibits diksa-gurus who are born śūdra, so ISKCON's gurus are not bona fide

- MM's objection to BS as an authority is that, based on a literal reading, he says BS judges varna by birth.
- However, SP says (SB 4.31.10, purport) that BS judges varna by quality, not birth.
- Scriptures like BS and Manu-smṛiti appear to judge a person's varna by birth, but it is actually by quality.

¹ "The siddha-pranali process is followed by a class of men ... who have manufactured their own way of devotional service."

² Following the above scriptural injunction ... that one should give up a guru who is inimical to Vaiṣṇavas... Śrīmad Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura became indifferent to bad association (asat-saṅga) with a sense gratifier and took shelter of Śrī Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, a great personality, the leader among paramahāṁsas.

- SBSST in his famous “Brahmana O Vaisnava”, Prakritijana Kanda, explains how this is so:
- When shastras mention varna by birth, it is taken for granted that the samskaras are in place.
- When the samskaras are in place, starting with garbhādhāna samskara, birth reflects actual quality
- But when the samskaras are not in place, like in Kali-yuga, then birth does not reflect actual quality.
- Whether samskaras are in place or not, quality alone is always the criterion for judging varna.
- MM’s idea seems to be that any scripture that mentions varna based on birth is to be rejected
- But by MM’s procedure, SB, BG and many other scriptures are also rejected.
 - For instance, SB 7.11.13 mentions varna by birth (janma-karma-avadatanam...)
- Thus, conclusion is that BS prohibition is applicable on those who have quality of sudras and lower, not ISKCON gurus who may have born in less-than-sudra families but who have qualities of brahmana

4. MM’s word Jugglery on “Not So Many”

- MM spends 25 pages giving creative explanations for the phrases “not so many”, “very special case” and “very rare.”

5. Are we accusing SP of being Inconsistent?

- MM accuses that we “have accused Srila Prabhupada of inconsistency just as Vallabhacharya accused Sridhara Svami of inconsistency.”
- Contrary to what MM claims, we say in our book that “Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā in fact enhances the position of Śrīla Prabhupāda as a staunch representative of the śāstras.”
- Vallabhacharya’s criticism of Sridhara Svami was to show how he was not in line with shastra.
- Our harmonization shows how all of Srila Prabhupada’s differing statements on FDG are actually consistent and strictly in accordance with shastra.

6. Are we calling ourselves Acharyas?

- MM says, “you in effect attempt to establish yourself as an ācārya in the matter of initiations — on par with Śrīla Prabhupāda, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.”
- MM’s argument applies to any book in ISKCON that explains sastra:
 - No one in ISKCON is on the level of SP, SBSST and BVT.
 - This means all books that explain shastra published by ISKCON devotees are not bona fide.
 - All SB purports that were written after SP’s departure are not bona fide.
- Truth is that one should not write books and explanations of sastras by one’s own accord without the order and permission of one’s gurus, and without strictly following their instructions
- We have researched and written this book on the order of senior leader disciples of SP, like HH Bhakti Vikasa Swami, HG Basughosa Prabhu, etc. and by their blessings.
- Whatever conclusion the GBC reaches on this matter, it is SP’s instruction that it must be corroborated not only with his words but also with sadhu and shastra.
- SAC failed to do so in its 2005 and 2013 papers and resorted to speculation.

Introduction

Before presenting our point-for-point response to Śrīmān Madana Mohana (MM) Prabhu's lengthy rebuttal "Guru: The Principle, Not the Body" (2020) to our book *Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada-Pañcarātra* (2019), a few words about the history and purpose of our own book are in order.

In the course of our research, while reviewing the SAC's papers of 2005 and 2013, we noticed some curious statements about *pāñcarātrika-vidhi*, in which it was said that there were no differences in qualifications of women relative to men with regard to eligibility for becoming *dīkṣā-guru*. We decided to double-check this claim. One of the shastras we reviewed was the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (BS), which is one of the *saṁhitās* identified as *Nārada-Pañcarātra*. It so happens that there are statements in this shastra that contradict the SAC's claims about *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* and women's eligibility.

This exposed a shortcoming in the SAC's research methods. Their statements about women's eligibility with regard to *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* turned out to be unsupported and untrue. Given that they are supposed to research shastra and report on it to the GBC, they shouldn't have made such claims without first having verified them. Considering the SAC's status and mission, their oversight cannot be overlooked.

The researchers of the two papers on female *dīkṣā-gurus* by the SAC, the 2005 and 2013 papers, seem to have decided on what they wanted to prove and then selected the evidence that supported their conclusion, or explained the evidence away or ignored if it didn't.

And Śrīmān Madana Mohan Prabhu's rebuttal to our book is no different in this respect. His work is yet another instance of an attempt to prove something (or in this case, disprove something else) by inconsistent, ad-hoc, ends-justifies-the-means arguments rather than adherence to an established set of hermeneutical principles.

Our hermeneutical principles begin with harmonizing our understanding of spiritual topics with sadhu, shastra, and guru, with shastra "as the center of all", as per CC Madhya 20.352. This is the way that Śrīla Prabhupāda told us to understand things. This is how we approached the research for our book. And this is how we have responded to some of Madana Mohana Prabhu's challenges.

Your servants,

Krishna-kīrti Dasa

Damodāra Dasa

p.s. An online version of our book is now available at www.tinyurl.com/vdnep-html

Siddha Pranali and Caste Goswamis

Prabhu Madana Mohan (MM) says that the *dīkṣā*-lineage of Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Thakura is bona fide because the Thakura himself took initiation in it. And because it has female *dīkṣā-gurus*, the female gurus must necessarily be bona fide. Otherwise, why did the Thakur even get initiated into it?

[MM says,] One example, which cannot be easily dismissed as deviant, is of Bhaktivinoda Thākura's own *dīkṣā* lineage as described in his *dīkṣā-patra* (letter of initiation), in which three Vaiṣṇavīs — Rāma Maṇi Gosvāminī, Guṇa Mañjarī Gosvāminī and Maheśvarī Gosvāminī — are preceding *dīkṣā-gurus* in his line:³ (20)

But notice that the chart below is titled “Bhaktivinoda’s siddha-pranāli chart in English.” This is significant because the diksha succession described is a *siddha-pranāli* succession. But Śrīla Prabhupāda in the Nectar of Devotion (chapter 16) says siddha-pranali is not bona fide.

Sri Sri Godruma Candraya Namah.

Srimati Jahnava Thakurani's Dhara (Parampara)

Hare Krsna Hare Krsna Krsna Krsna Hare Hare Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare

Siddha Pranali is determined in accordance with Sri Gopal Guru Goswami, and Dhyan Candra Goswami's Archana Paddhati's.

Sri Guru Parampara	Sri Manjari Parampara	Age	Bodily Color	Color of Dress	Seva	Kunjia of Residence	Group	Quality	Relationship	Order	Divine Cherished Ambition	Maintainer
1 Sri Nityananda Sakti Sri Jahnava Thakurani	Srimati Ananga Manjari	13	Basanta Ketaki	Blue Lotus	Dressing and Decorating	Anangambuda	Lalita's	Krsna Priti Kama	As far as who is to be served and what is the seva, that has been given by my Guru: The worshipable object is Sri Sri Radha Krishna within the forest kunjies of Vrindaban, and my eternal occupation is rendering seva to them. The siddha deha is always transcendental, unchangeable, and unaffected by time, and that is my real self. For I am an eternal maidservant of Sri Radha. My group leader is.....who is graceful and skilled in all the arts, she is a constant companion of Sri Radha. I always follow her order and consider myself her dasi. Let me attain the seva, form, and qualities, like that of Sri Rupa Manjari. And by following in her footsteps along with the other sakhis and manjaris, let me begin Radha Krishna nitya seva this very day. This mood is called 'Parakastha', by the strength of this firm conviction one will come to know all of the moods and mellows of jugal seva, if one is submissive to following in the foot steps of the sakhis. I am looked after by.....for she knows the essence of everything. I reside in her Sri Kunja Mandira and follow her every order, for by doing so, instantly Radha Krishna's seva will be available to me.			
2 Sri Ramacandra Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Ratna Manjari	12/10	Milkish color	Star Cluster	Pan	Manohar	Lalita's	Krsna Priti Kama				
3 Sri Rajab allabha Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Rasa Manjari	13	Morning sun	Jaba Flower Red	Candan	Mohana	Campak-lata's	Krsna Priti Kama				
4 Sri Keshavacandra Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Kanaka Manjari	12/6	Molten Gold	Deep Blue	Camara	Ananda	Lalita's	Krsna Priti Kama				
5 Sri Rudresvara Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Rati Manjari	12/4	Molten Gold	Jaba Flower (Red)	Camara	Rasa	Indulekha's	Rati Krsna Priti				
6 Sri Dayarama Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Dana Manjari	12/4	Kunda Flower (white)	Golden Flower	Dress	Kanaka	Rangadevi's	Kama Krsna Priti				
7 Sri Mahesvari Goswamini	Srimati Madhu Manjari	12/2	Golden color	Bumble Bee	Freshened Water	Nila	Tungavidya's	Madhure Krsna Priti				
8 Sri Guna Manjari Goswamini	Srimati Guna Manjari	12/1	Milkish color	Blue Lotus	Fanning	Manas Harang	Vishaka's	Rasa Lila Krsna Priti				
9 Sri Ramamani Goswamini	Srimati Rasa Manjari	13	Basanta Ketaki Flower	Blue Lotus	Dressing and Decorating	Ananga	Campak-lata's	Priti Krsna Priti				
10 Sri Jogesvara Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Juthi Manjari	12/10	Morning Sun	Star Cluster	Kunkuma Candan	Manohara	Citra's	Kama Krsna Priti				
11 Sri Vipina Bihari Goswami Prabhu	Srimati Vilasa Manjari	12/11	Tumeric	Star Cluster	Hari Candan	Ananda	Lalita's	Vilase Krsna Priti				
12 Sri Bhaktivinoda Thakura	Srimati Kamala Manjari	12/6/10	Lighting	Star Cluster	Camphor	Svananda Sukhada	Lalita's	Krsna Kama				

Bhaktivinoda's *siddha-pranāli* chart in English.

The *siddha-pranāli* process is followed by a class of men who are not very authorized and who have manufactured their own way of devotional service. They imagine that they have become associates of the Lord simply by thinking of themselves like that. This external behavior is not at all according to the regulative principles. The so-called *siddha-pranāli* process is followed by the

³ Reproduced under fair use from “Hindu Encounter with Modernity” by Shukavak N. Das (1996), pp. 202 and 233.

prakṛta-sahajīya, a pseudosect of so-called Vaiṣṇavas. **In the opinion of Rūpa Gosvāmī, such activities are simply disturbances to the standard way of devotional service.** (NOD 16)

Now, some will point out that this chart was originally made in Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's own handwriting. However, for argument sake, even if you accept *siddha-praṇāli* as bona fide, for several reasons the *siddha-praṇāli* is not applicable in ISKCON:

1. For *siddha-praṇāli dīkṣā*:
 - a. Guru reveals disciple's *siddha-svarūpa* to him.
 - b. The disciple henceforward performs *rāgānugā-bhakti*.
 - c. **Thus, the disciple needs to be at least on *rāgānugā* platform.**
 - d. **Guru must be on prema platform, which is evident because he not only knows his own *svarūpa* but that of his disciple also.**
2. In ISKCON those who are initiated are officially entering *vaidhi bhakti*.
3. They do not start meditating on their *svarūpa* and perform *rāgānugā bhakti*.
4. Instead they take shelter of the Lord's Holy name and perform deity worship according to regulative principles of *vaidhi bhakti*.
5. ISKCON's initiation process is *pāñcarātrikī*, not *siddha-praṇāli*.
6. Thus, even if we take *siddha-praṇāli* as bona fide (which doesn't seem to be, according to *Nectar of Devotion* 16), it is not applicable to ISKCON.
7. ISKCON doesn't need to depend on *siddha-praṇāli* because:
 - a. It is not established and propagated by BVT, BSST, or SP.
 - b. It is not applicable to *vaidha-bhaktas*.
 - c. ISKCON's process is sufficient even for advancement of *rāgānugā* devotees, and it will take them to the level of prema.
8. BVT & BSST established this process they called "*namāśraya*" in line with the Six Gosvāmīs who have fully based it on *guru-sādhu-śāstra*; while *siddha-praṇāli* is nowhere found in *guru-sadhu* or *sastras*.

So, even if we were to accept the *dīkṣā*-lineage of BVT as bona fide, the female gurus would have had to have been on the level of prema in order to have given *siddha-praṇāli dīkṣā*. In this regard, MM says,

We should note that BS 1.59-60⁴ says, in effect, that unless you are ready to accept these three Gosvāmīnīs as *siddhas*, **the entire *dīkṣā* lineage** of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura starting from them is bogus and useless, as all the consecutive *ācāryas* after them in his line were not properly initiated, and the three Gosvāmīnīs themselves were foolish and fallen. (21)

As pointed out above, even if accepting *siddha-praṇāli* as bona fide the *dīkṣā-gurus* giving *siddha-praṇāli-dīkṣā* most certainly would have to have been *siddhas* themselves, which is compatible with *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*'s requirement that ladies be *siddha* (BS 1.44) to give *dīkṣā*. Otherwise, without being *siddha*, how could they know not only their own *siddha-svarūpa* but also that of their disciples? If they were not *siddha*, then they absolutely had no qualification to give *siddha-praṇāli*.

It should also be noted that some articles published in *The Gaudiya* during the lifetime of SBSST suggest that even the disciplic succession of BVT's *dīkṣā-guru* itself was not bona fide. In the *Gauḍīya* 4.1 (15

⁴ As quoted in VNP 46-47

August 1925), page 27, in an article “*om̐ viṣṇupāda śrī jagannātha*” (translated from Bengali) pgs. 25-27 (see Appendix I for Bengali transliteration), there is this statement regarding BVT:

Śrīmad Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

*guror apy avaliptasya kāryākāryam ajānataḥ
utpatha-pratipannasya parityāgo vidhīyate*

A spiritual master who is seen to be inordinately proud, who is not able to distinguish between his prescribed duties and forbidden behavior, and who has strayed from the path of dharma, should be given up. (Mahābhārata 5.178.24)

Following the above scriptural injunction and the injunction that one should give up a guru who is inimical to Vaiṣṇavas—*vaiṣṇava-vidveṣī cet parityajya eva* (Bhakti-sandarbha 243)—Śrīmad Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura became indifferent to bad association (*asat-saṅga*) with a sense gratifier and took shelter of Śrī Jagannātha Dāsa Bābājī, a great personality, the leader among *paramahamsas*.

Other articles published during the lifetime of SBSST in the *Gauḍīya* (The *Gauḍīya*, 4/42, 12 June, 1926 - p. 857-8) and *Sajjana-toṣaṇī* (“Vaiṣṇava o Nindaka,” *Sajjana-toṣaṇī*, 21, 8-9, p. 253) give further support that the disciplic succession of Bipin Bihari Goswami, a caste-goswami guru, was not bona fide. Indeed, BVT himself declared the caste goswamis as an apasampradāya.

The Sunīti Verse and Purport

Contention: Sunīti Purport, SB 4.12.32, is ambiguous (underdetermined), and thus we do not have information of the **real reason** why Sunīti could not become Dhruva Maharaja’s *dīkṣā-guru*. Thus, it is not a prescriptive but a descriptive statement, not mandated to be followed by ISKCON

The point about the Sunīti quote is that it is ambiguous. ... This means the evidence (the quote in this case) is consistent with several theories (explanations). ...

Therefore this quote cannot be used as a normative statement—simply because it is unclear what exactly, if anything, it is supposed to normalize. (FULL, MM p.157-169)

ANSWER:

Here is the quote under consideration: **“According to sāstric 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*.”**

If one doesn’t try to juggle words and be confused, one will find two unambiguous reasons that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself mentions: “being a woman” and “specifically his mother.” Being a woman is gender reason; being a mother is reason of relation. Is being a woman ambiguous? When you say “she is a woman,” you cannot have other possibilities of who she is.

So wherefrom the doubt arises to brainstorm all possible hidden reasons that can be construed from SP’s words? When the statement is clear, you don’t need to interpret.

Śrīla Prabhupāda says that Sunīti could not become *dīkṣā-guru* because she was a woman. It is female gender. Period. What is the source of this prohibition? The previous sentence (“According to śāstric injunctions”) indicates that the *śāstric* injunctions are the source.

- According to Vaidika vidhi women cannot become *dīkṣā-guru*.
- According to *Pāñcarātrika-vidhi* women cannot become *dīkṣā-guru*.
- Thus, according to any vidhi, women could not become *dīkṣā-guru*.
- Thus, Sunīti could not become Dhruva Maharaja’s *dīkṣā-guru*.

You don’t need to prove that Sunīti was initiated according to *pāñcarātrika-vidhi* or not; result would be the same in either case: she could not become *dīkṣā-guru*.

Now those who want to juggle words to create doubt may argue that Sunīti’s not becoming a *dīkṣā-guru* doesn’t prohibit other women from doing so. They say that this is merely a description of Sunīti’s circumstances, not something Śrīla Prabhupāda asked us to do. MM says,

Therefore the Sunīti quote is descriptive (simply stating the fact of her unable to initiate Dhruva), not prescriptive (mandating a certain course of action) or proscriptive (forbidding other women to initiate). In a similar usage of word “could not become” (MM p.159)

In other words, because Śrīla Prabhupāda only gave a description and not some command, like “we must do this”, this statement cannot be the basis of any action.

But this is the same argument given by followers of *karma-māmānsā*, who say that statements that don’t directly prescribe action should not be the basis of our action. This argument is fully defeated by all commentators of Vedanta, specifically Baladeva Vidyabhūṣaṇa in third sutra (1.1.1.3), who argues that if a trustworthy person informs a poor man of a hidden treasure in his house and a means to find it, that information, though not prescriptive, benefits the poor man greatly.

To this objection we reply, that it is an erroneous action to think that the Vedanta text is useless; simply because it does not teach any action. Though there is no direct teaching of any command or prohibition in it, yet in as much as it teaches the existence of God, who is the highest end of man; it has a utility of its own; like the sentences ‘there is wealth in your house,’ etc. As a man who thought that he was a pauper and so felt miserable, gets happiness when some trustworthy person tells him that there is a great hidden treasure in his house; and as the attainment of that treasure then becomes the object of his life. (translation by Srisa Candra Vasu)⁵

⁵ *tatrāha na khalu tāvad vedānta-vākya-gaṇaḥ prayoga-yogyāḥ siddhārtha-bodhakatvena prayojana-śūnyatvāt, sapta-dvīpāvasundharety ādi vākyavat | pravṛtti-nivṛtti-rūpa-sādhyārtha-bodhakāni vākyaṇi prayojanavattvāt prayoga-yogyāni dṛṣṭāni | ... sarva-kāmo yajeta, surāṃ na pibed iti vede ca | ... brahma khalu pariniṣpannam vastu | tad-bodhakasya satyaṃ jñānam anantam ity ādi-vākyaṣya tac-chūnyatvān na tad-yogyatvam | ... āmnāyasya kriyārthatvād ānarthakyam atad-arthānām tasmād anityatvam ucyate maivam bhramitavyam | pravṛtti-nivṛtti-bodhakatā-virahe’pi parama-pumartha-rūpa-brahmāstīva-bodhanenaiva tasya tadvattvāt nidhi-sattāvabodhaka-vākyavat | yathā tvad-gṛhe nidhir astīty āpta-vākyaṭ tat-prāpty-eka-lakṣaṇaḥ pum-arthas*

(Objection): They (vedanta statements) are something like mere descriptive passages of the Vedas or other subjects: such as the sentences ‘the world consists of the seven continents,’ &c. Only those passages of the Vedas are relevant which direct something to be done or something not to be done. ... In the Vedas we find commands and prohibitions

Just the description alone motivates action. For example, from a description of the futility of Hiraṇyakaśipu’s attempt to become deathless by material benedictions, Śrīla Prabhupāda derives the moral rule that we should not be materially ambitious.

The whole point here is that even Hiraṇyakaśipu, the most powerful of materialists, **could not become deathless by his various plans**. What, then, can be accomplished by the tiny Hiraṇyakaśipus of today, whose plans are thwarted from moment to moment? *Śrī Īsopaniṣad* **instructs us not to** make one-sided attempts to win the struggle for existence. (Iso 11, ppt)

Śrīla Prabhupāda derives the moral rule that we should not “make one-sided attempts to win the struggle for existence” from a description of Hiraṇyakaśipu’s futile materialistic activities. Therefore, descriptive statements form the basis of our action. Thus, the knowledge mentioned in SB 4.12.32, purport: being woman, one cannot become *dīkṣā-guru*, becomes the basis of our action to be taken.

Jāti – qualification by birth

Contention: Because *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* (BS) disqualifies those who are born *śūdras* or lower from becoming guru, if we accept this shastra as authority, we will eventually come to oppose Śrīla Prabhupāda for establishing gurus who are *mleccha* by birth.

Madan Mohana Pr (MM’s) says (bolding in original),

In my last email I showed that, taken literally, BS 1.44 mandates the level of ‘*pratyakṣitātmanātha*’ to override ALL of the disqualifications from BS 1.42 for women, *śūdras*, *antyajas*, criminals, fallen and lustful. These disqualifications are referred to in BS 1.44, collectively, as ‘*kulādikam*’ and explained by Sarayū-prasāda Mīśra as ‘*hīna-kula-jāti*’, or “*birth in lower families*” — and not just gender, which is not even mentioned separately either in BS 1.44 or in his commentary:

*kim apy atrābhijāyante yoginaḥ sarva-yoniṣu
pratyakṣitātmanāthānām naiṣām cintyaṁ kulādikam (44)*

However (*kim api*), [since] yogis here (*atra*) take birth (*abhijāyante*) in all wombs (*sarva-yoniṣu*), for those who see the Lord of the soul directly (*pratyakṣitātmanāthānām*), their

such as, “Let a man who desires heaven, perform sacrifice,” “Let no man drink wine.” ... Therefore passages like “brahman is true, intelligence,” &c. are useless, because they do not aim at teaching any particular action. ...

āmnāyasya kriyārthatvādānarthakyaamatadanarthānām | (pū. mī. 1.2:1)

“As the purport of a scripture is action, those scriptural passages whose purport is not action, are purportless.”

(Answer): To this objection we reply, that it is an erroneous action to think that the Vedanta text is useless; simply because it does not teach any action. Though there is no direct teaching of any command or prohibition in it, yet in as much as it teaches the existence of God, who is the highest end of man; it has a utility of its own; like the sentences ‘there is wealth in your house,’ &c. As a man who thought that he was a pauper and so felt miserable, gets happiness when some trustworthy person tells him that there is a great hidden treasure in his house; and as the attainment of that treasure then becomes the object of his life.

(eṣām) [such yogis' disqualifications of] family, etc. (*kulādikam*) are not to be considered (*na cintyam*).

Do you accept that the original purpose for the term 'kulādikam' in BS 1.44 by its author Bharadvāja Muni was to refer to ALL of the categories in BS 1.42 disqualified from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*, and NOT just to women? (28)

As you can see, this statement from the scripture you propose as the new norm for ISKCON is literally one philosophical mutation away from what Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu was apprehensive about as "the conclusion that actually only Indians born in brāhmaṇa families should be *dīkṣā-gurus*". (9)

To put his argument more simply, he is saying that because women, *śūdras*, *antyajas*, criminals, the fallen, and the lustful are part of a single category (*kulādikam*), you cannot treat women differently from the rest of the members of this category. That means that not only are women prohibited from giving initiation in BS 1.42 – 43, but so are *śūdras* and *antyajas*, persons to whom ISKCON's non-Indian gurus belong. To say that it is by quality and not birth introduces inconsistency (*asaṅgati*), which then invalidates our interpretation of *śūdra*, *antyaja*, etc. by quality, not birth.

Furthermore, MM's contention is that according to the literal reading he ascribes to the verse, because women, *śūdras*, and *antyajas* are excluded on account of lower birth, this śāstra (*Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*) cannot be considered an authoritative sastra to settle any questions for ISKCON as to whether women may or may not become *dīkṣā-guru*, since ISKCON considers only qualification, not birth.

Our answer:

When we say that *varṇa* is by qualities and thus ISKCON gurus, although born *mlecchas*, have brahminical qualities and are thus bona fide, MM says that this understanding is incompatible with *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* and tries to prove that it only accepts *varṇa* by birth (quoting at length from BS and commentary) and is thus not applicable for ISKCON. However, SP says that BS supports *varṇa* by quality not birth.⁶ Thus MM needs to re-align his thinking procedure with that of SP. Let us see the faulty procedure which leads MM to reach a conclusion opposite to that of SP's.

It seems that MM studies scriptures with the idea that if it doesn't match with what he thinks SP says or does, then he rejects that scripture as either un-authentic or not applicable to ISKCON.

If we follow MM's procedure, then we need to reject any scripture that mentions that *varṇa* is by birth. Thus, we end up rejecting *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam*, *Bhagavad-gītā*, etc. where we do find mention of *varṇa* by birth. By referring to commentaries to these scriptures one can establish that they are speaking about by-birth consideration.

SB 7.11.13: *janma-karmāvadātānām kriyās cāsrama-coditāḥ* (*janma*—by birth; *karma*—and activities; *avadātānām*—who are purified;) **TRANSLATION:** "Such *brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas* and

⁶ It is not a fact that because one is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family he is automatically a *brāhmaṇa*. He has a better chance to become a *brāhmaṇa*, but unless he meets all the brahminical qualifications, he cannot be accepted as such. On the other hand, if the brahminical qualifications are found in the person of a *śūdra*, he should immediately be accepted as a *brāhmaṇa*. To substantiate this there are many quotations from *Bhāgavatam*, *Mahābhārata*, *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* and the *pañcarātra*, as well as many other scriptures. (SB 4.31.10, purport)

vaiśyas, purified by their family traditions and by their behavior, should worship the Lord, study the Vedas and give charity.”

Most of these scriptures mention both: *varṇa* by birth and *varṇa* by quality. Thus, supporters of both parties (*varṇa* by birth alone and *varṇa* by quality alone) get their respective quotes. However, what is needed is harmonization in order to reach a proper conclusion, which SBSST attempts in his book “Brāhmaṇa O Vaiṣṇava: *viśaya tāratamya*.” Here the word *tāratamya* itself means harmonization.

In this regard we can only say that in early times ten *samskāras*, or purificatory processes, were followed by the *brāhmaṇas*. Among these, one is the *garbhādāna* ceremony, which was based on seminal line. It has, however, been changed and perverted in the course of time. ... if this *samskāra* was taken more seriously, then seminal consideration would have been more applicable. (Brahmana o Vaiṣṇava, Prakṛti-jana-kanda)

The harmonization is that *varṇa* is by birth as well as by quality, but quality takes precedence over birth. It is because the *samskaras* are in place that a son with brahmana quality takes birth in brahmana family, *kṣatriya* quality in *kṣatriya* family, *vaiśya* quality in *vaiśya* family, and so on. Therefore, the sastras usually mention *varṇa* by birth while describing *varṇa* duties.

Thus, in sastras when *varṇa* is mentioned by birth, it is to be understood that it is taken for granted because *samskaras* are in place, the qualities required for that *varṇa* are in place.

However, nowadays because the *samskaras* are broken, the connection of *varṇa* with birth doesn't remain valid and thus the only procedure to identify *varṇa* is by observing quality. Śukadeva acharya's commentary to 7.11.35 (*yasya-yal-laksanam proktam... verse*) supports this analysis of BSST (see Appendix II for references and detailed explanation).

This doesn't mean that the sastras which mention *varṇa* by birth are inapplicable today. It only means that the procedure to judge *varṇa* by birth doesn't apply for today. The duties etc. mentioned there for *varṇas* are to be followed as is. When a person is identified as brahmana by symptoms he should perform the works mentioned for brahmanas in sastras; same for *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas*, women, etc. Thus, it must be understood that BS is following *varṇa* by quality.

Śrīla Prabhupāda sees *Manu-saṁhitā* (MS) with this same understanding, as is evident in his purport to SB 7.11.14, where he quotes from *Manu-saṁhitā* regarding duties of *dvijas*. MS establishes that *varṇa* is by birth (and never explicitly mentions that *varṇa* is by quality). So according to MM's thinking procedure, MS should have not been used to decide duties of *varṇas*; however, Śrīla Prabhupāda does that on numerous occasions, including instructing duties for devotee women.

This means that in studying BS also, we have to apply duties and rules mentioned there for different *varṇas* as is; however, the *varṇas* we identify by qualities not by birth. Therefore, our application of qualification to *śūdras* and *antyajas* is supported and is consistent.

MM's “Not So Many” Jugglery

This is a minor point, but the semantic gymnastics that MM goes through to prove that Śrīla Prabhupāda's phrases “not so many” or “very special case” don't mean what normal people think they mean tells us more about his own psychology than about Śrīla Prabhupāda's actual intentions.

For example:

[Now, Śrīla Prabhupāda puts his previous statements that “not that woman cannot be *ācārya*” and “But there are many *ācāryas*” in a historical context: “Generally, they do not become” and “In very special case”. This means that even though women acting as *ācāryas* were many, they were “not so many” or “as many as men”. “Generally, they do not become” and “In very special case” might also mean that, although women *ācāryas* were many, still very few of them, if any, became *ācāryas* of the entire Vaiṣṇava community, like Jāhnavā-devī, or even of significant numbers of disciples. The latter reading is corroborated by the next sentence.]

The above statement is what “an obscure meaning screwed out of” a text looks like.

If you have to spend 25 pages (which MM does) to explain away phrases like “not so many”, “very special case” and “very rare”, then you have wandered far from the simple, conventional usage of language characteristic of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s speech and writing.

Accusing Śrīla Prabhupāda of being inconsistent?

Contention: By saying Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements are contradictory, you have accused Śrīla Prabhupāda of inconsistency just as Vallabhācārya accused Śrīdhara Svāmī of inconsistency.

Reply: MM has falsely accused us. Instead, we show how all of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements on FDG are consistent with each other and strictly in line with shastra.

MM says, “you declare Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements on VDG to be “contradictory, incompatible, inconsistent, irreconcilable, incongruous” etc. and therefore badly in need to be “made consistent” by your Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā-ṭīkā.” and that by this we are just like Vallabhācārya in accusing Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī of being inconsistent. (14)

Contrary to what MM claims, we say in our book that “Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā in fact enhances the position of Śrīla Prabhupāda as a staunch representative of the śāstras.” Vallabhācārya’s criticism of Śrīdhara Svāmī was to show how he was not in line with shastra. Our harmonization shows how *all* of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s differing statements on FDG are actually consistent and strictly in accordance with shastra:

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 another (SB 4.16.1 purport).

Are we calling ourselves ācāryas?

MM says,

“Make no mistake about it — by insisting that it is your interpretation of BS that ISKCON’s initiation and guruship policies must be based on (VNP 7), you in effect attempt to establish yourself as an *ācārya* in the matter of initiations — on par with Śrīla Prabhupāda, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.”

It is a repeated accusation in MM’s book that we are not qualified to write a book (and especially comment on sastra like BS) and become guides to very senior devotee leaders of ISKCON. However, we would like to bring to his notice that it is not out of our own accord that we wrote this book, but it is on the orders of Prabhupāda’s senior disciples like His Holiness Bhakti Vikāsa Swami, His Grace Bāsughoṣa Prabhu, His Grace Śyāmasundara Prabhu, that we took up this attempt and that our book was reviewed by some of these. It is after getting blessings from them that we attempted this and, on their order, we dedicated our book to Śrīla Prabhupāda in Mayapur. Also for MM’s information, many of the senior leader disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda have appreciated our attempt in writing this book.

Furthermore, Śrīla Prabhupāda on innumerable occasions has told his disciples to synchronize their understanding of guru-sadhu-and shastra with one another. This does not mean anyone who has done this has proclaimed himself an acharya on the level of SP. There are so many books by so many followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and many of them are also explaining shastra according to their own realizations. Does that mean they are declaring themselves ācāryas on the same level with SP, SBSST and BVT? Of course not.

What we have insisted on in our book, however, is that whatever conclusion the GBC reaches on this matter, it must be corroborated not only with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words but also with sadhu-vakya and shastra. The SAC’s 2005 and 2013 papers, however, fall short of this standard, resorting to speculation in a number of places.

Appendix I: Bengali for “oṃ viṣṇupāda śrī jagannātha”

Gauḍīya 4.1 (15 August 1925), page 27:

Śrīmad Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura

guror apy avaliptasya kāryākāryam ajānataḥ
utpatha-pratipannasya parityāgo vidhīyate

o “vaiṣṇava-vidveṣī cet parityajya eva” ei śāstra-vākyaṅsāre viṣayīra asat-saṅge udāsīna haiyā paramahaṁsa-kula-purandara śrī jagannātha-dāsa mahā-puruṣakei svīya āśraya-rūpe varaṇa kariyāchilena.

Appendix II: References for *varṇa* by qualification despite referring to birth

Sastras describe *varṇa* as based on birth while describing different works or duties of *varṇas*. However, sastras also describe *varṇa* as based on quality, often as a principle (usually not while describing duties of *varṇas*). Thus, it has been a discussion for eons, whether *varṇa* is by quality or by birth? Mahābhārata has many such enquiries and the conclusion is that *varṇa* is based on qualities.

Then how are we to justify numerous statements of sastras, both *śrutis* and *smṛtis*, and the long-held practices of *varṇāśrama* societies that we find in almost all scriptures (including *Bhāgavatam*) that judge *varṇa* based on birth? Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī justifies by saying,

In this regard we can only say that in early times ten *samśkāras*, or purificatory processes, were followed by the *brāhmaṇas*. Among these, one is the *garbhādāna* ceremony, which was based on seminal line. It has, however, been changed and perverted in the course of time. ... if this *samśkāra* was taken more seriously, then seminal consideration would have been more applicable. (Brahmana o Vaiṣṇava, Prakṛti-jana-kanda)

Here is more detailed explanation to support it. The key harmonization verse is SB 7.11.13 (and there are many such references in other sastras),

samśkāra yatrāvicchināḥ sa dvijo 'jo jagāda yam

Those who have been reformed by the *garbhādāna* ceremony and other prescribed reformatory methods, performed with Vedic mantras and without interruption, and who have been approved by Lord Brahmā, are dvijas, or twice-born.

This is connected to SB 3.31.1, that a soul is placed in a certain womb according to his karmic background under the supervision of the Supreme Lord. A soul with brahminical background is placed in brahminical womb and so on. What Brahminical etc. wombs mean is described in the above quoted SB 7.11.13 sloka.

Thus, it can be said that the *varṇa* is actually based on quality; however, because if the samskaras are in place, soul's quality matches with the womb in which he takes birth, *varṇa* can be fixed by birth. Thus, all the statements of sastras that define or mention *varṇa* by birth are to be understood as taking it for granted that samskaras are in place. This is what is evident by verses like SB 7.11.35. Such a soul is known as "purified by their family traditions and by their behavior."

What happens when samskaras are not in place?

Then the birth consideration doesn't remain valid and thus the only way to judge *varṇa* is by observing qualities. *Siddhānta-pradīpa*, Śukadeva acharya's commentary on SB 7.11.35, says,

Although the prime consideration of *varṇa* is based on the lineages that are propagated starting from the prajāpati Brahma, when there is difficulty in ascertaining proper lineages due to the contaminations of *varṇa-sankara* etc. due to effect of time, brahmana etc. *varṇas* are to be fixed by observing the symptoms like satya etc. in such kulas (family lines). If symptoms of another *varṇa* is observed then he is to be designated the *varṇa* based on the symptom of that *varṇa*. This sloka starting with *yasya* is recited to inform this.

If someone born in a particular *varṇa* shows the symptoms of another *varṇa*, then he is to be designated with the *varṇa* for which his symptoms are visible. In this connection following statement from sruti should be considered, “We do not know whether we are brahmanas or non-brahmanas.” [SBSST quotes this and says that “*Such doubts arose in the hearts of the truthful sages*”]. Following statement from smṛti should also be considered, “O broad-minded, great serpent, because there are persons born from mixed marriages among each of the *varṇas*, it is extremely difficult to determine an individual's caste. This is my opinion. Therefore qualities are to be taken as primary consideration; this is according to those who are knowers of the truth.” [SBSST also quotes this reference]⁷.

Today, this exactly is the situation and thus *varṇa* is to be judged based solely on symptoms, not birth. However, this doesn't mean that the sastras which mention *varṇa* by birth become not applicable for today. It only means that the procedure to judge *varṇa* by birth doesn't apply for today. The duties etc. mentioned for *varṇas* are to be followed as is. When a person is identified as brahmana by symptoms he should perform the works mentioned for brahmanas in *śāstras*; same for *kṣatriyas* etc.

⁷ *yadyapi prajāpati-pravartitā varṇā mukhyās-tathāpi kāla-kṛta-saṅkarādi-doṣatas-tan-niścayābhāve satyādi-lakṣaṇena tat-tat-kule brāhmaṇādi-niścayaḥ kartavyaḥ | anya-varṇa-lakṣaṇaṁ dṛśyate tarhi tena lakṣaṇenāpi taṁ varṇitaṁ vijānīyād-ityāha – yasyeti | yasya puṁsaḥ varṇābhivyañjakaṁ yal-lakṣaṇaṁ yadyadi anyatra varṇāntare 'pi dṛśyeta tad-varṇāntaraṁ tenaiva lakṣaṇādi-nimittena vinirdīśet “na vyaṁ vidmo brāhmaṇāḥ smo 'brāhmaṇā vā ye yajāmahe” iti śrutiḥ, “jātir-atra mahāsarpa-manuṣyatve mahāmate | saṅkarāt sarva-varṇānāṁ duṣparīkṣyeti me matiḥ | tasmāc-chīlāṁ pradhāneṣṭāṁ vidurvai sattva-darśinaḥ,” iti smṛtiścānusandheyā ||*