

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

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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

This paper presents *pramāṇas* from *pāñcarātri* 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-saṃhitā* (BS) is a part of the *Nārada Pañcarātra*. (See Appendix I for authority of BS.)
- BS gives criteria by which both *sādhakas* and *siddhas* can be judged eligible to become *dīkṣā-guru*.
- *Siddhas* of any gender or from any family, heredity, social status or *varṇa* may become *dīkṣā-guru*.
- *Sādhakas* who are men of *brāhmaṇa*-, *kṣatriya*-, or *vaiśya-varṇa* (by quality) can become *dīkṣā-guru*.
- *Sādhakas* who are women, *śūdras* or *antyajas* (lower than *śūdras*) are forbidden to act as *dīkṣā-guru*.
- *Śūdras* or *antyajas* get the body of a *brāhmaṇa* if properly initiated and can also become *dīkṣā-guru*.
- *Dīkṣā* also elevates women to the platform of a *brāhmaṇa*.
- But gender does not change with *dīkṣā*.
- BS still restricts women who are *sādhakas* from initiating (giving *dīkṣā*).
- Women and those otherwise prohibited from acting as *dīkṣā-guru* can still give *śikṣā*.
- But women who are *siddhas* can become *dīkṣā-guru*.
- *Siddha* devotees are extremely rare, as compared with *sādhakas*.
- 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*.
- The SAC 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.

Schema for the paper:

- **Section 1:** Introduction
 - Why the debate over FDGs has persisted for so long.
 - “Śrīla Prabhupāda quote wars” do not settle such debates.
 - The need for a better standard of evidence or proof.
- **Section 2:**
 - Select verses from the *Bhāradvāja-saṃhitā*, which is a part of the *Nārada Pañcarātra*.
 - The verses describe:
 - Qualifications for post of *dīkṣā-guru*.
 - Disqualifications.
 - Exceptions.
 - Which different classes these injunctions apply to.
- **Appendix I:** The authority of the *Bhāradvāja-saṃhitā*.
- **Appendix II:** Differences in qualification between those receiving and giving mantras.
- **Appendix III:** All verses quoted from *Bhāradvāja-saṃhitā* presented in serial order.

1 Introduction

In the International Society for Krishna Consciousness for the past two decades there has been a standing controversy with regard to the eligibility of women to officially be recognized as *ācāryas*, or *dīkṣā-gurus*. One side believes that as compared with men’s eligibility there should be no difference when considering women. The other side however believes that for women there are indeed additional considerations. And for various reasons, participants on both sides have been unhappy with the controversy’s longevity and seeming lack of progress.

Perhaps the most significant reason the controversy has endured for so long is that ISKCON’s Founder-*Ācārya*, His Divine Grace A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupāda, has said different things at different times that do not fully support either side. As noted by Dr. Thomas J. Hopkins in his 2007 essay, “ISKCON’s Search for Self-Identity,” many of the disagreements within ISKCON “involve claims that ‘Prabhupad said this’ versus claims that ‘Prabhupad said that.’” And he further notes that this “basically settles 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.”¹ As with many other debates in ISKCON, this kind of back-and-forth has been characteristic of the debate over the eligibility of women to be *dīkṣā-gurus*.

This paper is an attempt to move the participants in this debate towards employing more formal, exegetical principles. Up to now the positions on both sides have been inferred from the statements of various *ācāryas* and different *śāstras*, but the sources thus far cited do not deal directly with this matter. Thus, for the first time in this debate, we are attempting to present śāstric references from the *pāñcarātrika* literature that directly say when a woman is eligible to accept the post of *dīkṣā-guru*. The references are verses from the first chapter of the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, which is part of the *Nārada Pañcarātra*. And on account of their directness, they have the potential to settle the debate, or at least move the debate substantially closer to a resolution.

Another motivation for this paper is to suggest a correction for some claims made by the GBC’s Śāstric Advisory Council in their 2013 paper, titled “FDG: Prudent Questions, Śāstric Answers.” In their paper, they say that the *smṛtis*’ restrictions on women for acting as *dīkṣā-guru* are “obviously overridden by the *pāñcarātrikī vidhi* followed by Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas,” and they conclude that “there are not different sets of qualifications to be a guru for various classes of people, including women.” The verses presented here from the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* lead us to believe that both of these claims from the SAC need to be reviewed.

An additional motivation for presenting this paper is that we believe these verses reconcile and reinforce many of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s sometimes paradoxical statements related to this controversy. And in this regard, it is our desire to share our pleasure in seeing these seeming conflicts resolved.

For these purposes, we present here, with some commentary and discussion, relevant verses from *Śrī Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*.

Your servants,

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¹ Hopkins 186.

2 Nārada Pañcarātra / Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā

This section begins with an answer to the controversy of Vaiṣṇavīs giving *dīkṣā*. Verse 44 from the first chapter of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* states when a Vaiṣṇavī or any other class ordinarily not allowed to act as a *dīkṣā-guru* can do so. When she is a *siddha*, then she may be allowed to act as a *dīkṣā-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 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*).”

Comment: The word *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām* 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 received the causeless mercy of a pure devotee (*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.

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 (*guṇair yuktaḥ*) is the principal qualification for being an *ācārya*.² Besides these, every soul has his *prārabdha-karma* attached by previous birth and cultural training

² 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, *ācāryaṁ 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, but that should not be done while reading the *śāstras*.

received from 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-ḡuṇa-yutād aravindanābha padāravinda-vimukhāt. . .* (SB 7.9.10)³ as there the qualified *brāhmaṇa* mentioned is not a *bhakta*. But the *brāhmaṇa* described in this verse is necessarily a *viṣṇu-bhakta*.

*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 hīna-vayo-jātiḥ prakṛṣṭānām anūpadi* ||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 *samskāras* are not in place. (According to SB 7.11.13, *jāti* taken as qualification is valid only when *samskāras* are in place.)

³ “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.”

***na jātu mantra-dā nārī na śūdra 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.”

***striyaḥ śūdrādayaś caiva bodhayeyur hitāhitam |
yathārham mānanīyāś 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. . .*”⁴ And in an early letter, Śrīla Prabhupāda gives a hint about these different standards, “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.”⁵ 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 have been confirmed as authentic *dīkṣā-gurus* have all been topmost devotees. These were indeed, as Śrīla Prabhupāda says, “very special case.”

⁴ Conversation. 14 July 1976. Quoting Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s *Śrī Śrī Gurvaṣṭaka*, verse 8.

⁵ Letter to Janārdana, 26 April 1968.

Appendix I: Authority of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā

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*.”⁶ 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 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.⁷ 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.⁸

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 Mīśra’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.

⁶ Lecture, *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam* 1.5.24—August 5, 1974, Vṛndāvana.

⁷ 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*], *Bṛhat-saṁhitā*, *Viṣṇu-samuccaya*, *Vaikhānasa-saṁhitā*, *Āgama-prāmānya* 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 Saṅkaraṣaṇa Śaraṇadeva, *Smṛti-ratnākāra* by Viṭṭhalācārya, *Śrī Hari-bhakti-vilāsa* and *Śrī Sat-kriyā-sāra-dīpikā* by Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī Prabhu, and *Samskāra-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.

⁸ *Caitanya-bhāgavata*, Ādi 8.7, purport:

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

*svayaṁ brahmaṇi niṁṣiptān jātān eva hi mantrataḥ
vinītān atha putrādīn saṁskṛtya 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:

*prāyaścittam tu paramaṁ prapattis tasya kevalam
kuryāt karmātmakam vāpi vāsudevam anusmaran
viśuddhyed viṣṇu-bhaktasya dṛṣṭyā sparśena sevayā
smaraṇenānna-pānādyair girā pāda-rajō-’mbubhiḥ
viṣṇor niveditānnādyais tathā tat-kīrtanādibhiḥ
abhāgavata-dṛṣṭyādeḥ 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 siddhim janaḥ sarvo 'py akiñcanaḥ |
śraddhayā parayā yukto hariṁ saraṇam āśrayet ||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 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.”

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: Index of Verses Quoted from Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā

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

***prāptum icchan parām siddhiṁ janaḥ sarvo 'py akiñcanaḥ |
śraddhayā parayā yukto hariṁ śaraṇam āśrayet ||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 kulam 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 (*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-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.”

***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-bhakty-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 śūdra nāntarodbhavaḥ /
nābhiśasto na patitaḥ kāma-kāmo 'py akāminah ||42||*

“Even then, a woman, a *śūdra* and an *antyaaja* 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 śūdrādayaś caiva bodhayeyur hitāhitam |
yathārham mānanīyāś 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*).”

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