THE SUNĪTI PRAMĀṆA AND SET THEORY

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SETTING THE THEME

In January 2021, an anonymous author circulated a paper titled *Sunīti's Ineligibility in ISKCON. An analysis of two statements made by Śrīla Prabhupāda* (further on referred to as SI for brevity). SI attempts to analyse Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport on SB 4.12.32 (or the "Sunīti *pramāṇa*") with the aim to show that the purport does not prohibit women from acting as *dīkṣā-gurus*. In particular, SI posits that Sunīti could not become Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru* on account of **both** her gender (woman) and role (mother) — and not **just** her gender.

The paper prompted a response from Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Prabhu, titled *Śrīla Prabhupada on Suniti Devi: Only Woman, not Mother, is the Prohibited Category* (further on referred to as OW). In OW, Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Prabhu argues that Sunīti's role as Dhruva's mother was immaterial for her ineligibility as Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru* because being a mother necessarily implies being a woman. He illustrated his conclusion, in part, with elements of set theory.

OW, in turn, caused yet another response from SI's author titled *A Response to Krishna-kirti Prabhu's Argument* (referred to as RK). In RK the author points out what s/he sees as inconsistencies, unfounded assumptions, and fallacious extrapolations in OW. Particularly, RK argues that mothers are not always a subcategory of women, and objects to OW's collapsing the two into one — women.

As both sides make some valid points and both commit some logical omissions, it appears necessary to try and analyze the purport in terms of a formal and objective mathematical paradigm that naturally lends itself to the debate at hand — set theory.

SUMMARY

This paper:

- formalizes Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport on SB 4.12.32 in terms of set theory.

- describes mathematically all possible interrelations between sets in SB 4.12.32 purp.;

- examines several conclusions derived from SB 4.12.32 purp. in light of its formal representation;

- demonstrates that SB 4.12.32 purp. is underdetermined for the conclusion most often read into it — that women cannot be *dīkṣā-gurus*;

- and offers possible explanations as to Śrīla Prabhupāda's decision to include both criteria of Sunīti's ineligibility as Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru*: her family role as well as her gender.

To prevent potential interpretational prejudice (mine included) from influencing both the process and the outcome of this analysis, I therefore:

- first formalized the Sunīti *pramāṇa* in set theory notation, which completely removed its semantic resemblance to the original text, leaving intact only its logical structure and content;

- then submitted the formal expression to seven devotee mathematicians (three of them holding a PhD in mathematics, two — a master's degree and two — a bachelor's) with a request to analyze it mathematically;

- (except for two married couples, all of them were at entirely different geographical locations and none of them knew that the expression had also been submitted to the others);

- requested them to verify their conclusions with their secular colleagues in the field, preferably specializing in set theory, and two of them did that — which brings the total number of mathematicians consulted up to nine;

- did not disclose to any of them what exactly the formal expression stood for until after they gave their conclusions;

- finally, requested them to check the formal expression submitted for their analysis against the original excerpt from SB 4.12.32 to make sure it was represented correctly. None of them found any discrepancy in it.

Albeit employing different pathways, all of them arrived at the same conclusion summarized and presented in this paper, which was then reviewed by the three PhDs and edited by one of them.

FORMALIZING THE SUNĪTI PRAMĀṆA

INITIAL CONDITIONS

Here is the excerpt in question. Numbers in square brackets — [1], [2], etc. — follow and denote key statements later converted into formal expressions of set theory:

> Dhruva had a feeling of obligation to his mother, Sunīti. [1] It was Sunīti who had given him the clue which had now enabled him to be personally carried to the Vaikuṇṭha planet by the associates of Lord Viṣṇu. He now remembered her and wanted to take her with him. Actually, Dhruva Mahārāja's mother, Sunīti, was his *patha-pradarśaka-guru*. [2] *Patha-pradarśaka-guru* means "the guru, or the spiritual master, who shows the way." Such a guru is sometimes called *śikṣā-guru*. [3] 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*. [4] Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's *dīkṣā-guru*. [5] (SB 4.12.32 purp.)

SET THEORY REPRESENTATIONS

Here are the conditions again:

1. Dhruva had a feeling of obligation to his mother, Sunīti.

2. Actually, Dhruva Mahārāja's mother, Sunīti, was his *patha-pradarśaka-guru*.

3. *Patha-pradarśaka-guru* means "the guru, or the spiritual master, who shows the way." Such a guru is sometimes called *śikṣā-guru*.

4. 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*.

5. Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's *dīkṣā-guru*.

In these five statements Śrīla Prabhupāda introduces seven categories, or sets, and describes their various interrelations. For simplicity's sake we will not deal here with temporal and modal (potential) relations between them.

Here are the sets:

s — denotes Sunīti;

DM — Dhruva's mother;

M — the set of mothers;

W — the set of women;

PG — the set of *patha-pradarśaka-guru*;

SG — the set of *śikṣā-gurus*;

DG — the set of those qualified to be *dīkṣā-gurus* in general;

DDG — the set of those who could become Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru*.

Let us now convert the above 5 statements into expressions of set theory.

[1] Dhruva had a feeling of obligation to his mother, Sunīti.

Sunīti (s) is Dhruva's mother and thus belongs to the category (set) of Dhruva's mothers (DM) as well as mothers in general (M) that DM is a subset of.

The relation is written as:

$$s \in DM \subset M$$

We note that, although Śrīla Prabhupāda writes specifically of Sunīti's role as the mother of Dhruva, there are several ways to interpret this statement:

a. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that Sunīti is disqualified from being Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru* as his one and only biological mother. Since she is then the only member of DM (which is thus called a singleton), any statement about DM in our discussion will be tantamount to a statement about Sunīti and vise versa. Thus, although it is not correct to equate a singleton with its only member, for practical purposes we can assume that **s ≡ DM.**

b. One may argue, as does the author of RK, that by "his [Dhruva's] mother" Śrīla Prabhupāda describes Sunīti as belonging to a group of seven mothers (7M):

> "According to scriptures also, there are seven mothers: (1) the real mother, (2) the wife of the spiritual master, (3) the wife of a brāhmaṇa, (4) the wife of the king, (5) the cow, (6) the nurse, and (7) the earth. All of them are mothers. Even by this injunction of the

śāstras, the stepmother, who is the wife of the father, is also as good as the mother because the father is also one of the spiritual masters". (SB 1.11.28 purp.)

which would then, by extension, disqualify all of them to be dīkṣā-gurus for Dhruva, including Suruci as his stepmother and a co-wife of King Uttānapāda. In this case Sunīti's set relation would be:

$$s \in DM \subset 7M \subset M$$

c. Lastly, it may also be argued that although Sunīti is described as Dhruva's mother and even as one of his seven mothers, the emphasis in considering her disqualification as his dīkṣā-guru is (or should be) placed on the word "mother" rather than on her being his mother or one of his mothers. In this case the only relevant set relation in the excerpt under consideration will be her belonging to a broad general category of mothers, or M:

$$s \in M$$

Without analyzing the relative validity of options (a-c) above, it may be proposed that, since

$$DM \subset 7M \subset M$$

any conclusion arrived at in regard to Sunīti belonging to set M will be valid for sets DM and 7M as its subsets. Thus, while keeping in mind sets DM and 7M, we will limit our discussion to Sunīti belonging to set M.

Also implied here is that, in the human species, being a mother means being a woman, and therefore Sunīti belongs to the category (set) of women (W) as well.

Now, RK argues that:

"… motherhood is a function, not a genus. It may be carried out by women in the human society, but it is also carried out by other non-human entities… Thus, it is logically incorrect to say that a mother is automatically a woman. Motherhood is a function not restricted only to the ladies in the human species."

While this observation is true in a general sense, however, as regards the human species, mothers **are** women.[1] And since we are discussing the mother of Dhruva, a human, the set M (mothers), to which Sunīti belongs, is a subset of W (women).

However, we will revisit the dichotomy of M and W later, when it becomes relevant for our discussion.

The final expression for [1] is thus written as:

$$s \in M \subset W \text{ [1]}$$

[2] Actually, Dhruva Mahārāja's mother, Sunīti, was his *patha-pradarśaka-guru*.

Here Śrīla Prabhupāda introduces another category that Sunīti belongs to — *patha-pradarśaka-guru*, or PG. This fact is written as:

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[1] There are rare exceptions: kings Sudyumna (SB 9.1) and Yuvanāśva (SB 9.6) gave birth to sons and were, technically, mothers, but also men. Moreover, Sudyumna alternated manhood with womanhood monthly. Would they be disqualified from initiating their sons as mothers (and occasionally a woman in Sudyumna's case) — or qualified as/when men?

$$\text{s} \in \textbf{PG} \ [2]$$

[3] *Patha-pradarśaka-guru* **means "the guru, or the spiritual master, who shows the way." Such a guru is sometimes called** *śikṣā-guru.*

Now Śrīla Prabhupāda introduces another category, *śikṣā-gurus*, while adding that *patha-pradarśaka-guru* is **sometimes** called *śikṣā-guru.* This means that not all *patha-pradarśaka-gurus* are called *śikṣā-gurus.* This is also evident from our philosophy, as *patha-pradarśaka-guru* is the least involved and responsible type of *śikṣā-guru*, and one that rarely develops into a permanent and substantial *śikṣā*-relationship. Describing that someone may be a *patha-pradarśaka-guru* and not a *śikṣā-guru* by set theory language, we write:

$$\textbf{PG} \cap \textbf{SG} \neq \varnothing \ [3]$$

which means that there are people who are both PG and SG, but not that PG are necessarily always SG, or vise versa. It is important to note in this regards that, while Śrīla Prabhupāda definitively terms Sunīti Dhruva's *patha-pradarśaka-guru,* he never designates her as his *śikṣā-guru.*

[4] 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.*

Śrīla Prabhupāda introduces another set of these qualified to become *dīkṣā-gurus* (DG). He then says, similarly to [3], that while there is no difference between *śikṣā-gurus* and *dīkṣā-gurus,* the former become the latter **generally** — which means, not always. Therefore, the relationship between SG and DG, again, is defined as:

$$\textbf{SG} \cap \textbf{DG} \neq \varnothing \ [4]$$

which means that there are people who belong to both SG and DG, but it is not correct to assume that all those belonging to SG necessarily belong to DG, or vise versa. In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda will give an instance to the contrary in his next statement.

[5] Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's *dīkṣā-guru***.**

Śrīla Prabhupāda now introduces another set — those who could become Dhruva's *dīkṣā-gurus*, or, in our notation, DDG. Please note that it is the potential descriptor *"could"* that necessitates set DDG, as there can only be one *dīkṣā-guru*. In other words, the specific mention of Sunīti's ineligibility for giving *dīkṣā* specifically to Dhruva — and not in general — makes the introduction of DDG mandatory. The set DDG, however, is a subset of DG — meaning, everyone who **could** be Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru* belongs to the category of those who **could** be *dīkṣā-gurus* in general. We cannot eliminate DDG as a subset of DG without sacrificing Śrīla Prabhupāda's exactitude of expression. Here is how we write this relationship:

$$\textbf{DDG} \subset \textbf{DG} \ [5a]$$

Śrīla Prabhupāda also clearly states that Sunīti could not become Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru* — which, in set theory language, means she did not belong to set DDG:

$$\text{s} \notin \textbf{DDG} \ [5b]$$

Śrīla Prabhupāda then combines the sets that Sunīti belongs to (DM, M, W) and the set that Dhruva's potential *dīkṣā-gurus* belong to (DDG) in one sentence: "Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's *dīkṣā-guru*". Some prefer to quote his original unedited version, "Sunīti, however, being in family relationship with Dhruva, his mother, and also woman, could not become the *dīkṣā-guru* of Dhruva Maharaja".

It is important to note here that, strictly speaking, statement [5] does not exactly follow the pattern of a conditional statement (if A then B) or even, more broadly, of a conditional sentence. It could be more appropriately classified as a logical truth, which "is true regardless of the truth or falsity of its constituent propositions" because it simply states a historical fact and leaves the exact nature — or even existence — of a causal connection between Sunīti's womanhood and motherhood and her inability to initiate Dhruva a moot point.

However, even assuming that the statement "Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother" **is** the antecedent, and her inability to become Dhriva's *dīkṣā-guru* is the consequent, the exact nature of this assumed implication is ambiguous, starting with the antecedent's own structure: Is this **both** her gender **and** her motherhood that disqualified her from being Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru,* or just one of them?

Both Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Prabhu in his OW and the author of SI/RK acknowledge this ambiguity and propose two different approaches to resolving it.

APPROACH 1: LOGICAL OR

Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Prabhu argues:

> "Since *'and specifically his mother'* is parenthetical and therefore not restricting the term *'being a woman,'* the only reason to be considered for Suniti's ineligibility is the fact that she is a woman. 'Being a mother' is not a disqualification separate from 'being a woman'."

He then opines that maintaining the opposite — that both condition "mother" and "woman" must be met for effecting the disqualification — would not only be redundant but also, somehow, tantamount to determining that "Śrīla Prabhupada's own utterance of 'woman' is a mistake".

In set theory language, Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Prabhu's position in regard to sets M and W is that of disjunction, or logical OR: to be disqualified, Sunīti must be **either** part of M **or** W. And since M is believed to be a subset of W, at least for humans, saying that she belongs to M necessarily implies that she belongs to W as well.

Here is how this relationship is represented:

$$\mathbf{s} \in (\mathbf{M} \cup \mathbf{W}) \rightarrow \mathbf{s} \notin \mathbf{DDG} \; [5']$$

which means that because Sunīti was a mother/Dhruva's mother OR a woman, she could not become his *dīkṣā-guru*.

APPROACH 2: LOGICAL AND

On the other hand, the author of SI and RK argues that the relationship between sets M and W in Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement is that of conjunction, or logical AND.

In other words, to be disqualified from becoming a *dīkṣā-guru* of Dhruva, she must be part of **both** M and W. Arguing to the contrary, the author maintains, would mean to eliminate one of the conditions that Śrīla Prabhupāda deliberately put in his commentary. To avoid eliminating the category "mother" as a subset of "women", the author notes that mothers are not always women, citing Lord Kṛṣṇa and non-human species as examples.

Here is how this relationship is represented:

$$s \in (M \cap W) \rightarrow s \notin DDG \text{ [5'']}$$

which means that because Sunīti was Dhruva's mother AND a woman, she could not become his *dīkṣā-guru*.

Without discussing the validity of each position, we can combine them in the following form:

$$(s \in (M \cap W) \rightarrow s \notin DDG) \vee (s \in (M \cup W) \rightarrow s \notin DDG) \text{ [5''']}$$

which means that Sunīti could not initiate Dhruva **either** because she was (mother AND woman) **or** Sunīti could not initiate Dhruva because she was (mother OR woman).

However, regardless of whether M is a subset of W or not, since

$$(M \cap W) \subset (M \cup W)$$

meaning that (M∩W) is necessarily a subset of both M, W and (M ∪ W), the expression [5'''] can be reduced to:

$$s \in (M \cup W) \rightarrow s \notin DDG \text{ [5]}$$

In other words, whatever is valid for [5] will be valid for [5'''].

So, the following set of true expressions combinedly formalizes the "Sunīti pramāṇa" from SB 4.12.32:

$$\left\{ \begin{array}{c} s \in M \subset W \text{ [1]} \\ s \in PG \text{ [2]} \\ PG \cap SG \neq \varnothing \text{ [3]} \\ SG \cap DG \neq \varnothing \text{ [4]} \\ DDG \subset DG \text{ [5a]} \\ s \notin DDG \text{ [5b]} \\ s \in (M \cup W) \rightarrow s \notin DDG \text{ [5]} \end{array} \right\}$$

Let us denote this set of expressions by **SP**, which stands for "Sunīti *pramāṇa"*.

WHAT THE SUNĪTI PRAMĀṆA DOES AND DOES NOT PROVE

The "Sunīti *pramāṇa"* has been proposed as proof that no women can ever give initiations to anyone. This hypothesis is expressed in terms of our discussion thus:

$$W \cap DG = \varnothing \text{ [6]}$$

To decide if [6] is a true and only true implication of SP, we need to analyze if the expression:

$$\text{SP} \rightarrow \text{W} \cap \text{DG} = \varnothing \ [7]$$

is always true. Otherwise, if SP does not **necessarily** imply that there is no single element belonging to both W and DG, then SB 4.12.32 purp. does not **necessarily** prohibit women *dīkṣā-gurus.*

Expression [7] in its expanded form is what was submitted for mathematical analysis.

METHOD 1: (SET THEORY ANALYSIS)

Since expressions [2]-[4] are not relevant to the relationship between W and DG, they can be omitted and SP simplified as:

$$\text{s} \in \text{M} \subset \text{W} \ [1]$$
$$\text{DDG} \subset \text{DG} \ [5a]$$
$$\text{s} \notin \text{DDG} \ [5b]$$
$$\text{s} \in (\text{M} \cup \text{W}) \rightarrow \text{s} \notin \text{DDG} \ [5]$$

Since [1] implies that (M∪W) = W, [5] therefore reduces to:

$$\text{s} \in \text{W} \rightarrow \text{s} \notin \text{DDG} \ [5]$$

Let us now test the hypothesis (6) by examining if and when the following two conjectures:

(1) W ∩ DG = ∅
(2) W ∩ DG ≠ ∅

satisfy SP. If the conjecture W ∩ DG ≠ ∅ satisfies SP, then the hypothesis (6) is not the only true implication of SP**.**

Since it is postulated that DDG ⊂ DG [5a] and s ∉ DDG [5b]:

(1) if W ∩ DG = ∅, then (s ∈ W) → (s ∉ DG), so only s ∉ DG would be possible.
(2) if W ∩ DG ≠ ∅, then ∃s: (s ∈ W) ∧ (s ∈ DG), and therefore:

$$(\text{s} \in \text{W}) \wedge (\text{s} \in \text{DG}) \rightarrow \text{s} \in \text{DG} \setminus \text{DDG} \neq \varnothing$$

Conclusion 1: The relationship between W and DG is not defined by the remaining set of expression, as neither relation:

$$\text{W} \cap \text{DG} = \varnothing$$
$$\text{W} \cap \text{DG} \neq \varnothing$$

is contradictory to the postulated conditions and, specifically, to [5]. In other words, it does not **necessarily** follow from SP that no women can be *dīkṣā-gurus*.

METHOD 2: (IMPLICATIONAL ANALYSIS)

Let us assume that s belongs to DDG. Since DDG ⊂ DG [5a], then:

$$\text{s} \in \text{DDG} \Rightarrow \text{s} \in \text{DG}$$

which means that if s belongs to DDG, then s also belongs to DG. However, since s does **not** belong to DDG, then, according to the definition of necessity and sufficiency:

$$¬(s ∈ DDG) ⇔ (s ∈ DG\backslash DDG) ∨ ¬(s ∈ DG)$$

And since s ∈ (M ∪ W) ⇒ s ∉ DDG [5], then, by hypothetical syllogism and transitive relation:

$$s ∈ (M ∪ W) ⇒ s ∉ DDG ⇔ ¬(s ∈ DDG)$$
$$s ∈ (M ∪ W) ⇒ ¬(s ∈ DDG) ⇔ (s ∈ DG\backslash DDG) ∨ ¬(s ∈ DG)$$
$$s ∈ (M ∪ W) ⇒ (s ∈ DG\backslash DDG) ∨ ¬(s ∈ DG)$$

which means that whether Sunīti is a woman or a mother, she still **may** be a *dīkṣā-guru* (but not of Dhruva)*.

Conclusion 2: Implication [5] does not **necessarily** rule out that Sunīti can be a *dīkṣā-guru,* and therefore women (or mothers) as *dīkṣā-gurus* are also not **necessarily** ruled out by [5].

THE TRUTH TABLE

To determine if the hypothesis:

$$W ∩ DG = ∅ \text{ [6]}$$

if always true or not, it is sufficient to find at least one instance when it is falsified while still satisfying SP. Let us revisit the dichotomy in expressions [5'] and [5'']:

$$s ∈ (M ∪ W) → s ∉ DDG \text{ [5']}$$
$$s ∈ (M ∩ W) → s ∉ DDG \text{ [5'']}$$

summarized as:

$$(s ∈ (M ∩ W) → s ∉ DDG) ∨ (s ∈ (M ∪ W) → s ∉ DDG) \text{ [5''']}$$

Let us denote if Sunīti is Dhruva's mother by **sM**, if she is a woman by **sW**, and if she is NOT the *dīkṣā-guru* of Dhruva by **¬D**. Let us also denote the disjunction of sM and sW (or sM∪sW) by $A_∪$ and the conjunction of sM and sW (or sM∩sW) by $A_∩$. Finally, let us separately denote both implications — if $A_∪$ and $A_∩$ imply ¬D — by $A_∪→¬D$ and by $A_∩→¬D$ respectively.

Here is the truth table for both implications, where T denotes a true statement and F — a false one:

sM	sW	$A_∪$	$A_∩$	¬D	$A_∪→¬D$	$A_∩→¬D$
F	F	F	F	F	T	T
T	F	T	F	F	F	T
F	**T**	T	**F**	**F**	F	**T**
T	T	T	T	F	F	F
F	F	F	F	T	T	T
T	F	T	F	T	T	T
F	T	T	F	T	T	T
T	T	T	T	T	T	T

The resultant truth table means that the implications $A_∪→¬D$ and $A_∩→¬D$ that can be derived from the "Sunīti *pramāṇa*" are true:

- in 100% of cases when Sunīti is not Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru*, regardless of her gender and role; and
- in 50% of cases even when she **is** Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru*.

The first line scenario is, of course, ruled out by the postulated conditions of SP — meaning that there is no uncertainty about Sunīti's gender and role. However, the last line scenario is fulfilled in two cases:

Case 1: Sunīti is not Dhruva's mother **and** not a woman, for both A_u and A_n;
Case 2: Sunīti is **either** Dhruva's mother **or** a woman, but not both, for A_n.

Of course, case 1 is invalid since Sunīti is known to be a woman and a mother. However, case 2 (highlighted in the truth table) proves that, in the strict **logical** sense, Sunīti being a woman and still initiating Dhruva is not ruled out by SP in case Sunīti happens to be either not Dhruva's mother or a mother in general. In other words, it does not **necessarily** follow from SP that no women can be *dīkṣā-gurus*. The hypothesis [6] is thus falsified.

(Incidentally, the premise of case 2 that leads to the above conclusion corresponds to Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Prabhu's relational stance in OW — that Sunīti belongs to A_u, meaning that she is **either** a woman **or** a mother.)

EULER DIAGRAMS

Euler diagrams are a graphic representation of sets and their relationships. One way to represent
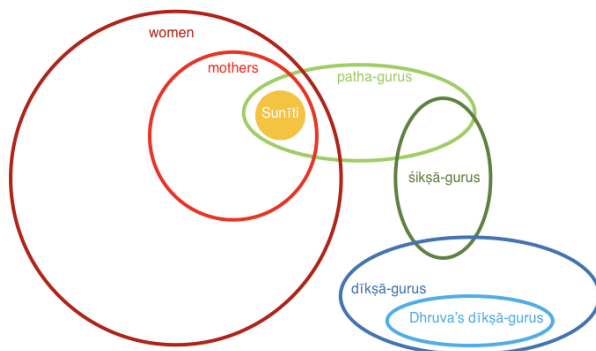

possible configurations that satisfy SP via an Euler diagram yields **Option 1** (left), which satisfies both SP and the hypothesis [7] that women cannot be *dīkṣā-gurus:*

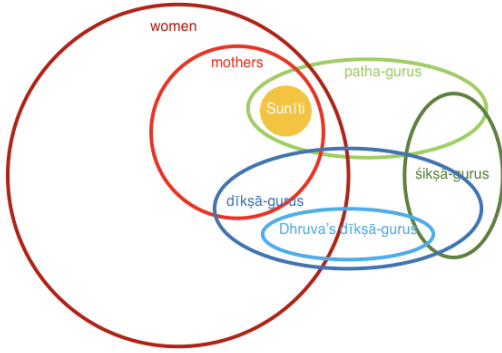$$SP \rightarrow W \cap DG = \varnothing \text{ [7]}$$

Here Sunīti is a woman, a mother, and a *patha-pradarśaka-guru,* and W and DG do not intersect, meaning that women here are not *dīkṣā-gurus.*

However, there are several other ways to represent SP via Euler diagrams that fulfill it yet falsify [7].
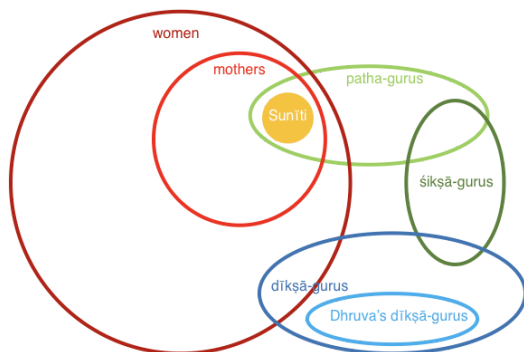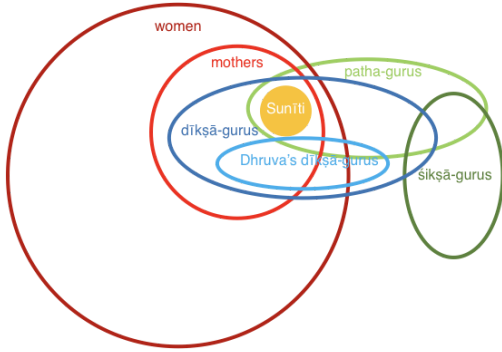

Option 2:

$s \notin$ **DDG — Sunīti cannot initiate Dhruva**
$W \cap DDG = \varnothing$ — women cannot initiate Dhruva
$W \cap DG \neq \varnothing$ — women can be *dīkṣā-gurus*

Option 3:

s ∉ DDG — Sunīti cannot initiate Dhruva
W∩DDG≠∅ — women can initiate Dhruva
W∩DG≠∅ — women can be *dīkṣā-gurus*
M∩DDG=∅ — mothers cannot initiate Dhruva
M∩DG≠∅ — mothers can be *dīkṣā-gurus*

(Euler diagram labels: women, mothers, patha-gurus, Sunīti, śikṣā-gurus, dīkṣā-gurus, Dhruva's dīkṣā-gurus)

Option 4:

s ∉ DDG — Sunīti cannot initiate Dhruva
W∩DDG≠∅ — women can initiate Dhruva
W∩DG≠∅ — women can be *dīkṣā-gurus*
M∩DDG≠∅ — mothers can initiate Dhruva
M∩DG≠∅ — mothers can be *dīkṣā-gurus*
s ∈ DG — Sunīti can be a *dīkṣā-guru*

(Euler diagram labels: women, mothers, patha-gurus, Sunīti, dīkṣā-gurus, Dhruva's dīkṣā-gurus, śikṣā-gurus)

For an animated presentation of these four options and their interrelations please **CLICK HERE**.

As evident from the above Euler diagrams, the assumption that Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport on SB 4.12.32 unequivocally bars women from being *dīkṣā-gurus* is not tenable.

Another important implication of the Euler diagrams above is that SP's underdetermination is invariant under both approaches — via conjunction ($A_\cap$) or via disjunction ($A_\cup$) — that one may use to describe the reasons for Sunīti's ineligibility, because among Options 1-4 neither $A_\cup \rightarrow \neg D$ nor $A_\cap \rightarrow \neg D$ is falsified.

Finally, they also show that both the current (edited) and the original (unedited) versions of SB 4.12.32 purp., while seemingly placing their emphases on two different aspects of Sunīti's relationship with Dhruva, make no difference in the ultimate outcome of SP's mathematical analysis.

CONCLUSION

All three mathematical methods employed in analyzing the Sunīti *pramāṇa* lead to the same conclusions:

- the Sunīti *pramāṇa* in SB 4.12.32 purp. is an example of underdetermination, as it is consistent with several ideas or explanations. For more on this see: The Sunīti *pramāṇa*;

- women's general ineligibility for being *dīkṣā-gurus* as the singular implication of SB 4.12.32 purp. is possible only if known *a priori*; and therefore:

- presenting SB 4.12.32 purp. as the sole proof that women cannot be *dīkṣā-gurus* is an instance of circular reasoning: "Women cannot initiate because Sunīti could not initiate Dhruva, and she could not be Dhruva's *dīkṣā-guru* because women are forbidden to initiate".

WHY WOMAN AND MOTHER BUT NOT *DĪKṢĀ-GURU*?

The above analyses conclusively show that the Sunīti *pramāṇa* cannot be used as a normative statement, because it remains unclear what exactly, if anything, it is supposed to normalize. Rather, it is descriptive (simply stating the fact of her being unable to initiate Dhruva), not prescriptive (mandating a

certain course of action) or proscriptive (forbidding other women to initiate). (For more on this subject please see Underdetermination and Normative cherry-picking).

In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda did not make — and most likely did not intend to make — the Sunīti purport into an unequivocal injunction in regard to women's eligibility to initiate.

DESCRIPTIVE, NOT PROSCRIPTIVE

For one thing, in doing so, Śrīla Prabhupāda was strictly in line with the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava philosophy of scriptural interpretation.

For instance, Jīva Gosvāmī in his *Sarva-saṁvādinī* (43-44) on *Tattva-sandarbha* 11 emphasizes that, **any** statement of *śāstra* or an empowered ācārya (whose words are as good as śāstric),[2] even if they are descriptive, are certainly a basis for action — the action of having to accept them as literally true.[3]

Similarly, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in his *Govinda-bhāṣya* commentary on the *Vedānta-sūtras* quotes — and then soundly defeats — *karma-mīmāṁsakas*' erroneous argument that "unless a scriptural statement can be interpreted as an injunction or prohibition, it is not useful", by proving that Vedic statements of facts about the Absolute Truth do not need to command or prohibit action to be considered of use. (For more on this subject please see *Karma-mīmāṁsakas* vs. the *ācārya*).

Therefore for one to disagree, as Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu does in one of his papers,[4] with the fact that:

> *"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."*

means precisely aligning oneself with *karma-mīmāṁsakas*' fallacious stance on scriptural interpretations.

Hopefully, this fact alone will help proponents of the Sunīti *pramāṇa* make up their minds if it indeed wields the proscriptive power they ascribe to it or not. For now they seem to be genuinely confused — by first proclaiming it as an ironclad unequivocal prohibition of Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus* and then immediately dismissing it as ambiguous and thus in need of reinforcement by outside scriptural sources. To quote Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu himself:

> *"So, what do we do about resolving the purport regarding Suniti's ineligibility to become Dhruva's diksa-guru? If the current edited version is disputed, the unedited version is at least ambiguous as pointed out above, and any further editing to it in order to remove the ambiguity would degrade the authority of Srila Prabhuapda's books. So, the best way would be to refer to the revealed scriptures themselves to see what they actually say ("mother" only, "family relation" or "woman" as the prohibited category). **It so happens** that Narada Pancharatra (Bharadvaja-*

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[2] *Sarva-saṁvādinī*, 16, part (translated by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa): *tatra vaiduṣe ca vipratipatti-bhramādi-nṛ-doṣa-rāhityāt, śabdasyāpi tan-mūlatvāc ca* ("Among these other means, about the perceptions of the wise there is no disagreement, because these perceptions are devoid of the human weaknesses, such as faulty judgment. Moreover, the perceptions of the wise are the basis of even verbal testimony [*śabda-pramāṇa*].")

[3] *Sarva-saṁvādinī*, 42-43, part (translated by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa): *tasmāt siddhe siddhāyāṁ śaktau dṛṣṭe ca śrotṛ-pratīti-virodhābhāve vaktus tātparyam api tatra setsyatīti siddhavan-nirdiṣṭānām upaniṣad-ādīnām api svārthe prāmāṇyam asty eva.* (43) *tad evaṁ sarvasminn api vedātmake śabde svārthaṁ [558] prati prāmāṇyam upalabdhe, sa katham arthaṁ prasūta iti vivriyate.* (44) "Now that it is thus established that statements of fact have denotative power and that a hearer whose perception of a statement is not obstructed can be seen to realize the meaning the speaker intended, it follows that texts like the Upaniṣads, which speak of matters of fact, are authoritative in their literal sense." (43) "Now that we understand that all the verbal expression that constitutes the Vedas is authoritative in its literal meaning, we must explain how that expression generates its meaning." (44)

[4] https://www.dropbox.com/s/tmium9bxe6etl70/kk_and_dd_on_mm-20200219.pdf

samhita), what our system of panchartrika initiations is based on, gives "woman" as the prohibition".[5]

It so happens, however, that Śrīla Prabhupāda himself has already thoroughly disambiguated the Sunīti *pramāṇa.* He did so not only by repeatedly calling on his disciples of both genders to become *ācāryas* and *gurus*, but also by always responding in the affirmative whenever specifically asked about the possibility of women initiating, and even giving specific qualifications for them to do so, on par with men. (For more on this subject please see Women dīkṣā-gurus — "many", but not "so many" and Order and eligibility).

This makes scriptural research on the subject outside the body of his instructions irrelevant at best and offensive at worst. (See, for instance, "Harmonizing" Śrīla Prabhupāda and Silencing the ācāryas.)

Also, as was shown — conclusively and in great detail — in Guru: The principle, Not the Body, the interpretation of *Bhāradvaja-saṁhitā* that Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu et al first devised and then proposed as the new norm for ISKCON initiation policy, is novel, unprecedented, rife with creative interpolations, deliberate omissions and dire contradictions and, most alarmingly, is starkly at odds with the corpus of Śrīla Prabhupāda's and Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava teachings on the topic. (For more on this subject please see Interpreting Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā and Reinventing BS 1.42-44).

However, here it is important to draw attention not only to the ease with which Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu segued from pronouncing ambiguity of the Sunīti *pramāṇa* to proposing Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā as the disambiguating remedy, but also the scriptural rationale that he used.

Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu proposes to follow Jīva Gosvāmī's rule of respective strengths of scriptural sources in *Tattva-sandarbha* 11:

> *"But when there are conflicting statements, we must decide which is stronger and which weaker. This relative strength and weakness applies to differences between one scripture and another as well as to different statements within a single scripture. An example of the first type of application: "In a conflict between sruti and smrti, the sruti is stronger".*[6]

and suggests:

> *"Therefore Srila Prabhupada himself in the matter of synchronizing the meaning of various texts says in his purport to CC Madhya 20.352, that among the authorities of guru, sadhu, and shastra, "shastra is the center for all." On any given subject, the statements of guru, sadhu and shastra should be understood in a unified way (aikya), but there is also a hierarchy among them as to which should be interpreted in the light of the other in case of any seeming conflict or ambiguity, and Srila Prabhupada's direction of shastra being in the center is in accordance with Srila Jiva Gosvami's direction in Tattva Sandarbha".*[4]

However, in citing both Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Prabhupāda in support for his promotion of a scripture of his choice as the new initiation standard for ISKCON, Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu commits three significant omissions.

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[5] Email dated 24 January 2021, PAMHO text 32532962.
[6] Translation by Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu.

First, what Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu skips is the very next line in Jīva Gosvāmī's *Sarva-samvādinī*, in which the *ācārya* states:

> *"When there is conflict among direct statement, logical indication, the sentence, the larger context, the location, and the etymology, the later items are progressively weaker because they are derived by progressively more indirect methods".*[7]

According to this hierarchy, repeated direct statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda that women can and even should be *dīkṣā-gurus* in his movement take precedence over indirect logical indications that they should not — such as derived from the Sunīti *pramāṇa* and even from *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*.

Second, Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu neglects the writings of his own spiritual master, Bhakti Vikāśa Swami, who in his book Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava[8] cites Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī as asserting:

> *"Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura is Kamala Mañjarī, a personal associate of Rādhārāṇī. He directed me to establish daiva-varṇāśrama. I must obey his order.* **An ācārya is not under śāstra. He can make śāstra***".*

Bhakti Vikāśa Swami then footnotes this quotation and elaborates on it thus:

> [quote]
> The basic definition of an *ācārya* is given in Vāyu Purāṇa:
>
> > *ācinoti yaḥ śāstrārtham ācāre sthāpayaty api*
> > *svayam ācarate yasmād ācāryas tena kīrtitaḥ*
>
> *"An ācārya is one who fully understands the conclusions of the revealed scriptures and whose behavior reflects his deep realization. He is a living example, for he teaches the meaning of the scriptures by both word and deed".*
>
> **Nevertheless, a fully liberated *ācārya* is not constricted by rules of scripture meant for regulating and uplifting those who have not realized the essence of *śāstra*.** *Śāstra* is given by God, and the duty of an *ācārya* is to follow and transmit the message thereof. **Yet in one sense, self-realized persons are more important than *śāstra* because they explain and fulfill its purpose by making its meaning understandable to eligible people.** The statement "An *ācārya* can make *śāstra*" means that a fully God-realized emissary can introduce practical adjustments that may not be clearly mentioned in but serve the purpose of *śāstra*.
>
> From Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's commentary on Tattva-sūtra: *"Devotees of the Supreme Lord are not controlled by scriptures, because their activities are harmonious with divine wisdom. Therefore when realized devotees ordain any new arrangement, it should be accepted as a religious code even if not found in the scriptural directions of previous sages."*
>
> See also *Nārada-bhakti-sūtra* 69: *"Great pure devotees make scriptures authoritative".*
> [end of quote]

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[7] Translation by Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu.
[8] Part III: The Preaching Challenge, chapter "Disputes of Succession", pp. 227-8 [alternatively titled "Bhagavata-parampara" and placed in Volume II in another electronic edition].

Therefore, if we accept Śrīla Prabhupāda as a fully liberated *ācārya* to whom the above descriptions are completely applicable, we must also accept that:

1. Śrīla Prabhupāda makes *śāstras* authoritative. (per Narada Muni)

2. Śrīla Prabhupāda is not controlled by scriptures because his activities are already harmonious with divine wisdom. Therefore, when Śrīla Prabhupāda ordains any new arrangement, it should be accepted as a religious code even if not found in the scriptural directions of previous sages. (per Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura)

3. Śrīla Prabhupāda as an *ācārya* is not under *śāstra*. He can make *śāstra*. (per Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī); and

4. Śrīla Prabhupada fully understands the conclusions of the revealed scriptures and his behavior reflects his deep realization. Śrīla Prabhupada is a living example, for he teaches the meaning of the scriptures by both word and deed. Nevertheless, as a fully liberated *ācārya*, Śrīla Prabhupāda is not constricted by rules of scripture meant for regulating and uplifting those who have not realized the essence of *śāstra*. *Śāstra* is given by God, and the duty of Śrīla Prabhupāda as an *ācārya* is to follow and transmit the message thereof. **Yet in one sense, Śrīla Prabhupāda as a self-realized person is more important than *śāstra* because he explains and fulfills its purpose by making its meaning understandable to eligible people. The statement "An *ācārya* can make *śastra*" means that Śrīla Prabhupāda as a fully God-realized emissary can introduce practical adjustments that may not be clearly mentioned in but serve the purpose of *śāstra*".** (per Bhakti Vikāśa Swami)

Arguing to the contrary, as Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu seems to be doing by suggesting that we skip direct statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda in preference to *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, therefore means precisely to go against *guru*, *sadhu* and *śāstra*.

ŚRĪLA PRABHUPĀDA ON SĀDHU-ŚĀSTRA-GURU-VĀKYA TINETE KARIYĀ AIKYA

And third, Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu quotes Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement from CC Madhya 20.352 purp.:

> *"Therefore Srila Prabhupada himself in the matter of synchronizing the meaning of various texts says in his purport to CC Madhya 20.352, that among the authorities of guru, sadhu, and shastra, "shastra is the center for all." On any given subject, the statements of guru, sadhu and shastra should be understood in a unified way (aikya), but there is also a hierarchy among them as to which should be interpreted in the light of the other in case of any seeming conflict or ambiguity, and Srila Prabhupada's direction of shastra being in the center is in accordance with Srila Jiva Gosvami's direction in Tattva Sandarbha".*[4]

in order to give *carte blanche* to his attempts to harmonize Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements on the topic of Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus* by sources outside of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings. However, in doing so Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu does not quote Śrīla Prabhupāda's numerous own statements in which he explains how the principle of *aikya*, unification, must be applied. To give just three examples out of the many:

> *So our method is not against the śāstra. Yaḥ śāstra-vidhim utsṛjya [Bg. 16.23]. If we give up the direction of the śāstra, then we are faulty. If we do not deviate the injunctions of the śāstras...* **Sādhu-śāstra-guru-vākya tinete kariyā aikya.** *In the śāstra it is sanctioned. My Guru Mahārāja, he also ordered. Caitanya Mahāprabhu also ordered. When Caitanya Mahāprabhu ordered that pṛthivīte āche yata nagarādi grāma, so that means He wanted that all over the world, in every town, in every village, His mission should be propagated. [CB Antya-khaṇḍa 4.126]* **And what is His mission? His mission is: yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya [Cc. Madhya 8.128]. That is His mission. So it is not that in Western countries one cannot become Vaiṣṇava, one cannot become guru. This is not. This..., such sort of remark is not tolerable from śāstric point of view.** *It is completely, strictly to the śāstric point of view. And it is*

*a glory for us that people in other countries, outside India, they're accepting this cult of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. But crippled people, they unnecessarily criticize this method. **But we don't care for them**".* (The Nectar of Devotion -- October 24, 1972, Vṛndāvana)

This is how Śrīla Prabhupāda saw and applied the *aikya* principle — by stressing that the mission of Caitanya Mahāprabhu is to make everyone, including Westerners, into gurus, that it is strictly according to *sādhu-śāstra-guru-vākya* and that arguing against it is not tolerable, but "we don't care" for such opponents.

And, as if preempting someone's persistent confusion at to the hierarchy among *sādhu-guru-śāstra*, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in which sequence and form the tripartite *pramāṇa* manifests:

*"So if you want to learn that transcendental science then tad viddhi, try to understand what is this praṇipātena. Here also Prahlāda Mahārāja asks. That is, that is the symmetry. Sādhu-guru-śāstra-vākya tinete kariyā aikya. A sādhu, Prahlāda Mahārāja is sādhu. He is speaking, he is speaking the words which he has heard from his guru, Nārada, and that there is no discrepancies with the śāstra. **Whatever he is speaking that is stated in the śāstra**. Just like he's a guru-śuśrūṣayā. That, that is stated in the śāstra. Ādau gurv-āśrayam [Brs 1.1.74], tad viddhi praṇipātena.* (SB 7.7.29-30 — March 21, 1971, Bombay)

and drives the point home in no unclear terms:

*"So in order to invoke that love of Godhead there is process, this is the process. This is the process as prescribed in the śāstras: sādhu śāstra guru-vākya. You have to make progress with reference to the śāstras, with reference to the saintly persons, ācāryas, and your direct spiritual master. Sādhu śāstra guru, tinete koriyā aikya.. Ādau śraddhā tato sādhu-saṅga. **Sādhu first. Sādhu first. If anyone has got śraddhā, a faith for realizing Kṛṣṇa then he must associate with sādhus**".* (Lecure of SB 7.6.19‑21 — March 7, 1971, Calcutta)

Bʜāʀᴀᴅᴠāᴊᴀ-sᴀṁʜɪᴛā ᴏɴ śāsᴛʀᴀ ᴠs. āᴄāʀʏᴀ

Finally, to indulge Kṛṣṇa-kirtī Prabhu's fascination with *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*, here is what the *saṁhitā* says on the subject of relative interdependence of *śāstra* and *ācārya*:

jñānatas tv anupetasya brahmācāryam abhīpsataḥ
vṛthaivātma-samit-kṣepo jāyate kṛṣṇa-vartmani (1.34)

One who aspires for spiritual realization by mere knowledge without surrendering to the spiritual master simply wastes his life in vain like wood in fire.

śāstradiṣu sudṛṣṭāpi sāṅgā saha phalodayā
na prasīdati vai vidyā vinā sad-upadeśataḥ (1.35)

Without receiving spiritual instructions, even thorough knowledge of the scriptures along with their six corollaries does not become clear or yield fruit.

Commentary by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra: This verse beginning with the word '*śāstra*' explains ('*viśadayati*') the [previously] stated meaning (*uktam artham*). '*Vidyā*' here means 'spiritual knowledge' (*brahma-vidyā*). It does not become clear or correct (*prasannā na bhavati*) nor does it yield fruit ('*phalāya na bhavati*').

kāmaṁ loka-pramāṇasya kāmāḥ siddhyanti kāminaḥ
gṛhīta-sat-padasyaiva nirapāya-phalodayaḥ (1.36)

While worldly desires of a fruitive worker become fulfilled by worldly means, one attains eternal result simply by grasping the feet of saintly devotees.

Commentary by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra (part): Eternal result, or liberation, is attainable by one who holds onto the feet of the saintly, namely, by one who has taken complete shelter of the two feet of the spiritual master. This is the meaning. In the worldly experience, the desired goal of plowing etc. is achieved simply by the acts of plowing etc. themselves, without depending on a spiritual master. However, in the transcendental experience it is understood that the desired result, spiritual knowledge, can be achieved only by dependence on the spiritual master. This is evident by the fact that without being rooted in the service of the spiritual master, pursuit for spiritual knowledge is fruitless.

To conclude, it is the compulsive persistence that the Sunīti *pramāṇa* of SB 4.12.32 purp. must be interpreted as a normative statement that is at the root of the protracted VDG debate. Hopefully, it is now adequately addressed.

[The subject of Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings as **already** fully harmonious with and perfectly representative of *śāstric* conclusions will be treated in much more detail in The Root of Śabda, which is forthcoming, Kṛṣṇa willing.]

Did Sunīti wish them well?

However, the question why Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned that Sunīti could not initiate Dhruva "being a woman and specifically Dhruva's mother"still remains unanswered. Indeed, isn't this a clear indication at least of a general principle — being a woman and a mother is more likely a disqualification for being a *dīkṣā-guru* than not?

Not necessarily. There is a much simpler, more natural and much more *śāstric* possible reason for Sunīti's ineligibility, as indicated by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his commentary on SB 4.8.20. He relays the dialogue between Sunīti and Dhruva as follows:

[Dhruva:] 'Will I enter the womb of that sinful woman by worshipping the Lord?'

[Sunīti:] 'She is such a vile creature. Your father, her servant, is also vile and foolish. You can attain a position greater than that of Brahmā. Therefore quickly go from here and worship the Lord.'"

It appears from the dialogue that Sunīti as Dhruva's mother and a neglected co-wife of the King was afflicted by grief out of affection for her son, as well as by jealousy and resentment towards Suruci and Uttānapāda.[9] This might naturally be the reason why she could not muster enough composure and clarity (required of a guru[10]) to pacify and enlighten even herself, much less her son, and could not become his *śikṣā-guru.*

As a result, even though earlier Sunīti supported Suruci's instructions, asked Dhruva not to wish Suruci ill, glorified the Lord and encouraged Dhruva to worship Him, Dhruva still could not get rid of his vengeance on the way to the forest, as pointed out by Śrīla Prabhupāda in SB 4.9.23:

*"Dhruva Mahārāja came to the forest to search out the Supreme Personality of Godhead **with a revenging spirit against his stepmother**. … Because of having insulted Dhruva Mahārāja,*

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[9] VCT on SB 4.8.20 (translation by Bhanu Swami): *nanu kiṁ harim ārādhya tasyāḥ pāpīyasyāḥ garbhaṁ pravekṣyāmīti tatra sā varākī khalu kā, tasyāḥ kiṅkaras tvat-pitaiva varāko dīna-buddhis tvaṁ brahma-padād apy utkṛṣṭaṁ padaṁ prāptuṁ pārayiṣyasi, tad itaḥ śīghraṁ vraja*

[10] Bhakti-sandarbha 203 (translation by Bhanu Swami): "The speaker is the best guru if he enlightens people filled with lust and anger, misers and depressed persons when they hear him." *kāma-krodhādi-yukto'pi kṛpaṇo'pi viṣādavān | śrutvā vikāśam āyāti sa vaktā paramo guruḥ*

*Suruci would become mad upon the death of her son and would enter a forest fire, and thus her life would be ended. **This was specifically mentioned by the Lord to Dhruva because he was determined for revenge against her***".

The fact that Dhruva was still afflicted by anger and vengeance on the way to the forest indicates that Sunīti was not able to free him from anger by her instructions (or maybe didn't actually intend to). The last point is further confirmed in SB 4.8.24, in which Maitreya says:

maitreya uvāca
evaṁ sañjalpitaṁ mātur ākarṇyārthāgamaṁ vacaḥ
sanniyamyātmanātmānaṁ niścakrāma pituḥ purāt

The great sage Maitreya continued: The instruction of Dhruva Mahārāja's mother, Sunīti, was actually meant for fulfilling his desired objective. Therefore, after deliberate consideration and with intelligence and fixed determination, he left his father's house.

Here Maitreya significantly states that Suniti's words were *arthāgamaṁ vacaḥ*, which Śrīla Prabhupāda translates as "the instruction of Dhruva Mahārāja's mother, Sunīti, was actually meant for fulfilling his desired objective" — which happens to be, quite determinedly, to take revenge on Suruci.

To sum up:

1. as a **woman**, Sunīti was attached to her husband Uttānapāda and therefore afflicted by his favoritism towards Suruci; and
2. as a **mother**, Sunīti was attached to Dhruva[11] and therefore, while pointing him to the right path, could not give him the kind of substantial spiritual instructions that would rid him of anger and vengefulness and would qualify her as Dhruva's *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*.

There could be, of course, many other reasons, such as that Sunīti might have been uninitiated herself, but at least Sunīti's psychological state, as explained by Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, by itself gives enough substantiation for Śrīla Prabhupāda statement: "Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's *dīkṣā-guru*". (For more on this subject please see Did Sunīti wish them well?)

This explanation draws upon both her gender and her motherhood as independent and complementary factors, clarifies the reason for which she could not become Dhruva's *śikṣā-guru* and, finally, explains her inability to initiate him — without having to trigger any philosophical repercussions seven *manvantaras* later.

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[11] Chapter 31 of *Nṛsiṁha-purāṇa* states that Sunīti out of attachment for Dhruva initially even tried to dissuade Dhruva from going into the forest to worship the Lord: *"Suniti said- Beloved son, I cannot allow you. You are only about seven or eight years of age this time. You are only able to play and enjoy so far. Furthermore, you are my only child and I only live on the basis of you. I have got you as a result of severe worship of god and goddesses and faced a number of troubles. Dear son, my breathings run after you even when you leave me to a distance not more than three or four paces from the home"*.