

Guru: The Principle, Not the Body

*A response to
“Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada-Pañcarātra:
Can a Female Devotee be a dīkṣā-guru?”*

by Madana-mohana Dāsa

2020

Dedication

*datta-gosvāmi-pīyūṣaṁ
prabhupādānuprāṇinam
siddhānta-dhana-dhārāṇām
su-vinītaṁ namāmi tam*

I offer my humble obeisances unto Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu, who received the nectar of the Gosvāmīs' literatures and of *kṛṣṇa-kathā* and freely gives it to others. He dedicated his entire life breath to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and among the knowers of perfect philosophical conclusions of the Vedas he is distinguished by his utter humility.

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“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.”

Dāmodara Dāsa and Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Dāsa,
“Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada-Pāñcarātra”, p.23

“Out of many thousands of men, one may be trying to become perfect in his life; and out of many perfect men, one may know Kṛṣṇa in truth.’ But Kṛṣṇa is so kind that in this age He has given a special facility: that you chant Hare Kṛṣṇa *mantra*, your heart will be purified and you will be able to understand what is Kṛṣṇa.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda,
Janmāṣṭamī lecture, 13 August 1971 in London

“One who knows the science of Kṛṣṇa, he can become guru. *Ṙṥthivīm sa śiṣyāt*. He can make disciples all over the world... So Caitanya Mahāprabhu confirmed it: *kibā vipra kibā śūdra nyāsī kena naya yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya*. It doesn't matter whether one is a *grhastha* or one is a *sannyāsī* or one is a *brāhmaṇa* or not *brāhmaṇa*. It doesn't matter. Because this is not the science of this physiological, anatomical science or cobbler's science. Cobbler's science means cobbler knows what kind of skin it is. It is not like that. **Neither cobbler's science nor anatomical science or physiological science. Bhagavat-tattva-vijñānam. It is another science.** So anyone who is well versed in *bhagavat-tattva-vijñānam*, he can become guru. Not others.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda,
The Nectar of Devotion, 28 January 1973 in Calcutta

“Krishna and His representative is the same. Just like Krishna can be present simultaneously in millions of places. Similarly, the Spiritual Master also can be present wherever the disciple wants. **A Spiritual Master is the principle, not the body.**”

Śrīla Prabhupāda,
letter to Malati, 28 May 1968

Setting the theme

Originally this paper began in a heated public email thread in February-March 2019 as a personal response to Dāmodara Prabhu and Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Prabhu, the authors of *Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada-Pañcarātra: Can a Female Devotee be a dīkṣā-guru?* However, the response quickly grew beyond the scope of what a back-and-forth exchange by email might hope to resolve, so the obvious way forward was to write a paper adequately addressing their contentions on the topic of Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus*.

Using Śrīla Prabhupāda’s maxim for its title, *Guru: The Principle, Not the Body* attempts to respond to said contentions by showing that they draw upon unfounded assumptions, missing or misstated contexts, and/or misinterpreted *śāstric* sources. Most importantly, *Guru: The Principle, Not the Body* tries to illuminate the topic by the light of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings, deeply grounded both in the legacy of the previous *ācāryas* as well as in his own status of an empowered *ācārya* par excellence. In doing so, the paper also tries to show that the novel interpretation of a few verses from Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā as disqualifying Vaiṣṇavīs from acting as *dīkṣā-gurus* is, in fact, at odds with *guru-sādhū-śāstra* and with the very essence of Lord Caitanya’s message — as taught by Śrīla Prabhupāda, supported by the available historical evidence of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism and implemented by several GBC resolutions stating that Vaiṣṇavīs, when mature and qualified, can certainly accept and initiate disciples.

Therefore, while retaining something of the format of a personal response, *Guru: The Principle, Not the Body* hopes to be relevant to anyone interested in its pivotal theme of spiritual equality, perfectly encapsulated by Śrīla Vṛndāvana Dāsa Ṭhākura in the following passage from Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya-khaṇḍa 6.165-171, and by Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s commentaries on these verses:¹

*ghare ghare karimu kīrtana paracāra
mora yaśe nāce yena sakala-saṁsāra* (165)

“I will preach the chanting of the holy names from house to house so that the entire universe will dance as they sing My glories.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī’s commentary: Śrī Gaurasundara said, “I will preach the topics of *kṛṣṇa-kīrtana* in each and every house so that everyone in the world will be grateful to Me and dance while singing My glories.”

*brahmā-bhava-nāradādi yāre tapa kare
hena bhakti bilāimu, balilūṅ tomāre*” (166)

“I will distribute that devotional service for which personalities headed by Brahmā, Śiva, and Nārada undergo austerities. This I assure You.”

¹ Translation by Bhūmipati Dāsa.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's commentary: "I will benefit everyone including the most sinful by awarding them the devotional service (love of God) for which the four-headed Brahmā, Śiva, and Nārada perform austerities. This is My assurance."

*advaita balaye,—“yadi bhakti bilāi
bāstrī-śūdra-ādi yata mūrkhare se dibā (167)*

Advaita replied, “If You will distribute devotional service, then also give it to the less-intelligent persons, including the women and śūdras.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's commentary: Advaita said, “If You will distribute the Lord's devotional service, which is rare for even great personalities like Brahmā, to everyone in this world, then You will have to distribute that loving devotional service to those who are considered unqualified. Till now, people in general consider that women, śūdras, and fools are unqualified for the service of the Lord. May You change that concept by giving Lord Hari's devotional service to those unqualified people.”

*vidyā-dhana-kula-ādi tapasyāra made
tora bhakta, tora bhakti ye-ye-jana vādhe (168)*

*se pāpiṣṭha-saba dekhi' maruka puḍiyā
ācaṇḍāla nācuka tora nāma-guṇa gāñā” (169)*

*advaitera vākya śuni' karilā huṅkāra
prabhu bale,—“satya ye tomāra aṅgikāra” (170)*

“Let all the sinful people who are proud of their education, wealth, high birth, and austerities and those who place obstacles in the path of Your devotees and Your devotional service burn to death, and let all others, including the dog-eaters, dance while singing Your holy names and qualities.” Hearing Advaita's statement, the Lord roared loudly and said, “Whatever You say will be fulfilled.”

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's commentary: “Pride born of education, pride born of wealth, pride born of high birth, and pride born of austerities all originate from the false ego, which is the source of all inauspiciousness. Only those unfortunate envious people who are ignorant of the glories of the devotees and the characteristics of devotional service are puffed-up with the pride of their respective education, wealth, high birth, and austerities. They put obstacles on the path of the devotees and their devotional service, so their hearts are naturally inclined towards sinful activities.

“Let sinful people burn to death with envy on seeing the devotees from all classes of this world and their extraordinary devotional service. And let Me have the pleasure of seeing the envious proud persons' hearts burn on seeing the enthusiastic dancing of the dog-eaters and other

condemned and neglected persons who joyfully identify themselves as followers of the path of *prema-bhakti*." Lord Gaurasundara approved these statements of Advaita.

*e saba vākyera sākṣī sakala-saṁsāra
mūrkha-nīca-prati kṛpā haila tāñhāra (171)*

The entire world is witness to these words, for the Lord's mercy was distributed to the foolish and fallen.

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī's commentary: The condemned low-class people of this world will testify to the authenticity of the conversation between Śrī Mahāprabhu and Śrī Advaita Prabhu. Even today foolish people who are ignorant according to mundane considerations are capable of defeating learned scholars in every field of knowledge by the influence of their devotional service to the Lord. The degree of authority that they achieve in all fields of knowledge by the mercy of Śrī Caitanya, in spite of being born in sinful low-class families, is the prime evidence of the Lord's mercy.

May Śrī Advaita Ācārya's compassionate plea on our behalf, its merciful fulfillment by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and Śrīla Prabhupāda's flooding the whole world with Their compassion and mercy be our hope, light and inspiration for this discussion.

A servant of Śrīla Prabhupāda's servants,
Madana-mohana dāsa

1 February 2020,
Śrī Advaita Ācārya's appearance day

Preface

Dear Dāmodara Prabhu and Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Prabhu,
please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

I apologize for having taken so long with this response due to reasons explained in my earlier message: once I resumed my regular services in March 2019, it left me with very little time for extracurricular engagements such as the writing of this text — especially sans the convenience of ready books and papers at hand to copy-and-paste or paraphrase from.

This will be my last text on the topic, so please bear with its length. I will refrain from going into yet another argumentation cycle with you because the stakes in this discussion are much higher than proving one side right and the other wrong.

Since you both have been alternating as contributors in the discussion, by “you” I will refer to both of you, unless specified otherwise. And as much as I would prefer to “depersonalize” this text for a neutral audience via the third-person objective “the authors” instead, its subject is too tightly interwoven with your repeated public assertions for an aloof third-person narrative.

Therefore, please forgive an occasional tinge of levity and light-hearted criticism in my comments as directed only at the views expressed by you in this discussion and at their dangerous ramifications, and not at you personally. My sincere apologies if anything written below will hurt you on a personal level. That was not my intention. May I remind you that I would have much rather had a private and personal discussion with both of you on this topic, as I proposed back in March 2019 in Mayapur. I regret that you did not take me up on that offer back then, opting instead to debate the issue as publicly as possible — and forcing me to be responding in kind.

However, let me assure you and the readers that my critique of your positions below, however sharp or even sarcastic it may seem, in no way diminishes my attitude of sincere respect and appreciation toward both of you as sincere Vaiṣṇavas and servants of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mission, nor does it prevent me from aspiring to have your association around such unifying spiritual activities as *kṛṣṇā-kīrtana*, *kṛṣṇā-kathā*, and *kṛṣṇā-prasāda*. I am also grateful to both of you for inspiring me to research the topic at hand in more depth over the last year, which further solidified my conviction that Śrīla Prabhupāda indeed gave us everything we need individually and collectively for practicing and propagating Lord Caitanya’s mission just as he envisioned. Thank you.

Since my time and resources were too limited to have the text below thoroughly edited and proofread, especially as it kept expanding, it may display typos as well as inconsistencies in its diacritics usage, citation and formatting styles, which you are requested to kindly report or overlook. Unless specified, all emphases of any kind (bolded, underlined and/or capitalized) as well as comments in square brackets are mine. And of course, as a conditioned soul, I am prone to commit mistakes, which I will be grateful to have pointed out to me in a constructive manner and on the basis of *guru-sādhū-sāstra*.

(1) Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to a number of senior, knowledgeable and wise devotees for their feedback, comments, suggestions, encouragement, contributions and support at different stages of my work on this document. I would love to acknowledge their contributions here personally and in detail, but am reluctant to do so for fear of having these devotees exposed to the kind of vitriol I received in email since my involvement in the debate in February 2019.

As an aside, it is unfortunate yet quite telling that some participants of the ongoing discussion on the topic of Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus* (further on referred to as VDG) propound and extol Vedic culture in public, yet stoop to entirely uncultured rhetoric in private. This behavior is anything but conducive for a civil Vaiṣṇava dialogue on this important subject, which we should be having. So I hope (against hope) that, should this text generate any discussion at all, it will be free from any type of incivility — Vedic or otherwise.

(2) Rationale

Of course, now that on October 15, 2019 the GBC passed their decisive resolution on Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus* and the Indian Bureau responded in kind with their own, discussing your counterarguments against it might seem or be irrelevant. However, I would like to state the main reason behind my continued involvement in this discussion. The reason is to represent and advocate to the best of my limited ability the position on the issue by Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu — one of ISKCON's foremost scholars, whose depth of knowledge of Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* was matched only by the depth of his loyalty to Śrīla Prabhupāda and of his humility, and whom I am fortunate to regard as one of my *śikṣā-gurus*.

In 2009 during his tenure as a SAC member, Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu remarked on one of the first in a series of papers that attempted to argue against Vaiṣṇavīs becoming *dīkṣā-gurus* on the basis of *strī-dharma* (titled “Official Response to the GBC”) that he was “very disturbed by its racist motivation and offensive attitude toward Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disciples.”²

Nine days later, on November 28, 2009 in his letter to the said paper’s authors and the Indian RGB Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu wrote, in part:

“How *strī-dharma* should be understood and implemented in ISKCON in the twenty-first century is not so easy a question to answer. First of all, we have to recognize the difference between *daivi-varṇāśrama* and its Hindu distortion. My understanding is that the *varṇāśrama* is Daivi when it is interpreted and organized by pure Vaiṣṇavas. Therefore our determining factor for defining *daivi-varṇāśrama* is not the opinions of conservatives or liberals, Indians or Americans, but the opinions of Śrīla Prabhupāda. It's just not obvious to me that Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't want women in ISKCON to initiate; if I'm wrong please show me. He definitely didn't want all his

² Email dated 19 November 2009, PAMHO text 18563751

female disciples to only sit at home, raise children and cook and clean. He wanted women devotees to also participate in book distribution and other preaching, and explicitly endorsed their giving Bhāgavatam classes. Whether that mandate for preaching extends to initiating or not is apparently a not yet settled question, since the RGB is reconsidering the GBC's ruling. So it requires more research and discussion, done impartially and without hostility.

"I'm also concerned that the logic demonstrated in the Response can be easily carried further to the conclusion that actually only Indians born in *brāhmaṇa* families should be *dīkṣā-gurus*. There are several verses to this effect cited in the first chapter of Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, the same chapter containing the Kulārṇava-tantra text quoted by the Response. These verses, taken out of context and translated with a suitable slant, give an even stronger basis for arguing that *dīkṣā-gurus* must be born *brāhmaṇas*. Before 1977, how many New York Jews in the Gauḍīya-sampradāya were properly authorized to give initiation? If the number is so small (zero), why whimsically now allow exceptions to the rule?"³

Unfortunately, the concerns he voiced in this letter a decade ago still remain valid. In fact, they proved prophetic, as new *śāstric* statements are being thrust into the discourse on guru qualifications in ISKCON with an attempt to establish them as the final *pramāṇa* on the matter — despite the fact that they have never been cited or relied upon for the subject by Śrīla Prabhupāda or his predecessors and that these statements can indeed be, “with a suitable slant”, used for trying to push ISKCON down the slippery slope of racism and casteism.⁴

For a sample, look no further than Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā itself. There in verses 1.61-62 Bharadvāja Muni makes a blanket statement about conditioned souls who, due to their own beginningless sinful inclinations and **resultant births into sinful families, sinful communities, or sinful countries, or at inauspicious times**, cannot develop remembrance of, surrender to, or servitude toward Lord Viṣṇu, or Keśava:

*anāder vāsanā-yogād viparīṭad ihātmanaḥ
smṛtir na jāyate viṣṇau kuta evārpaṇe matiḥ (61)*

*sva-pāpa-sambhavād eva kulāt saṁsargato 'nyataḥ
deśāt kālāt svabhāvāc ca prapadyante na keśavam (62)*

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*”.

[In fact, we have already seen that deadly philosophical mutation in recent years. In 2012, a young Indian devotee wrote and circulated a series of lengthy *śāstric* papers trying to prove that

³ Email to Indian RGB dated 28 November 2009, PAMHO text 18620959

⁴ See, for instance, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā 1.61-62, where people born in sinful places, sinful families, sinful communities or at sinful times are described as disqualified by their previous sinful impressions from developing remembrance of Viṣṇu, surrender to Him and servitude to Him.

Vaiṣṇavis must never be *dīkṣā-gurus*.⁵ He was then paraded by leading anti-VDG proponents as the “boy *paṇḍita*” and his writings touted as the final word in the debate. However, consistent as he was, he soon went on to write and circulate equally copious *śāstric* articles arguing that Western or non-*brāhmaṇa* devotees too could not be *dīkṣā-gurus*⁶ — and was hastily disavowed by his former anti-VDG promoters.]

However, Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu is no longer physically present and cannot personally speak in defence of what he was convinced to be Śrīla Prabhupāda position on the Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* as regards the topic of Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-gurus*. Therefore, inept as I am, I cannot help but try to respond on his behalf, if only as a humble service to him — especially now that his own spiritual competence and scholarly reputation are being challenged and called by you into question.

A secondary reason for me taking the time to compile this response is because your ideas meld misinterpretations of scriptures with not-so-thinly-veiled criticism of ISKCON seniormost leaders.⁷ And since they are also being translated and spread in larger fora of ISKCON in several languages, including Russian, they need to be confronted and leadership defended (see also Section IV.5 “Normative cherry-picking”).

(3) Summary of anti-VDG contentions

At this point it is relevant to summarise your position and main contentions.

You quote a series of verses from Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā, chapter 1, which describe, in part, qualifications for being a *dīkṣā-guru*. In a nutshell, the verses state that:

13-15: anyone with transcendental faith is qualified for *pāñcarātrikī-vidhi*;

38-40: one should then accept a qualified devotee *brāhmaṇa*, ideally hailing from a pure lineage, as one’s *dīkṣā-guru*;

41: without an emergency, one should not initiate those superior to oneself in terms of birth or age;

42: women, *śūdras*, outcastes, criminals, fallen and/or lustful cannot act as *dīkṣā-gurus*;

43: they can give moral instructions but can never be accepted as *ācāryas*, unless...

⁵ https://docs.google.com/document/d/1GAi_29mnSYTIRcilAhpcRjLejBc2bWrKzsaPRkZjUdg/edit

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/notes/radhakrishnadas-brahmachari/ascertainment-of-the-scriptural-qualifications-of-diksa-guru-diksa-bhagavata-and/619592921439305>

⁷ **On members of the GBC subcommittee on Vaiṣṇavī Initiating Gurus:** “Their recommendations, however, have little if any basis in *guru, sadhu*, or *śāstra* — ISKCON’s traditional and highest lines of authority.” (VNP ix) “Because this recommendation and other questionable ones made by the subcommittee are not in line with *guru, sadhu*, and *śāstra*, their authority is questionable.” (*Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada-Pañcarātra*, p.x)

On the SAC authors of VDG 2005 and 2013 papers: “The authors of both papers seemed to be unaware of the extent of the authority of *Pāñcarātrika-vidhi* over the system of initiations as conducted within ISKCON” [as they were] resorting to extensive speculation, suppression of some of [Śrīla Prabhupāda’s] statements in favor of others, or outright contradictions.” (*Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada-Pañcarātra*, p.77)

On the GBC: “After Śrīla Prabhupāda’s disappearance, the appointment of women to positions of authority in ISKCON like temple presidents and GBC — something that Śrīla Prabhupāda never did — appears to be a violation of these instructions [from Hari-bhakti-vilāsa].” (*Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada-Pañcarātra*, p.52)

44. ...they are *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas*, literally “of those who are directly perceiving the Lord of the souls”, which overrides their aforementioned disqualifications for the role of an *ācārya* such as birth, gender, etc.

Then, citing Harināma Cintāmaṇi, you equate direct perception of the Lord with *bhāva-bhakti* and conclude that women must be on the level of *bhāva-bhakti* to have their otherwise incorrigible bodily disqualification for the role of *dīkṣā-guru*, gender, counteracted.

As for the other categories listed in verse 42 as ineligible for being *dīkṣā-gurus* along with women — *śūdras*, outcastes, criminals, fallen and/or lustful — you argue that they are *sādhakas* who either become *brāhmaṇas* by *sādhana-bhakti* and thus qualify as *dīkṣā-gurus* per verses 38-40, or remain *śūdras*, outcastes, criminals etc. by their qualities and/or work, and thus disqualify as *dīkṣā-gurus* per verses 41-42.

Next, you cite Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu to remind us that *bhāva-bhakti* is ‘*sudurlabha*’ (“very rare”) and equate it with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s “not so many” to conclude that women acting as *dīkṣā-gurus* must also necessarily be “very rare”.

The most comprehensive exegesis of your views to date is published by you in February 2019 as a book titled *Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada-Pañcarātra: Can a Female Devotee be a dīkṣā-guru?* (In this text we will use it as the main source of your views and refer to it hereinafter as VNP.)

In this regard, before we move on to the subject at hand, it is essential to point out that yours is just the latest — albeit the most voluminous to date — attempt to prove that women, unlike men, must be on some special level to initiate. As you are certainly aware, there have already been numerous such attempts over the last 15 years or so, sparked by the SAC paper of 2004 on VDG⁸ and the subsequent GBC resolution 425 of 2005⁹, and drawing, at different times, upon either obscure *tantric* or *Pāñcarātric* texts, or Vedic *strī-dharma*, or even women’s periods — only to end up fizzling out and sinking into oblivion. Some of them in their efforts to covertly disprove Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings that women and *śūdras* can be gurus even went as far as alleging that his statements to that effect were malicious interpolations by his disciples.¹⁰

This fact alone shows that, for some, the notion that Vaiṣṇavīs must not be allowed to initiate under any feasible circumstance has long been a foregone conclusion that just needed *śāstric* backing to convince the ISKCON public. It is not, therefore, that the anti-VDG stance has necessarily been an outcome of rigorous *śāstric* research, as you are sincerely trying to present here. For some, it was precisely in reverse — a compulsive conviction followed by a tailored and selective research.

Now, on the subject of our discussion.

⁸ <http://gbc.iskcon.org/female-dīkṣā-guru/>

⁹ Resolution 425. Female dīkṣā Guru: [Statement] The GBC accepts the basic philosophical conclusion presented in the SAC’s Female dīkṣā Guru Paper, i.e. that a mature, qualified, female devotee may accept the role of an initiating spiritual master. The implementation thereof is pending further GBC consideration. <http://gbc.iskcon.org/2005/>

¹⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/notes/radhakrishnadas-brahmachari/ascertainment-of-the-scriptural-qualifications-of-diksa-guru-diksa-bhagavata-and/619592921439305>

In your text of March 18, 2019¹¹ (further on in this text referred to as “March 18”) you expressed frustration with me restating the same points that you believed to have already answered. I will attempt to show how your answers, for the most part, have fallen short of even addressing, much less refuting, my earlier points, will elaborate on them and add some more.

(4) Update: June 2020

On February 19, 2020 Dāmodara Prabhu and Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Prabhu published an essay *In Defense of Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Nārada-Pañcarātra: An Initial Response To Śrīman Madan Mohan Dasa*¹² (further on referred to as Defense). Unfortunately, the essay added few new arguments, and none of substance, and thus did not merit a separate response. However, since several senior Vaiṣṇavas wanted the essay answered nevertheless, I will try to address some of its contentions below in relevant sections of this paper under subheadings tagged with the words “[Updated June 2020:]”.

I. Interpreting Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā

(1) *Adhikāra* for writing one’s own *ṭīkā*

You have so far not denied to be writing your own commentary on Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā (hereinafter BS, following your own abbreviation system in VNP), a Vaiṣṇava scripture, and proposing it as a normative doctrine for entire ISKCON, or, in your words, as “the first authorized account of the process of initiations followed in ISKCON today” (VNP p.xvi) meant by you to “harmonize” — no less no more — **all** statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda on VDG.

[Hereinafter I will be citing your book titled “Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā according to Narada-Pāñcarātra” as “VNP #” where “#” will stand for page number(s).]

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),¹³ you in effect attempt to establish yourself as an *ācārya*¹⁴

¹¹ Email dated 18 March 2009, PAMHO text 31315734, available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/grqjtzif3745kro/18-Mar-2019.pdf>

¹² Available at: https://www.dropbox.com/s/tmium9bx6etl70/kk_and_dd_on_mm-20200219.pdf

¹³ VNP 7: “Thus, without doubt, the process of initiation as established by our *ācāryas* and followed by Śrīla Prabhupāda is strictly based on Narada Pāñcarātra. The *ācāryas* have not innovated anything in the matter of initiations. And because ISKCON’s initiations are based on this *śāstra*, its injunctions on who may and may not become guru apply in deciding the eligibility of female candidates for *dīkṣā-guru*.”

¹⁴ As described by Śrīla Prabhupāda: “*Ācārya. Acinoti śāstra, śāstrārtha*. One who knows the *śāstra-artha*, one who has assimilated the *śāstrārtha*, he is *ācārya*.” (Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 20.110-111 — November 17, 1975, Bombay), a paraphrase of the definition from Vāyu-purāṇa:

*ācinoti yaḥ śāstrārtham ācāre sthāpayaty api
svayam ācarate yasmād ācāryas tena kīrtitaḥ*

in the matter of initiations — on par with Śrīla Prabhupāda, Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura. More evidence of this will be given throughout the text, particularly in Section II.4.j “Posthumous hermeneutics”.

Considering how consequential your proposal is, it would be prudent to first recall some very specific qualifications (or *adhikāra*) for such a task, as defined by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself.

You yourself have quite relevantly quoted one of his injunctions regarding one’s eligibility for writing such commentaries (VNP xv):

“The paramparā system does not allow one to deviate from the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas*. By depending upon the previous *ācāryas*, one can write beautiful commentaries. **However, one cannot defy the previous *ācāryas*. The false pride that makes one think that he can write better than the previous *ācāryas* will make one’s comments faulty.** [emphasis yours — Mmd] At the present moment it has become fashionable for everyone to write in his own way, but such writing is never accepted by serious devotees.” (CC Antya 7.134 purp.)

However, for whatever reason, you have left out the remainder of this commentary, which is no less relevant in assessing your Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā-ṭīkā — or, for that matter, any other similar attempt at commenting on a Vaiṣṇava scripture:

“Because of false pride, every scholar and philosopher wants to exhibit his learning by interpreting the *śāstras*, especially the Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, in his own way. This system of commenting in one’s own way is fully condemned by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Therefore He says, ‘*artha-vyasta’ likhana sei*. **Commentaries written according to one’s own philosophical way are never accepted**; no one will appreciate such commentaries on the revealed scriptures.” (CC Antya 7.134 purp.)

If that is not enough, here are some more eligibility criteria for writing one’s own commentary on scriptures, in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words:

“Unless one is fully qualified in Vaiṣṇava behavior and authorized by superior authority (the Supreme Personality of Godhead), one cannot write Vaiṣṇava literatures or purports and commentaries on Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and the Bhagavad-gītā.” (CC Madhya 24.326 purp.)

“So unless one is self-realized, there is practically no use writing about Kṛṣṇa. This transcendental writing does not depend on material education; it depends on the spiritual realization.” (Lecture on SB 7.5.23–24 — March 31, 1976, Vrndavana)

“We cannot interpret Bhagavad-gītā in my own way. That is not Bhagavad-gītā; that is something else. They take advantage of the Bhagavad-gītā and put their own conclusion. That is

“The *ācārya* is thus called because he has studied and understood the meaning of the scripture, he establishes this meaning in the behavior of others, and himself practices what he preaches.”

not Bhagavad-gītā. If you want to study Bhagavad-gītā, then you have to study as it is. Then it is nice... [O]ur proposition is that if you want to be benefited by reading Bhagavad-gītā, don't read such malinterpretation. Read Bhagavad-gītā as it is. Then you will be benefited." (Bhagavad-gītā 2.13 — November 19, 1972, Hyderabad)

“Personal realization does not mean that one should, out of vanity, attempt to show one's own learning by trying to surpass the previous *ācārya*. One must have full confidence in the previous *ācārya*, and at the same time one must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. *The original purpose of the text must be maintained.* [emphasis Śrīla Prabhupāda's — Mmd] No obscure meaning should be screwed out of it, yet it should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience. This is called realization.” (SB 1.4.1 purp.)

Do you accept these and other similar requirements as mandatory prerequisites for someone contemplating to write an authorized commentary on a Vaiṣṇava scripture — or to “harmonize” previous *ācāryas'* statements? And if you agree, do you fulfill them?

In other words:

- are you free from thinking that you can explain the subject of VDG better than Śrīla Prabhupāda?
- is your BS commentary free from unique and unprecedented innovations in Vaiṣṇava-siddhānta, i.e., in Śrīla Prabhupāda's terminology, from “your own philosophical way”?
- do you present Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā as it is, without any “malinterpretations”?
- in your exegesis are you not deviating from the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas* and commentators on essential points of *siddhānta*?
- are you free from attempts to exhibit your learning by trying to educate your seniors in the areas of their alleged ignorance about *siddhānta*?
- in doing so, are you fully qualified in Vaiṣṇava behavior, an essential facet of which is respect for one's *guru-jana*, or seniors — especially in the context of your repeated criticism of them, individually and collectively, as ignorant of *siddhānta*, offensive to Śrīla Prabhupāda, and generally confused?¹⁵
- have you been authorized for this task by the Supreme Personality of Godhead?
- are you self-realized (or, in your preferred frame of reference, *sākṣāt-kṛta-bhagavat-tattva* — endowed with direct realization of the truth of God)?

¹⁵ **On members of the GBC subcommittee on Vaiṣṇavī Initiating Gurus:** “Their recommendations, however, have little if any basis in *guru, sadhu*, or *śāstra* — ISKCON's traditional and highest lines of authority.” (VNP ix) “Because this recommendation and other questionable ones made by the subcommittee are not in line with *guru, sadhu*, and *śāstra*, their authority is questionable.” (VNP x)

On the SAC authors of VDG 2005 and 2013 papers: “The authors of VDG of both papers seemed to be unaware of the extent of the authority of *Pāñcarātrika-viddhi* over the system of initiations as conducted within ISKCON” [as they were] resorting to extensive speculation, suppression of some of [Śrīla Prabhupāda's] statements in favor of others, or outright contradictions.” (VNP 77)

On the GBC: “After Śrīla Prabhupāda's disappearance, the appointment of women to positions of authority in ISKCON like temple presidents and GBC — something that Śrīla Prabhupāda never did — appears to be a violation of these instructions [from Hari-bhakti-vilāsa].” (VNP 52)

- do you maintain the original purpose of both Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions?
- and, most importantly, do you have full confidence in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions on the topic of VDG as self-sufficiently evident, consistent and conclusive by themselves, rather than “attempting to show one’s own learning by trying to surpass the previous *ācārya*” by claiming Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions on the topic to be conflicting and therefore in need of harmonization?

Out of humility, you may feel understandably reticent about answering some or all of the above questions. However, fortunately for our discussion, you have already conclusively answered at least the last one:

(2) “Harmonizing” Śrīla Prabhupāda

In your email of March 8¹⁶ (further on referred to as “March 8”) one of you wrote:

“That Śrīla Prabhupāda has conflicting statements on this issue is a fact and that harmonizing them is indeed necessary is also a fact.”

— a claim used as the main underpinning and rationale for your VNP.¹⁷

To make grave implications of your assertion above perfectly clear, here is how Oxford American Writer’s Thesaurus glosses “conflicting”:

“contradictory, incompatible, inconsistent, irreconcilable, incongruous, contrary, opposite, opposing, antithetical, clashing, discordant, divergent; at odds.”

And here is a relevant definition of the verb “to harmonize” from the New Oxford American Dictionary: “to make consistent.”

In other words — unless you don’t actually know or mean what you are writing — by the above assertion 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.

You even modestly offer:

“The attempt which we have presented is not bringing any speculation in picture and directly harmonizes all statements based on śāstra. However, all other attempts that have been

¹⁶ Email dated 8 March 2019, PAMHO text 31296135, available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/87fzqdsqj4ztd4v/8-Mar-2019.pdf>

¹⁷ “Once again, the conflicting statements [of Śrīla Prabhupāda on VDG] include affirmation, prohibition, and restriction.” (VNP 14)

presented till date had to resort to some assumption, inference, or interpretation by one's whims." (March 8)

For one thing, such pronouncements about a previous *ācārya*'s instructions as "conflicting" or inconsistent are nothing new. In fact, they are surprisingly reminiscent of another memorable stab at harmonization, when Vallabha Bhatta likewise declared Śrīla Śrīdhara Svāmī's commentary on SB inconsistent and proffered his own as a harmonizing remedy. CC Antya 7.114 quotes him as saying:

*sei vyākhyā kareṇa yāhāṅ yei paḍe āṇi'
eka-vākyatā nāhi, tāte 'svāmī' nāhi māni"*

"Whatever Śrīdhara Svāmī reads he explains according to the circumstances. Therefore he is inconsistent in his explanations and cannot be accepted as an authority."

Of course, we all remember what Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu had to say in response. And there is little reason to treat any differently your public diagnosis of Śrīla Prabhupāda's position on VDG as circumstantial (*'yāhāṅ yei paḍe āṇi'*) (see VNP 52-55), "conflicting" (*eka-vākyatā nāhi*) (see VNP 62-67) and therefore unreliable and inconclusive by itself in the matter of VDG (*'tāte 'svāmī' nāhi māni*) — and, in your words, "in need of harmonization."

Now, as far as the alleged need for "harmonizing" Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements on VDG that you even decided to word as a challenge:

"OUR OPEN CHALLENGE: Please bring a direct clear evidence from *śāstras* and *sādhu* that women can become *dīkṣā-gurus* as a norm. The evidence should be as clear as "na jatu mantra-da nari" verse."¹⁸

Let me ask in response:

Do you accept that activities of liberated *ācāryas* like Śrīla Prabhupāda are already harmonious with transcendental knowledge and therefore, when they ordain any new arrangement, it should be accepted as a religious code even if it is not found in the scriptural directions of previous sages (such as Bharadvāja)?

Do you accept that, in one sense, such self-realized *ācāryas* as Śrīla Prabhupāda are even more important than the *śāstra* because they explain and fulfill its purpose by making its meaning understandable to eligible people, and that such fully realized *ācāryas* can introduce practical adjustments that may not even be clearly mentioned in the *śāstra* but serve the purpose of *śāstra*?

Do you accept that it is the statements of great liberated souls like Śrīla Prabhupāda that make scriptures authoritative and form their very basis for us — and not the other way around?

¹⁸ Email dated 9 March 2019, PAMHO text 31299586, available at: <https://www.dropbox.com/s/yeasvn3h21xl50y/9-Mar-2019.pdf>

In other words, do you accept that the following and many other similar statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda already ARE fully harmonious with the *śāstra*, internally consistent and self-sufficiently authoritative — no less than the *śāstra* itself, what to speak of *śāstric* interpretations by those who might not yet be on an equally realized platform:

“The actual system is that the husband is Spiritual Master to his wife, but **if the wife can bring her husband into practicing this process, then it is all right that the husband accepts wife as Spiritual Master.** Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said that anyone who knows the science of Krishna, that person should be accepted as Spiritual Master, regardless of any material so-called qualifications; such as rich or poor, **man or woman**, or *brāhmaṇa* or *sūdra*.” (Letter to Silavati -- New Vrindaban 14 June, 1969)

[Please carefully note that here — and in several similar instances — Śrīla Prabhupāda explains Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s “kiba vipra” verse (CC Madhya 8.128) by branding both gender and *varṇa* as “material so-called qualifications” that someone “should be accepted as Spiritual Master regardless of.” More on this later.]

Devotee: Śrīla Prabhupāda, since there is no distinction between man and woman — these are both designations — is it possible for a woman to become a *brāhmaṇa*?

Prabhupada: He is... Woman is a *brāhmaṇa*'s wife. Then she is automatically a *brāhmaṇa*.

Devotee: Suppose she doesn't want to get married for the rest of her life, just wants to serve the Lord?

Prabhupada: **So in his spiritual position everyone is a *brāhmaṇa*...Yes. But on spiritual point she is *brāhmaṇa*. On the spiritual platform there is no such distinction.** (Morning walk — November 2, 1975, Nairobi)

[Please note this important statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda that Vaiṣṇavīs don't need to be married to be considered *brāhmaṇas* “on the spiritual platform”, which implies that for women marriage is a prerequisite for being considered a *brāhmaṇa* (“*brāhmaṇī*”) only on the material, or social platform. We will revisit it later.]

“Just adhere yourself to the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Then you become spiritual master. That's all. So I hope that all of you, **men, women, boys and girls**, become spiritual master and follow this principle. Spiritual master — simply, sincerely, follow the principles and speak to the general public. Then Kṛṣṇa immediately becomes your favorite. Kṛṣṇa does not become your favorite; you become Kṛṣṇa's favorite. Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad-gītāna ca *tasmān manuṣyeṣu kaścīn me priya-kṛttamaḥ* [Bg. 18.69]: “One who is doing this humble service of preaching work, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, nobody is dearer than him to Me.” **So if you want to become recognized by Kṛṣṇa very quickly, you take up this process of becoming spiritual master, present the Bhagavad-gītā as it is, your life is perfect.**” (Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā Lecture — August 22, 1973, London)

[Please note that by this strong enjoinder Śrīla Prabhupāda makes it compulsory for his disciples, irrespective of their gender, to try and become qualified for the role of a guru. Śrīla Prabhupāda preempts possible objections that he is speaking about just śikṣā-gurus in CC Madhya 8.128: “Sometimes a caste guru says that ye *kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei guru haya* means that one who is not a brāhmaṇa may become a śikṣā-guru or a vartma-pradarśaka-guru but not an initiator guru. ... However, the hereditary consideration is not acceptable to Vaiṣṇavas. **The word guru is equally applicable to the vartma-pradarśaka-guru, śikṣā-guru and dīkṣā-guru. Unless we accept the principle enunciated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement cannot spread all over the world.**”]

“Because in India, according to the caste system, or *varṇāśrama-dharma*, the *brāhmaṇa* and *kṣatriyas* are considered to be the highest in the society, and the *vaiśyas*, a little less than them, and *śūdras*, they are not taken into account. In the similarly, woman class, they are taken as *śūdra, śūdra*. Just like the thread ceremony is given to the *brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya*, but there is no thread ceremony for the woman class. Although the woman is born in the *brāhmaṇa* family, she has no that reformation. Because *striyaḥ*, woman class, are taken less intelligent, they should be given protection, but they cannot be elevated. But here in the Bhagavad-gītā, He surpasses all these formalities. Lord Kṛṣṇa surpasses all these formalities. He is giving facility to everyone. Never mind what he is. **In the social structure, you may consider that woman is less intelligent or śūdra or less purified, but in spiritual consciousness there is no such bar.** Here Kṛṣṇa accepts everyone. Either you become woman or you are śūdra or a vaiśya or whatever you may be, that doesn't matter. If you simply take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the Lord is there. He will give you all protection, all protection, and gradually He will help you. You are already... One who is in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness platform, he is already in the liberated platform.” (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 9.29-32 — New York, December 20, 1966)

“Yes. Jāhnavā devī was—Nityānanda's wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? But, not so many. **Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection...** *Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya* [Cc Madhya 8.128]. **The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa. Then he or she can become guru.** *Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei guru haya.* [break] In our material world, is it any prohibition that woman cannot become professor? If she is qualified, she can become professor. What is the wrong there? She must be qualified. That is the position. So similarly, **if the woman understands Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly, she can become guru.**” (Interview with Professors O'Connell, Motilal and Shivaram — June 18, 1976, Toronto)

[We will address the “not so many” statement in Section III, and your treatment of Jāhnavā devī's case in Section II.4.I “Did Jāhnavā-devī behave nicely?”]

In other words, do you agree that it is our understanding and application of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā and other *śāstra* that we should try and “harmonize” with the instructions of Śrīla Prabhupāda on that topic that are already fully consistent and harmonious with the *śāstra* — and not the other way around?

If you do, you needn't read any further. We can conclude our discussion here and turn our efforts towards better understanding Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions in their own light, without attempting to “illuminate” or “harmonize” them by some outside sources — however authentic.

But if you do not — meaning, if you still insist that Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions on the topic are inconsistent, internally conflicting, less authoritative than the *śāstra* and are therefore in a desperate need of “harmonization” by your commentary on BS — we will have to proceed with analyzing your commentary, which then happens to be aptly described by Śrīla Prabhupāda himself:

“The *paramparā* system does not allow one to deviate from the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas*. By depending upon the previous *ācāryas*, one can write beautiful commentaries. However, one cannot defy the previous *ācāryas*. The false pride that makes one think that he can write better than the previous *ācāryas* will make one's comments faulty. At the present moment it has become fashionable for everyone to write in his own way, but such writing is never accepted by serious devotees. Because of false pride, every scholar and philosopher wants to exhibit his learning by interpreting the *śāstras*, especially the Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, in his own way. This system of commenting in one's own way is fully condemned by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Therefore He says, '*artha-vyasta' likhana sei*. Commentaries written according to one's own philosophical way are never accepted; no one will appreciate such commentaries on the revealed scriptures.” (CC Antya 7.134 purp.)

Please read on.

(3) Unprecedented approach to *dīkṣā-guru-adhikāra*

The first point regarding your commentary on BS needs to be restated from our previous exchange because you chose to dismiss it rather than address it straightforwardly.

It is simple yet essential to our discussion — to be tenable, the conclusions of your interpretation of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā must be evidenced by authoritative precedents. Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly stresses that ingenuity and innovation, or “commenting in one's own way”, have no place in a discourse on spiritual matters. And in the following quote, quite significantly, he warns against inventions in the matter of qualifications for becoming a guru:

“So we have to approach a pure Vaiṣṇava as spiritual master, follow his instruction. And what is his instruction? **His instruction is as he was instructed by his spiritual master. He does not invent instruction. This is instruction. The pure Vaiṣṇava, he does not invent anything new.** *Yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa* [Cc. Madhya 7.128]. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that “You all, every one of you, become guru, everyone.” *Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa*. Wherever you are living, it doesn't require that you have to travel all over the world. If you have

no such capacity, it doesn't matter. You remain wherever you are, but you become a guru. "How I become a guru?" *Yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa* [Cc. Madhya 7.128]: **"Very simple thing. You instruct only what is instructed by Kṛṣṇa. That's all." Don't invent. Don't become overintelligent.** Remain a poor fool. *Guru more mūrkhā dekhi' karila śāsana* [Cc. Adi 7.71]. Caitanya Mahāprabhu also presenting Himself as a great fool, because He says, "My Guru Mahārāja found Me a great fool." He was a fool? He was Kṛṣṇa Himself. But one should remain always a fool before Guru Mahārāja. That is progress. If he thinks, "I know more than my Guru Mahārāja," then he's fallen. *Yasyāprasādād na gatiḥ kuto 'pi*. Then he is finished." (Lecture on SB 7.9.28 — March 6, 1976 in Māyāpura)

A "very simple thing" indeed.

Yet, your interpretation of BS 1.42-44 that women must be residents of Goloka to initiate (VNP 29), while *śūdras* and *antyajas* can initiate as *sādhakas* — or, conversely, that *sādhakas* can initiate while being classified as *śūdras* and *antyajas* — is entirely novel and unprecedented in the history and tenets of any traditional Indian Vaiṣṇava school.

To prove otherwise, please cite at least one authentic traditional Vaiṣṇava school in India that **officially** agrees to ordain Western "mleccha and yavana" *sādhakas* as *dīkṣā-gurus* into their fold while denying the same opportunity to women unless and until they are on a level equivalent to *bhāva-bhakti* or higher.

Please do not repeat in response that you "got your translations checked with three Śrī Vaiṣṇava and one Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholar, besides our own group of 3 Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava scholars."¹⁹ As I wrote earlier, it's not about your translations. Your translations may all be well and good, but that by itself does not make the conclusions you draw from them less novel and unprecedented — that women must be Goloka residents to initiate while *antyajas* (outcastes) can initiate as *sādhakas*. More on this later.

Also, please do not quote individual Śrī Vaiṣṇava professors and pujaris only to pit them against each other in order to avoid answering this clear and direct question:

First, quoting them only if and when it favors your view is *ardha-kukkuṭi-nyāya* ("the logic of half a hen"), which reveals only **your** actual convictions, not theirs. This is especially evident from the included in the Appendix SAC survey on the topic of VDG among five prominent members of both Śrī- and Madhva-sampradāya, of whom two (one from each sampradāya) did endorse VDG as bona fide and three didn't.²⁰ Why do you cite the latter and not the former? And would they be as evenly split on a proposal to anoint Western "mleccha and yavana" *sādhakas* — or even *siddhas* — as *dīkṣā-gurus* in their sampradāyas?

Second, claiming as you do that you select their statements by "*guru-sādhu-śāstra*" in this discussion is a brilliant instance of circular reasoning — citing as proof for your interpretation of "*guru-sādhu-śāstra*"

¹⁹ Email dated 9 March 2019, PAMHO text 31299586

²⁰ "Female dīkṣā-guru Surveys from the Shree and Madhva sampradāyas" (conducted by SAC members)

only those statements that you declare to be true exactly because they comply with your interpretation of “*guru-sādhū-śāstra*”.

Third, it would be more honest toward and respectful of your Sri Vaiṣṇava acquaintances to notify them beforehand that only statements supporting your ideas will be culled from their interviews, with the remainder discarded as erroneous because of being at odds with your take on “*guru-sādhū-śāstra*.” Will they then ever grant you another interview again?

Fourth, seeking their opinion on ISKCON’s internal matters may backfire as it did when a prominent Śrī Vaiṣṇava professor in one of your video interviews refused to address “the controversy” of Western males initiating²¹ and instead chose to compare brahmanism to a pure-bred pedigree of German shepherds, asserting that non-*brāhmaṇas* can have spiritual knowledge but not the right to even teach it to others as *brāhmaṇas*²² — a stance that Śrīla Prabhupāda was vehemently and openly critical about:

"In India the caste *brāhmaṇas* have become enemies of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because we elevate foreigners, who are supposed to be *mlecchas* and *yavanas*, to the position of *brāhmaṇas*. We train them in austerities and penances and recognize them as *brāhmaṇas* by awarding them sacred threads. Thus the caste *brāhmaṇas* of India are very displeased by our activities in the Western world". (SB 6.5.39 purp.)

And lastly — and most importantly — on your own admission:

“[W]e are obliged to assess what is permissible for us according to the *vidhis*, or rules established by our *ācāryas*, not according to some other *sampradāya*’s rules if they differ from ours. Trying to do otherwise is an offense against the *ācāryas* of our disciplic succession.”
(VNP 80)

Thank you. We couldn’t have said it better.

(4) Recent examples for VDGs in Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava sampradāya

Heeding your good advice above that “we are obliged to assess what is permissible for us according to the *vidhis*, or rules established by our *ācāryas*, not according to some other *sampradāya*’s rules if they differ from ours” lest it should constitute “an offense against the *ācāryas* of our disciplic succession”, let us turn to our own sampradāya for examples.

²¹ <https://youtu.be/Z1bQ2GtDRzQ?t=345>

²² <https://youtu.be/Z1bQ2GtDRzQ?t=1220>

(a) *Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's dīkṣā line*

One example, which cannot be easily dismissed as deviant, is of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura'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 (see next page).²³

We should note that BS 1.59-60²⁴ 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 Gosvāmīnis themselves were foolish and fallen:

*atha strī-śūdra-saṅkīrṇānirmalāpatitādiṣu
ananyenānya-dṛṣṭau ca kṛtāpi na kṛtā bhavet ||59||*

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

²³ Reproduced under fair use from "Hindu Encounter with Modernity" by Shukavak N. Das (1996), pp. 202 and 233.

²⁴ As quoted in VNP 46-47.

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 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's 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	Milky 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	Milky color	Blue Lotus	Fanning	Manas Harana	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-pranali* chart in English.

*ato 'nyatrāsu vidhivat kartavyā śaraṇāgatih
upadeṣṭā tu mantrasya mūḍhaḥ pracyavate hy adhaḥ ||60||*

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

However, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura had a different opinion. Otherwise why did he seek initiation into this line from Bipin Bihārī Gosvāmī, and conclude his commentary on Caitanya-caritāmṛta with the prayer:

“The eminent Bipin Bihari Prabhu, who is the manifestation of the transcendental energy of Lord Hari, who sports in the forests of Vraja, has descended in the form of the spiritual preceptor.

Seeing me in the dark well of worldly existence, he has delivered this humble servant of his.”²⁵

This by itself says a lot about the applicability of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā's above verses (and your *ṭikā* on them) to our Gauḍīya-sampradāya.

²⁵ From Bhaktivinoda Vānī Vaibhāva.

[Updated June 2020:] Challenging Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *dīkṣā* line

As anticipated, in order to avoid having to acknowledge the undeniable fact that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura did not see VDGs in his own *paramparā* as socially inappropriate or śāstrically deviant, you chose to attack the validity of his *dīkṣā* line altogether.

In Defense 1, 4-6²⁶, you noted that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's line is called *siddha-praṇālī* and then argued that the VDGs in his line were not bona fide because:

1. Śrīla Prabhupāda in NOD 16 “rejects siddha-pranali as a concoction”;
2. or else, “even if siddha-pranali is bona fide, it is not meant for ISKCON” because, among other things, “ISKCON's initiation process is pancaratrīki not siddha-pranali”;
3. or else, those VDGs in his line should have been on the level of *prema* to reveal the *siddha-svarūpa* of their disciples; and
4. or else, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura rejected his *dīkṣā-guru* Bipin Bihari Goswami and the entire disciplic succession as a caste goswami *apasampradāya*.

One point to note here is that tossing everything but the kitchen sink at an inconvenient historical fact reveals nothing but one's desperation to deny it and overall confusion about the truth. Indeed, the above four contentions are so mutually contradictory that it leaves us wondering which one of them you yourselves believe to be true — if any.

More specifically:

1. If Śrīla Prabhupāda's rejection of *siddha-praṇālī* in NOD 16 as “a manufactured way... followed by the *prākṛta-sahajiyā* pseudosect of so-called Vaiṣṇavas”²⁷ is indeed as blanket as you seem to suggest by applying it to the practice that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura deliberately and happily took initiation into,²⁸ you would necessarily imply that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura himself was either a *prākṛta-sahajiyā* follower or gullible enough to be misled by them. By extension, this would also invalidate Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's detailed description of the process of *siddha-praṇālī* in *Harināma-cintāmaṇi* and *Jaiva-dharma*, and make him an accomplice in the “manufactured way” as he gave *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā* to his son Lalitā Prasāda as well as to some of his other disciples.

²⁶ Available at: https://www.dropbox.com/s/tmium9bxe6etl70/kk_and_dd_on_mm-20200219.pdf

²⁷ NOD 16: “In this connection, we should be careful about the so-called *siddha-praṇālī*. The *siddha-praṇālī* 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-praṇālī* process is followed by the *prākṛta-sahajiyā*, a pseudosect of so-called Vaiṣṇavas. In the opinion of Rūpa Gosvāmī, such activities are simply disturbances to the standard way of devotional service.”

²⁸ *Svalikhita-jīvanī*, 155-156 (translated by Shukavak Das): “I had been searching for a suitable guru for a long time, but had not found one, so I was feeling disturbed. Whenever I met someone who inspired my devotion, when I studied his character, I became disappointed and lost faith. I was anxious to find a guru and so I prayed to God. One night in a dream the Lord indicated that soon I would receive initiation. The next morning I felt relieved. In a few days Gurudeva finally wrote a letter saying, “I will come soon and give you initiation.” When Gurudeva finally came both my wife and I received initiation and we were pleased. From that day on I felt compassion towards all beings and the sin of meat eating vanished from my heart and compassion arose towards living beings.”

Moreover, your interpretation of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s dismissal of *siddha-praṇālī* puts him at odds with his spiritual master, and you — with yours. Bhakti Vikāśa Swami writes in Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava:

“To extrinsic vision, Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura either abandoned *rāgānuga-bhajana* or gave a new definition of and vantage on it, converting it into a process so confidential as to appear almost nonexistent, while practically rejecting the established *rāgānuga* tradition. Yet **his teaching that there was no need for the meditational *siddha-praṇālī* was not rejection of the process per se, but of its widespread misappropriation.**”²⁹

Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura himself describes the genuine process of *siddha-praṇālī* and its corrupted version in his letter to a disciple:

“I have noted your letter dated the 24th. The *aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā* about which you have heard from the Vaiṣṇavas in Vṛndāvana should be highly regarded no doubt. But the way in which these pastimes are conceived of in the contaminated state is totally corrupt. Some fortunate individuals are capable of knowing these things after chanting for a long time, for that is the identity of the true self. But it can only be known after one is freed of mental contaminations. With the awakening of this spiritual identity, one automatically has constant cognition of his spiritual form. Those who say that they can teach or reveal this identity are practicing a kind of deception; it cannot be done. On the other hand, **if a devotee receives some inspiration after sincerely chanting for a long time, he should go to the *sad-guru* or advanced devotees and ask for it to be confirmed and purified by them.** The spiritual identity has eleven aspects (*ekā-daśa-bhāva*). There are many cases of unscrupulous gurus who artificially force-feed these designations on unqualified practitioners, but we cannot call this the mark of spiritual perfection. Those who have achieved the perfection of being fixed in their spiritual identity (*svarūpa-siddhī*) have attained such a realization through internal revelation and the spiritual master’s only involvement in these matters is to help the further advancement of a disciple. As a practitioner progresses toward spiritual perfection, all these things are revealed naturally within the heart that sincerely seeks service.”³⁰

Your misconstrued interpretation of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement about *siddha-praṇālī* also invalidates as deviant Gopāla Guru and Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī’s writings³¹ that established the practice in our *sampradāya*. Contrary to your view, however, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura writes in Jaiva-dharma 39:

Gopāla Guru Gosvāmī said: “Śrī Caitanya instructed Śrīla Svarūpa Dāmodara to disseminate *rasa-upāsanā*, the process of bhajana inculcated with rasa. Accordingly, he composed his diaries on *rasa-upāsanā* comprising two sections: *antaḥ-panthā*, the esoteric, internal means of

²⁹ Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava (III.3.12) by Bhakti Vikāśa Swami.

³⁰ From Prabhupāder-patrāvalī, volume 2.

³¹ For instance, Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī writes in Gaura-govindārcana-smaraṇa-paddhati (344): “Concerning that *dhyāna*, before anything else, the *sādhaka* should perform smaraṇa of the *mañjarī* forms of his *guru-praṇālī*, beginning with his guru, then parama-guru, etc.” (*tatrādau mañjarī-rūpān gurvādīn tu svīyān svīyān praṇāly-anusāreṇa sarṁsmaret śrī-guru-parama-guru-krameṇeti tataḥ śrī-rādhikāṁ dhyāyēt.*) (translation by Haricaraṇa Dāsa).

attainment; and *bahiḥ-panthā*, the exoteric, external means of attainment. The esoteric process was entrusted to Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, as amply exhibited in his books, and the exoteric *rasa-upāsanā* was allocated to Śrīla Vakreśvara Paṇḍita, which is the treasure of our spiritual lineage. **This exoteric *rasa-upāsanā* was passed on to me by Śrīla Vakreśvara Paṇḍita and from me to Śrī Dhyānacandra who has compiled it in a book of which you are now the fortunate recipient.**³²

He also describes the process in detail in Harināma-cintāmaṇi, 15.66-67:

“The spiritual master then mercifully describes to his disciple the eleven aspects of identity and how they relate to the Lord’s lila. Pleased with his disciple, the spiritual master then orders him, “Now go and enter the Lord’s pastimes in this identity”.³³

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s notes: “When on examining the disciple’s natural tendencies, the spiritual master verifies that he truly has the qualifications for serving in the *shringar* rasa, he informs him of the eternal form that he should cultivate as a *manjari* in Lalita’s sub-group of Srimati Radharani’s *yutha* of gopis. Then the spiritual master explains the mutual relation between the eleven components of that spiritual identity necessary for the practice and the object of that practice, the pastimes the Lord enjoys throughout the eight periods of the day (*aṣṭa-kālīya-līlā*). He especially shows the disciple his spiritual name, form, qualities, and principal service. Furthermore, the spiritual master tells him in which home in Vraja the practitioner will take birth and with which cowherd she will be married. He then goes on to explain how, as a gopi, she will reject the conventional morality of the Vedas and become a protected servant under the tutelage of one of the Lord’s prominent mistresses, a *yutheshwari*, whom she will serve through the daily cycle of pastimes. The aspirant then accepts this identity and enters the next stage, that of contemplation, *smaraṇa-daśā*. This is the aspirant’s actual birth as a gopī in Vraja. One should here remember and follow the words of the Bhagavatam: *yāḥ śrutvā tat-paro bhavet*—“When one hears these pastimes of the Lord, one becomes absorbed in them”.”

using his own *svarūpa* (Kamalā-mañjarī) as its exemplar.

Lastly, your objection to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s lineage as a “concoction” is mutually incompatible with your other three above objections by suggesting that either Śrīla Prabhupāda was mistaken in his assessment of *siddha-praṇālī* or that one following it cannot attain *prema* or become a *dīkṣā-guru* of a Vaiṣṇava *ācārya*.

2. By starting your second objection with the clause “even if siddha-pranali is bona fide, it is not meant for ISKCON”, you admit to having either misread or deliberately misinterpreted Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement from NOD 16 that you used for labeling Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *dīkṣā*-line as a “concoction”.

³² Translation by Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Int. & Sarvabhāvana Dāsa.

³³ Harināma-cintāmaṇi, 15.66-67 (translated by Jagadānanda Dāsa):
urudeva kṛpā kari karibe varṇana | līlā-tattve ekādaśa bhāva-saṅghaṭana ||66||
prasanna ha-iyā prabhu karibe ādeśa | ei bhāve līlā-madhye karaha praveśa ||67||

It should be obvious to you that, like Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī, by the “so called *siddha-praṇālī* ... followed by the *prākṛta-sahajiyā* pseudosect” Śrīla Prabhupāda criticized not the authorized practice followed by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and predecessors in his line, including the three Gosvāmīnīs, but “its widespread misappropriation”.

You then proceed to elaborate on how *siddha-praṇālī* is not applicable to ISKCON, thus resorting to the straw man fallacy³⁴ at its best, as no one in this discussion has ever proposed or has any intention to propose adoption of the practice of *siddha-praṇālī* in ISKCON.

[Speaking of which, incidentally, this is also the red herring fallacy³⁵ — as an attempt to divert our discussion from its main topic, which is your efforts to make ISKCON adopt a novel initiation policy and practice based on your misinterpretation of selected verses from Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā.]

You then state, somewhat puzzlingly, that “ISKCON’s initiation process is pancaratrīki not siddha-pranālī” — apparently being unaware that the exoteric *rasa-upāsanā* process taught by Dhyānacandra Gosvāmī, of which *siddha-praṇālī* is an intrinsic part, actually **is** *pāñcarātrīki* by classification and its very nature. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura writes in his commentary on Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya-khaṇḍa, 6.111:

*śāstra-dr̥ṣṭye pūjā kari’ paṭala-vidhāne
ei śloka paḍi’ kare daṇḍa-paraṇāme*

Advaita Ācārya worshiped the Lord according to the pāñcarātrīka regulations of the scriptures. He offered His obeisances while reciting the following verse.

Commentary by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura: The phrase *paṭala-vidhāna* refers to the *pāñcarātrīki* regulations that are described in various *paṭalas*, or chapters of the scriptures. Śrī Advaita Ācārya Prabhu worshiped Mahāprabhu according to the *pāñcarātrīka* rules and regulations set forth in the scriptures. By using the phrases *śāstra-dr̥ṣṭye* and *paṭala-vidhāne*, the author of Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata has indicated to those who are inclined to the service of the Lord that Advaita Ācārya Prabhu worshiped Gaura with Śrī Gaura-mantra. **We find this method of worship in Śrī Dhyānacandra’s paddhati as well as in many other Pañcarātra literatures like the Ūrdhvāmnāya Tantra.**³⁶ In these literatures the process for worshiping Gaura with Gaura-mantra is described. Advaita Ācārya Prabhu worshiped Mahāprabhu according to the *pāñcarātrīka* rules and regulations based on the scriptures, and in order to reveal that Lord Gaurasundara is nondifferent from Viṣṇu, He offered prayers to Mahāprabhu by

³⁴ A straw man is a form of argument and an informal fallacy based on giving the impression of refuting an opponent’s argument, while actually refuting an argument that was not presented by that opponent.

See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straw_man

³⁵ See: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Red_herring#Logical_fallacy

³⁶ From Gauḍīya-bhāṣya by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura on Caitanya-bhāgavata, Madhya-khaṇḍa, 6.111 (translated by Bhumipati Dāsa): *ei paṭala-vidhāna āmarā śrī-dhyānacandrera paddhatite evaṁ ūrdhvāmnāya-tantra-prabhṛti pañcarātra śāstre dekhite pāi.*

reciting the verse beginning *namo brahmaṇya-devāya*. By quoting the verse beginning *namo brahmaṇya-devāya*, the author of Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata did not contradict the Gaura-mantra.

So, *siddha-praṇālī* is as much a *pāñcarātrikī* process as *ātmīya-bhara-nyāsa* of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā. And the reason why it is not practiced in ISKCON is because it was not introduced by Śrīla Prabhupāda — just like Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā wasn't.

3. You then make yet another peculiar objection:

“Guru must be on prema platform, which is evident because he not only knows his own svarūpa but that of his disciple also. (...) [E]ven if accepting siddha-praṇālī as bona fide the dīkṣā-gurus giving siddha-praṇālī-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-praṇālī.” (Defense 5)

First, it is rather telling that you are ready to declare the three Gosvāminīs in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *dīkṣā* line to be either *prākṛta-sahajiyā* deviants or *siddha-prema-bhaktas*, but are unwilling to concede them to be a historical fact and an accepted social norm in Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇavism — simply because the latter conclusion doesn’t fit your speculative prejudiced paradigm. (More on this in Section II: “Reinventing BS 1.42-44”) Such lack of scruples as regards using the spiritual status of (potentially) great devotees of the past as a bargaining chip for establishing one’s philosophical inventions ultimately leads to dire consequences — as will be shown in Section II.4.I “Did Jāhnavā-devī behave nicely?”

And second, contrary to your premise that a *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā-guru* “must be on prema platform, which is evident because he not only knows his own *sva-rūpa* but that of his disciple also”, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in Harināma-cintāmaṇī 15.68-73 describes the process of *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā* as more of a gradual iteration towards one’s *sva-rūpa* with the assistance of one’s guru rather than its immediate and correct discernment by the guru “on the spot”:

“On hearing of his eternal spiritual identity with a pure attitude, the aspirant accepts it and takes it into his heart. (68) One should assess one’s personal preferences at the time of acceptance and reveal them to the spiritual master in all sincerity: “O master, you have given me my spiritual identity, and I am completely satisfied with it.” (69) “I feel a natural attraction for this identity and therefore accept your order with all seriousness and purity.” (70) **If, on the other hand, the disciple does not like it, he should sincerely tell his spiritual master what he would prefer.** (71) The guru will consider the matter and give him another identity and, if the disciple likes it, also reveal to him his own. (72)³⁷

³⁷ Harināma-cintāmaṇī, 15.69-73 (translation by Jagadānanda Dāsa):
śuddha rūpe siddha bhāva kariyā śravaṇa | sei bhāva svīya citte karibe varaṇa ||68||
varaṇa kālete nija ruci vicāriyā | guru-pade jānāibe sarala ha-iyā ||69||
prabhu tumi kṛpā kari yei paricaya | dile more tāhe mora pūrṇa prīti haya ||70||

Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura adds in a footnote to verses 72-73:

“When the spiritual master establishes the pure personal inclinations of the aspirant, the aspirant should also help the spiritual master by speaking his mind about his own preferences. **As long as he does not clearly establish the inclinations of the disciple, the guru’s directions are not flawless.** *Ruci* or taste is an inclination that has been shaped by one’s previous deeds in both this and previous lives. The inclination to a particular spiritual identity, however, is integral to the soul. Should a person have a natural aptitude for servitude or friendship rather than for shringar rasa, he should be instructed accordingly, otherwise there will be undesirable consequences.”

In other words, the ability of a *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā-guru* to immediately and accurately ascertain a disciple’s *sva-rūpa* is a case of wishful thinking on your part to advance your own hypothesis that only women of the level of *prema* can be VDG, and is not an actual qualification established by the *ācārya*.

The actual qualification for such a *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā-guru* is described by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in verse 61 of the same chapter 15 of *Harināma-cintāmaṇī*:

*nijāpekṣā śreṣṭha śuddha-bhāvuka ye jana |
bhāva-mārga gurudeva sei mahājana ||61||*

“The spiritual master on this path of cultivating the spiritual identity is a great ecstatic, more advanced than oneself, and pure in his mood.”³⁸

As is evident from the verse, the *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā-guru* needs to be greater than oneself (*nijāpekṣā śreṣṭha*), pure in his mood (*mahājana*) and a “great ecstatic (“*śuddha-bhāvuka*”). The latter is a term that doesn’t necessarily refer to *prema* or even *bhāva*.³⁹ Without delving into the intricacies of the *siddha-praṇālī* process as described by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in *Harināma-cintāmaṇī*, one may be a *siddha-praṇālī-dīkṣā-guru* even at advanced stages of *rāgānuga-sādhana-bhakti*. (*Bhāva* as your arbitrary prerequisite for VDGs will be discussed in detail in Section II.(5) titled “Defining *pratyakṣitāma-nāthas*”.)

4. Finally, you offer the most paradoxical objection to the validity of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *dīkṣā* line. In Defense 5-6 you write:

*svabhāvataḥ mora ei bhāve āche ruci | ataeva ājñā śire dhari hye śuci ||71||
ruci yadi nahe tabe akapaṭa mane | nivedibe nija-ruci śrī-guru-caraṇe ||72||
vicāriyā gurudeva dibe anya-bhāva | tāhe ruci ha-ile prakāśibe nija-bhāva ||73||*

³⁸ Translation by Jagadānanda Dāsa.

³⁹ This is evident, for instance, from *Harināma-cintāmaṇī* 15.83: *nija śuddha-bhāvera ye nirantara smṛti | tāhe dūra haya śīghra jaḍa-baddha-mati* (“By constantly remembering one’s pure spiritual identity the remnants of identification with matter will quickly be effaced.”), which uses the term *śuddha-bhāva* as a descriptor for a *rāgānuga-sādhaka* prior to his development of *bhāva* proper.

“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. (...) Other articles published during the lifetime of SBSST in the Gauḍīya ... 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*.”

As far as your conjecture that, since Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura “declared the caste goswamis as an *apasampradāya*”, therefore he himself belonged to one — that would necessarily imply that Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura also willfully propagated the same “*apasampradāya*” as he gave initiations into the same *dīkṣā* line to his son Lalitā Prasāda and a few other disciples. There is no written evidence by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura himself that he ever rejected or even disrespected Bipin Bihārī Goswami,⁴⁰ neither were disciples of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura ever classified or rejected by Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura as belonging to an *apasampradāya* on the basis of their initiation into the same *dīkṣā* line.

Not only that, but one would expect the writings of an “*apasampradāya*” guru such as Bipina Bihārī Goswami to be also tinged with deviations and as such, unacceptable for pure devotees. However, as Bhakti Vikāśa Swami writes in Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava:

“Arcana procedures given by Śrīla Sarasvatī Ṭhākura for the Gauḍīya Maṭha were based largely on the extensive directions given in Śrī Bipina Bihārī Goswami's Hari-bhakti-taraṅgiṇī, and also incorporated those of Hari-bhakti-vilāsa and the Saṅkṣepa-arcana-paddhati (Abridged system of worship) given by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura at the end of his Bhajana-rahasya. (...) In his preface to Hari-bhakti-taraṅgiṇī, Śrī Bipina Bihārī Goswami acknowledged Śrī Siddhānta Sarasvatī's having edited that work. Even after Śrī Bipina Bihārī's demise, the Gauḍīya continued to advertise Hari-bhakti-taraṅgiṇī.”⁴¹

Also, Bipina Bihārī Goswami was instrumental in conferring the title “Bhaktivinoda” upon Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, wrote articles for Sajjana Toṣaṇī, actively participated in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *nāma-haṭṭa* program, and helped him establish and manage the Caitanya Press for publishing Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's writings.⁴²

Moreover, considering Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's description of Bipina Bihārī Goswami's pivotal role in his life:

“I had been searching for a suitable guru for a long time, but had not found one, so I was feeling disturbed. Whenever I met someone who inspired my devotion, when I studied his character, I became disappointed and lost faith. I was anxious to find a guru and so I prayed to God. One night in a dream the Lord indicated that soon I would receive initiation. The next morning I felt relieved. In a few days Gurudeva finally wrote a letter saying, “I will come soon and give you initiation.” When Gurudeva finally came both my wife and I received initiation and we were

⁴⁰ <http://harekrsna.com/sun//editorials/05-06/editorials344.htm>

⁴¹ Śrī Bhaktisiddhānta Vaibhava (I.2.16) by Bhakti Vikāśa Swami.

⁴² Shukavak Das, Hindu Encounter with Modernity, pp. 94-95, 100.

pleased. From that day on I felt compassion towards all beings and the sin of meat eating vanished from my heart and compassion arose towards living beings.”⁴³

which culminated in revealing Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *svarūpa* as Kamalā-mañjarī, on your own admission, Bipina Bihārī Goswami must have been on the level of *prema*. Not only that, but the guru of Bipina Bihārī Goswami, Yogeśvara Goswami, must have likewise been on the level of *prema* to have correctly identified his disciple’s *svarūpa* as Vilāsa-mañjarī, confirmed by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura.⁴⁴ How could then both of them be, in your judgment, *prema-bhaktas*, bogus “caste-goswami gurus”, and deviant *prākṛta-sahajiyās* — all at the same time?

Lastly, and most importantly, while few doubt that there was a disagreement and consequent alienation between Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Bipina Bihārī Goswami on substantial grounds later in their relationship, — even if it finally led to a formal rejection of the guru by the disciple (or vice versa), how could that by itself invalidate the entire *paramparā* founded by Jāhnavā-devī that they both belonged to?

For instance, does Kṛṣṇa-kīrti Prabhu’s official and public rejection of his own spiritual master, Hridayananda Dasa Goswami, on philosophical and doctrinal grounds⁴⁵ invalidate, by the same token, the latter’s *dīkṣā-paramparā*? And why shouldn’t the obvious answer “no” to this question equally apply to the *dīkṣā-paramparā* of Bipin Bihārī Goswami?

Conclusion: Of the four specious objections that you have put forward against VDGs in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *dīkṣā* line, none give any grounds for their dismissal — either as deviants or as *prema-bhaktas*.

BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja and the “dead mantras”

In yet another attempt to invalidate this inconvenient historical fact about Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s *dīkṣā* lineage, some VDG opponents ascribe the following statement to Bhakti Rakṣaka Śrīdhara Mahārāja:

“And since FDG is against DVAD then to create them would again be disregarding Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instruction about implementing DVAD and committing the 3rd offense against the Holy Name so they, as Sridhar Swami said regarding other lady gurus ‘will deliver dead mantras’.”⁴⁶

However, the statement that lady gurus “will deliver dead mantras” is nowhere to be found in the teachings of BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja. What BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja did say about “dead mantras” was in reference to caste goswamis, rather than to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s own *dīkṣā* lineage:

⁴³ Svalikhita-jīvanī, 155-156 (translated by Shukavak Das)

⁴⁴ This is the name by which Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura refers to Bipina Bihārī Goswami along with Jāhnavā-devī in *Gītā-mālā* (1893): 3.1: When will Vilāsa-mañjarī and Anangā-mañjarī [Jāhnavā-devī] see me and, being merciful, speak the following essential words? 5.4: O Vilāsa-mañjarī, Anangā-mañjarī and Rūpa-mañjarī, please notice me and accept me at your feet, bestowing on me the essence of all perfection.

⁴⁵ <https://web.facebook.com/notes/basu-ghosh-das/krishna-kirti-das-clarifies-why-hes-rejected-hridayananda-maharaj/746683622059271>

⁴⁶ Email dated 5 March 2017, PAMHO text 29587010.

“One who is possessing that knowledge, that love, of that type, that purity; there is guru. Otherwise the guru parampara means body parampara. The continuation of so many bodies together. Then the caste brāhmaṇas, the caste Goswamis, they will continue, because body after body they are getting that mantram. But the mantram is dead there, so living mantram, living tendency for the service of higher type, wherever it is to be traced, we shall find that there is the guru. One who has got that sort of eye awakened, he'll see where is guru.”⁴⁷

As for the female dīkṣā-gurus in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's line, this is what BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja actually said:

“We have to follow the spirit; otherwise from Jahnava up to Vipina Goswami, from whom initiation was taken by Bhaktivinoda Thakur from Vipina Goswami, from Jahnava to Vipina Goswami, so many ladies are there, unknown ladies. Through them the mantram came to Vipina Goswami and from him, Bhaktivinoda Thakur came. But we accept Bhaktivinoda. **Should I go to count all those ladies in the parampara? What was their realization?** We are slaves of the truth. What is flowing, the current, the pure current, we are beggars of that. We have no charm of any form.”⁴⁸

In other words, he did not call the Vaiṣṇavīs deliverers of “dead mantras”, but questioned their realization — and not because they were women, but because they were “unknown”.

Apparently, BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja did not hold those lady gurus in high esteem, and one may be tempted to apply his questioning their realization to VDG in toto. However, just two days later BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja elaborated on the possibility of *madhyama-adhikārīs* and women serving as *dīkṣā-gurus*, emphasizing the same point — wherever there is substance of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and dedication to Caitanya Mahāprabhu's mission, the person is a guru:

Devotee: She [a disciple of Śrīla Prabhupāda who had joined another Gauḍīya Maṭha] believes that only a maha-bhagavata, an uttama-adhikari should act in that position.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: If it is available, it is well and good. Otherwise, the madhyama bhagavata who cannot stop his activity of preaching by his intrinsic inspiration, his urge, he feels urge to propagate then he cannot be checked, should not be checked. We are to detect whether that urge for preaching is for to acquire the fame or some position. That is also fame. That is also money or something else. If it is true that he wants to spread this Kṛṣṇa consciousness he should be recognized as an ācārya. Recognition should be given, should be allotted to them who has got sincere enthusiasm to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in the line of Swami Mahārāja. A fair field should be. If Swami Mahārāja's case is justified, Prabhupada did not give recognition to Swami Mahārāja in a clear way that he will become ācārya but why Swami Mahārāja has taken that interest in himself? Because he had love, sufficiently intense for Prabhupada. He could not check the urge for preaching and he came in the battle, the forefront, in a pushing way. If that

⁴⁷ Transcript of conversation dated 25 August 1981

⁴⁸ Transcript of conversation dated 25 August 1981

has got justification, then this *ācārya* will feel urge within himself to go on with the work of Swami Mahārāja ahead. They should not be checked. They are justified, thereby. Their internal feeling, that is their justification. So they should be left free to go on with their sincere propaganda, their attempt, their enthusiasm. Only we should try to detect whether that energy, source of energy is something else than Guru Mahārāja's, than Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

(...) So ladies may not be left, excluded from getting the benefit of Kṛṣṇa consciousness and they also may have [a] chance. **But whether the lady *ācārya* should be appointed or not, that may come in future. Whether a lady devotee for the facility to propagate amongst the ladies, whether such qualified lady *ācārya* should be accepted or not, that may be a question of controversy. But I think that, for the sincere thinking person wherever there is Kṛṣṇa consciousness, there is purity.** And wherever the sincere urge for propagation, the sanction must be there. That should be the fair field. Here also previously Jahnadevi Ṭhākurani and others they did that sort of function of the *ācārya*.

Devotee: So there were some lady *ācāryas*.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Where?

Devotee: There were previously.

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: Yes, very rare. The number can be counted on fingers, lady *ācāryas*.

Devotee: **Whenever this question would arise our Guru Mahārāja [our Śrīla Prabhupāda] he would always quote the verse *kiba vipra, kiba nyasi, śūdra kene naya/ yei krsna-tattva-vetta, sei 'guru' haya.***

Śrīdhara Mahārāja: **Wherever Kṛṣṇa consciousness is present and wherever Mahāprabhu consciousness, that is to preach - yare dekha, tare kaha 'krsna'-upadesa. That is not mere Kṛṣṇa consciousness but that is Mahāprabhu consciousness.** Kṛṣṇa consciousness with guru consciousness, Mahāprabhu consciousness. And Mahāprabhu, that says whomever you will find, talk about Kṛṣṇa, nothing else. You won't be lost. You have no fear to be lost. I am here. This wide command. But everywhere, the test is sincerity must be there. Sincerity. Not any imitation.⁴⁹

Please note that in this passage, while acknowledging the rarity of female *dīkṣā-gurus* in our line in the past, BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja concurs with Śrīla Prabhupāda's position by emphasizing that the qualification for this service comes from one's dedication to Mahāprabhu's order to preach. What is conspicuous by its absence in his treatment of the topic, though, is your contention that women are forbidden to initiate in Mahāprabhu's line unless they are Goloka residents.

⁴⁹ Transcript of conversation dated 27 August 1981

(b) *Kṛṣṇa-mayī Devī of the Gauḍīya Matha*

In the context of BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja’s above statement:

“But whether the lady *ācārya* should be appointed or not, that may come in future. Whether a lady devotee for the facility to propagate amongst the ladies, whether such qualified lady *ācārya* should be accepted or not, that may be a question of controversy.”

it is especially relevant that his own disciple, Kṛṣṇa-mayī Devī (1898-2002)⁵⁰ later in her life assumed, on the request of senior Gauḍīya Math members, the role of *dīkṣā-guru* with a *praṇāma-mantra* composed for her by a Gauḍīya Math sannyasi,⁵¹ and gave hari-nāma initiations to 7-8 disciples⁵² — even though her doing so faced objections from some leaders of other Maths.⁵³ She was also requested for but didn’t give *mantra-dīkṣā* because, as she explained, she hadn’t received the *brahma-gāyatrī* — which in the Gauḍīya Math was given along with the *Pāñcarātrika* mantras only to men, but not to women.⁵⁴

(c) *Jayasri Goswamini of Sri Guru Prapanna Asrama*

Another example of a contemporary Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavī *dīkṣā-guru* is Jayasri Goswamini, head and *ācāryā* of Sri Guru Prapanna Asrama since 1994.⁵⁵ She is the successor of her guru Patita-pavana Goswami Ṭhākura (1919-1991),⁵⁶ a disciple of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, who, following the split in the Gauḍīya Math, founded Sri Guru Prapanna Asrama in pursuance of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura’s vision of “Visnupriya Palli” — an asrama for Vaiṣṇavīs to practice devotional service in renunciation.⁵⁷

Jayasri Goswamini initiates both men and women. At her Vyasa-puja ceremony in 2019, *sannyasis* and *brahmacaris* from Gauḍīya Vedanta Samiti, Sri Gopinath Gauḍīya Math, and Sri Caitanya Gauḍīya Math offered their homage to her.⁵⁸

⁵⁰ <http://www.tcllew.com/Bhakti%20Rakshaka/DevoteeKrsnamayi.htm>

⁵¹ http://www.tcllew.com/Bhakti%20Rakshaka/Krsnamayi_pranams.htm

⁵² Interview with Bhakti Caitanya Giri Mahārāja of Caitanya Sarasvata Matha (2013): https://youtu.be/5jO_BGYooKU?t=235 and https://youtu.be/5jO_BGYooKU?t=507

⁵³ Ibid., https://youtu.be/5jO_BGYooKU?t=295

⁵⁴ Ibid., https://youtu.be/5jO_BGYooKU?t=647

⁵⁵ <https://shreeguruprapannaashram.wordpress.com/shrimati-jayshree-devi/>

⁵⁶ <https://shreeguruprapannaashram.wordpress.com/shrila-patitpavan-goswami-thakur/>

⁵⁷ “Our mathṣ are being built at many places, and many sannyāsīs, vānaprasthas, gṛhasthas, and brahmachārīs are living there all the time and receiving the opportunity to learn spiritual conduct. But we have been trying for a long time to also give the mothers [women] the opportunity for devotional service. Of course, those who have the facility and opportunity for devotional service in their own homes do not need a separate residence. But very often we hear that many of them get impeded in their devotional service due to bad association. It will be very beneficial for them if we can build Śrī Viṣṇupriyā-pallī in Śrīdhām Māyāpur near the residence of Śrīman Mahāprabhu, and if they can live there separately from their families and render devotional service.” (Sarasvatī Jayaśrī, p. 339)

⁵⁸ <https://shreeguruprapannaashram.wordpress.com/2019/08/24/sannyasinis-offeringn-their-obeisances-to-gurumata/>



(Photo: sannyasis and brahmacaris from Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, Sri Gopinath Gauḍīya Math, and Sri Caitanya Gauḍīya Math offering homages to Jayasri Goswami at her Vyasa-puja, 24 August 2019)

One of them, Bhaktivedānta Santa Mahārāja of Gauḍīya Vedānta Samiti, addressing in his speech the question of whether women can be *ācāryās*, cited the example of Jahnava Devi and Gangamata Goswami and quoted CC Antya 4.67:

*yei bhaje sei baḍa, abhakta—hīna, chāra
kṛṣṇa-bhajane nāhi jāti-kulādi-vicāra*

”Anyone who takes to devotional service is exalted, whereas a nondevotee is always condemned and abominable. Therefore in the discharge of devotional service to the Lord, there is no consideration of the status of one’s family.

and emphasized:

“Only Kṛṣṇa is Bhagavan and the rest, everyone, are prakṛiti. When Hari, guru and Vaiṣṇavas are remembered then all impediments are removed. It is Nityananda Prabhu who supplies the potency to guru-tattva. Nityananda Prabhu is like the powerhouse and anyone connected to the powerhouse can transmit that power.”⁵⁹

(d) Premadhara Devi of Rādhā-kunḍa

Another contemporary Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavī dīkṣā-guru is Premadhara Devi, a disciple of Ananta Dasa Babaji (1927-2018). She resides in Vrndavana with her husband and children and, on her guru’s order,

⁵⁹ Video of Bhaktivedanta Santa Mahārāja at Jayasri Goswami’s Vyasapuja, 2019: <https://youtu.be/li3zBtd4v5M?t=737>

preaches, gives *śāstric* discourses, counsels devotees and initiates disciples of both genders into hari-nāma and mantra.⁶⁰ Moreover, she started initiating while her guru was still physically present.

While ISKCON has philosophical differences with Rādhā-kuṇḍa Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavas on a number of issues, few challenge the extensive knowledge of the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava siddhanta and tradition that Ananta Dasa Babaji had and which he, undoubtedly, acted in accordance with rather than contrary to when appointing Premadhara Devi as an initiator.

(e) Haridās Śāstri of Gadadhara-parivara

Yet another example of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavī dīkṣā-gurus comes from a prominent Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava guru and scholar Haridās Śāstri⁶¹, considered to be "arguably the most prolific and well-educated Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava 'insider' scholar of the twentieth century." He belonged to the Gadādhara-parivāra and emphasized that Vaiṣṇavīs giving *dīkṣā* in his line was a norm rather than an exception:⁶²

Haridās Śāstri: "Only Sri Caitanya gave complete status to women in everything, whether it was worship of Salagrama, worship of the deity, chanting, or initiation. Before Him no one else allowed women to do those things. In varṇāśrama or even in other Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas, women were always considered as less than men. But Sri Caitanya gave them equal rights, as far as devotion is concerned.

"Mahāprabhu had an equal vision toward woman, because every human being has a right to worship Bhagavan, and there is no discrimination in that. Therefore, He gave equal rights to women to worship just like men. He ordained that women should not be discriminated against when it comes to the service of Bhagavan."

Question: What is the meaning of Gosvāminī when it comes to the female gurus in our sampradāya?

Haridās Śāstri: "Previously there was a tradition that the mantra was to be taken from the mother, and not from the male. The mother is considered to be superior to the father. The mother is considered as the first guru of the child. So in our Vaiṣṇava parampara, dīkṣā was taken from the wife (mother) and not from the husband (father).

"So Gosvāminī in this case does not mean the renounced order, but the wife of the guru. This changed at my guru's time, because his father gave dīkṣā. Before that, it was always from the wife (mother).

"In the case of my guru, his mother had left her body before he could take dīkṣā from her. Then there was a meeting of the scholarly people to decide who would give him (my guru) dīkṣā. Then it was decided that his father should give dīkṣā."

⁶⁰ <http://krishnapremdharatrust.com/premdhara-parvati-rathore-mata-ji/>

⁶¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Haridas_Shastri

⁶² From Sri Guru Darsanam. Vrindavan: Shri Haridas Shastri Goseva Sansthan (2015)

Both Haridās Śāstri's own *dīkṣā-paramparā* (lineage of initiation into mantra) and vesa-line (lineage of initiation into the babaji order) descend from Gadadhara Pandita and include Vaiṣṇavī gurus:⁶³

Dīkṣā-parampara: Gadadhara Pandit, Bhugarbha Goswami, Caitanya Goswami, Bhimananda Goswami, Kasirama Goswami, **Svarnamani Goswamini, Hemamani Goswamini, Kiranamani Goswamini, Cintamani Goswamini**, Durganath Goswami, Vinoda Bihari Goswami. (7 men, 4 women)

Vesa-parampara: Gadadhara Pandit, Nayanananda Misra, Vallabha Misra, **Srimati Thakurani**, Madhusudana Goswami, Nityananda Dasa Mahasaya, Ramakrsna Dasa Mahasaya, Vinoda Bihari Goswami. (7 men, 1 woman)

Again, if BS 1.59-60 had such an absolute applicability to our *sampradāya* as you propose, then both lineages of Haridās Śāstri, just like Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's, would have been bogus and useless.

We may note here that Haridas Śāstri's explanation of the term 'Gosvāminī' and its underlying tradition of initiation may further corroborate that the three Gosvāminīs in Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's *dīkṣā* line are representative of a formerly established and authentic tradition rather than of a deviation, as some anti-VDG proponents are trying to prove.

To sum up, following your sagacious advice:

“[W]e are obliged to assess what is permissible for us according to the *vidhis*, or rules established by our *ācāryas*, not according to some other *sampradāya*'s rules if they differ from ours. Trying to do otherwise is an offense against the *ācāryas* of our disciplic succession.” (VNP 80)

we are obliged to conclude that Vaiṣṇavīs in the role of *dīkṣā-gurus* in our *sampradāya* are much more permissible than you are trying to present by references to “some other *sampradāya*'s rules that differ from ours” — thus, in your own words, committing “an offense against the *ācāryas* of our disciplic succession.”

II. Reinventing BS 1.42-44

(1) Original intention vs. figurative meaning

Now, as far as the aforementioned requirement by Śrīla Prabhupāda in SB 1.4.1 purp. that “the original purpose of the text must be maintained” and no obscure meaning should be screwed out of it”:

⁶³ <http://sriharidasniwas.org/index.php/Śri-guru-parampara/our-guru-shishya-parampara.html>

In my last email⁶⁴ I showed that, taken literally, BS 1.44 mandates the level of '*pratyakṣitātma-nātha*' 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 Miśra 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
pratyakṣitātmanāthānāṁ naiṣāṁ 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** (*eṣāṁ*) **[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?

If you do not, then you, in effect, suggest that Bharadvāja Muni:

(a) either didn't know the precise Sanskrit term for 'gender' (which, by all considerations, is "an obscure meaning screwed out" of the term '*kulādikam*' after you whimsically strip it of *śūdras*, *antyajas*, etc. by your interpretation), or;

(b)

simply forgot that, as you argue throughout, a few verses earlier he had already designated *śūdras* and *antyajas* of BS 1.42-43 as *sādhakas* and thus exempted them from his own restriction to initiate in BS 1.44.

In either case, that would imply that the author of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā also suffered, just like Śrīla Prabhupāda, from conflicting and inconsistent statements that need to be "harmonized" by your interpretation.

Śrīla Prabhupāda had the following to say about such an approach to scriptural interpretations:

"Therefore, all different interpretation... The Vedic literature, either take Bhāgavata or Śrīmad Bhagavad-gītā, or any Upaniṣad, **the meaning is very clear**. It is sheer foolishness to understand that "The meaning is vague; now I am clearing. I am a great scholar. I can interpret in a different way." So... **As if Vyāsadeva left the meaning to be cleared** by some rascal. You see? **He was not himself competent to clear the meaning**, but he left the work to be done by some rascal. That is their interpretation." (Lecture on CC Madhya 25.4050 on January 24, 1967 in San Francisco)

⁶⁴ Email dated 13 March 2019, PAMHO text 31306684

...which, of course, applies to the work of any great *ṛṣi* or *muni*, including Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā.

But if you do understand and accept Bharadvaja Muni's original intention in the wording of BS 1.42-44, why don't you then heed your own advice given when you wrote:

“When direct meaning is clear and not conflicting with any other instructions of guru-sādhu-śāstras, one must not resort to laksana (interpretation)... when its direct meaning remains shining like the sun.” (March 18)

Or, as Śrīla Prabhupāda worded it:

“Therefore Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has warned us not to depend on any kind of interpretation. **It is better to take the verses as they are, without interpretation.**” (CC Madhya 6.135 purp.)

It is undeniably obvious that both ‘*pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām*’ and ‘*naiṣāṁ cintyaṁ kulādikam*’ syntactically and semantically are inseparable parts of the following single sentence:

“Family etc. of those directly seeing the Lord of the soul are not to be considered [as a disqualification to initiate].”

— as further corroborated by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra's commentary on the verse. Since it is seminal to our discussion, here is the commentary's very literal translation:

“By the two preceding verses [BS 1.42-43] women, *sūdras*, etc. are prohibited (*niṣiddham*) to be dīkṣā-gurus (*ācāryatvam*). Now, in the verse beginning with ‘*kim api*’ [BS 1.44] it is stated that there is no such prohibition in regard to those who see the Lord directly (*‘pratyakṣitātma-nātha-viśaye*). Here (*‘atra*’), or in this world (*‘loke*’), although yogis appear in all wombs (*‘sarva-yoniṣu*’), or even in debased or outcast families (*‘nikṛṣṭāsv api yoniṣu*’), the words ‘*kim api*’ mean that we do not despise (*‘na avajānīmaḥ*’) them for whatever reason or purpose (*‘kim api kāraṇam prayojanam*’). Alternatively, the words ‘*kim api*’ may mean that the yogis take birth in all wombs for whatever purpose (*‘kim api pratisandhāya*’). Those by whom the Lord of the soul is directly perceived (*‘pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām*) are the yogis who directly experience the truth of the Lord (*‘sākṣāt-kṛta-bhagavat-tattvānām*’), and in regard to such yogis their birth in a particular family etc. (*‘kulādikam*’) is not to be considered (*‘na cintyam*’), that is, one should not think “These people born in lower families do not deserve to be dīkṣā-gurus” (*‘etena hīna-kula-jātāḥ ācāryatām nārhantīti na cintanīyam*’); rather, one should think “They also deserve to be dīkṣā-gurus” (*‘api tu te ‘pi tu ācāryatām arhantīti*). This is the meaning.” (Sarayū-prasāda Miśra's commentary on BS 1.44)⁶⁵

⁶⁵ pūrva-śloka-dvayena strī-sūdrādīnām ācāryatvaṁ niṣiddham ity uktam | idānīm tu pratyakṣitātma-nātha-viśaye tu niṣedho nāstīty āha kim iti | atra loke yoginaḥ sarva-yoniṣu nikṛṣṭāsv api yoniṣu abhijāyante kim api kim vā kāraṇam prayojanam nāvajānīma ity arthaḥ | kim api pratisandhāya sarva-yoniṣu abhijāyanta iti vānvayaḥ | pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām sākṣāt-kṛta-bhagavat-tattvānām eṣāṁ yogināṁ kulādikam na cintyam etena hīna-kula-jātāḥ ācāryatām nārhantīti na cintanīyam api tu te ‘pi ācāryatām arhantīty apīty arthaḥ ||

Do you agree that this commentary by an authoritative commentator leaves no ground for excluding all but women from the requirement to be *pratyakṣitātmā-nātha* in order to be *dīkṣā-gurus*?

If you disagree, by the very fact of disagreeing with the commentary's literal purport you agree with and prove our earlier premise — that you are writing your own, unprecedented and unique, commentary on a Vaiṣṇava scripture.

But if you agree, then in the light of this crystal-clear verse and its commentary, why not let the literal meaning of the word '*kulādikam*' shine in this discussion as brightly? Why interpret the verse and commentary in an innovative and roundabout way?

Would you agree that if an interpreter sees only selected words in a verse as “shining like the sun” — and not all, it is symptomatic of either deliberate distortion, or semantic ignorance, or intellectual dishonesty, or contextual blindness — which, in any case, in your own words, “accuses the fault of *asangati* or disharmony on the *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā*” (March 8) — or, alternatively, disqualifies one from commenting on the scripture in question in the first place. After all, you know your interpretation is off if the strongest rebuttal to it is the literal translation of the text you are interpreting.

And one more important note drawn, again, from the **literal** meaning of this verse and its commentary:

The verse in question speaks **exclusively** about the yogis already born with a perfect innate awareness of *bhagavat-tattva*, or with direct perception of the Lord — and not about *sādhana-siddhas* who were born into lower families and who attained perfection later in life, or not even of *nitya-siddhas* in the orthodox Vaiṣṇava sense of the term.⁶⁶ Taken literally, the verse refers only to perfect yogis appearing in lower families (*hīna-kula-jāti*) and excludes everyone else, so you are out of luck here trying to force *sādhakas* into its meaning. And even accepting that the term ‘yogis’ here means *nitya-siddha* devotees, as you suggest in your *ṭīkā* (after all, BS itself repeatedly refers to its subject of *prapatti* or *nyāsa* as ‘*yoga*’), it still excludes *sādhana-siddhas*, or those not possessed of prenatal perfection in spiritual understanding. I will leave it to you to figure out how to tell the former from the latter.

(2) Misunderstanding of ‘*jāti*’

You wrote:

“Śrīla Prabhupāda does clarify it again and again that one’s varna does not depend upon one’s birth (*yasya yal laksanam proktam*) and hence, we, as his followers, should understand the word “*jāti*” or “*hina-jāti*” in this context throughout SB. The same holds true for BS while discussing *varṇāśrama* texts or context.” (March 18)

⁶⁶ For example: “A *nitya-siddha* devotee comes from *Vaikuṅṭha* upon the order of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and shows by his example how to become a pure devotee (*anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam*). In spite of coming to this material world, the *nitya-siddha* devotee is never attracted by the allurements of material enjoyment.” (SB 7.10.3 purp.)

You then proceed to educate us on the actual meaning of *vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhi*:

“*Vaiṣṇava jāti-buddhi* means to see a Vaiṣṇava by his lineage, namely *brāhmaṇa*, *ksatriya*, etc. (*Jāti* means birth lineage). But since we are not seeing Vaiṣṇavas’ material aspect (or *varṇa*) by lineage but by qualities, it doesn’t create the offense of *vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhi*.” (VNP 56)

Based on this and other similar statements of yours, one reason for your novel interpretational liberty combined with contextual blindness could be that you might not have fully grasped the actual concept of ‘*jāti*’ in regard to initiation as consistently employed by the author of *Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā* himself throughout its 1st chapter, and which, indeed, serves as one of its underlying and unifying motifs (*sangati*).

In BS 1.15 Bharadvaja Muni groups women, *śūdras*, *antyajas* together as eligible — along with the three higher *varṇas* — for the process of *prapatti*, or surrender to the Lord.

In BS 1.42, Bharadvaja Muni again refers to the same group, slightly expanded — women, *śūdras*, *antyajas*, criminals, fallen and lustful — as forbidden to be *dīkṣā-gurus* under any circumstance (‘*na jātu*’):

*na jātu mantra-dā nārī na śūdro nāntarodbhavaḥ
nābhiśasto na patitaḥ kāma-kāmo ’py akāminaḥ* (42)

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

In BS 1.43, Bharadvaja Muni reinforces the prohibition for the same group — women, *śūdras*, *antyajas*, criminals, fallen and lustful — to act as *dīkṣā-gurus* at any time (‘*kvacit*’):

*striyaḥ śūdradayaś caiva bodhayeyur hitāhitam
yathārham mānanīyāś ca nārhanty 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*.”

In BS 1.49 and 1.53-54 Bharadvaja Muni introduces different initiation standards for *dvijas*, *śūdras*, *antyajas* (*pratilomas*) and warns in 1.55:

*mantram niyatam agryāṇām yo hīnāya prayacchati
sa vai hīna-gurur nindyas tena sārddham pataty adhaḥ* (55)

“One who gives a mantra prescribed for the higher varṇas to a lower person is indeed a lower, despicable guru who falls down along with that person.”

Commentary by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra: “In the verse starting with ‘*mantram*’ he speaks of the sin of giving Vedic and other mantras to those not belonging to the three higher varṇas. ‘Of the higher’ (*argyāṇām*) means ‘of those belonging to the three varṇas’; ‘prescribed’ (*niyatam*) means ‘Vedic and other [mantras]’. By giving (*prayacchan*) ‘to a lower person’ (*hīnāya*), meaning by giving a Vedic mantra to someone not belonging to the three higher varṇas (*atraivaṇīkāya*), or by giving a tantric mantra to a person born of a *pratiloma* marriage (*pratilomajāya*) one falls down (*patati*). This is the meaning.”⁶⁷

[NB: Would you apply the prohibition in this verse to initiate into Vedic mantras those below *vaiśyas* to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s initiations of Westerners into the purely Vedic *brahma-gāyatrī* mantra? And if you wouldn’t, why? I will understand if you decline to answer, but at least you can contrast the prohibition in BS 1.55 with Śrīla Prabhupāda treatment of it, for instance, in his purport on SB 4.8.54, in which he faithfully paraphrases commentaries by Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura:⁶⁸

“There is an injunction that those who are not *brāhmaṇas* cannot pronounce the *praṇava* mantra. But Dhruva Mahārāja was born a *kṣatriya*. He at once admitted before Nārada Muni that as a *kṣatriya* he was unable to accept Nārada’s instruction of renunciation and mental equilibrium, which are the concern of a *brāhmaṇa*. Still, although not a *brāhmaṇa* but a *kṣatriya*, Dhruva was allowed, on the authority of Nārada, to pronounce the *praṇava* oṃkāra. This is very significant. Especially in India, the caste *brāhmaṇas* object greatly when persons from other castes, who are not born in *brāhmaṇa* families, recite this *praṇava* mantra. But here is tacit proof that if a person accepts the Vaiṣṇava mantra or Vaiṣṇava way of worshipping the Deity, he is allowed to chant the *praṇava* mantra. In Bhagavad-gītā the Lord personally accepts that anyone, even one of a low species, can be elevated to the highest position and go back home, back to Godhead, simply if he worships properly.” (SB 4.8.54 purp.)]

In BS 1.59 Bharadvaja Muni warns that taking shelter of women, *sūdras*, people born of mixed marriages, sinful, deprived of full surrender to the spiritual master and possessed of an exclusively external vision as *dīkṣā-gurus* is useless:

*atha strī-sūdra-saṅkīrṇānirmalāpatitādiṣu
ananyenānyadṛṣtau ca kṛtāpi na kṛtā bhavet* (59)

and in BS 1.60 enjoins those initiated by such disqualified persons to quickly take shelter elsewhere according to *śāstric* injunctions and says that such a foolish mantra-guru falls down:

atho ‘nyatrāśu vidhi-vat kartavyā śaraṇāgatīḥ

⁶⁷ *atraivaṇīkādiḥyho vaidikādi-mantra-pradāne pratyavāyam āha — mantram iti | agryāṇām traivaṇīkānām niyatam vaidikādikam ity arthaḥ | hīnāya atraivaṇīkāya vaidikam pratilomajāya tāntrikam ca prayacchan patatīty arthaḥ ||*

⁶⁸ Jīva Gosvāmī’s Krama-sandarbhā on SB 4.8.53: *om iti | anenānupanītāya dhruvāya sa-praṇava-mahāmantropadeśena Vaiṣṇava-mantrāṇām dvijatvādy-avasthāpekṣā parihṛtā ||*

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s commentary on SB 4.8.54: *om iti anenānupanītāya sa-praṇava-mahā-mantropadeśena Vaiṣṇava-mantrāṇām dvijatvādy-avasthāpekṣā parihṛtā ||*

upadeṣṭā tu mantrasya mūḍhaḥ pracyavate hy adhaḥ (60)

Finally, in BS 1.61-62 Bharadvāja Muni makes a blanket statement about conditioned souls who cannot develop remembrance of, or servitude toward Lord Viṣṇu, or Keśava, due to their own beginningless sinful inclinations and resultant births into sinful families, societies, or countries, or at inauspicious times:

*anāder vāsanā-yogād viparīṭad ihātmanah
smṛtir na jāyate viṣṇau kuta evārpaṇe matiḥ* (61)

*sva-pāpa-sambhavād eva kulāt saṁsargato 'nyataḥ
deśāt kālāt svabhāvāc ca prapadyante na keśavam* (62)

By this recurring list Bharadvāja Muni introduces a '*jāti*' — not in the sense of birth, but in the sense of what Jīva Gosvāmī defines in Hari-nāmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa as '*jātiḥ samānatvaṁ, brāhmaṇatva-gotvādi*': "*Jāti* ("common quality, class, species") is the similarity of quality ('*samānatvam*') such as brāhmaṇa-hood, or cow-hood."⁶⁹

In other words, the specific '*jāti*' in the sense of common quality ('*samānatvam*') of these several recurring groups in BS is their shared ineligibility for Vedic initiation (as also evidenced by Śrīla Prabhupāda and Sanātana Gosvāmī) and also for becoming *dīkṣā-gurus* under any circumstance ('*na jātu'/'kvacit'*', which, as Sarayū-prasāda Miśra explains, rules out even emergencies that are otherwise treated as legitimate exceptions for non-*brāhmaṇas* in BS 1.41).

But each of these several categories under the umbrella of '*jāti*' ("common quality") has its own distinct and separate reasons that warrant its inclusion in the group:

For women, it is their gender; for *śūdras* — *varṇa*; for *antyajas* — their *pratiloma* birth, occupation (such as washerman, leather dealer, actor, cane splitter, fisherman, and tribal)⁷⁰ and their base qualities (see SB 11.17.20); for *saṅkīrṇas* — their mixed birth; for *abhiśastas* (literally, "accused" or "accursed") — their implication in certain grievous crimes such as the killing of a brāhmaṇa;⁷¹ for the fallen — their sinful habits; and for the lustful — their uncontrolled contaminated desires, etc.

Therefore, for you to belabor that this commonality, or *jāti*, is maintained elsewhere in BS **except** in 1.42-44 is, basically, to inject *asangati*, or inconsistency, simultaneously on several levels — in *pāda* (immediate context), *adhyāya* (chapter), and *śāstrāntara* (other scriptures).

As regards the last instance of *asangati*, *śāstrāntara-asangati*, or inconsistency with other scriptures — it was already mentioned earlier in our discussion that the same or very similar list of people grouped by their '*jāti*' in terms of their shared ineligibility for Vedic spiritual practices regularly occurs in many authoritative śāstras, such as BG, SB, CC, Hari-bhakti-vilāsa and other Vaiṣṇava scriptures.

⁶⁹ from Vṛtti commentary by Jīva Gosvāmī on Bṛhad-dhari-nāmāmṛta-vyākaraṇa, I.148

⁷⁰ see Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on SB 7.11.30

⁷¹ see Apastamba Dharma-sutras I.9.24.7-9 and Manu-samhita, 11.87

To mention just a few:

- ‘*striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrās te 'pi yānti parām gatim*’ (BG 9.32)^[ḶḶ]_[SEP]
- ‘*strī-śūdra-hūṇa-śabarā api pāpa-jīvāḥ*’ (SB 2.7.46)^[ḶḶ]_[SEP]
- ‘*striyaḥ śūdrā vrajaukasaḥ khagā mṛgāḥ pāpa-jīvāḥ*’ (SB 7.7.54)
- ‘*strī-bāla-vṛddha, āra 'caṇḍāla' 'yavana*’ (CC Madhya 18.123)
- ‘*stri śūdraḥ pukkaso vāpi ye cānye pāpa-yonayaḥ*’ (HBV 11.405 and Prema-vivarta 20.152)
- ‘*strī-śūdra-pukkaśa-yavanādi kena naya*’ (Prema-vivarta 20.151) [this quote will be discussed in detail below in Section II.4.g]^[ḶḶ]_[SEP]

And, in a remarkable display of consistency, such verses often proceed to explain how ALL of these otherwise disqualified, per Vedic norms, classes of people become elevated by bhakti, especially in the form of surrender to Kṛṣṇa through His devotees, taking Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā, and chanting Kṛṣṇa’s name.

In fact, it was the famous BG 9.32 verse that Śrīla Prabhupāda cites dozens of times to emphasize how, regardless of varṇāśrama considerations, anyone, **including women**, can be elevated to the position of a pure Vaiṣṇava and a spiritual master. To give just one example:

“According to the cult of devotion, generally known as the Vaiṣṇava cult, there is no bar against anyone's advancing in the matter of God realization. A Vaiṣṇava is powerful enough to turn into Vaiṣṇavas even the Kiratas, etc., as above mentioned. In the Bhagavad-gītā (9.32) it is said by the Lord that there is no bar to becoming a devotee of the Lord (even for those who are lowborn, or for women, śūdras or vaiśyas), and whoever becomes a devotee is eligible to return home, back to Godhead. **THE ONLY QUALIFICATION** is that one take shelter of a pure devotee of the Lord who has thorough knowledge of the transcendental science of Kṛṣṇa (the Bhagavad-gītā and Srimad-Bhagavatam). **Anyone from any part of the world who becomes well conversant in the science of Kṛṣṇa becomes a pure devotee and a spiritual master for the general mass of people and may reclaim them by purification of the heart.** Though a person be even the most sinful man, he can at once be purified by systematic contact with a pure Vaiṣṇava. A Vaiṣṇava, therefore, can accept a bona fide disciple from any part of the world without any consideration of caste and creed and promote him by regulative principles to the status of a pure Vaiṣṇava, **who is transcendental to brahminical culture.**” (SB 2.4.18 purp.)

Please note how Śrīla Prabhupāda here and in other similar statements too numerous to cite stresses that the only interrelated requirements to be elevated to the position of a pure devotee and a spiritual master are (1) taking shelter of a pure devotee and (2) becoming well conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa (a clear reference to ‘*yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya*’, CC Madhya 8.128).

The only thing conspicuous by its absence in all such emphatic statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda on the topic of becoming a pure devotee and a guru is the stipulation that women must be on some special level to qualify — contrary to what you want us to believe in a stark departure from *guru*, *sādhus* and *śāstra*, and, yes, from Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā’s **original purport** itself.

(3) Redefinition of Vaiṣṇavas as śūdras and caṇḍālas

And now comes the fulcrum of your unique interpretational logic.

The literal meaning of BS 1.42-44 and 1.59-60 is very clear and unequivocal: the entire class of *hīnakula-jāti*, or people of lower descent or lower qualities, is barred from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus* **under any circumstance** — whether they are *sādhakas* or not — with the **ONLY** exception if they happen to be **born** as *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas*, or yogis directly perceiving the truth about God.

Obviously, this clear and direct meaning of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā is unacceptable to you as it, for one thing, disqualifies a vast majority of ISKCON *dīkṣā-gurus* along with your own spiritual master from ever taking up this service in the first place. By extension, it also contradicts volumes of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions to the contrary.

To somehow circumvent this philosophical impasse while still being able to single out and cling to the Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā’s prohibition on women to initiate, you repeatedly suggested that the groups listed in BS 1.42-43 — women, *śūdras*, *antyajas*, criminals, fallen and debauchees — are actually *sādhakas* who are simply named after their qualities, not birth.

You wrote, for instance:

“[S]udras etc are to be judged by symptoms and thus ISKCON gurus who are born in śūdra etc family are bona fide if they have brahminical qualities. SP supports in SB 4.31.10, purport that BS takes brāhmaṇa etc by symptoms. However, women, even if we try to judge by symptoms, then the judging symptoms are physical only as gender is judged based on physical symptoms. Thus, when BS and SB 4.12.32, purport prohibit women, they prohibit female gender.” (March 18)

“Now, gender is judged or decided solely based on physical symptoms. Thus, when it is said that women are prohibited, even if we take by symptoms, it means anyone with the physical symptoms of women are prohibited. This means women as gender are prohibited from becoming *dīkṣā-guru*. Whereas Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned that by training, even a low born person can be elevated to the position of a “dvija” however, we don’t find in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s whole literature that he ever stated that by training, a female body will turn into a male body.” (March 18)

and

“In addition to women, Narada Pāñcarātra (BS 1.42-43) also prohibits *śūdras* or those even lower from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus*. This means that almost all gurus in ISKCON are not bona fide according to Narada Pāñcarātra. But Śrīla Prabhupāda never taught this. He always rejected caste considerations, quoting the *kiba-vipra kiba-nyasi* verse (CC Madhya 8.128) (...) **Thus, when it is said that a śūdra is prohibited from becoming a dīkṣā-guru, it means a person**

who is a śūdra by quality (guna) and karma (work). Someone who is actually qualified as a guru is never a śūdra.” (VNP 35)

We will now look at your statements closer.

(a) sādhakas as śūdras etc. by their qualities (guna)

Let's first recap:

BS 1.44 forbids six categories of people to initiate. BS 1.59 adds to śūdras and women four more: *saṅkīrna* (those of mixed birth), *anirmala* (literally, “not purified”, glossed by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra as “deprived of the shelter of an ācārya”), *āpatita* (“those who committed very grave sins”) and *anya-dṛṣṭi* (glossed as ‘*bāhya-kudṛṣṭir yadi śāstra-mātra-sampanna-jñānaḥ*’, meaning “possessed of a corrupt external vision, that is, of solely śāstric knowledge”).

[The last category of people forbidden in Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā 1.59 to act as dīkṣā-gurus, *anya-dṛṣṭi*, deserves a separate mention and will be revisited in Section V.7.]

You then suggest that a śūdra prohibited from becoming a dīkṣā-guru in BS 1.42-43 is a sādaka “who is a śūdra by quality (guna) and karma (work).” (VNP 35)

First of all, this is not at all how Sarayū-prasāda Miśra explains the verse. Again, you are innovating and cherry-picking.

His commentary on BS 1.42 clearly terms their **collective** disqualification as ‘*hīna-jāti*’, literally, “lower birth” and proceeds to explain how each of these categories separately cannot act as dīkṣā-gurus. Yet you creatively translate śūdras and *antarodbhavas* (glossed as *pratilomajātaḥ*, or born of a mixed marriage) as qualities rather than births — stopping understandably short of explaining just how birth in a mixed family is a quality rather than a birth.

And while your interpretation betrays you as compassionate and generous Vaiṣṇavas (and ingenious commentators), neither the verse nor the commentary themselves treat these terms your way. You with your interpretation are squarely on your own.

Second, although it is not unprecedented for sincere sādhakas to retain and even occasionally succumb to their lower qualities (see SB 11.20.27-28, for example), Lord Kṛṣṇa in BG 9.30 enjoins ‘*api cet su-durācāro bhajate mām ananya-bhāk sādhuḥ eva sa mantavyaḥ*’ — such devotees, even if committing the most abominable acts, must still be considered sādhus. (See also Section II.4.b.2) Śrīdhara Svāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Baladeva Vidyabhusana and Śrīla Prabhupāda all concur on this principle in their commentaries. Or do you suggest that Lord Kṛṣṇa should have followed your interpretational logic and said “*śūdra eva sa mantavyaḥ*”— based on the “most abominable qualities” of His devotees?

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura even goes as far as specifying that ‘*su-durācāra*’ includes committing violence, theft and adultery, which is remarkably synonymous with BS 1.42’s “*abhiśasta, patita* or

kāma-kāma.” Still, according to him, Lord Kṛṣṇa sternly warns against considering such misbehaving devotees to be anything but *sadhus* in their entirety and forbids us to even notice their bad qualities.⁷²

Moreover, unlike you, none of the *ācāryas* apply SB 7.11.35:

*yasya yal lakṣaṇaṁ proktaṁ puṁso varṇābhivyañjakam
yad anyatrāpi dṛśyeta tat tenaiva vinirdīśet*

“If one shows the symptoms of being a brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya or śūdra, as described above, even if he has appeared in a different class, he should be accepted according to those symptoms of classification.”

for classifying Vaiṣṇavas in terms of any of the four *varṇas* except to emphasize that because they serve Kṛṣṇa they are already *brāhmaṇas*. This is also how Śrīla Prabhupāda explains it — that it is the quality of being a Vaiṣṇava that overrides all other qualities that a *sādhaka* may display or be externally designated by as belonging to a particular *varṇa*:

“So Bhagavata says, *yasya hi yal lakṣaṇaṁ [proktaṁ puṁso] syat varṇābhivyañjakam* [SB 7.11.35]. There are symptoms. You'll find all these in Bhagavad-gītā: who is *brāhmaṇa*, who is *kṣatriya*, who is *vaiśya*, who is *śūdra*. By symptoms, by characteristics, you will know. **Similarly, if you find a man knows Kṛṣṇa, you must accept him: "He is a brāhmaṇa." He's a brāhmaṇa. Brahma janati iti brāhmaṇa.** (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 2.46–62 — December 16, 1968, Los Angeles)

He also writes in SB 4.8.36 about people of the West with decidedly and inborn *śūdra* qualities that their deeply ingrained tendencies are immaterial once they join the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement:

“In America we have practical experience of this incompatibility of the brahminical and *kṣatriya* temperaments. The American boys, who have simply been trained as *śūdras*, are not at all fit to fight in battle. Therefore, when they are called to join the military, they refuse because they do not have *kṣatriya* spirit. This is a cause of great dissatisfaction in society. That the boys do not have the *kṣatriya* spirit does not mean that they are trained in brahminical qualities; they are

⁷² VCT's commentary on BG 9.30 (translated by Bhanu Swami): “My attachment to My devotee is My very nature. That attachment does not decrease even if the devotee commits wrong, for I make him come up to the highest standard. If someone with bad conduct, addicted to violence, thievery, or adultery (*sudurācārah*), worships Me, and worships no one except Me, and does not follow any other process like *karma* or *jñāna*, and has no other desire than My desire (*ananya-bhak*), he is My devotee (*sādhuh*).

“But, considering his bad conduct, how is he a devotee?”

“He is to be respected (*mantavyah*) as a devotee because of his devotee qualities. It is a command. Not doing so is offense. My order is the authority.”

“So he should be considered a devotee in that portion where he worship You, and as a non-devotee in that portion where he commits adultery?”

“No, he should be considered as a devotee (*eva*) in all his parts. You should not see his bad qualities at all. He is completely convinced (*samyak vyavasthitah*). He makes a splendid resolution: ‘I will go to hell for my sinful actions which are hard to give up, but I will not give up dedicated worship of Kṛṣṇa.’”

trained as *śūdras*, and thus in frustration they are becoming hippies. However, as soon as they enter the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement being started in America, they are trained to meet the brahminical qualifications, even though they have fallen to the lowest conditions as *śūdras*. **In other words, since the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is open for everyone, people in general can attain the brahminical qualifications.**” (SB 4.8.36 purp.)

Finally, throughout his teachings Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes numerous *śāstric* statement forbidding to consider a Vaiṣṇava to be anything but “already a *brāhmaṇa*” — for instance, in CC Antya 16.29 purp.:

“Similarly, in the Padma purāṇa it is said:

*na śūdrā bhagavad-bhaktās te tu bhāgavatā matāḥ
sarva-varṇeṣu te śūdrā ye na bhaktā janārdane*

”**A devotee should never be considered a *śūdra*.** All the devotees of the Supreme Personality of Godhead should be recognized as *bhāgavatas*. If one is not a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, however, even if born in a *brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya* or *vaiśya* family, he should be considered a *śūdra*.”

[Please note that the verse and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s translation of it both forbid to ever consider a devotee a *śūdra*, with no exceptions for his birth, qualities or work.]

The Padma Purāṇa further says:

*śūdraṁ vā bhagavad-bhaktarṁ niṣādarṁ śva-pacarṁ tathā
vīkṣate jāti-sāmānyāt sa yāti narakarṁ dhruvam*

”One who considers a devotee of the Supreme Personality of Godhead who was born in a family of *śūdras*, *niṣādas* or *caṇḍālas* to belong to that particular caste certainly goes to hell.”

[Please note that the verse here mentions — just like Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā in 1.42 and 1.59 — exclusively hereditary or inborn status of being a *niṣāda* or *śva-paca*, which cannot be meaningfully translated as “quality”. More on this later. Please also note the destination meant by this verse for those who consider them in terms of their births.]

A *brāhmaṇa* must be a Vaiṣṇava and a learned scholar. Therefore in India it is customary to address a *brāhmaṇa* as *paṇḍita*. Without knowledge of Brahman, one cannot understand the Supreme Personality of Godhead. **Therefore a Vaiṣṇava is already a *brāhmaṇa*, whereas a *brāhmaṇa* may become a Vaiṣṇava.** In the Garuḍa Purāṇa it is said:

*bhaktir aṣṭa-vidhā hy eṣā yasmin mlecche ’pi vartate
sa viprendro muni-śreṣṭhaḥ sa jñānī sa ca paṇḍitaḥ*

”Even if one is born a *mleccha*, if he becomes a devotee he is to be considered the best of the *brāhmaṇas* and a learned *paṇḍita*.”

[Again please note that the *śāstra* orders that a devotee **must** be considered to be already a *brāhmaṇa*. Therefore the only way for you to prove that Vaiṣṇavīs are not automatically *brāhmaṇīs* is to prove that they are not devotees.]

Similarly, the Tattva-sāgara says:

*yathā kāñcanatām yāti kāmśyam rasa-vidhānataḥ
tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām*

”As bell metal is turned to gold when mixed with mercury in an alchemical process, so **one who is properly trained and initiated by a bona fide spiritual master becomes a *brāhmaṇa* immediately.**” All this evidence found in the revealed scriptures proves that according to the Vedic version, a **Vaiṣṇava is never to be considered an *abrāhmaṇa*, or *non-brāhmaṇa*.** A Vaiṣṇava should not be thought to belong to a lower caste even if born in a *mleccha* or *yavana* family. Because he has become a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, he has become purified and has attained the stage of *brāhmaṇa* (*dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām*).” (from CC Antya 16.29 purp.)

Yet, you argue that a Vaiṣṇava scripture, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā, in BS 1.42-43 classifies non-perfected *sādhakas* as *sūdras*, *antyajas*, *abhiśastas* etc. by their residual material *anarthas* — and, by promoting such a view, you incidentally violate *guru-sādhu-śāstra*’s and even Lord Kṛṣṇa’s own order in the process. (Please see section II.4.b “Silencing the *ācāryas*” for more details on BG 9.30 in this context.)

Is this what you call “direct translations” or “real and simple” (March 18) as opposed to “indirect workarounds and interpretations”? And, except you, are there any commentators on Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā — or any pure Vaiṣṇava literature, for that matter — that gloss *sūdras*, *antyajas* and *abhiśastas* as “*sādhakas* with the residual qualities of *sūdras*, *antyajas* and *abhiśastas*” and call is “direct translations”? Can you cite at least one Vaiṣṇava *ācārya* who applies SB 7.11.35 to Vaiṣṇavas in order to classify them as *sūdras*? If not, your Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā-ṭīkā is again quite unique — in the worst sense of the word.

Third — and most importantly — you must have accidentally overlooked or deliberately concealed the fact that both *antarodbhavas* of BS 1.42-43 (*antyajas*, untouchables) and *saṅkīrnas* of BS 1.59-60 (born of a mixed birth) are also defined by birth and not by qualities or occupation. **Therefore, in your paradigm they also suffer, along with women, from an inborn incorrigible disqualification that doesn’t change with initiation and thus bars them from initiating unless on the level of *bhāva*.** And since in the list of these ten “spiritual pariahs” it is the *antyajas* (“the untouchables”) and *saṅkīrnas* as a category — not *sūdras* — that Western devotees formally fall under from the Vedic viewpoint,⁷³

⁷³ CC Antya 5.84 purp.: “**The Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is creating pure, exalted Vaiṣṇavas even from those born in families considered lower than those of *sūdras*.** This is proof that a Vaiṣṇava may appear in any family, as confirmed in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (2.4.18):

kirāta-hūṇāndhra-pulinda-pulkaśā ābhīra-śumbhā yavanāḥ khasādayaḥ

that would, in your paradigm, make it mandatory for all Western devotees to be on the level of bhāva to initiate as well.

To show the absurdity of your argument that gender disqualifies Vaiṣṇavīs from being *dīkṣā-gurus* because it doesn't change with initiation, here is another example from Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (1.56-58) of some equally inborn and incorrigible disqualifications for being a *dīkṣā-guru*:

“If a person accepts a spiritual master who eats voraciously, who is lazy, who is greedy for acquiring material objects, who is fond of arguing against the śāstra, who is mischievous, who is happy to expose others' sinful activities, who is a blasphemer, **who has no hair or much hair on his body**, who is engaged in the service of a condemned asrama, **who has black teeth, whose lips are black, who has bad breath**, or who is very cunning and thus accepts a great deal of charity even though he does not require it — all of his good fortune and opulence will become exhausted.”⁷⁴

Here we have a stern prohibition in our own śāstra compiled by our own ācārya against accepting as a *dīkṣā-guru* someone with excessive or insufficient bodily hair, black teeth, and black lips.

Using your logic,⁷⁵ Sanātana Gosvāmī surely speaks here about Vaiṣṇavas, because “if you think that HBV 1.56-58 speaks about nondevotees or uninitiated devotees, then your understanding clashes with the immediate statements” of HBV 1.54-55, in which it is forbidden to accept even a *brāhmaṇa* as a guru if he is a non-Vaiṣṇava, or not initiated into Visnu-mantras.⁷⁶

So, do you maintain that since these permanent bodily features — bodily hair, the color of teeth and lips — just like gender, are listed in the śāstra as disqualifications for becoming a *dīkṣā-guru* and, just

ye 'nye ca pāpā yad-apāśrayāśrayāḥ śudhyanti tasmai prabhaviṣṇave namaḥ

“Kirātas, Hūṇas, Āndhras, Pulindas, Pulkaśas, Ābhīras, Śumbhas, Yavanas and members of the Khasa races, and even others addicted to sinful acts, can be purified by taking shelter of the devotees of the Lord, due to His being the supreme power. I beg to offer my respectful obeisances unto Him.”

Morning walk of April 6, 1975, Māyāpur: “And those who are lower than the *śūdras*, they are not in the Vedic culture, they are called *caṇḍālas*. Amongst these *caṇḍālas*, the *mleccha*, *yavana*, are also. *Kirāta-hūṇāndhra-pulinda-pulkaśā ābhīra-śumbhā yavanāḥ khasādayaḥ* [SB 2.4.18]. They are also *caṇḍālas*, fifth status.”

⁷⁴ Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 1.56-58: *bahvāśī dīrgha-sūtrī ca viṣayādiṣu lolupaḥ | hetu-vāda-rato duṣṭo 'vāg-vādī guṇa-nindakāḥ ||56|| aromā bahu-romā ca ninditāśrama-sevakaḥ | kāla-danto 'sitausṭhaś ca durgandhi-śvāsa-vāhakaḥ ||57|| duṣṭa-lakṣaṇa-sampanno yadyapi svayam īśvaraḥ | bahu-pratigrahāsakta ācāryaḥ śrī-kṣayāvahaḥ ||58||*

⁷⁵ A quote from email of March 18: “Your understanding clashes with the immediate statements of BS itself. BS 1.42-43 prohibits women from becoming guru while your understanding of BS 1.44 allows women from becoming guru. How is that? If you say women BS 1.42-43 are not initiated devotees then your understanding of BS 1.42-43 clashes with BS 1.37 which says that only an initiated Vaiṣṇava can become guru and thus sets the context of gurus' being described in BS 1.38-44 as initiated Vaiṣṇavas.”

⁷⁶ Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 1.54-55:

(1.54) “If a non-Vaiṣṇava is born in an aristocratic family, is expert in performing all types of sacrifices, and has studied the one thousand branches of the Vedas, he still cannot become the spiritual master of Vaiṣṇavas.”

(1.55) “One who is initiated into the chanting of Viṣṇu mantras and is engaged in the worship of Lord Viṣṇu is called a Vaiṣṇava. This is the verdict of the knowers of the truth. Those who are contrary to this are non-Vaiṣṇavas.”

like gender, do not change with *dīkṣā*, those possessed of such permanent bodily features also need the level of *bhāva* to override them before qualifying as *dīkṣā-gurus*?

- If you do, would you then suggest that those male *dīkṣā-gurus* in ISKCON than don't pass the visual or olfactory test of HBV 1.56-58 should be rejected as *śrī-kṣayāvahaḥ*, or bringing about ill fortune?
- But if you do not, would you then agree that gender too should not be seen as a disqualification from becoming a *dīkṣā-guru* just because it doesn't change with initiation?

(b) *sādhakas as śūdras etc. by their work (karma)*

As if branding *sādhaka* Vaiṣṇavas as *śūdras* and untouchables on the basis of their qualities is not already implicating enough, you then suggest that they be so defined on the basis of their *karma* (work):

“...when it is said that a *śūdra* is prohibited from becoming a *dīkṣā-guru*, it means a person who is a *śūdra* by ... *karma* (work).” (VNP 35)

To show how drastically your proposition deviates from Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings, suffice it to cite verbatim his answers to this very question — whether devotees can or should be designated as belonging to any of the *varṇas* by their occupation, or vocation — from his “Varṇāśrama College” morning walks of March 1974 in Vrndavana:

Hrdayananda: **Should devotees be formally designated in a particular occupation?**

Prabhupada: Eh? **No. Devotees are devotees. Actually, devotees are above this brāhmaṇa, ksatriya, vaiśya, śūdra. But for management of material things, we have to divide.** Just like in the body there are divisions. There are... Kṛṣṇa. Kṛṣṇa was acting as a ksatriya. In His boyhood, He was acting like a vaiśya. But Kṛṣṇa is neither ksatriya, nor vaiśya, nor brāhmaṇa. This is the example. He was a cowherd boy. That is business of vaiśya. And when He was fighting in the battlefield, He was a ksatriya. He was marrying as a ksatriya. So although He was acting sometimes as ksatriya, sometimes vaiśya, but He's neither of these. **So devotee is like that. He may act in any position, but he is above all the material conception of life.** That is perfection. (March 12, 1974)

Prabhupada: [S]o far we are concerned, Kṛṣṇa conscious men, we are above varṇāśrama. But to show the people that we are not escaping, we can take part in any order of life. That is our position. **Just like if I brush somebody's shoes, that does not mean I am shoemaker.** My position is the same. ... Just like I show you sometimes how to mop. So I am not a mopper, but I am showing how to mop. So our position is like that. We do not belong to any varṇa and asrama. But we have to show these rascal[s].

Tamala Kṛṣṇa: In our centers we are awarding brāhmaṇa initiation, second initiation...

Prabhupada: No, no. **Initiation should go on. Even... You do not understand what I have said, that that is for Vaiṣṇava.** A Vaiṣṇava and Visnu... Just like Kṛṣṇa is Visnu, He's not human being, but He was acting like human being; similarly, **Vaiṣṇava is transcendental, but for proper management of the material world, one should be acting like brāhmaṇa, one should be acting like ksatriya.** That is required. Just like actually we are doing so. Some of you are preaching, and some of you are cleansing the temple. It does not mean that a sannyasi who is preaching, he is better than that man who is cleansing. The... Their position as Vaiṣṇava is the same. But for the management, one is cleansing, one is seeing the construction, one is going to preach -- like that. That should be there. It is not that "Because I have taken sannyasa, therefore I cannot anymore do anything." If need be, he has to act as ksatriya, or a śūdra. It doesn't matter.

Hridayananda: Oh.

Prabhupada: Doesn't matter. But manage..., for management, this division must be there. Otherwise it will be mismanagement. Yes. **A Vaiṣṇava coming to the position of doing the work of a śūdra does not mean he has become śūdra. He's Vaiṣṇava.** Try to understand this point. Just like in the stage. If you want to play something, one must be king, one must be queen, one must be..., but neither of them king or queen. That is stage play. Similarly, to manage things in the material world we have to... Guna, karma. Karma there must be. Therefore the karma should be done, executed, according to quality. (March 12, 1974)

And two days later Śrīla Prabhupāda emphatically stressed the same point again:

Hridayananda: So, Prabhupada, in our temples, we have so many devotees. Should the devotees...?

Prabhupada: They should be engaged.

Hridayananda: Should they be trained in a particular...?

Prabhupada: Yes. Those who are not able to preach or to do other things, they must go to the plow department, agriculture.

Hridayananda: Those who cannot preach.

Prabhupada: Yes. Those who are less educated, not very much expert in preaching, they must be acting as ksatriya or vaiśya, or as śūdra.

Hridayananda: And sometimes...

Prabhupada: **Not he's śūdra. ALWAYS REMEMBER THAT.** But he has to act to fulfill the..., fill up the gap. Proxy. (March 14, 1974)

In fact, Śrīla Prabhupāda stresses this essential principle on occasions too many to enumerate, like:

“So this is Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, that everyone should be employed in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That I am repeatedly saying to my students, that "Nobody sit idly. You must be engaged, either as a *brāhmaṇa* or as a *kṣatriya* or as a *vaiśya* or at last, as a *śūdra*. But there must be..." **But anyone who is engaged in the business of... Superficially, it may be the *brāhmaṇa*'s business, but in Kṛṣṇa consciousness there is no such difference. Even**

though one is sweeping the temple, it may be *śūdra*'s business, but he can be allowed to worship the Deity, the *brāhmaṇa*'s business. **Because a devotee is neither *brāhmaṇa*, neither *ksatriya*, nor *vaiśya*, nor *śūdra*, because he is above. He is in the transcendental position.** But in this material world, *guṇa-karma*, if one is not fit for performing the work as a *brāhmaṇa*, he can work as a *śūdra*, he can work as a *vaiśya*. But employment must be there for Kṛṣṇa. That is Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Employment must be there." (Bhagavad-gītā 4.15 -- April 4, 1974, Bombay)

Śrīla Prabhupāda voiced similar stern warnings against classifying a Vaiṣṇava as a *śūdra* or even as a *brāhmaṇa* on numerous occasions:

Prabhupāda: But we can utilize that *śūdra* also. (...) But he cannot do the work of a *brāhmaṇa*. He cannot be trained as a preacher. But he can help. Just like my legs. The legs cannot do the work of brain, but it can help me; I am walking. So leg is as important as the brain. Similarly, *śūdra* is as important as the *brāhmaṇa*, provided he helps the movement, Kṛṣṇa conscious. That is wanted, not that artificially a *śūdra* should be working as a *brāhmaṇa*. No. But everyone should be engaged in Kṛṣṇa consciousness. That is required.

Nitāi: So in that case, he is a *śūdra*, and he is also doing the work of a...

Prabhupāda: **Then he is not a *śūdra*. One who is engaged in Kṛṣṇa's service, he is neither *brāhmaṇa* nor *śūdra*. He is devotee.** He is *brahma-bhūta*. Brahma-bhūyāya kalpate.

Mahāmsa: Just like that devotee who was making garlands for Kṛṣṇa.

Prabhupāda: Yes.

Mahāmsa: He is a devotee. He is not a *śūdra* making garlands.

Prabhupāda: No. He is not a ordinary gardener.

Pañcadraṇḍa: Or that devotee who was making leaf bowls for worshipping the Ganges.

Prabhupāda: **Any engagement, any engagement for Kṛṣṇa, he is Vaiṣṇava. If he is under the guidance of his spiritual master and doing the business according to direction, he is Vaiṣṇava. He is above all these.**

Pañcadraṇḍa: A *śūdra*, if he is working, he cannot take *brāhmaṇa* initiation, but he can take hari-nāma, is that it?

Prabhupāda: Just like sometimes our men, my devotee, they wash the cupboard. Does it mean he is a *mehtar*? No. He can go to the Deity room also. He is not a *mehtar*, or sweeper. But sometimes we do that. **So devotee is above all these consideration.** But because there is management, they should appear as *brāhmaṇa*, as *śūdra*, as *kṣatriya*, like that.

*sa guṇān samatīyaitān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate
mām ca vyabhicariṇi bhakti-yogena yaḥ sevate*

A devotee, because he is working as a śūdra, he is not a śūdra; neither he is a brāhmaṇa. He is already in the spiritual platform. But for management we have to do that. One can do the śūdra's work nicely—let him be engaged in that way. Why he should imitate?

Mahāṁsa: **Does he get second initiation?**

Prabhupāda: **EVERYTHING HE WILL GET.**

Mahāṁsa: He gets.

Prabhupāda: **Yes. Second initiation means recognized: "Now he has become fully competent Vaiṣṇava."** Just like master is teaching the servant, "Now you give massage in this way, this way." But that does not mean he has become servant.

Pañcadraviḍa: What if the śūdra..., person working as śūdra says, "I can do so much. I can..."

Prabhupāda: **First of all, try to understand. A devotee is neither brāhmaṇa nor śūdra. He may act like a śūdra, but he is not śūdra. He may act like a brāhmaṇa; he is not brāhmaṇa.** He is Vaiṣṇava. Just like gopīs. The gopīs, they are village cowherds women. They are, according to social construction, they are not very high class. They did not belong to the brāhmaṇa class. But their worship, method of worship, has been taken the highest. *Ramyā kācid upāsanā vraja-vadhū-vargeṇa*. They were village girls, and practically their character was also not good, because at dead of night they are going to Kṛṣṇa. But why they have been taken as the most..., topmost devotee of Kṛṣṇa? Because the love was so, I mean, high class. It is the test, how much one has learned to love Kṛṣṇa. That is wanted. Apparently he may appear as a brāhmaṇa, a śūdra or vaiśya. It doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. The only business is to see: *sa vai puṁsām paro dharmo yato bhaktir adho...*

Pañcadraviḍa: What if the person cannot chant sixteen rounds a day? He says, "I can't..."

Prabhupāda: Then he is not even a human being. He is a rascal, that's all. He is not a human being. What to consider of talking about...? Don't talk about him if he cannot chant sixteen rounds. He is not even a human. He's an animal. (Morning Walk April 20, 1974, Hyderabad)

So, the conclusion is that your idea that *sādhakas* can be called *śūdras* and *antyajas* in BS 1.42-43 by dint of their occupation is grievous *apasiddhānta*. "Always remember that." –Śrīla Prabhupāda.

(c) sādhakas as both brāhmaṇas and outcastes

So who are actually the *śūdras* and *antyajas* forbidden by Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā to initiate in 1.42-43? As was shown above:

- if they are already *sādhakas*, as you seem to maintain to exempt them from the ban in BS 1.42-44 of being *dikṣā-gurus* unless on the level of *bhava*, then, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda and *śāstra*, they are already above *brāhmaṇas* — and therefore referring to them as *sūdras* and *antyajas* by dint of their qualities and work is *apasiddhānta* and *Vaiṣṇava-aparadha*;
- conversely, if they are actually *sūdras* and *antyajas* by their qualities and work and thus cannot initiate unless on the level of *bhāva* per BS 1.42-44, they cannot possibly be *sādhakas*.

You obviously understand that you cannot have it both ways. To extricate yourselves from this philosophical quagmire, in VNP 60-61 you cite Śrīla Prabhupāda’s conversation of February 14, 1977 in which he apparently states that devotees need to be designated in terms of *varṇāśrama* roles “because Vaiṣṇava is not so easy.”⁷⁷

However — speaking of “indirect workarounds and interpretations” — you again stop tellingly short of quoting Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement in its entirety, probably because otherwise it won’t fit your interpretational paradigm. Here is how Śrīla Prabhupāda continues to explain who needs *varṇāśrama* and why in the very next sentences:

Hari-śauri: So the *varṇāśrama* system is like for the *kaniṣṭhas*, *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*.

Prabhupāda: *Kaniṣṭha*?

Hari-śauri: When one is only on the platform of neophyte.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Yes. *Kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*, yes.

Hari-śauri: *varṇāśrama* system is beneficial.

Prabhupāda: ***Kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* means he must be a *brāhmaṇa*.** That is *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*.

Hari-śauri: He must be at least a *brāhmaṇa*.

Prabhupāda: **The spiritual life, *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* means he must be a qualified *brāhmaṇa*. That is *kaniṣṭha*. What is esteemed as very high position in the material world, *brāhmaṇa*, that is *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*.**

*arcāyām eva haraye yaḥ pūjām śraddhayehate
na tad-bhakteṣu cānyeṣu sa bhaktaḥ prākṛtaḥ smṛtaḥ*

[SB 11.2.47]

The *brāhmaṇa* means from the material stage gradually he is elevated to the spiritual stage. **And below the *brāhmaṇa* there is no question of *Vaiṣṇava*.**

⁷⁷ Prabhupada: Yes. *Vaiṣṇava* is not so easy. The *varṇāśrama-dharma* should be established to become a *Vaiṣṇava*. It is not so easy to become *Vaiṣṇava*.

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

Prabhupada: Yes. Therefore this should be made. *Vaiṣṇava*, to become *Vaiṣṇava*, is not so easy. If *Vaiṣṇava*, to become *Vaiṣṇava* is so easy, why so many fall down, fall down? It is not easy. The *sannyasa* is for the highest qualified *brāhmaṇa*. And simply by dressing like a *Vaiṣṇava*, that is... Fall down. (Room Conversation *varṇāśrama* System Must Be Introduced – February 14, 1977, Mayapur)

In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda again aligns the topmost position in *varṇāśrama*, or *brāhmaṇa*, with the lowest level of spiritual life, *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*. Any other varnas **as an essential designation** are only for those below the level of *kaniṣṭha* and *sādhaka*.

And as if to preempt possible speculations as to how an aspiring devotee attains the level of *brāhmaṇa* to qualify as a *kaniṣṭha*, Śrīla Prabhupāda continues:

Hari-śauri: No question of...?

Prabhupāda: Vaiṣṇavīsm.

*śṛṇvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ
hṛdy antaḥ-stho hy abhadrāṇi vidhunoti suhṛt satām*

[SB 1.2.17]

By becoming a *brāhmaṇa*, hearing, hearing, hearing... **Or by hearing, hearing, hearing, he becomes a brāhmaṇa.** The other qualities—*śūdra* quality, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya*—means finished. So then next stage is *śṛṇvatām sva-kathāḥ kṛṣṇaḥ puṇya-śravaṇa-kīrtanaḥ*, *hṛdy antaḥ*... *Naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu*. By this process, hearing... Without becoming a *brāhmaṇa*, nobody is interested to hear. Then, by hearing, *naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu*. Then *abhadrā*, means the base qualities, means ignorance and passion. These are the base qualities. So *naṣṭa-prāyeṣv abhadreṣu*. When these base qualities are finished almost, not complete, *nityam bhāgavata-sevayā*, by hearing from *Bhāgavata* or by serving the spiritual master and *Kṛṣṇa* consciousness movement, (...) then he becomes fixed up in devotional... This devotional service is the first-grade quality of *sattva-guṇa*.

Again, while you are trying to present your portrayal of *sādhakas* as *śūdras* and *antyajas* to be fully in line with Śrīla Prabhupāda, he himself proves you wrong in the same statement by stressing that the only people who can be legitimately called *śūdras* and even *brāhmaṇas* in the *varṇāśrama* sense of the term are those below the level of *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī* — that is, not (yet) *sādhakas*.

(d) misquoting Śrīla Prabhupāda's words

In another attempt to try and provide credence for your unique interpretation of *antyajas* as “*sādhakas* with qualities of the outcastes”, you quote one sentence from Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport on CC Madhya 8.128, in which he writes:

“Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu's cult must be preached all over the world. This does not mean that people should take to His teachings and remain *śūdras* or *caṇḍālas*.”

However, you again leave out the purpose and context of this statement, made absolutely clear right in the next sentence:

“As soon as one is trained as a pure Vaiṣṇava, he must be accepted as a bona fide *brāhmaṇa*. **This is the essence of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instructions in this verse.**”

Here Śrīla Prabhupāda directly refutes your specious conclusion by saying that:

1) taking to Lord Caitanya's teachings (which starts with being trained by a pure Vaiṣṇava and hearing from him — see above), and

2) remaining *caṇḍālas*

are mutually exclusive. Yet, you prefer to misconstrue this clear, unequivocal and consistent statement, repeated and explained by Śrīla Prabhupāda dozens of times, as supporting your unique interpretation that a *sādhaka* can and should be called a *caṇḍāla*.

Incidentally, Śrīla Prabhupāda offers his own explanation of a possible cause for such vacillation between considering devotees *sādhakas* and *śūdras* at the same time:

“Prakṛta-bhakta means executing devotional service under the instruction of spiritual master and the regulative principles of śāstra, but he's still on the platform of material understanding. That is called prakṛta-bhakta. **A prakṛta-bhakta cannot understand how another bhakta is transcendental.** A prakṛta-bhakta cannot understand that Vṛndāvana is always transcendental. Therefore Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has discussed this point in his Tattva-sandarbhā, that we cannot accept any manufactured ideas.” (Lecture on the Nectar of Devotion — November 1, 1972, Vṛndavana)

Similarly, Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura aptly describes this blunder of categorizing Vaiṣṇavas by their external qualities with the analogy of a “golden stone pot.” He says in particular:

“Either one should be considered as `Vaiṣṇava', or as brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, or śūdra. Either one should call it a 'golden pot', or a 'stone pot.' ... Similarly, it would be wrong terminology to ascribe the quality of a *śūdra* to a *Vaiṣṇava*.”⁷⁸

⁷⁸ The Golden Stone Pot: A wealthy landlord called upon a goldsmith in his village and requested him while giving him a lump of pure gold, You are to make a nice pot for my milk with this gold. You should not make it in any way impure by mixing any kind of alloy in it. The goldsmith agreed, Yes sir, and went away with the gold-lump.

Thus getting a lump of pure gold in his possession, the goldsmith was tempted to steal it. However, he apprehended that he would be punished by the landlord if he cheated him entirely, so he made up a plan to prepare a stone-pot and gold-plate it so that he would not be accused of stealing the gold.

When the goldsmith took the gold-plated stone pot to the landlord, the landlord asked him in great astonishment, What is this thing you have brought? The goldsmith replied, O sir! This is a golden pot. I have made it with hard labour. The landlord said, Are you joking? This is a stone pot! The goldsmith told him, O sir, this is a 'golden' stone pot.

PURPORT: Those who consider casteism among the Vaiṣṇavas, classifying them as brāhmaṇa-Vaiṣṇavas, ksatriya-Vaiṣṇavas, vaiśya-Vaiṣṇavas, śūdra-Vaiṣṇavas, or as caṇḍāla-Vaiṣṇavas, simply indulge in a speculative inference as "golden" stone pot. **Either one should be considered as `Vaiṣṇava', or as brāhmaṇa, kṣatriya, vaiśya, or śūdra.** Either one should call it a 'golden pot', or a 'stone pot.' Mango-cake (amsatva) must be prepared from mango itself, and no one can call something 'mango cake' if it is made of 'jackfruit' (knathaler amsatva). Similarly, it would be wrong terminology to ascribe the quality of a śūdra to a Vaiṣṇava. Whenever one is accepted to be a `Vaiṣṇava', then it is confirmed that he does not belong to any mundane social classification such as brāhmaṇa, ksatriya, vaiśya, śūdra or low-born caṇḍāla and the like, nor even Hindu or non-Hindu. Any terminology such as `Hindu-Vaiṣṇava' or `Yavana-Vaiṣṇava' is utterly absurd and also offensive.” (Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, Upakhane Upadesa)

(e) *pseudo-gurus of śūdra sādhakas*

Another grave repercussion of your attempt to pigeonhole *sādhakas* as *śūdras* in BS 1.42-43, either on the basis of their qualities (*guṇa*) or work (*karma*), and apply your analysis to ISKCON is that by doing so you automatically disqualify their spiritual masters.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in CC Madhya 23.105 purp.:

“According to *smārta-brāhmaṇas*, a person not born in a *brāhmaṇa* family could not be elevated to the position of a *brāhmaṇa*. Sanātana Gosvāmī, however, says in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (2.12) that **anyone can be elevated to the position of a *brāhmaṇa* by the process of initiation.**

*yathā kāñcanatām yāti kāmśyam rasa-vidhānataḥ
tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām*

”As bell metal is turned to gold when mixed with mercury in an alchemical process, so one who is properly trained and initiated by a bona fide spiritual master **immediately becomes a *brāhmaṇa*.**” There is a difference between the *smārta* process and the *gosvāmī* process. According to the *smārta* process, one cannot be accepted as a *brāhmaṇa* unless he is born in a *brāhmaṇa* family. According to the *gosvāmī* process, the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa and the Nārada Pañcarātra, **anyone can be a *brāhmaṇa* if he is properly initiated by a bona fide spiritual master.**” (Madhya 23.105 purp.)

He further explains in CC Madhya 10.139 purp.:

“In the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī states that one who is initiated by a bona fide spiritual master immediately becomes a *brāhmaṇa*. **A pseudo spiritual master cannot transform a person into a *brāhmaṇa*, but an authorized spiritual master can do so.** This is the verdict of *śāstra*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and all the Gosvāmīs.” (Madhya 10.139 purp.)

In other words, labeling an initiated devotee as a non-*brāhmaṇa*, whether because of occupation, or qualities, or gender, by extension necessarily disqualifies his or her *dīkṣā-guru* as “a pseudo spiritual master” who “cannot transform” the disciple into a *brāhmaṇa* — unlike “an authorized spiritual master” who can. Alternatively, the *dīkṣā-guru* himself may not have full faith in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words that “one who is initiated by a bona fide spiritual master immediately becomes a *brāhmaṇa*” — which, in this case, clearly is an ever more grievous disqualification.

(f) *outcastes as śikṣā-gurus but not dīkṣā-gurus*

But your creativity doesn’t stop there:

Trying to coerce Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā into compliance with your interpretational revelations, you offer yet another unique treatment of the words “*bodhayeyur hitāhitam*” in BS 1.43, meaning “[women, śūdras and others]” can give ethical and moral instructions”, as “women, *śūdras* and *antyajas* can be śikṣā-gurus, but not dīkṣā-gurus”:

“Śrīla Prabhupāda stated that Sunīti was Dhruva’s *śikṣā-guru* but could not become his *dīkṣā-guru* due to her being a woman (SB 4.12.32, purport). Exactly the same is stated in the Nārada Pāñcarātra [BS 1.43]:

*striyaḥ śūdrayaś caiva bodhayeyur hitāhitam
yathārham mānanīyāś ca nārhanty ācāryatām kvacit*

Women, *śūdras*, etc. can give ethical and moral instructions and are also worthy of respect as per their qualifications and conditions but are not entitled to get the position of *ācārya*.” (VNP 12-13)

First, as has already become a pattern, you again preferred to disregard the commentary on this verse by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra as not fitting your own *ṭīkā*. He explains that the kind of instructions that “women, *śūdras* and *antyajas*” are eligible to give to others are ‘*apradhāna-hitāhita-upadeśa*’, literally “secondary, non-essential instruction on the good and bad.” He also warns that “women, *śūdras* and *antyajas*” can be appropriately respected but that their food remnants etc. should be avoided (*ucchiṣṭāśanādi-varjaṁ mānanīyāḥ*) — so much for them being *śikṣā-gurus*.

However, giving worldly trivial moral or ethical instructions is not exactly what qualifies one for being a *śikṣā-guru* in the Vaiṣṇava sense. Something else does:

“There are two kinds of instructing spiritual masters. One is the liberated person fully absorbed in meditation in devotional service, and **the other is he who invokes the disciple's spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions.** Thus, the instructions in the science of devotion are differentiated in terms of the objective and subjective ways of understanding. The *ācārya* in the true sense of the term, who is authorized to deliver Kṛṣṇa, enriches the disciple with full spiritual knowledge and thus awakens him to the activities of devotional service.” (CC Adi 1.47 purp.)

This is what Sunīti did as she invoked Dhruva’s “spiritual consciousness by means of relevant instructions”. Her instructions to him were not “secondary, non-essential instruction on the good and bad,” as is the scope of instructions permitted to be given by women and *śūdras* in BS 1.43.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then warns in the same purport:

“There is no difference between the shelter-giving Supreme Lord and the initiating and instructing spiritual masters. **If one foolishly discriminates between them, he commits an offense in the discharge of devotional service.**” (CC Adi 1.47 purp.)

and emphasizes earlier on in CC Adi 1.34 purp.:

“The initiating and instructing spiritual masters are equal and identical manifestations of Kṛṣṇa, although they have different dealings. Their function is to guide the conditioned souls back home, back to Godhead.”

So, even on this count your attempt to present women, *śūdras* and *antyajas* of BS 1.42-43 as *śikṣā-gurus* who are unqualified to be *dīkṣā-gurus* because of their gender, qualities, or work is again grounded in nothing except, in Jīva Gosvāmī’s words, *sva-kapola-kalpitatvam*⁷⁹ — your sheer imagination.

Thus, if you wanted to present this verse as a *pramāṇa* for Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement in SB 4.12.32 purp. about Sunīti being able to be a *śikṣā-guru* and not a *dīkṣā-guru*, you will need to find another one.

Second, if you take women, *śūdras* and *antyajas* in BS 1.42-43 as *sādhakas* qualified to be *śikṣā-gurus*, then by denying that they can also be *dīkṣā-gurus* you directly contradict the preceding statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda from the same purport on CC Madhya 8.128^[SEP]:

“If one becomes a guru, he is automatically a *brāhmaṇa*. Sometimes a caste guru says that yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vetta, sei guru haya means that one who is not a *brāhmaṇa* may become a *śikṣā-guru* or a *varṇa-pradarsaka-guru* but not an initiator guru. According to such caste gurus, birth and family ties are considered foremost. However, the hereditary consideration is not acceptable to Vaiṣṇavas. **The word guru is equally applicable to the varṇa-pradarsaka-guru, śikṣā-guru and dīkṣā-guru. Unless we accept the principle enunciated by Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement cannot spread all over the world.**”

Usually the anti-VDG party tries to dismiss these words by Śrīla Prabhupāda, opining that the verse itself speaks exclusively of males. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda often elucidated on the meaning of the verse by explicitly including Vaiṣṇavīs in its list of those who are to be considered gurus if sufficiently conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa consciousness:

“Women in our movement can also preach very nicely. **Actually male and female bodies, these are just outward designations. Lord Caitanya said that whether one is brāhmaṇa or whatever he may be if he knows the science of Kṛṣṇa then he is to be accepted as guru.** So one who gives class, he must read and study regularly and study the purport and realize it. Don’t add anything or concoct anything, then he can preach very nicely. **The qualification for leading class is how much one understands about Kṛṣṇa and surrendering to the process. Not whether one is male or female.** Of course women, generally speaking are less intelligent, better she has heard nicely then she will speak nicely.” (Letter to Malati — Bombay 25 December, 1974)

“Yes. Jāhnavā devī was—Nityānanda’s wife. She became. If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? But, not so many. **Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection... Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya [Cc Madhya 8.128].** The

⁷⁹ Sarva-saṁvādinī on Tattva-sandarbha, 4

qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa. Then he or she can become guru. Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei guru haya. [break] In our material world, is it any prohibition that woman cannot become professor? If she is qualified, she can become professor. What is the wrong there? She must be qualified. That is the position. So similarly, if the woman understands Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly, she can become guru.” (Interview with Professors O’Connel, Motilal and Shivaram — June 18, 1976, Toronto)

“Now if you can induce all the women of Los Angeles to place an altar in their homes and help their husbands have peaceful, happy home life in Krishna Consciousness, that will be very great service for you. The actual system is that the husband is Spiritual Master to his wife, but if the wife can bring her husband into practicing this process, then it is all right that the husband accepts wife as Spiritual Master. **Caitanya Mahāprabhu has said that anyone who knows the science of Krishna, that person should be accepted as Spiritual Master, regardless of any material so-called qualifications; such as rich or poor, man or woman, or brāhmaṇa or śūdra.**” (Letter to Silavati — New Vrindaban 14 June, 1969)

“The best thing is if you come and live with us for some time and learn thoroughly the Kṛṣṇa science. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu said anyone can become a guru in the matter of teaching about Kṛṣṇa, **provided he or she thoroughly learns the Kṛṣṇa science.**” (Letter to Kay Johnson, 26 January, 1977)

And third, if you decide not to take them as *sādhakas*, then you state that non-devotees can somehow act as *śikṣā-gurus*.

Either way, all three conclusions are your unique contributions to Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*.

However, Śrīla Prabhupāda offers his own — practical and realized — solution for this apparent riddle as to what is exactly meant by “*śūdras*” who are somehow “*sādhakas*”;

“Just like Jhaḍu Ṭhākura. We are discussing this in Caitanya-caritāmṛta. He belonged to the caste bhuṇi-mālī. Bhuṇi-mālī means the sweeper, baṅgi. He became a great Vaiṣṇava. And Kālidāsa, one of the relative, uncle, of Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī, he was also very great Vaiṣṇava, mahā-bhāgavata. His business was to eat the remnants of foodstuff left by Vaiṣṇava. **He did not care whether he's a brāhmaṇa-Vaiṣṇava or śūdra-Vaiṣṇava. Vaiṣṇava is not śūdra. But a Vaiṣṇava coming from śūdra family, sometimes they are called śūdra-Vaiṣṇava. Just like Haridāsa Ṭhākura, he's sometimes called Yavana-Haridāsa.** He's not yavana. He is hundred times, thousand, million times better than brāhmaṇa. But because he is born in a Muhammadan family, he was, another name... The Vaiṣṇava never says, "Yavana-Haridāsa." He is "Nāmācārya Haridāsa." Vaiṣṇava... Why he should be yavana? Vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhiḥ [Padma Purāṇa]. Nobody should consider a Vaiṣṇava belonging to this caste, that caste. No. Just like here. The Deity is there. Everyone knows that Deity is made of brass metal. But that is not metal. Because we cannot see Kṛṣṇa in any other way at present, therefore Kṛṣṇa has appeared as made of metal. But He is not metal. Or even if He is metal, still He's Kṛṣṇa,

because everything is Kṛṣṇa. So arcye viṣṇau śilā-dhīr guruṣu nara-matir vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhiḥ. We should not consider like that..” (Lecture on SB 1.8.39 — Mayapur, October 19, 1974)

In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that designating a Vaiṣṇava as a *śūdra* or even as a *brāhmaṇa* was sometimes done in the traditional Vedic setting as a matter of social convention. There are numerous examples of this in Caitanya-līlā, with Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Sanātana Gosvāmī, although *suddha-bhaktas*, acting in compliance with social and cultural conventions of the time in terms of their birth and former occupation:

*hīna-jāti janma mora nindya-kalevara
hīna-karme rata muñi adhama pāmara*

“[Haridāsa Ṭhākura replied:] ‘I was born in an inferior family, and my body is most abominable. I always engage in low work. Therefore, I am the lowest, most condemned of men’.” (CC Antya 11.27)

— an attitude that was respected even by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

In fact, Kṛṣṇādāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī himself refers to some Vaiṣṇavas as *śūdra-vaiṣṇavas* in terms of their birth in CC Antya 16.13:

*śūdra-vaiṣṇavera ghare yāya bheṭa lañā
ei-mata tāhṛa ucchiṣṭa khāya lukāñā*

He would also take gifts to the homes of Vaiṣṇavas born in *śūdra* families. Then he would hide and in this manner eat the remnants of food they threw away.

Or do you suggest that Kṛṣṇādāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī was referring to those Vaiṣṇavas as *śūdras* in terms of their qualities and work?

However, while respecting the social customs, Lord Caitanya emphasized in His instructions to Sanātana Gosvāmī in CC Antya 4.66-67:

*nīca-jāti nahe kṛṣṇa-bhajane ayogyā
sat-kula-vipra nahe bhajanera yogyā (66)*

”A person born in a low family is not unfit for discharging devotional service to Lord Kṛṣṇa, nor is one fit for devotional service simply because he is born in an aristocratic family of brāhmaṇas.

*yei bhaje sei baḍa, abhakta—hīna, chāra
kṛṣṇa-bhajane nāhi jāti-kulādi-vicāra (67)*

”Anyone who takes to devotional service is exalted, whereas a nondevotee is always condemned and abominable. Therefore in the discharge of devotional service to the Lord, there is no consideration of the status of one’s family.”

Please note the last line, in which Lord Caitanya stresses *kṛṣṇa-bhajane nāhi jāti-kulādi-vicāra* — “in the discharge of devotional service to the Lord, there is no consideration of the status of one’s family” in the context of our earlier discussion of *hīna-kula-jāti*, to which, according to Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā and its commentator, women belong along with *sūdras* and untouchables.

Śrīla Prabhupāda further corroborates this conclusion in the following statement about Hari-bhakti-vilāsa:

“In the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa it is stated that if one bona fide spiritual master is born in a brāhmaṇa family and another qualified spiritual master is born in a śūdra family, one should accept the one who is born in a brāhmaṇa family.⁸⁰ **This statement serves as a social compromise, but it has nothing to do with spiritual understanding. This injunction is applicable only for those who consider social status more important than spiritual status. It is not for people who are spiritually serious. A serious person would accept Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instruction that anyone conversant with the science of Kṛṣṇa must be accepted as the spiritual master, regardless of his social position.** There is an injunction in the Padma Purana which states that though a highly elevated, spiritually advanced devotee of the Lord may have been born in a family of dog-eaters, he can be a spiritual master, but that a highly elevated person born in a brāhmaṇa family cannot be a spiritual master unless he is a devotee of the Lord. A person born in a brāhmaṇa family may be conversant with all of the rituals of the Vedic scriptures, but if he is not a pure devotee he cannot be a spiritual master. In all śāstras the chief qualification of a bona fide spiritual master is that he be conversant in the science of Kṛṣṇa.” (TLC 31)

Śrīla Prabhupāda also says about Hari-bhakti-vilāsa:

“Sanātana Gosvāmī wrote his Vaiṣṇava smṛti, Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, **which was specifically meant for India.** In those days, India was more or less following the principle of *smārta-vidhi*. Śrīla

⁸⁰ Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, 1.47-50:

(47) In the conversation between the Lord and Nārada given in the Nārada-Pāñcarātra, the Lord says, “A brāhmaṇa who knows all kālas [as described in the Pāñcarātra literature] should bestow kindness [in the form of initiation etc.] upon everyone in the world. O best among the twice-born [Nārada], in the absence of such a brāhmaṇa, [a kṣatriya] who is peaceful in disposition; who is imbued with thoughts of the Lord;

(48) who is pure in consciousness; who knows all the rites and rituals of initiation; who knows scriptures; who is determined to engage in saintly activities; who is completely equipped with three siddhis [of worshipping the mantra, the guru and the Deity] is to be appointed for the role of an ācārya.

(49) Such a kṣatriya is capable of bestowing mantras upon kṣatriyas, vaiśyas and sūdras. In the absence of such a kṣatriya guru, a vaiśya with similar characteristics should be the guru. By such a vaiśya guru, initiation should be bestowed upon two varṇas [vaiśyas and sūdra].

(50) O broad-minded Narada, [in the absence of even a vaiśya] a śūdra can get initiated and become a guru by the grace of another śūdra belonging to the same caste.”

Sanātana Gosvāmī had to keep pace with this, and his Hari-bhakti-vilāsa was compiled with this in mind. (Madhya 23.105 purp.)

and

“*Smārta-panḍita*. Very serious about performing ceremonial rituals, they are called *smārtas*. This Hari-bhakti-vilāsa also, *Vaiṣṇava-smṛti*, that is also imitation of *smārta*-ism. It is called *smṛti*. **So at least in Europe and America, they will never be able to take all these things. The things should be made shortcut**; at the same time, they should be successful. So that is chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa *mahā-mantra*, depending on...” (Room conversation — July 16, 1973, London)

In other words, while extensively quoting Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, Śrīla Prabhupāda as the empowered *ācārya* also exercised his exclusive prerogative by distilling essential injunctions of the *śāstra* and relegating the rest to “shortcut” that is just “meant for India” as a “social compromise” that “has nothing to do with spiritual understanding” and is “not for people who are spiritually serious”.

This seems to be a general oversight on your part:

While trying in earnest to reinterpret and transpose the injunctions of Nārada-pāñcarātra into ISKCON you forget two important factors:

(1) although spiritual, these injunctions were given for a very specific social and cultural context in which devotees were often treated in terms of their *varṇāśrama* roles and themselves complied with such treatment; and

(2) although well-meaning, you are obviously not the *ācāryas* empowered to transpose Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā or any other authoritative *śāstra* as a new norm into ISKCON’s practice by isolating and supporting the principles and adjusting details. For who such an empowered *ācārya* is, see above.

(g) emergency that is not yet over

Another tool that you resort to in explaining away clear instructions by Śrīla Prabhupāda as conflicting, forced and circumstantial is to proclaim that he was acting in an emergency situation that is no longer, and therefore things now need to be reverted back to Vedic norms. You write in VNP 54-55:

“Thus, by seeing the words “one cannot suddenly change a community’s social customs” in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s famous purport to Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta, Adi-līlā, 7.31–32, in which he defended his adjustment to allow women to preach alongside of men, it can be seen that it was a case of *asāmarthya* on the part of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Western disciples. Being from a society that encourages free mixing of the sexes, they were not immediately capable of strictly following Vedic rules prescribed by our *ācāryas* for keeping men and women strictly separate. But we also see that Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to revert back to the Vedic norm as soon as possible. (...) So, we can see from these examples that when there is some *asāmarthya*, or incapability, in the matter of following rules that must be followed (or degradation happens), then some adjustment is made. **But once**

there is no longer an irregular or emergency situation that requires the adjustment, then the norm specified in the śāstras must be resumed.”

True, Śrīla Prabhupāda did make a number of adjustments that only an *ācārya* of his caliber can make, and did defend those adjustments in the face of opposition from India. However, the reasons he gave for defending those adjustments in CC Adi 7.31-32 purp. were not a compromise with *asāmarthya*, or incapability of his Western disciples to follow Vedic standards, as you surmise. Let us look at the complete purport, in which Śrīla Prabhupada writes:

“Here is an important point. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted to invent a way to capture the Māyāvādīs and others who did not take interest in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. This is the symptom of an *ācārya*. An *ācārya* who comes for the service of the Lord cannot be expected to conform to a stereotype, for he must find the ways and means by which Kṛṣṇa consciousness may be spread. Sometimes jealous persons criticize the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement because it engages equally both boys and girls in distributing love of Godhead. Not knowing that boys and girls in countries like Europe and America mix very freely, these fools and rascals criticize the boys and girls in Kṛṣṇa consciousness for intermingling. But these rascals should consider that one cannot suddenly change a community’s social customs. However, since both the boys and the girls are being trained to become preachers, those girls are not ordinary girls but are as good as their brothers who are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, to engage both boys and girls in fully transcendental activities is a policy intended to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. These jealous fools who criticize the intermingling of boys and girls will simply have to be satisfied with their own foolishness because they cannot think of how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness by adopting ways and means that are favorable for this purpose. Their stereotyped methods will never help spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Therefore, what we are doing is perfect by the grace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, for it is He who proposed to invent a way to capture those who strayed from Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that:

1. he is an empowered *ācārya* not confined by stereotypes in his spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness;
2. his adjustments are meant to facilitate the spread of Kṛṣṇa consciousness;
3. his engagement of both genders in this mission is not a compromise due to “*asāmarthya*, or incapability of his Western disciples”, but “a policy intended to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement” by engaging “both boys and girls in fully transcendental activities” of “distributing love of Godhead”;
4. engaged in this “transcendental activity”, “those girls are not ordinary girls but are as good as their brothers who are preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness”;
5. this arrangement is “perfect by the grace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu”;
6. on the other hand, those who disagree with this perfect and transcendental policy or criticize it are “jealous fools” who “will simply have to be satisfied with their own foolishness because they cannot think of how to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness by adopting ways and means that are favorable for this purpose”, and
7. “Their stereotyped methods will never help spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Now, as far as the emergency situation, which you all but declare to be over:

“But once there is no longer an irregular or emergency situation that requires the adjustment, then the norm specified in the *śāstras* must be resumed.”

However, would you agree that the emergency situation can be lifted only by the empowered *ācārya* himself who declared it in the first place — or, at the very least, strictly according to the criteria he set? Would you agree that anyone’s whimsical attempt to lift it prematurely would in itself constitute *asāmarthya*, or incapability?

Here is how Śrīla Prabhupāda determines the emergency and when it can be lifted in his translation of and purport on SB 7.11.17:

*jaghanyo nottamāṁ vṛttim anāpadi bhajen naraḥ
rte rājanyam āpatsu sarveṣāṁ api sarvaśaḥ*

Except in a time of emergency, lower persons should not accept the occupational duties of those who are higher. When there is such an emergency, of course, everyone but the kṣatriya may accept the means of livelihood of others.

Purport: The occupational duty of a *brāhmaṇa* should not be accepted by persons in lower social orders, especially *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*. For example, an occupational duty of the *brāhmaṇa* is to teach Vedic knowledge, but unless there is an emergency, this professional duty should not be accepted by the *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* or *śūdras*. Even a *kṣatriya* cannot accept the duties of a *brāhmaṇa* unless there is an emergency, and then even if he does so he should not accept charity from anyone else. Sometimes *brāhmaṇas* protest against our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement for creating *brāhmaṇas* from Europeans, or, in other words, from *mlecchas* and *yavanas*. This movement, however, is here supported in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. At the present moment, society is in a chaotic condition, and everyone has given up the cultivation of spiritual life, which is especially meant for the *brāhmaṇas*. **Because spiritual culture has been stopped all over the world, there is now an emergency**, and therefore it is now time to train those who are considered lower and condemned, so that they may become *brāhmaṇas* and take up the work of spiritual progress. **The spiritual progress of human society has been stopped, and this should be considered an emergency.** Here is solid support from Nārada Muni of the movement known as Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

In other words, Śrīla Prabhupāda defines the emergency he declared in terms of the lamentable state of spiritual culture **globally**, and not in one temple or even one country. He then explains that the reason for training “those who are considered lower and condemned” as *brāhmaṇas* is to engage them in restoring this spiritual culture globally — which means we will still live in an emergency situation unless and until this mission of restoring spiritual culture all over the world is accomplished.

So your call for lifting the emergency is, no doubt, well-meaning but quite premature and *asāmartha*, incapable.

(4) Women as *brāhmaṇas* and non-*brāhmaṇas*

And lastly, your demand that Vaiṣṇavī disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda be at least on the level of *bhāva* to initiate is nowhere to be found in his own teachings.

On the contrary — as much as you would want to avoid admitting it, Śrīla Prabhupāda did say, time and again, that his spiritual sons and daughters, while having different social roles, are equal spiritually, and the same gauge of spiritual accomplishment is applicable to both genders:

Prabhupada: **There is no distinction between man and woman.** That is clearly said in the Bhagavad-gītā. *Mam hi partha vyapasritya ye 'pi syuh papa-yonayah striyo sūdras tatha vaiśyah* [Bg. 9.32]. The first is mentioned, striya. *Striyah sūdras tatha vaiśyah*. These classes are understood to be less intelligent -- woman, *sūdra* and the *vaiśyas*. But Kṛṣṇa says, "No, even for them it is open." **Because in the spiritual platform there is no such distinction, man, woman, or black, white, or big or small.** No. Everyone is spirit soul. *Panditah sama-darsinah* [Bg. 5.18]. *Vidya-vinaya-sampanne brahmane gavi hastini suni caiva sva-pake ca panditah* [Bg. 5.18]. One who is actually learned, he is *sama-darsinah*. He does not make any distinction. **But so far our material body is concerned, there must be some distinction for keeping the society in order.** (Interview with Professors O'Connell, Motilal and Shivaram -- June 18, 1976, Toronto)

(a) conflating Vedic and Pāñcarātric norms

You, on the other hand, seem to conflate Vedic norms, which base considerations of one's social status and spiritual qualification almost exclusively on one's innate material nature, or *sva-bhava*, with *Pāñcarātrika* norms, which allow even those unqualified per Vedic norms, such as women, *sūdras* and outcastes, to engage in purely brahminical activities.

For instance, you write:

“In the case of women, although they may have a particular *guṇa*, or quality, the *śāstras* do not prescribe any duty to women based on that quality or *guṇa*.... The only duty for women prescribed in the *śāstra* (irrespective *guṇa*) is to serve and follow their husbands.” (VNP 36)

As you are definitely aware, according to Vedic norms, women are not allowed to worship *śālagrāma-śilā* — an activity reserved exclusively for *brāhmaṇas*. But, according to *Pāñcarātric* norms, both women and *sūdras* (which covers pretty much everybody now, per *kalau sūdra-sambhavāḥ*) are allowed to worship *śālagrāma-śilās* if they are properly initiated:

*striyo vā yadi vā sūdra brāhmaṇaḥ kṣatriyādayaḥ
pūjayitvā śilā-cakraṁ labhante śāśvataṁ padam*

"Worship of śālagrāma-śilā can be done by women, śūdras, brāhmaṇas, kṣatriyas, etc. and they can all achieve the eternal abode of Lord Kṛṣṇa perfectly." (Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 5.452)

On the one hand, you say: "the śāstras do not prescribe any duty to women based on [their] quality or *guna*" (VNP 36). On the other, the śāstra prescribes an exclusively brahminical activity for women. So, what do the śāstras base their recommendation on for women to worship śālagrāma as a means of attaining Lord Kṛṣṇa's abode? On their gender? If not, what else qualifies them for this exclusively brahminical activity if not their innate or acquired brahminical quality?

You belabor that Vaiṣṇavīs' external gender does not change with initiation as your main argument against regarding them as *brāhmaṇas* (*brāhmaṇīs*) who are eligible, per BS 1.38-41, to initiate. In effect, you claim that, for Vaiṣṇavīs, gender designation supersedes spiritual qualification until the level of *bhāva*.

However, in the very next statement from Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (5.453-55) Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī addresses precisely this train of thought — and proves it wrong:

*ato niṣedhakaṁ yad yad vacanaṁ śrūyate sphuṭam |
avaīṣṇava-param̐ tat tad vijñeyam̐ tattva-darśibhiḥ (453)*

yathā—

*brāhmaṇasyaiva pūjyo'ham̐ śucer apy aśucer api |
strī-śūdra-kara-saṁsparśo vajrād api suduḥsahaḥ (454)*

*praṇavoccāraṅārcaiva śālagrāma-śilārcanāt |
brāhmaṇī-gamanāc caiva śūdraś caṇḍālatām̐ iyāt (455)*

According to those who are knowers of the truth, the statements prohibiting the worship of the śālagrāma-śilā by śūdras and women that are found in the scriptures are applicable only to those who are not devotees of Lord Viṣṇu.

An example of such a prohibitory injunction is: "Whether pure or impure, only *brāhmaṇas* are qualified to worship Me. I feel the touch of a *śūdra* or a woman to be more painful than a thunderbolt. If a *śūdra* utters the sacred syllable om, worships the śālagrāma-śilā, or enjoys sex with a *brāhmaṇa* woman, he surely becomes a dog-eater."

Please note that these verses specifically refer to the śāstric prohibition — spoken, no less, by the Lord Himself — for women to worship śālagrāma-śilā. However, the prohibition is lifted when the women become Vaiṣṇavīs — without mandating that they change or otherwise transcend their gender.

In his extensive commentary on these verses Sanātana Gosvāmī proves that, included in the categories of people thus elevated to the platform of *brāhmaṇas* despite their inborn disqualification, are also untouchables (*antyajas*).⁸¹ He then quotes examples of Vaiṣṇavas not barred from reciting *Srimad-Bhagavatam* and other brahminical activities among Śrī Vaiṣṇavas of Eastern and Southern parts of India and concludes:

“Therefore injunctions (*vidhi*) and restrictions (*niṣedha*) [limiting one’s eligibility for brahminical activities] do not apply to [literally, do not exist for] devotees of the Lord, due to the provisions like ‘*devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām-pitṛṇām*’ [SB 11.5.41] etc. Moreover, the devotees are not considered to be at fault for giving up their ordinary duties, per ‘*tāvat-karmāṇi-kurvīta*’ [SB 11.20.9] and ‘*yadā yasyānugrḥṇāti bhagavān*’, etc. [SB 4.29.46].”⁸²

...which brings us to the next sentence in your pronouncement:

“The only duty for women prescribed in the *śāstra* (irrespective *guṇa*) is to serve and follow their husbands.” (VNP 36)

that again clashes with the same *śāstra* that states that women **do not even need to be married** to engage in Kṛṣṇa worship and to become even greater than ordinary *brāhmaṇas* in terms of their liberated status and liberating power:

*sabharṭṛkā vā vidhavā viṣṇu-bhaktiṁ karoti yā
samuddharati cātmānaṁ kulam ekottaraṁ śatam*

“Whether a woman is married or a widow, if she is engaged in devotional service of Lord Viṣṇu, she delivers one hundred generations of her family.” (Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 10.128)

[Similarly, in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.19.26 Śukadeva Gosvāmī concludes his description of the *puṁsavana* ritual by saying: *avīrā hata-kilbiṣāṁ gatim*, which Śrīla Prabhupāda translates as “If a woman who is *avīrā*—who has no husband or son—executes this ritualistic ceremony, she can be promoted to the spiritual world.”]

The same principle applies to chanting *brahma-gāyatrī*. Although there are attempts to challenge or even reverse his decision as forced or circumstantial, Śrīla Prabhupāda as an empowered *ācārya* gave *brahma-gāyatrī* to Vaiṣṇavīs as well — including unmarried Vaiṣṇavīs — recognizing them, regardless of their marital status, to be no less qualified (or no more unqualified) for this exclusively brahminical activity than their Western or non-*brāhmaṇa* Indian male counterparts.

⁸¹ from Sanātana Gosvāmī’s commentary on HBV 5.453-455: *yataḥ śūdreṣv antyajeṣv api madhye ye Vaiṣṇavas te śūdradayo na kilocyante* |

⁸² from Sanātana Gosvāmī’s commentary on HBV 5.453-455: *atrācāras ca—satām madhya-deśe’smin viśeṣato dakṣiṇa-deśe ca mahattamānām Śrī-Vaiṣṇavanām pramāṇam iti dik | evaṁ Śrī-bhāgavata-pāṭhādāv apy adhikāro Vaiṣṇavanām draṣṭavyaḥ | yato vidhi-niṣedhā bhagavad-bhaktānām na bhavantīti devarṣi-bhūtāpta-nṛṇām pitṛṇām ity ādi-vacanaḥ | tathā karma-parityāgādīnāpi na kaścid doṣo ghaṭata iti tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta [BhP 11.20.9] iti, yadā yasyānugrḥṇāti bhagavān ity ādi vacanaḥ ca vyaktam bodhitam evāsti |*

(b) silencing the ācāryas

As a general principle, the borderline between dependence upon and independence from Vedic rules and *varṇāśrama* in one's spiritual life is delineated by Lord Kṛṣṇa in SB 11.20.9 thus:

*tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvatā
mat-kathā-śravaṇādau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate*

"One should continue to perform the Vedic ritualistic activities until one actually becomes detached from material sense gratification and develops faith for hearing and chanting about Me."⁸³

or, in Śrīla Prabhupāda's translation in CC Madhya 9.268 and 22.61:

"As long as one is not satiated by fruitive activity and has not awakened his taste for devotional service by *śravaṇam kīrtanam viṣṇoḥ* [SB 7.5.23], one has to act according to the regulative principles of the Vedic injunctions."

Yet, you failed or deliberately avoided quoting this most essential demarcating verse when you wrote on March 18:

"Śrīla Prabhupāda says in BG 3.35, purport, that one should follow *varṇāśrama* duties unless liberated; and that there is difference in duties." (March 18)

And in your exegesis (VNP 47) you refer to this verse only in passing, and only in an attempt to give credibility to your insistence that ISKCON must follow your interpretation of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā in regard to initiations:

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

*śruti-smṛti mamaivājñe yas te ullaṅghya vartat
ājñā-cchedī mama dveṣī mad-bhakto 'pi na vaiṣṇavaḥ*

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

Let us take a closer look at your above statement:

⁸³ quoted in SB 11.3.45 purp.

1) SB 11.20.9

First, it is unclear who you are referring to by “almost all *ācāryas*”, who allegedly “quoted” this verse in their commentaries on SB 11.20.9. Of the thirteen available commentaries on SB 11.20.9 (including Sanātana Gosvāmī’s commentary on this verse in Hari-bhakti-vilāsa), the *śruti-smṛti mamaivājñe* verse is quoted only in three: in Jīva Gosvāmī’s Krama-sandarbha, in Viśvanātha Cakravartī’s Sārāthadarśinī and in Vaṁśīdhara’s Bhāvārtha-dīpikā-prakāśa, with both Viśvanātha Cakravartī’s and Vaṁśīdhara’s commentaries closely paraphrasing Jīva Gosvāmī’s treatment of the *śruti-smṛti mamaivājñe* verse in his.

And second, you again stop unsurprisingly short of quoting what “almost all *ācāryas*” (meaning, in effect, Jīva Gosvāmī) actually say in their commentaries in regard to the *śruti-smṛti mamaivājñe* verse:

1) Jīva Gosvāmī in Krama-sandarbha commentary on this verse and in Bhakti-sandarbha 172, explains:

“The commentary [by Śrīdhara Svāmī] says “Karma means *nitya* and *naimittikā* karmas.” There is the following objection:

*śruti-smṛti mamaivājñe yas te ullaṅghya vartate |
ājñā-cchedī mama dveṣī mad-bhakto 'pi na Vaiṣṇavaḥ ||*

“Whoever ignores *śruti* and *smṛti*, thus disrespecting Me, even if he is My devotee, is not a Vaiṣṇava, breaks My order and hates Me.” **However, this fault does not apply, since verse (SB 11.20.9) above gives a superior order [one can give up karmas after being fixed in bhakti]. Rather one will disobey the Lord’s order if one who has developed detachment from karmas and faith in bhakti still performs those karmas.**

*ājñāyaivaṁ guṇān doṣān mayādiṣṭān api svakān
dharmān santyajya yaḥ sarvān mām bhajeta sa tu sattamaḥ*

“A person who, understanding good and bad aspects of dharma as taught by Me gives up all his duties and simply worships Me is the best of all.” (SB 11.11.32)⁸⁴ The commentary says, “He gives up duties because of strong bhakti, by being qualified with detachment.”

Jīva Gosvāmī further elaborates on devotees’ transgressions of *śāstric* injunctions in Bhakti-sandarbha, 312:

“The transgression of compulsory rules and regulations, which is criticized in verses such as: *śruti-smṛti mamaivājñe*, is of two types: transgression of the rules described in the *dharmāśāstra* and transgression of those outlined in the *bhakti-śāstra*. In the first case, if a Vaiṣṇava

⁸⁴ From Jīva Gosvāmī’s Krama-sandarbha commentary on SB 11.20.9 (translation by Bhanu Svāmī): *ata eva— śruti-smṛti mamaivājñe yas te ullaṅghya vartate |ājñā-cchedī mama dveṣī mad-bhakto 'pi na Vaiṣṇavaḥ || ity ukta-doṣo'py atra nāsti, ājñā-karaṇāt | pratyuta jātayor api nirveda-śraddhayos tat-karaṇa evājñā-bhaṅgaḥ syāt | yathā ca vyākhyātam ājñāyaiva guṇān doṣān [bhā.pu. 11.11.32] ity asya ṭīkāyām— bhakti-dārḍhyena nivṛtty-adhikāratayā santyajya iti |*

does not carry out the prescriptions of the *dharma-śāstra* or does something forbidden by the *dharma-śāstra*, either because of firm faith in devotion to the Lord or due to bad character, he or she does not fall down from the Vaiṣṇava platform.”⁸⁵

as well as in Bhakti-sandarbha, 62, where he explains:

“An ignorant person (*ajñāḥ*) who has no control over his senses and does not follow the Vedic injunctions, wanders in the cycle of birth and death because of engaging in forbidden irreligious acts.” (SB 11.3.45) (...) The word *ajñāḥ* means, “one who is devoid of the sense of knowing,” which here means that he does not have the disposition of mind, or in other words, the faith to hear narrations about the Lord. Therefore, he does not engage in such activity. (...) “As long as one has not awakened faith in hearing narrations about Me, or as long as one has not developed detachment, he or she should continue to engage in prescribed karma” (SB 11.20.9) In this verse faith and renunciation are described as independent of each other. **Faith is the frontier at which karma ends and bhakti begins**, and renunciation is the boundary at which karma is left behind and jnana begins.”⁸⁶

2) Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura closely paraphrases a portion of Jīva Gosvāmī’s commentary on SB 11.20.9, also emphasizing that there is no fault in not following secondary injunctions for someone who has developed such faith.⁸⁷ He then adds:

“Devotees may think that, as devotees following purely, it is not necessary to follow injunctions and prohibitions in śruti and smṛti, such as vows like Ekādaśī and forbidden acts like putting coconut water in a bell metal vessel, or putting yogurt or milk in a copper vessel, or eating the Lord’s offerings before offering to the Lord. However, understanding that the *śruti* and *smṛti* are the Lord’s order, they follow those instructions. Some pure devotees in the East, because of the pressure from *karmīs* with which they have close contact, may perform karmas. But this is not actually performance of karma, because it is done without faith in those acts.”

3) Rūpa Gosvāmī in BRS 1.2.246-7⁸⁸ writes:

*saṁmataṁ bhakti-vijñānām
bhakty-aṅgatvaṁ na karmaṇām (246)*

The consensus of those knowledgeable of *bhakti* is that *karma* (*varṇāśrama* duties) is not an *aṅga* of *bhakti*.

⁸⁵ Translation by Satya-nārāyaṇa Dāsa.

⁸⁶ From Jīva Gosvāmī’s Bhakti-sandarbha, 62 (translation by Satya-nārāyaṇa Dāsa): *ajño na vidyate jñā Śri-bhagavataḥ kathā-śravaṇādau śraddhā-lakṣaṇā dhī-vṛttir yasya saḥ | ata eva tasmīn na pravartata ity arthaḥ | tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta ity-ādau [bhā.pu. 11.20.9] paraspara-nirapekṣayoḥ śraddhā-viraktayor dvayor eva tat-tan-maryādātvenokteḥ |*

⁸⁷ From Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s Sārārtha-darśinī commentary on SB 11.20.9: *ata eva— śruti-smṛti mamaivājñe yas te ullaṅghya vartate |ājñā-cchedī mama dveṣī mad-bhakto’pi na Vaiṣṇavaḥ || ity ukta-doṣo’py atra nāsti | ājñā-karaṇāt | pratyuta jātyāyām śraddhāyām tat-karaṇe ājñā-bhaṅgaḥ prasajjed iti ||*

⁸⁸ Translation by Bhanu Swami.

and quotes for *pramāṇa* the same SB 11.20.9:

*yatha caikādaśe—
tāvat karmāṇi kurvīta na nirvidyeta yāvata
mat-kathā-śravaṇādau vā śraddhā yāvan na jāyate (247)*

In the Eleventh Canto it is explained: One should continue to perform the daily and periodic *varṇāśrama* activities until one actually becomes detached from material sense gratification and develops faith for hearing and chanting about Me.

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura then writes in his commentary on BRS 1.2.247:

The commentary says *karmāṇi* means daily and periodic duties of *varṇāśrama*. The scriptures say:

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

Whoever disregards the *śruti* and *smṛti* scriptures that are mine and breaks the rules is a breaker of My order, a hater of Me. Even if he is My devotee he is not a Vaiṣṇava.

However, this does not apply to the devotee because the devotee is following another order. He breaks the first order, to perform *varṇāśrama*, only because he is following another order of the Lord which is based on detachment from material enjoyment and faith in bhakti.

4) It is important to note that even though Sanātana Gosvāmī doesn't reference the *śruti-smṛtī mamaivājñe* verse in his commentary on SB 11.20.9 in HBV 11.553, but he comments on it in very similar terms:

“Now in the verse starting with *tāvat* He describes the superexcellence manifested by devotees in that they, because of their *bhakti*, are no longer qualified for *karma*, and **therefore there is no transgression in their renouncing *karma*.**”⁸⁹

2) *śruti-smṛtī mamaivājñe*

You may, of course, argue that Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā is a Vaiṣṇava scripture, and as such, its regulations should not be disregarded by devotees on the basis of SB 11.20.9. You then employ the *śruti-smṛtī mamaivājñe* verse as a justification for replacing Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions on guru qualifications in ISKCON with your own contrived interpretation of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā.

⁸⁹ From Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary on SB 11.20.9: *bhaktiḥ karmaṇādhikārāt karma-tyāge'pi na doṣaḥ syād iti bhaktair māhātmyaṁ likhati—tāvad iti | karmāṇi nitya-naimittikādīni | yāvata yavat na nirvidyate, karma-phaleṣu aihikāmuṣmika-viṣaya-bhogeṣu vā virakto na syāt | śraddhā viśvāsaḥ prītir vā | ādi-śabdena kīrtanādi-bhakti-prakārāḥ | nirvede jāte mat-kathā-śravaṇādi-śraddhāyām vā jātāyām na kuryād ity arthaḥ | karmaṇām sāvadhritvena sādhye sidde sādhana-parityāgopateteḥ | vā-śabdena pūrvato'sya pakṣasyādhikyam sūcitam | ye vā mayīṣe [bhā.pu. 5.5.3] itivat | vairāgye jāte'pi karma-tyāgo yuktaḥ | kiṁ punar vairāgyasya phale śravaṇādau jāte satīti bhāvaḥ*

However here is how Jīva Gosvāmī addresses the scope of applicability of the *śruti-smṛtī mamaivājñe* verse in Bhakti-sandarbha 312-314:

“Now rules and prohibitions in the Vaiṣṇava scriptures (and breaking them) will be discussed. The only goal of all these rules and prohibitions is to satisfy Viṣṇu. Though what to do and not to do is written in the scriptures, because of a taste for *rāgātmika* devotees, the person will naturally be inclined to follow the rules and avoid the prohibitions, since the devotee who has developed *prīti* desires only to satisfy the Lord. Because of following the *rāgātmika* devotee of his choice, he does not depend on investigating what is to be done or not to be done. Rather what the *rāgātmika* devotee has done, he is eager to accept.

“Sometimes the devotee will depend on rules mentioned in scripture, out of taste for *rāga*. Such rules are included within *rāgānuga* bhakti. Those who are following the *rāgātmika* devotees of Gokula perform ordinary or Vaiṣṇava *dharma* only following the intentions of those Vraja residents — who have only the desire that there be no obstacle to association with Kṛṣṇa and to his welfare.

“Thus the injunction *śruti-smṛtī mamaivājñe* does not apply to the *rāgānuga* bhaktas since they perform the principles of dharma out of taste. **It does not even apply to the *vaidhī bhaktas*, since it is said *api cet sudurācarah***: even one who commits the most sinful act is still my devotee. (BG 9.30) **The injunction applies to persons following the paths of worship instituted by Buddha, Rṣabha, Dattātreya and others described in non-Vedic scriptures.**”⁹⁰

As we see, the *ācāryas* emphasize that the *śruti-smṛtī mamaivājñe* verse:

- in terms of obligations to follow *varṇāśrama* does not apply to Vaiṣṇavas who have developed faith in *śravaṇa* and *kīrtana*;
- in terms of obligations to follow the rules of *bhakti* applies to devotees — even to *rāgānuga*- and *vaidhī-bhaktas* — only partially (and the prerogative to determine its scope of applicability belongs to an empowered *ācārya*⁹¹);
- specifically applies only to those who follow the paths of worship established by Buddha, Rṣabha, Dattātreya and others, which are prescribed in books outside of the Vedic canon.⁹²

⁹⁰ Jīva Gosvāmī in Bhakti-sandarbha 312-314 (translation by Bhanu Swami): *atha vaiṣṇava-śāstroktau | tau tarhi viṣṇu-santoṣaika-prayojanāv eva bhavataḥ | tayoś ca tādṛśatve śrute sati tadīya-rāga-rucimataḥ svata eva pravṛtṭy-apravṛtṭtau syātām | tat-santoṣaika-jīvanatvāt prīti-jāteḥ | ata eva na tatra svānugamyamāna-rāgātmika-siddha-bhakta-viśeṣeṇa kṛtatvākṛtatvayor anusandhānaṁ cāpekṣyaṁ syāt | kintu tat-kṛtatve sati viśeṣaṇāgraho bhavatiṭy eva viśeṣaḥ | atra kvacic chāstroktā-krama-vidhy-apekṣā ca rāga-rucyaiva pravartiteti rāgānugāntaḥpāta eva | ye ca śrī-gokulādi-virāji-rāgātmikānugās tat-parās te tu śrī-kṛṣṇa-kṣema-tat-saṁsargāntarāyābhāvādi-kāmyātmaka-tad-abhiprāya-rītyaiva vaiṣṇava-laukika-dharmānuṣṭhānaṁ kurvanti | ata eva rāgānugāyām rucer eva sad-dharma-pravartakatvāt śruti-smṛtī mamaivājñe ity etad-vākyasya na tad-vartma-bhakti-viṣayatvam | kintu bāhya-śāstra-nirmīta-buddha-rṣabha-dattātreya-ādi-bhajana-vartma-viṣayatvam eva |*

⁹¹ See SB 10.2.31 and purp.

⁹² Translation by Satya-nārāyaṇa Dāsa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda perfectly summarizes the *ācāryas*' conclusions in the Teachings of Lord Caitanya, chapter 11:

“Such a direct instruction from Kṛṣṇa is more important than any Vedic injunction or regulative service. There are certainly many Vedic injunctions, ritualistic and sacrificial performances, regulative duties, meditative techniques, and speculative processes for attaining knowledge, but Kṛṣṇa's direct order—“Just give up everything else and become My devotee, My worshiper”—should be taken as the final order of the Lord and should be followed. If one is simply convinced of this direct order of the Lord in the Bhagavad-gītā, becomes attached to His devotional service, and gives up all other engagements, one will undoubtedly attain success. **To confirm this statement, in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.20.9) Kṛṣṇa says that one should follow other paths of self-realization only as long as one is not convinced of His direct order to become His devotee. It is the conclusion of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Bhagavad-gītā that the direct order of the Lord is to give up everything and engage in devotional service.**”

He further spells out this difference between Vedic and Vaiṣṇava approaches in the following excerpt in his class on Bhagavad-gītā 9.29-32 in New York, December 20, 1966:

"Because in India, according to the caste system, or varṇāśrama-dharma, the brāhmaṇa and ksatriyas are considered to be the highest in the society, and the vaiśyas, a little less than them, and śūdras, they are not taken into account. In the similarly, woman class, they are taken as śūdra, śūdra. Just like the thread ceremony is given to the brāhmaṇa, ksatriya, vaiśya, but there is no thread ceremony for the woman class. Although the woman is born in the brāhmaṇa family, she has no that reformation. Because striyah, woman class, are taken less intelligent, they should be given protection, but they cannot be elevated. **But here in the Bhagavad-gītā, He surpasses all these formalities. Lord Kṛṣṇa surpasses all these formalities. He is giving facility to everyone.** Never mind what he is. In the social structure, you may consider that woman is less intelligent or śūdra or less purified, but in spiritual consciousness there is no such bar. **Here Kṛṣṇa accepts everyone. Either you become woman or you are śūdra or a vaiśya or whatever you may be, that doesn't matter.** If you simply take to Kṛṣṇa consciousness, the Lord is there. He will give you all protection, all protection, and gradually He will help you. You are already. ... One who is in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness platform, he is already in the liberated platform".

And Śrīla Prabhupāda consistently applies this dichotomy between Vedic and Pāñcarātric norms even to rules of Deity worship usually deemed inviolable:

“Regarding the worship of our Gaura Nitai by women pujaris, we worship Lord Caitanya in His householder life when He was with His wife, and not as a sannyasi. **So, it is alright for women to do this service. But, besides this, service is spiritual and there can be no material designation.** In Bhagavad-gītā it is stated by Lord Krishna: striyo vaiśyas tatha śūdras te'pi yanti param gatim. **The principle is that everyone who is properly initiated and following the rules and regulations can worship.** This activity can not on the material platform. According to the smarta vidhi, women cannot touch deity during menstrual period but the goswami viddhi

allows. But it is better not to do it. One thing is that the seva can never be stopped for any reason. This also for the cooking. (Letter to Amsu — Vrindaban 13 August 1974)

To conclude, when you insist that ISKCON must follow your interpretation of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā in regard to initiations, because:

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

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

“The *śruti* and *smṛti* literatures are to be understood as My injunctions, and one who violates such codes is to be understood as violating My will and thus opposing Me. Although such a person may claim to be My devotee, he is not actually a Vaiṣṇava.” (VNP 47)

... you either disregard the opinion on the matter of our *ācāryas* or place yourselves above them.

(c) redacting the truth

So are the women who received *Pāñcarātrika-dīkṣā brāhmaṇas* or not? You seem to be either genuinely confused about the question, or deliberately concealing the truth. Otherwise how would you explain the following editorial changes in your own paper on the subject:

In the Executive summary of your paper entitled “Sri Narada Pāñcarātra / Sri Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā on Female dīkṣā-gurus”, version 11 September 2017, p. 1, you stated:

- *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*. L
SEP

However, merely fifteen months later the highlighted line about women becoming *brāhmaṇas* by *dīkṣā* was scrapped from your paper’s revision of 17 December 2018, so now the same passage reads:

- *śūdras* or *antyajas* get the body of a *brāhmaṇa* if properly initiated and can also become *dīkṣā-guru*.
- But gender does not change with *dīkṣā*. L
SEP

So, do women become elevated by *dīkṣā* to the platform of *brāhmaṇa* or not? What happened to *siddhānta* over these fifteen months? Was Śrīla Prabhupāda wrong when wrote and said on countless occasions that one immediately becomes a *brāhmaṇa* when initiated by a bona fide spiritual master, like:

*yathā kāñcanatām yāti kāmśyaṁ rasa-vidhānataḥ
tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām*

”As bell metal is turned to gold when mixed with mercury in an alchemical process, so one who is properly trained and initiated by a bona fide spiritual master becomes a brāhmaṇa immediately.” (Antya 16.29 purp.)

Shall we now, in compliance with your change of mind, likewise purge numerous Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements stressing that both women and men need to fulfill the same requirement for acting as *brāhmaṇas* and gurus?

But these might be rhetorical questions.

Now, as far as you interpreting the fact that gender doesn’t change with *dīkṣā* as proof that *sādhaka*-women cannot be *dīkṣā-gurus*:

In VNP 8, writing of *siddha* devotees, you cite your own paper and concede:

“In such cases anyone from any condition, including women, can become *dīkṣā-guru*, and there will be no *adharma* or adverse effect. The body of such a man or woman is not at all material but spiritual, there can be no inauspiciousness arising from such instances.” (VNP 8)

So, you admit that devotees **of both genders** have to have a spiritualized body to act as *dīkṣā-gurus*, and once the body is spiritualized, its material precondition — be it *varṇa*, sinful background, or gender — is no longer relevant.

(d) spiritualized body at the time of dīkṣā

What you don’t admit, though — in yet another stark departure from Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* — is that the kind of spiritualization of the body that is sufficient to override one’s any and all material liabilities doesn’t need the level of *bhāva* to occur:

1) Lord Caitanya on devotee’s body at *dīkṣā-kāla*

In fact, as emphatically stated by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself in CC Antya 4.191-194, the degree of spiritualization sufficient for the body of a devotee to be regarded as fully spiritualized happens at the time of *dīkṣā*:

*prabhu kahe,—”vaiṣṇava-deha ’prākṛta’ kabhu naya
’aprākṛta’ deha bhaktera ’cid-ānanda-maya’ (191)*

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, ”The body of a devotee is never material. It is considered to be transcendental, full of spiritual bliss.

Before someone raises a possible objection that Lord Caitanya describes the body of a *prema- or bhāva-bhakta* — after all, He is addressing with these words Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī — Śrīla

Prabhupāda in his commentary explains that Lord Caitanya refers to any devotee fully engaged in devotional service:

Purport: Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is trying to convince Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Sanātana Gosvāmī that **a devotee whose life is dedicated to the service of the Lord** is never in the material conception. **Because he always engages in the service of the Lord**, his body is transcendental and full of spiritual bliss.

Śrīla Prabhupāda then compares the body of such a devotee fully engaged in devotional service to the Deity of the Supreme Lord:

One should never consider his body material, just as one should never consider the body of the Deity worshiped in the temple to be made of stone or wood. Factually, the Deity is directly the Supreme Personality of Godhead, without a doubt. The injunctions of the Padma Purāṇa therefore state, *arcye viṣṇau śilā-dhīr guruṣu nara-matir vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhiḥ . . . yasya vā nārakī saḥ*: "That person is a resident of hell who considers the Deity worshiped in the temple to be stone or wood, who considers the spiritual master an ordinary man, and who thinks that the body of a Vaiṣṇava fully dedicated to the service of the Lord belongs to the material modes of nature."

In the next two verses Lord Caitanya then specifies the point of time at which the body of a devotee is accepted by Lord Kṛṣṇa to be spiritualized enough for the devotee to be "as good as Himself" and for the body itself to be eligible for engaging in serving His lotus feet — it is *dīkṣā-kāla*, or "the time of initiation":

*dīkṣā-kāle bhakta kare ātma-samarpaṇa
sei-kāle kṛṣṇa tāre kare ātma-sama (192)*

"At the time of initiation, when a devotee fully surrenders unto the service of the Lord, Kṛṣṇa accepts him to be as good as Himself.

*sei deha kare tāra cid-ānanda-maya
aprākṛta-dehe tānra caraṇa bhajaya (193)*

"When the devotee's body is thus transformed into spiritual existence, the devotee, in that transcendental body, renders service to the lotus feet of the Lord.

And in the next verse Lord Caitanya cites Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself in SB 11.29.34 as the ultimate *pramāṇa*:

*martyo yadā tyakta-samasta-karmā
niveditātmā vicikīṣito me
tadāmṛtatvaṁ pratipadyamāno
mayātma-bhūyāya ca kalpate vai (194)*

“The living entity who is subjected to birth and death attains immortality when he gives up all material activities, dedicates his life to the execution of My order, and acts according to My directions. In this way he becomes fit to enjoy the spiritual bliss derived from exchanging loving mellows with Me.”

Again, pre-emptying possible guesswork about who is being referred to here, in his purport on this verse (CC Antya 4.194) Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

“... At the time of initiation, a devotee gives up all his material conceptions. Therefore, being in touch with the Supreme Personality of Godhead, he is situated on the transcendental platform. Thus having attained knowledge and the spiritual platform, he always engages in the service of the spiritual body of Kṛṣṇa. **When one is freed from material connections in this way, his body immediately becomes spiritual, and Kṛṣṇa accepts his service.** However, Kṛṣṇa does not accept anything from a person with a material conception of life. When a devotee no longer has any desire for material sense gratification, in his spiritual identity he engages in the service of the Lord, for his dormant spiritual consciousness awakens. This awakening of spiritual consciousness makes his body spiritual, and thus he becomes fit to render service to the Lord. **Karmīs may consider the body of a devotee material, but factually it is not, for a devotee has no conception of material enjoyment.** If one thinks that the body of a pure devotee is material, he is an offender, for that is a *Vaiṣṇava-aparādha*.”

You will now likely attempt to dismiss these clear statements by Lord Caitanya, Lord Kṛṣṇa, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Śrīla Prabhupāda as referring only to devotees on the level of *svarūpa-siddhi*. However, please note that in this and other similar quotes Śrīla Prabhupāda actually describes *dīkṣā* as not a formal ritual, but as full surrender to the order of the Lord (*ātma-samarpaṇa/niveditātmā*) via the spiritual master, solidified by one’s resolve to cease all material activities (*tyakta-samasta-karmā*), in reciprocation to which the Lord agrees to accept the devotee as eligible to worship His transcendental form in his/her own spiritualized identity (*cid-ānanda-maya*).

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport closely follows the commentary of Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura on this verse, in which the *ācārya* also emphasizes that a devotee becomes eligible for personal service to the Lord at the time of initiation marked by full surrender.⁹³

⁹³ VCT on SB 11.29.34 (translation by Bhanu Swami): “When a person by chance mercy of My devotee gives up all daily, periodic and motivated (*kāmya*) duties and offers all identity of I and mine by words and mind **to the guru, who is My svarūpa, who gives My mantra — from that moment**, that mortal person desires to do different work for Me — *bhakti-yoga*, which is different from *yoga* and *jñāna*. Surrender is expressed in the following:

*yo’haṁ mamāsti yat kirncid iha loke paratra ca
tat sarvaṁ bhavato nātha caraṇeṣu samarpitam*

O Lord! I offer everything related to I and mine in this life and the next to Your lotus feet. (Padma Purāṇa)

The effects of *bhakti* are not illusory, but real. It is not the effect of avidyā. Rather, the activities done for Me are beyond the guṇas. Thus, the devotee is made deathless, and he becomes qualified for being My servant (*ātma-bhūyāya*) in My company. The word *ca* indicates that deathlessness is not a sought result but that being an associate in prema is the desired goal.

Please also note that these statements do not erase the border between different levels of devotional service: *sādhana-bhakti*, *bhāva-bhakti* and *prema-bhakti*. Rather, they simply emphasize that by surrendering to the Lord via His representative, the spiritual master, signified by *dīkṣā*, and by trying to fully engage in devotional service to the Lord as taught by the spiritual master, any devotee becomes spiritualized enough to directly serve the Lord.

Śrīla Prabhupāda elaborates on this same point — how the body of a devotee fully engaged in the service of the Lord **MUST** be considered transcendental — in his purport to an earlier verse in the same chapter, CC Anyta 4.173, quoting Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura:

*aprākṛta-deha tomāra 'prākṛta' kabhu naya
tathāpi tomāra tāte prākṛta-buddhi haya (173)*

”Actually your body is transcendental, never material. You are thinking of it, however, in terms of a material conception.”

Purport: Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura gives his opinion about how a person completely engaged in the service of the Lord transforms his body from material to transcendental. He says, “A pure devotee engaged in the service of Lord Kṛṣṇa has no desire for his personal sense gratification, and thus he never accepts anything for that purpose. He desires only the happiness of the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Kṛṣṇa, and because of his ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa, he acts in various ways. *Karmīs* think that the material body is an instrument for material enjoyment, and that is why they work extremely hard. A devotee, however, has no such desires. A devotee always engages wholeheartedly in the service of the Lord, forgetting about bodily conceptions and bodily activities. The body of a *karmī* is called material because the *karmī*, being too absorbed in material activities, is always eager to enjoy material facilities, but **the body of a devotee who tries his best to work very hard for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa by fully engaging in the Lord’s service MUST be accepted as transcendental.** Whereas *karmīs* are interested only in the personal satisfaction of their senses, devotees work for the satisfaction of the Supreme Lord. Therefore one who cannot distinguish between devotion and ordinary karma may mistakenly consider the body of a pure devotee material. One who knows does not commit such a mistake. Nondevotees who consider devotional activities and ordinary material activities to be on the same level are offenders to the chanting of the transcendental holy name of the Lord. **A pure devotee knows that a devotee’s body, being always transcendental, is just suitable for rendering service to the Lord.**”

Again, although a devotee in ecstatic love is mentioned here, the actual point is Śrīla Prabhupāda’s emphatic and highly normative injunction that **“the body of a devotee who tries his best to work very hard for the satisfaction of Kṛṣṇa by fully engaging in the Lord’s service MUST be accepted as transcendental”** and that this truth is known to a pure devotee, but not to *karmīs* and nondevotees, who thus offend the holy name.

Unsurprisingly, these statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda are wholly supported by the other *ācāryas* — Jīva Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī and Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura — who cite the following verse from Skanda-purāṇa:

*dīkṣā-mātreṇa kṛṣṇasya narā mokṣaṁ labhanti vai
kiṁ punar ye sadā bhaktyā pūjayanty acyutaṁ narāḥ*

“Simply by initiation into Kṛṣṇa-mantra any man attains liberation. What then to speak of those who worship Acyuta with bhakti?”⁹⁴

Śrīla Prabhupāda lucidly paraphrases this same principle in the following words, as if spoken to awaken some participants of this discussion to the truth:

“...Sometimes they say that unless the body is changed, how a *caṇḍāla* can become purified? Yes, body is changing. ... Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad-gītā, *tatha dehantara-praptih*. ... Suppose in my childhood I am born in a *caṇḍāla* family, but if by initiation, by taking shelter of a pure devotee, I become initiated, so *dehantara* is there, going on. So if I take initiation seriously, so in the next *dehantara*... **Suppose yesterday I was a *caṇḍāla*. Now by this time there is *dehantara*, and if I am purified by initiation...** So this argument... Not that somebody was European or... We take Europeans as *mlecchas*, *yavanas*. **Yes, he was yesterday *mleccha* and *yavanas*, but he has changed his body, and after changing, if he's initiated, then *dehantara*. *Sudhyanti*, he's purified. *Sudhyanti*. **So how this is possible, if we cannot understand...** Because Lord Visnu's energy is inconceivable. Inconceivable, *acintya*.” (Lecture on SB 1.7.12 -- September 11, 1976, Vrndavana)**

Therefore, Śrīla Prabhupāda time and again explains that, although at the point of initiation one's gender, race, cultural and social background don't appear to change, but the body itself changes for another, spiritualized body fit for the service of the Lord, per the famous *śāstric* adage “*nādevo devaṁ arcayet*” (“Without being on the level of a deva [i.e., pure], one cannot worship the Lord”).⁹⁵ In other words, if a devotee admitted to worshiping the Lord by His authorized representative, the spiritual master, then the devotee's material body and nature are to be considered as spiritualized enough to be irrelevant for his or her spiritual status.

For instance, he writes in CC Antya 16.29 purp.:

“Similarly, the Tattva-sāgara says:

*yathā kāñcanatām yāti kāmasyaṁ rasa-vidhānataḥ
tathā dīkṣā-vidhānena dvijatvaṁ jāyate nṛṇām*

“As bell metal is turned to gold when mixed with mercury in an alchemical process, so **one who is properly trained and initiated by a bona fide spiritual master becomes a *brāhmaṇa***

⁹⁴ Quoted in Bhakti-sandarbha 149, Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 11.200, and Bhakti-tattva-viveka, chapter 2

⁹⁵ As quoted in SB 6.8 summary.

immediately.” All this evidence found in the revealed scriptures proves that according to the Vedic version, **a Vaiṣṇava is never to be considered an *abrāhmaṇa*, or *non-brāhmaṇa*.** A Vaiṣṇava should not be thought to belong to a lower caste even if born in a *mleccha* or *yavana* family. Because he has become a devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa, he has become purified and has attained the stage of *brāhmaṇa* (*dvijatvarṇ jāyate nṛṇām*).” (from CC Antya 16.29 purp.)

and in CC Madhya 10.139 purp. warns those who think otherwise:

“In the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī states that one who is initiated by a bona fide spiritual master immediately becomes a *brāhmaṇa*. **A pseudo spiritual master cannot transform a person into a *brāhmaṇa*, but an authorized spiritual master can do so.** This is the verdict of *śāstra*, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and all the Gosvāmīs.” (Madhya 10.139 purp.)

As a counterargument, some will cite the following passage from Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport on NOI 5:

“Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī warns, however, that if a person is properly initiated by a bona fide spiritual master, he should not think that simply by the acceptance of such initiation his business is then finished. One still has to follow the rules and regulations very carefully. If after accepting the spiritual master and being initiated one does not follow the rules and regulations of devotional service, then he is again fallen. One must be very vigilant to remember that he is the part and parcel of the transcendental body of Kṛṣṇa, and that it is his duty as part and parcel to give service to the whole, or Kṛṣṇa. If we do not render service to Kṛṣṇa then again we fall down. **In other words, simply becoming initiated does not elevate one to the position of a high-class *brāhmaṇa*.** One also has to discharge the duties and follow the regulative principles very rigidly.” (NOD, chapter 5)

The key point that that Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes in this passage, however, is the absolute necessity of following the regulative principles after initiation to stay on the liberated and brahminical platform afforded to him or her at the point of initiation. In other words, as we saw in the numerous quotes above, by surrendering one’s life to Kṛṣṇa via initiation one immediately becomes elevated to the transcendental position, which externally manifests as brahminical nature, and it is an offense to consider a devotee thus initiated in terms of his or her previous material conditioning:

Kṛṣṇa is absolute. He can appear in any way, any form, as He likes. That is His mercy. Because we cannot see except stone, similarly, therefore He appears as stone. But He's not stone. If we think that it is stone, then we are gone to hell. You see. No. *Arcye śilā-dhīr*. **Similarly Vaiṣṇava.** A Vaiṣṇava should not be considered that "Here is American Vaiṣṇava" or "*brāhmaṇa* Vaiṣṇava" and "*śūdra* Vaiṣṇava." No. Vaiṣṇava is Vaiṣṇava. **There is no more distinction. Just like Ganges water.** So many sewage ditches, water coming, mixing, in Calcutta. Everyone knows. But nobody says, "Oh, it is Titagarh Paper Mill's sewage water." No. That is Ganges water. That is Ganges water. Everyone takes bath, without any objection. Everyone is taking water and giving, bringing to the Deity room. Nobody distinguishes that this, with this water, so many mill water has been mixed up; therefore it is rejected. No. **Similarly, when one becomes Vaiṣṇava,**

never mind from which family's he's came. *Mām hi pārtha vyapāsṛitya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpa-yonayah* [Bg 9.32]. (The Nectar of Devotion January 28, 1973, Calcutta)

But to ascend to and maintain that “position of a high-class *brāhmaṇa*”, which here is more a social than a spiritual role (as indicated by the word “high-class”), one has to strictly follow the regulative principles given by the spiritual master, and not take one’s newly acquired liberated brahminical position for granted. We see that following the regulative principles as a prerequisite to qualify as “a high-class *brāhmaṇa*” is something Śrīla Prabhupāda expected of both genders. What we **do not** see, however, is him introducing some other, much higher set of regulative principles for women to qualify for that position. Therefore, both genders qualify externally and internally as *brāhmaṇas* at the time of initiation provided they strictly follow their initiation vows and the spiritual master’s instructions. Any other explanation of this quote from NOD, chapter 5, will make statements on the topic by Śrīla Prabhupāda and the *śāstra* self-contradictory and open to whimsical interpretations.

Śrīla Prabhupāda further emphasizes this principle — that by strict following of one’s bona fide spiritual master one becomes liberated and his/her bodily designations become irrelevant in the realm of *kṛṣṇa-bhajana* — in his teachings too many times to even count, although, perhaps, insufficiently often to convince some participants of this discussion. Here is one such statement:

“So we must stick to Kṛṣṇa consciousness without any designative ideas. We must stand on the transcendental platform. *Sa guṇān samatīyaitān brahma-bhūyāya kalpate*. Transcendental platform means above the three modes of material nature, which is called *brahma-bhūtaḥ*. So this position, *brahma-bhūtaḥ*'s position... **Without being in *brahma-bhūtaḥ* position, liberated stage, nobody can be engaged in devotional service.**

*brahma-bhūtaḥ prasannātmā na śocati na kāṅkṣati
samaḥ sarveṣu bhūteṣu mad-bhaktiṁ labhate parām*

Bhakti begins when is..., one is actually liberated from the influence of the modes of material nature. That is real *bhakti*. Otherwise, when you are..., we are in training, that is called *prakṛta-bhakta*. Actually, we are in the material state, but we are being trained up, the Deity worship. This is, following the rules and regulations under the instruction of spiritual master, or Vedic injunction, this is training period. **But even in the training period, if one is sincere and serious, he's liberated. He's liberated. It is so nice.** Kṛṣṇa consciousness is so nice that even in the training period, although he's not mature, and even one falls immature stage, there is no loss.” (Lecture on the Nectar of Devotion — November 2, 1972, Vṛndāvana)

Do you agree with Lord Kṛṣṇa’s, Lord Caitanya’s and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s conclusion? And if you do, would you now admit that your own words:

“In such cases anyone from any condition, including women, can become dīkṣā-guru, and there will be no *adharmā* or adverse effect. The body of such a man or woman is not at all material but spiritual, there can be no inauspiciousness arising from such instances.” (VNP 8)

come into effect at the time of initiation, if accompanied by full surrender to instructions of the spiritual master?

2) connection with Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā

In your attempt to legitimize bringing Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā — or, rather, your contrived interpretations of a few selected verses from it — into ISKCON’s discourse as the ultimate *pramāṇa* on guru qualifications, you write:

“First of all, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā is a treatise on *śaraṇāgati* (surrender), and it elaborates upon the verse *ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ...*, which describes the six limbs of surrender. This verse is often quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda, and it appears in the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa (11.676) by Sanātana Gosvāmī. Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā explains this verse, expanding it into 8 chapters and guides about how to practically implement it in daily life, living in a society of devotees. It explains each and every limb of surrender in utmost detail.” (VNP 42-43)

First, your logic here appears to be as follows:

If a famous and important verse quoted by Śrīla Prabhupāda is mentioned in a particular scripture, and if one decides to write one’s own commentaries on a few other verses on a remotely related topic from this scripture, then these commentaries automatically become relevant and authoritative for ISKCON’s discourse on their subject and capable of “harmonizing” Śrīla Prabhupāda’s “conflicting” statements on the same.

I hope it is needless to explain how far-fetched this logic is and why.

Second, the fact that the verse *ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ* is mentioned and even elaborated upon in Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā by itself doesn’t necessarily make this scripture an exclusive exposition on this verse.

In fact, this verse is also found and explained in Vāyu-purāṇa,⁹⁶ Ahirbudhnya-saṁhitā 37.28-29, and Brahmāṇḍa-purāṇa 3.41.76-77. Shall we now, by the same token, accept as relevant and authoritative for ISKCON any other commentary on any other verse from these scriptures?

Third, and most importantly — Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu Himself cites and explains this verse in CC Madhya 22.100:

*ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ prātikūlyasya varjanam
rakṣiṣyatīti viśvāso gopṭṛtve varaṇaṁ tathā
ātma-nikṣepa-kārpaṇye ṣaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ* (100)

⁹⁶ As quoted by Baladeva Vidyābhūṣana in his commentary on BG 18.66.

“The six divisions of surrender are the acceptance of those things favorable to devotional service, the rejection of unfavorable things, the conviction that Kṛṣṇa will give protection, the acceptance of the Lord as one’s guardian or master, full self-surrender, and humility.”

Lord Caitanya then explains in CC Madhya 22.102 that Lord Kṛṣṇa accepts the devotee thus surrendered as equal to Himself — more specifically, as one of His confidential associates:

*śaraṇa lañā kare kṛṣṇe ātma-samarpaṇa
kṛṣṇa tāre kare tat-kāle ātma-sama (102)*

“When a devotee thus fully surrenders unto Kṛṣṇa’s lotus feet, Kṛṣṇa accepts him as one of His confidential associates.”

He then illustrates the effect of such surrender with the same verse by Lord Kṛṣṇa in SB 11.29.34 that He also quotes in CC Antya 4.194:

*martyo yadā tyakta-samasta-karmā
niveditātmā vicikīṛṣito me
tadāmṛtatvaṁ pratipadyamāno
mayātma-bhūyāya ca kalpate vai (103)*

“The living entity who is subjected to birth and death attains immortality when he gives up all material activities, dedicates his life to the execution of My order, and acts according to My directions. In this way he becomes fit to enjoy the spiritual bliss derived from exchanging loving mellows with Me.”

and then proceeds to explain *sādhana-bhakti* to Sanātana Gosvāmī.

In other words, in both these passages — in CC Madhya 22 and CC Antya 4 — Lord Caitanya repeats that Lord Kṛṣṇa accepts a surrendered devotee as *ātma-sama*, equal to Himself, or as His confidential associate, and explains that the process of surrender, or *śaraṇāgati*, is consummated by one’s acceptance of *dīkṣā* and instructions from the spiritual master.

Similarly, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī also equates surrender with *dīkṣā* in HBV 1.102 in the famous *mantra* that a disciple must recite before begging for initiation from the spiritual master:

*trāyasva bho jagannātha guro saṁsāra-vahninā
dagdhaṁ mām kāla-daṣṭam ca tvām ahaṁ śaraṇam gataḥ (1.102)*

“O spiritual master, O master of the worlds, please rescue me, who am bitten by time and burned by the flames of repeated birth and death. I surrender to you and take shelter of you.”

So, agreeing that the *ānukūlyasya saṅkalpaḥ ... śaḍ-vidhā śaraṇāgatiḥ* verse is essential, would you also agree that its explanation by Lord Caitanya and Śrīla Prabhupāda in CC Madhya 22 and CC Antya 4 takes precedence over any other explanations in any other scriptures on the subject?

More specifically, would you accept that, according to Lord Caitanya, if one surrenders to the spiritual master at the time of initiation, then he or she are already spiritualized enough to be accepted by Lord Kṛṣṇa as equal to Him, as eligible to serve Him directly and to become His associates — what to speak of being able to impart His *mantras* to others as *dīkṣā-gurus*?

(e) modern nitya-siddhas

And, just in case someone objects that Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Sanātana Gosvāmī were already pure devotees and *nitya-siddhas* prior to meeting Lord Caitanya, thus qualifying as *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas*, and on these grounds dismisses Lord Caitanya’s statements about them as inapplicable to us, Śrīla Prabhupāda preempts such objections:

“One should not think that because Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was personally present five hundred years ago, only His associates were liberated. Rather, Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura says that **anyone is a *nitya-siddha* if he acts on behalf of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu by spreading the glories of the holy name of the Lord. We should respect those devotees preaching the glories of the Lord as *nitya-siddha* and should not consider them conditioned.**” (CC Madhya 11.89 purp.)

and

“The associates of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu were unlimited during the Lord's presence on this planet, but **anyone who is pure in life and devoted to the mission of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu is to be understood as a *nitya-siddha* associate of the Lord.**” (CC Madhya 11.96 purp.)

Śrīla Prabhupāda also gives a very precise and practical definition of who is a devotee **pure enough** to purify others:

“When one is situated on the neophyte platform, one cannot understand the devotional ingredients of a pure, unalloyed devotee. **However, when the novice engages in devotional service—especially in Deity worship—and follows the order of a bona fide spiritual master, he is a pure devotee.** Anyone can take advantage of hearing about Kṛṣṇa consciousness from such a devotee and thus gradually become purified. In other words, **any devotee who believes that the holy name of the Lord is identical with the Lord is a pure devotee**, even though he may be in the neophyte stage. By his association, others may also become Vaiṣṇavas.” (CC Madhya 15.106 purp.)

Acyutānanda: ...says first-class, second-class and third-class devotees, they are pure devotees.
Prabhupāda: **Yes, pure devotee is anyone who has no other motive except to serve Kṛṣṇa. It doesn't matter he's first class, second class or third.** Anyābhilāṣitā-sūnyam. If he has got

some motive, then he's not pure devotee. **He may be not advanced, but if he has not motive, then he's pure devotee.** If he wants to utilize Kṛṣṇa for his personal benefit, then he's not pure devotee. He's impure. So first of all he has to become pure devotee. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.25 — November 5, 1972, Vṛndāvana)

“Therefore devotees who are constantly engaged in the loving service of the Lord, they are liberated. *Mām ca avyabhicāriṇi bhakti-yogena yaḥ sevate.* Anyone who is engaged in devotional service unadulterated, without any motive, unadulterated: *anyābhilāṣitā-śūnyam jñāna-karmādy anāvṛtam ānukūlyena kṛṣṇānu-śīlanam...* He's liberated. These activities of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, it is..., it appears to be ordinary activities, but that is liberated activity. (Lecture on the Nectar of Devotion — December 27, 1972, Bombay)

“All of my disciples, as soon as they surrender themselves to Kṛṣṇa, they become pure devotees actually.” (Letter to Madhudvisa — Bombay 29 December, 1972)

“So one who does not indulge in speculating habit, neither tries to gain something by his work, but simply engages himself in the service of the Lord, he is called a pure devotee. **Such pure devotees are very rare. But by the Grace of Krishna, practically all the devotees and disciples who have kindly joined me, they are, their symptoms are pure devotees.** Even if they have got some ulterior desire, that will be removed very soon, because they have taken to the pure process of Krishna Consciousness.” (Letter to Janaki — Seattle 13 October, 1968)

And in the same practical terms, with remarkable consistency, Śrīla Prabhupāda demystifies who should be considered an *uttama-adhikārī* and a *dīkṣā-guru*:

“When a neophyte devotee is actually initiated and engaged in devotional service by the orders of the spiritual master, he should be accepted immediately as a bona fide Vaiṣṇava, and obeisances should be offered unto him. Out of many such Vaiṣṇavas, **one may be found to be very seriously engaged in the service of the Lord and strictly following all the regulative principles, chanting the prescribed number of rounds on japa beads and always thinking of how to expand the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement.** Such a Vaiṣṇava should be accepted as an *uttama-adhikārī*, a highly advanced devotee, and his association should always be sought.” (NOI 5)

(f) qualified by preaching

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that it is preaching that makes one qualified as a guru and therefore as a *brāhmaṇa*, not the other way around:

“A Vaiṣṇava is understood to be above the position of a *brāhmaṇa*. **As a preacher, he should be recognized as a *brāhmaṇa*; otherwise there may be a misunderstanding of his position as a Vaiṣṇava.** (...) If one becomes a guru, he is automatically a *brāhmaṇa*. (...) The word guru is equally applicable to the vartma-pradarśaka-guru, śikṣā-guru and dīkṣā-guru. Unless we accept the principle enunciated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement cannot spread all over the world. According to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's intentions,

ṛthivīte āche yata nagarādi-grāma sarvatra pracāra haibe mora nāma. [CB Antya-khaṇḍa 4.126] Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's cult must be preached all over the world. This does not mean that people should take to His teachings and remain śūdras or caṇḍālas. As soon as one is trained as a pure Vaiṣṇava, he must be accepted as a bona fide brāhmaṇa. This is the essence of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's instructions in this verse." (CC Madhya 8.128 purp.)

"Caitanya Mahāprabhu never said that "You chant." He has given certainly the chanting, but so far His mission is concerned, He said that "Every one of you become guru." Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa [Cc Madhya 7.128]. And deliver, preach, that people understand what is Kṛṣṇa. Ṛthivīte āche yata nagarādi. That is His mission. It is not that "Become a big Vaiṣṇava and sit down and imitate." This is all rascaldom. So don't follow this thing. So at least we cannot advise you in that way. We have learned from our Guru Mahārāja that preaching is very, very important thing, and **when one is actually an experienced preacher, then he is able to chant Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra without any offense.** Before that, this so-called chanting of Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, you may practice without any offenses..." (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.7.19 — September 16, 1976, Vṛndāvana)

And Śrīla Prabhupāda deliberately contrasted traditional Vedic norms of women's mandatory dependence with his direct empowerment of his female disciples for preaching and direct order for them to do so:

"In India all the *ācāryas* and their descendants later on acted only from the man's side. Their wives were at home because that is the system from old times that women are not required to go out. **But in Bhagavad-gītā we find that women are also equally competent like the men in the matter of Krishna Consciousness Movement.** Please therefore carry on these missionary activities, and prove it by practical example that there is no bar for anyone in the matter of preaching work for Krishna Consciousness." (Letter to Himavati — London, 20 December, 1969)

Śrīla Prabhupāda's incessant, tireless emphasis by word and deed was that it is only by the power of preaching Lord Caitanya's *sankīrtana* movement that one qualifies as a "*nitya-siddha*" devotee absorbed in the mellows of bhakti and as a guru:

"By the grace of the Supreme Lord Viṣṇu, anyone can be completely purified, become a preacher of Kṛṣṇa consciousness, and become the spiritual master of the entire world. This principle is accepted in all Vedic literature. Evidence can be quoted from authoritative śāstras showing how a lowborn person can become the spiritual master of the entire world. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is to be considered the most munificent personality, for He distributes the real essence of the Vedic śāstras to anyone who becomes qualified by becoming His sincere servant. (CC Antya 5.84 purp.)

In stressing this over and over again, Śrīla Prabhupāda faithfully follows the teachings of Lord Caitanya:

śuni' harṣe kahe prabhu—"kahile niścaya

yānhā haite kṛṣṇa-bhakti sei guru haya"

Hearing Mukunda dāsa give this proper decision, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu confirmed it, saying, "Yes, it is correct. One who awakens devotion to Kṛṣṇa is certainly the spiritual master." (CC Madhya 15.117)

and the previous *ācāryas*:

*tad evaṁ kalau nāma-kīrtana-pracāra-prabhāveṇaiva
parama-bhagavat-parāyaṇatva-siddhir darśitā*

"In this way it is shown that in the age of Kali one achieves perfection in topmost surrender to the Lord only by the power of preaching *nāma-kīrtana*."⁹⁷ (Jīva Gosvāmī, Bhakti-sandarbhā, 274)

However, this emphasis on the essential, pivotal role of *sankīrtana* in one's becoming a *brāhmaṇa*, a guru and a *nitya-siddha* — or even a casual reference thereof — is conspicuous by its absence in your exegesis on guru-qualification, being substituted by extensive and speculative *varṇāśrama* deliberations.

(g) Prema-vivarta on women as "worshipable gurus"

While sidelining the crucial role of *nāma-kīrtana-pracāra* in acquiring qualifications for being a *brāhmaṇa* and a guru, no wonder that you even go as far as dismissing a quote from Prema-vivarta (PV):⁹⁸

*strī-śūdra-pukkaśa-yavanādi kena naya
kṛṣṇa-nāma gāya, seo guru pūjya haya* [151]

"Those who chant the name of Kṛṣṇa, whether they are women, laborers, persons of mixed caste, outcasts, or otherwise, become worshipping gurus." (PV 20.151)

...because, in your words, "it describes those who have reached on the level of *kṛṣṇa-prema*" by chanting "suddha nama" (March 8).

You elaborate:

"This sloka comes in the last chapter (20) of Prema-vivarta where the glories of the Holy Name (nama-mahima) is described. However, in many chapters before this, that this Holy Name is suddha-nama, is established. This is also corroborated from Prema-vivarta 20.199, 216. This is

⁹⁷ Word-for-word translation: In this way (*tad evam*) it is shown (*darśitā*) that in the age of Kali (*kalau*) one achieves perfection (*siddhiḥ*) in topmost surrender to the Lord (*parama-bhagavat-parāyaṇatva*) only by the power (*prabhāvena eva*) of preaching (*pracāra*) *nāma-kīrtana*.

⁹⁸ Verses and translations from the Sri Caitanya Gauḍīya Math's edition of Prema-vivarta.

also very similar to the statement in CC Madhya 18.122, which has been answered in this email thread itself, proving that it describes those who have reached on the level of kṛṣṇa-prema.”
(March 8)

We note that this seems to have become the pattern in your dealing with inconvenient facts or authoritative statements contradicting your paradigm: when faced with them, you dismiss them either by pronouncing them as exceptions or deviations or, alternatively, by promoting them to unattainable transcendental heights.

However, let us analyze your argument against the statement from Prema-vivarta that those who chant the name of Kṛṣṇa, be it women, *śūdras*, or outcastes, become worshipable gurus (*guru pūjya haya*).

1) Context

You suggest that “many chapters before this” in Prema-vivarta establish that “this Holy Name is suddha-nama.” Actually, it is only in chapter 19 titled “Nāma-rahasya-ṣaṭala” (“A Collection of Hidden Truths about the Name”) that the term “*śuddha-nāma*” is used. Lord Caitanya, indeed, repeatedly stresses the need to chant *śuddha-nāma* by avoiding *nāma-aparādhas* and glorifies the result of such pure chanting, Kṛṣṇa-prema. (See PV 19.54, 67, 149, and 151).

However, in chapter 20 called “Nāma-mahimā” (“The Glories of the Holy Name”) Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu grants Kṛṣṇadāsa’s request to narrate the glories of the Holy Name “that even Brahmā and Śiva do not know the end of” (*ye mahimāra brahmā śiva nāhi jāne sīmā*, PV 20.2) and gives His own explanations or glosses of numerous śāstric statements on the glories of the Holy Names, including those not at all indicative of the *śuddha-nāma* or Kṛṣṇa-prema **level of the chanter**.⁹⁹

For instance (please forgive the sheer bulk of verses cited here en masse to make the actual context of the verse in question easier to see and harder to dismiss):

*saṅketa vā parihāsa stobha helā kari’
nāmābhāse kabhu yadi bale kṛṣṇa’ hari’ [25]*

*aśeṣa-pātaka tāra dūre yāya tabe
Śri-vaikuṅṭhe nīta haya yamadūtera parābhave [26]*

“If ever souls chant ‘Kṛṣṇa’ or Hari’ indirectly, jokingly, mnemonically, or neglectfully, by this semblance of the Name (nāmābhāsa), their innumerable sins disappear, they overstep the attendants of Yamarāja, and they are taken to Vaikuṅṭha.

⁹⁹ as opposed to the Name Himself, who is *caitanya-rasa-vigrahaḥ* — the form of all transcendental mellows, and *pūrṇaḥ śuddho nitya-mukto* — complete, pure, free from material contamination and eternally liberated. (CC Madhya-līla 17.133)

In the above verse in the beginning of Chapter 20 Lord Caitanya explicitly refers to the Holy name as *nāmābhāsa*, contrary to your notion that “in many chapters before this, that this Holy Name is suddha-nama, is established.” He then proceeds to give many examples of *nāmābhāsa*:

*paḍi' khasi' bhagna daṣṭa dagdha vā āhata
ha-iyā vivaśe bale, āmi hainu hata' [28]*

*kṛṣṇa' hari' nārāyaṇa' nāma mukhe ḍāke
yātanā kakhana āśraya nā kare tāhāke [29]*

“The punishment of Yamarāj never afflicts those who desperately call aloud Kṛṣṇa', Hari', or Nārāyaṇa' when they feel as though they are dying after having fallen or slipped, or been injured, bitten, beaten, or burnt.

*ajñāne vā jñāne kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtane
sarva-pāpa bhasma haya, yathā kāṣṭha agny-arpaṇe [31]*

“Like a piece of wood placed in a fire, all sins are reduced to ashes by chanting the Name of Kṛṣṇa, knowingly or unknowingly.

*ārta vā viṣaṇṇa śithila-manā bhīta
ghora-vyādhi-kleśe āra nā dekhe hita [57]*

*nārāyaṇa' hari' bali' kare saṅkīrtana
niśchaya vimukta-duḥkha sukhī sei jana [58]*

“When those who are distressed, depressed, disheartened, fearful, or afflicted with a terrible disease see no help anywhere and chant Nārāyaṇa' or Hari', they certainly become happy and free from sorrow.

*ārtā viṣaṇṇāḥ śithilāś cha bhīta ghoreṣu cha vyādhiṣu vartamānāḥ
saṅkīrtya nārāyaṇa-śabdā ekaṁ vimukta-duḥkhāḥ sukhino bhavanti [59]*

(Viṣṇu-dharma-purāṇa)

“Those who are distressed, depressed, disheartened, fearful, or terribly diseased become free from sorrow and happy by once chanting the Name of Nārāyaṇa.’

*mriyamāṇa kliṣṭa jana paḍite khasite
vivaśa ha-iyā kṛṣṇa bale kona-mate [82]*

*karmārgala-mukta hañā labhe parā gati
kali-kāle yāhā nāhi labhe anya mati [83]*

“A dying, diseased, bedridden, faltering, desperate soul who somehow or other chants the Name of Kṛṣṇa becomes free from the bondage of karma and attains the supreme destination—which souls in the Age of Kali cannot attain by any other means.

*śvapacha ha-ileo dvija-śreṣṭha bali tāre
yāhāra jihvāgre kṛṣṇa-nāma nṛtya kare [125]*

“Even outcasts are considered the best of brāhmaṇs when the Name of Kṛṣṇa dances on the tip of their tongue.

Do you suggest that all the above categories of people — desperate, distressed, bitten, dying, negligent, etc. — also chant *śuddha-nāma* because, in your words, “in many chapters before this, that this Holy Name is *suddha-nama*, is established”? To the contrary, as we can see, Lord Caitanya lists beneficiaries of chanting Kṛṣṇa’s name of various motives, levels of consciousness and circumstances, not Kṛṣṇa-prema-bhaktas chanting *śuddha-nāma*, as you maintain.

On the other hand, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura establishes the level where *śuddha-nāma* can be obtained nowadays by the mercy of Lord Nityānanda:

śraddhā-mūlye śuddha-nāma sei haṭṭete vikāya

“Such wonderful things are going on in that blissful marketplace! Śrī Nityānanda Prabhu is selling the pure holy name wholesale, merely for the price of one’s faith.” (Dālāler Gīta)

Lord Caitanya then concludes:

*varṇādi vichāra nāhi Śrī-nāma-saṅkīrtane
dīkṣā-puraścharyā vidhi bādhā nāi gaṇe [146]*

“In chanting the Name, there is no consideration of class or caste, and the conventions of brahminical initiation and preparatory rites are not barriers to it.

*nārāyaṇa jagannātha vāsudeva janārdana
yāra mukhe sadā śuni, pūjya guru sei jana [147]*

“Those from whose mouth we always hear Nārāyaṇa!’, Jagannātha!’, Vāsudeva!’, and Janārdana!’ are worshippable gurus.

*śayane svapane āra chalite basite
kṛṣṇa-nāma kare yei, pūjya sarva mate [148]*

“Those who chant the Name of Kṛṣṇa while resting, dreaming, walking, and sitting are worshippable in all respects.

It is important to note that in PV 20.147 it is Lord Caitanya Himself who decides to call anyone who chants the Holy Name *pūjya guru* — a worshipable guru — while the next two verses from Bṛhan-nāradīya-purāṇa, which Lord Caitanya is glossing here, do not terms them as such at all:

*nārāyaṇa jagannātha vāsudeva janārdana
itīrayanti ye nityam te vai sarvatra vanditāḥ* [149]

*svapan bhujjan vrajams tiṣṭhan uttiṣṭhamś cha vadams tathā
ye vadanti harer nāma tebhyo nityam namo namaḥ* [150]

(Bṛhan-nāradīya-purāṇa)

“Those who always chant Nārāyaṇa!, Jagannātha!, Vāsudeva!, and Janārdana!’ are worshipped everywhere. Eternally, I bow again and again to those who chant the Name of the Lord while resting, eating, walking, sitting, standing, or talking.’

And next Lord Caitanta clarifies that His provision — whoever chants Kṛṣṇa’s name becomes a worshipable guru — refers to different categories of people otherwise disqualified from being gurus, remarkably similar to the list of ‘spiritual pariahs’ of BS 1.42-44:

*strī-śūdra-pukkaśa-yavanādi kena naya
kṛṣṇa-nāma gāya, seo guru pūjya haya* [151]

“Those who chant the Name of Kṛṣṇa, whether or not they are women, labourers, persons of mixed caste, outcasts, or otherwise, become worshippable gurus.

Again, it is Lord Caitanya Himself who calls these chanters “*pūjya gurus*” while the verse from Nārāyaṇa-vyūha-stava that He is glossing here and quoting next makes no mention of them being gurus at all:

*strī śūdraḥ pukkaśo vāpi ye chānye pāpa-yonayah
kīrtayanti hariṁ bhaktyā tebhyo ’pīha namo namaḥ* [152]

(Nārāyaṇa-vyūha-stava)

“I bow again and again to those who chant the Name of the Lord with devotion, be they women, labourers, persons of mixed caste, or even outcasts.’

And then, as if to prevent anyone from arguing that from this verse onwards it’s only *śuddha-nāma* chanters that are being described, Lord Caitanya continues enumerating people whose symptoms are anything but those of Kṛṣṇa-prema-bhaktas:

*chalite basite svapne bhojane śayane
kali-damana kṛṣṇochchāre vākyera pūraṇe* [177]

*helāteo kari' nāma nija svarūpa pāñā
parama-pada vaikuṅṭhe yāya nirbhaya ha-iyā [178]*

“While walking, sitting, dreaming, eating, resting, or speaking, those who even neglectfully chant the Name of Kṛṣṇa, the subduer of Kali, realise the true self and fearlessly go to the supreme abode of Vaikuṅṭha.

*madya-pāne bhūtāviṣṭa vāyu-pīḍā-sthale
hari-nāmo chhāre mukti tara karatale [181]*

“By chanting the Lord’s Name, even those who are drunk, bewitched, or diseased find liberation on the palm of their hand.

So by insisting that the verse in question, PV 20.151 that states that women, *śūdras* and untouchables become gurus by chanting Kṛṣṇa’s name, applies only to *śuddha-bhaktas* chanting *śuddha-nāma*, you contradict Lord Caitanya’s opinion and introduce *asangati*, or inconsistency, simultaneously on two levels — in *pāda* (immediate context) and *adhyāya* (chapter).

2) Lord Caitanya’s order

Again, you seem to overlook that, according to Jagadananda Pandita, this verse is Lord Caitanya’s own gloss of the next verse, quoted from *Nārāyaṇa-vyūha-stava*, that makes no mention of those people becoming gurus or chanting *śuddha-nāma*:

*strī śūdraḥ pukkaśo vāpi ye chānye pāpa-yonayaḥ
kīrtayanti hariṁ bhaktyā tebhyo 'pītha namo namaḥ*

“I bow again and again to those who chant the Name of the Lord with devotion, be they women, labourers, persons of mixed caste, or even outcasts.’ (Prema-vivarta, 152)

In other words, it is Lord Caitanya’s personal instruction that they be regarded as gurus. And it was on the strength of this Lord Caitanya’s order that Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly called on his disciples, men and women alike, to become gurus and continue His mission:

“So the question may be raised that "How I can do welfare activities for the welfare of the whole world?" The Caitanya Mahāprabhu encourages. He says that āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra ei deśa: "Wherever you are staying," ei deśa, "in that country... You may not go outside, but wherever you are staying," āmāra ājñāya, "by My order," guru hañā, "you must become a guru"—by the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Then? "I have no education. How can I become guru? How can I instruct?" Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, "Yes, that I know. But you take My order." Āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra ei deśa. "Then what shall I do?" Yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa: "You become guru. You haven't got to manufacture anything, any philosophy.

You simply instruct whatever is spoken by Kṛṣṇa. That's all. You'll become a guru." (City Hall Lecture October 7, 1975, Durban)

"You are my disciples. "Like father, like son." You should be. Gaurāṅgera bhakta-jane. Everyone. Therefore Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra' ei deśa [Cc Madhya 7.128]. He asked everyone, "Just become guru." Follow His instruction, you become guru. Āmāra ājñāya. Don't manufacture ideas. Āmāra ājñāya. "What I say, you do. You become a guru." Where is the difficulty? "And what is Your ājñā?" Yāre dekha tāre kaha kṛṣṇa-upadeśa. Bās. Everything is there in the Bhagavad-gītā. You simply repeat. That's all. You become guru. To become a guru is not difficult job. Follow Caitanya Mahāprabhu and speak what Kṛṣṇa has said. Bās. You become guru." (Room conversation April 15, 1977, Bombay)

"The best thing is if you come and live with us for some time and learn thoroughly the Kṛṣṇa science. Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu said anyone can become a guru in the matter of teaching about Kṛṣṇa, provided he or she thoroughly learns the Kṛṣṇa science." (Letter to Kay Johnson, 26 January, 1977)

So you are correct when you write in VNP 23:

"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."

It is just that you seem to forget that the prerogative to define who "actually knows Kṛṣṇa in truth" already belongs to someone else — to Śrīla Prabhupāda and Lord Caitanya. Here is one example how this forgetfulness manifests:

In this quotation you allude to Śrīla Prabhupāda's letter to Mukunda of 10 June 1969, cited in VNP 27-28, in which Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

"The answer to your Istagosthi questions are as follows: Unless one is a resident of Krishna Loka, one cannot be a Spiritual Master. That is the first proposition. A layman cannot be a Spiritual Master, and if he becomes so then he will simply create disturbance. And who is a liberated person? One who knows Krishna. It is stated in BG, fourth chapter, anyone who knows Krishna in truth is immediately liberated, and after quitting the present body, he immediately goes to Krishna. That means he becomes a resident of Krishna Loka. As soon as one is liberated he is immediately a resident of Krishna Loka, and anyone who knows the truth of Krishna can become Spiritual Master. That is the version of Lord Caitanya. So to summarize the whole thing, it is to be understood that a bona fide Spiritual Master is a resident of Krishna Loka.

Your next question, whether the Spiritual Master was formerly a conditioned soul, actually a bona fide Spiritual Master is never a conditioned soul. There are three kinds of liberated persons. They are called 1) sadhan siddha, 2) kripa siddha, and 3) nitya siddha. Sadhan siddha means one who has attained perfection by executing the regulative principles of devotional service. Kripa siddha means one who has attained perfection by the special mercy of Krishna

and the Spiritual Master, and nitya siddha means one who was never contaminated. The symptoms of nitya siddha is that from the beginning of his life he is attached to Krishna, and he is never tired of rendering service to Krishna. So we have to know what is what by these symptoms. But when one is actually on the siddha platform there is no such distinction as to who is sadhan, kripa, or nitya siddha. When one is siddha, there is no distinction what is what.”

However, you again stop short of quoting the relevant portion of the letter in its entirety. Śrīla Prabhupāda continues:

“You are correct when you say that when the Spiritual Master speaks it should be taken that Krishna is speaking. That is a fact. **A Spiritual Master must be liberated. It does not matter if he has come from Krishna Loka or he is liberated from here. But he must be liberated.** The science of how one is liberated is explained above, but when one is liberated, there is no need of distinction whether he has come directly from Krishna Loka or from the material world. But in the broader sense everyone comes from Krishna Loka. **When one forgets Krishna he is conditioned, when one remembers Krishna he is liberated.** I hope this will clear up these points. I hope this will meet you in good health.”

Importantly, Śrīla Prabhupāda emphasizes here that 1) one must be liberated to be a guru; 2) it is not relevant whether one is liberated by practice here in this world or by descending from Kṛṣṇaloka; and 3) this position of liberation is achieved when one remembers Kṛṣṇa.

However, it is interesting to observe how you are segueing from the incomplete quote to the conclusion that:

“...women are not allowed to be *dīkṣā-guru* until they are *siddha*, and residents of Goloka Vrndavana.” (VNP 29)

First, you seem to be attempting to read Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mind when you proclaim that:

“According to Bharadvaja-sangita 1.44, if one is on the level of seeing Kṛṣṇa face-to-face, then one may be a spiritual master. **It is *this standard of dīkṣā-guru* that Śrīla Prabhupāda had in mind when he wrote the letter to Hamsaduta saying both his male and female disciples could accept disciples.**” [emphasis yours] (VNP 28)

Second, you answer the question “How do you act as a bona fide spiritual master when you aren’t a *siddha*?” with a quote Śrīla Prabhupāda’s letter to Janardana of 26 April 1968:

“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.”

Third, you translate “by strictly following the disciplic succession” as “one must follow the srutis, smṛti, Purānas, Pāñcarātra, etc. in order to act as a bona fide guru *while not yet a resident yet of Goloka Vrindavana*” (VNP 29), supplying another quote from BRS 1.2.101 as cited in BG 7.3:

“Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī writes in his Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.2.101):

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

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

And, finally, you marry Śrīla Prabhupāda’s mention of Nārada Pāñcarātra above with your interpretation of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā that “according to this *Pāñcarātra-śāstra*, [only] women are not allowed to *dīkṣā-guru* until they are *siddha*, and residents of Goloka Vrindavana.” (VNP 29)

So, what started as Śrīla Prabhupāda’s simple and clear statement that one must follow the disciplic succession to be considered liberated and act as a guru, ended up as his wholehearted telepathic endorsement of your Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā-ṭīkā on par with “*srutis, smṛtis, Purāṇas, Pāñcarātra, etc.*”

3) Hayasirsa-Pāñcarātra

You then make the following argument:

“Moreover, it also says both in Prema-vivarta 20.145, and Caitanya Caritamṛta Madhya 15.108, that *the Holy Name doesn’t need initiation (dīkṣā). Thus, there is no question of any dīkṣā-guru.* However, we are discussing about dīkṣā-guru. We have never argued that women cannot ask others to chant the Holy Name. Although the chanting of the Holy Name doesn’t need dīkṣā, our acharyas (from Jīva Gosvāmī till Śrīla Prabhupāda) have mandated arcana (or deity worship) and other bhakti-limbs for all of us (without exception). Thus, there is a dīkṣā process in our line that is based Pancharaṭīkā-vidhi.” (March 8)

It is unclear if here you are disagreeing with Lord Caitanya’s statement that the Holy Name doesn’t depend on *dīkṣā*, or with His definition of those who chant it as worshipable gurus — or if you maintain that those who are able to inspire others to chant the Holy Name are still unable to give *dīkṣā* into it, just because they, in your view, require some additional qualification to become *dīkṣā-gurus* by Pāñcarātrika-vidhi.

First, as far as your notion that women, *sūdras* and outcastes described by Lord Caitanya as *pūjya-gurus* in PV 20.151, cannot be *dīkṣā-gurus* until they are vetted by pāñcarātrika-vidhi — here is what Lord Caitanya says in response in PV 19.74-76, which, again, is conveniently left out of your exegesis:

*kṛpā kari’ yei jana hari dekhāila
hari-nāma-parichaya karāiyā dila [74]*

*sei mora karṇadhāra guru mahāśaya
tahare avajñā kaile nāmāparādha haya [75]*

[Śrīman Mahāprabhu paraphrases:] “He who has mercifully revealed the Lord to me and introduced me to His Name is my captain, my worshippable Guru. If I disrespect him, I offend the Name.

*‘hīna-jāti pāṇḍitya-rahita mantra-hīna’
nāmera gurute hena buddhi arvāchīna [76]*

“Those who consider the Guru who reveals the Name to be low-class, uneducated, or uninitiated are foolish.

Please note that Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu condemns here exactly the logic you are employing in your argument. He is warning that those capable of delivering the Holy Name to others must never be disrespected as anything else but gurus, neither in terms of their education, low social status (please refer to our discussion of *hīna-jāti* earlier), or completeness of their initiation into mantras (obviously, both Pāñcarātrik or Vedic).

And second, let us again remind you that the verse in question, PV 20.151, is Lord Caitanya's personal paraphrase of and commentary on a verse from *Nārāyaṇa-vyūha-stava*:

*strī sūdraḥ pukkaśo vāpi ye chānye pāpa-yonayaḥ
kīrtayanti hariṁ bhaktyā tebhyo 'pīha namo namaḥ [152]*

“I bow again and again to those who chant the Name of the Lord with devotion, be they women, labourers, persons of mixed caste, or even outcasts.’

It is Lord Caitanya’s opinion that the categories of people described here are to be considered qualified to be *dīkṣā-gurus*, and treating them otherwise is, in His words, a sign of foolishness and a case of *nāma-aparādha*.

However, if you still wish to argue that, to be applicable to *dīkṣā*-giving, this definition should come from a Pāñcarātrika scripture — it happens so that *Nārāyaṇa-vyūha-stava* is actually a part of Hayaśīrṣa-Pāñcarātra and as such, is a Pāñcarātrika śāstra itself. And, unlike Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā, *Nārāyaṇa-vyūha-stava* is quoted profusely by our previous ācāryas and by Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Incidentally, this very verse of *Nārāyaṇa-vyūha-stava* is quoted by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, 11.405, in the section of Chapter Eleven describing the glories of the holy name, so even on this count the verse in question qualifies as a Pāñcarātrika vidhi.

Therefore, Lord Caitanya’s paraphrase and explanation of this verse in VP 20.151:

*strī-śūdra-pukkaśa-yavanādi kena naya
kṛṣṇa-nāma gāya, seo guru pūjya haya [151]*

“Those who chant the Name of Kṛṣṇa, whether or not they are women, labourers, persons of mixed caste, outcasts, or otherwise, become worshippable gurus.

is Pāñcarātrik in essence and as such, affords those women, *śūdras* and outcastes who chant Kṛṣṇa’s name with devotion (*kīrtayanti hariṁ bhaktyā*) the necessary qualification to become *dīkṣā-gurus* per Pāñcarātrika vidhi.

4) Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura on *śuddha-nāma*

In your attempt to dismiss PV 20.151 as a *pramāṇa* that by chanting Kṛṣṇa’s name with devotion (*kīrtayanti hariṁ bhaktyā*) women on par with *śūdras* and untouchables can become gurus, you quote Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s article *Vaiṣṇava-ninda*:

“This Krishna-nama is *suddha-kṛṣṇa-nama* as is made clear by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in his article *Vaiṣṇava-ninda* in *Sajjana-tosani* published (partly) at [Vaiṣṇava-ninda, Criticizing a Vaisnava](#).” (March 8)

However, in this article Sila Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura says that even devotees who have developed faith in the scriptures (*śāstriya-sraddha*) but have not yet manifested all the other qualities of *madhyama-adhikaris* occasionally chant *śuddha-nāma*¹⁰⁰ and are called *Vaiṣṇavas*,¹⁰¹ while those who chant *śuddha-nāma* incessantly are called *madhyama-adhikārīs*, or *Vaiṣṇava-tara*.¹⁰²

Translating this definition in practical terms, Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport on CC *Madhya-lila* 15.106 writes:

“When one is situated on the neophyte platform, one cannot understand the devotional ingredients of a pure, unalloyed devotee. However, when the novice engages in devotional service—especially in Deity worship—and follows the order of a bona fide spiritual master, **he is a pure devotee. Anyone can take advantage of hearing about Kṛṣṇa consciousness from such a devotee and thus gradually become purified.** In other words, any devotee who

¹⁰⁰ “One who chants the name of Kṛṣṇa* even once is *Vaiṣṇava* (possessed of *Vaiṣṇava* qualities). Therefore, you should show all respect to him.” (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, “*Vaiṣṇava-ninda*”)

¹⁰¹ “The only conclusion to be drawn then is that when those who were in the *kanistha* stage attain faith in the scriptures (*śāstriya-sraddha*) and hence become eligible to serve the *Vaiṣṇavas*, they are thereafter described simply as *Vaiṣṇava* (having *Vaiṣṇava* qualities) until the time when they attain the other qualities characteristic of a *madhyama Vaiṣṇava*. Correspondingly, *madhyama Vaiṣṇavas* are described as *Vaiṣṇava-tara* (having *Vaiṣṇava* qualities to a profound degree) while *uttama Vaiṣṇavas* alone, the topmost *Vaiṣṇavas*, are described as *Vaiṣṇava-tama* (having *Vaiṣṇava* qualities to the superlative degree).” (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, “*Vaiṣṇava-ninda*”)

¹⁰² “One who incessantly chants Kṛṣṇa’s name is *Vaiṣṇava-tara* (possessed of *Vaiṣṇava* qualities to a profound degree) and one should render service to his lotus feet.” (Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, “*Vaiṣṇava-ninda*”)

believes that the holy name of the Lord is identical with the Lord **is a pure devotee**, even though he may be in the neophyte stage. **By his association, others may also become Vaiṣṇavas.**”

So, if by citing Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura’s article you sought to emphasize that one needs to chant *śuddha-nāma* to become a guru, then you must admit that, according to Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda, even sincere but immature neophytes who have faith in the scriptures but have not yet developed all the qualities of a *madhyama* are eligible, per PV 20.151, to be gurus because they occasionally chant pure holy name.

So, well in keeping with the tradition, your statement that the verse PV 20.151 “describes those who have reached on the level of *kṛṣṇa-prema*” is, again, your own unique and inventive commentary — this time on Prema-vivarta.

5) “immediately liberated” by chanting *nāmābhāsa*

Śrīla Prabhupāda in his explanation of *nāma-tattva* uses terminology that differs from that of Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, but their conclusions, of course, fully concur. Śrīla Prabhupāda says that those who chant *nāmābhāsa* are chanting without offenses, they are *madhyama-adhikārīs* and are “immediately liberated”:

“So the first stage of chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is full of offenses. But if one sticks to the principle... Therefore we have to chant regularly sixteen rounds at least. So even there are offenses, by simply chanting and being repentant that "I have committed this offense unnecessarily, or without knowledge," so simply be repentant and go on chanting. Then the stage will come, it is called *nāmābhāsa*. That is offenseless, when there is no more offenses. That is called *nāmābhāsa*. At *nāmābhāsa* stage one becomes liberated immediately. And when one is liberated, if he goes on chanting-naturally he will go on chanting — then his love of Kṛṣṇa becomes manifest. These are the three stages of chanting: chanting with offense, chanting as a liberated person and chanting in love of God. There are three stage of chanting.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam 6.2.9-10 — January 15, 1971, Allahabad)

“Of course, in the beginning, the offenses are there, but if we try to avoid them, then there will be *nāmābhāsa*. *Nāmābhāsa* means almost pure chanting of the holy name. That is called *nāmābhāsa*. And if you attain the state of *nāmābhāsa*, you’ll become immediately liberated. And then, when you can chant the *śuddha* holy name, pure, uncontaminated by the material modes of nature, then you will develop your love of Kṛṣṇa.” (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.2.19 — July 21, 1974, New Vrindavan)

He also says of such offenseless chanting, or *nāmābhāsa*:

“Chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra is the easiest process of meditation in this age. **As soon as one chants the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra, he sees the forms of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and Their energies, and that is the perfect stage of trance.** One should not artificially try to see the form of the Lord while chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, but **when the chanting is performed offenselessly the Lord**

will automatically reveal Himself to the view of the chanter. The chanter, therefore, has to concentrate on hearing the vibration, and without extra endeavor on his part, the Lord will automatically appear.” (SB 4.8.53 purp.)

and

“The holy name of the Lord and the Lord Himself are identical, and **one who chants the holy name of the Lord in an offenseless manner can at once realize that the Lord is present before him.** Even by the vibration of radio sound we can partially realize the presence of what is related to the sound, and by resounding the sound of transcendence we can verily feel the presence of the Lord. In this age, when everything is polluted by the contamination of Kali, it is instructed in the scriptures and preached by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu that by chanting the holy name of the Lord we can at once be free from contamination, gradually rise to the status of transcendence, and go back home, back to Godhead. **The offenseless chanters of the holy name of the Lord are as auspicious as the Lord Himself,** and the movement of such pure devotees of the Lord all over the world can at once change the troublesome face of the world. Only by the propagation of the chanting of the holy name of the Lord can we be immune from all effects of the Age of Kali.” (SB 1.16.3233 purp.)

Finally, Śrīla Prabhupāda explicitly links initiation by the spiritual master, following the regulative principles, one’s offenseless chanting AND one’s eligibility to become a *dīkṣā-guru* all over the world:

“A sincere student aurally receives the holy name from the spiritual master, and after being initiated he follows the regulative principles given by the spiritual master. When the holy name is properly served in this way, automatically the spiritual nature of the holy name spreads; in other words, the devotee becomes qualified in offenselessly chanting the holy name. When one is completely fit to chant the holy name in this way, he is eligible to make disciples all over the world, and he actually becomes jagad-guru.” (CC Ādi 7.83 purp.)

So, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda, those who chants *nāmābhāsa* or “offenselessly” become “immediately liberated”, at “the perfect stage of trance” in which they “see[s] the forms of Kṛṣṇa, Rāma and Their energies”, “at once realize that the Lord is present before [them]”, become “as auspicious as the Lord Himself” and “eligible to make disciples all over the world” — and therefore their material conditioning, including gender, should not be taken as disqualifying for them acting as *dīkṣā-gurus*. Would you agree with him?

6) Pāñcarātrika dependent on bhāgavata

In this connection you also seem to entirely disregard, deliberately or not, that it is only by the power of chanting and preaching the holy name imbued with prema, “a special creation” of Lord Caitanya:

*bhaṭṭācārya kahe ei madhura vacana
caitanyera sṛṣṭi—ei prema-saṅkīrtana*

Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya replied, "This sweet transcendental sound is a special creation of the Lord known as prema-saṅkīrtana, congregational chanting in love of Godhead.

(Madhya 11.97)

that one becomes eligible to practice *pāñcarātri*ka-*vidhi* properly. To emphasize this, Śrīla Prabhupāda regularly describes *pāñcarātri*ka-*vidhi* as, albeit important, but subordinate to *bhagavata-vidhi*:

"There are many books for arcana, especially Narada Pāñcarātra. In this age, the Pāñcarātra system is particularly recommended for arcana, Deity worship. There are two systems of arcana -- the bhagavata system and Pāñcarātri system. **In the Srimad-Bhagavatam there is no recommendation of Pāñcarātri worship because in this Kali-yuga, even without Deity worship, everything can be perfectly performed simply through hearing, chanting, remembering and worship of the lotus feet of the Lord.**" (SB 7.5.23-24 purp.)

and that its main purpose, to purify the conditioned nature, was made easier by Lord Caitanya:

"This Narada Pāñcarātra trains the *karmis*, or the fruitive workers, to achieve liberation from the bondage of fruitive work." (SB 1.3.8 purp.)

"So bhagavata side is very difficult. Unless one is purified from the Pāñcarātri side, it is very difficult to go to the bhagavata side. **But Caitanya Mahāprabhu has given this simple process: chanting Hare Kṛṣṇa, kirtana, and hearing the Srimad-Bhagavatam.** And pursuant to these two principles one can install Radha-Kṛṣṇa Deity and serving". (Lecture on Srimad-Bhagavatam 7.9.8–10 — March 10, 1969, Hawaii)

"And so actually *bhāgavata-marga* is very strong. That is sufficient. But without *pāñcarātri*ka-*vidhi* this polluted body, polluted mind of the devotee, cannot be purified. Therefore both the process should be adopted in preaching Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement." (Lecture — February 17, 1971, Gorakhpur)

Thus, it was conclusively shown here and previously that:

- at the time of *dīkṣā* a devotee's body becomes spiritualized enough for his/her bodily designations such as varna and gender to cease being a liability for his/her devotional service;
- one qualifies for such transformation by strict adherence to the orders of the spiritual master primarily in the form of offenseless chanting of the Holy name, worshiping the Deity, and preaching the *sankīrtana* mission of Lord Caitanya;
- one who does that, regardless of his/her material designations, should be considered a *brāhmaṇa* and qualified to be both *śikṣā-* and *dīkṣā-guru*.

(h) Vaiṣṇavīs as brāhmaṇas and more

You write in VNP 36:

“In the case of women, although they may have a particular *guna*, or quality, the *śāstras* do not prescribe any duty to women based on that quality or *guna*.... The only duty for women prescribed in the *śāstra* (irrespective *guna*) is to serve and follow their husbands.”

So now it is appropriate to revisit the direct statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda quoted earlier — if only to marvel at how deeply steeped in *siddhānta* Śrīla Prabhupad’s words are, and how drastically your above quote departs from them:

Devotee: Śrīla Prabhupāda, since there is no distinction between man and woman — these are both designations — is it possible for a woman to become a brāhmaṇa?

Prabhupada: He is... Woman is a brāhmaṇa's wife. Then she is automatically a brāhmaṇa.

Devotee: Suppose she doesn't want to get married for the rest of her life, just wants to serve the Lord?

Prabhupada: **So in his spiritual position everyone is a brāhmaṇa... Yes. But on spiritual point she is brāhmaṇa. On the spiritual platform there is no such distinction.** (Morning Walk — November 2, 1975, Nairobi)

We asked you to note that here, contrary to what you maintain, Śrīla Prabhupāda states that Vaiṣṇavīs don’t need to be married to be considered *brāhmaṇas* “on the spiritual platform”, which implies that for women marriage is a prerequisite for being considered a *brāhmaṇa* (“*brāhmaṇī*”) only on the material platform. Here is a relevant quote from Hari-bhakti-vilāsa 10.128 showing that such Vaiṣṇavīs are actually greater than ordinary *brāhmaṇas*:

*sabharṭṛkā vā vidhavā viṣṇu-bhaktim karoti yā
samuddharati cātmānaṁ kulam ekottaraṁ śatam*

“Whether a woman is married or a widow, if she is engaged in devotional service of Lord Viṣṇu, she delivers one hundred generations of her family.”

... in terms of their comparative purificatory power contrasted by Prahlada Mahārāja in SB 7.9.10.¹⁰³

So when you also contended:

“Whereas Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned that by training, even a low born person can be elevated to the position of a “dvija” however, we don’t find in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s whole literature that he ever stated that by training, a female body will turn into a male body.” (March 18)

¹⁰³ SB 7.9.10:

*viprād dvi-ṣaḍ-guṇa-yutād aravinda-nābha-pādāravinda-vimukhāt śvapacāṁ variṣṭham
manye tad-arpita-mano-vacanehitārtha-prāṇaṁ punāti sa kulāṁ na tu bhūrimānaḥ*

“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.”

...you seem to forget that, while the body of a devotee retains its physical gender during such training and initiation, according to the *śāstra* and Śrīla Prabhupāda — and even according to your own paper of 11 September 2017 before redaction — Vaiṣṇavīs do become *brāhmaṇas* (*brāhmaṇīs*) on the spiritual level. And if you accept that *dīkṣā* is a purely spiritual rather than social process, you should accept them qualified for giving it as spiritual *brāhmaṇīs* as well.

(i) “yes, Prabhupada wanted this, but actually...”

You also disagree with Śrīla Prabhupāda on this matter in one extremely consequential way.

In VNP 55 you advise Vaiṣṇavī disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda that “becoming a *dīkṣā-guru* is not a compulsory act (you do not degrade if you do not become a *dīkṣā-guru*).” Yet, as was quoted above, Śrīla Prabhupāda was calling upon his “boys and girls” and “all of you” to become gurus. Quotes are too many to cite:

“So we should follow this instruction of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, *yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa*. **So you, every one of you, can become guru.** You may say that “I am not interested to become a guru,” but Caitanya Mahāprabhu says that **if you are not interested, that is not very good. You should be interested. You must be guru.** That is success of your life.” (Room Conversation with Indian Guests — March 13, 1975, Tehran)

“Just adhere yourself to the lotus feet of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu. Then you become spiritual master. That's all. **So I hope that all of you, men, women, boys and girls, become spiritual master and follow this principle.** Spiritual master — simply, sincerely, follow the principles and speak to the general public. Then Kṛṣṇa immediately becomes your favorite. Kṛṣṇa does not become your favorite; you become Kṛṣṇa's favorite. Kṛṣṇa says in the Bhagavad-gītā, *na ca tasman manusyesu kascin me priya-kṛttamah* [Bg. 18.69]: “One who is doing this humble service of preaching work, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, nobody is dearer than him to Me.” **So if you want to become recognized by Kṛṣṇa very quickly, you take up this process of becoming spiritual master, present the Bhagavad-gītā as it is, your life is perfect.**” (Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā Lecture — August 22, 1973, London)

“Everything is there. *Satām prasāṅgān*. From a bona fide spiritual master you receive knowledge, because he will present as he has received from his spiritual master. He'll not adulterate or manufacture something. That is the bona fide spiritual master. And that is very easy. To become spiritual master is not very difficult thing. **You'll have to become spiritual master. You, all my disciples, everyone should become spiritual master.** It is not difficult. It is difficult when you manufacture something. But if you simply present whatever you have heard from your spiritual master, it is very easy. If you want to become overintelligent, to present something, to interpret something, whatever over you have heard from your spiritual master you can make some further addition, alteration, then you'll spoil whole thing. Then you'll spoil whole thing. Don't make addition or alteration. Simply present as it is.” (Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā Lecture — August 22, 1973, London)

“So to understand the spiritual master... Spiritual master is not a new invention. It is simply following the orders of the spiritual master. **So all my students present here who are feeling so much obliged...** I am also obliged to them, because they are helping me in this missionary work. **At the same time, I shall request them all to become spiritual master. Every one of you should be spiritual master next.** And what is that duty? Whatever you are hearing from me, whatever you are learning from me, you have to distribute the same in toto, without any addition or alteration. Then all of you become the spiritual master. That is the science of becoming spiritual master. Spiritual master is not very... To become a spiritual master is not very wonderful thing. Simply one has to become sincere soul. That's all. Evaṁ paramparā-prāptam imaṁ rājarṣayo viduḥ (...) One has to hear it properly, assimilate it, and then practice it in life and preach the same thing. Then everyone becomes spiritual master. Caitanya Mahāprabhu says, āmāra ājñāya guru hañā tāra 'sarva-deśa: "O My dear disciples, I tell you that you, all of you, become spiritual master. Simply you carry out My order. That's all." "And what is Your order?" "The order is the same: yāre dekha, tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa." (Śrī Vyāsa-pūjā lecture — August 17, 1968, Montreal)

“So we have to take the authority of become guru from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the same thing. Within five hundred years His order is that āmāra ājñāya guru hañā "You cannot become guru all of a sudden. You must take order from Me." He is jagad-guru. **So Caitanya Mahāprabhu says you, all of you, to become guru and deliver.** Because there are so many innumerable fallen souls in this age—mandāḥ sumanda-matayo manda-bhāgyā hy upadrutāḥ, we require hundreds and thousands of gurus. But not cheaters. **This is the time when required hundreds and thousands of gurus.** But who will become guru? That is Caitanya Mahāprabhu's injunction, āmāra ājñāya: "By My order you become guru. Don't be all of a sudden guru. Become guru on My order." So what is the order of Caitanya Mahāprabhu? (...) So He is giving very simple formula: āmāra ajñāya guru hañā tāra ei deśa yāre dekha tāre kaha 'kṛṣṇa'-upadeśa." (Lecture to devotees — April 7, 1976, Vṛndāvana)

“Anyone following the order of Lord Caitanya under the guidance of His bona fide representative, can become a spiritual master and **I wish that in my absence all my disciples become the bona fide spiritual master** to spread Krishna Consciousness throughout the whole world.” (Letter to Madhusudana — Navadvīpa 2 November, 1967)

“So one who is spreading *kṛṣṇa-upadesa*, simply repeat what is said by Kṛṣṇa, then you become *ācārya*. (...) Suppose you have got now ten thousand. We shall expand to hundred thousand. **That is required.** Then hundred thousand to million, and million to ten million. So there will be no scarcity of *ācārya*, and people will understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness very easily.” (Sri Caitanya-caritamṛta, *Adi-līlā* 1.13 – April 6, 1975, Mayapur)

“So that is our mission. All of you who have come to Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, **that is our request, that you, all of you, become guru** but don't speak nonsense. That is request. Simply speak what Kṛṣṇa has said. Then you become brāhmaṇa, you'll be guru, and everything. (Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 6.1.21 — May 21, 1976, Honolulu)

So, on the one hand, Śrīla Prabhupada repeatedly urges **all of his disciples** “men, women, boys and girls” to become gurus — and on the other, in a brilliant display of hubris, you modify his order to tell them otherwise, reckoning that “becoming a *dīkṣā-guru* is not a compulsory act (you do not degrade if you do not become a *dīkṣā-guru*) — meaning that one does not degrade by not trying to become qualified to fulfill a direct request of one’s spiritual master and founder-*ācārya*.”

And while failing to measure up to this standard despite sincere efforts won’t indeed lead to degradation, but something else certainly will:

“In this way the bhakti-*latā* shrivels up. Such an offense is especially created when one disobeys the instructions of the spiritual master. This is called guru-*avajñā*. The devotee must therefore be very careful not to commit offenses against the spiritual master by disobeying his instructions. **As soon as one is deviated from the instructions of the spiritual master, the uprooting of the *bhakti-latā* begins, and gradually all the leaves dry up.**” (CC Madhya 19.156 purp.)

“At the present moment **it has become fashionable to disobey the unimpeachable directions given by the *ācāryas*** and liberated souls of the past. Presently people are so fallen that they cannot distinguish between a liberated soul and a conditioned soul. A conditioned soul is hampered by four defects: he is sure to commit mistakes, he is sure to become illusioned, he has a tendency to cheat others, and his senses are imperfect. Consequently we have to take direction from liberated persons. This Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement directly receives instructions from the Supreme Personality of Godhead via persons who are strictly following His instructions. **Although a follower may not be a liberated person, if he follows the supreme, liberated Personality of Godhead, his actions are naturally liberated from the contamination of the material nature.** Lord Caitanya therefore says: “By My order you may become a spiritual master.” **One can immediately become a spiritual master by having full faith in the transcendental words of the Supreme Personality of Godhead and by following His instructions.** Materialistic men are not interested in taking directions from a liberated person, but they are very much interested in their own concocted ideas, which make them repeatedly fail in their attempts. (SB 4.18.5 purp.)

and, of course:

“The *paramparā* system does not allow one to deviate from the commentaries of the previous *ācāryas*. By depending upon the previous *ācāryas*, one can write beautiful commentaries. **However, one cannot defy the previous *ācāryas*. The false pride that makes one think that he can write better than the previous *ācāryas* will make one’s comments faulty.** [emphasis yours — Mmd] At the present moment it has become fashionable for everyone to write in his own way, but such writing is never accepted by serious devotees.” (CC Antya 7.134 purp.)

(j) posthumous hermeneutics

A good example of what it might mean "to write in [one's] own way" is a recent post in which one of you described your hermeneutical approach to Śrīla Prabhupāda's "conflicting" statements:¹⁰⁴

“* In case of authors who write by his experience or intelligence only, the only person who knows author's intention best, is the author himself. Others can guess from his writings and in case of doubt directly ask the author. But when the author is no more, his intentions can only be guessed based on readers' anumana (inference). Thus, posthumus editing of such works should be considered lesser close to the original intentions.

* However, in case of an author who is representing sastras and tradition who is strictly representing those sastras, and so on. This is parampara system. In this case the author's intentions cannot be different from those of the sastras and tradition and thus even in the author's absence we can know what author intended by knowing the instructions, followings and understandings of sastras and tradition (parampara etc).

* Thus, **in case of Srila Prabhupada, we have to resort to tradition and sastras in order to know his real intention behind what he did or instructed in specific instances.**”

As has already been shown above, Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly made his intentions in regard to all of his disciples crystal clear:

- Time and again, he stated that he wanted **all of his disciples, men and women, boys and girls**, to become gurus and continue the guru-paramparā.
- He emphasized that Lord Caitanya meant that “...the word *guru* is equally applicable to the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*.” (CC Madhya 8.128 purp.)
- He repeatedly stressed that the qualification for becoming a guru is to be perfect in following the instructions of one's spiritual master and Lord Caitanya, and applied this eligibility criteria equally to both genders.
- He also consistently stressed that he had given everything we needed in ISKCON within the corpus of his teachings and that there was no need to go outside of it, or, in your words, “to resort to tradition and sastras” to understand his instructions, much less his intentions:

“In my books the philosophy of Krishna Consciousness is explained fully so if there is anything which you do not understand, then you simply have to read again and again. By reading daily the knowledge will be revealed to you and by this process your spiritual life will develop.” (Letter to Bahurupa — Bombay 22 November, 1974)

¹⁰⁴ <https://www.akincana.net/2020/01/21/female-diksha-gurus-part-3/>

“There is no need by any of my disciples to read any books besides my books—in fact, such reading may be detrimental to their advancement in Krishna Consciousness.” (Letter to Sri Govinda — Jaipur 20 January, 1972)

“You have no right. Suppose I have written one book. So I have got some intention. So why should you interpret my intention with your intention? What right you have got? You have no right. If you want to speak something of yours, then you write another book. Why you are taking advantage of my book and misleading others? I want to speak to the public something, I have expressed my opinion in that way. But because it is popular, you are taking advantage of my book and expressing your views. How much cheating, how much cheater you are.” (Room Conversation April 2, 1972, Sydney)

“[I]nstruct the other students there to stick to whatever is mentioned in our books and try to understand that subject matter from every angle of vision, without trying to adulterate by adding anything rumor. Our preaching must be based upon the subject matter from books and nothing outside of them.” (Letter to Prajapati — Los Angeles 16 June, 1972)

However by your statement above you strongly imply that:

- Śrīla Prabhupāda was inept at communicating his actual intentions on key issues such as guru qualifications via his books, letters, and personal conversations;
- he left figuring out his actual intentions not to his direct disciples — perhaps because they were as inept at understanding his actual intentions as he was at communicating them — but to junior grand-disciples 40 years later;
- now these junior grand-disciples have successfully figured out Śrīla Prabhupāda’s actual intentions, based on their unearthing of a *śāstra* that he never cited and on their novel interpretation of the *śāstra*; an interpretation that no Vaiṣṇava traditional school adheres to or supports;
- and because, as you say above, “[Śrīla Prabhupāda’s] intentions cannot be different from those of the sastras and tradition”, now these junior grand-disciples in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s absence “can know what [he] intended by knowing the instructions, followings and understandings of sastras and tradition (parampara etc)”. **In other words, they don’t really need to know what Śrīla Prabhupāda said or wrote as long as they know the śāstra and tradition** — or so they think.
- lastly, while, in your words, “posthumous editing of such works should be considered lesser close to the original intentions”, somehow your posthumous interpretations of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s intentions on the basis of your knowledge of the *śāstra* and tradition are actually much closer to his original intentions.

To quote one of you, yours is “an alternative way of interpreting Srila Prabhupada that allows ... to disregard almost anything he says. (...) This is not “explaining” Srila Prabhupada, but “explaining him away.”¹⁰⁵

We could, of course, launch into a very detailed critique of your hermeneutics to expose its flaws. But, fortunately, CC Antya 1.91 provides us with a Nyāya litmus test for the soundness of your interpretational premise — or anyone else’s, for that matter:

phalena phala-kāraṇam anumīyate

“By seeing a result, one can understand the cause of that result.”

And since the results of your interpretational model have already been shown above to be irreconcilably at odds with *guru-sādhū-śāstra*, so is, necessarily, your interpretational method itself.

This is how Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā 1.30 explains it:

*jñānatas tv anupetasya brahmācāryam abhīpsataḥ
vr̥thaivātma-samit-kṣepo jāyate kṛṣṇa-vartmani (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. (Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā 1.34)

Or, in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words:

“Yes. The regulative principles means that you don't manufacture anything. Regulative principle means authorized—as they are mentioned in the authorized scriptures and as it is confirmed by the spiritual master. Because we do not know. When it is confirmed by the spiritual master, yes, it is right. *Sādhū guru...*, *sādhū-śāstra-guru-vākya*, *tinete kariyā aikya*. The same statement of Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura. *Sādhū*, principles which are followed, *sādhū-mārga-anugamanam*. We cannot follow *asādhū-mārga*. We must follow *sādhū-mārga*. *Mahājano yena gataḥ sa panthāḥ* [Cc Madhya 17.186]. **We cannot follow an upstart**, manufacturing some song, **manufacturing some ideas**. We cannot follow that. What is authorized song, we shall sing. What is authorized method, we shall follow. *Sādhū-guru-śāstra-vākya*. *Sādhū* and *guru* means on the basis of *śāstra*. And *śāstra* means the statements of *sādhū* and *guru*. **Therefore *sādhū* and *guru* and *śāstra*, they are identical. So they must be corroborated.** If somebody's *sādhū* is speaking against *śāstra*, then he's not *sādhū*. If somebody's *guru*, if he's going against *śāstra*, then he's not *guru*. **And *śāstra* means the original *guru* and *sādhū*.** What do we mean by *śāstra*? Just like in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam. Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam means we are studying the character of original *sādhū* and *guru*. Just like Prahāda Mahārāja, Prahāda-caritra, Dhruva-caritra, Ambarīṣa-caritra, the Pāṇḍavas, Bhīṣma. So Bhāgavata means the glories of Bhagavān and bhaga..., devotees. That's all. This is Bhāgavatam. So *sādhū-guru*-

¹⁰⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/notes/basu-ghosh-das/krishna-kirti-das-clarifies-why-hes-rejected-hridayananda-maharaj/746683622059271/>

śāstra-vākya, tinete kariyā aikya. So this is *sādhana-bhakti*. **We must take instruction from the spiritual master.**” (The Nectar of Devotion — November 13, 1972, Vṛndāvana)

(k) Vedic women as givers of mantras (mantra-dā)

In another attempt to lend credence to your claim that women must not initiate until the level of *bhāva-bhakti*, you are trying to support it by alleged lack of historical evidence:

“In Kṛṣṇa’s Vedic culture there were *brāhmaṇīs* (wives of *brāhmaṇas*), but **they never took the position of *dīkṣā-guru*.**” (VNP 35)

“Even sattvic women in Krishna’s vedic culture were wives of *brāhmaṇas* **and not *dīkṣā-gurus*.**” (March 18)

However, you might have missed or ignored examples to the contrary:

1) Rukmiṇī receiving a Durgā-mantra from brāhmaṇīs:

In Chapter 53 of the Tenth Canto Rukmiṇī Devī received a *mantra* for worshiping Goddess Bhavānī, or Durgā, from elderly wives of *brāhmaṇas*, who also taught and guided Rukmiṇī in the ritual of worship itself:

*nānopahāra balibhir vāramukhyāḥ sahasraśaḥ
srag-gandha-vastrābharaṇair dvija-patnyaḥ sv-alaṅkṛtāḥ* (42)

*gāyantyaś ca stuvantaś ca gāyakā vādyā-vādakāḥ
parivārya vadhūṁ jagmuḥ sūta-māgadha-vandināḥ* (43)

Behind the bride followed thousands of prominent courtesans bearing various offerings and presents, **along with well-adorned brāhmaṇas' wives singing and reciting prayers**, and bearing gifts of garlands, scents, clothing and jewelry. There were also professional singers, musicians, bards, chroniclers and heralds.

*āsādyā devī-sadanarṁ dhautā-pāda-karāmbujā
upasprśya śuciḥ śāntā praviveśāmbikāṅṭikām* (44)

Upon reaching the goddess's temple, Rukmiṇī first washed her lotus feet and hands and then sipped water for purification. Thus sanctified and peaceful, she came into the presence of mother Ambikā. (44)

*tām vai pravayaso bālām vidhi-jñā vipra-yoṣitaḥ
bhavānīm vadayām cakrur bhava-patnīm bhavānvitām* (45)

The older wives of brāhmaṇas, expert in the knowledge of rituals, led young Rukmiṇī in offering respects to Bhavānī, who appeared with her consort, Lord Bhava.

Jīva Gosvāmī comments: “The elderly women also taught her the mantra in the next verse. They had also realized the mantra.”¹⁰⁶

*namasye tvāmbike 'bhīkṣṇam sva-santāna-yutām śivām
bhūyāt patir me bhagavān kṛṣṇas tad anumodatām (46)*

[Princess Rukmiṇī prayed:] “O mother Ambikā, wife of Lord Siva, I repeatedly offer my obeisances unto you, together with your children. May Lord Kṛṣṇa become my husband. Please grant this!”

*adbhir gandhākṣatair dhūpair vāsaḥ-sraṅ-mālya bhūṣaṇaiḥ
nānopahāra-balibhiḥ pradīpāvalibhiḥ pṛthak (47)*

*vipra-striyaḥ patimatīs tathā taiḥ samapūjayat
lavaṅpūpa-tāmbūla-kaṅṭha-sūtra-phalekṣubhiḥ (48)*

Rukmiṇī worshiped the goddess with water, scents, whole grains, incense, clothing, garlands, ornaments such as jeweled necklaces, and other prescribed offerings and gifts, and also with arrays of lamps. **The married brāhmaṇa women each performed worship simultaneously with the same items**, also offering savories and cakes, prepared betel nut, auspicious beaded necklaces, fruit and sugarcane.

*tasyai striyas tāḥ pradaduḥ śeṣām yuyujur āśiṣaḥ
tābhyo devyai namaś cakre śeṣām ca jagṛhe vadhūḥ (49)*

The ladies gave the bride the remnants of the offerings and then blessed her. She in turn bowed down to them and the deity and accepted the remnants as prasādam.

Although the elderly *brāhmaṇīs* apparently did not perform a Vaiṣṇava *dīkṣā*, they nevertheless did initiate Rukmiṇī into the ritual of worshipping Goddess Bhavānī and into the chanting of the mantra required for the worship. Jīva Gosvāmī explains that the mantra was revealed to them, or realized by them (*tāsām eva draṣṭṛtvaṁ labhyate*). The ladies then took part in the worship alongside Rukmiṇī and at its conclusion offered her *prasāda* and blessings.

In other words, the *brāhmaṇas'* wives by themselves and independently of their husbands performed all the brahminical functions, including instructions, worship, blessings and, yes, initiation into worship for Lord Kṛṣṇa's eternal consort, Rukmiṇī — contrary to your notion that “in Kṛṣṇa's Vedic culture there were *brahmanis* (wives of *brāhmaṇas*), but they never took the position of *dīkṣā-guru*.” (VNP 35)

¹⁰⁶ from Vaiṣṇava-toṣinī by Jīva Gosvāmī (translation by Bhanu Swami): anena tu vakṣyamāṇasya mantrasya tābhir upadeśyatvamāyātīti tāsām eva tad-draṣṭṛtvaṁ labhyate |

2) gopis seeking initiation from Paurṇamāsī's disciple Nāndīmukhī:

In his book *Muktā-carita* Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī writes of Lord Kṛṣṇa's conversation with Satyabhāmā in Dvārakā, in which Lord Kṛṣṇa tells her about His earlier pearl pastime with the gopis in Vraja. In the course of the pastime the gopis:

- refer to Nāndīmukhī as an initiated disciple of Paurṇamāsī: (*śrī-bhagavatī-pāda-padma-siddha-mantra-śiṣyā*, literally "a disciple into the *siddha-mantra* at the lotus feet of Śrī Bhagavatī, [i.e. Paurṇamāsī].")
- express their intention to get initiated by Nāndīmukhī: (*-nāndīmukhī-sakāśāt siddha-mantram ekam ādāya katharṁ na tathodyamaḥ kriyate?*, literally "having received the same *siddha-mantra* from Nāndīmukhī, why don't we endeavor for the same [result]?")
- and actually approach Nāndīmukhī with this request.

You may try to dismiss this as not a historical account. However, there are three options here:

Option 1: Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī documented an actual conversation between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā in Dvārakā, in which Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke of the actual, historical pearl pastime.

Option 2: Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī documented an actual conversation between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā in Dvārakā, in which Lord Kṛṣṇa invented either the entire pearl pastime, which never happened in reality, or parts of it.

Option 3: *Muktā-carita* is a purely fictional narrative. There was actually no such conversation between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā in Dvārakā, nor the pearl pastime in Vraja.

Since our Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava siddhanta and Śrīla Prabhupāda's teaching place strong emphasis on *mukhya-vṛtti* (literal interpretation) over and above *gauṇa-vṛtti* and *lakṣaṇā-vṛtti* (indirect or figurative interpretations), we naturally favor option 1 by accepting Lord Kṛṣṇa's words to Satyabhāmā described by the Gosvāmī as literal. In other words, we believe that there was an actual conversation between Lord Kṛṣṇa and Satyabhāmā in Dvārakā, in which Lord Kṛṣṇa spoke of the actual, historical pearl pastime. However, let us examine all the three options.

Option 1: We should note that, while most of *Muktā-carita* indeed consists of Lord Kṛṣṇa's joking with the gopis, the early part of it contains a prelude to the humorous exchange. This prelude, being told by Lord Kṛṣṇa to Satyabhāmā, is to be accepted literally.

Therefore, if one accepts that Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī's *Muktā-carita* describes actual, historical events in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes in Vraja, then one has to accept that Paurṇamāsī initiated Nāndīmukhī, that the gopis approached Nāndīmukhī for initiation, and that thus women initiating was an accepted social norm in Vraja. In other words, it is not only in jest that initiations from women are mentioned in *Mukta-carita*.

Moreover, there is little logical ground to dismiss later references to the possibility of initiation from women in the course of humorous exchange between Lord Kṛṣṇa and the gopis as made in jest, unrelated or contrary to the accepted social norms in Vrndavana. By the same token, one may just as well dismiss Lord Kṛṣṇa's numerous words of eulogy of or romantic interest in the gopis during the same exchange as spoken in jest only.

Therefore, rather than challenging Bhaguri-muni's position as a *dīkṣā-guru* of Vrajavasis, these references, in or outside of the joking exchange, simply show that women also initiate in Vraja – albeit "not so many".

Option 2: If we assume that Lord Kṛṣṇa in His historical conversation with Satyabhāmā simply invented the pearl pastime or its parts, we also have to admit that, in the absence of definitive statement to this effect by the *śāstra* or *ācāryas*, we have no means of verifying the correctness of our assumption. This leaves us with no conclusion other than that Lord Kṛṣṇa chose to speak of women initiating as an accepted social norm in Vraja, for whatever reason, and that we have to accept His words as a normative dharma unless interpreted otherwise by guru, sadhus, or *śāstra*.

Option 3: If we consider Mukta-carita a mere fictional narrative rather than a "historical statement", we are still led to assume that its references to women initiating simply indicate that Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī did not see the function of *dīkṣā-guru* as something wrong or non-Vedic for women.

(I) Did Jāhnavā-devī behave nicely?

In VNP 30-32 you attempt to answer a very relevant question:

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

Your answer to this question is so revealing that we will reproduce it and comment on it in its entirety.

Before we begin, the first thing to note in your two-page answer is that it doesn't answer the question "How can you decide which woman is a siddha?" at all. Rather, you dismiss it as irrelevant. We will deal with this in more detail in the Section II.5.b "Ativyapti".

Here is your answer:

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

Let us remind you that, as was already proved above, if Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā 1.38-43 is taken as the normative document for *dīkṣā-guru* qualifications, the norm will be that *śūdras* and *antarodbhavas* also

cannot be *dīkṣā-gurus*. You yourself acknowledge this restriction above: “This means that if needed, a *dīkṣā-guru* can be appointed even from a prohibited category, **provided that he or she is a *siddha***.”

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

[We will deal with “not so many” and “very special case” in detail in Section III below to show how they prove something contrary to your contentions here.]

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

“And Bhagavad-gītā 3.17–25 explains why they did not become. Lord Kṛṣṇa explains that even if one is a *siddha* and therefore eligible to transgress the rules of *varṇāśrama-dharma*, one should still go on following one’s prescribed duties, which also means not following others’ prescribed duties, in order to guide others who are less advanced.

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

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

Here you mention that Kunti, Devahūti, Rukmiṇī, Yaśodā and other ladies didn’t become *dīkṣā-gurus* “in order to guide others who are less advanced” per Lord Kṛṣṇa’s instructions in BG 3.17-25, of which they “were aware”.

First of all, again in an awe-inspiring display of transtemporal telepathy, this time you glean your insights from the minds of residents of bygone *yugas*. However, since your own repeatedly stated epistemological preference is *guru-sādhu-śāstra*, could you support with sastric evidence that you have read their minds correctly? For more on the possible reasons why one of such ladies didn’t become a *dīkṣā-guru*, please see Section IV.

Second, your statement leads one to conclude that Jāhnavā-devī set a bad example and improperly guided others by becoming an *ācāryā*. You cannot avoid this conclusion by stating that Jāhnavā-devī, being the Lord’s *śakti*, was able to do what Kunti could not, since you immediately go on to state that

even Kṛṣṇa Himself would be responsible for the destruction of the whole society if He failed to fulfill His *varṇāśrama* duties, because “everyone will follow His example”.

Then you again conclude that this was the reason why Kunti et al “did not **artificially** try to become *dīkṣā-guru* — even though they were eligible from all angles, even according to the *śāstras*”. You say it was because they were aware of Lord Kṛṣṇa’s instructions and example in BG 3.17-25 and didn’t want to be “the reason for the destruction of the whole society.”

So, following your train of thought, if it would have been artificial, *aśāstric* and socially disruptive even for *siddhas* like Kuntidevī and Devahūtī to initiate a disciple or two, then it must have been immensely more artificial, *aśāstric* and disruptive for Jāhnavā-devī to actually act as the *ācāryā* for the entire Gauḍīya *sampradāya*.

You then try, as usual, to enlist Śrīla Prabhupāda in support of your view:

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

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

“In ISKCON, a *guru* must preach. Therefore, a *guru* “must behave nicely,” following all rules and regulations for non-*siddhas*, thereby setting an example to be followed by others. The very word *ācārya* means “to lead by an example.” This is another reason for the Vaiṣṇavīs to not become *dīkṣā-gurus* and follow the examples of predecessor Vaiṣṇavīs like Kunti and Devahūtī.”

So what you are trying to make Śrīla Prabhupāda say here is that for women — **even for *siddha* women** such as Kunti etc. — “behaving nicely” and being “*ācārya*” means that they won’t initiate.

This necessitates that, by her being the *ācāryā* of the entire Gauḍīya *sampradāya*, Jāhnavā-devī was not an *ācāryā* or behaving nicely. Furthermore, she was being artificial in that role, she was not actually guiding others less advanced people by her example and thus was contributing to the destruction of the world — perhaps because, unlike Kuntidevī, Yaśodā and other *siddha* women, Jāhnavā-devī was either not aware of BG 3.17-25 or simply chose to disregard Lord Kṛṣṇa’s example and precept.

Now, while trying to “screw out” a contrived meaning out of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement made in an entirely different context and to make it sound as if applicable to VDG, you forget or deliberately conceal Śrīla Prabhupāda’s other statements in which he directly dealt with Jāhnavā-devī being an *ācāryā* when he was specifically asked about the subject of Vaiṣṇavīs acting as *dīkṣā-gurus*:

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

(For a detailed treatment of this and the other conversation, please consult Section III.3 below.)

So, for the record, when discussing the exact topic of VDG, Śrīla Prabhupāda does not agree with your interpretation. Moreover, even his qualifying statements about VDG as being “not so many” and “very special case” are totally free from all your offensive innuendos in regard to Jāhnavā-devī and, by extension, other Vaiṣṇavīs who acted and continue to act as *dīkṣā-gurus* in our *sampradāya*.

Furthermore, if the entire Vaiṣṇava community — which at the time of Jāhnavā-devī included such luminaries as Jīva Gosvāmī, Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and Narottama Dāsa Ṭhākura — allowed themselves to be “controlled” by a woman, they disagree with you too.

Hence, once again we see that your interpretation of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā is not only unique and imaginative (*sva-kapola-kalpitatvam*¹⁰⁷) but also runs contrary to the orthodoxy and orthopraxy of our entire Gauḍīya *sampradāya*. And yes, it is also deeply offensive.

(5) *Defining pratyakṣitātma-nāthas*

As was conclusively shown above, in your attempt to separate women from the other categories disqualified for being *dīkṣā-gurus* by BS 1.44, you had to:

- reinterpret a number of key verses from Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā;
- ignore commentaries on some of them by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra;
- misconstrue Lord Caitanya's words in Prema-vivarta and ignore His other words in Caitanya-caritāmṛita;
- force several Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements into artificial compliance with your view or sideline them altogether — and occasionally read his mind, or “actual intentions”; and
- challenge our entire *sampradāya*.

It was also shown that, taken literally, neither Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā nor the extant commentary on it leave any room for your interpretation of BS 1.44 as applicable only to women and not to the rest of the “spiritual pariahs”: *śūdras*, untouchables, people of mixed birth, lustful, sinful, criminal etc. We also showed that, just like women, several other categories in this list are disqualified from becoming gurus on the basis of their inborn rather than acquired qualifications — such as *antarodbhavas* and *saṅkīrnas*, or people of mixed genealogy.

Therefore, discussing now what exact level of bhakti *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām* relates to is relevant for our discussion only if you:

¹⁰⁷ Sarva-saṁvādinī on Tattva-sandarbhā, 4

1. finally accept that, taken literally, the term must apply to ALL categories of people disqualified from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus* in BS 1.42-43 and BS 1.59-60;
2. agree that, taken literally, BS 1.44 refers only to *yogis* with prenatal direct perception of *bhagavat-tattva* (*sākṣāt-kṛta-bhagavat-tattva*) born in lower families and NOT to those who have attained this level by *sādhana-bhakti* later in life;
3. demonstrate that Śrīla Prabhupāda indeed intended to base assessments of *dīkṣā-guru* candidates in ISKCON on Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā and, more specifically, on your non-literal interpretation of it as “the first authorized account of the process of initiations followed in ISKCON today.” (VNP xvi)

Until then, any discussion on what level of bhakti the term *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* refers to will be, albeit amusing, a purely hypothetical exercise at best — and so will be our counterarguments. Since, unlike you, I don't consider myself eligible to independently codify norms and qualifications for the service of *dīkṣā-guru* in ISKCON for posterity on the mere basis of my own interpretations of selected verses from a *śāstra* of my choosing, nor do I consider it necessary, please accept most of my comments in this section as meant simply to problematize your exegesis rather than establish my own.

With this caveat, here are a few comments:

To recap, your assertion is that the term *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām* refers to the level of *bhāva* and beyond. You then illustrate this level with the following quote from Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura's Harināma-cintāmaṇi, chapter 15, as you deem applicable:

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

"Here, one's identification with the material body will vanish and identification with one's spiritual body will predominate. In that spiritual body (*svarūpa-siddhi*) **one will always see Vṛndāvana and serve Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa**. This final stage is called *sampatti-daśā*. By Kṛṣṇa's mercy, suddenly one's material body, mind, intelligence and false ego will be cast off and one will appear in a pure spiritual body, serving Rādhā and Kṛṣṇa along with Their eternal associates. The *jīva* can achieve this fifth stage in perfecting *rasa* by taking the name and becoming purified." (VNP 8, 34-35)

You then emphasize that this description of *svarūpa-siddhi* by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, that you equate with *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas* of BS 1.44, implies that women also need to be able to always see Kṛṣṇa

directly and be residents of Goloka Vrindavana to act as *dīkṣā-gurus* and insist that, until at least on this level, Vaiṣṇavīs must not initiate.

I then pointed out that your treatment of the term *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* as synonymous with *bhāva-bhakti* is arbitrary and specious.¹⁰⁸

At this point I would like to thank you for your response to my citing Nārada in his previous life at the level of *mūrcchita-kaṣāya bhakta-siddha* (a perfected devotee whose residual material desires are inactivated) as an example of *sadhaka*. Quoting him as a *madhyama-adhikārī* and a *sādhaka* was based on the opinion of BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja, both stated¹⁰⁹ and cited,¹¹⁰ who explained these three levels of *bhakta-siddhas* as somewhat corresponding to three levels of *dīkṣā-gurus*. However, I agree that Jīva Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, and Śrīla Prabhupāda in their commentaries on SB describe Narada in his previous life not as an ordinary *sādhaka*. In fact, all three describe him as a *prema-bhakta*, while slightly differing with one another on the exact nature of Narada’s disqualification for seeing the Lord, but agreeing that he was able to see the Lord only once to increase his longing.

However, insisting as you do that *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* must be understood as the level of *bhāva* and above, on which one always sees Kṛṣṇa, raises more questions that it answers. In fact, this definition of *dīkṣā-guru* eligibility is flawed with three defects:¹¹¹

- (1) *avyapti* — being too narrow and thus excluding elements that should fall within the definition;
- (2) *ativyapti* — being too broad and thus including elements that should be excluded from the definition; and

¹⁰⁸ Email dated 7 March 2019, PAMHO text 31295273.

¹⁰⁹ BR Śrīdhara Mahārāja in Sri Guru and His Grace: “A spiritual master may be one of three kinds. The first class guru extends one foot from the spiritual world into the material world and takes souls from here to there. The guru in the intermediate stage is situated here, but he has extended one foot there and he is taking souls to the spiritual world. The lowest class of guru has both feet here, but he clearly sees the highest plane and is trying to take the souls from here to that plane. In this way, we may roughly conceive of three kinds of guru. These are not three stages of Vaiṣṇava, but three stages of guru. A first class devotee takes the position of an intermediate devotee when he descends to play the role of an ācārya, one who teaches by example. He has one leg there in the spiritual world, and by the order of Kṛṣṇa, he extends another leg here in the material world to do the duty of an ācārya. The guru who has one leg here in the material world and extends another leg into the spiritual world is a madhyama-adhikari, or intermediate devotee. He also discharges the duty of an ācārya. The lowest class of ācārya has both legs here in the material world, but his vision is towards the spiritual world. He may also do the duty of an ācārya. These are the gradations of ācāryas, and the different stages of Vaiṣṇavas are another thing.”

¹¹⁰ Tripurari Swami, Sanga vol. 3/29 of 22 September 2001: “According to one edition of the Gauḍīya published after the disappearance of Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura yet widely accepted by the disciples of Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the kanīṣṭha-madhyama is considered murcchita-kashaya, a mahabagavata who is still slightly influenced by sattva-guna and corresponding samskaras and vasanas (desires), yet not such that they hinder his bhakti. He has nistha and ruci. The madhyama-madhyama is considered nirdhuta-kashaya, a mahabagavata who is free from the negative influence of the gunas but not mature in love of God. He experiences the ankura (sprout) of bhava. The uttama-madhyama approaches the status of a mahabagavata known as bhagavata-parsada-deha-prapta, being fully situated in his spiritual body, a stage that generally implies leaving the sadhaka-deha, as in the case of Narada Muni. As mentioned above, all uttama-adhikaris are then differentiated from one another in terms of their rasa, the uttama-uttama being in gopi prema. These three types of mahabagavatas are discussed in Jiva Goswami’s Bhakti-sandarbhā. Śrīla Śrīdhara Mahārāja was using this description when he articulated three types of gurus: one with both feet here but his eyes in the spiritual world, one who extends one foot to the spiritual world while keeping one here, and one who extends one foot here while keeping the other in Goloka.

¹¹¹ Quoted from Jīva Gosvāmī’s Bhakti-sandarbhā edition by Satya-narayana Dasa, footnote 45 in anuccheda 216.

(3) *asambhava* — infeasibility of the validity of an assertion.

Earlier in this text we have already extensively dealt with *asambhava*, or infeasibility of your definition, by showing how your take on BS 1.44 is creative, unprecedented, at times absurd, and also leading to untenable conclusions or unacceptable consequences.

We will now show how it is both *avyapti* (too narrow) and *atīvyapti* (too broad).

(a) Avyapti (too narrow)

By arbitrarily maintaining that the term *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* (literally, those who directly see the Lord of the soul), refers only to those who **always** see Kṛṣṇa on the level of *bhāva-bhakti* and above, you exclude devotees who are either on the *bhāva-bhakti* platform and don't always see Him, or those who are able to see Him while being on a lower platform (as well as those who see other forms of the Lord such as Nārāyaṇa and Paramātmā, but we won't discuss this omission for simplicity's sake).

Examples:

1) Nārada and BRS 2.1.276

In your last email of March 18 you quoted BRS 2.1.276 as a description of *bhāva-bhakta* called *sādhaka* in reference to Nārada in his previous life:

*tatra sādhakāḥ
utpanna-ratayaḥ samyañ nairvighnyam anupāgatāḥ |
kṛṣṇa-sākṣāt-kṛtau योग्याḥ sādhakāḥ parikīrtitāḥ ||276||*

Practitioners (sādhaka) are those who have developed *ratī* for Kṛṣṇa but have not completely extinguished the anarthas, and who are qualified to see Kṛṣṇa directly.¹¹²

to prove that Nārada was a *bhāva-bhakta*.

However, in doing so, you failed him by your own definition, because, as is explained in SB 1.6.21, in his previous life he saw the Lord only once, and not always:

*hantāsmiñ janmani bhavān mā mām draṣṭum ihārhati
avipakva-kaṣāyāñāṁ durdarśo 'haṁ kuyoginām*

O Nārada, [the Lord said,] I regret that during this lifetime you will not be able to see Me anymore. Those who are incomplete in service and who are not completely free from all material taints can hardly see Me.

¹¹² Translation by Bhanu Swami.

Moreover, as was already quoted in my previous email, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains in his commentary on SB 1.6.22 that the Lord replied to Nārada's plea to reveal Himself once more by stating that it was His rule that devotees such as Nārada see Him only once in their lifetime:

“But just show Yourself once more to me!”

“Seeing Me only once, not many times, is enough to produce desire for Me (kāmāya). By only slight increase in longing, prema will not develop to the state of youthfulness in a person having somewhat weak prema. **My rule is that I show Myself one time only to a person practicing in his present body (in his sādḥaka-deha) who has developed prema.**”¹¹³

This statement by the Lord is reflected by the above-quoted BRS 3.1.276 in which Rupa Gosvāmī defines *sādḥakas* as those who still have both material desires (*nairvighnyam anupāgatāḥ*) and **eligibility for seeing Kṛṣṇa** (*kṛṣṇa-sākṣāt-kṛtau yogyāḥ*) rather than His actual and continuous vision — as you demand of Vaiṣṇavīs.

Thus, your interpretation of *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas* as those who **always** see Him leaves out most, if not all, of *bhāva-bhaktas* despite you claiming them to be eligible.

2) Āsakti

On the other hand, devotees on the level of *āsakti* are also able to see the Lord in their purified hearts, and their vision is almost as good as seeing Him directly. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes in *Madhurya-kadambini* 6.1:

*āsaktir evāntaḥ-karaṇa-mukuraṁ tathā mārjayati yathā tatra sahasā pratibimbīto bhagavān
avalokyamāna iva bhavati.*

Here are several translations of this statement:

“Āsakti is able to cleanse the mirror of the devotee's consciousness to the extent that the Supreme Lord is always reflected in it.”¹¹⁴

“Āsakti cleans the mirror of devotee's heart in such a way the reflection of the Lord suddenly seems to be almost directly visible there.”¹¹⁵

¹¹³ VCT on SB 1.6.22 (translated by Bhanu Swami): tarhi hā hā ! punar apy eka-vāraṁ darśanaṁ dehi ! ity ata āha—saktiḥ ity | etad eka-vāra-darśanaṁ te kāmāya tan manorathaṁ sādḥayitum yogyam ity arthaḥ, na tu muhur darśanam | autkaṅṭhasyānavivṛddhyā premṇo'py anativṛddhas tasya tāruṇyaṁ na syād iti bhāvaḥ | **ata eva jāta-premṇe bhaktāya sādḥaka-dehe eka-vāraṁ eva darśanaṁ dadāmīti mama niyamaḥ** |

¹¹⁴ Translation by Sarvabhavana Dasa

¹¹⁵ Translation by Ananta Dasa Babaji

“This āsakti cleanses the heart of the devotee and makes it so transparent that the Lord's reflection appears therein in such a way as if the Lord has appeared before the devotee in person.”¹¹⁶

“Āsakti polishes the mirror of the heart to such a condition the reflection of the Lord suddenly seems to be almost visible there.”¹¹⁷

...which stress that *āsakti* enables a devotee to see the Lord in the heart as if He is personally present.

Indeed, *āsakti* not only enables a devotee to see the Lord as if face-to-face, but also to realise his or her *svarūpa* and that of the Lord, as stated by Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura in Bhakti-tattva-viveka, Chapter 3:

“When pure bhakti arises during *sādhana*, the actions of bhakti take on beauty. **Realization of the jīva's *siddha-svarūpa* and the Lord's *siddha-svarūpa* becomes prominent among the various beauties. In that bhakti great attachment with longing (*āsakti*) arises.** When that state of practice arrives, pure *sādhana-bhakti* transforms into *rati* or *bhāva-bhakti* and finally *prema*. In *bhāva* condition, the bhakti attracts Kṛṣṇa with his associates but in *prema*, bhakti makes the devotee enjoy the highest rasa as a participant in Kṛṣṇa's pastimes. This topic will be explained in detail later.”¹¹⁸

and in Amnaya-sutra, 119:

āsakti-paryantā sādhana-bhaktiḥ

Translation: Sādhana-bhakti (devotional service in practice) continues up to the stage of āsakti (attachment).

Commentary by Śrīla Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura:

In the Muṇḍaka Upaniṣad (3.1.7) it is said:

*br̥hac ca tad divyam acintya-rūpaṁ sūkṣmāc ca tat sūkṣmataraṁ vibhāti
dūrāt sa-dūre tad ihānti ke ca paśyatsv ihaiva nihitaṁ guhāyām*

"The Supreme Personality of Godhead is the greatest. He is splendid and transcendental. His form is beyond the understanding of the material mind. He is more subtle than the most subtle. He stays far away from the impious. **The devotees see Him in their hearts.**"

In the Nārāyaṇa-Pāñcarātra it is said:

bhāvonmatto harau kiñcin na deva-sukham ātmanaḥ

¹¹⁶ As translated by Bhakti Hridaya Bon Mahārāja

¹¹⁷ Translation by Dina-bandhu Dasa

¹¹⁸ Translation by Bhanu Swami

"In that stage one becomes intoxicated with love for Lord Kṛṣṇa."

Do these descriptions of devotees on the level of *āsakti* pass your eligibility test as *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas* and self-realized souls? And if not, why?

3) SB 10.87.2

In SB 10.87.1 Mahārāja Parikṣit asks Sukadeva Gosvāmī: "How can the Vedas directly describe the Supreme Absolute Truth, who cannot be described in words?"

In SB 10.87.2 Sukadeva Gosvāmī begins to answer his question by stating, in effect, that the Lord being omnipotent (*prabhuḥ*) can manifest Himself even in the material intelligence, mind and senses of the living entities.

Sanātana Gosvāmī in *Bṛhad-vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* explains:

"Though the Lord is beyond the senses and mind, being Adhokṣaja, when persons perform bhakti, by the mercy generated by bhakti, the person contacts the Lord's personal *śakti* and **He becomes visible to the eye of undeserving persons.**"¹¹⁹

Jīva Gosvāmī in *Laghu-vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* comments along the same line:

"By chanting the name of the Lord, one's mind concentrates on the Lord. *Sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt*: the Supreme Lord becomes immediately captured in the heart of the accomplished devotees by hearing Bhāgavatam and **even by those who have suddenly developed a desire to hear it.**" (SB 10.87.2)¹²⁰

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura in his commentary on the verse explains:

"The Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad (Pūrva 12) says:

*sat-puṇḍarīka-nayanam meghābham vaidyutāmbaram
dvi-bhujam mauna-mudrāḍhyam vana-mālinam īśvaram*

"The Supreme Lord, appearing in His two-armed form, had divine lotus eyes, a complexion the color of a cloud, and garments that resembled lightning. He wore a garland of forest flowers, and His beauty was enhanced by His pose of meditative silence." In this context, the transcendental

¹¹⁹ From Sanātana Gosvāmī's *Bṛhad-vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* on SB 10.87.2 (translated by Bhanu Swami): *ato'dhokṣajatvād avān-manasāgocaro'pi Śri-bhagavān bhaktim kurvati jane bhakta-janyenaiva prasādena tatra sva-śaktim saṅgamyā bāḍham aghaṭamānām api cakṣur-ādi-gocaratām prāpnotīty*

¹²⁰ From Jīva Gosvāmī's *Laghu-vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī* on SB 10.87.2 (translated by Bhanu Swami): *ṭīkā ca nāmoccāraṇam puruṣa-viṣayā matir bhavatiṭy ādikā sadyo hṛdy avarudhyate 'tra kṛtibhiḥ śuśrūṣubhis tat-kṣaṇāt iti |*

intelligence and senses of the *siddha-bhakta* (perfected devotee) can correctly perceive Kṛṣṇa's purely spiritual beauty. It is his realizations that are echoed in the Gopāla-tāpanī's comparison of Kṛṣṇa's eyes, body and clothing to a lotus, a cloud and lightning. For the *sādhaka* (neophyte devotee), however, Śrī Kṛṣṇa's spiritual eyes, body and clothing are not actually perceivable to his intelligence and senses. Nevertheless, by reading verses such as this one from the Gopāla-tāpanī Upaniṣad, the *sādhaka* thinks of the wonderful beauty of Kṛṣṇa. Concentrating his mind in this way, he gradually becomes joyful under the impression that he is meditating on the Lord, though he is not fully realized and cannot even meditate steadily on the effulgence surrounding Kṛṣṇa's transcendental body. But Śrī Kṛṣṇa on the other hand, being moved by the waves of His boundless mercy, thinks "Oh how wonderful that My devotee is meditating on Me." **Then when the *sādhaka*'s devotion matures Kṛṣṇa brings that beloved devotee to His feet and engages him in confidential service.** Thus it is concluded that only by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa can the Vedas convey the transcendental form and identity of the Lord."¹²¹

The term Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura uses to describe the level of maturity of a *sādhaka*'s bhakti is *bhakti-paripāka*. It cannot be equated with *bhāva-bhakti*, because otherwise it will clash with Sanātana Gosvāmī's previous explanation of the Lord's becoming visible to the eye of undeserving persons, since BRS 2.1.276 describes a *bhava-bhakta* as deserving to see Kṛṣṇa (*kṛṣṇa-sākṣāt-kṛtau योगyāḥ*). Also, Visnavantha Cakravartī Ṭhākura himself describes in Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu-bindu such mature *sādhana-bhakti* as one of the precursors to *bhāva-bhakti*, along with the mercy of Kṛṣṇa or His devotees, but not *bhāva-bhakti* itself.¹²²

So it follows from these commentaries of the *ācāryas* that although the actual eligibility for directly seeing Kṛṣṇa occurs on the level of *bhāva-bhakti*, devotees on lower levels of bhakti may still experience His personal presence, as if seeing Him directly, due to His merciful nature.

4) BG 6.47

Connected with the previous point about the *avyapti* defect of your treatment of the term *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām* in BS 1.44 is another:

In BG 6.47 Lord Kṛṣṇa declares devotees to be the highest of all yogis:

*yoginām api sarveṣāṃ mad-gatenāntar-ātmanā
śraddhāvān bhajate yo mām sa me yuktatamo mataḥ*

¹²¹ From Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's Sarartha-darsini-ṭīkā on SB 10.87.2 (translation by Bhanu Swami): *sat-puṇḍarīka-nayanam meghābham vaidyutāmbaram | dvi-bhujam jñāna-mudrādhyam vana-mālinam īśvaram || iti | atra siddha-bhaktānām aprākṛta-buddhīndriyair aprākṛta-puṇḍarīka-megha-vidyutāṃśu-grāhyatvāt tābhir upāmatesu bhagavan-nayana-vapur-vasaneṣv aprākṛtī tāpanī śrutir bhagavan-nayanādi-varṇayitrī sukhenaiva carati | sādhaka-bhaktānām tu buddhy-ādibhir agrāhyatve'pi tatra prākṛta-puṇḍarīkādi-sādṛśyāropeṇaiva te yathā kathañcid eva buddhim praveśayantaś cittaikāgryeṇāpi vastuto'spṛṣṭa-tad-rūpa-bhāsā api bhagavantaṃ prabhuṃ dhyāyāma ity abhimānino hṛṣyanti, bhagavān apy apāra-kṛpā taraṅga-vaśād eva ebhir bhaktair ahaṃ dhyāta ity abhimanyamānas tad-bhakti-paripāke satī tāt sva-bhaktān sva-caraṇādikaṃ sevārtham ānayatīti bhagavat-svarūpasya śruti-gamyatvaṃ tat-kṛpayaiva siddham ||*

¹²² *atha sādhana-bhakti-paripākena kṛṣṇa-kṛpayā tad bhakta-kṛpayā vā bhāva-bhaktir bhavati.*

“And of all *yogīs*, the one with great faith who always abides in Me, thinks of Me within himself, and renders transcendental loving service to Me—he is the most intimately united with Me in *yoga* and is the highest of all. That is My opinion.”

In his commentary on this verse Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura writes:

“The devotee is not just superior to one type of *yogī*, but is superior to all types of perfected *yogīs* — those in *samprajñāta-samādhi* and those in *asamprajñāta-samādhi*. (...) He who practices bhakti with hearing and chanting however is the best *yogī*.¹²³

Rupa Gosvāmī describes the Lord’s revelation of Himself to *yogis* in *asamprajñāta-samādhi* in BRS 3.1.36 as the level of *sama-śānta-rati*:

samādhau yoginas tasminn asamprajñāta-nāmani |
līlayā mayi labdhe ’sya babhūvotkampinī tanuḥ ||36||

“When I playfully revealed Myself to the *yogī* absorbed in *asamprajñāta-samādhi*, his body began to shake to the extreme.”¹²⁴

Similarly, in SB 3.21.12 purp. Śrīla Prabhupāda also characterizes *asamprajñāta-samādhi* by the *yogī*’s ability to realize the form of the Lord:

“In *samādhi* or *asamprajñāta* one can realize, by his spiritual senses, the spiritual form of the Lord. That is the ultimate goal of spiritual realization.”

And Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura, likewise, describes *asamprajñāta-samādhi* in Jaiva-dharma, 29, as the level on which a *yogi* sees the Supreme Lord in the heart:

“In *asamprajñāta-samādhi*, when there is no longer any connection with mundane pleasure and the *yogi* perceives the sphūrṭi, manifestation, of Supreme Lord within his heart, the body registers symptoms such as *harṣa*, smiling; *kāma*, desire; and *romāñca*, horripilation. This is how *samā-śānta-rati* is manifested.”¹²⁵

It is thus established that it is an *asamprajñāta-samādhi* *yogi* in your frame of reference is synonymous with *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* — after all, both BS 1.44 and its commentary by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra speak about *yogis*.

¹²³ From Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s commentary on BG 6.47 (translation by Bhanu Svāmī): *na kevalam yogibhya eka-vidhebhyaḥ sakāśāt | api tu yogibhyaḥ sarvebhya nānā-vidhebhya yogārūḍhebhyaḥ samprajñāta-samādhy-asamprajñāta-samādhimadbhya’pīti | yad vā yogā upāyāḥ karma-jñāna-tapo-yoga-bhakti-ādayas tadvatām madhye yo mām bhajeta | mad-bhaktō bhavati sa yukatatama upāyavattamaḥ | karmī tapasvī jñānī ca yogī mataḥ | aṣṭāṅga-yogī yogitaraḥ | śravaṇa-kīrtanādi-bhaktimāms tu yogitama ity arthaḥ*

¹²⁴ Translation by Bhanu Swami.

¹²⁵ Translation by Sarvabhavana Dasa.

So, if you accept all these statements as equally authoritative and consistent with each other, then, according to Lord Kṛṣṇa, Rupa Gosvāmī, Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura and Śrīla Prabhupāda, a *śravaṇa-kīrtanādi-bhaktimān*, or a devotee who practices *bhakti* by hearing and chanting is the best *yogī*, superior not only to one type of *yogī*, but to all types of perfected *yogī*, including those in *samprajñāta-samādhi* and those in *asamprajñāta-samādhi*, the latter being *pratyakṣitātma-nātha*.

In one of numerous statements to that effect, Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport on SB 4.8.44 places *yoga-samadhi* and *śravaṇa-kīrtanādi-bhakti* in the same hierarchical sequence:

“The mind, by nature, is always oscillating, for it is very fickle, but the breathing exercise is meant to control it. This process of controlling the mind might have been very possible in those days millions of years ago when Dhruva Mahārāja took to it, but **at the present moment the mind has to be fixed directly on the lotus feet of the Lord by the chanting process**. By chanting the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra one immediately concentrates on the sound vibration and thinks of the lotus feet of the Lord, and very quickly one is elevated to the position of *samādhi*, or trance. If one goes on chanting the holy names of the Lord, which are not different from the Supreme Personality of Godhead, naturally his mind becomes absorbed in thought of the Lord.” (SB 4.8.44 purp.)

Therefore, applying *kaimutya-nyāya*¹²⁶ here, if a *yogī* in *asamprajñāta-samādhi* is qualified per BS 1.44 to be a *dīkṣā-guru* despite his lower birth, then what to speak of a devotee practicing *bhakti* by *śravaṇam* and *kīrtanam*, whom Lord Kṛṣṇa declares to be greater than such a *yogī*.

5) BG 4.34-35

In your interpretation of *pratyakṣitātma-nāthanām* as “always seeing Kṛṣṇa” and being “residents of Goloka Vrindavana” you also neglect Sarayū-prasāda Miśra’s gloss of this term in his commentary on BS 1.44 as *sākṣāt-kṛta-bhagavat-tattvānām*, which literally means, “of those who directly perceive the truth of the Lord.”

The term *bhagavat-tattva* and its direct perception, of course, may have a wide spectrum of meanings, ranging from realized knowledge of the Lord all the way up to *prema-bhakti*.¹²⁷

However, in the former meaning, as “direct realization of the truth of the Lord”, *sākṣāt-kṛta-bhagavat-tattva* parallels verses BG 4.34-37. There Lord Kṛṣṇa describes the vision of someone who has received transcendental knowledge from *tattva-darśinaḥ*, self-realized souls who have seen the truth

¹²⁶ *Kaimutya-nyāya*, literally “the “what to speak of” logic, is an argument from a yet stronger reason. Śrīla Prabhupāda’s analogy with smaller amounts of money being automatically included in a large sum is one famous example of *kaumutya-nyāya*: “Just like if you have got one hundred thousand dollars, ten dollars is automatically there. There is no need of searching where is ten dollars.” (Lecture on Bhagavad-gītā 4.31 January 11, 1969, Los Angeles)

¹²⁷ For instance, commentaries of Jīva Gosvāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura on SB 1.2.20 gloss *bhagavat-tattva-vijñānam* as *sākṣātkāro manasi bahir vā bhāvanām*, “direct perception of the Lord internally or externally” (JG) and *bhagavatas tasya svarūpa-guṇa-līlāśvarya-mādhuryasya vijñānam anubhava ity anubhava ity anusarṁhitam bhakteḥ phalam uktaḥ*, “From that [prema] arises realization (*vijñānam*) of the Lord’s form, qualities, pastimes, powers and sweetness. The desired result of *bhakti* has thus been explained.” (VCT) (translation by Bhanu Swami)

and whom both Śrīla Prabhupāda and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura¹²⁸ explain to mean the spiritual master:

*tad viddhi praṇipātena paripraśnena sevayā
upadekṣyanti te jñānaṁ jñāninas tattva-darśinaḥ* (4.34)

“Just try to learn the truth by approaching a spiritual master. Inquire from him submissively and render service unto him. The self-realized soul can impart knowledge unto you because he has seen the truth.”

Lord Kṛṣṇa then describes the result of properly respecting, serving and enquiring from the spiritual master in BG 4.35:

*yaj jñātvā na punar moham evaṁ yāsyasi pāṇḍava
yena bhūtāny aśeṣāṇi drakṣyasi ātmany atho mayi* (4.35)

“Having obtained real knowledge from a self-realized soul, you will never fall again into such illusion, for by this knowledge you will see that all living beings are but part of the Supreme, or, in other words, that they are Mine.”

The verse is synonymous with the description of *uttama-adhikārī* in SB 11.2.45:

*sarva-bhūteṣu yaḥ paśyed bhagavad-bhāvam ātmanaḥ
bhūtāni bhagavaty ātmany eṣa bhāgavatottamaḥ*

which Śrīla Prabhupāda translates in his purport on CC Madhya-līla 8.44 as:

In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam (11.2.45), the symptoms of a topmost devotee are described as follows: “The advanced devotee sees that all living entities are part and parcel of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Everyone is in Kṛṣṇa, and Kṛṣṇa is also within everyone. Such a vision is possible only for a person who is very advanced in devotional service.”

and explains earlier in the same purport:

“Unless one is a first-class devotee, he cannot be a preacher. A preacher is generally a topmost devotee, but in order to meet the general populace, he has to come to distinguish between devotees and nondevotees. Otherwise, an advanced devotee makes no such distinctions. Indeed, he always sees that everyone is engaged in the service of the Lord. When one engages in preaching work, he must distinguish between people and understand that some people are

¹²⁸ Viśvantha Cakravartī Ṭhākura’s commentary on BG 4.34 (translation by Bhanu Swami): “This verse speaks of the method for attaining that knowledge. It is attained by offering respects, bowing down to the *guru*, the instructor; and by asking questions, such as “O master, why am I in this world of misery? How can this world of birth and death be stopped?” And it is attained by service to the *guru*. This is illustrated in the *śruti*: *tad vijñānārthaṁ sa gurum evābhigacchet samit-pāṇiḥ śrotriyaṁ brahma-niṣṭham.*”

not engaged in the devotional service of the Lord. The preacher then has to take compassion upon such innocent people who do not know how to worship the Lord.”

We can conclude, then, that it is by serving one’s spiritual masters (*tattva-darśinaḥ*) per BG 4.34 that one becomes perfectly and directly realized in the truth of the Lord and His relationships with the living entities (*bhūtāny aśeṣāṇi draṅśyasy ātmany atho mayi*), thus qualifying as an *uttama-adhikari* per SB 11.2.45 and as an empowered preacher per CC Madhya 8.44 purp. And, yes, as *sākṣāt-kṛta-bhagavat-tattva* and *dīkṣā-guru* per Sarayū-prasāda Miśra’s commentary on BS 1.44.

This legitimate conclusion, however, is entirely excluded from your *avyapti* exegesis.

6) Goloka vs. Vaikuntha

Incidentally, by insisting that the term *pratyakṣitātma-nāthanām* must refer to Goloka Vrindavana residents who always see Lord Kṛṣṇa face-to-face, you exclude from its scope the very people who *pratyakṣitātma-nāthanām* describes in BS 1.44: *yogis* with direct perception of the Lord or with direct realization of His *tattva*.

Throughout its Chapter 1, Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā makes no reference to the Lord as Kṛṣṇa, to His abode as Goloka Vrindavana, or to one’s devotional mood toward Him as anything except service (*dāsyā*), nor does it give you any grounds to fully equate its process of bhakti (described as *nyāsa*, *prapatti*, or *ātmīya-bhara-nyāsa*) with that of Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu.

Therefore, by transposing its stipulations in BS 1.44 into the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava context you not only create your own innovative exegesis on guru qualifications, but also abandon Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā’s original purport and constituency in the process.

7) Dhruva

Another example of a *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* who was not yet a *bhāva-bhakta* or a resident of Goloka Vrindavana is Dhruva Mahārāja.

In SB 4.8.40-61 Narada Muni instructs Dhruva Mahārāja in the process of meditation on the Supreme Lord in the heart. In SB 4.8.45-51 he describes the Lord’s four-handed form and in SB 4.8.53-54 initiates Dhruva into the mantra *om namo bhagavate vāsudevāya*.

In SB 4.8.77-78, Dhruva not only successfully concentrated his mind on the transcendental form of the Lord without deviation, but, as Śrīla Prabhupāda says in his translation of verse 78, “thus captured the Supreme Personality of Godhead, who is the refuge of the total material creation and who is the master of all living entities”.

In his commentary on SB 4.8.77 Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura explains that the form that Dhruva “thus captured” in his heart was transcendental, that is, beyond the scope of material senses:

“*Bhūtendriyāśayam*, referring to the form of the Lord, can mean “that which does not reside (*aśayam*) within the senses of living beings.” Or it can mean “that, to which the living beings’ senses are completely sleeping (*āśayam*), that which is beyond their senses.”¹²⁹

That it was an actual form of the Lord is further corroborated by the fact that Dhruva became as heavy as Him:

“Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī, therefore, says that since the transcendental form of the Lord is the seed of all greatness, He is the Supreme Brahman. Since the Supreme Brahman was situated in the heart of Dhruva Mahārāja, he became heavier than the heaviest, and therefore everything trembled in all three worlds and in the spiritual world.”¹³⁰ (SB 4.8.78 purp.)

Then Lord Garbhodakaśāyī Viṣṇu decided to interrupt Dhruva’s meditation by personally appearing to him as Prśnigarbha (SB 4.9.1). He first appeared to him in the heart, which Śrīla Prabhupāda explains was due to Dhruva’s “mature position in yogic meditation”, and Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura, likewise, attributes to Dhruva’s “intense concentration through advanced *yoga* meditation”,¹³¹ and then disappeared from his heart and stood in person in front of Dhruva. Overwhelmed with ecstasy, Dhruva tried and failed to glorify the Lord until He touches Dhruva’s forehead with His conch.

Thus, in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words, “transcendentally inspired”, in SB 4.9.6 Dhruva began offering his prayers. The first of his prayers is very significant for our discussion. He said:

dhruva uvāca
yo 'ntaḥ praviśya mama vācam imām prasuptām
sañjīvayaty akhila-śakti-dharaḥ sva-dhāmnā
anyāś ca hasta-caraṇa-śravaṇa-tvag-ādīn
prāṇān namo bhagavate puruṣāya tubhyam (6)

Dhruva Mahārāja said: My dear Lord, You are all-powerful. After entering within me, You have enlivened all my sleeping senses—my hands, legs, ears, touch sensation, life force and especially my power of speech. Let me offer my respectful obeisances unto You.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in his purport:

“This spiritual enlivenment of Dhruva Mahārāja's senses and mind was due to the action of the internal potency of the Lord. In this verse, therefore, the word *sva-dhāmnā* means "by spiritual energy." Spiritual enlightenment is possible by the mercy of the spiritual energy of the Lord.”

¹²⁹ VCT on SB 4.8.77 (translation by Bhanu Swami): *bhūtānām prāṇinām indriyeṣu na śerate na viṣayībhavatīti tayābhāvaṁ bhagavad-rūpam | yad vā, ā samyak śete, na tu jāgartīti teṣām agamyam ity arthaḥ ||*

¹³⁰ JG on SB 4.8.78 (translation by Bhanu Swami): *sarvātmakatvena brhattva-sattvād bhagavato rūpam eva brahma | ata eva ādhāram api | tatas tādrśatvena dhāraṇāt tadātmakatā-prāptyā yadā bhāva-viśeṣeṇa kampate sma tadā viśvam api kampate sma ||* “The Lord is called brahma because he is the greatest, composed of all things. Thus he called the shelter of *mahat-tattva* etc. (*ādhāram mahad-ādīnām*). By becoming one with the Lord through meditation, when he trembled out of ecstasy for the Lord, the whole world trembled.”

¹³¹ VCT on SB 4.9.2 (translation by Bhanu Swami): *dhyāna-yogasya paripākena tivrāyā dhiyā hṛdi sahasaiva sphuritaṁ taḍit-prabhaṁ yathā syāt tathā tirohitaṁ ca upalakṣya sva-samīpe eva drṣṭvā*

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura elaborates:

“...Seeing that all his senses had suddenly become inclined to the Lord, he understood that the Lord had made all his senses spiritual. Appreciating the incomparable, unconditional mercy of the Lord, he offers respects with astonishment: “You, by Your *cit-śakti* (*sva-dhāmnā*), have brought to life the power of speaking in me, now your servant, so that it can describe Your form, qualities and activities. That speech has until now been sleeping, as if dead. And from now on, You should put to sleep, or destroy, that power of speech which was awake in describing material enjoyment of eating and drinking. Not only my power of speaking has changed, but You have engaged my hands and feet in Your service, and You have made my life airs favorable for Your service.” **This means that Dhruva’s senses had all suddenly become spiritualized.** This is understood since the two words *mama* and *imām* modify speech and the other senses, indicating that the same senses have changed.”¹³²

In other words, it was not until the moment when the Lord appeared before Dhruva and touched his forehead with His conch that Dhruva’s power of speech and other senses became spiritualized and suitable for serving the Lord by describing His form, qualities and activities. According to the definition of *bhāva* in BRS 1.3.1 (as quoted in CC Madhya-lila 23.5):

*śuddha-sattva-viśeṣātmā prema-sūryāṁśu-sāmya-bhāk
rucibhiś citta-masṛṇya-kṛd asau bhāva ucyate*

”When devotional service is executed on the transcendental platform of pure goodness, it is like a sunray of love for Kṛṣṇa. At such a time, devotional service causes the heart to be softened by various tastes, and one is then situated in bhāva [emotion].”

...it is with the descent of *śuddha-sattva*, which is glossed as *saṁvid-śakti*,¹³³ a manifestation of *cit-śakti*, that *bhāva-bhakti* manifests.

Therefore, the fact that the Lord appeared to Dhruva before his senses were thus spiritualized means that he was able to “capture[d] the Supreme Personality of Godhead” within, to get His *darśana* in the heart and even to see Him externally prior to his speech and other senses being spiritualized by the Lord’s *cit-śakti* (*sva-dhāmnā*).

¹³² VCT’s commentary on SB 4.9.6 (translation by Bhanu Swami): *akasmād eva svīya-vāg-ādi-sarvendriyāṇām bhagavad-unmukhī-bhāvam ālakṣya eṣām idṛśam aprākṛtatvaṁ Śri-bhagavat-kṛtam iti jānan svasmin bhagavato nirupamām nirupādhikyam tām kṛpām eva sākṣād anubhavann iti vismayena namasyati ya iti | svena dhāmnā cic-chaktyā imām mama tvad-dāsasya vācam tvat-svarūpa-guṇa-lilādikam eva varṇayitrīm prasuptām etāvat-kāla-paryantaṁ śayiteva sthitām mṛtām iva sañjīvayati, yā tu svīyānna-pānādi-prakṛta-bhoga-vārtām viśayīkurvatī jāgraty eva vāg āsīt, tām ata ārabhya śāyayati sma, nāśayati smaiva iti bhāvaḥ | na kevalam vāg-indriyam eva, api tv nayān hasta-pādādīn api tvat-paricaryādikam viśayī-kariṣṇūn prāṇāṁś ca tvad-unmukhān iti | dhruvasyendriyādīnām cinmayatvena aprākṛtatvaṁ sadyo jātam iti sūcitam | atra mameti imām iti viśeṣābhyām vāg-ādīndriyāṇi viśiṣṭāny eva labhyante ||*

¹³³ JG’s commentary on BRS 1.3.1: *atra śuddha-sattvaṁ nāma bhagavataḥ sva-prakāśikā svarūpa-śakteḥ saṁvid-ākhyā vṛttiḥ, na tu māyā-vṛtti-viśeṣaḥ |*

BSST’s commentary on BRS 1.3.1: *śuddha-sattva-viśeṣātmā bhagavataḥ kṛṣṇasya sarva-prakāśaka-saṁvid-ākhyā-svarūpa-śakti-vṛtti-rūpaḥ |*

Of course, this may be an example of the Lord's giving mercy by appearing, *āloka-dānaja*,¹³⁴ described as one of the causes for *bhāvā*. However, this doesn't negate the fact that Dhruva, motivated in his worship by strong material desires and emotions that disqualify one from having actual *bhāvā*,^{135, 136} was still able to perceive the Lord prior to having his senses and the faculty of speech spiritualized by His touch.

However, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in his commentary on SB 4.8.71 why Dhruva was successful in his attempt to see the Lord despite his obvious lack of pure motives and devotional maturity. He writes:

“The significance of this particular verse is that Dhruva Mahārāja acted exactly according to the advice of his spiritual master, the great sage Nārada. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī also advises that if we want to be successful in our attempt to go back to Godhead, we must very seriously act according to the instruction of the spiritual master. That is the way of perfection. There need be no anxiety over attaining perfection because if one follows the instruction given by the spiritual master he is sure to attain perfection. Our only concern should be how to execute the order of the spiritual master. A spiritual master is expert in giving special instructions to each of his disciples, and if the disciple executes the order of the spiritual master, that is the way of his perfection.” (SB 4.8.71 purp.)

We will revisit this landmark purport by Śrīla Prabhupāda when discussing your (mal)treatment of his other purport on SB 4.28.51, in which he says:

“When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As explained before, this means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instruction of the spiritual master. This is technically called *vāñī-sevā*. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states in his Bhagavad-gītā commentary on the verse beginning *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana* (Bg. 2.41) that one should serve the words of the spiritual master. The disciple must stick to whatever the spiritual master orders. Simply by following on that line, one sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead.” (SB 4.28.51 purp.)

¹³⁴ BRS 1.3.18 (translation by Bhanu Swami): *āloka-dānajaḥ, yathā skānde—adr̥ṣṭa-pūrvam ālokya kṛṣṇam jāṅgala-vāsinaḥ | viklidyad-antarātmano dr̥ṣṭim nākraṣṭum īsire ||18||*

Translation: Giving mercy by showing Himself, is illustrated in the Skanda Purāṇa: When they saw Kṛṣṇa, who appeared like nothing they had seen before, the hearts of the residents of Jāṅgala melted and they could not take their eyes away from His form.

¹³⁵ BRS 1.3.42-43 (translation by Bhanu Swami): “How can rati appear in persons having desires for enjoyment or liberation? Those persons do not perform pure bhakti. Rati is sought out by those liberated from all desires and is not given immediately by Kṛṣṇa even to the devotees, since it is most secret.”

¹³⁶ Bhakti-sandarbha 198 (translation by Satya-nārāyaṇa Dāsa): “The word *sākṣāt*, “directly,” or, “in person,” is used in the verse in regard to Lord Hari, indicating that Lord Hari personally appears in the devotee's heart. The use of this word signifies that there is no possibility of material desires in such a devotee because **direct vision of the Lord is obtained only after all material desires are uprooted**. Furthermore, the verse states that Lord Hari destroys all sins even if called upon unintentionally.”

8) Āveśa

Closely connected with the previous example of Dhruva and excluded from your definition of *pratyakṣitātmā-nāthanām* (as Goloka Vrndavana residents who always see Lord Kṛṣṇa face-to-face in ecstatic love) are those devotees who see face-to-face and serve with love an *āveśa* manifestation of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

Again, since due emphasis on Lord Caitanya's special empowerment of His devotees for the role of gurus and deliverers of the whole world is conspicuous by its absence in your exegesis, please forgive the amount of verses quoted below to make up for that omission.

As Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī describes in CC Antya, Chapter 2, Lord Caitanya delivered the whole universe in three ways:

*sarva-loka uddhārite gaura-avatāra
nistārera hetu tāra trividha prakāra* (3)

In His incarnation as Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa descended to deliver all the living beings in the three worlds, from Brahmaloaka down to Pātālaloka. He caused their deliverance in three ways.

*sākṣāt-darśana, āra yogya-bhakta-jīve
'āveśa' karaye kāhāñ, kāhāñ 'āvirbhāve'* (4)

The Lord delivered the fallen souls in some places by meeting them directly, in other places by empowering a pure devotee, and in still other places by appearing before someone Himself.

*'sākṣāt-darśane' prāya saba nistārilā
nakula-brahmacārīra dehe 'āviṣṭa' ha-ilā* (5)

*pradyumna-nṛsimhānanda āge kailā 'āvirbhāva'
'loka nistāriba',—ei īśvara-svabhāva* (6)

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu delivered almost all the fallen souls by directly meeting them. He delivered others by entering the bodies of great devotees, such as Nakula Brahmācārī. And He delivered still others by appearing before them, as in the case of Nṛsimhānanda Brahmācārī. "I shall deliver the fallen souls." This statement characterizes the Supreme Personality of Godhead.

*sākṣāt-darśane saba jagat tārīlā
eka-bāra ye dekhilā, se kṛtārtha ha-ilā* (7)

When Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was personally present, anyone in the world who met Him even once was fully satisfied and became spiritually advanced.

*prabhure dekhiyā yāya 'Vaiṣṇava' hañā
kṛṣṇa bali' nāce saba premāviṣṭa hañā (11)*

Having seen the Lord, they all became Vaiṣṇavas. Thus in ecstatic love of Godhead they chanted the Hare Kṛṣṇa mantra and danced.

[This and previous verses describe the effect of personally seeing Lord Caitanya (*sākṣāt-darśane*) that all the people who saw Him directly experienced: ecstatic love of Godhead (*prema-āviṣṭa*), chanting and dancing.]

*ei-mata darśane trijagat nistāri
ye keha āsite nāre aneka saṁsārī (12)*

Thus by direct meetings, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu delivered the three worlds. Some people, however, were entangled in material activities and could not go.

*tā-sabā tārīte prabhu sei saba deśe
yogya-bhakta jīva-dehe karena 'āveśe' (13)*

To deliver people in regions throughout the universe who could not meet Him, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally entered the bodies of pure devotees.

[This verse speaks about Lord Caitanya's delivering those people in other parts of the world — literally, "in all those countries" (*sei saba deśe*) — who failed to see Him personally. He did so by entering (*āveśe*) the body (*jīva-dehe*) of "a suitable devotee" (*yogya-bhakta*), which Śrīla Prabhupāda translates in the plural as "Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally entered the bodies of pure devotees".]

*sei jīve nija-bhakti karena prakāśe
tāhāra darśane 'Vaiṣṇava' haya sarva-deśe (14)*

Thus He empowered living beings [His pure devotees] by manifesting in them so much of His own devotion that people in all other countries became devotees by seeing them.

[The verse describes details of Lord Caitana's empowerment (*āveśa*): He manifested in such pure devotees (*sei jīve*) His own devotion (*nija-bhakti karena prakāśe*) to such an extent that whoever saw such pure devotees (*tāhāra darśane*) in all other countries (*sarva-deśe*) became devotees (*'vaiṣṇava' haya*). Please note that, again, Śrīla Prabhupāda chose to translate singular *sei jīve* in the plural "pure devotees". It is significant that seeing such empowered devotees was as effective in transforming into Vaiṣṇavas people of other countries (*sarva-deśe*) deprived of seeing Lord Caitanya

personally (*sākṣāt-darśane*), as seeing Him directly. For instance, simply “upon seeing [Nakula Brahmācārī], people were overwhelmed with love of Godhead.” (CC Antya 2.21)]

Purport: As stated in the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya 7.11):

kali-kālera dharma—kṛṣṇa-nāma-saṅkīrtana
kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana

Unless one is empowered by the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, one cannot spread the holy names of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra throughout the world. Persons who do so are empowered. Therefore they are sometimes called *āveśa-avatāras*, or empowered incarnations, for they are endowed with the power of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

[In his purport Śrīla Prabhupāda directly links devotees empowered by Lord Caitanya during His time to preachers (again, plural) of the holy name throughout the world. He calls such devotees empowered, or *āveśa-avatāras* of Lord Caitanya’s power. Obviously, Śrīla Prabhupāda himself is the first and foremost self-evident exemplar of such an *āveśa-avatāra* devotee.

Śrīla Prabhupāda illustrates his statement with the famous verse from Antya 7.11. In his purport to the next verse, Antya 7.12, he describes in remarkable detail the nature and symptoms of his own empowerment, without referencing himself directly:

“Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura explains that unless one is directly empowered by the causeless mercy of Kṛṣṇa, one cannot become the spiritual master of the entire world (*jagad-guru*). One cannot become an *ācārya* simply by mental speculation. The true *ācārya* presents Kṛṣṇa to everyone by preaching the holy name of the Lord throughout the world. Thus the conditioned souls, purified by chanting the holy name, are liberated from the blazing fire of material existence. In this way, spiritual benefit grows increasingly full, like the waxing moon in the sky. **The true *ācārya*, the spiritual master of the entire world, must be considered an incarnation of Kṛṣṇa’s mercy. Indeed, he is personally embracing Kṛṣṇa.** He is therefore the spiritual master of all the varṇas (*brāhmaṇa*, *kṣatriya*, *vaiśya* and *śūdra*) and all the āśramas (*brahmācārya*, *gṛhastha*, *vānaprastha* and *sannyāsa*)” (CC Antya 7.12 purp.)

It is also remarkable how well aware of his mission and empowerment Śrīla Prabhupāda was even prior to his sojourn to the West. For instance, as early as in 1956 he wrote to the then President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad:

“Believe me or not, I have got the clue of going back to Godhead just after leaving my present material body and **in order to take along with me all my contemporary men and women of the world I have started my paper Back to Godhead as one of the means to the way.** Please do not think of me as a wonderful or a mad man when I say that I shall go back to Godhead after leaving my present material body! It is quite possible

for everyone and all of us... I have simply adopted the easy method of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu just suitable to the modern people in general. As such I am feeling as sure of going back to Godhead as I feel without any doubt after taking my dinner that I have eaten to my satisfaction. This feeling is a necessary concomitant factor for the great science of devotional service in the approved line of Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu.” (letter to President of India, Dr. Rajendra Prasad — December 21, 1956)

Śrīla Prabhupāda also writes about his empowerment with profound, even striking candor — again, without direct reference to oneself — in SB 6.19.5 purp.:

“Sometimes He requests His devotee to preach His glories all over the world, although He alone is quite competent to perform this task. Even though the Supreme Personality of Godhead is endowed with all possessions and is self-sufficient, He depends on His devotees. Therefore the relationship of the Lord with His devotees is extremely confidential. Only the devotee can perceive how the Lord, although full in Himself, depends on His devotee for some particular work. This is explained in Bhagavad-gītā (11.33), where the Lord tells Arjuna, *nimitta-matram bhāva savyasacin*: "O Arjuna, merely be an instrument in the fight." Lord Kṛṣṇa had the competence to win the Battle of Kuruksetra, but nonetheless He induced His devotee Arjuna to fight and become the cause of victory. **Sri Caitanya Mahāprabhu was quite competent enough to spread His name and mission all over the world, but still He depended upon His devotee to do this work.** Considering all these points, the most important aspect of the Supreme Lord's self-sufficiency is that He depends on His devotees. This is called His causeless mercy. The devotee who has perceived this causeless mercy of the Supreme Personality of Godhead by realization can understand the master and the servant.” (SB 6.19.5 purp.)]

*ei-mata āveśe tārila tribhuvana
gauḍe yaiche āveśa, kari dig-daraśana (15)*

In this way Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu delivered the entire three worlds, not only by His personal presence but also by empowering others. I shall briefly describe how He empowered a living being in Bengal.

In Caitanya Mangala (Sutra-khanda, song 12, texts 564-565) Lord Caitanya clearly mentions that He will send His leading preacher abroad to capture the sinful people who managed to escape His mercy:

*ebe nāma-saṅkīrtana tīkṣṇa khaḍga laiya
antara asura jīvera phelibe kāṭiyā (564)*

*yadi pāpi chāḍi dharma dūre deśe yāya
mora senāpati-bhakta yāibe tathāya (565)*

“Taking the sharp sword of the congregational chanting of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra, I will root out and destroy the demoniac mentality in the hearts of all conditioned souls. If some sinful people escape, going to far-off countries, then my senāpati-bhakta [general of the devotees] will come at that time to give them Kṛṣṇa consciousness.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda makes an even more compelling statement about empowered devotees in his purport on CC Adi 10.59:

“In the Gaura-gaṇoddeśa-dīpikā (73-74) it is said that Nakula Brahmācārī displayed the prowess (*āveśa*) and Pradyumna Brahmācārī the appearance (*āvirbhāva*) of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. There are many hundreds and thousands of devotees of Lord Caitanya among whom there are no special symptoms, but when a devotee of Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu functions with specific prowess, he displays the feature called *āveśa*. **Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu personally spread the *saṅkīrtana* movement, and He advised all the inhabitants of Bhāratavarṣa to take up His cult and preach it all over the world. The visible bodily symptoms of devotees who follow such instructions are called *āveśa*.** Śrīla Śivānanda Sena observed such *āveśa* symptoms in Nakula Brahmācārī, who displayed symptoms exactly like those of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. **The Caitanya-caritāmṛta states that in the Age of Kali the only spiritual function is to broadcast the holy name of the Lord, but this function can be performed only by one who is actually empowered by Lord Kṛṣṇa.** The process by which a devotee is thus empowered is called *āveśa*, or sometimes it is called *śakty-āveśa*.” (CC Adi-līla 10.59 purp.)

... explicitly mirroring the *āveśa* empowerment of Lord Caitanya’s personal associates such as Nakula Brahmācārī and Pradyumna Brahmācārī, with those who follow Lord Caitanya’s instruction by preaching the *saṅkīrtana* movement all over the world. He also emphasizes that this function to broadcast the holy name of the Lord “can be performed only by one who is actually empowered by Lord Kṛṣṇa.”

Moreover, in CC Antya 5.88 Śrīla Prabhupāda writes that the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is nondifferent from Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s personal pastimes:

*śrī-caitanya-līlā ei—amṛtera sindhu
trijagat bhāsāite pāre yāra eka bindu (88)*

The activities of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu are just like an ocean of nectar. Even a drop of this ocean can inundate all the three worlds.

Purport: To inundate the three worlds with nectar is the purpose of the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. How this could be possible was exhibited by Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī and later by Ṭhākura Narottama dāsa and Śyāmānanda Gosvāmī, who all represented the mercy of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu. **Now that same mercy is overflowing the entire world through the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. The present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is nondifferent from the pastimes performed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu when He was**

personally present, for the same principles are being followed and the same actions performed without fail.

And in CC Madhya 17.51 Śrīla Prabhupāda also emphasizes that, due to the merciful nature of Lord Caitanya, one doesn't even need to see Him to become a pure devotee:

*tathāpi tānra darśana-śravaṇa-prabhāve
sakala deśera loka ha-ila 'vaiṣṇave' (51)*

“Although Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu did not manifest His natural ecstatic love, everyone became a pure devotee simply by seeing and hearing Him.”

Purport: Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has described Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu as *mahā-vadānya-avatāra*, the most munificent incarnation. Although Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is not physically present now, simply by chanting His holy name (*Śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda Śrī-advaita gadādhara śrīvāsādi-gaura-bhakta-vṛnda*) people throughout the world are becoming devotees. This is due to the ecstatic chanting of the holy name of the Lord. It is said that a pure devotee can see the Lord at every moment, and because of this he is empowered by the Lord. This is confirmed in the Brahma-saṁhitā (5.38): *premāñjana-cchurita-bhakti-vilocanena santaḥ sadaiva hṛdayeṣu vilokayanti*. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu appeared five hundred years ago, but it cannot be said that now the potency of the Hare Kṛṣṇa mahā-mantra is less than it was in His presence. By hearing Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu through the paramparā system, one can be purified. Therefore in this verse it is said, *tathāpi tānra darśana-śravaṇa-prabhāve*. **It is not that everyone is able to see Kṛṣṇa or Śrī Kṛṣṇa Caitanya Mahāprabhu physically, but if one hears about Him through books like Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta and through the paramparā system of pure Vaiṣṇavas, there is no difficulty in becoming a pure Vaiṣṇava**, free from mundane desires and personal motivations.

On the other hand, to the extent one serves Lord Caitanya and His mission under the guidance of His pure and empowered representative, one becomes elevated to the highest position of devotional service:

*yathā yathā gaura-padāravinde vindeta bhaktiṁ kṛta-puṇya-rāśiḥ
tathā tathotsarpati hṛdy akasmād rādhā-padāmbhoja-sudhāmburāśiḥ*

“As a pious soul fortunately attains pure devotion to Gaura and becomes absorbed in rendering service to His lotus feet, the nectar ocean of devotional ecstasy flowing from the lotus feet of Śrī Rādhikā suddenly arises without any material cause and floods his heart.” (Śrī Chaitanya-chandrāmṛta, 88)

To conclude:

- Lord Caitanya is Kṛṣṇa Himself;

- He delivered His contemporaries and endowed them with *prema* in His three forms: *sākṣāt-darśana*, *āveśa*, and *āvirbhāva*;
- those in other countries were delivered by Him in the form of *āveśa*, in which He entered the bodies of His pure devotees;
- Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī mentions no disparity in efficacy between seeing Lord Caitanya personally or via His *āveśa*;
- Śrīla Prabhupāda is a self-evident *āveśa* of Lord Caitanya, in terms of: his symptoms, his own statements, predictions about him in the *śāstra* and by *ācāryas*, the effect of personal interactions with him, his ability to empower others, and the effect of preaching by his faithful followers;
- therefore, those who personally interacted with Śrīla Prabhupāda as his dedicated servants, in effect, directly associated with Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, thus qualifying as *pratyakṣitātma-nāthāḥ*;
- the present Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is nondifferent from the pastimes performed by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu when He was personally present; and therefore
- by following Lord Caitanya's and Śrīla Prabhupāda's order to broadcast the holy name throughout the world, which is "the only spiritual function" in the Age of Kali, Śrīla Prabhupāda's faithful followers too can become empowered (*āveśa*), and gurus of the world,¹³⁷ and qualify for the highest service in the spiritual world.

Would you agree?

9) Seeing the Lord in a dream

Another possibility that is not covered by your *avyapti* definition of *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas* is the vision of the Lord in a dream. As we see in the *śāstra* and Vaiṣṇava hagiography, the Lord routinely appears to His devotees in dreams to instruct, encourage, or sometimes chastise them. Famous examples are too many to even mention: Mādhavendra Purī, Puṇḍarīka Vidyānidhi, Sanātana Gosvāmī, Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī and, in our days, Śrīla Prabhupāda and Gour Govinda Maharāja, to cite a few.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in SB 6.19.5 purp.:

“Sometimes [the Lord] tells His devotee in a dream that His temple and His garden are now very old and that He cannot enjoy them very nicely. Thus He requests the devotee to repair them. Sometimes He is buried in the earth, and as if unable to come out Himself, He requests His devotee to rescue Him.” (SB 6.19.5 purp.)

However, Kṛṣṇa's appearance in a dream of His devotee is not limited to just the lives of great saints. Books have already been written in ISKCON about contemporary pastimes of temple or home Deities, in which They appeared in the dreams of Their *pūjārīs*, servants, and rank and file devotees of both

¹³⁷ “So the Caitanya Mahāprabhu is so kind that He wants to send gurus all over the world.” (The Nectar of Devotion January 7, 1973, Bombay)

genders giving them instructions, promises, predictions, inspirations or corrections that later came true or were otherwise objectively verified. The most famous examples are the numerous and undeniably genuine accounts of such pastimes of Lord Nsiṁhadeva and Śrī Śrī Jagannātha, Baladeva and Subhadra in Śrīdhāma Māyāpura. Many of us have personally known devotees of both genders whose visions of and interactions with the Lord in their dreams were later objectively confirmed and/or led to profound transformations in theirs or others' spiritual lives. Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in CC Madhya 4.135 purp. in reference to the *brāhmaṇa* priest of Lord Kṣīra-corā-gopīnātha and Mādhavendra Purī:

“A *brāhmaṇa* is not supposed to offer his obeisances by falling flat before anyone because a *brāhmaṇa* is considered to be in the highest caste. However, when a *brāhmaṇa* sees a devotee, he offers his *daṇḍavats*. This *brāhmaṇa* priest did not ask Mādhavendra Purī whether he was a *brāhmaṇa*, but when he saw that Mādhavendra Purī was such a bona fide devotee that Kṛṣṇa would even steal for him, he immediately understood the position of the saint. As stated by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu: *kibā vipra, kibā nyāsī, śūdra kene naya/ yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei 'guru' haya*. (Cc. Madhya 8.128) **Had the *brāhmaṇa* priest been an ordinary *brāhmaṇa*, Gopīnātha would not have talked with him in a dream. Since the Deity spoke to both Mādhavendra Purī and the *brāhmaṇa* priest in dreams, practically speaking they were on the same platform.** However, because Mādhavendra Purī was a senior *sannyāsī* Vaiṣṇava, a *paramahansa*, the priest immediately fell flat before him and offered obeisances.” (Madhya 4.135 purp.)

Please note Śrīla Prabhupāda's emphasis that “[s]ince the Deity spoke to both Mādhavendra Purī and the *brāhmaṇa* priest in dreams, practically speaking they were on the same platform.” So, in light of this statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda, do similar genuinely spiritual visions of the Lord and interactions with Him in contemporary devotees' dreams qualify such devotees of both genders as *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas*? And if not, why?

(b) *Ativyapti* (too broad)

Surprising as it may seem for such an arch-restrictive definition of *pratyakṣitātma-nāthānām* as “residents of Goloka Vrndavana who **always** see Kṛṣṇa on the level of *bhāva-bhakti* and above”, it is also guilty of being *ativyapti*, or too inclusive. In other words, there are categories of people (albeit “not so many”—pun intended), that can slip into its scope without actually having the required qualification.

This fault arises mainly due to your refusal or inability to produce any objective, observable and practicable criteria for qualifying people as *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas* by your own definition:

1) absence of criteria

In the FAQ section of your VNP book, page 30, you present the following question:

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

You then proceed off on a tangent with a two-page-long answer (VNP 30-32) that boils down, basically, to a variously repeated assertion that everyone, including *siddhas*, must perform their prescribed *varṇāśrama* duties.

First of all, as was already shown above in the section “Silencing the *ācāryas*” and elsewhere, by peddling this idea you contradict the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda, *ācāryas* and Lord Kṛṣṇa Himself as to when one can stop depending on *varṇāśrama* without committing an *avajāñā*. Moreover, by doing so you also attempt to usurp the position or functions of *ācāryas* in your own right on the topic of primary, secondary and tertiary duties of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s followers in ISKCON.

Second, you basically declare that even *siddha* Vaiṣṇavīs must not be *dīkṣā-gurus*, like Kuntī and Yasoda, thus trying to invalidate even the need for ascertaining *siddha* women in the first place. Again, in doing so you deliberately subvert or misconstrue Śrīla Prabhupāda’s many statements, sufficiently quoted above, in which he directly asked his disciples of both genders to become gurus. You, on the other hand, advise Vaiṣṇavīs “to not become *dīkṣā-gurus* and [instead] follow the examples of predecessor Vaiṣṇavīs like Kuntī and Devahūti.” (VNP 32) (See Section II.4.I “Did Jāhnavā-devī behave nicely?”)

Did Sunīti, Kuntī and Devahūti have a spiritual master who happened to be an *āveśa* of Lord Caitanya empowered by Him to distribute the highest gift, *prema-nāma* to the whole world in the Age of Kali, and who repeatedly enjoined them to preach and in this way become gurus? And if they did, what would and should have they done? Now, do Vaiṣṇavīs of ISKCON have such a spiritual master who gives them such an order that you are advising to disregard, citing Sunīti, Kuntī and Devahūti? Again, think hubris.

And third, you are tellingly silent about the question itself: “How do you know who is a *siddha*?”

However, your shyness in citing verifiable criteria for identifying *siddhas* among preachers of both genders is understandable, because citing them might suddenly help discover too many Vaiṣṇavīs competent to be *dīkṣā-gurus* even by your own definition — more than you are ready to accept (none).

Let me help with verbalizing these criteria:

1) *Madhyama-adhikārī* of BRS 2.1.277:

We have already discussed above the verse from BRS 2.1.276 that you yourself proposed as a definition of one who passes the *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* test:

tatra sādhakāḥ
utpanna-ratayaḥ samyañ nairvighnyam anupāgatāḥ |
kṛṣṇa-sākṣāt-kṛtau yogyāḥ sādhakāḥ parikīrtitāḥ ||276||

Practitioners (*sādhaka*) are those who have developed *rati* for Kṛṣṇa but have not completely extinguished the *anarthas*, and who are qualified to see Kṛṣṇa directly.¹³⁸

It was already shown above that, taken literally, this verse speaks not of those who always see Kṛṣṇa, or even see Him once, but of those who are **qualified** to see Him.

In the next two verses Rūpa Gosvāmī gives examples of such *sādhakas*:

yathaikādaśe
īsvare tad-adhīneṣu bālīseṣu dviṣatsu ca |
prema-maitrī-kṛpopekṣā yaḥ karoti sa madhyamaḥ ||277||

An example from the Eleventh Canto: An intermediate or second-class devotee, called *madhyama-adhikārī*, offers his love to the Supreme Personality of Godhead, is a sincere friend to all the devotees of the Lord, shows mercy to ignorant people who are innocent and disregards those who are envious of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. (SB 11.2.46)

yathā vā
siktāpy aśru-jalotkareṇa bhagavad-vārtā-nadī-janmanā
tiṣṭhaty eva bhavāgni-hetir iti te dhīmann alam cintayā |
hṛd-vyomany amṛta-sprhā-hara-kṛpā-vṛṣṭeḥ sphuṭaṁ lakṣate
nediṣṭaḥ pṛthu-roma-tāṇḍava-bharāt kṛṣṇāmbudhasyodgamaḥ ||278||

Another example: Do not worry, that, after you have been drenched in tears arising from the river of the pastimes of the Lord, you will remain in the flame of suffering in the material world. When all the hairs on your limbs dances, then you will see very near, rising in the sky of your heart, the cloud of Kṛṣṇa's form, full of the shower of mercy which destroys the desire for liberation.

Since pure devotees usually try to conceal their ecstatic symptoms such as tears and horripilation, and pseudo-devotees often imitate these symptoms, of the two descriptions it is the former — a verse from SB 11.2.46 describing symptoms of a *madhyama-adhikārī* — that can be used as a verifiable criterion for one's spiritual qualification.

2) *Anubhāvas* of BRS 1.3.25-26:

Another list of symptoms of a *bhāva-bhakta* is given in BRS 1.3.25-26 and quoted in CC Madhya 23.18-19:

kṣāntir avyārtha-kālatvaṁ viraktir māna-śunyatā |
āśā-bandhaḥ samutkañṭhā nāma-gāne sadā ruciḥ ||25||

¹³⁸ Translation by Bhanu Swami.

*āsaktis tad-guṇākhyāne prītis tad-vasati-sthale |
ity ādayo ’nubhāvāḥ syur jāta-bhāvāṅkure jane ||26||*

”When the seed of ecstatic emotion for Kṛṣṇa fructifies, the following nine symptoms manifest in one’s behavior: forgiveness, concern that time should not be wasted, detachment, absence of false prestige, hope, eagerness, a taste for chanting the holy name of the Lord, attachment to descriptions of the transcendental qualities of the Lord, and affection for those places where the Lord resides—that is, a temple or a holy place like Vṛndāvana. These are all called anubhāva, subordinate signs of ecstatic emotion. They are visible in a person in whose heart the seed of love of God has begun to fructify.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that it is only by these symptoms called *anubhāvas* that the presence of genuine *bhāva* can be discerned:

“The *bhāva* stage is manifested by eight transcendental symptoms, namely inertness, perspiration, standing of hairs on end, failing of the voice, trembling, paleness of the body, tears in the eyes and finally trance. The Nectar of Devotion, a summary study of Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu, explains those symptoms and vividly describes other transcendental developments, both in steady and accelerating manifestations. (...) When Lord Caitanya met Śrīla Rāmānanda Rāya of Kavaur on the bank of the Godāvarī, the Lord developed all these symptoms, but because of the presence of some nondevotee *brāhmaṇas* who were attendants of the Rāya, the Lord suppressed these symptoms. So sometimes they are not visible even in the body of the first-class devotee for certain circumstantial reasons. Therefore real, steady *bhāva* is definitely displayed in the matter of cessation of material desires (*kṣānti*), utilization of every moment in the transcendental loving service of the Lord (*avyārtha-kālatvam*), eagerness for glorifying the Lord constantly (*nāma-gāne sadā ruci*), attraction for living in the land of the Lord (*prītis tad-vasati sthale*), complete detachment from material happiness (*virakti*), and pridelessness (*māna-śūnyatā*). **One who has developed all these transcendental qualities is really possessed of the *bhāva* stage**, as distinguished from the stonehearted imitator or mundane devotee.” (SB 2.3.24 purp.)

3) Priti-sandarbha 7:

Speaking on the actual qualification for direct internal vision of the Lord, Jīva Gosvāmī in Priti-sandarbha, 7, also offers a very practical list of observable criteria based on SB 4.24.59:

“The qualification for internal vision of the Lord is stated in Rudra-gītā:

*na yasya cittam bahir-artha-vibhramam
tamo-guhāyām ca viśuddham āviśat
yad-bhakti-yogānugṛhitam añjasā
munir vicaṣṭe nanu tatra te gatim*

The devotee whose heart is pure, not agitated by external objects, and not subject to falling asleep during worship, having been blessed by Bhakti-devī herself, certainly sees the Lord’s pastimes and beauty with ease. (SB 4.24.59)

The sage among the devotees who was previously described, whose pure heart, blessed with bhakti-yoga, does not wander to material objects and does not enter into the hole of ignorance, easily sees the Lord (internally).¹³⁹

Jīva Gosvāmī then adds:

“A pure heart is not the only qualification. What is it? The main qualification is a manifestation of the Lord’s self revealing *śakti* filled with the Lord’s desire, appearing by special bhakti. By that manifestation everything is revealed.”¹⁴⁰

We already saw the example of Dhruva in whose case it was his strict following of the spiritual master’s instructions that invoked the Lord’s appearance through His *cit-śakti*:

“The significance of this particular verse is that **Dhruva Mahārāja acted exactly according to the advice of his spiritual master, the great sage Nārada. Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī** also advises that if we want to be successful in our attempt to go back to Godhead, we must very seriously act according to the instruction of the spiritual master. That is the way of perfection. **There need be no anxiety over attaining perfection because if one follows the instruction given by the spiritual master he is sure to attain perfection. Our only concern should be how to execute the order of the spiritual master.** A spiritual master is expert in giving special instructions to each of his disciples, and **if the disciple executes the order of the spiritual master, that is the way of his perfection.**” (SB 4.8.71 purp.)

Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura also describes this verse as a qualification to see the Lord in the heart:

“From association with your devotees, the heart becomes particularly pure (*viśuddham*). With a pure heart, one can realize your form, pastimes and beauty. The pure heart (*cittam*) is described. It is not agitated by external objects at the time of remembering and hearing about you. It does not enter a hole for sleeping. At the time of hearing and remembering you, the heart does not become subject to the disturbance of drowsiness. The reason is that it has been blessed with bhakti and thus becomes pure. The meaning is this. The causes of sleep and

¹³⁹ Priti-sandarbha, 7 (translation by Bhanu Swami): *tatrāntaḥ-sākṣātkāre yogyatā Śrī-rudra-gīte—*

*na yasya cittam bahir-artha-vibhramam
tamo-guhāyām ca viśuddham āviśat |
yad-bhakti-yogānuḡrhitam añjasā
munir vicaṣṭe nanu tatra te gatim ||*

*tatra teṣām pūrvoktānām satām bhakti-yogenānuḡrhitām viśuddham yasya cittam bāhyeṣv artheṣu bhrāntam na bhavati
tamo-rūpāyām guhāyām ca na viśati sa munir ity ādikam ca vyākhyeyam |*

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.: *na kevalam śuddha-cittatvam eva yogyatā | kim tarhi? Tad-bhakti-viśeṣāviṣkṛta-tad-icchāmaya-tadīya-sva-
prakāśatā-śakti-prakāśa eva mūla-rūpā sā, yat-prakāśena tad api niḥśeṣam sidhyati |*

agitation are the offenses to the name which are offenses to bhakti. When these disappear, Bhakti-devī is pleased. When she is pleased, she gives mercy. This means there will be no agitation or sleep while performing bhakti. When the heart is pure, one who is inclined to meditate (*muniḥ*) then sees your pastimes (*gatim*) and beauty.”¹⁴¹

4) Preaching as a sign of advancement:

Śrīla Prabhupada also repeatedly explains that preaching is one of the actual signs of advancement:

“So one has to make advance. What is that advance? That advance is... What is that verse? The four kinds of... *Prema-maitrī-kṛpopekṣā yaḥ karoti sa madhyamaḥ* [SB 11.2.46]. *Īśvare tad-adhīneṣu*. The further advancement... One has to make advance, stage by stage, from the *kaniṣṭha-adhikārī*, from the lower stage, to the middle stage to the higher stage. So the next stage, from *prākṛta*, from material position... Of course, any devotion is..., any devotee is not on the material platform. He is... But if we remain more on the material platform, not on the spiritual platform, then we'll fall down. We'll fall down. Therefore one should try to make forward march. The forward march is to become a preacher. *Bhakteṣu cānyeṣu*. Preaching means to obey the order of the spiritual master or superior authorities and to good to others, do good to others. They are suffering for want of Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Try to preach them. This is the second stage. If we simply become blocked up for Deity worship and do not preach, then we remain in the lowest stage.” (Srimad-Bhagavatam 1.8.47 October 27, 1974, Mayapur)

and

“When a neophyte devotee is actually initiated and engaged in devotional service by the orders of the spiritual master, he should be accepted immediately as a bona fide Vaiṣṇava, and obeisances should be offered unto him. Out of many such Vaiṣṇavas, one may be found to be very seriously engaged in the service of the Lord and strictly following all the regulative principles, chanting the prescribed number of rounds on japa beads and always thinking of how to expand the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. **Such a Vaiṣṇava should be accepted as an *uttama-adhikārī*, a highly advanced devotee**, and his association should always be sought. (...)

“When a person realizes himself to be an eternal servitor of Kṛṣṇa, he loses interest in everything but Kṛṣṇa's service. Always thinking of Kṛṣṇa, devising means by which to spread the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, he understands that his only business is in spreading the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement all over the world. **Such a person is to be recognized as an *uttama-adhikārī***, and his association should be immediately accepted according to the six processes (*dadāti pratigrhṇāti*, etc.). Indeed, the advanced *uttama-adhikārī* Vaiṣṇava devotee should be accepted as a spiritual master.” (NOI 5 purp.)

5) Madhvācārya on SB 11.2.40:

¹⁴¹ VCT's commentary on SB 4.24.59 (translation by Bhanu Swami)

Along the same line, Madhvācārya comments on the seminal verse of SB 11.2.40 describing the ecstatic symptoms of a devotee on the level of *premā*:

*evaṁ-vrataḥ sva-priya-nāma-kīrtiyā
jātānurāgo druta-citta uccaiḥ
hasaty atho roditi rauti gāyaty
unmāda-van nṛtyati loka-bāhyaḥ*

“By chanting the holy name of the Supreme Lord, one comes to the stage of love of Godhead. Then the devotee is fixed in his vow as an eternal servant of the Lord, and he gradually becomes very much attached to a particular name and form of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As his heart melts with ecstatic love, he laughs very loudly or cries or shouts. Sometimes he sings and dances like a madman, for he is indifferent to public opinion.” (SB 11.2.40)

by simply quoting a verse from Varāha-purāṇa to the same effect — that it is only by one’s steadfastness in the principles of bhakti and by his or her ability to benefit others through preaching that one’s *bhakti* can and should be judged, not otherwise:

*kecid unmāda-vad bhaktā bāhya-liṅga-pradarśakāḥ
kecid āntara-bhaktāḥ syuḥ kecid caivobhayātmakāḥ
mukha-prasādād dārḍhyāc ca bhaktir jñeyā na cānyataḥ*

"Some devotees of the Lord exhibit external symptoms, acting like madmen, others are introspective devotees, and still others partake of both natures. It is by one's steadfastness and by the merciful vibrations emanating from one's mouth that one's devotion can be judged, not otherwise." (as quoted in SB 11.2.40 purp.)

Would you agree that it is only by the observable symptoms of a *madhyama-adhikārī* in SB 11.2.46 and of *anubhāvas* in BRS 1.3.25-26 that Śrīla Prabhupāda and the *ācāryas* prescribe to be used for identifying those on the level of *bhāva*? Would you then agree that there are Śrīla Prabhupāda’s female disciples in ISKCON who externally correspond to these symptoms? And is Nārāyaṇi Devī (ACBSP) among them?

2) raty-ābhāsa

However, if you refuse to accept such practicable and observable criteria, proposed by our *ācāryas*, as too superficial (or, in your parlance, too “institutionalized” — VNP 30) to accurately determine if a devotee **could well be** on the level of *bhāva*, then you are left only with subjective external symptoms such as genuine ecstatic symptoms — or their imitations, *ratyābhāsa*.

In fact, it is exactly because genuine symptoms of *bhāva* and their imitations are sometimes so difficult to distinguish from each other that Rūpa Gosvāmī included a warning against the latter, along with its thorough description in BRS 1.3.41-51:

*api ca—
vyaktam masṛṇitevāntar lakṣyate rati-lakṣaṇam |
mumukṣu-prabhṛtīnām ced bhaved eṣā ratiḥ na hi ||41||*

“However it should be said: If softness of the heart, the symptom of *rati*, becomes clearly visible in persons desiring liberation, or in other unqualified persons, it is not real *rati*.”¹⁴²

Jīva Gosvāmī’s commentary:

“It has been stated that the quality of real *rati* is having the desire only to please the Lord. If other desires are present, it should not be considered *rati*, in spite of the presence of other symptoms, such as *sāttvika-bhāvas*. That is explained in this verse. The phrase *api ca* (moreover) should mean *api tu* (however). If the *rati* characterized by internal softness (melting of the heart), or what appears to be so, becomes visible in persons, such as those desiring liberation, it should not be considered real *rati*, because persons desiring liberation have other desires. One should not think that if a person has strong desires for things other than Kṛṣṇa, it can be called *rati* for that particular object (for instance *rati* for liberation).”¹⁴³

Rūpa Gosvāmī then acknowledges that *ratyābhāsa* can appear misleadingly genuine to the innocent and that it can only be discerned for what it is by the knowledgeable:

*kintu bāla-camatkāra-karī tac-cihna-vikṣayā |
abhijñena subodho ’yam raty-ābhāsaḥ prakīrtitaḥ ||44||
pratibimbas tathā cchāyā raty-ābhāso dvidhā mataḥ ||45||*

Though this semblance of *rati* is very astounding to the innocent, those in knowledge understand what it really is by seeing the characteristics. This is called *raty-ābhāsa*, a semblance of *rati*. This semblance of *rati* has two types: reflection (*pratibimba*) and splendor (*chāyā*).

One example of *raty-ābhāsa*, for instance, is found in Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, Part 2, chapter 1, in the life story of an ignorant and materialistic *brāhmaṇa* who chanted *gopāla-mantra* received in a dream from goddess Kāmākhya. Even though he was neither initiated or trained by a *dīkṣā-guru* nor well-versed in Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta*, the *brāhmaṇa* nevertheless experienced ecstatic emotions and direct vision of Lord Gopāla in his heart as a result of *sādhu-saṅga* and the *mantra*’s influence:¹⁴⁴

*evam sa pūrva-van mantram tam japan nirjane nijam
devam sākṣād ivekṣeta satām saṅga-prabhāvataḥ (79)*

¹⁴² BRS 1.3.41 (translation by Bhanu Swami).

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Translation by Gopīparādhana Dāsa.

Thus the brāhmaṇa continued chanting his mantra in seclusion as before. And by the power of the saintly company of the Vaiṣṇavas, he would see his Lord, as if directly in person.

Commentary: Since the ignorant *brāhmaṇa* lacked the instructions and blessings of a pure devotee spiritual master, he had not yet developed true knowledge and faith. But still he was reaping the benefits of *sādhū-saṅga* in Prayāga. Even without the support of *guru* and *śāstra*, he was making some advancement by associating favorably with Vaiṣṇavas. He kept chanting the ten-syllable Gopāla *mantra*, renowned among all *mantras* as the most excellent, and as his heart became more and more cleansed he entered into an intense meditation in which he saw His Lord as vividly as if the Lord were physically present.¹⁴⁵

*vastu-svabhāvād ānanda-mūrchām āpnoti karhicit
vyūthāya japa-kālāpa-gamam ālakṣya śocati (80)*

Because of the nature of the object of his meditation, he sometimes fainted in ecstasy, and when he woke up and noticed that the time for chanting his mantra had been lost he would lament.

Commentary: Sometimes the ecstasy of his meditation made all the external functions of his senses stop, as if he had achieved *samādhi*. This symptom was but a superficial reflection of the advanced conditions of *bhāva* and *prema*. It arose not from mature understanding of the object of meditation but from the transcendental influence of the object Himself.¹⁴⁶

In other words, again, in the absence of verifiable objective criteria this *brāhmaṇa* would have perhaps qualified as a *dīkṣā-guru* in your paradigm — even though he was ignorant, materialistic and uninitiated.

Śrīla Prabhupāda also gave numerous warnings about imitative or reflective emotions:

NOD 28:

“Sometimes it is found that a nondevotee who has practically no taste for Kṛṣṇa and who follows no rules or regulations can, by practice, make a show of devotional symptoms, even crying in an assembly of devotees. This shedding of tears is not actually an ecstatic loving expression, however. It is done simply by practice. Although there is no need to describe these reflections of

¹⁴⁵ Sanātana Gosvāmī's Dig-darśinī ṭīkā on Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 2.1.79 (translation by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa): *evam vimarṣeṇa sa vipraḥ tam suprasiddham mantragaṇātiśreṣṭham śrīmadanagopāladevatākam daśākṣaram mantram | yadvā tam anirvacanīyam aśeṣopāśya-śiromaṇim devam śrīnandakīśoram cittaśuddhyā sarṁdhyānābhīniveśāt sākṣādivaikṣeta | sambhāvanāyām saptamī | nanu śraddhādirāhityena kathametad sidhyettatrāha—satāmīti ||79||*

¹⁴⁶ Sanātana Gosvāmī's Dig-darśinī ṭīkā on Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 2.1.80 (translation by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa): *tataśca karhicit kasminnapyavasare ānandena mūrchām sarvendriya-bahirvṛtinvṛttirūpām satsamādhāviva kāmapi daśam prāpnoti | vastusvabhāvāditi sarvānandaka-taddarśanasvabhāvādeva na tu tattattvālocanādinetyarthaḥ | vyūthāya bahiḥsamjñām labdhvā japakālasya niyamitajapasamayasya divābhāgasya vā apagamamatyayam ālakṣya sandhyāndhakārādīlakṣaṇena jñatvā ||80||*

ecstatic love, Rūpa Gosvāmī gives some instances where there is no actual devotional service and such expressions are manifested.” (NOD 28, Degrees of Ecstatic Symptoms)

CC Adi 8.22:

“Whether he is offensive or inoffensive, anyone who even now chants *śrī-kṛṣṇa-caitanya prabhu-nityānanda* is immediately overwhelmed with ecstasy, and tears fill his eyes.”

Purport: The *prākṛta-sahajiyās* who chant *nitāi-gaura rādhe śyāma* have very little knowledge of the Bhāgavata conclusion, and they hardly follow the Vaiṣṇava rules and regulations, and yet because they chant *bhaja nitāi-gaura*, their chanting immediately evokes tears and other signs of ecstasy. Although they do not know the principles of Vaiṣṇava philosophy and are not very much advanced in education, by these symptoms they attract many men to become their followers. Their ecstatic tears will of course help them in the long run, for as soon as they come in contact with a pure devotee their lives will become successful. Even in the beginning, however, because they are chanting the holy names of nitāi-gaura, their swift advancement on the path of love of Godhead is very prominently visible. (CC Ādi 8.22 purp.)

CC Antya 20.28 purp.:

“Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura comments that persons who are actually very poor because they possess not even a drop of love of Godhead or pure devotional service falsely advertise themselves as great devotees, although they cannot at any time relish the transcendental bliss of devotional service. A class of so-called devotees known as *prākṛta-sahajiyās* sometimes display devotional symptoms to exhibit their good fortune. They are pretending, however, because these devotional features are only external. The *prākṛta-sahajiyās* exhibit these symptoms to advertise their so-called advancement in love of Kṛṣṇa, but instead of praising the *prākṛta-sahajiyās* for their symptoms of transcendental ecstasy, pure devotees do not like to associate with them. It is not advisable to equate the *prākṛta-sahajiyās* with pure devotees. One who is actually advanced in ecstatic love of Kṛṣṇa does not try to advertise himself. Instead, he endeavors more and more to render service to the Lord.

“The *prākṛta-sahajiyās* sometimes criticize pure devotees by calling them philosophers, learned scholars, knowers of the truth, or minute observers, but not devotees. On the other hand, they depict themselves as the most advanced, transcendently blissful devotees, deeply absorbed in devotional service and mad to taste transcendental mellows. They also describe themselves as the most advanced devotees in spontaneous love, as knowers of transcendental mellows, as the topmost devotees in conjugal love of Kṛṣṇa, and so on. Not actually knowing the transcendental nature of love of God, they accept their material emotions to be indicative of advancement. In this way they pollute the process of devotional service. To try to become writers of Vaiṣṇava literature, they introduce their material conceptions of life into pure devotional service. Because of their material conceptions, they advertise themselves as knowers of transcendental mellows, but they do not understand the transcendental nature of devotional service.” (CC Antya 20.28 purp.)

SB 2.3.24 purp.:

“Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura has very critically discussed all these *bhāva* displays in connection with some unscrupulous neophytes imitating the above symptoms for cheap appreciation. Not only Viśvanātha Cakravartī but also Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī has treated them very critically. Sometimes all the above eight symptoms of ecstasy are imitated by the mundane devotees (*prākṛta-sahajiyās*), but the pseudo symptoms are at once detected when one sees the pseudo devotee addicted to so many forbidden things. Even though decorated with the signs of a devotee, a person addicted to smoking, drinking or illegitimate sex with women cannot have all the above-mentioned ecstatic symptoms. But it is seen that sometimes these symptoms are willfully imitated, and for this reason Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī accuses the imitators of being stone-hearted men. They are sometimes even affected by the reflection of such transcendental symptoms, yet if they still do not give up the forbidden habits, then they are hopeless cases for transcendental realization.” (SB 2.3.24 purp.)

...to cite just a few.

In other words, in the absence of definitive, objective, practicable and authorized criteria for applying your ‘*pratyakṣitātma-nātha*’ yardstick to *dīkṣā-guru* candidates, you inexorably make your VDG vetting process vulnerable to imitators, which is *ativyapti*.

3) love vs. direct vision

There is yet another instance of the *ativyapti* fault in your treatment of *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas*.

Discussing comparative superiority of love for the Lord among three types of realized devotees, Jīva Gosvāmī in *Bhakti-sandarbha* (187) makes the following analysis:

“While direct vision of the Lord (*sākṣātkāra*) by itself constitutes the fulfillment of human life, the deeper a person’s experience of the Lord’s essential nature as the ultimate object of love, the more exquisite is his or her vision of the Lord. **Without experiencing the Lord’s characteristic nature as the beloved (*priyatva-dharmam vinā*), that His very essence is to be the recipient of pure, unmotivated love (*nirupādhi-prīty-āspadatā-svabhāvasya*), even direct vision of the Lord is as good as no vision at all (*sākṣātkāro’py asākṣātkāra eva*).** Such vision is comparable to tasting sugar candy without perceiving its sweetness because the tongue is infected with jaundice (*mādhuryam vinā duṣṭa-jihvayā khaṇḍasyeva*).

“Therefore [in SB. 5.5.6] Lord Rsabhadeva said: “Unless one develops love for Me, Vasudeva, he cannot give up his love for the body.”

“**Therefore, the greatness of a devotee is known primarily by the degree of intensity of his or her love.** It is for this reason that the definition of a *mahanta*, or a great devotee, was stated as “those who consider love for Me as their supreme goal.” [SB 5.5.3] Among great devotees,

however, one whose love is preeminent, who has had direct vision of the Lord, and is free from material desires is topmost. And one lacking or deficient in one or more of these attributes is correspondingly less developed. As a result, the devotees who were described [in SB 5.5.3] as “those who consider love for Me as their supreme goal,” do not belong to the category of devotees who have attained eternal forms as associates of the Lord. In addition, it is possible that they have some latent material desires, although having renounced sensual pleasure.”¹⁴⁷

In other words, Jīva Gosvāmī describes the plausibility of a scenario when someone has direct vision of the Lord while not having love for Him, which he says “is as good as no vision at all” — but which, coupled with *ratyābhāsa*, would incidentally qualify such a person as a *pratyakṣitātma-nātha* per your *ativyapti* definition.

Śrīla Prabhupāda concurs in Elevation to Kṛṣṇa Consciousness, chapter 4:

“We put so much stress on seeing, but **when Kṛṣṇa was present on this earth, so many people saw Him and did not realize that He is God**; so what is the advantage of seeing? **By seeing Kṛṣṇa, we will not understand Him**, but by listening carefully to His teachings, we can come to the platform of understanding. We can touch Kṛṣṇa immediately by sound vibration; therefore we should give more stress to the sound vibration of Kṛṣṇa and of the spiritual master...”

(c) Conclusion

To conclude, your interpretation of *pratyakṣitātma-nāthanām* of BS 1.44 as those the level of *bhāva* and beyond who always see Kṛṣṇa face-to-face and reside in Goloka Vrindavana is flawed on all three counts of a faulty definition:¹⁴⁸

- (4) *avyapti*, being too narrow and thus excluding categories that should fall within the definition;
- (5) *ativyapti*, being too broad and thus including categories that should be excluded from the definition; and
- (6) *asambhava*, infeasibility of the validity of an assertion.

However, as has already been proved above, whatever meaning you fancy to read into *pratyakṣitātma-nāthanām* of BS 1.44, **you must apply it equally** to the whole range of “spiritual pariahs” and not just to women — so fancy responsibly.

¹⁴⁷ Bhakti-sandarbha 187 (translation by Satya-nārāyaṇa Dāsa): *sākṣātkāra-mātrasyāpi yadyapi puruṣa-prayojanatvaṁ tathāpi tasminn api sākṣātkāre yāvān yāvān Śrī-bhagavataḥ priyatva-dharmānubhavas tāvāms tāvān utkarṣaḥ | nirupādhi-prīty-āspadatā-svabhāvasya priyatva-dharmān vinā tu sākṣātkāro'py asākṣātkāra eva, mādhyarāṁ vinā duṣṭa-jihvayā khaṇḍasyeva | ata evoktān Śrī-ṛṣabha-devena—prītir na yāvān mayi vāsudeve [bhā.pu. 5.5.6] iti | tataḥ prema-tāratamyenaiva bhakta-mahattva-tāratamyān mukhyam | ata eva mayīse kṛta-sauhṛdārthāḥ [bhā.pu. 5.5.3] ity eva tal-lakṣaṇatvenoktam | yatra tu sākṣātkāra eva premādihikyam, kaṣāyādi-rāhityādikam apy asti, sa paramo mukhyaḥ | tatraikaikāṅga-vaikalye nyūna-nyūna iti jñeyam | tad evaṁ ye vā mayīse [bhā.pu. 5.5.3] ity ādinā ye uktās te tu prāpta-pārṣada-dehā na bhavanti, tathā viṣaya-vairāgyo'pi nigūḍha-saṁskāravanto'pi sambhavanti | tatas tad-vivecanāya prakaraṇāntaram utthāpyate |*

¹⁴⁸ Quoted from Jīva Gosvāmī's Bhakti-sandarbha edition by Satya-narayana Dasa, footnote 45 in anuccheda 216.

III. “Not so many”, “very special case” and “very rare”

The last discussed topic naturally segues to the “henceforward” of this discussion: the “not so many” statement. Indeed, you seem to build your entire bridge between Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements on VDGs and your interpretation of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā on the following assumptions about this statement:

1. “Not so many” is a prescriptive (normative) rather than descriptive statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda.
2. “Not so many” is synonymous with “*sudurlabha*” or “extremely rare” as a descriptor of *bhāva-bhakti*.¹⁴⁹

Here are some examples:

“Yet Śrīla Prabhupāda also says that female *dīkṣā-gurus* should be “not so many” or in “very special case.” (VNP 11)

“Hence, because *bhāva-bhakti* itself is very rare, and because many among those who reach this stage continue to follow *daiva-varṇāśrama-dharma*, female *dīkṣā-gurus* would be extremely rare. This comports with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statements about female *ācāryas*: “not so many,” and “in very special case.” (VNP 10)

“The exception is that if she is *siddha*, she may be allowed. But exceptions should not be institutionalized. The exception supports the norm. But if the norm is not in place, then the exception becomes an option, not an exception. Śrīla Prabhupāda said “not so many” and “very special case.” The norm must first be in place. Otherwise, the exception will itself become a part of the norm in lieu of any other example.” (VNP 30)

A few observations:

(1) “Not so many”s are not so many, but they all mean “not so many”

¹⁴⁹ BRS 1.1.35-37 (translation by Bhanu Swami):

35: Bhakti is rarely attained. Bhakti is difficult to attain in two ways: if undertaken in great quantity but without attachment, bhakti cannot be attained even after a long time; and even if practiced with attachment, Kṛṣṇa does not give bhakti to the practitioner immediately.

36: The first type of rarity (by practice without attachment) is illustrated in one of the tantras: Liberation is easily attained by jñāna and material enjoyment is easily attained by puṇyas such as sacrifice, after attaining dedication to those goals by thousands of attempts. However, bhāva-bhakti to the Lord cannot be attained if one practices thousands of different sādhanas (because āsakti will not appear).

37: The second type of rarity is described in the Bhāgavatam. My dear King, the Supreme Person, Mukunda, is actually the maintainer of all the members of the Pāṇḍava and Yadu dynasties. He is your spiritual master, worshipable Deity, friend, and the director of your activities. To say nothing of this, He sometimes serves your family as a messenger or servant. This means that He worked just as ordinary servants do. Those engaged in getting the Lord’s favor attain liberation from the Lord very easily, but He does not give bhāva-bhakti at all times. SB 5.6.1

As much as you strive to equate “not so many” with “*sudurlabha*”, they are far from being synonyms — the latter is, literally, “extremely rare”, and the former is, literally, “not so many”.

Arguing to the contrary is, in effect, to accuse Śrīla Prabhupāda of careless usage of his words, or worse yet, of ignorance of their meaning — or both.

Let Śrīla Prabhupāda’s words speak for themselves.

Below are all twenty-one instances of his “not so many” expressions in lectures and letters (there are none in books). Please point out at least one besides the one from the discussion with Prof. O’Connell, where by “not so many” Śrīla Prabhupāda means “*sudurlabha*” or “extremely rare”:

1.

If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru? But, **not so many**. Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. (Interview with Professors O’Connell, Motilal and Shivaram — June 18, 1976, Toronto)

2.

[aside:] Give me that knife. Hare Kṛṣṇa. **Not so many**. Begin. Aiye. (Room Conversation — January 17, 1971, Allahabad)

3.

Prabhupāda: **Not so many** days. Two days, three days, like that.

Gaurasundara: Hah. Instead of two weeks.

Prabhupāda: So, short visit will encourage everybody. (Room Conversation — May 14, 1972, Honolulu)

4.

Prabhupāda: So far I am personally experienced, in our childhood there were **not so many** problems. Now India is faced with so many problems on account of imitating Western civilization. (Interview with Journalists — August 11, 1972, London)

5.

"Kṛṣṇa, what can I do for You? I am so teeny, You are so great. Still, I have tried to do something. If You kindly eat." This is mantra. Real mantra is that; **not so many** formalities of mantra. Kṛṣṇa does not say, "One who offers Me with the Vedic mantras..." Never says. Kṛṣṇa says bhaktyā, "with devotion." (SB 1.10.2 — June 17, 1973, Māyāpur)

6.

Prabhupāda: How many rooms?

Bhajahari: Maybe had fifteen.

Prabhupāda: Fifteen? No. **Not so many**.

Śrutakīrti: Two rooms a floor.

Prabhupāda: Not more than ten rooms. (Interview with Reporters — August 6, 1973, London)

7.

But Bhāgavata says, ete cāmśa-kalāḥ puṁsaḥ kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam. Particularly says that "All the incarnations are described," but at the end, the Bhāgavata points out that "There are so many Bhagavāns..." That's all right. **Not so many**; I mean not everyone. Not pantheism, not like that. Bhagavān has got innumerable incarnations. They have been described, but particularly pointing out that "Bhagavān is Kṛṣṇa." Kṛṣṇas tu bhagavān svayam. (SB 2.1.5 — November 8, 1973, Delhi)

8.

Rabindranath Tagore said sometimes that "When I was in London, the people are so busily running?" That time motorcar was **not so many**; he went about sixty years ago. So he said that "I was thinking the small island, they are going so fast, they may not fall in the sea." (Morning Walk — December 14, 1973, Los Angeles)

9.

Dr. Ghosh: But you see, up till now, in my long life of eighty years...

Prabhupāda: No, no, you have **not so many** experiences. That does not mean these things does not exist. Your experience is not all in all. Don't think like that. (Morning Walk — April 12, 1974, Bombay)

10.

"But he brought many, many, unlimited number of soldiers, and they were killed. So this time Kṛṣṇa wanted to kill only Jarāsandha, **not so many** innocent soldiers. So therefore Kṛṣṇa, Arjuna and Bhīma went to Jarāsandha, and they went in the dress of brāhmaṇa. (SB 1.2.2 — May 26, 1974, Rome)

11.

Therefore Kṛṣṇa says that "I am showing you the way how to understand Bhagavad-gītā. You have to accept that." **Not so many** ways. Only that way. (Morning Walk — May 10, 1975, Perth)

12.

Govinda dāsī: I went to the North Shore just recently to the hut where Siddha-svarūpa used to hold meetings, and there in the backyard I saw a huge tulasī plant, Kṛṣṇa tulasī, as big...

Prabhupada: I saw in... What is that island? (...)

Govinda dāsī: On Fiji.

Prabhupada: There also, they have got. The gentleman whose house I stayed, Mr. Punja. There were **not so many**, but one or two, very nice.

(Talk during massage — June 11, 1975, Honolulu)

13.

If you think that this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is restricting so many things... **Not so many** things. That is very simple. Just like we don't allow illicit sex life. We don't allow

intoxication. We don't allow meat-eating. We don't allow gambling. (SB 5.5.2 — April 28, 1969, Boston)

14.

Prabhupāda: Moon is one. There are **not so many** moons. Moon is one. You can go to the moon. (Morning Walk — July 20, 1976, New York)

15.

So they became poverty-stricken, and culturally conquered. [aside:] **Not so many**. This will be enough. (Room Conversation — August 3, 1976, New Māyāpur)

16.

Our Gargamuni, his father is very rich man. He wanted to take back the son from the Hare Kṛṣṇa movement. He was unable. Hardly! So many fathers. Our... So many... **Not so many**; few, they left this movement, but they could not stay outside—again come. (SB 5.5.35 — November 22, 1976, Vṛndāvana)

17.

Of course, we do not see here, but in the Western countries there are many places, oh, hundreds and thousands of cars are... Hundreds and thousands. Here, of course, we have **not so many** cars, but there in many cities I have seen. (Room Conversation with C.I.D. Chief — January 3, 1977, Bombay)

18.

In this press there is only (**not so many**?) workers. If you take charge of printing in India it is welcome. (Letter to Hitsaran Sharma — Los Angeles 19 January, 1968)

19.

This Yogananda gives no restrictions or regulative principles to his disciples, and thereby collects all nonsense class of men. But if you put restrictions then **not so many** men will come, but sincere ones will come, those who are actually sincerely searching after real spiritual life. (Letter to Kris — Los Angeles 13 November, 1968)

20.

In Bengali it is said wherever there is the goddess of fortune, there are varieties of responsibility. When I was alone there were **not so many** letters of so many problems. (Letter to Hansadutta: — Mayapur 19 October, 1974)

21.

I have noted that in July there were so many deposits. Why in August, September there were **not so many** deposits? Please explain. (Letter to: Jayatirtha — Bombay 24 October, 1975)

As you can see, there are none. The closest they get to your desired conclusion is when Śrīla Prabhupāda means “just one” — “one way”, “one moon”. Yet, in quote 1 you put words in Śrīla

Prabhupāda’s mouth by making him say something else that he usually meant by “not so many” — just like the *rtvik-vādīs* who make Śrīla Prabhupāda’s “henceforward” into something he never meant by it himself, and then build their entire theory on one misinterpreted word.

(2) “Very rare”s are not at all rare, but they all mean “very rare”

Unlike the expression “not so many”, which occurs only 21 times in the corpus of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s recorded classes and letters, the expression “very rare” is used by him over 300 times — more than 15 times as often as “not so many” — in books, lectures and letters, and in a variety of contexts, but with the precise meaning of “very rare”.

However, it is remarkable how Śrīla Prabhupāda purposely used this expression “very rare” to describe the unique and unprecedented mercy of Lord Caitanya invested in the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement:

“So one who does not indulge in speculating habit, neither tries to gain something by his work, but simply engages himself in the service of the Lord, he is called a pure devotee. **Such pure devotees are very rare. But by the Grace of Krishna, practically all the devotees and disciples who have kindly joined me, they are, their symptoms are pure devotees.** Even if they have got some ulterior desire, that will be removed very soon, because they have taken to the pure process of Krishna Consciousness.” (Letter to Janaki — Seattle 13 October, 1968)

[Please note how Śrīla Prabhupāda acknowledges the rarity of pure devotees (think ‘*sudurlabha*’) but then says that practically all of his disciples are pure devotees by their symptoms.]

“*Sa mahātmā su-durlabhaḥ. Such kind of great soul is very rare, but this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is making very cheaply a mahātmā like that.* Although they are distributing this knowledge very cheap, don’t think it is very cheap thing. It is very valuable. Those who are intelligent, they will understand, and they’ll take to it.” (SB 6.1.13-15 — USA, undated)

[Again, Śrīla Prabhupāda refers to rare mahatmas of BG 7.19 (literally called *sudurlabha* by Lord Kṛṣṇa) but then says ISKCON manufactures such *sudurlabha-mahatmas* “very cheaply”.]

“Purchase this kṛṣṇa-bhakti-rasa-bhāvitā matiḥ, Kṛṣṇa consciousness, if it is available somewhere.” Tatra laulyam eka mūlyam, na janma koṭibhiḥ sukṛtibhiḥ labhyate. **So this Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement is very rare thing, but, by the grace of Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, it is being distributed all over the world freely. It is Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s grace.** *Mahā-vadānyāya kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te.* If we adopt the method of Caitanya Mahāprabhu, then we can distribute what Kṛṣṇa..., kṛṣṇa-prema, love of Kṛṣṇa. Knowledge of Kṛṣṇa may be distributed.” (The Nectar of Devotion — January 5, 1973, Bombay)

[Again, Śrīla Prabhupāda contrasts the extreme rarity of Kṛṣṇa consciousness with its easy availability via his Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement]

"My dear Lord, You are the most munificent, magnanimous incarnation, because You are distributing love of Kṛṣṇa." **This is very rare thing, love of Kṛṣṇa.** Kṛṣṇa personally failed. He canvassed, sarva-dharmān parityajya mām ekaṁ śaraṇaṁ vraja "You give up everything. Just surrender unto Me, Kṛṣṇa, personally." But nobody surrendered; only a few persons of the Pāṇḍavas, Arjuna, Bhīma, or the gopīs in Vṛndāvana. But at that time there were others. And later age, people misunderstood Him. But the idea is that Kṛṣṇa also came to distribute love of Kṛṣṇa, but He actually could not induce people to this cult. They misunderstood Him. **But Lord Caitanya, by His grace, by this saṅkīrtana movement, He very easily distributed this love of Kṛṣṇa.** Therefore He is called namo mahā-vadānyāya: "My dear Lord, You are the most magnificent, munificent personality, incarnation, because," kṛṣṇa-prema-pradāya te [Cc Madhya 19.53], "You are distributing kṛṣṇa-prema, love of Kṛṣṇa, the most important thing, the goal of life." And that was the mission of Lord Caitanya." (7.6.6-9 — June 23, 1968, Montreal)

Hopefully the above quotes are enough, if anything, to impress on you at least that Śrīla Prabhupāda was deliberate in his choice of words when he wanted to convey his intended meaning — especially in regard to extremely consequential topics. So, when he said “not so many”, he usually meant it.

Therefore you have no semantical justification for putting words in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s lotus mouth that he never intended to utter.

(3) Women dīkṣā-gurus — “many”, but not “so many”.

Now that the semantics of “not so many” and “very rare” are somewhat clearer — specifically, that it is sheer speculation on your part to translate Śrīla Prabhupāda’s “not so many” as “very rare” — let us consider the two conversations in which Śrīla Prabhupāda directly addressed the topic of VDG.

They are:

- (a) with Atreya Rsi of 29 June 1972 in San Diego; and
- (b) with Professors O’Connel, Motilal and Shivaram of June 18, 1976, Toronto

Let us now parse these two conversations sentence by sentence:

(A) Conversation with Atreya Rsi of 29 June 1972 in San Diego

Prabhupāda: Manodhara means those who are conditioned by the mind, their statement is not accepted, according to our philosophy. Because he has no value.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda continues to develop the previous topic of people whimsically disobeying the order of śāstra and guru, by now stating that those conditioned by their minds cannot give authoritative or valuable statements]

Ātreya Ṛṣi: They have to be cured.

Prabhupāda: Huh?

Ātreya Ṛṣi: They have to be cured.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Crazy.

Ātreya Ṛṣi: Yes.

Prabhupāda: So a crazy man's statement is not accepted. Child's statement, crazy man's statement, unauthorized person's statement, blind man's statement we cannot accept.

[Now Śrīla Prabhupāda lists specific categories of people whose statements cannot be accepted: crazy, children, unauthorized, blind]

Ātreya Ṛṣi: A woman's statement?

Prabhupāda: Huh?

Ātreya Ṛṣi: A woman's statement?

[Ātreya Rsi asks if women are also among the aforementioned categories whose statements cannot be accepted.]

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

[Śrīla Prabhupāda objects by explaining that if a woman is perfect in Kṛṣṇa consciousness, she can be an *ācārya*, whose statements are to be accepted, and cites Jahnava-devi as an example. He also adds that not only was she an *ācārya*, but she was the head of the entire Vaiṣṇava community.]

Ātreya Ṛṣi: Lord Nityānanda?

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

[Śrīla Prabhupāda repeats who Jāhnavā-devī was.]

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

[Now Ātreya Ṛṣi asks if Śrīla Prabhupāda has written anything “about that” in any of his books. It is not clear, though, if his “about that” refers just to Jāhnavā-devī as the ācārya of the GV community or to women being ācāryas in general.]

Prabhupāda: I don't think.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda doubts anything has been mentioned about either Jāhnavā-devī as the GV ācārya or about women being ācāryas in general.]

But there are many *ācāryas*.

[This phrase is very significant, because Śrīla Prabhupāda directly states here that there are “many *ācāryas*”, meaning, women acting as *ācāryas*. This phrase cannot be meaningfully interpreted as referring to men as *ācāryas*, because (1) men acting as *ācāryas* is not the topic of their discussion, and (2) it is already well known to all participants of the discussion that *ācāryas* were usually men, and they were many. This statement makes sense and fits the context of the discussion only in reference to women acting as *ācāryas*.]

Maybe somewhere I might have mentioned.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda further adds that he “might have mentioned” somewhere about either Jahnava-devi or women as *ācāryas* in his books.]

It is not that woman cannot be *ācārya*.

[And even if he didn’t, he is restating the fact and the objection to Ātreya Ṛṣi’s question about women’s statements as unreliable, by restating that it is not that a woman cannot be an *ācārya*.]

Generally, they do not become. In very special case.

[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.]

But Jāhnavā-devī was accepted as, but she did not declare.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda stresses here that Jāhnavā-devī was accepted as the *ācārya* of Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *sampradāya* Vaiṣṇavas on their own. She didn’t propose or declare herself for that position.]

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

[Bouncing off “but she didn’t declare”, Ātreya Ṛṣi moves the discussion toward modern women, on the contrary, declaring their liberation.]

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

[Śrīla Prabhupāda brings the segment of this discussion back to its start — that Kṛṣṇa doesn't make spiritual discrimination between women and men on the basis of their bodies.]

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

[In a clear reference to BG 5.18 “*vidyā-vinaya-sampanne*”, Śrīla Prabhupāda reminds of the spiritual equality of all souls, including those in the bodies of animals. Sometimes this statement is used against VDG as an *argumentum ad absurdum*¹⁵⁰ by saying “If you maintain spiritual equality of women and men, why not propose taking initiations from cats and dogs?” The argument, however, is clearly absurd by itself and, as such, self-refuting.]

To conclude, in this conversation Śrīla Prabhupāda said both that women can be *ācāryas* and that there were “many *ācāryas*”, but, at the same time, that they “generally do not become” and “in very special case”. Śrīla Prabhupāda didn't specify what the stipulations for those special cases were, but he did add that Jahnava-devī hadn't declared herself to be the *ācārya*; rather, she was accepted as such by the Vaiṣṇava community. Combining these statements supports neither the notion of extreme rarity (*sudurlabha*) of Vaiṣṇavī *ācāryas*, nor womens' self-promotion to or struggle for positions of spiritual authority.

The natural scenario seems to be for the Vaiṣṇava community to recognize a Vaiṣṇavī for her preaching and qualities and accept her as an *ācārya* (*dīkṣā-guru*) on the basis of her devotional merits. The same scenario, of course, should apply to men. When it is applied to both genders, women *ācāryas* thus manifested naturally become “not so many” and “very special case”, because, for various reasons, they generally don't become as actively involved with dedicated preaching and spiritual mentorship as men.

[This natural dynamics is also supported by CC Antya 16.16-29 in a conversation between Kālidāsa and Jhaḍu Ṭhākura, in which Kālidāsa cited *śāstra* to prove that Jhaḍu Ṭhākura as a Vaiṣṇava was higher than a *brāhmāna*. Jhaḍu Ṭhākura, however, while agreeing with the śāstric statements, said himself to be low-born (*nīca-jāti*) and deprived of any devotion (*āmāra nāhi kṛṣṇa-bhakti*). But you advocate a diametrically opposite dynamics: Śrīla Prabhupāda encourages and orders his disciples of both genders to become gurus despite their lack of confidence in themselves as advanced enough, yet you portray some of them, despite them being devotees, as innately disqualified for that service.]

¹⁵⁰ An argument whereby one seeks to prove one's position by pointing out the absurdity or foolishness of an opponent's position. Also, an argument carried to such lengths that it becomes silly or ridiculous. From Latin, meaning “to absurdity”: <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/ad-absurdum>

(B) Conversation with Prof. O'Connel, Motilal and Shivaram of June 18, 1976, Toronto

Mrs. O'Connel: Swamiji, would you say something about the place of women in your movement?

[Mrs. O'Connel sets the topic for this segment of discussion.]

Prabhupāda: There is no distinction between man and woman. That is clearly said in the Bhagavad-gītā. *Mām hi pārtha vyapāśritya ye 'pi syuḥ pāpā-yonayaḥ striyo śūdras tathā vaiśyaḥ* The first is mentioned, striya. Striyaḥ śūdras tathā vaiśyaḥ. These classes are understood to be less intelligent—woman, śūdra and the vaiśyas.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda first states the classical definition of women's (as well as śūdras' and vaiśyas') position in the Vedic society per varṇāśrama and BG 9.32]

But Kṛṣṇa says, "No, even for them it is open." Because in the spiritual platform there is no such distinction, man, woman, or black, white, or big or small. No. Everyone is spirit soul. *Paṇḍitāḥ sama-darśinaḥ* [Bg 5.18]. *Vidyā-vinaya-sampanne brāhmaṇe gavi hastini śuni caiva śva-pāke ca paṇḍitāḥ* [Bg 5.18]. One who is actually learned, he is *sama-darśinaḥ*. He does not make any distinction.

[He then balances the varṇāśrama outlook on women (as well as on śūdras and vaiśyas) with the spiritual outlook, emphasizing their spiritual equality through the eyes of the actually learned.]

But so far our material body is concerned, there must be some distinction for keeping the society in order.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda then harmonizes the two types of outlook by both supporting social distinctions needed "for keeping the society in order" and relegating such distinctions to the realm of the material body.]

Mrs. O'Connel: The women could become paṇḍitas, then.

[She asks if women can play the traditional roles of sastric experts and teachers, or paṇḍitas/brāhmaṇas]

Prabhupāda: Oh, yes. *Te 'pi yānti parām gatim*. Not only come, she can also attain perfection. There is no such restriction. Kṛṣṇa said.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda responds affirmatively, citing Kṛṣṇa that there are no restrictions in the realm of spiritual knowledge and attainment of perfection for both genders.]

Mrs. O'Connel: Do you have any paṇḍitas in the Western movement, women?

[She wants to know if this hypothetical spiritual equality is indeed practiced in ISKCON in the West.]

Prabhupāda: There are so many Western woman, girls, in our society. They are chanting, dancing, taking to Kṛṣṇa consciousness. Many.

[Although not directly mentioning any women panditas in ISKCON, Śrīla Prabhupāda again answers affirmatively and cites “many” women and girls in ISKCON who engage in the same fundamental spiritual activities as men.]

Of course, because superficially, bodily, there is some distinction, so we keep women separately from men, that's all. Otherwise, the rights are the same.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda again reminds of the need to follow social norms of separating the sexes, and again terms them as “superficial[ly]” and “bodily” distinction, which are not meant to restrict or affect women’s spiritual rights.]

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

[In asking this question, he specifically refers to the possibility of a woman to be a guru “in the line of disciplic succession,” which traditionally refers to *dīkṣā-guru*.]

Prabhupāda: **Yes. Jāhnavā devī was—Nityānanda's wife. She became.**

[Śrīla Prabhupāda answers affirmatively, citing Jāhnavā devī as a *dīkṣā-guru* in our line.]

If she is able to go to the highest perfection of life, why it is not possible to become guru?

[By this sentence Śrīla Prabhupāda (1) refers to his earlier statement “Oh, yes. *Te 'pi yānti parāṁ gatim*. Not only come, she can also attain perfection. There is no such restriction. Kṛṣṇa said” and (2) stresses that the role of guru is contingent on attaining “the highest perfection of life”. Some wish Śrīla Prabhupāda stopped here so the term “the highest perfection of life” could remain vague and open to interpretation, for instance, as “*bhāva-bhakti*” or “*pratyakṣitātmā-nāthānam*” and applicable only to women. But he continues.]

But, not so many.

[Again, as was shown in analyzing Conversation (a), Śrīla Prabhupāda did say in reference to women *ācāryas* that they were both “many” and “in very special case” who “generally do not become”. Accepting, as we should, that Śrīla Prabhupāda is consistent and does not contradict himself, the line “not so many” must be seen as part of the same paradigm. In this case Śrīla Prabhupāda’s “not so many” can have the meaning “not as many”, as both are synonymous

when used in the sense “less” or “fewer”.¹⁵¹ What the expression does not mean, though, as was shown earlier based on its standard usage by Śrīla Prabhupāda, is “very rare”, or “*sudurlabha*”.]

Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda again stresses that she can become guru when she has attained perfection, which just lends itself to the hypothesis of “*sādhana-bhakti* for male gurus, *bhāva-bhakti* for female gurus.” But he continues:]

But man or woman, unless one has attained the perfection...

[Śrīla Prabhupāda stresses that devotees **of both genders** — “**man or woman**” — must attain perfection to be a guru. Period.]

Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā sei guru haya. [CC Madhya 8.128] The qualification of guru is that he must be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa. **Then he or she can become guru.** *Yei kṛṣṇa-tattva-vettā, sei guru haya.* [break]

[Śrīla Prabhupāda again holds both genders **to the same** standard for becoming a guru — being “fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa.” We have already discussed earlier and at length what he meant by “knowing the science of Kṛṣṇa” or “knowing Kṛṣṇa in truth” — repeating the words of Kṛṣṇa and guru-parampara without distortion and following the order of the spiritual master. Of course, one is free to give it another reading, but in doing so one cannot separate the genders by holding them to different standards of perfection without ignoring Śrīla Prabhupāda’s crystal clear “he or she”, “man or woman” “must be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa — **THEN he or she can become guru**”.]

In our material world, is it any prohibition that woman cannot become professor? If she is qualified, she can become professor. What is the wrong there? She must be qualified. That is the position.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda gives a simile that Mrs’ O’Connel can easily relate to — a woman can become a professor if she meets the same qualification standards as men.]

So similarly, if the woman understands Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly, she can become guru.

[Śrīla Prabhupada again reminds that to become a guru a woman must “understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly” — just like a man.]

Indian man: Well, to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness, do you not require *adhikārī*?

[Since Śrīla Prabhupāda explained that becoming a guru requires “understand[ing] Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly”, another guest, also a professor, chimes in asking if that understanding

¹⁵¹ See, for instance, https://www.powerthesaurus.org/not_so_much/synonyms and <https://www.thefreedictionary.com/less> listing “not so many” and “not as many” as synonyms with each other and with “less” and “fewer”.

by itself requires a prior qualification, or *adhikāra*. Obviously, one who has such *adhikāra* is called an *adhikārī*.]

Prabhupāda: *Adhikārī* means he must agree to understand. That is *adhikārī*. But we do not agree. That is our fault.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda demystifies the required *adhikāra* to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly by saying that he “must agree to understand”. This is his succinct yet exhaustive paraphrase of the entire range of śāstric statements like *tad viddhi praṇipātena* (BG 4.34), *tasmād gurum prapadyeta* (SB 11.3.21), *yasya deve parā bhaktir* (SU 6.23), *guru-pādāśrayas tasmāt* (BRS 1.2.74-75) etc., stressing that submissive hearing from and humble service to the spiritual master is the key to understanding Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly.]

Indian man: Is this agreement due to learning, or out of...?

[The guest wonders if one agrees or doesn't agree to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness due to one's learning.]

Prabhupāda: No. Kṛṣṇa says, *sarva-dharmān parityajya mām* [Bg 18.66]: you surrender, you become qualified. You agree, "Yes, I surrender, Kṛṣṇa says," then immediately you become qualified.

[Śrīla Prabhupāda dismisses his suggestion that learning has anything to do with one's ability to agree to understand and drives the point home — it is by surrender to Kṛṣṇa that one immediately becomes qualified to understand Kṛṣṇa consciousness perfectly and, consequently, to become a guru. And, yes, “he or she”, or “man or woman”. Śrīla Prabhupāda concludes:]

Prabhupāda: But that you do not do. Kṛṣṇa is personally canvassing, but we are not agreeing. What can be done?"

To conclude, this conversation, just like the previous one, leaves no room for misinterpreting Śrīla Prabhupāda's words as holding women to a higher standard of perfection than men for becoming gurus. And, as was shown, “not so many” here most logically means its synonymous “not as many” as men.

(4) Normative or descriptive

A brief but important aside on your contention that “not so many” is a normative rather than descriptive statement. You write:

“But if the norm is not in place, then the exception becomes an option, not an exception. Śrīla Prabhupāda said “not so many” and “very special case.” The norm must first be in place. Otherwise, the exception will itself become a part of the norm in lieu of any other example.” (VNP 30)

Here is a definition of normative and descriptive statements:

“A **normative statement** expresses a value judgment about whether a situation is desirable or undesirable. Whereas a **descriptive statement** (also known as a **positive statement**) is meant to describe the world as it is, a normative statement is meant to talk about the world as it should be. For instance, “the world would be a better place if the moon were made of green cheese” is a normative statement because it expresses a judgment about what ought to be. **Normative statements are characterised by the modal verbs "should", "would", "could" or "must"**.¹⁵²

Accepting this definition, it is simply inexplicable, even on purely grammatical grounds, how you can interpret “not so many” (which has no semantic signs of being a normative statement, such as the modal verbs “should”, “would”, “could” or “must”) as the one and only normative statement in this discussion while ignoring the other obviously normative statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda literally in the next sentences:

- “The qualification of guru is that he **MUST** be fully cognizant of the science of Kṛṣṇa. **Then he or she can become guru.**”
- “*Adhikārī* means he **MUST** agree to understand. That is *adhikārī*.”
- “Actually one who has attained the perfection, she can become guru. But **man or woman, unless** [which conveys a mandatory condition] one has attained the perfection.”

Conclusion:

Unlike many other statements in the conversation, “not so many” is a descriptive rather than normative statement, synonymous with “not as many” and consistent with Śrīla Prabhupāda’s earlier statement in Conversation (A), and which describes the ratio between male and female gurus as it is, rather than prescribes a ratio or proscribes women from becoming *dīkṣā-gurus* unless on a level of spiritual advancement much higher than the one expected of men.

(5) “Not so many” śūdras as *dīkṣā-gurus*

And while we are on this topic — you write in VNP 24-25:

“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”.” (VNP 24-25)

Let us accept, for argument’s sake, that *śūdras* and *antyajas* of BS 1.42-43 are indeed *sādhakas* who are, unlike women, exempt from having to be *pratyakṣitātma-nāthas* to become *dīkṣā-gurus*.

¹⁵² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Normative_statement

Now, paraphrasing your statement above, let us take it one logical step further to show its absurdity:

“Simply put, *sādhakas* will always be much more numerous than *siddhas*. And since Pāñcarātrikī vidhi does not proscribe *sūdras* and *antyajas* who are *sādhakas* from acting as *dīkṣā-gurus*, that explains why we see in our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava disciplic succession, as well as in the Vaiṣṇava schools of yore following Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā, scores of *sūdras* and *antyajas* who have been confirmed as authentic *dīkṣā-gurus* while being ordinary *sādhakas*.”

If the above is historically correct, then, to paraphrase you in VNP 39, you are invited to present your lists of *sūdra* and *antyaja dīkṣā-gurus* in different Vaiṣṇava lines, along with their bona fide biographies and teachings so that everyone can really see the evidence.

But if the above is historically incorrect, then so is necessarily your interpretation of BS 1.42-44, failing its own historical test.

IV. The Sunīti *pramāṇa*

If “not so many” is the “henceforward” of this discussion, then Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport on SB 4.12.32 must be its “*rtvik* appointment letter” of 9 July 1977 — so much is being read into it as the final and ultimate *pramāṇa* that women must not be *dīkṣā-gurus*. For instance, you write:

“In Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 4.12.32, purport, Śrīla Prabhupāda says “Dhruva Mahārāja’s mother, Sunīti, was his patha-pradarśaka-guru ... sometimes called śikṣā-guru. It is the duty of the śikṣā-guru or dīkṣā-guru to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to śāstric injunctions, there is no difference between śikṣā-guru and dīkṣā-guru, and generally the śikṣā-guru later on becomes the dīkṣā-guru. Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s dīkṣā-guru.” Śrīla Prabhupāda says “generally the śikṣā-guru later on becomes the dīkṣā-guru.” And this has been the common experience within ISKCON. “However,” Śrīla Prabhupāda adds, “Sunīti, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s dīkṣā-guru.” Here it is seen that Śrīla Prabhupāda is applying this restriction in case of women who are preaching and having followers. Although men generally can become dīkṣā-gurus, women generally cannot.” (VNP 40)

Given that this excerpt is the only apparent statement by Śrīla Prabhupāda against women initiating, it generally forms the core of any argument that ISKCON shouldn’t allow Vaiṣṇavīs to become *dīkṣā-gurus*. And since it also seemingly goes against all the other statements Śrīla Prabhupāda made on this subject (that we’ve surveyed thus far), for both these reasons it needs to be examined carefully, lest things remain unclear.

Let us again look at the relevant part of the purport in question:

“Dhruva had a feeling of obligation to his mother, Sunīti. It was Sunīti who had given him the clue which had now enabled him to be personally carried to the Vaikuṅṭha 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. Patha-pradarśaka-guru means "the guru, or the spiritual master, who shows the way." Such a guru is sometimes called śikṣā-guru. Although Nārada Muni was his dīkṣā-guru (initiating spiritual master), Sunīti, his mother, was the first who gave him instruction on how to achieve the favor of the Supreme Personality of Godhead. It is the duty of the śikṣā-guru or dīkṣā-guru to instruct the disciple in the right way, and it depends on the disciple to execute the process. According to śāstric injunctions, there is no difference between śikṣā-guru and dīkṣā-guru, and generally the śikṣā-guru later on becomes the dīkṣā-guru. **Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's dīkṣā-guru.** Still, he was not less obliged to Sunīti. There was no question of carrying Nārada Muni to Vaikuṅṭhaloka, but Dhruva Mahārāja thought of his mother.” (SB 4.12.32 purp.)

Here are a few observations:

(1) Underdetermination

We'll begin by citing an analysis of this purport by a prominent ISKCON scholar, paraphrased and expanded:

“The point about the Suniti quote is that it is ambiguous. It is a classic problem in philosophy, especially philosophy of science. It is called underdetermination.¹⁵³ This means the evidence (the quote in this case) is consistent with several theories (explanations). It is consistent with multiple ideas, such as:

1. no woman should ever give initiation to any man or woman;
2. a woman should only give initiation to another woman, but not to man;
3. under the *vaidika* system, a woman could not take initiation and therefore could not give it;¹⁵⁴
4. Sunīti was initiated under Pāñcarātriki systems but was either not allowed to initiate others by the particular Pāñcarātriki rules for her manvantara, or could, but not her son;
5. 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 vengefulness towards Suruci and

¹⁵³ See: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Underdetermination>

¹⁵⁴ CC Madhya 24.331 purp.: “However, according to Vedic principles, only a brāhmaṇa who is fully engaged in his occupational duties can be initiated. Śūdras and women are not admitted to a *vaidika* initiation.

Uttānapāda,¹⁵⁵ and therefore she could not muster enough composure and clarity (required of a guru) to pacify and enlighten even herself, much less her son;¹⁵⁶

6. her motherly attachment to Dhruva and/or her insufficient spiritual level by itself disqualified her from being anything more than *patha-pradarśaka-guru* for him, which is the least involved and responsible type of *śikṣā-guru*, and one that rarely develops into a permanent and substantial *śikṣā*-relationship, which is a mandatory precursor for *dīkṣā*;¹⁵⁷
7. and the list can be continued *ad infinitum*.

The Sunīti quote is consistent with every one of explanations 1-6, each supportable by *śāstra*, but it does not contain enough information to allow us to pick out only one of them as the only correct explanation. Therefore this quotation simply cannot be used to support explanation 1, your preference, over explanations 2-6.”¹⁵⁸

Therefore this quote cannot be used as a normative statement — simply because it is unclear what exactly, if anything, it is supposed to normalize. Therefore the Sunīti quote 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).

(2) Sunīti: Bhaktin or Devī Dāsī?

The only way to collapse this quantum-like ambiguity of the quote into one definitive conclusion is to introduce additional relevant information. You can significantly help our discussion by supplying one such piece of information. In your VNP, page 41, you astutely observe:

“If a woman is not an initiated Vaiṣṇava, then she has not received any mantra and thus there is no question of giving the mantra to others. **Thus, it becomes useless to mention that she cannot become mantra-dā.** Besides that, in the verse 1.37, where the description of the qualifications for who can be guru starts, it is mentioned that only a Vaiṣṇava can be guru and thus the context is set that whatever personalities are being discussed are duly initiated Vaiṣṇavas.” (VNP 41-42)

I hope you accept that one of the implications of your above statement pertinent to our discussion is, to paraphrase you, that:

¹⁵⁵ VCT on SB 4.8.20 (translation by Bhanu Swami): “[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.’” *nanu kiṁ harim ārādhya tasyāḥ pāpiyasyāḥ garbhaṁ pravekṣyamīti tatra sā varāki khalu kā, tasyāḥ kiṅkaras tvat-pitaiva varāko dina-buddhis tvam brahma-padād apy utkṛṣṭam padam prāptum pārayiṣyasi, tad itaḥ śighram vraja*

¹⁵⁶ Bhakti-sandarbha 203 (translation by Bhanu Swami): *kāma-krodhādi-yukto’pi kṛpaṇo’pi viśādavān | śrutvā vikāśam āyāti sa vaktā paramo guruḥ ||* “The speaker is the best guru if he enlightens people filled with lust and anger, misers and depressed persons when they hear him.”

¹⁵⁷ CC Adi 1.35 purp.: “Generally a spiritual master who **constantly** instructs a disciple in spiritual science becomes his initiating spiritual master later on.”

¹⁵⁸ Email dated 20 June 2004, PAMHO text 8352063.

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

As you could see above, there are other, similarly viable rationales for why Sunīti could not become Dhruva’s *dīkṣā-guru* that do not require her to be an initiated Vaiṣṇavī.

However, since you are bent on interpreting SB 4.12.32 purp. as a proscriptive normative statement that prohibits **contemporary initiated Vaṣṇavis** from initiating others per Pāñcarātriki rules, for Sunīti’s case to be applicable to **contemporary initiated Vaṣṇavis** as a *pramāṇa*, first you **MUST prove that Sunīti was a Vaiṣṇavī initiated per Pāñcarātriki rules.**

Otherwise, following your own logic, “it becomes useless to mention that Sunīti could not become *mantra-dā*” for Dhruva — and to build your entire theory on an unproven assumption.

[Please note that it is not enough to just state, like some participants of the discussion, that Pāñcarātra was existent around Sunīti’s time. This might be the case, but there should be evidence that she was initiated per that Pāñcarātra. Until then, any reference to the “Sunīti *pramāṇa*” in regard to VDG will remain a moot point.]

(3) *Dhruva-māṭṛkā-nyāya*

And even if you manage to prove that Sunīti was indeed a Pāñcarātriki-initiated Vaiṣṇavī, you will need to establish that her Pāñcarātriki norms are fully applicable today and override all other normative injunctions as well as historical evidence.

So, when you demand:

“Also, I request you to not try to avoid direct statement of Śrīla Prabhupāda (SB 4.12.32, purport) that says that women cannot become *dīkṣā-gurus*, although they can become *śikṣā-gurus*.”
(March 8)

...please note that it’s not that I am trying to avoid the “direct statement” by Śrīla Prabhupāda. It is rather the opposite — your “direct statement in SB 4.12.32 purp.”, which you cite as “women cannot become *dīkṣā-gurus*, although they can become *śikṣā-gurus*” and which no one else sees there except you, somehow avoids me. Between which lines does the purport actually say “cannot”, “women”, and “they can become”?

Moreover, for you to argue that by his purport on SB 4.12.32 “Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s *dīkṣā-guru*” Śrīla Prabhupāda also meant “Therefore, no woman can even give initiation” is improper, self-defeating and intellectually dishonest because:

- 1) it is again putting words in Śrīla Prabhupāda's mouth and making him into a mouthpiece of your interpretations, which by itself is wrong and offensive;
- 2) since the purport doesn't mention any exceptions, taken literally it would also necessitate that even *siddha* women cannot and must not give initiations, regardless of what BS 1.44 enjoins. Period.
- 3) by extension, p.2 would mean that all other statements by Śrīla Prabhupāda to the contrary — that women can and even should be *gurus* — are either confused, or illegitimate, or politically and socially expedient rather than *śāstric* and truthful, which is, again, wrong and offensive; and
- 4) this will also constitute a typical case of *nagna-māṭṛkā-nyāya* — or, in our case, *dhruva-māṭṛkā-nyāya* (“the logic of Dhruva's mother”).

On the last point, incidentally, Śrīla Prabhupāda writes a few chapters earlier:

“One cannot argue, "How is it that Dhruva Mahārāja, who was prevented from getting up on the lap of his father, could press down the whole earth?" This argument is not very much appreciated by the learned, for it is an example of *nagna-māṭṛkā logic*. By this logic one would think that because his mother in her childhood was naked, she should remain naked even when she is grown up.” (SB 4.8.79)

Śrīla Prabhupāda gives a few more examples of the *nagna-māṭṛkā* fallacy in his instructions, which are very relevant here:

“In this regard, Śrīla Prabodhānanda Sarasvatī writes, *yat-kāruṇya-kaṭākṣa-vaibhavavatām*. **If Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu simply glanced at someone for a moment, that person immediately turned into one of the most confidential devotees of the Lord.** The prince came to see the Lord for the first time, but by the Lord's mercy the boy immediately became a topmost devotee. **This was not in theory but in practice. We cannot apply the *nagna-māṭṛkā-nyāya* formula.** This states that if one's mother was naked in her childhood, she should continue to remain naked, even though she has become the mother of so many children. If a person is actually blessed by the mercy of the Lord, he can immediately become a topmost devotee of the Lord. **The logic of *nagna-māṭṛkā* states that if a person is not elevated on such and such a date, he cannot become an exalted devotee overnight, as it were.** This particular instance offers evidence to contradict that theory. On the previous day, the boy was simply an ordinary prince, and the next day he was counted as one of the topmost devotees of the Lord. This was all made possible by the causeless mercy of the Lord. The Lord is omnipotent—all-powerful or almighty—and He can act as He likes. (Madhya 12.68 purp.)

We have already discussed how Lord Caitanya empowers His devotees as *āveśas* to extend His presence and glance to every nook and corner of the world, and therefore arguing that female disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda cannot be *dīkṣā-gurus* just because Suniti could not initiate her son seven manvantaras ago is a sterling instance of *nagna-māṭṛkā-nyāya*.

Here is one more relevant, even poignant example by Śrīla Prabhupāda:

Devotee (1): Does one have to be a pure devotee to be a...? The twelve authorities, are they all pure devotees?

Prabhupāda: Why do you ask this question? Huh? You have no sense. Without pure devotee, how they became authority? You are ask the question, "Is Mr. Rockefeller a rich man?" Your question is like that. He is known a very rich man, and he has foundation. If you ask, "Is he a rich man?" is that very intelligent question? Unless pure devotee, how they are authorized?

Devotee (1): What I was wondering about was the four Kumāras were [indistinct]. And I wanted to ask about Lord Kapila.

Prabhupāda: Kapilo manuḥ.

Devotee (1): They weren't pure devotees right from..., they weren't devotees right from the first. The Nectar of Devotion says that the four Kumāras were first situated in the...

Prabhupāda: Right from the... What do you mean by "right from the first"? What do you mean by that? Just like Rūpa Gosvāmī. Rūpa Gosvāmī was a minister of Muhammadan government. So what is his position? He was minister, he was working under government service, and he was rejected by the brāhmaṇa community. Then how he became gosvāmī?

Devotee (1): From the beginning of their...

Prabhupāda: Beginning... Bhaktivinoda Ṭhākura was a magistrate. What do you mean by "beginning"? As soon as he is situated in his own original position, then he is pure devotee. That's all. It doesn't matter what he has done in the past. **It is called nagna-māṭṛkā.** Nagna-māṭṛkā, that one's mother was naked in her childhood. So one is asking, "Mother, why you are putting on those sārīs? You were naked. You can remain naked." **This kind of argument is no argument. Whatever one may be in his past, that's all right. As soon as he is situated in pure devotee, devotional state, that's all.** One hasn't got to inquire "from the beginning" or "from the end." There is no need of such inquiry. As soon as he is situated in his original position, hitvā anyathā-rūpaṁ svarūpeṇa vyavasthiṭṭiḥ. (SB 6.3.1819 — February 12, 1971, Gorakhpur)

However, if you disagree and would like to prove me wrong, please reveal the words in the SB 4.12.32 purp. that you and only you seem to be seeing there so clearly: "women", "cannot", and "they". Until then, your imaginative treatment of the purport will continue to be plagued by *nagna-māṭṛkā-nyāya*.

(4) Order and eligibility

There is yet another possible explanation for the Sunīti-*pramāṇa* that happens to lead to an extremely consequential conclusion.

Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā 1.48 mandates that a woman must seek permission from her husband and other senior relatives (according to Sarayū-prasāda Mīśra, such as her father, father-in-law, etc.) to receive *dīkṣā*. She cannot circumvent them:

*strīṇām ca pati-mitrādīn anatikramya sattamān |
anujñayā vāpy anyebhyaḥ smrto mantra-parigrahaḥ ||48||*

So, maybe Mahārāja Uttānapada didn't give such permission to Sunīti as his neglected wife, and therefore, despite her eligibility for *dīkṣā*, she remained uninitiated and hence incapable to initiate Dhruva. Or maybe her father didn't give her such permission. If BS 1.48 itself provides for such a scenario, why rule it out as a plausible explanation for the mystery of SB 4.12.32 purp.?

Similarly, when an exalted *maha-bhāgavata* spiritual master, the actual spiritual father, gives one a direct order to give initiations, this order overrides all other injunctions, eligibility or ineligibility. Would you not agree?

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī narrates the following conversation between Lord Caitanya and Sarvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya in CC Madhya 10.142-145, which ensued after Lord Caitanya met his Godbrother Govinda and learned that Govinda had been sent by their spiritual master Īśvara Purī, to serve Him:

*prabhu kahe,—bhaṭṭācārya, karaha vicāra
gurura kiṅkara haya mānya se āmāra (142)*

**Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu then continued speaking to Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya:
"Consider this point. The servant of the spiritual master is always respectable for Me.**

*tānhāre āpana-sevā karāite nā yuyāya
guru ājñā diyāchena, ki kari upāya (143)*

"As such, it is not befitting that the guru's servant should engage in My personal service. Yet My spiritual master has given this order. What shall I do?"

Purport: A guru's servants or disciples are all godbrothers to one another, and as such they should all respect one another as prabhu, or master. No one should disrespect his godbrother. For this reason Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu asked Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya what to do about Govinda. Govinda was the personal servant of Īśvara Purī, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's spiritual master, and now Īśvara Purī had ordered Govinda to become Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu's personal servant. So what was to be done? This was the inquiry Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu placed before Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, an experienced friend.

*bhaṭṭa kahe, gurura ājñā haya balavān
guru-ājñā nā laṅghiye, śāstra-pramāṇa (144)*

Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya said, "The order of the spiritual master is very strong and cannot be disobeyed. That is the injunction of the śāstras, the revealed scriptures.

*sa śuśruvān mātari bhārgaveṇa pitur niyogāt prahr̥tam dviṣad-vat
pratyagr̥hīd agraja-śāsanaṁ tad ājñā gurūṇāṁ hy avicāraṇīyā (45)*

”Being ordered by his father, Paraśurāma killed his mother, Reṇukā, just as if she were an enemy. When Lakṣmaṇa, the younger brother of Lord Rāmacandra, heard of this, He immediately engaged Himself in the service of His elder brother and accepted His orders. The order of the spiritual master must be obeyed without consideration.”

Lord Caitanya Himself used the same logic of the higher order when answering Vallabha Bhaṭṭa’s challenge in CC Antya 7.103-108:

*eka-dina bhaṭṭa puchila ācāryere
”jīva-’prakṛti’ ’pati’ kari’ mānaye kṛṣṇere (103)*

One day Vallabha Bhaṭṭa said to Advaita Ācārya, ”Every living entity is female [prakṛti] and considers Kṛṣṇa her husband [pati].

*pati-vratā hañā patira nāma nāhi laya
tomarā kṛṣṇa-nāma laha,—kon dharma haya?” (104)*

”It is the duty of a chaste wife, devoted to her husband, not to utter her husband’s name, but all of you chant the name of Kṛṣṇa. How can this be called a religious principle?”

*ācārya kahe,—”āge tomāra ’dharma’ mūrtimān
iñhāre puchaha, iñha karibena ihāra samādhāna (105)*

Advaita Ācārya responded, ”In front of you is Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the personification of religious principles. You should ask Him, for He will give you the proper answer.”

*śuni’ prabhu kahena,—”tumi nā jāna dharma-marma
svāmi-ājñā pāle,—ei pati-vratā-dharma (106)*

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

*patira ājñā,—nirantara tāñra nāma la-ite
patira ājñā pati-vratā nā pāre lañghite (107)*

”The order of Kṛṣṇa is to chant His name incessantly. Therefore one who is chaste and devoted to the husband Kṛṣṇa must chant the Lord’s name, for she cannot deny the husband’s order.

*ataeva nāma laya, nāmera 'phala' pāya
nāmera phale kṛṣṇa-pade 'prema' upajāya" (108)*

"Following this religious principle, a pure devotee of Lord Kṛṣṇa always chants the holy name. As a result of this, he gets the fruit of ecstatic love for Kṛṣṇa."

Similarly, when the same Supreme Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu orders everyone to preach and become gurus — which Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in CC Madhya 8.128 purp. as "equally applicable to the *vartma-pradarśaka-guru*, *śikṣā-guru* and *dīkṣā-guru*" — this order of the Lord and His pure devotee overrides all otherwise authoritative *śāstric* injunctions if they come in its way, as we already saw in Section II.4.b "Silencing the ācāryas".

In this context, notwithstanding his purport on SB 4.12.32, his "not so many" and "very special case" statements and even BS 1.42-44, Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly urged all of his disciples, men and women alike, to become *śikṣā-* and *dīkṣā-gurus*. This is an undeniable and "very strong" order. In Śrīla Prabhupāda's own words:

"Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya here asked Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu why Īśvara Purī accepted a disciple from a *śūdra* family. According to the *smṛti-śāstra*, which gives directions for the management of the *varṇāśrama* institution, a *brāhmaṇa* cannot accept a disciple from the lower castes. (...) In answer to this question, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu replied that His spiritual master, Īśvara Purī, was so empowered that he was as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead. As such, Īśvara Purī was the spiritual master of the whole world. He was not a servant of any mundane rule or regulation. **An empowered spiritual master like Īśvara Purī can bestow his mercy upon anyone, irrespective of caste or creed. The conclusion is that an empowered spiritual master is authorized by Kṛṣṇa and his own guru and should therefore be considered as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.** That is the verdict of Viśvanātha Cakravartī: *sākṣād-dharitvena*. An authorized spiritual master is as good as Hari, the Supreme Personality of Godhead. **As Hari is free to act as He likes, the empowered spiritual master is also free. As Hari is not subject to mundane rules and regulations, the spiritual master empowered by Him is also not subject.** According to the Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Antya-līlā 7.11), *kṛṣṇa-śakti vinā nahe tāra pravartana*. **An authorized spiritual master empowered by Kṛṣṇa can spread the glories of the holy name of the Lord, for he has power of attorney from the Supreme Personality of Godhead.** In the mundane world, anyone possessing his master's power of attorney can act on behalf of his master. **Similarly, a spiritual master empowered by Kṛṣṇa through his own bona fide spiritual master should be considered as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself.** That is the meaning of *sākṣād-dharitvena*." (CC Madhya 10.136 purp.)

Do you accept that Śrīla Prabhupāda is no less empowered than Īśvara Purī and thus "should be considered as good as the Supreme Personality of Godhead Himself"?

If you do, then why obscure and eclipse this position by one's own imaginative interpretations of hitherto largely unreferenced *śāstras* in a presumptuous attempt to "harmonize" Śrīla Prabhupāda's

“conflicting statements” —and then educate his trusted direct disciples that they have had it wrong all along?

And when such an empowered emissary, *āveśa* and *senapati-bhakta* of Lord Caitanya repeatedly orders his “boys and girls” to become spiritual masters and help liberate the world, who is there to tell them: “Yes, Prabhupada said that, but actually his instructions on the topic are conflicting and therefore you should stick to your *varṇāśrama* duties until you are Goloka residents” — except, of course, someone either more empowered than Śrīla Prabhupāda or totally blinded by one’s arrogance and superficial learning?

And since the first case — being more empowered than Śrīla Prabhupāda — is highly unlikely, whoever the second case is, their position is indeed lamentable:

*jñānatas tv anupetasya brahmācāryam abhīpsataḥ
vṛthaivātma-samit-kṣepo jāyate kṛṣṇa-vartmani*

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. (Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā 1.34)

(5) Normative cherry-picking

As was shown above, without the extra information about the actual reasons behind Sunīti’s inability to initiate Dhruva, the “*Sunīti-pramāṇa*” is a descriptive statement.

Still let us assume, for argument’s sake, that in the “Sunīti quote” Śrīla Prabhupāda indeed relayed a general Vedic rule that women should never initiate.

However, we should then acknowledge that Śrīla Prabhupāda would sometimes write or speak about authoritative ancient Vedic injunctions that he didn’t personally practice or instruct his followers to practice, and sometimes he would do so as if these injunctions were still in use. Here’s an example from the SB 4.4.17 and purport (which are much more relevant than the “Sunīti quote” for some online VDG discussions — if not for their content, but for their style):

*kaṇṇau pidhāya nirayād yad akalpa īśe
dharmāvitary asṛṇibhir nṛbhir asyamāne
chindyāt prasahya ruśatīm asatīm prabhuś cej
jihvām asūn api tato visṛjet sa dharmah*

Satī continued: If one hears an irresponsible person blaspheme the master and controller of religion, one should block his ears and go away if unable to punish him. But if one is able to kill, then one should by force cut out the blasphemer's tongue and kill the offender, and after that one should give up his own life.

Purport: (...) The instruction set forth here in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is that one should not tolerate at any cost the activities of a person who vilifies or blasphemes an authority. If one is a *brāhmaṇa* he should not give up his body because by doing so he would be responsible for killing a *brāhmaṇa*; therefore a *brāhmaṇa* should leave the place or block his ears so that he will not hear the blasphemy. If one happens to be a *kṣatriya* he has the power to punish any man; therefore a *kṣatriya* should at once cut out the tongue of the vilifier and kill him. But as far as the *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* are concerned, they should immediately give up their bodies. Satī decided to give up her body because she thought herself to be among the *śūdras* and *vaiśyas*. As stated in Bhagavad-gītā (9.32), *striyo vaiśyās tathā śūdrāḥ*. Women, laborers and the mercantile class are on the same level. Thus since it is recommended that *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* should immediately give up their bodies upon hearing blasphemy of an exalted person like Lord Śiva, she decided to give up her life.

Please note that here Śrīla Prabhupāda cites and reaffirms a series of authoritative — and strongly normative — Vedic injunctions in regard to perpetrators of blasphemy and vilification of an authority. (It is worth pointing out that blasphemy or vilification are defined in the English language as mere verbal offenses, like Dakṣa’s offense in this instance). And, unlike the Sunīti quote, after stating them (“The instruction set forth here in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam is that one should not tolerate at any cost the activities of a person who vilifies or blasphemes an authority”), Śrīla Prabhupāda then proceeds to translate them into strongly normative injunctions of his own:

- “a *brāhmaṇa* should leave the place or block his ears so that he will not hear the blasphemy”;
- “a *kṣatriya* should at once cut out the tongue of the vilifier and kill him”;
- “*vaiśyas* and *śūdras* (...) should immediately give up their bodies”.

So here we have:

1. a direct injunction of the authoritative *śāstra*;
2. spoken by the wife of Lord Śiva herself;
3. spoken not just in some hitherto unknown *śāstra*, but in our *pramāṇam amalam* — the supreme and perfect *pramāṇa*, Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam;
4. spoken not only in our supreme *pramāṇa*, but, to quote one of you, in one which “is meant for kaliyuga (as per SB 1.3.43)”;¹⁵⁹
5. and not just spoken for Kali-yuga in the supreme *pramāṇa*, but confirmed and reinforced as a highly normative injunction by the foremost *ācārya* for Kali-yuga, Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport that is, to quote you, “more so meant for kaliyuga!”¹³⁷ than Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam itself.

With such overwhelmingly normative, strong and Vedic statements in SB 4.4.17 and purport, one would expect you to promote SB 4.4.17 with at least the same zeal and vigor as you do with the Sunīti quote in SB 4.12.32 purp. However, you do not. Why?

¹⁵⁹ From email dated 29 January 2020, PAMHO text 31897780.

For one thing, because, as has already been and will be further shown here, your norm is to be very selective in your application of Vedic injunctions, as well as in quoting *śāstras*, *ācāryas* and even Śrīla Prabhupāda.

But most importantly, we do not accept this SB verse and purport as a punitive norm in ISKCON because Śrīla Prabhupāda did not do it himself, nor did it tell us to do so. Period.

In fact, this specific injunction was brought up in a conversation with Śrīla Prabhupāda on February 17, 1977 in Māyāpur for his comments. Please note his response:

Tripurāri: People involved in this deprogramming have read most of the books. They have read and studied, and when they try to deprogram someone they quote from the books different things. So is it that they can't understand this philosophy even though they're reading it, or they just don't want to understand it? Just like this man Ted Patrick. He has read so many of the books.

Prabhupāda: How...? What does he say about our books?

Satsvarūpa: One time I heard he challenged a devotee, "Where is your Lord Nṛsiṃhadeva now to save you?" And also, "**We have heard that if the Lord is blasphemed, you're supposed to either give up your life or leave the place, so why don't you do? Or cut out the tongue..., cut out my tongue. So why don't you do that now?**"

Ādi-keśava: They used that as one legal argument. They said that one of our devotees should be put in the mental hospital for his own protection, because otherwise he would go and kill himself. And the court said, "Why is that?" They said, "Well, because **in their books it says that if a devotee hears someone blaspheming the spiritual master or Kṛṣṇa, then they have to commit suicide.**"

Prabhupāda: No, they will argue on so many things.

Ādi-keśava: "**Or cut their tongue out.**" They said, "**Either they will cut my tongue out or they will kill themselves.** So either way, they should be put in a mental hospital."

Prabhupāda: **No, or you go away from that place.**¹⁶⁰

So much for the normative statement in SB 4.4.17 and purport. For ISKCON, this Śrīla Prabhupāda's "No, or you go away from that place" was the philosophical termination of cutting tongues and committing suicides in response to vilification.

Similarly, while Śrīla Prabhupāda mentioned in SB 4.12.32 purp. that "Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja's *dīkṣā-guru*" — which, as has already been shown, is a far cry from SB 4.4.17 purp. in terms of their comparative normative strengths —

¹⁶⁰ Room Conversation — February 17, 1977, Māyāpur.

when he was directly asked about the possibility of women acting as *dīkṣā-gurus*, he would **ALWAYS** respond in the affirmative and cited historical precedents (see Section III).

I hope you will now at least accept that it is inconsistent for you to argue against VDG on the basis of SB 4.12.32 purp. while not advocating Vedic punitive measures of SB 4.4.17 purp. for GBC vilifiers. Just kidding.

[Updated June 2020:] Who is the karma-mīmāṃsaka and the ācārya?

As expected, in your attempted rebuttal to the above section “The Sunīti pramāṇa” you chose to ignore the facts and to avoid addressing inconvenient questions, resorting instead to philosophical and evidential sleight of hand. To see through the trickery, let us play in slow motion the relevant part of your paper titled In Defense of Vaisnava-diksa according to Narada-Pancaratra¹⁶¹ pp. 6-8, (referred to here as Defense) piece by piece, as we are fact-checking it:

Defense: Here is the quote under consideration: **“According to śāstric injunctions, there is no difference between śikṣā-guru and dīkṣā-guru, and generally the śikṣā-guru later on becomes the dīkṣā-guru. Sunīti, however, being a woman, and specifically his mother, could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s dīkṣā-guru.”**

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.

True so far — Sunīti was clearly a woman and Dhruva’s mother. No ambiguity there.

Defense: 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.

Please note the shift of focus, the first stage of any trick — “If Sunīti was clearly a woman, why doubt what we read into the rest of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport?”

Defense: 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.

Did we pay attention? What Śrīla Prabhupāda did actually say after “According to śāstric injunctions”, is **“there is no difference between śikṣā-guru and dīkṣā-guru, and generally the śikṣā-guru later on becomes the dīkṣā-guru”**. However, with the bolded portion scrapped, we are now being made to believe that he said ““According to śāstric injunctions, Sunīti could not become Dhruva Mahārāja’s dīkṣā-guru.” A very clever use of omission indeed — and one that can be employed to prove just anything as being “according to *śāstric* injunctions”.

¹⁶¹ Available at: https://www.dropbox.com/s/tmium9bxe6etl70/kk_and_dd_on_mm-20200219.pdf

Defense:

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

The warped reading of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s purport, of course, needs to be quickly impressed upon the unwitting audience as *śāstric* itself — before its clever redaction is spotted.

The truth, though, is that point 1 is irrelevant because Sunīti as a woman could not even receive *vaidikā dīkṣā*, what to speak of giving it, and point 2 is precisely the topic under discussion which is now being hastily presented as a proven fact (see Section II “Reinventing BS 1.42-44”). With points 3 and 4 now losing their foundation to circular reasoning, the argument, basically, collapses to “Why could not Sunīti become Dhruva’s *dīkṣā-guru*? Because she could not.” — just as Defense admits itself next:

Defense: 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.

You said it — you needn’t prove anything as long as you have enough self-righteousness and redaction skills.

And now comes the most spectacular part of the show:

Defense: 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.

Correct so far, except that “those who want to juggle words to create doubt” is, ironically, the most accurate description of those who select and reinterpret words from Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā to create doubts in Śrīla Prabhupāda’s clear and repeated assertions that Vaiṣṇavis, if qualified on par with men, can and should become gurus.

Defense: MM says, “Therefore the Sunīti quote 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).”

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.

“Cannot be the basis of any action” in **your** words — but not in mine and definitely not in the words of the *ācāryas*. As Jīva Gosvāmī explains in his commentary *Sarva-saṁvādinī* 43-44 on *Tattva-sandarbha* 11, any statement of *śāstra* or an empowered *ācārya* (whose words are as good as *śāstric*), even if

they are descriptive, are certainly a basis for action — but the action of having to accept them as literally true.¹⁶² However, for some in this discussion, this action might be beyond their capacity as it requires humility and intellectual honesty rather than eagerness to “screw obscure meanings” out of such statements in an “attempt to show one’s own learning by trying to surpass the previous *ācārya*”. (SB 1.4.1 purp.)

In fact, it is your compulsive urge to translate Śrīla Prabhupāda’s descriptive statement of facts in SB 4.12.32 purp. about Sunīti not being able to initiate Dhruva into a normative injunction for posterity that exhibits precisely the *karma-mīmāṃsā* approach to scriptural interpretations that you accuse me of. As Jīva Gosvāmī explains in *Sarva-saṁvādinī* 41, some Jaimini followers of *karma-mīmāṃsā* dismiss simple denotative or descriptive statements in the *śāstra* as useless — unless they can be interpreted as prescriptive or proscriptive.¹⁶³

And finally, the big Vedāntic argument:

Defense: But this is the same argument given by followers of *karma-mīmāṃsā*, 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 Vedānta, specifically Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa in third sūtra (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.

True to your redacting style, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s words are now being subjected to the same twisting and pruning as Śrīla Prabhupāda’s:

In the passage from his *Govinda-bhāṣya* (1.1.1.3) Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa defeats approaches to understanding the Absolute Truth by various Vedic schools, like the dry logic (*śuṣka-tarka*) of Gautama and others, and then specifically addresses the *karma-mīmāṃsā* interpretive methods of Jaimini Muni.

You then present what you try to pass for the *karma-mīmāṃsā* argument: “[they] say that statements that don’t directly prescribe action should not be the basis of our action” — that you also ascribe to me.

However, this is not how Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa cites the *karma-mīmāṃsā* objection. He says:

¹⁶² *Sarva-saṁvādinī*, 42-43, part (translated by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa): *tasmāt siddhe siddhāyām śaktau dṛṣṭe ca śroṭṭṛ-pratīti-virodhābhāve vaktus tātparyam api tatra setsyatīti siddhavan-nirdiṣṭānām upaniṣad-ādīnām api svārthe prāmāṇyam asty eva.* (43) *tad evaṁ sarvasminn api vedātmake śabde svārtham [558] prati prāmāṇyam upalabdhe, sa katham artham 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)

¹⁶³ *Sarva-saṁvādinī*, 41, part (translated by Gopīparāṇadhana Dāsa): *athaivaṁ sarveṣāṁ veda-vākyānām prāmāṇya eva sthite kecid evaṁ āhuḥ, kārya evārthe vedasya prāmāṇyam, na siddhe, tatraiva śakti-tātparyayor avadhāritatvāt.* “Although we have thus established that all the statements of the Vedas are authoritative, some persons still might say that the authority of the Vedas is limited to matters of prescribed duties, not those of settled fact, because one can determine the literal meaning and purport of statements only in activity that needs to be done.”

(Objection:) **"In that case, the statements of the Vedānta would be impractical. They would be devoid of use, since they reveal what is already known to exist. They are like the statement "The earth has seven continents."** Statements which reveal actions to be performed or avoided are practical since they are useful: for example, "The man desiring money should go to the king" or "A person with weak digestion should not drink water." ... Brahman however is an already existing object. Statements like *satyaṁ jñānam anantam* which describe Brahman are not practical for application since they are devoid of statements of action."¹⁶⁴

In other words, the *karma-mīmāṃsā* followers argue that unless a scriptural statement can be interpreted as an injunction or prohibition, it is not useful — which is quite different from what you are making them say: "Statements that don't directly prescribe action should not be the basis of our action".

To this Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa replies:

"This is not so. It is a mistaken belief. **Though not containing orders to perform or refrain from certain actions, by teaching the existence of Brahman as the highest human goal, there is utility in statements.** It is like a statement which reveals [the] existence of wealth. From hearing an authoritative statement that you have wealth in your house, finding that treasure becomes the goal of your life. Similarly by statements declaring the existence of Brahman who is one's source, Brahman who has a form of knowledge and bliss, who is the excellent friend of all, and who gives himself to his devotees, one gains conviction in the existence of Brahman. **Thus it is not unlike the statements enjoining action.** It may be seen that such statements yield results in the form of giving happiness and removing fear in the manner of statements like "A son has been born to you" and "That is not a snake but a rope."¹⁶⁵

In other words, he defeats the *mīmāṃsakas* by proving that Vedic statements of facts about the Absolute Truth **do not need** to command or prohibit action to be considered of use, because just by stating facts about the Absolute Truth they create the correct awareness about Brahman that benefits people greatly.

To recap what we have learned so far:

¹⁶⁴ Full quote (translation by Bhānu Swami): (objection) In that case, the statements of the Vedānta would be impractical. They would be devoid of use, since they reveal what is already known to exist. They are like the statement "The earth has seven continents." Statements which reveal actions to be performed or avoided are practical since they are useful: for example, "The man desiring money should go to the king" or "A person with weak digestion should not drink water." Or, in the Vedas it is said *svarga-kāmo yajeta*: a person with desire for Svarga should perform sacrifice. It is said *surāṁ na pibet*: one should not drink liquor. Statements are not made without indicating a goal. They are either positive statements to attain a desired goal or negative statements to avoid a certain result. Brahman however is an already existing object. Statements like *satyaṁ jñānam anantam* which describe Brahman are not practical for application since they are devoid of statements of action. If someone wants to use these statements about Brahman, one could make them useful by making them statements of a goal. One should utter those statements in this manner. By describing a sacrifice, *devatā* or the performer of sacrifice, statements can become useful in performing sacrifice. Jaimini explains this.

¹⁶⁵ *ibid.*

- 1) you have distorted and misrepresented Śrīla Prabhupāda, Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa and *karma-mīmāṃsā* followers to suit your needs in this discussion;
- 2) Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement about Sunīti being unable to initiate Dhruva seven manvantaras ago does not belong to the same category as a Vedāntic statement about the eternal, omnipresent and all-blissful Supreme Brahman who is the excellent friend of the devotees;
- 3) by arguing that the Sunīti quote must be made into an injunction for posterity or else it is useless, you expose yourself at least on this count as a *karma-mīmāṃsā* follower; and
- 4) if you really want to translate Śrīla Prabhupāda’s statement about Sunīti into Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa’s example of a poor man, it would be not:

“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.”

but:

“a trustworthy person informs a poor man that there **WAS** a hidden treasure in his house seven manvantaras ago.”

And now, a grand finale in vanity and attempts to surpass the previous *ācārya*:

Defense: 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.

Yes, it is Śrīla Prabhupāda who derives the moral rule from his own statement, as he has every right to do, being the empowered *ācārya* for this age. But just who derives the rule from his statement about Sunīti that women should never initiate — the rule that runs contrary to what he himself repeatedly said when directly asked about the possibility? **You do.**

Defense: “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.

Unfortunately for you, Śrīla Prabhupāda did not derive from the Sunīti quote the rule that you are trying so hard to put in his mouth. However, he did derive one rule that he repeatedly and tirelessly impresses upon us in many ways in his purports, lectures, letters and conversations:

“Personal realization does not mean that one should, out of vanity, attempt to show one's own learning by trying to surpass the previous ācārya. One must have full confidence in the previous ācārya, and at the same time one must realize the subject matter so nicely that he can present the matter for the particular circumstances in a suitable manner. **The original purpose of the text must be maintained. No obscure meaning should be screwed out of it**, yet it should be presented in an interesting manner for the understanding of the audience. This is called realization.” (SB 1.4.1 purp.)

And more than anything, Śrīla Prabhupāda disliked this rule being lost on those who profess to be his followers.

V. Śrīla Prabhupāda on seeing Kṛṣṇa face-to-face

We finally got to your treatment of Śrīla Prabhupāda's clear, recurrent, unequivocal and practicable statement in SB 4.28.51:

“When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, **his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead**. As explained before, this means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instruction of the spiritual master. This is technically called *vāñī-sevā*.” (SB 4.28.51 purp.)

For obvious reasons, it is this statement — in fact, the entire purports on SB 4.28.51 and 52, in which Śrīla Prabhupāda repeatedly stresses that carrying out the order of the spiritual master and his mission is THE ONLY SECRET in seeing the Lord face-to-face — that seem to exasperate you the most. Why? Because these two purports by themselves totally deflate your speculative theory that it is only by seeing the Lord face-to-face in the very literal sense that women become qualified to initiate.

Therefore, expectedly, in your reply on March 18 you tried your best to invalidate Śrīla Prabhupāda's words as relevant only to *sādhakas*:

“This [purport] is not applicable to BS 1.44 but to BS 1.37-43. There are two levels of devotees discussed in BS: pratyakṣitātma-nāthas (BS 1.44) and non-pratyakṣitātma-nāthas (BS 1.37-43). For BS 1.44 no rules of śāstra etc. are given while for BS 1.37-44 rules from guru-sadhu-śāstras are given. This is in accordance to Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement that it means meeting Supreme Personality of Godhead IN THE INSTRUCTIONS OF SPIRITUAL MASTER.” [capitalization yours — Mmd] (March 18)

You then continued with more of that ilk, trying to misconstrue Śrīla Prabhupāda's statement:

“when one who becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”

as applicable only to non-liberated devotees and not to the liberated ones. In your mind, liberated devotees on the level of *bhāva* and above in their direct vision of the Lord and service to Him no longer depend on instructions of their spiritual masters, which thus become irrelevant. According to you, for them serving instructions of the spiritual master is no longer tantamount to seeing the Lord face-to-face.

(1) Seeing the Lord through the spiritual master

First, such assertions are *apasiddhānta*. One's connection with the bona fide spiritual master is eternal and never ceases to be the very foundation of one's spiritual life on all its levels; this is the very basis of Vaiṣṇava philosophy and practice.¹⁶⁶

Śrīla Prabhupāda exhaustively and conclusively clarifies this in SB 1.5.23 purp.:

“The Lord says that the service of His servants is greater than His personal service. Service of the devotee is more valuable than the service of the Lord. One should therefore choose a bona fide servant of the Lord constantly engaged in His service, accept such a servant as the spiritual master and engage himself in his (the spiritual master's) service. **Such a spiritual master is the transparent medium by which to visualize the Lord, who is beyond the conception of the material senses. By service of the bona fide spiritual master, the Lord consents to reveal Himself in proportion to the service rendered.** Utilization of the human energy in the service of the Lord is the progressive path of salvation. The whole cosmic creation becomes at once identical with the Lord as soon as service in relation with the Lord is rendered under the guidance of a bona fide spiritual master. The expert spiritual master knows the art of utilizing everything to glorify the Lord, and therefore under his guidance the whole world can be turned into the spiritual abode by the divine grace of the Lord's servant.”

Please note that, contrary to your notion, Śrīla Prabhupāda establishes here that “the Lord consents to reveal Himself” proportionately to the service rendered to the spiritual master. In other words, direct perception of the Lord and serving the orders of the spiritual master go side by side continuously and proportionally — directly proportionally, that is, not inversely.

Similarly, Śrīla Prabhupāda explains in SB 4.8.71 purp. that Druva Mahārāja was able to see the Lord, despite his disqualifications and immaturity, because he followed the instructions of his spiritual master, Nārada Muni:

“The significance of this particular verse is that **Dhruva Mahārāja acted exactly according to the advice of his spiritual master, the great sage Nārada.** Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī also advises that if we want to be successful in our attempt to go back to Godhead, we must very seriously act according to the instruction of the spiritual master. That is the way of perfection. **There need be no anxiety over attaining perfection because if one follows the instruction given by the spiritual master he is sure to attain perfection. Our only concern should be how to execute the order of the spiritual master.** A spiritual master is expert in giving special

¹⁶⁶ SB 2.9.43 purp.: “Such a relationship between the disciple and the spiritual master is eternal.”

instructions to each of his disciples, and **if the disciple executes the order of the spiritual master, that is the way of his perfection.**" (SB 4.8.71 purp.)

Moreover, Rupa Gosvāmī explains in BRS that one develops *bhāva*, which generally is the prerequisite for seeing the Lord directly, by the mercy of the Lord or His devotee, citing the example of Prahlāda and his spiritual master Nārada Muni:

BRS 1.3.22

*nāradasya prasādena prahlāde śubha-vāsanā |
nisargaḥ saiva tenātra ratir naisargikī matā ||22||*

Favor or *nisarga* was granted to Prahlāda by Nārada and this created devotional impressions. Thus his *ratī* is called *naisargikī* (through mercy).

(2) Exemplified by ācāryas

Second, you would be hard-pressed to produce at least one evidence from Vaiṣṇava *śāstra* or *ācāryas* that a devotee becomes independent from instructions of the spiritual master upon liberation or direct perception of the Lord. In fact, rather contrary to this notion, practically any liberated devotee attributes his or her ability to see the Lord and serve Him to their spiritual masters' continued instructions and mercy.

For instance, in the same purport on SB 4.28.51 Śrīla Prabhupāda quotes Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura's commentary on BG 2.41, which became pivotal in his own mission:

"My *sādhana* is to serve the lotus feet of the Lord, to remember and glorify Him as instructed by my guru. **That is also my goal (*sādhya*). It is my life sustaining medicine, for I cannot give up the *sādhana* and the *sādhya*.** This is my most desirable object, my duty, and nothing else is my duty; nothing else is desired, even in dreams. There may be happiness or sorrow. *Sarṁsāra* may be destroyed, or may not be destroyed. That is no loss for me. Let there only be resolute intelligence fixed in pure *bhakti*."¹⁶⁷

Here a liberated *ācārya* and *prema-bhakta* calls serving the Lord as instructed by his spiritual master to be his both *sādhana* and *sādhya*, whereas you confine such instructions to the realm of *sādhana*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

"Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura states in his Bhagavad-gītā commentary on the verse beginning *vyavasāyātmikā buddhir ekeha kuru-nandana* (Bg. 2.41) that one should serve the words of the spiritual master. The disciple must stick to whatever the spiritual master orders. **Simply by following on that line, one sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead.**"

¹⁶⁷ VCT on BG 2.41 (Translation by Bhanu Swami).

And Śrīla Prabhupāda himself is the best evidence of this, always living by the instructions of his spiritual master and attributing all his success in spreading Kṛṣṇa consciousness to him. Here are some of his concluding words on Caitanya-caritamṛta:

“Today, Sunday, November 10, 1974—corresponding to the 10th of Kāṛṭikā, Caitanya Era 488, the eleventh day of the dark fortnight, the Ramā-ekādaśī—we have now finished the English translation of Śrī Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī’s Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta in accordance with the authorized order of His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Gosvāmī Mahārāja, my beloved eternal spiritual master, guide and friend. Although according to material vision His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura Prabhupāda passed away from this material world on the last day of December, 1936, I still consider His Divine Grace to be always present with me by his vāṇī, his words. (...) I think that His Divine Grace Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura is always seeing my activities and guiding me within my heart by his words. **As it is said in Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, *tene brahma hṛdā ya ādi-kavaye* [SB 1.1.1]. Spiritual inspiration comes from within the heart, wherein the Supreme Personality of Godhead, in His Paramātmā feature, is always sitting with all His devotees and associates. It is to be admitted that whatever translation work I have done is through the inspiration of my spiritual master, because personally I am most insignificant and incompetent to do this materially impossible work.** I do not think myself a very learned scholar, but I have full faith in the service of my spiritual master, His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura. If there is any credit to my activities of translating, it is all due to His Divine Grace. Certainly if His Divine Grace were physically present at this time, it would have been a great occasion for jubilation, but even though he is not physically present, I am confident that he is very much pleased by this work of translation. He was very fond of seeing many books published to spread the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement. Therefore our society, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness, has been formed to execute the order of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and His Divine Grace Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.”

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes on the same principle in his commentary on SB 7.9.28, in which Prahlāda Mahārāja offers prayers to the Nrsimhadeva:

My dear Lord, O Supreme Personality of Godhead, because of my association with material desires, one after another, I was gradually falling into a blind well full of snakes, following the general populace. But **Your servant Nārada Muni kindly accepted me as his disciple and instructed me how to achieve this transcendental position. Therefore, my first duty is to serve him. How could I leave his service?**

Purport: As will be seen in later verses, even though Prahlāda Mahārāja was directly offered all the benedictions he might have desired, he refused to accept such offerings from the Supreme Personality of Godhead. **On the contrary, he asked the Lord to engage him in the service of His servant Nārada Muni. This is the symptom of a pure devotee.** One should serve the spiritual master first. **It is not that one should bypass the spiritual master and desire to serve the Supreme Lord. This is not the principle for a Vaiṣṇava.** Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura

says:

*tāñdera caraṇa sevi bhakta-sane vāsa
janame janame haya, ei abhilāṣa*

One should not be anxious to offer direct service to the Lord. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu advised that one become a servant of the servant of the servant of the Lord (*gopī-bhartuḥ pada-kamalayor dāsa-dāsānudāsaḥ* [Cc. Madhya 13.80]). This is the process for approaching the Supreme Lord. The first service should be rendered to the spiritual master so that by his mercy one can approach the Supreme Personality of Godhead to render service. While teaching Rūpa Gosvāmī, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu said, *guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja*: [Cc. Madhya 19.151] one can achieve the seed of devotional service by the mercy of the guru, the spiritual master, and then by the mercy of Kṛṣṇa. This is the secret of success. First one should try to please the spiritual master, and then one should attempt to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura also says, *yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādo*. One should not attempt to please the Supreme Personality of Godhead by concoction. **One must first be prepared to serve the spiritual master, and when one is qualified he is automatically offered the platform of direct service to the Lord.** Therefore Prahlāda Mahārāja proposed that he engage in the service of Nārada Muni. He never proposed that he engage directly in the service of the Lord. This is the right conclusion. Therefore he said, so *'haṁ kathaṁ nu visrje tava bhṛtya-sevām*: "How can I give up the service of my spiritual master, who has favored me in such a way that I am now able to see You face to face?" Prahlāda Mahārāja prayed to the Lord that he might continue to engage in the service of his spiritual master, Nārada Muni." (SB 7.9.28 purp.)

Here a liberated devotee and a *mahājana*, Prahlāda Mahārāja, during his personal darśana with Lord Nṛsimhadeva asking HIm to be always engaged in the service of his spiritual master, Nārada Muni.

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

"Therefore he said that *tad-bhṛtya-ṛṣi-vākyam ṛtaṁ vidhātum. Ṛṣi-vākya*. Even the devotee or the servant of Kṛṣṇa says something, even it is wrong, Kṛṣṇa upholds this. *Kaunteya pratijānīhi na me bhaktaḥ pranaśyati* So even it is wrongly done, still, Kṛṣṇa fulfills because He thinks that "My servant has promised; it must be fulfilled." Therefore Prahlāda Mahārāja, in the previous verse he has said, *tava bhṛtya-pārśva*. So to serve the servant of Kṛṣṇa is better than to serve directly Kṛṣṇa, because if the servant of Kṛṣṇa promises something, **if the servant of Kṛṣṇa says, "I'll take you to Kṛṣṇaloka," you must go there. Even Kṛṣṇa cannot do that.** He can; I mean to say that He does not say very easily. But if a servant... *Yasya prasādād bhagavat-prasādaḥ*. Therefore our philosophy is to please the servant of God, *tad-bhṛtya, bhṛtyasya bhṛtya*. Then it is very nice. The success is..." (SB 7.9.29 March 7, 1976, Māyāpur)

(3) Mandated by the Lord

Third, the Lord Himself orders to see the spiritual master as non-different from Him.

SB 11.10.5:

*yamān abhīkṣṇaṁ seveta niyamān mat-paraḥ kvacit
mad-abhijñāṁ gururṁ śāntam upāsīta mad-ātmakam*

gururṁ — the spiritual master; śāntam — peaceful; upāsīta — one should serve; **mat-atmakam** — **who is not different from Me.**

“One who has accepted Me as the supreme goal of life should strictly observe the scriptural injunctions forbidding sinful activities and, as far as possible, should execute the injunctions prescribing minor regulative duties such as cleanliness. Ultimately, however, one should approach a bona fide spiritual master who is full in knowledge of Me as I am, who is peaceful, and who by spiritual elevation is not different from Me.”

SB 11.17.27:

*ācāryaṁ mām vijānīyān nāvamanyeta karhicit
na martya-buddhyāsūyeta sarva-deva-mayo guruḥ*

ācāryam -- the spiritual master; mam -- Myself; vijaniyat -- one should know;

“One should know the ācārya as Myself and never disrespect him in any way. One should not envy him, thinking him an ordinary man, for he is the representative of all the demigods.”

Similarly, Lord Nārāyaṇa tells Gopa-kumāra in Brhad-bhagavatamṛta 2.4.86 that He Himself appeared as his spiritual master to expedite his return to the spiritual world:

*śrīmad-govardhane tasmin nija-priyatamāspade
svayam evābhavaṁ tāta jayantākhyāḥ sa te guruḥ*

Dear boy, in that divine district of Govardhana, My most beloved abode, I Myself became your guru, known by the name Jayanta.

(4) The only secret for seeing the Lord

Fourth, you might have overlooked that in SB 4.28.51 purp. Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

“In conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by vāṇī or vapuḥ. **This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead.** Instead of being eager to see the Lord in some bush of Vṛndāvana while at the same time engaging in sense

gratification, if one instead sticks to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master, he will see the Supreme Lord without difficulty.”

So, it is not, as you seem to imply, that the relevance of the spiritual master’s instructions recedes with the appearance of the Lord’s vision — they are the only secret of success in seeing Him both on the non-liberated and the liberated platform, or, in your frame of reference, BS 1.37-43 and BS 1.44.

“The Supreme Personality of Godhead, Paramātmā, appeared before the Queen as a brāhmaṇa, but why didn’t He appear in His original form as Śrī Kṛṣṇa? Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura remarks that unless one is very highly elevated in loving the Supreme Personality of Godhead, one cannot see Him as He is. Nonetheless, if one sticks to the principles enunciated by the spiritual master, somehow or other he is in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead. Since the Lord is in the heart, He can advise a sincere disciple from within.”

[Please note that Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura concludes his short commentary on this verse with stating “He had the dress of a *brāhmaṇa*: if a person does not have prema the Lord does not reveal Himself directly to that person”. Śrīla Prabhupāda faithfully quotes his statement in his purport, but then continues with emphasizing that “Nonetheless, if one sticks to the principles enunciated by the spiritual master, somehow or other he is in association with the Supreme Personality of Godhead.”]

“In conclusion, if a disciple is very serious to execute the mission of the spiritual master, he immediately associates with the Supreme Personality of Godhead by *vāṇī* or *vapuḥ*. **This is the only secret of success in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead.** Instead of being eager to see the Lord in some bush of Vṛndāvana while at the same time engaging in sense gratification, if one instead sticks to the principle of following the words of the spiritual master, he will see the Supreme Lord without difficulty.”

“If one is very highly advanced in devotional service, he will have no difficulty in seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead. If one engages in the service of the spiritual master, he not only sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead but attains liberation.”

[Please note that in this quote Śrīla Prabhupāda chose to put the devotee serving the spiritual master in a position even higher than “very highly advanced in devotional service” by emphasizing that such a devotee “not only sees the Supreme Personality of Godhead but attains liberation.”]

(5) Seeing the Lord externally and internally

And, as if to directly address your notion that his words in SB 4.28.51 purp. are meant only for *sādhakas*, Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport on SB 4.28.52 juxtaposes serving the spiritual master and seeing the Lord in the heart side by side, and not one after another, as you suggest. Śrīla Prabhupāda calls such simultaneous connection with the Lord and spiritual master “the duty of the pure devotee”:

“Consultation with the Supersoul seated within everyone's heart is possible only when one is completely free from the contamination of material attachment. One who is sincere and pure gets an opportunity to consult with the Supreme Personality of Godhead in His Paramātmā feature sitting within everyone's heart. **The Paramātmā is always the *caitya-guru*, the spiritual master within, and He comes before one externally as the instructor and initiator spiritual master. The Lord can reside within the heart, and He can also come out before a person and give him instructions. Thus the spiritual master is not different from the Supersoul sitting within the heart.** An uncontaminated soul or living entity can get a chance to meet the Paramātmā face to face. Just as one gets a chance to consult with the Paramātmā within his heart, one also gets a chance to see Him actually situated before him. Then one can take instructions from the Supersoul directly. **This is the duty of the pure devotee: to see the bona fide spiritual master and consult with the Supersoul within the heart.**”

He then proceeds to explain how a sincere devotee always stays in touch with the Lord:

“When the *brāhmaṇa* asked the woman who the man lying on the floor was, she answered that he was her spiritual master and that she was perplexed about what to do in his absence. At such a time the Supersoul immediately appears, provided the devotee is purified in heart by following the directions of the spiritual master. **A sincere devotee who follows the instructions of the spiritual master certainly gets direct instructions from his heart from the Supersoul. Thus a sincere devotee is always helped directly or indirectly by the spiritual master and the Supersoul.** This is confirmed in Caitanya-caritāmṛta: *guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja* [Cc. Madhya 19.151]. If the devotee serves his spiritual master sincerely, Kṛṣṇa automatically becomes pleased. *Yasya prasādād bhagavad-prasādaḥ*. By satisfying the spiritual master, one automatically satisfies Kṛṣṇa. Thus the devotee becomes enriched by both the spiritual master and Kṛṣṇa.”

Please note that in this case Śrīla Prabhupāda describes how a sincere devotee receives **direct** guidance from the Supersoul **in the absence** of his spiritual master. It is also remarkable how solidly Śrīla Prabhupāda's words are corroborated by the *śāstra*, as spoken by Śrī Uddhava in SB 11.29.6:

*naivopayanty apacitiṁ kavayas taveśa
brahmāyuṣāpi kṛtam ṛddha-mudaḥ smarantaḥ
yo 'ntar bahis tanu-bhṛtām aśubhaṁ vidhunvann
ācārya-caitya-vapuṣā sva-gatiṁ vyanakti*

O my Lord! Transcendental poets and experts in spiritual science could not fully express their indebtedness to You, even if they were endowed with the prolonged lifetime of Brahmā, for You appear in two features—externally as the ācārya and internally as the Supersoul—to deliver the embodied living being by directing him how to come to You.

(6) “Tantamount”

You might also be confused by the word “tantamount”, thinking it to be a synonym of “equal in all respects”. Otherwise why would you rather bizarrely suggest in your reply of March 18:

“Now, if we take your meaning that there is no difference at all, then it is like arguing that the śāstras say there is no difference between guru and Krishna (Hari), so guru is Krishna and one can have rasa-dance with guru.” (March 18)

However, as we have already demonstrated in the “Not so many” and “Very rare” sections, Śrīla Prabhupāda was very precise in his semantics when he wanted. The word “tantamount” is used only 3 times in his books, and once in a letter. Its dictionary definition is: “equivalent in value, significance, or effect”.¹⁶⁸

In other words, although serving the mission and orders of the spiritual master may not look like seeing the Lord face-to-face, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda, it is “equivalent in value, significance, or effect” with direct *darśana* of the Lord and, as we are assured by Śrīla Prabhupāda, will bring about its equivalent effect. Therefore, if, according to BS 1.44, the effect of seeing the Lord face-to-face (*pratyakṣitātma-nātha*) is overcoming all disqualifications to initiate in BS 1.42, then, according to Śrīla Prabhupāda, one’s “resolution to become serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master” is tantamount to, or brings about the same effect.

(7) Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā on seeing guru

However, just in case you still disagree with Śrīla Prabhupāda and our *ācāryas* that one’s resolute determination to follow the instructions of the spiritual master is **tantamount** to seeing the Lord face-to-face, and if you are still tempted to draw ill-advised parallels between seeing the Lord by strictly following the mission of the spiritual master and dancing a *rāsa* dance with him, you may want to turn your attention to verses BS 1.32-36 and relevant commentaries on them by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra. They describe both the transcendental effect of accepting the spiritual master, being instructed by him, as well as uselessness of one’s efforts in spiritual life without it:

*bāla-mūka-jaḍāndhās ca paṅgavo badhirās tathā
sad-ācāryeṇa saṁdr̥ṣṭāḥ prāpnuvanti parāṁ gatim (32)*

Fools, mutes, dumb, blind, lame, and deaf people, glanced upon by the true ācārya, attain the supreme destination.

Commentary by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra: If even those who have received the glance of the true *ācārya* can attain liberation, what to speak of persons coming from a good lineage [referred to in the previous verse] attaining liberation? With that intention the verse is spoken. The glance of the *ācārya* involves the *ācārya* identifying the candidates as his students. This is the implied meaning.¹⁶⁹

¹⁶⁸ Merriam-Webster: <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tantamount>

¹⁶⁹ (translation by Bhanu Swami) *sad-ācārya-kaṭākṣa-viṣayī-kṛtānām api mokṣaḥ sambhavati, tad-varṁsyānām mokṣo bhavati kim uta vaktavyam ity abhiprāyeṇāha — bāleti | saṁdr̥ṣṭāḥ madīyatvābhimana-pūrvakam dṛṣṭā iti bhāvaḥ ||*

*guruṇā yo 'bhimanyeta gururṁ vā yo 'bhimanyate
tāv ubhau parama-siddhirṁ niyamād upagacchataḥ (33)*

One who is accepted by the guru and he who accepts a guru, both attain the supreme perfection as a rule.

Commentary by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra: “The fools etc. will not know how to accept the guru as a guru. How then can they attain liberation?” “He who is accepted by the guru” here means the guru thinks “I should protect this person.” Or the person may, like Ekalavya, think “He is my protector.” He recognizes the ācārya at the time of the ritual of bhara-nyāsa performed by the ācārya. By these two types of recognition, by establishing a connection with the guru, by this surrender, by this rule, one attains the highest perfection. Not related to the time of surrender, one can complete the *bhara-nyāsa* ceremony by having it performed at a later time. This is widely accepted. As a rule, necessarily, these two types of person, being accepted by the guru and giving respect to the guru, attain the highest perfection, or liberation.¹⁷⁰

*jñānatas tv anupetasya brahmācāryam abhīpsataḥ
vr̥thaivātma-samit-kṣepo jāyate kṛṣṇa-vartmani (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 sudr̥ṣṭāpi sāṅgā saha phalodayā
na prasīdati vai vidyā vinā sad-upadeśataḥ (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*).¹⁷¹

[Please note that verses BS 1.34-35 are an explanation why those referred to in BS 1.59 as *anya-dr̥ṣṭau*, or, as glossed by Sarayū-prasāda Miśra, possessed of exclusively book knowledge, are not eligible to become a guru.]

¹⁷⁰ (translation by Bhanu Swami) *nanu bālādayo gururṁ gurutvenābhimanturṁ na jñāsyanti | tataḥ katham teṣāṁ muktir ity ata ity āha — guruṇeti | guruṇā yo 'bhimanyeta madīyo 'yam mama rakṣya ity abhimānena vā vīkṣyeta | gururṁ vā yo 'bhimanyeta | ekalavyādi-nyāyena mamāyāṁ rakṣako gurur ity abhumānena gururṁ yaḥ ācāryasyātmīya-bhara-nyāsa-velāyām-ubhaya-vidhābhimānasya gurv anvaya-sampādakatvena niyamena tat-prapatti-dvārā-siddhi-hetutvarṁ tat-prapatti-velāyām- ananvaye paścad-guru-kartṛka-svaprapattyanuṣṭhāna-parya-vasāne nyāsa-siddhi-hetutvam iti bahu manute | tāv ubhau gurv-abhimāna-viṣayau gurur bahumantācety ubhau niyamāta avyabhicāreṇa paramāṁ siddhirṁ muktim upagacchataḥ ||*

¹⁷¹ *uktam artham viśadayati — śāstreti | vidyā brahma-vidyā na prasīdati, prasannā na bhavati, phalāya na bhavatiṭy arthaḥ*

*kāmaṁ loka-pramāṇasya kāmāḥ siddhyanti kāmīnaḥ
grhīta-sat-padasyaiva nirapāya-phalodayaḥ (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 Mīśra (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.¹⁷²

So, even on this count Śrīla Prabhupāda's words in SB 4.28.51-52 are already fully supported by BS 1.32-36.

(8) Śrīla Prabhupāda's special position

To conclude, we must not forget that Śrīla Prabhupāda as a specially empowered representative of Lord Caitanya, has the prerogative to establish principles of devotional service that might appear to be at odds with some standard śāstric references but which are nevertheless fully authorised and accepted by the Lord.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in SB 10.2.31 that he as such an empowered ācārya established principles of devotional service that appear to be not very standard but which will be accepted by Lord Kṛṣṇa and therefore fully effective:

*svayaṁ samuttīrya sudustaraṁ dyuman
bhavārṇavaṁ bhīmam adabhra-sauḥṛdāḥ
bhavat-padāmbhoruha-nāvam atra te
nidhāya yātāḥ sad-anugraho bhavān*

O Lord, who resemble the shining sun, You are always ready to fulfill the desire of Your devotee, and therefore You are known as a desire tree [vāñchā-kalpataru]. When ācāryas completely take shelter under Your lotus feet in order to cross the fierce ocean of nescience, they leave behind on earth the method by which they cross, and because You are very merciful to Your other devotees, You accept this method to help them.

¹⁷² *siddhyantu nirapāya-phalodayaḥ mokṣas tu grhīta-sat-padasyaiva samāśritācārya-caraṇa-yugalasyaiva | atha bhāvaḥ |
laukikaṁ hi pramāṇaṁ kṛṣyādāv iṣṭa-sādhanatām kṛṣyāditvenaiva bodhayati | na tvācāryādhīna-kṛṣyāditvena |
alaukika-pramāṇam | ācāryādhīna-brahma-vidyātveneṣṭa-sādhanatām avagamayantīti a-tan-mūlalātās tasyāḥ niṣphalatvam eva
yuktam iti |*

Purport (part): This statement reveals how the merciful ācāryas and the merciful Supreme Personality of Godhead together help the serious devotee who wants to return home, back to Godhead. Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, in His teachings to Rūpa Gosvāmī, said:

*brahmāṇḍa bhramite kona bhāgyavān jīva
guru-kṛṣṇa-prasāde pāya bhakti-latā-bīja
(Cc. Madhya 19.151)*

One can achieve the seed of bhakti-latā, devotional service, by the mercy of guru and Kṛṣṇa. **The duty of the guru is to find the means, according to the time, the circumstances and the candidate, by which one can be induced to render devotional service, which Kṛṣṇa accepts from a candidate who wants to be successful in going back home, back to Godhead.** After wandering throughout the universe, a fortunate person within this material world seeks shelter of such a guru, or ācārya, who trains the devotee in the suitable ways to render service according to the circumstances so that the Supreme Personality of Godhead will accept the service. This makes it easier for the candidate to reach the ultimate destination. **The ācārya's duty, therefore, is to find the means by which devotees may render service according to references from śāstra.** Rūpa Gosvāmī, for example, in order to help subsequent devotees, published such devotional books as Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu. Thus it is the duty of the ācārya to publish books that will help future candidates take up the method of service and become eligible to return home, back to Godhead, by the mercy of the Lord. **In our Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, this same path is being prescribed and followed. Thus the devotees have been advised to refrain from four sinful activities—illicit sex, intoxication, meat-eating and gambling—and to chant sixteen rounds a day. These are bona fide instructions.** Because in the Western countries constant chanting is not possible, one should not artificially imitate Haridāsa Ṭhākura but should follow this method. **Kṛṣṇa will accept a devotee who strictly follows the regulative principles and the method prescribed in the various books and literatures published by the authorities.** The ācārya gives the suitable method for crossing the ocean of nescience by accepting the boat of the Lord's lotus feet, and if this method is strictly followed, the followers will ultimately reach the destination, by the grace of the Lord. This method is called ācārya-sampradāya. It is therefore said, sampradāya-vihīnā ye mantrās te niṣphalā matāḥ (Padma Purāṇa). The ācārya-sampradāya is strictly bona fide. Therefore one must accept the ācārya-sampradāya; otherwise one's endeavor will be futile. Śrīla Narottama dāsa Ṭhākura therefore sings:

*tāṅdera caraṇa sevi bhakta sane vāsa
janame janame haya, ei abhilāṣa*

One must worship the lotus feet of the ācārya and live within the society of devotees. Then one's endeavor to cross over nescience will surely be successful.”

And, as we wrote earlier, “because the activities of liberated ācāryas like Śrīla Prabhupāda are already harmonious with transcendental knowledge and therefore, when they ordain any new arrangement, it should be accepted as a religious code even if it is not found in the scriptural directions of previous

sages (such as Bharadvāja). In one sense, such self-realized *ācāryas* as Śrīla Prabhupāda are even more important than the *śāstra* because they explain and fulfill its purpose by making its meaning understandable to eligible people, and that such fully realized *ācāryas* can introduce practical adjustments that may not even be clearly mentioned in the *śāstra* but serve the purpose of *śāstra*.”

Therefore, when Śrīla Prabhupāda writes:

When one becomes serious to follow the mission of the spiritual master, **his resolution is tantamount to seeing the Supreme Personality of Godhead**. As explained before, this means meeting the Supreme Personality of Godhead in the instruction of the spiritual master. This is technically called *vāṇī-sevā*.” (SB 4.28.51 purp.)

...those, including women, *śūdras*, *antyaajas*, *sankīrṇas* and other of BS 1.42 and 1.59, who fulfill this requirement get a result “equivalent in value, significance, or effect” to seeing HIm face-to-face — which means that they also become eligible to give initiations.

VI. Harmonization sans BS

On March 8 you wrote:

“Thus, we still invite anyone to present a better harmonization without resorting to any sort of assumption, inference, or interpretation by whims.” (March 8)

However, as was repeatedly shown above, your interpretational approach to Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā as well as to statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda and *ācāryas* is exactly that: resorting to all sorts of assumptions, inferences, or whimsical interpretations.

So here is the harmonization that is free from these defects and does not resort to harmonization tools outside of Śrīla Prabhupada’s teachings, such as your interpretation of Bhāradvāja-saṁhitā:

1. Every human being can become a devotee of Kṛṣṇa, regardless of race, cultural background, varṇa, āśrama, or gender.
2. Everyone can achieve complete perfection, pure love of Kṛṣṇa, on the path of devotional service.
3. In order to achieve complete perfection on the path of devotional service, one must seek spiritual guidance of another devotee or devotees.
4. Acceptance of spiritual guidance must be voluntary.
5. Acceptance of spiritual guidance must also be based on spiritual qualifications of prospective spiritual guides.

6. Aspiring devotees need to be well aware of the spiritual qualifications to look for in prospective spiritual guides prior to accepting their guidance.
7. These spiritual qualifications, as well as the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *siddhānta* needed to achieve complete perfection, are fully described in Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings.
8. These spiritual qualifications of a prospective spiritual guide include: faithfulness to one's spiritual master, Śrīla Prabhupāda and guru-parampara, strict adherence to sadhana-bhakti, sound knowledge of the Vaiṣṇava śāstras and teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda, and demonstrable Vaiṣṇava behavior.
9. These spiritual qualifications of a prospective spiritual guide do not include such external considerations as race, cultural background, *varṇa*, *āśrama*, or gender.
10. Generally, among spiritual guides thus qualified, one who constantly instructs an aspiring devotee in spiritual science becomes his or her initiating spiritual master later on.
11. Such acceptance of an initiating spiritual master should not be done in terms of hereditary or customary social and ecclesiastical conventions.
12. Aspiring devotees should be encouraged to accept the shelter of an initiating spiritual master in terms of pp.10 and 11.
13. ISKCON leadership should facilitate such mature and voluntary acceptance of instructing and initiating spiritual masters in terms of pp.10-11.
14. The service of initiating spiritual master should not be regarded as conferring any particular social, administrative, or hierarchical status, power, preferences, or privileges.
15. The service of initiating spiritual master should necessarily mandate an even greater accountability and responsibility to GBC as ISKCON's ultimate managerial authority than usually required of a regular devotee of any *varṇa* or *āśrama*.
16. Śrīla Prabhupāda encouraged every disciple, and, by extension, every ISKCON follower to qualify oneself for the responsibility of representing the parampara and giving spiritual guidance and shelter to others.
17. At the same time, those who have currently qualified themselves for the service of initiating spiritual masters in ISKCON are still relatively rare, "not so many", and are exceptions more than not.
18. ISKCON has a number of senior Vaiṣṇavīs qualified per p.8 to give spiritual instructions and guidance to other devotees.

19. Such senior Vaiṣṇavīs are naturally fewer than their male counterparts due to the difference in nature, social roles and needs of women as compared to men.
20. There are devotees in ISKCON for whom these Vaiṣṇavīs have become principal spiritual guides.
21. Some of these devotees are aspiring to take initiation from one of these Vaiṣṇavīs, per pp.10-11.
22. Their aspiration is voluntary, mature, and legitimate in terms of Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions and spiritual qualifications of their current spiritual guides and prospective initiating spiritual masters.
23. To fulfill Śrīla Prabhupāda's vision and teachings, GBC should find a way to accommodate mature inspiration of such devotees by facilitating initiation from their primary spiritual guides qualified per Śrīla Prabhupāda's instructions and ISKCON laws.

Om tat sat

VII. Appendix: Female dīkṣā-guru Surveys from the Śrī- and Madhva-sampradāyas (conducted by SAC in 2004)

1) Brahma-Madhva-sampradāya: Segri Raghavendra Acharya

Matha or Institution: Senior Professor, Sanskrit College, Udupi

Sampradāya: Brahma-Madhva

Address: Same as above

Name of Interviewer: Devamrta Dasa

Questions & Answers (answers in bold)

1) Do you feel that the śāstras and Vedic or Vaiṣṇava history allow scope for women to act as a dīkṣā-guru?

1) **No**

2) Do you know of any bona fide examples of women dīkṣā-gurus?

2) **No**

3) Are there any prohibitions that you can cite from scripture or history that would specifically restrict women to act as dīkṣā-gurus?

3) **Even the Pāñcarātriki-dīkṣā involves Vedic mantras which cannot be given to ladies. Therefore, how can they give such dīkṣā?**

4) Is there a history of female dīkṣā-gurus in your sampradāya? If so, were they? If not, why not?

4) **No**

5) If there were female dīkṣā-gurus, what kind of initiations did they give? Are these female gurus considered bona fide?

5) **Kalyani Devi, a contemporary of Madhvācārya, gave antar-dīkṣā. She preached actively and also wrote some books on Madhva philosophy.**

6) Would your sampradāya allow women dīkṣā-gurus today. If yes, why? If no, why not?

6) **No**

2) **Brahma-Madhva-sampradāya: Ananta Krishna Acharya**

Matha / Institution: Palimar Matha, Udupi

sampradāya: Brahma-Madhva

Address: Same as above

Name of Interviewer: Devamrta Das

Questions and Answers (answers in bold)

1) Do you feel that the śāstras and Vedic or Vaiṣṇava history allow scope for women to act as dīkṣā-guru ?

1) **Yes, if she has taken proper dīkṣā (kṛṣṇa-mantra) from a Vaiṣṇava guru. But her disciple must be another lady, or a man on a lower platform from the samskara point of view. Further, there must not be a qualified male guru available.**

2) Do you know of any bona fide examples of women dīkṣā-gurus ?

2) **I know of no famous examples.**

3) Are there any prohibitions that you can cite from scripture or history that would specifically restrict women to act as dīkṣā-gurus?

3) **I can't cite anything specific.**

4) Is there a history of female dīkṣā-guru in your sampradāya? If so, where and why? If not, why not?

4) **No**

5) If there were female dīkṣā-gurus, what kind of initiations did they give? Are these female gurus considered bona fide?

5) **As in #1 above**

6) Would your sampradāya allow women dīkṣā-gurus today. If yes, why? If no, why not?

6) There would be no objection from the śāstric point of view, but there could be an objection from the social point of view.

3) Śri-sampradāya: Professor M.A. Lakshmi ThaThachar

Matha/Institution: Academy of Sanskrit Research, Melkote, Karnataka

sampradāya: Sri Vaiṣṇava

Address: 23, "Sudharma", 10th Cross, Swimming Pool Extn, Malleshwaram, Bangalore

E mail: malakshmithathachar@yahoo.co.in

Interviewer: Sudhir Caitanya Das

Question and Answers (answers in bold)

1) What is dīkṣā according to the Sri sampradāya?

1) **There are external and internal dīkṣās:**

I. External—Panca Samskaras consists of the following:

- a. **Receiving mudra/tapa on body with sankha and sudarshan cakra markings**
- b. **Apply tilak on 12 parts of the body**
- c. **Disciple receives dasya-nama from ācārya**
- d. **Disciple receives astaka-nama, maha-mantra and other secret mantras**
- e. **Yajna-karya—the ācārya offers the soul of the disciple as oblation to Lord Visnu**

[Note: This is given to both men and women irrespective of caste or creed. "Trivainikas" (people born in the three upper varnas) get three births according to this system: (1) from the womb of a mother (2) upanayana (3) initiation as Sri Vaisanava.

According to this system, any soul born in this world, irrespective of caste or gender, is entitled to salvation. That includes plants, animals, insects, etc.]

II. Internal—Study of Scriptures (amankinkara-samvada)

1. **That which is written by Alvars can also be studied by women.**
2. **The Rahasya Grantha can also be studied by women.**
3. **Dravida Veda written by Alvars can also be studied by women.**
4. **Sanskrit Vedas can be studied only by men.**
5. The omkara mantra can also be given to women.
6. Women cannot individually perform Agni-karya homa.
7. However, the ācārya assisted by his wife can perform the ceremony.
8. A widow cannot perform the Agni-karya.
9. A woman is purusakara. She is the sakti of the male person.
Therefore she is not independent or separate from man.

10. Sripada Ramanujācārya recognized 74 Simhasanadi-patis. These are the grhastā-ācāryas who can perform the Agni-karya. They are also known as the svayam-ācārya-purusa and they come in the parampara.

2) Do you feel that the śāstras and Vedic or Vaiṣṇava history allow scope for women to act as a dīkṣā-guru?

2) **No. She cannot perform the Agni-karya independent of husband.**

3) Do you know of any bonafide examples of women dīkṣā-gurus.

3) **Andal, the celebrated wife of Kuresa (disciple of Ramanujācārya), was an ideal Sri Vaiṣṇava woman (ācāryani).**

4) Are there any prohibitions that you can cite from scriptures or history that would specifically restrict women to act as dīkṣā-guru?

4) **Yes. She cannot independently perform Agni-karya without her husband.**

5) Is there any history of female dīkṣā-guru in your sampradāya? If so, where and why? If not, why not?

5) **Andal, the celebrated wife of Kuresa, was an ideal Sri Vaiṣṇava woman (ācāryani). She used to guide students on the spiritual path. Among the Sri Vaiṣṇava saints, Andal, the spiritual daughter of Periyalvar or Vishnucitta, ranks high. Her composition, Tiruppavai, is considered to be the epitome of the entire Vedas.**

6) If there were female dīkṣā-gurus, what kind of initiations did they give? Are these female gurus considered bona fide?

6) **She used to guide disciples of the ācārya in his brief absence.**

7) Would your sampradāya allow female dīkṣā-gurus today, If yes, why? If not, why not?

7) **No.**

4) Śri-sampradāya: Dr. A.V. Ramana Dikshitulu M.Sc., Ph.D.

Matha or Institution: Pradhana Acaraka (head pujari) of Balaji Mandir, Tirumalla
sampradāya: Sri Vaiṣṇava

Address: Same as above

Name of Interviewer: Purnacandra Das

Questions & Answers (answers in bold)

1) Do you feel that the śāstras and Vedic or Vaiṣṇava history allow scope for women to act as a dīkṣā-guru?

1) **Yes**

2) Do you know of any bona fide examples of women dīkṣā-gurus?

2) **I cannot think of an example immediately.**

3) Are there any prohibitions that you can cite from scripture or history that would specifically restrict women to act as dīkṣā-gurus?

3) **No. The atma is transcendental to the body, and spiritual power comes from the atma, not the body. So there should not be any prohibition.**

4) Is there a history of female dīkṣā-gurus in your sampradāya? If so, where and who? If not, why not?

4) **Yes, we have such a history.**

5) If there were female dīkṣā-gurus, what kind of initiations did they give? Are these female gurus considered bona fide?

5) **Yes**

6) Would your sampradāya allow women dīkṣā-gurus today. If yes, why? If no, why not?

6) **I don't see why not.**

5) Śri-sampradāya: Murali Bhattar (descendent of Venkata Bhatta)

Matha or Institution: Pradhana Acaraka (head pujari) of the Ranganatha Mandir, Sri Rangam.

sampradāya: Sri Vaiṣṇava

Address: 15 North Citra Street, Sri Rangam (This is the house where Sriman Mahāprabhu stayed during the caturmasya period. They call the house "Caitanya Saadhan".)

Name of Interviewer: Purnacandra Das

Questions & Answers (answers in bold)

1) Do you feel that the shastras and Vaishnava history allow scope for women to act as a diksha-guru?

1) **No! Females are totally not allowed to act as diksha-gurus in Vaishnava History. There's not even diksha for them at all. There is only one function for them which is called "samasrayanam" wherein the Vaishnava guru will press hot symbols of "sanga" and "chakra" on their left and right hand. Then only will they be allowed to participate in all rituals of the home.**

2) Do you know of any bona fide examples of women diksha-gurus?

2) **No please!**

3) Are there any prohibitions that you can cite from scripture or history that would restrict women to act as diksha-gurus?

3) **No, to the best of my knowledge.**

4) Is there a history of female diksha-gurus in your sampradāya? If so, where and who?

4) **No diksha-guru.**

5) If there were female diksha-gurus, what kind of initiations did they give? Are these female gurus considered bona fide?

5) **No such gurus here at our Vaishnava sampradāya.**

6) Would your sampradāya allow women diksha-gurus today. If yes, why? If no, why not?

6) **In our sampradāya a woman can attain moksha if she is obedient to her husband and helpful to him in all kinds of activities. So there's no need for separate sadhana for her.**