

Who or what is a Brāhmaṇa?

Q: Can a *sūdra* or a *mleccha* become a *brāhmaṇa* in this birth?

A: In the Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava missions that operate in the western countries we see everyone ultimately receiving *brāhmaṇa*-initiation. But which *varṇāśrama*-society has only *brāhmaṇas*? Qualities and birth are non-different— *kāraṇam guṇa saṅgo'sya sad asad yoni janmasu* (Bhagavad Gītā 13.22). "The cause of birth in either a good or a bad species is one's attachment to a certain psychological quality (culture, habit)." Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has taught His followers *ṭṛṇād api sunīcena* "One must consider oneself lower than a blade of grass", not a *mleccha* claiming to be equal to a *brāhmaṇa*. Caste is for life, just as one cannot change one's biological father and mother during this lifetime. Once born a European one cannot suddenly, during this lifetime, become an Asian or African. One cannot change ticket mid-flight. A human being can and should not launch one's own *varṇāśrama dharma*, for it is created by God Himself, and He is the highest authority— *catur varṇyam mayā sṛṣṭam* (Bhagavad Gītā 4.13) "The four castes are created by Me (God, Kṛṣṇa)", and not by a human being, who wishes to 'reform' society, however elevated he may have been. In Śrīmad Bhāgavata (7.15.14) human concoctions about *varṇāśrama dharma* are called *ābhāsa dharma*, or fallacious religion – *yas tvicchayā kṛtaḥ pumbhir ābhāso hyāśramāt pṛthak*: "That which has been created by man according to their own whim, separately from the established *āśramas*, is called *abhāsa*." Finding fault in a *brāhmaṇa* or trying to usurp his position will cost you dear, for Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself says in the Bhāgavata (10.64.41-42):

*vipram kṛtāgasam api naiva druhyata māmakāḥ
ghnantam bahu śapantaḥ vā namaskuruta nityaśaḥ
yathāham praṇame viprān anukūlam samāhitam
tathā namata yūyam ca ye'nyathā me sa daṇḍa-bhāk*

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

"O My relatives! Do not harm a *brāhmaṇa*, even if he mistreats you! Even if he is a sinner, abuses you or abundantly curses you, you should always bow down to him. Even I bow down to the *brāhmaṇas*. Whoever acts otherwise is punishable by Me!"

The best example is Indra, who had to suffer severely for killing the *brāhmaṇa* Vṛtrāsura, even though he was a demon.

If the river Gaṅgā is considered pure in spite of all dirt, if Go is considered worshipable and inviolable even if it comes to kill, the *brāhmaṇa* must also be considered worshipable right from birth despite his faults. Just like *gotva*, it is the *brāhmaṇatva* which is glorified. This *brāhmaṇatva* is by birth, just as the *gotva* of the cow is by birth. The Lord further tells Śrutadeva -

*brāhmaṇo janmanā śreyān sarveṣāṃ prāṇinām iha
tapasā vidyayā tuṣṭyā kim u mat kalayā yutaḥ
duṣprajñā aviditvaivam avajanānantyasūyavaḥ; gurum mām vipram ātmānam*

“The *brāhmaṇa* is superior to all living beings by birth. Let alone when he is austere, learned, content and devoted to Me.....”

“Men of crooked understanding, who do not know this, disrespect a *brāhmaṇa* and are envious of him, who is identical with Me and their very self." (Śrīmad Bhāgavata (10.86.53, 55)

In his commentary to verse 53, Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī says: *janmanā jāti mātrena* – “*janmanā* means, just by *jāti*, caste.”

Nanda Mahārāja told Garga Muni:

*tvaṃ hi brahma-vidāṃ śreṣṭhaḥ saṃskārān kartum arhasi
bālayor anayor nṛṇāṃ janmanā brāhmaṇo guruḥ
(Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.8.6)*

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

“You are the greatest knower of the Vedas, so you are qualified to perform this rite on my sons. **A *brāhmaṇa* is Guru by birth.**”

Jīva Goswāmī comments in his Vaiṣṇava Toṣaṇī *ṭīkā-janmanā jātyeva kiṃ punar jñānādinetyarthaḥ* - He is Guru by caste, what to speak of by knowledge and so?

Jīva Goswāmī’s Bṛhad Vaiṣṇava Toṣaṇī – *janmanā janma mātrenaiva kiṃ punar jñānādinetyarthaḥ* “*janmanā* means only by birth, what to speak of knowledge and so?”

Jīva Goswāmī’s Krama Sandarbha – *janmanā jātyeva* “By birth means by caste only.”

The Bhāgavata (7.11.13) declares that a *brāhmaṇa* must first be born in a family that has always, throughout the generations, followed all the *saṃskāras* for the *brāhmaṇas*—

saṃskārā yad avichinnāḥ sa dvijo'jo jagāda yam

"A twice born *brāhmaṇa* is he in whose family the (16) purificatory rites have been performed in unbroken succession and whom Lord Brahmā has denominated as such."

Śrīpāda Śrīdhara Svāmī comments on this verse:

śūdraṃ tu na mantravat saṃskāra yuktam jagāda na copanayanavantam ato nāsau dvijaḥ....ato vivāha vyatirikta saṃskārānavaśyakatvāt upanayanasya tu sarvathā niṣedhāt na tasya dvijatvam

"The *śūdra* is not to be invested with *mantras* nor with the sacred thread, hence he is not a *dvija*." "Other than marriage there is no *saṃskāra* for the *śūdra*, therefore the sacred thread ceremony is forbidden for him in all respects and he cannot be a *dvija*."

What to speak then of a person who is born entirely outside of *varṇāśrama*?

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda comments on this verse:

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saṁskāra mantravanto garbhādhānādayo yasmin sa dvijaḥ. vichinna saṁskāro dvijabandhur ityarthaḥ. ajo brahmā yaṁ jagādeti brahma sṛṣṭyārambhata eva pravṛttāyāṁ dvija jātau viśuddha mātā pitṛkaṁ janmaiva mukhya lakṣaṇam

"A *dvija* is a person whose parents have gone through purificatory rites like the *garbhādhāna saṁskāra*. When there is no unbroken succession of *saṁskāras* the *brāhmaṇa* is called *dvija bandhu*. This practise is going on since the creation by the unborn *Brahmā*. **The main symptom of the twice-born caste is merely birth from a pure father and mother.**"

Those who preach mere meritocracy often quote this verse from Śrīmad Bhāgavata (7.11.35):

*yasya yallakṣaṇaṁ proktaṁ puṁso varṇābhivyanjakam
yad anyatrāpi dṛśyeta tat tenaiva vinirdiśet*

“If what has been declared as a feature of the grade of society of a man is perceived even in another (person belonging to another caste), the latter should be particularly called by that very denomination (caste).”

Śrīdhara Svāmī comments on this verse:

śamādibhir eva brāhmaṇādi vyavahāro mukhyaḥ na jāti mātrād ityāha yasyeti. yad yadi anyatra varṇāntare'pi tad varṇāntaram tenaiva lakṣaṇa nimittenaiva varṇena vinirdiśet na tu jāti nimittenetyarthaḥ

“One is not just a *brāhmaṇa* by birth - the main symptom is good behaviour like self-control. If such virtue is found elsewhere, in another caste, this determines the person's *varṇa*, not just birth.”

However, Śrīdhara Svāmī does not say here that non-*brāhmaṇas* can receive the sacred thread. If he did, then he would contradict his commentary of verse 13, quoted on the previous page.

This verse from the Mahābhārata (Anuśāsana Parva chapter 163) is often quoted –

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

*na yonir nāpi saṁskāro na śrutam na ca santatiḥ
kāraṇāni dvijatvasya vṛttaṁ eva tu kāraṇam*

"Neither birth, purificatory ceremonies, nor learning, nor progeny, but one's mode of life alone is the cause for *dvijatva*."

The meaning of this is that, if a *brāhmaṇa* leads his whole life in a manner that is not conform to how a *brāhmaṇa* must live (as per *śāstras*), in his next life, he will attain that mode in which he led his life. In the same mode often the Vajra Sucika Upaniṣad is quoted, but this Upaniṣad says nothing about giving *brāhmaṇa*-threads to *mlecchas* or *śūdras*, nor does it say that one should not be first born a *brāhmaṇa* to be considered qualified.

Śrīpāda Bhaktivinoda explains in his Jaiva Dharma (Chapter 6):

"Cuḍāmaṇi: "One must take birth in a *brāhmaṇa*-family to perform *yajñas* and other such activities, and even one who is born in a *brāhmaṇa*-family must be purified by the ceremony of investiture with the sacred thread before he is eligible to perform the duties of a *brāhmaṇa*. Similarly, a *caṇḍāla* may have become purified by the chanting of *harināma*, but he is still not eligible to perform *yajñas* until he acquires a seminal birth in a *brāhmaṇa*-family. However, he can perform the limbs of *bhakti* which are infinitely greater than *yajñas*."

Cuḍāmaṇi: "What kind of conclusion is that? That a person not qualified for an ordinary thing can be qualified for an exalted thing! What is the clear proof for that?"

Vaiṣṇava dāsa: "There are two types of human activity: material activities that relate to practical existence (*vyavahārika*); and spiritual activities that relate to the ultimate truth (*pāramārthika*). A person may have attained spiritual qualification, but that does not necessarily qualify him for particular material activities. For example, one who is a Muslim by birth may have acquired the nature and all the qualities of a *brāhmaṇa*, so that he is a *brāhmaṇa* from the spiritual point of view, but he still remains ineligible for certain material activities, such as marrying the daughter of a *brāhmaṇa*."

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Cuḍāmaṇi: “Why not? What is wrong with that?”

Vaiṣṇava dāsa: “If one violates social customs, one is guilty of secular impropriety, and members of society who take pride in their social respectability do not condone such activities. That is why one should not perform them, even if he is spiritually qualified.”

Śrīla Raghunātha Dāsa Gosvāmī writes in his Śrī Manaḥ śikṣā (1):

*gurai goṣṭhe goṣṭhālayiṣu sujane bhū-sura-gaṇe
sva-mantre śrī-nāmni vraja-nava-yuva-dvandva-smaraṇe
sadā dambhaṁ hitvā kuru ratim apūrvām atitarām
aye svāntar bhrātaś caṭubhir abhiyāce dhṛta-padaḥ*

"O mind, I grasp your feet and beg you with sweet words: please cast away hypocrisy at all times and have unprecedented love for my Guru, Vrajabhūmi, the people of Vraja, the Vaiṣṇavas, the *brāhmaṇas*, the *mantras* given by my Guru, the holy name and the fresh young couple of Vraja."

Here he uses two words, *sujana* (Vaiṣṇavas) and *bhū-sura-gaṇa* (*brāhmaṇas*). If Vaiṣṇavas are automatically *brāhmaṇas* in every respect, as Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī claims, then there is no need to mention two categories in this verse. Giving two categories means each is unique and yet both have something in common. If a *brāhmaṇa* is to be worshipped only if he is a Vaiṣṇava, then there is no need to specifically mention *brāhmaṇa* and Vaiṣṇava.

Śrīmad Bhāgavata (3.33.6) states:

*yan-nāmadheya-śravaṇānukīrtanād yat-prahvaṇād yat-smaraṇād api kvacit
śvādo 'pi sadyaḥ savanāya kalpate kutaḥ punas te bhagavan nu darśanāt*

“O Lord! By occasionally hearing and chanting Your divine names, bowing to You or even remembering You, a pariah (a dog-eater) becomes instantly worshipable as a *brāhmaṇa* that performs a Soma-sacrifice. Who can then imagine the benefit of seeing You directly?”

However, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī comments on Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu 1.1.22, which is Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī’s comment on this verse:

*tasmād durjātir evetyatra savanāyogyatve’pi kāraṇam iti tad-yogyatā pratikūla-pāpamayīty arthaḥ. na tu tad-yogyatvābhāva-mātra-mayīti. brāhmaṇāṅām śaukre janmani durjātitvābhāve’pi savana-yogyatvāya puṇya-viśeṣa-maya-sāvitra-janmāpekṣatvāt. tataśca savana-yogyatva-pratikūla-durjāty-ārambhakaṁ prārabdham api gatam eva kintu śiṣṭācārābhāvāt sāvitram janma nāstīti brāhmaṇa-kumārāṅām savana-yogyatvābhāvāvachedaka-puṇya-viśeṣa-maya-sāvitra-janmāpekṣāvad **asya janmāntarāpekṣā vartata** iti bhāvaḥ. ataḥ pramāṇa-vākye’pi savanāya kalpate sambhāvito bhavati na tu tadaivādhikārī syād ity abhipretam vyākhyātaṁ ca taiḥ sadyaḥ savanāya soma-yāgāya kalpate. **anena pūjyatvaṁ lakṣyata** iti .*

“Therefore bad birth itself is here the cause of being unqualified for Soma-sacrifice and that means possessing sin that is antagonistic to qualification for that, not merely having an absence of qualification for that. Even though there is an absence of bad birth in being born from the seed of *brāhmaṇas* there is still the necessity for a *sūrya*-birth (sacred thread initiation) which possesses the merit suitable for qualifying one for Soma-sacrifice. Therefore though the *prārabdha* that caused the bad birth that is antagonistic to suitability for Soma-sacrifice is gone, like *brāhmaṇa*-boys who because of absence of cultured practice have no *sūrya*-birth and must await a *sūrya*-birth that possesses the merit that can cut to pieces their absence of suitability for Soma-sacrifice, **he (the dog-eater who chants the names of Kṛṣṇa) must await another birth.** This is the position. Therefore, in the statement of authority (Ś.B. 3.33.6) the words *savanāya kalpate*, "he becomes fit for Soma sacrifice," are intended to mean he becomes **respected** or **honored**, but not that he has actually become qualified then and there (to perform that sacrifice).”

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Śrīdhara Svāmī comments on Śrīmad Bhāgavata 3.33.6: *anena pūjyatvaṁ lakṣyate* – “This verse just describes how the chanting dogeater is worshipable.”

Śrī Jīva Goswāmī comments on this verse and Śrīdhara Svāmī’s comment in Bhakti Sandarbha (128): *tasmāt pūjyatva mātra tātparyam ityabhipretya ṭikā-kṛdbhir apy uktam anena pūjyatvaṁ lakṣyata iti* – “The only purpose of Śrīdhara Svāmī’s commentary on this verse is to show how the chanting dog-eater is worshipable (not that he literally becomes a *brāhmaṇa*).”

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī repeats that point in his Dig-darśini ṭikā to Hari bhakti vilāsa:

brāhmaṇa-kumārāṇām śaukre janmani yogyatve saty api sāvitra-daikṣya-janmāpekṣāvat. sāvitṛādi-janmani tu sad-ācāra-prāpter iti savane pravṛttir na yujyate. tasmāt pūjyatva-mātre tātparyam ity abhipretya ṭikā-kṛdbhir apy uktam anena pūjyatvaṁ lakṣyata iti

“Just as even though there is the eligibility in the son of a *brāhmaṇa* through seminal birth, there is still the dependence on the birth through *sāvitra-dīkṣā* (initiation into *gāyatrī mantra*), birth through *sāvitra-dīkṣā* is but attained through *sad-ācāra* and thus, performing *soma yāga* is not suitable. Therefore, the purport here is only *pūjyatva* (being worshipable) and thus the commentator (Śrīdhara Svāmī) too has said “*anena pūjyatvaṁ lakṣyata*”.

In his Krama Sandarbha-ṭikā to Śrīmad Bhāgavata (3.33.6) Jīva Gosvāmī says:

tatra yogyatāyām labdhārambho bhavatīty arthaḥ. tad-anantara-janmany eva dvijatvaṁ prāpya tad-ādy-adhikāri syād

„It just means that there is a beginning made with qualification – **he only becomes really qualified by taking a *brāhmaṇa*-birth in the next life.**”

From this huge amount of authorised evidence it must be clear that the phrase *guṇa karma vibhāgaśaḥ*, “divided according to quality and activity”, which is often quoted from Bhagavad-Gītā 4.13 to prove that mere qualification at this very instant is enough to qualify as a *brāhmaṇa*, refers to **previous births**’ accumulation of a

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certain attitude (*guṇa*) and activities (*karma*) that cause one to take birth in a certain caste in the present life. Śrīla Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa comments on Bhagavad Gītā 18.41 that *svabhāva*, or nature, is formed by impressions from previous births - *svabhāvaḥ prāktana-saṁskāras*. You cannot reform the laws of *karma*, nature and subsequent reincarnation.

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda has elaborated further on this point to some degree, stating that since such sacrificial activities are lower on the spiritual hierarchy than direct service to Kṛṣṇa, they are not to be taken up even by *brāhmaṇa* Vaiṣṇavas. Sanātana Gosvāmī says in Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta (2.2.57):

*eṣāṁ yajñāika niṣṭhānām aikya-nāvaśyake nīje
jape ca sad gurūddiṣṭe māndyaṁ syād dṛṣṭa sat phale*

"Mahārṣis offered Gopa Kumāra the status of a *brāhmaṇa*, but he thought to himself: "If I accept the position of a *brāhmaṇa*, I will surely slacken in my practise of the *mantra* that I received from the bonafide *guru*, and that is certainly not good. *brāhmaṇas* are only engaged in *yajñas* and are not engaged in other matters."

Second initiation or mantra-initiation is not *brāhmaṇa*-initiation

The *brāhmaṇa*-thread is only for practising the Brahma Gāyatrī, not for the Vaiṣṇava-*dikṣā-mantras* like Gopāla mantra and Kāma Gāyatrī. Only the last two are mentioned in Hari Bhakti Vilāsa as Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava *dikṣā-mantras*. Proof that *brāhmaṇa*-initiation and *mantra* initiation are two different things is shown in Hari Bhakti Vilāsa (2.3-4):

*dvijānām anupetānām sva-karmādhyayanādiṣu
yathādhikāro nāstiḥa syāccopanayanād anu
tathātrādikṣitānām tu mantra devārcanādiṣu*

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nādhikāro'styataḥ kuryād ātmānaṁ śiva saṁstutam

A.C. Bhaktivedānta Swāmī quotes this verse in his commentary on Caitanya Caritamrita (Madhya 15.108) and translates it as follows:

"Even though born in a brahmana family, one cannot engage in Vedic rituals without being initiated and having a sacred thread. Although born in a brahmana family, one becomes a brahmana after initiation and the sacred thread ceremony. Unless one is initiated as a brahmana, he cannot worship the holy name properly."

This is, however, not a correct translation. The proper translation is:

"Just as an *anupanita vipra* (born *brāhmaṇa* who is not yet initiated with the *brāhmaṇa* thread) does not yet qualify to study the Vedas, but does so after getting the *upanayana* (sacred thread) *saṁskāra*, similarly an uninitiated person does not qualify for the Lord's *arcana* (temple worship). Hence one should take *dīkṣā* (*śiva saṁstutam iti dīkṣitam*)."

Noteworthy are the words *tathā* (also) and *atra* (here), 'here' meaning "in practise of *arcana*", showing that this verse is a comparison between *brāhmaṇa*-hood on the one hand and *Vaiṣṇava-dīkṣā* on the other, and that these are two separate things, not one and the same.

A *brāhmaṇa* is called *dvija*, or twice born. How can you have the second birth (*upanayana saṁskāra*) without having had the first one (*śaukra* or seminal birth)? *brāhma gāyatri* investment is done by the father of a *brāhmaṇa*-boy when he is 11 years old. The boy should not see the sun for many days (since the *brāhma gāyatrī* is a solar *mantra*) and is locked up into a room with the windows shut, given only *haviṣyāna* (porridge without salt, spices or sugar) to eat. Initiation into *Ṛṣṇa*-mantra is a separate initiation which is only given to active *Vaiṣṇava-brāhmaṇas*. For instance, Mahāprabhu already wore His thread when He received *ṛṣṇa mantra* from Īśvara Puri and Advaita Prabhu had been doing *brāhma gāyatrī* for decades when He received

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Kṛṣṇa-mantra from Mādhavendra Puri. And what if the ‘qualified’ *brāhmaṇa* falls down and starts drinking and engaging in illicit sex? Then we take his thread away and give it back to him as soon as he follows the principles again? Isn’t this bizarre? Has this ever been shown in any Vedic scripture? We are seeing that western Vaiṣṇava organizations, which have a 100% ‘*brāhmaṇa*’-population, also have the highest divorce rate in the world, women have children from different men - in India even the sweepers’ wives don’t do that. Some ‘qualified *brāhmaṇas*’ keep dogs in their houses, again something even the sweepers in India won’t do – where is the qualification then?



“Qualified *brāhmaṇas*” drink beer and “qualified *brāhmaṇīs*” wear bikini.

Considering the *dvijatva* in the Haribhakti Vilāsa-verse that says -

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

“As bell metal is turned into gold through the process of alchemy, similarly a human being attains twice born status through the process of *dīkṣā*.”

In his commentary Sanātana Gosvāmī confirms that *dvijatva* means *vipratā* for everyone (*sarveṣāṃ eva dvijatva vipratā*), and this seems a justification for turning everyone into a *brāhmaṇa*. However,

1) This does not mention the *brāhma gāyatrī*, this statement deals with Vaiṣṇava *dīkṣā*.

2) If this referred to *brāhma gāyatrī*, then that would contradict Śrīdhara Svāmī's and Jīva Gosvāmī's previously quoted verdict that this is not attainable for non-*brāhmaṇas* in their current births.

3) In his Bhakti Sandarbha (298) Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī has quoted this verse under the heading *athārcanādhikāri nirṇayaḥ* - 'Now follows the designation of eligibility for deity worship.' Then he proceeds by quoting scripture on the eligibility of all castes and genders for deity worship, ending with *yathā kāñcanatām*. This is the context in which this verse appears.

4) None of Mahāprabhu's *nitya siddha* associates, like Advaita or Nityānanda, Gadādhara, Śrīnivāsācārya, Narottama, Śyāmānanda, nor any of Their disciples or grand-disciples have ever put such a '*brahmana*-initiation' into practise, involving the Brāhma Gāyatrī in the process. *mahājano yena gata sa pantha* — One must follow in the footsteps of the *mahājanas*. Before 1918, when Śrīpād Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī began giving *brāhmaṇa*-threads to non-*brāhmaṇas*, 350 years after the compilation of Haribhakti Vilāsa, no one has ever given '*brāhmaṇa*-initiation'. Shall we assume that Śrīpād Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī knew it better than the Pañca Tattva, the Six Gosvāmīs, and all their successor *ācāryas*?

5) In Bhakti Rasāmṛta Sindhu (1.2.62) Rūpa Gosvāmī quotes the Kāśī-khaṇḍa —

*antyaajā api tad-rāṣṭre śaṅkha-cakrāṅka-dhāriṇaḥ
samprāpya vaiṣṇavīm dīkṣām dīkṣitā iva sambabhuḥ*

“In that country even the outcastes wore conch and disc signs. They received Vaiṣṇava *dīkṣā* and thus became just like sacrificial priests.”

Viśvanātha Cakravartī comments: *dikṣitā yājñikā iva sambabhur* - “*dikṣitā* means just like sacrificial priests.” *iva* means ‘just like’, not that they **actually** became sacrificial priests.

6. If the Haribhakti Vilāsa-verse *yathā kāncanatām yāti* was really about giving *brāhmaṇa*-threads to all the *mlecchas*, why was this verse not followed by a description of how such a ceremony is to be held?

Gauḍīya Maṭha-followers try to dismiss or play down the authority of the Haribhakti Vilāsa by writing (as Swami A.C. Bhaktivedānta did in his purport of Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya 1.35:)

"According to Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, the regulated principles of devotional service compiled by Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī do not strictly follow our Vaiṣṇava principles....It is Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Gosvāmī's opinion, however, that to follow the Hari-bhakti-vilāsa strictly is to actually follow the Vaiṣṇava rituals in perfect order. He claims that the smārta-samāja, which is strictly followed by caste brāhmaṇas, has influenced portions that Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī collected from the original Hari-bhakti-vilāsa. It is therefore very difficult to find out Vaiṣṇava directions from the book of Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī."

However, when Śrīman Mahāprabhu outlines the contents of Haribhakti Vilāsa, he assures Sanātana Gosvāmīpāda; *yabe tumi likhibā kṛṣṇa korābe sphuraṇa*, "Kṛṣṇa will reveal to you what to write." (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 24, 340) It was not written under pressure of *smārtas* but through the inspiration of Śrī Kṛṣṇa. That is an offence to Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, Śrīla Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and even to Lord Śrī Kṛṣṇa Himself, who has revealed the text to Sanātana Gosvāmī. Sanātana Gosvāmī clarifies in the very first verse of Haribhakti Vilāsa that he has written this book for the pleasure of the Vaiṣṇavas (and not for *smārtas* and bodily conscious people) –

caitanya-devaṁ bhagavantam āśraye śrī-vaiṣṇavānāṁ pramude'ñjasā likhan

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

āvaśyakam karma vicārya sādhubhiḥ sārddham samāhṛtya samasta śāstrataḥ

“I take shelter of Lord Caitanya Deva for easily writing (this book) to delight the divine Vaiṣṇavas. Deliberating with the *sādhus* (not *smārtas*) I have collected from all the scriptures the duties that must be performed.”

To say that certain statements of Sanātana's are for the appeasement of a certain class would be like saying that Sanātana Gosvāmī is not an *ācārya* at all. This is the biggest *aparādha*. If indeed, he did appeasement, why did not Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī clarify it in the *Dig-darśinī-ṭīkā* written on those verses of Haribhakti Vilāsa? Why both Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī are silent on this issue both in Haribhakti Vilāsa and in *Dig-darśinī*? Jīva Gosvāmī clarifies in the beginning of his *Locana-rocanī*-commentary on Ujjvala Nīlamaṇi that *svecchayā likhitam kiñcit kiñcit likhitam parecchayā* or “Some statements I have written according to my own desire, whereas some statements are written keeping into mind the desire of others”. But, any such statement from the two authors themselves i.e. Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī and Sanātana Gosvāmī – have not been issued in the case of Haribhakti Vilāsa and its commentary. Indeed the word *smārta* never appears in the 6 Gosvāmīs’ books in any negative way.

Śrīmad Bhāgavata 1.7.43 –

*uvāca cāsaṁty asya bandhanānayanam sati
mucyatām mucyatām eṣa brāhmaṇo nitarām guruḥ*

“Draupadi could not tolerate Aśvatthāmā's being bound by ropes, and being a devoted lady, she said: Release him, for he is a *brāhmaṇa*, our spiritual master.”

The text *brāhmaṇo nitarām guruḥ* actually means ‘*brāhmaṇas* are always *Guru*’. This clearly shows that Aśvatthāmā was still referred to as a *brāhmaṇa* despite his heinous act. He did not get demoted to a *śūdra* or less because of his sinful behavior. Even a *dvija-bandhu* must be treated differently from others even if he commits the most grievous sins and is an *ātatāyī*; he must never be killed - *śrī-bhagavān uvāca—*

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

brahma-bandhur na hantavya. The Lord said: “One should not kill a fallen *brāhmaṇa*.” (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 1.7.53) Thus respect shown to *brāhmaṇas* is real and a must.

The Bhāgavata teaches respect for Guru-families as well, as in this statement by Draupadī (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 1.7.46)-

*tad dharmajña mahā-bhāga bhavadbhir gauravaṁ kulam
vṛjinam nārhati prāptum pūjyam vandyam abhikṣṇasāḥ*

“O knower of *dharma*! You should not cause suffering to the family of your Guru, because they are always praiseworthy and worthy of worship.”

Śrīdhara Swāmī and Viśvanātha Cakravartī both gloss *gaurava* as *guroḥ kulam*, the family of the Guru.

Droṇa: He was a *brāhmaṇa* but took to the life of a *kṣatriya* due to his war-like disposition. Was he then referred to thereafter as a *kṣatriya*? No. Anyone who has read the Mahābhārata can tell you that the text continued to refer to him as a *brāhmaṇa*.

Arjuna: He demonstrated a propensity towards renunciation when he declined to fight on the battlefield of Kurukṣetra. He was ready to renounce everything and just live by begging. Did Lord Kṛṣṇa accept it? No. He argued that Arjuna was a *kṣatriya* and should fight the battle despite his *brāhminical* disposition.

These examples refute the point of view that one's *varṇa* changes on the basis of his "mentality." Other *sāstric* evidence that further refutes this point of view:

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.41

brāhmaṇa kṣatriya viśāṁ śūdrāṇāṁ ca parantapa

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

karmāṇi pravibhaktāni svabhāva prabhavair guṇaiḥ

“*brāhmaṇas*, *kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* are distinguished by the qualities born of their own natures in accordance with the material modes, o chastiser of the enemy.”

The *ācāryas* wrote the following commentaries –

Śrīdhara Swāmī - *svabhāvaḥ pūrva-janma-saṁskāraḥ* – “*svabhāva* means the cultivation from **previous birth**.”

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartī - *svabhāvenotpattyaiva prabhavanti prādurbhavanti ye guṇāḥ* – “The *guṇas* of the four *varṇas* appear due to *svabhāva*, *utpatti* (*utpattyā*) or birth.”

ISKCON’s own translations of *utpattyā* -

utpattyā — from the beginning of His appearance; SB 5.4.1

utpattyā — because of my birth (in a demoniac family); SB 7.10.2

saha utpattyā — by our very birth; SB 10.16.56

utpattyā eva — simply by birth; SB 11.21.24

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa – *svabhāvaḥ prāktana-saṁskāras* – “*svabhāva* means cultivation from previous birth”.

All *ācāryas* here confirm *varṇa* is by birth, not merely by quality.

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.47 -

*śreyān sva-dharmo viḡuṇaḥ para-dharmāt sv-anuṣṭhitāt
svabhāva-niyataṁ karma kurvan nāpnoti kilbiṣam*

“It is better to engage in one's own occupation, even though one may perform it imperfectly, than to accept another's occupation and perform it perfectly. Duties prescribed according to one's nature are never affected by sinful reactions.”

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

Śrī Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa's commentary to 18.47:

nanu kṣatriyādi-dharmānām rājasāditvāt teṣu ruci-śūnyaiḥ kṣatriyādibhiḥ sāttviko brahma-dharma evānuṣṭheya iti cet tatrāha śreyān iti. sva-dharmo viguṇaḥ nikṛṣṭo'pi samyag-anuṣṭhito'pi vā para-dharmād utkṛṣṭāt svanuṣṭhitāc ca śreyān atipraśaṣṭo vihitatvāt.

“If it is said by someone that, only *sāttvika brāhmaṇa dharma* must be conducted by those *kṣatriyas* that have no taste for the *dharmas* of *kṣatriyas* and others because of their being in *rajas*, it is said, *śreyān svadharmo-viguṇaḥ* – it is better to practice one’s own *dharma* imperfectly than another’s *dharma* perfectly....”

Bhagavad-gītā As It Is 18.59 -

*yad ahaṅkāram āśritya na yotsya iti manyase
mithyaiṣa vyavasāyas te prakṛtis tvām niyokṣyati*

“If you do not act according to My direction and do not fight, then you will be falsely directed. By your nature, you will have to be engaged in warfare.”

Why did Lord Kṛṣṇa say it was Arjuna's nature to fight? And that too despite Arjuna offering to give up everything and take to begging? Because Arjuna was born a *kṣatriya* and he was obligated to follow *kṣatriya dharma*. Arjuna did not get promoted to *brāhmaṇa*-status because of his compassion for his family.

Someone may argue:

*janmanā jāyate śūdraḥ saṁskārāt bhaveddvijaḥ
veda-paṭhād bhaved vipraḥ brahmajānātīti brāhmaṇaḥ.*

“The meaning of who is a *brāhmaṇa* is very clear - one who knows *brahman*. Hence, all scriptural statements that apply to a *brāhmaṇa* can only apply to one who

has realised *brahman* and is completely free of faults such as lust, anger etc and does not depend on considerations of one's birth.”

Refutation: The scriptural statements applicable to a *brāhmaṇa* apply only to that person who has directly realised *brahman* and is completely devoid of lust, anger, greed etc. Then, when it comes to practicality the following points are to be considered:

a) Those who directly experience *brahman* and are free from all six faults are very, very rare. One in a million. So what happens to all the injunctions in the *śāstras* meant for *brāhmaṇas*? Are they to be done by anyone at all or wait only for those extremely rare personalities to do whenever they become qualified by realising *brahman*? If they are not done by the millions of so called *brāhmaṇas* citing disqualification, it then leads to destruction of *dharma*. A result which will be contrary to the purpose of those injunctions.

b) Once one becomes a true *brāhmaṇa*, what interest does he have in performing the activities in the *śāstras* for all of them are *laukika* and he will have no *laukika śraddhā*, having directly realised *brahman*? He practically is a non-starter and these activities will never be performed by anyone at all. If he can do it only after he attains such realisation, it is known that such realisation comes by years of *sādhana*? What activities does he do till he gets such realisation? Anything that he pleases or his *svadharma*? If he does anything that he pleases, there are numerous statements in all scriptures including *bhakti-śāstras* that stand against him. Thus he must only follow his *svadharma* according to his birth.

So far no source reference is given for the above *śloka*. Ācārya Vamśīdhara writes in his *ṭīkā* of Śrīmad Bhāgavata 1.1.2 - *ādhunīkair vipra dviḍbhis tu 'janmanā jāyate śūdraḥ' iti pāṭhaḥ kalpitaḥ. sa cānādarāṇīya eva* – “Modern quotes by *brāhmaṇa*-haters like ‘*janmanā jāyate śūdraḥ*’ are concocted reading, which should be disregarded.” If the meaning is taken literally as "by birth one is born a *śūdra*" and is taken to apply to every human being born on earth, then this contradicts numerous

other statements which mention about a *brāhmaṇa* that he is a *brāhmaṇa* right from birth.

Q.: There are numerous non-*brāhmaṇas* who became *brāhmaṇas* in the same life. If *brāhmaṇa*-hood is by birth then how did they become *brāhmaṇas*?

A: It is true that there were non-*brāhmaṇas* who became *brāhmaṇas* in the same life, but these were exceptions, not the rule. The scriptures themselves question these exceptions and answer them. For example, in the Mahābhārata, Anuśāsana parva (3.1-2) -

*brāhmaṇyaṁ yadi duṣprāpaṁ tribhir varṇair narādhipa
katham prāptaṁ mahārāja kṣatriyeṇa mahātmanā
viśvāmitreṇa dharmātman brāhmaṇatvaṁ naraṣabha
śrotum icchāmi tattvena tan me brūhi pitāmaha*

'If, O prince, *brāhmaṇa*-hood is so hard to attain by the three classes (*kṣatriyas*, *vaiśyas* and *sūdras*), how then did the high souled Viśvāmitra, though a *kṣatriya* (by birth), attain the status of a *brāhmaṇa*? I desire to know this, O sire. Therefore, relate this matter to me in truth please.'

The description continues wherein, sage Ṛcika, a son of sage Bhṛgu married Satyavatī, a princess. Pleased with her nature, he blessed her that she will have a *brāhmaṇa*-son. Satyavatī's mother, wife of King Gādhi also wanted a child. On Satyavatī's request, sage Ṛcika gave both of them 2 *carus* (*pāyasa*) along with instructions to embrace two different trees. The mother and daughter exchanged their *carus* and the trees. Hearing this, sage Ṛcika explained that he had infused the potency of an effulgent *brāhmaṇa* in the *caru* meant for Satyavatī and that of a fiery *kṣatriya* in the *caru* meant for her mother. But since they exchanged the *carus* and also embraced the trees meant for the other, Satyavatī would give birth to a fiery *kṣatriya*, though a *brāhmaṇa* by birth and her mother an effulgent *brāhmaṇa*, though a *kṣatriya* by birth.

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On account of Satyavatī's pleas, he agreed to make her grandson instead of son with the nature of a fiery *kṣatriya*. The grandson was Paraśurāma. The *kṣatriya* who was actually a *brāhmaṇa* was Viśvāmitra. Thus Viśvāmitra became a *brāhmaṇa* because of the grace of sage Ṛcika. In **chapters 28 and 29 of Anuśāsana parva**, Bhīṣma-deva explained through the story of Mataṅga that it is not possible to become a *brāhmaṇa* in the same birth even through the fiercest of penances.

In his purport to Caitanya Caritāmṛta, Madhya-līlā 1, 63, Swami A.C Bhaktivedānta says:

“Śrī Rūpa, Śrī Sanātana and Śrī Haridāsa were prohibited from entering the Jagannātha Mandir and Lord Caitanya did not approve of such dogmatic prohibitions. To avoid unnecessary turmoil, however, these great personalities would not enter the Jagannatha temple.”

The Caitanya Caritāmṛta text says, however:

*haridāsa ṭhākura āra rūpa-sanātana
jagannātha-mandire nā yāna tina jana*

"Haridāsa Ṭhākura and Rūpa and Sanātana, these three men, did not go to the Jagannātha Mandir."

From this it is clear that they voluntary, out of sheer humility, did not enter the Jagannātha Mandir, not grudgingly, due to prohibition or to avoid turmoil. There is no mentioning anywhere in this Bengali text that they wanted to avoid turmoil, that they were prohibited to enter or that they protested or resisted such prohibitions. If that were so, then why did Sanātana Gosvāmī prefer to have his foot-soles scorched over having to touch Lord Jagannātha's *pūjārīs*? If Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu wanted

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to overthrow the caste system He could have done so easily. Pratāparudra Mahārāja was at His feet:

*prabhura nikaṭe āche joto bhakta-gaṇa; mora lāgi' tā-sabāre koriho nivedana
sei sab doyālu more hoiyā sadaya; mora lāgi' prabhu-pade karibe vinaya
tā-sobāra prasāde mile śrī-prabhura pāya; prabhu-kṛpā vinā mora rājya nāhi bhāya
yadi more kṛpā nā koribe gaurahari; rājya chāḍi' yogi hoi' hoibo bhikhārī*

In a letter King Pratāparudra requested Sārvabhauma Bhaṭṭācārya, “Please appeal to all the devotees associated with Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu and submit this petition to them on my behalf. If all the devotees associated with the Lord are favorably disposed toward me, they can submit my petition at the lotus feet of the Lord. By the mercy of all the devotees, one can attain the shelter of the lotus feet of the Lord. Without His mercy, my kingdom does not appeal to me. If Gaurahari, Lord Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, will not show mercy to me, I shall give up my kingdom, become a mendicant and beg from door to door.”

With such influence Mahāprabhu could have easily told the king to lift the ban on non-Hindus entering the Jagannāth Mandir so that Rūpa Gosvāmī, Sanātana Gosvāmī and Haridās Ṭhākur could enter, but there is no evidence from any *śāstra* that He never did that.

During Advaita Prabhu’s feast in honor of Mahāprabhu, when He had just taken *sannyāsa*, Śrīla Haridās Ṭhākur humbly said:

mui pāpiṣṭha adhama, bāhire eka muṣṭi pāche korimu bhojan

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 3.63)

“I am a fallen sinner – I will eat a handful later, outside.”

When Rūpa Gosvāmī’s dramas were about to be read to the Lord, Rūpa and Haridās humbly sat at the base of the platform where the other devotees were seated:

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rūpa haridāsa duñhe bosilā piṇḍātale; sabāra agre nā uṭhilā piṇḍāra upare

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya 1.111).

When the *brāhmaṇa* Kālidāsa glorified his *sūdra*-friend Jhaḍu Ṭhākura, stating that a low-caste devotee is greater than a non-devotee *brāhmaṇa*, Jhaḍu Ṭhākura did not say: “Yes, you see! I am greater than or equal to you!” Rather, he said:

*śuni ṭhākura kohe – śāstre ei satya hoy; sei nīca nahe – yāte kṛṣṇa-bhakti hoy
āmi – nīca jāti, āmār nāhi kṛṣṇa-bhakti; anya aiche hoy, āmāy nāhi aiche śakti*

“The scriptures speak the truth, a low caste person is not low if he/she has devotion for Kṛṣṇa. I, however, am low-born and I have no devotion for Kṛṣṇa. This may apply to others, but I do not have such a power.” (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya 16, 28-29)

These are perfect examples of *maryādā-pālana*, maintaining the etiquette.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu was **NOT AGAINST THE CASTE SYSTEM**. When He heard that Sanātana Gosvāmī had burned his footsoles to avoid touching Lord Jagannātha’s *pūjārīs*, He praised him, saying (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya 4, 129-132):

*yadyapi tumi hao jagat pāvan; tomā sparśe pavitra hoy deva muni-gaṇa
tathāpi bhakta svabhāva - maryādā rakṣaṇa; maryādā pālana hoy sādharma bhūṣaṇa
maryādā laṅghane loka kore upahāsa; iha loka, para loka - dui hoy nāśa
maryādā rakhile, tuṣṭa hoy mora mana; tumi aiche nā korile kore kon jana?*

"Although you are the purifier of the whole world and the gods and sages are purified by your mere touch, still it is the nature of a devotee to follow the social

protocol. Maintaining the social protocol is the ornament of a *sādhu*. When a Vaiṣṇava violates the social protocol people will ridicule him and he will perish in this birth and in the next. By keeping the social standard you have pleased My mind. Who else but you could do such a thing?"

By saying: ‘Although you are the purifier...’, Mahāprabhu acknowledges the spiritual superiority of a Vaiṣṇava, but then He immediately warns that the external social protocol must be maintained. These are two separate worlds, one spiritual and the other material.

In his Caitanya Caritāmṛta edition, A.C.Bhaktivedanta Swami translates these verses as follows -

TEXTS 129-130

*"yadyapio tumi hao jagat-pāvana
tomā-sparśe pavitra haya deva-muni-gaṇa
tathāpi bhakta-svabhāva----maryādā-rakṣaṇa
maryādā-pālana haya sādhu bhūṣaṇa*

SYNONYMS

yadyapio--although; tumi--you; hao--are; jagat-pāvana--the deliverer of the entire universe; tomā--you; sparśe--by touching; pavitra--purified; haya--becomes; deva-muni-gaṇa--the demigods and great saintly persons; tathāpi--still; bhakta-svabhāva--the nature of a devotee; maryādā--etiquette; rakṣaṇa--to protect or observe; **maryādā pālana--to maintain etiquette**; haya--is; sādhu bhūṣaṇa--ornament of devotees.

TRANSLATION

"My dear Sanātana, although you are the deliverer of the entire universe and although even the demigods and great saints are purified by touching you, it is the characteristic of a devotee to observe and protect the **Vaiṣṇava** etiquette. Maintenance of the Vaiṣṇava etiquette is the ornament of a devotee."

But Mahāprabhu did not speak of Vaiṣṇava etiquette here - the word ‘Vaiṣṇava’ does not appear in the word-for-word translation – He spoke of social, Vedic etiquette in general. The word *tathāpi* (still, nonetheless) indicates that the Vaiṣṇavas do not

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externally throw society topsy-turvy. Verse 129 speaks of *vaiṣṇava maryādā*, but not verse 130. That speaks of practical, general, social etiquette.

On the other hand, a person who violates the social protocol can expect Mahāprabhu's wrath: *maryādā laṅghana āmi sohite nā pāri* (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya 4.166) "I cannot tolerate violation of the protocol."

When Śrīman Mahāprabhu travelled Śrī Svarūpa Dāmodara and Śrī Rāmānanda Rāy wanted to take a *brāhmaṇa* with Him - He would not eat grains from non-*brāhmaṇas*:

*āmā duñhāra mone tabe boro sukh hoy; ek nivedana yadi dhara, dayāmaya
'uttama brāhmaṇa' ek saṅge avaśya cāhi ; bhikṣā kori bhikṣā dibe jābe pātra bohi
banapathe jāite nāhi 'bhojyāna' brāhmaṇa; ājñā koro – saṅge coluk vipra ekjan*

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 17.10-12)

"We would both be very happy if you could heed our plea, O merciful One! You should definitely travel with one topmost *brāhmaṇa*, who can beg alms for You, serve You these alms and carry your vessels. When You traverse the forest path You will have no *brāhmaṇa* with You who will cook and serve Your grains. Order us to send a *brāhmaṇa* along with You."

*ye grāme rohen prabhu tathāya brāhmaṇa; pānca sāt jan āsi kore nimantraṇa
keho anna āni dey bhāṭṭācārya sthāne; keho dugdha dadhi keho ghrta khaṇḍa āne
jāhā vipra nāhi tāhā 'śūdra mahājana'; āsi sabe bhāṭṭācārye kore vanya vyañjana
bhāṭṭācārya pāka kore vanya vyañjana; vanya vyañjana prabhura ānandita mana*

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 17.58-60)

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“In whatever village the Lord stayed five to seven *brāhmaṇas* invited Him. Some gave grains to Bhaṭṭācārya, others gave milk, yoghurt, clarified butter or rock candy. Wherever there were no *brāhmaṇas* the great devotee-*śūdras* came and gave Bhaṭṭācārya forest-vegetables to cook for the Lord. Prabhu was very happy to eat these vegetables cooked by Bhaṭṭācārya.”

Note here that the Lord accepted only vegetables from *śūdra*-devotees.

In Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Antya 10.139-141):

*ācārya-ratna, ācārya-nidhi, nandana, rāghava; śrīvāsa-ādi joto bhakta, vipra sab
eimata nimantraṇa koren jatna kori; vāsudeva gadādhara, gupta murāri
kulīna-grāmī, khaṇḍavāsī, āra joto jan; jagannāthera prasāda āni koren nimantraṇa*

“Devotees like Ācārya-ratna, Ācārya-nidhi, Nandana, Rāghava and Śrīvāsa were all *brāhmaṇas* and they invited the Lord for meals. Vāsudeva, Gadādhara, Murāri Gupta and the villagers from Kulīna and Khaṇḍa (who were not *brāhmaṇas*) brought *prasāda* from Lord Jagannātha.” And later on in that chapter (verses 154-155):

*gopīnāthācārya, jagadānanda, kāśīśvara;
bhagavān rāmabhadra-cārya, śaṅkara, vakreśvara
madhye madhye ghara bhāte kore nimantraṇa;
anyera nimantraṇa prasāde kauḍi dui paṇa*

“Gopīnāthācārya, Jagadānanda, Kāśīśvara; Bhagavān Rāmabhadra-cārya, Śaṅkara, Vakreśvara (who were all *brāhmaṇas*) cooked for the Lord in their homes while others bought *prasāda* for Him for (a price of) 2 *kauḍis*.”

śrīvāsādi joto prabhura vipra bhakta-gaṇa; prabhuke bhikṣā dite hoilo sobākāra mana

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

“(When the Lord took His first alms in Advaita Prabhu’s house just after taking *sannyāsa*) Śrīvāsa and all the other *brāhmaṇa*-devotees of the Lord wanted to invite the Lord for a meal.” (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 3. 168)

Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Ādi 7.45-46):

*kāśīte lekhak śūdra candra-śekhara;
tār ghare rohilā prabhu svatantra īśvara
tapana miśrera ghare bhikṣā nirvāhaṇa.....*

“When in Benares, the independent Lord (Mahāprabhu) stayed in the house of the scribe Candraśekhara, who was a *śūdra*, but He took His meals in the house of Tapan Miśra (who was a *brāhmaṇa*)...”

Also in Caitanya Bhāgavata (Antya 9.118-119) it is described that Mahāprabhu ate only from *brāhmaṇas* -

*tathā bhikṣā āmāra, ye hoy lakṣeśvara; śuniyā brāhmaṇa sab cintita antara
vipraṅgaṇa stuti kori bolen gosāi; lakṣera ki dāy sahasreko kāro nāi*

“I will invite invitations only from those who have one lakh. Hearing this, the *brāhmaṇas* were all worried. The *vipras* said ‘O Lord, what to speak of a lakh, we don’t have even a thousand.’”

It is also very clear from all these quotations that no one in Mahāprabhu’s entourage was initiated as a *brāhmaṇa* without being born one first, otherwise the above distinction would not have been made.

Although Mahāprabhu played the pastime that a *brāhmaṇa* and *sannyāsī* can be enlightened by a *śūdra* and a *grhastha* like Rāmānanda Rāya, who, in Caitanya

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

Caritāmṛta Madhya līlā chapter 8, took Him to the limit of Vaiṣṇava teachings as a *śikṣā guru* (*kibā vipra kibā nyāsī sūdra kene noy ye kṛṣṇa tattva vettā sei guru hoy*), Mahāprabhu would not accept meals from him. First He humbly submitted (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 8.43):

ei jāni – kaṭhin mora hṛdaya; śodhite sārvabhauma kohilen tomāra milite

“I know that My heart is hard, hence Sārvabhauma told Me to meet you.”

But then He did follow the *maryādā*, or external protocol -

heno kāle vaidika eka vaiṣṇava brāhmaṇa; daṇḍavat kori koilo prabhura nimantraṇa

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 8.45)

“At that time a Vedic Vaiṣṇava *brāhmaṇa* came and invited Mahāprabhu.” This proves that external protocol and spiritual appreciation are two separate worlds, which should not be mixed.

Śrī Kṛṣṇa proclaimed in Bhagavad-Gītā (3.21-24) that He follows the rules, otherwise the worlds would go to ruin. Indeed, even in the *aṣṭakāliya līlā* Kṛṣṇa followed the external protocol -

*tuṅgī subhadra janani jananīti vijñā vijñāpitā vrajapayā pariveśanāya;
bhojyam kramāt pariviveśa sarohiṇikā viprātmaja svadhava devara putrakebhyaḥ*

(Govinda Līlāmṛta 20.45)

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

“Subhadra's mother Tuṅgī was expert in etiquette and serving, so on mother Yaśodā's request and with Rohiṇī's help she served. First she served the *brāhmaṇas*, then her husband, then her brothers-in-law and then the boys (including Kṛṣṇa).”

Kṛṣṇa was the last to get *prasāda*. If the Supreme Lord can be that humble, should not *śūdras* and *mlecchas* follow suit by simply accepting the fact that they do not belong to the upper class? Śrī Kṛṣṇa says in Bhagavad Gītā (9.33) -

kiṁ punar brāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayas tathā

“(If the women, *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* can attain the Supreme Destination) What to speak then of the *brāhmaṇas*, the virtuous and the saintly kings?”

Why even mention *brāhmaṇas* separately from other devotees? The previous verse would have said that *vaiśyas* and *śūdras* become *brāhmaṇas* by surrendering to Kṛṣṇa, but instead Kṛṣṇa said *kiṁ punar brāhmaṇa*, what to speak of *brāhmaṇas*? If considering *brāhmaṇas* superior devotees to non *brāhmaṇa*-devotees is ‘*smārta*’ then Kṛṣṇa is a *smārta* too, by speaking this verse. *kiṁ punaḥ* means "what to speak of?"

One may challenge here: “But what about these verses then, that are quoted in the Gosvāmī’s books?”

*śūdraṁ vā bhagavad bhaktaṁ niṣādaṁ śvapacaṁ tathā
vikṣate jāti-sāmānyāt sa yāti narakam dhruvam*

“A devotee of the Supreme Lord may be born a *śūdra*, or *niṣāda*, or even a dog-eater, but anyone who views such a devotee according to pedigree or caste, most certainly precipitates his fall to the infernal regions.” (Hari Bhakti Vilāsa 10,119), or:

arcye viṣṇau śilā-dhīr guruṣu nara-matir vaiṣṇave jāti-buddhiḥ...yasya vai nārakī saḥ

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

“Those who consider the deity of Viṣṇu to be a mere stone, one’s superiors to be mere human beings and the Vaiṣṇava to belong to a certain caste.....are surely hellish persons.” (Cited in Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s ‘Padyavali’, 114)

To that the response is: These verses are glorifications of the Vaiṣṇavas that caution us not to treat lower born Vaiṣṇavas with disdain or contempt and urge us to keep them in honour. As in Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī’s ‘Upadeśāmṛta’ (5) - *kṛṣṇeti yasya giri taṁ manasādriyeta dikṣāsti cet praṇatibhiḥ*, “Mentally honour anyone who says Kṛṣṇa, and bow down if someone has received initiation”, and the following verse -

*drṣṭaiḥ svabhāva janitair vapuṣaś ca doṣair
na prākṛtatvam iha bhakta janasya paśyet
gangāmbhasaṁ na khalu budbuda phena pankair
brahma-dravatvam apagacchati nīra-dharmaḥ*

“Though a devotee may have bad habits or a faulty body he should not be seen (judged) in this mundane way, just as Ganges-water is considered a divine substance though it may be covered with bubbles and foam.”

However, in practical Vaiṣṇava-life we see that distinction is being made. Mahāprabhu would not eat grains from non-*brāhmaṇa* Vaiṣṇavas, including Rāmānanda Rāya (see pages 14-16), and Vaiṣṇavas were mentioned with their caste-adjectives – certainly that wouldn’t make Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu a ‘hellish person’.
Examples –

*miśrera sakhā teṅho prabhura pūrva dāsa
vaidya-jāti, likhana-vṛtti, vārānasī-vāsa*

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 17.92)

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

“Candraśekhara was a friend of Tapan Miśra and a former servant of the Lord. **He was of a Vaidya-caste.** His profession was writing and he lived in Benares.”

*heno kāle āilo vaiṣṇava 'kṛṣṇadāsa' nāma;
rājapūta-jāti,----grhastha, yamunā-pāre grāma*

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 18.82)

“Just then a Vaiṣṇava arrived named Kṛṣṇadās. **He was of the rājapūt-caste,** a householder who lived in a village on the other bank of the Yamunā.”

śūdra viṣayī-jñāne upekṣā nā koribe; āmāra vacane tāñre avaśya milibe

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 7.63)

"Please do not neglect him, thinking he belongs to a **śūdra** family engaged in material activities. It is my request that You meet him without fail."

yāhān vipra nāhi tāhān 'śūdra-mahājana'; āsi' sabe bhaṭṭācārye kore nimantraṇa

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 17.60)

“Wherever there were no *brāhmaṇas* - nonetheless, great **śūdra saints** came and extended invitations to Balabhadra Bhaṭṭācārya.”

*ye te kule vaiṣṇavera janma kene nohe; tathāpi-o sarvottama sarva śāstre koy
ei tār pramāṇa yavana haridāsa; brahmādīra durlabha dekhilo prakāśa*

(Caitanya Bhāgavata Madhya 10.100-101)

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

“In whatever family a Vaiṣṇava may take his birth, still he is the greatest person. All scriptures proclaim this. The evidence of this is **Yavana** Haridāsa, who saw manifestations rarely seen even by *Brahmā*.”

śūdra vaiṣṇavera ghare jāy bheṭ loiyā (C.C. Antya 16.13)

“Kālidās went to the homes of *śūdra vaiṣṇavas* with gifts.”

bhuimāli jāti vaiṣṇava jhoru tāra nāma (C.C. Antya 16.14)

“There was a Vaiṣṇava from the **Bhuimāli caste** named Jhoru.”

Sanātana Goswāmī writes in his commentary to Haribhakti Vilāsa 1.2 – *śrī raghunātha dāso nāma gauḍīya kāyastha kulābja-bhāskaraḥ parama bhāgavataḥ* - “The *parama bhāgavata* named Śrī Raghunātha dāsa is the sun that shines on the lotus of the *kāyastha* clan of Bengal.”

Each time a Vaiṣṇava is mentioned with his caste it was done with the utmost respect, but it is not that a Vaiṣṇava is casteless.

Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu had His Raghunāthas – one was Raghunātha Vaidya, one was Raghunāth Bhaṭṭa and one was Raghunāth Dās - all named according to *jāti*. Even Nityānanda Prabhu, who is considered most liberal, had himself served by *brāhmaṇas* during the chipped rice festival in Pānihāti –

*āra tina kuṇḍikāya avaśeṣa chilo; grāse-grāse kari' vipra saba bhakte dilo
puṣpa-mālā vipra āni' prabhu-gale dilo; candana āniyā prabhura sarvāṅge lepilo*

“There was food remaining in the three other big pots of Lord Nityānanda, and a *brāhmaṇa* distributed it to all the devotees, giving a morsel to each. Then a *brāhmaṇa*

brought a flower garland, placed the garland on Nityānanda Prabhu’s neck and smeared sandalwood pulp all over His body.” (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya 6.95-96).

All members of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu’s entourage followed the social protocol. Śrī Gadādhara Paṇḍit was once forced by Vallabha Bhaṭṭa to hear his devotional explanations (*bhaṭṭa jāy, tabu poḍe kori balātkār*, Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya 7.96), although no one in Purī would hear them because they had already been rejected by Mahāprabhu (*prabhur upekṣāy sab nilācaler jan; bhaṭṭera vyākhyān kichu nā kore śravaṇ*, 7. 91). Thus Gadādhara ended up in a dilemma (*sankate poḍilo paṇḍit, koroye samśoy*, 7.95). Nevertheless, because Vallabha Bhaṭṭa was of a high birth Gadādhara did not forbid him to speak his rejected theories (*ābhijātye paṇḍit korite nāre niṣedhan*, 7.97). He followed the protocol, though he risked scorn by his fellow Mahāprabhu-followers because of it, and actually received it too (*tathāpi prabhur gaṇ kore praṇaya roṣa*, 7.99).

Śrīla Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī is the *rāgānugā ācārya* pur sang, but he too kept the protocol, however transcendental *rāgānugā bhakti* is to the external world and even to compulsory devotion (*vidhi bhakti*). Though in the second verse of his Manaḥ Śikṣā (teachings to the mind) he warned *na dharmam nādharmam śrutigaṇa niruktaṁ kila kuru* “Do not engage in either religious or irreligious activities mentioned in the Vedas” and thus showed himself as being aloof from the world, still in the opening verse, yes even in the opening line of Manaḥ Śikṣā he said: *gurau goṣṭhe goṣṭhālayiṣu su-jane bhū-sura gaṇe* “Oh mind, worship the Guru, Vraja-bhūmi, the Vrajabāsīs, the saints and the *brāhmaṇas*.”

In short, there is the internal world of *bhakti* and there is the external world of *maryādā* (respect, protocol). The 12th Canto of the Bhāgavata predicts a decay of Vedic society and the 6 Gosvāmīs have read the Bhāgavata very well and commented upon it as well. They were therefore aware of what was going to happen later on in Kali-yuga and could have created an artificial new caste system if they had wanted to, or, as they are puppets in Mahāprabhu’s hands, if Śrīman Mahāprabhu had wanted to.

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

But they did not do that and later *ācāryas* should respect that and not speak before their turn.

Who or what is a Guru?

Q: Can a non-Hindu become a Guru in this life?

A: Non-Indian Vaiṣṇava Gurus are falling down from Vedic and Vaiṣṇava principles much more often than their Indian counterparts do. The Vaiṣṇava scriptures show us why. Proponents of casteless Gurus quote this verse from Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Madhya 8,128):

kibā vipra kibā nyāsī śūdra kene noy; yei kṛṣṇa tattva vettā – sei guru hoy

“Whether someone is a *brāhmaṇa*, a *sannyāsī* or even a *śūdra* – whoever knows the truth about Kṛṣṇa is a Guru.”

However, the context in which this verse was spoken is as follows: Although Himself a *brāhmaṇa* and a *sannyāsī*, Caitanya Mahāprabhu considered the *śūdra* and *grhastha* Rāmānanda Rāya to be His *śikṣā guru*, since He was on the receiving end of all the enlightenment passed on by Rāmānanda Rāya. In the preceding verses Caitanya Mahāprabhu said about His personal *āśrama*-status:

*māyāvādī āmi to sannyāsī; bhakti tattva nāhi jāni māyāvāde bhāsi
sārvabhauma saṅge mora mon nirmala hoilo; kṛṣṇa bhakti tattva koho, tāhāre puchilo
tiho kohe āmi nāhi jāni kṛṣṇa kothā; sabe rāmānanda jāne; tiho nāhi ethā*

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

tomāra ṭhāi āilām tomāra mahimā śuniyā; tumi more stuti koro sannyāsī jāniyā

“I am a *māyāvādī sannyāsī*, hence I do not know about *bhakti*. I was purified in Sārvabhauma’s company, so I asked him: “Tell Me the truth about devotion to Kṛṣṇa.” He (Sārvabhauma, although he was a *brāhmaṇa*) said: “I do not know about Kṛṣṇa. Rāmānanda knows all, but he is not here.” So I have come here after hearing of your greatness, but you praise Me because I am a *sannyāsī*.”

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 8.124-127)

And then Mahāprabhu speaks the famous verse, in this context – *kibā vipra kibā nyāsi śūdra kene noy; yei kṛṣṇa tattva vettā sei guru hoy* - Rāmānanda Rāya never gave *dīkṣā* to Mahāprabhu. The context of this verse is a personal one, and there is no question here of *dīkṣā*. The word *guru* in this verse means *śikṣā guru*. The words *yei kṛṣṇa tattva vettā* (“Whoever knows the truth about Kṛṣṇa”) clearly show that this verse refers to the qualification of a *śikṣā guru*. After the famous *kibā vipra*-verse Mahāprabhu continues:

sannyāsī boliyā more nā koro vañcana; kṛṣṇa rādhā tattva kohi’ pūrṇa koro man

“Don’t deprive Me because I am a *sannyāsī*; fulfil My desire my speaking of Kṛṣṇa and Rādhā.”

Indeed, throughout the lengthy conversation between Rāmānanda Rāya and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu there is no mentioning of *dīkṣā* anywhere!

Many westerners, who are not acquainted with Vedic culture, think that this idea of ‘*brāhmaṇa* by quality alone’ has always been the Vedic norm, but, in his comment on Caitanya Caritāmṛta Madhya 8.128, A.C. Bhaktivedanta Swami himself confirms that it was introduced by Bhaktisiddhānta Saraswati:

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

“Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura therefore **introduced** the sacred thread ceremony for all Vaiṣṇavas according to the rules and regulations.”

In the Haribhakti Vilāsa (chapter 1), Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī and Gopāla Bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī state that the first choice of a qualified Guru should be a born *brāhmaṇa* — *vīpraṃ pradhvasta kāmā* (1.29) *avadātānvayaḥ śuddhaḥ svocitācāra tatparaḥ* (1.32) “He must be from a spotless dynasty and dedicated to proper conduct.” *brāhmaṇaḥ sarvakārajña* (1.36). *varṇottame'tha ca gurau* (1.37) These traits are not secondary requirements of a Guru. They are listed under the heading *viśeṣataḥ śrī guror lakṣaṇa* – ‘Special characteristics of Śrī Guru’. Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī’s commentary on Haribhakti Vilāsa 1.32 –

avadātaḥ śuddhaḥ pātityādi doṣa rahito'nvayo vaṁśo yasya sad vaṁśa jāta ityartha. śuddhaḥ svayam api pātityādi doṣa rahitaḥ.

“The word *avadāta* means that his family is free from the faults of being fallen. That means he comes from a good family. The word *śuddhaḥ* means that he himself is also not fallen.”

Monier Williams’ Sanskrit dictionary translates *patita* as: “fallen, dropped, descended, alighted, fallen upon or from, fallen (morally), wicked, degraded, out-caste...”

In the Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa (Kṛṣṇa Janma Khaṇḍa 83.42) it is also said:

jāti hīnād guror mantraḥ gṛhṇīyān na kadācana

"Never take *mantra* from a casteless Guru."

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

If a qualified *brāhmaṇa* cannot be found, a qualified *kṣatriya* must be sought, and so on downwards:

*tad abhāvād dvija śreṣṭha śāntātmā bhagavanmayah
bhāvitātmā ca sarvajñaḥ śāstrajñaḥ sat kriyāparaḥ
siddhi traya samāyukta ācāryatve'bhīsecitaḥ.
kṣatra viṭ sūdra jātīnām kṣatriyo'nugrahekṣamaḥ
kṣatriyasyāpi ca guror abhāvād idrśo yadi
vaiśyaḥ syāt tena kāryaśca dvaye nityam anugrahaḥ
sajātīyena sūdrena tādrśena mahāmate
anugrahābhiṣekau ca kāryau sūdrasya sarvadā*

“In the absence of a qualified *brāhmaṇa* Guru, one can take a *kṣatriya* Guru, who is filled with God consciousness, peaceful, knows all about the *dikṣā* ritual, knows scripture, is conversant with all rites, has the three *siddhis* (perfection in practise of *mantra*, worship of the Guru and the *devatās*, attained through practises like *puraścaraṇa*). Such a *kṣatriya*-Guru can give *dikṣā* to his fellow *kṣatriyas* as well as to *vaiśyas* and *sūdras*. Similarly *sūdras* can always give *dikṣā* to their fellow *sūdras*.” (Haribhakti Vilāsa 1.47)

Furthermore, these verses of Haribhakti Vilāsa say that one should not give *pratiloma dikṣā*, viz. a low caste Guru giving *dikṣā* to a high caste disciple — *prātilomyaṁ na dikṣayet* (1.52). Śrīla Narottama Dās Ṭhākura was an exceptional case - he gave *dikṣā* to high caste persons, but at the end he rose from the dead and his body melted like milk into the Gaṅgā (*dugdha samādhi*). This is not something that every non-*brāhmaṇa* that gives *dikṣā* to *brāhmaṇas* can imitate.

There has never been a prohibition by the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas or the scriptures to calling householder-ācāryas 'Gosvāmī'.

On the contrary, Śrī Narottama Ṭhākura Mahāśaya sang: *doyā koro sītāpati, advaita gosāi*, addressing the householder-Guru, the husband of Sītā, Advaita Prabhu as *gosāi*. Advaita is also repeatedly called *gosvāmī* in Kavi Karṇapūra's 'Caitanya Candrodaya Nāṭakam', and in Gaura Gaṇoddeśa Dīpikā (76) he writes: *sa evādvaita gosvāmī caitanyābhinna viḡrahaḡ* “He, Advaita Gosvāmī, is non-different from Lord Caitanya.” To see the ‘caste-‘ Gosvāmīs as different from the Lords - Nityānanda and Advaita - that they directly descend from in family line is an offence to Nityānanda and Advaita, for the Vedas teach us *ātmā vai jāyate putraḡ* — "So father, so son", or: "The child is the image of the father." (CC. Madhya 12.56) Lord Balarāma said in Śrīmad Bhāgavata (10.78.36): *ātma vai putra utpanna iti vedānuśāsanam; tasmād asya bhaved vaktā* “O worshipable sages, the Vedas declare that one’s own self is reborn as the son, therefore let Romaharṣaṇa’s son recite the Purāṇas to you!” *pituh putro yena jāta sa eva saḡ* (Ś.B. 9.20.21): “The son belongs to the father. Indeed, the son is the father.”

Staying with family-succession, it is not true that one can/should not be initiated by one's parents: Hemalatā Ṭhākuraṇī, guru of Yadunandana Ṭhākura, took initiation from her father Śrīnivāsācārya, Kṛṣṇa Mīśra took initiation from his mother Sītā-devī and Vīrabhadra Prabhu took initiation from his co-mother Jāhnvā-devī. Vīrabhadra was a son of Nityānanda Prabhu, but according to 'Advaita Prakāśa' he went to Advaita Prabhu for *dīkṣā*. Advaita Prabhu, however, sent him back to his own family to take *dīkṣā* there, which confirms that it was the wish of Nityānanda and Advaita Prabhu that these family-*guru paramparās* would be created.

Sanātan Gosvāmī gave *dīkṣā* to his brother Rūpa Gosvāmī and Rupa Gosvāmī gave *dīkṣā* to his nephew Jīva Gosvāmī.

Prabodhānanda gave *dīkṣā* to his nephew Gopāl bhaṭṭa Gosvāmī.

Vīrabhadra gave *dīkṣā* to his father-in-law and his three sons.

Śrīnivāsācārya gave *dīkṣā* to his two wives, three sons and three daughters.

Kṛṣṇacaran Cakravartī gave *dīkṣā* to Rādhāraman Cakravartī (Viśvanātha Cakravartī’s Guru)

Gati Govinda, Śrīnivāsācārya's son, gave *dikṣā* to his son who gave *dikṣā* to his son.

Kavi Karṇapura was already told to chant by Mahāprabhu, after which he took *dikṣā* from Śrīnātha Cakravartī, the *kula-guru* of his father and grandfather.

Baladeva Vidyābhūṣaṇa took *dikṣā* from *kula-guru* Rādhā-Dāmodar Gosvāmī.

Family-Gurus ('caste Gosvāmīs') are sometimes rejected by pointing at Śrī Jīva Gosvāmī's Bhakti Sandarbha (210) *tad etat paramārtha gurvāśrayo vyavahārika gurvādi parityāgenāpi kartavyam* "One should give up a mundane Guru and take a spiritual Guru", but this 'mundane Guru' refers to a marriage-priest, village elder or parent, not to a family-Guru, for in Haribhakti Vilāsa (4.363) the Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa is quoted:

*upadeṣṭāram āmnāyāgataṁ pariharanti ye
tān mṛtān api kravyādāḥ kṛtaghnān nopabhuñjate*

"Even the vultures will not eat the dead corpse of the ungrateful one who abandons the *āmnāyāgataṁ guru*."

In his commentary to this verse Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī writes: *āmnāyāgataṁ kula kramāyātaṁ*— This *āmnāyāgata guru* means a Guru who has come in a family succession." Just before this, in his *dik darśinī ṭīkā* of verse 361, Sanātan Gosvāmī quotes how many other Gurus exist other than the spiritual master -

*prasaṅgād anyeṣām api gurūṇāṁ saṅgrahārtham. te caktāḥ kaurme— upādhyāyaḥ
pitā jyeṣṭha-bhrātā caiva mahīpatiḥ. mātulaḥ śvaśuraḥ sūto mātāmaha-pitāmahau. varṇa-
jyeṣṭhaḥ pitṛvyaś ca sarve te guravaḥ smṛtāḥ.*

“...others are also named Guru, as it is said in the Kūrma Purāṇa - the Veda-teacher, father, elder brother, king, mother and family, in-laws, parents' parents, upper caste people and other elders.”

Śrī Raghunātha dāsa Gosvāmī was initiated by the family-Guru Yadunandana Ācārya, but he did not leave him to take *dikṣā* from, for example, Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī. On the contrary, in Mukta Caritra (4) he acknowledged that he had gotten everything from his family-Guru Yadunandana Ācārya -

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

*nāma śreṣṭhaṁ manum api śacī-putram atra svarūpaṁ
rūpaṁ tasyāgrajam uru puriṁ māthurim goṣṭha-bāṭim
rādhākuṇḍam girivaram aho rādhikā mādhavāśām
prāpto yasya prathita kṛpayā śrī gurum taṁ nato'smi*

“I bow down to my blessed Śrī Guru (Yadunandana Ācārya), by whose grace I have received the greatest name in existence, the holy name of Kṛṣṇa, the 18-syllable Gopāla-mantra, Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, the son of Mother Śacī, Svarūpa Dāmodara, Rūpa Gosvāmī, his elder brother Sanātana Gosvāmī, the great city of Mathurā, the pastures of Vraja, Rādhākuṇḍa, the best of mountains Govardhana, and the hope of attaining Rādhikā and Mādhava.....”

With ‘Śrī Guru’ he could not have meant anyone else but Yadunandanācārya, for he lists all his other possible ‘Gurus’ like Mahāprabhu, Svarūpa Dāmodara and Rūpa Gosvāmī as his great gifts.

Those who claim that *dikṣā-mantras* received from a family-Guru are ‘dead *mantras* in a body-succession’ should remember that –

Jagannāth dās Bābājī, Madhusūdan dās Bābājī of Sūryakuṇḍa, Manohar dās Bābājī of Govinda-kuṇḍa, Jaya Kṛṣṇa dās Bābājī of Kāmyavan and Vamśī dās Bābājī of Navadvīpa all took *dikṣā* from *kula-gurus* without giving them up for ‘*mahā-bhāgavatas*’ and became *siddha*. How is their *mantra* ‘dead’ then?

Who or what is a *sannyāsī*?

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda comments on the famous Bhagavad Gītā verse *sarva dharmān parityajya* (18.66), refuting Śankarācārya’s explanation that ‘giving up all *dharma*’ means that Arjuna should have taken *sannyāsa*: *parityajya sannyasyeti na vyākhyeyam arjunasya kṣatriyatvena sannyāsānadhikārān...* ”Completely giving up

dharma cannot mean *sannyāsa* for Arjuna, for as a *kṣatriya* he had no right to take *sannyāsa*.”

This confirms the Vedic teaching that only *brāhmanas* are eligible for *sannyāsa*, what to speak of *śūdras* or *mlecchas*?

Śrīmad Bhāgavata (11.17.38) clearly says that *sannyāsa* is only for *brāhmaṇas* - *pravrajed vā dvijottamaḥ*.

Preaching is not a ground to give *sannyāsa* - a vow of lifelong celibacy - to young westerners. The western audience is anyway not impressed nor does it respect saffron cloth, like Indians. They simply know nothing about it! Indeed, all devotees who opened the temples in America and Europe were white-clad householders!

Who or what is a spouse?

Due to air travel everyone mixes nowadays - Africans marry with Eskimos, Latinos with Chinese and *brāhmaṇas* with Russians. Spiritual oneness and equality is transported down to the physical plane, with the slogan ‘we are all spirit souls anyway’. If we are all only spirit souls, with no subtle cultural coverings at all, then –

- 1) Why marry at all, because we are not at all this body (why even dress then?)
- 2) Why not marry a fly or a pig? They are also spirit souls.

Despite spiritual equality there are huge cultural and economic differences between all the peoples that become Vaiṣṇavas - the result of genetically mixing them up is confused children who are part of neither parents’ ethnicity or culture. This is called *varṇa saṅkara*, or a mixed race, in Bhagavad Gītā (1.41-43). Spouses from poor countries (especially Indian men) exploit their rich spouses (usually naive gullible western girls). After they flattered them into sending them a plane ticket to the rich west they call them prostitutes and abandon them to start businesses in the west. For material relationships one must follow material rules. Śrīmad Bhāgavata says: (11.17.39) *ghārthī sadṛśīm bhāryām* „A *brahmacārī* who wants to marry should seek a

bride like him.” *sadṛśīm* (like him) is glossed by Śrīdhara Swāmī as *savarṇa*, ‘of the same caste’.

Bhaktivinoda writes in Jaiva-dharma, chapter 6 –

ye mata yavana-vaṁśīya viśuddha brahma svabhāva sampanna vyakti vastutaḥ pāramārthika viśaye brāhmaṇa hoiyāchen, tathāpi vyavahārika kriyā ye brāhmaṇa kanyāra pāṇi-grahaṇa tāhāte tāhār adhikāra hoy nā –

“Though a person born in a *yavana*-family may have accrued the pure nature of a *brāhmaṇa*, and thus actually became a *brāhmaṇa* from the spiritual perspective, still he has no right to perform material actions like marrying a *brāhmaṇa*-girl.”

A marriage CAN be spiritual, as a side effect, but it is never the root cause of marriage. “I want sex, but only with a devotee girl/boy.” But the first motive is sex, not *bhakti*.

About respect in general

From Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Antya 4. 135-169) we learn that junior devotees should not instruct senior devotees. In this narration we see that Jagadānanda Paṇḍit advised Sanātana Gosvāmī to go to Vṛndāvana, but when Mahāprabhu heard that he was very angry, because Jagadānanda Paṇḍita was junior to Sanātana not just *vyavahāre*, materially, by being younger in age, but also *paramārthe*, spiritually, because Sanātana Gosvāmī was like his Guru (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya 4.159, *vyavahāre paramārthe tumi - tāra guru tulya*). Mahāprabhu thus set the standard for devotees of all time to act according to *maryādā*, or protocol. He will be very angry when junior devotees instruct senior ones - *maryādā laṅghana āmi sahite nā pāri* (Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya 4.166) "I cannot tolerate breach of the protocol."

One should note, however, that if a devotee senior in age is inferior in spiritual advancement one need not heed the instructions of such a senior devotee-by-age-only. After all, Mahāprabhu said of Sanātana Gosvami:

kāhā tumi - prāmāṇika, śāstre pravīṇa; kāhā jagā - kālikāra baṭuyā navīna

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*, *guru* or *sannyāsī*?

(Caitanya Caritāmṛta Antya 4.167)

"Where are you, expert in the scriptures and a great authority, and where is Jagadānanda in comparison, a new student?" Sanātana Gosvāmī was not just superior in age.....

Giving a '*brāhmaṇa*'-thread is meant to give respect to aspirants and flatter them into becoming your follower. It does not change the quality of your semen into *brāhmaṇa*-semen. Without humility one cannot enter into the kingdom of God, and Vaiṣṇava leaders that encourage their followers in thinking that they are equal to or even higher than *brāhmaṇas* thus throw up serious barriers for them. Śrīman Mahāprabhu kindly gave the keys to the kingdom of God with this formula:

*ṭṛṇād api sunīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amānina mānadena kīrtaniya sadā hariḥ*

“Lower than a blade of grass, more tolerant than a tree.

Expecting no honour for yourself, always giving honour to others.

In this way Hari is always to be glorified.”

maryādā pālana, or observing the protocol, is the way to get there.

Concluding, the *daiva-varnāśrama*-project is *pratiyogitā*, envious rivalry – in Śrīmad Bhāgavata Lord Kapila says (3.29.8) –

*abhisandhāya yo himsāṇ dambhaṁ mātsaryam eva vā
saṁrambhī bhinna dṛg bhāvaṁ mayi kuryāt sa tāmasaḥ*

abhisandhāya – with the intention of; *yaḥ* - whoever; *himsān* – with violence; *dambhaṁ* - deceitful; *mātsaryam* – with envy; *eva* – surely; *vā* – or; *saṁrambhī* – an

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angry or proud person; *bhinna dṛk* – separate view; *bhāvam* - such a mood; *mayi* – unto Me; *kuryāt* – does; *sa* – he; *tāmasaḥ* - darkness.

“An angry and proud person who worships me with intentions of violence, duplicity **and envy**, having a dualistic vision about others, is rendering *tāmasik bhakti* towards Me.”

Thus ends the essay on Vaiṣṇava protocol compiled by Advaitadās, 2005-2022.