

ব্রাহ্মণ কাকে বলে?

Who or what is a Brāhmaṇa?

Q: Can a non-Hindu 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 *trṇād 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 4.12) "The four castes are created by Me (God, Kṛṣṇa)", and not by a human being like Bimal Prasād Datta (Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī), the original founder of the various Gauḍīya Missions that preach in the west, 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):

*vipraṁ kṛtāgasam api naiva druhyata māmakāḥ
ghnantaṁ bahu śapantaḥ vā namaskuruta nityaśaḥ
yathāhaṁ praṇame vipraṁ anukūlaṁ samāhitaṁ
tathā namata yūyaṁ ca ye'nyathā me sa daṇḍa-bhāk*

"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. The Lord further tells Śrutadeva -

*brāhmaṇo janmanā śreyān sarveṣāṁ prāṇinām iha
tapasā vidyayā tuṣṭyā kim u mat kalayā yutaḥ
duṣprajñā aviditvaivam avajanānantyasūyavaḥ; guruṁ mām vipraṁ ātmānam*

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*? A Guru? Or a *sannyāsi*?

“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)

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 *saṁskāras* for the *brāhmaṇas*—

saṁskārā 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:

śūdraṁ tu na mantravat saṁskāra yuktam jagāda na copanayanavantam ato nāsau dvijaḥ....ato vivāha vyatirikta saṁskārānavaśyakatvāt 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 *saṁskāra* for the *śūdra*, therefore the sacred thread ceremony is forbidden for him in all respects and he cannot be a *dvija*." ¹

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

Śrī Viśvanātha Cakravartīpāda comments on this verse:

saṁskāra mantravanto garbhādhānādayo yasmin sa dvijaḥ. vichinna saṁskāro dvijabandhur ityarthah. ajo brahmā yaṁ jagādeti brahma sṛṣṭyārambhata eva pravṛttāyām 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 quoted this verse from Śrīmad Bhāgavata (7.11.35):

*yasya yallakṣaṇam proktaṁ puṁso varṇābhivyanjakam
yad anyatrāpi dṛṣyeta 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 nimittenetyarthah —

¹ *prabhu hāsi kohe — svāmī nā māne yei jana; veśyāra bhitorē tāre koriye gaṇana* (C.C. Antya 7.115) Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu smilingly replied, “One [a wife] who does not accept the *svāmī* [husband or Śrīdhara Svāmī in this context] as an authority I consider a prostitute.”

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*? A Guru? Or a *sannyāsi*?

“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.

This knowledge should not be alien to the followers of Śrīpād Bhaktisiddhānta, for his own father 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 *yajnas* 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*.

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.”

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 Brahmin 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. brāhmaṇāṇām śaukre janmani
durjātivābhāve'pi savana-yogyatvāya puṇya-viśeṣa-maya-sāvitra-janmāpekṣatvāt. tataśca
savana-yogyatva-pratikūla-durjāty-ārambhakaṁ prārabdham api gatam eva kintu
śiṣṭācārābhāvāt sāvitraṁ janma nāstīti brāhmaṇa-kumārāṇām savana-
yogyatvābhāvavacchedaka-puṇya-viśeṣa-maya-sāvitra-janmāpekṣāvad asya
janmāntarāpekṣā vartata iti bhāvaḥ. ataḥ pramāṇa-vākye'pi savanāya kalpate sambhāvito*

bhavati na tu tadaivādhikārī syād ity abhipretam vyākhyātam 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 [ie 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).”

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

Śrī Jīva 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 Brahmin).”

In his Bhāgavata ṭikā named Krama Sandarbha Jīva Gosvāmī says: *tatra yogyatāyām labdhārambho bhavatiṭy arthaḥ. tad-anantara-janmany eva dvijatvaṁ prāpya tad-ādy-adhikārī syād* — „It just means that there is a beginning made with qualification — he only becomes really qualified by taking a brahmin 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 quoted by Śrīpād Bhaktisiddhānta’s followers from Bhagavad-Gītā 4.12 to prove that mere qualification at this very instant is enough to qualify as a *brāhmaṇa*, refers to previous births’ accumulation of a 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 Gita 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 Brahmin Vaiṣṇavas. **Sanātana Gosvāmī** says in **Bṛhad Bhāgavatāmṛta** (2.2.57):

*eṣāṁ yajñaiḥ niṣṭhānām aikya-nāvaśyake nija
jape ca sad gurūddiṣṭe māndyaṁ syād dṛṣṭa sat phale*

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*? A Guru? Or a *sannyāsī*?

"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."

The Vedas teach that a *sannyāsī* renounces his *brāhmaṇa*-thread when he takes *sannyāsa* (*sūtra-śikhā tyāga*, C.C.), but Gauḍīya Maṭha/ISKCON *sannyāsīs* continue to wear the thread, while they aren't even born as *brāhmaṇas* in the first place!

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):

*dvijānāṁ anupetānāṁ sva-karmādhyayanādiṣu
yathādhikāro nāstiha syāccopanayanād anu
tathātrādikṣitānāṁ tu mantra devārcanādiṣu
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 *dikṣā* (*śiva saṁstutam iti dikṣitam*)."

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-*dikṣā* on the other, and that these are two separate things, not one and the same as in the Gauḍīya Maṭh and ISKCON.

The proof that *brāhmaṇa*-initiation does not exist in reality is that there is a separate 10-syllable *gopāla mantra* for *brāhmaṇas* and an 18-syllable *mantra* for non-*brāhmaṇas*. This means that 2nd initiation is not the same as *brāhmaṇa*-initiation. And if you **do** become a *brāhmaṇa* through such initiation, then why not receive the 10-syllable *mantra* instead of the 18-syllable *mantra* the Gauḍīya Maṭha/ISKCON *bhaktas* now receive? 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)? *brahma gāyatri*

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*? A Guru? Or a *sannyāsi*?

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 *haviṣyānna* (porridge without salt, spices or sugar) to eat. Initiation into *Kṛṣṇa-mantra* is a separate initiation which is only given to active *Vaiṣṇava-brāhmaṇas*. For instance, Mahāprabhu already wore His thread when He received *kṛṣṇa mantra* from Īśvara Puri and Advaita Prabhu had been doing *brahma gāyatrī* for decades when He received *Kṛṣṇa-mantra* from Mādhavendra Puri. Instead in Iskcon a child's 'caste' is determined by examination at the age of 12². And even if a child does not 'pass' his '*brāhmaṇa*-examination' he will still receive the *brāhmaṇa*-thread eventually. Which scripture or historical account supports such concocted practises? And what if the 'qualified' *brāhmaṇa* falls down and starts drinking and engaging in illicit sex (which happens in almost all cases in western branches of Iskcon and Gauḍīya Maṭha)? Then we take his *sutra* 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 Iskcon, which has a 100% '*brāhmaṇa*'-population, also has 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 wont do — where is the qualification then?

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

*yathā kāñcanatām yāti kāṁsyaḥ 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 (*sarveṣāṁ eva dvijatva vipratā*), and thus Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī seems justified in turning everyone into a *brāhmaṇa*. However,

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

2] If this referred to *brahma gāyatrī*, then that would contradict Śrīdhara Svāmī's and Jīva Gosvāmī's 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 granddisciples have ever put such a '*brahmana*-initiation' into practise, nor have any of them ever involved the *Brāhma Gāyatrī* in the process. *mahājano yena gata sa pantha* –

² This theory originates from Bhaktivinoda's *Sajjana Tosani* 2.7.

One must follow in the footsteps of the *mahājanas*. All the *mahājanas* have considered such a practise to be an *utpāta*, or social disturbance. Before 1918, 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*?

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 sphurāna*, "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.

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 Jagannātha 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 *pūjāris*? During Advaita Prabhu's feast in honor of Mahāprabhu, when He had just taken *sannyāsa*, Śrīla Haridās Ṭhākura humbly said: *mui pāpiṣṭha adhama, bāhire eka muṣṭi pāche korimu bhojan* (C.C. 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: *rūpa haridāsa duṅhe bosilā piṅḍātale; sabāra agre nā uṭhilā piṅḍāra upare* (C.C. 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.

Śrīman 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 sādhu 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 demigods 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.

On the other hand, a person who violates the social protocol can expect Mahāprabhu’s wrath: *maryādā lanḡhana āmi sohite nā pāri* (C.C. Antya 4.166) “I cannot tolerate violation of the protocol.”³

³ Although the direct context of this statement is Jagadānanda Pandit’s treatment of Sanātana Gosvāmī, Mahāprabhu spoke this as a general statement, applying to all circumstances and relationships.

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*? A Guru? Or a *sannyāsi*?

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 gḥṛta 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)

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

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*? A Guru? Or a *sannyāsi*?

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

“Gopīnāthācārya, Jagadānanda, Kāśīśvara; Bhagavān Rāmabhadrācārya, 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*

“(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.” (C.C. Madhya 3. 168)

Caitanya Caritāmṛta (Ādi 7.45-46):

*kāṣīte lekhak sūdra 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 *sūdra*, 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
vipragāṇa 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 *sannyāsi* can be enlightened by a *sūdra* and a *grhastha* like Rāmānanda Rāya, who, in C.C. Madhya līlā chapter 8, took Him to the limit of Vaiṣṇava teachings as a *śikṣā guru* (*kibā vipra kibā nyāsi*

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*? A Guru? Or a *sannyāsi*?

śūdra kene noy ye kṛṣṇa tattva vettā sei guru hoy), Mahāprabhu would not accept meals from him. First He humbly submitted (C.C. Madhya 8.43):

*ei jāni — kaṭhin mora hṛdaya;
śodhite sārvaḥmauma kohilen tomāra milite*

“I know that My heart is hard, hence Sārvaḥmauma 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* (C.C. 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 pariveśa sarohiṇikā vipratmaja svadhava devara putrakebhyah*

“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).” (Govinda Līlāmṛta 20.45) Kṛṣṇa was the **last** to get *prasāda*. If the Supreme Lord can be that humble, should not non-*brāhmaṇas* follow suit by simply accepting the fact that they do not belong to the upper class?

kiṁ punar brāhmaṇāḥ puṇyā bhaktā rājarṣayas tathā

(Bhagavad Gītā 9.33)

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

bhaktas: “But what about these verses then, that are quoted in the Gosvāmī's books?”

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

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

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

“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 ‘Padyavalī’, 114)

Advaita Dās: 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 dīkṣāsti cet praṇatibhiḥ*, “Mentally honour anyone who says Kṛṣṇa, and bow down if someone has received initiation”, and the following verse -

*dṛṣṭaiḥ svabhāva janitair vapuṣāś ca doṣair
na prākṛtatvam iha bhakta janasya paśyet
gangāmbhasaṁ na khalu budbuda phena paṅkair
brahma-dravatvam apagacchati nīra-dharmaiḥ*

“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 7-9) — certainly that wouldn’t make Śrīman Mahāprabhu a ‘hellish person’. 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*, CC Antya 7.96), although no one in Purī would hear them because they had already been rejected by Mahāprabhu (*prabhur upekṣāy sab nīlācaler jan; bhaṭṭera vyākhyān kichu nā kore śravaṇ*, 7. 91). Thus Gadādhara ended up in a dilemma (*sankṛte 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

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

গুরু কাকে বলে?

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

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*? A Guru? Or a *sannyāsī*?

“I am a *māyāvādī sannyāsī*, hence I don't 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 don't 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*.” (CC Madhya 8.124-127)

And **then** Mahāprabhu speaks the famous verse, in **this** context — *kibā vipra kibā nyāsī 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!

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* – *vipraṁ pradhvasta kāma* (1.29) *avadātānvayaḥ śuddhaḥ svocitācāra tatparaḥ* (1.32) “He must be from a spotless dynasty and dedicated to proper conduct.” *brāhmaṇaḥ sarvakālajña* (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 ityārtha.
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 Brahmavaivarta Purāṇa (Kṛṣṇa Janma Khaṇḍa 83.42) it is also said:

jāti hīnād guror mantraḥ gṛhṇīyān na kadācana

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

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'bhīṣecitaḥ.
kṣatra viṭ śūdra jātīnāṁ kṣatriyo'nugrahekṣamaḥ
kṣatriyasyāpi ca guror abhāvād idṛśo yadi*

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*? A Guru? Or a *sannyāsi*?

*vaiśyaḥ syāt tena kāryaśca dvaye nityam anugrahaḥ
sajātiyena śūdrēna tādr̥ṣena mahāmate
anugrahābhiṣekau ca kāryau śūdrasya 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 *dīkṣā* ritual, knows scripture, is conversant with all rites, has the three *siddhis* (perfection in practise of *mantra*, worship of the Guru and the demigods, attained through practises like *puraścaraṇa*). Such a *kṣatriya*-Guru can give *dīkṣā* to his fellow *kṣatriyas* as well as to *vaiśyas* and *śūdras*. Similarly *śūdras* can always give *dīkṣā* to their fellow *śūdras*.” (Haribhakti Vilāsa 1.47)

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

janmanā brāhmaṇo guruḥ (Śrīmad Bhāgavata 10.8.6)

"A *brāhmaṇa* is *guru* by birth."

There has never been a prohibition by the Vaiṣṇava Ācāryas or the scriptures to call 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 vigrahaḥ* “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 putraḥ* – "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!” *pituḥ putro yena jāta sa eva saḥ* (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 Ṭhākurānī, *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 Jāhnavā-devī. Vīrabhadra was a son of Nityānanda Prabhu, but according to 'Advaita Prakāśa' he went to Advaita Prabhu for *dīkṣā*. Advaita Prabhu 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.

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Gauḍīya Maṭha preachers attract followers from family *gurus* ('caste Gosvāmīs') 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 (4.141) the Brahma Vaivarta Purāṇa is quoted:

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

"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." For example, 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 -

*nāma śreṣṭhaṁ manum api śacī-putram atra svarūpaṁ
rūpaṁ tasyāgrajam uru puriṁ māthurīṁ goṣṭha-bāṭim
rādhākuṇḍaṁ girivaram aho rādhikā mādhavāśāṁ
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.

সন্ন্যাসী কাকে বলে?

Who or what is a sannyāsi?

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*?

Who and what is a *brāhmaṇa*? A Guru? Or a *sannyāsi*?

Preaching is not a ground to give *sannyāsa* to young westerners - a vow of lifelong celibacy. 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!

मर्यादा दृष्टि

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 (CC 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 lañghana āmi sahite nā pāri* (CC 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 Gosvāmī: *kāhā tumi - prāmāṇika, sāstre pravīṇa; kāhā jagā - kālikāra baṭuyā navīna* (CC 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.....

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:

*ṭṭṇād api sunīcena taror iva sahiṣṇunā
amānina mānadena kīrtanīya 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.

Thus ends the essay on Vaiṣṇava protocol compiled by Advaitadas in 2005-2009.