

Change the Past Control the Future

— Part 2 of Our Response to SAC’s Paper
‘Brahma-gāyatrī mantra in ISKCON’

By Shyamasundara Dāsa ACBSP, Jyotiṣī

On behalf of the Śāstra-cakṣuḥ-pariṣat

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Abstract

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s decision to grant the *brahma-gāyatrī* mantra to female disciples remains one of the most discussed topics in ISKCON’s history. Was this a doctrinal shift or a response to a pressing circumstance? This paper examines historical records and firsthand testimonies, demonstrating that Prabhupāda’s decision arose from a moral dilemma—*dharma-saṅkṣa*—rather than establishing a groundbreaking precedent. Contrary to the Śāstric Advisory Council’s (SAC) claim that the decision was rooted in spiritual benefit for women, the evidence suggests it was a reluctant concession to specific challenges in ISKCON’s early years. The study further critiques SAC’s reliance on selective testimonies and historical reinterpretation, highlighting inconsistencies in its conclusions. By advocating a return to *śāstric* orthodoxy, this paper underscores the need to preserve doctrinal integrity while addressing contemporary challenges. It offers critical insights into ISKCON’s ongoing engagement with tradition, adaptation, and institutional continuity.

Executive Summary

SAC predicates its thesis on the principle that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave females *brahma-gāyatrī* because it was beneficial for their spiritual life. We will show that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave it for a different reason thus nullifying their thesis. In the early days, Śrīla Prabhupāda, to pacify a few irate female disciples who had revolted because of not getting second initiation, started the practice of granting *brahma-gāyatrī* to his female disciples but without the sacred thread, implying they were not genuine *brāhmaṇas*. Knowing this history to be fatal to their argument SAC falsified the history of the first second initiation in the USA by “massaging the data”¹—to

¹ Enago Academy, “Data Massaging in Scientific Research: When Does it Go Too Far?” (2018): accessed Dec 12,

create a feminist mythology. They disregarded earlier records and testimonies, instead favoring recent contradictory statements by Govinda and Jadurāṇī Dāsīs that align with SAC’s political ideology.

Govinda Dāsī’s revised narrative falsely accuses male devotees of **pressuring** Śrīla Prabhupāda, while he was ill, to grant the men *brahma-gāyatrī* against his will. We present firsthand recorded testimony of devotees who were present at the functions as well as written documentation which demonstrate that there was a feminist agitation which led Śrīla Prabhupāda to reconsider his initial decision of not giving the females *brahma-gāyatrī*—not because giving it was a “principle” beneficial to their spiritual life but that he saw “no harm” if they got it. Hardly a ringing endorsement for continuing the practice.

Additionally, we examine examples of SAC’s reliance on unreliable narrators and their strategic use of falsehoods to advance a feminist agenda.

We also discuss the “*dharmasankata*”—moral dilemma—Śrīla Prabhupāda faced in the early days leading him to, “Sometimes do something which I should not have done.” Finally, we argue why the practice of giving *brahma-gāyatrī* to female disciples should cease.

(Use the PDF’s “bookmarks” for navigation and as a “Table of Contents.”)

Preface

Dear Mahārājas, Prabhus and Mātājīs,

Please accept my humble obeisance. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

The Śāstric Advisory Council has engaged in illicit historical revisionism that serves their ideological objectives, distorting facts to justify their stance. This document serves as Part 2 of my response to SAC’s paper, “*Brahma-gāyatrī mantra in ISKCON*” (download it from the link). While [Part 1](#) of my response provided a philosophical critique, this segment delves into historical and factual inaccuracies, exposing instances of manipulation and deception. It is crucial to confront these distortions to uphold truth and preserve the integrity of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings.

Movements that rely on deception to further their aims are fundamentally flawed, as they sacrifice honesty and integrity for power or influence. This leads to long-term damage, not only to the movement itself but also to the people it claims to represent or help. The stakes are high, as these falsehoods not only distort historical records but also impact the spiritual lives of devotees. The following analysis meticulously examines SAC’s claims, presenting evidence that challenges their narrative and highlights the dangers of promoting ideologically driven distortions.

dāsa dāsānudāsa
Shyamasundara Dāsa ACBSP, Jyotiṣī
Kṛṣṇe matir astu

Who controls the past controls the future. Who
controls the present controls the past.
George Orwell — 1984²

Introduction

Earlier this year I observed an exchange between two devotees on social media, regarding the first time Śrīla Prabhupāda gave *brahma-gāyatrī* to female disciples. “Devotee 1” gives the previously universally accepted history as recorded in various documented sources. Whereas “Devotee 2” vehemently responds based on the rewritten “history” in SAC’s paper.

Devotee 1: He [Śrīla Prabhupāda] observed those symptoms as part of a revolt by the two *mātājīs* at that first *brāhmaṇa-dīkṣā* ceremony. Hence, he chose to give the mantra alone without the sacred thread.

Devotee 2: This is so disingenuous that I have little doubt it is an *aparādha*. I can only say that I will muster whatever genuine empathy I have to say a prayer for you and others who peddle such nonsense. There isn’t a scintilla of evidence for what you state. In addition, everyone involved at the time has confirmed such a claim is completely false. Also to even think for a moment that these young devotees would have had the desire and gumption to try to put Śrīla Prabhupāda under pressure, what to speak of succeeding to do so, is fanciful in the extreme. The plain truth is you are grasping at straws that don’t exist and in the process clocking up offences. I would urge you (for your own wellbeing) to stop right here, right now.

How did the standard historical depiction get turned upside down and is now considered an *aparādha*? Let’s find out.

² George Orwell, 1984 (New York: The New American Library, 1963), 204. See also <http://george-orwell.org/1984/18.html>

When Feminists Control the Past

A favorite Marxist and feminist tactic of dissimulation is to control the past³ by rewriting history through a feminist lens and then weaponizing that history to achieve their goals. (See also [Appendix](#) “Deception is a Feminist Tactic.”) And that is exactly what SAC has done. In the section of SAC’s paper entitled, “The first times Śrīla Prabhupāda gave *gāyatrī-dīkṣā* to his disciples: the real history” (pages 103–109) SAC distorts events to fabricate a feminist mythology.

SAC’s claims hinge on demonstrably false premises. They assert that Govinda Dāsī’s absence from the initiation ceremony stemmed from her objection to Śrīla Prabhupāda being **pressured** into initiating while ill. SAC’s reliance on this altered account highlights their disregard for historical accuracy (emphasis mine):

On May 6th, Śrīla Prabhupāda was giving *gāyatrī* mantra to some men disciples. Govinda dāsī had initially stayed away as she was upset that the men had asked Śrīla Prabhupāda for *gāyatrī*-mantra **when he was in ill health**.
Page 103

And then later repeating the same falsehood on page 107,

He [Satsvarūpa Mahārāja] says that Govinda dāsī was late because she was upset that she was not included in the initiation and feigned illness, but Govinda dāsī says she was late because she was upset that some devotees had **pressured** Prabhupāda to have an initiation **when he had been ill**.

There is nothing more sinful than untruthfulness.
Because of this, mother earth once said, “I can bear
any heavy thing except a person who is a liar.”
Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 8.20.4

But SAC’s ruse unravels in this recorded YouTube interview wherein, Govinda Dāsī herself tells us what happened. There is no mention of Śrīla Prabhupāda being pressured by men to initiate while he was ill as the cause of her absence but rather of her great anger for being excluded from the initiation—a portrayal consistent across multiple testimonies (emphasis mine).

Govinda Dāsī: Goursundar really wanted this Gayatri mantra, so he talked to Prabhupāda about it. He was reading all kinds of things. So Prabhupāda agreed to give him Gayatri mantra and give him second initiation. So I met him on the street and he had his hair all shaved off, **that really bothered me**. But that night he had the Gayatri

³ See, Janice Fiamengo, “When Feminists Control the Past - Tff Episode 53.” (2016): accessed Dec 12, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nt00Y1GW7EQ> .

mantra initiation, and **I was upset because he was going to give Goursundar a mantra but he wasn't going to give it to me.** So I felt very left out. So when it came time to go for the initiation ceremony, I said, "Well, I'm not feeling very well so I'm not going to go." I was pouting. And then after they left, I thought to myself, "What am I doing? I don't want to be not there!" So I ran out the door and ran the 10 blocks all the way to the temple and burst into the temple, and Prabhupāda was sitting there giving the initiation and he looked up and he said, "Ah, Govinda dasi, I was wondering how you could stay away. You love to hear me speak so much." Because he wanted me to come, **but I was mad. I was very upset about this. And so because I was a little upset, he decided that the girls also should have Gayatri mantra. Jadurāṇī was more upset.** And so he gave us initiation the next evening with the Gayatri mantra because he knew that in this country the girls and the boys are educated in the same way.

Following Śrīla Prabhupāda — DVD 1

<https://youtu.be/Go0AyD7urmw?si=UcAhqkXBGaOikPXt&t=4081>

Govinda Dāsī tells us the real reason she didn't go to the initiation ceremony was because she was very upset (and Jadurāṇī even more so), that only the men were getting the *gāyatrī* mantra and not her, **and that because the girls were upset Śrīla Prabhupāda decided to give the girls *gāyatrī*-mantra.**⁴

Pradyumna Prabhu confirms that the women were very angry and boycotted the temple (emphasis mine):

Pradyumna Dāsa: During that Boston trip, almost every week new faces used to show up from New York. All the New York devotees would come up – Brahmananda, Rayarama, Rupanuga. The Boston temple had always been a small temple – three people, two people, five people, six people, but never more than about five or six; but during Prabhupāda's visit there, it was just packed with mostly New York devotees. I remember the day after the brāhmaṇa initiation we all went on a walk, I was also there, and I quipped, "Boston brahmins." Prabhupāda said, "Ah, yes, Boston brahmins." There were six of us that got sacred thread in the first initiation, six men and no women. **Then they raised a fuss and they didn't show up. They were so angry that they weren't going to get second initiation, they didn't come.**

[Following Śrīla Prabhupāda — DVD 1](#)

In the next video Jadurāṇī Dāsī confirms the reason why Govinda Dāsī did not attend. It was not as SAC claims, that Śrīla Prabhupāda was ill and forced to do an initiation by the men (emphasis mine):

Jadurāṇī Dāsī : I didn't know that I wasn't getting second initiation so I was in the temple. **But Govinda Dāsī, one of Prabhupāda's personal servants, wasn't there because she knew she wasn't going to get second initiation, and she felt bad.** She came late. The fire sacrifice was taking place near the front door, and when she came

⁴ That they were upset indicates that they still had a strong influence of feminism in them although they accepted the practices of Kṛṣṇa Consciousness. After all, "One cannot suddenly change a community's social customs." A girl from Kṛṣṇa's Vedic culture would not have acted this way.

in Prabhupāda looked up and said, “Oh, I was just thinking, ‘Where is the girl?’ and Krishna has sent you.”

[Śrīla Prabhupāda Remembrances, ITV, Siddhanta Dasa, Ch.20](#)

And in the next video Balai Mataji describes how one of Jadurāṇī Dāsī’s assistants in the art department named Madhavī Latā Dāsī, “insisted that the women, especially her, be given *gayātrī*-mantra.” (Emphasis mine.)

Balai: To my understanding, Srila Prabhupada didn’t want to give girls *gayātrī*-mantra. In India at that time girls didn’t receive *gayātrī*-mantra. **But one very outspoken woman, Madhavī Latā Dāsī, insisted that the women, especially her, be given *gayātrī*-mantra.** Srila Prabhupada, being a pure devotee, could make an adjustment to previous customs according to time and circumstance. Thus, he gave all the women *gāyatrī*-mantra. That adjustment was necessary because so many women did and still do pujari work which is also something that wasn’t done in India but *Śrīla Prabhupāda* allowed it in America. [This is incorrect, *brahma-gāyatrī*, as we pointed out in [Part 1](#) of our response to SAC, is not required to do deity worship.]
[Śrīla Prabhupāda Remembrances, Siddhānta dāsa, ITV, Chapter 48](#)

This seems to indicate that there were more than two females involved especially since Madhavī Latā Dāsī was a close associate of Jadurāṇī Dāsī and siding with her. More on Madhavī Latā Dāsī later.

On page 104 SAC quotes Jadurāṇī Dāsī,

Brahmānanda suggested that Śrīla Prabhupāda had given *brahminical* initiation to us girls only because he knew in his heart that we were upset and he wanted to please us. I didn’t believe that at all.

Jadurāṇī Dāsī is implying that Brahmānanda Prabhu is a **liar**⁵ after his demise and unable to defend himself. Śrīla Prabhupāda called Brahmānanda Prabhu, “The mountain of our mission.”⁶ He explained that in the beginning he was struggling financially but that Brahmānanda Prabhu joined and immediately offered his total salary—“After his joining I got some relief ... When Brahmānanda came I got little relief... I made him the president. **He is a very saintly person.**”⁷ And as the temple president Brahmānanda was Śrīla Prabhupāda’s right-hand-man, an intimate confidant, and attuned to his mood.

Whose estimation of Brahmānanda Prabhu should we accept— Jadurāṇī’s (that he is a liar) or Śrīla Prabhupāda’s (that he is very saintly)?

And, in this case, Brahmānanda Prabhu was correct because Govinda Dāsī as quoted above agrees with him as to the reasons why Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the girls *brahminical*

⁵ This surely falls under *Vaiṣṇava-aparādha*, and SAC is complicit for propagating it.

⁶ Shyamasundara Dasa, “Brahmananda Prabhu “The Mountain of Our Mission.” (2015): accessed Dec 11, 2024, https://shyamasundaradasa.com/jyotish/resources/articles/informal_articles/brahmananda.html.

⁷ Room Conversation—January 6, 1977, Bombay

initiation—because the girls were upset he wanted to appease them. “Govinda dāsī: . . .but I was mad. I was very upset about this. And so *because I was a little upset, he decided that the girls also should have Gāyatrī-mantra.*”

Either Jadurāṇī Dāsī’s memory is faulty, or she is sanitizing her story to look better. In either case, she is not a reliable narrator.

The narrative of the recordings have all been consistent, that the women were furious that they didn’t get brahminical initiated so they boycotted the temple. To placate them Śrīla Prabhupāda gave them the mantra but not the thread. Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami described the situation thusly in *Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta* (emphasis mine):

Govinda dāsī hadn’t gone to the initiation, excusing herself as ill. Although she hadn’t told Prabhupāda, **she was upset that he wasn’t giving brahminical initiation to women.** Disappointed, she had stayed at Swamiji’s apartment, crying. After an hour, however, she decided that by behaving so foolishly she was missing out on Prabhupāda’s talk. So she hurried out of the house and ran all the way to the temple, arriving near the end of the ceremony. As she entered, Prabhupāda looked up. “Oh,” he said, “I was just thinking, ‘Where is that girl?’ and Kṛṣṇa has sent.”

After the ceremony Govinda dāsī conferred with Jadurāṇī, who also felt slighted. **Prabhupāda could detect their mentality, although they didn’t openly voice their complaints.** The next morning he told Gaurasundara and Govinda dāsī that **he saw no harm** in offering the *Gāyatrī-mantra* to women – but they could not receive the sacred thread. That very night, he held a separate ceremony, initiating Govinda dāsī and Jadurāṇī into the *Gāyatrī-mantra*.

Śrīla Prabhupāda-līlāmṛta Volume 2, Chapter 58 “A Visit to Boston”⁸

This description accurately captures the mood in the recorded conversations of Govinda and Jadurāṇī Dāsīs and Pradyumna Prabhu. We should also note that he didn’t say it would benefit the women, but that he didn’t see any harm in giving it to them—a big difference.

And in *Living with the Scriptures* Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami writes:

The next morning Prabhupāda held a second *brāhmaṇa* initiation ceremony. This was for the women, after they had made a **feminist protest** about being excluded. Soon after that, groups of devotees came from both New York and Montreal to also receive second initiation. Thus on several occasions we got to hear Śrīla Prabhupāda lecture about the meaning of *brāhmaṇa* and the authenticity of his awarding this status to those born in the West.

Living with the Scriptures “IX: The Boston Brāhmaṇas”⁹

⁸ Satsvarupa Dasa Goswami, *Srila Prabhupada-Lilamrta, Volume 2: A Biography of His Divine Grace, A. C. Bhaktivedanta Swami Prabhupada* (Los Angeles: The Bhaktivedanta Book Trust, Chapter 58. (This is an ebook without page numbers.)

See also <https://vedabase.io/en/library/spl/2/58> and <https://archive.org/details/prabhupada-lilamrta-compl/page/1302/mode/1up>

⁹ Satsvarūpa dāsa Goswami, “IX: The Boston Brāhmaṇas,” in *Living With the Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Gītā-nagarī

Why did he describe it as a “feminist protest?” Because militant “Second-wave feminism” began in the early 1960s. This was the zeitgeist of ISKCON’s formative years. And while most newcomers, both men and women, were imbued with hippie consciousness, many of the women came with the extra baggage of feminist conditioning.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Western female disciples weren’t trained in *Strī-dharma*. Think about *Gauḍīya-maṭha* practices regarding menstruation ([see below](#)). None of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s God-sisters received *brahma-gāyatrī*. So how could Śrīla Prabhupāda go against Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta in this regard unless and until there was some pressure from his Western female disciples? If they had been trained in *strī-dharma* there would never have been any issue. But they were feminists, as some still are now—as evidenced by their behavior.

Conversation with Pradyumna Prabhu

In 1998 I called Pradyumna Prabhu on behalf of the GBC who had agreed to my recommendation that they apologize to Pradyumna for neglecting the [prescient letter](#) he had written to Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami in 1978. Over the course of our long desultory conversation, he revealed to me that he was present at the first second initiation ceremony in the USA. And that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want to give the women second initiation. The young women were extremely angry and protested, boycotting the temple. Śrīla Prabhupāda (concerned that his infant movement was disturbed by such rebellious tendencies) pacified the girls by having another initiation ceremony in which he gave them the *brahma-gāyatrī-mantra* but not the sacred thread which is the emblem of a *brāhmaṇa*.

When the question arose as to why Śrīla Prabhupāda had given them the mantra but not the sacred thread it was concluded by both of us that Śrīla Prabhupāda was under pressure to do something [he didn’t want to do](#) by disciples who were culturally challenged when it came to Lord Kṛṣṇa’s Vedic civilization. Śrīla Prabhupāda didn’t want his nascent movement impeded at its inception so he gave the mantra but didn’t give the thread.¹⁰ We also examined the potential argument that Śrīla Prabhupāda’s decision not to give the sacred thread to women might serve as a subtle indication to more knowledgeable individuals in the future that the practice of granting women the *brahma-gāyatrī* mantra should not persist.

Press, 1984).

¹⁰ Śrīla Prabhupāda simultaneously gave and did not give them *brahminical* initiation. This can be likened to the predicament Ambarīṣa Mahārāja faced when Durvāsā Muni appeared at the time he had to break his Ekādaśī fast. He was in a quandary as to how to break his fast and at the same time not eat before his guest had eaten. He was advised by the learned *brāhmaṇas* to drink some water to observe the formality of breaking the fast but at the same time it is not considered eating. Thus simultaneously breaking and not breaking his Ekādaśī fast. For details see [Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 9.4.38-40](#)

Time Line of Divergent Testimonies Important

SAC may object, “But we are not falsifying history; we asked Govinda Dāsī and she is saying this; she is changing the history. Why do you accuse us of changing history?”

We respond: Until SAC’s paper of 2023 the universally accepted account, as recorded in various documented sources, was that a feminist revolt took place and in order to appease them Śrīla Prabhupadā gave them *brahma-gāyatrī* without the thread. But now SAC up-ends the received history in order to establish imaginary reasons as to why Śrīla Prabhupadā gave females *brahma-gāyatrī*, and enthusiastically accept Govinda Dāsī’s and Jadurāṇī Dāsī’s new contrary recounting of “history” without due diligence and properly vetting their sources.

Everyone knew what the old history was. The question is why did SAC so readily believe the new version? Could this devotee’s experience be related?

In my experience of dealing with the FDG issue, I saw that their weakest argument was our pointing out the incidence of the first second initiation. The supporters of FDG were running away from answering this point and never tried to falsify what Satsvarūpa Mahārāja said. It is after two years of SAC’s effort that they could come up with something to even speak about, and that evidence is also weak, which shows that they know their argument is empty.¹¹

It would seem that SAC is not in the business of researching the truth but creating feminist mythology.

If a lie is only printed often enough, it becomes a quasi-truth, and if such a truth is repeated often enough, it becomes an article of belief, a dogma, and men will die for it.¹²

Isa Blagden

It should be noted that the videos, “Following Śrīla Prabhupāda — DVD 1” was published by Yadubara Prabhu on October 25, 2002 using much earlier recordings of Govinda Dāsī and Pradyumna Prabhu from the “Remembrances” track.¹³ And, Siddhānta Prabhu’s “Śrīla Prabhupāda Remembrances” ITV series was started in 1991.¹⁴ So the interview of Jadurāṇī Dāsī took place circa 1995 as is obvious from her youthful appearance in the video. The point is that these testimonies are decades earlier than the new “revelations.”

¹¹ Personal communication.

¹² Isa Blagden, *The Crown of a Life (Vol 3)* (London: Hurst & Blackett, 1869), 155.

¹³ Back To Godhead, “Following Srila Prabhupada.” (2007): accessed Dec 5, 2024, <https://www.backtogodhead.in/following-srila-prabhupada/>.

¹⁴ Siddhānta Dāsā, “Siddhanta’s Story.” accessed Dec 5, 2024, <https://prabhupadamemories.com/siddhanta.html>.

The videos were not kept in secret vaults but in the public eye for decades and seen by thousands. But somehow SAC didn't know about it. Or, they did and hoped others had forgotten or were too lazy to do their homework.

Why didn't they do their "due diligence?" Was it because that would negate their thesis? As former SAC member Mukunda Datta Prabhu personally told me, "In a nutshell, this is how SAC works."

Mukunda Datta Prabhu further opined:

One thing about my experience with SAC is that it demonstrates how long SAC has harbored both bad methodology and sinister agendas. These corruptions became politically treacherous especially after Urmila and her ilk slowly stuffed SAC with their agenda's sympathizers after 2010 or so. By 2013 it became very clear to me that it's alleged "research" on the FDG issue merely followed a preset conclusion, a social activist agenda backed by favorable GBC EC members at that time: Anuttama, Tamohara, and Praghosa prabhus.¹⁵

For further insights from Mukunda Datta Prabhu into the internal workings of SAC see: "[Politically Motivated Wrongdoings of the Sastric Advisory Committee.](#)"

Govinda Dāsī is not a Historian

If SAC had done proper research they would have found out that Govinda Dāsī is not a reliable source when it comes to the history of ISKCON. As Jayādvaita Swami tells us (emphasis mine):

I have a very soft spot in my heart for my senior godsister Govinda Dāsī. In 1968, right after I was initiated, she was serving as Śrīla Prabhupāda's cook, and for a couple of weeks in Boston I got to assist her. I will always fondly remember those days of being with her and Gaurasundara in serving Śrīla Prabhupadā. She was (and is) such a nice example of a devoted disciple! **But as for Govinda Dāsī the historian, well. . .**¹⁶

He then explains in two articles: "Book changes: History backs the BBT"¹⁷ and "Book changes: History really does back the BBT"¹⁸ why her historical memoirs are unreliable.

In summary the two web articles critique Govinda Dāsī's reliance on her personal memories to challenge the BBT's editorial decisions regarding Śrīla Prabhupāda's works. Jayādvaita Swami argues that **Govinda Dāsī's recollections often misrepresent events**, particularly concerning the *Bhagavad-gītā* manuscript preparation and editing process. The articles emphasize the need

¹⁵ Personal correspondence.

¹⁶ Jayadvaita Swami, "Book Changes: History Backs the Bbt." (2010): accessed November 23, 2024, https://www.jswami.info/gita_editing_history/#https://jswami.info/editing/hayagriva .

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ Jayadvaita Swami, "Book Changes: History Really Does Back the Bbt." (2010): accessed November 23, 2024, https://www.jswami.info/book_changes_history_really_does_back_bbt/ .

for historical accuracy, **noting discrepancies in her claims when compared with documented facts**. By highlighting these points, the BBT defends its revisions as faithful to Prabhupāda’s teachings and authorized by him.

It could be argued that Govinda Dāsī, being opposed to book edits, may have “adjusted” her recollections to align with her stance. Similarly, when informed by SAC about their research into the first second initiation ceremony in the USA and their underlying motives—supporting FDG and other feminist agendas she endorses—Govinda Dāsī may have once again “adjusted” her account. This pattern suggests that Govinda Dāsī has a reputation for modifying narratives to reinforce positions she supports.

Whatever the case, we reject Govinda Dāsī’s revised recollections and instead rely on the well-documented earlier testimonies provided above for historical accuracy. These accounts consistently confirm the incident of Govinda Dāsī being upset during the second initiations in Boston.

SAC is supposed to be ISKCON GBC’s most eminent advisory body yet they made such an egregious error. This leads to the following possible scenarios:

- It was not an error but a calculated move to deceive. SAC cynically and purposely colluded with Govinda Dāsī and coached her to change her story in the hopes that no one would notice.
- SAC turned a “Nelson’s eye” to Govinda Dāsī’s “adjusted” recollection because it fits their political and ideological objectives.
- SAC are incompetent and do not have the existential stamina to do methodical and thorough research.
- Some combination of the above.

Let us now change tack and shine a light on SAC’s hypocrisy.

SAC’s Hypocritical Double Standard

On page 108, SAC states:

To suggest that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave the dīkṣā-mantras to women in Boston because he felt **pressured** by them to do so is highly presumptuous.

However, on page 107, they (falsely) claim,

Govinda dāsī says she was late because she was upset that some devotees had

pressured Prabhupāda to have an initiation when he had been ill.

SAC’s inconsistency in addressing alleged pressures on Śrīla Prabhupāda is striking. On page 108 of their paper, they dismiss as “highly presumptuous” the notion that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave *gāyatrī-dīkṣā* to women under pressure from them. Yet, on page 107, they accept without question the claim that male disciples pressured Śrīla Prabhupāda to conduct an initiation ceremony despite his ill health.

This double standard is evident in their selective approach to testimony. When accusations align with their feminist agenda, they are presented as credible; when they contradict it, they are dismissed as offensive or speculative. Such selective reasoning undermines the objectivity expected from a body like SAC and exposes its ideological bias.

Another Example of Feminist Presumptuousness

Another example of feminist presumptuousness is their claim that the men pressured Śrīla Prabhupāda to exclude women from morning walks. The actual situation was explained by H.H. Tamāla Kṛṣṇa Goswami (emphasis mine):

Another way he was not equal is after a while, very rarely did women accompany him on a walk. Now the women claim that this is because of the sannyasis. I don't know which sannyasis they are talking about, but some of the sannyasis, they say, were really pushing the women away and not letting them have an equal right. There may be some truth to that but Prabhupāda allowed it. Prabhupāda was not so unaware of the fact that there were no women on the walk. He could have said, “Where is so and so, where is so and so?” and he did used to say, “Where is so and so, where is so and so?” **but that so and so was always a sannyāsi or a senior man.** So I don't think that Prabhupāda was equal to all.

Now I will show you how he was equal to all. Because when the movement was just beginning, he showed far more equality to the women, when there were no sannyasis in the movement. He had a woman secretary, Govinda Dāsī. It is very interesting, how he got rid of her. Very interesting, because he did not want Govinda Dāsī to realize that he wanted to change the secretary. So he dictated a letter to me and had me write the letter and post it separately to get a male secretary in but his first secretary was a woman secretary. He had ladies cooking for him. And the women used to come walking with him just as much as the men. Yamuna used to lead the kirtans. Yamuna and Himavati used to speak at public lectures.

But gradually as the movement became more established, he tried to establish what you may call Vedic culture and that is where he started to make these distinctions. In his mind he made no distinction. One time in 1977, Prabhupāda asked me, “Where is,” I think it was Upendra, perhaps. I said, “He is cooking in the kitchen.” So Prabhupāda said, “Who else is in the kitchen?” and I said, “Srutirupa, the wife of Abhirama.” Prabhupāda said, “Oh that is not very good, that they are in the same room together.”

He said, “I am above all of these things now. I am an old man but you are all young *sannyāsīs*, you must be very careful.” So he did these things to protect the *sannyāsa* asrama, and in general uphold Vedic etiquette.

Talk in Hungary on Aug 24, 2000

It should be noted that Upendra Prabhu was not a *sannyāsī*. And, Srutakirti Prabhu recalls in his book¹⁹ that Śrīla Prabhupāda admonished him not to cook in the same kitchen with women to avoid a spiritual fall down. So this was not just about protecting *sannyāsīs* but the spiritual life of both sexes. However, Śrīla Prabhupāda was especially protective of the *sannyāsīs* because of their special position as the spiritual masters in *varṇāśrama dharma* society.

Some Women in ISKCON Behaved in Ways That Led to Sannyāsīs Falling Down

In Kṛṣṇa’s Vedic culture, celibate *brahmacārīs* and especially *sannyāsīs* are regarded as invaluable jewels, deserving of protection to ensure the purity of their *brahmacarya*. For instance, men are traditionally trained never to leave a *sannyāsī* alone with a woman, and chaste women are taught to avoid acting in ways that might attract, entice, or disturb *sannyāsīs*. And in general there was strict separation of the sexes to maintain a sanctified ambiance in society. However, in the following conversation, Śrīla Prabhupāda highlighted a troubling deviation within ISKCON: some husbandless women were intentionally dressing attractively to draw attention from men in hopes of snaring a husband, even going so far as to solicit (canvass) *sannyāsīs*, which led to instances of spiritual fall down (emphasis mine).

Prabhupāda: That one thing is that this sort of publicity, and this, this dress, is very nice. Girls who have no husband, they should dress like this, not attractive dress. A dress sometimes attracts the opposite sex. **And women are..., by nature they dress very nicely.** [laughs] That is everywhere—**to attract**. The nature is that they are dependent, woman, by nature. Do you admit or not?

Pālikā: Yes. ...

Jagadīśa: Most of the women, or at least many of the women in our society, have neither father, husband or sons.

Prabhupāda: It is very precarious condition. So we want to give them, all of them, “Come and live.” But when you come here, if you get husband we have no objection, **but don't canvass. That is not good. And that is making our sannyāsīs fall down.** Of course, it is difficult, that young men, young women living, intermingling. ... And this kind of hypocrisy—they have taken *sannyāsa* and mixing with woman—this is not to be allowed.

Room Conversation—January 7, 1977, Bombay

¹⁹ Dasa Srutakirti, *What is the Difficulty* (Radlett, UK: Dharma Publications, 2006), 177-78.

This article, “The Night Dacoits Stole Śrīmatī Rādhārāṇī”²⁰ shows why Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to uphold the Vedic social etiquette of separating the sexes and the serious consequences that follow by neglecting them.

The feminists within ISKCON have rewritten history by reinterpreting Śrīla Prabhupāda’s actions and teachings to fit a feminist perspective. They suggest that Prabhupāda was aware of and sympathetic to women’s issues but allowed stricter gender roles under pressure to accommodate the concerns of newly initiated male celibates. In actual fact Śrīla Prabhupāda introduced stricter gender roles because of his own concerns regarding newly initiated male celibates (and the spiritual health of all his disciples). This revisionist approach seeks to distance Prabhupāda from the traditional gender roles he promoted (based on *śāstra* and Vedic orthopraxy) and to place the blame on male leaders for enforcing these roles (which were desired by Prabhupāda). The feminists have altered the historical account to create a gender divide similar to that in secular society, misrepresenting Prabhupāda’s teachings to support their own views on gender equality. **The feminists’ real problem is with certain of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s teachings which at heart they do not agree with and do not want to accept.**²¹

Segregation of the sexes is fundamental to *varṇāśrama dharma*, a system Śrīla Prabhupāda sought to establish due to his disciples’ moral lapses.²² However *varṇāśrama* without *varṇas* isn’t *varṇāśrama* by anyone’s standards.²³ Also without distinguishing between men and women there is no *varṇāśrama*. Ignoring his directive to implement *varṇāśrama dharma* led to the downfall of many prominent leaders and the subsequent rise of the *Ṛtvik* heresy.

Returning from our digression: according to SAC logic, when feminists falsely claim that Śrīla Prabhupāda was pressured by men, it is deemed reasonable. However, when others factually state that Śrīla Prabhupāda was pressured by women, it is dismissed as “highly presumptuous.” We categorically reject such SAC logic.

²⁰ Shyamasundara Dasa, “From the Astrologer’s Diary: The Night Dacoits Stole Srimati Radharani.” (2019): accessed Dec 11, 2024, https://shyamasundaradasa.com/jyotish/resources/articles/formal_articles/cora_prasna.html.

²¹ Bhakti Vikasa Swami, *Mothers & Masters* (Surat: Bhakti Vikasa Trust, 2016), 80-83.

²² See for example: Room Conversation Varṇāśrama System Must Be Introduced —February 14, 1977, Māyāpura

²³ According to the GBC resolution 453.03 #3 of 2023, *varṇas* are no longer required.

Examples of Rebellious Women in ISKCON

Mādhavī-latā Dāsī Revolted

We previously mentioned Mādhavī Latā Dāsī, an artist and associate of Jadurāṇī Dāsī. She is noted for having a troubled mind, with Śrīla Prabhupāda describing her as, “This girl appears very disturbing and every place she goes there seems to be some trouble.”²⁴ She was even arrested and jailed for theft.²⁵ Mādhavī Latā Dāsī exhibited a defiant attitude toward any form of restriction. She challenged the prohibition against women receiving the *brahma-gāyatrī*, as discussed earlier, and was not alone in this stance. This can be seen as part of a broader revolt by certain women (feminists) against the limitations imposed on the female gender in Kṛṣṇa’s Vedic culture. In the following transcript, Śrīla Prabhupāda specifically highlights Mādhavī Latā Dāsī’s rebellious and recalcitrant temperament (emphasis mine).

Prabhupāda: The whole Vedic civilization is to bring men to the transcendental platform by restricting all his nonsense habits to nil. But not all of a sudden. Gradually, according to the quality. Similarly, those who are addicted to flesh-eating, meat-eating: “All right.” Vedic literature says, “All right. You can eat meat. But sacrifice an animal before the deity, Goddess Kālī, and you can eat.” So that the man who is eating meat, he’ll not revolt. If I say... Just like many men revolts already. That girl? What is called?

Devotee: Mādhavī-latā.

Prabhupāda: **Mādhavī-latā, she revolted. She revolted. She was always trying to plead, “Why this restriction? Why this restriction?”** So I had to tell, “If you don’t like the restriction, then go away. You don’t associate with us.” What can be done? So they do not want restriction. That is natural tendency. **But these śāstras are meant for restriction.** Just like marriage is restriction of sex life. And offering sacrifice before Goddess Kālī, that is also a restriction of meat-eating. You cannot eat meat by purchasing from the slaughterhouse. ... So these books, these literatures, I mean to say, Vedic literatures, are meant for **restricting our life and elevating ourself.**

Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.5.9-11 — June 6, 1969, New Vrindavan

Mādhavī Latā Dāsī must have been notorious because we note that the devotee immediately knew who Śrīla Prabhupāda intended.

Govinda Dāsī Rejects Her Guru’s Instruction

Regarding the rebellious nature of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s early Western female disciples, the following text shows how some practices in ISKCON allowed by Śrīla Prabhupāda were not really desired by him (emphasis mine).

²⁴ Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to: Gaurasundara — Los Angeles 17 December, 1968

²⁵ Śrīla Prabhupāda letter to: Mādhavī Latā Dāsī — Los Angeles 28 December, 1968

Text PAMHO:2441074 (31 lines)
From: Kusha (dd) ACBSP (Philadelphia, PA - USA)
Date: 01-Jul-99 12:37 (08:37 -0400)
To: (Arcana) Deity Worship [3442]
Subject: Re: babies moochi

Dear Urmila Prabhu,

Dandavats! Jaya Srila Prabhupada! Gaur Sundar and Govinda dasi, husband and wife team were Srila Prabhupada's servant and secretary 1967-68. His Divine Grace requested Govinda dasi to take a three day break from her duties from the first day of her period. **She reacted in such a way as to reject her Guru Maharaj's instruction** because she didn't want to leave his personal service or presence. **Govinda dasi did not want to surrender to SP request, so His Divine Grace said, "Oh, it doesn't matter."**

Again on another occasion, Govinda dasi was dying Śrīla Prabhupāda's dhotis saffron with a special rock. Srila Prabhupada noticed some reddish off colored fluid on the floor and asked Govinda if menstruation was the cause. If so Govinda dasi should refrain from her regular service and take three days off. Govinda explained the spots on the floor were due to the dye leaking from the dhoti as she carried it to the clothes line.

For many years, many years [sic] following this Govinda dasi has followed Srila Prabhupada's order. She realized the importance of Srila Prabhupada's instruction and **gradually became ready to follow in spite of her initial rejection** of this particular instruction.

Srila Prabhupada wanted that ladies should take 3 days off from all Deity seva. This includes cooking and sewing. **Due to initial rebellion** and lack of information this fact is not widely known. I hope this pastime sheds some light on the fact that we should be following the 3 days off rule as instructed by Srila Prabhupada early in the establishment of our beloved ISKCON. In Bharat Varsha, followers of Sanatan Dharma respectfully observe this rule as per Vedic prescription.

Your Servant, Kusha devi dasi
(Text PAMHO:2441074)

A friend of Govinda Dāsī privately wrote me in regards to this text (emphasis mine):

Govinda Dāsī has told me many times that she feels some guilt about this event, because she felt Śrīla Prabhupāda **compromised his ideal on account of her mind**, which had rejected his instruction. She also felt that this led to a case of "*sa yat pramāṇam kurute*," the de facto establishment of a lowered standard she might have prevented.

Śrīla Prabhupāda desired her compliance, yet when she resisted, he casually remarked, "Oh, it doesn't matter," though the significance was undeniable. Similarly in regards to *gayātrī-mantra*

he diplomatically stated, “That he saw no harm” in giving it to them. **Confronted with defiant individuals, options are limited.** Giving *brahma-gāyatrī* to women, which is forbidden by *śāstra*, is another lower standard that Govinda Dāsī was involved with.

Letters to “G” and Brahmānanda Prabhus

And, there is also a letter to G Prabhu regarding his getting married, wherein Śrīla Prabhupāda said the western girls (his disciples), “are no longer very much humble and submissive to their husbands.²⁶” (Emphasis mine.)

But one who is disturbed in mind, he must get himself married. Therefore, it has to be decided by oneself if he should marry or not marry. It is a fact however that if one is thoroughly engaged in Krishna’s service, this sex urge does not have much disturbance. But you have got to work outside with karmis and different types of people. Under the circumstances, if you have a good wife to help you, that will be very nice. Another difficulty is that in modern civilization everyone is independent spirited. **The girls are no longer very much humble and submissive to their husbands.** So you must be prepared to tolerate such whims of your future wife. According to our Vedic civilization, disagreements between husband and wife is not taken very seriously. But the modern age allows divorce even, either by the husband or by the wife. These things are not good. But after marrying, certainly there will be some disagreement or misunderstanding between husband and wife.

Letter to: G — London, 26 November, 1969

And, in fact, G’s wife turned out to be as Śrīla Prabhupāda described leading to a breakdown of the marriage. There is a similar letter to Brahmānanda Prabhu (emphasis mine):

I think also that Gargamuni also should be supplied with another bride. Because karmis without association of woman, cannot work. So as he is going to be a karmi—not exactly karmi, karma-yogi, so if he likes, he can marry again. But he cannot be a very strict husband, otherwise the same thing will happen. **Because in America, the girls are not so trained that they will be very much obedient.** So you think over, but if he likes, he can marry again.

Letter to Brahmānanda, Seattle, 16 Oct 1968

Sunitā’s Story

The following is a truncated email exchange I had with Urmilā Dāsī leaving only the part essential to our narrative. It shows how Śrīla Prabhupāda’s Western female disciples actively pushed another female disciple to disobey his instructions (emphasis mine).

²⁶ It is not unreasonable to assume that Srila Prabhupada refers to girls in ISKCON because he wanted his disciples to marry devotees not non-devotees.

Letter PAMHO:9465359 (283 lines)
From: Shyamasundara (das) ACBSP (Vedic Astrologer) (USA)
Date: 21-Feb-05 04:19 -0500
To: Urmila (dd) ACBSP (ISKCON School NC - USA)
Reference: Text PAMHO:8694516 by Urmila (dd) ACBSP
Comment: Text PAMHO:9467158 by Urmila (dd) ACBSP
Subject: Re: The Secret Lives of Wives + "This Is Not A Book Review"

Dear Mother Urmila,

Please accept my humble obeisances. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda.

Sorry that I didn't answer earlier. I was extraordinarily busy and then 3 hurricanes hit us and then I got sick. I will take this opportunity to answer your other letter as well.

Snip

Remember the late Sunitā dd? The last time I saw her alive, May 1996, she told me a story. Up till then I didn't know that she had been married to someone before X. Did you? Anyway she told me she was married to a Marwari man who was not a devotee. He didn't follow the 4 regs. She told me she went to Śrīla Prabhupāda and asked him what she should do? Śrīla Prabhupāda told her: "just do what your mother has trained you to do; serve your husband nicely (and offer it to Kṛṣṇa)." But when she went back to the temple her Western god-sisters, all cultural barbarians, kept urging her to divorce her husband telling her "he is a demon." She finally relented and divorced her husband and later married X. The last thing she said to me was: "to this day I regret disobeying Śrīla Prabhupāda."

Snip

Your humble servant, Shyamasundara Dasa
(Text PAMHO:9465359)

Letter PAMHO:9467158 (73 lines)
From: Urmila (dd) ACBSP (ISKCON School NC - USA)
Date: 21-Feb-05 10:52 -0500
To: Shyamasundara (das) ACBSP (Vedic Astrologer) (USA) [28497]
Reference: Text PAMHO:9465359 by Shyamasundara (das) ACBSP
Comment: Text PAMHO:9908051 by Shyamasundara (das) ACBSP
Subject: reply

Please accept my obeisances. All glories to Śrīla Prabhupāda!

Thank you for your long and careful letter and for taking the time and trouble, of your own accord, to look at my chart and give me good advice. I am deeply grateful.

Snip

Your servant, Urmila devi dasi

PS I had always known that about Sunitā. We were such stupid, fanatically misguided persons in those days.

(Text PAMHO:9467158)

Urmilā Dāsī makes an intriguing remark. What did she mean by “stupid, fanatically misguided”? Sunitā Dāsī had conveyed Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions to her Western god-sisters, yet they all (including, it seems, Urmilā Dāsī) encouraged Sunitā to disregard them. Perhaps this reflected a fanatical expression of feminist defiance against the idea of serving one’s husband—dismissed as “being a man’s slave” in feminist rhetoric. Alternatively, they may have believed they knew better than Śrīla Prabhupāda. Whatever their motives, their actions were decidedly not “fanatical” in assisting Sunitā to adhere to Śrīla Prabhupāda’s instructions but instead caused her to violate them. This serves as yet another example of Western female disciples opposing Śrīla Prabhupāda’s expressed wishes.

Nor do the Women Act Like Mothers

From Bhurijana Prabhu’s *My Glorious Master* (page 341), it speaks for itself, emphasis mine:

Candravali: Prabhupāda, we hear that in our philosophy the men should treat the women as mothers. But actually, the men, especially the sannyāsīs, don’t treat the women as mothers. Instead they treat them as maya. Their attitude, not the women, seems more like maya! It doesn’t seem proper.

Prabhupāda heard her complaint carefully. He smiled softly and began to reply. His words dropped from his mouth as if they were sweet ripe fruits falling from a tree.

Prabhupāda: Yes, the men do not treat the women as mothers. **Nor do the women act like mothers. Neither do they dress as mothers.**²⁷

Females in ISKCON Are Not Free From Anarthas

Today several female disciples of Śrīla Prabhupāda like to describe themselves in self-congratulatory terms. For example, they strategically changed the name of the “Women’s Ministry” to “Vaiṣṇavī Ministry,” but “Women’s Ministry” was the original name that they had chosen. And, they protest that it is not “FDG” but “VDG” — “Vaiṣṇavī Dīkṣā Guru” even

²⁷ This reinforces the point above where Śrīla Prabhupāda claimed that some women were dressing in an attractive way to entice men for marriage and leading to the fall of some *sannyāsīs*.

though historically the name “Female Diksha-gurus in ISKCON” came from their side and was the title of SAC’s 2005 pro-FDG paper.

Changing the nomenclature to “Vaiṣṇavī” does not, in and of itself bestow some sort of divinity, and “status on a higher platform,” i.e. the attainment of “*bhāva*” and “*prema*.” Females in ISKCON aspiring to serve Lord Kṛṣṇa are not exempt from *anarthas* or immune from criticism.

Dharma-saṅkaṭa

The term “*dharma-saṅkaṭa*” can be translated as “moral dilemma” or “ethical crisis.” “*Dharma*” refers to duty, righteousness, or moral law, while “*saṅkaṭa*” means difficulty or crisis. Together, *dharma-saṅkaṭa* describes a situation where one faces a challenging decision involving conflicting duties or ethical principles. The *śāstras* are full of examples of *dharma-saṅkaṭa*— in the *Bhagavad-gītā*, Kṛṣṇa is giving Arjuna the solution to his moral dilemma of whether or not to fight his kinsmen. In a previous footnote we referred to Ambarīṣa Mahārāja’s *dharma-saṅkaṭa* in relation to Durvāsā Muni.

One of the most dramatic cases is the dilemma faced by Vasudeva when Kaṁsa was going to murder his wife Devakī.²⁸ In order to save Devakī, Vasudeva agreed to give all his unborn children to Kaṁsa to be killed. For as the sages say *āpat-kāle nāsti maryādā*—“In times of crisis, there are no boundaries.” Implying that during critical or emergency situations, the usual rules or norms may be suspended.²⁹ And as *nīti-śāstra*³⁰ tells us, “In order to save a family one member can be sacrificed, to save a village a family can be sacrificed, to save a country a village can be sacrificed, and to save one’s soul everything can be sacrificed.”³¹ So in order to save his family (Devakī) Vasudeva sacrificed his unborn children. *Vaiṣṇava* commentators note that Vasudeva’s promise to give his future sons to Kaṁsa was not in line with dharmic principles. However, to prevent the imminent death of Devakī, he felt compelled to make such a promise. He left the future to fate, and although his actions seemed contrary to dharma, he was not at fault given the circumstances.

²⁸ Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 10.1.34-55

²⁹ But once the *āpat-kāla* (emergency) is over one must revert to proper standards.

³⁰ *Nīti-śāstra* refers to the ancient Vedic texts of political science, ethics, welfare and conduct, royal responsibilities, principles or rules governing appropriate behavior and decision-making, often in the context of righteousness and justice. It is closely related with *artha-śāstra* (economics, statecraft, and military strategy) and *dharma-śāstra* (religious law).

³¹ V.K.Subramanian, *Maxims of Chanakya. The Crystallised Wisdom of the Indian Machiavelli* (New Delhi: Shakti Malik, Abhinav Publications, 1980), 117.

Śrīla Prabhupāda Faced With a Dharma-saṅkaṭa

In 1968 at the time of the first second initiation in the USA Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want to give his female disciples *brahma-gāyatrī* because it is forbidden by *śāstra*³², his guru didn't give it to his female disciples, no previous bona fide *Vaiṣṇava ācārya* has done so, nor has any orthodox *sampradāya* or other traditional follower of Vedic culture done so. It is strictly verboten. So why did he change his mind and do something he should not have done—give females the *brahma-gāyatrī*? Let us consider the unique circumstances of his situation that constituted his *dharma-saṅkaṭa*.

- Kṛṣṇa's Vedic culture forbids giving *brahma-gāyatrī* to females.
- *Brāhmaṇīs*, women in *brāhmaṇa* families, do not chant this mantra.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want to give his female disciples *brahma-gāyatrī*.
- He was preaching to hippies (*yavanas* and *mlecchas*) who had very different social customs which could not be suddenly changed.
- Some females in particular were infected with feminism and were rebellious.
- They had almost no understanding of the standards or expectations of Kṛṣṇa's Vedic culture.
- *Strī-dharma* was an unknown concept to them.
- ISKCON, his preaching mission, was in its infancy and fragile.
- Some of his leading female disciples were very upset and made a “feminist protest.”
- Dissension between men and women could have suffocated the movement.
- He had no one else to consult because no Vedic person or *Pariṣad*³³ had ever faced the situation of preaching to liberal *mlecchas* and feminists.
- He had to make a quick decision and act in such a way to maintain ISKCON's cohesion.

Seeing his female disciples' *asāmarthyā* (inability) to follow Vedic culture he acted in such a way as to protect a nascent ISKCON from potential harm and to assuage the feelings of his rebellious female disciples. Thus he decided, as a stopgap measure, to give them *brahma-gāyatrī*

³² See for example, Nṛsīṁha Pūrva Tāpinya Upaniṣad 1.7

³³ *Pariṣad* here is a committee of specialists in different subjects convened to decide difficult questions of dharma. See *Manu* 12.110-111.

but not the thread and thus solve his dilemma. For as *Pañca-tantra*³⁴ (4.28-29) tells us:

When a complete loss is imminent, a wise man gives half away voluntarily and works with the rest, for a complete loss is unbearable. A wise man never sacrifices big interests for smaller ones. This is real wisdom.

This suggests that in difficult times, wise people are willing to part with a portion of what they have in order to survive or mitigate the damage.

Though they were sincere it was the incapability of Śrīla Prabhupāda’s female disciples that required him to take emergency measures in order to uphold the highest and most essential action of bringing souls to Kṛṣṇa consciousness.

“I Had to Sometimes do Something Which I Should not Have Done”

Śrīla Prabhupāda himself tells us that he sometimes had no other alternative but do things he should not have done (emphasis mine).

Prabhupāda: In a, in the Western countries, **I had to sometimes do something which I should not have done.** But I’ve done it to bring so many souls to Kṛṣṇa.

Brahmānanda: The preaching necessitates that.

Prabhupāda: Yes. Because if there is no other alternative, what can I do?
Morning Walk — March 9, 1974, Mayapura

And, in the beginning, he did what was necessary for starting the mission but now we should be more careful.

Prabhupāda: They must be all ideal *ācārya*-like. In the beginning we have done for working. Now we should be very cautious. Anyone who is deviating, he can be replaced.
GBC Meets with Śrīla Prabhupāda--May 28, 1977, Vrindavana

³⁴ If the objection is raised that, “We don’t follow *Pañca-tantra*, it is not bona fide.” Our response is that *Pañca-tantra* is a highly respected *Nīti-śāstra* (see previous note) well known to followers of Kṛṣṇa’s Vedic culture including Śrīla Rūpa Gosvāmī whose *Upadeśāmṛta* (4) is identical to *Pañca-tantra* 4.13.

Ramifications of Falsifying the History

We have demonstrated that SAC has misrepresented the history of the first time Śrīla Prabhupāda administered *gāyatrī dīkṣā* to his disciples in the USA. What are the ramifications?

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura introduced significant innovations in spiritual practice, including *upanayanam* for non-*brāhmaṇa* males, but it was all supported by extensive philosophical reasoning based on *guru*, *sādhu*, and *śāstra*.³⁵ In contrast, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s decision to give the *sāvitrī gāyatrī* mantra to women lacks such clear philosophical *śāstric* justification.

The history as we have shown above reveals that Śrīla Prabhupāda initially refused to give the mantra to women. When some female disciples became upset and cried, he relented, stating there was “no harm” in women chanting it, though he did not grant them the accompanying sacred thread. It is important to note that Śrīla Prabhupāda never philosophically justified his giving *brahma-gāyatrī* to women as he did repeatedly with giving *brāhmaṇa* status to men of lower birth.³⁶ Śrīla Prabhupāda’s decision seems to stem from a response to an immediate moral dilemma, or “*dharma-saṅkaṭa*,” rather than a foundational doctrinal change.

Women in Vaiṣṇavism are considered equal to male *brāhmaṇas* in spiritual terms, but this does not necessarily imply the need for them to chant the *sāvitrī* mantra or wear the sacred thread. **If Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted to give the women second initiation, why not on the same day? Śrīla Prabhupāda’s initial refusal suggests that the mantra was not deemed an essential principle for women’s spiritual advancement. Had it been, he would have given it to them without hesitation, just as he did for men. Instead, under pressure, he saw “no harm” in allowing it, which implies that the mantra was not perceived as necessary for women’s spiritual progress. This is hardly a ringing endorsement for continuing the practice of giving it to women in the future.**

No Benefit Derived From Mantras not Bestowed Voluntarily by the Guru in Proper Dīkṣā

In fact there is no benefit derived from mantras not bestowed voluntarily by the guru in a proper *dīkṣā*.

*mantraṁ dadyāt susiddhau tu sahasraṁ deśiko japed
yadṛchayā śrutam mantraṁ chalenātha balena vā
patre sthitañca gāthāñca janayed yadyanarthakam*

³⁵ See, for example — Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura, *Brāhmaṇa and Vaiṣṇava*, trans. Bhūmipati Dāsa (New Delhi: Vrajraj Press, 1999).

³⁶ In giving *brāhmaṇa* status to men of lower birth he was following in the philosophical footsteps of Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura.

At the time of *dīkṣā* a guru (*deśika*) chants a thousand count japa of the mantra and gives it to the disciple. A mantra not received through proper *dīkṣā* but by accidental hearing or by deceiving someone, or by force or by violence or through a written paper (or leaf), or through textual verses won't bear fruit.
Agni Purana 293.20-21

Thus according to *śāstra*, mantras that are given because of pressure, crying, boycotts, etc. yield no benefit.

We are Compelled to Reexamine Our Practices as Our Knowledge Increases

There are standard practices that we aim to promote as norms, alongside exceptional practices that we might reconsider. Śrīla Prabhupāda's desire to establish *varṇāśrama-dharma* compel us to reexamine certain practices we followed when we were less informed. For example, in the early days of ISKCON, *ārati* was held simply by offering candles. Just because we initially followed one understanding doesn't mean we must continue with it once we grasp a more accurate or refined approach. Just like there is no use in perpetuating the old standard of Deity worship before *Arcana-paddhati*, because we know Śrīla Prabhupāda wanted us to advance. Similarly there is no reason to follow the old system of doing initiations by the 1970 system when we know the actual technicalities of doing it properly. We can also expect that eventually ISKCON *dvijas* will take their *dvijahood* seriously and learn *sandhyāvandanam* as mentioned in *Hari-bhakti-vilāsa*, that is our *sampradāya* standard. If ISKCON chooses to be stuck in the systems that we followed when we didn't know any better then ISKCON can do that. But future generations will inevitably seek to understand their spiritual heritage, traditions, and culture more deeply according to *guru*, *sādhu*, and *śāstra*. **It could be argued that Śrīla Prabhupāda's decision not to grant the sacred thread to women was an implicit signal for future generations that this practice of granting *brahma-gāyatrī* to women should not continue.**

It is Correct to Stop Giving Females *Brahma-gāyatrī*

Considering this, it is not wrong to stop giving females *brahma-gāyatrī* but absolutely the correct thing to do because:³⁷

- Scriptures forbid giving *brahma-gāyatrī* to females.
- Not giving *brahma-gāyatrī* to females is in accordance with *śāstra*.

³⁷ If the objection is raised that Śrīla Prabhupāda did not change *brahma-gāyatrī* initiation standards so we also should not. By that logic, we should not change leadership standards. Śrīla Prabhupāda did not make women gurus, GBCs or temple presidents.

- *Brāhmaṇīs*, women in orthodox *brāhmaṇa* families, do not chant this mantra.
- No authentic *sampradāya* gives *brahma-gāyatrī* to females.
- Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta didn't give it to any female disciples.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda did not want to give the women *brahma-gāyatrī*.
- Originally reluctant, Śrīla Prabhupāda ultimately undertook an action against his preference to pacify a rebellious faction at a critical juncture in the history of ISKCON.
- Śrīla Prabhupāda did not award the females the sacred thread which is an intrinsic part of *upanayana*.
- The situation (cultural backwardness and ignorance) that prompted Śrīla Prabhupāda to do this no longer exists because now many devotees have become more knowledgeable of the practices of Kṛṣṇa's Vedic civilization as evidenced by [Part 1](#) of my response to SAC's paper.
- Just as in times of famine one may eat forbidden food to survive but must return to a pure diet once the famine ends.³⁸ Similarly, one may resort to forbidden actions during emergencies but must revert to the norm when the emergency is over.
- There is no loss to Vaiṣṇavīs.
- Females are not spiritually benefited by reciting *brahma-gāyatrī*. If they were benefited Śrīla Prabhupāda would not have been reluctant in giving it.
- Furthermore, if females were indeed spiritually benefited by reciting *brahma-gāyatrī*, it would imply that all the previous *ācāryas*, *śāstras*, and traditions were unjustly denying female devotees a spiritual benefit, which is untenable within the framework of Vedic wisdom.

There is no Loss to Vaiṣṇavīs

There is no loss to Vaiṣṇavīs. Why? Because the only mantra they would not receive is the *sāvitrī*-mantra (*brahma-gāyatrī*), a Vedic mantra. They would receive all other *pāñcarātrika* mantras. Thus, they could still do Deity worship³⁹ and study *bhakti-śāstras* because, as discussed

³⁸ Baladeva, *The Vedāntasūtras of Bādarāyaṇa: With the Commentary of Baladeva (Govinda Bhāṣya)*, trans. Srisa Chandra Vasu (New Delhi: Munshiram Manoharlal Publishers, 1979), 641-44.

³⁹ According to *pāñcarātra āgama* females and *sūdras* can worship the Deity at home. But if females are engaged in Deity worship in a temple then it considered a lower "home standard" not "temple standard." For a more detailed

in [Part 1](#), *brahma-gāyatrī* is not used in *pāñcarātrika* Deity worship nor is it a prerequisite to study *bhakti-śāstras* like *Bhagavad-gītā*, *Śrīmad Bhāgavatam*, *Caitanya-caritāmṛta*, *Mahābhārata*, *Rāmāyaṇam*, *Purāṇas*, et cetera. So what loss would this be to Vaiṣṇavīs? Nothing.

Final Remarks

SAC predicates their thesis on the principle that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave females the *brahma-gāyatrī* mantra because it was beneficial for their spiritual life. However, we have demonstrated that Śrīla Prabhupāda gave it for a different reason, thus nullifying their thesis.

In order to justify the continued practice of giving females the *brahma-gāyatrī*, SAC has falsified the history of the first “second initiation” in the USA. Govinda Dāsī altered her account of why she did not attend the first brahminical initiation in the West. Initially, she attributed her absence to being upset about being excluded—a sentiment that Satsvarūpa Dāsa Goswami described as a “feminist protest.” Much later (in 2020s), she offered a different explanation, shifting blame onto the misbehavior of male devotees. Similarly, Jadurāṇī Dāsī revised her historical account in a way that also pointed fingers at the men. This revisionism undermines SAC’s credibility, exposing its reliance on manipulated narratives to support its position.

The evidence strongly suggests that Śrīla Prabhupāda felt obliged to give the *brahma-gāyatrī* mantra to his rebellious female disciples as a means of alleviating their dissatisfaction during a critical period in ISKCON’s history. This context reveals the decision as a response to circumstantial pressures rather than a principle-driven doctrinal change.

Moreover, SAC employs a hypocritical double standard regarding the concept of “pressuring” Śrīla Prabhupāda. When feminists are accurately depicted as pressuring him, SAC denounces such assertions as offensive and “highly presumptuous.” Yet, SAC sees no issue in accusing men of pressuring Śrīla Prabhupāda when it serves their purpose.

Govinda Dāsī’s shifting accounts further undermine the integrity of SAC’s argument. Her pattern of altering narratives to suit her preferred positions calls her reliability into question.

Numerous historical examples highlight problematic and rebellious behavior among some of ISKCON’s female disciples. Additionally, as documented in the [Appendix](#), feminists both within and outside ISKCON frequently use deception as a core tactic.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s decision to give females the *brahma-gāyatrī* mantra represents an unprecedented *dharma-saṅkaṭa* (moral dilemma) in the history of *Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇavism*.

discussion of this topic see the second half of this article:

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Shyamasundara Dasa, “From the Astrologer’s Diary: The Night Dacoits Stole Srimati Radharani.” (2019): accessed Dec 11, 2024, https://shyamasundaradasa.com/jyotish/resources/articles/formal_articles/cora_prasna.html.

Confronted with unique challenges in the Western preaching mission, Śrīla Prabhupāda acknowledged, “In the Western countries, I had to sometimes do something which I should not have done. But I’ve done it to bring so many souls to Kṛṣṇa.”

While Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura introduced significant innovations in spiritual practice, these were always underpinned by extensive philosophical reasoning rooted in guru, *sādhu*, and *śāstra*. By contrast, Śrīla Prabhupāda did not offer a philosophical justification based on guru, *sādhu*, and *śāstra* for giving the *brahma-gāyatrī* mantra to women as he did for granting *brāhmaṇa* status to men of “lower birth.” His concession was a practical response to an immediate moral dilemma, not a foundational doctrinal shift.

Śrīla Prabhupāda’s initial reluctance to grant women the mantra underscores that it was neither a principle essential for their spiritual advancement nor inherently beneficial. If it had been a vital spiritual principle, he would have given it to women without hesitation, as he did with men. Instead, his eventual decision was based on the understanding that there was “no harm” in granting it—a far cry from advocating it as necessary. This distinction is critical and further weakens the case for continuing the practice.

Importantly, women in ISKCON lose nothing by not receiving the *brahma-gāyatrī* mantra. It is not a prerequisite for performing *pāñcarātrika* Deity worship or for studying *bhakti-śāstras*, both of which they already engage in. And as *Agni Purana* (293.20-21) informs us above women gain nothing from chanting this mantra. **So they do not lose anything by not chanting it, and they gain nothing by chanting it.**

For these reasons, we suggest discontinuing the practice of giving females the *brahma-gāyatrī* mantra. Such a change would align ISKCON with *śāstra*, the traditional dharma and orthopraxy of Kṛṣṇa’s Vedic civilization, the standards of our *sampradāya ācāryas*, and Śrīla Prabhupāda’s original intention not to grant it to women.

Future of SAC

After SAC’s record of intellectual malfeasance, a question arises: What should be done with SAC? Several possible scenarios are:

- SAC is disbanded and not replaced.
- SAC is completely overhauled and staffed with new, intellectually honest *brāhmaṇas* (excluding females).
- The head of SAC resigns, but the remaining members stay.
- The GBC adopts a laissez-faire approach, leaving the situation unchanged—business as usual.

It is evident that ISKCON India has no confidence in SAC, having established their own “ISKCON India Scholars Board” in opposition to SAC. Additionally, independent scholars hold SAC in open disdain. The GBC’s response—if any—will be telling, especially if they opt for the last scenario. In any case no intelligent person could place trust in ISKCON’s SAC.

Appendix

Deception is a Feminist Tactic

This current deception by SAC is not an isolated incident but rather a pattern of behavior within ISKCON's feminist faction and feminists in general (see below). **If the feminists had a strong case they would not have to resort to all manner of chicanery, subterfuge, deceit, and prevarication.**

Urmila and the 3rd Ellipsis

Urmilā Dāsī, SAC's chairwoman, has a history of intellectual dishonesty. This is evidenced by the article "[Urmila and the 3rd Ellipsis](#)," which reveals that she deliberately misquoted Śrīla Prabhupāda to dupe her audience. She exploited her position as a Prabhupāda disciple to manipulate junior devotees who had placed their faith in her. Her actions aimed to advance a feminist agenda. She used the same tactic in this SAC paper.

SAC Member Ghostwrites a Discredited Feminist Tract

In 2013 Bhaktarupa Dāsa and Madhavānanda Dāsa floated a paper titled, "Some Evidence Regarding Education and Guruship for Vaishnavis." Crucially it was later learned that this paper was ghost written by [Hari Pārṣada Dāsa](#), currently a core member of SAC. This paper was later dissected in the following essay.

[An analysis of the paper "Some Evidence Regarding Education and Guruship for Vaishnavis"](#)

In this document Goloka-ranjana Dasa detected what he considered to be manipulative tactics or "cheating" by the authors he critiqued. He accuses the authors of selectively using obscure sources and interpretations to justify their argument, which he sees as contradictory to traditional *Gauḍīya-Vaiṣṇava* teachings. He claims the authors manipulated scripture to support their views, misleading readers and undermining established doctrines on the role of women in Vedic culture.

Here are few historical examples from within ISKCON where feminists engage in the tactic of "reputation demolition" where they will use any opportunity to ruin the reputation of male devotees in ISKCON who oppose them.

Conspiracy To Terminate The ISKCON Women’s Ministry

In November 1998, the article “Conspiracy to Terminate the ISKCON Women’s Ministry” by “Ardhabuddhi Dāsa” sent shockwaves through ISKCON, alleging a conspiracy by senior male devotees to terminate the Women’s Ministry. (Which has since been strategically renamed the “Vaiṣṇavī Ministry.”) The article outraged many innocent devotees, inciting hostility and a desire for retribution against the supposed culprits. However, it was later revealed that the article itself was part of **an elaborate plot orchestrated by the Women’s Ministry**.

The incident unfolded when members of the Women’s Ministry discovered that a group of senior devotees, known as “GHQ,” was meeting online to discuss ways to address the rise of feminism in ISKCON and to present a philosophical paper to the GBC. Through their connections, the Women’s Ministry managed to hack into the forum and acquire all the texts. They then commissioned x-Madhusūdanī Rādhā Dāsī (aka “Ardhabuddhi Dāsa”) to write an inflammatory essay, taking texts out of context and portraying the GHQ members in the worst possible light to damage their reputations.

In response, GHQ authored a comprehensive rebuttal titled “Notes From a Think Tank,” which thoroughly dismantled the claims made in “Ardhabuddhi Dāsa’s” article. Anyone who reads “Notes From a Think Tank” can see the truth behind the situation. After its publication, “Conspiracy to Terminate the ISKCON Women’s Ministry” faded into obscurity until the Vaiṣṇavī Ministry revived it by republishing it on their website. Coincidentally, x-Madhusūdanī Rādhā Dāsī has since become an atheist, hence the “x.”

For a granular analysis debunking this plot by the “Women’s Ministry” and the continued gaslighting by ISKCON feminists, see [GHQ Reloaded](#) (also includes “Notes From a Think Tank”).

Incident in Vṛndāvana

In November 1999, a controversy erupted at the ISKCON Kṛṣṇa-Balarāma temple in Vṛndāvana, instigated by the feminist faction led by Pārvatī Dāsī and supported by Sudharmā Dāsī (the Woman’s Minister). They launched an email campaign falsely claiming that women were assaulted during a religious ceremony, using these claims to push for their agenda that women should hold positions like Temple Presidents, GBCs, and *Dīkṣā*-gurus.

The dispute arose during the Kartik festival over *darśan* arrangements during *maṅgala ārotik*. The previous year, a compromise allowed men and *sannyāsīs* to offer obeisances first, followed by women. However, Pārvatī Dāsī and a small group of women disrupted this arrangement, pushing to the front of the altar, a space traditionally reserved for men and *sannyāsīs*. Pārvatī began verbally abusing the temple president, Mahāman Prabhu, and physically blocked *sannyāsīs* from offering obeisances.

As tensions escalated, reports emerged that Pārvatī and other women engaged in provocative actions, including physically assaulting men and trying to capture reactions on video to support their accusations of being mistreated. Although a compromise was eventually reached, Pārvatī continued to defy the management, disrupting the peaceful atmosphere of the festival.

For Dīna Bandhu Prabhu's [detailed report](#) click on the link.

Coincidentally, shortly after this event Pāravati Dāsī suffered a life threatening stroke and was in a coma for an extended period.

Further Reading

Articles/Videos Showing How Feminists Cheat

(In no particular order)

[Lopamudrā and Agastya Rgveda 1.179](#) by Acharya Veeranarayana Pandurangi

In this lecture Acharya Veeranarayana Pandurangi (from Mādhva *sampradāya*) addresses misinterpretations of Vedic texts by Western Feminist scholars. It critiques the portrayal of Lopamudrā, wife of the sage Agastya, as a feminist icon, arguing instead for a traditional view of her role in spiritual practices. The speaker emphasizes the importance of interpreting ancient texts through an authentic Vedic perspective, rejecting modern biases, and stresses the value of these texts for understanding Vedic culture, tradition, and spiritual goals like *mokṣa*.

[Fudging the Figures to Support the Feminist Narrative.](#)

This article critiques how statistics are manipulated to support the feminist depiction of domestic violence. The author argues that feminist-aligned researchers often omit data on male victims, skewing the perception of domestic violence as a gendered issue. This practice leads to biased research, flawed policy-making, and the perpetuation of gender stereotypes. The article calls for a more balanced and transparent approach to studying and addressing domestic violence, ensuring that all victims are represented. It is a wonderful resource with many useful links to other articles in a similar vein.

[The Monstrous Lies of Simone De Beauvoir](#)

Dr. Janice Fiamengo's analysis of Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* presents a scathing critique of the philosophical and ideological flaws of the feminist classic. Fiamengo argues that despite its influence on feminist thought, the work is riddled with inaccuracies, selective readings, and misrepresentations, all of which have contributed to what she views as a harmful

legacy for feminism.

[The Victimhood Craze in Early Feminism: The Case of Elizabeth Cady Stanton](#)

Feminist icon Elizabeth Cady Stanton's life exemplifies that feminism is a *victim mentality disorder*, in other words that it embodies and exacerbates a delusion of unique persecution that results in a radically lessened empathy for others. It is testimony to the sickness of the modern feminist movement that feminist historians have never objected to the vengeful anti-male fervor and self-pitying obsessions at the heart of Stanton's advocacy.

[Feminism's False Origin Story: The Struggle For the Vote](#)

Dr. Janice Fiamengo argues that the feminist commentary surrounding women's suffrage is misleading. It contends that the struggle for the vote was less about overcoming widespread misogyny and more about the gradual expansion of democratic rights, which also affected many men who were initially voteless. The article critiques the idea that feminism was solely responsible for women's suffrage, suggesting that it distorts historical facts to emphasize a victimhood mythology.

[Feminism's Biggest Blindspot Revealed](#)

Dr. Christina Hoff Sommers discusses her evolution from a philosophy professor to a writer at the American Enterprise Institute, focusing on feminism and gender politics. She recounts her initial enthusiasm for feminist theory, which later turned to disillusionment upon encountering radical feminist texts. These texts presented an exaggerated and distorted view of gender oppression, lacking reliable data and leading to harmful conclusions.

[Factual Feminist.](#)

A series of short videos exposing a cavalcade of feminist lies, myths, and distortions.

[The Fiamengo file](#) a series of videos by Dr. Janice Fiamengo exposing feminist intellectual dishonesty.

[Ten Lies of Feminism](#)

At its inception, the feminist movement, accompanied by the sexual revolution, made a series of enticing, exciting promises to women. These promises sounded good, so good that many women deserted their men and their children or rejected the entire notion of marriage and family, in pursuit of "themselves" and a career. These pursuits, which emphasized self-sufficiency and individualism, were supposed to enhance a woman's quality of life and improve her options, as well as her relations with men. Now women have had to face the fact that, in many ways, feminism and liberation made promises that could not be delivered.

[O'Faolain exposes the dishonesty of feminism](#)

John Waters critiques Nuala O’Faolain’s feminist stance, arguing that her work inadvertently reveals feminism’s intellectual dishonesty. He contends that feminists have positioned themselves as the sole voice for all women, creating a culture where criticizing feminism is equated with attacking women as a whole. Waters argues that what truly “offends” feminists about his and Kevin Myers’ writings isn’t their tone but the fact that their arguments against feminist dogma are unanswerable, exposing the movement’s inability to handle legitimate criticism.

[Cathy Young: The UVA Fiasco and ‘Believe the Survivor’ Syndrome](https://reason.com/2015/04/13/the-uva-fiasco-and-believe-the-survivor/)

<https://reason.com/2015/04/13/the-uva-fiasco-and-believe-the-survivor/>

Young analyzes the false rape accusations at the University of Virginia and how feminists used them to push a narrative.

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