

# The Draupadī Incident

By

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Commemorating the arrival of Śrīla Prabhupāda in USA

*This is a paper which examines whether the attempted disrobing of Draupadī took place. There is a second paper which examines whether Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira of Mahābhārata, who gambled away Draupadī, is the real Dharmarāja. These two papers are the beginning of a response to two online posts (question and answers) which are gravely erroneous, deviant and offensive. In conformity with the ancient protocol in Vaiṣṇava-sampradāyas, I find it sufficient to identify the author of these two posts simply as a prominent follower of Śrīla Prabhupada without providing any links to the author's official website from which I have sourced these two posts. I intend to debate the opinions and explanations in these two posts. To deal with the identity of the author is not relevant in such a debate because authors may wish to change their opinions in time and yet somebody else in the future may bring up similar opinions and explanations. It is the opinions and explanations that need to be dealt with. I first seek to kindly draw your attention to these two posts before I present my response.*

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## **Disrobing of Draupadi in the Mahābhārata**

**Question:** In the *Mahābhārata*, when Draupadi was being disrobed by Dushasana, why did the Pandavas sit quiet? Is there any other reason besides the fact that they had already lost in the gambling match and had become slaves? The primary duty of a husband is to protect his wife. How could Yudhisthira Maharaj fail to understand this?

**Answer:** Regarding Draupadi's disrobing, here are the main points as I see it:

1. I seriously wonder if this incident took place, based on evidence from the *Bhagavatam*. The *Bhagavatam*, as you know, many times gives the highlights of the *Mahābhārata*: a) in Bhishma's prayers; b) in Kunti's prayers; c) in Arjuna's and Yudhisthira's recollections after Krishna leaves this world; d) in the description of Vidura's pilgrimage after quitting Hastinapura; e) throughout the 10th canto; f) elsewhere.

The *Bhagavatam* mentions the insult to Draupadi four times in these verses: SBh 1.8.5, SBh 1.15.10, SBh 3.1.7, SBh 11.1.2. Remarkably in all four cases, the *Bhagavatam* states that the insult to Draupadi was

touching/pulling her hair. There is not a word about disrobing, nor about Yudhisthira gambling her.

I doubt that Yudhisthira could have gambled her on these grounds: in Vedic culture, human beings are not commodities to be bought and sold. Lord Krishna directly states this in *Mahābhārata* when Balarama and other Yadus are furious because Arjuna took Subhadra without giving gifts to the Yadus. In fact, if we study feudal law, I believe we get a clue to the gambling match which took place in a type of Vedic feudal society.

From Wikipedia: "...feudalism describes a set of reciprocal legal and military obligations among the warrior nobility, revolving around the three key concepts of lords, vassals, and fiefs."

I do not believe that Yudhisthira gambled away his brothers, but rather that he gambled their legal and military obligation to him as their older brother and king. Just as today a financial obligation is a negotiable instrument that can be gambled, auctioned, sold, bought etc, so in ancient societies, military and political obligations were similarly negotiable instruments. I believe that Yudhisthira thus gambled away the obligation, not the people.

The relationship between husband and wife in Vedic culture is not political nor military and cannot be negotiated or gambled. Neither the *Bhagavatam* nor the *Chaitanya Charitamrita* mention the attempt to disrobe Draupadi.

2. If for the sake of discussion we assume that the Kurus did attempt to disrobe Draupadi, then why did Yudhisthira remain silent? In the description of this incident found in the *Mahābhārata* (which Madhvacharya declared to be a highly corrupt text), Yudhisthira falls into the same ethical misunderstanding that Bhishma fell into many years before: act-based ethics. This ethics theory states that moral good lies in the act itself, regardless of the act's consequences. Thus, if you are sworn to tell the truth, then you should tell the truth, even if by doing so you cause terrible suffering to innocent people. Example: without any risk to yourself, if you lie you "honestly" reveal to Nazi soldiers where Jews are hiding. Consequences don't matter, only the act.

In the *Mahābhārata*, Krishna tells Arjuna a similar story where a sage revealed the hiding place of innocent citizens fleeing from murderous thieves. The sage kept his vow to tell the truth, revealed the hiding place, and caused the death of the citizens. Krishna then states that because the sage told the truth, he went to a terrible hell. The sage

should have lied. Krishna tells this story to Arjuna, because when Satyawati begged Bhishma to save the world and beget heirs in the widows of Vicitravirya, Bhishma replied that, basically, even if the universe blew up, he would keep his vow. Consequences don't matter.

In the *Mahābhārata* version of the gambling match, Yudhisthira feels he must honor the result of his gambling, and that this "honesty" trumps all other moral duties, such as protecting a chaste, pure Vaishnavi wife who is virtually a goddess. Yudhisthira ignores consequences, in this version, and thereby acts badly. In fact, he acts so badly that he practically drops from the list of heroes in the rest of the *Mahābhārata*. He is officially Dharma-rajā, but no one, including Draupadi, respects him anymore. She constantly berates and insults him during their forest exile. To make matters worse, Yudhisthira completely fails in the one chance he has later to redeem himself. Draupadi begs for protection from the lecherous Kicaka during the Pandavas' incognito stay in Virat. Yudhisthira insults Draupadi and again refuses to protect her. I don't believe this is the real Dharma-rajā. How could a great war be fought to put such a man on the throne? I think Dharma-rajā really is Dharma-rajā, and that's why Krishna enthroned him.

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### **Infallibility of Guru & Shastra**

**Question:** I read your letter stating that in your view, Draupadi was not disrobed by the Kurus. However, Śrīla Prabhupada describes this scene various times throughout his purports. Are you not worried that by contradicting Śrīla Prabhupada's statements, the devotees may lose their faith in Śrīla Prabhupada? Also, I've noticed that when you quote the *Gita*, you often do not use Śrīla Prabhupada's translation. Why is this?

**Answer:** I appreciate your concerns and will address your points.

Translation issue:

1. Śrīla Prabhupada said that "there can be many translations" of the *Gita*, for example. He also translated the same verse in different ways in different contexts.
2. Prabhupada wrote to me: "Read my books and explain them in your own words." Also, in his first letter to me he said, "I want you to be nicely educated and explain Krishna consciousness to similarly educated people." So in obedience to these words, I try to translate Sanskrit verses in a very literal, since that is what educated people often expect in a translation.

3. I am well aware that Prabhupada is far more Krishna conscious than me. Prabhupada knows Krishna intimately, and I can only know something of Krishna by his mercy and blessing. Krishna is fully present in Prabhupada's books and translations. It is Prabhupada who is saving the world, who is revealing Krishna in this world. As his small servant, I am trying to serve his mission according to his instructions to me.

The case of Draupadi:

1. Prabhupada emphatically taught that the Guru's teachings are infallible because the Guru is simply repeating Shastra. Prabhupada made it very clear that a Guru is not infallible when not repeating Shastra.

2. Similarly in his *Sandarbhas*, Śrīla Jiva Goswami explains that Shastra and Guru are infallible in matters of siddhanta, or the philosophical conclusions regarding God, the soul, and nature.

3. We find that great Acaryas, pure devotees, disagree on matters of detail of lila and sadhana, issues that are not siddhanta.

4. Prabhupada and Shastra also clearly teach that one must apply the test of Guru, Sadhu, and Shastra. So, in obedience to all these principles, and based on what I read in *Srimad-Bhagavatam*, I have some doubts about the Draupadi story.

5. We should also note that great Acaryas, through their advanced realizations, envision many details of Krishna Lila. We find this extensively in the writings of Śrīla Visvanatha Cakravarti Ṭhākura, Rupa Goswami, and, I would say, Śrīla Prabhupada. My understanding is that great Acaryas envision Krishna Lila on a pure spiritual platform, and do not necessarily, in a literal sense, look back in time. For example, in his translation of *SBh* 7.9.40, Prabhupada says that Pahlada Maharaja warns us not to listen to "cinema songs." The highly Indian term "cinema songs" is a non-literal translation of the Sanskrit 'sravanam', 'hearing.' I do not believe, and I am sure that Prabhupada does not believe, that millions of years ago on a different planet, Pahlada Maharaja spoke of 'cinema songs.'

And yet, Prabhupada is perfectly making a philosophical point. In general Prabhupada uses a non-literal translation style. He even told his Sanskrit editors, just before his disappearance, that he was interested in only doing purports, not translations, since the purports were his real concern.

My conclusion: I understand that some devotees are alarmed by my approach to these matters. And of course some devotees state that my approach allows them to remain with ISKCON and Prabhupada. Inevitably in every religion on earth, we will find faithful members taking different approaches on these issues. I am confident that I am

faithfully serving Prabhupada, and whatever liberties I take are within the boundaries of Prabhupada's own teachings, which I accept as authoritative.

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For brevity and simplicity, I have treated these two posts as a single article and called it *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* or simply *The Article*.

## **Śrīla Prabhupāda on the Draupadī Incident**

Śrīla Prabhupāda in his comments on Śrīmad Bhāgavatam writes substantially that the attempted disrobing of Draupadī took place. In *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article*, we encounter a rather surprising statement, "I seriously wonder if this incident took place, based on evidence from the Bhāgavatam . . . There is not a word about disrobing, nor about Yudhiṣṭhira gambling her."

Śrīla Prabhupāda also writes about the Draupadī incident in his purports to Bhagavad-gītā and explains it in great detail in numerous lectures.

Here is an indicative, but not necessarily an exhaustive, list of these references:

1. BG 1.11 Purport
2. BG 11.49 Purport
3. SB 1.8.24 Purport
4. SB 1.13.3-4 Purport
5. SB 1.15.16 Purport
6. SB 2.8.20 Purport
7. SB 3.1.43 Purport
8. BG 1.36 Lecture, London, July 26, 1973
9. SB 1.5.18 Lecture, New Vrindavan, June 22, 1969
10. SB 1.8.23 Lecture, Mayapur, October 3, 1974
11. SB 1.8.24 Lecture, Los Angeles, April 16, 1973
12. SB 1.8.24 Lecture, Mayapur, October 4 1974
13. SB 1.8.25 Lecture, Los Angeles, April 17, 1973
14. SB 1.8.43 Lecture, Los Angeles, May 5, 1973
15. SB 1.8.44 Lecture, Mayapur, October 24, 1974
16. SB 1.15.50 Lecture, Los Angeles, December 27, 1973
17. CC Madhya-lila 20.118-119 Lecture, New York, November 23, 1966
18. General Lecture, London, September 14, 1969

In his public lectures, Śrīla Prabhupāda, as the recognized ācārya of the world, explained the revealed scriptures<sup>1</sup>. An adaptation of some of these lectures where he describes the

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<sup>1</sup> As stated in *Our Original Position*, published by ISKCON GBC Press, page 158.

Draupadī incident feature as chapters seven and eight in the book *Teachings of Queen Kuntī*, published during Śrīla Prabhupāda’s physical presence on the planet.

We gather from a close examination of these references from his books and lectures that Śrīla Prabhupāda, our Founder-Ācārya, an eternal associate of the Lord, the general of Lord Caitanya’s saṅkīrtana army empowered to spread Kṛṣṇa consciousness in every town and village of the world, has thoroughly presented, with unmistakable certainty, that the attempted disrobing of Draupadī took place.

And yet strangely, *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* finds it admissible to raise a serious doubt whether this Draupadī incident took place.

## **Evidence from Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta**

The assertion in *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* that the absence of a single word such as “disrobing” or “Yudhiṣṭhira’s gambling” in reference to the Draupadī incident, constitutes lack of evidence from Bhāgavatam, does not hold up when we examine the hermeneutical precedent set by the great liberated ācāryas of the past, both in our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line and other bona fide Vaiṣṇava sampradāyas. In scriptural texts where specific literal words may seem absent, the commentaries of the great liberated ācāryas convey the factual meaning of the texts. The existence of specific literal words is not the hermeneutical standard to determine the presence or lack of evidence of any incident in the Bhāgavatam or other Vedic literatures. The commentaries of the great liberated ācāryas on its texts ascertain the presence or lack of such evidence.

Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta by Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī is an essential book about devotees, devotional service and Kṛṣṇa.

Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his purport to Śrī Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi 5.203), explains:

Śrī Sanātana Gosvāmī Prabhu, the teacher of the science of devotional service, wrote several books, of which the Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta is very famous; anyone who wants to know about the subject matter of devotees, devotional service, and Kṛṣṇa must read this book.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in his comments on Śrī Brahma-saṁhitā (5.2), remarks that Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta “embodies the final essence of all the books of instructions.”

HG Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu in his preface to his translation of Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta notes:

Śrī Rūpa Gosvāmī, who regarded his elder brother Śrīla Sanātana as his spiritual master, acknowledged indebtedness to Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta

in his definitive textbook on devotional service, Bhakti-rasāmṛta-sindhu (1.4.13):

śrīmat-prabhu-padāmbhojaiḥ sarvā bhāgavatāmṛte  
vyaktī-kṛtāsti gūḍhāpi bhakti-siddhānta-mādhurī

“Our divine master has revealed in his Bhāgavatāmṛta all the sweet conclusions of devotional philosophy, including its most confidential secrets.”

Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 1.5.39 with HG Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu’s translation reads:

śrī-draupadī ca hariṇā svayam eva rāja-  
sūyādiṣṭsava-vareṣv abhiṣikta-keśā  
sambodhyate priya-sakhīty avitātri-putra-  
duḥśāsanādi-bhayato hr̥ta-sarva-śokā

“Lord Hari personally sanctified Śrī Draupadī’s hair during the Rājasūya sacrifice and other special festivals. He would call Draupadī ‘dear friend.’ He relieved her of fear of Atri’s son Durvāsā and fear of others, including Duḥśāsana. He removed all her sorrow.”

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī describes the attempted disrobing of Draupadī twice in his Dig-darśinī commentary on this text. HG Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu combines these two comments of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī<sup>2</sup> into one and summarizes it as:

He [Kṛṣṇa] protected her [Draupadī] in frightening situations involving Durvāsā Muni, the temperamental son of Atri, and saved her from the shame of being disrobed by Duḥśāsana in the royal assembly.

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī is both the author and commentator<sup>3</sup> of this great work, Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta. We note that Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī does not mention a word about disrobing, nor about Yudhiṣṭhira gambling Draupadī in text 1.5.39 of Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta. Yet in his commentary, he mentions the disrobing incident twice. Here we encounter a crucial hermeneutical principle stated earlier in this section of the paper. Scriptural authors may not use specific literal words in their texts to refer to specific incidents.

<sup>2</sup> Dig-darśinī commentary on 1.5.39: hariṇā svayam evābhiṣiktāḥ sva-hastena mantra-pūta-jala-kalasaḥ snāpitāḥ keśāḥ yasyāḥ sā. he priya-sakhi ity evaṁ sambodhyate āmantryate. atri-putro durvāsās. tasmād yad-bhayaṁ dharma-rājena nimantritasya sa-śiṣya-gaṇasya tasya bhojanārthaṁ sūrya-vara-prāpta-nija-bhojanānantara-tyaktāna-pātre 'nnāsad-bhāvāt. **duḥśāsanāc ca sabhā-madhye vastrākarṣaṇādinā yad-bhayaṁ tasmāt avitā rakṣitā ca yā.** svayam āgatya sthālī-lagna-śākāna-prāśana-mātreṇa śiṣya-gaṇa-sahita-durvāsasas tṛpti-jananāt kṣud-abhāvenādhika-pāka-doṣa-bhītyā sadyo 'pasāraṇāt **sabhā-madhye ca vastrānantyāpādanāt.** kim ca hr̥tā nāsītā duḥśāsana-ghātanādinā sarve śokāḥ sabhā-madhyānayanādi-sambhavāḥ yasyāḥ sā.

<sup>3</sup> Clear from the introductory remark in Dig-darśinī commentary on 1.1.1: abhipretārtha-vargāṇām eka-deśasya darśanāt; dig-darśinīti nāmnīyaṁ **svayam ṭīkāpi likhyate.**

We understand the intended meaning of their texts only through the commentaries of great liberated acaryas. Here, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, the author of Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta, himself explains the intended meaning of his texts in his Dig-darśinī commentary. A literal reading of scripture without reference to its commentaries by great liberated ācāryas leads to confusion as in the case of *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article*. In it, we observe a serious doubt springing forth from a literal reading of Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, ignoring the commentaries of the great liberated ācāryas.

## Evidence from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam

In accordance with the hermeneutical principle elucidated in the previous section of this paper, here in this section, I seek to examine Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam 1.8.24 with the commentaries of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī to confirm the presence or absence of evidence in the Bhāgavatam about the attempted disrobing of Draupadī.

In SB 1.8.24, Queen Kuntī glorifies Kṛṣṇa who protected her and her family “from the vicious assembly”. This appears both in the Sanskrit text and its translation:

viṣān mahāgneḥ puruṣāda-darśanād  
asat-sabhāyā vana-vāsa-kṛcchrataḥ  
mṛdhe mṛdhe 'neka-mahārathāstrato  
drauṇy-astrataś cāsma hare 'bhirakṣitāḥ

"My dear Kṛṣṇa, Your Lordship has protected us from a poisoned cake, from a great fire, from cannibals, *from the vicious assembly*, from sufferings during our exile in the forest and from the battle where great generals fought. And now You have saved us from the weapon of Aśvatthāmā."

Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport to this text describes this incident:

Once Draupadī was dragged out, and attempts were made to insult her by stripping her naked in the vicious assembly of the Kurus. The Lord saved Draupadī by supplying an immeasurable length of cloth, and Duryodhana's party failed to see her naked.

Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in his Bhāgavatam commentary known as Krama-sandarbha states in reference to this text:

asat-sabhāyā **draupadī-vastra-vardhanādi**

(Kṛṣṇa protected the Pāṇḍavas) from the vicious assembly by **increasing Draupadī's clothes, etc.**

This prayer in text 1.8.24 by Queen Kuntī in glorification of Kṛṣṇa who protected them “from the vicious assembly” is conclusive evidence from the Bhāgavatam of the attempted disrobing of Draupadī as confirmed by both Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī.

This is an application of the standard hermeneutical principle discussed in the previous section of this paper. It is elegantly simple for the simple. The factual meaning of śāstra is revealed through the great liberated ācāryas. The order in which we approach the commentaries of the great liberated acaryas constitutes another important hermeneutical principle which I have adopted in my analysis of SB 1.8.24. We first examine our Founder-Ācārya, Śrīla Prabhupāda’s comments on any given statement in śāstra and then through his eyes, we examine the comments of the previous ācāryas on the same statement. *Our Original Position*, published by ISKCON GBC Press confirms:

In fact, we must see the previous ācāryas through Prabhupāda. We cannot jump over Prabhupāda and then look back at him through the eyes of the previous ācāryas.<sup>4</sup>

Yet considering the complex explanations about the Draupadī incident in the *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article*, I intend to deal further with one of its statements in reference to the Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, “There is not a word about disrobing, nor about Yudhiṣṭhira gambling her”

## **Evidence from Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata**

Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura, the author of Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata, is the incarnation of Śrīla Vyāsadeva in Caitanya-līlā. Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī explains:

caitanya-līlāra vyāsa—dāsa-vṛndāvana  
tānra ājñāya karoṇ tānra ucchiṣṭa carvaṇa

Actually the authorized compiler of the pastimes of Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu is Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa, the incarnation of Vyāsadeva. Only upon his orders am I trying to chew the remnants of food that he has left. (CC Madhya 1.13)

We discover that while Śrīla Vyāsadeva does not use the specific word “disrobing” in the Bhāgavatam, he uses that precise word in the Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata in his incarnation as Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura. This confirms that Śrīla Vyāsadeva accepts the attempted disrobing of Draupadī.

Śrīla Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī further states about Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata:

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<sup>4</sup> Page 163.

manuṣye racite nāre aiche grantha dhanya  
vṛndāvana-dāsa-mukhe vaktā śrī-caitanya

The subject matter of this book is so sublime that it appears that Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu has personally spoken through the writings of Śrī Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura. (CC Ādi 8.39)

Śrīla Prabhupāda in his comments on this text writes:

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī confirms that what Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura wrote was actually spoken by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and he simply repeated it.

Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura describes the attempted disrobing of Draupadī in three verses of Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata:

**sabhā-madhye draupadī karite vivasana  
ānila pāpiṣṭha duryodhana-duḥśāsana**

saṅkaṭe paḍiyā kṛṣṇa tomā saṅarilā  
smaṛaṇa-prabhāve tumi vastre praveśilā

**"Once the sinful brothers Duryodhana and Duḥśāsana brought Draupadī to disrobe her in the royal assembly.** Finding herself in that dangerous condition, she remembered You. By the influence of her remembrance, You entered into her cloth.

smaṛaṇa-prabhāve vastra haila ananta  
tathāpiha nā jānila se saba duranta

"As a result of her remembrance the cloth became unlimited, yet those miscreants did not understand why. (CB Madhya 10.64-66)

These verses appear in the prayers of the stalwart Nāmācārya of our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line, Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura, to Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu in His Maha-prakāśa-līlā.

At the end of those prayers, Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura, offers a much sought after treasure, to his readers:

haridāsa-stuti-vara śune yei jana  
avaśya milibe tāre kṛṣṇa-prema-dhana

Anyone who hears the prayers of Haridāsa and the benediction he received [from Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu] will certainly obtain the treasure of Kṛṣṇa-prema. (CB Madhya 10.103)

For the record, the description of the failed attempt to disrobe Draupadī is an element of a prayer that can grant us Kṛṣṇa-prema.

Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in his comments on these verses from Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata refers us to the Sabhā-parva of Mahābhārata for a detailed description of the Draupadī incident. This reference to the Mahābhārata leads us to the next section of this paper.

## **The Position of Mahābhārata**

Śrīpāda Madhvācārya physically met Śrīla Vyāsadeva, the author of Mahābhārata, in the Himalayas and became his direct disciple. He was informed by Śrīla Vyāsadeva that the Mahābhārata had been tampered with and that he should write a book that presents an outline of the Mahābhārata. In obedience to that direct order from Śrīla Vyāsadeva, Śrīpāda Madhvācārya wrote a book titled *Mahābhārata-tātparyā-nirṇaya*, "Ascertaining the purport of Mahābhārata". We ascertain what incidents happened in the Mahābhārata from this book.

Śrīpāda Madhvācārya writes:

grantho 'py evaṁ vilulitaḥ kim v artho deva-durgamaḥ  
kalāv evaṁ vyākulite nirṇayāya pracoditaḥ

hariṇā nirṇayān vacmi vijānaṁs tat-prasādataḥ  
śāstrāntarāṇi sañjānan vedāṁś cāsya prasādataḥ

Even (the text of this) scripture, what to speak of its purport which is difficult to be approached even by the devas, has been tampered with in this manner. Thus, when (this scripture's text) became confused in Kali-yuga, ordered by Lord Hari to ascertain (its content and conclusions), I state those ascertained (content and conclusions) clearly knowing them by His mercy, (and) fully knowing other scriptures and the Vedas by His mercy. (2.5-6)

deśe deśe tathā granthān dṛṣṭvā caiva pṛthag-vidhān  
yathā sa bhagavān vyāsaḥ sāksān nārāyaṇaḥ prabhuḥ

jaḡada bhāratādyeṣu tathā vakṣye tad-īkṣayā  
saṅkṣepāt sarva-śāstrārtham bhāratārthānusārataḥ

Moreover, having seen the scriptures of various types in various lands, with the help of knowledge granted by Him, I shall briefly state the purport of all scriptures in accordance with the purport of the Mahābhārata exactly corresponding to (the purport) the Supreme Lord

Vyāsa, Lord Nārāyaṇa Himself, spoke in the Mahābhārata and other scriptures. (2.7-8)

\* \* \*

**vikṛṣyamāṇe vasane** tu kṛṣṇā  
sasmāra kṛṣṇaṁ suviśeṣato 'pi  
tadānyad āsīd vasaṇaṁ ca tasyā  
divyaṁ susūkṣmaṁ kanakāvadātā

**punaḥ punaś caiva vikarṣamāṇe**  
**duḥśāsane 'nyāni ca tādrśāni**  
**babhūvur antaṁ na jagāma** pāpaḥ  
śrānto nyaṣīdat svinna-gātraḥ sabhāyām

**But when (her) cloth was pulled**, Kṛṣṇā specifically remembered Kṛṣṇa. At that time another cloth of hers, divine, very fine, golden and glaring, appeared. **Again and again, while Duḥśāsana was pulling (her cloth), other (clothes) similar (to it) appeared, (and) he never reached its end.** The exhausted sinner, (his) body sweating, (then) sat down in the midst of the assembly. (21.347-348)

\* \* \*

ānandatīrthākhyā-muniḥ supūrṇa-  
prajñābhido grantham imaṁ cakāra  
nārāyaṇenābhihito badaryām  
tasyaiva śiṣyo jagad-eka-bhartuḥ

Commanded by Nārāyaṇa in Badarī, the sage named Ānandatīrtha known as the excellent Pūrṇaprajña, the disciple of that very master of the universe, has composed this book. (32.258)

While on the one hand, *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* claims that the Mahābhārata has been tampered with on the authority of Śrīpāda Madhvācārya's statements in *Mahābhārata-tātparyā-nirṇaya*, it ignores, on the other hand, his explicit acceptance of the attempted disrobing of Draupadī in the same work. This is a case of "ardha-kukkuṭi-nyāya" or the logic of half-hen.

## **Evidence from the Previous Ācāryas**

When we attempt to consolidate the references from the great liberated ācāryas in connection with the Draupadī incident, a formidable list emerges:

- 1) Śrīpāda Madhvācārya in Mahābhārata-tātparyā-nirṇaya 21.347-348

- 2) Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura in Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata Madhya 10.64-66
- 3) Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī in his Dig-darśinī commentary on Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 1.5.39
- 4) Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī in his Krama-sandarbha commentary on SB 1.8.24
- 5) Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura in his comments on Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata Madhya 10.64-66.

There is not even a remote suggestion from any of the other great liberated ācāryas in our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line that the attempted disrobing of Draupadī did not take place. We note that Śrīla Prabhupāda in his purport of CC Ādi 8.34 instructs us that acceptance of Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata indicates acceptance of the disciplic succession:

This acceptance of Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata by Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī indicates his acceptance of the disciplic succession. A writer of transcendental literature never tries to surpass the previous ācāryas.

So it is evident that nobody in our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line has doubted any of the statements of Śrīla Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura in his Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata.

## **Evidence from BBT Commentary**

The BBT Bhāgavatam completion team, headed by HH Hṛdayānanda dāsa Gosvāmī acknowledges the reality of the attempted disrobing of Draupadī in their comments on two Bhāgavatam texts:

SB 10.78.16 purport:

In Śrī Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī, Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary on the Tenth Canto, we find the following sequential list of pastimes: First was the journey on the occasion of the solar eclipse, then the Rājasūya assembly, then the gambling match and attempted disrobing of Draupadī, then the Pāṇḍavas' exile to the forest, then the killing of Śālva and Dantavakra, then Kṛṣṇa's visit to Vṛndāvana, and finally the winding up of the Vṛndāvana pastimes.

SB 11.1.2 purport:

The Pāṇḍavas were sent to a house of lac, which was later burned to the ground. They were administered poison, and their chaste wife Draupadī was publicly insulted when her hair was pulled and an attempt was made to strip her naked. Throughout these dangers, Lord

Śrī Kṛṣṇa constantly protected the Pāṇḍavas, who were fully surrendered to Him and who knew no shelter other than Him.<sup>5</sup>

## Śāstra, Sādhu, Guru and Gaurāṅga

In connection with the Draupadī incident, I have provided references with the specific word 'disrobing' from Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata and Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya, along with references without the specific word 'disrobing' from Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam and Śrī Bṛhad-Bhāgavatāmṛta but with confirmatory commentary by Śrīla Prabhupāda, Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī. That forms a total of four scriptural references. I have provided references from five previous ācāryas and numerous, detailed references from Śrīla Prabhupāda, our Founder-Ācārya. These thoroughly fulfill the śāstra, sadhu, Founder-Ācārya criteria to establish that the attempted disrobing of Draupadī took place. That's not all.

In Śrī Caitanya-bhāgavata, the Supreme Personality of Godhead, Śrī Caitanya Mahaprabhu is highly pleased with the prayers offered to Him by Śrīla Haridāsa Ṭhākura. In these prayers, among other things, the Ṭhākura glorifies the Lord for protecting Draupadī from being disrobed by supplying unlimited cloth. Furthermore Śrīla Prabhupāda in his comments on Caitanya-caritāmṛta (Ādi 8.39) writes:

Kṛṣṇadāsa Kavirāja Gosvāmī confirms that what Vṛndāvana dāsa Ṭhākura wrote was actually spoken by Lord Caitanya Mahāprabhu, and he simply repeated it.

We then have, not merely Śāstra, Sādhu and Guru references, but Śāstra, Sādhu, Guru and Gaurāṅga references.

## Philosophical Speculation and Mental Speculation

In the preface to the book *Our Original Position*, HH Hṛdayānanda dāsa Gosvāmī writes:

Śrīla Prabhupāda often stated, and indeed wrote to me in a letter, that we should try to understand Vedic knowledge as follows: Lord Kṛṣṇa says that He is the taste in water. Now we should try to understand *how* Lord Kṛṣṇa is the taste in water. That is called philosophical speculation. On the other hand, mental speculation, which is against the principle of bhakti, is to speculate on **whether** or **if** Lord Kṛṣṇa is the taste in water.

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<sup>5</sup> A point may be raised that in the sequential list of pastimes in the original Sanskrit text of Śrī Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī averred to in the BBT team's comments on SB 10.78.16, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī does not specifically mention the attempted disrobing of Draupadī. While that is true, there is no reason to consider that the comments of the BBT team headed by HH Hṛdayānanda dāsa Gosvāmī are in need of revision as far as text SB 10.78.16 is concerned, since Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī has accepted the attempted disrobing of Draupadī in his comments on Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 1.5.39.

Similarly, the members of ISKCON, who live perpetually at the feet of Śrīla Prabhupāda, may speculate *how* Śrīla Prabhupāda's statements are true, but they may not challenge his statements, or claim that they are false. This is precisely what it means to accept Śrīla Prabhupāda as the Founder-ācārya of ISKCON . . . The proper spiritual culture is to submissively accept the statements of our Founder-Ācārya as fact, and then try, through devotion and service, to realize the purport of his statements.<sup>6</sup>

This is reconfirmed later in the book, in its Eleventh Chapter, titled "The Boundaries of Interpretation":

Śrīla Prabhupāda said that a Vaiṣṇava may engage in "philosophical speculation." He gave an example of this:

"For example, we know from Bhagavad-gītā that Kṛṣṇa says He is the taste in water. Now try to understand just how Lord Kṛṣṇa is the taste in water, that is the high-class education." (Letter to Hṛdayānanda dāsa Gosvāmī, July 9, 1972)

In mental speculation one speculates about **if** Lord Kṛṣṇa is actually the taste in water, whereas in philosophical speculation one simply tries to understand *how* Lord Kṛṣṇa is the taste in water. Similarly, a Vaiṣṇava follower of Śrīla Prabhupāda may speculate on how all of Prabhupāda's statements are true. But when we speculate that some of the statements are not true, this is a different category of speculation.<sup>7</sup>

*The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article*, seriously doubts **if** the attempted disrobing of Draupadī took place. This is "mental speculation, which is against the principle of bhakti" or "different category of speculation". That is eminently clear.

A little further in *The Article*, it gets bizarre and ludicrous:

I am confident that I am faithfully serving Prabhupāda, and whatever liberties I take are within the boundaries of Prabhupāda's own teachings, which I accept as authoritative.

This can be aptly dismissed with an insight from the Eleventh Chapter of *Our Original Position*:

There is a saying in Brazil that one cannot suck sugarcane and whistle at the same time.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Emphasis partially mine.

<sup>7</sup> Emphasis partially mine.

<sup>8</sup> Page 168.