

The Real Dharmarāja

By

Acintya Caitanya dāsa

Completed on September 26, 2013

Commemorating the arrival of Śrīla Prabhupāda in USA

*This paper is a sequel to my previous paper titled *The Draupadī Incident*. I highly recommend that you kindly read that paper before you proceed further.*

The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article has far more shocking and dangerous elements in it than a serious doubt about the attempted disrobing of Draupadī. It has an attempt to impertinently surpass Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous ācāryas and radical, invective assertions about Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira who gambled away Draupadī. While the previous paper thoroughly examines and establishes the attempted disrobing of Draupadī as a fact with references from Śrīla Prabhupāda, previous ācāryas, śāstra and Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu, this paper confronts the impertinence of attempting to surpass Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous ācāryas and counters the radical, invective assertions about Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira who gambled away his wife.

Please note that while a serious doubt about the Draupadī incident, found in *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* falls into the category of “mental speculation which is against the principle of Bhakti”, invective assertions about a great eternal associate of the Lord, Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, who gambled away Draupadī, fall into the category of the mad elephant offense which spoils the practice of Bhakti.

Śrīla Prabhupāda on the Pāṇḍavas

Śrīla Prabhupāda explains that the Pāṇḍavas who are eternal associates of the Lord or His constant eternal companions descend from the spiritual world whenever the Lord descends. Their sufferings in their earthly pastimes including the loss of their chaste wife Draupadī by Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the Dharmarāja in a gambling match, were never due to their past misdeeds but due to the inconceivable plan of the Lord to teach the world by teaching the devotee. This can be gleaned from the direct explanations of Śrīla Prabhupāda in the next three sections of this paper.

The Pāṇḍavas as Eternal Associates of the Lord

The constant companions of Lord Kṛṣṇa, such as Uddhava, are all liberated souls, and they descended along with Lord Kṛṣṇa to this material world to fulfill the mission of the Lord. The Pāṇḍavas are also liberated souls who descended along with Lord Kṛṣṇa to serve Him in

His transcendental pastimes on this earth. As stated in the Bhagavad-gītā (4.8), the Lord and His eternal associates, who are also liberated souls like the Lord, come down on this earth at certain intervals. (SB 1.14.32-33 Purport)

The pastimes of the Lord, beginning from His birth at the prison house of Kāmsa up to the mausala-lilā at the end, all move one after another in all the universes, just as the clock hand moves from one point to another. And in such pastimes His associates like the Pāṇḍavas and Bhīṣma are constant eternal companions. (SB 1.9.39 Purport)

The Sufferings of the Pāṇḍavas

Before winning the Battle of Kurukṣetra, all the Pāṇḍavas were put into many dangers, as already described in the previous verses. They were given poison, they were put into a house of lac that was later set afire, and sometimes they were even confronted with great man-eating demons. They lost their kingdom, they lost their wife, they lost their prestige, and they were exiled to the forest. But throughout all those dangers, Kṛṣṇa was there. When the Kauravas were trying to strip Draupadī naked, Kṛṣṇa was there supplying cloth to protect her honor. Kṛṣṇa was always there.

Therefore, when the Pāṇḍavas went to see their grandfather, Bhīṣmadeva, on his deathbed, Bhīṣmadeva began to cry. "These boys, my grandsons, are all very pious," he said. "Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the oldest of the brothers, is the most pious person. He is even called Dharmarāja, the king of religion. Bhīma and Arjuna are both devotees, and they are such powerful heroes that they can kill thousands of men. Their wife, Draupadī, is directly the goddess of fortune, and it has been enjoined that wherever she is, there will be no scarcity of food. Thus they all form a wonderful combination, and moreover, Lord Kṛṣṇa is always with them. But still they are suffering." Thus he began to cry, saying, "I do not know what is Kṛṣṇa's arrangement, because such pious devotees are also suffering." (TQK 8 Purport to 1.8.25)

The Cause of Pāṇḍavas' Suffering

In SB 1.9.16-17, Bhīṣma instructs Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira:

na hy asya karhacid rājan pumān veda vidhitsitam
yad vijijñāsayā yuktā muhyanti kavayo'pi hi

“O King, no one can know the plan of the Lord [Śrī Kṛṣṇa]. Even though great philosophers inquire exhaustively, they are bewildered.”

PURPORT (excerpt): The bewilderment of Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira over his past sinful acts and the resultant sufferings, etc., is completely negated by the great authority Bhīṣma (one of the twelve authorized persons). Bhīṣma wanted to impress upon Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira that since time immemorial no one, including such demigods as Śiva and Brahmā, could ascertain the real plan of the Lord. So what can we understand about it? It is useless also to inquire about it. Even the exhaustive philosophical inquiries of sages cannot ascertain the plan of the Lord. The best policy is simply to abide by the orders of the Lord without argument. The sufferings of the Pāṇḍavas were never due to their past deeds.

tasmād idam daiva-tantram vyavasya bharatarṣabha
tasyānuvihito'nāthā nātha pāhi prajāḥ prabho

“O best among the descendants of Bharata [Yudhiṣṭhira], I maintain, therefore, that all this is within the plan of the Lord. Accepting the inconceivable plan of the Lord, you must follow it. You are now the appointed administrative head, and, my lord, you should now take care of those subjects who are now rendered helpless.”

PURPORT (excerpt): The popular saying is that a housewife teaches the daughter-in-law by teaching the daughter. Similarly, the Lord teaches the world by teaching the devotee. The devotee does not have to learn anything new from the Lord because the Lord teaches the sincere devotee always from within. Whenever, therefore, a show is made to teach the devotee, as in the case of the teachings of Bhagavad-gītā, it is for teaching the less intelligent men. A devotee's duty, therefore, is to ungrudgingly accept tribulations from the Lord as a benediction.

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī and Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura on the Pāṇḍavas

Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura refers to Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira as bhagavan-nitya-parikara or an eternal associate of the Lord in his comments on SB 1.15.42.¹ He confirms Śrīla Prabhupāda's teachings on the Pāṇḍavas in his comments on SB 1.9.16² and SB 1.9.17³.

¹ tathā hi brahmaṇaḥ kṛṣṇasyaiva jīvo jīvasyaiva vyaṣṭi-māyā tasyā eva guṇa-trayaṁ guṇatrayasyaiva pañca-bhūtātmako dehaḥ, dehasyaiva mṛtyur mṛtyor evāpānaḥ apānasyaiva prāṇas tasyaiva manaḥ manasa eva indriyāṇi indriyāṇām eva viṣayā rājyādi-bhogāḥ teṣāṁ ca bhoktā samprati parīkṣid eva na tu aham iti vicārayāmāsa | kintu **bhagavan-nitya-parikaratvān** nitya-vigrahāṇām api tadānīm ātmānam prākṛta-śārīram matvaivāyaṁ vicāro'py akiñcit-kara eveti jñeyam.

Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī delves deeply into the life of the Pāṇḍavas with an outstanding and exceptional description in his Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta. In a conversation with Śrī Nārada in Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 1.4.75, Śrī Hanumān states in praise of the Pāṇḍavas:

sa yeṣāṃ bālyatas tat-tad-viṣādy-āpad-gaṇeraṇāt
dhairyaṃ dharmam yaśo jñānam bhaktim premāpy adarśayat

By sending poison and many other calamities, one after another, to trouble the Pāṇḍavas from their childhood, the Lord deliberately showed their determination, religion, fame, wisdom, devotion, and ecstatic love. (BB 1.4.75)

COMMENTARY: As the invisible Supersoul, Lord Kṛṣṇa arranged for the Pāṇḍavas to undergo many troubles. He did this, however, only to broadcast their glories forever throughout the world. The Lord's pure devotees never perish, and what seems to be their suffering in this world is only for their benefit and glorification.⁴

A little further in BB 1.4.81, Śrī Hanumān continues:

teṣāṃ apad-gaṇā eva sattamāḥ syuḥ su-sevitāḥ
ye vidhāya prabhuṃ vyagraṃ sadyaḥ saṅgamayanti taiḥ

All the calamities that befell the Pāṇḍavas were most auspicious and desirable because those calamities made the Personality of Godhead anxious to join the Pāṇḍavas quickly.

COMMENTARY: Whenever Kṛṣṇa heard that the Pāṇḍavas were in danger, He would want to drop whatever He was doing and go at once

² tarhy atra kim nirdhārayāmi? sāmānyatas tāvad ayaṃ siddhāntaḥ sarva-vādi-sammato yat kṛṣṇasya cikīrṣitam anyathā-kartuṃ na ko'pi samarthas tac cikīrṣitam kim iti adyāpi ko'pi na veti? ity āha—na hy asyeti. karhicid api kāle ko'pi pumān brahmabhavādiḥ ko'pi na veda ahaṃ ko varāka iti bhāvaḥ. nanu ko'pi mā jānātu, jijñāsā tu avaśyam eva jāyate. tatrāsmāsu duḥkha-dānam eva kim cikīrṣitam? sukha-dānam eva vā, ubhaya-dānam eva vā? tatrādyam na bhakta-vātsalya-guṇasya lopānaucityāt. dvitīyam api na adṛṣṭatvād eva. tṛtīyam api na tat-sauhārda-lopāpatteḥ. tarhi jijñāsām api naiva kartum uciteti vinirṇayann āha—yad vijijñāsayeti. yuktā vivekino'pi kavayaḥ sarva-śāstra-jñā api moham eva prāpnuvanti siddhāntālābhād iti bhāvaḥ. atra bhīṣmasya mahā-vijñasyoktau kavaya iti muhyanti iti padābhyāṃ **yudhiṣṭhirādayo'pi bhagavad-bhaktāḥ prārabdham bhuñjate iti matam parāstam.**

³ idam sukha-duḥkhādikaṃ daiva-tantram īśvarādīnam eva vyavasya niścītya kintu tad-vidhīsitasya durjñeyatokteḥ **sva-bhaktāya tat-pradānādikaṃ durjñeya-prayojanakam** ity api niścītya tasya kṛṣṇasya anuvihito'nugataḥ hi gatau anāthāḥ prajāḥ pāhi.

⁴ tad-anugraham eva vivṛṇoti sa iti dvābhyām. sa mahā-prabhuḥ bālyataḥ bālyād ārabhya tat-tad-anirvacanīyam bahutaram vā yad-viṣa-dānādi-rūpasya āpad-gaṇasya īraṇam preraṇam tasmāt tad-dvārety arthaḥ. teṣāṃ pāṇḍavānām dhairyādikaṃ adarśayat prakāṭicakāra lokeṣu vikhyāpitavān ity arthaḥ. tādrśeṣu mahāpatsv api dhairyādi-vṛtteḥ. evaṃ **teṣāṃ mātmya-bhara-prakāṭanārtham bhagavataiva teṣu tat-tad-āpadaḥ preritāḥ; kuto'nyathā, tādrśeṣu mahātmasu tat-tat-sambhavaneti bhāvaḥ.**

to help them. And since the Pāṇḍavas' misfortune was auspicious, how much more auspicious was their good fortune! Kṛṣṇa helped the brothers kill Jarāsandha and then washed the feet of everyone at Yudhiṣṭhira's Rājasūya sacrifice. So who can adequately describe the glory of the Pāṇḍavas' loving exchanges with Kṛṣṇa? Before, Hanumān had said that the Pāṇḍavas' troubles were not real, that they were only a show arranged by Kṛṣṇa to advertise the Pāṇḍavas' steadfastness and other saintly qualities. Now Hanumān speaks differently. Even taking for granted that the calamities were real, as they seemed to ordinary eyes, those troubles brought the Pāṇḍavas the greatest good fortune.⁵

Salve of Love

The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article notes:

In the Mahabharata 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 Mahabharata. He is officially Dharma-rajā, but no one, including Draupadī, 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. Draupadī begs for protection from the lecherous Kicaka during the Pāṇḍavas' incognito stay in Virat. Yudhisthira insults Draupadī 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 Dharama-rajā really is Dharma-rajā, and that's why Kṛṣṇa enthroned him.

This is not a mere narration of specific events in the Mahābhārata. There are several interpretative elements intertwined in it such as "he practically drops from the list of heroes in the rest of the Mahabharata", "To make matters worse, Yudhisthira completely fails in the one chance he has later to redeem himself" and "Yudhisthira insults Draupadī" and so on. These interpretative elements need critical analysis. I intend to do that at a later stage, if necessary, in a different paper.

⁵ susevitāḥ paramopāsītāḥ sattamāḥ sādhu-varāḥ syur abhavann ity arthaḥ. tatra hetum āha--ye āpad-gaṇāḥ prabhuṃ vyagraṃ anyāśeṣa-kṛtya-tyājanena teṣāṃ nikaṭāgamane parama-sambhrāntaṃ kṛtvā. taiḥ pāṇḍavaiḥ saha, yathā mahānto bhagavat-prāptiṃ kārayanti tathā teṣāṃ āpad-gaṇā api. sampadāṃ tu mahimā kena varṇyatām iti bhāvaḥ. sa ca rājasūyādaḥ jarāsandha-vadhābhyāgata-pādāvanejanādinā prasiddha eva. **pūrvam tu teṣāṃ āpad-gaṇās tattvato na santi, dhairyādi-prakāṣanārtham bhagavad-icchaiva bhavāntīty uktam, idānīm ca loka-dṛṣṭyā santu nāma, tathāpi parama-sat-phala-pradā eveti viśeṣaḥ.**

We note that *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* spares little sarcasm in asserting that Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira of Mahābhārata who gambled his wife is not the real Dharmarāja and then questions his eligibility to ascend the throne. *The Article* further suggests that the real Dharmarāja did not gamble his wife and it is this real Dharmarāja that Kṛṣṇa installed on the throne.

This conjecture falls apart on the discovery of a complete agreement between our Founder-Ācārya, Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous ācāryas like Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī in their analysis of the inconceivable workings of the Lord in the life of the Pāṇḍavas. That renders it fairly simple to grasp that Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, though being the Dharmarāja, gambled away his wife.

For the record Śrīpāda Madhvācārya describes the Kīcaka incident in his *Mahābhārata-tātparya-nirṇaya* 23.22-24⁶ and Śrīla Prabhupāda confirms it in his purport of SB 1.13.3-4:

When the Pāṇḍavas lived incognito in the palace of Virāṭa, Kīcaka was attracted by her exquisite beauty, and by arrangement with Bhīma the devil was killed and she was saved.

The speculative interpretation in *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* that Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira of Mahābhārata completely failed in the one chance that he had later to redeem himself in the court of King Virāṭa after having lost Draupadī earlier in a gambling match is in opposition to the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda. The Pāṇḍavas are forever outside the ambit of fall and redemption. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, who gambled away his wife, is an eternal associate of the Lord and his heart constantly burns in the fire of Kṛṣṇa-prema⁷. It takes an eye tinged with the salve of love to behold his true glory. Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous ācāryas, through their eyes enriched with the salve of love, have extolled the glories of the Pāṇḍavas, specifically the Lord’s inconceivable handling of their lives to deliberately show their determination, religion, fame, wisdom, devotion and ecstatic love. The privilege of that vision, offered to us with abundant kindness through their eyes, confers eternal clarity. The choice to keenly embrace it or discard it, is solely ours.

Maryādā-vyatikrama

Śrīla Prabhupāda describes the principle of maryādā-vyatikrama in his purport of SB 3.4.26:

⁶ balāt tayā preritā tad-grhāya yadāgamat tena haste grhītā; vidhūya tena prādravat sā sabhāyai smṛtvāditya-sthaṁ vāsudevaṁ pareśam. anudrutya inām pātayitvā padā sa santāḍayāmāsa tadā ravi-sthitah; nārāyaṇo heti-nāmaiva rakṣo nyayojat tad adṛśyaṁ samāgāt. vāyus tam āviśya tu kīcakam tam nyapātayat tām samīkṣayaiva bhīmaḥ; cukopa vṛkṣaṁ ca samīkṣyamāṇam tam vārayāmāsa yudhiṣṭhiro ’grajaḥ.

⁷ Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 1.4.116: **krṣṇa-premāgni**-dandahya-mānāntah-karaṇasya hi; kṣud-agni-vikalasyeva vāsaḥ-srak-candanādayaḥ: “Since **his heart always burns in the fire of love for Kṛṣṇa**, those garlands, fine garments, and sandalwood pulp attract him no more than they would attract a man afflicted by the fire of hunger.”

Although one may be well versed in the transcendental science, one should be careful about the offense of maryādā-vyatikrama, or impertinently surpassing a greater personality. According to scriptural injunction one should be very careful of transgressing the law of maryādā-vyatikrama because by so doing one loses his duration of life, his opulence, fame and piety and the blessings of all the world. . . . The Lord never tolerates the impertinence of maryādā-vyatikrama.

Our Original Position published by ISKCON GBC Press invokes this principle to refer to Vallabha Bhaṭṭa's attempt to impertinently surpass Śrīdhara Svāmī and then applies it to the attempts of two followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda to impertinently surpass Śrīla Prabhupāda on the jiva issue. In regard to the fault of these two followers, *Our Original Position* states:

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.⁸

The great fault of these two followers of Śrīla Prabhupāda was their attempt to impertinently surpass Śrīla Prabhupāda by invoking the previous ācāryas. However, *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* goes one step further and tries to impertinently surpass not just Śrīla Prabhupāda but the previous ācāryas as well by invoking a so-called literal reading of śāstra along with some "rational" analysis.

Again, for a reminder, Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī, who accepts the attempted disrobing of Draupadī, writes:

sa yeṣāṁ bālyatas tat-tad-viṣādy-āpad-gaṇeraṇāt
dhairyaṁ dharmam yaśo jñānam bhaktim premāpy adarśayat

By sending poison and many other calamities, one after another, to trouble the Pāṇḍavas from their childhood, the Lord deliberately showed their determination, religion, fame, wisdom, devotion, and ecstatic love. (BB 1.4.75)

Here's what Śrīla Prabhupāda explains:

The Pāṇḍavas were put into many dangers . . . they lost their wife . . . When the Kauravas were trying to strip Draupadī naked, Kṛṣṇa was there supplying cloth to protect her honor. Kṛṣṇa was always there. Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the oldest of the brothers, is the most pious person. He is even called Dharmarāja, the king of religion.⁹

⁸ Page 163.

⁹ *Teachings of Queen Kuntī*, Chapter 8.

And, here's what *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article*, states:

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?

That is a big leap over Śrīla Prabhupāda and Sanātana Gosvāmī. We clearly identify an opinion different from the opinion of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī.

Śrīla Prabhupāda writes in his purport of Cc Adi 12.9:

Any opinion different from the opinion of the spiritual master is useless.

When an article springs up in ISKCON with an opinion different from the opinion of Śrīla Prabhupāda and if that opinion is not swiftly and definitively purged out of the Kṛṣṇa consciousness movement, it sows the seed of an epistemological schism.

Fashionable Writing, the Paramparā System and Full Condemnation

Śrīla Prabhupāda, in his purport of CC Antya 7.134 writes:

The paramparā system does not allow one to deviate from the commentaries of the previous ācāryas. By depending upon the previous ācāryas, one can write beautiful commentaries. However, one cannot defy the previous ācāryas. The false pride that makes one think that he can write better than the previous ācāryas will make one's comments faulty. At the present moment it has become fashionable for everyone to write in his own way, but such writing is never accepted by serious devotees. Because of false pride, every scholar and philosopher wants to exhibit his learning by interpreting the śāstras, especially the Bhagavad-gītā and Śrīmad-Bhāgavatam, in his own way. This system of commenting in one's own way is fully condemned by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article fails to demonstrate either directly or indirectly that its assertions about Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, who gambled away his wife concur with the opinions of Śrīla Prabhupāda and any of the great liberated ācāryas, not even one of them. On the contrary, it defies the explanations of Śrīla Prabhupāda and Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī.

The last sentence in Śrīla Prabhupāda's purport of CC Antya 7.134 is pertinent to *The Article's* approach:

This system of commenting in one's own way is fully condemned by Śrī Caitanya Mahāprabhu.

An Avoidable Mad Elephant offense

The ignorance and refusal in *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* to accept Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, who gambled away his wife as the real Dharmarāja, combined with an attempt to depict him as a man fallen from Dharmic standards and unfit to ascend the throne, steers it into the dangerous territory of the great mad elephant offense at the lotus feet of an eternal associate of the Lord, albeit unknowingly.

It may be disputed that no mad elephant offense has been committed in *The Article* because of the belief stated in it that the real Dharmarāja is different, leading to the opposing conclusion that the person criticized in it is not the real Dharmarāja. The test of a belief lies in its convergence or lack of convergence with reality. A lack of convergence opens up the possibility of offenses. That's when we discover that *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* has gone awfully wrong. It distinctly emerges from the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous ācāryas that the person criticized in *The Article* is indeed the real Dharmarāja and an eternal associate of the Lord.

This dangerous offense has its origins in the rejection of the explicit statements of Śrīla Prabhupāda, our Founder-Ācārya, about Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira. A reckless venture outside the sacred territory of the teachings of Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous ācāryas was a grave impropriety and thus all offenses committed in the process, even if only unknowingly, were entirely avoidable. The damage has been done and one must be responsible for what one states in a published article.¹⁰ Furthermore, *The Article* misleads readers who trust its contents to commit the same offense, inflating it into a mass mad elephant offense.

Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira, who gambled away Draupadī is far above a mundane man or even a mundane hero who fell down from Dharmic standards, failed to redeem himself and was unfit to ascend the throne. He was always the Dharmarāja and an eternal associate of the Lord, notwithstanding his role in the Draupadī incident and in his presence in King Virāṭa's court during the Kīcaka incident. The consequence of this offense of dragging Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira down to a mundane status of being an ordinary man or even a fallen hero, is serious. There is nothing mundane about Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira or the Pāṇḍavas. In his paraphrase of Śrīla Sanātana Gosvāmī's commentary on Śrī Bṛhad-bhāgavatāmṛta 1.4.110, HG Gopīparāṇadhana Prabhu notes:

¹⁰ Cf. *Our Original Position*, page 167.

Simply to think that the Pāṇḍavas are materialists, even without saying anything against them, is a grave offense against pure Vaiṣṇavas, an offense from which the offender might never be able to recover.¹¹

Differences among Ācāryas

In Vaiṣṇava-sampradāyas, one great liberated ācārya may sometimes oppose the opinion of another great liberated ācārya. In our Gauḍīya Vaiṣṇava line, Śrīla Viśvanātha Cakravartī Ṭhākura disputed some of the explanations of Śrīla Jīva Gosvāmī concerning svakīyā-bhāva and parakīyā-bhāva. Śrīla Bhaktisiddhānta Sarasvatī Ṭhākura sheds light on this in his purport of Brahma-saṁhitā 5.37:

In fact Śrīpāda Jīva Gosvāmī has come to the true conclusion, and at the same time the finding of the opposing party is also inconceivably true. It is the vain empirical wranglings about wedded wifehood and concubinage which is false and full of specious verbosity. He who goes through the commentaries of Śrīpāda Jīva Gosvāmī and those of the opposing party with an impartial judgment cannot maintain his attitude of protest engendered by any real doubt. What the unalloyed devotee of the Supreme Lord says is all true and is independent of any consideration of unwholesome pros and cons. There is, however, the element of mystery in their verbal controversies. Those, whose judgment is made of mundane stuff, being unable to enter into the spirit of the all-loving controversies among pure devotees, due to their own want of unalloyed devotion, are apt to impute to the devotees their own defects of partisanship and opposing views. Commenting on the śloka of Rāsa-pañcādhyāyī, gopīnām tat-patīnām ca, etc., what Śrīpāda Sanātana Gosvāmī has stated conclusively in his Vaiṣṇava-toṣaṇī has been accepted with reverence by the true devotee Śrīpāda Viśvanātha Cakravartī without any protest.

The conclusion is that when one great liberated ācārya opposes another great liberated ācārya, both their opinions are simultaneously and inconceivably true. It is gravely erroneous to conclude that one of them has corrected the other. We note that the verbal controversies among great souls are all-loving and beyond the grasp of empiricism. The conclusion is not that a disciple may oppose his spiritual master who is a great liberated ācārya. The ācāryas may oppose the ācāryas. After all, Śrīla Prabhupāda stated that the entire Vedic culture is going on under the authority of the great ācāryas. So if someone presumes to oppose Śrīla Prabhupāda, that person must believe himself or herself to be the next ācārya, because who else but an ācārya could oppose an ācārya?¹²

¹¹ tān pāṇḍavān gārhashtyaṁ gr̥hashtatā tat-sambandhi-dharma-yuktān tatra ca sāmṛājyaṁ cakravartītvam̐ tatra vyāpṛtān tat-kṛtyānuṣṭhātīn matvā aparādhena āvṛto mā bhava. **tādṛṣeṣu mahattameṣu tathā-mananam evāparādhaḥ. sa ca kadāpi nāpayāti**, atas tādṛṣo mābhūr ity arthaḥ.

¹² Cf. *Our Original Position*, page 163.

Our Original Position remarks:

Indeed, because Śrīla Prabhupāda is our Founder-ācārya, we must reconcile everything to his statements and not change Prabhupāda to fit something else.¹³

Even self-effulgent ācāryas who may appear in the future within our movement do not have the authority to oppose Śrīla Prabhupāda. That is what it means to accept Śrīla Prabhupāda as the Founder-Ācārya of ISKCON.

Our Original Position further states:

Of course, this is not at all the first nor even the second time that someone has tried to persuade us . . . that Prabhupāda's specific teachings or style are no longer adequate for the current world situation. We have been told in the past that the dress style Prabhupāda gave us is no longer appropriate for spreading this movement. We have been told that we must now perform sādhanabhakti in the English language, or with a much greater emphasis on rasa, or that we must give up our attachment to the institutional framework of ISKCON and merge into the "wider world" of Vaiṣṇavism.¹⁴

Now we are told that we must go outside Śrīla Prabhupāda's books and the writings of all the previous ācāryas to get better answers than they gave us. A so-called literal reading of the Bhāgavatam along with "rational" analysis has thrown light on the actual reality concerning the Draupadī incident and the real Dharmarāja. What Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous ācāryas have taught us all along is in sudden need of revision and it is *The Draupadī and Dharmarāja Article* that we have to consult to gain a correct understanding of these realities after having received an imperfect answer from Śrīla Prabhupāda and the previous ācāryas. We have to abandon our well-founded faith in what has been revealed to us by Śrīla Prabhupāda and instead let *The Article* lead us to a correct understanding through its redeeming combination of so-called literal reading of śāstra invigorated by an (im)potent dose of "rational" analysis.¹⁵

¹³ *Our Original Position*, page 169.

¹⁴ *Our Original Position*, page 169.

¹⁵ Cf. *Our Original Position*, pages 165 and 170.