

**Coming Out to the Devotees at Gita-nagari**  
**An experiment in honesty and openness**

His Holiness Bhakti Tirtha Swami gave the following lecture on May 15, 2003, at the Gita-nagari farm community in Pennsylvania. Maharaja is seated on a saffron-colored chair in the temple room. He is surrounded by greenery and Sri Sri Radha-Damodara are to his left. He is wearing a white and lavender garland, and behind him is an open window from which the occasional cries of the temple peacocks can be heard. After leading a kirtana and reciting some prayers, Maharaja begins the lecture.

Sri Sri Radha-Damodaraji ki jaya!

So, I mentioned this morning that I would change my topic and I would talk today about sexuality. I think you know we talk about marriage, we talk sometimes about relationships and we talk and discuss things about community. As a matter of fact we are looking closer and closer at the model that we have with ISKCON, moving from a monastic order to, basically, a congregational scheme. So there are many things to scrutinize to see how best we can please and serve Srila Prabhupada, the main way is to look at our personal lives, as individuals, up to this time in our Krsna consciousness, the many ways we want to try to look at how we can be better devotees. And so one of the ways that we become better devotees is we look at how we can offer ourselves better in Krsna's service. One way we can offer ourselves better in Krsna's service is that we try to communicate to each other as best as possible—this is the nature of healthy sadhu-sanga. We want to always try to access what is the siddhanta, the goal that we're trying to attain, what constitutes being a proper sadhika, one who is following the sadhana practices, and in the community environment we try to revisit the individual as well as the institution, both in the present and in the legacy of antiquity.

Sometime back I gave a very, I would say, interesting class in addressing the ideas of "tritiya-prakriti" or third gender, and trying to look at this in terms of what's been given to us in our shastra, and also reflecting on ways of how we look at this at the present time. One member of our community wanted to share something, and I wanted to take advantage of addressing some issues in relationship to this person's sharing, just kind of revisiting some things we've discussed, and because especially in the last few



months, actually, in the last year or two, there's a lot of discussion taking place in the Vaishnava community on this issue. It has interesting dynamics. Like everything, it can be viewed in different ways. It can be addressed out of context or it can be categorized based on some of our previous experiences and understandings. We are who we are. We are all products of heredity and socialization from this life and many other lifetimes, and we often look at that to understand what we are trying to become. So Mohini wanted to share something, and then I'll move on with the class, sort of give the class in connection with some things she wanted to share with the community. Is that all right Mohini? Since she asked me to speak to the community I thought this would be a good time, and then we'll spend a few minutes discussing what she wants to offer to us.

(At this point Mohini-murti dasi, wearing a red and saffron sari, goes up to the microphone and pays her obeisances. She then begins to speak, rather meekly at first.)  
 Mohini: I don't know what to say right now, so I'm just going to speak from my heart because I don't have anything written down. First of all, I want to thank the devotees that I've talked to and have been counseling me through this. I want to first of all thank His Holiness Bhakti Tirtha Swami, Mother Devavati, Mother Purana, Ajamila, Pariksit, Anasuya, Mother Laksmi and a few others, and yes, my spiritual master especially (for helping me) through this whole process of becoming more vulnerable and truthful to the devotees about being a third-gender devotee within this community. This is a rather humbling and very difficult process for me to go through, to come to terms with being myself within this community, within following the four regulative principles and being engaged in service. So, I would like to try to just set the best example as possible, as a third-gender devotee in this community and help, so that way I can become more Krsna conscious so I can also help others. Not to be stuck in a pigeonhole and be invisible, but be visible. So many of us have been stuck in a pigeonhole and died silently, because of fear of scrutinization, bigotry, homophobia and different sources of mental or physical, sometimes in the past, abuse or being thrown out because someone doesn't really understand. Also in the past some third-gender people have come out in a very un-Vaishnava way, but I personally want to come out and be honest to the devotees. Bhakti Tirtha Maharaja and Mother Devavati have been counseling me; they will know my every move and my every endeavor in this process. So there is nothing that will be unknown to the community either, because I want to be fully honest, and vulnerable, and try to perform devotional service as best I can, by the mercy of guru and Krsna and all the devotees here. Thank you.



Bhakti Tirtha Maharaja: Jaya! Vaishnava Thakura ki jaya! So, I want to piggyback on this and use this as a topic today, just briefly, and then open up for discussion. In previous classes I shared how often we lump everyone who is in the gay community into a certain sector. We discussed how, when Lord Caitanya was born, if we read the section closely we see how Jagannatha Misra invited so many people to come and some of those who came to honor Lord Caitanya's birth were called the "natabaris." These natabaris, they were men, gay men, who were professional actors, performers, dancers, and it was considered that their presence was auspicious. Prabhupada, in one or two conversations, one major conversation, where he was discussing this issue, and he says how in India there were special villages, special places, where such people lived and that also they were invited to various ceremonies—they were celibates, they were invited to various celibate ceremonies—and it was considered that their presence would bring blessings to the environment. There's also the example, of course, we mentioned about Arjuna. We may remember, it was quite a time back, when the Pandavas were exiled, we remember how Arjuna, as well as all of them, were surreptitious—they were in disguise—and Arjuna's particular disguise, the word then was used as a "eunuch," but it was understood that he was a man dressed as a woman, cloth, a woman's, mannerisms... When the Maharaja Virata examined his character, to see if he was going to invite Arjuna into the kingdom, they tested him to see if he was attracted to women, and of course his service was dressing women, and singing, and decorating their hair, etc. His name was, of course, Brihannala. So if this idea of third gender was something in itself demonic, or something in itself evil or whatever, then of course obviously Jagannatha Misra would never have invited such people to Lord Caitanya's appearance, and the Pandavas would have never considered having Arjuna to take that kind of involvement, nor would the king have investigated him to see if he was going to allow him to do this kind of work, or in Vedic times would such people be invited to various types of occasions, to live in certain villages, etc.

Now, we may say, well that's different from what homosexuals are today, or gay people. Yes and no. There are so many classifications of people who are in straight bodies as well as in gay bodies. At the same time we are none of these. In one sense—(Mohini's) sharing—there's many positive things about it, in one sense there's things that some people can use in a negative way, and in another sense, it's a non-issue. First, if it's a non-issue, let's take that one first, because, we've all been men and women in so many different lifetimes, we've had different orientations in many lifetimes, and rarely is anybody just, you see it has to do with hormones and chromosomes also in some cases. In the sense of the basic biological perspective, "na tv evaham jatu nasam, natvam



neme janadhipah”—never was there I time when I did not exist—but in terms of the bodies that we have at particular times, there are some hormonal and chromosomal combinations. And especially in these days, the combinations are not always so distinct. Let me just give you some examples from a biological perspective. Normally what is considered male is XY chromosome, female XX chromosome. We’re looking at this first from a biological perspective, social, and then spiritual. Now from a biological perspective, there are times when there are people who have XY chromosomes, which means that you’re supposed to be a male, for whatever that means, but there are people who have XY chromosomes who would normally be considered to be male, but they have female organs, uterus and vagina, and they have XY chromosomes. Some people have XY chromosomes and they’re born, knowing that they’re male, but they’re born without male genitals, totally. There are people who have what’s called XX chromosomes, female, but they’re born with testes and male genitals, penis. Or there are people who have XX, what’s normally considered female chromosomes, but they’re born with either genital. And there are people of different combinations, and in some cases they’re born with both genitals.

Now, why are we discussing all of this? For several reasons. One, because at any given time it’s supposed that we have about at least five per cent of the people in society who would be considered to be gay. It’s not just recent; it’s been in existence since time immemorial. You look at Arjuna, you look at Lord Brahma... You say, well what about this story in the Bhagavatam where Lord Brahma is engaged in creation, and, in the process of creation, he produces two, what is normally called homosexual, from his buttocks who later chase him. Well, this is a totally different category... this is not homosexuality. This is bisexuality in the sense of just lust. They chase after Lord Brahma, who is in a male body, and then, there is the twilight manifested, which is manifest as a female body, and they also chase that, and they give up chasing Lord Brahma, so in this case what we see is just lust—uncontrolled lust, which is very prevalent today—uncontrolled lust. People in male bodies, people in female bodies—uncontrolled lust. Now, uncontrolled lust is taking a person off the highest expression of human existence, and uncontrolled lust doesn’t allow us to access our spirituality. And uncontrolled lust, whether it’s coming out of whatever body a person is using, is uncontrolled lust. Just as illicit sex, coming out of whatever body it’s using, is illicit sex.

Now, I gave that initial discussion... we had a suicide in this community, that one devotee in Potomac had committed suicide, and this person had committed suicide mainly based on the anxiety, bewilderment, of being in a body that was third gender, and



having difficulty in trying to understand their role, their position in devotional service. As a matter of fact, in terms of teenagers, teenagers who are gay are four times more likely to commit suicide than other teenagers. So it's an interesting issue to look at closer and try to gain better insight on the human condition... getting better insight in how to analyze the body so we rise above the body. It's an interesting issue because in today's society, there are so much social concerns about people trying to posit their rights, and people trying to find themselves, people wanting to be valued. The reason suicide is on the rise and depression is on the rise has a lot to do with people having trouble in being truly valued and cared for. So there are people who are so-called straight who have all kinds of orientations due to this life and previous life involvement as well as heredity and socialization; people who are considered gay, who are gay in some cases because of biological orientation, some people because of sociological, and some people just due to a distinct choice. These are all various categories, which ultimately have to do with the individual and Krsna, and the individual following dharmic principles.

Now dharmic principles emphasize that, well, let's read what Krsna says Himself in Bhagavad-gita 7.11:

balam balavatam caham  
 kama-raga-vivarjitam  
 dharmaviruddho bhutesu  
 kamo 'smi bharatarsabha

"I am the strength of the strong, devoid of passion and desire. I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles, O lord of the Bharatas [Arjuna]."

Read that again. Krsna is speaking in the seventh chapter "Knowledge of the Absolute." "I am the strength of the strong." Where there is strength, ultimately, it is coming from Me. I am the original sakti or provider of strength. I am devoid of passion and desire. "I am sex life which is not contrary to religious principles." Prabhupada's purport says:

"The strong man's strength should be applied to protect the weak, not for personal aggression. Similarly, sex life, according to religious principles (dharma), should be for the propagation of children, not otherwise. The responsibility of parents is then to make their offspring Krsna conscious."

So here, Krsna is taking the time Himself, to address sex by saying, or address some gender issue by saying, "I am sex life according to religious principles." Bhaktisiddhanta himself who was a naistiki-brahmacari, who was a lifetime celibate,



writes that sex life cannot be, and I'm paraphrasing, cannot be neglected or denied anymore than the life or soul itself, because ultimately the soul's natural position is union in the spiritual kingdom with the divine. So ultimately, sex life is an intricate part of intimacy and union. Just as in these physical bodies, sex life usually means genitals—stimulation and the connection, but only, or centered around such. We remind ourselves that the soul, the atma, one sense can perform the activities of all the other senses, and so so much, which we do not discuss much because it is not something just to be talked about lightly, but the nature of the spiritual world is constant association, constant union, constant intimacy—where one sense can perform the activities of all the other senses—and so therefore sex life is not centered around genital connection. Because the eye can hear, and the ear can smell, therefore one sense can have total or complete sense of satisfaction in union; one sense is constantly having union, and so are interacting in the spiritual world. So sex life in the material sense and in the spiritual sense is like oil in contrast to water. In both cases there is liquid, but in one case a different substance, but it is in connection with saying, ultimately it's the same basic foundation—liquidity. So Bhaktisiddhanta, who's firmly celibate, and we notice, that if we look at our legacy of Vaishnavas, and even those who've associated with the Panca-tattva, we look at so many other acaryas, next we see householders who were engaged in sex life. Look at Bhaktivinoda; he had over a dozen children. And so we see that sex life is important; that relationships, family, is important; to a point where Krsna Himself says that He is that, when it is performed according to religious principles. And at the same time we see that “maithunya-gara,” the shackles of sex life, are one of the main things that bind us in the material world. How do we process it? There seems to be a contradiction, that, by not controlling the passion, one is surely guaranteed to take many, many physical bodies. At the same time, while offering everything to Krsna, one is already on their way out, doing things in a God-centered focus.

Why is it that there are so many “samskaras” in connection with sex life? There are so many samskaras in terms of impregnation, as well as delivery, as well as name ceremony after the infant has come, grain-taking ceremony, hair-cutting ceremony, so many samskaras. And in Vedic times, when people come together for sex life it was a celebration—it was even announced. And it was announced in such a way to give the community and the guru's blessing, and sex life was performed with tremendous rituals. Srila Prabhupada mentions about chanting fifty rounds—what is an intricate part of procreation? The people were not procreating with somebody else's wife, somebody else's husband; not procreating if they were not ready to honor the life; or in darkness; or in drugs; or in intoxication; it was the opposite. (There was) special music, special dress,



special scent of perfume, special cologne... and special meditation on Krsna, in such a way.

So, we may say that this transgender is significant for us now, why? Because, one, we can have another fragmentation in the movement now, if we're not careful, and it's somewhat occurring. It is important (in) that we have a larger percentage of gays in the movement than in society. One reason is that many gays are people who are ready to be celibate for lifetime—they're attracted to priestlyhood—priestly class of society—as well as you'll find a large percentage of gays amongst nuns and priests. Not that they came into the order, and then they started getting introduced to such activities, and then somehow became gay just based on some association, any more than people in general do not just become gay just based on some kind of an involvement or association, although some do. As we look more and more at how to make the world Krsna conscious, we look also more and more at how to make ourselves Krsna conscious, we look more and more at how to recognize that whatever we have in this time is part of our karma from previous lives, and how to use it.

Now, for instance, let's look at why this is important in terms of why it has some significance in sharing, and look at why it can be negative and why it can be a non-issue. (The) easiest thing is why it's a non-issue—take that one first. It's a non-issue because, whatever body we're in—whatever race, gender, even age and part of the world—it's all temporary, and we have to honor a consciousness above whatever the temporary situation is. Let's look at why it is dangerous, and then we'll look at why it is positive. It is dangerous because, for many people, the idea of expressing that they are third gender in the Vaishnava community will open up a floodgate. Just like, when we have divorce, and there are cases where it is necessary for somebody to get a divorce because it's just bad for both parties based on the situation, although the people can stay together and live happily and live virtuously, that is the best, but there are times when Prabhupada himself allowed divorce and there are times when he even pushed divorce. You may not realize that. Basically, the dharma is we do not want divorce; we'll go out of our way to try to minimize it from not happening. We make those vows, we are ready to make those vows, we commit ourselves. In the case of Sruti-kirti, Prabhupada actually encouraged to divorce. We see Prabhupada stopped making/arranging the marriages because people were divorcing so much, and he complained especially to us as Westerners, we're in and out of situations like anything, and it's a big embarrassment to our movement that there's so much divorce. I know another case where Prabhupada forced a person to take sannyasa, because the marriage was so terrible, and one way to protect the woman (was that) he forced the man to take sannyasa, pushed him to take sannyasa, so that the wife



would be able to go on with her Krsna consciousness and the man would have the chance to come up to sannyasa, or deal with the consequences, but would not cause problems to the wife who was trying to be quite Krsna conscious. I'm not even going to share who he is but it's a very classical case, this happened. What we notice is in Srila Prabhupada's books is he's always giving us the highest, most preferred standard, and for us to become most extremely Krsna conscious we should try to honor the most highest, preferred standard, and if we do that our Krsna consciousness becomes very speedy. So now, where this can be dangerous, and will be dangerous for some people—because this is not just happening in secular it's happening in our society now also, for instance, we have in many cases a larger percentage of gays than in society—that people will be coming out and some of them coming out will mean now I will not try to be so careful in expressing some of my desires and I will act upon some of these desires. And that's where Mohini-murti is saying about the fact that she knows some people can look at this in an unhealthy way, or they can pursue it in an unhealthy way, she doesn't want to be such a person.

Now, where it is very powerful, and can be very powerful in one's own evolution... We'll take a social example, for instance, I'm in a black body, but I'm not this body. At the same time, the fact that I'm in a black body, there are certain cultural things, linguistic things, that is a part of my life at this time because I'm in this body. As I recognize that myself personally, as the community recognizes that, it allows me to transcend it even more, of this uniform that I'm using at this time. I think that everybody is saying... that's impersonal. Somebody's from an Italian background or a Jewish background, that sometimes certain idiosyncrasy tendencies or cultural norms that's associated with it. And you appreciate that person on a deeper level by understanding some of that, while you look deeper at who that individual really is as spirit-soul. There are certain patterns that differ from somebody born in Australia, somebody born in India, somebody born in Africa, which by recognizing it, we can move faster toward transcending it. And by not recognizing it, sometimes that person or the community or the environment, will have greater difficulty in understanding, supporting, and loving that particular person. Because they will deny what that person's life space, field of activities, present "battle of Kuruksetra" is at this particular time. We try to attain something by being able to move from where we are, and being able to attain it in such a way. So for many Vaishnavas, they have been hurting inside, in being in an environment where they feel that people know how I think, people know what my present package is in this lifetime, really is; they would disown me, not appreciate me, would categorize me. And so many Vaishnavas are hurting inside from being able to feel more love in the community, from being able to feel more Krsna conscious, by having this secret that



they're having to cover up constantly in such a way. Or not being able to get help for whatever their particular issues are because they can't really say to the temple president, or to the GBC, or to the guru or sannyasi, they can't say, well look, I'm hurting in this way, I'm suffering in this way, or this is something I'm trying to deal with, something I'm trying to cope with, and so an intricate part of them that then is like living sort of a lie, or living in secrecy. Now, in a community of love, less and less secrets means more and more chance to see how to serve each other, how to help each other, how to learn from each other, etc. And so as Krsna says in the Govardhana Hill story, that Vaishnavas do not keep secrets. Or Rupa Goswami explains, in the process of "priti" or loving exchanges, we reveal our mind. And Bhaktivinoda of course shares that when we reveal our mind in community or in audience, it helps us to get more blessings, it gives us more protection, it helps us also to be more accountable. While we make "vrata" in public, it helps us to be more accountable.

So now, let us say someone, who biologically is in a certain third-gender orientation, and they are feeling that people are considering that because they have that orientation, that they are abnormal, that they are demonic, that they are a disturbance. Or someone says, just get out of it, prabhu; it's just by choice. Just like it's choice, for many people who are so-called straight, to make decisions on who they marry, who they have relationships with, some people by choice become pedophiles, by choice bisexual, by choice become sex-mongers. But there's also a biological aspect. We can say there's still choice there, from some previous life, there's some choice there, that somebody's in a handicapped body in this lifetime, but not necessarily in this lifetime, there's factors from the previous, from the past. There's some choice while you're in an Indian body, or you're in an American body, or you're in an African body—there's some choice there. Woman's body or a man's body. There's some aggregate choices from some previous life experiences that have unfolded. But now, in this lifetime, there is a package that's given to us, that now we have to deal with as we try to attain the Godhead.

So let me help you understand about something a little more because we want to deal with this ourselves, within our Vaishnava community, as we try to service the world, we have to understand what is in society to be able to serve and to preach and to help people. Now what happens medically, is that there are many intersexed people—not many, but people who are intersexed at birth. Their gender is somewhat ambiguous. The doctor often assigns a gender. Do you understand what happens? Sometimes people are intersexed. The doctor assigns a gender, and usually it's whatever the dominant concern is. It's not that the child has a chance to make a decision, or the child has a chance to unfold. Many times at puberty, not until puberty, does it become clear what the particular



orientation in fact is. So sometimes, one has been assigned a gender of being a female, and at puberty they're actually a male. And so they may pursue seemingly a gay orientation, but actually it's just the doctor's assignment that's off. So this is just to give you some idea of how complex what we're dealing with, and to lump everybody in is unhealthy, it's impersonal, it's insensitive and it's harsh, and if anything, that is what aligning being demonic because we are personalists and we are to try to encourage everybody in the siddhanta, in reaching the goal. Prabhupada had so many homosexuals around him, especially in the early days. We don't have to go there, but many were. Even when he dealt with people like Allen Ginsberg who was a known, active member in the gay community, Prabhupada tried to encourage him, but still spoke the philosophy, what is the philosophy. He didn't see him as less of a person because he had that kind of orientation. But he surely tried to give him the knowledge to help him become liberated out of bodily conceptions, etc.

So often devotees relegate things based on that story of Lord Brahma where this is a demonic arrangement because it is entities who are just lusty, and they were ready for lust, pursuing lust wherever and however it may come. Most actual people who are, let us say, genuine gays do not have affection for the opposite sex. Now, in anyone's body, there's a mixture. Women are attracted to women who are straight, men, in situations are attracted to other men, in general as well as in confinement. So what we really see is that the material world is a big mess, many people are pursuing sense gratification in all different kinds of ways, whether it's overt or whether it's covert, it's a problem. At the same time we see that it's all a perverted reflection of genuine need for intimacy, for union and for association. And that, as Bhaktisiddhanta said, can never really be eradicated. Why is it that the Goswamis, who were also celibate, were the most divinely absorbed in writing and in their mental "bhajana" and most intimacy relationship of conjugal? Because, this is natural to the soul.

In America, for instance, a man, it would be interesting in the case of a woman, but scientifically speaking, the average man thinks about sex life every thirty minutes. Women, biologically/physiologically being more sexually powerful than men, one wonders what the percentage is for them, and that is so-called normal, in the physical body. Now, the interesting thing's that every mammal species, except man, engages in sex life basically, categorically for procreation and mates during season, seasonally, this is natural. Humans have a tendency of not just engaging in sex life for procreation. Where we see mammals in their natural environment, wild animals for instance, that they engage in sex life during certain times, they're naturally stimulated, make contact, and it is for procreation. Not that it's just a routine thing, anymore than just thinking that



Bhaktivinoda and other pure devotees who had sex life just did it out of a routine thing, intimately. Now, we go to the touchy one, illicit sex. I've been having some exchanges with some of the scholars in our society, and what is coming clear is very interesting. It needs to be communicated, I think, better, for proper healthy relationships. There is no example of Prabhupada saying sex once a month in giving initiation. Initiation lectures, initiation discussions. The main presentation of sex once a month is a letter to Satsvarupa Goswami, and I can read some parts of it. Where he is mentioning, in addressing this particular issue, and what does he say? He says... Srila Prabhupada gives the once a month instruction. Prabhupada tells Satsvarupa Maharaja to follow this, quote, "as far as possible." This is an exact letter that Prabhupada gave. "But under no condition to use contraceptive methods."

Now, there is a top line, and there is a bottom line, and there's things that are outside the bottom or the top, if that makes any sense. (Laughs). There is the top line, the highest we try to strive for, there's a bottom line, and there's things that don't fit into that whole sequence. Let's give an example, but first thing, when Prabhupada would give initiation lectures, he would go into detail about gambling, intoxication, and no meat eating. He would go into detail about no meat-eating it also means no fish and eggs; it also means no coffee, and no, when he talks about intoxication, he would go into detail about also no tea and no coffee. He would go into detail on these things, every one of them, at initiation, but he did not go into detail about initiation about sex once a month. Why? There's a reason for that. Well why are we talking about these kinds of issues? (Laughs). What have I gotten myself into? We are trying to help devotees to stop getting divorced, to stop getting devotees engaging in "bhoga-tyaga," where they fast and then they binge, they binge and then they fast. We're trying to get devotees who have healthy understandings of how to have healthy family life, and understand what higher goals are, and understand what are their boundaries and also understand what is not acceptable.

Why do we find, through our Vaishnava line of other acaryas, they also do not mention once a month? Well, look us look at this, first from the Manu-samhita. You know, we have the Vedas given to us, passed down, you know through, by the mercy of Lord Brahma. And then we have principles of ethics and virtue given to us by Manu in the form of the Manu-samhita. And then we have principles given to us, this is Vedic general knowledge that Manu took certain parts and broke down to focus on particular principles for humankind, and then, let me see, Brhaspati, focused on certain things from the general Vedas emphasizing management, politics, law, administration, which are called, you know, the Artha Shastra—Manu Shastra, Artha Shastra—and then we have principles of sex life, relationships, expressing senses, the science of sex, taken from the



general Vedas, broken down, you see, by Nandi, the consort of Lord Siva, which is called the Kama Shastra, or now sometimes referred to as the Kama-sutra. Now, each of these are from the general Vedic knowledge emphasizing how to function the material body on this planet, basic things that are part of Vedic prayer time. And there's also, now, the other aspect of things that are transcendental, just like there is Bhagavata Dharma and there is Varnashrama Dharma. Varnashrama Dharma is like general Vedic things that are there for the best way how to live in the material world, how to function based on what is functional and sociologically correct for having a life based on "dharma." Now mind you, we're trying to be "sanatana-dharmis," but we look at dharma, we honor dharma, and we rise above dharma. If we minimize dharma, ethics, morality, righteousness, the mode of goodness, we're sure you're not going to become sanatana-dharmis. If we stay with dharma, which is piety in the mode of goodness, we won't become transcendental. But we use dharma as well as the mode of goodness as a stepping platform. So the Kama-sutra is one of those ways and efforts, and the Manu-samhita gives some basic principles of dharma that can give us some cues about sanatana-dharma, which we want to understand, analyze, and we want to be bigger than that, by understanding what it is that we're trying to be bigger than. Now in the Manu-samhita, it gives some interesting points in relationship to sex life. Just like in the Kama-sutra, it distinctly talks about tritiya-prakriti or it talks about third gender, third sex, lesbians, homosexuals, it talks about all of these things. It means that it's not something new, that's just existing recently, it's talking about this and the Kama-sutra was written back, you know 4 B.C., before Christ's era, etc., later compiled by certain personalities, but it's something that goes way, way back in time and addresses all of these things. Or just as we've heard that in Vedic times there were prostitutes, how all that fits in? Meaning that there were certain things going on in prescribed ways, just like there's certain ways in Vedic times, if you're going to eat meat, then there were certain rituals and certain things in that regard. But not that that was something that somebody who's trying to honor sanatana-dharma is going to follow or to be involved in, but it's surely there to be understood because it's in the Vedas.

Now hear from the Manu-samhita. It says, from age twenty to thirty, I mean it's very specific in relationship to sex life, and for somebody who's just following what is politically correct or what is stimulating for the body, these things will seem totally unnatural, impractical, impossible, etc. As we understand the value of celibacy, and there's many, many things about that, then we can understand also why abstention is important, and why minimizing just adhering to the bodily demands. The more that we are slaves of the body, the more it means another body is waiting for us. But the more



that we use the body in Krsna's service, then the more it also means that we are honoring the soul and one day soon we can be out of these bodies. But we have these bodies, and Krsna Himself says He is sex life according to religious principles, and we see that most of the devotees in our line were "grhastas," were householders, and they had children, and they had relationships, they had sex life, and we see that Bhaktisiddhanta is saying that sex life can not be thrown out of consciousness because intimacy and union is an intricate part of the soul itself. It's just a matter of the orientation, is it God-centered or not. OK, here, from age twenty to age thirty, this is from the Manu-samhita, it says... let me read this section first. This is from Satyaraja's book about the four principles, some of you may want to get this, it's a nice information about all the different principles. "While Manu is clear," this is Satyaraja speaking, "that celibacy is ideal, but is rarely achieved, and that a householder or a married person should have sex only for procreation, he is concerned with loving householders who want to engage in sexual activity for reasons other than procreation. He is aware that people are engulfed in three modes of nature—goodness, passion and ignorance—and depending upon just how these three affect one's psychological constitution, Manu says that restriction should vary." So Manu is saying the best thing is celibacy, the best thing is abstention. Manu is saying the best thing is sex life for procreation only. But Manu is also saying that people are in different modes of material nature, and therefore because they're in different modes there is also authorized ways of how such people in such modes can become transcendental. So let's see what Manu has to say. "From age twenty to thirty, the householder most serious about spiritual life will limit their sex to once a month." Age twenty to age thirty. "If they're second-class householders, they may have sex twice a month. If they are third-class, they may have sex more than twice a month, but their advancement in spiritual life will be difficult." Keep in mind mammals, most, practically, maybe all mammals, take a look at them closely, engage primarily in sex life seasonal, and for procreation there's natural captivation when there is time for procreation. Keep in mind even the Bible, Christianity, tells us that during seven days after menstruation there should not be sex life. During pregnancy, and just after pregnancy, there should not be sex life, emphasizing sex life mainly for procreation as such, and there is more even detailed information from Manu, and also in the Kama-sutra, about this as well. What we see is not only something in our tradition, but is in another tradition emphasized. In all traditions, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Tao, etc., no adultery, no fornication and accountable, responsible sex life in marriage etc., as an expression of service to the Godhead.



Now, look at this, age thirty to forty, first class. Just as we say, let's go like this. Let's take a vegetarian diet. First class, you're taking only prasadam, cooked by "paka" brahmana, only prasadam offered to the murti, to the Deity, only prasadam that Krsna will distinctly accept—first class, highest expression. Paka prepared, paka devotional environment, only offered to the Deity, only if the Deity will accept. Now, within boundary is prasadam that's vegetarian. It may not be prepared by first-class brahmanas, it may not be something that's offered to the Deity, it may be offered at your home, offered at some other place, whatever, but that's within the standard. But it's not the highest thing, it's a lower standard, but it's acceptable. This is serving as an example. But now, eating something that is not offered, or something that is not vegetarian, doesn't fit. It isn't standard, it goes outside, it's not accepted. Age thirty to forty. So what we're seeing is first class is sex, like in this age group, once a month only for procreation, and that's it. First class. Prabhupada in his letter and in initiation did not bring up "sex once a month," although he went deep into the other areas in detail. In his letter, for instance, it's a classical letter where he's mentioning this, he says about trying to do this, his words, his... let's see Prabhupada's exact words, his written word, is that "as far as possible," but his written words were also "but under no condition to use contraceptive methods." And so we'll find in these discussions the bottom line is that no use of contraceptive methods, and we also find in Prabhupada's discussion that he would mention the bottom line Prabhupada gave in marriage—no contraceptives, no procreation, it is certainly a fact that heterosexual... OK, this is another point. So, Prabhupada did discuss sometimes in initiation lectures no contraception, helping us to understand where the boundaries are.

Go back to Manu... age thirty to forty: "First class householders have sex only once in three months; the second class twice in three months; the third class more than twice." So these are some general guidelines that Manu is giving in such a way. Age forty to fifty: "The first class householder has sex only once in six months; second class twice in six months; third class more than twice." Older than fifty—give it up! (Laughs). Anyway, this is Manu giving some general guidelines about what is first class. So we understand what is considered sin, and what is not first class, or what is in boundary, and to work toward higher, etc.

Now one of the things that the Christians say is that honoring contraception brings a floodgate for homosexuality. Some of their lectures, their writings, we see like this, and so we see in Catholicism sex is also supposed to be for procreation, and we see as nuns and priests, that the rule is to be celibate. Now we don't have time, but there's a tremendous list of biological and social gains that are associated with celibacy, upon



hence the brain tissues are strengthened, the nervous system, and on and on and on, how it rejuvenates the body in many ways, how it can be channeled to allow one, of course, to focus more internally on the Godhead, on devotion, etc. And so we can see why Manu is giving us a situation where there's practically celibacy, where there's celibacy within marriage, and where sex life is aimed mainly for procreation, where you're inviting life, and you're ready to honor the life that you are inviting, therefore it becomes a ritual, it becomes a festival, it becomes a God-centered focus.

One or two other short things and then we want to stop. So this is some points from the Manu-samhita, given as messages for humanity for leading a life based on dharma. We see that... well I think we can summarize at this point and we'll open up for discussion because I want to just touch on it lightly. We had some other discussions earlier, in more detail, and we have our marriages we were discussing more about, you know, married life, in the marriage lecture. But we want to analyze and look at the points, at the perspective, of the fact that this is a genuine serious issue. Now, every day, two hundred fifty pornographic websites are created. I mean, people are just so sexed out and out of control in so many ways. In America, every minute a child is being sexually abused. So there is a serious need to gain more of a handle on one's sexuality; there is a serious need for people to be able to have a greater sense of control; there is a serious need for people to be able to have more healthier relationships, where they're having sex as spirituality, as a celebration, based on Biblical and religious shastra, scripture, Vedic scripture; there is a need for people to be able to bring in and honor a greater life, because their consciousness, of course the aggregate of their consciousness affects the kind of child that they can bring into the womb. There's a greater need for honoring of the "samskaras" or rites of passage, so that there's healthier children and healthier relationships, less suicide among kids, less anxiety about orientation, less divorce. So all of these things, you know, come to all of our own levels, in trying to see how to use our bodies more in the service of Krsna.

So let's summarize what we went over today. We mentioned how there are benefits as well as dangers in this kind of campaign of people trying to look closer at their identity. There are benefits in that we all have some package that we brought into this world—that's part of our imperfection, or part of our battle of Kurukshetra, or part of our facility to offer to Krsna; that nobody's physical body is wonderful and is the goal of life; that all of us having these physical bodies means, is a sign, that we have a lot of work to do. As the Bible says not flesh and blood can go back to the kingdom of God, then what is it, the soul. That Krsna says "dehino smin yatha dehe," that we have been transversing from infant to baby to child to adult and to elder and then death, and so it



goes on. Where the soul comes from... (Deity doors close). Jaya Sri Sri Radha-Damodara ki! (Offers pranams). Where does the soul go after we leave these bodies, that is our main concern. Not that we have these pie in the sky conceptions, we want to live for the moment, honoring the moment properly, while we prepare for the future. The future is being prepared based on how we honor the present moment. That there is a rising concern, outside of spiritual circles as well as inside of spiritual circles, for people who are in third-gender bodies, of how to be able to communicate their situation, to be understood, to offer value and to be able to rise above whatever their particular concerns are as well as anybody else's concerns. There's also a tendency for people to exploit whatever their identity is, either straight, or gay, or transex... or whatever. That somebody who has a manipulative, exploitative mentality, that they will exploit whether they are in a communistic environment, an autocratic, a monarchical; whether they're in commerce, or they're in education, or that they're in political or even religious—they have an exploitive mentality. So some people will exploit this in the sense of considering, "Well, yes, it is in the Vedic shastra, it is something that's always been there, and therefore let me enjoy." Well Manu has given, as well as our acharyas, have given us ways how to refrain from illicit activities whatever our gender or whatever our environment is and how to control the senses and not be slaves of the senses. That Brhaspati has given us the Artha Shastra; that Lord Siva and Nandi, his consort, have given us the Kama-sutra, where these kinds of things are discussed with all kinds of details; where Manu has given us the Dharma Shastra; and all of this is a part of varnashrama-dharma—basic knowledge in how to be healthy humans ethically and morally. And then of course we have the Bhagavata Purana, or we have Bhagavata-dharma, which is helping us to be transcendental. We want to be hungry and eager and determined to embrace Bhagavata-dharma while we try to understand the nature of this body and the material world.

We talked about that there is different reasons why people are in different kinds of bodies, in this life and in previous lifetimes, and different reasons why somebody finds themselves in a package that's third gender. Some of it is hormone and chromosomal arrangement; some of it has to do with that person being blessed so that they could feel different, so that they could not feel themselves a part of the world and become more interested in honoring the soul. Some of our sannyasis and others who are third gender have used that in a way now to be more focused in their devotion, to be less situated in any kind of orthodox environment or mindset and to focus more on Krsna with celibacy. That if we can be celibate, wonderful, we can simplify our lives and be focused just on addressing the soul. But that is rare; it is understood that that is not the ordinary, and so



therefore Manu is giving ways on how to be first class. And if we can't be first class, one has to understand what constitutes first class to come up to first class, and he let us know what is outside the boundaries, that is, not first, second, third, fourth, fifth class, but is a deviation. And we've had a chance to look at some of these things today, by looking at Krsna Himself saying in 7.11, 7.11 (chuckles), in 7.11, that He is sex life according to religious principles, that Krsna, you know, posits us by letting us know that, yes, sex life is there, and according to dharma, according to religious principles, according to ethics and morality, Krsna says, "I am that, that is glorious, and I am honored and worshipped in such a way." So, let us see what you want to, what questions you have. I took some time myself to look at the Kama-sutra, and Mother Indrani to order for me, to look at the unabridged Kama-sutra, just to look at these things closer because I wanted to understand a little better. Why does Siva, why does Nandi discuss these, you know, these kind of issues and then what, in a way, such things are being discussed. And I saw that, yes, that since time immemorable there have been these kinds of classifications and there have been various ways how people can honor it in the right way, and ways how people can also exploit it, just as people exploit anything, and all things, based on their consciousness and based on the modes of material nature that they're in. We said there's a good part about this, is that individuals should not have to feel that they're hiding something that they brought into this world that's part of their experience in Krsna consciousness in this lifetime. At the same time, persons should understand what these higher goals are and try to acquire and attain such higher goals.





The Gay and Lesbian Vaishnava Association is an international organization dedicated to the teachings of Lord Caitanya, the importance of all-inclusiveness within His mission, and the Vedic concept of a natural third gender. Its purpose is to educate Vaishnavas, Hindus and the public in general about the “third sex” as described in Vedic literatures. This knowledge will help to correct many of the common misconceptions that people hold today concerning third-gender people (gays, lesbians, bisexuals, transgenders, the intersexed, etc.). In addition to this, GALVA wishes to provide a friendly and positive-oriented place where third-gender devotees and guests can associate together and utilize their time to learn more about Krsna consciousness and advance in spiritual life.

**Online at: [www.galva108.org](http://www.galva108.org)**

